

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA)

Special Meeting Minutes
Distributed 9/21/20

CLERK

Rev. Adam Kuehner
ak@streetsermon.org
(248)497-9187

ASST. CLERK

Elder Dale Koons
dlkoons49@gmail.com
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TIME & PLACE

Time: Friday September 11 from Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Place: Second Reformed Presbyterian Church
4800 N. Michigan Rd. Indianapolis, IN 46228

Phone: (317) 255-7557

SCHEDULE

Business Session (Noon - 5:00p)
Two 15-min breaks @moderator's discretion

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery met at noon on Friday September 11, 2020 by an edict of the moderator for “the consideration of the LeFebvre Writings Study Committee report and associated recommendations.”¹

1. CALL TO ORDER / DEVOTIONS

The moderator, David Hanson, called the court to order at 12:00 p.m. with the singing of Psalm 119Q, then addressed the court from 2 Samuel 23:1-5, urging the delegates to humility and hope as they seek to conduct the business of the day with a gracious tone toward their brethren.

2. PRAYER OF CONSTITUTION

Kent Butterfield constituted the court in prayer at 12:15 p.m.

3. ROLL CALL / QUORUM (Asst. Clerk, Dale Koons)

The assistant clerk, Dale Koons, called the attendance roll and confirmed that a quorum was present.

4. MEETING RATIFICATION

In accordance with DCG 7.4 (D-31), it was moved, seconded, and passed to sustain the action of the moderator in calling the meeting.

¹ Moderator's Edict (8/6/20): “Brothers, In consultation with the Ad Interim Commission, the LeFebvre Writings Study Committee, Pastor LeFebvre, the Great-Lakes Gulf clerk, and 2nd RP, I, as moderator, am calling a Great-Lakes Gulf Presbytery Meeting for September 11th, 2020 to convene at 12 p.m. at Second R.P Indianapolis. The specified business for this meeting is the consideration of the LeFebvre Writings Study Committee report and associated recommendations, which will be distributed on or before August 28, 2020. [According to] DoCG 6.4 A Presbytery may arrange special meetings. The moderator may, at his own discretion, or upon the request of two members, call a meeting to transact business requiring immediate attention. At least ten days' notice shall be given, and the call shall specify the business to be considered. The first decision after the organization of the court shall be on the question of sustaining the action of the moderator in calling the meeting. The presbytery shall consider only the business specified, other items may be introduced by a two-thirds vote.” One of the primary considerations in the time & place of the meeting is seeking to address the safety concerns of the presbytery. The meeting will be at 2nd RP, so that we can hopefully meet in a tent outdoors, away from traffic noise; in September hopefully to avoid extreme heat or cold; from 12-5 to avoid the need for serving food and providing overnight accommodations. For those coming from a distance, we will work with the Treasurer so that you can receive reimbursement for meals and necessary lodging. Finally, for those interested, I will lead an informal, outdoor prayer time concerning the issues of this meeting from 10:30-11:30 at 2nd RP on the day of the meeting. In Christ, David Hanson. August 6, 2020”

5. CLERK'S REPORT

Adam Kuehner presented the clerk's report, clarifying that some versions of our Constitution include an obsolete version of Book of Discipline I.3.4-5 (E-4).

- It was moved, seconded, and passed to appoint Phil Pockras and Steve Rhoda as parliamentarians for this meeting.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed to adopt the proposed agenda for this meeting.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed to grant all RPCNA elders present, including all non-certified delegates from this presbytery, the privilege of the floor during the remainder of this meeting.
- It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the clerk's report.

6. REPORT OF THE LEFEBVRE WRITINGS STUDY COMMITTEE (L.W.S.C.)

- A. **OPENING REMARKS**: Five minutes was granted to committee chairman, Joel Hart, who then shared a summary of the committee's report.
- B. **FACTUAL QUESTIONS**: Fifteen minutes was granted to the court to ask factual questions of committee; no questions were asked.
- C. **RESPONSE FROM MR. LEFEBVRE**: Thirty minutes was granted to Michael LeFebvre, who then addressed the court with his response to the committee's report.
- D. **DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT**: Thirty minutes was granted to the court for a discussion of the report as a whole. Joel Hart returned to the microphone, and the report was discussed.

BREAK: The court took its first break at 1:05 p.m., after which Bob McKissick reconvened the meeting in prayer at 1:18 p.m.

- E. **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**: The court turned its attention to the L.W.S.C. recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION ONE (passed)²

The court proceeded to consider Recommendation 1.

MOTION TO SUBSTITUTE (failed, 20-27): It was moved and seconded to entertain a substitute motion,³ as outlined in Communication 20-6.

- The moderator ruled the substitute to be germane, and the mover clarified that it was specifically intended to substitute for Recommendation 1.

² "That an exception to RPT 4.4 be found out of accord with the system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church."

³ "We acknowledge that Mr. LeFebvre is out of accord with RPT 4.4. We affirm our confidence in Mr. LeFebvre's pastoral ministry as we give more time to seek diligently to win our brother and to evaluate his progress. We seek to win Mr. LeFebvre to the RPCNA's position by appointing a committee of three men to be named by the moderator to work with Mr. LeFebvre over the next three years. The committee will seek input from qualified parties from within and without the RPCNA to engage with Mr. LeFebvre's writings. The committee will actively seek contributions from those who support the RPT 4.4 position, but may also receive submissions from those whose opinions differ. Helpful submissions will be made available to RPCNA elders and contributors. This would allow for robust give and take among contributors as questions are raised. After three years, the committee will lead presbytery in evaluating what the Lord has done and recommend the best course of action for all of the parties."

- Opportunity was given for discussion; no comments were received.
- The parliamentarians clarified the nature of the motion under discussion.
- The motion failed by a vote of 20-27.

MOTION TO AMEND (failed, 22-25): It was moved and seconded to amend Recommendation 1 to replace the word “an” with the words “Mr. LeFebvre’s requested”.

- The motion was discussed and eventually failed by a vote of 22-25.

RECOMMENDATION 1 (passed): Discussion of Recommendation 1 ensued, after which it passed.

RECOMMENDATION TWO (amended & failed, 14-29)⁴

The court proceeded to consider Recommendation 2.

AMENDMENT (common consent): By common consent, the phrase “within 90 days of September 11, 2020” was replaced with the phrase “by December 11, 2020.”

MOTION TO CALL THE PREVIOUS QUESTION (failed, 27-17): Following additional debate over Recommendation 2, it was moved and seconded to call the previous question, which failed to reach a two-thirds majority (27-17).

RECOMMENDATION 2 AS AMENDED (failed, 14-29): Opportunity was given for further comments on Recommendation 2; none were received.

- Recommendation 2 (as amended by common consent)⁵ failed by a vote of 14-29.

RECOMMENDATION THREE (Laid on Table)⁶

The court proceeded to consider Recommendation 3.

⁴ “That the presbytery counsel Mr. LeFebvre to repent within 90 days of September 11, 2020 of the position that this Court has recognized as against the system of doctrine.”

⁵ “That the presbytery counsel Mr. LeFebvre to repent by December 11, 2020 of the position that this Court has recognized as against the system of doctrine.”

⁶ “That Mr. LeFebvre be admonished for failing in his pursuit of the ‘purity, peace, unity, and progress of the church’ (vow 8) in the process he has followed in his teachings and writings on creation and Adam.”

MOTION TO ENTERTAIN A SUBSTITUTE (passed): It was moved and seconded to entertain a substitute motion⁷ for Recommendation 3, after which the motion was discussed.

- **MOTION TO CALL THE PREVIOUS QUESTION**: It was moved, seconded, and passed by two-thirds majority to call the previous question on the motion to entertain a substitute.
- The motion to entertain a substitute passed, after which the court took up a discussion of the substitute as the main motion on the floor.

POINT OF ORDER (denied): One of the parliamentarians declared a point of order, noting that the successful motion to call the previous question precludes any further debate on the substitute motion itself.

- The moderator ruled that although the calling of the previous question did rightly preclude further debate on the motion to *entertain* the substitute, it does not preclude further debate on the substitute motion *itself*, which is now the main motion before the court.
- Discussion continued on the main motion.

MOTION TO AMEND (Laid on the Table): It was moved and seconded to amend the main motion by striking charges 1-3.

- The proposed amendment was debated, including a discussion of whether it might be more appropriate for charges to be brought by the movers of the main motion rather than by the court as a whole.
- **BREAK**: By common consent, the court took an additional break at 2:45 p.m., after which Gary McNamee reconvened the meeting in prayer at 2:57 p.m.

⁷ **SUBSTITUTE**: “In view of the LeFebvre Writings Study Committee Report, which establishes ‘the appearance of credibility’ (BOD I.1.4, E-9) to the notion that certain of Mr. LeFebvre’s beliefs and writings stand in conflict with his ordination vows, that presbytery charge Mr. LeFebvre with the following censurable offenses:

1. Violating Ordination Query #8 (“to study and promote the purity, peace, unity and progress of the church”) and/or Ordination Query #9 (to “engage to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine and order which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted”) by publishing doctrinal teaching which contradicts our rejection of the theory of human macro-evolution, as articulated in RPT 4.3, RPT 4.4, WCF 4.2, and/or WLC 17;
2. Violating Ordination Query #8 (“to study and promote the purity, peace, unity and progress of the church”) and/or Ordination Query #9 (to “engage to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine and order which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted”) by publishing doctrinal teaching which contradicts our belief that Scripture presents Adam and Eve as the first human beings and sole biological progenitors of humanity, as articulated in WCF 6.1, WCF 6.3, WSC 13, WSC 15-16, WLC 21-22, and/or WLC 26;
3. Violating Ordination Query #8 (“to study and promote the purity, peace, unity and progress of the church”) and/or Ordination Query #9 (to “engage to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine and order which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted”) by publishing doctrinal teaching which contradicts our belief that the weekly Sabbath is a creation ordinance first instituted by God for the good of all mankind “from the beginning of the world”, as articulated in WCF 21.7, WSC 59, WLC 20, and/or WLC 116;
4. Violating Ordination Query #4 (“Do you believe in and accept the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as being agreeable to, and founded upon, the Scriptures?”) by holding a personal exception to RPT 4.4, which states “We deny that man evolved from any lower form of life. Gen. 2:7, 21-22”.

“Thus, warranting a formal trial — time, place, and special prosecutor to be appointed by the moderator — to determine whether this charge is true, on the basis of the following body of evidence:

1. The Testimony of the RPCNA
2. The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (Larger and Shorter)
3. Mr. LeFebvre’s book, “The Liturgy of Creation” (2019)
4. Mr. LeFebvre’s journal article, “Adam Reigns in Eden” (2018)
5. Mr. LeFebvre’s BioLogos Article, “Cracking the Code of Cadence: The Genre of Genesis” (9/26/19)
6. Mr. LeFebvre’s BioLogos Article, “First Human or First King?” (3/20/20)
7. GLG Communications 20-01, 20-2, 20-4, and 20-5”

- **REQUEST TO DIVIDE (granted)**: A request to divide the main motion, so as to isolate each of the four charges, was granted by the moderator.
- **QUESTION OF ORDER**: The court discussed parliamentary procedure with the advice of the parliamentarians, seeking to determine whether the main motion is consistent with BOD II.1.3 (E-9), after which the moderator ruled that the main motion is in order, but that the court is free to lay the present business on the table by two-thirds majority to then entertain a special resolution.

MOTION TO LAY ON THE TABLE (passed, without vocal dissent): It was moved, seconded, and passed without vocal dissent to lay the present business on the table.

7. **JUDICIAL PROCESS**

SPECIAL RESOLUTION (passed, without vocal dissent)

It was moved and seconded to entertain a special resolution permitting Mr. Kuehner and Mr. Anderson to bring the proposed charges as individual accusers.

- Comments were received regarding the procedural import and necessity of this vote, after which the motion passed without vocal dissent, bringing the special resolution before the court.
- Further discussion ensued, after which the moderator ruled that the court has now received the charges and must proceed to consider the matter of making a written accusation.
- Mr. Kuehner and Mr. Anderson submitted a signed document outlining the charges, which is as follows:

We, the undersigned, do hereby formally charge Mr. LeFebvre with the following censurable offenses:

1. Violating Ordination Query #8 (“to study and promote the purity, peace, unity and progress of the church”) and/or Ordination Query #9 (to “engage to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine and order which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted”) by publishing doctrinal teaching which contradicts our rejection of the theory of human macro-evolution, as articulated in RPT 4.3, RPT 4.4, WCF 4.2, and/or WLC 17;
2. Violating Ordination Query #8 (“to study and promote the purity, peace, unity and progress of the church”) and/or Ordination Query #9 (to “engage to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine and order which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted”) by publishing doctrinal teaching which contradicts our belief that Scripture presents Adam and Eve as the first human beings and sole biological progenitors of humanity, as articulated in WCF 6.1, WCF 6.3, WSC 13, WSC 15-16, WLC 21-22, and/or WLC 26;
3. Violating Ordination Query #8 (“to study and promote the purity, peace, unity and progress of the church”) and/or Ordination Query #9 (to “engage to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine and order which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted”) by publishing doctrinal teaching which contradicts our belief that the weekly Sabbath is a creation ordinance first instituted by God for the good of all mankind “from the beginning of the world”, as articulated in WCF 21.7, WSC 59, WLC 20, and/or WLC 116;
4. Violating Ordination Query #4 (“Do you believe in and accept the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as being agreeable to, and founded upon, the Scriptures?”) by holding a personal exception to RPT 4.4, which states “We deny that man evolved from any lower form of life. Gen. 2:7, 21-22”.

Thus, warranting a formal trial — time, place, and special prosecutor to be appointed by the moderator — to determine whether this charge is true, on the basis of the following body of evidence:

1. The Testimony of the RPCNA
2. The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms (Larger and Shorter)

3. Mr. LeFebvre's book, "The Liturgy of Creation" (2019)
4. Mr. LeFebvre's journal article, "Adam Reigns in Eden" (2018)
5. Mr. LeFebvre's BioLogos Article, "Cracking the Code of Cadence: The Genre of Genesis" (9/26/19)
6. Mr. LeFebvre's BioLogos Article, "First Human or First King?" (3/20/20)
7. GLG Communications 20-01, 20-2, 20-4, and 20-5

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Kuehner
Shawn Anderson

WRITTEN ACCUSATION (passed):

At the urging of the moderator, the court proceeded to vote on making a written accusation, in keeping with the steps outlined in BOD II.2.2 (E-10/11).

- **MOTION (passed)**: The motion to classify the alleged offenses as censurable passed.
- **MOTION (passed)**: The motion to regard the proposed evidence as sufficient to warrant a trial passed.
- **MOTION (passed)**: The motion to affirm that Christ's rule in Matthew 18:15-16 has been satisfactorily followed was debated and passed by a vote of 29-17, with Mr. Kuehner and Mr. Anderson abstaining.

BREAK: The court took a break at 3:55 p.m. and reconvened in prayer at 4:07 p.m.

Following the break, it was noted that Adam Kuehner will need to be temporarily relieved as clerk during the upcoming trial, so that he can serve (alongside Shawn Anderson) as a prosecutor in the case.

