

Book Review



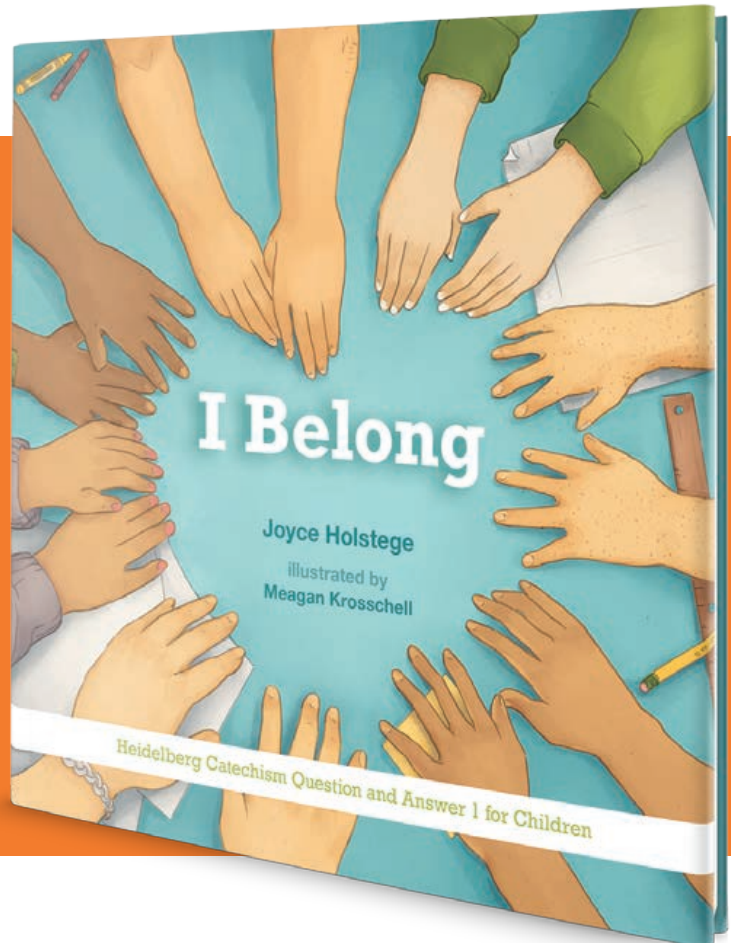
Mrs. Annemarieke **Ryskamp**

Review of *I Belong: Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 1 for Children*, Joyce Holstege, illustrated by Meagan Krosschell. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2022. 50 pages. Hardback. \$18.95.

This book was written so that parents or other adults and children can work through Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism together. Every left page contains a beautifully drawn, relevant, page-sized picture and the part of the Answer that is being discussed on every right page. The text on the right page can be read by older children who are skilled at reading, but it's mostly meant to be read by the adult who is reading it to the children. Because of this layout, it is an excellent book to read to younger and older children at the same time.

The title, *I Belong*, is a perfect title to pick from the original text because it is appropriate for our time and age, in which it becomes more and more difficult for children to know where, how, and to whom they belong, such as when their family is torn by divorce and blended by remarriage. Question and Answer 1 of the catechism gives a short summary of the Christian faith, and therefore this book explains the key points of faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

I'm impressed with the author for tackling and explaining all aspects of the Christian faith in a clear and simple way, understandable



to children and adults alike. She doesn't shy away from the difficult points like "in death" or "soul" or "savior" and explains them with refreshing clarity.

Since the author handled explaining the major points in Christianity in such an understandable way, this book would be also excellent to read to children who are not being raised in the faith or in a Bible-believing church. In that case, I would recommend starting with the last pages, where some typical church expressions, like "glory" or "glorify

God" or Satan and sin are better explained than in the first couple pages.

I would have liked to see a bit more emphasis on Jesus, on how he loves the little children and even said "Let the children come to me" (Matt. 19:14, English Standard Version). I think this would be especially comforting for children who feel they don't belong. But this can be easily added by the adult who is reading the book. This adult can also elaborate a bit by explaining that Satan is a name for

the devil, mentioned in the Answer, and that the devil is the archenemy of God and therefore so eager to make people sin against God.

It is also my opinion that the phrases that include the word *must*, like “you **must** use your body to serve him” and “everything you do **must** be for God’s glory and for his honor” are a bit strong. The text of the Answer itself is milder, saying “[his Holy Spirit] makes me sincerely willing and ready . . . to live unto him.” The catechism’s approach is especially good for the child with a strict conscience, who would misunderstand this word *must* and constantly feel guilty and so miss out on the love and forgiveness of our Savior.

There are not many authors who dare to write a children’s book explaining in detail Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 1. As far as I know, Joyce Holstege is the only one who has done it. I admire her courage, and she did an excellent job. The illustrator, Meagan Krosschell, made it into an attractive-looking book that I think will be a treasure both for the kids who want (or have) to learn the catechism, and for the children who are new to the Christian faith. We all have the responsibility to make sure that all children hear to whom they belong, and this book is certainly one of the best. I recommend you all get a copy and read it to children who need to hear the message of comfort and love.

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 has two grown sons and attends Dutton URC (MI) where she leads various bible study and mentor groups.

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