

The Standard Bearer

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Faith Without Works

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
James 2:14-17

There was a problem in the early Christian church of showing respect of persons. To have respect of persons is to show favoritism to some and discriminate against others on the basis of earthly, natural considerations. The early church was doing this by favoring the rich that came into their assembly and despising the poor.

James points out that this is contrary to the very nature of God's royal law that the saints claimed to uphold. The law requires that we love our neighbor. This love is a love that manifests itself in acts of mercy and kindness

to those in need. And it is a love that does not show respect of persons.

In that context James proceeds to show that the works of love and mercy required by the law are the product of a true and living faith in Jesus Christ. A faith that does not produce works of mercy is not living but dead. And a dead faith is of no profit to us. The implication is that we must possess a living faith, a living faith that joins us to Jesus Christ and that shows itself to be so by producing works of mercy. That faith alone will profit us.



James describes a man who says that he has faith.

What is true, saving faith?

Faith is knowledge. It is knowledge of the Scriptures, which are God's revelation to us about Himself, our sin, and the way of salvation in Jesus Christ. And faith is certain knowledge whereby we hold for truth all that God has revealed in His Word. To know the Scriptures but reject them as truth is not faith but unbelief. But there is more. True, saving faith is more than just intellectual knowledge and acceptance of the teachings of Scripture. It is a *spiritual* knowledge. It is knowledge that springs from a heart that is born again by grace. It is, therefore, a knowledge that

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embraces the truths of God in Scripture, and thus embraces the living God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

In that connection, faith is also trust and confidence. Knowing God in Jesus Christ as Savior, the believer also trusts God. In this trust he relies upon God and the works of God in Jesus Christ for all his salvation and needs.

Now, James speaks of a man who says that he has faith. James is describing a man of the church, who confesses that he knows his sin and knows the God of Scripture as the God of his salvation in Jesus Christ. He also confesses that all his trust and confidence is in Jesus Christ alone. He is saved by grace and not by works. This is a confession made not just once by making confession of his faith in the assembly of the church, but repeatedly.

James goes on to describe this man who says he has faith by pointing out that he does not have works. For all his talk about his faith, his life is noticeably absent of works of mercy for those in need.

James illustrates this by calling our attention to a brother or a sister who is “naked, and destitute of daily food.” “Naked” need not to be taken absolutely, but of one who has not enough to wear. It describes one with inadequate clothing. “Destitute of daily food” means not enough to eat. The professed believer, on the one hand, wishes this destitute brother and sister well. “Go in peace,” he says. This was a common Jewish farewell, expressing that one find and have peace of heart and soul as he leaves. “Be warmed and filled,” he adds. This is close to our expression, “Take care of yourself; look out for yourself.” But for all his warm words this confessed believer does not give the poor brother or sister that which is needful for the body. He provides neither clothing nor food—only well wishes.

James’ evaluation of such a person in the church is that he has not works.

What is striking is that James is not talking about a vile man in the community, whose life is filled with evil, but of a man in the church, whose life appears to be full of good works. He attends church regularly and keeps the Sabbath. He leads his family in daily worship in the

home. He is much involved in the life and fellowship of the church. He is a defender of the faith against false teaching. He avoids worldly amusements.

Yet James says that by neglecting to give help to the poor, he is a person that does not have works.

This is in keeping with what James has already taught us in this chapter. The standard of works is the royal law of God, the heart of which is that we love God and the neighbor as ourselves. Since love is the heart of the

law, everything that the law requires of us must be a work of love. Our church attendance, our family worship, our life in the church, our defending the faith must all arise out of a true love of God and our neighbor. Should that love be lacking, all our works fall short. They may be good in the sight of man, but they are not good in the sight of God. In the eyes of God, who alone knows the heart, such

works are sinful. And this love that God requires as the great commandment of His law is a love that shows itself in works of mercy to those in need, and works of mercy without respect of persons. This ultimately is the test whether you have the love required by God’s royal law.

And so it is that those who do not show mercy to the needy have not works. For they do not have love—all their “works” are devoid of love.

Do you have this love?



A person who has faith but does not have works has a dead faith that profits nothing.

Remember the illustration of the man who expresses the greatest concern for the brother in need but does nothing to alleviate his need. James asks, “What does it profit?” That is, what do well wishes without providing food and clothing profit the naked brother, destitute of food? The answer is obvious, “It profits him nothing!” A naked brother, destitute of food is profited nothing by mere well wishes.

“Even so [in the same manner] faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

James is making a comparison. He is comparing the

*Yet James says that
by neglecting to give help
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have works.*

expression of well wishes to the poor without helping them to a faith that has not works. And James indicates that they are both dead and thus profit nothing.

Well wishes to the poor without help are dead. They are lifeless in that they are empty, hollow, and insincere. And because they are dead, they produce nothing worthwhile. They profit the poor nothing.

Even so a faith that has not works is dead. Such faith is dead in that it is lifeless, empty, hollow, and fake. And therefore, such a faith does not produce anything that profits the one who has and confesses it.

James indicates more clearly the profitless character of a dead faith.

What does it profit though a man say he has faith, and has not works? can faith save him? This is obviously a rhetorical question. It is an emphatic way of saying that a dead faith that does not produce good works cannot save, and therefore is of no profit to the man who has it. Such a faith does not bring one the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, peace with God, or eternal life with God. Those who have faith without works will perish eternally in their sins.

What a profitless faith!

The clear implication is that the only faith that can save us and is therefore of any profit to us is a living faith that produces works.

What explains this?

Some claim that such a living faith saves us because the good works it produces save us. But this is the age-old error of works-righteousness that the Scriptures throughout condemn.

Rather, a faith that produces good works saves us because it is a living faith that unites us to Jesus Christ.

All our salvation is in Jesus Christ. By His perfect sacrifice on the cross Jesus earned full and free salvation for all that the Father had given Him. In turn, God has bestowed all the blessings of this salvation upon Jesus Christ at His exaltation. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," writes the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:3, "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

We receive and enjoy this salvation by faith alone. Faith is our spiritual union to Jesus Christ. By faith we know Him as our Lord and Savior. By faith we cling to

Him and rely upon Him for all our salvation. And so it is that by faith we are joined to Christ, even as a branch is joined to the tree that gives it life.

And the inevitable fruit of such a true and living faith is works. What transformation takes place in those that are joined to Christ by faith! The salvation they receive from the Fount of all blessings fills their

hearts with love for their God and for their neighbor. This love leads them to frequent the house of God to worship and praise Him, to worship the Lord in their homes, to be involved in the life and fellowship of the church, to defend the faith against false teachings, and to avoid worldly amusements. And it also leads them to show mercy to the brother or sister in the church who is naked and hungry. It leads them to do more than extend warm wishes. It leads them to provide food and clothing as they are able, without respect of persons.

This then is the saving profit of a faith that produces works. It is the kind of faith that joins one to Christ, the Fount of all blessing and salvation.



The conclusion of all this is simple.


Let us not be content with a dead faith whose works are devoid of love for the Lord and for the neighbor. Such a faith is fraudulent, fake, and of no profit.

Let us rather cultivate in our own lives and in the lives of our children and fellow saints a true faith that joins us to Jesus Christ and produces works of love and mercy.

We can possess and grow in such a faith by faithful use of the Word and sacraments, by prayer and seeking the fellowship of the saints.

In that faith we will profit.

We will profit in all the blessings of salvation.

We will also profit those around us. 

*This ultimately is
the test whether you have
the love required
by God's royal law.*

What It Means to Be Reformed (11)

Reformed is being “Confessional”

The church that is Reformed is also a *confessional* church. That is, the church officially embraces, genuinely believes, and actively teaches the Reformed confessions in her life. For the PRCA, these creeds are the Three Forms of Unity and the ancient ecumenical creeds in these confessions.¹

We have shown so far that to be Reformed is to be *Covenantal*, to be *Calvinistic*, and to have a proper view of the *Church*. The fourth “C” I am proposing is *Confessional*. That is, if a person properly identifies himself as Reformed, he will be a member, not of *any* church, but of a *confessional* church. The Reformed Christian sees the essential necessity of creeds.

Every church in the world holds creeds. That is, every church in the world is confessional... from a certain point of view. So the important questions that help identify a *Reformed* church are 1) whether her

creeds and confessions are written and public (thus, open to examination by members and prospective members), and 2) whether they are Reformation creeds.

—WIMTBR—
COVENANTAL
CALVINISTIC
CHURCH
CONFESSIONAL
CHRISTIAN LIFE

No creed but Christ?

How can it be said, you may ask, that all churches have creeds, when the motto of many churches is an emphatic: “We have no creed but Christ!”? First, the answer is easy. The six-word statement “We have no creed but Christ” is itself a creed! It is a statement of what that church believes. If one truly had “no creed,” he would make absolutely no statement of belief except what the Bible says, quoting it, one would suppose, word for word; or simply saying “Christ” and giving no explanation of what saying “Christ” means. Second, and more important, every church has creeds in that all churches have “stands” on issues of faith or life. For various reasons they do not have these “stands” written down for you to examine and test with Scripture. But they all have such stands, which are their “we believe.”