SPECIAL RESOLUTION (failed, 29-18)

It was moved and seconded to entertain a special resolution: "That presbytery grant Mr. LeFebvre 90 days to study, be counseled, recant, or relocate peacefully with his good name intact."

- **POINT OF ORDER (failed)**: A point of order was raised, asserting this to be a reconsideration of Committee Recommendation 2. The moderator ruled against the point of order and his ruling was challenged unsuccessfully.
- Discussion ensued on whether to entertain the special resolution, after which it failed to reach a two-thirds majority by a vote of 29-18.

SPECIAL RESOLUTION (passed)

It was moved, seconded, and passed to entertain a special resolution from the Immanuel RPC Session to request Presbytery to replace the Immanuel RPC Session on the Ad Interim Commission.⁸

- **AMENDMENT**: The words "to be appointed by the moderator" were added by way of friendly amendment, after which the special resolution passed as amended.⁹

TIME AND PLACE (referred)

The court took up a consideration of the time and place of the impending trial.

- It was moved, seconded, and passed that the time and place of the trial be appointed by the Ad Interim Commission in consultation with the moderator.

8. REPORT OF THE LEFEBVRE WRITINGS STUDY COMMITTEE (L.W.S.C.) — *Continued*

It was moved, seconded, and passed to take up the L.W.S.C. Report off the table.

⁸ **From IRPC Session**: "At its regularly scheduled session meeting on September 4, 2020, a motion carried unanimously to request Presbytery to replace the Immanuel RPC Session on the Ad Interim Commission."

⁹ That Presbytery replace the Immanuel RPC Session on the Ad Interim Commission to be appointed by the moderator.

- Speaking on the committee's behalf, chairman Joel Hart withdrew Recommendations 4¹⁰ and 5¹¹, and introduced Recommendation 6¹² for discussion.

RECOMMENDATION 6 (ruled out of order)

POINT OF ORDER: Discussion ensued on Recommendation 6, after which a point of order was raised on the basis of BOD II.2.3 (E-11)¹³ asserting that no further actions involving Mr. LeFebvre's case may be taken at this meeting.

- The moderator upheld the point of order, after which a challenge to this ruling failed by a vote of 10-27.

RECOMMENDATION 7¹⁴ (passed)

Recommendation 7 passed without discussion.

It was moved, seconded, and passed to receive the L.W.S.C. Report.

9. POINT OF CLARIFICATION

In response to a question from the floor, the parliamentarians clarified that, per BOD II.2.2, the accusers will be responsible for prosecuting the case and the court will serve as the jury.

- The moderator also noted his belief that the prosecutors would be free to drop any of the charges prior to the trial at their discretion.

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN

It was moved, seconded, and passed to adjourn the meeting.

11. READING OF THE MINUTES

The clerk read the minutes, after which they were approved by common consent as corrected.

12. INTERCESSORY PRAYER & ADJOURNMENT

Rich Johnston led the court in intercessory prayer, followed by the moderator's prayer of adjournment at 5:09 p.m.

¹⁰ "That Mr. LeFebvre be admonished for engaging in divisive discourses from the doctrine which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted (vow 9)."

¹¹ "That presbytery form a judicial committee to determine a future course of action, depending on the outflow of the 90-day period, and that if Mr. LeFebvre does not repent, the presbytery institute proceedings against Mr. LeFebvre by appointing a special prosecutor to pursue the case & bring charge(s) against Mr. LeFebvre pursuant to the Book of Discipline (2.1.3, E-9 and 2.2.1, E-10). This committee would also be tasked with evaluating Mr. LeFebvre's response to the admonishment concerning vows 8 and 9."

¹² "That during the process of evaluation and judicial analysis, Mr. LeFebvre be directed not to publish written material or speak in public forum (lecture, podcast, etc.) on the issues directly in view of this discussion, namely the origin of Adam and evolutionary approaches to origins."

¹³ **BOD II.2.3 (E-11)**: "At the meeting in which the accusation is issued no further steps shall be taken, except to fix the time and place of the trial and to summon all who are concerned to appear."

¹⁴ "That the LeFebvre Writings Study Committee be dismissed."

Certified Delegates and Alternates for
2020 Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Fall Meeting, September 11, 2020

				ATTENDANCE				
				Roll Call				
Church	First Last Name	Status						
Atlanta Presbyterian Fellowship	Frank J. Smith	EXCUSED						
Belle Center RPC	Phillip Pockras	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Belle Center RPC- Provisional	Scott Hunt	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Bloomington RPC	Richard Holdeman	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Bloomington RPC	Phillip McCollum	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Bloomington RPC	Stephen Shipp	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Bloomington RPC	Eric Cosens	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Christ Church RP	Michael LeFebvre	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Christ Church RP	Jason O'Neill	ALT	ALT	P				
Christ Church RP	Dale Koons	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Christ Church RP	Sean Bird	ALT	ALT	P				
Christ Church RP	Andrew Falk	ALT	ALT	P				
Columbus RPC	Jeffrey Jones	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Columbus RPC	Gary McNamee	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Durham First RPC	Kent Butterfield	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Durham First RPC -Provisional	Robert Bibby	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Elkhart RPC	Wade Mann	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Elkhart RPC	Fikre Menbere	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Grand Rapids First RPC	Craig Scott	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Grand Rapids First RPC	Jake Schwartz	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Hetherton RPC	Ray Morton	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Immanuel RPC, West Lafayette	Jared Olivetti	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Immanuel RPC, West Lafayette	David Carr	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Immanuel RPC, West Lafayette	Zachary Blackwood	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Lafayette RPC	Adam Niess	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Lafayette RPC	Jeff Kessler	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Lafayette RPC	Chris Stockwell	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Marion RPC	Jason Camery	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Marion RPC	Greg Fisher	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Orlando RPC	H.P. McCracken	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Second RPC, Indianapolis	James Faris	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Second RPC, Indianapolis	Joel Hart	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Second RPC, Indianapolis	Russ Pulliam	DELEGATE	RE	P				

**Certified Delegates and Alternates for
2020 Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery
Fall Meeting, September 11, 2020**

				ATTENDANCE				
				Roll Call				
Church	First Last Name	Status						
Second RPC, Indianapolis	Richard Blankenship	ALT	ALT	P				
Second RPC, Indianapolis	Richard Blum	ALT	ALT	P				
Second RPC, Indianapolis	Jeff Platt	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Southfield RPC, Michigan	Adam Kuehner	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Southfield RPC, Michigan	Jon Hughes	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Southside RPC, Indianapolis	David Hanson	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Southside RPC, Indianapolis	Ian Wise	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Southside RPC, Indianapolis	John Hanson	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Southside RPC, Indianapolis	Mark Hart	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Southwest Ohio RPC, Mason, Ohio	Dick Knodel, Jr.	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Southwest Ohio RPC, Mason, Ohio	Timothy Vincze	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Sparta RPC	James Odom	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Sycamore RPC, Kokomo	Shawn Anderson	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Sycamore RPC, Kokomo	Robert McKissick	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Terre Haute RPC	Steve Rhoda	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Terre Haute RPC	Russell Lodge	ALT	ALT	A				
Terre Haute RPC	Josh Reshey	DELEGATE	RE	P				
Ministers, Retired	Richard Johnston	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Ministers, Retired	Ray Lanning	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Ministers, Retired	Keith Magill	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Ministers, Retired	Frank Schutz	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Ministers, Retired	Steven Work	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Ministers, in Synod Service	Keith Evans	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Ministers, Presbytery Missionary	Zachry Smith	DELEGATE	TE	P				
Ministers, in Synod Service	David Whitla	DELEGATE	TE	P				
		Teaching Elders	28	57	0	0	0	0
		Ruling Elders	23					
		Alternates	6					

NOTE: While the assistant clerk included alternates alongside delegates in his attendance roll, only delegates voted in the meeting.

The Great Lakes-Gulf
Presbytery (RPCNA)
Special Meeting Agenda
Distributed 9/9/20

CLERK

Rev. Adam Kuehner
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(248)497-9187

ASST. CLERK

Elder Dale Koons
dlkoons49@gmail.com
(317)228-9522

TIME & PLACE

Time: Friday September 11 from Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Place: Second Reformed Presbyterian Church
4800 N. Michigan Rd. Indianapolis, IN 46228

Phone: (317) 255-7557

SCHEDULE

Business Session (Noon - 5:00p)
Two 15-min breaks @moderator's discretion

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. **CALL TO ORDER / DEVOTIONS / PRAYER OF CONSTITUTION** (Moderator, David Hanson)
2. **RATIFICATION** (DCG 7.4 on D-31, "...sustaining the action of the moderator in calling the meeting.")
3. **ROLL CALL / QUORUM** (Asst. Clerk, Dale Koons)
4. **CLERK'S REPORT** (Clerk, Adam Kuehner)
 - A. Brief clarification regarding synod's 2007 Revision to Book of Discipline I.3.4-5 (E-4).
 - B. Motion: That presbytery appoint Phil Pockras and Steve Rhoda as parliamentarians for this meeting.
 - C. Motion: That presbytery adopt the proposed agenda for this meeting.¹
 - D. Motion: That presbytery grant all RPCNA elders present, including all non-certified delegates from this presbytery, the privilege of the floor during the remainder of this meeting.²
5. **REPORT OF THE LEFEBVRE WRITINGS STUDY COMMITTEE** (Chairman, Joel Hart)³
 1. Opening Remarks — Mr. Hart (5 mins)
 2. Factual Questions for the Comte from the Floor (15 mins)
 3. Mr. LeFebvre's Response to the Comte Report — Mr. LeFebvre (30 mins)
 4. Discussion on the Report as a Whole (30 mins)
 5. Recommendations
6. **READING OF THE MINUTES** (Clerk, Adam Kuehner)
7. **PRAYER OF ADJOURNMENT** (5:00 p.m.)

¹ This proposed agenda was originally drawn up by the moderator and submitted to the clerk, who is pleased to distribute it as the proposed agenda for this meeting.

² Note: Recommendation #4 does **not** grant *voting* privileges to GLG elders lacking written session certification.

³ The members of this committee are as follows: Ken DeJong, Joel Hart (ch), Jon Hughes, Wade Mann, and Steven Work.

1 **Communication 20-05: *LeFebvre Writings Study Committee Report to Presbytery***

2
3 The outline of our report is as follows:

- 4 I. Introduction
5 II. An evaluation of Mr. LeFebvre’s positions on creation, Adam, and corresponding issues
6 III. An underlying issue: Mr. LeFebvre’s approach to scientific authority
7 IV. An evaluation of Mr. LeFebvre’s faithfulness to his ordination vows during this process
8 V. Summary answers to the questions posed in Communication 20-01
9 VI. Recommendations

10
11 **I. Introduction**

12
13 Since the 2020 spring meeting of the Great-Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, the *LeFebvre Writings Study Committee*
14 has pursued its assigned task.¹ We began by individually reading all the materials referred to us by the
15 presbytery. We also considered various reviews of Mr. LeFebvre’s writings, which he provided to us
16 upon our request. Then, we sent Mr. LeFebvre a series of written questions for clarification on his
17 positions. We met with him on April 11 to discuss those questions. The questions asked to Mr.
18 LeFebvre are available in an appendix to this report.

19
20 After this meeting, the committee worked for several months on studying the writings at hand and
21 writing this report. The committee engaged with Mr. LeFebvre again on August 11 to share and discuss
22 some of the fruits of our committee’s work.² After this meeting, the committee moved toward its final
23 report and recommendations as presented here.

24
25 The anchor of our committee work was prayer and a deep desire for the good of the church and the
26 glory of God.

27
28 What is presented here is our assessment of the writings as they pertain to the assignment presented to
29 the committee. We have not sought a point-by-point review of every major topic the writings present.
30 Nor have we addressed every area of doctrine that could be seen by some as at variance with an
31 interpretation of our confessional standards. Instead, we have sought to hone in on the issues most

¹ In response to Communication 19-5 and 20-01, that Presbytery appoint a five-man Study Committee: A. To read Dr. Michael LeFebvre’s book *The Liturgy of Creation: Understanding Calendars in Old Testament Context*, his article “Adam Reigns in Eden,” and his Biologos post, “Cracking the Code of Cadence: The Genre of Genesis”; B. To consider the academic review of the LeFebvre writings by the RPTS faculty committee (20-4). C. To assess the LeFebvre writings and provide an evaluation as to confessional subscription and to suggest answers to the questions raised in Communication 20-01. D. To interact with Dr. LeFebvre for the purpose of understanding and clarification of the relevant points raised in the writings being evaluated; E. To report the committee’s assessment along with any relevant recommendations at a special meeting of presbytery held immediately before the 2020 Synod meeting at a time and place specified by the time and place committee. [At Marion RPC, on Monday June 22, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.]

² Note that in our meetings with Mr. LeFebvre, we invited him to bring member(s) of his session with him. We were glad for Mr. Jason O’Neill’s participation in these meetings.

1 pertinent to the questions at hand before us, namely those pertaining to confessional adherence and
 2 the ordination vows. Though we explore many areas in the paper, the consideration of Mr. LeFebvre's
 3 own stated exception to *Reformed Presbyterian Testimony (RPT) 4.4* is embedded in our work from start to
 4 finish.

5
 6 Our paper begins by evaluating Mr. LeFebvre's positions on creation and Adam before proceeding to
 7 an analysis of issues pertaining to scientific authority. After this, we move to consider Mr. LeFebvre's
 8 adherence to the ordination vows, which leads to our proposed answers to Mr. LeFebvre's questions
 9 posed in Communication 20-01. We conclude with our recommendations.³

10 11 **II. An evaluation of Mr. LeFebvre's positions on creation, Adam, and corresponding issues**

12
 13 In this section of the paper, we will analyze directly Mr. LeFebvre's positions in view of RPT 4.3 and
 14 4.4. Then we will deal more broadly with his views of the creation account, Adam's progenitorship,
 15 original sin, and broader covenantal issues, all in view of the question of confessional adherence.

16
 17 In Communication 20-01, Mr. LeFebvre says,

18
 19 I have concluded that my views on the Genesis creation texts involve only one point of actual
 20 exception to the RP standards. I am aware that there are at least two other points at which
 21 some may perceive additional inconsistencies. As for myself, I only recognize one point of
 22 exception to a secondary doctrine in the RP Testimony, and I believe that I am holding that
 23 exception consistently with my ordination vows.⁴

24
 25 Our committee, though, disagrees this assertion of Mr. LeFebvre. Mr. LeFebvre's positions run
 26 contrary to not one but several standards of the RPCNA. He allows that some positions affirmed by
 27 the standards are possible understandings. However, in many places, he does not affirm the
 28 confessional position, except perhaps as allowing the confessional position as a possible interpretation.
 29 Instead, Mr. LeFebvre proposes new interpretations that move against the standards. In some cases, he
 30 holds that Scripture is entirely silent on a position in the standards – which, by its very inclusion in the
 31 standards reveals the church's position that the Scriptures do speak on that subject.

