

Book Review

The Baptism Form

The Reformed Baptism Form —A Commentary.

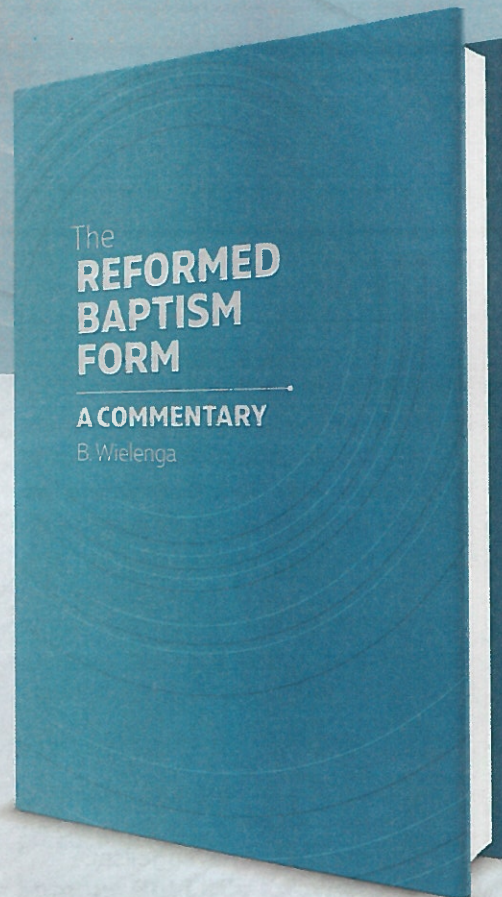
By Wielenga, Bastiaan
Jenison, MI: Reformed Free
Publishing Association, 2016
425 pp., hardcover.

Reviewed by Rev. J. Julien.

Anyone who reads this fine volume will never hear the historic Form for the Baptism of Infants (Form 1) the same again. Until now this book has been available only for those who read Dutch. The first edition appeared in 1906 and a second in 1920. It was written because of the various competing views of the covenant and baptism in the Dutch churches in that day.

As a son of the Afscheiding and a student of Herman Bavinck, Wielenga believed this book was necessary. Though he also looked up to Abraham Kuyper, he was not a fan of his presumptive regeneration.

Wielenga wrote about these various views and carefully and lovingly pointed out what he saw in the form for baptism. He began by explaining why there was a form for baptism. He points out that the Dutch churches saw the liturgical forms as secondary confessions—just as this reviewer learned in seminary. For the uninitiated, there is quite a history to



Then Wielenga proceeds meticulously to go through each part of the form: baptism in general, infant baptism, the admonition to the parents, and the two prayers. The various views of covenant and baptism are referred to as they relate to the form.

The translation was done by the late Annemie Godbehere of France. Professor David Engelsma edited the manuscript and placed in several footnotes about the view of the Protestant Reformed churches which developed after the publication date (though his view was known among some of the Afscheiding).

This is not a deep theological treatise. It was written for the people in the pew. Anyone who reads this volume will be greatly benefited. There are times when it is written in almost devotional style.

In many ways the reader's attention will be called to see things we may have overlooked. Do you realize that the form says that we are "admonished to loathe ourselves, humble ourselves before God"? Wielenga admonishes ministers to read the prayers—and the form—with some slowness and to use the prayers as written because they are all part of the teaching of baptism. Though they are the work of men we must use these prayers and not push them aside. He quotes Kuyper: "A minister who regards his spontaneous prayer as rather more beautiful and therefore rattles off the prayer of the form merely out of duty profanes the prayer" (196).

Having read this volume, this reviewer asks if and when we will be able to read in English the commentary Wielenga wrote on the Form for the Lord's Supper.

Highly recommended.

Rev. Jerome M. Julien

is a retired pastor and is a