Ask any preacher: Does your church baptize babies? His answer will be what they believe about baptizing infants—their “creed.” Does your church allow women to preach? The answer is a creed: “We believe women may (or may not) preach.” Does your church preach sovereign, unconditional, gracious election unto everlasting salvation; and does it teach the accompanying doctrine of sovereign, righteous reprobation? The answer will be their creed about predestination. So your follow-up question must be: “Will you put that answer in writing so that we can make a decision about joining your church without worshipping here for five years to find out what you believe in all these areas?” Honesty would require churches to put their creed in *writing*. But every church has creeds.

The Right Creeds

A Reformed church has Reformed creeds. For the Protestant Reformed Churches, and for most churches with the name “Reformed,” these creeds are the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of the Synod of Dordt, and the ancient ecumenical creeds. The PRC have recognized that there are other Reformed churches coming out of the Calvinistic Reformation, which have a different history and, because of that different his-

¹ I use the words creeds and confessions interchangeably here. Creed, from the Latin *credo*, means “I believe,” the words with which many of the articles in the Belgic Confession begin. “Confession,” also from the Latin, does not mean “to admit,” and especially not “to admit sin,” but “to declare adherence to.” The Belgic Confession’s articles sometimes begin, “We confess,” or “We believe and confess.”

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2015, p. 77.

tory, embrace different Reformed creeds—the Westminster Confessions or Standards. The PRC has expressed, with a few exceptions or clarifications, that Westminster’s creedal system is a faithful expression of Reformed faith and life.¹

The churches that embrace these creeds are fully convinced that they are nothing more than what the Bible itself teaches, that they accurately and fully express the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation, and are the rich and ripe fruit of the Spirit’s work to lead the church into all truth. As our members vow when they confess their faith, the creeds are part of the “true and complete doctrine of our salvation.”

Necessary for Survival

Officially embracing, genuinely believing, and actively teaching creeds is the only way for a church to survive as a true church in the world. It is also true that the only way *creeds* can survive is by the church, the “pillar and ground of the truth.” The church as institute is needed to maintain the creeds.

But, *vice versa*, the church needs *creeds* in order for her to survive as a truth-speaking church. What will guard the church from each

¹ The PRC’s decision to this effect can be found in the *Acts of Synod*, 1985: 25, 30. And, we say “system” because the Westminster Standards include a Larger Catechism, a Shorter Catechism, a Confession of Faith, a Form of Church Government and a Directory for Public Worship. The PRCAs “creedal system” includes the Church Order of Dordt and what we have described as our “minor confessions”—the liturgical forms for Baptism and the Lord’s Supper and a few others.

new pastor’s own take on the Bible? What will stop a preacher from taking the Baptist line on infants, or expressing the egalitarian view on women’s rule, or singing the Arminian tune on predestination? Taking a cue from Abraham Kuyper, who once said that a written *liturgy* is needed to protect the church from her pastor, we could say that *confessions* are needed to protect the church from her pastor. So when a new pastor appears, a Reformed consistory will meet him, as it were, creeds in hand, and say, “Within these parameters and not outside them! And there is the door if you so much as hint at disagreement with them.” (That’s a very rough, but fairly accurate paraphrase of the Formula of Subscription.)

“...from history’s light”

Being creedal is the way for God’s church to be faithful to history. And faithful to history we must be. We—the Christian church, the church of Jesus Christ—are nothing without our history. We have sung for generations that children must learn “from history’s light.” Psalm 78 is only one of the many Psalms that bind us to teach history—another good reason to sing the Psalms, also the Psalms that recite history at quite some length. The church’s children ought “ne’er, like their fathers, to turn from His way.” So, “The wonderful story our fathers made known to children succeeding by us must be shown.” And one fundamental link for us to the past is the confessions—officially embraced, genuinely believed, actively taught.

The creeds are the church’s stan-

dards, the church’s official expression of how she understands—and always *has* understood—the Bible. When we teach our children Bible truth and give them, for example, *our* understanding of the history of Jacob and Esau, we quickly show them that this is the church’s historic understanding of that history, clearly expressed in the creeds—in this case, the Canons of Dordt as these Canons expound the humbling truth of double predestination.

Not about “Big Men”

A Reformed church’s grounding in history, therefore, is primarily her officially adopted *creeds*. This needs emphasis today because from reading theology one might get the impression that it is not the churches’ creeds that determine orthodoxy, but this or that larger-than-life man who does. Quoting one or three of these big men is the “end of all strife.” If Calvin, or Luther, or (these days) Herman Bavinck, or (for PRC members) Herman Hoeksema, says so, it must be so. Now this paragraph is no criticism of the church’s heavyweights whom God raised up to do marvelous things for the church. It’s only to call us to put these theologians in their right place in our thinking and in our “doing theology.”

Give me one clear creedal statement against five of these big men, and I must take the creed. Of course, you will not likely find five heavyweights against the creeds, but if that would happen, we go with the creeds. They are that weighty for Reformed Christians. In that way we work with the Scripture.

Which means that a good Reformed/Reformation study Bible will not be quoting men as much as it will quote the Reformed creeds.

To make this as clear as possible: If Herman Bavinck could be found to say that God's love for Jacob and hatred of Esau had nothing to do with their eternal salvation (such will not be discovered), I would be sorely disappointed, but not moved. For the Reformed *creeds* teach differently—God loved Jacob savingly, and hated Esau with a hatred that condemned him eternally.

Creeds honestly taught

Which brings up my last point here.

There is a distressing dishonesty out and about these days. Dishonesty must always be exposed. The father of lies never rests. One way he deceives people is by the dishonesty of completely redefining terms to fool the gullible into believing, for example, that a man believes justification just because he uses the term, and embraces the truth of election just because he says election. But then he proceeds to say that justification is not legal, or that election is not a choice unto salvation.

But redefinition of terms is not—at least not exactly—the dishonesty I refer to now. Another way the


father of lies deceives, and deceives those even more gullible, is to refer to the Reformed *confessions* but brazenly deny the heart of what they teach. And what I read last week in a “Reformed” periodical did just that. It was so brazen that it would not be inaccurate to compare what it did to a man holding a gun to your head and saying, with a straight face, “I love you.”

In the magazine's rubric entitled (of all things) “Reformed Matters,” the opening paragraph says, “For many of us, the doctrine of election means that God has chosen a certain number of people to be saved” and “a certain number of people to be damned.” The latter, he qualifies saying, “depending on how you interpret the Canons of Dort.” In this way, with an impressive reference to the venerable Canons, but with the added twist that makes you imagine that there are different (all legitimate) ways to interpret the Canons, the author proceeds to teach that the doctrine of election is not “unto salvation” but “unto service,” which are my words in quotes, not his. But such is the author's teaching. “The trouble is that we tend to think of election” in terms of Romans 9-11, and understand election as the church always—“from Augustine to Calvin”—understood these chapters.

Instead, we must think of election as the “ever-widening embrace of God's love.” Election is God's choice of some, not others, to be messengers of the gospel to the world.

So this magazine, which calls itself Reformed and claims rights to that title with reference to the Reformed creeds, denies the very essence of what the Reformed fathers took seven months (November, 1618 to April, 1619) to formulate as they overthrew the Arminians. And the author sweeps aside (with an appeal, by the way, to the writings of a “big man” who did not claim to be Reformed) what has been the official position of Reformed churches regarding election for the last 400 years.

The church must thoroughly educate her children in the confessions, to know and to love the Christ revealed in them, and then require the children to make a public vow that they believe *these confessions* to be the “true and perfect doctrine of salvation.” If she does this, and God blesses that instruction, those children will rise up in holy horror before such an author, and show him the door.

Then God will use the church's children—now grown to be fathers and mothers and leaders in the church—to preserve their Reformed church in Reformed truth until the Lord returns. 

LETTERS

Retirement of Ministers

I am writing in response to the editorial of Professor Dykstra in the June issue of the *Standard Bearer*. In this editorial, Professor Dykstra states that, given a goodly number of graduates from the seminary in a couple of years, Lord willing, and very few openings in the

churches, “one option is to push ministers in their low to mid-sixties into early retirement? (Vol. 91, No. 17, 390).

...The church order makes no provision for early retirement of ministers. They may seek emeritation when they reach a point in their lives when they can no longer do their work for health reasons or because they reach

an age when they can no longer function in the office of minister. There is no early retirement clause anywhere in the church order for the clergy. Being a pastor and teacher in the churches is, or at least has been, a lifelong calling.

...The people of God have always believed the scriptural assessment that “the fields are white with harvest, but the laborers are few.” ...The Scriptures say nearly nothing about retirement, let alone early retirement, and do not address the early retirement of ministers.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric J. Ophoff
Crete PRC

RESPONSE:

Brother Ophoff and I do not disagree on this. In the editorial from which brother Ophoff quotes I was reflecting on the Synod of 2015, and encouraging the churches to view the large class of seminarians as a God-given opportunity for the PRC to call more missionaries. Ministers ought not retire so long as they can properly do the work (and we all recognize that judgments need to be made in regard to a man’s labor). My concern is that pressure may be put on the older ministers to ask for emeritation earlier than they otherwise would, in order to make room for seminary graduates.

—RJD

About Vaccinations

The recent article that appeared in the *Standard Bearer* regarding vaccines raises important spiritual and moral questions that need to be examined more closely. For the last year I have been studying this issue in the medical and scientific literature. Although the author’s claims are in line with the popular and widely held beliefs of the day, many of his claims are questionable and fall apart upon examination and application of critical thinking.

