

# Need a Reformation?

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517: Reformation Day. A commemorative day in our Free Reformed Churches, and if we lived in Slovenia or certain German provinces, we would have the day off. Ironically it is also Halloween, a day originating from pagan practises intended to scare away the demons and spirits. In reality though, those demons are far more scared of the meaning that we attach to it. It is the day when Martin Luther hammered the 95 Theses on the chapel door in Wittenberg, sparking the Great Reformation.

It was not an act of defiance and provocation, as some have been led to believe. On the contrary, the door was regularly used as a public notice-board given its location along a major thoroughfare. And to anyone who thinks that Luther was just trying to start a revolt, the fact is that the theses were written in Latin, the language of the church, not the local vernacular. Most of the general population would not have been able to read it. But those in the church certainly did. And the general population soon found out.

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## *Need a Reformation? (continued)*

Indeed, the 95 Theses was the work of a man who had truly examined not just the Bible but also himself. He observed that the existing church was in a state of deformation, and he saw that he himself was in a state of deformation.

It is true that Luther was best known for his Reforming deeds. He especially denied the Roman Catholic practise of selling indulgences. In 1517, the year of the Reformation, Pope Leo X had initiated the Roman Catholic Church's most aggressive indulgence sale yet, the proceeds of which were to go to the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In Theses 28, Luther specifically attacks the well-known statement of top seller Johan Tetzel: "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." 1517 consisted of a church in its deepest state of deformation: materialism, greed, hypocrisy and idolatry. The question is... does this sound familiar?

Some might shrug and say it was an interesting anomaly: one monk changes the course of history nearly 500 years ago. Just a footnote in history really. Certainly not worth remembering 500 years after the event. In reality though, Martin Luther was one of many reformers like Zwingli, Calvin, Huss, Wycliffe, Knox, Tyndale, Bullinger. And there was nothing extra special about these men. To be sure, many were very gifted. Some, like Calvin, churned out astounding amounts of literature, and they didn't have Microsoft Word. Others, like Knox and Tyndale, obviously had brilliant minds. But what is most important is that the Holy Spirit worked in their hearts, and in the hearts of thousands of their followers, to create thousands of reformations in those hearts.

Throughout history God's people have fallen into sin, been prompted to examine themselves, and then repented and again received God's blessing. The book of Judges in the Old Testament is solely dedicated to an endless cycle where the children of Israel fall into sin, receive judgment at the

hands of their enemies, repent, receive a new judge until he dies and then the cycle of degeneration begins again.

The first recorded sermon in the New Testament that wasn't delivered by Jesus was themed specifically at God's people in a state of deformation. In fact, they had just killed Jesus. Hence Peter cries: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) And they did, and a few verses later we read about how God blessed them and the church grew rapidly in numbers. It was a reformation.

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Reformation Day is not just a  
footnote in history. It is His-story.*

This reformation wasn't just a collective event. In fact, it is more crucially an individual event. We

all, individually, need to undergo a reformation. Self-examination, it is more commonly called, and we know from the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in our *Book of Praise* that we need to consider our sins and accursedness, examine whether we believe in Christ's saving work (not some petty indulgence or any other man-made, band-aid solution) and whether we actually show our thankfulness to God in all our words and works. And if we don't, then we need to reform.

But we all have busy lives. We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and October 31 comes and goes so regularly we tend to overlook its significance. We tend to forget that Reformation Day is not just a footnote in history. It is *His-story*.

Rewind back to the Old Testament. The exiles had come back from Babylon, released back to their homelands by the Persian king Cyrus. They had begun to rebuild their cities and houses. But they had neglected one thing: the temple. So we read in Haggai 1:3: "Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?' Now therefore: 'Consider your ways!'"

Most of us certainly live in 'panelled houses' with a roof over our head and food on our table. We are blessed, living in one of the richest and most independent countries in the world. Yet as Paul asks: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:6) The question is, have we let our temples of the Holy Spirit "lie in ruins?"

