



RFPA update

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The Committees behind the Work

by Michael Bosveld, RFPA board president

The board of the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA) is made up of twelve members of the Association, who each serve a three-year term. Each year four men retire and four new board members are elected from the Association at its annual meeting in September.

The work of the board can be divided into two basic parts: publishing, distributing, and promoting the *Standard Bearer* and publishing, distributing, and promoting sound Reformed books, both of which explain and promote God's truth and expose and condemn heresy. To facilitate and approve this work and to make policies, the board holds regular monthly meetings to conduct its business. The monthly board activities include reviewing the secretary's minutes, reviewing the financial reports submitted by the treasurer, receiving and acting on reports and recommendations from the various committees and from Tim Pipe, the business manager.

Three regular standing committees carry out and oversee the ongoing work: the Book and Standard Bearer (B&SB) Committee (4 members), the Finance and Operations (F&O) Committee (3 members), and the Membership and Marketing (M&M) Committee (4 members).

Book and Standard Bearer Committee

The purpose of the RFPA is found in the work of the above committee. The other committees serve its purpose and work. The committee's first responsibility is to periodically

evaluate the various policies regarding the publishing of the *Standard Bearer*. Because the editorship and contents of the magazine are the responsibility of the Editorial Committee of the *Standard Bearer*, the B&SB's monthly duties regarding it are minimal.

The second part of the B&SB's work is to carry out the policies of the board in regard to the publishing of books. This important work takes up the majority of the committee's time. The B&SB initiates new book projects and explores other publishing opportunities. An example of other opportunities would be translation and publication of theological or doctrinal works in the Dutch language, as well as the reprinting of works in the public domain. The committee evaluates and approves book projects on the basis of submitted outlines and/or manuscripts. After the committee thoroughly evaluates a submission, it makes a recommendation to the board. This recommendation includes reasons for printing, cover material and design, and print quantity. Progress reports of current book projects are periodically given to the board. The committee also contacts prospective and current authors to broaden the authorship base of the RFPA and to promote the need for new books with relevant, timely subjects. Requests to translate RFPA publications into foreign languages are also evaluated by the B&SB. And the committee has recently recommended the conversion of many RFPA print books into electronic format and is overseeing the progress of this project.

Many others aspects of publishing a magazine and books are handled by this committee, but the above gives the reader a taste of the extensive work that is involved in publishing Reformed literature.

All the work of the B&SB would be virtually impossible without the diligent labors of our book publications manager, Evelyn Langerak. The vast majority of the committee's work and the decisions of the board are carried out or supervised by her.

Finance and Operations (F&O) Committee

The F&O Committee is responsible for the financial aspects of the work of the Association and meets monthly with the business manager as adviser. In addition to the finances, this committee oversees the building, property, equipment, and the wages and benefits of the staff. Typical monthly duties include analyzing the monthly financial statements of the *Standard Bearer* and books. This review includes sales compared to the annual budget, the performance of investment funds, and the use of restricted funds. The committee reviews current book and *Standard Bearer* prices and brings recommendations to the board for the pricing of new books. The committee's duties also include reviewing insurance policies and utility contracts, filing and auditing financial records and tax returns, updating business licenses and copyrights, renewing the *Standard Bearer* trademark, and preparing the annual budget. This list of responsibilities is not exhaustive, but one can see that this committee is entrusted with very important work for the RFPA.

Membership and Marketing (M&M) Committee

The board handbook states the following purpose for the M&M Committee: "[To] oversee and implement the Board's policies and to take the lead in shaping policy in regard to the marketing of books and the *Standard Bearer*."

This original mandate from many years ago captures in a simple sentence what is the main purpose of this committee. Although the central purpose of this committee is unchanged, over the years its scope and duties have expanded exponentially. The RFPA handbook, revised in September, 2013, has four full pages detailing the duties of this committee. Much of its work has increased greatly due to the use of the Internet.

The regular responsibilities of the M&M Committee are the monthly review of book and *Standard Bearer* sales, including the recent addition of digital versions of both; oversight of the RFPA website, along with various other electronic media used by the RFPA. The committee also studies book club membership and *Standard Bearer* subscriptions and looks for ways to maintain and expand the numbers of both. This includes sending letters to Protestant Reformed church councils, reminding them of the free one-year subscription to the *Standard Bearer* for newlyweds.

Twice a year the book club members and *Standard Bearer* subscribers receive the *Update*, which is published by the M&M Committee. RFPA's participation in various conventions, trade shows, and service organizations is also considered and attended to by this committee. Besides all of these regular duties the committee is responsible for the maintenance and growth of membership in the Association and the organization of its annual meeting in September.