If vaccination is merely a matter of personal choice, then perhaps it does not matter whether we examine these claims and beliefs. However, if, as the author suggests, vaccination is a matter of obedience to the command of God to love the neighbor, then a closer look is absolutely necessary. Further, this topic raises other spiritual questions that urgently need answering.

One such question is the issue of whether or not vac-

cines contain aborted fetal tissue. The author says in regard to this: “This simply is not true.” But immediately following this statement he explains that it is, in fact, true. A simple Internet search of fetal cell lines currently in research or production for vaccine use yields evidence that this practice is on-going with new and “improved” cell lines being created now. To verify this, simply do a Google search of these terms: WALVAX 2, PER-C6, HEK293. These are aborted babies—more than the two the author mentions—that are being harvested for vaccine production. They are not the only lines, but merely examples of a few.

Another problem with the article is the claim that “herd immunity” can be achieved with vaccination. If we are going to claim that vaccination is a matter of loving the neighbor, then we need to understand what “herd immunity” is. There is a difference between the immune protection afforded by natural infection and the weak, temporary “immunity” provided by a vaccine. We know vaccines are temporary because we have been required to have boosters. Because vaccine-induced antibodies are temporary, “herd immunity” cannot be achieved through inoculation, since many of the “herd” at any given time are in need of boosters.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and what we know about the workings of our complex immune system is only a small beginning. The obvious problem with the theory of vaccination is that it is based on an extremely oversimplified view of how the process was designed to work. A proper understanding of the physical, spiritual, and moral implications of attempting to eradicate the effects of sin with vaccination requires more than a cursory glance at these issues.

Based on the biblical principle of Proverbs 18:13, we are cautioned of the folly of “answering” a matter before “hearing” it.... May we strive to examine these issues with wisdom, balance, and discernment. A starting place would be on YouTube with the lectures of Dr. Suzanne Humphries.

Amy Bauer,
Peace PRC

[This is] in response to your good article “A Christian Doctor’s Perspective on Vaccines,” in the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 92, No. 1, 11.

...In the late 80s and early 90s I was a prisoner...[and] received a flu shot. Within a couple of hours I was all but unconscious with a very high fever that didn't break for six days.... Soon thereafter it was discovered that I had developed the chronic, insidious autoimmune disorder hypothyroidism, as well as an adrenal gland problem that tormented me for years. To this day, decades later, I don't feel that I've ever fully recovered from the effects of that flu shot—and do struggle very greatly every day of my life.

I will mention that God meant it for good, for through the many years of dreadful process He was reforming me to His Word and to the Protestant Reformed distinctives, faith, and tradition that I love.

...Perhaps I got a bad shot when most are beneficial.

...My experience causes me to fear about these for the families of the saints, and I felt compelled to share from many years of increased hardship that I feel strongly and certainly can be traced to a flu shot vaccine.

Terry Beydler,
Adelanto, CA

We recently read the article in the *Standard Bearer* entitled, "A Christian doctor's view on vaccines." For many reasons this article made us very upset and disappointed. We understand that this issue concerning vaccines is a very heated one on both sides of the debate, even among medical doctors. But the scientific proof of the great harm of vaccines is amply established. The arguments he wrote in the *Standard Bearer* are easily refuted. Some things he [Dr. Decker] wrote are simply not true. For those of us who have seriously researched vaccines, our consciences bind us against vaccinating. It is out of love for the neighbor that we do not vaccinate and that we militate strongly against this dangerous practice. We do love our neighbor and do not appreciate...the insinuat[ion] that we are sinning when we do not vaccinate. To vaccinate or not is an issue of Christian liberty, about which the government and the church may not make judgments. It is our prayer that this topic will remain the decision of the parents and that God would be glorified through that liberty.

Sincerely,
Greg and Monica Zandstra
Couer d'Alene, ID

We appreciate the *Standard Bearer* allowing an op-

portunity to respond to Dr. Brian Decker's perspective on vaccines, published in the October 1, 2015 issue.

We disagree with Dr. Decker's understanding of vaccines. We believe the readers deserve to be presented with an opposing, scientifically based view.

We have been following the vaccine debate for several years. Arguments against vaccine effectiveness continue to surface, uncovering the errors of the pharmaceutical industry. That industry has over many years cunningly gained the public trust regarding vaccines (also drugs), while concealing vaccine harms. This is a most grave and complex issue; vaccines are increasingly foisted on to the public as the way to prevent disease. The industry's escalating promulgation of vaccines, compels us to share our findings, which document errors of the "science" promoting them.

Providentially, qualified people have begun to question the theory regarding vaccines; these people have researched the past history of vaccines along with pertaining published medical journals and peer-reviewed studies. We offer a few pertinent links for your examination: an association of professionals questioning vaccines;¹ research explaining the science of epigenetics (environment of the cell), the microbiome of the bowel and its bacteria, and how vaccines work against the body.² We also offer a link to a research foundation whose research educates about health, including gut health (vital for immunity) with explanations of food composition, proving the importance of nutrient-dense foods.³

Kevin & Lois Inskeep
New Zealand

RESPONSE

Before my original article was written, I informed the editors that it was my preference not to respond to any "Letters to the Editor." As a long-time reader of the *Standard Bearer*, I have never particularly cared for this practice. To me, it feels like the original writer always gets the last word. Because of this, I am not going to respond

¹ <http://www.vaccinationcouncil.org/about>.

² <http://drsuzanne.net/videos> (Dr. Suzanne Humphries, a doctor specialising in internal medicine and nephrology).
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCqmzJIoo52a7bqx-CuuZSIw/feed> (Dr. Humphries' personal channel).

³ <https://www.westonaprice.org>.
<http://www.westonaprice.org/journals> (the most recent being, "Vaccination Issue" of August 2015).

to most of what has been submitted. However, I would like to clarify a few things.

The sentences about fetal tissue could have been clearer, and I did not intend to be misleading. When I used the word “tissue,” I referred to it in the medical sense, that is, a group of cells that perform the same function (for example, skin tissue or heart tissue). The vaccines that develop in the human cells do so by using the material found inside the cell.

More importantly, I absolutely believe deciding whether or not to vaccinate is within the realm of Christian liberty, and is ultimately the parents’ decision. If readers of the original article have the impression that I believe it is sin if you withhold vaccination, then I was not clear enough. The point of the last few paragraphs is that we live in a community, the members of which we

are called to love. The community includes both our children and neighbors. Because the decision of whether or not to vaccinate could have an effect on the members of that community, our calling to love the neighbor should be considered (the word “consider” was deliberately used in the original).

Finally, the title of the original article is important. It was my perspective at the time of publication. It certainly is not the *only* perspective as the printed letters reveal, and the debate includes both physical and spiritual matters. In such cases, individuals are guided by their conscience that must be rooted in God’s Word. May we all appreciate that as we make decisions as Christians living in a wicked and depraved world.

—Dr. Brian Decker 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (22)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (14)

“**F**or thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.”
That’s from Psalm 51.

Stunning words, really, when we consider them in light of who wrote them. And when.

They were written by David, the man “after God’s heart,” who knew God’s law and loved it. He was therefore well acquainted with the book of Leviticus, which, if nothing else, made it crystal clear that sacrifices and offerings were not *optional*. Repeatedly we read concerning the ceremonial rites, “as the LORD commanded Moses.” And not only that. God declared concerning the “offering made by fire” that it would be “a sweet savour unto the LORD” (Lev. 3:5). In other words, the bringing of sacrifices would be *pleasing* to God. God would *delight* in them. David, we say, *knew* all of this.

And when was this psalm written? A millennium before Christ.

Some 3,000 years later we sing Psalm 51 in our wor-

ship services: “Not sacrifice dost Thou desire, else would I give it Thee; nor with appointed offerings wilt Thou delighted be.” That’s a versification of verse 16 of this psalm of David. And then the next stanza, of verse 17: “A broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice; a broken and a contrite heart, Thou, Lord, wilt not despise.”

For us, the shadows have been dispersed. The treasures of heavenly wisdom, in the coming of Christ, have been laid open before our eyes. No longer does a thought of bringing to God a lamb, with its throat slit, even cross our minds. Nor should it. But the words of David that we sing from our Psalter #143, still ring true. No burnt offering? To be sure. In fact, *nothing*. *That*, says Calvin, is what we see in Psalm 51:16: “absolute destitution of merit.” And, in verse 17, “humiliation and contrition of spirit, in opposition to everything like an attempt to render compensation to God.” The hymn writer had it right: “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to the cross I cling.” There is only one way to come to God, and that is with an outstretched...*empty* hand.

We do well, of course, to read the psalms that way—

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Previous article in this series: October 15, 2015, p. 37.

applied to *us*—for, though many of them were penned 3,000 years ago, they were *intended* by the Author to be also... for you... and for me.

But, at the same time, we ought not overlook the fact that the psalmist, David in this case, was writing first of all for a *contemporary* audience. With intention, even, that the psalm be *sung* by a contemporary gathering of God's people in public worship. Can you imagine the Israelites singing "Not sacrifice dost Thou desire, else would I give it Thee"? Or: "Nor with appointed offerings wilt Thou delighted be"? Knowing well that they were *under the law*? That God meant what He said when He *commanded* sacrifice? And that He promised to find *delight* in their burnt offerings?

