

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

Courage, Clarity & Charity in an Age of Confusion

By Pastor Brian De Jong

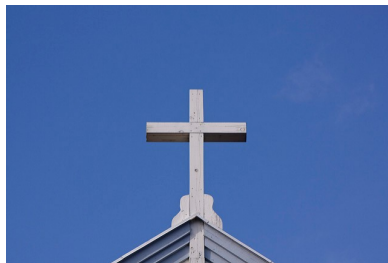
This past week a group of evangelical leaders released a statement on sexuality called the “Nashville Statement.” The original signatories included a who’s who of evangelicalism, including John Piper, R.C. Sproul, D.A. Carson, Ligon Duncan, Al Mohler, John MacArthur, James Dobson, Kevin DeYoung and hundreds of others. The Nashville Statement, including the introductory explanation, are included inside this issue of Reflections.

This was a courageous stand to take, as these are very hotly debated issues in our time. To call homosexuality and transgenderism “sin” and to say that it is sinful to approve of these things is about as bold as one can be in our current cultural climate. These leaders were unashamed to affirm the authority of the Bible in these matters, and to affirm the actual teachings of the Bible.

This effort, as the introduction makes plain, is aiming at clarity. Their format seems “confessional” or “creedal” by employing both affirmations and denials. Such a method was used at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-19 to clearly deal with the heresy of Arminianism. This approach leaves little room for doubt as to what the group means by what it says.

In our day, it may have been tempting to fill their document with “weasel-words” that can be massaged to mean whatever the reader wants them to mean. It could have been subjected to the death of a thousand qualifications. Instead, it comes out and plainly says what they mean in unambiguous language.

These two qualities – courage and clarity – stand in stark contrast to the confusion of our age. Few of our contemporaries hold any convictions. If they do, and their convictions are challenged, they rarely have the courage to stand up for what they believe. Defending your convictions against a firestorm of criticism is almost unknown in our time. Likewise, how many times do you people tell the plain, unadorned truth about controversial matters?



Equivocation is the order of the day in communication circles. As a result of cowardice and muddiness in communication, confusion reigns supreme in our culture. When light is sought, all that is found are shades of darkness.

For their efforts, the signers of this statement are being roasted in the court of public opinion. The media is in full-throated outrage against these “hate groups.” They mischaracterize them as bigoted homophobes who are probably Nazi’s and members of the KKK. And frankly, that is entirely predictable. Because they have no intelligent argument against the Scriptural position, all the left wing of our culture can do is rant and scream and name-call. It is sadly to be expected – we’d be surprised to hear anything else.

What is more surprising, and much more disconcerting, is the tepid reaction coming from Reformed circles. I’ve been watching and reading and listening, and some Reformed voices speaking about this statement are dripping with scorn. Two friends of mine – both

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NASHVILLE

STATEMENT

A COALITION FOR BIBLICAL SEXUALITY

*“Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves...”*
-Psalm 100:3

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God’s design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God’s beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual’s autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God’s good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes gladhearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God’s design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God’s good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ’s church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God’s revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Nashville Statement Continued...

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Nashville Statement Continued...

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his imagebearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender selfconceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

This document is signed by hundreds of Evangelical leaders, including John Piper, James Dobson, Russel Moore, J.I. Packer, Albert Mohler, D.A. Carson, John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, Rosaria Butterfield, Ligon Duncan, Kevin DeYoung, Alistair Begg, Heath Lambert and many others.





