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SECOND EDITION

# Quest of Faith

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU CONFESS

The background of the cover is an aerial photograph of a road and a river. The road is on the left, and the river is on the right, both curving away from the viewer. A white dashed line runs down the center of the road. Overlaid on the top half of the image is a network diagram consisting of white circles connected by dashed lines, with some arrows indicating direction. The title 'Quest of Faith' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, and the subtitle 'UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU CONFESS' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it.

ROBERT DE MOOR

# Quest of Faith

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU CONFESS

ROBERT DE MOOR



Grand Rapids, Michigan

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

De Moor, Robert. 1950-  
Quest of Faith: understanding what you confess/Robert De Moor.  
p. cm.  
1. Reformed Church—Doctrines—Miscellanea. 2. Reformed Church—  
Catechisms. I. Title.  
BX9422.2.D45 1989  
238'.57—dc20

89-15769  
CIP

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-1-59255-431-7

*To Margo, my dear partner on this journey of faith*

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# Introduction

*This brief overview of Reformed teachings is intended primarily for anyone of high school age or above who wants to “think through” and deepen his or her faith.*

## AUDIENCE

*Quest of Faith* is especially aimed at those about to profess their faith. Many will read and discuss this book as part of a pre-profession or pastor’s class. Others will use it to guide their personal study and reflection as they prepare to take the next step in their faith journey.

The quests that appear on these pages are questions that might be asked during a profession of faith interview. The suggested answers are not the only “right” answers, but they should promote thinking and talking about the questions and searching for one’s own answers.

*Quest of Faith* is also an excellent resource for council members who are about to participate in a profession of faith interview. It will help them ask the kinds of questions that elicit knowledgeable and sincere responses.

However, *Quest of Faith* needn’t be used exclusively in “profession of faith” settings. Churches might choose to present this book to inquirers about the Reformed faith; they’ll appreciate its clear format and simple explanations. Persons from non-Reformed traditions who have recently joined the church will find *Quest of Faith* a useful guide to the beliefs of their new congregation and denomination. And adult church school classes will profit from taking a deeper look at their faith as they discuss many of the questions raised in this book.

## FORMAT

The sixty-five quests in this book were selected not only to prepare persons to profess their faith but also to deepen their insights and faith-responses to Reformed Christianity. Each quest offers several possible answers for personal reflection or for discussion. The answers conclude with “The Church Says,” an example of how the church’s creeds, confessions, and other formal statements of faith have responded to each question. Most of the selections are taken from the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Belgic Confession; several come from *Our World Belongs to God*, a contemporary testimony of faith of the Christian Reformed Church, and *Our Song of Hope*, a contemporary confession of faith from the Reformed Church in America.

“The Church Says” is followed by “Hotseat Questions,” which are designed to stimulate readers beyond standard answers and pat phrases to deeper, personal responses. An additional section, “Check It Out,” provides a sample of Bible references for further study. Participants may want to use these references for personal devotions during the week.

## GROUP SESSIONS

*Quest of Faith* has a flexible format that can be adapted to meet the needs of a variety of classes and groups. Its sixty-five quests are divided into seven major topics, each with ten quests (except for the final chapter, which has five quests). Most classes using the material will probably meet seven times (ten quests per session); groups preferring a slower pace can take five quests per week, for thirteen sessions; groups desiring an in-depth study could take only one or two quests per week, for up to a full year of weekly sessions.

Leaders should adapt the material to the interests and abilities of participants. Pre-profession or confirmation participants should not be left with the impression that they must have an instant answer to all sixty-five quests; the intent is for the participants to think through their faith, not memorize it. Assignments of quests to be read at home should be reasonable for all participants.

Leaders should select questions for discussion that are most important and interesting for participants. Questions that participants have on the material they’ve read should get top priority. “Hotseat Questions,” too, should provoke considerable reflection and discussion.

Leaders will find it useful to frequently ask participants to answer questions in their own words. For variety, leaders may occasionally want to assign a participant to prepare thoroughly on just a single quest from the chapter, then present that quest to the group for discussion. Statements from the creeds and confessions can be used to summarize a given quest.

In some cases, especially when working with younger participants, leaders may want to provide one-on-one tutoring, perhaps not requiring participants to read the textbook but rather using it as a leader’s resource to help them frame questions for discussion.

We think *Quest of Faith* is flexible enough to satisfy a variety of audiences and purposes. We hope that studying and discussing these questions and answers will help all readers to speak more clearly and honestly of the hope they have in Christ.

# From the Beginning

(Quests 1-10)

- 1 Revelation
- 2 God
- 3 Creation
- 4 Humanity's Purpose
- 5 Providence
- 6 Human Choice
- 7 Rationalizing Sin
- 8 Sin's Effect
- 9 God's Judgment
- 10 Depravity's Extent

QUEST

1

## How do you know God is real in your life?

*If God is not real, making profession of faith is just a big joke. And if God does exist but ignores us, we would be foolish to commit our lives to him; we might as well pack in all the fun we can before death robs us of everything. Only if we're sure that God lives for us will it make sense for us to live for God.*

### *Some Possible Answers*

**I feel God's nearness in worship, prayer, or song.** God often makes us draw close through experiences that “grab” us. For example, a song may strike a deep chord in our hearts, making our spirits soar with God's. But because our feelings can lead us astray, this very real way of experiencing God cannot be the only way

**I see God in the wonders of the universe and the beauty of a rose.** We understand so much about artists from their art. Similarly God shows us much about himself through creation. Swirling galaxies show God's power, the elegant rose God's skill. But this important way of experiencing God cannot be the only way we know him. Unless we know God more personally, we will overlook his telltale signature on the things our Creator has made.

**Looking back, I see how God guides my life.** Despite the setbacks, our lives may show God's guiding hand. Through everything we receive—home, friends, experiences, even bad times—we see God works in us and for us. We glimpse how God fits together the pieces of our lives. Of course, we cannot depend fully on this way of knowing God either. Life may throw us a curveball. Things may happen to us that we will never understand this side of heaven. Especially in those times we need a surer way of knowing we have a God who cares.

**My parents taught me about God.** God uses parents as a major way of telling us about himself. But this answer begs another question: Where do parents get this knowledge?

**God is revealed through the Bible.** The Bible is the clearest and most reliable way in which God speaks to us. Through many witnesses it tells us the great things only the Almighty could have done. By telling us God sacrificed his Son and raised him from the dead, the Bible assures us of two things: First, God lives. Only God could raise Jesus from the dead. Second, God cares. He gave us his only Son so that we may live with him forever. That fact makes our lives eternally important.

*The Church Says*

We know God by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe,  
since that universe is before our eyes

like a beautiful book

in which all creatures,  
great and small,  
are as letters

to make us ponder  
the invisible things of God:

his eternal power

and his divinity,

as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20.

All these things are enough to convict men

and to leave them without excuse.

Second, he makes himself known to us more openly

by his holy and divine Word,

as much as we need in this life,

for his glory

and for the salvation of his own.

*(Belgic Confession Article 2)*

*Hotseat Question*

When do you pay attention to God: when God *shouts* or when he whispers?

*Check It Out*

Psalm 19:1-7; Romans 1:18-23; 2 Peter 1:12-21