

The sharp two edged sword

In each case of apostasy, the error and waywardness of God's people was not overcome by human craft or strength, but by 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6:17). This is the sharp two-edged sword which comes from the mouth of the Son of God (Revelation 1:16, 2:16, 19:15,21).

Each of God's confessors listened intently to His word in their day and spoke that word accurately and powerfully. It was this sharp sword which cut through the confusion, corruption and deception of the time.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

Because of God's faithfulness in this way it is possible to speak today of 'the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.' This faith has not only endured down through the ages, but has clarified and strengthened.

What does it mean to be a confessing congregation?

To be a confessing congregation today means to realise that in our proclamation of God's word we have often been wielding a pretty blunt instrument and need, as all confessors in the past, to humble ourselves and turn intently to God's word that we may accurately know its sharpness and rightly handle this great sword of the Spirit.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15

To 'rightly handle the word of truth' means not only having right doctrine, but also, and more importantly, boldly and continuously proclaiming that word of truth and grace to a lost world.

A congregation can join a confessing movement and still not be a confessing congregation. Equally, a congregation may not join such a movement but be a confessing congregation because they are 'rightly handling the word of truth'.

But this is the one to whom I will look:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit
and trembles at my word. Isaiah 66:2

Rod James

September 2007

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4000 years of Apostasy, Confessing and Reformation

Throughout the nearly 4000 years since Abraham, God's people have been prone to veering away from the will, the word and the way of God. This veering away is called 'apostasy'.

Whenever apostasy has occurred God has raised up confessors who have boldly and bravely confessed the will, word and way of the Lord.

In each case God's people have, in retrospect repented of that apostasy and affirmed the confession of the confessors.

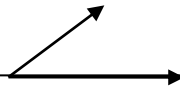
This often repeated scenario of apostasy, confession and reformation has produced wonderful confessions of faith which have been recorded for our benefit. Each historical controversy has resulted, by God's grace, in a reformation and a rich clarification of the truth of God for His people for all time.

See the centre opening of this leaflet for an account of this history of apostasy and confessing and reformation.

4000 YEARS OF APOSTASY, CONFESSING AND REFORMATION

Old Testament period

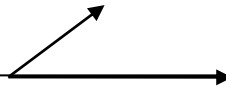
Israel turns to pagan gods and worships idols



The prophets confess the will and the word and the way of God

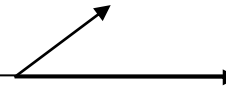
New Testament period

The Judaizers take the churches in Galatia back to legalism



Paul confesses Christ in his letter to the Galatians

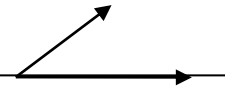
Early Gnostic beliefs deny that Jesus became flesh



John confesses that 'the word became flesh' in John 1 and 1 John 1

300AD

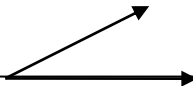
Arius says that Jesus isn't God, just the first created being. Many follow him.



Athanasius and the Nicean Fathers confess Christ as truly God and truly man. The Nicean Creed is written and adopted.

1500AD

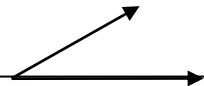
Pope Leo sells salvation for indulgences—i.e, payments to the church



Luther confesses salvation as by grace through faith in Christ, and a Reformation starts.

18th century

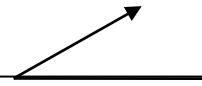
The Church of England languishes in deism and moral corruption abounds in Britain



The Wesleys, Whitefield and others confess Christ in the streets and the nation amends

1930s

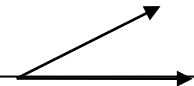
The Protestant churches in Germany support Hitler



The Confessing Church confesses "Jesus is Lord, which means that Hitler is not."

21st century

The Protestant churches of the Western world decline under liberal theology



A confessing movement develops in every Protestant church in the Western world