

Questions for Discussion: Theology

1. Theology: General

1.1. John 15:26

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me

Galatians 4:6

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

- (a.) Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father and the Son?
- (b.) Does it matter?

1.2. Romans 2:13-15

For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;

Notice this refers to believing Gentiles only – those who “do by nature the things contained in the law” and not only have a conscience but have the law written on their hearts as well.

Can a man know right and wrong from natural revelation and/or conscience?

1.3. Revelation 10:5,6

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer....

Time is a succession of moments. We need time for movement and increase. If, in heaven, there is no longer any time, we can never be getting better and better (which makes sense because if we were, heaven wouldn't be perfect it would be becoming increasingly perfect and never arriving at perfection), but it also means there can't be any movement.

- (a.) How can we understand a world with no movement?
- (b.) In heaven, will there be increase in knowledge, because we will not become omniscient, so there will always be more to learn. Will we be able to learn?

1.4. (a.) Will we use language in heaven? Language is a burden here, because it is so limiting. God has to use words to reveal His truth to us. How limiting is this?

- (b.) In heaven, will we have teeth? Will we eat and drink?

1.5. Does becoming born-again by the Spirit of God make one chatty?

1.6. (a.) Of all the subjects we learn at school, or indeed anywhere in our lives; of all the facts we learn and have stored in our minds (e.g. Oslo is the capital of Norway); How much will we need to know in heaven? How much do we really need to know here, and how much of that will we no longer need to know in heaven? We will not even have a Bible in heaven!!!

(b.) What is the point of any of the following: Literature, Drama, Dance, Music, Art, Sport, Politics.... in fact anything outside of the Bible?

(c.) We spend approximately 16 years of our life in full time education, training us for approximately double that time in work. We then spend approximately another 16 years in retirement where none of that education is necessary apart from reading, writing and arithmetic. When we finally get to heaven we won't even need these three things either, because we'll no longer have a Bible to read and we'll be dealing with numbers that no man can number. Discuss.

1.7. *"If God wishes to save the heathen, he will do so in his own good time."* Discuss.

1.8. What about prophecies? Can Christians today:

(a.) predict the future?

(b.) have discernment in the interpretation of providence?

1.9. What is the difference between "steadfastness" and "stubbornness"?

1.10. If two ways are before us and one is sin and the other not, the way forward that we should take is obvious. But if two ways are before us, neither of which are sin, e.g. who to marry or what job to take, we must use providence to guide us, but how? How far can biblical examples be used in order to determine this, especially as God does not communicate to us in the same way as he did in biblical times any more? e.g. Isaac and Rebekah. If we can't use biblical examples as our guide at all, does this not put most of the Bible out of our reach for use in these matters?

1.11. The question "Is God the author of sin" is a red herring. Discuss.

1.12. If the uniqueness of man is due to the fact that he was originally made in the image of God, then what is the image of God?

– It can't be the knowledge of good and evil, as he only got that after the fall.

– It can't be rationality, knowledge, righteousness or holiness (Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10); because the angels also have all of these.

So, what made man unique in his original creation that even the angels did not have?

1.13. *Larger Catechism 50:*

Q. Wherein consisteth Christ's humiliation after His death?

A. Christ's humiliation after His death consisted in His being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day, which hath been otherwise expressed in these words: He descended into hell.

How does this definition of "He descended into hell" tally with Luke 23:43: "*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*"?

1.14. (a.) Is the universe billions of light years across (bearing in mind that it was created 6000 years ago, two days after the earth)?

(b.) Do atoms and molecules exist?

(c.) Did we evolve from monkeys (from fish, from slime)?

1.15. Does one have to believe in the Trinity to be saved?

1.16. Matthew 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels

Why did God create hell in the first place, if it wasn't to be filled with people?

1.17. "*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*" Discuss.

1.18. (a.) Is the Son ETERNALLY begotten of the Father?

Westminster Confession of Faith 2:3

In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

The proof texts here are John 1:14,18, which only uses the phrase "*only begotten*," similarly the proof texts for the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost are John 15:26 and Galatians 4:6, but these only teach the proceeding from the Father and the Son, nothing about eternity.

(b.) Is the non-biblical phrase "*eternally begotten*" an oxymoron?

