



REFORMED

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

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From the Ramparts Editor: Dewey Engelsma

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MEDITATION

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the vail. And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof. And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle. And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein. And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate. And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy. And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy. And thou shalt anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify it. And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations. Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he.

And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up. And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and fastened his sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars. And he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as the LORD commanded Moses. And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark: and he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the vail of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony; as the LORD commanded Moses. And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the vail. And he set the bread in order upon it before the LORD; as the LORD had commanded Moses. And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward. And he lighted the lamps before the LORD; as the LORD commanded Moses. And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before the vail: and he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the LORD commanded Moses. And he set up the hanging at the door of the tabernacle. And he put the altar of burnt offering by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering; as the LORD commanded Moses. And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat: when they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the LORD commanded Moses. And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

—Exodus 40:1–33

The Rearing up of the Tabernacle

It was time for the rearing up of the tabernacle. One year to the month after God had delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, Moses set up the tabernacle. In the first month, God had saved his people Israel by the blood of the passover lamb in Egypt—out of the house of bondage! A year later on the first day of the first month, the tent of the congregation was raised—into the tabernacle of God!

There were many details for Moses to attend to in rearing up the tabernacle. All the boards and bars and pillars must be set in their sockets. The colorful fabrics must be spread abroad for coverings. The stone tables of the law had to be put in the ark of the covenant and the golden staves run through the golden rings. The whole ark must be placed in the holy of holies, and the mercy seat must be placed upon the ark, and the veil of the covering must be hung. The table of shewbread must be placed in the holy place, with its bread arranged upon it. The candlestick must be placed opposite the table and its lamps lighted. The altar of incense must be placed before the veil and sweet incense burned upon it. The door of the tabernacle must be hung, and the altar of burnt offering and the brass laver must be placed. All the boards and hangings of the court round about must be reared and secured. A tremendous job it was to rear up the tabernacle!

Then came the anointing. The special, fragrant anointing oil, made according to Jehovah's exact recipe, must be used to anoint the tabernacle, its furniture, and all the vessels. The oil pictured the Holy Spirit, who sanctified the tabernacle and set it apart for God's dwelling and for God's worship. "And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy" (Ex. 30:29).

Then came the sprinkling. A bullock and a ram were slain in turn, and their blood was sprinkled on the altar (Lev. 8:14–21). "Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry" (Heb. 9:21). The blood pictured Jesus Christ in his death on the cross for the remission of the sins of the people who would

dwell with Jehovah. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (v. 22).

Then came the consecration ceremonies for Aaron and his sons. The ceremonies began on the day of the rearing of the tabernacle and continued for seven days. Aaron and his sons pictured Jesus Christ, the great high priest. "And having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:21–22).

The rearing up of the tabernacle was the testimony of God to his lowly people that he made his home with them. "The tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21:3). That glorious tent—its majestic curtains rippling in the desert wind, its vibrant hues splashed against the drab flint of the desert ground, its bustle of blood and fire and oil and water and incense and light and death and life in the midst of the waste howling wilderness—was God's home. And God's home in the very center of Israel's camp stood as a visible declaration that God dwelled among the children of Israel. It was "the tabernacle of testimony" (Ex. 38:21) and "the tent of the congregation" (40:2) and "the tabernacle of witness" (Acts 7:44).

Could such a thing even be? Could it truly be God's will to dwell with men? Could it truly be God's will to dwell with such sinful men as these Israelites? We must know if such a thing can be! For we are that Israel! We are those sinners in the wilderness! Is it truly God's will to dwell with us?

Let us hearken to what God says, and we shall learn of his great mercy. For when Moses reared up the tabernacle, he did it as that which God had insisted upon. Not as that which Moses had invented. Not as that which the people had imagined. But as that which God had commanded. The express will of God was that his house be built in the midst of his beloved people. And so Moses "spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle...as the LORD commanded Moses" (Ex. 40:19). He hung the veil "as the LORD commanded Moses" (v. 21). He set up the table of shewbread "as the LORD commanded

Moses” (vv. 22–23). He lit the candlestick “as the LORD commanded Moses” (v. 25). He burned incense “as the LORD commanded Moses” (v. 27). He offered a burnt offering “as the LORD commanded Moses” (v. 29). He washed his hands at the laver “as the LORD commanded Moses” (v. 32). Yes, it is God’s will to dwell with his people. God insists on it! For behold Moses’ rearing up the tabernacle: “Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he” (v. 16).