David wrote also Psalm 40. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required" (v. 6). Again, how could David even *think* such things—in light of Leviticus? In light of *Moses*? In light of the fact that sacrifices were *instituted by God*?

Or might it perhaps be the case that David's words are not at all to be understood to refer to the sacrifices *themselves* but only to the *defiling* of them by sinful men? Think Isaiah 1: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I *delight not* in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.... Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul *hateth*: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them" (vv. 11-14—emphasis added). Or the word of the Lord to the Israelites of the northern kingdom through the prophet Amos: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts" (Amos 5:21-22).

"I am full of...." "I delight not...." "...it is iniquity." "...my soul hateth." "...a trouble unto me." "I am weary to bear them." Hardly could the Lord's detestation of the Jews' bringing of sacrifices, of offerings, of oblations in the day of Isaiah the prophet have been expressed more vividly. "Sweet-smelling savour"? No. They are "an abomination unto me" (v. 13). Odious!

Not, however, the sacrifices, the offerings, the oblations *as such*—that is, as they were *instituted by God*. Isaiah

does not say, "Bring no more oblations." He says, "Bring no more *vain* oblations" (v. 13). That is, *empty*. *Form*, but no *substance*. Robbing Christ of His honor.

Which is what David could not have had in mind in Psalm 51:16. Never would he have said, "Thou desirest not *hypocritical* sacrifice, else would I give it." David, clearly, was not speaking of sacrifices as corrupted by men, but of sacrifices *as instituted by God*. In the sacrifices of God's own institution, David dares to say, He has no delight. That's what makes this verse so stunning.

And *interesting*, for our purposes in this series. Especially as it is considered in contrast to Isaiah's denunciation of vain oblations. In the one instance, a reaching for Christ. And in the other, a robbing Him of His honor.

So... let's examine them a little more closely.

Think again of our singing of Psalter #143: "Not sacrifice dost Thou desire.... A broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice." Sung with understanding by us in the twenty-first century AD, this is, as I said, an acknowledgment that we come in worship before the face of God... empty-handed. When the saints of God in the old dispensation sang with understanding this same psalm from the pen of King David, what, do you suppose, did it mean to *them*?

It meant... exactly the same thing.

They *knew* it.

And, not only that, they were *expected* to know it.

True, David, by the inspiration of the Spirit, was giving expression to the truth of the matter in a way that would make the contemporary readers and singers sit up and take notice. But he did not have to exegete the text for them. They understood what he meant—without explanation. Why? Because the "sacrifices" and "burnt offerings" of which David spoke in Psalm 51:16 had vicarious, substitutionary atonement writ large all over them.

Did the saints of old see in the sacrificial animal a prefiguration of Christ as the suffering Servant of Jehovah? As we explained in previous articles in this series, the answer to that question is very likely no. Just how far the prophets were able to penetrate into the mysteries of God, Rev. G. Ophoff acknowledged, is a "matter of conjecture." But, he went on to say, "the blunders of the disciples" do not favor the view that they made a clear connection between the sacrificial victim and the Christ. A fair question, then, as it seems to me, would be, what are the impli-

cations of this ignorance, if any, for David's conviction, as expressed implicitly in Psalm 51:16, that he can come to God only with an outstretched, empty hand? And what about the "vicarious, substitutionary atonement writ large" over the burnt offerings? That 'writing' looks large to *us*. But could it be 'read' by believers in David's day? Or was that simply part of the "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints"? (Col. 1:26).

The answer, I think, must be that, yes, the saints of old *could*, and *did*, 'read' it. And that their inability to 'connect the dots,' as far as the typology is concerned, does not for a minute mean that they could not grasp the *symbolism*. They *did*.

Key word here, of course, is "symbolism." Heretofore in this series we have said very little about that, focusing rather on the *typology* of the old dispensation. For a better understanding of the words of David in Psalm 51:16,

we would do well to consider also that other purpose of the shadows in their day.

Ophoff identifies two: "The typical institutions and transactions," he writes, "served a twofold purpose. They prefigured future realities and objects of a higher province [the typology]; and they exhibited to the believer of the old dispensation the spiritual realities of the covenant of grace and demonstrated to him the great principles of sin and redemption [the symbolism]." Actually, Ophoff later on in his writing identifies still another purpose of the shadows, this one reaching beyond the 'day' of shadows. "Finally," he says, "the shadows of the Old Testament were made to appear for the benefit of the believers of the new covenant as well. To them also they are vehicles of much valuable instruction." Anyone who takes it upon himself to *study* typology will testify to the truth of *that*. I'd like to return to that later, but, first, symbolism—next time. ☞

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

REV. RODNEY KLEYN

"This Is My Body"

Lord's Day 29

Question 78. Do then the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ?

Answer. Not at all; but as the water in baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, neither is the washing away of sin itself, being only the sign and confirmation thereof appointed of God; so the bread in the Lord's supper is not changed into the very body of Christ; though agreeably to the nature and properties of sacraments, it is called the body of Christ Jesus.

Question 79. Why then doth Christ call the bread His body, and the cup His blood, or the new covenant in His blood; and Paul the communion of the body and blood of Christ?

Answer. Christ speaks thus, not without great reason, namely, not only thereby to teach us, that as bread and wine support this temporal life, so His crucified body and shed blood are the true meat and drink, whereby our souls are fed to eternal life; but more especially by these visible signs and pledges to assure us, that we are as really partakers of His true body and blood (by the operation of the Holy Ghost) as we receive by the mouths of our bodies these holy signs in remembrance of Him; and that all His sufferings and obedience are as certainly ours as if we had in our own persons suffered and made satisfaction for our sins to God.

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The second great debate of the Reformation, after the debate over justification by faith alone, was the debate over the presence of Christ in

the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. What did Jesus mean when, at the institution of this sacrament, He said, "This is my body"? Today, the visible church on earth is divided into four main groups along the lines of the answer to that question.

Four Views

The catechism is mostly answering the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation, that the elements (substance) of the sacrament, the bread and wine, are changed (transformed) into the actual body and blood of Jesus. Catholics believe that when Jesus said, "This is my body," the actual loaf of bread that He held up became His real physical body. Alluding to the Latin version of the words, "This is my body" (*hoc est corpus meum*), the Reformers derided the Catholic view as *hocus pocus*. When Jesus said, "This is my body," He was speaking metaphorically, just as He was when He said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11), "I am the door" (John 10:7), "I am the true vine" (John 15:1), and "I am the bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:41). He did not mean He was literally these things: a shepherd with sheep, a door on hinges, a vine in a garden, or a loaf of bread that fell from the sky. Rather, these things represented Him, and in the same way the bread represents His body in the Lord's Supper.

Luther and the Lutherans reject the false teaching of transubstantiation, but they do not totally reject the idea of a real physical presence of Christ at the sacrament. The Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation, (*con* = with), insists that Christ is "in, with, and around" the elements of the sacrament. That is, these elements, remaining bread and wine, are, as it were, soaked and permeated with the presence of Christ. This, of course, means that Jesus' human nature has to have the divine characteristic of omnipresence; and so Luther taught the *ubiquity* of the human nature of Christ, that the human nature assumes the characters of the divine nature in the state of exaltation, and therefore is not limited physically to the place heaven and the position of the right hand of God.

Ulrich Zwingli, another Reformer, responded to this debate by teaching that the Lord's Supper is simply a feast of remembrance, that there is essentially nothing mysterious or spiritual in the sacrament, and that we need not talk about the "presence of Christ" in the sacrament. The bread and wine are simply reminders or memorials of the

death of Jesus Christ for our sins. The modern Baptist view of the sacrament is very similar to this, with the emphasis falling on our receiving the sacrament, rather than what the sacrament represents.

John Calvin's view, which is the Reformed and Presbyterian view, is that Christ is truly but spiritually (not physically) present in the sacrament to all who partake by faith, so that as a believer partakes of the sacrament he actually receives Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is indeed a memorial, but it is also a feast of *communion* through which participants by faith lay hold on and receive to themselves Jesus Christ. In the sacrament, our faith is the "hand and mouth of our soul" (Belgic Confession, Art. 35). The Lord's Supper is a *sign* of the death of Jesus Christ, yet also a *seal* and *promise* (a "pledge" in the Catechism) to all believers that they are truly partakers of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, that is, that they partake and benefit from the reality of His suffering that is represented by the sacrament. In the Lord's Supper, we are able, by faith, to "discern the Lord's body" (I Cor. 11:29).

The Reason for these Views

Why did the Reformers fight so long and hard over the doctrine of this sacrament? Why, today, is Christianity splintered along these lines into Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, and Roman Catholics?

There are at least three good reasons, all of which were at the heart of the Reformation.

The Reformed view calls us to look to Christ alone for our salvation. Whereas Rome says that in the Eucharist Christ is sacrificed again and again, the Scriptures teach that by His death on the cross Christ made the complete and final payment for sin (Heb. 7:27; 9:26-28; 10:10-12). There is no more sacrifice needed for sin, and there is nothing to add to the finished work of Jesus Christ. Rome's view of the sacrament fits with its denial of the sufficiency of the death of Christ for our sins.