Psalm 2:7

"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

This points to a specific time, i.e. when Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary. He is God's only begotten Son, in the sense that he was begotten (not by ordinary generation) as a human in this world. Is there any sense in which Christ was "begotten" other than His coming into the world? He was not begotten from eternity, He was God from all eternity.

1.19. Is faith "*a confidence that Christ loved me and gave Himself for me*"? Or does this assurance of hope come later. Faith is "*a firm, full, assured persuasion or conviction of mind of the truth of the gospel,*" which can only be given by the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 1:13: *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."*

1.20. (a.) How do we reconcile the fact that Christ always was God but he didn't know everything?

Compare:

Luke 2:52.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

Matthew 24:36.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

with:

John 4:29.

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

John 2:25

"And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."

(b.) God became flesh. He became a babe. So He had to grow. So He had to learn. Was there ever a time Christ had to learn that He was God?

Hebrews 5:8,9

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Luke 2:40

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Luke 2:52

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

1.21. God in providence ordains all things to come to pass without being the author or approver of sin.

(a.) Can these two things be perfectly reconciled or do we have to flee to "mystery"?

e.g. Joseph's brothers selling him into Egypt could only see as far as their getting rid of him, whereas God decreed it to happen because he knew that it would end in Israel being saved from famine. If Joseph or his brothers had known infallibly that his being sold into Egypt would save Israel from famine, would that not have been a good work?

e.g. the crucifixion. Those who crucified Christ could see no further than his death, thinking it would end the new sect that had been formed around him. God knew all along that Christ's death at the hands of men would be the means of salvation of his people. Now, if men had known that infallibly, would putting him to death have been a good work????

(b.) Does this go to prove that we can't know anything infallibly?

1.22. "God loves you the way you are." Discuss.

1.23. Define the term "Evangelical."

1.24. (a.) Are the Jews still God's chosen people?

(b.) Will there be a mass turning to Christ amongst the Jews just before Christ returns?

1.25. Luke 22:42

Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

Did Christ have two wills?

1.26. Why should God save any of us?

1.27. Revelation 20:5,6

*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is **the first resurrection**. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in **the first resurrection**: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

Amillennialists believe that "the first resurrection" is the believer's conversion, or being born again. But:

2 Timothy 2:17,18

*And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; [18] Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that **the resurrection is past already**; and overthrow the faith of some.*

Does this verse not disprove that, seeing as the conversion of all believers is a past event, otherwise they wouldn't be believers?

1.28. Exodus 25:18

And **thou shalt make two cherubims of gold**, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.

Exodus 26:1

Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: **with cherubims** of cunning work shalt thou make them.

If making images and idols are wrong, why did God ordain images of cherubim to be made?

1.29. Matthew 26:28

For this is my blood of the **new testament**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

A “testament,” or “covenant” is always confirmed by a sacrifice.

Malachi 1:11

For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and **in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering**: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

This is a prophecy of an “offering” being offered to God in every place.

Luke 22:19

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

This instruction was given only to the disciples, and to all priests descending from them by apostolic succession. They are to take a piece of bread, say it is Jesus’ body and give it to the people.

These are the three main Biblical passages that would be used to try to “prove” that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice, and the bread and wine are the real body and blood of Christ. Prove that is not true.

1.30. Genesis 6:3

And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man....

Acts 7:51

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

Can the Holy Spirit be resisted?

1.31. If Adam had repented of his sin, would he have stayed in the garden?

1.32. How does prophecy work?

Paul first prophesies that the voyage would damage the ship (which it did) and also that their lives would be in danger:

Acts 27:10

*And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, **but also of our lives.***

But later, he prophesies the opposite, namely that there shall be no loss of life at all:

Acts 27:21-24

*But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for **there shall be no loss of any man's life among you**, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, **God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.***

All contingent with them staying on the ship:

Acts 27:31

*Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, **Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.***

This prophecy that no life was to be lost was repeated:

Acts 27:34

*Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for **there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.***

And indeed this was the result:

Acts 27:44

*And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that **they escaped all safe to land.***

So, how does prophecy work, if the first one seemed to imply the opposite of what actually happened?

1.33. The most embarrassing thing about Protestantism is:

- (a.) The splintering of churches.
- (b.) Antinomianism.
- (c.) People forthrightly preaching misinterpretations of Scripture as fact.
- (d.) Lack of seriousness.
- (e.) Lack of gravity.
- (f.) Make a list of other embarrassing things that ruin the testimony of the truth.

