



RFPA UPDATE

"Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following" – Psalm 48:13

Issue #22

Spring 2012

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS: OUR USE OF GOD'S GOOD GIFTS

In 2011, through God's providential care, the RFPA received word that we were the recipients of a sizable estate gift from Glenn E. Snyder, a member of the Shore Vineyard Church in Beechwood, New Jersey. The RFPA knew few details about Mr. Snyder, and none that explained his bequest to ensure that the truth would continue to go forth. We are deeply thankful for this gift and seek to use it wisely.

Because a gift of this size had not previously been received in the history of the RFPA, the board took a close look at the existing practices and adopted a Gift and Bequest Policy to govern how gifts are received and acknowledged. The new policy acknowledges that the RFPA is a non-profit organization. It documents the practice that has been in place for years. All gifts will be acknowledged with an official, written response. The receipt of significant gifts will be communicated to the board and will become part of the records of the RFPA. Gifts that contain specific requirements will be reviewed by the treasurer and a committee of the board.

The board has also adopted an Investment Policy Statement to cover how the funds of the RFPA are held and managed. This new policy establishes guidelines for an investment portfolio including accountability standards for monitoring the progress of the portfolio. Spending policies and investment targets are covered by this policy.

This gift has enabled the RFPA board to make extensive, progressive plans for the future. A 5-Year Plan was developed and approved by the board, covering a broad range of detail under the headings of Operations, Sales and Marketing, Facilities, Publishing, and Financial. The plan includes objectives, due dates, and funding.



The new monitor and camera in the board room will be put to good use when the board and various committees hold meetings with others in various locations.

The 5-Year Plan will be reviewed periodically, updated annually, and expenditures carefully tracked. Initially, the RFPA engaged two consultants (both experts in their respective fields: Christian book publishing and marketing) to provide a broad assessment of the organization and suggestions for improvement. The feedback addressed the use of direct marketing, enhancements to the website, the urgency of

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THE NEXT FIVE YEARS: OUR USE OF GOD'S GOOD GIFTS

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implementing ebooks, the handling of rights and permissions, the use of social media, and much more. The various committees of the RFPA are now busy considering and implementing these suggestions.

Many of these projects fall under the jurisdiction of the Marketing and Membership committee (M & M). The M & M committee is active in finding ways to increase individual and wholesale sales as well as membership in the RFPA Book Club. At the suggestion of the consultants, the M & M committee has engaged in social media marketing, including setting up an RFPA Facebook account (with Twitter and a blog coming soon), to reach a worldwide audience of both current and potential readers.

Part of the M & M committee's mandate has resulted in an ongoing project to update the look and functionality of the RFPA website. Over the past five months the committee has been working on a website upgrade that will enable us to more easily engage in some of the marketing techniques suggested to us by the consultants. Some of these suggestions include social media, starting a blog, and developing an enewsletter subscribe feature. The *Standard Bearer* searchable archive is being improved, and an online subscription to the magazine will soon be available for readers on-the-go.

Alongside the website project, the M & M committee and the Book and *Standard Bearer* committee (B & SB), with the encouragement of the consultants, have worked through the process of

making our publications available as ebooks. For some time now, readers have been requesting ebook versions of RFPA publications.

The board has deliberated on whether ebooks would appeal to our readers, how digital files can be protected, how to distribute ebooks, and many more related topics. The board realizes that times have changed and a substantial portion of society uses digital media. The board now understands how the major Christian book publishers have implemented ebooks. Soon, RFPA ebooks will be available online at Christian Book Distributors, Barnes and Noble, and Amazon.

The 5-Year Plan also outlined a technology upgrade to accommodate the needs of the RFPA staff and board. For example, when Skype has been used to communicate with people in other locations, committee members huddled around a small laptop to be heard and viewed by the other party.

The board room now has a large monitor with a mounted webcam that can display the entire boardroom table. The microphone is able to pick up voices throughout the room. This new technology will be put to good use in the future. A laptop was also purchased and is dedicated to the conference room. With the recently activated Wi-Fi in the building, the board and committee secretaries now can record minutes and immediately email their draft copies to themselves at home for rework.

