

The Outlook

VOLUME 72

ISSUE 2

71 YEARS: 1951–2022

reformedfellowship.net

MAR/APR
2022

DEDICATED TO THE EXPOSITION AND DEFENSE OF THE REFORMED FAITH



The Cross the Emblem of Love

I Am Afraid of Your Love

A Message from the Holy Spirit

Momentary Marriage and
Immanuel Eternity

Alle roem is uitgesloten:

A Calvinistic Hymn on God's Love

Office Bearers in the Church:

The Duties of the Office

I Didn't Know How Difficult It Would Be

What Is an Apologist?

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

William Bates (1625–1699):

A Forgotten Puritan

Timeless Truths Selected Reading

Lessons My Father Taught Me

Book Reviews

Did You Know?

LOOKING UNTO JESUS
the **AUTHOR AND FINISHER**
of our **FAITH**; who for the joy that was
set before him **ENDURED THE CROSS**,
DESPISING THE SHAME, and is set down
at the **RIGHT HAND OF THE**
THRONE OF GOD

3 | The Cross the Emblem of Love

Mr. Cornelius VanKempen

With passion season coming, the cross reveals the love of the triune God through his Son for his people.

4 | I Am Afraid of Your Love

Rev. James Sinke

Facing his approaching martyrdom, Ignatius feared the prayers of the Roman church more than he feared death itself.



6 | A Message from the Holy Spirit

Mrs. Annemarieke Ryskamp

The Holy Spirit warns us for the great and dark deception that's going on in the world.

8 | Momentary Marriage and Immanuel Eternity

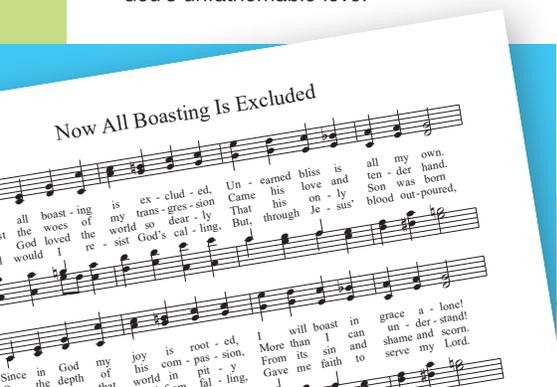
Mrs. Vanessa Le

Marriage, although good, is a temporary picture meant to point us to the greater reality of intimacy and communion with God.

10 | *Alle roem is uitgesloten:* A Calvinistic Hymn on God's Love

Mr. Michael R. Kearney

An introduction and English translation to an eighteenth-century Dutch hymn celebrating God's unfathomable love.



12 | Office Bearers in the Church: The Duties of the Office (2)

Rev. Greg Lubbers

In this second of two articles Rev. Lubbers presents a basic overview of the duties and guidelines for the offices of elder and deacon with the hope that present and future office bearers might “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that [their] labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58, English Standard Version).

16 | I Didn't Know How Difficult It Would Be

Pastor Anoud T. Vergunst

This article is an introduction to the new upcoming book from Reformed Fellowship and is subtitled: Personal thoughts of a grieving husband and father.

19 | What Is an Apologist? (Part 2)

Rev. William Boekestein

All Christians must be prepared to defend their hope in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15). But God not only demands that we defend the faith, he also defines how we must defend it.



22 | Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Rev. Casey Freswick

What is your sexual orientation? What is your gender identity? Are you cis gender? These are all questions you will likely be asked if you are filling out a form for hospitalization or medical insurance. So, how should a Christian answer these questions?

24 | William Bates (1625–1699): A Forgotten Puritan

Dr. Joel R. Beeke

William Bates was one of the most popular and esteemed preachers among the Nonconformists; a master of the Puritan plain style of preaching, his stress on piety earned him the name “silver-tongued.” Learn more about him in this article!



26 | Timeless Truths Selected Reading

Edited by Rev. Jerome Julien

In an age of discontent, the apostle Paul offers invaluable insight into what means to learn contentment.

32 | Lessons My Father Taught Me

Dr. Joel R. Beeke

This article describes several lessons learned from my father—lessons that fathers ought to find worthy of emulation. These include the value of speaking regularly to our children about God, living a life of service, being organized, sharing our spiritual life, living with holy earnestness, treasuring Christ's beauty, and focusing on prayer, self-examination, and eternity.

36 | Book Reviews

Rev. Jerome Julien

Three book reviews.

38 | Did You Know?

Submitted by the Editor

Did people in Bible times have last names?

The Cross the Emblem of Love



When we think of crucifixion the picture is extreme suffering reserved for the vilest criminals, and then only if the evidence against them is so overwhelming that there is no doubt of their guilt. It shows the criminal cast out from the earth and cursed of God (see Gal. 3:13b, referring to the Old Testament law, “for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” [Deut. 21:23]). Everything leading up to the act of crucifixion shows justice being carried out with a vengeance to rid the world of a depraved and dangerous person. It is a gruesome picture of suffering and shame. How can this be a picture of God’s love?

Adam had disobeyed his maker in Paradise by eating of the forbidden fruit, thereby earning the death penalty for himself and all his posterity. Every human being deserves death and has no right to expect anything different.

The price of sin must be paid either by ourselves or a substitute. The promise of a Savior was our only hope, because we could never have paid the price. “And I will put enmity between thee

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20, KJV)

and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). This displays the love of God described in 1 John 4:10, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

However, this love is shown especially in Jesus’ resolve to finish the work his Father had given him to do: “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1; read also Isa. 50:7). This is love, but it was also a joy for him, as Hebrews 12:2 says: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The world cannot understand love like this. The world says, “Look around you. See all the happiness and joy. Come with us, and you shall be satisfied.” Seeing what our Savior endured, should we then continue filling our minds and hearts with the things of this world? What picture do you envision in your mind when reading or hearing about the suffering and death

of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross? Is your question, “Was he there for me”? Life and death is very personal. No one can experience it for another. This makes Christ’s sufferings precious to me, because he accomplished for me what I could never have done. Eternity will be too short to praise, worship, and adore him!

Alas and did my Savior bleed
and did my sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
for sinners such as I?

Was it for sins that I have done
he suffered on the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide
and shut his glories in,
when Christ, the great Redeemer,
died for man the creature’s sin.

Thus might I hide my blushing
face while his dear cross appears,
dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
and melt mine eyes to tears.

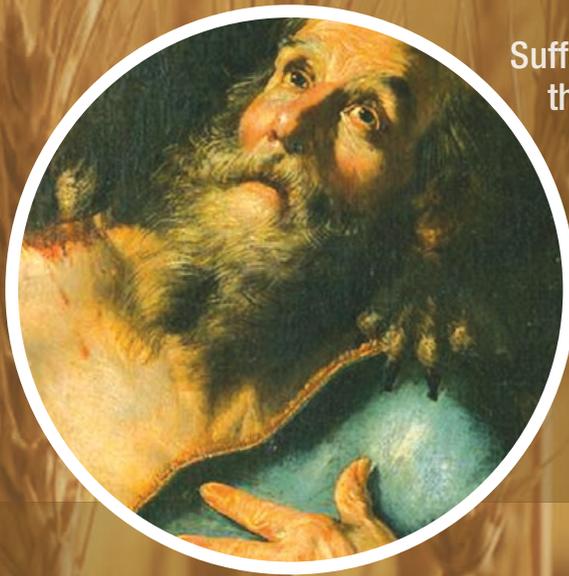
But drops of grief can ne’er repay
the debt of love I owe;
here, Lord, I give myself away—
tis all that I can do.

—Isaac Watts, “Alas and Did My Savior Bleed” (1707)



Mr. Cornelius VanKempen

known as Case, has been married to Susan for fifty-four blessed years. They attend and are members of Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, MI.



Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God.

I Am Afraid of Your Love



Rev. James Sinke

For if you are silent concerning me, I shall become God's; but if you show your love to my flesh, I shall again have to run my race. Pray, then, do not seek to confer any greater favor upon me than that I be sacrificed to God while the altar is still prepared; that, being gathered together in love, you may sing praise to the Father through Jesus Christ, that God has deemed me, the bishop of Syria, worthy to be sent for from the east unto the west, and to become a martyr in behalf of his own precious sufferings, so as to pass from the world to God that I may rise again unto him. (Ignatius, "The Epistle to the Romans," chapter 2)

Ten Roman soldiers were escorting Ignatius from Syria to Rome, where he would undergo a trial with a predetermined verdict. The Roman emperor intended to use the public execution of Ignatius as a warning to his subjects to stay away from Christianity. But much more than he feared death, Ignatius feared the prayers of his fellow Christians. "I am afraid of your love," he wrote in his letter to the Roman church in advance of his arrival, "lest it do me injury" (chap. 1). That injury would

be their prayers pleading with God to rescue Ignatius from martyrdom.

The Road to Rome

The church in Antioch had become one of the most prominent congregations by the beginning of the second century. As its bishop, Ignatius pastored and protected Christians alongside the congregation's elders, and gained a reputation for firm faithfulness. He was passionate about keeping the truth of the gospel clear and unchanged, which brought Ignatius

into conflict with those who wanted the church to accommodate the culture's ideas and the culture's morality. When he was arrested on the emperor's authority, many were glad to see him leave Antioch.

While on his journey to Rome, Ignatius stopped in Smyrna in Asia Minor. At the time, Christians were free to gather and to worship unless local Roman authorities viewed the church's growth as a threat to the peace of the empire. Taking advantage of this freedom, several churches sent delegations to visit with Ignatius, and many Christians blessed him with gifts and fellowship. He wrote letters to churches that had encouraged him, reminding them to remain steadfast in the gospel of Christ and to keep all things in order under the authority of the bishop and elders.

The Wheat of God

Because Ignatius's pilgrimage would come to its end in Rome, his letter to the Roman church has a more personal tone than the other epistles.

The Roman congregation would be planning to care for Ignatius upon his arrival and until his martyrdom, and perhaps some would be devising a plan to free him. But Ignatius had no interest in escaping martyrdom. He encouraged them to see his impending death not as a loss but as a gain for him: “Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let breakings, tearings, and separations of bones; let cutting off of members; let bruising to pieces of the whole body; and let the very torment of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ” (chap. 5).

These were not the exaggerations of a man looking to be venerated by the church, but genuine expressions of hope. Ignatius knew that at least some of those tortures awaited him, so he fixed his eyes on his Savior. He encouraged the Roman Christians to pray that his suffering would be swift, but not that his suffering could be avoided. In fact, he asked them to see his approaching martyrdom as one of the greatest gifts that Christ could give him:

Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God. . . . But when I suffer, I shall be the freed-man of Jesus Christ, and shall rise again emancipated in him. And now, being in bonds for him, I learn not to desire anything worldly or vain. (chap. 4)

All the ends of the world, and all the kingdoms of this earth shall profit me nothing. It is better for me to die for the sake of Jesus Christ, than to reign over all the ends of the earth. . . . Pardon me, brethren: do not hinder me in attaining to life; for Jesus is the life of believers. Do not wish to

keep me in a state of death, for life without Christ is death. (chap. 6)

Beloved by God

Ignatius’s desire to die for the sake of Christ has encouraged generations of the church. But his plea to the Roman congregation that they not pray for his escape is worth debating nearly two thousand years after he wrote his epistle. Is it more righteous to pray that one would receive a martyr’s death? Or should Christians pray for God to provide the means of escape from persecution?

What is not in question is the prominent role of prayer during times of persecution, and there is much to be gained from reflecting on the power and the content of those prayers. Ignatius did not see the prayers of the Roman church as desperate, last-gasp attempts to change the will of God, but as powerful instruments through which God ordains the lives of his people. That is why he expressed his fear about the loving prayers of these believers—he expected God to graciously provide what they were requesting.

Indeed, it is when the world seeks to demonstrate its power through oppression and torment that the church’s strongest witness is to continue to pray, fully expecting the glory of God to be on display through their suffering. And for the Christian’s steadfastness, there is no greater need than the power of God to sustain him.

Only request in my behalf both inward and outward strength, that I may not only speak, but [truly] will, so that I may not merely be called a Christian, but really found to be one. For if I be truly found [a Christian], I may also be called one, and be then deemed faithful when I shall no longer appear in the world. . . . The Christian is not the result of persuasion, but of power. When he is hated by the world, he is beloved by God. (chap. 3)

If You Do Not Spare Me

Knowing the physical torment that waited him, Ignatius repeatedly exhorted the Roman church not to consider the comforts of the flesh to have greater importance than the comfort of resting in Christ. For as much as they loved Ignatius, their prayers for his escape from persecution were in danger of serving the devil’s schemes. Knowing his own frailties, Ignatius knew that the devil desired to weaken Ignatius’s resolve to bear witness to Christ in his death. If Ignatius clung to the things that are earthly and temporal, and thus displayed to his executioners too much anguish to leave this life, he would not be a firm witness to the hope he had in Jesus. He wrote, “It is difficult for me to attain to God if you do not spare me under the pretense of carnal affection” (chap. 1). In other words, the church’s loving prayers for his physical safety threatened his spiritual courage.

That is why, when considering the appropriate outlook on the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage, Ignatius turned to that well-loved question of Psalm 116: “What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?” The Lord’s greatest benefit to Ignatius was the gift of Jesus “who was delivered [to death] for my sake” (chap. 8), but Ignatius was not willing to degrade the value of that gift by refusing to offer himself willingly if God had so appointed his martyrdom. “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” (Matt. 16:26, English Standard Version).

Rev. James Sinke

is the pastor of Bethel United Reformed Church. He and his wife, Andrea, live in Woodstock, ON, with their four children.

A Message from the Holy Spirit



Mrs. Annemarieke **Ryskamp**

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. (1 Tim. 4:1–5, English Standard Version)

This passage is from the first letter of the apostle Paul to Timothy. Note that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pass on this message, not only to Timothy but also to Christians in later times (v. 1). The Spirit says it “expressly,” which gives urgency to the message so that

we, when we start to recognize the issues he is talking about, will heed the message and cultivate the right attitude, as mentioned in verse 4.

The Message

What is the Holy Spirit telling us? That there will be deception spread

by people who (often still) call themselves Christian. This is part of the deception. We think they are fellow Christians, and we trust them to have our well-being at heart. Think, for example, of politicians, school teachers, or professors at universities, to whom we entrust our children to be educated.

Paul, who wrote the letter to Timothy, says that there are “some,” so not everybody is departing from the faith. But the ones who are, are deceiving a great many others and would deceive even the elect, if possible (Matt. 24:24). These past couple of years have shown us the division between the two groups becoming more and more evident.



We need to be alert. When Jesus sent out his disciples, he warned them: “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16). If Jesus is warning us this way, we know he will help us when we have doubts about somebody or some teaching or rule. In fact, in the same chapter gives us a criterion we can apply (vv. 32–33): “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

How Bad Is It?

The “some” who depart from the faith get taken in by the devil himself. I’m convinced some are possessed. This passage in 1 Timothy 4 is not subtle in stating what they do:

They devote themselves to deceitful spirits. Devotion is more than an occasional slip into sin; it is giving one’s full attention at all times.

They listen to and follow the teaching of demons, which comes to them through the insincerity (i.e., lies and hypocrisy) of liars.

The consciences of these liars are seared. This means they are burned shut. By cauterization their consciences are shut down. Remarks like “How can they do this?” will not influence them. They have no empathy, no love, no care anymore. They can only hate and follow the orders they get from others like them.

What Will They Do?

They forbid marriage and require abstinence from food (v. 3). When you think about it, both have been going on for a while now.

Remember how certain foods were suddenly bad, because

they contained cholesterol and cholesterol was bad for you? Eggs were bad, and red meat and butter and whole milk and much more. Why was that? My opinion is that the pharmaceutical industries wanted to sell more of their statin drugs. They were successful.