1.34. When we get to heaven, what will we do? Nobody will be in need any more.

1.35. Does God do anything reluctantly (like sending people to hell)?

2. Theology: Free Offer, Common Grace and Related Subjects

- 2.1. (a.) Does God “delight” that the reprobate keep the law?
(b.) Is the gospel preached “common grace” to the reprobate?

2.2. Does God want the non-elect to be saved?

John 5:34

“But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.”

vv.38-42 show that he was speaking to those who “*will not come*” (v.40).

2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

But the “us” only refers to believers.

2.3. 2 Kings 10:30

And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.

Is Jehu an example of one of the non-elect doing good works commended by God?

2.4. We can say to all men, “If you keep the Law, you shall be saved.” We are not saying anything about ability to keep the law at this point, we are just making a conditional statement (which no-one can fulfil). In Romans we are told that we all fall short of the glory of God, and that no-one can keep the law. The question is then asked: if this is the case then, “Is the law sin?” The answer being “God forbid!” (Rom 7:7) The law is good and clean and just and right. It acts to magnify the view of our depravity and condemn us the more, yet it is always good.

Similarly the gospel. “If you repent and believe in Christ, you shall be saved.” Again, this says nothing as such about ability, it is simply a conditional statement (which again no-one can fulfil). The gospel is a conditional promise to all men which no-one can fulfil unless faith and repentance are granted them by God. But, if:

2 Corinthians 2:16

To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.

Is the gospel a genuine free offer of genuine good news to all men?

2.5. Can the unregenerate realise their inability to repent and believe?

2.6. Isaiah 46:10

*Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and **I will do all my pleasure**:*

Ezekiel 33:11

*Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, **I have no pleasure** in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

If God does all His pleasure, how can He have no pleasure in something?

2.7. Was Christ's blood sufficient to save a thousand worlds? (John Calvin; William Perkins on Matthew 5:20).

3. Theology: Free Presbyterian Magazine and Related Subjects

3.1. Free Presbyterian Magazine Sept. 2003 editorial.

"One factor in the awfulness of a lost eternity is the absence of restraining grace there, so that lost sinners are – under the judgement of God – totally unrestrained in their reactions to each other."

But sinners **want** God's restraining grace removed. So, will people really continue to sin for evermore in hell?

3.2. Free Presbyterian Magazine Jan. 2004 p.20

"This parable cannot be understood unless we keep in view certain of the customs of the East."

Should we rely on extra-biblical material to interpret the Bible, because we cannot vouch for the accuracy of it?

3.3. (a.) "God is more willing to forgive than men are to be forgiven." Discuss.

(b.) "God shows greater glory in his forgiveness of sinners than in his damning them."

Discuss. (This is rubbish, because if this were the case, his damning any one person in providence would display a lesser glory than if he saved them, therefore every act of damning would not be for his greatest glory – which is the only way things can be for God to be perfect.)

(c.) Is God's justice more satisfied in the salvation of a sinner (who has complete satisfaction for his sin paid for by Christ) than in the damnation of a sinner (who will never fully satisfy for his sin to all eternity)?

3.4. Discuss the use of the common phrase “lost eternity.” Is it not just a watering down of the more biblical “hell-fire”?

3.5. Free Presbyterian Magazine Dec. 2004. p.359 (R.M.McCheyne)
“...infinite obedience was required of him...”

Surely Christ, in his estate of humiliation, was in a finite body, in a finite place at a finite period of time. So His obedience was not infinite (perfect, yes).

(a.) What on earth does ‘infinite obedience’ mean? Is it a meaningless phrase, given to impress, but meaning nothing?

(b.) Should we ever use the word “infinite” when used with regards God. Infinity is merely a virtual mathematical concept like the square root of -1.

3.6. Free Presbyterian Magazine Jan. 2005 editorial (p.2)

“It is not because God wills to punish sin that He does so; in punishing sin – whether in the sinner himself, or in Christ as the substitute – God is acting according to His holy and just nature. God cannot leave sin unpunished.”

So, does God punish sin unwillingly?

3.7. Isaiah 30:18

And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

Is God “waiting to be gracious” to sinners?