Good News Jail and Prison Ministry September

Recently in a conversation with one of our ministry volunteers, this volunteer casually mentioned that the last couple of times they went into the Detention Center for Church Service no inmates came out. This volunteer said this was making them wonder if they should continue coming in to conduct the service. I took to heart what I heard and I truly believe the Lord spoke to me about this. After listening to this very dedicated volunteer I realized that we can grow weary doing the Lord's work. This is especially true when we don't seem to see evidence that we're making a difference. I realize that after being involved in ministry for several years, people can feel burned out and begin to wonder if what they are doing is making a real difference. This is especially true when experiencing a "lean time" in ministry. By "lean time" I mean when the response to the ministry, i.e., attendance at services, is going through a period when less inmates seem to be participating. I call this the "ebb & flow" of ministry. We also need to remember that there is a real enemy out there battling for the souls of those very inmates. After over 13 years of correctional ministry I've seen the ups and downs of the response to ministry. This is when I remind myself the reason I got involved in correctional ministry is because God called me to. It was His calling, not the response to my ministering that created a passion to bring the "good news" to the incarcerated. While contemplating on and pray about all of this, here is where the Lord led me; Galatians 6:9,10 NIV 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. I want to encourage everyone of you reading this article, whether you are going into correctional facilities ministering to inmates, lifting this ministry in prayer, or financially supporting this ministry. What you're doing is making an eternal impact on real lives. You're helping bring the lost to Jesus. You're helping to restore families. You're literally involved in saving lives. Sheboygan County is truly a better place because of you! Thank you for your partnership in this ministry! This next little bit is specifically for those who go into our facilities to minister, but I encourage all of you to consider participating in this. Okay, try this next time you show up to minister to a group or one-on-one, and nobody shows up. Instead of feeling disappointed or question if you're wasting your time (which I guarantee you're not) turn it into a powerful, positive experience. Go out to your car, and before you drive away take a look at the building you're at. Remember those who are behind those walls and how much Jesus loves them. Take some time. Maybe take the entire time you would have spent ministering, and pray for every inmate and every staff member that is in that building. Pray that the Lord would breathe new life into everyone in the building. Pray for those who are on the verge of giving up. Pray for those who have no hope. Pray for those who Jesus loves, (that's everyone). Pray for the Holy Spirit to sweep through that place and begin to draw the hearts of men and women to the cross. Remember there is a battle going on for the souls of those in that building and you are on the front line. I believe that as you do drive away, you will be charged up knowing you just engaged in battle/ministry for those behind the bars. John 6:44 (NIV) "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day." Romans 10:13-15 (NIV) " for, Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" I thank Jesus for you. I truly consider every one of you as a Champion. A Champion for the Gospel of Jesus! Jesus has used you through your prayers, your time and your giving to make an eternal impact on the lives of at least 4,200 lives (the number of men and women placing their faith in Jesus) since the start of this ministry. I truly praise the Lord for your "beautiful feet"!! Oh, the ministry volunteer I mentioned at the beginning of this article; you probably know who you are. I want you to know something. What you mentioned to me didn't upset me. Instead you inspired me. Thank you for your honesty. Your honest led me right to the "Throne Room" where this article was birthed. God is good, all the time!

John Ploughman's Talks

Chapter 8: On Keeping One's Eyes Open

To get through this world, a man must look about him and even sleep with one eye open; for there are many baits for fishes, many nets for birds, and many traps for men. While foxes are so common, we must not be geese. There is a very great difference in this matter among people of my acquaintance: many see more with one eye than others with two, and many have fine eyes and cannot see a jot. All heads are not sense boxes. Some are so cunning that they suspect everybody, and so live all their lives in miserable fear of their neighbors; others are so simple that every knave takes them in, and makes his penny out of them. One man tried to see through a brick wall and hurts his eyes, while another finds out a hole in it and sees as far as he pleases. Some work at the mouth of a furnace and are never scorched, and others burn their hands at the fire when they only mean to warm them. Now, it is true that no one can give another experience, and we must all pick up wit for ourselves; yet I shall venture to give some of the homely cautions which have served my turn, and perhaps they may be of use to others as they have been to me.

Nobody is more like an honest man than a thorough rogue. When you see a man with a great deal of religion displayed in his shop window, you may depend upon it that he keeps a very small stock of it within. Do not choose your friend by his looks: handsome shoes often pinch the feet. Don't be fond of compliments: remember, "Thank you, pussy, and thank you, pussy," killed the cat. Don't believe in the man who talks most, for mewling cats are seldom good mousers. By no means put yourself in another person's power: if you put your thumb between two grinders, they are very apt to bite. Drink nothing without seeing it; sign nothing without reading it, and make sure that it means no more than it says. Don't go to law unless you have nothing to lose: lawyers' houses are built on fools' heads. In any business, never wade into water where you cannot see the bottom. Put no dependence upon the label of a bag, and count money after your own kin. See the sack opened before you buy what is in it, for he who trades in the dark asks to be cheated. Keep clear of the man who does not value his own character. Beware of everyone who swears: he who would blaspheme his Maker would make no bones of lying or stealing. Beware of no man more than of yourself we carry our worst enemies within us. When a new opinion or doctrine comes before you, do not bite till you know whether it is bread or a stone. Do not be sure that the gingerbread is good because of the gilt on it. Never shout "hello!" till you are quite out of the wood, and don't cry fried fish till they are caught in the net. There's always time enough to boast—wait a little longer. Don't throw away dirty water till you have got clean; keep on scraping the roads till you can get better work: the poorest pay is better than none, and the humblest office is better than being out of employment. Always give up the roads to bulls and madmen, and never fight with a coal heaver or contend with a base character, for they will be sure to blacken you.

"Neither trust nor contend,
Nor lay wagers, nor lend,
And you may depend—
You'll have peace to your ends."