Now the climate change activists have set their eyes on meat and dairy. When you pay attention to it, you will find many instances of small groups of people wanting to decide for you and control what to eat.

How we should respond is in the same verse 4. All food that God created for us can be eaten with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. This requires that we thank God for everything we eat, and we believe and know the truth. By extension it means that we should try to help the people close to us who may be fearful or are being deceived. We have to help them know the truth and grow in their faith. This is our responsibility that comes with our freedom.

The other main item of concern for the “deceitful spirits” is marriage. Marriage is instituted by God and is the core unit of the family. So the battle is raging against the family as God created it.

First, the definitions of the words are changed: the definition of family and of male and female. In Romans 1 we read what happens to people who are involved in this battle: God gives them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity (v. 24); they are given up to dishonorable passions (v. 26) and to a debased mind (v. 28). For an excellent description of this kind of people, I recommend reading Romans 1.

Recently in Canada, but earlier already in California and New York, laws have been passed that

Christians are not allowed anymore to show deceived and confused people the way to Christ. This is only a start to where the world will try to tell pastors what to preach about in church. Pastor Tim Stephens from Calgary said (according to a World Net Daily message on January 16, 2022), “We’ve seen that the new prevailing worldview is totalitarian, seeking to define marriage, sexuality, and control health choices. It is absolutely intolerant to opposing beliefs. All socialistic and communistic movements hate the authority and law of God that Christianity promotes.” He was jailed twice last year for keeping his services open.

What Do We Do?

What do we as believers in Jesus do? We acknowledge Jesus as our Savior before the people. Then we may call on God as our Father. The Father loves us so much that he will give us everything we need. Everything he created for us is to be enjoyed with thanksgiving. Saying thank you is our acknowledgment that we received it from him. We do not need to reject anything, because it is made holy by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:5). What should we pray for? First Timothy 2:2 gives an excellent answer in this context: “[Pray] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

Mrs. Annemarieke Ryskamp

was born and raised in the Netherlands. She graduated with a master’s degree in Dutch Language and Literature from Utrecht University and worked for the Dutch L’Abri and as a secondary school teacher at United World College in Singapore. She attends Dutton United Reformed Church (MI), where she leads various Bible study groups and mentor groups. She has two sons who are currently in graduate studies.

MOMENTARY

Marriage

AND

IMMANUEL ETERNITY

Mrs. Vanessa Le

Weddings are beautiful. The music, the flowers, the food, the dress. The joy on the faces of the bride and bridegroom. The joyful anticipation of many happy days together. The beginning of a new life together is worth a good celebration. Marriage can also be beautiful. The mutual delight of the spouses in each other. The new avenues of service they can find together. The pitter-patter of little feet that have been brought into the world through this couple. Marriage is a picture of the love which Christ has for his church and is worth celebrating.

So, what happens when the music fades, the flowers wither, the food gets burned, and the dress no longer fits? What happens when the joy between spouses turns to angry arguments? What happens when life begins to feel like a big pity party? The wedding day holds many dreams of happiness and hope for the future, but what happens when the husband looks less like Christ and a lot more like a sinful man, and what happens when the wife looks less like a bride

and a lot more like a crabby mama who is best avoided most of the time? What happened to happily ever after?

A Picture, But Only a Picture

The Bible tells us that marriage is a relationship that God ordained, a relationship that is meant to picture the love that Christ has for the church. Husbands are to love their wives as themselves, and wives are to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:24). This picture of Christ and the church

makes marriage sound beautiful and wonderful, which it often is. However, I want to challenge your expectations of marriage. Have you put your hope in the picture instead of in the reality?

In the beginning, God created man and woman to enjoy perfect fellowship with him and with each other. Sin broke that fellowship, and part of the curse is that both the marriage relationship and mankind's relationship to God are no longer perfect. Another part of the curse on Eve is, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16, New King James Version). This phrase, "Your desire shall be for your husband," shows how women, especially, idolize marriage and desire it more than is good and proper. Yes, God designed marriage as being good; yes, it is a beautiful picture of his relationship to his people; but no, marriage is not meant to replace our relationship with God. One of the themes throughout the Bible

is the theme of God making us his people and of him being our God. In fact, we see God making covenant commitments to his people, pursuing them, and working to restore their relationship with him. The message of the Bible is never, “Get married to solve your problems”; rather, it is, “Worship God as your God, and rejoice in his presence.”

God’s Covenant Promises

Notice some of the language that God uses when making a covenant. He talks about God being our God and us being his people. In the covenant with Abraham, God says, “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you . . . and I will be their God” (Gen. 17:7–8). In reference to the New Covenant, God says, “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer. 31:33). When Jesus is born, we finally reach the earthly fulfillment of God’s covenant promises: “So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matt. 1:22–23). We are now the temple of God, and we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us permanently (1 Cor. 3:16).

With each successive covenant, God reveals more of himself to his people, and the way we approach God changes along with the expanding revelation. The Old Testament is filled with requirements to enter into God’s presence. Animal sacrifices, blood everywhere, the stench of burning flesh: the removal of sin often involved elaborate and repeated

rituals. One such ritual was laying hands on a goat, which was then sent into the wilderness as a sign of sin being removed from the Israelites’ lives. But it didn’t end there; the person who accompanied the goat then had to wash his clothes, bathe with water, and only then could he come back into the camp. Rituals involved repeated washings, removal of contaminated objects, and separating the clean from the unclean, and touched every aspect of life in ancient Israel.

Already, But Not Yet

We live in the New Covenant and are no longer required to keep the ceremonial law or perform animal sacrifices. We can now approach God without an earthly mediator. Jesus came to be Immanuel, God with us. And he came to redeem our lives, our marriages, and our brokenness. Are you looking for a spouse who will build you up spiritually? Jesus builds his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Are you looking for a good spiritual leader? You already have a perfect Husband who cares more about your spiritual life than you do. Are you looking for someone who will pray for you every day? Jesus has direct access to the Father, and he always lives to make intercession for us. Are you lonely? Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Whatever you think you are missing by not being married, or by being married to this particular person, you already have it in Jesus Christ.

We already have the perfect spouse in Jesus Christ, but we live in the tension between the “already” and the “not yet.” “Now we see in a

mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Cor. 13:12). We already have a perfect spiritual leader in Christ, but he calls us to submit to lesser, imperfect leaders. We already have Christ praying for us every day, but we don’t stand directly in God’s presence. We already have God with us at all times, but we can’t see him face to face. We’re the bride of Christ, but the wedding day hasn’t arrived. We long for the day when all those “not yet” aspects of life here will completely, and finally, be fulfilled in perfection. Meanwhile, we stay close to our Lord each day by reading Scripture, staying active in daily Bible study and prayer, and praying with our families and church friends.

You’re Getting Married!

The wedding will be beautiful. The music of the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand people will reverberate throughout the city (Rev. 5:11). The food will be delicious. The tree of life will produce twelve different fruits, each in its season, for the enjoyment of those invited and attending (Rev. 22:2). The dress will be the most perfect and glorious wedding dress we have ever seen—for the bride will be clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ, and she will be glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, holy and without blemish (Rev. 21:2; Eph. 5:27). Who is that most blessed bride? When is that happiest of all weddings? We, the people of God, are the bride, when God finally fulfills all his covenant promises to us. We shall dwell with him and be his people, and he shall dwell with us and be our God. And then we shall finally, and truly, be happily married. Forever after.



Mrs. Vanessa Le

is a wife and mom to four children age six and under. She enjoys reading, playing the piano, studying theology, and generally being Mommy. She is a member of Orlando Reformed Presbyterian Church in Orlando, FL.

Alle roem is uitgesloten: A Calvinistic Hymn on God's Love



Mr. Michael R. Kearney

In the previous issue, I described the cautious stance with which Reformed churches in the Netherlands accepted the singing of anything but the Psalms in worship. Yet this is not to suggest that good Dutch hymns were lacking—far from it! In fact, some of the most beautiful expressions of Protestant faith emerged from Germany and the Netherlands in the centuries following the Reformation. The words of these hymns have sustained and refreshed generations of believers. Here I'd like to trace the history of one such hymn by the Dutch minister Jan Scharp (1756–1828).

Scharp served congregations in Sint-Annaland, Axel, Noordwijk-Binnen, and Rotterdam. He was influential in introducing the 1773 translation of the Dutch Psalter and was responsible for authoring nine of the texts in the 1807 collection of “Evangelical Songs” published by the state denomination, the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. Among these is the fascinating text *Alle roem is uitgesloten*.

The scope of the hymn's eight stanzas is astounding, moving through the story of redemption in an individual believer's life to a cosmic hymn of everlasting praise. In the first stanza, the singer rejoices that long before God formed the world, “his choice was for me.” The second, third, and fourth stanzas reflect on total depravity and irresistible grace, including a paraphrase of John 3:16. In the fifth stanza, the singer turns to consider the blessings afforded by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Stanzas six and seven admit the ongoing doubt and unbelief that often characterize the Christian life but emphasize the

reassurance that comes from a fresh look at “my Father's heart.” Finally, the hymn expresses the believer's desire for heaven and a tranquil posture toward death—“And the final word I stammer:/Free, amazing, boundless grace!” At the end of each stanza is a couplet that echoes the closing verses of Psalm 103: “God is love, O angel throng,/Tongues of men, praise him in song!” It is a beautiful and intimate expression of faith in the fatherly mercies of a sovereign God.

Here's where the history of *Alle roem is uitgesloten* becomes tangled and intriguing. The hymn is set to an altered version of a tune from the seventeenth century, composed by the German violinist Johann Schop (c. 1590–1667). The original text associated with that tune is the German hymn *Sollt ich meinem Gott nicht zingen*, authored by the famous German hymnodist Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676). The Dutch text is not close enough to Gerhardt's hymn to be called a translation, but there are still some interesting similarities.¹ Both texts reference John 3:16 in the second stanza, both invoke the imagery of a parent caring for a child in the second-to-last stanza, and both conclude with a couplet about God's love. Yet there are notable differences too; the Scharp hymn includes much more explicit Calvinistic themes.

Perhaps Scharp took Gerhardt's hymn as inspiration for his own text. In any case, both hymns are worthy of inclusion in Protestant hymnals

today. Gerhardt's text has been translated into English as “I Will Sing My Maker's Praises,” but *Alle roem is uitgesloten* has never been completely rendered into English until now. The altered melody appears in the Canadian Reformed *Book of Praise* with the text of two other hymns, “Christ Has Risen! Hallelujah!” and “He Has Come, the Holy Spirit!” But this is the first time that the Jan Scharp–Johann Schop duo has appeared in English with a full translation and full harmonization.

The richness of this Calvinistic text would make it wonderful material for family devotions, perhaps learning one stanza each day over the course of a week. It could also suggest an outline for a topical Bible study on the doctrines of grace. And, of course, it is a tremendous blessing simply for use in one's personal walk of faith with the Lord. May it continue to encourage those who sing and hear it!

1. See https://hymnary.org/text/i_will_sing_my_makers_praises.

I first learned of this Dutch hymn through an organ fantasia by the composer John Propitius (1953–). Follow this link, <https://youtu.be/AbXT7iZb05Y>, to see my performance of Propitius's fantasia on *Alle roem is uitgesloten*, recorded on a historic 1853 organ at St. Paul of the Cross Monastery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Michael R. Kearney

is a board member of Reformed Fellowship. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in Rhetoric at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh

Now All Boasting Is Excluded

1. Now all boast - ing is ex - clud - ed, Un - earned bliss is all my own.
2. Midst the woes of my trans - gres - sion Came his love and ten - der hand.
3. For God loved the world so dear - ly That his on - ly Son was born
4. Still would I re - sist God's cal - ling, But, through Je - sus' blood out-poured,

Since in God my joy is root - ed, I will boast in grace a - lone!
O, the depth of his com - pas - sion, More than I can un - der - stand!
To re - deem that world in pit - y From its sin and shame and scorn.
He re - newed my mind from fal - ling, Gave me faith to serve my Lord.

Long be - fore my moth - er bore me, Yes, be - fore God's might - y hand
En - mi - ty and sin had caught me, Bound in chains of dark - ness grim;
Yes, while we were foes of heav - en, Mer - cy was his gift so free.
Then I saw my shame with weep - ing, Saw what God in Christ pro - vides,

Made the world from noth - ing stand, E - ven then, his choice was for me.
Nev - er would I turn toward him. It was he, in love, who sought me.
Je - sus died on Cal - va - ry, Died, that sin - ners be for - giv - en!
Cast my un - be - lief a - side, Trust - ed in my Fa - ther's keep - ing.

God is love, O an - gel throng, Tongues of men, praise him in song!

Office Bearers in the Church: The Duties of the Office (Part 2)



Rev. Greg Lubbers

The Duties of the Office

The Duties of an Elder: The General Duties¹

Concerning the office of elder, the biblical language of “overseer” summarizes the general duty of the elder to be the overseeing of the spiritual well-being of the flock. In overseeing the spiritual well-being of the flock, the elders are to engage in faithful prayer both for the flock and with the flock (Acts 6:4; Eph. 6:19; 2 Thess. 3:1–2; Jas. 5:14). In addition, the elders are to “shepherd”² all the spiritual aspects of the congregational life (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). This shepherding must include proactive ministerial nurturing as well as reactive pastoral action and is limited to the spiritual life of the congregation and its members.

The Duties of an Elder: The Goals of the Duties

As the elders shepherd the flock, their primary goals are the purity of doctrine and holiness of life of the congregation. There is a vital connection between these two goals, as purity of doctrine must result in holiness of life, and holiness of life is impossible without purity of doctrine. Therefore, through instruction, examples, encouragement, admonitions, and discipline, the elders of a flock strive to foster and maintain purity of doctrine and holiness of life.

The Duties of an Elder: The Tasks within the Duties

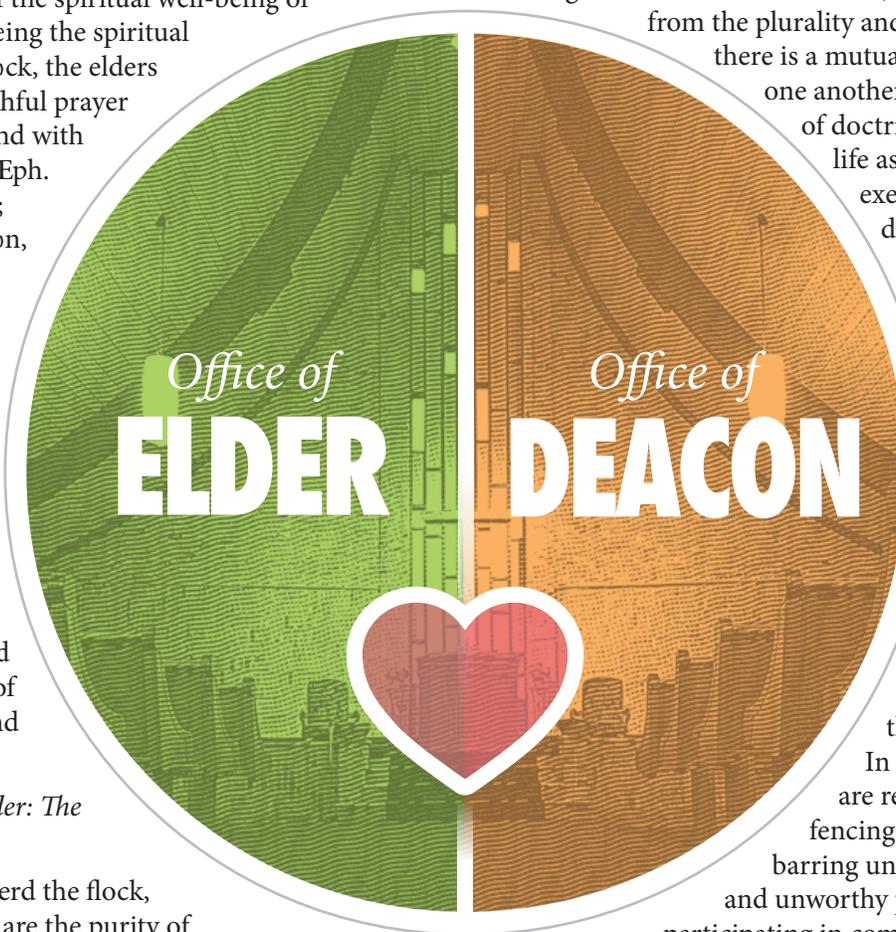
To achieve purity of doctrine and holiness of life, the elders are to engage in numerous tasks.