3.8. Can anyone “sin away the day of grace”?

4. Theology: Departure from “Reformed” Orthodoxy

[Note: We love “Reformed” churches, because they base their beliefs on the Bible, and preach much truth from it. But “Reformed” churches, far from continually “reforming,” are very rigid. One cannot feel comfortable in any of them, but will always find something to disagree with them about, because no church is perfect. But one cannot say anything, because those in power rule the roost and will not, will not, will not change. Much of their theology, being based on the Protestant Reformation, is very good, and we can wholeheartedly agree with them on most of what they teach. So we go to their churches, and learn from them. But there are some subjects they will not budge on, and which we truly, in our heart, cannot accept. So we cannot subscribe to any of their Confessions of Faith, even though we probably agree with a vast majority of each. We could, if we so wished, become a member of such churches on a simple profession of faith in Christ, but we would never be able to progress further. We would always be on the periphery of the

church. That's a sad state of affairs. Some of the issues we cannot agree on are the subjects of discussion here. And this list just seems to get longer, the more we think on these things.]

4.1. Is assurance of the essence of faith?

["Reformed" orthodoxy says "no." But there is a problem with the concept of being saved but having a lack of assurance that one is saved. We are told that this is a fairly common problem, but we cannot understand how that can be.

(1.) No matter how much a true Christian backslides, he always still knows in his heart that he has been fundamentally changed by God from within. Therefore a backslidden position will always **bother** him. Someone who maybe has been in a church a long time, then leaves and goes back into the world, **and it doesn't bother him**, was never saved in the first place.

(2.) 1 John shews us lots of things that Christians know **for sure**:

1 John 3:14

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

1 John 3:18,19

*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby **we know** that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

1 John 3:24

*And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby **we know** that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

1 John 4:6

*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby **know we** the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

1 John 5:2

*By this **we know** that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

1 John 5:13-15

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if **we know** that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, **we know** that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

All these verses are not conditions that we need to strive to possibly attain in the future, they are absolutes, which exist the moment we become a Christian and never leave us.

(3.) The closer we get to God, the more sin we see in ourselves, as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us. This can be mistaken for a lack of assurance. We think that we ought to be getting better and better, **but we never are**. We think this can't be right, **but it is**.

Romans 7:18-25

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

(4.) The gospel message we proclaim to the world is: "Repent and believe in Christ and you will be saved." But, because this is a statement requiring mental assent, so many think this is a simple act of the mind and

nothing more. So many think they have become a Christian because they affirm this with their minds, but their heart has never been changed. The most important concept in Christianity is:

John 3:3

....Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:7

....Ye must be born again.

If we have truly been born again, we have had our hearts fundamentally changed from the inside. We can never become “un-born” again. As a result, we will know **for sure** this has happened.

So, any lack of assurance could be due to either one of two things:

(a.) The person has assented in their mind, and so thinks they are a Christian, but has never been changed in their hearts, and so is not a true Christian at all. Or,

(b.) They have been changed in their hearts, and therefore are a true Christian, but they don't recognise fully the change that has happened in them. They think they need to undergo some greater experience before they feel fit enough to come to the communion table (and so probably look down on others who, they think, seem to be coming presumptuously).]

4.2. Is Progressive Sanctification true?

(a.) Is Sanctification “me every day in every way getting better and better”?

(b.) If such progressive sanctification is true, does that mean we need Christ less and less each day?

[“Reformed” orthodoxy believes in progressive sanctification. But: Every day in every way we are **NOT** getting better and better. We are rather getting more and more set apart from the world.

We do grow in grace and knowledge:

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

And we do see more and more of our sin, as we can bear it. Note the progression in Paul:

1 Corinthians 15:9

*For **I am the least of the apostles**, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Ephesians 3:8

*Unto me, **who am less than the least of all saints**, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*

1 Timothy 1:15

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners; of whom I am chief.***

But at the end of our life we are just as much in need of Christ as at our conversion. Any good work we do, we just don't see, because it comes from the Holy Spirit within us, not ourselves.

Matthew 25:44

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?]