Yes, behold Moses’ rearing up the tabernacle. But above all, behold Jesus Christ. For Jesus stands as the everlasting testimony that our merciful covenant God is pleased to dwell with his people! Was Moses faithful in all that God appointed him? Then “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house” (Heb. 3:1–2). Did Moses have

glory as God’s servant? Then see Christ’s glory as God’s Son.

For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. (Heb. 3:3–6)

Yes, it is God’s everlasting good pleasure to dwell with such as us. By faith we know it and rejoice! For “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

—AL

BOOK REVIEW

Reformed Theology, volume 1. David J. Engelsma. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2026. 444 pages, hardcover, \$59.95. [Reviewed by Rev. Andrew Lanning]

Content: The Advances

At various places in *Reformed Theology*, Engelsma advances the church’s understanding of the doctrine under discussion. That is, Engelsma does not merely restate what others have written before, as valuable as that might be. But Engelsma shines the light of the truth as revealed in the scriptures on certain doctrines so that they become clearer and can be known more fully and deeply by God’s people.

One advance is Engelsma’s method of treating the doctrine of God. The traditional method is to treat God’s being, names, attributes, persons, and works. Engelsma proposes a different method.

I propose yet another method of covering the material included under the being, names, and attributes of God, different from the traditional Reformed method of treatment as well as the method followed by Herman

Hoeksema. The method I propose is to combine the name, the being, and the attributes of God in one chapter, as it were, that is, to treat them together as forming one, inseparable body of truth about God, and then to follow the specific order of treating the name of God first and then treating the being and attributes of God after the name, on the ground that the being and attributes of God are made known by the name. (114)

Engelsma’s method is appealing. God makes himself known to us by his name, so let God’s name be the first topic of our dogmatics. God reveals his name in the opening verse of the Bible: “In the beginning God” (Gen. 1:1). The first Reformed confession takes God’s name as its starting point: “We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual

Being, which we call God” (Belgic Confession 1). Engelsma’s method accords well with scripture and the Reformed confessions.

Another advance is Engelsma’s doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost. The Protestant Reformed Churches and her children probably do not realize how significant Engelsma’s contribution on this point has been. Engelsma will likely remain forever unrecognized on earth for his doctrine of the Trinity, which he set forth in his doctoral thesis, published as the book *Trinity and Covenant: God as Holy Family*.¹ But Engelsma distills the essence of that book into a few glorious pages in *Reformed Theology*, tying together our understanding of the Holy Ghost, his procession from the Father and the Son, and the covenant life of the triune God. The church’s understanding and adoration of the Holy Ghost is advanced by this truth.

The doctrine that Engelsma sheds light on is the eternal *procession* of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son. We confess that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son: “And I believe in the HOLY GHOST, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son” (Nicene Creed). But what does it mean that the Holy Ghost proceeds, and how is that different from the Son’s being begotten? These are difficult questions that many have wrestled with. Engelsma observes, “Describing the procession of the Spirit even in figurative language is so difficult that theologians have given up. Leydecker has written: ‘No one will explain how it (*spiratio*) differs from generation’” (176). But taking us to the biblical revelation of the Holy Ghost’s name, Engelsma explains,

In conceiving the meaning of the procession of the Spirit, theology must take its lead from the Spirit’s name, “Holy Spirit.” *Holy* does not refer to the sinlessness of the Spirit, which would be senseless of a person of the Godhead. But *Holy* does describe him as the consecration of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father in the being of God. The Spirit is the personal bond of love between the Father and the Son. His

procession is the breathing forth of the ardent love of the Father for the Son and of the Son for the Father. (177)

And, taking his stand on the tremendously important *filioque* (“and the Son”) clause adopted by the Council of Toledo in AD 586, Engelsma writes,

The Spirit proceeds from the Father *to* the Son and from the Son *to* the Father. Thus, he is the personal bond between the other two persons of the Godhead. In the Spirit, Father and Son express their mutual love and enjoy fellowship. The Spirit is the *covenant* reality of the being of God.

The saving work of the Spirit can be the establishment of the covenant as the elect’s fellowship with God because the Spirit is essentially the fellowship of God himself in the triune being of God. (177)

This is astonishing doctrine! And it warms the believer’s soul! “The Spirit is essentially the fellowship of God himself in the triune being of God.” There is a lifetime’s worth of reflection for the child of God in this truth. Indeed, because we will be adoring our triune, covenant God to all eternity, there is an eternity’s worth of reflection for the child of God in this truth. For our gracious covenant God breathes his Spirit—his own covenant fellowship!—to us through Jesus Christ in order that we creatures of the dust might know him in Christ, have fellowship with him, and testify of him.