In the first place, this duty includes the task of the oversight of fellow office bearers (Acts 20:28). Flowing from the plurality and equality of officers, there is a mutual duty of overseeing one another’s personal purity of doctrine and holiness of life as well as the faithful execution of their office’s duties.

In the second place, this duty includes the task of maintaining the purity of the Word and the sacraments. “An important task of every elder is to stand guard over the pulpit and to insist on the pure preaching of the Word of God.”³

In addition, the elders are responsible for the fencing of the table, that is, barring unrepentant sinners and unworthy partakers from participating in communion, ensuring covenant children receive baptism properly, as well as examining spiritual maturity in connection with profession of faith and adult baptism.

In the third place, this duty includes the task of assisting in catechizing the covenant youth (1 Tim. 3:2). While the instruction of the congregation falls primarily upon the teaching elder or minister, the task of catechizing is often



broader than the minister's ability, and therefore it falls upon the elders to assist in this labor. This task, along with the guarding of the pulpit's purity, will demand the elder be a man of theological knowledge and biblical wisdom.

In the fourth place, this duty includes the task of promoting God-centered schooling (Eph. 6:4). Within the realm of the covenant and under the demands of the covenant, the elders must ensure that the children of the covenant receive training and instruction in the fear of the Lord.

In the fifth place, this duty includes the task of congregational visiting (Jas. 5:14). Upon the reception of a call from the member, the elders are to counsel biblically and pastorally those who are dying, sick, or distressed by perplexing providences.

In the sixth place, this duty includes the task of family visiting (Acts 20:20). In addition to visiting the sick, the elders are to imitate the apostolic example in frequently visiting families of the congregation for spiritual check-ups and appropriate encouragement or admonition.

In the seventh place, this duty includes the task of the exercise of Christian discipline (Gal. 6:1). If need be, in reaction to an impurity of doctrine or ungodliness of life, the elders of the congregation are to exercise the authority of Christ in Christian discipline for the purpose of restoring the erring one, protecting the congregation, and bringing glory to God.

In the eighth place, this duty includes the task of encouraging evangelism (Matt. 28:19–20). Heeding Christ's command, the elders are to encourage and direct the congregation in the engagement of personal evangelism as individuals and as a corporate body.

In summary, the elders are to insure all is done in good order (1 Cor. 14:40). While they do not do everything, often making proper use of delegation, they oversee the general affairs and conduct of the congregation ensuring biblical, godly orderliness. It is by faithfully engaging in these duties that the elders prayerfully seek to preserve a purity of doctrine and holiness of life within the congregation.

The Duties of a Deacon: The General Duties

Similar to the elders, a primary duty of the diaconate is that of prayer. To fulfill this duty, the deacons are to engage faithfully in prayer in their meetings as a body and in their visits with the physically distressed. In addition, their specific duty is to engage in overseeing and guiding the Christian work of mercy. They are the hands of the body of Christ, filled with compassion and reaching out to those poor and distressed who are in material need.

The Duties of a Deacon: The Tasks in the Duties

As the hands of compassion of the body of Christ, the deacons are to engage in a number of tasks.

In the first place, this duty includes the task of knowing congregational needs. While those in need have every right to approach the deaconry, the deacons have the duty to visit the widowed, sick, unemployed, accident stricken, large families, orphaned, disabled, and others to investigate gently whether there is material need. These visits are not informal social visits but official visits of ministration and ought to be conducted accordingly.

In the second place, this duty includes the task of encouraging the congregation to show mercy. Generally, this encouragement may take the form of confidentially

making needs known to the congregation, thereby encouraging the display of Christian compassion on the part of the body of Christ. Specifically, this encouragement may come through exhortations from Scripture through the avenue of appeals to the congregation, wealthy individuals, or a neighboring diaconate.

In the third place, this duty includes the task of gathering and distributing funds among the congregation. Benevolent funds are to be gathered exclusively through collections and counted and deposited with the safeguard of a plurality of officers.

In the distribution of the funds, the diaconate must investigate the reasons and severity of need in order to respond appropriately. P. Y. DeJong makes a helpful distinction between "primary poverty," where there is a lack of sufficient income to maintain the normal-size family in a state of physical efficiency although resources are economically and frugally administered, and "secondary poverty," which is the result of inappropriate spending.⁴ Likewise, William Heyns distinguishes between "personal faults" and "special adversities."⁵ Both need diaconate assistance but of a differing nature.

In the act of distribution itself, the deacons should give gifts in a sufficient, regular, and confidential manner with biblical encouragement and prayer. Various circumstances will determine whether a simple one-time gift or regular monetary gifts are given or if the deacons become more creative with paying of bills, buying food or clothing, or meeting other material needs.

In the fourth place, this duty includes encouraging and comforting the needy with God's Word. This aspect especially distinguishes the work

of the diaconate from that of other social forms of assistance. With scriptural guidance and instruction, the deacons must encourage the prevention of poverty as well as remedy poverty if possible. However, they also have to assist with the understanding of poverty through the biblical perspective on special adversities of providence.

In the fifth place, this duty includes showing mercy to those outside the congregation if possible (Gal. 6:10). While their main field of service is the local congregation of God's people, deacons should also have an open eye for opportunities to show the compassion of Christ among the community as occasion allows.

The Duties of the Council

While each respective office has its respective duties, there are also general responsibilities that fall upon the officers to fulfill as a council including both the elders and the deacons. These duties include the issuing of calls to office, formulating and operating an annual budget, and overseeing the functioning of various committees that may be organized to deal with the practical, day-to-day items of congregational life.

The Guidelines for the Office

A Necessary Knowledge

To fulfill the tasks and duties of their office faithfully, the office bearers must have a necessary knowledge of the Scriptures, the confessions, and the Church Order.

Since the Scriptures are the basic tool used in functioning in the offices of both elder and deacon, the office bearers must have a good grasp of the passages and teachings of Scripture (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:9).

In addition, since the confessions summarize the teachings of Scripture and serve a unifying, preserving, and instructing purpose, the office bearers must have a solid understanding of the confessions. This is especially critical for the office of elder whose tasks include maintaining the purity of Word and sacraments, assisting in catechizing the youth, and exercising discipline. However, it is also necessary for the deacons to encourage and comfort the needy with God's truth in times of perplexing difficulty.

Finally, since the Church Order summarizes "that spiritual polity which our Lord has taught us"⁶ or the way Christ would have the churches governed ("decently and in order," 1 Cor. 14:40), the office bearers must have a good grasp of the Church Order.

A Necessary Cooperation

Within the execution of these offices, there must be a necessary attitude of humble servitude recognizing the plurality of officers. Each officer must remember that he does not serve himself but Christ and that each other officer is also humbly seeking to serve Christ. With this attitude, there must be the recognition that each office bearer has distinctive gifts and responsibilities and must

engage in a necessary participation within the work of the office. Since the whole body is seeking, or should be seeking, to serve Christ, there will be frequent times when an individual office bearer must exercise a necessary submission to the majority mind of the body. The work of the consistory, diaconate, and council is the work of a body rather than that of individuals and therefore should demonstrate a necessary unity. Divided and divisive consistories or councils are a disaster waiting to happen.

The Wife of the Office Bearer

The Character of the Office Bearer's Wife

While Scripture lists numerous criteria for the spiritual qualification of the office bearer, it also says something concerning the necessary character of an office bearer's wife. First Timothy 3:11 states an office bearer's wife is to demonstrate a godly attitude of reverential, spiritual maturity that displays itself predominately in godly speech by consistently refraining from malicious gossip or backbiting. This is essential because while the office bearer will seek to keep important matters confidential, the wife of an office bearer will not be ignorant to the realities of special meetings, visits, or phone calls.

Furthermore, the wife of an office bearer is to display a character of godly self-control or being temperate in relationship to her desire of material goods. This is especially critical for the wife of a deacon, who could frequently accompany her husband to minister to those in financial straits. Finally, the wife of an office bearer must display godly faithfulness. As she assists her husband, the wife must be faithful in her duties by enabling and encouraging him to be faithful in his.

Within the execution of these offices, there must be a necessary attitude of humble servitude recognizing the plurality of officers. Each officer must remember that he does not serve himself but Christ and that each other officer is also humbly seeking to serve Christ.

The Duties of the Office Bearer's Wife

We must stress that the wife of an office bearer does not have a set of vast duties within the life and labor of the church. She is not to be the default person for every committee and assignment. Nor should she feel extraordinary pressure to assume numerous responsibilities. Rather, her duty is to fulfill her God-given design and role by being a supportive assistant to her husband as he fulfills his God-given calling of office bearing.

Conclusion

While the future of the church is guaranteed based upon the person and work of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18), the well-being of the churches is dependent upon the wisdom, godliness, and diligence of its office bearers. May we as members of those churches be in prayer for current office bearers as well as future office bearers so that the kingdom of God might increase and peace rule within the house of the Lord.

1. The divisions of this section (duties, goals, and tasks) follow the *Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America*, Articles 14 and 15, along with Michael G. Brown, ed., *Called to Serve: Essays for Elders and Deacons* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Fellowship, 2007), chap. 2.
2. The word *shepherd* has a broad idea including protect, rule, govern, foster, lead, or guide.
3. J. L. Shaver, *The Polity of the Churches*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Church Polity Press, 1947), 152.
4. P. Y. DeJong, *The Ministry of Mercy for Today* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 137.
5. William Heyns, *Handbook for Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1928), 325–26.
6. Belgic Confession, Article 30.

Rev. Greg Lubbers

is currently serving as Minister of the Word and Sacraments at Covenant Reformed Church (URCNA) in Pella, IA.



New Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling (MABC) Degree

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) is excited to announce its new Master of Arts in Biblical Counseling (MABC) degree program. This program is designed to serve the church with biblical, Reformed, and experiential counselors who teach and model the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Program Distinctives:

- Committed to the Scriptures
- Creedal and Confessionally Reformed
- Grounded in Systematic Theology
- Informed by Biblical Theology
- Drawing on Biblical Examples of Counseling
- Experiential Emphasis
- Hands-on Approach

The MABC degree program requires a total of 62 credit hours and can be completed in two years.

“There is a great need in our churches for pastors and ministry leaders who understand the effects of the Fall on individuals and on our social order, and who can pastorally care for the souls of men and women in a way that biblically brings about restoration, redemption and transformation, both with God and with one another. I believe this new MABC program will train such counselors.”

Dr. Mark Kelderman, Dean of Students and Spiritual Formation, as well as Instructor in Pastoral Theology

For more information visit prts.edu/curriculum/master-of-arts-biblical-counseling



I Didn't Know How Difficult It Would Be



Rev. Arnoud T. Vergunst

The following introduction article is a preview to a coming book to be published by Reformed Fellowship.

Introduction

With this book I desire to share with you the struggles I experienced in the journey I began with my first wife, Melanie, and the later struggles I faced without her. In December 1993 it became known to us that she had a malignant brain tumor. After about two years and two months, the Lord took her to be with him at the young age of twenty-nine years. I remained behind with five young children. As a pastor I knew which Bible texts were fitting and comforting for such an intensely sad situation, since I preached weekly about God who is good and gracious but also wise and sovereign. Yet I have to admit, sometimes it was a huge struggle for me to believe that myself. The struggle to find rest in him was real. I was often tossed about with storms from within my own mind. "Does God exist? Is everything I believe really true? God is good, but why does he inflict so much pain and grief? Why would he take a mother away from her young family and leave the father behind alone? Is everything that I preach Sunday after Sunday really true?"

Personal thoughts of a grieving husband and father

The Lord didn't leave me alone in such moments of intense wrestling. Countless times he pulled me out of these pits. Sometimes through a rainbow which stood at just such a moment along the skyline. Or through the mighty display of his

glory with the sunrays beaming through the clouds upon the earth while driving to preach his Word. Or I would be called at just the right time by someone who again pointed me to the God of the Scriptures and his goodness in caring for us. His timing was marvelous. But mostly

he comforted me by what I read in the Scriptures.

This book has been written about the struggles we may experience as we travel through the valley of grief, and how we can help others in these storms of life.

A Helping Hand

Don't expect a scientific treatment of grieving in this book. For such insights I direct you to other authors who have done extensive research in the area of grief. Don't expect in this book a Bible study or the biblical teaching on death, grief, the promises of God, and the crucial importance of the anchor of faith. About those subjects many valuable books have been written. In these pages I share the thoughts and the struggles that I experienced surrounding the loss of my dear wife Melanie, with the hope that I may be a practical, helping hand to others who are journeying through the deep valley of grief.

During one school year, my children were involved in a learning experience called "Shoes." Each week they were challenged to walk in the "shoes" of another person who lived through a specific need or situation. It was intense for them to experience in this attempted simulation what it meant to be discriminated against because of race or sex, to be permanently handicapped (blind or deaf), or to belong to a poorer social class within a rich country. In unbosoming my struggles with grief, I make an attempt to take you along in the shoes of a grieving person. It could be enlightening for yourself, or it may be helpful in your conversations and interactions with others at work or within your family circle.

Reading through this book may also help us to not speak or judge as

thoughtlessly as we often do. One author put it like this:

How often have I given my opinion when I wasn't asked for it? Why do I judge when I don't wear "their shoes"? How can I judge how many children a couple can handle? Or how someone spends his money? Or when the following words slip into my daily conversations: "If I was her, then . . ." Or I might ask someone, "Say, would you do that when . . . ?" Often, before we realize it, we have stepped into the shoes of someone else. Let's stay out of those shoes of the other unless we are called to wear them! Their shoes usually don't fit us. Our calling is not to wear their shoes but to make sure that the shoes another has to wear feel a little more comfortable. Therefore, jump into their life, without judging, when you see someone struggling. Lend a real helping hand; speak or write an encouraging word. Give a financial gift. Let's not look for great deeds in these situations. Try to give one a little foot rub; give another some help with a shoe-horn to get their shoes on, or obtain for third an arch support. This may help people to wear their shoes a little more comfortably. Or, as it is often said, it may help others to "carry their cross more cheerfully."

We can all profit from these wise words. In this case the old proverb is fitting: "If the shoe fits, wear it!"

First Aid

First aid can mean life or death. In this connection I think about our (foster) daughter Kim. At the very moment that she had a serious accident, a fireman/paramedic was literally sitting in his car talking on his phone, just a few hundred yards

away. In less than a minute he was with Kim, and partly through his expert intervention, we still have Kim with us. Of course, behind all these human interventions, we see the hand of God's grace. In his providence he placed her near this well-trained fireman/paramedic who knew what was critical for her survival. It would have been no help for someone like me to find her, with limited medical knowledge about the medical condition that she faced as she lay there in the totally twisted wreck of her car. Consider this book therefore a first-aid course in grief.