4.3. Church Principles are in the Bible, but are they not a “secondary” issue?

[We shouldn't divide on them. “Reformed” churches elevate their this-worldly principles too highly by preaching on them from the pulpit, and, based on them, they separate themselves into tiny factions from many other true Christians:

1 Corinthians 1:12,13

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

Examples of such principles being so important in “Reformed” circles::

- adult or infant baptism
- open or closed communion
- Form of Church Government – Presbyterian or Congregational
- Worship practice – exclusive psalms or psalms and “Reformed” hymns
- Women's head coverings

Colossians 2:20-3:4

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.]

4.4. Is the Establishment Principle true?

[Many “Reformed” churches believe the church and state should be connected in some way. But: When Jesus Christ was on the earth, He never got involved with politics. The gospel is altogether different from worldly concerns. Other “Reformed” churches, however, go to the opposite extreme and ignore the government God has placed over us altogether:

Romans 13:1

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

We are called to pray for authorities for one particular thing, and one thing only:

1 Timothy 2:1,2

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; **that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.***

We are not to pray about any of their policies, or get involved with politics in any way. But we are only to pray for them that we, i.e. Christians, may be free to live our lives without being hassled by them in any way.

Sadly, in many countries, Christians are hassled by the government. Christians can't behave the way they ought to, force of law forbidding them. We are to pray that we may be free from government interference so we may “*lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*”

We should pray for this, as we do indeed for the salvation of our rulers. However, some “Reformed” churches don't even do this, they think it smacks too much of political involvement.]

4.5. Do we have to acknowledge the gospel message in order to be saved?

["Reformed" orthodoxy says "yes," but people can be saved by the Lord (ordinarily upon hearing some truth, but not necessarily) first, and then later, when they hear the gospel message, they will acknowledge it freely.]

4.6. Is "The Angel of the Lord" the Lord Jesus Christ in a pre-incarnate state?

["Reformed" orthodoxy says "yes," but we disagree. He is a messenger from God, so we ought still to fear and tremble when he is present.]

4.7. Will men in hell be "sinning for evermore"?

["Reformed" orthodoxy says "yes." But that's exactly what they want. Surely they will be bowing the knee to Christ and hating every minute of it. God could not possibly create a place where men will continue to sin forever.

Revelation 14:10

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb]

4.8. Is there such a thing as the "Holy Ministry"?

["Reformed" orthodoxy very much elevates the minister and elders. But ministers and elders are **NOT** above the rest. Ministers are **NOT** Christ's special ambassadors, higher than the ordinary riff-raff in the pews. **ALL** those who believe in Christ are His ambassadors equally.

The orthodox "Reformed" view elevates the minister far, far too highly. He becomes the ordinary means of salvation because he is the only one "licensed" to preach the gospel, which, to them, is the only ordinary means of salvation. This is no different from the Roman Catholic priest becoming the ordinary means of turning the wafer and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and therefore the only means of salvation in that church.

Affirmation 2010, an otherwise reasonable "Reformed" confession, is ruined by the following chapter:

Affirmation 2010

"12. The Holy Ministry

We affirm belief in the holy Ministry. Even in Old Testament times, there were Ministers of the Word, both extraordinary and ordinary,¹ but in New Testament times the Ministerial Office comes very much to the fore.² Our Lord Himself was a Minister,³ and during the period of His public preaching and teaching, He ordained first the Twelve, and later the Seventy;⁴ but He intimated that others still would be involved in this work⁵ and, before ascending, He declared *a Ministry would exist to the end of time*.⁶ Thus, even now, the exalted Lord gives 'pastors and teachers' to His Church.⁷ Scripture insists that such men should be divinely qualified by a holy and blameless life, rational and experiential knowledge of the Truth, and ability faithfully and zealously to declare and to apply the Word of God.⁸ It is also required – indeed it is essential – that such be 'called' into the Ministry, which 'call' is two-fold: an inner call from the Lord (the divine will impressed on the heart, bringing real, deep and compelling conviction) and an outer call from the Church (involving election and then

solemn ordination or appointment).⁹ It is clear that men only are called to the office, and so publicly to lead worship and minister God's Word in the Churches;¹⁰ and whatever other officers may function in a Gospel Church (Ruling Elders or Deacons), their service can never be a substitute for a proper Biblical and stated Ministry.¹¹ Those duly appointed to the Ministry should perform their duties, not in any overbearing or domineering manner, but with a *humble, forbearing and compassionate spirit*, such as is ever found in the chief Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ.¹² Furthermore, according to the Scriptures, their Ministry is *not* priestly or sacerdotal (the order of Aaron having been set aside, and the order of Melchizedek being unique to the Lord Jesus Christ):¹³ instead, its chief functions are *the preaching or teaching of God's Word and the administering of the ordinances*.¹⁴ The only divinely authorised public means for the instruction and conversion of sinners is the *verbal* proclamation of God's holy Word¹⁵ and one of the greatest needs of the present time is for men to be raised up to preach the whole counsel of God authoritatively and faithfully,¹⁶ and for these preachers – and for this preaching – to be anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.¹⁷