Reformation Day isn't just about a monk who changed the course of church history, a story we've all heard about since primary school. It's about examining events around us, and examining our own hearts. On October 31 we must ask ourselves: Do I need another Reformation?

Brendan Pitlo

*All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:  
Him serve with fear, his praise forth tell,  
Come ye before him and rejoice.*

*Know that the Lord is God indeed;  
Without our aid he did us make:  
We are his flock, he doth us feed,  
And for his sheep he doth us take.*

*O enter then his gates with praise,  
Approach with joy his courts unto;  
Praise, laud, and bless his Name always,  
For it is seemly so to do.*

*Genevan 134:  
"Old Hundredth"*

*For why? the Lord our God is good,  
His mercy is for ever sure;  
His truth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure.*

## *Welcome to another edition of **C**ontender*

In this particular edition we have published a letter to the editor that was received in response to one of the articles from our last issue. If I must be honest, the letter as well as an appropriate response to it, occupied my thoughts for quite some time over a number of days and I expect it will continue to do so for some time yet. We confess salvation is by grace alone. Salvation is also by faith alone. Faith is worked by God, and yet man also is wholly responsible. Place those thoughts in the context of sharing the gospel whilst working under the umbrella of an organization that is interdenominational in character, and it becomes clear why it is so important that we fully understand exactly what we believe. I think you will begin to appreciate the mind struggles if you re-read the article followed by the letter to the editor and the two responses.

At this point I would like to encourage you to also think and talk about matters such as these amongst yourselves, at home and in your Bible Study Clubs. Seek the wisdom in your elders and minister too. Contender does not wish to publish lots of letters to the editor on this topic.

We also have a couple of articles on a variety of topics that I am sure you will find up-building. Enjoy reading them.

Eric

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

*Dear Editor*

*I refer to the article *Ministering in Casuarina Prison*. The article states “we are working within the interdenominational structure of Prison Fellowship Australia. This may be an obstacle for some us.” This obstacle is not explained; the author simply states why he participates.*

*The author does injustice to “some of us” and the readers, especially because most readers are our youth. Our Reformed churches, especially since the Liberation of 1944, have studied and struggled intensely about working within interdenominational structures to bring the gospel. The conclusion was that it is wrong to teach the gospel in this way. This conclusion has been widely published and debated in books and church magazines including the *Una Sancta*. If the author wants to publicly promote his disagreement with this, and seek others to join him, it is his responsibility to first prove that our churches were wrong all those years. The Bible teaches us to test the spirits. To lightly dismiss that struggle with one sentence does injustice to a matter of principle. And it is a matter of principle. If we can work within this interdenominational structure we also can do it in other areas like mission and politics. And then we depart from the Reformed faith.*

*The author states that “Team members must also sign their agreement with Prison Fellowship Australia’s ‘Statement of Faith’. What is remarkable is that all presenters in the team bring the same message”. Later he adds that “whilst we can comfortably bring the gospel (that is salvation through Jesus Christ alone) with Christians from different denominations, we do differ from them in other parts of Christian doctrine”. These two statements are contradictory. This statement also leaves room for the view that the doctrine of Scripture can be divided into two parts, that is, salvation through Jesus Christ alone and the rest. This is incorrect because Scripture’s doctrine is one (Ephesians 4:4).*

*J and A Bruning*

### EIC RESPONSE:

I appreciate the point that J and A Bruning bring to our attention. Whilst I need to admit that I am not fully fledged on the intense studies, the published debates and the conclusions that were drawn on this topic, I recognise and agree with them, that when bringing the gospel, we bring just one message, one gospel. There are no contradictions or ambiguity in scripture.

In this way I can also understand that there is confusion on a statement such as “whilst we can comfortably bring the gospel (that is salvation through Jesus Christ alone) with Christians from different denominations, we do differ from them in other parts of Christian doctrine”. We are not able to divide scripture in two as the Bruning’s correctly point out.