32
 33 *Reformed Presbyterian Testimony Paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4*

34
 35 The RP Testimony in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 states:

36
³ We note that, on the whole, our paper does not focus its interactions on Communications 20-2, 20-3, or 20-4. We did consider those writings in our work. But our writing focuses on direct engagement with Mr. LeFebvre's writings.

⁴ Michael LeFebvre, *Communication 20-01 to the Great-Lakes-Gulf Presbytery*, 5.

1 4.3 The theory of evolution which assumes that chance happenings are an explanation of
2 the origin and development of matter and living things is unscriptural. God created
3 various kinds of living forms with tremendous potential for variation. The increase of
4 varieties which has occurred is within genetic limitations provided at creation.

5 4.4 *We deny* that man evolved from any lower form of life.
6

7 In Communication 20-01, Mr. LeFebvre states his understanding of these paragraphs and where he
8 takes exception to them.
9

10 Regarding paragraphs 3 and 4 he states:
11

12 These are the positions we hold, as a denomination, with respect to the theory of evolution. I
13 fully affirm the first of these paragraphs (para. 3) and take exception only to the latter (para.
14 4).⁵
15

16 Regarding paragraph 3 he states:
17

18 I understand that many in our churches likely believe that *all* forms of evolution are described
19 by this paragraph and would therefore regard paragraph 3 as denying all possibilities of
20 evolution.⁶
21

22 Note that later in the very same paragraph, we actually affirm that some processes of
23 evolutionary change do occur “within [the] genetic limitations provided [by God] at creation.”
24 Since the very same paragraph acknowledges some forms of evolutionary processes in nature,
25 the earlier statement cannot be read as a blanket characterization of all theories of evolution. ...
26 Therefore, it does not appear to me that paragraph 3 requires an opposition to all processes of
27 evolution, but only to those theories which assert evolution as sufficient to account for all that
28 exists (i.e., to the neglect of God).⁷
29

30 If my understanding of paragraph 3 in this manner is deemed permissible by this court, then I
31 find no reason to assert any exception to it. As far as I can reflect on my own heart, and with a
32 clear conscience toward God, I fully affirm *RPT* 4.3.⁸
33

34 And regarding paragraph 4 he states:

⁵ Michael LeFebvre, 20-01, 6.

⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷ Ibid. 6-7.

⁸ Ibid. 7.

1 It is to paragraph 4 that I find I must take exception. This is the paragraph wherein we, as a
2 church, “deny that man evolved from any lower life form.” For reasons detailed in my paper,
3 “Adam Reigns in Eden,” I do not find that Scripture supports this denial. But neither do I
4 believe that Scripture asserts the contrary. Scripture is silent on such natural processes as
5 evolution, and so I do not think it proper to make a theological statement of faith either
6 affirming or denying evolution. I do, therefore, take exception to RPT 4.4.

7 That being said, I fully appreciate and heartily affirm what I suspect to be the underlying
8 intentions behind that paragraph’s denial. I suspect that the real targets of paragraph 4 are the
9 assertions that are often joined to atheistic claims about human evolution: for instance, that
10 humanity is not in the image of God, or that God did not create humankind.⁹

11 *Concerning Mr. LeFebvre’s Position on RP Testimony Paragraph 4.3*

12 Mr. LeFebvre claims to “fully affirm” paragraph 4.3. His assessment is that paragraph 3 only rejects
13 those views of evolution that rely on “chance happenings” (actual undirected chance). However, we
14 note that the reference in the RP Testimony to the creation of kinds excludes virtually every view of
15 evolution accepted by the majority of evolutionists. It states, “The increase of varieties which has
16 occurred is within genetic limitations provided at creation.” Nine times Genesis 1 tells us that each
17 type of living creature reproduces “according to its kind”. It is not true that living creatures evolve from
18 one kind to another.

19 Mr. LeFebvre asserts that “we (i.e., the RPCNA) actually affirm that some processes of evolutionary
20 change do occur ‘within [the] genetic limitations provided [by God] at creation’”. However, we believe
21 it is misleading to even give the impression that affirming variation within the God-appointed kinds
22 somehow allows the possibility of evolution from one kind to another. It is precisely this sort of
23 evolutionary development that is in question with Mr. LeFebvre’s questioning of RPT 4.4 of the
24 *Testimony*. Therefore, to teach that kinds do evolve to higher kinds, or that it is even possible (within
25 the bounds of Scripture) that kinds evolve into higher kinds, is effectively contrary to RPT 4.3.

26 In addition, in *The Liturgy of Creation*, Mr. LeFebvre asserts that “the uncritical acceptance of the
27 atheistic claim that Genesis is incompatible with evolution must be rejected.”¹⁰ Since RPT 4.3 appears
28 to claim that Genesis is incompatible with the commonly-accepted view of evolution, this statement
29 appears to be rejecting the Testimony at this point. At the very least, such an assertion moves far afield
30 from *RP Testimony 4.3*.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Michael LeFebvre, *The Liturgy of Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 205.

¹¹ We note here that the discussion of evolution presented here aligns with the assertion of the “Report of the Committee to Study the Midwest Presbytery Report on Creation” (2002 RPCNA Minutes of Synod, 136-138). This is the report which Mr. LeFebvre cites in both his book (*The Liturgy of Creation*, xiv) and 20-01 (page 8) as informing his

1 *Concerning Mr. LeFebvre's position on RP Testimony Paragraph 4.4*

2 Mr. LeFebvre explicitly claims an exception to this paragraph and states that it “is a secondary point of
3 doctrine (i.e., that it is not systemic under query four).”¹² He argues that Scripture does not support the
4 paragraph of the *Testimony* and that by taking exception to it he is not saying that Scripture teaches that
5 man did evolve from a lower form of life, but simply that “Scripture is silent on such natural processes
6 as evolution.”¹³

7 By taking exception to the denial of RPT 4.4., he is saying that it is possible that man (i.e. mankind)
8 did evolve from a lower form of life, just not by chance, but rather in a God-directed way, and that
9 Scripture, being silent, allows the possibility.

10 However, Scripture is not silent on natural processes. By declaring that each kind reproduces according
11 to its own kind Scripture has declared that evolution from one kind to another is not possible. The
12 teaching of Genesis 1 is that each kind of creature is distinct from the others (although they share
13 many common properties and processes) and that they do not evolve from one kind to another.

14 It is especially the teaching of Scripture that man is a unique creation of God, or of a “kind” distinct
15 from the animal “kinds”. The *Confession* affirms this when it states, “After God had made all other
16 creatures, He created man, male and female...” (4.2). The same teaching is affirmed by the *Larger*
17 *Catechism* Q. 17. The *Confession* and *Catechism* both assert that it is the teaching of Scripture that
18 mankind was not formed by any process other than by the direct hand of God, Adam from the dust of
19 the ground, and Eve from Adam.¹⁴

20 Thus, to take exception to paragraph 4.4 of the *Testimony* is contrary to paragraph 4.2 of the *Confession*
21 and Q17 of the *Larger Catechism*.¹⁵

22 Already, at this point, the relation of RPT 4.4 to the broader denominational standards is being
23 revealed. Now, broader points need to be observed about Mr. LeFebvre's writings and positions on
24 creation, Adam and Eve as progenitors, and covenant headship and original sin.

25 *Regarding Mr. LeFebvre's Writings on the Genesis Account of Creation*

approach to these issues. It is noteworthy, then, that the 2002 committee declared this (page 137): “The Confession and the Testimony (Chapter 4) both reject ‘the theory of evolution as commonly taught, including macro-evolution.’”

¹² Michael LeFebvre, 2001, 8.

¹³ Michael LeFebvre, 2001, 7.

¹⁴ On the question of Adam and Eve, consider Timothy 2:13: “Adam was formed first, then Eve.” On this point, G. I. Williamson argues, “There is no way that such a thing could possibly have happened through any evolutionary process of reproduction. For the male and the female of any species to come into existence at different times is out of the question. The only way that such a thing could have happened was by God creating them directly.” See G. I. Williamson, *The Heidelberg Catechism: A Study Guide* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing), 45.

¹⁵ More on this point is found below in the discussion Adam's progenitorship.

1 In *The Liturgy of Creation*, concerning the creation week, Mr. LeFebvre writes:

2 It participates in the law-giving function of the Pentateuch and serves as another of the
3 calendar narratives designed to bring God’s work to bear on Israel’s metronome of labor and
4 worship in the land. The dates do not reflect original occurrence timing but rather later Israel’s
5 legally instructed observance timing. This approach to the creation week accords with the
6 Pentateuch’s own representation of that narrative in the fourth commandment of the
7 Decalogue...”¹⁶

8 At this point, he quotes Exodus 20:8-11. Later, Mr. LeFebvre reaffirms much the same position, saying:

9 I want to show that the creation week is another of the Torah’s calendar narratives. Genesis
10 1:1-2:3 provides a narration of creation events, but the timing and details of its telling are
11 transparently “re-mapped” to the cadence and themes of Israel’s weekly sabbath festival. The
12 purpose of the narrative is not simply to teach the people what happened but to teach them
13 how to remember God’s work and God’s rest through their own weekly labors and worship.
14 This is, in fact, what the fourth commandment identifies as the creation narrative’s function.¹⁷

15 His argument is that the creation account of Genesis is “remapped” to (i.e., based upon) the weekly
16 Sabbath later instituted by God for Israel and was intended primarily to remind the people of their
17 obligation to keep the weekly Sabbath.

18 But in Exodus 20, the opposite of Mr. LeFebvre’s reasoning is given. Scripture does not say that
19 because the people of Israel were to keep the weekly Sabbath that therefore God’s creation is described
20 as happening in six days with a seventh day of rest. The account of creation is given as the basis of the
21 weekly Sabbath – man’s call for six days then rest derives from God’s own pattern. As quoting the 4th
22 commandment, *Larger Catechism* answer 115 and *Shorter Catechism* answer 57 accord with the
23 Scriptures in affirming Sabbath-keeping as based on God’s actual example, and not the inverse.¹⁸

24 On the broader point here of Genesis and history, *RP Testimony 4.1* states: “The account of creation in
25 Genesis 1 and 2 is history, not mythology.”

26 Doubtless, Mr. LeFebvre has not stated an exception to *Testimony* paragraph 4.1 since he would agree
27 that Genesis 1 and 2 are not mythology. But his framing them as an idiomatic description of events
28 based on God’s later prescriptions for Israel presents real question as to how Genesis 1 is being treated
29 as historical. To say that the creation account of Genesis is not offering a historic,
30 chronologically-based account is contrary to the *Testimony* and the *Catechism*.

¹⁶ Michael LeFebvre, *The Liturgy of Creation*, 109.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

¹⁸ See as well, *Larger Catechism* 120 and *Shorter Catechism* 62, which cites the “example of God” and “his own example” of making the earth in six days as the impetus for Sabbath-keeping.

1 One last point on the creation account needs to be made. In GLG paper 20-01, regarding *Testimony*
2 paragraph 4.1, Mr. LeFebvre says:

3 I fully affirm this statement within the parameters expressed by synod in 2002. In that 2002
4 ruling, synod recognized that the Westminster divines, themselves, almost certainly regarded
5 the six creation days as the actual timing of the creation event. However, synod also recognized
6 “that differing views of the length of these days are held by some in the church” and that these
7 “variant views ... have hitherto not been the ground of either denying ordination or instituting
8 discipline.” Furthermore, synod positively urged, “that the best answer to this situation [i.e.,
9 the presence of controversy in the church over the nature of the creation days] is for us to
10 resolve, in the Confession’s own language, to let ‘the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture’ be
11 the supreme judge of any controversy in this matter, in the context of ongoing ministry that
12 seeks to be biblically and confessionally faithful before the Lord.”¹⁹

13 By Mr. LeFebvre’s admission, the *Confession* almost certainly meant “the actual timing of the creation
14 event”. To suggest that it means something other than that would tend to discount the original authors
15 of the *Confession*.

16 *Regarding Mr. LeFebvre’s Writings on Adam and Eve as the Progenitors of the Human Race*

17 In the introductory section of *Adam Reigns in Eden*, Mr. LeFebvre writes:

18 It is now regarded as genetically improbable—some insist, impossible—for the human race to
19 have arisen from a single couple. ... the human race embodies remarkable genetic diversity that,
20 according to the operations of genetics, cannot be explained by a single set of parents.²⁰

21 On the contrary, the human race embodies remarkable genetic diversity that, according to the
22 operations of genetics, cannot be explained by a single set of parents.²¹

23 All sides of the discussion generally concur on one point: the Adam narrative is an origin story
24 (an etiology) for the human race. But is it, in fact, this point of consensus that needs
25 correction?²²

26 Adam is introduced as humanity’s first father, not in his reproductive capacity but in his royal
27 appointment. The thesis of this paper is that the Eden narrative introduces Adam as
28 humankind’s first king, and the narrative is an etiology of kingship with only tangential
29 relevance at best to the question of humankind’s biological origins. Consequently, current

¹⁹ Michael LeFebvre, 20-01, 8.

²⁰ The entirety of this article can be found here: Michael LeFebvre, “Adam Reigns in Eden: Genesis and the Origins of Kingship”, *BET* 5, no. 2 (October 2018): 25-57. This quotation comes from page 25.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 26.

1 genetic findings have no bearings on the question of Adam’s historicity. He was a real person
 2 who was appointed by God as humanity’s first universal king, but—as we will examine in this
 3 paper—the Genesis text does not actually require that Adam was the sole progenitor of all
 4 subsequent human beings.²³

5 Regarding Adam as humanity’s first universal king is not necessarily exclusive of the view that
 6 Adam may also have been the first human being and progenitor of the whole human race. ...
 7 Any implications of the text for human ancestry is secondary at best. While this conclusion is
 8 nuanced differently from the traditional view, it is not inconsistent with orthodox soteriology.
 9 In fact, the likeness of Jesus to Adam is based on their like role as federal heads of humankind,
 10 not paternity. It is regency rather than reproduction that, in Pauline thought, links the First
 11 and Second Adams. Jesus never begat biological offspring. Jesus is the Second Adam strictly by
 12 his succeeding the First Adam in his role as humankind’s universal king (Rom. 5:12–21).²⁴

13 It is my contention that the Eden narrative (Gen. 2:4-4:26) is an etiology of kingship, not
 14 human biological origins.²⁵

15 Key parts of his thesis include:

- 16 ● That there was a single set of parents is genetically improbable and the diversity we see in the
 17 human race cannot be explained by a single set of parents.
- 18 ● That Adam may have been the first human being, but it was not the purpose of Scripture to say
 19 that or to explain human biological origins.