I cannot say quite so much as that old rhyme does, for there's more than that which is needed to give peace, but certainly it will help toward it. Never ride a broken-kneed horse: the trader who has once been a fraudulent bankrupt is not the man for you to deal with. A rickety chair is a dangerous seat. Be shy of people who are overly polite, and don't be too fast with those who are forward and rough. When you suspect a design in anything, be on your guard: set the trap as soon as you smell a rat, but mind that you don't catch your own fingers in it. Have very little to do with a boaster, for his beer is all froth; and though he brags that all his goods and even his copper kettles are gold and silver, you will soon find out that a boaster and a liar are first cousins. Commit all your secrets to no man; trust in God with all your heart, but let your confidence in friends be weighed in the balances of prudence, seeing that men are but men, and all men are frail. Trust not great weights to slender threads. Yet be not evermore suspicious, for suspicion is a cowardly virtue at best.

John Ploughman Continued...

Remember that men are not angels; but they are not devils, and it is too bad to think them so. one thing be sure of, never believe in any priest of any religion: for before a man could be bad enough to pretend to be a priest, he must have hardened his heart and blinded his conscience to the most horrible degree. Our governors imprison gypsies for telling fortunes, and yet they give fat pensions to those vagabonds who deceive the people in much weightier things. "Bad company" said the thief, as he went to the gallows between the hangman and a priest; a very honest speech, and a very true word, though spoken in jest. It is the ignorance of fools which keeps the pot boiling for priests. May God clean this land from the plague of their presence and make men wise enough to see through their crafty devices. Lastly, my advice to all is—remember that good wisdom is that which will turn out to be wise in the end; seek it, friends, and seek it at the hands of the wisest of all teachers, the Lord Jesus. Trust Him, and He will never fail you; be guided by His word, and it will never mislead you; pray in His name, and your requests will be granted. Remember, he that leans on man will find him a broken reed, but he who builds on Christ has a firm foundation. You may follow Jesus with your eyes Shut, if you please; but when others guide you, keep all your eyes open even if you have a dozen and all of them as powerful as telescopes.

2017 MIDWEST
WOMEN'S PRESBYTERIAL
**WOMEN FAITHFUL IN OUR
JOURNEY TO GLORY**

WHERE: APPLE VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEENAH, WI

WHEN: OCTOBER 7, 2017

**Our speaker, Pat Clawson,
will focus on the new book:
CHOOSING THE GOOD PORTION
Women of the OPC**

Questions: Elaine Laczny
emlaczny@gmail.com



Church Campout Pitch-in Supper



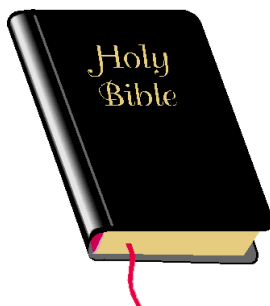
The annual pitch-in supper at the church campout takes place this Friday night at 6:30pm. Everyone is invited to bring food to share. Plates, cups, drinks, utensils, etc. will be provided. We have reserved the enclosed shelter in the main campground (near the bath house). This will be open for us throughout the day, so come join us whenever you wish. The supper will be held, rain or shine! Bring camp chairs for a campfire after dinner. Questions? Ask Pastor Brian.

Anchor of Hope Annual Banquet

Save the date for the Anchor of Hope health center's 3rd annual banquet, to be held on Tuesday, October 10th. Call (920) 452-4673 for more information or to register.



Thursday Morning Men's Bible Study



The men's Thursday morning Bible study and fellowship will begin on Thursday, September 14th, at 8:30am. We will continue our study of Let's Study Acts, beginning with chapter 36.

September Birthdays

Howard Voskuil	7th
Mark Berenschot	12th
James Bingham	14th
Elizabeth TenPas	16th
Kristen Berenschot	22nd
Virginia Berenschot	22nd
Joshua Arndt	25th

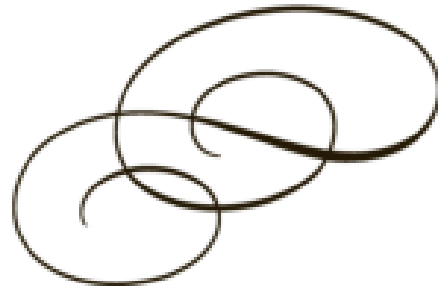


Wedding Anniversaries

Carl and Phyllis Nyhof
~ 51 years ~

Rodney and Samantha Nyhof

Harlan and Nancy Harmelink





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

September 2017

Grace OPC



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 Meadowview Manor 3pm	4	5	6 Prayer Meeting 7pm	7 Church Campout	8 Church Campout Pitch in Supper	9 Church Campout
10	11	12 Session Meeting	13 Prayer Meeting 7pm	14	15 Presbytery at Orland Park	16 Presbytery at Orland Park
17	18	19	20 Prayer Meeting 7pm	21	22	23
24	25	26	27 Prayer Meeting 7pm	28	29	30