Having said that, I would have extreme difficulty in condemning brothers and sisters who take time out on a Saturday morning to share the gospel with those in the prison. These are people who are in prison for serious crimes, who have time to discover their sin, their misery and their wretchedness. If there are any people without hope in this world surely they would be here in the prison.

It needs to be recognised too, that the gospel as it is brought in the prison is a very simple message. It is as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 3, milk for those who are immature in faith, and not of great understanding in the scripture. Paul assured the

Philippian jailer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:30,31) The Lord Jesus assured a woman her salvation was sure when he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven...Your faith has saved you, go in peace.” (Luke 7:48,50) In this way, salvation is not difficult to attain. Persons in the prison, who confidently look to Jesus as a Saviour from their sins can be assured of salvation. This is the background thought to the sentence that is somewhat confusing. And whether that message is brought by a Free Reformed, a Baptist or Church of Christ makes no difference to the persons salvation. Therefore whilst the gospel remains only salvation through Jesus Christ alone, ( see also Eph 2:4-9) I find it hard to criticise members of our Church who share this gospel with lost ones in the prisons, be it under an interdenominational banner.

Christians do not remain babes in Christ, but need to progress on to more solid food, as Paul also

describes in that same chapter of Corinthians. (See also Heb 5:12ff) As they progress they come to a firmer understanding of the scriptures, and will need to be made aware that there is a difference in Christian teachings between those who participate in sharing the gospel. These differences can and should be taught in one on one visits with the prisoners. But these are early days yet in ministering to those who are in prison, and at this stage there are only minimal people who are yet asking for additional visits from the prison fellowship staff.

Please note: The article that was published was written by G Bergsma, but had some paragraphs added to it by EIC (with G Bergsma approval) based on a meeting that was conducted in Byford Church. The confusing statement was included by the EIC. Hence the response from EIC.

**E Terpstra**

## A PASTOR'S RESPONSE:

It's true that those who are coming to know Christ need milk (1 Peter 2:2). But Scripture speaks about desiring the “pure” milk of the word. When teaching the basics of the doctrine of God's Word, the Catechism begins already in LD 2 & 3 to teach the total depravity of man. That has to be the point of departure. But already at this necessary point of departure the Arminians (together with the semi-Pelagians of Rome) differ greatly from Reformed. They teach the partial depravity of man. Man is still capable of doing some good.

If you start by laying the wrong foundation, it's hard to correct later, because one's total understanding of doctrine is built on that wrong foundation. (What builder would want to build on a poor foundation, only to have to “fix” the foundation once the building has been erected?)

It's true that these prisoners need to hear is the gospel that “your faith has saved you” (Luke 7:50). But this text (and others like it) is a fundamental text used by the Arminians. They say that Christ offers to do just about everything for everyone. But in order to be saved a person has to apply his own free will and the remaining goodness left in him, and he has to choose to believe. And a person's choice to believe and his

act of faith will ultimately save him. But midway in our Catechism we are taught that faith does not and cannot arise from man himself, because he's incapable of doing any good. Faith has to be worked through the Spirit.

So it's not enough to start with the statement that salvation is through faith alone. The Arminian will agree with that. But at the very beginning it's important to lay the foundation that salvation is through grace alone. And that the Arminian does not agree with. They teach (though they might not acknowledge it) that salvation is the combination largely of God's grace plus a man's own small act of faith and perseverance which arises from his own free will. In this sense, the Arminians are no different that the semi-Pelagians (Roman Catholics).

The question that would decide whether I could rightly participate in Prison Fellowship is whether I could freely lay this good foundation, and if I can build on it rightly with no restrictions. If I was prevented from telling the whole truth right from the beginning and onward, I would not be able to participate.

**Rev van Delden**

## SERVE IN CHRIST

In his letter to the Romans Paul tells us a lot concerning the salvation we have in Christ and also how we are to go about serving him in our daily life. Paul makes it very clear in chapter 10 & 11 what the Romans are doing wrong in their relationship with God. It certainly wasn't that they lacked enthusiasm. No, they were very passionate about serving God, however, their passion was misdirected. They didn't understand the grace of God and as a result were doing all they could to be made right with God particularly by keeping the law. Little did they realise that in the process they were neglecting their real relationship with God and rejecting Christ's sacrifice as being the only grounds of their salvation.