20 In fact, that Mr. LeFebvre does not believe that immediately after Adam and Eve were created, they
 21 were the only humans on earth, or that the human race descended from a single set of human parents
 22 is confirmed later in the article when he writes:

23 Remarkably, the narrative presupposes the presence of other populations already dwelling to
 24 the east of Eden! Up to this point in the narrative, it is possible to regard Adam as the first king
 25 and also humanity’s first progenitor. It is only as the narrative follows Cain away from Eden
 26 into “the land of wandering” that we realize the author’s worldview includes other populations
 27 already present. Questions like, “Where did Cain get his wife?” (4:17) and “Who were the other
 28 people Cain was afraid would kill him when he was cast out?” (4:14) and “Who lived in the city
 29 built by Cain?” (4:17) have been asked for centuries. Typically, these questions have been
 30 viewed as marginal issues mainstream exegetes answered by postulating extreme fecundity to
 31 Eve (cf., 5:4). However, in light of current questions about Adam’s biological relationship with
 32 the rest of the human race, those peripheral details about other populations contemporaneous
 33 with his household may be much more important than previously recognized. Walter Moberly

²³ Ibid., 26-27.

²⁴ Michael LeFebvre, *Adam Reigns in Eden*, 27.

²⁵ Ibid.

1 notes that the text's presupposition of a populated world is actually pervasive through the text,
2 beyond the most obvious instances connected with Cain's exile.²⁶

3 A broader population is assumed throughout the Eden narrative, although it is clearest when
4 Cain is banished to the lands of the east, where he fears attack, finds a wife, and founds a city.
5 ... In particular, banishment to the east was a punishment for Cain. Are we to suppose that
6 other sons and daughters of Adam had been exiled to that distant "land of wandering" prior to
7 Cain? Had large numbers of other sons and daughters of Adam previously been exiled for
8 earlier crimes like that leading to Cain's banishment? It seems that the narrative simply
9 presupposes there are other, non-settled groups of wanderers "out there."²⁷

10 Ultimately, any effort to use the Bible to explain the origins of those among whom Cain settled
11 must lean on arguments from silence. The text presupposes the existence of dangerous
12 populations of wanderers in the east without explaining them. That is significant. It is not part
13 of the writer's agenda to report the origins of those other populations! The Augustinian
14 interpretation inserts assumptions into the text. So do other efforts to explain the origin of
15 those peoples It is not possible to make any assertions from Scripture as to where Cain's
16 contemporaries came from. Genesis is silent on that question. Thus, we can reliably conclude
17 that Genesis 2:4-4:26 was written to address a different topic than the origins of all human
18 populations. The question of human biological origins is not the burden of the passage. The
19 origin of all humanity is the burden of a passage in the previous chapter: Genesis 1:26-27. That
20 text reports that God created humankind in the categories of "male and female" by his
21 command. But the Eden narrative tells a different story. And the Eden narrative occurs at a
22 time when humankind was already greater than a single family, since the text presupposes a
23 broader population than Adam's household without any concern to explain their identity or
24 relationship to him. The etiological function of the Eden narrative is one of kingship and not
25 genetic origins.²⁸

26 In this essay, it has been argued that Adam is introduced as the first universal king and not the
27 first progenitor of humanity.²⁹

28 Key parts of his thesis include:

- 29 ● Scripture actually presupposes there were other humans present at the time the events recorded
30 regarding Adam and Eve took place.
- 31 ● That must have been the case in order to be able to understand the account of Cain's concern
32 over being killed and even his ability to find a wife.

²⁶ Ibid., 43.

²⁷ Michael LeFebvre, *Adam Reigns in Eden*, 44.

²⁸ Ibid., 45.

²⁹ Ibid., 47.

1 Five exegetical considerations arise that challenge Mr. LeFebvre's thesis.

2 First, Mr. LeFebvre's thesis overlooks the long lives of Adam and Eve and their descendants (some over
3 900 years). In this timeframe, they could have very easily have produced thousands upon thousands of
4 descendants. It is reasonable to assume that Cain would very likely come in contact with many of his
5 "cousins" who might seek revenge for the killing of Abel, and also many from which he could have
6 taken a wife. Nothing in the account describes how many years passed before Cain killed Abel, which
7 quite likely occurred, as Mr. LeFebvre states, "at a time when humankind was already greater than a
8 single family" (but not for the reasons Mr. LeFebvre assumes). Nothing in the account requires other
9 humans to have been created by God from whom God chose Adam and Eve for special roles.

10 Second, Mr. LeFebvre has moved against a faithful, confessional clear reading of Genesis 2:7-8.³⁰ The
11 Confession makes reference to the creation of man in WCF 4.2: "After God had made all other
12 creatures, He created man", with Genesis 2:7 being listed as a cited prooftext. What the confession
13 speaks of here in interpreting Genesis 2:7 is the creation of a man (Adam) and not any kind of
14 coronation of a king or other like event. This guides an interpretation of the Genesis 2:7 impartation
15 of the breath of life into Adam as a creation, or an immediate act that separated Adam from the
16 creatures. To argue otherwise is contrary to Scriptural interpretation and to the standards.³¹

17 Third, if, as Mr. LeFebvre postulates, there was a broader population of humans at the time Adam was
18 placed in the garden, Genesis 2:18 and 2:20 would suddenly present an exegetical conundrum. There,
19 God says, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."
20 (Genesis 2:18). In Genesis 2:20, it says, "for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him"
21 (Genesis 2:20). Thus, God proceeded to form Eve from the very body of Adam. If God could single out
22 Adam from a mass of human males to raise to kingship, why not a woman from a mass of human
23 females to raise to queenship as a wife for Adam?

24 Fourth, throughout *Adam Reigns in Eden*, Mr. LeFebvre teaches that Adam was "raised from the dust of
25 the ground" signifying his being raised to "king".³² This reading, however, presents exegetical conflict

³⁰ See *Adam Reigns in Eden*, 33 on this point.

³¹ On Genesis 2:7, we stand with the long record of Reformed interpretation on this text. Consider the work of John Murray in "The Origin of Man" in *Collected Writings of John Murray, Volume 2* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 3-13. Murray writes (p7), "The terms [of Genesis 2:7] must represent communication from without and cannot be interpreted as evolution of potencies resident in 'dust from the ground', nor even in terms of potencies belonging to the resultant of the formative action to which dust from the ground has been subjected." Later Murray writes (p11), "[G]eneration from any lower form of animate life is excluded. Now we are expressly advised of what if equally implied in Genesis 2:7, that human parentage played no part in Adam's origin." Again, Murray writes (p12), "Genesis 2:7 cannot be reconciled with the evolutionary hypothesis ... it was by *ab extra* impartation, communication from God described as inbreathing, that man became animate creature." Consider as well John Calvin on this: "For Moses intended nothing more than to explain the animating of the clayey figure, whereby it came to pass that man began to live." See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1984), 112.

³² See *Adam Reigns in Eden*, 33-34.

1 with Genesis 3:19. Genesis 3:19 reads, “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to
 2 the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” Adam was
 3 made from the dust of the ground and Eve from him. If in Genesis 2:7 “formed man of the dust of the
 4 ground” means being raised to kingship, to what does the return to dust of Genesis 3:19 refer? The text
 5 clearly speaks to the death of the body followed by decay in the dust. It does not mean that one ceases
 6 to be king, which is what Mr. LeFebvre’s thesis would require.

7 Fifth, Mr. LeFebvre has capitulated to the understanding of some regarding the “operations of
 8 genetics” that requires many pairs (hundreds or even thousands) of biological parents for the present
 9 diversity seen in the human race. But this goes contrary to Scripture when in Genesis 7-9 recounts only
 10 eight humans entering the ark. The same interpretation is found in 1 Peter 3:20 and 2 Peter 2:5.
 11 Therefore, Scripture teaches that the entire population of humans on earth from that time forward are
 12 descendants of Ham, Shem and Japheth and their wives, not many or even thousands of pairs of
 13 humans. This unexplained tension in Mr. LeFebvre’s writings runs contrary to Scripture.

14 With this in mind, we can list the places in the *Confession* and the *Testimony* that teach that Adam and
 15 Eve were the original and only humans (directly created by a special act of God). We have already
 16 noted WCF 4.2, which is corroborated by WLC 17 on this point. In addition, the *Confession*, in
 17 paragraph 6.3, says, “They being the root of all mankind...”. The “they” referred to are Adam and Eve.
 18 To teach that Adam and Eve are not the “root of all mankind” is contrary to the *Confession*.

19 Other confessional statements speak to the language of “our first parents:”

20 Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the
 21 forbidden fruit. (WCF 6.1)

22 Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan,
 23 transgressed the commandment of God, in eating the forbidden fruit, and thereby fell from the
 24 estate of innocency wherein they were created. (LC 21)³³

25 The expression “our first parents” refers to Adam and Eve. To imply that “first” has others that
 26 preceded them in some way, or were contemporaneous with them, and from which some of modern-
 27 day mankind has descended, does injustice to the plain meaning of the word “first”.³⁴

³³ On this point, see also Shorter Catechism 13 and 15, which make the same points in more abbreviated terms.

³⁴ On the view of Adam and Eve as first parents and the lack of humanlike species before Adam, we stand with the record of Reformed theologians on this point. RPTS professor Richard Gamble writes, “Some assert that a humanlike species of bipedal primates existed before Adam and Eve ... Some scholars call them pre-Adamites or hominids. These creatures were apparently not quite human, and perhaps became extinct before ‘true’ humans existed. This question has also recently caused controversy in the church, particularly in some of the conservative Presbyterian denominations. After being debated in church courts, this view has rightly been rejected as contrary to Scripture.” See Richard Gamble, *The Whole Counsel of God*, vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 165-166. See also Herman Bavinck’s engagement with the question in Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, trans. John Vriend

1 These paragraphs also make no sense if some of us today (implied by the word “our”) were not the
 2 biological descendants of Adam and Eve and to teach otherwise is contrary to the *Confession* and the
 3 *Catechisms*.

4 As we contemplate this theme of Adam’s progenitorship, we discover what is perhaps the underlying
 5 cause of discord with the confessional standards on this point. For Mr. LeFebvre, the Eden narrative is
 6 a “different story”³⁵ than that of Genesis 1:26-27, and issues of human biological origins are not in
 7 view of Genesis 2, as perhaps they are in Genesis 1.

8 And yet, the *Confession and Catechism* assume that Genesis 1 and 2 refer to the same event. *WCF 4:2*
 9 combines the creation of man in God’s image (referring to Genesis 1) with the creation of their
 10 “reasonable and immortal souls”, with Genesis 2 given as the prooftext there. Larger Catechism 17
 11 combines the creation of man male and female (interpreting Genesis 1) with the Genesis 2 language of
 12 the formation of the “body of the man from the dust of the ground and the woman of the rib of the
 13 man”. The *Confession* and *Catechism* assume that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 both refer to the etiology of
 14 mankind. To assert otherwise is contrary to the standards.

15 Ultimately, on this entire subject of the origin of mankind and the progenitorship of Adam and the
 16 origin of mankind, to remain within the confessional bounds, what must be maintained is the
 17 announcement of Genesis of the immediate creation of Adam as the first of mankind. By this we
 18 mean, to use A. A. Hodge’s description: “That man, on the contrary, was immediately created by God,
 19 his body out of earthly materials previously created and his soul out of nothing.”³⁶ To move against this
 20 is to move against the pervasive teaching of the confession.³⁷

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 523-526. There, Bavinck engages directly with the work Isaac La Peyrère, who Mr. LeFebvre cites favorably in *Adam Reigns in Eden* (pages 44-45).

³⁵ See Michael LeFebvre, “Adam Reigns in Eden”, 45.

³⁶ See A.A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1998), 86. We quote here at length Hodge (p85-86) on the matter. Hodge writes, “Man was created immediately by God, and last of the creatures. According to God’s plan of successive creation, and of progressive advance in complexity and excellence of organization and endowment, man’s true place is last in order as the immediate end and crown of this lower creation. The scientific advocates of the hypothesis of organic development have denied that man was created immediately by God, and have held that the higher and more complex living organisms were developed gradually and by successive stages from the lower and more simple as the physical condition of the world became gradually favorable to their existence, and that man at the proper time came last of all from the last link in the order of being immediately below him. That man, on the contrary, was immediately created by God, his body out of earthly materials previously created and his soul out of nothing, is rendered certain by the following evidence: ... The Scriptures expressly affirm the fact of man’s immediate creation (Gen. 1:26,27; 2:7). ... This truth is rendered obvious, also, by the immense distance which separates man from the nearest of the lower animals; from the incomparable superiority of man in kind as well as degree ... That God created one human pair, from whom the entire race in all its varieties has descended by generation, is a fundamental truth of the Christian revelation.”

³⁷ We are reminded here of the statement from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on this issue. In 2004, the OPC General Assembly adopted this statement: “That since the Westminster Confession of Faith, IV, clearly states that God created all things out of nothing and that Adam and Eve were created by direct acts of God at particular times, and thereby condemns the teaching that man developed from lower forms of life, no further statement is necessary in

1 *Regarding the Relationship between Mr. LeFebvre's Positions and Questions Concerning Adam as the Covenant*
 2 *Head and Original Sin*

3 In 20-01, Mr. LeFebvre writes:

4 [On WCF 6.3] In that article [Adam Reigns in Eden], I argue that the Eden narrative presents
 5 Adam as humanity's first (and failed) universal king in the same manner in which Jesus is
 6 humanity's second (and continuing) universal king. There is, of course, nothing controversial
 7 there. But I also note evidence within the Genesis account that suggests the passage is
 8 concerned with Adam's fatherhood as humanity's federal head without necessitating that
 9 Adam be the biological father of all humans as well—such as the presence of contemporaneous
 10 populations east of Eden (Gen. 4:14-17) without any effort by the author to explain their
 11 relationship to Adam. ... While admittedly controversial, I do not believe these considerations
 12 bring me into contradiction with our standards. It is my understanding that phrases like “root
 13 of all mankind” and “first parents” are used in WCF 6.3—and throughout the Westminster
 14 Standards—to identify Adam's federal office, which is precisely what my work affirms. I
 15 understand that these terms are generally understood to reflect Adam's biological fatherhood
 16 of all humanity, also. However, that physical link is not the theological burden of these
 17 references in the *Confession* and *Catechisms*.³⁸

18 [On WCF 6.3] Most of the reformers (and most if not all of the Westminster divines) likely did
 19 hold that Adam was the biological ancestor of all humankind as well as humanity's first
 20 covenant head. However, the reformers held that original sin is communicated due to Adam's
 21 office, not through the mechanism of physical generation.

22 Again, I readily admit that the reformers generally maintained as a historical given that Adam
 23 was the first father of the whole human race. However, the doctrine of original sin was
 24 explicitly decoupled from physical descent as a mechanistic necessity, even leading to the
 25 general rejection of traducianism. Original sin is transmitted to all humankind by imputation
 26 due to Adam's covenantal office (not by impartation through generational descent), just as
 27 justification is transmitted by imputation due to Christ's covenantal office (not by impartation
 28 through the sacraments). ... Both the *sin* and the *righteousness* presuppose a federal relation
 29 between humanity as a whole and its heads.”³⁹

30 [On WCF 6.3] As I understand the theology of Adam's federal headship: it is already woven
 31 into the fabric of covenant theology that, while Adam might be regarded as the physical father
 32 of the entire human race, neither the universal import of his fall nor the doctrine of original

the context of this overture.” See *Minutes of the 47th General Assembly of the OPC*, 203–04. The 2004 OPC “Report of the Committee to Study the Views of Creation” can be found here: <https://www.opc.org/GA/creation.html>.