To Speak or to Be Silent

When you haven't experienced grief, you may think that it is better to avoid the subject of grief or loss. Isn't it painful and difficult to say something or to ask specifically about the great loss experienced? Be assured that it is not when it is done in a meaningful and genuine way. It is more painful when we act as if there is not a cloud in the sky. Compare it with a great flesh wound. Would you stand by and let it bleed? Would you say, "Don't touch the wound because it may bleed more"? Such a reaction could be fatal. Yet treating the wound with a dirty, infected rag could also be deadly. Through the reading of this book I hope to take away the shyness you may feel when you suddenly find yourself looking into the eyes of a one who grieves. I hope reading this book will provide you answers to question like "What should I say then? How do I begin a conversation? Should I avoid speaking about it at this time? How do I answer them when they ask questions or when they pour out their story?"

Intended Audiences

In writing this book, I hope to reach a varied audience, but mostly those

who are trudging through the valley of grief. Perhaps your journey has just begun, or you have already been traveling for years. As I share some of my struggles, you may find a sense of recognition. It may feel like a relief that you are not the only one. Judging by the numerous reactions I have received from those grieving in the Netherlands, where this book was first printed, I am confident that grieverers will feel less alone in their journey through the valley of grief.

Another target group is those who walk with the grieving. Perhaps you haven't experienced grief yourself in a personal way. You may feel awkward and unsure. But as you peek into the griever's world, it may give you more confidence walking along with them, knowing what or

what not to look for, what or what not to say or do.

I also think of the office bearers who are called to visit the grieving. So often you are called to minister to the church family in times of sickness, death, and the aftermath.

In addition, even adults who have lost a parent or parents or a sibling or siblings while young may benefit from reading this book. Many have shared that the wounds inflicted during their childhood have continued to ooze because they were the forgotten mourners. As one young man said to me the other day, "In those years, they always asked, 'How is your mother doing?' but nobody asked me, 'How are you doing?'" Reading through this book may help those of you who never

processed the grief appropriately at the time of loss.

Last, I think of those who contemplate entering or have recently entered into marriage with someone who is a widower or widow. Reading through these pages will give you a better understanding of your spouse. A new marriage can be very satisfying, very close, and beautiful. Yet that doesn't mean it has cancelled the grief of the loss about our former lover.

Rev. Arnoud Vergunst

is the pastor of the Reformed Congregation in Carterton, New Zealand.

SEEKING MISSION WORKER



Are you excited about sharing the gospel and using your God-given talents in urban mission?

Bethel Canadian Reformed Church in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada experiences increasing mission opportunities in our community. With a clear mandate from Council and a preliminary budget with startup funding, we are now seeking a full-time mission worker to promote and develop this work.

Based out of a well-established local church with eager membership, a tremendous opportunity exists for Reformed mission in the immediate community and neighbouring region. Qualified applicants must have a heart for mission in a diverse, multi-cultural community. The applicant is to be a member in good standing of a Canadian Reformed, United Reformed or sister church.

The position is presently geared towards non-ordained persons, but we are willing to consider ordained candidates as God leads. Qualification is not limited to those who have formal education although relevant training and experience, particularly in multi-cultural contexts, would be valuable assets.

If you are interested and would like more information along with a more detailed job description, please contact Barry Van Ommen at bvanommen@rogers.com or 416-953-3682.



What Is an Apologist?



Rev. William **Boekestein**

All Christians are apologists. All of us must be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). But God not only demands that we defend the faith, he also defines how we must defend it.

By demanding confidence, love, and holiness (1 Pet. 3:15–16) Peter warns against three faulty apologetic approaches:

1. The fearful apologist avoids all religious controversy. He craves safety. The approval of people matters more to him than the

approval of God. He also fears that if exposed to controversy his faith might fail.

2. The firebrand apologist isn't afraid of people. He also doesn't really care about them. What he cares about is being right. His passion blinds him from seeing that his fierceness compromises his mission.

3. The fraudulent apologist boldly engages critics. He might know his Bible and his theology. He might exude compassion and tenderness. But his life contradicts his message. He is disqualified by ungodliness.

There is a better way.

Faithful Apologists Are Confident

“Apologists do not start from a position of doubt or neutrality but from a position of firm and unshakeable conviction. They face the enemy, not in dread and fear, but with a strong sense of spiritual superiority.”¹

Spiritual superiority isn't arrogance, but certainty that the Christian faith is right. We are not talking about one valid approach among many, but *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*.

Faithful apologists are confident in God. True defenders of the faith “have no fear” of those intent on wronging the faithful (1 Pet. 3:14, English Standard Version). Here's

Part of practicing apologetics in gentleness and respect means we truly listen and speak truthfully. Listening will help us find the reasons beneath the objections. Sometimes intellectual objections are a cover-up for refusal to submit to God. Some objections arise from terrible pain. But we'll never truly know the heart of the argument if we refuse to listen.

Jesus' uncomfortable comfort: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Matt. 10:28). Whoever loses his life for Jesus' sake will find it (Matt. 10:39). And nearly all early apologists died miserably. Stephen was stoned. John's brother James, and Paul were beheaded. Philip, Andrew, Jude, Bartholomew, Luke, and both Simons were crucified. Matthew and Thomas were speared. Jesus' brother James was "beat and stoned . . . and finally had his brains dashed out" with a club. Matthias was stoned, then beheaded. Mark was "dragged to pieces."² Martyrs offer a pattern for the kind of conviction we need. And their deaths are themselves an apologetic for the faith. You don't follow your message to a horrible death if you believe it to be false.

Faithful apologists are also confident in God's word. We must depend on divine revelation and not be bothered by claims that "nothing can be true unless it is shown to be so by independent human thought."³ Even the best philosophical proof for God cannot convince a critic. Only God's divinely blessed word can open a closed mind (Heb. 4:12). "Without the Knowledge of Scripture a biblical defense is practically impossible."⁴

Biblical apologists have never left "attacks unanswered nor did they proceed to the defense with reluctance and hesitation. Rather, they were profoundly convinced that the truth was on their side and that it was capable of defense." Their

confidence was "practically half the victory."⁵ Believing confidence will help facilitate apologetic meetings in the first place. Fearful Christians will keep their hope hidden and their views quiet, so as to avoid uncomfortable spiritual engagements.

Confidence doesn't mean you have every answer. Mysteries aren't problems. "It is the glory of God to conceal things" (Prov. 25:2). But know that nothing is "hidden that will not be known" (Matt. 10:26).

Faithful Apologists Are Loving

For the world to know us not by our arguments or forcefulness but by our love (John 13:35) we must defend the faith with "gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Gentleness is the unexpected posture of a soul under the restful influence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' gentleness is a main reason unbelieving people should seek rest in him (Matt. 11:29). So our speech with outsiders should "always be gracious" (Col. 4:5-6). Initially, people may be more affected by how we answer than by what we answer.

It is not perfectly clear whether Peter means that we should respect our opponents or, as some translations have it, "fear" God (King James Version; New King James Version). But both are true. And they work together. The fear of God is the believer's heartfelt awe at all that God is and does.⁶ Believers amazed in the presence of Jesus, wondering

how he could love condemned, unclean sinners, can respect fellow image bearers even when they have not yet come to fear God. Note Paul's gentle reverence and composure in Acts 26:24-29, when Festus accused him of insanity and Agrippa tried to buy time:

"I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"

And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains."

You answer like that only if you fear the God of grace.

Sometimes we fail to argue gently and respectfully because we are looking for meaning in being right. Most habitual quarrelers "would be in such quarrels no matter what religion, or no religion, they inhabit . . . Quarrels are mostly . . . not about persuading opponents or making a difference in the world, but causing the quarreler to feel alive."⁷ But "Christians are free from the need of vindication, and filled with humility as heirs of grace."⁸ And the truth that we are defending is beyond the reach of the strongest accusations. God himself illustrates why this matters. "He who sits in the heavens laughs" at those who "take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed" (Ps.

2:4, 2). He isn't anxious. He doesn't lose his composure. He is perfectly secure. In the same way neither we nor the gospel we defend can ever be shaken (Heb. 12:28). So we can argue with hearts and minds, not with adrenaline.

Part of practicing apologetics in gentleness and respect means we truly listen and speak truthfully. Listening will help us find the reasons beneath the objections. Sometimes intellectual objections are a cover-up for refusal to submit to God. Some objections arise from terrible pain. But we'll never truly know the heart of the argument if we refuse to listen. And disagreement need not be disrespectful (Eph. 4:15). An opponent should be able to say, "I disagree. But I feel loved." Some people are too fragile or hostile to answer like that. But that's how we want people to disagree with us if they must.

Faithful Apologists Are Holy

Defend the faith "having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame" (1 Pet. 3:16). Good consciences are cultivated by works that match our words. Our adversaries should have nothing to accuse us of other than that we follow Christ.⁹ The holiness of faithful apologists will shame those who accuse them of hypocrisy.

Or, the hypocrisy of unfaithful apologists will shame Christianity. Ravi Zacharias was the worst kind of apologist because he broke Peter's rule. He was brilliant, confident, and charming. He appeared compassionate. He had every answer. But "biblical literacy and theological knowledge are not the same as holiness."¹⁰ Because Ravi lived a lie, accusations stuck. And who can calculate the damage of his moral failure? Hypocritical apologists

provide just the defense critics of the faith are looking for.

In a certain sense, we are the apologetic of the gospel. Jesus said, "[You] shall be My witnesses—My evidences, My credentials, My arguments."¹¹ The goal of apologetic conversations is "not so much about helping your friends understand your views as about helping them understand *your God*"¹² You can't do that without holiness.

Peter gives one command to those who defend the faith: "In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy" (1 Pet. 3:15). "As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet, 1:15–16). Christians must "distance themselves from those things that are contrary to [God's] perfect character. This distancing is not necessarily special. It is impossible to live entirely apart from the world. The 'distancing' in view . . . is positional. We are to be like God in *his* holiness. . . . [This will] have definite moral or ethical consequences . . . We should *be* different because we *are* different."¹³

And we must live differently together. Jesus prayed to his Father for Christian unity "that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:23). "There is hardly a greater obstacle to Christian apologetics than the fighting and bickering which goes on in the church."¹⁴

If we are sometimes ungentle, unloving, unholy apologists—sometimes representing Christianity, sometimes denying the gospel—let's be careful how we respond. Our hypocrisy is not a sign that we should stop defending the faith but that we should repent of hypocrisy. We should trust in Christ who suffered to bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18). And then, as Peter did after his backsliding, continue to defend

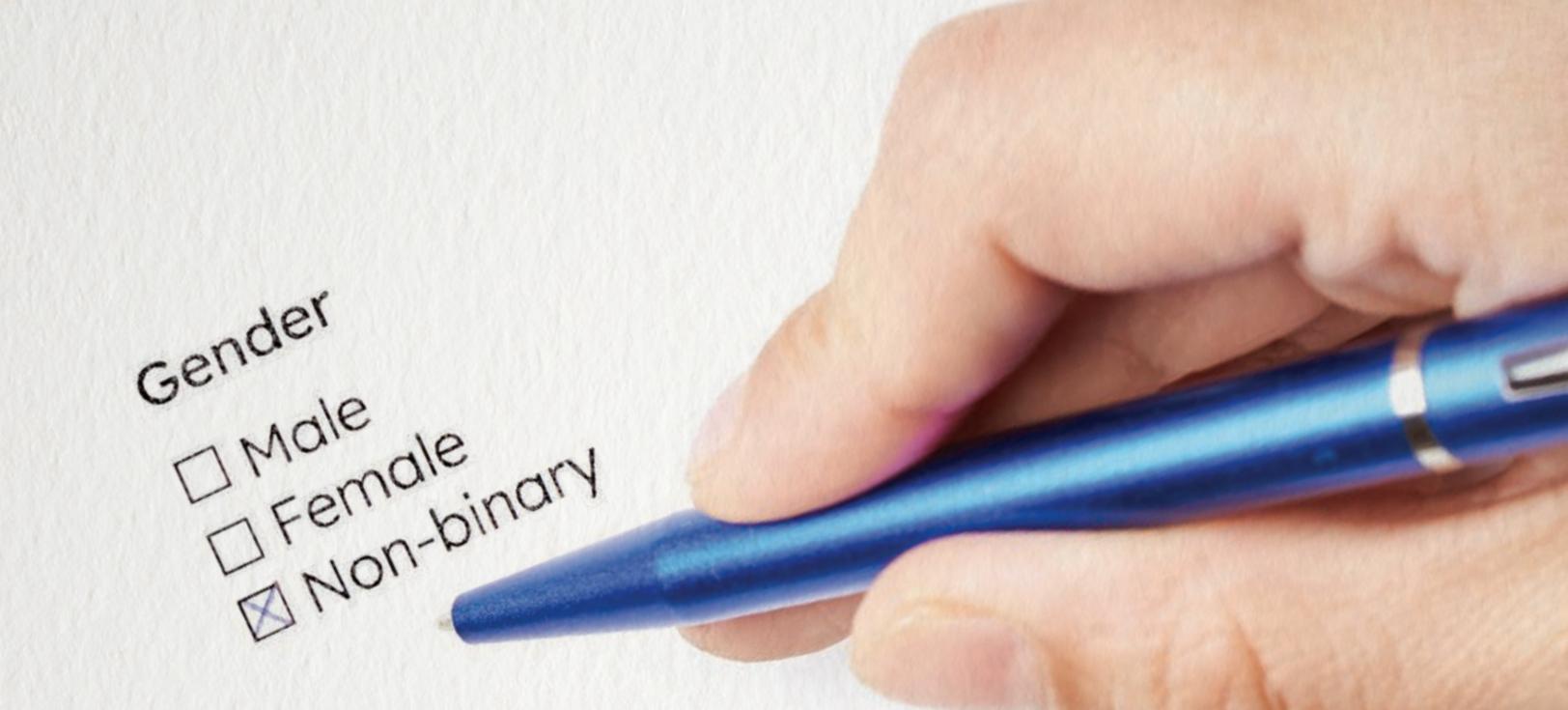
the reason that believers can hope in Christ.

Editor's note: This is the second article of a series and appeared previously at the blog for Reformation 21: <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/what-is-an-apologist>.

1. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 507–8.
2. William Byron Forbush, ed., *Fox's Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christians and the Protestant Martyrs* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1926), 2–5.
3. Richard Pratt, *Every Thought Captive: A Study Manual for the Defense of Christian Truth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979), 45.
4. Pratt, *Every Thought Captive*, 64.
5. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, 515.
6. Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, in *The Bible Speaks Today*, ed. John R. W. Stott (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988), 148.
7. Russel Moore, *The Courage to Stand: Facing Your Fear without Losing Your Soul* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 52, 55.
8. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, 143.
9. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 110.
10. Tedd Tripp, "Biblical Literacy and Theological Knowledge Are Not the Same as Holiness," September 10, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/tedd.tripp/posts/10224718585287523>.
11. G. Cambell Morgan, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), 13.
12. Kruger, *Surviving Religion 101*, 74.
13. K. Scott Oliphint, *The Battle Belongs to the Lord: The Power of Scripture for Defending Our Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 26–27.
14. Pratt, *Every Thought Captive*, 63.

Rev. William Boekestein

is the pastor of Immanuel Fellowship Church in Kalamazoo, MI. He has written several books and numerous articles. He and his wife, Amy, have four children.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a blue pen, pointing towards a form. The form has the word "Gender" at the top, followed by three options: "Male" with an unchecked checkbox, "Female" with an unchecked checkbox, and "Non-binary" with a checked checkbox. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

Gender

Male

Female

Non-binary

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity



Rev. Casey **Freswick**

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

—Genesis 1:26–27, ESV

What is your sexual orientation? What is your gender identity? Are you cis gender? These are all questions you will likely be asked if you are filling out a form for hospitalization or medical insurance. So, how should a Christian answer these questions? I submit that it is impossible for a Christian to answer the questions because the questions assume a worldview that is neither Christian nor biblical. These questions arise out of a postmodern worldview. They make assumptions that are contrary to a Christian witness.