We reject the view that the ministry 'lies in common', so that *anyone* may undertake public ministry in the church, even as we reject the idea that women may lead any part of divine worship or preach to the gathered church. We also repudiate any use of drama, mime, puppetry, and the like, as illegitimate and improper means to communicate God's revealed Truth, since we believe God has appointed preaching as the proper way to make known His Truth to this needy world.

¹ Luke 1:70; 2 Peter 1:21; Deuteronomy 33:10; 2 Chronicles 15:3; Malachi 2:7; Acts 15:21 ² Acts 6:4; Ephesians 4:11,12; 1 Timothy 1:12 ³ Isaiah 61:1; Romans 15:8; Revelation 3:14 ⁴ Mark 3:13,14; Luke 10:1-16 ⁵ Matthew 13:52; Luke 12:42,43 ⁶ Matthew 28:19,20 ⁷ Ephesians 4:11,12; 1 Corinthians 12:28 ⁸ Acts 20:27,28; Romans 12:6-8; 2 Corinthians 3:5,6; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:15,24; 4:1-5; Titus 1:4-9 ⁹ Acts 13:1,2; Romans 10:15; 1 Corinthians 9:16; Acts 1:15-26; 13: 1-3; 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14 ¹⁰ 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Corinthians 14:34,35; 1 Timothy 2:11,12 ¹¹ Acts 12:17; 21:18; Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Hebrews 13:7,17 ¹² Matthew 20:25-28; 23:11,12; 1 Peter 5:3; 3 John 9-11 ¹³ Hebrews 8:13; 10:11,12 ¹⁴ Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 6:4; 20:7-11; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:1-4 ¹⁵ Luke 24:46-48; 1 Corinthians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 4:5 ¹⁶ Matthew 9:37,38; Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 2:2 ¹⁷ Luke 24:49; John 20:21,22; Acts 4:8,31; 1 Peter 1:12.”]

4.9. (a.) Are the “gifts” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 for today?

[“Reformed” orthodoxy says “no.” But: We agree that the “*signs and wonders*” that Christ and the apostles performed are no longer with us today, but the “*gifts of the spirit*” as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 (if understood correctly) are still with us, otherwise why have instructions about them in the Bible? “Reformed” orthodoxy believes that the “*signs and wonders*” and the “*gifts of the Spirit*” are the same thing and that both have ceased.]

(b.) Were nearly all the future prophecies in Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation fulfilled in A.D.70 when the Temple was destroyed?

[Most Reformed people espouse Postmillennialism, which believes that most of these prophecies were fulfilled in A.D.70. But, again, why are all the warnings in the Scriptures if it is not for us?]

4.10. Is “Elder” an office?

[Most Reformed churches elect “*elders*” to a specific office who then rule the roost. But:

(1.) It all boils down to whether we believe that the word “*elder*” (*presbuteros*) is equivalent to the word “*bishop*” (*episkopos*) or overseer. If they are completely equivalent, then elder is indeed an office. However, why would the Holy Spirit use two words, if they both really mean the same thing?

(2.) 1 Timothy 3:1 uses the phrase “*the office of a bishop.*”

1 Timothy 3:10 uses the phrase “*the office of a deacon.*”

But nowhere in Scripture is “*elder*” described as an office. Rather it simply refers to the elderly, more mature members of a congregation. Everybody automatically becomes an “*elder*” if they stay in a congregation long enough. This is the “*presbytery*,” if you will.

(3.) Sometimes “presbuteros” or “presbutes” is translated “aged men” Titus 2:2, or “aged” Philemon 9. Interestingly, we also have “aged women” (presbutis) in Titus 2:3, and “elder women” (presbuteros) in 1 Timothy 5:2. (Although elsewhere in Scripture we see that ruling and teaching is the domain of the males only).