³⁸ Michael LeFebvre, 20-01, 9-10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

1 sin and universal human guilt are dependent upon that physiological connection. And if it
 2 were to be found that the Scriptures do not present Adam as the sole progenitor of the human
 3 race, he would still remain the “first man” and “root of all mankind” by virtue of his covenant
 4 appointment—just as Jesus, though never having born children, is called “Everlasting Father”
 5 (Isa. 9:6) and the “root of David” (Rev. 5:5)—and the doctrines of the fall and original sin
 6 would remain unchanged.⁴⁰

7 Key points of his thesis include:

- 8 ● Adam’s fatherhood as humanity’s federal head does not require that Adam be the biological
 9 father of all humans as well.
- 10 ● The phrases “root of all mankind” and “first parents” identify Adam’s federal office and a
 11 physical link is not the theological burden of these references in the confessional standards.
- 12 ● The doctrine of original sin is explicitly decoupled from physical descent as a mechanistic
 13 necessity such that neither the universal import of his fall nor the doctrine of original sin and
 14 universal human guilt are dependent upon that physiological connection.

15 However, the *Confession* in paragraph 6.3 says “They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin
 16 was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity
 17 descending from them by ordinary generation.” This clearly establishes a link between the guilt of
 18 original sin and the posterity of Adam and Eve – and to clarify that it added “descending from them by
 19 ordinary generation”. The clear teaching of the *Confession* is that the guilt of original sin is imputed
 20 only to the physical descendants of Adam and Eve. The *Confession* allows no room for the guilt of
 21 original sin to be imputed (by covenant) to any other supposed contemporaneous humans.

22 Many other sections of the *Confession*, *Testimony* and *Catechisms* contradict Mr. LeFebvre’s thesis
 23 regarding original sin and covenant representation.:

- 24 ● *Confession* 7.2: “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was
 25 promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal
 26 obedience.”. Here we see that life was promised to the “posterity” of Adam, not to anyone else.
 27 The word “posterity” does not mean those “in covenant with him”. It means those “descending
 28 from him”.
- 29 ● *Testimony* 7.1: “*We reject* the teaching that Adam was not a covenant head and representative of
 30 all his descendants.” This paragraph says that Adam was the “covenant head and representative
 31 of all his descendants”. If he could also be the “covenant head and representative” of more
 32 than his descendants, why does it not say that? The implication is that we are not to believe
 33 that he was the covenant head and representative of anyone else.
- 34 ● *Larger Catechism* 22: “Q. *Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?* A. The covenant being
 35 made with Adam, as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity; all mankind

⁴⁰ Michael LeFebvre, 2001, 12.

1 descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first
 2 transgression.”⁴¹ The answers to WLC 22 and WSC 16 say that the covenant was made with
 3 Adam and his posterity. And, the answers explicitly define who those were: “all mankind
 4 descending from him by ordinary generation.” Therefore, to teach that the covenant might
 5 have included (or did include) others not descending from him by ordinary generation is
 6 contrary to the teaching of the catechisms.

- 7 ● *Larger Catechism* 26: “Q. *How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity? A.*
 8 Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as
 9 all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin.” The answer to this
 10 question teaches that original sin is conveyed from our first parents (Adam and Eve) to “their
 11 posterity by natural generation”, “all who proceed from them in that way”. It further teaches
 12 that “their posterity by natural generation” and “all who proceed from them in that way” are
 13 the ones who are conceived and born in sin. Nothing is said about how that comes about, but
 14 it is clear that it is teaching that it is only to “their posterity by natural generation” and “all who
 15 proceed from them in that way”. To teach that original sin is conveyed to anyone else is
 16 contrary to the teaching of the *Larger Catechism*.

17 Conclusion to Section 2⁴²

18 Mr. LeFebvre contends that he takes exception to only paragraph 4.4 of the *RP Testimony*. However,
 19 this exception necessarily creates conflict with many other areas of the *Confession*, *Testimony* and
 20 *Catechisms*. Other statements concerning creation and Adam may not have a necessary dependence on
 21 affirming RPT 4.4, but Mr. LeFebvre’s views on creation have run contrary to these statements
 22 nonetheless. We summarize below the list of confessional statements on creation and Adam that we
 23 find in conflict with Mr. LeFebvre’s views:

Confession	4.2	After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change.
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⁴¹ See also Shorter Catechism 16, which offers almost identical phrasing.

⁴² As we conclude this analysis of Mr. LeFebvre’s views on creation, we recognize that some might appeal for allowing an alternative or reimagined articulation of features of Reformed theology discussed here. Mr. LeFebvre seems to imply that such work maybe could be done in footnote 116 (p55) of *Adam Reigns in Eden*. There, he focuses on the issue of death as a result of the fall. But as our paper has shown, the issues at hand extend far beyond that issue. One such alternative perspective on Reformed theology appears in a book Mr. LeFebvre recommended for the committee’s consideration: *Reformed Theology and Evolutionary Theory* by Gijsbert van den Brink (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020). This book was surveyed in the committee’s writing process. It is noteworthy that van den Brink admits that his presentation of Reformed theology would move against the teaching of the Westminster Confession on creation (p17). Our committee focused its attention, not on efforts to move past confessional understanding, as perhaps van den Brink seeks, but to express our understanding of the standards as we believe them to have been received and understood by the church.

		Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.
	6.1	Our first parents , being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory.
	6.3	They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed , and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.
	7.2	The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity , upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
Testimony	4.1	The account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 is history , not mythology.
	4.3	The theory of evolution which assumes that chance happenings are an explanation of the origin and development of matter and living things is unscriptural. God created various kinds of living forms with tremendous potential for variation. The increase of varieties which has occurred is within genetic limitations provided at creation.
	4.4	We deny that man evolved from any lower form of life.
	7.1	<i>We reject</i> the teaching that Adam was not a covenant head and representative of all his descendants . <i>We reject</i> the view that Adam's headship involves any injustice.
Larger Catechism	17	Q. 17. <i>How did God create man?</i> A. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female; formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground , and the woman of the rib of the man; endued them with living, reasonable, and immortal souls; made them after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, having the law of God written in their hearts and power to fulfill it, with dominion over the creatures; yet subject to fall.
	21	Q. 21. <i>Did man continue in that estate wherein God at first created him?</i> A. Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God, in eating the forbidden fruit, and thereby fell from the estate of innocency wherein they were created.
	22	Q. 22. <i>Did all mankind fall in that first transgression?</i> A. The covenant being made with Adam, as a public person, not for himself only, but for his

		posterity; all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression.
	26	Q. 26. <i>How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity?</i> A. Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation , so as all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin.
	115	Q. 115. <i>Which is the fourth commandment?</i> A. The fourth commandment is, Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day and hallowed it.
	120	Q. 120. <i>What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it?</i> A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment, the more to enforce it, are taken from the equity of it, God allowing us six days of seven for our own affairs, and reserving but one for himself, in these words, <i>six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work</i> : from God's challenging a special propriety in that day, <i>the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God</i> : from the example of God, who in six days made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : and from that blessing which God put upon that day, not only in sanctifying it to be a day for his service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it, <i>wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath-day and hallowed it</i> .
Shorter Catechism	13	Q. 13. <i>Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?</i> A. Our first parents , being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.
	15	Q. 15. <i>What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?</i> A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, was their eating the forbidden fruit.
	16	Q. 16. <i>Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?</i> A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation , sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression.
	57	Q. 57. <i>Which is the fourth commandment?</i> A. The fourth commandment is, Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant,

		<i>nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it.</i>
	62	Q 62: <i>What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?</i> A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are, God’s allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example , and his blessing the Sabbath day.

1

2 **III. An underlying issue: Mr. LeFebvre’s approach to scientific authority**

3

4 Beyond the specific question raised in Communication 20-01 concerning the confessions and RPT 4.4,
5 the committee has noted many other issues raised in various communications forwarded to it by the
6 presbytery and received directly from various interested parties.⁴³ Most of these collect around the
7 larger issue of the relationship between scriptural authority and science. The theme of how to
8 characterize this relationship is familiar to students of recent church history and formed a core area of
9 concern in the modernist debates in mainline Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the first half of
10 the 20th century, and in later developments in more orthodox churches in the subsequent decades.
11 Indeed, the communications to the presbytery make reference to the slide of various denominations
12 into theological liberalism, connecting Mr. LeFebvre’s writings to these earlier controversies.

13

14 Our committee has not necessarily come to an agreement concerning our common judgment about
15 many questions regarding Mr. LeFebvre’s treatment of specific passages, but we do agree that a larger
16 issue appears to be driving many of the conflicts over the writings. This is the nature of scientific
17 authority, and how it constrains and drives the interpretation of scripture.

18

19 *Scriptural Authority vs. Scientific Authority*

20

21 Concerning the authority of scripture, our church’s confessional statements are very clear on many
22 points, including the doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility (RPT 1.13), and concerning the plenary
23 inspiration of scripture in its inception and our understanding of the nature of scriptural authors and
24 how to interpret scripture (WCF 1.9 – 1.10; RPT 1.5 – 1.8, RPT 1.19). Included in these confessional
25 statements is a clear statement of the scope of scriptural authority as encompassing all of life and
26 doctrine. RPT 1.13 states “We reject the view that the Bible is only partially inspired, that inspiration
27 pertains only to ‘revelational’ matters or ‘saving’ truth ...”, or to put it another way, where the Bible
28 speaks to an issue, it is inspired. Thus, scriptural authority potentially encompasses any and all aspects
29 of physical creation.

⁴³ See in particular communications 20-2 and 20-4, which our committee was tasked to consider. Both these communications spend significant time on the doctrine of revelation. What we offer here is our attempt to engage with the types of concerns presented in those communications, but to do so in view of the issues we find most prominent, which may differ in some places from those expressed in 20-2 and 20-4.

1
2 Our discussion with Mr. LeFebvre on this topic has been aided by the Chicago declaration, a statement
3 formulated by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy to draw together orthodox Christians
4 from various denominational backgrounds with a common concern for upholding the doctrine of
5 scripture. Among its signatories were many leaders across the RPCNA. Particularly relevant to the
6 current situation are articles 4 and 5 of the shorter declaration, and the denials in the attendant
7 Articles XII and XIII.

8
9 *4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it*
10 *states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under*
11 *God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.*

12
13 *5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or*
14 *disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to*
15 *both the individual and the Church.*

16
17 *Article XII. We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive*
18 *themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses*
19 *about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.*

20
21 *Article XIII. We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are*
22 *alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack*
23 *of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the*
24 *reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant*
25 *selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.*

26
27 In our discussion, Mr. LeFebvre himself pointed to the Chicago statement as a standard of inerrancy to
28 be guided by.

29
30 Concerning scientific authority, we note first of all that the confessions of the church are much less
31 well developed than they are concerning Biblical authority. RPT 1.1 indicates that God reveals Himself
32 clearly, minus his covenantal purposes, through all his works, calling this revelation *Natural or General*
33 *Revelation*. Most treatments of the question of scientific authority tend to base it in the notion of
34 General Revelation, discussing these two methods of revelation, e.g. as laid out in RPT 1.1, as
35 indicating two methods of ascertaining God's truth. Science, in such treatments then, pertains to
36 ascertaining truth through General Revelation. The strength of this approach is that it grounds all
37 truth in God's revelation of Himself and what He is doing in creation, providence, and redemption, so
38 the approach leads the church away from a fragmented view of reality towards an integrated view of
39 faith and life as flowing from Christ who is the Word Incarnate.

40
41 A potential problem with some attempted practical applications of the dual revelation formulation,
42 however, is a tendency of seeing scriptural revelation and scientific inquiry as being somehow parallel.
43 This tends, then, to encourage us to ascribe aspects of the administration of Special Revelation to

1 General Revelation, for example, by giving scientists credentials as prophets (or ordained preachers) of
2 General Revelation. RPT 1.2, then, reminds us that obscurity in general revelation can exist, and it is
3 due specifically to the natural limitations of humanity, and particularly the sinfulness of mankind.
4 Beyond this, the confessions of the church do not speak directly to the nature of science itself, so the
5 stance of the church with respect to the nature of scientific authority is not explicit at this time. We
6 will lay out some of our understanding immediately below, and then go on to discuss how we see it
7 interacting with Mr. LeFebvre's writings.

8

9 The two types of revelation, *special* and *general*, are not entirely parallel. Special Revelation is a
10 particular providence within the general activity of God revealing himself to people. The term, *special*,
11 in Special Revelation denotes two things, first, that it is *specific*, and second that it is *explicit*.

12

13 It is *specific*; it does not impart knowledge about everything, but it targets some things and not others.
14 God does not target all of our understanding of His ways with Scripture; He selects particular things to
15 communicate and correct through the word, and not other things. Since God is the creator and
16 sustainer of everything; scriptural authority is not limited in its scope; it is limited only by God's intent
17 to redeem *specific* parts of his people's minds. He does not choose to redeem every part of our
18 individual minds through the Word at this time but leaves parts of the human mind to be ministered
19 to by the common operations of the Holy Spirit, outside of the Word. However, there is no reason to *a*
20 *priori* define and delimit which aspects of creation and providence the scriptures can address with
21 authority. We have no reason to expect that our attempts to do so, leaving some world of autonomous
22 authority outside of the Scriptures, will be successful. Scriptural revelation and authority speak broadly
23 and specifically to all categories of life, and attempting to delimit the practical scope of its authority
24 away from fields addressed by science will be unsuccessful and potentially destructive.

25

26 Special Revelation is also *explicit*. By communicating through Scripture, God by His Spirit addresses the
27 human mind directly. This mode of communication differs from what takes place in General
28 Revelation, where communication is mediated by creation and providence itself. Scientific investigation
29 does not yield explicit accounts of the nature of creation, but people construct accounts based on the
30 experienced nature of creation and God's acts of providence. While we also construct accounts and
31 doctrine on the basis of Scripture in a similar fashion, scriptural revelation is fundamentally different
32 from general revelation in that scriptural accounts are explicit by their very nature.

33

34 Scientific endeavor observes creation and providence and then applies human reason to such
35 observations. Scientific endeavor, then, is limited by our ability to observe the targets of our study and
36 is also limited by our ability to reason our way to the nature of things. There are surely many things
37 outside of our ability to observe, including events in the distant past and the future. These limitations,
38 then, restrict how and the degree to which the human mind can grapple with various topics. The
39 degree to which these topics are distant from us in time, space, or scale, will determine the degree to
40 which we are capable of saying anything to any particular topic. There are also many things that are not

1 subject to the simple grasp of human reason. For example, scientific inquiry focuses on, and one might
2 even say, is restricted to generalizable and replicable phenomena. Scientific reasoning deals in
3 abstraction. What this means is that events that do not repeat or are otherwise unique are not
4 capturable with the scientific method. In addition, scientific inquiry is, like all human endeavor,
5 plagued with the effects of sin, marred by our unwillingness to observe with rigor, to admit
6 observations that do not fit with our preconceptions, and warped by our biases toward particular
7 models or conclusions. Science never holds a claim to explicit and inviolable truth, but needs to rely
8 upon persistent, healthy skepticism, as all accounts need to be persistently held to the standards of the
9 observation of creation.