As with the other committees the list could go on and on, but we hope this article has provided you with an insight into the work of the RFPA board and its committees. The RFPA board takes the lead in much of the work described above, but without the work of many others its decisions would not amount to much. With that in mind, the board expresses its appreciation for the work of the staff, the Editorial Committee of the *Standard Bearer*, our authors and all the other willing workers who give much time and effort in the cause of publishing and distributing the truth of the gospel.

We live in an age of religious indifference and toleration. In recent years it has become apparent to the RFPA board that within the church there is an alarming lack of interest in reading sound Reformed literature. We ask for your continued support and encourage you to continue to read the *Standard Bearer*, to subscribe if you are not a subscriber, and to join the book club or to maintain your membership in it.

Finally, we ask that you remember the work of the RFPA in your prayers. God has given to us a great calling to witness to the truth. He will see to it that his word does not return to him void.



Association Meeting



The annual meeting of the RFPA was held on September 19, 2013, in Georgetown PR Church. Eighty-four members of the Association were in attendance along with many visitors. Rev. Brian Huizinga from Redlands, California, spoke on the topic “Encouraging the Next Generation to Read.”

The board secretary and the treasurer presented reports on the activities of the previous year. The combined gross profit for the book and *Standard Bearer* divisions was \$122,645 with net income of minus \$46,331. This loss was subsidized by a transfer from our investment accounts. The balance sheet shows a net worth of \$1,648,639.

The following men applied for membership in the Association and were accepted: Nathan Bodbyl, Nathan DeVries, Matthew Engelsma, Nick Engelsma, Rev. Carl Haak, Dustin Hall, Steven Huizinga, Joe Holstege, Eugene Kamps, Ryan Kregel, Dan Kuiper, Zachary Kuiper, Jonathan Langerak Jr., and Dan Schipper.

To watch the video or listen to the audio of this speech (as well as our past Association meeting speeches), please visit the RFPA website (rfpa.org/pages/rfpa-annual-meeting-speeches).



RFPA Board

Front row from left: Michael Bosveld (president), Cal Kalsbeek (secretary), Tom Bergman, Doug Mingerink Jr., and Vern Haveman

Back row from left: Joel Bodbyl, Terry Dystkra, Jon Engelsma (vice-president), Dan Van Uffelen, Dan Kalsbeek (treasurer), Aric Bleyenbergh, and Jim Holstege

Committees of the RFPA Board are as follows:

Book & SB Committee:

Cal Kalsbeek—chairman
Tom Bergman
Vern Haveman
Dan Van Uffelen

Finance Committee:

Dan Kalsbeek—chairman
Aric Bleyenbergh
Jim Holstege

Marketing & Membership Committee:

Joel Bodbyl—chairman
Jon Engelsma
Terry Dykstra
Doug Mingerink Jr.

IN REVIEW:

1834: HENDRIK DE COCK'S RETURN TO THE TRUE CHURCH

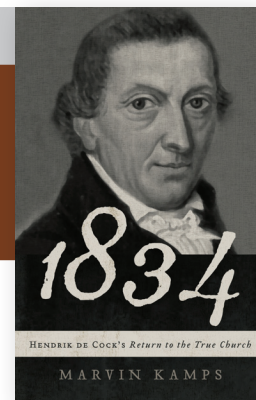
1834: Hendrik de Cock's Return to the True Church by Marvin Kamps
Jenison, Michigan: RFPA, 2014. 512 pages. (hardcover)

Reviewed by Rev. Clayton Spronk

1834, the title of the book, is the year sixty-eight members of the Reformed congregation in Ulrum signed a document entitled *Act of Secession or Return*. By this act these Reformed believers separated themselves from the government sanctioned Reformed Church in the Netherlands and formed a new congregation that was (re)committed to the principles of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. In the first 239 pages Marvin Kamps deftly explains and analyzes the events that resulted in faithful Reformed believers' leaving a false church in order to begin a new true church of Jesus Christ. Kamps appropriately focuses on Hendrik de Cock, the pastor of the Ulrum congregation in 1834,

whom God used almost single handedly to spark a momentous Reformation of the church commonly referred to as the *Afscheiding* in Dutch or Secession in English. The last 251 pages contain seven very valuable appendices, which would be worth purchasing and reading on their own. These appendices contain important historical documents that Kamps translated from Dutch into English.

The value of the first part of the book is that Kamps accurately explains the doctrinal significance of the Secession. In the preface Kamps explains that doctrine is his main concern. He writes, “In my recounting of the Secession of 1834 and the reformation of the Reformed church by Hendrik de



Cock on the basis of the sole authority of the Bible, I will limit myself to the doctrinal issues of that reformation” (xvi). Because of this doctrinal concern Kamps does not focus on the historical question, how did the Secession come about? Rather the focus is on the weightier question, in what ways was the Session a true and necessary Reformation of the church of Jesus Christ? Kamps’ explanation is that the Secession was a true and necessary Reformation because it involved a rejection of false doctrine and a return to right doctrine as set forth in the Reformed confessions.