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: and ye also shall bear witness. (John 15:26–27)

Content: Some Puzzles

Throughout *Reformed Theology* there were several things that caused this reviewer some puzzlement. Some of these puzzles are minor and are not necessarily errors. Some of these puzzles are major and may be errors. Whether major or minor puzzles, I did not find Engelsma’s writings on the following to be convincing (for whatever that is worth).

¹ David J. Engelsma, *Trinity and Covenant: God as Holy Family* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2006).

First, I am curious why the book was given the title *Reformed Theology*. Engelsma argues in the book that the term *reformed dogmatics* is to be preferred over *systematic theology*. After reading that section one would expect the title on the cover to be *Reformed Dogmatics*. There was no explanation (that I could find) for why the title ended up being *Reformed Theology*, a combination of *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Systematic Theology*. This is not a criticism of the title. *Reformed Theology* is a fine name for a dogmatics book. It emphasizes that the content of the book is the knowledge of God according to the Reformed, biblical, true faith. But it is not the title that Engelsma argues for in the book.

Second, Engelsma denies Herman Hoeksema's definition of love as a bond of fellowship. "I differ with Hoeksema's definition of love as it is a perfection of God. Hoeksema defines love as a bond of fellowship. This is to confuse the goal of love with love itself" (162). Engelsma denies Hoeksema's definition in the interest of maintaining that God's love is gracious. God does not love those who are lovely in themselves, but he graciously loves sinners. Engelsma's contention that God's love is gracious is certainly true. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). And Engelsma's criticism of Hoeksema's exegesis of Colossians 3:14—"charity...is the bond of perfectness"—might be valid. But does that also mean that Hoeksema's definition of love as a bond is essentially wrong? Is it not possible that God's love for us elect sinners be both a bond and gracious because God loves us *in Christ*? "He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). And what about the fact that one of the main Old Testament words for love means *to join together* or *to cleave to*, as even Engelsma points out? And what about the fact that the other main Old Testament word for love means *to breathe after* or *to long for*? For example,

The LORD did not set his love upon you [literally, *join you to himself*], nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any

people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved [literally, *breathed after*] you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut. 7:7–8)

Engelsma does not offer his own definition of love to replace Hoeksema's.

Third, Engelsma criticizes Hoeksema's insistence that all God's perfections pertain first of all to God as God, even apart from the creature. That is, Hoeksema taught that God's love is not first of all love for his elect creature but love for himself—God is love. God's righteousness is not first of all his just dealing with his creatures but righteousness with respect to himself—God is righteous. Engelsma describes Hoeksema's project negatively: "Hoeksema labors to explain these perfections as primarily obtaining in God's own being" (158). Engelsma even approvingly quotes James Daane's criticism of Hoeksema's project. James Daane was a Christian Reformed minister who, in his book *The Freedom of God*, denied the doctrine of reprobation. As part of his argument in *The Freedom of God*, Daane criticized Hoeksema's doctrine that God is merciful to himself.

Recall again what happened to the concept of mercy in Hoeksema's thought...He urged that God is merciful to himself...But if mercy is understood as an internal attitude of God toward himself, the biblical reality of mercy is seriously threatened.²

Daane is wrong. God's mercy is his will that the objects of his mercy be blessed. God can be merciful to himself without in the least threatening the biblical idea of mercy. God's mercy for his elect people is his will that his sinful and miserable and helpless people be blessed in Christ. But God's mercy for himself is his will that he—who is the most blessed forever—be most blessed forever. "God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 9:5).

² James Daane, *The Freedom of God: A Study of Election and Pulpit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 30–31, as quoted in David J. Engelsma, *Reformed Theology*, 171.

However, in *Reformed Theology* Engelsma asserts that not only must we do justice to Hoeksema, but we must also do justice to Daane's criticism of Hoeksema. "One does justice both to the concern of Hoeksema...and to the criticism of Daane" (171). What? Since when must we do justice to the heretic Daane's criticism of Hoeksema? The only way one "does justice" to Daane's criticism is to repudiate it. But, confusingly, Engelsma follows Daane's criticism to arrive at the conclusion, contrary to Hoeksema, that God "is not, therefore, merciful toward himself, but in himself" (172). And to add confusion to confusion, Engelsma concludes this after previously teaching that God is merciful toward himself. "Within God himself, it [mercy] is the will that he himself be blessed" (167).

At best, this is puzzling and contradictory. But at worst, Engelsma has set the church's foot on Daane's path, which ends in a denial of God's sovereign predestination. Engelsma confesses sovereign election and reprobation in *Reformed Theology*, but then he should also repudiate Daane's criticism of Hoeksema. Let readers of *Reformed Pavilion* be warned that we must not follow Engelsma in trying to do justice to the heretic James Daane when he criticizes Hoeksema.