11 *Scientific Authority in Mr. LeFebvre's Writings*

13 Turning to Mr. LeFebvre's writings, we note that interaction with scientific authority, while not driving
14 much of the actual textual content of *The Liturgy of Creation* or "Adam Reigns in Eden", occupies a very
15 prominent position in both works in terms of how the writings are situated in the larger discourse. The
16 summary 12th chapter of *The Liturgy of Creation* is dominated by two themes. The first is the
17 Biblically-oriented point that the creation narrative in Genesis 1 emphasizes God's structuring of time
18 in the establishment of the sabbath. The second is a philosophical and practical concern that
19 Christians need to learn to trust science. On page 211, he argues that Christians need to learn to
20 engage with science regarding issues ranging from origins to vocation to health care using the fallible
21 tools of science. Page 209 contains a litany of areas in which Mr. LeFebvre decries the aversion of many
22 American Christians to various points of scientific doctrine. We also note that several reviewers'
23 statements of disapproval of *The Liturgy of Creation* specifically reference this section of the book. Most
24 of the textual analysis of Genesis 1 in *The Liturgy of Creation* stands without reference to this theme in
25 the 12th chapter. While many may not agree with any or all of the textual analysis in the book, it is
26 clear that the nexus between his analysis and this statement of purpose developed in its 12th chapter is
27 greatly contributing to the conflict over the book.

29 This issue is even more apparent in "Adam Reigns in Eden", where the entire discourse setting of the
30 article, the take-off point for the article, situates the textual analysis of Genesis 2 in the face of
31 statements made with reference to the Human Genome project concerning the minimum size of the
32 human population necessary to account for the information in the human genome. Also later in the
33 article, he explicitly notes that 'the impetus of this study has been the challenge emerging from modern
34 science'.⁴⁴ Thus, while most of the textual work in the article makes very little reference to the question
35 of Adam's biological genesis of the human race (the point of the question taken up above concerning
36 RPT 4.4), a dominating take-home point of the article is to make room for the conclusions of
37 contemporary geneticists. In fact, while there are many very compelling aspects to Mr. LeFebvre's
38 treatment of Genesis 2, especially with situating it in the context of the rest of the book of Genesis, we

⁴⁴ Michael LeFebvre, *Adam Reigns in Eden*, 56.

1 find the weakest parts of the textual analysis specifically surround this point. Not only is the point of
2 the human genome largely irrelevant for the work on Genesis 2, but it also does not particularly
3 strengthen the textual analysis when it does get introduced.
4

5 Concerning explicit statements on the issue of the authority of scripture vis-à-vis scientific inquiry in
6 Mr. LeFebvre's writings, there are a few. On p. 126 of *Liturgy of Creation*, he states "We need to turn
7 elsewhere [than Scripture] to explore the questions raised in the scientific quest." On p. 200 in *Liturgy*
8 *of Creation*, he draws out a historical effect in which the findings of science provide a filter for plausible
9 interpretations for Biblical texts, a position which seems to give scientific investigation a sort of veto
10 over scripture. In this context is a quote from Francis Watson on liberation of Biblical text from
11 captivity to natural sciences. And further, on page 208, he writes, "It is prudent to respect the
12 consensus of the scientific community on natural origins", and on page 219, "We don't need better
13 science from Genesis 1." A sort of emblematic comment on page 209 distinguishes
14 practical/theological purposes as being the guide of Biblical texts and in contradistinction from the
15 scientific features.
16

17 We interacted with him on this point specifically, whether scripture ever has the function of correcting
18 scientific doctrine, or whether they just exist in complementary spheres. In this discussion, Mr.
19 LeFebvre indicated that he is not intending to endorse a position that segregates Biblical and scientific
20 authority, and he noted many ways in which scientific pronouncements have been properly nullified
21 on scriptural authority in the positions of the church, and these include statements he helped craft.⁴⁵
22 Indeed, he consistently notes in the 12th chapter of *The Liturgy of Creation* that scientific authority is not
23 parallel to Biblical authority, in that scientific authority is fallible (e.g., on p. 201 and later in more
24 detail on p. 209). Hence, as he advocates caution in applying Biblical authority to scientific questions,
25 he would be advocating more of a stance of skepticism of claims concerning natural events and models,
26 regardless of the source of such claims. Similarly, on p. 209, he notes '[s]cientific institutions are
27 fallible. There are many reasons to critique the claims of mainstream science ...'. In addition, in your
28 committee's interactions with Mr. LeFebvre, he asserted his agreement with the Chicago declaration as
29 well as agreement with the confessional positions of the church concerning Biblical authority.

⁴⁵ In our discussion with Mr. LeFebvre on the issues of scientific authority, he requested that we consider his work found in *The Gospel and Sexual Orientation* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012) and *Gender as Calling: The Gospel and Gender Identity* (Pittsburgh, PA: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2017). We did survey these materials as part of our work. In page 11 of *The Gospel and Sexual Orientation* we find a commendable balance of respecting the scientific community and the need for skepticism of certain scientific conclusions due to false presuppositions and political motivations within the community. It does seem the current writings under review strike a different tone on the authority of science as it relates to creation. So, it is legitimate to commend some of Mr. LeFebvre's work on this issue while raising concerns about another. It is also noteworthy that both *The Gospel and Sexual Orientation* and *Gender as Calling* treat Genesis 1 and 2 as creation-of-man-narratives that recount the same creation event (see *The Gospel and Sexual Orientation*, 38-40 and *Gender as Calling*, 24-26). In particular, p38 of *The Gospel and Sexual Orientation* has this header on page 38: "1. Genesis 1:27-28, 2:20-25 - The Creation of Man". The point in *Gender as Calling* may be less clear, but page 26 does speak of Genesis 2 as a "Creation account". Mr. LeFebvre has now written against such a view in *Adam Reigns in Eden* (see discussion of this in Section 2 above).

1
2 A common approach to guiding the interaction of scripture and science is to attempt to segregate the
3 topics which are subject to scriptural and scientific authority. However, it is clear that this approach is
4 also not being advocated in Mr. LeFebvre's writings, especially as evident in his bringing up many areas
5 of concern in the science-scripture debate in *The Liturgy of Creation* chapter 12. However, we note that
6 Mr. LeFebvre does tend to slip into a mode that distinguishes scriptural authority as involving matters
7 of practicality (for example on p. 208 of *The Liturgy of Creation* where he notes "the ... right use of the
8 creation narrative for practical guidance ..."), in distinction from scientific authority as involving the
9 "actual". Whether this is intended or not, we note many of our discussions about the textual claims of
10 the book were greatly complicated by the uneasy perception that an actual set of events, which would
11 be the target of scientific inquiry, are being assembled in a fabricated wrapper for practical purposes,
12 and that the actual events are far less relevant for the purposes of the text in getting people to act and
13 think in a particular way.

14
15 There are also several aspects of *The Liturgy of Creation's* 12th chapter which give other cause for
16 unease. The first are various somewhat extravagant claims about evolutionary theory, the most
17 commonly noted which is on p. 202, that "evolution just happens to be one of the most profound
18 scientific insights of the modern world." This statement draws much attention, as species evolution is
19 the crucial point at question in RPT 4.4. It is very unclear exactly what insight is being lauded in *The*
20 *Liturgy of Creation*, but later references to evolution in the paragraph seem to include more than just the
21 observation that biological adaptation is aided by the removal of genotypes which do not fit an
22 environment (Darwin's original observation), but sweeps any and all temporal process explanations
23 into the term. The committee has noted that these sorts of extravagant claims for evolution are
24 endemic in the ubiquitous contemporary apologetics for materialistic naturalism. Also, a number of
25 communications make reference to the further discussion on pp. 210 and 211, in which Mr. LeFebvre
26 decries the stances of Christian communities to many areas of inquiry from psychology to climate
27 science as being due to a 'poisoning of the wells' fallacy created by controversy surrounding Genesis 1.
28 In this section, it appears that he is endorsing some sort of uncritical acceptance of mainstream
29 positions as the default expectation, and divergence from this default must be due to problems on the
30 side of the Christian community.

31
32 In fairness to Mr. LeFebvre's stated concerns about con contrarianism in Chapter 12 of *The Liturgy of*
33 *Creation*, we note further that maintaining healthy skepticism concerning science is not easy to do,
34 which is why individuals engaged in science need to constantly check each other for gullibility and bias.
35 The major issue among those opposed to the standard positions espoused by mouthpieces of the
36 scientific establishment is not excessive skepticism, but *selective* skepticism. A problem with contrarians
37 concerns their willingness to believe statements contrary to popular opinion, simply because they are
38 contrary to popular opinion. The proper position is one that is consistent in weighing what is known
39 regardless of the sources, taking into account what we know about the likelihood of such knowledge

1 being credible, based on our understanding of the limitations to scientific inquiry and likelihood of
2 biases infecting our and others beliefs.

3
4 When we consider the topics surrounding Mr. LeFebvre's writings on creation matters, it becomes
5 fairly easy to see why scientific inquiry is going to be limited and indirect at best. For instance,
6 concerning the size of the community at the time of Adam, the distance in time alone removes any
7 ability to probe the question directly. In addition, methods of reconstruction all assume that current
8 conditions or currently constructible conditions need to have applied at the time, and that no unique
9 events have occurred since that time, and that there are no crucial discontinuities between current and
10 past conditions. These obvious constraints on scientific inquiry need to be recognized.

11
12 The conclusion that this leads to is that Christians need to have the disposition of healthy skepticism
13 with respect to science. Indeed, an important disposition for practicing scientists to learn is just this
14 sort of skepticism. Thus, we find it very unwise to predicate a scriptural analysis, or even to situate a
15 scriptural analysis in the light of scientific pronouncement, as Mr. LeFebvre has done in his
16 construction of "Adam Reigns in Eden". Such a disposition is likely to stir up conflict within the
17 church, as has happened in this case, dragging Biblical interpretation into the same mode of thought as
18 scientific investigation. In addition, situating scriptural analysis in this way is not likely to aid an
19 accurate interpretation of the meaning of scripture. This is all the more likely in areas surrounding the
20 text of Genesis where many prominent members of the scientific community have very strong biases
21 against the philosophy and content of the Genesis narrative.

22
23 The current very unsatisfactory situation is that we believe that in Mr. LeFebvre's writings,
24 pronouncements by scientists are being used to introduce and support doubts concerning the Biblical
25 interpretation that Adam and Eve were the sole progenitors of humanity, setting up the specter of the
26 familiar pattern of persistent retrenchment of Biblical orthodoxy in the face of secular science found
27 throughout the 20th century in various churches.

28
29 To be clear, the position we believe the church should be advocating is that Christians need to
30 recognize the limitations of modern science, and not be swept up into the spirit of the times which sets
31 up scientific experts as oracles of general revelation. Further, we believe it extremely unwise to
32 predicate the interpretation of scripture on the pronouncements of science, and though Mr. LeFebvre
33 properly and eloquently decries the importing of natural science into the scriptural narrative
34 throughout *Liturgy of Creation*, we believe that he has done just this in his discussion of Genesis 2 in
35 "Adam Reigns in Eden".

36 37 **IV. An Evaluation of Mr. LeFebvre's Faithfulness to his Ordination Vows**

38
39 At this point, this paper must turn specifically to Mr. LeFebvre's own questions about his adherence to
40 his ordination vows. To assess his adherence, we will evaluate vows 4, 8, and 9.

41

1 *Ordination Vow 4*⁴⁶

2

3 In many ways, the committee has already made its case concerning Mr. LeFebvre’s continued
4 adherence to the system of doctrine committed to in vow 4. We have argued that an exception to RPT
5 4.4 and the corresponding positions argued by Mr. LeFebvre present extensive problems within
6 themselves. His positions have created a ripple effect of conflict with a plethora of areas within the
7 confessional standards, addressing issues ranging from creation to covenant to anthropology and
8 beyond.

9

10 This doctrinal interrelation tied to these issues has led the Reformed church to long assert that the
11 organic unity of the human race is foundational, or systemic, to the teaching of Scripture. As one
12 example, B.B Warfield (1851-1921) argued this:

13 The question of the unity of the human race ... is of indubitable theological importance ... It is
14 also the postulate of the entire body of the Bible's teaching – of its doctrine of Sin and
15 Redemption alike: so that the whole structure of the Bible's teaching, including all that we
16 know as its doctrine of salvation, rests on it and implicates it.⁴⁷

17 Belief in RPT 4.4, then, is not an anecdotal piece of Reformed theology, the Westminster Standards,
18 or the RPCNA testimony. In other words, the belief of RPT 4.4 finds itself as part of a *system of doctrine*.
19 Denial of RPT 4.4 thus constitutes non-adherence to the system of doctrine.

20

21 Of course, arguments arise here as to how to define our *system of doctrine*. In 20-01, Mr. LeFebvre has
22 presented elements of what seems to be his working approach to issues of defining the system of
23 doctrine. For Mr. LeFebvre, the system of doctrine is best categorized as a list of doctrines noted as
24 *primary*, as opposed to the doctrines that would be *secondary* or *non-systemic*.⁴⁸ This “list approach” would
25 seem to categorize each of the individual statements or paragraphs of the testimony and confession as
26 systemic or non-systemic. Mr. LeFebvre cites Charles Hodge’s work on this issue as representative of

⁴⁶ “Do you believe in and accept the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, as being agreeable to, and founded upon, the Scriptures?”

⁴⁷ B.B. Warfield, “On the Antiquity and Unity of the Human Race” in B.B Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia, PA: P&R Publishing Company, 1968). In the same article, Warfield writes (p261), “It would be [true] to say that the whole doctrinal structure of the Bible account of redemption is founded on its assumption that the race of man is one organic whole, and may be dealt with as such.” Consider as well, the words of Herman Bavinck (*Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, p526) on this point of the familial organic relation of the human race. He writes, “The unity of the human race, as Scripture teaches, is powerfully confirmed ... It is, finally, not a matter of indifference, as is sometimes claimed, but on the contrary of the utmost importance: it is the presupposition of religion and morality. The solidarity of the human race, original sin, the atonement in Christ, the universality of the kingdom of God, the catholicity of the church, and the love of neighbor – these all are grounded in the unity of humankind.”

⁴⁸ See Michael LeFebvre, *Communication 20-01*, 14-16 for this discussion.

1 such a view.⁴⁹ Of course, as Mr. LeFebvre laments, the RPCNA has not delineated such a list, and so,
2 in this paradigm, the list is to be determined or guessed at by each individual office-bearer.

3
4 Our committee offers no objection at this point to identifying some statements as systemic and others
5 as non-systemic. Nonetheless, in this approach, two realities must be maintained.

6
7 First, one must recognize that broader systemic doctrines would come with many necessary particulars.
8 In the cited work of Charles Hodge, Hodge cites summaries of heads of doctrines, largely by working
9 through chapter summaries of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Immediately, this seems different
10 from Mr. LeFebvre's apparent proposed approach of listing out individual testimonial statements as
11 systemic or non-systemic.