Another truth for which the Reformers battled was the truth of particular grace. Just as the gospel is not a universal offer of salvation from a God who loves all and wants to save all, so the grace of the sacrament is particular. Jesus' word concerning His presence, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20), means that He, by His grace and Holy Spirit, would be

with His church (believers) till the end of the world. So, also, His gracious presence in the Supper is only with believers. The views of Rome and Lutheranism, which teach that Christ is physically present and therefore is received by all who partake, teach a universal grace. However, to those who partake in unbelief there is no grace in the sacrament, but judgment and condemnation (I Cor. 11:29).

Too often the emphasis in Roman Catholic and Baptist circles falls on the act of partaking—you take your first communion, or the sacrament is viewed simply an expression of the faith of the participant. This sacrament, however, is intended by Christ as a statement of what He has done for us, not of what we do for or with Him. The message of the sacrament is the death and suffering of Jesus Christ as the only ground of our salvation, and in the sacrament we celebrate, remember, and believe in the cross. Yes, we make a profession in the sacrament, but this profession is itself a work of God's grace. In this we profess that our only salvation is in Jesus Christ and that it was our sin that necessitated the death of the Savior. We "shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Cor. 11:26).

Spiritually Nourished

Just as we have a physical life, so God's people have a spiritual life—the new life of regeneration.

Just as our bodies grow hungry and thirsty and need nourishment, so we need spiritual nourishment—we hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Just as there is physical food to nourish us, so there is spiritual food for our nourishment—Jesus is the Bread come down from heaven.

Just as we need to eat and drink in order to be nourished physically, so we need to believe on Jesus Christ when we come to the Supper—faith is the hand and mouth of our soul.


Only as we come in faith, with our mind and heart fixed on what Jesus Christ has completed in His suffering and death on the cross, are we truly nourished by this sacrament. That nourishment is the growth and increase of our faith, in which we grow into a greater awareness of our sin and become more dependant on Christ for our salvation.

Coming to the Lord's Supper, then, is a deeply spiri-

tual exercise. That does not mean it is beyond any of God's people, but it does mean that when we come, we must come in meditation on Christ and His work for us. We must avoid trust in the practice and externals. Only then can we grow spiritually.

As you come to the table, are you hungry and thirsty for Christ?

Questions for Discussion

1. What did not happen when Jesus uttered the words, "This is my body?"
2. Why are bread and wine given different names by Jesus in this sacrament?
3. Is it ever proper to call the elements of the Lord's Supper the "body" and "blood" of Christ? What do we mean when we say this?
4. Evaluate the Lutheran view of this sacrament? In what important ways is it different from the Roman Catholic view? What are some of the problems with this view?
5. What is the difference between superstition and faith? How does this relate to the different views of the sacrament? How does it apply to our partaking?
6. Seeing that the idea of transubstantiation is so contrary to reason and sense, from where did it arise?
7. Why cannot Christ be physically present in the Lord's Supper? How is He present?
8. How does the Reformed understanding of the sacrament promote the other main teachings of the Reformation?
9. Can the sacrament of the Lord's Supper itself "convert" or "save" a participant? Why or why not?
10. Do unbelievers receive anything more than bread or wine when they partake (I Cor. 11:29)?
11. How can you prepare yourself to partake of the Lord's Supper with profit? 

Rend


Rend is an uncommon word in the Bible, but one with a rather specific use, which actually sharpens its meaning and enhances its significance. In Scripture, to rend is the opposite of to sew (Eccl. 3:7), and refers almost exclusively to the tearing apart of fabrics, or, occasionally, items with textile-like qualities. Being woven like textiles, nets can be rent (John 21:11); or altars that are constructed with interlocking stone (I Kings 13:5). And because the heavens act as a cloak shielding God from view, the prophet prays God to rend them and come down (Is. 64:1), a prayer fulfilled vividly the day our Lord appears by tearing apart the fabric of the universe and causing men to flee His presence (Rev. 6:14).

Rending is no ordinary division. Whereas such things as water and wood, spoils and inheritances, lands and lots are divided, rending divides something that has been deliberately interwoven with warp and woof precisely so that it does not rend. Rending, therefore, also destroys the benefits and purpose of this union. This idea underlies the Old Testament practice of rending one's garments in times of deep distress and sorrow. It signified outwardly the inner ripping apart of the heart by overwhelming grief over sin or circumstance, and to such an extent, the garment was deemed unfit or useless. In such despair, Jacob, Joshua, Job, and David rent their clothes (Gen. 37:4; Josh. 7:6; II Sam 1:11). So did Ahab, Athaliah, and Mordecai. In fact, one great evil in Israel was that, with regard to sin, this practice became only an outward show. The Lord demands true repentance: "Rend your heart and not your garments" (Joel 2:13).

This consistent biblical association of rending and fabric adds significance to the one notable exception—the division of the kingdom of Israel after Solomon. With precision, it is described as a rending. "I will rend the kingdom..." the Lord repeatedly declares, and then reiterates the point by sending a prophet to rend the garment of Jeroboam into twelve pieces (I Kings 11:11-31). This particular description of that event, therefore, empha-

sizes the true character of rending any covenant body, particularly the church, the New Testament reality of the kingdom of Israel.

Significantly, the New Testament Greek word for rend is schism. With good reason, schism bars from the Lord's table and makes officebearers worthy of deposition. For schism is the sin of rending the covenant fabric of the church that God has carefully knit together in love, peace, and faith. It is rebellion against the rule of God through His officers, which is why the ten tribes cried out, "What portion have we in David?," a chilling word that echoed through the judgment hall of Pilate (John 19:15). To rend in this sense involves selfish pride that callously disregards and destroys the blessings, benefits, and purposes God intends through that covenant union. And therefore, rending any covenantal fabric, whether the covenant church, home, family, or marriage is destructive and makes that wonderful garment essentially useless. All twelve tribes found this out—being rent, they all quickly lost the wisdom, sovereignty, riches, and blessed peace enjoyed during Solomon.

Rending is also a judicial act of God. God rent the kingdom of Israel. But He does not sin. It is His kingdom to rend. And rending is the fitting judgment of God for not rending the heart in repentance, especially while making a show of it outwardly. Besides, God rent Israel that He might unite them spiritually through Jesus Christ. Significantly, at His baptism the heavens are rent (Greek, schism) and the Spirit descends on Him as a dove (Mark 1:10). By that Spirit He teaches that simply patching up the old kingdom will only make the rent worse (Mark 2:21). When crucified, the veil is rent from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51), but His garment stays whole (John 19:24). By rending His own body (Heb. 10:10), He obtains eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). By His resurrection, that body rent by the sin of its members and just judgment of God is made whole, and all nations are also woven into its fabric. All the more reason to love the covenantal fabrics the Lord weaves, and to rend our hearts, and especially not these garments given us. 

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Dating for God's Glory: Love

Maybe some of you young women are eagerly waiting for the moment when a young man looks you in the eyes and affectionately pledges his love for you. Maybe some of you young men look forward to making this pledge and hearing the response whispered in your ear, "I love you, too." It feels good to be told, "I love you." Some of you may have experienced this already in a dating relationship.

But what do these words mean? When I have asked young people, engaged couples, and even some married couples what this means, many have struggled to answer. Some have even said love is unexplainable, but someday they will understand it better. They plan to grow in understanding what these words mean. There is some truth to this. We are all growing in our understanding of love. But if a couple does not understand what true, biblical love is when dating, they will not magically have an epiphany of understanding love because they are married. In fact, they may have to learn what true love is in a miserable marriage because they ignored understanding love when they were dating. Love must be understood before dating and marriage.

What if a young man whispers his love for a young woman in the car parked in the driveway of the young woman's home, and what he really means is "I lust for you"? Then the relationship will be focused on the physical. What if a young woman looks into the eyes of a young man and says, "I am falling in love with you," but all she means is that this relationship feels good because the young man has been so romantic and kind? What happens when the young man is not so romantic and kind? You have a "love" based on feelings that can change directions like the wind. Such relationships fall apart because there was no true understanding of love.

Before young people date and marry they must have a basic understanding of biblical, God-glorifying love. A biblical definition and understanding of love is vital in a

dating relationship that has as its one goal the glory of God with an eye on marriage.

In the Greek language we can identify three words for love. The first word is "eros," from which we derive our English word "erotic." I begin with this word because one way the world defines love is sexual lust. Sometimes, when a man tells a woman he loves her, what he really means is, "I lust for you." Succumbing to his raging hormones, he has one thing on his mind. This kind of "love" is described in I Thessalonians 4:5 as the "lust of concupiscence," which characterizes those who do not know God. In our sex-crazed culture, so many define love by this lust for physical closeness. Within marriage, physical closeness is a way a husband and wife show love to each other, but this is not the beginning or chief idea of love.

The second word in the Greek language we need to identify is "phileo," which means "brotherly love." This word identifies the feelings and emotions that are part of love. In the world of our day, feelings rule. Feelings of love are the powerful emotions that one has for another person, feelings that are like the swift, raging current of the Colorado River in the springtime, rapidly carrying white-water rafters. Such can be the feelings of a young woman for a young man who opens the door for her, listens to her, and buys nice things for her.

The third word for love we must understand is "agape." This is the strongest word for love in Scripture (often translated as "charity" in the KJV) and the only word used for God's love.