As the RFPA operations were examined the need to improve the storage and security of digital files

became apparent. A server has been purchased and is used as the common storage point for files that are shared among users. Critical business information is also stored on the server.

During the day, the server periodically saves the stored data, and an external hard-drive is used to backup the server and is removed from the building each evening. These new practices will prevent a disastrous loss of data in the event of a catastrophe.

The 5-Year Plan also includes long-range activities such as succession planning, apps for smart phone and tablets, equipment and staffing for different aspects of publishing, improvements to the building, audio books, and more.

The large estate gift has allowed the RFPA to consider the translation and publishing of pertinent Dutch works. Translation projects are costly and have therefore been mostly out of the reach of the RFPA. t

The B & SB committee has embarked on two translation projects: *Ons Doopsformulier* (Our Baptism Form) and *Ons Avondmaals Formulier* (Our Lord's Supper Form), both authored by Dr. B. Wielinga.

The receipt of the gift has afforded the opportunity for the RFPA to be proactive in planning future activities. As always, the RFPA waits for God to bless our efforts to publish the truth of his word, realizing that the success of the 5-Year Plan is subject to his will and provision. The RFPA covets your prayers and support as we continue this important work.



REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

GIFT REGISTRY

Reformed Books for Believing Households

At the suggestion of customers and constituents, the RFPA is now offering a gift registry service, especially for engaged couples but also for anniversaries, baby showers, etc. The registry is designed to help new or young families build a library of Reformed literature, creating a strong foundation for their household.

For more information, visit www.rfpa.org/catalog/gifts.php, email bethany@rfpa.org, or call (616)457-5970.

ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

Sixty members of the Association and numerous others gathered on September 22, 2011 for the Reformed Free Publishing Association's annual meeting.

Professor David J. Engelsma, professor emeritus of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches and author of many RFPA publications, spoke in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Principles as adopted by the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1951.

In a riveting address, Engelsma gave the historical context of the document, described its contents, and spent a portion of time drawing on its significance today over against the development of the conditional covenant in the heretical theology of the federal vision. The speech was transcribed and published in subsequent issues of the *Standard Bearer* beginning with Issue 3, Volume 88 (November 1, 2011). DVDs and CDs of the speech may be obtained from the RFPFA office for \$6 each.

Following Engelsma's address, the business meeting was held, beginning with the voting in of new board



The current RFPFA board (from left to right): Dan DeMeester, Joel Bodbyl, Michael Bosveld, Henry Kamps (president), Jeff Kalsbeek (treasurer), Tom Bodbyl (vice-president), Cal Kalsbeek (secretary), Ryan Brunsting, Tom Bergman, Matt VanOverloop, Ed Hoekstra, and Dave Harbach.

members. Tom Bergman, Joel Bodbyl, Michael Bosveld, and Cal Kalsbeek, were elected by majority vote to 3-year terms on the RFPFA board. The RFPFA expressed their thanks to Dewey Engelsma, Trevor Kalsbeek, Titus Kamps, and Gordon Schipper for their three years of service. Dewey Engelsma, the former secretary of the board, presented a report of RFPFA activity for the previous year. Highlights

of this report included details on the books that had been published in the past year and upcoming projects that are in various publishing stages.

Treasurer Jeff Kalsbeek reviewed the financial details for the fiscal year ending August 2011. The report indicated total income of \$217,063, net income of -\$23,029, and total assets of \$1,313,495 with no debt.