12
13 Within broader doctrinal expressions, like the ones Hodge articulates, some particular doctrinal
14 points will be necessary to understand the broader doctrine. As one example of this, consider Hodge's
15 own *Systematic Theology*, in which his entire volume on anthropology begins with an extensive argument
16 against Darwinian thinking and an argument for the necessity of the unity of the human race for a
17 proper anthropology.⁵⁰ There, the particulars prove necessary for the whole.

18
19 Second, one must recognize the interrelation of doctrines with each other within the broader system.
20 The tenor of Mr. LeFebvre's presentation seems to advocate an atomistic approach to the system of
21 doctrine. In an atomistic view, each statement is evaluated "on its own" for its systemic quality. With
22 such a view, tracing the connections of the doctrine to the remainder of the standards would constitute
23 a slippery-slope fallacy. Presumably, in this case as an example, the argument would be that one could
24 simply not affirm RPT 4.4 while holding all the systemic features of doctrine to which RPT 4.4 relates.

25
26 And yet such a view moves against the very nature of a system. The language of *system* inherently speaks
27 to the interrelation of ideas, concepts, or processes. The weight of a doctrine is shown, not by the bare
28 statement of the doctrine, but by the observation of its inherent relation to the unified whole of the
29 church's confession. Some doctrines, it may be discovered, do not speak too significantly to the
30 broader whole. Others, as we find with RPT 4.4, are themselves as one part of an interlocking broader
31 whole involving many related points. Thus, we argue that RPT 4.4 is systemic and that denial of such
32 lands one outside of the system of doctrine.

33
34 At this point Mr. LeFebvre's concern arises that assertions about systemic statements like this just
35 appear at the whim of presbytery.⁵¹ It might even be argued that it is unfair at this point to speak to

⁴⁹ Charles Hodge, "What is the System of Doctrine" in *The Presbyterian Guardian* 2.9 (1936).

<http://www.pcahistory.org/documents/subscription/hodge.html>

⁵⁰ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1946), 3-91.

⁵¹ Michael LeFebvre, *Communication* 20-01, 16.

1 RPT 4.4 as systemic – and to hold Mr. LeFebvre accountable to that – when that assertion has not
2 previously been stated in a formal sense by the presbytery.

3
4 And yet, in this case, such a disagreement reveals an approach to exceptions to doctrine that is at
5 variance with the process outlined within the denomination. It was not at a whim that the 2003 synod
6 adopted this guideline:

7
8 That Synod remind all officers of the church that if they find themselves out of accord with the
9 Confessional Standards of the church, their beliefs and commitments having changed, it is
10 their duty to declare their scruples and differences with the Westminster Confession of Faith,
11 the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, or the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to
12 their Presbytery if a Teaching Elder, or to their Session if a Ruling Elder or Deacon.⁵²

13
14 The guideline adopted here presented the route of announcing differences with the standards of the
15 RPCNA. And while one may disagree with this formation of the process, as the clear recommendation
16 of the synod itself, it is the standard that must be followed.

17
18 And ultimately, this process has now taken place. The exception has been declared to the presbytery,
19 and the reviewing committee has now presented an argument that RPT 4.4 is indeed systemic. Insofar
20 as the presbytery aligns to this viewpoint, Mr. LeFebvre can rightly be seen to no longer be within the
21 bounds of ordination vow 4.

22
23 *Ordination Vow 8*⁵³

24
25 In vow 8, ministers agree to do that which promotes the “purity, peace, unity and progress of the
26 church.” Embedded in this vow would be a commitment to pursuing the truth, and our committee is
27 confident that Mr. LeFebvre has attempted to do that with his writings.

28
29 However, the approach Mr. LeFebvre has taken cannot be regarded as a faithful pursuit of the peace
30 and unity of the church. In the opening page of the preface to his book, Mr. LeFebvre affirms that “the
31 meaning of the creation week continues to be one of the most controversial issues in the church
32 today”⁵⁴. With this statement, the committee completely agrees. As has been noted, in recent years, as
33 one example, the OPC has been embroiled in lengthy, extensive debates over issues quite similar to

⁵² RPCNA Minutes of Synod 2003, page 86.

⁵³ “That you may perform faithfully all the duties of the office to which you have been called, do you engage to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Do you promise, in His strength, to live a holy and exemplary life, to study and promote the purity, peace, unity and progress of the church ... to bring to your congregation the fruits of earnest study of the Word, to maintain a testimony for the Kingdom of God, to endeavor to minister to others and win them to Christ, to watch for souls as one who must give account?”

⁵⁴ Michael LeFebvre, *The Liturgy of Creation*, xiii.

1 these.⁵⁵ Any informed observer would know that the publication of Mr. LeFebvre's materials in the
2 public square would inevitably create significant controversy.

3
4 Of course, controversy itself is not necessarily to be avoided. The promotion of progress in the church
5 will at times create controversy. But the realities surrounding a topic such as creation and the
6 immediate creation of Adam – and the processes already given to the teaching elders of the church⁵⁶ -
7 cannot be avoided when assessing adherence to vow 8 in these writings. This reality is even more the
8 case when portions of the writings speak against the standards of the church.

9
10 With this in mind, a critical assessment is in order when evaluating Mr. LeFebvre's publishing
11 approach. There are processes laid out, such as the communication of scruples, the seeking of counsel
12 in the church courts, or even the seeking of change of our standards through the church courts, that
13 Mr. LeFebvre did not follow that would have enabled a greater pursuit of peace and unity. These
14 processes, combined with Biblical wisdom should also have commended to Mr. LeFebvre a desire to
15 deal with these matters within the courts of the church.

16
17 The courts serve as a means of protection for ordained officers and churches alike. For officers, it
18 provides them a forum to engage their views and ask questions without moving headlong into error
19 without accountability. For churches and their members, it protects them from teaching contrary to
20 the church and Scripture. The process also protects the peace and unity of the local church. It enables
21 them to trust the public ministry of the church's ministers as in accordance with the constitution
22 which they have affirmed as being based upon the Scriptures.⁵⁷

23
24 It is clear, though, that Mr. LeFebvre did not pursue this route of protection and caution. Much of the
25 ensuing controversy, critique, and "cloud of suspicion"⁵⁸ can be pointed directly back to this
26 publication decision and approach of Mr. LeFebvre. While it is possible for onlookers to respond to
27 Mr. LeFebvre's writings in error, the existence of these tensions themselves is not the fault of the
28 onlookers. They are the natural result of decisions from Mr. LeFebvre that have moved against the
29 peace and unity of the church.

30
31 Thus, the committee believes Mr. LeFebvre has not consistently pursued the peace and unity of the
32 church in accord with vow 8.

⁵⁵ For insight into the OPC controversy, consider this "Report of the Committee to Study the Views of Creation":
<https://www.opc.org/GA/creation.html>.

⁵⁶ See above discussion about ordination vow #4.

⁵⁷ See Communicant Membership Vow #4.

⁵⁸ See Michael LeFebvre, *Communication 20-01*, 2.

1 *Ordination Vow 9*⁵⁹

2

3 Finally, Mr. LeFebvre's own work in 20-01 explores his conformity to vow 9, and so the discussion of
4 this vow must be taken up. It has already been argued in this paper that Mr. LeFebvre has written in
5 ways contrary to the standards of the church. That in itself creates an argument that he has engaged in
6 divisive discourses to the doctrine of the church.

7

8 Here we must note the language of "divisive discourses" seems most naturally to apply to discourses
9 that objectively divide from the church's doctrine. Vow 9 refers to divisiveness to "doctrine and order"
10 and not to divisiveness in terms of an angry spirit or a desire to be antagonistic. The most warm and
11 gentle teaching could be found divisive if it divides from the doctrine and order of the church.⁶⁰

12

13 In 20-01, Mr. LeFebvre presents two threads of argumentation as to his not having engaged in divisive
14 discourses in terms of doctrine.⁶¹ We will consider each of these here:

15

16 1. *Mr. LeFebvre points to his not having taught these truths in the life of the congregation.*

17

18 We believe that Mr. LeFebvre has not publicly preached or taught against RPT 4.4 or on all his
19 views on the creation week within the life of the church. That said, when evaluating his
20 writings, it seems disingenuous to assert that his teachings have not come to the local church,
21 whether his congregation or others. His writings on creation and Adam appear on BioLogos,
22 which "*invites the church and the world to see the harmony between science and biblical faith as*
23 *we present an evolutionary understanding of God's creation.*"⁶² In *Liturgy of Creation*, he

⁵⁹ 9. Do you promise subjection in the Lord to the courts of this church, and engage to follow no divisive courses from the doctrine and order which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted; and do you promise to submit to all the brotherly counsel which your brethren may tender you in the Lord?

⁶⁰ The committee recognizes here that Mr. LeFebvre asked about this exact issue in Communication 18-06. There he asks, regarding vow 9: "Is it primarily a matter of intention, so that as long as a minister desires the unity of the church as he preaches contrarian views, is he free from "divisiveness"?" It is not clear if that question reflects Mr. LeFebvre's implied view of vow 9. That said, the desire for unity more accurately falls as a vow 8 issue (see the above discussion of vow 8). Vow 9 seems more specifically to address actual teaching content.

⁶¹ He writes (p17), "On that last point, I have thought long and hard about the prohibition against 'engaging in divisive courses' over any point of exception, and particularly whether publishing on the topic would be inherently divisive. In consultation with my session as well as other ministers in the church, I have concluded that it would be prudent to abstain from any teaching on my recent studies within the congregational context to avoid anything that might be regarded as sowing seeds of divisiveness on these matters within the church (and I have, indeed, abstained from any teaching on these topics within the church). However, the ban against 'engaging in a divisive course' seems to target certain kinds of actions without imposing an absolute gag order. It therefore seemed fitting to me (again, in consultation with my elders and other ministers of the church) to proceed with the publishing of my work as part of my scholarly vocation, without assuming it to be, automatically, a 'divisive course' to do so."

⁶² *Biologos - About Us*, Biologos, 2019, <https://biologos.org/about-us#our-mission>. Emphasis added. It is worth noting that since the March presbytery, Mr. LeFebvre has published on BioLogos a popularized version of some of his arguments in *Adam Reigns in Eden*. <https://biologos.org/articles/first-human-or-first-king-the-introduction-of-adam-in-the-eden-narrative>

1 explicitly speaks to his motivation for writing being out of his role as a pastor, particularly in
 2 view of his calling to Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian.⁶³ The goal of the book, then, is to
 3 write pastorally, with an audience of churches and members of congregations. Further, *Adam*
 4 *Reigns in Eden* is easily accessible online to anyone in the church. In short, the aim and
 5 audience of Mr. LeFebvre's writings have indeed included those within the church, whether
 6 the congregation he pastors or the church at large.

7
 8 And finally, the output of his writings is clear. They have reached the local church. They are
 9 being purchased and read by members of congregations who are now being forced to interact
 10 with these teachings.

11
 12 These teachings may not have appeared in Christ Church Reformed Presbyterian on Sunday
 13 morning. But they are readily available to the members of his congregation, the entire RPCNA,
 14 and the church at large every day of the week. And that availability comes, not from an
 15 accidental discovery of the writings by congregants, but by the intentional efforts of Mr.
 16 LeFebvre in his writings and those of the publishing agencies through which he publishes.

- 17
 18 2. *Mr. LeFebvre argues that this writing proceeds from his scholarly vocation in contrast to his pastoral*
 19 *vocation.*

20
 21 The committee acknowledges this point at one level. Mr. LeFebvre has a capacity for scholarly
 22 pursuits that may not always appear in the immediate life of his local congregation. That being
 23 said, this distinction between pastoral and scholarly vocation seems arbitrary and not
 24 consistent with the natural meaning of our Presbyterian structure. The RPCNA has two
 25 ordained offices: elder and deacon. In the vows a teaching elder takes, "the earnest study of the
 26 Word"⁶⁴ falls under the work of the minister. Earnest study of the Word is not seen as of a
 27 different vocation than pastoral calling, but falls within the calling. Every faithful minister will
 28 engage in various levels of scholarly pursuit, of which various portions of that will appear in the
 29 teaching of the local church or the church at large.

30
 31 Pursuing scholarly work is a fine effort for a pastor. Ministers are permitted to ask questions
 32 about issues found within our standards. They are permitted to develop and promote doctrinal
 33 thinking in areas not contrary to our confession. There are even routes for advocating changes
 34 to the standards within the courts of our church.

35
 36 And yet, when it comes to public writings, whether of a scholarly nature or not, that pursuit
 37 must be done within a Presbyterian context and manner. In the case of vow 9, that means not

⁶³ Michael LeFebvre, *The Liturgy of Creation*, xiii.

⁶⁴ Ordination Vow #8.

1 advancing divisive discourses from the doctrine of the church, even when the discourse finds
2 itself in a scholarly field and not immediately within the pulpit.

3
4 Thus, we conclude that within Mr. LeFebvre's writings, there are evident teachings that run against the
5 vow made in ordination vow #9.

6 7 **V. Summary Answers to the Questions Posed in 20-01**

8
9 The committee seeks to make clear its answers to the questions posed in 20-01. Therefore, before our
10 recommendations, we will offer our concise answer to each question posed in 20-01:

- 11
12 1. *Does this court find that my understanding of RPT 4.3, WCF 4.1, and the titles of Adam in, for*
13 *example, WCF 6.3, are consistent with my ordination vows?*

14
15 In RPT 4.3 and WCF 6.3 and many other places, the committee finds discord between Mr.
16 LeFebvre's positions and many areas in the standards. Thus, we do not find Mr. LeFebvre's
17 views of these areas are being held consistently with the ordination vows.

- 18
19 2. *Does this court find that my exception to RPT 4.4 is being held consistently with my ordination vows?*

20
21 As reflected in the arguments found in sections 2 and 4 of this paper, the committee does not
22 find the exception to RPT 4.4 is being held consistently with the ordination vows.

- 23
24 3. *If this court regards my understanding of any points noted under question 1 (i.e., RPT 4.3; WCF 4.1;*
25 *6.3, etc.) to be inconsistent with the church's standards, are those exceptions nonsystemic and am I*
26 *holding them consistently with my ordination vows?*

27
28 The committee believes that there is an inherent systemic relation between the issues noted in
29 this question. The committee believes that the positions held, on the whole, have moved
30 against the system of doctrine as expressed in the confession and testimony.

31
32 Additionally, the committee believes that the manner in which these positions have been held
33 and taught (see section 4 above) is not consistent with the ordination vows.

34
35 We come to these conclusions with heaviness of heart. For many years, we have gratefully served
36 alongside Mr. LeFebvre in the life of the church and presbytery. In many areas, his preaching, teaching,
37 writing, and service have blessed the church and the committee personally. We would wish for any
38 other conclusion than to articulate that Mr. LeFebvre has now fallen outside the vows of ordination.
39 But in love for Christ, His church, and for Mr. LeFebvre as well, we find it necessary to observe the
40 serious errors in the teachings in review. We come to these conclusions with a longing for the peace of

1 the church and the blessing of the gospel for Mr. LeFebvre, Christ Church RP, and all of Jesus'
2 kingdom.