Before we define true, biblical love as revealed on the pages of Scripture, understand why I presented these words in the order I did. This is not the order of Scripture. This is the order of the world. Love in dating and marriage is first of all seen as lust and attraction based on how "hot" he or she is. In the world, dating is seen as a way for a young man and young woman to hook up sexually. If this works out, the feelings they have for each other will grow. The last step is a more intimate relationship that might lead to marriage.

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Satan twists a good desire we all have, the desire for sex, to be the most important thing. This is the mindset of the world in which we live. The backward, foolish thinking of this world must be exposed so that we do not think of love in this way. The way of a young man and woman is not that they have a physical attraction, act on this by dating to see if they have feelings for each other, which, in turn, leads to marriage. This is not how the church should view dating. The worst thing a couple can do is put these real lusts they have first. Be committed to no sex in your dating relationships!

Biblical love turns this view of dating on its head. What is love? Before reading on, take some time to read John 3:16, John 15:13, Philippians 2:5-8, and I John 4:8-10 and formulate a biblical definition of love. Defining love is not as hard as we think, because the Bible does it for us.

Love is an activity of self-sacrifice that seeks the good of another although the person being loved does not deserve it. This love is a decision, commitment, and activity.

Only those who know God can love in this way. This love originates in God for God is love (I John 4:8-10). This love is part of God's Being. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love each other with this love. Within God's Being, love is an intimate, living bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14). The three Persons of the Holy Trinity live in a union more intimate and closer than that of a husband and a wife. Stretching from all eternity and to all eternity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love each other without disagreement, fighting, or conflict. They love each other perfectly!

God actively shows this pure love to His people in Jesus Christ. Remember that love is a decision, commitment, and activity. From all eternity, God decided to love a people unworthy of His love. He is committed to His people, promising to them that His love will never fade or change (Rom. 8:31-39). Imagine! God never falls out of love with us. The action of God's love is saving us from our sins in Jesus Christ. He gave His only begotten Son to save us from our sins. This giving is the supreme activity of love by which God seeks our good by blessing us with all the blessings of salvation in Jesus Christ. No wonder we sing of the amazing love of God! How wonderful and amazing is God's love! A love beyond measure! You cannot measure God's love in inches, feet,

or miles; in pints, quarts, or gallons; in ounces, pounds, or tons. You get the point.

We are called to put this love in action in marriage. Within marriage, it is foundational that husband and wife love God first. A marriage will not be blessed unless both husband and wife love God with heart, mind, soul, and strength. This teaches us that love is a matter of worship. The Christian husband and wife love God by obeying His commandments. Specifically, they love God by loving the spouse God gives them with this sacrificial, unconditional love. Love in marriage is not first of all about sex. It is not first of all a feeling, although a husband and wife must have feelings of love for each other. *Love is a decision, commitment, and action although the other person does not deserve it.* In marriage, love is a decision, a conscious, deliberate decision to love the spouse God has given. In marriage, love is a life-long commitment in which a husband and wife promise before God, family, and friends to love each other. This love must be put into action, which seeks the good of the other person although the person does not deserve it. A wife lives for her husband. A husband lays down his life for his wife. We will have more to say about this in the next article.

What we are interested in is what this means for dating. When a Christian young man and young woman know God's love for them, God will be first in their hearts. Because we are saved by God's love in Jesus Christ, we are followers of Christ who obey His Word. This means that desires for sex, romance, and fulfillment in a relationship will not rule my life.

Doing Christ's will by living in obedience to Him has wide-ranging implications for dating. Christian young men and women are not interested in dating unbelievers no matter how kind, generous, and good looking they may be. Being committed to loving and honoring Jesus Christ in all of life, they will not seek friendships with those who do not love or honor Him.

Because we know the comfort and fullness of God's love in Jesus Christ that delivers us from all our sins and brings us into a relationship of love and friendship with God forever, we will not date for self. We will not date to feel better about ourselves. We will not date to feel complete or to overcome insecurities or fears of being alone. When we do this, we are seeking fulfillment in a person instead of God.

Because we know the love of God, we will not date for romance or attraction or lust. If we date for these reasons, we are not dating for God's glory but for our own.


Because we know the love of God, we will seek what is best for the person we are dating. We will not push to cross the sexual boundaries God has established. True love is controlled by the mind (Phil. 1:9, 10). A young woman will not dress seductively to entice a young man and a young man will not put pressure on a young woman, ignoring the boundaries God sets. Instead, both will desire to learn to serve while getting to know the other person.

A dating relationship that is shaped by God's love will be a relationship in which a young man and young woman are trying to get to know the other to determine if this is the person God wants me to love for the rest of my life within the bond of marriage. In this kind of relationship, the young man and young woman are concerned with learning what it means to sacrifice and serve for the good of each other. Dating should not be making ourselves look like something we are not. This is what a car salesman might do with an old jalopy. He washes and

waxes it, trying to cover up all the defects to sell it. This is not what dating is about. Rather, it is about letting the other person know what I am truly like to find out if they can continue to love me in marriage.

And now, let us return to what it means to say "I love you." What do you think about the place of this in a dating relationship? Does it take on new meaning and seriousness now? To say this is a commitment. Are you ready for this commitment?

Think about it from this perspective. You are dating someone you do not know as yet if you will marry. Maybe you break up one day, and date someone else that you marry. The one you formerly dated also dates someone else and marries. Maybe those marriages bring you into the same church. How would you feel about sitting down the aisle from another man or woman to whom you said, "I love you"? As you say, "Awkward!" Yes, it is.

True love is beautiful and God-glorifying. May this love of God mold our dating so that we glorify God as we search for the spouse we will one day marry, according to God's will. 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. WILBUR BRUINSMA

Protestant Reformed Missions

Small Beginnings:

Mission Methods Established (1925-1931) (4)

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in session on September 18, 1929. A number of recommendations were received at this Classis from the Committee on Home Missions made up of Elhart, Korhorn, and VanDellen. Among these recommendations, Classis considered one that was of unusual importance: "that our leaders put forth every effort to instruct our members thoroughly in the basic doctrines and in the Confessions, in order that our members who come in contact with brothers and sisters

of other churches may try to win them in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord." It was moved to adopt this recommendation. We learn that "after some discussion this motion is rejected."¹

It would be of value to be privy to the discussion that took place at this meeting of Classis. Perhaps it was argued that leaders of the church, both elders and pastors, always put forth every effort to instruct their members in the basic doctrines of the Reformed faith and the Confessions. It is their chief duty to do this. Do the churches need a motion to fulfill what is already their mandate

Rev. Bruinsma is Eastern Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, stationed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Previous article in this series: August 2015, p. 446.

¹ Article 21, September 18, 1929 Minutes of the meeting of the Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

in Scripture? Indeed, if there is any strong point of the Protestant Reformed Churches through the years, it is the thorough training given to children and young people in the doctrines of the Reformed faith and the Confessions. Likewise, the preaching has soundly instructed our members in the Heidelberg Catechism and in the doctrines of Scripture. We have carefully guarded what God has given us by means of instruction and Christian discipline. Furthermore, the doctrine of the covenant has safely guided us to understand the need for the education of our children in Christian schools. This may have been a reason for rejecting this proposal of the committee.

On the other hand, perhaps this proposal was aimed at something a little less noble. The emphasis of this motion falls on the latter part of it, “in order that our members who come in contact with brothers and sisters of other churches may try to win them in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord.” It is hard to interpret this recommendation in any other way than: “Let’s teach our membership how to approach others with the basic doctrines of the Reformed faith and the Confessions in a spirit of love to win them for the cause of the Lord.” Perhaps it is because of this emphasis that the motion was rejected. It was, after all, only five years after the bitter controversy of 1924. There had been a storm in the church—much agitation, tempers that flared, hard feelings, strong opinions. Perhaps, to pass such a motion as this a mere five years after the battle was too much of an admission.

We will never know what motivated the Committee on Home Missions to propose this recommendation or what motivated Classis to reject it some 85 years ago. Neither may we, looking back from this point in our history, cast judgment on the decision to reject it. There is no reason to doubt that, though there may have been much hurt at the time of the controversy, it was nothing less than a genuine, brotherly concern that motivated our churches in the early years to work toward the reformation of their mother church.

That being said, I believe that we as members of the Protestant Reformed Churches *today* would have greatly benefitted from the passage of this motion by the Classis of September, 1929. As was mentioned, our membership is rigorously trained in Old and New Testament history and in the doctrines of the Reformed faith, particularly the Protestant Reformed faith. Likewise, we have Heidel-

berg Catechism preaching, and often our other Confessions are taught in the catechism rooms. But along with this instruction are we also taught how to share that faith in a humble spirit with others? Is there integrated into the preaching and catechetical studies the need to talk with others about the blessed truths of Scripture in order to win them in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord?

I realize that some might say, “Now *that* sounds like the wishy-washy, sappy approach of modern evangelicism! We must make a solid stand for the truth! We must be uncompromising, tell it like it is, defend the faith against the lie, make it abundantly clear from Scripture where those who oppose us are wrong!” The answer to this charge is simple enough. Yes, we must defend the faith and make a solid, uncompromising stand on the Scripture. We must be able to show from Scripture the errors of others. But all of this must be done in order to win others in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord. That must always be our goal when we speak with others about the basic doctrines of the faith as summed in the Confessions.