Imagine someone in the church sets up an accountability group, where a group of people who are struggling meet regularly in order to solve issues in each other's life to help us serve God better. Is it scriptural? Don't we grow in Christ by making a commitment to doing what is right and then following through with it? Do we need a support group to help each other do that? Someone might say that it helps people try to live better. Does it?

Unfortunately, often these groups try to achieve a better more godly life through man's own effort. Although it seems like a great idea, the sad fact is that we aren't changed by our promise to God (perhaps to keep the law), but by the promises God makes to us – one such promise being the covenant. Often when we make serious commitments, we live up to them for just a brief period of time, and when we fail our guilt multiplies (more than if we didn't make that commitment). We can then easily become upset that God doesn't do more for us and sometimes might turn to something that helps us dull the

pain somewhat; drugs, alcohol, smokes, food, shopping etc. It's easy (and nice) to make a fresh start and come back feeling good about yourself, but a few weeks later you find when pressures of work and family set in, you'll fall into the same old rut once again. This is because nothing has changed on the inside. This is an outside remedy that is based on our own effort and sacrifice and this just doesn't work.

The worst part of this type of thinking is that it takes our best intentions and uses them against us. People who are trying to be godlier actually become more confined to their sinful desires. Consider Eve in the Garden. She wanted to be more like God. God wanted the same for Eve (in fact God wants this of mankind). No sin there. She sinned in the fact that she relied on her own strength rather than God's to get her there and in doing so put us all under sin.

We tend to think of our lives as a choice between living for Christ, or working for Satan. Paul however saw two different ways we could serve in Christ. The first one makes us work hard to follow God rules and laws, in particular the commandments, that is, man's concerted effort to appease God by his own work. This is man centred, and this way fails every time. Paul gives an example by referring back to his own life. Following all the rules externally he called himself the worst sinner of all time (1 Timothy 1) because of all the hate and anger in his heart. He could outwardly perform all the actions but it only made his problems bigger. He was, after all, killing and persecuting God's own people in God's name (see Acts). Paul was passionate about serving God but he was misguided till God put him back on the right path.

*We don't **earn** Gods love by living up to His rules ...*

*God came to us with His love first.*

It's surprising how many people think (even in Christian circles) that if we do what God wants then He will do good things for us and if we don't, bad things will happen to us. At best this is too simplistic and this kind of thinking makes us self righteous. At its worst, it heaps up guilt. What some may call living to 'New Testament principles,' is just another way of living to the law. These people are still caught up in the process of trying to get God to reward them for doing good.

Is that really the joy of being a Christian? Definitely not! It makes us scared and guilty because we know we always fail.

However Paul saw another way to serve in Christ that was so engaging that it transformed his whole life. God taught him that in Damascus and this is what he is trying to teach in his letter to the Romans (10 & 11). Our commitments and precautions that lead to failures are due to the fact that we don't trust God to take care of us. As Paul began to know God better he could trust God in his daily life. Only by putting your trust in Jesus Christ alone and his sacrifice for you can you experience this kind of freedom.

Won't people use this as an excuse to do whatever feels good and ignore what God really wants? Sure people will, but can you just throw out the truth just because people think they're getting away with it and abusing it? Those who really know who God is (and this is why Paul puts stress on knowing who God is through the Bible) will indeed want to be like Him.

You might say, don't we need a standard? Don't we need rules to follow? I'll ask you the question. Is Christianity just about doing the right thing and maybe, just maybe, God will save us? Maybe

we've been so caught up in trying to serve God just by trying to do the right thing that we've missed the simple relationship that God wants to have with us. God made his covenant with us long before he gave us his law. In our baptism God says, "You are My child," and then promises to care for us and wash us clean through Christ's blood. All we have to do is accept this with a believing heart. We don't **earn** God's love by living up to his rules (after all that is what we were supposed to do in the first place) no, rather God came to us with His love first and as we get to know God we learn how to love God in return and have that life changing relationship where we want to, and do live according to his commandments. Even this we have to admit is the working of the Holy Spirit within us.