CHECK OUT WWW.RFPA.ORG

RFPA UPDATE

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IN REVIEW: COVENANT AND ELECTION IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

Covenant and Election in the Reformed Tradition

by David J. Engelsma

Reformed Free Publishing Association

Jenison, MI, 2011

Hardcover, 288 pages

Reviewed by Adam Tash

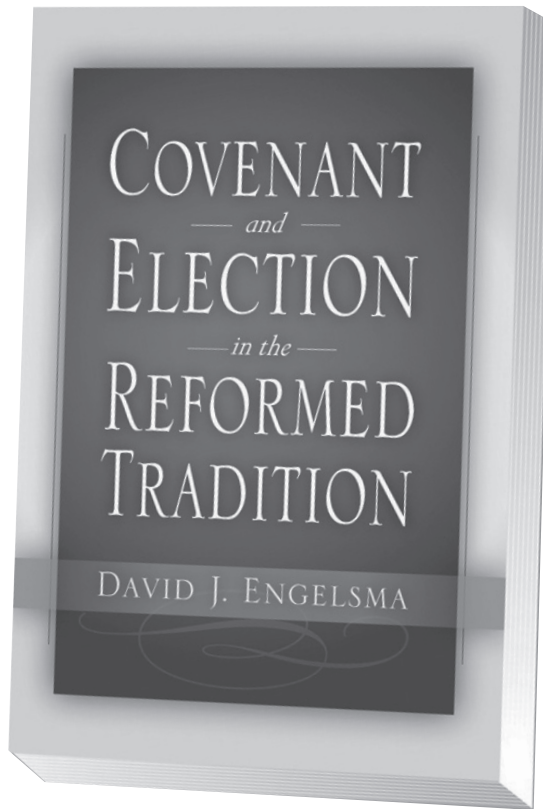
Refreshingly polemical, uncompromising, and antithetical, *Covenant and Election in the Reformed Tradition* is a clarion call to all Reformed believers and denominations to an unconditional covenant of grace. Its writing is occasioned by the rapid spread of and fierce debates concerning the pernicious heresy of the federal vision, a heresy calling for a conditional covenant.

According to history, the creeds, and the scriptures, however, the matter has long been settled: the covenant is governed by election. In other words the covenant is unconditional. This truth is binding upon all Reformed churches who hold the scriptures as the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God as set forth and summarized in the three forms of unity.

Covenant and Election is a “reexamination of covenant and election” within the Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Without a doubt, history depicts for us a bitter intestinal conflict over the covenant within the Reformed church world. Due to this fact many have concluded that the matter is still officially undecided. Many are mistaken.

The official doctrine of a covenant governed by election is clearly set forth in the Form for the Administration of Baptism. Elect infants are “received unto grace in Christ” and “sanctified in Christ.” As Engelsma shows, “sanctified” means “saved.” The Canons of Dordt assign a conditional election (a grace for all that is resistible) to its proper place in hell as

the doctrine of demons that it is. This is not insignificant. For the heresy of the Remonstrants was a covenant heresy. And when the canons teach that “election is the fountain of every saving good” they teach that about the covenant. Likewise they assert that by the cross, Christ confirmed the new covenant for the elect and the elect only. Election governs the covenant.



Heresy huckster Peter Lillback, professor at Westminster East, attempts to portray John Calvin as one of his ilk. According to Lillback, Calvin taught unconditional election outside the covenant, but within the covenant he taught justification by faith and works by severing election from covenant. Engelsma will have none of

this false dichotomy. In three masterful chapters on Calvin, Engelsma lays waste Lillback’s claims. Engelsma turns Calvin loose like a ravenous animal upon his adversary by allowing him to speak for himself. Lillback doesn’t stand a chance. Even a C. Graafland, no friend of election, puts the lie to Lillback’s claims.

Engelsma rightly inveighs against Baptists in all their forms as “doing Satan’s work.” With precision and astuteness he demonstrates that a conditional covenant is essentially the Baptist heresy and is therefore unreformed. A conditional covenant treats infants like Baptists do, namely, as unconverted. Calvin’s sharp condemnation of Baptists therefore applies to the Reformed church that excludes infants from salvation as Baptists do. God will “wreak vengeance” upon such.

In this reviewer’s opinion, the most crucial chapters in the book are the three concerning the covenant and Christ. Here Engelsma gets to the heart of the issue.

The covenant of grace is first and foremost established with Christ and then, only as they are in him by eternal election, with believers and their seed. In this regard Engelsma is unabashedly supralapsarian! The all-important point is not what is first in God’s decree but who is first. The organic nature of the Noahic covenant is also stressed in the author’s concise yet devastating rebuttal of common grace. In addition, the relation of old and new covenant as well as the various administrations of the covenant are clearly elucidated.