To ask, “What is your gender identity?” for a Christian is like asking, “Are you a human or a zebra?” Both questions assume that my will determines reality. But my will does not determine reality. It is God’s will that determines reality. The form for my insurance carrier on medical information never technically asks, “What is your gender?” It asks what is your legal gender, what gender do you identify with, and what is your sexual orientation. But it never asks,

“What is your gender?” This last question assumes that you have a gender that is based on a view of the word that fits with the fact that God ordained my existence and I recognize what he created. It fits with a Christian worldview. It fits with science.

You are not the gender you choose. You are the gender you are given by God. The gender you are born with. In rebellion against God, people attempt to change the gender God gave them, but rebellion does not change reality. It does not change what is observable and verifiable. That is because the basic assumptions of medical science fit a Christian worldview. Ultimately medical practice cannot operate out of a postmodern worldview. A postmodern worldview is one in which individuals redefine

reality. A Christian worldview is one in which individuals recognize the reality God created. So, for a Christian to even answer the question, “What gender do you identify with?” is to compromise with the world. It is at best an accommodation to rebellion and at worst promotes the rebellious, nonsensical, unscientific, post-modern worldview of a significant portion of our current culture. We can answer the question, “Are you male or female?” But we ought not to answer the question, “What gender do you identify with?”

If we are asked, “What is the god you have brought into existence?” we would say the question is wrong. The question makes assumptions that are false. The question makes man the source of a god, rather than recognizing that the one true God is the source of man. To answer this question, we must confront the presuppositions in the question. In

the same way, even in our answering a form for medical insurance, we must confront the worldview those questions raise. How can we do this?

We can refuse to answer the question. If there is an “other with comments” option to questions like “What is your gender” we could write in “my gender is God-given” or “Created male in the image of God.” You could also write to the insurance company. Recently I wrote something like this to the postmodern questions asked by my insurance company:

Your questions about sexual orientation and gender identity do not fit my worldview. Both questions imply that I have a choice in these matters. From my worldview these questions are like asking, “Are you a human or a zebra?” God made me male. I am born human. I am born male. I recognize this

physical reality. A good question from a Christian worldview would be, “What sex did God give you at conception?” Please change your questions so that I can answer them. The questions you are asking are related to a secular, postmodern, unscientific, irrational worldview. This is not my worldview.

Witness the truth of the created order, the Christian worldview, and ultimately the gospel that can set people free from their enslavement to themselves, repent of their sin, and bow their knees before the Creator God, maker of heaven and earth, male and female.

Rev. Casey Freswick

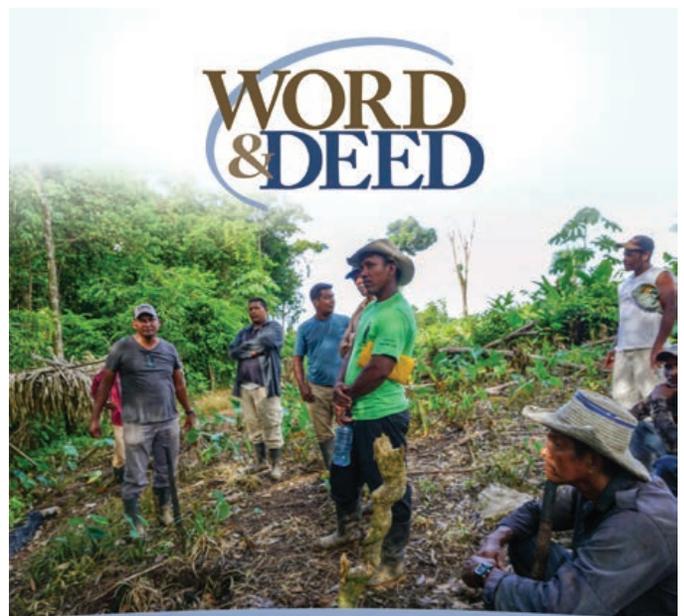
is minister emeritus, Bethany United Reformed Church, Wyoming, MI, and vice president of the board of Reformed Fellowship.

OPEN POSITIONS

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, MI) is looking to fill the **DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRAR** and **DIRECTOR OF ONLINE LEARNING** positions. Applications will be accepted until the positions are filled. The start date for the positions is **AUGUST 1, 2022**.

If you love the biblical, experiential, Reformed faith and have the gifts and experience necessary for this position we would like to hear from you. For more information about the admissions director, please visit prts.edu/open-position-at-prts/. To apply, send CV and cover letter to Dr. Jonathon Beeke at jonathon.beeke@prts.edu.

For more information about the online learning director, please visit prts.edu/director-of-online-learning/. To apply, send CV and cover letter to Dr. Adriaan Neele at adriaan.neele@prts.edu.



And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:17

www.wordanddeed.org

William Bates (1625–1699): A Forgotten Puritan



Dr. Joel R. Beeke

William Bates was one of the most popular and esteemed preachers among the Nonconformists; a master of the Puritan plain style of preaching, his stress on piety earned him the name “silver-tongued.” Born in November 1625, he was the son of William Bates, gentleman of St. Mary Magdalene parish, Bermondsey, Surrey. He graduated from Queen’s College with a bachelor of arts degree in 1645 and a master of arts degree in 1648.

The following year he became vicar of Tottenham, Middlesex, and a few years later he succeeded William Strong as vicar of St. Dunstan-in-the-West. Like other Puritans, Bates often lectured at the famous morning exercises at Cripplegate Church.

According to Richard Baxter, Bates played a major role in negotiating for the restoration of Charles II. As a reward, he was appointed royal chaplain in 1660. That same year he was appointed as a commissioner for the approbation of ministers by the Rump Parliament and was given a doctorate in divinity from Cambridge University by royal mandate. The following year he represented the Presbyterians as a commissioner at the Savoy Conference, of which one purpose was to review public liturgy. That included pointing out weaknesses in the Book of Common Prayer.

Bates’s first wife died young, as did his first daughter. At age thirty-six, he married Margaret, twenty-one-year-old daughter of Edward Gravenor, gentleman of St. Giles Cripplegate. She outlived him by a generation.

In 1662, Bates was one of two thousand ministers ejected by the Act of Uniformity. Yet he did not take offense. In his farewell sermon to the St. Dunstan’s church, he made no mention of the coming ejections, other than to say rather mildly in his conclusion that his Nonconformity was motivated only by his fear of offending God. He then added, “If it be my unhappiness to be in an error, surely men will have no reason to be angry with me in this world, and I hope God will pardon me in the next” (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 4:327).

Bates labored for the next ten years in a variety of ways, often with men like Thomas Manton, Edmund Calamy, and Richard Baxter, for the inclusion of Nonconformists within the Anglican church and for toleration of other churches. On two occasions, he addressed William III and Mary on behalf of his fellow Nonconformists. All of these efforts remained largely fruitless, however, for Charles never fulfilled his promises to work toward nonconformist inclusion.

After his ejection, Bates often preached in the vicinity of St.

Dunstan’s, most commonly at the house of the Countess of Exeter and in a room over Temple Bar Gate, beside his old church. From 1669 onward he apparently served as one of the lecturers at a dissenting congregation at Hackney. In 1672, he was licensed as a Presbyterian teacher and was appointed to lecture at Pinner’s Hall (later called the Ancient Merchants lecture). When Daniel Williams was expelled from this lectureship in 1694, Bates surrendered his lectureship as well and founded the Salters Hall lecture, where he drew large crowds.

Throughout the last decades of his life, Bates had several brushes with the authorities, including at least three fines for holding conventicles, notwithstanding his irenic character, mild manner of preaching, growing reputation as a respectable scholar, and friendships with leading Anglican authorities, such as Archbishop Tillotson. Bates remained a leading Puritan until the end of his life, often being invited to preach at the funerals of close Puritan friends, including Richard Baxter, Thomas Manton, Thomas Jacomb, and David Clarkson.

Bates died in Hackney on July 21, 1699. His funeral sermon, preached by John Howe, a close friend of more than forty years, was a rich testimony to his godly life and diligent study. His excellent library,

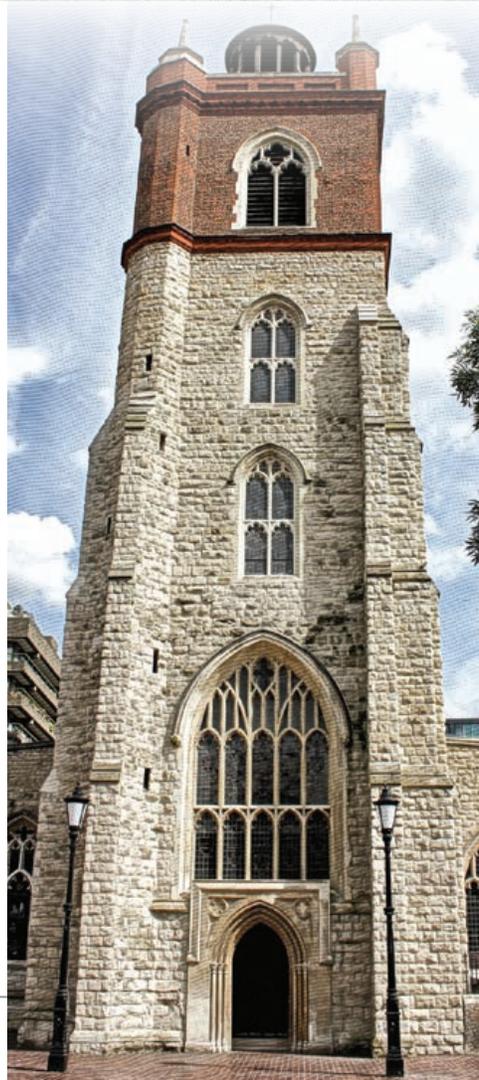
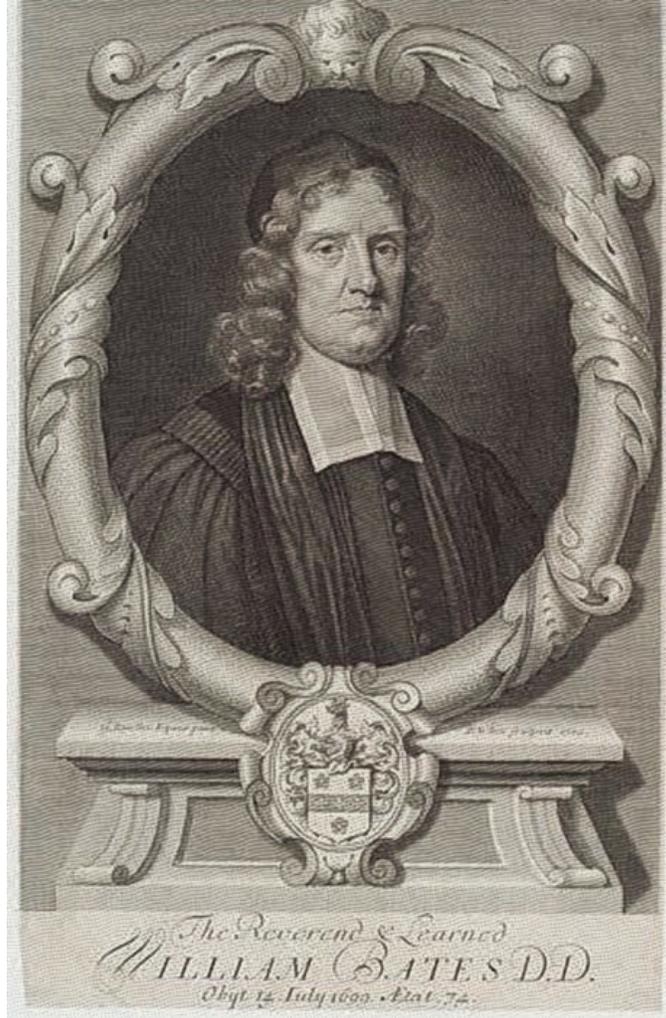
purchased by Daniel Williams, helped establish the Dr. Williams's Library, now situated at Gordon Square, London.

Bates's writings were first collected in a 1700 folio edition; in 1815, they were printed in four volumes as *The Complete Works of William Bates*. Sprinkle Publications reprinted them in 1990.

All of Bates's writings convey good scholarship, wide reading, and careful writing. John Howe called Bates a "devourer of books," and one who yearned to study about God and set forth his love and mercy: "Into what transports of admiration and love of God, have I seen him break forth," Howe said (*Works of Bates*, 1: xviii). That comes to the fore in Bates's most frequently reprinted book, *The Harmony of the Attributes of God* (1674), which has just been reprinted again by Solid Ground Christian Books. His chapters on the mercy of God are some of the finest ever written on this precious subject. Here are four practical inferences Bates draws from reveling in the infinity of divine love:

(1) Redeeming love deserves our highest admiration and most humble acknowledgments. (2) The love of God discovered in our redemption, is the most powerful persuasive to repentance. (3)

St Giles' Cripplegate is one of the few remaining medieval churches in the City of London and, after surviving devastating bombing during the Blitz, it sits at the heart of the modern Barbican development.



The transcendent love that God hath expressed in our redemption by Christ, should kindle in us a reciprocal affection to him. (4) What an high provocation is it to despise redeeming mercy, and to defeat that infinite goodness which hath been at such expense for our recovery? (1:329–40)

Some consider Bates's greatest work to be *The Four Last Things* (1691), a short, poignant treatment on death, judgment, heaven, and hell. His fifty-page treatise *On Divine Meditation* is typically Puritan and one of the best in its field, covering the basics of its nature, necessity, time, advantages, rules, and applications—no word wastage here! His other major publications include *The Select Lives of Illustrious and Pious Persons*, *Discourses on the Existence*

of God, *The Immortality of the Soul*, *The Great Duty of Resignation*, *The Danger of Prosperity*, *Sermons on the Forgiveness of Sins*, and *The Sure Trial of Uprightness*. *Complete Works* includes numerous sermons and several treatises on Christian living, all of which are succinctly written and packed with edifying material. If you are looking for a Puritan who always writes well, is both practical and heavenly, and is never tedious, read William Bates.

Dr. Joel R. Beeke

is president and professor of systematic theology and homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, a pastor of Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, MI, and a prolific author and frequent conference speaker.

Timeless TRUTHS

for a Changing Culture

Timeless
Truths
Selected
Reading

Are Bones a Luxury?

Johannes G. Vos



In this strange but appropriately entitled article we learn of the importance and necessity of doctrinal preaching. The author, a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, served as a missionary to Manchuria and later as professor at Geneva College. He was a frequent contributor to the early issues of *Torch and Trumpet*.

Our pastor preached another doctrinal sermon. It is getting to be almost more than we can stand!" This remark of a Covenanter church member betrays a common, but deplorably wrong-headed, attitude toward the doctrinal system of the Christian faith. People who say such things regard instruction in Christian truth as a boresome nuisance. They prefer "inspirational" sermons. But "inspiration" will be a mere castle in the air, a mere fleeting cloud of emotion, unless it has a solid foundation underneath it. If we do not have a clear, consistent, substantial knowledge of the doctrinal system of Christianity, no amount of "inspiration" or exhortation or enthusiasm-rousing can do us a bit of real good.

The human body is built on a structure of bones. The bones of the human body are not a luxury; they are an absolute necessity. Bones are not merely nice, not merely highly desirable, not merely a decorative ornament like a necktie; they are absolutely essential; without them the body can neither live

nor function. We do not consider bones relatively desirable; we do not say that bones would be nice to possess as something extra, after we get everything else. We recognize that bones are not a luxury, but a necessity.

What bones are to the human body, doctrines are to Christianity. The doctrines of Christianity are not a superfluous luxury, to be added moderately to our religion after we have acquired everything else; on the contrary, the doctrines of Christianity are the framework to which everything else is fastened, on which all the rest is built; the doctrines are what give the body of Christianity its form and shape. With a different set or doctrines, it would not be Christianity but a different religion.