Don't we have to walk away from sin to know God? The truth is that as we walk to God we walk away from sin. We'll find that the better we know God and the better our relationship is with him the freer we will be from sin. We can't walk away from sin in our own strength. God will complete every good work in us in His time in His way. It sounds easy, almost too good to be true. I'm not trying to promote an airy fairy faith. The fact is

*"For God so loved the world  
that He gave His only Son that  
whoever believes in Him should  
not perish but have eternal life"*  
(John 3:15)

that salvation and being right with God is indeed a free gift of God's grace. That's why it's called 'good news'. It is the most incredible offer you've ever had or will be made to you... better than winning the lottery or uncovering an inheritance from a long, lost uncle.

This text highlights that we do absolutely nothing for our own salvation. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him **should not perish** but have **eternal life**" (John 3:15)

**Julian Slobe**

## HARDENED HEARTS

The news of this week contained an interesting story of a science experiment that is being conducted in Switzerland. It is an experiment in which scientists are attempting to replicate the “Big Bang” that supposedly occurred approximately 13.7 billion years ago resulting in the presence of all matter. The experiment, which is being conducted about 100 meters under the ground, has been the subject of protests from many people around the world. Some even believe that the scientists would accidentally create a black hole that would destroy the earth. One professor is quoted as saying, “What we’re trying to understand is the first fraction of a second of the history of the universe.”<sup>1</sup> The cost of producing the machine known as the Large Hadron Collider, for the experiment is something in the vicinity of \$6 billion and it is expected to produce mega amounts of data over the next 10-15 years for analysing. Tied into this experiment, scientists are also hoping to discover what has been dubbed as the ‘God particle’, that is, some kind of particle that seems to be everywhere and yet is very elusive, and is believed will shed some light on how particles obtain their mass.

Whilst I would have to be very careful in my judgment about this experiment, for the information is sourced from popular media, and I am not privy to all the details of what this experiment hopes to achieve, what does strike me is the background supposition to this experiment seems to be that the earth came into being as the result of a Big Bang. In this, scientists have rejected the idea that the earth was created, and they believe that it started with a Big Bang. It would not make sense to carry out such a costly experiment over such a long period of time unless you were convinced of your theory.

To the mind of a Christian, such an experiment borders on the line of craziness. Why would scientists research on the principle that the earth started with a Big Bang, when the Bible so beautifully and articulately describes the dawn of creation? It simply can’t be justified to spend so

much money on a hypothesis which is flawed from the outset. I think to explain the logic of the scientists mind, it needs to be recognised that the heart has been hardened.

What is a hardened heart?

The word ‘hardened’ is synonymous with unyielding, stubborn, impervious and cold. It may be likened to an individual who knows of the truth but refuses to accept it as truth. This individual remains impervious to what is accepted as truth by a believer’s heart.

In the New Testament the Lord Jesus (a man that could look into the hearts of all men), also came across hardened hearts. In Mark 8 Jesus rebukes his disciples for their hardness of heart. He says to them, “*Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes do you not see? And having ears do you still not hear? And do you not remember.*” Hardened hearts may be characterised by the inability to see, hear and remember spiritual matters.

The Lord also explained this concept of a hardened heart in His teaching which is related in Matthew 13:10 and following. The disciples approach the Lord and ask why He teaches the people in parables. Jesus’ response indicates that there are two purposes – to enlighten but also to conceal. The enlightenment is received by the disciples and other believers in Jesus, but the concealing is meant for those who have already turned away from the Lord; “*For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.*”

In the Bible there are other examples of people who hardened their heart before the Lord. Consider for example Pharaoh king of Egypt during the time of Moses. His hard and stubborn heart brought much pain and affliction on not just himself, but all of his people. The people of Israel during their journeys in the wilderness also hardened their hearts at times, especially when they began to run out of water and food. Today too we see countless numbers of people who also harden themselves to the message of the gospel. It

<sup>1</sup>

<http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuID=29&ContentID=97144>

is not as if they cannot understand, rather, they refuse to understand and they have no desire to understand.