There is a particular Scripture I have come to appreciate more as I labor in the work of home missions. God instructs us in II Timothy 2:24-26, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” This is polar opposite from a condescending, haughty, combative witness that portrays to others that we are superior to them, or that we view ourselves as the last bastion of truth on earth. I remember one of my professors said in class while I was in seminary many years ago, “God protect us from theological pride.” We have the calling today as God’s saints humbly to share the truths of Scripture and the Confessions with “brothers and sisters of other churches (to) try to win them in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord.” And this is true in our witness to those who are *not* brothers and sisters of other churches too, but who wander in unbelief as unchurched.

This does not mean that in our defense of the truth we buckle before the onslaughts of heretics and hide ourselves behind a shroud of silence as so many do in the

church today. Paul's command to Titus against "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" is clear. Their mouths must be stopped! "Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Titus 1:9-13). The leaders and members of the church of Jesus Christ must be bold to withstand error. There is no room in the church for heretics (Titus 3:10, 11). But we must remember that there are many in the church world today who because of heretics and false doctrine are ensnared by the devil and taken captive by him at his will. God's servant is called "not [to] strive; but [to] be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance." For that reason the recommendation of the Committee on Home Missions was a good one: "that our leaders put forth every effort to instruct our members thoroughly in the basic doctrines and in the Confessions, in order that our members who come in contact with brothers and sisters of other churches may try to win them in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord."


This is not to say, of course, that trying to win others in a spirit of love will drastically change the results of the witness we leave as believers and churches. In this postmodern age, any church that remains uncompromising, holding fast the faithful Word and unyielding in matters of truth, is immediately labeled as judgmental, narrow, and hateful, even if God's people strive to win others in the spirit of love for the cause of the Lord. That too is a matter we learn firsthand in home mission work. Nevertheless, this ought not to influence how we are to witness to others about the blessed salvation that has delivered our souls from destruction and given us fellowship with God.

But I have not yet explained why I believe that we as members of the Protestant Reformed Churches today would have greatly benefitted from a passing of this motion by the Classis of September, 1929. Our churches today are removed from this decision by three and four generations. The question we confront today is not whether or not our witness is done properly. The question is, do we witness at all? Is there a desire to speak with others about the truths of Scripture and the Confessions? Is there a desire to share the precious gospel with brothers and sisters in the spirit of love to win them to the cause of the Lord? We have been blessed by God with the truth—a precious, glorious truth in which we can truly rejoice.

We are thoroughly trained in the doctrines of Scripture. Why do we not want to talk about them?

There are those who do. In fact, there are those who are very good at talking about their faith with others. This question is not asked of them. These members are a blessing to our churches. But I ask this question to our generations in general. How often do we find ourselves discussing even *among ourselves* what God has done for us in our salvation? How often are we genuinely excited about what we heard in a sermon and want to talk about it with our fellow saints after the worship service? Not very often? Well, if we cannot get past the ability to talk with each other about spiritual matters, how will we ever be able to speak with others outside of our churches? When was the last time you freely spoke with someone about your faith in a spirit of love and humility?

There may be various reasons for our lack of witness. It could be we are afraid that what we believe might be challenged and we will not know what to say. It could be that, though we have been taught the doctrines of Scripture, they are not of real interest to us. It could be we are so overtaken with worldly-mindedness that our own salvation is not a concern to us anymore. We certainly pray that is not the reason. Maybe it is as simple as taking for granted the truth passed down to us in our generations, and therefore, a lack of zeal for the gospel. Or, maybe we do not know how to share our faith in a spirit of love with others in order to win them for the cause of the Lord.

The recommendation of Classis of September 1929 was rejected. But one thing is for certain: it was not rejected because the classis believed it to be erroneous. Unnecessary perhaps, but not in error. Is it necessary, then, for the Domestic Mission Committee to come to synod in our day with a similar recommendation? Not at all! But it is necessary that our leaders make a concerted effort to continue to teach our members the basic doctrines of Scripture and the Confessions in such a way that members learn how to share what they believe with others in a spirit of love and patience. Perhaps such instruction will help recapture some of the enthusiasm for the gospel that seems to be waning. May we not lose our first love exhibited by our fathers in their recommendation 85 years ago. 

The Triple Knowledge: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism. Herman Hoeksema. 2nd edition. 10 vols. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2015. Cloth. \$179.95. [Reviewed by Rev. Joshua D. Engelsma.]

I must admit that, when I first caught wind that the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) was putting out a second edition of Hoeksema's *Triple Knowledge*, I was a bit skeptical. I already possessed the hefty three-volume set; was it really necessary to replace them? But any lingering doubts I may have had were put to rest when I received my copies of the first five volumes. The project is worthwhile, and the new edition is welcome.

So, what's new?

Working from the outside in, the first and most obvious change is that Hoeksema's work now appears in ten volumes. But, as some may be aware, this is not something altogether new. In fact, it reverts back to the original format of the first edition. Mark Hoeksema, grandson of the author, notes in his foreword, "Hoeksema originally wrote his exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism as a lengthy series of articles in the *Standard Bearer*," beginning in 1941. As these articles were printed, William B. Eerdmans approached Hoeksema about putting them in book form. He agreed, and Eerdmans published the work in ten volumes between 1943 and 1956.

Thirty years later several of those volumes were out of print, and the RFPA made work of rectifying the situation. From 1970 to 1972, the *Triple Knowledge* was reprinted, but the format was changed from ten, slim volumes to three, large tomes.

Now fast forward another forty years to the present, and the *Triple Knowledge* is again out of print. That fact in itself makes the presence of this new edition worthwhile. But the RFPA decided that, instead of reproducing the work in three volumes, they would go back to the original ten-volume format. Volume one, entitled *In the Midst of Death*, treats Lord's Days 1–4 and the first section of the Catechism having to do with our misery. Volume two (*God's Way Out*) examines Lord's Days 5–10, which includes the first part of the Apostles' Creed dealing with God the Father and our creation. The third and fourth volumes (*The Death of the Son of God* and *The Lord of Glory*)

treat the saving work of Jesus Christ in His humiliation and exaltation (Lord's Days 11–20), and volume five (*Abundant Mercy*) brings to a conclusion Hoeksema's treatment of the Apostles' Creed (Lord's Days 21–24). Volumes six and seven (*Baptized into Christ* and *Eating and Drinking Christ*) treat Lord's Days 25–31 and the sacraments. Volume eight (*Love the Lord Thy God*) deals with the first table of the law as explained in Lord's Days 32–38, while volume nine (*Love Thy Neighbor for God's Sake*) covers the second table of the law in Lord's Days 39–44. The final volume (*The Perfect Prayer*) explains Lord's Days 45–52 and the Lord's prayer.

There is value, I judge, in having Hoeksema's work divided into ten volumes. First, having the ten volumes allows the reader to better understand the logic and flow of the Heidelberg Catechism itself, since each volume treats one of the major subsections of the creed. Second, this format makes the *Triple Knowledge* less intimidating and more accessible. The thought of plowing through three massive volumes of more than six hundred pages each would make even the most voracious reader balk. But the relatively slender volumes of the present edition seem much more manageable and will (we hope) stimulate ready consumption of their contents.

The second noticeable difference in this second edition is in the appearance. Although appearance is not the foremost consideration, it is an important one. The outward appeal of a book encourages one to take up and read. Of late the RFPA has done a wonderful job of producing attractive-looking publications. The *Triple Knowledge* is no exception. Gone are the nondescript grey covers with the unforgettable black and pink dust jackets of the 1970s. The new edition comes in a handsome blue and red cloth cover and will make a beautiful addition to any library.


Digging deeper, a third important change is in the careful editing of the books. The foreword notes that "the revisions are strictly formal to bring the books into conformity with today's publishing standards." The cramped font of the previous edition has been replaced with an elegant, readable type. Chapters have been broken down into sections. Quotations from other sources are noted by indentations. Thorough acknowledgement of these sources is given in footnotes. Minor infelicities of grammar and style have been corrected. The end result is a readable, reliable exposition of the beloved Heidelberg Catechism.

Rev. Engelsma is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

Although a number of commendable changes have been made in this second edition, the most outstanding feature is something that has not changed. What's *not* new in this new edition is the content. The reader of this edition will find the same rich, deep explanation of the Catechism as was found in the previous edition. The content is biblical. Hoeksema makes a point of grounding every doctrine in the Scriptures. The content is theological. Hoeksema does not confine himself strictly to the text of the Catechism but expands upon and develops the various truths of Scripture that are set forth in it. The content is thoroughly Reformed. Repeatedly, Hoeksema draws on others in the Reformed tradition to support his explanation of the Catechism, in so doing showing that his position is not novel but has precedence in the Reformed tradition. The content is extensive. It is one of the few in-depth commentaries on the Catechism in the English language. In bygone days it was common for theologians in the Dutch Reformed tradition to expound the Catechism at length (for example, Klaas Schilder spent more than two thousand pages explaining only the first ten Lord's Days). But works of such magnitude are hard to find in English. Hoeksema's is one of the few.

This publication is of particular value to ministers who are regularly called on to preach through the Catechism. Hoeksema's work is not first of all that of a scholar, but of a preacher who spent nearly fifty years preaching through the Catechism. The advice given to me by a more experienced preacher was to read through Hoeksema's *Triple Knowledge* during my first round of Catechism preaching and make his theology my own. I have not yet finished that first round, but I look forward to doing so with these volumes in hand.

