

Editorial Foreword



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This edition of *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* is published on request of the Convent of Reformed Churches in South Africa. The Convent wants to express its gratitude to the editorial board of the journal for their willingness to publish this edition and for the help with all the aspects related to a publication of this nature.

The aim of this edition was to pay tribute to the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619) in the 400-year commemoration of the Synod. The nature of the Synod was, in its core, doctrinal; it was an initiative from the Netherlands to give a decision about a matter that plagued the country, namely, free will and predestination. The supporters of Jacob Arminius became known as the Armenians. They supported Arminius's views of free will, which, in its core, attribute the responsibility to humans to contribute to their justification. These views were opposed by the supporters of the reformed doctrine of predestination. It has been decided to focus in this edition mainly on aspects related to doctrinal matters, which include reasons why some delegations attended the Synod and why some delegations did not attend.

However, another focus of the Synod was to produce a standardised version of the church order for use by the reformed churches in the Netherlands. This aspect of the Synod is not as well-known as the part regarding the doctrinal matter about predestination and free will. We are therefore pleased to also include contributions directly related to the church government aspects of this Synod. In his contribution, Barry van Wyk asks the following question: The Canons of Dordt: Inclusive or exclusive? He argues that the Synod of Dordt did not use an inexorable view and application of predestination. Don Sinnema, in turn, asks the following question: Are the Canons of Dordt a true reflection of Calvin's view of predestination? He compares Chapter 1 of the Canons on predestination with Calvin's views in his various writings on predestination. On the basis of this comparison, the conclusion is that the Canons reflect Calvin's views on some points relating to predestination, and not on others. Klaas-Willem de Jong performs an exploratory study of the reception of an anti-hierarchical principle in Dutch reformed-type church orders. This study is based on the *Confessio Gallicana* (1559) which states the anti-hierarchical principle in article 30. He finally concludes that the church order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands continues an old tradition: even though it gives the principle a new scope, a new content and a new shape, it simultaneously uses old phrases and elements. Leon van den Broeke writes about 'The composition of Reformed church orders: A theological, reformed and juridical perspective'. He presents the argument that there is more at stake than the theological nature of the composition of the Dordt Church Order and its successors, namely, their relationship with the Institutes of Justinian. Pieter Coertzen writes about 'Freedom of religion: From the Church Order of Dordt (1619) to South Africa (2018)'. In his contribution, he sets freedom of religion as an integral part of the Reformation of the 16th century and how it was expressed in church and state regulatory instruments in South Africa as it finds expression in the current situation (2018) with a constitution, and the South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms that guarantee freedom of religion for every person in South Africa.

Callie Coetzee reflects on the following question: what can we learn from Dordrecht for a possible authentic *Confessio Africana*? He comes to the conclusion that we learn from Dordt (as well as the drafting of other reformed confessions through the ages) that a true reformed confession is born as a result of the judgement of the churches on a fundamental doctrinal issue. Such a confession must be recognised and accepted by churches internationally because it is in accordance with the Word of God. Piet Strauss writes about 'Church discipline: A fair and just pastoral-ecclesiastical act? Is article 60.3 of the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church a spiritual offspring of the Church Order of Dordt?' He compares article 60.3 of the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church with the Church Order of Dordt to determine whether the former may be regarded as a spiritual offspring of the latter. It is concluded that article 60.3 is indeed scriptural, according to the confessions and determined by the character of the church. It is therefore also an offspring of the Church Order

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of Dordt. Ignatius van Wyk writes about 'Luther and Calvin on predestination: A comparison'. He concludes that both Luther and Calvin understood election as the final word on justification. Karin Maag's theme is 'Impact amid absence: The Synod of Dordt and the French Huguenots'. She investigates the reasons behind the absence of delegates from the French Reformed (Huguenot) churches at the Synod of Dordt, setting the reasons for their absence in the broader political and religious contexts of the times. She argues that the Huguenots had a rather different project in mind (religious reconciliation among reformed Protestants and even possibly between reformed and Lutheran Christians) when they considered

the possibility of an international gathering of reformed theologians.

Henco van der Westhuizen asks the question about 'The Trinity in the Canons of Dordt'? He argues a case that highlights an understanding of the inherent doctrine of the Trinity in the Canons of Dordt. Wim Dreyer writes about Barth on election and the Canons of Dort. Dreyer's contribution is published 50 years after Barth's death and in the year in which reformed churches all over the world commemorate the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) and he reflects on Barth's revisionist understanding of election and his critique of the Canons of Dort.