The flawed basis of the experiment must be seen in this light. Scientists know and understand the story of creation. Even a child can understand that all matter was created by God in six days. But their hardness of heart rejects God as the Creator, choosing instead to experiment on a flawed hypothesis. Indeed their heart is dull, their ears and eyes are closed and they are unable to remember.

To make this article a little more up-building it is prudent to examine the opposite of a hardened heart, which for lack of a better word is a soft heart. This provides positive teaching and direction. It demonstrates what ought to be done. In Matthew 13 Jesus calls people blessed who can perceive and understand his spiritual teaching. Softened hearts may be characterised by eyes that may be opened, ears that are ready to hear, and a mind that is willing to understand.

#### **Eyes that are open:**

It is not difficult to look around to observe the works of God. Time that is spent on the beach, in the forest, on the farm, in your own backyard provides beautiful illustrations of God's work in creation. Two ducks suddenly come forth with a dozen furry ducklings behind them, and we see that God again has given new life. A mother gives birth to a child, and in that too the Lord gives and protects life.

A person who takes the time to look, also recognises God's work in the Church, in the school, in the Eucalypt Home, in the Fair Haven Village on the mission fields and in your own family. In each example there are special things that happen there of which we can conclude that the Lord is working among us.

#### **Ears that are ready to hear:**

The gospel is relayed to people by means of the spoken word. In Church, Sunday by Sunday, that gospel is brought to us. The gospel strengthens, equips, comforts, exhorts, and warns people.

The sense of hearing is acutely used in building each other up in formal discussions as well as

discussions amongst each other. The Bible speaks about being a hand and foot to each other, and this also includes being ready to listen, to empathise, to provide guidance, both to those that are younger and older than ourselves.

#### **Mind that is willing to Understand:**

Jesus asked his disciples, "Do you not remember?" He was referring to the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand and the five thousand people. That was asked in the negative. The positive approach and instruction in this text, is to recall the Lord's mighty works. Revive the memories of these works and appreciate the power by which they were done. In the Old Testament some of the Psalms (such as 78, 90, 95, 105, 106) recall in quite some detail God's wonderful works amongst his people. Christians today need to continue to recall the Lord's great works of the past as well as in their own lives.

Having a mind that is willing to understand also calls Christian people to be able to accept the supernatural. It is important that faith and belief is not limited to what can be seen and heard. Stories of the creation of the world, the virgin birth of Christ, the miracles in the Bible require Christians to believe that such things can occur, even though they are outside of the way we would normally think of them. Accepting these things in faith, allows greater worship and praise to God who can operate in a higher sphere than man kind.

The mind becomes receptive also through meditation and prayer. In many ways meditation is closely linked to recalling those works of the Lord. But it also includes the ability to be discerning. How do the issues that you are confronted with match up with what God's word tells us? In prayer Christians can ask for the grace of God's Spirit to be good discerners, to act wisely, and to be willing and able to understand.

In conclusion it is sad to see hearts that are hardened. It is sad to see so many billions of dollars spent on experiments with a flawed hypothesis. May it be that the Lord gives all of us the grace of a soft heart to be able to reach out to those with hardened hearts.

**Eric Terpstra**

# A DEVOTION: DANIEL

*Originally produced as a speech for a JCCC Senior School Assembly*

Imagine you weren't sitting here. I didn't just read Daniel 1. Your seats aren't real. The buildings aren't real. JCCC isn't real. It doesn't exist.

Imagine you went to a state school. You don't have the teacher's guidance or the Christian environment provided for you. It's hostile territory. Your parents, having no alternative, leave you to fend for yourself in the local state school six hours every day. Your local state school isn't the same as our school. Shady activity abounds such as drug and alcohol abuse as well as many other questionable activities. There's no respect. Everyone does as they see fit. You are left by yourself, maybe with a couple friends to resist in a hostile world. Welcome to Daniel's situation.