(4.) So, in Acts 14:23 when it speaks of ordaining elders in every church, or Titus 1:5 “ordain elders in every city,” it does not mean “ordain some suitably qualified people to the office of elder,” because it is not an office. Rather, it means “from the elders, ordain some to be bishops (or overseers).” Titus 1:7 then goes on to talk about qualifications for bishops: “For a bishop must be blameless....” etc.]

4.11. Is Acts 6:1-7 the calling of deacons?

[“Reformed” orthodoxy says “yes.” But that is not true. Deacons are nowhere mentioned in this passage. It simply refers to delegating responsibility.]

4.12. Was the book of Hebrews written by Paul?

[“Reformed” orthodoxy says “yes.” But that is not true:

2 Thessalonians 3:17

The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

Hebrews is anonymous.]

4.13. Was Mary of the line of David?

[Reformed orthodoxy tells us that the genealogy in Luke 3 was that of Mary. But that is NOT true:

Luke 3:23

*And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, **being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,....***

Elisabeth was of the house of Aaron, the High Priest, and Mary was her cousin (or close relative):

Luke 1:5

*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and **his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.***

Luke 1:36

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

Zechariah specifically mentions that Christ was of the house of David, which, as a relation, would have been a surprise to him how the Lord was working:

Luke 1:67-69

*And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And **hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David]***

4.14. Should we have a “burden for souls”?

[Reformed orthodoxy believes Christians should have a burden for everybody’s souls. But:

We should hate the wicked as God does:

Psalm 7:11

*God judgeth the righteous, and **God is angry with the wicked every day.***

Psalm 11:5

*The LORD trieth the righteous: but **the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.***

This includes unbelieving members of our families, and even our own selves:

Luke 14:26

*If any man come to me, and hate not **his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also,** he cannot be my disciple.*

Yes, we should love our enemies, by which we mean do good to them, but we hate the wickedness in them. We don’t befriend them and do what they do. Until and unless they repent and come to the Lord for themselves, they are still our enemies:

Matthew 5:44,45

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Romans 12:19-21

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Once someone has been saved by the Lord, had a new heart put within them and been granted repentance, it is a delight to know them. These are the people we love from our hearts. These are our brothers and sisters in Christ:

1 John 3:14

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because **we love the brethren.** He that loveth not **his brother** abideth in death.*

John 15:12-14

*This is my commandment, That ye **love one another,** as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for **his friends.** Ye are **my friends,** if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

We are going to be perfectly content in heaven. We are not going to be looking over the edge into hell and being sad in any way. We know it is perfectly just that they are there. We also realise of course that but by the grace of God we would be there too, and are ever thankful to Him for saving us and a number that no man can number:

Psalm 149:6-9

*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them **the judgment written:** this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.*

Psalm 91:8

*Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see **the reward of the wicked.***]

- 4.15. (a.) Were the epistles of James and Jude written by the Lord's half brothers?
(b.) Was James, the chairperson of the council in Acts 15, the Lord's half brother?

["Reformed" orthodoxy says "yes." But there is no evidence of any of this.]

In Galatians 1:19, where it mentions "*James the Lord's brother*," it means the Lord's close relative, i.e. James, brother of John and son of Zebedee. On the cross Christ committed His mother to John, whose mother was Salome, Mary's sister. So John was Christ's cousin.

This James was killed by Herod in Acts 12:1,2, so couldn't possibly have been the chairperson of the council, nor have written the epistle of that name.

Every other mention in Scripture of a James after this event does not specify which James.

There were two other apostles, James, the son of Alphaeus, and his brother Judas (not Iscariot) (Acts 1:13).

Jesus also had half brothers named James and Judas (Mark 6:3). They were originally opposed to Christ during His lifetime, but became believers, as they are found in the upper room in Acts 1:14. But they were never apostles.

So it is most likely that James and Judas, the sons of Alphaeus, wrote the epistles of James and Jude, and that it was this James who was the chairperson at the council of Jerusalem.

4.16. It is often said that Luke was a Gentile. But, if so, the books of Luke and Acts would be the only books in the Bible not written by a Jew. Try to prove from Scripture that Luke was a Gentile, because I can't see it.