Christianity Is Essentially Doctrinal

Unlike some religions, Christianity is essentially doctrinal. It is built upon a foundation of specific ideas. Because these ideas are true, we speak of them as doctrines or truths of Christianity. Christian doctrines are made of (1) facts, plus (2) the divinely revealed interpretation of the facts. “Christ died” is a fact of history. To this fact there is added the divinely revealed interpretation, “for our sins.” Thus the statement, “Christ died for our sins” is one of the doctrines of the Christian faith. In this particular instance, it is a doctrine reduced to its lowest and barest terms; on the basis of other parts of the Bible it can be stated more comprehensively. But it shows the ingredients of all Christian doctrines: facts, plus God’s explanation of the facts.

The bones of the human body are not merely a collection of large and small bones carelessly thrown together; they are related to each other in a definite way, and so form a system of bones. So, too, the doctrines of the Christian faith are not merely a miscellaneous collection of truths thrown together in grab-bag fashion; they are related to each other in a

definite way, and so form a system of doctrine. Just as the body’s system of bones determines its structure, form, and shape, so the Christian faith’s system of doctrines determines its structure, form, and shape. Really to grasp any one doctrine, you have to understand the system; really to grasp the system, you have to know each of its component parts. They are all organically related to each other.

Neither Skeleton nor Jellyfish

Of course the human body is not merely bones; it also has flesh, blood, nerves, muscles and so forth. A body with nothing but bones would not be a body, but only a skeleton. And Christianity is not merely a system of doctrines; it consists also of the flesh and blood of Christian life built upon the system of doctrines. Any so-called Christianity which consists merely of doctrines is not the genuine article, but a mere skeleton of lifeless ideas.

But the bones must be there to make it a living body, and the doctrines must be there for genuine Christianity. A body with only bones is a skeleton; but a body with no bones at all would be a jellyfish. There are some people who seem to think that we must choose between being a skeleton and being a jellyfish;

we must either have nothing but doctrines, or we must have no doctrines at all. How absurd! We should be neither skeleton nor jellyfish. While making sure that our religion has the genuine structure of doctrines for its basis, we must also make sure that it is not “dead orthodoxy,” but vital Christianity, in living communion with God and active in service to him throughout the whole realm of life.

No one can live the Christian life aright nor serve Christ adequately without a thorough knowledge of Christian doctrine. It is not something extra, to be added after we have everything else; it is the foundation, the underpinning, which we absolutely must have if we are really to be Christians. The church today lacks power and effectiveness for a number of reasons, but one of the main ones is sheer ignorance of the doctrinal structure of Christianity. People just do not know what Christianity is and wherein it differs from other systems of religion. We face today not merely opposition to Christianity, not merely indifference to Christianity, but a downright ignorance of what Christianity is—an ignorance without parallel since the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Occupation... Housewife and Mother

“Peter” Palmer

Notice “Peter’s” call to godly women to fulfill the biblical commands for wifedom and for motherhood as she reminds her readers mirror God’s attributes while she raises her children along with her husband.

How many times, while filling out an income tax return or filling some sort of application have you written in under “Occupation” the word “housewife” or “housewife



and mother” with a certain amount of reluctance and even perhaps a little shame? You can claim no real occupation; you’re “just a housewife.” Have you perhaps thought back with some nostalgia to the time when you were able to write proudly: “school teacher;” “nurse;” “private stenographer;” “medical technician;” or the like? But now you have become like millions of other nameless women who have no title, no pay, no boss, who are “just” housewives and mothers.

But are you like those millions? In many respects, of course, you are. Outwardly, certainly. You have the same three meals a day to prepare as they do. You have the same dirty sheets and jeans to wash as they do. Dust accumulates on your table tops and floors as well as on theirs. Nor are you exempt from diapers and formulas, PTAs and graduations, or discipline problems. But what a basic, fundamental difference there really is! For you are aware, as those millions of the world are not, of the high calling to which you have been called by God, who makes his sovereign demands upon ministers and missionaries, doctors and teachers, clerks and mechanics—and yes, also upon housewives and mothers.

In Subjection to God

Whether they recognize it or not, all mothers—and fathers, too, for that matter—are answerable, as far as their family relationships are concerned, not first of all to their husbands, their children, or themselves, but first of all to God. For it is from him who is the source of all power and authority that mothers and fathers alike receive authority over their children. Just as the civil “powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1), so also are parental powers ordained by him. And just as the civil powers should be responsible first of all to God, who gave them the authority (and not to

the voters), so also parents must be responsible first of all to God for the way they make use of the authority he has given them.

There is another slightly different comparison which we may make. All gold and silver, trees and rivers, “every beast of the forest” and “the cattle upon a thousand hills”—in short, the world and the fullness thereof—belong to God (Ps. 50). Out of his abundance he graciously “lends” a certain portion of his possessions to us. And we are responsible to him for what we do with them all of them, and not just the 10% or 15% we give back to his kingdom. In a similar way, he “lends” us the lives he has created—“our” children. And since they are basically his, not *ours*, we are, again, responsible to him for the way in which we take care of them.

In Subjection to Husbands

But then for the mothers we must go one step further. When a man and woman marry, they become one flesh, and yet in that union there is not absolute equality. Ephesians 5:22–23 tells us, “Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is head of the church.” This ancient biblical truth is now being revived in the currently popular motto: “Put father back at the head of the house.” This does not mean that we must put back fathers who are selfish, mean despots, but ones who “love [their] wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it” (Eph. 5:25) and who “provoke not [their] children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (6:4). To such fathers must the wives be in subjection, as well as the children.

The Mother’s Responsibility

Yet even with these two basic restrictions placed upon mothers—their subjection to God and to their

husbands—there is for them still much authority and consequently much responsibility. For although children belong first of all to God, it pleases him to rule them through their parents, by proxy, so to speak. And in like manner, although the husband is the head of the wife, by virtue of the fact that he is customarily absent from the home more than she is, it pleases him to rule the children through the mother, again by proxy. Thus for all practical purposes it is the mother who usually has the greatest contact with the children, and therefore the greatest influence upon their lives.

Perhaps the worst sickness of our time is the sickness of the family. Our medical scientists and doctors are valiantly destroying bodily sicknesses one by one. Yet this malignant disease of the family, which they cannot touch with their most recent surgical and radiation techniques, is eating away at the social structure of our nation. One symptom of this sickness is juvenile delinquency, which is increasing at an alarming rate, both as to the number of delinquents and as to the magnitude of their crimes. And if we do not want to have a policeman for every teenager, we must make corrections at the source of the trouble, the home.

Thus what a challenge there is to parents, and in particular to mothers, who are with their children so much of the time! God commands—and society demands—that mothers labor diligently and conscientiously to build up their homes and their children. It is not enough to set before the children the proper quantity of vitamins and proteins each day, and to see to it that they have enough baths and clean clothes. Nor is it enough to supervise their school assignments and encourage them in their intellectual development. It is not sufficient to help them to become

well-adjusted citizens of their community and their nation. It is not even adequate to send them to a Christian school and to insist on their regular attendance at Sunday school, church, and catechism. These are all important duties which no mother should neglect. But Christian motherhood goes beyond these necessary activities.

A Mirror of God

The Christian mother should strive to mirror as much as possible certain divine attributes. A child's first contact with the world is his mother. Before he is ever able to have any realization that there is a God, he does know that he has a mother who is always there, watching over and taking care of him. As the prominent British Christian psychiatrist, Ernest White, has pointed out, our concept of God is often formed in early childhood by associating God with a parent or grandparent. An excessively severe and stern father, for example, can condition a child into conceiving of God as a merciless judge. A withdrawn, silent grandmother can leave with a child the impression that God is unapproachable. In like manner, a good Christian mother can, just by her attitudes and actions, do much to give her child a correct understanding of what God is like, and how he deals with us.

For example, a mother's love and care of her child should be a reflection—even though it will be an imperfect one—of the Father's love and care of his children in Christ. With how much solicitude and tenderness does not our heavenly Father take care of all our needs, often before we ourselves even know what our needs are. God's mercy and longsuffering also should be reflected in the mother's attitude toward her child. How true the words we often sing: "No mother, half so mild, bears and forbears as Thou hast done, with me, Thy sinful child." Of course this

does not mean that she should allow her child to throw a bottle of ink at the wall whenever he pleases, but it does mean that she should exercise patience, love, and forgiveness as she attempts to correct and guide him. When a mother must judge and punish, she should do it as God always does, in wisdom, love, and justice, and not as a result of a moment of anger or impatience. A child should eventually learn to depend on the veracity of God. But before that time, he should have learned that whatever mother says is always true. Then it will be an easy step for him to say, "I know it's true because God says so." God's trustworthiness, not only as far as his words are concerned, but also as far as his actions are concerned, should be mirrored in the mother. A child who is confident that his mother "knows best" for his welfare will more easily learn to confess "that to them that love God all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28). In such a way, a mother can help to form a scriptural concept of God in the mind of her child.

Explicit Instruction

And then, at the same time, a mother should give explicit instruction which corresponds to that which has been implicitly conveyed by her actions and attitudes. As important as the Sunday school, Christian school, and catechetical instruction are, they may never be a substitute for training in the home. And how much more effective such training will be in a home atmosphere as we have

just described! How much more quickly the child will be able to grasp the truths about God's love, longsuffering, justice, veracity, and trustworthiness when he has already experienced such qualities on the human plane!

But if a mother wishes the faith to be important to her child, it must be evident to the child that the faith is important to his mother. If a mother wants her child to be faithful and earnest in Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance, then the child must be able to see that his mother is faithful and earnest in them herself. A child is quick to detect hypocrisy, and nothing is more devastating to the positive instruction of the child than the negative behavior of the mother.

Thus, deeply grounded in the faith herself, the mother will better be able to impart to her child not only that which he needs for his physical, intellectual, and emotional development, but also that which is essential for his spiritual growth. Aware of her responsibility first of all to God, and receiving from him divine wisdom and grace to do that which he commands; and in subjection to her husband, from whom she will receive human encouragement and wisdom, the Christian mother will strive to fulfill her obligations toward that child which has been entrusted to her care.

See "Nine Words That Can Stop Juvenile Delinquency," *The Reader's Digest* (March 1958).

Her children rise up and **call her blessed;**
Her husband also, and **he praises her**
—Proverbs 31:28

Praying Mothers

Pearl Tadema



The author of this article, Mrs. Pearl Tadema, was a pastor's wife who, among their several charges, served with her husband as missionaries in Nigeria, Africa. In this article she urges godly mothers to pray without ceasing for the children of God has given her family. Throughout the article, she also provides insight into how to pray for and with them.

What would you do you were given a bank account of eighty-six thousand dollars a day? If each morning there would be eighty thousand dollars on your bank account and each evening what you had not used that day would be gone? At the end of each day your account would be blank. Of course, if you had such a bank account you would draw it all out each morning and use as much as possible. And I'm sure you wouldn't just throw it away. But you would ask yourself: "How can I best spend it? What are the most useful and most valuable things that I can buy with it?"

We all have some such a bank account. Each day God gives us eighty-six thousand seconds. And the seconds we don't use are lost at the end of the day. They are gone, and we can never get them back again. But when a new day is born there are eighty-six thousand new seconds waiting to be used. We shall want to use them in the best possible way. So we shall ask ourselves each new day, "What are the most useful and most valuable ways of using my seconds today?" For one thing we'd want that which is the most valuable for the longest time.

For example, suppose you go to market to buy food for your family. When you arrive the only things left are four barrels of avocados, ten cans of milk, and a cow. Now, avocados are delicious and nutritious, but you couldn't possibly eat more than one barrel before they would spoil. The same with the milk. It would be sour before your family could drink a tenth of it. You'd naturally buy the cow because then you'd have fresh milk every day, plus cream for whipping and making butter, and buttermilk besides. And when the cow is no longer good for producing milk, you'd still have hamburger to eat and leather for slippers.

Now in the same manner we must decide what are the most valuable things to strive for in our lives. As Christian mothers our first reaction would be, "Why, life eternal! What could be more valuable or for a longer time?" As Christians we have eternal life, because the Bible says that he that believeth on Jesus hath eternal life in him. And so as Christian mothers we want more than anything else to see our children have that same eternal life in them. That is why we

baptized them and promised to do all in our power to lead them through Christ to God.

In this task we face many problems. Perhaps the greatest barrier is formed by our own inconsistencies. We want to teach our children to praise God, and they hear us singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." But then they hear us describe our farms, our homes, our cars, our washers and dryers, not first of all as a blessing from God, but purely as a product of hard work. On another occasion a child is sick, and they hear us pray, "Dear God, make little sister, or baby brother well again." But when he is well they hear us speak about the wonders of penicillin, or of the cleverness of our doctor who immediately diagnosed the case correctly. Again, we pray for a safe journey, and when we arrive safely we flippantly remark, "Yes, the roads were good."

Children have a keen sense of intuition or feeling. When we pray for a thing and later give credit to sources other than God, it should not surprise us that our children cannot see the importance of prayer.

As Christian mothers we face the problem of our inconsistencies. But how can we overcome them? I believe the best and surest way is through prayer. Listen to what God promises us: "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." So let's take God at his Word. He says, "every need of yours." When we wake up

in the morning, then, let's pray that God will give us courage to admit that it is only his hand moving along the highway which leads us safely to our destination, that only our Lord God can make penicillin and streptomycin effective, that God alone is responsible for giving us conveniences and blessings far beyond the fondest dreams of many people in other lands.

In order to teach our children Christ-like living by our personal example, we must pray without ceasing. To be a mother is a great responsibility, but through prayer a Christian mother has access to a reservoir of strength that never runs dry. And when we fail, we fail because we do not drink freely enough from God's reservoir of blessings. We worry about our health or the health of our children, we are anxious about meeting monthly payments, for car, tuition, and other things. We worry about the weather because if it doesn't rain the crop will be a failure. But all our handwringing, fretting, and nail biting does not produce one drop of rain, meet a single payment, or produce rosy cheeks on our children. The fact is we do have cares, and the only way to deal with them is to turn each one into a prayer. Then every care will be a benefit to you. Then you will have grace to walk one step at a time, and God will give you strength for each trial, grace for each day.

Yes, our personal example is an important part of bringing our children through Christ to God. But our example cannot stand alone. The Word must accompany it. And, still more important, the two must harmonize. If all our talents and all our energies are directed in one great effort to gain a little chunk of this earth for ourselves, as if that is all-important, then it will be hard to convince our child that to save his soul is more profitable than to gain the whole world. But neither can he come to understand the value

of his immortal soul unless we tell him, "Son, nothing in this world is profitable if you have a lost soul."

And who is better fit to impart such wisdom than a mother? God has made you the mother of your children. He has placed their little souls in your hands to mold. There is nobody with as many opportunities of explaining, both by deed and word, the eternal value of his soul as mother. It is true, we do not all have equal abilities and equal tact. But if we pray, God will use and bless whatever abilities we do have. He has promised: "Be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Let's use what abilities we have, and use them at once.

One of the favorable opportunities for a spiritual chat with your child is at night when it is bedtime. It is easy to slip into the habit of saying, "Jump in bed now. You can pray by yourself, can't you?" Oh, let's not miss such an occasion simply because we're tired. This day's opportunity will never come back. If we don't make use of it—it will be gone. But kneel by his bedside together and teach him to pray.

Did Johnny kick Mary today? Teach him then to pray, "I'm sorry, Lord, that I kicked Mary. Please forgive me. Help me to show love instead as Jesus wants me to."