Strawberry Lemonade Cupcakes

Ingredients:

Lemon Cake:

- 1 box white cake mix
- 1/3 C. oil or melted butter
- 3 eggs
- zest of 2 lemons
- 1/4 C. fresh lemon juice
- 1 C. sour cream
- 1/2 C. milk

Strawberry Frosting:

- 1 C. butter
- 1 (1.2 oz) pkg. freeze dried strawberries*, crushed and sifted to remove large pieces
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice, optional
- 3-4 C. powdered sugar

*NOTE: You can use strawberry jam or fresh strawberry puree as a replacement but it won't yield the same punch of flavor and color

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line pan with cupcake liners.
2. Sift cake mix into a large bowl to remove any lumps and continue to add the remaining cake ingredients. Stir until smooth.
3. Fill cupcake liners 3/4 full and bake for 15-20 minutes or until an inserted knife comes out clean.
4. Let cool.
5. Strawberry Frosting: Beat butter and crush freeze dried strawberries until smooth. Add vanilla and lemon juice and slowly add in powdered sugar. Scrape the side of the bowl as needed and add powder sugar until it becomes thick enough.
6. Pipe onto cooled cupcakes and top with fresh berries or little straws to really make adorable Strawberry Lemonade cakes!



*“For He
has satisfied
the thirsty soul,
and the
hungry soul
He has filled
with what
is good.”*



Showing forth the
excellencies of Jesus
Christ

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Spurgeon Corner

“Take up the cross, and follow me.”

Mark 10:21

You have not the making of your own cross, although unbelief is a master carpenter at cross-making; neither are you permitted to choose your own cross, although self-will would fain be lord and master; but your cross is prepared and appointed for you by divine love, and you are cheerfully to accept it; you are to take up the cross as your chosen badge and burden, and not to stand cavilling at it. This night Jesus bids you submit your shoulder to his easy yoke. Do not kick at it in petulance, or trample on it in vain-glory, or fall under it in despair, or run away from it in fear, but take it up like a true follower of Jesus. Jesus was a cross-bearer; he leads the way in the path of sorrow. Surely you could not desire a better guide! And if he carried a cross, what nobler burden would you desire? The *Via Crucis* is the way of safety; fear not to tread its thorny paths.

Beloved, the cross is not made of feathers, or lined with velvet, it is heavy and galling to disobedient shoulders; but it is not an iron cross, though your fears have painted it with iron colours, it is a wooden cross, and a man can carry it, for the Man of sorrows tried the load. Take up your cross, and by the power of the Spirit of God you will soon be so in love with it, that like Moses, you would not exchange the reproach of Christ for all the treasures of Egypt. Remember that Jesus carried it, and it will smell sweetly; remember that it will soon be followed by the crown, and the thought of the coming weight of glory will greatly lighten the present heaviness of trouble. The Lord help you to bow your spirit in submission to the divine will ere you fall asleep this night, that waking with to-morrow's sun, you may go forth to the day's cross with the holy and submissive spirit which becomes a follower of the Crucified.

Morning, February 23rd, C.H. Spurgeon

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Front page concluded...

ministers – have been dismissive of this statement. In one case, he singled out one of the affirmations and began attempting to prove that this effort is heretical. When I gently questioned him about some of his statements, he dug his heels in further. More pushback from me led him to make several highly questionable statements about Jesus Christ that were in apparent contradiction to several verses from the book of Hebrews. Bringing those to his attention shifted his focus a bit, but he wouldn't back down. I finally gave up trying to dialogue with him.

The other fellow – a minister I respect – admitted that he only “skimmed” it. He slammed the signers of the statement as being evangelical “popes”. He referenced a statement made by one of the signers in a book he had written (which was

a horrible statement, to be sure), but then rejected the whole Nashville Statement in part due to comments from a book authored by one of the signees.

I'm left to wonder, why do Reformed folk have such knee-jerk reactions to anything and everything put forward by evangelical leaders? We don't have to agree with everything they've ever written or said, but should we dismiss out of hand whatever they offer? Guilt by association isn't a logically sound argument, is it?

For my part, I appreciate their attempt to speak with courageous clarity to THE controversy of our day and age. I'm sorry they're abused by the secular media, but I'm more troubled by how some from within our own Reformed circles treat these brethren.