Kamps implies that his analysis of the issues involved in the Session is controversial. He writes, “The reformation of 1834 is often viewed superficially as a controversy about the “hymn question” and the error of baptizing children whose parents were not members of De Cock’s church in Ulrum” (152). Kamps recognizes that De Cock ran afoul of the state Reformed Church’s officials because he vehemently opposed the hymns that the state church adopted and because he agreed to baptize the children of parents who were not members of the Ulrum congregation. Kamps admits that these two actions contributed to the state church’s decision to discipline De Cock and finally depose him; and the deposition of De Cock eventually convinced members of the Ulrum congregation to secede from the state church in 1834. But Kamps rightly explains that the Secession involved other more central doctrinal issues than the “hymn question” and De Cock’s act of baptizing the children of parents who belonged to other congregations.

The Secession of 1834, Kamps explains, was a true and necessary Reformation because of the deep doctrinal division that developed between the state church and De Cock and his followers. The division was not the fault of De Cock. The division was the fault of the state church that for decades prior to 1834 allowed doctrines to be taught that contradicted the Reformed confessions. This animosity toward the Reformed confessions resulted in a very sad and important decision by the state church’s synod in 1816 to replace the Formula of Subscription adopted by the Synod of Dordt in 1618–19, which when signed constituted an oath to uphold and defend the confessions, with a new Formula. With this new Formula the state Reformed church rejected the Canons of Dordt! It referred only to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. But this new Formula used language that did *not* bind the signatories to uphold and defend these two confessions. The new form “opened the way for the approval of all manner of unfaithful preaching in the churches . . . so that in the state church preachers were permitted to deny total depravity, sovereign election, the eternal divinity of Christ, the reality of hell, and even the doctrine of the Trinity” (19).

The state church had fallen away from the Reformed confessions, and therefore from the truth of scripture which they set forth. The Arminianism that the denomination rejected at the Synod of Dordt as the enemy of Reformed truth had come to dominate the denomination. De Cock

grew up and entered the ministry in the state church oblivious to its apostasy. Kamps provides an excellent account of De Cock’s discovery and then heartfelt conviction of the Reformed faith.

Although it is true that De Cock is the central figure in the Secession’s break from false doctrine and return to Reformed orthodoxy, you will find in Kamps’ account a description of how God used many influences to help him along the way. Kamps explains how De Cock was helped by his wife, John Calvin (by reading his *Institutes* for the first time during his ministry), Rev. Dirk Molenaar, Rev. Cornelius Baron van Zuylen Nijvelt, and the faithful consistory members of the Ulrum congregation. God graciously opened De Cock’s eyes so that he understood the truth and could see the apostasy of the state church.

Kamps highlights De Cock’s witness to the Reformed truth, especially to the doctrines of election and regeneration. In the state church the doctrine of election was rarely taught. Those who did speak of it openly taught the Arminian view of election condemned by the Canons of Dordt. And at least one minister was bold enough to reject the doctrine of reprobation. Over against this De Cock witnessed to the truth of unconditional election and reprobation (139–45, 274, 289–90).

Many in the state church also denied the necessity of regeneration. This included a rejection of the doctrine of total depravity. Sinful man does not need the Holy Spirit to sovereignly regenerate him, many taught, because man has the natural ability through moral persuasion and encouragement to choose to believe. Over against this De Cock witnessed to the truth of man’s natural total depravity and complete dependence on God to sovereignly bestow upon him new life in order to be saved (146–52).

Kamps, to his credit, is favorably disposed toward De Cock and portrays him as an imperfect sinner that God was pleased to use as a hero of the Reformed faith. After his conversion De Cock energetically promoted the truths of the Reformed faith in his preaching and writing. With his own money he published the Canons of Dordt for distribution. He was faithful not only to teach the truth but to condemn heresy. He was not afraid to name names and to use appropriately sharp language. He publicly charged Rev. Brouwer and Rev. Reddingius with the sin of oath breaking because these older pastors had signed the 1618–19 Formula of Subscription and failed to do anything to refute false doctrines that contradicted the Reformed confessions. De Cock willingly stood up for the truth against friends, which is evident in the correspondence between De Cock and P. Hofstede de Groot that Kamps provides in the appendices. De Cock defended the genuine faith of the poor and uneducated people who separated themselves from the state church after they were unfairly disparaged by the educated elites of the state church. Noteworthy too is De Cock’s respect for church government. Even though he was unjustly suspended and then later deposed from office in

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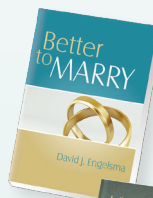
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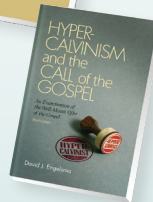
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In Review: 1834 continued

the state church, De Cock submitted and patiently pursued every avenue of protest available to him in the state church where church government was thoroughly corrupt. And De Cock, along with his wife and many other saints, willingly suffered persecution for the truth's sake.