Younger than most of us, Daniel is around 14 when he is forcibly taken away from Israel to Babylon. Without his parents; and constantly barraged by humanistic beliefs, Daniel faces his toughest trial. Daniel and his friends are the best and brightest of Judah's youth. They are Judah's future.

Satan always has his eye on the church and in this case his eye is on the youth. He wants to take the church's future away from the church.

At the local state school you are not tortured or screamed at to agree with their man-centred views. This is not the tactic they use. Rather you are slowly persuaded, bit by bit. Slowly you are becoming more accepted and more associated with these people. Before long you're a part of their world. Satan's world.

Would you be strong enough to resist? Without any support could you defend your faith? They say your religion is bigotry. Be multicultural like we are. We accept you. Accept us.

Daniel receives good treatment and good food in Babylon. It all looks so inviting. Slowly Judah's youth are brainwashed. They are removing God and introducing man. Satan has the advantage – Daniel is in his territory as we would be in the public school.

Daniel DOES resist however. He sees the errors. The fine food offered is a part of pagan god rituals and Daniel does not want to take part in eating it. Daniel's companions encourage him to take part. It's not your fault that the meat is sacrificed – no one will condemn you.

However Daniel refuses to eat it out of dedication to the Lord. Daniel has to stand up for his faith. He gets veggies instead of meat. After all, let's be honest, no one wants to make that trade. However all the meat was offered to pagan gods in a ritual and thus Daniel would not partake in it.

How much easier – to make peace – just eat the meat. It is in little steps that we compromise our faith, surrendering our standards step by step. It's a slippery slope. There can be no compromise with those at the local state school. Doing this will compromise our faith and commitment to God.

God rewarded Daniel. He gave him wisdom and knowledge. In verse 21 the war has been decided. Daniel outlived Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar lost, Daniel had won. Today we face a similar battle – we are the soldiers. Us. The youth.

Be aware of the enemy. Know the battlelines and know that compromise brings harm. Christ has assured the complete victory. Our fight involves upholding His name and His work.

Ask yourselves: do you compromise? Are you stepping away? Are you stepping closer? Are you standing strong in your faith?

Your actions show who you are. If you talk in one direction but walk in another are you not hypocritical? Do you litter? Graffiti? Bully others into submission?

Or do you show positive traits. Helpfulness? Not making trouble? Diligence? Punctuality?

Are you a foul smelling stench or are you a sweet smelling aroma?

**Jarrod Hart**

## Te Deum

O God, we praise you, we confess that you alone are Lord,  
the everlasting Father, by the whole of earth adored.  
To you all angels cry aloud, to you the powers on high,  
both cherubim and seraphim, continually do cry:

O holy, holy, holy Lord, whom heavenly hosts obey,  
the world is with the glory filled of your majestic ray.  
Th'apostles' glorious company, and prophets crowned with light,  
with all the white robed martyrs' host, your constant praise recite.

Your holy church throughout the world confesses you to be:  
eternal God and Father, of a boundless majesty;  
your honoured true and only Son, so worthy of our praise;  
the Spirit, our blest Comforter, who dwells in us always.

You are the King of glory, Christ, in faith whom we receive;  
the Father's everlasting Son you are, as we believe.  
When you did take upon yourself to rescue those of earth,  
the Virgin's womb you did not shun nor spurn a humble birth.

When you had conquered death's sharp sting and did its curse undo,  
your Kingdom you did open up to all who trust in you.  
At God's right hand you ever sit beside the throne of grace,  
reflecting in your majesty the Father's glorious face.

We do believe that you will come to judge our every deed;  
we therefore pray you, help your servants in their hour of need.  
For you have with your precious blood redeemed us graciously;  
now make us to be numbered with your saints eternally.

**Aim:**

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

This magazine will encourage its readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. Its basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the Una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

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