Fourth, Engelsma describes the influence of the angels upon God's people today as "secret spiritual whisperings" (231). But is this how we want to describe the angels' work? Admittedly, describing the work of God's angels upon us is difficult. Scripture does not detail their influence. Engelsma recognizes this difficulty by qualifying his description with "as it were" (231). And Engelsma rightly insists that, whatever the angels' work is, "always the message is the word of God" (231). But "secret spiritual whisperings" is not the direction we should go in describing the angels' work. Such a description invites the believer to listen for the angels' secret whisperings. And it must be asked, what should I do if someday I hear the angels whispering to me? Shouldn't I whisper back? What if a particular passage is suddenly pressed upon my consciousness, and I attribute it to angelic whispering? Shouldn't I at least say, "Thank you"?

But now I am praying to the angels, contrary to all scripture. No, we should not go in that direction. Why not limit our description of the angels' work upon us to what the Belgic Confession says? "He also created the angels good, to be his messengers, and to serve his elect" (Belgic Confession 12).

Fifth, Engelsma criticizes Hoeksema's definition of a miracle as wrong. Hoeksema: "In general we would circumscribe a wonder as that act of God whereby he raises the whole of his creation, fallen in sin and under the curse, into the glory of his eternal kingdom and everlasting covenant."³ Engelsma:

[Hoeksema] is correct in pointing out that also the ordinary happenings...are the wonderful works of God...Hoeksema is also correct in pointing to the essential meaning and purpose of the miracle: to lift the creation from the curse to the bliss of the perfection of the covenant in Christ...

But Hoeksema is wrong inasmuch as by ignoring the element of the supernatural and extraordinary, he loses the distinction between miraculous and non-miraculous entirely. (291)

Engelsma even raises the specter of Ralph Janssen—"Shades of Ralph Janssen!" (291)—as if Hoeksema's position is essentially the same as that of those liberal theologians who deny the supernatural nature of miracles. Engelsma's suggestion that Hoeksema's doctrine of miracles shares something with Janssen's doctrine of miracles is obscene and is not worthy of Engelsma. Engelsma knows as well as anyone that Hoeksema emphatically confessed the supernatural nature of miracles. And Engelsma knows as well as anyone the difference between Janssen and Hoeksema. Janssen took God out of the miracles by explaining them as natural occurrences. Hoeksema put God into the miracles and into all God's works of providence by explaining that all God's works serve his eternal purpose in Christ. Shades of Ralph Janssen? Hardly! The suggestion ridicules itself.

(To be continued)

—AL

³ Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd ed. (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2004), 1:345–46.

REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

MARTIN LUTHER'S "Theology of the Cross"

Friday, October 30, 2026 · 7:00 p.m.

Martin Luther is most remembered for his 95 Theses, nailed to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. But though his 95 Theses may be Luther's most famous contribution to the Reformation, he made his most profound contribution six months later at the Heidelberg Disputation on April 26, 1518. With the eyes of Europe and the church upon him to see if he would soften his 95 Theses, Luther ran even further into the Reformation with his "Theology of the Cross." It electrified the audience. Not only did Luther not soften his 95 Theses, but he advanced beyond them by leaps and bounds. Luther's "Theology of the Cross" was unlike anything the wisdom of man had heard before. Europe staggered; the church was scandalized; the best and brightest men mobilized against it. Still today, Luther's "Theology of the Cross" appears to be great folly to the wisdom of man. Ah, yes—it appears to be great folly to the wisdom of man; but the "Theology of the Cross" is a sweet comfort to the mind of faith. For the "Theology of the Cross" is simply the gospel of our Savior applied to the doctrine and life of his church.

What is Luther's "Theology of the Cross"? It is not so much a doctrine to be set alongside other doctrines. Rather, the "Theology of the Cross" is a way of thinking. It is the way for faith to think like God and not like man. For God did not glorify himself in the palace of a king but in the sweat and blood and death and curse and scandal of the cross. When the church grasps this by faith, then she understands all of theology and all of life.

This Reformation Day weekend, we would be very pleased if you would join us for a lecture on Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross."

DATE	Friday, October 30, 2026
TIME	7:00 p.m.
SPEAKER	Rev. Andrew Lanning
TOPIC	Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross"
PROGRAM	Lecture, followed by Q&A and refreshments
VENUE	Pavilion Christian School 9181 Kenowa Ave. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534
HOST	Remnant Reformed Church

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