

EDITORIAL

Reformed theology in South Africa, as elsewhere, is in the midst of a decade or so of widespread commemoration. In 2009 Reformed communities worldwide commemorated the 500th anniversary of the birth of the 16th century Reformer, John Calvin. This was followed in 2011 by remembering the 450th anniversary of the Belgic Confession. And 2017 will mark the official year for concluding the commemorations of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. This publication is about yet another important date in Reformed memory: the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism, celebrated in 2013.

From the examples listed above it is clear that commemoration can take on a variety of forms. It can focus on important figures (such as John Calvin), important movements or events (such as the 16th century Reformation movements), and also important documents (such as the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism). Over and above this array of commemorated figures, events and documents, commemoration itself can be said to take on different forms. It can be, for some, a time for celebration, while, for others, a time of mourning. This said, commemoration is built on the assumption that revisiting (something from) the past is important.

That we remember and how we remember the past and the figures, movements and documents that it brought forth are, therefore, two important notions to consider. Memory is always a capability haunted by its own inabilities; a human faculty taunted by its own untrustworthiness. Remembering some things necessarily imply that we forget others, for memory is by definition vulnerable and selective. Considering that we remember certain events, figures or documents is therefore a confrontation with our own fragile memory and forgetfulness. And because of the impossibility of overcoming the selective nature of memory, we have a responsibility to make a special effort with how we remember the past.

These are questions that we took into account as we dealt with what is presented here under the heading *Remembering the Heidelberg Catechism in Southern Africa today*. In 2013 a variety of commemorative events were held in South Africa, including international conferences and seminars in Pretoria, Bloemfontein and Stellenbosch. What we present here is a selection of articles resulting from these events. Commemorating the Heidelberg Catechism in Southern Africa is a way of consciously recognising and grappling with the influence of Reformed theology in African Christianity, and also claiming the active role that Southern Africa is playing in continuously defining what it means to be Reformed in conversation with other Reformed scholars. Accordingly, the papers

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included here represent voices from South Africa, Malawi, the United States, the Netherlands, and Germany, and are presented under three main headings: 1) On remembering, confessing and historical origins, 2) On theological and ethical themes, and 3) On reception and relevance.

By publishing these articles we also invite others to critically engage with the fact that we commemorated the Heidelberg Catechism and with how it has been done. It is research that opens itself for second-order reflection: if taken as a sample of memory work in South Africa in 2013, what does it say about the time, place and memory-agents of which it is representative? Given the ongoing task, at the heart of Reformed identity, of interpreting and embodying confessions anew, we hope that the articles brought together in this publication provide more insight into the (Reformed) past and contribute to the ever-evolving understanding of what it means to belong to a confessing tradition.

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