Yet the value of these volumes is not just for ministers. The Reformed believer can read them with great benefit. Although not written in a devotional style, they can be read devotionally. I can envision a person sitting down on a Sunday morning before church with one of the volumes in hand, reading Hoeksema's explanation of the Lord's Day that is the subject of the sermon that day.

The RFPA is to be commended for bringing back this gem after forty years. I trust that the coming generations will benefit from its treasures for the next forty years or more, if the Lord tarries. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Missionary Activities

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (which meets three times a year) met Saturday, October 31 in the Provident Christian Church of Marikina and was hosted by the Berean PRC. One of the main items on the agenda was the request of the Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church (MPRC) in Valenzuela City to join the Federation of Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines. There have been many meetings and months of preparation to determine if that congregation was one in doctrine and faith with the churches of the federation. Our Protestant Reformed

missionaries (especially Rev. R. Smit) have also labored for many years in this congregation. We now report with joy and with thanks to the Lord that Classis voted unanimously to receive MPRC into the federation.

Classical delegates included pastors Vernon Ibe of the Berean Protestant Reformed Church (BPRC) and John Flores of the Protestant Reformed Church of Bulacan (PRCB). Elder delegates included Rod Bongat, Eric Mescallado, and Sonny Umali of the BPRC, and Ronald Mercado of PRCB. Present and representing MPRC were Pastor Leovy Trinidad and elder Alvin Castillo.

The report of the decision of Classis read this way in the bulletin in Maranatha PRC: "The Consistory would like to share the good news that we are now a member of the

Federation of Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines as was approved yesterday at the Classis meeting. We praise the Lord for this!"

In other business, the Classis received reports from its treasurer, clerk, and standing committees; set the classical assessment for 2016; approved subsidy requests for two churches; and appointed church visitors for 2016. The next meeting of the Classis has been scheduled for Thursday, February 25, 2016 and will be hosted by the Maranatha PRC in Valenzuela, the Lord willing.

Rev. Jonathan Mahtani (Cornerstone PRC pastor) planned a visit to the Republic of the Philippines to offer assistance with preaching there. On the dates of November 15, 22, and 29 he was to preach in the con-

Mr. Van Egdom is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

gregations of the Maranatha PRC in Valenzuela City, the Berean PRC, and the PRC of Bulacan.

The bulk of Rev. Daniel Kleyn's missionary activities continue to be in the Maranatha PRC of Valenzuela City and Provident Christian Church located in Marikina.

Minister Activities

The Council of the calling church (Doon, IA) for a second missionary to the Philippines announced a new trio consisting of Rev. Cory Griess (Calvary PRC in Hull, IA), Rev. Brian Huizinga (Hope PRC in Redlands, CA), and Rev. James Laning (Hull, IA PRC). The congregation at Doon planned to call at their annual congregational meeting on November 23, D.V.

School Activities

On Friday, October 23 a significant event took place in Lacombe, AB, Canada. The evening served both as a dedication of the Genesis Protestant Reformed School's new building as well as a lecture commemorating Reformation Day. Prof. Russell Dykstra spoke on the theme "Our Christian School: A Legacy of the Reformation."

On Saturday, October 31 the Covenant Christian High School (Grand Rapids, MI) craft show took place with more than 100 booths of handcrafted-goods from which to shop. Cinnamon rolls, pizza, subs, and homemade desserts were available for purchase with all proceeds to benefit the band and boosters at Covenant.

Young Adult Activities

Take notice, if you have not already done so, of the Protestant Reformed

Young Adult Retreat to be held in northwest Iowa on August 15-18, 2016, D.V. More details will be forthcoming.

Young Peoples' Activities

After the evening service on October 25 the young people of the Doon, IA PRC hosted singers of all ages from the Siouxland area churches to their annual Reformation Day singspiration. The area Thanksgiving singspiration was hosted by Calvary YPS, Hull, IA and the Christmas singspiration will be hosted by the YPS of Edgerton, MN, D.V.

Monday evening, October 26 was the date for the annual Communist Run sponsored by the YPS of the Doon, IA PRC. The event was attended by more than 50 participants on a beautiful fall night as young people of the area churches joined in the fun.

Congregational Activities

The Reading Club of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA is beginning the book *Homeward Bound: Preparing Your Family for Eternity* by Edward Hartman.

Evangelism Activities


Reformation Day is the time of year for lectures in our churches and this year did not disappoint. Among those given in October (many on the 30th and, with one exception, in November) were the following: In Loveland, CO Rev. James Laning—"Signs of the Coming of Christ and His Kingdom"; in Wingham, Ontario Rev. Martin Vander Wal—"The Reformation and Marriage"; in Crete, IL Rev. William Langerak—"The Devil as a Roaring Lion"; in Bethel PRC of Roselle, IL Prof. Barry Gritters—"Anti-Christ"; in Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane,

WA Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma—"What DID Calvin Teach?"; in Bethel CRC of Edgerton, MN Prof. Ronald Cammenga—"The Reformation's Recovery of Marriage and Family"; in Randolph, WI Rev. Erik Guichelaar—"The Fearless Mission of William Tyndale"; in Hope PRC of Redlands, CA Prof. Barry Gritters—"What it Means to Be Reformed: Christian Living"; in Southwest PRC of Grand Rapids, MI Prof. Ronald Cammenga—"Theistic Evolution: Should the Church Make Peace or War?"

Sister Church Activities

With this year being the 600th anniversary of the wicked execution of the great pre-Reformer Jan Hus, Rev. Angus Stewart spoke on "Jan Hus: His Martyrdom and Ecclesiology," while illustrating his presentation with photos and slides (Friday, October 30). An engaged audience in the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC) in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, learned about Hus, the most famous Czech in history, a man with heroic status in his native land and further abroad as a powerful preacher, beloved pastor, university professor, multiple author, Bible translator, church reformer, and steadfast martyr. A lively time of questions and answers followed the speech.

Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore sponsored their Reformation Day conference around the topic of the "Forgotten Solas of the Reformation" on November 9 and 10 with Rev. Andrew Lanning as the speaker.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

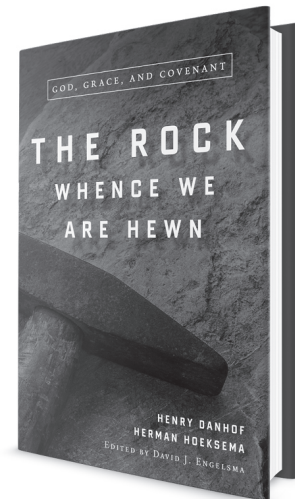
THE ROCK WHENCE WE ARE HEWN

HENRY DANHOF & HERMAN HOEKSEMA | EDITED BY DAVID J. ENGELSMA

The publication of this book accomplishes several purposes on behalf of the defense and maintenance of the gospel of grace with its accompanying Christian life of separation from the world of the ungodly. The book recalls to the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches their doctrinal and historical origins: "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn" (Isa. 51:1). Their doctrinal origins were the confession of salvation by sovereign grace, embedded in predestination, and their insistence on a holy life of separation from the world of the ungodly.

The book exposes the theory of common grace as heretical. This theory consists of a well-meant offer of Christ to everyone in the preaching and of a cultural grace that unites believers and unbelievers in the grand calling of establishing on earth a glorious kingdom of God.

The book is evangelistic. With urgency, it calls not only Reformed and Presbyterians, but also all Protestants back to their origins in the sixteenth-century Reformation of the church: the gospel of salvation by sovereign, particular grace and antithetical holiness of life. And to martyrdom!



Coming December 2015 | Reformed Free Publishing Association | rfpa.org | 616-457-5970

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hull PRC express their Christian sympathy to Rev. Laning and his family in the loss of a father and grandfather,

GERRIT LANING.

May Rev. and his family be comforted by these words from Scripture: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:6-8).

Jim Andringa, Vice-President
Gerald Brummel, Clerk of records

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express our sympathy to Rev. Carl and Mary Haak, the Mark and Bethany Feenstra family and the Chad and Melanie Noorman family in the recent passing to glory of their mother and grandmother,

THRESSA HAAK.

It is our prayer that they may take comfort from God's word to us in Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Phil Vander Wall, Vice President
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Harv and Marcia Verbeek and their children in the death of their mother and grandmother,

BERDINA LOTTERMAN.

Our prayer is that God may encourage and comfort them with His word in John 14:3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 13, 2016 at the Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by December 14, 2015.

Jon J. Huisken
Stated Clerk

Notice

■ From Southwest PRC's Evangelism Committee: "Theistic Evolution: Should the Church Make Peace or War?" and the follow up sermon "By Faith We Understand...Creation," both given by Prof. Cammenga, can be viewed on the website www.CreationOrTheisticEvolution.com. You are encouraged to submit questions using the "submit a question" box on the website. The questions and answers will be posted on the site.

Reformed Witness Hour December 2015

Date

December 6
December 13
December 20
December 27

Topic

"The Naming of John"
"Mary's Miraculous Conception"
"From Nazareth to Bethlehem"
"God's Faithfulness"

Text

Luke 1:57-66
Matthew 1:18
Luke 2:4, 5
1 Thessalonians 5:24