After all of the avenues of protest were closed and the state church had shut De Cock out of the office of the ministry, De Cock agreed that separation from the state church was necessary. Thus began, as Kamps explains, a reformation of immense significance (see especially chapter 9). For first, this was indeed a doctrinal reformation. Kamps explains this well throughout his explanation of the history and provides ample evidence of this in the appendices. De Cock and his followers started a church that would no longer allow denials of the Trinity, of the divinity of Jesus Christ, of the doctrine of predestination, of the necessity of regeneration, or of any other doctrine taught in the Reformed creeds. The binding authority of the Reformed confessions was reestablished, which created true unity in the truth. The restoration of right doctrine helped bring about a restoration of the pure preaching of the gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments, two marks of the true church of Jesus Christ. And by breaking away from the state church the Secession restored proper church government, freeing the church from improper intrusions by the civil government, and establishing the proper rule of elders (the importance of this cannot be overstated, for this marks the first time that a Reformed Church in the Netherlands would be completely free of the intrusion of the civil government, at least regarding the spiritual rule of the church). Included in this restoration of church government was the exercise of Christian discipline, the third mark of the true church, that was so lacking in the state church that De Cock was advised that nothing could be done to discipline those who openly denied the truth or taught false doctrine opposed to the truth (see appendix B and compare 254 and 259).

We should thank God for De Cock and his role in the reformation of the church that began in 1834. As a true Reformed

movement the Secession churches continued to grow and develop in the Reformed faith. And Kamps explains that De Cock received great help from other men in this work of continuing Reformation. Some of their names are probably familiar to you—Scholte, Van Velzen, Brummelkamp, Meerburg, and Van Raalte. Thankfully the Lord used these men even to prevent De Cock's wrong view of baptism from being adopted by the young Secession denomination. It is quite remarkable that these younger men stood up to the man most responsible for the formation of the denomination. It is probably even more remarkable that De Cock had the humility to admit his error and apologize in writing to the synod of the churches. But most importantly God ensured that the Secession denomination would uphold the right view of the sacrament of baptism. You can read about this fascinating and important history in chapter 8.

There are many reasons *1834* is worth the investment it takes to buy it and read it. It is written in a way that is accessible to most readers, including teenagers and maybe even preteens. For Reformed Christians who are the spiritual descendants of the Secession the history is vitally important. Reading this book will make you appreciate anew the truths of the Reformed faith, especially the truth of salvation by God's sovereign grace. And reading this book will increase your gratitude to God for delivering our forefathers from apostasy and thus delivering us; and for returning them and us to the true church.

Finally, I would like to mention that the book is also available in both the epub and mobi digital formats. I read the hardcover edition but used the mobi format on my Kindle Fire tablet to write this review. The ability to search the book electronically is especially useful. For example, my tablet tells me that the word *election* appears 98 times in the book, and it allows me to scroll through a list of every use of the word within its context.

In either the hardcover or electronic format I highly recommend the book.



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RFPA update Reader Feedback

“I was introduced to Herman Hoeksema and David Engelsma through the Trinity Foundation, and can’t get enough of their ammunition. I feel like giving out Engelsma’s book *Hyper Calvinism*, but can’t find more copies. I am also interested in catechism teachings for my family that we can all do together.” —*Reader from Georgia*

After reading *The Reformed Faith of John Calvin*, “which led me to a desire to have the 2 volumes of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin, I tried to find out if such books are being sold in any book stores in India but I tried in vain.” —*Reader from India*

One of our authors was approached by an elderly man who misidentified an RFPA title as one on miracles. The book was, in fact, *Mysteries of the Kingdom*. This man had heard about the book from his minister who felt this was a fine publication and was using it for sermons which also indicated there may have been some plagiarism. The elderly man concluded, “You never know what influence you have with your books.” —*Reader from Grand Rapids*

“I read and reread many of the *Standard Bearer* articles and meditations. Thank you so much for printing such a good magazine.” —*Reader from Iowa*

From a reader in England who had resubscribed to the *Standard Bearer*: “This is a good sound Bible based publication with useful, spiritually edifying articles. May the editorial staff be enabled to continue this vital work and all for the glory of God and hopefully profitable to the readers.”

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