I highly recommend this timely, important, and comprehensive book to all who seek a better understanding of God’s covenant of grace.

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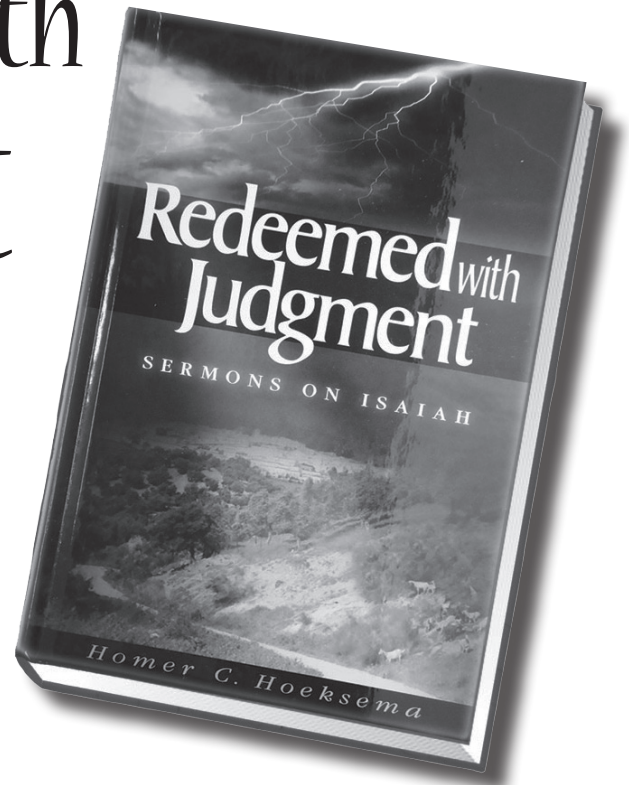
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A WORD FROM OUR READERS...

I look forward to perusing *Communion with God* and would like to thank everyone at the RFPA for their work in making solid Reformed material available to those who seek it. It has been a real blessing to me. Keep up the good work!

—a reader from Indiana

Since our son died and went to glory, we receive our *Standard Bearer* as a great treasure. How our merciful God has opened our eyes to our amazing heritage! As never before we cry out with the Psalmist in Psalm 119, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." Blessed we are that men work faithfully to help open our understanding to such, and God uses this magazine for our good and his glory. Keep up the good work as our Savior's day draws nigh.

—a reader from Colorado

My father-in-law has had second thoughts about cancelling his subscription to the *Standard Bearer* and would like to reinstate his membership, please. He says he really misses it!

—a reader from the United Kingdom

Thank you for my recent order. I ordered some books from the *Suffer Little Children* series and to my surprise a copy of *Our Goodly Heritage Preserved* was included at no cost! Thank you so much for this special history lesson!

—a reader from Minnesota

Thanks for publishing the scripturally rooted semi-monthly *Standard Bearer*. I read many, many of the articles twice!

—a reader from Iowa

Bound to Join made me realize the importance of church membership, even though I was resistant. Your book also made me realize the importance of membership even though it may take sacrifice to find and join that true church. We desperately need this better understanding of the importance of church membership in this day and age in which Christians are oriented to be too independent and too consumer-oriented and too transitory in attendance in church.

—a reader from Florida

I simply could not read another word of your new book, Herman Hoeksema's devotional gem, *Communion with God*, without a comment and a plea. This is a great book—as good as it gets in devotional literature. I have a huge library and feel that this, the second volume of this collection is so very special (as was the first one). My plea: please confirm that you will continue to release further volumes of Hoeksema's incredible treasury of. It is so abundantly clear that this man knew Christ personally. What a great read, a wonderful way to end my day, in preparation for sleep.

—a reader from Maine

As I read *Covenant and Election*, I was stirred up in my soul to renewed vigor and opposition to the lie. You did a wonderful job elucidating the issue. I especially appreciated the chapters dealing with Christ as first in God's decree and the organic principle.

—a reader from Washington