This is also an excellent time to encourage your child by telling some of your own spiritual experiences. Most of our children display at times outbursts of uncontrolled anger. We can be a real help to them by telling them about our own struggles against a bad temper. For example, remind them that God says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will help you."

Your experience may be similar to mine. When I was a little girl, I had a

very bad temper. One day a boy threw a stone and hit me in the leg. This made me furious. So I picked up a big rock and hurled it at him as hard as I could. He jumped up so that instead of hitting him, the rock bounced and went through the back window of a car. I scampered hurriedly down the riverbank and hid under an old shack before the driver of the car could catch and punish me. With pounding heart I then prayed to God that he would take my evil temper away, so that I wouldn't do such a thing again. However, a few days later I felt the same burning anger inside me. From then on I asked God each morning to help me show love instead of anger. I still ask him each morning and he has helped me. He will help you too, for, what he's done for others he'll do for you. God means it when he says, "Call upon me . . . and I will help you."

Mothers, if we do this for our children, they too will feel that God is real to their soul.

A mother holds a most powerful influence in molding the little lives God has entrusted to her. Who knows, beneath the rosy cheek you've kissed good-night may lie another John Calvin or Johanna Veenstra? At any rate you know that tucked beneath the blankets beats the heart of a little lamb belonging to the flock of the Good Shepherd.

God grant it to be so.

Prayer: Lord God in heaven. It makes us tremble to think that we have eternal souls in our care. The responsibility of leading and training these souls is too much for us alone. Help us to pray without ceasing. And supply all our needs, small and great, according to thy riches in Christ Jesus. Amen.

If you enjoyed these three articles, see back cover for more information on the Timeless Truths book!

Lessons My Father Taught Me



Dr. Joel R. Beeke

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

—Hebrews 13:7–8, KJV

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

—Hebrews 13:7–8, KJV

Right from the start let me say that neither of my parents was perfect. Even so, I am not going to share their faults with you. I am going to share their strengths. I offer their strengths to you so that, first, you may be encouraged with the thought that a godly parent can have a positive impact on a child. Second, I want you to know that if you will persevere with your child, your impact will be great. Third, it is my hope that the young people who hear my story will remember some of what I say, that it might be a help to them when they become parents themselves.

My father died very suddenly. The telephone rang during a morning service at church, and a deacon brought the message to me in a note while I was preaching. His note reached me about ten minutes before the end of my sermon. It said, “Your father is seriously sick.” When I saw those words I knew. He had a history of heart problems, and so I knew that he had gone to be with the Lord. In God’s providence I was preaching about the white robes, the glory, and the beauty of being with the Lord forever.

I will never forget the last five minutes of that sermon, how the Lord gave me special freedom to speak about the future of God’s people in glory. Perhaps that is one of the greatest gifts of all that a father can leave behind for a child—to live in such a way as to leave no doubt in that child’s mind that you are now in glory.

We all miss our parents tremendously when they die. We miss their love. But the greatest balm of comfort to the grieving soul is the knowledge

that one’s parents are in glory. My father lived and died serving the Lord. In fact, he went straight from leading a service to being in glory that day. He had prayed the long prayer with great emotion, and then began reading a sermon. He was on page 2 when he fell over with a heart attack. He went straight from the pulpit to the throne room of heaven at the age of seventy-three. He was married to my mother for fifty-two years.

There are many memories that flood into my mind at a time like this. My dad taught me many lessons. I will offer you nine examples.

Lesson 1: The Value of Speaking to Your Children about God

My dad spoke to us often about God’s ways with his people. I think his specialty was the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. When I later became a minister, those talks would come back to me with a lot of power and comfort. In his talks he would often have these “sayings.” He would say to me, “What I am about to tell you I wish I could write with an iron pen on your heart.” I don’t know why, but that’s what he always said, and I knew something big was coming when he said it. As a matter of fact, it is almost as if his words were written with an iron pen on my heart, because I never forgot the things he said. He would save these moments



Even though my father became much more Christ-centered at the end of his life, he still taught us throughout his life that we must examine our own souls and never approach spiritual things casually or superficially. He was looking for reality in his life and in the lives of others.



for very special instructions. For example, once he said to me, “What I am about to tell you I wish I could write with an iron pen on your heart: It is a wonderful thing to get some comfort from the Lord, but an instruction from the Lord is even more valuable, because a comfort lasts only a little while, but an instruction lasts your whole lifetime.” He would say things like this all the time. You just cannot forget those things.

Another time he said to me, “I wish I could write this with an iron pen on your heart, but the difference between a believer and an unbeliever—and always remember this—is that a believer has a place to go all the time. When an unbeliever comes into trouble, he doesn’t know where to go.”

I’ve had only two surgeries in my life, and both were on my knees. I remember when I was going in for my first knee surgery. I had stood

beside thousands of hospital beds over the years, but I had never been in one. This was strange to think about on my way to the hospital. As I began to pray, my dad’s words came back into my mind. It brought me to tears on the way to the hospital: “A believer always has a place to go.” I thought to myself, “There is no need to fear. You are safe in the hands of Jesus. Even if he takes your life, you will go to be with him, the best place of all.”

I wrote recently about a man in Northern Ireland who awoke out of surgery and was told by his doctor that his body would fully heal. The man replied, “I am disappointed. I wanted to be healed altogether. I wanted to go and be with the Lord.”

My dad would find opportunities to teach us. His best time was often on Sunday nights, when he would read to us from *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Once

he tried to read *Holy War* to us, but we did not understand it well so he stopped halfway through. With that one brief exception, all twenty years that I lived at home, we did nothing but read *Pilgrim’s Progress* on Sunday nights. I know that book like the back of my hand, and I love it. My dad would encourage us to ask questions. My brother and I asked many questions during our teen years. After I was converted I would sometimes ask my dad questions until midnight or later. I would literally sit at his feet on the floor, and we would talk from heart to heart. It was absolutely wonderful.

During the week my dad was so busy that it seemed like he did not have any time for us kids. But Sunday night was a time to ask my dad spiritual questions. “Who was ‘Mr. Talkative’?” “What does that name mean?” “Why did it take Christian so long to find the key of promise in Giant Despair’s castle?” I asked many

He told me about how he and Uncle Pete were shingling a roof together one day when Uncle Pete came under sudden conviction of sin, and so the two of them sat down on the roof and wept together over their sins as they were seeking for a Savior.

questions, and he loved it. He would set the book down and teach us with tears in his eyes. For my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary, we kids all agreed to share one thing we appreciated about mom and dad. All five of us said the same thing. We all appreciated our mother's prayers, and we all appreciated our father's family worships on Sunday evenings as he would go through *Pilgrim's Progress*. My brother said to him, "My oldest memory in life comes from a time when I was three years old. I was sitting on your lap, dad, and I looked up into your face, and I saw a God who is real as I watched the tears stream down your face. I thank you, dad, that I never had to question the reality of God."

Lesson 2: The Value of Service

I worked with my dad for only two summers. When you worked for him, it seemed that he had time for you. My first day on the job he said to me, "You see that hammer there? Don't try to saw a board with it. You see that saw? Don't try to drive a nail with it." I responded, "I know that, dad." He said to me, "But do you know why I am telling you? Because God designed us to live to his glory and to be of service to our neighbor. When we try to live for ourselves it is like trying to saw a board with a hammer, and trying to drive home a nail with a saw. It doesn't work. You will never find satisfaction and joy in life, my son, if you try living for a purpose for which God did not make you."

I was thirteen years old when my dad shared this with me. I wasn't converted until I was fourteen. It really made me stop and think.

"Service is what life is all about." My dad exemplified that, sometimes to the point of frustration. It was rare for him to spend leisure time with us kids during the week, but if someone from the church called, he would be gone in a moment. He was a servant. At times I resented him for this, but at other times I understood, especially as I got older. He would say to me, "If there are people in need, you meet those needs." Now, would it have been wiser for him to spend some time with his family first, and then go? I think so. But that was my dad. All day long he would work, and all evening long he would serve the church. I don't ever remember my mom and dad sitting together and talking at night. They were always working and serving. The idea of making every moment count is something I learned from my dad. He never wasted time. He never occupied himself with things that he felt would not be fruitful in some way.

Lesson 3: The Value of Organization

My dad had only an eighth-grade education, but he was an organized man. He was always elected clerk of the classis for our whole denomination. As I grew older I sometimes wanted to say to them, "Don't you know that my dad has only an eighth-grade education and can't write well?" But, he managed to put it together. He was organized. And, he was a pretty good clerk. His language was a bit rough, so he would often slip his notes over to me and ask if I would proofread it for him, which I did. My dad knew what task needed to be done next, so he accomplished a fair bit. I think he modeled that for

me in a way that impacted me, even more than I consciously realized.

I once had to give a talk to the students at Puritan Reformed Seminary on the subject of organizing one's time. I had never before thought about that subject. I did not know what to say. So I began to think about how I organized my own time. As I did so, it occurred to me how much I had been influenced by my dad in this area. He did not teach time management to me; I picked it up from him. My brothers and sisters were influenced by him the same way.

Lesson 4: The Value of Placing Prayer at the Center of Life

My dad wasn't as free with prayer as I. For example, if he happened to drive by an accident on the highway, he wouldn't spontaneously pray. But I knew prayer was at the center of his life. I would often see him sitting in his chair for a while meditating, especially as he grew older. That wasn't wasted time. It was purposeful meditation. I knew somehow that while he was meditating, he was praying with eyes open.

Lesson 5: The Value of Sharing Your Spiritual Life with Your Children

My dad often spoke about how the Lord had led him personally and spiritually. He told me that when he was twenty-seven years old he read Van Reenen's work, *Bert and Case*, and that God had used it to convict him of his sin. He told me about how he found Christ in his early thirties. He told me about how he and Uncle Pete were shingling a roof together one day when Uncle Pete came under sudden conviction of sin, and so the two of them sat down on the roof and wept together over their sins as they were seeking for a Savior. These stories made a deep impression my own spiritual experiences later on. My father taught me experiential Christianity; that the doctrines of

grace not only must be known but also felt and experienced.

Lesson 6: The Value of Holy Earnestness

My dad was in earnest for the well-being of souls. When he was home he was very laid back, almost passive. But when it came to the church, and to matters of truth and eternity, he could become quite moved. Sometimes I wondered whether my dad cared about my bodily needs, but I never doubted that he cared for my soul. I knew that he believed what J. C. Ryle once said: “Soul love is the soul of all love.” This made a profound impact on me as well. Now I think that my dad left the whole matter of physical needs to my mother’s care, and he is the one who really looked after my soul.

Lesson 7: The Value of Christ’s Beauty and Amiability

I cannot say that I learned this lesson from my father initially. Early on, he was a bit of a hyper-Calvinist, believing that God spoke only to sensible sinners. He hardly believed that anyone was saved. This was very difficult for me initially. Once when I was fifteen, I awoke my father in the middle of the night to tell him that I had found real deliverance in Christ, that he was my Savior and Lord, that he was everything to me. But my dad discouraged my enthusiasm. He didn’t want me to believe too quickly that I had been delivered. Later in life, when the gospel really came home to him, this attitude completely changed.

The process of transformation was interesting. When I was young I would sit at my father’s feet. Even while I was in seminary, I would come home and ask him questions. But a point came early in my ministerial years when the tables were turned and my father would ask me theological questions. It was a strange thing. It was still to our mutual

edification, but there was a definite changing of the tide. Especially as he approached his seventieth year, he seemed to love Christ more and more. It was tangible. As I would preach about Christ from the pulpit in Kalamazoo, Michigan, his face would be bathed in tears. And not just once in a while, but normally.

When he was a bit older I said to him, “Dad, you’ve changed so much in terms of the gospel. Now you find it so much easier to believe that God is working in the hearts of sinners, and you love Christ so much more. And you seem to be at such peace now. You are not nearly as uptight about spiritual things as you once were. What happened?” He replied that three things had impacted his life. First, he was impacted by the gospel-centered preachers in our denomination who had visited the church over the years. Second, he was impacted by my brother’s book, *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults*. Third, he said he was impacted by my sermons. It really touched me when he said this.

It is a beautiful thing when you and your adult children not only can speak to one another but also exchange ideas and be of help to each other. Sometimes you almost become the child, and your child becomes a parent to you, teaching you. This is the kind of relationship I have with my son, Calvin, whenever we go hunting. He is the parent, and I am the child. He teaches me about hunting because I know nothing about it. It is a wonderful thing to relate to adult children, and we need to grow in this area as parents. Sometimes we need to sit back, relax, and enjoy the fruits of God’s work in our children’s lives.

As my father grew older, his love for Christ became so fervent that my siblings and I would say to each other, “Yes, though his health appears to be fairly good, it seems that he can’t

live long on earth like this with such Christ-centered joy.” In his prayers he would often pray to be with Christ forever, saying, “Oh, come Lord Jesus, come quickly!”

Lesson 8: The Value of Self-Examination

Even though my father became much more Christ-centered at the end of his life, he still taught us throughout his life that we must examine our own souls and never approach spiritual things casually or superficially. He was looking for reality in his life and in the lives of others. If you can keep that emphasis on self-examination, without the hyper-Calvinistic belief that almost no one is saved, you will have a powerful combination for combating shallow religion, while at the same time keeping yourself in the love of Christ.

Lesson 9: The Value of Focusing on Eternity

One of my dad’s expressions in prayer was, “Lord, let our lives be nothing but a preparation to meet thee in the righteousness and peace of Jesus Christ on the Great Day.” He was always praying like that, always focusing on eternity, always preparing to meet the Lord. We must remember that we have here no continuing city. This is an important legacy to leave to our children.

Jonathan Edwards once prayed, “Oh God, stamp eternity upon my eyes.” We need to impress our children with this thought. We are all traveling to eternity. Eternity is what ultimately matters. We must be prepared every moment to meet the Lord.

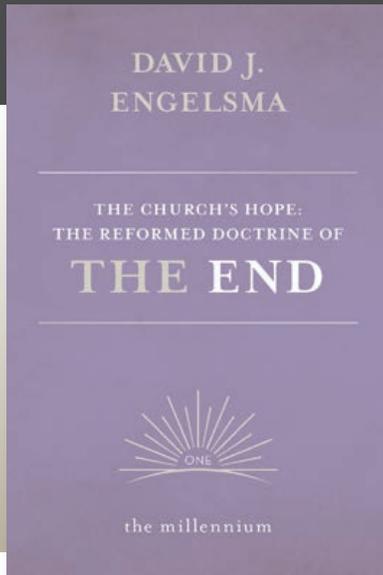
Dr. Joel R. Beeke

is president and professor of systematic theology and homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, a pastor of Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, MI, and a prolific author and frequent conference speaker.

Book Reviews



Rev. Jerome **Julien**



The Church's Hope: The Reformed Doctrine of the End, Volume 1: The Millennium

David J. Engelsma. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2021. 350 pages. Paperback. \$29.95.

The discussion over a cup of coffee by the Lord's people now often turns to Christ's return, due to the events taking place all around us. Of course, we know that no one knows the day or hour of this great event. It could be far off in time. Yet, the events we read about in the news seem suspiciously like those we are told about in Scripture, and we wonder.

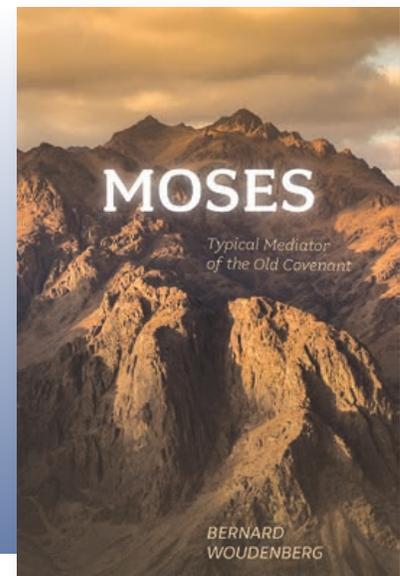
This volume of Professor Engelsma is the first of two on this important subject: the return of Christ. He lays out the scriptural teaching on the millennium. Placed before the reader is a discussion of the doctrine of the end with a necessary emphasis on the believer's hope, the intermediate state (what takes place when we die, along with common errors, including soul sleep, purgatory, and others), the nature of the

millennium, an explanation of Reformed amillennialism, and then a discussion of postmillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. These discussions are thorough in nature and strongly scriptural in approach.

