

# **Form of Subscription**

**RCNZ**

## Form of Subscription

We, the undersigned, office bearers of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, do hereby, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that the whole system of doctrine as taught in the Belgic and Westminster Confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, does fully agree with the Word of God.

We therefore promise to teach diligently and to defend faithfully the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching or writing.

We declare moreover that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors.

And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the session, presbytery or synod, that the same may be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the session, presbytery or synod, under penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

Furthermore, if at any time the session, presbytery or synod may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular doctrine of any of the afore mentioned standards, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves however the right of appeal in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the session or the presbytery, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

# Guidelines to the Form of Subscription

Synod 1977 (Acts 1977, Art. 76.6) decided that the following should be appended to the Form of Subscription. Previously synod 1971 (Acts 1971, Art. 45) had declared that subscription by office bearers is understood in the following way:

- a. That the person making subscription subscribes to *all* the doctrines set forth in the confessions, as being doctrines which are the teaching of the Word of God;
- b. That the subscriber so subscribes to all these doctrines, be they understood in the eyes of men as being *major or minor* doctrines of the Christian faith, without any reservation on his part, and that he confesses these doctrines to be his own understanding of the teaching of the Word of God, desires to maintain such, and rejects all other teachings which would contradict the same;
- c. That the subscriber *does not* by his subscription declare that the statements of these doctrines are formulated in the best manner, or with the use of the best words, or that the confessional standards of our denomination cover *all* the teaching of the Scriptures on the matters confessed, or that every teaching of Scripture is dealt with by the confessional standards, or that the confessional standards of our denomination refute all the heresies that now exist (Report 17 section 2, Acts 1969, p. 79 slightly amended);
- d. That only the doctrines intentionally conveyed are binding and not such allusions, or incidental remarks, or propositions which can be derived from the confessions are binding. Nevertheless no one is free ultimately to decide for himself or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine contained in the standards. If such a question should arise the Form of Subscription itself specifies quite clearly that it is the decision of the court of the church that shall be sought, reached and acquiesced in, in every case.