More than one hundred pages lay out the errors of postmillennialism, and the same is true for dispensational premillennialism. Professor Engelsma spends some time focusing on Herman Hoeksema's view of the loosing of Satan (which he finds questionable); the premillennial views of Revelation 20, Daniel 9, and Romans 11; and other emphases and issues. This present volume lays the foundation for a second volume. The "second volume will treat the other outstanding elements of eschatology, including lawlessness and apostasy in the last days, antichrist and the great tribulation of the saints, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and more" (xviii). (It is the intention of the publisher to provide all of Professor Engelsma's dogmatics in future years, with these being the concluding volumes of the series.)

For anyone desiring to see what Scripture says about this important subject, here is another volume to get, read, and place alongside of William Hendriksen's valuable works. A study of this work will inject some meat into these over-coffee discussions. It is practical and very worthwhile.

This reviewer anxiously awaits volume 2 because of what will be included. He hopes it will include an index, along with a textual index (although the fine table of contents is extremely valuable until then).



Moses: Typical Mediator of the Old Covenant

Bernard Woudenberg. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2021. 282 pages. Hardcover. \$27.95.

What a book! Perhaps we have often read the portions of Scripture which lay out Moses' life, and perhaps we have heard sermons on the passages opened up in this new publication; yet this handsome volume will still lay truths before the reader. Here in this life of Moses he is seen as the typical mediator of the Old Covenant who mediated between God and his church in those days when Israel was led

out of Egypt on the way to the promised land.

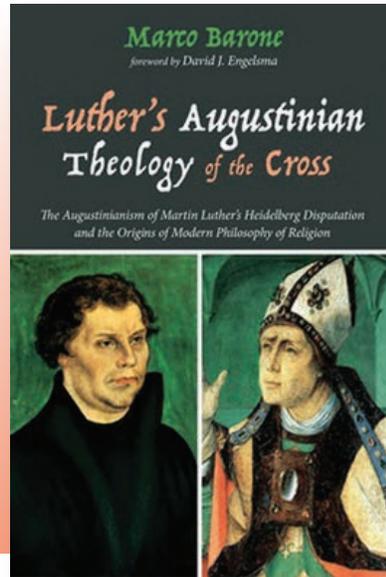
Originally, these articles were part of a long series of some two hundred articles the author wrote for the *Standard Bearer's* rubric "The Cloud of Witnesses." (Perhaps there are other series in the *Standard Bearer* which could be made available as are these.) These forty-six articles lay out Moses' work for his Lord during his 120 years on earth.

This volume, though its author engages in some poetic license, will lay before its readers the wonderful grace of God shown to God's people in spite of their weaknesses and sin. Commenting on Numbers 14:13–19, Woudenberg writes:

This was the deepest love of Moses' heart. It was true that he loved Israel, the people that he led. It was true that he loved the promise of God to bring them into Canaan land. But more than anything else, he loved his God and was jealous for the glory of God's name. He desired with all his heart that the goodness of God should be revealed and maintained unto the ends of the earth. For this he first pleaded, and from this derived all the rest. There was nothing on Israel's part that could be pleaded as an excuse for what they did. There was no virtue on Israel's part that warranted that their sin should be overlooked. There was only one thing that demanded Israel's preservation. God had promised forgiveness and redemption, and for his name's sake Moses pleaded, "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the Greatness of thy mercy" (Num. 14:19). (219)

Each chapter is short, though filled with good material. Quoting from Augustine's experience, "Take up and read," it will help you to see how God works through his people

and how marvelous are his ways and plans.



Luther's Augustinian Theology of the Cross: The Augustinianism of Martin Luther's Heidelberg Disputation and the Origins of Modern Philosophy of Religion

Marco Barone. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2017. 145 pages. Paperback. \$21.00.

If we read about the Reformation, we soon learn that it was much more than a moment in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg. It was a slow unveiling of the gospel. In a very real sense, it was a return to at least a portion of Augustine's teaching, but not all; indeed, a return to the theology of the Bible. This had been long covered up by man's philosophy.

Only a few months after the posting of the Ninety-five Theses, Luther, whose life was threatened by Roman Catholics for his firm stand on truth, was appointed to attend the Augustinian convention held at Heidelberg. He was there to present his theology of the cross, in ninety-five theses. Luther's presentation of the gospel was thoroughly biblical, and it certainly reflected what Augustine had taught.

He strongly emphasized that man had fallen from a state of innocence to one of utter misery and depravity. Man lost his free will, so that now he is free to do only evil. This, of course, is laid out by Luther in his *Bondage of the Will*. He emphasized that only through the cross do we know redemption. Luther clearly taught that man cannot reason his way to God. God must come to us. Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, by contrast, speak of a free will by which man is able to freely choose between good and evil. Also, man becomes righteous by activities or works which bring him to reach moral goodness. Augustine had to deal with Pelagianism and its ugly effects. We still have that corruption around us in Arminian preaching and popular so-called Christian novels.

Although historically Augustine was a teacher of truth when it came to the doctrine of salvation, the church today, as did the Church of Rome so long ago, has turned its back on the truths which Martin Luther taught already in his earliest days as a Protestant. As you spend with this book you wonder where that true doctrine has gone. Besides, many so-called religious philosophers like Kant and Leibniz have their way of corrupting the church. In the face of this, Luther would defend this thesis: "He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ."

This excellent work is not for recreational reading. It is for a student of theology. One who works through it will be richly rewarded.

Rev. Jerome Julien

is a retired pastor and a member of Walker United Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI.

DID YOU KNOW?

People in Bible times had no last names, so it was customary to refer to someone as “the son of” or daughter of “their father.” We read of “Saul son of Kish” and “David son of Jesse”—a convenient way of connecting the person’s first name with a family.

A curiosity: The great prophet Elijah was never referred to as “son of” anyone. He was only referred to as “Elijah the Tishbite,” meaning he came from a place called Tishbe. Bible readers have enjoyed speculating that the great prophet who did not die but was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2) is not mentioned as having any earthly father, as almost all men were.

From J. Stephen Lang, *1,001 Things You Always Wanted to Know about the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).



(ISSN 8750-5754) (USPS 633-980)

“Exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” — Jude 3

Journal of Reformed Fellowship, Inc.

Send all copy to:
Editor, Dan Van Dyke
3718 Earle S.W. Grandville, Michigan 49418
Email: djvan1951@gmail.com
Website: www.reformedfellowship.net

Board of Trustees

Rev. Talman Wagenmaker, President, Rev. Casey Freswick, Vice President; Rev. Doug Barnes, Secretary; Gaylord Haan, Treasurer; Rev. Sacha Walicord, Vice-all, Rev. Jerome Julien, Michael Kearney, Al Rumph, David Vander Meer, and John Velthouse

Editor: Dan Van Dyke

Contributing Editor: Dr. Cornelis P. Venema

General Manager: Dan Van Dyke

Business Manager: Hope Staal

Art, Design & Production: Jeff Steenholdt

This periodical is owned and published by Reformed Fellowship, Inc., a religious and strictly non-profit organization composed of a group of Christian believers who hold to the biblical Reformed faith. Its purpose is to advocate and propagate this faith, to nurture those who seek to live in obedience to it, to give sharpened expression to it, to stimulate the doctrinal sensitivities of those who profess it, to promote the spiritual welfare and purity of the Reformed churches and to encourage Christian action.

The publishers of this journal express their adherence to the Calvinistic creeds as formulated in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

Reformed Fellowship holds the copyright to all material published in this magazine. All contributions represent the personal views of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the members of Reformed Fellowship, Inc.

Subscription Policy

The Outlook (USPS 633-980) is published six times per year (bi-monthly) by Reformed Fellowship, Inc. Annual subscriptions are \$27.00 per year in the United States; outside the US, \$33 per year (foreign subscribers please remit payment in US Funds; Canada add GST). Digital download subscriptions are \$12 annually, and are included FREE with a print subscription. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. Anyone desiring a change of address should notify the business office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Zip code should be included. Periodical postage paid at Grandville, MI and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to *The Outlook*, 10857 W. Parmalee Rd., Middleville, MI 49333-888

Advertising Policy

1. *The Outlook* cannot accept announcements or advertising copy inconsistent with the stated purpose of RFI. All advertisements and announcements must be approved by the RFI board prior to publication. We reserve the right to reject, edit, or request resubmission of announcement text or advertising copy. Books, pamphlets, or CDs to be advertised are to be screened as to author and content prior to publication of the advertisement, and such material should not conflict with the stated purpose of RFI. We reserve the right to limit the size of all announcements and advertisements, and to limit the number of issues in which they appear.

2. All advertisements or announcements are to be submitted via email to **president@reformedfellowship.net** or to the business office at 10857 W. Parmalee Rd., Middleville, MI 49333-888, and must be received at least two months before the publication date.
3. Fees for B&W/grayscale ads: \$190 for full-page, \$115 for half-page, \$65 for quarter-page.
4. Fees for full-color ads: \$235 for full-page, \$140 for half-page, \$80 for quarter-page.
5. Fees for preparing artwork for ads (in addition to advertising costs above) are \$140 for full-page, \$115 for half-page, \$90 for quarter-page. These fees are waived if advertising art is print-ready. Please submit manuscript in an email or as an MS-Word.doc attachment. If you have pictures or images, please include as JPG files.
6. Preferred final file format for print-ready ads: High Quality Print PDF.
7. Ad sizes specifications:
8.75 x 11.25, trim 8.5 x 11"
Full page non-bleed: 7.25 x 9.75"
Half page horizontal bleed: 8.625 x 5.25"
Half page horizontal non-bleed: 7.25 x 4.5"
Quarter page (non-bleed) 3.5 x 4.5"
8. This Advertising Policy supersedes all prior policies, resolutions, or other statements.

Editorial Office

Dan Van Dyke
3718 Earle S.W. Grandville, Michigan 49418
Email: djvan1951@gmail.com

Circulation Office

10857 W. Parmalee Rd., Middleville, MI 49333-8881
(877) 532-8510 Phone Toll-free in US and Canada

Business Mailing Address

10857 W. Parmalee Rd., Middleville, MI 49333-8881
Email: office@reformedfellowship.net

A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



The Solar Talking Bible

- Easy to use
- Powerful speaker
- Solar powered

DONATIONS FROM CANADA
ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE
THROUGH OUR WEBSITE!



Priyanka can read, but her family cannot. In fact, most people in her area can't read. She knows that being able to read is an advantage in many ways—especially when it comes to reading the Bible. **When she was given a Talking Bible, she quickly realized its potential for sharing the Gospel with others.**

Priyanka thinks that the Talking Bible is *invaluable* to other new believers like her—or even non-believers like her neighbors. “When reading, we understand and imagine,” she explains. “But when listening, it’s like speaking with someone face-to-face.”

She is always listening to God’s Word on her Talking Bible, and she’s always inviting others to join her. Priyanka’s family and neighbors now have access to the Word of God because Priyanka has a Talking Bible that she faithfully and boldly shares with others.

Talking Bibles International is covering India with God’s spoken Word. You can help! Give the gift of a Talking Bible today.

Talking Bibles International • www.talkingbibles.org

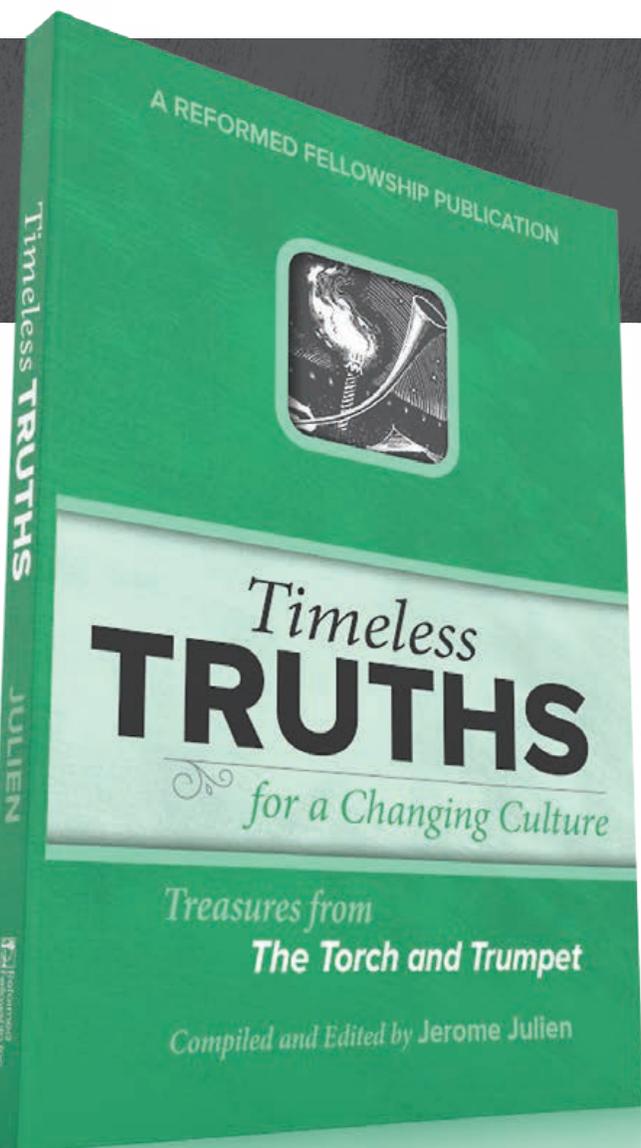
419 East Grand Avenue, Escondido, CA 92025 • Telephone: 855-55-BIBLE (855-552-4253) or 760-745-8105 • Mark S. Hoekstra, President

Reformed Fellowship, Inc.

10857 W. Parmalee Rd.

Middleville, MI 49333-8881

(877) 532-8510



Timeless TRUTHS for a Changing Culture

*The Torch and
Trumpet*

*Compiled and Edited by
Jerome Julien*

Seventy years ago the Reformed Fellowship, a very young organization, published its first magazine called *Torch and Trumpet*. Since then its name has been changed to *The Outlook*. The publication has been blessed to have had faithful editors, writers who have represented a broad group of Reformed churches, and board members who have come from Christian Reformed, United Reformed, Protestant Reformed, Presbyterian Church of America, and Orthodox Presbyterian churches.

In an early issue of *Torch and Trumpet* it was stated that the magazine's "purpose is to give sharpened expression to [the Reformed] faith, stimulate the doctrinal sensitivity of those who profess this faith, help promote the spiritual welfare and purity of the Reformed churches, and further the interests of all Kingdom Institutions of Reformed caliber."

Sad to say, many of the articles which have been published during those early years are collecting dust and have been forgotten. As we rejoice in God's faithfulness, it is our desire to place before you only a small portion of the many articles which have been published during the first ten years. Choosing the articles that are included was difficult for there were many others that could have been reprinted.

Paperback, **392** pages | **\$15.99**

A few reader comments

Very helpful for growing in the Reformed faith. I found it very interesting and enlightening.

—Evert Helms

Edifying for all Christians. A great book, keep up the good work.

—Edward Hoekstra

Katie Gunnink's article on Calvinism was a favorite chapter; Passion for Souls. It's so important to teach our children this.

We were also blessed by Rev. Greenway's meditations.

—Paul and Marcia Vander Kloek