3
4 **VI. Recommendations**

- 5
6 1. That an exception to RPT 4.4 be found out of accord with the system of doctrine set forth
7 in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, and the *Testimony of*
8 *the Reformed Presbyterian Church*.
- 9 2. That the presbytery counsel Mr. LeFebvre to repent within 90 days of September 11, 2020
10 of the position that this Court has recognized as against the system of doctrine.
- 11 3. That Mr. LeFebvre be admonished for failing in his pursuit of the “purity, peace, unity and
12 progress of the church” (vow 8) in the process he has followed in his teachings and writings
13 on creation and Adam.
- 14 4. That Mr. LeFebvre be admonished for engaging in divisive discourses from the doctrine
15 which the church has solemnly recognized and adopted (vow 9).
- 16 5. That presbytery form a judicial committee to determine a future course of action,
17 depending on the outflow of the 90-day period, and that if Mr. LeFebvre does not repent,
18 the presbytery institute proceedings against Mr. LeFebvre by appointing a special
19 prosecutor to pursue the case & bring charge(s) against Mr. LeFebvre pursuant to the Book
20 of Discipline (2.1.3, E-9 and 2.2.1, E-10). This committee would also be tasked with
21 evaluating Mr. LeFebvre’s response to the admonishment concerning vows 8 and 9.
- 22 6. That during the process of evaluation and judicial analysis, Mr. LeFebvre be directed not to
23 publish written material or speak in public forum (lecture, podcast, etc.) on the issues
24 directly in view of this discussion, namely the origin of Adam and evolutionary approaches
25 to origins.
- 26 7. That the *LeFebvre Writings Study Committee* be dismissed.

27 Respectfully submitted,

28 Ken de Jong

29 Joel Hart (chair)

30 Jon Hughes

31 Wade Mann

32 Steven Work

33
34 Submitted August 28, 2020

35

36

Appendix

Document submitted to Mr. LeFebvre for the April 11, 2020 meeting discussion of the issues related to the committee's work

Listed below are questions for clarification and discussion for Michael LeFebvre from the *LeFebvre Writings Study Committee*. These questions come as a particular attempt to fulfill part 4 of our mandate from Presbytery: *To interact with Dr. LeFebvre for the purpose of understanding and clarification of the relevant points raised in the writings being evaluated.*

These are written with the intent of guiding an in-person discussion with Michael LeFebvre about each of these questions.

Questions are broken down below by topic. Our questions engage the following topics: Scripture, Creation and Anthropology, and the Ordination Queries/System of Doctrine.

On the Doctrine of Scripture

1. In *Liturgy of Creation*, your introduction speaks to intentional alterations of timing of the crucifixion narrative by the apostle John. This reading of John also serves as a sampling of your exegetical approach to many issues in dating within the Old Testament. This may seem to suggest that you are teaching that there are contradictions in the details of Scripture or that the narratives of Scripture do not harmonize.

Could you clarify your view on the harmonization of Scripture and the nature of contradictions in the details of Scripture? How does your view align with RPT 1.13 and WCF 1.5 (on the “consent of all the parts”)?

2. In reference to RPT 1.5: In your thinking and practice, how do we differentiate limitations to the text with respect to viewpoint and idiom, as opposed to violations of the concept of inerrancy? While the works present parts of passages as being encoded in the idiom of the day, it might be equally valid to present these passages as simply being wrong.

3. John 1:45, John 5:46 and Romans 10:5 (and other verses by inference, such as Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29, 31; Luke 20:37; Luke 24:27; Acts 15:21; 2 Corinthians 3:15) say that Moses wrote the books attributed to him as “the Law of Moses”. Recognizing that Moses almost certainly didn’t write Deuteronomy chapter 34 about his own death and burial a question still remains: what portions were written by Moses and how can we know? Or perhaps, if the first few chapters of Genesis were not written by Moses, but by a later author while the Israelites were in the promised land, how do we know which parts were written by Moses?

1 Perhaps clarify your comments here in references in your book to “the original compiler of the
2 Pentateuch” (p82) and the “original compiler” (p119).

3 4. On page 126 of *Liturgy of Creation*, you write, "We need to turn elsewhere [than Scripture] to explore
4 the questions raised in the scientific quest." On page 201 you write, "The Bible is not given ... 'for
5 training in science.'" On page 208, you argue for the removal of the creation narrative from
6 "naturalistic inquiry."

7 Can you clarify how you are defining science/the scientific quest, and naturalistic inquiry? In what way
8 does Scripture speak to the scientific quest and inquiry? What makes science conclusive, and can we
9 ever adopt interpretations of an issue on which scientific consensus speaks otherwise? Perhaps engage
10 with this in view of RPT 1.2 and particularly, RPT 1.3 on the way general revelation is only rightly
11 understood in view of God's Word.

12

On Creation and Anthropology

13 1. You say that you uphold RPT 4.3 because you interpret it to be only rejecting a specific form of
14 evolution (“which assumes that chance happenings are an explanation’ for all matter and life”) and
15 you support that by also saying, “we actually affirm that some processes of evolutionary change do
16 occur ‘within [the] genetic limitations provided [by God] at creation’” (communication 20-01). The
17 Testimony does not refer to those changes as “evolution” and yet you do (by referring to them as
18 “evolutionary processes”). The Testimony’s statement seems to say that change within a species (or even
19 a family) is what the Bible refers to as “according to its kind”. Is your statement analogous to the
20 position of many evolutionists that conflate species-to-species change (“macroevolution”) with change
21 within a species (“microevolution”)?

22 2. Your paper asserts that “*Adam may also have been the first human being and progenitor of the whole human*
23 *race.*” Simultaneously, you note that the creation narrative “*presupposes the presence of other populations*
24 *and that the "author's worldview includes other populations already present".* These assertions seem to directly
25 contradict one another. How do you reconcile these ideas (Adam as potentially being the first human
26 being and the assumption of other populations outside of Adam)?

27 3. In *Adam Reigns in Eden*, you argue for Genesis 1 and 2 being separate narratives. See p44-45: “The
28 origin of all humanity is the burden of a passage in the previous chapter: Genesis 1:26-27. That text
29 reports that God created humankind in the categories of “male and female” by his command. But the
30 Eden narrative tells a different story.” You also acknowledge that your writings produce this question
31 (p55): “*Were populations in “the land of wandering” Homo sapiens, or was the “breath of life” given to Adam a*
32 *distinct mark of the first Homo sapiens within a broader, interbreeding hominid population?*”

33

- 1 What are we to make of these potential *homo sapiens* populations? Were they image-bearers of God with
2 the breath of life, as referenced in Genesis 2:7? How does the existence of these other hominids
3 comport with WCF 4.2 on the timing of the creation of man in His image after creating all other
4 creatures?
- 5 4. In *Adam Reigns in Eden*, you suggest that Adam may not literally have been formed from the dust of
6 the ground and that perhaps instead he descended from other hominids. How do you see your
7 statements aligning with WLC 17? “After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and
8 female; formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground, and the woman of the rib of the man;
9 endued them with living, reasonable, and immortal souls; made them after his own image.”
- 10 5. In RPT introduction, paragraph 3, we assert, “When Adam broke the covenant by disobedience
11 death came upon him and all mankind since they were included in the covenant.” Why would the rest
12 of mankind be cursed if they were not actually descended from Adam? How does your view align with
13 this paragraph?
- 14 6. RPT Intro:3 says, “When Adam broke the covenant by disobedience death came upon him and all
15 mankind since they were included in the covenant. But God delayed the final sentence of death...” We
16 agree that the death threatened by God, “you shall surely die” in Genesis 2:17 includes spiritual death,
17 but the Testimony clearly means that it includes physical death as well (since spiritual death was
18 immediate, but it was physical death that was delayed). The clear implication then of the Testimony is
19 that physical death was part of the penalty of that first sin by Adam and so for there to have been
20 physical death of mankind prior to that is unscriptural. Was there death among mankind prior to that
21 point?
- 22 7. Is human death a good thing or bad? If bad, and it existed for many years, perhaps thousands or
23 millions of years, how do you understand Genesis 1:31 in which God declares all that he had made
24 “very good”? If good, then how do you understand 1 Corinthians 15:26 which says the “the last enemy
25 that will be destroyed is death”?
- 26 8. In *Adam Reigns in Eden* (page 1) you introduce the concept of as many as 10,000 pairs of founders of
27 humankind, and you say, “... the human race embodies remarkable genetic diversity that, according to
28 the operations of genetics, cannot be explained by a single set of parents.” How is that reconciled with
29 the account of the flood where the Bible declares that all human life other than those on the ark was
30 destroyed, that only 8 people were on the ark (Genesis 7:7, 1 Peter 3:20 and 2 Peter 2:5) and goes on
31 to tell us that all modern humans must be descended from the three pairs of humans (Noah’s sons and
32 their wives) that were on the ark?
- 33 9. In communication 20-01, you address questions of the relationship of your writings to the doctrine
34 of original sin. You address WCF 6.3, but you do not speak to WLC 26, which seems to more clearly
35 discuss the genetic connection of mankind to our first parents. WLC reads: “Original sin is conveyed
36 from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in

1 that way are conceived and born in sin.” Could you speak to how your position relates to the statement
2 of WLC 26?

3 **On the Ordination Queries and the System of Doctrine**

4 1. In 20-01, you assert that RPT 4.4 has never been declared to be part of the system of doctrine. But,
5 as you've noted, declaring paragraphs as part of the system of doctrine has not been part of the church's
6 practice. So, the same question could be flipped: on what basis do you determine it not to be part of
7 the system of doctrine?

8 2. In communication 20-01 (page 4), you write, "I do not believe my work contradicts the church's
9 settled doctrine." And yet, in the same communication, you note your exception to RPT 4.4. Do you
10 not believe RPT 4.4 to be the settled doctrine of the RPCNA? Or are you using "church's settled
11 doctrine" in a different sense?

12 3. Could you relate to us the process by which you interacted with other presbyters prior to publishing
13 the three works in question? When did you inform your session of the publications, and how much of
14 the documents did they review prior to submission for publication? Similarly, how and when did you
15 request input concerning these works concerning their controversial nature from elders across the
16 presbytery, and how did you determine who to consult? What counsel did you receive from them along
17 the way?

18 4. Per Ordination vow 8, how do you see your approach functioning to “promote the purity, peace,
19 unity and progress of the church”? How does publishing multiple materials on what you acknowledge
20 “continues to be one of the most controversial issues in the church today” (Lit. of Creation, xii),
21 without submitting them to the presbytery for review, comport with adherence to query #9?

22 5. You identify yourself as an Adjunct Professor of Old Testament at RPTS on your book cover. Did
23 you submit a copy of your manuscript and journal to the Seminary Faculty/Administration for review
24 and counsel before publishing it? What counsel did you receive?

25 6. On 20-01: in your last paragraph, you make a distinction between your pastoral vocation (i.e. your
26 teaching within the church) and your scholarly vocation. In terms of your ordination vows, can you
27 clarify how you ascertain the existence of such a distinction? Since your materials are easily accessible
28 and widely read within the local church/presbytery, it is clear that pursuing scholarly work has and will
29 have profound pastoral implications.

1 September 9, 2020

2

3 Fathers and Brothers of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery,

4

5 We write with appreciation for the work of the LeFebvre Writings Study Committee. These
6 brothers have agreed with Mr. LeFebvre that he is out of accord with Reformed Presbyterian
7 Testimony 4.4. The committee gave helpful analysis to demonstrate this reality, and we are
8 thankful for their commitment to remain within their remit.

9

10 However, we are concerned that their recommendations do not sufficiently consider the whole
11 scope of presbytery's responsibility before hastily moving to serious action that will be essentially
12 irreversible and may produce unintended consequences. We also believe this course will set a
13 poor precedent and could reflect poorly on the church. We understand how a committee can
14 conclude after finding a man out of accord at a significant doctrinal point that the only options
15 are to vote "up or down." But, in this case, we believe there is more work remaining if we are to
16 be found faithful and true in our calling.

17

18 **Motion to Substitute Planned**

19

20 We plan to introduce a motion to substitute and then take up the recommendation below as an
21 alternative way forward. We believe a somewhat more measured approach will result in greater
22 progress, peace, and prosperity in Christ's kingdom. It is important to note that Mr. LeFebvre
23 has had no hand in formulating this idea and is seeing this proposal for the first time along with
24 the rest of presbytery.

25

26 We have several concerns regarding the committee's recommendations, but our greatest
27 concern is this: It seems to us that significantly absent in the whole approach is any attempt to
28 win Mr. LeFebvre to our position on RPT 4.4. In fulfilling their remit, which was to understand
29 Mr. Lefebvre's teaching, the committee members asked questions of him in writing, met with
30 him once to ask questions, and then met a final time to inform him of their direction. Now, they
31 recommend that he simply be given 90 days to repent. But their work was essentially focused on
32 his positions relative to our standards. They did not reason with him personally on the content
33 of his work from Scriptures. We understand that this was not their remit, but it is our remit as a
34 presbytery to do everything we can to win our brother (Matthew 18:15ff). To take judicial action
35 without a deliberate and strategic plan to reason with Mr. LeFebvre would lack the pastoral care
36 we owe our brother.

37

38 **Mr. LeFebvre's History**

39

40 In crafting a plan to win Mr. LeFebvre, we must consider his past performance. He has a track
41 record of seeking the peace and unity of the church in the courts; arguably, his record may
42 outshine every other member of this court in specific application. Consider his efforts serving on
43 the committee to work with Mr. Ray Lanning, and his tedious work on papers regarding difficult
44 matters such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and the manner of collecting tithes and

1 offerings, just to name a few. All of these activities in the courts led to greater peace in the
2 church.

3
4 In the case of Mr. Lanning, Mr. LeFebvre led the way in laboring with the committee through long
5 hours of many meetings seeking to understand Mr. Lanning's views. He wanted to win Mr.
6 Lanning, and the end result was Mr. Lanning's agreement with the denomination. Our presbytery
7 has engaged in no similar, formal efforts to win our brother now. Our energies have been
8 primarily, if not entirely spent understanding whether he is out of accord or not with our
9 confessional documents. We are called to reflect the character of our God, as a presbytery. Our
10 Savior warns us and promises, "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will
11 not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good
12 measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. *For with the
13 measure you use it will be measured back to you*" (Luke 6:37-38). If Mr. LeFebvre has been
14 exemplary in judging and measuring generously and faithfully in cases like that of Mr. Lanning,
15 then it would be a great blight on the church if it did not return the favor. Let us measure Mr.
16 LeFebvre with the same patient generosity he has measured others before our very eyes, making
17 every effort to win this brother. This process will involve discussing and reasoning in personal,
18 brotherly, and intellectual ways over the content of his writings and conclusions. It will also take
19 time.

20
21 Jesus famously tells the parable of the barren fig tree: "A man had a fig tree planted in his
22 vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, "Look,
23 for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why
24 should it use up the ground?" And he answered him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig
25 around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you
26 can cut it down"" (Luke 13:6-9). If Jesus taught to give one year to a fruitless fig tree, how much
27 more are we responsible to give time and attention to a brother who has borne so much fruit in
28 our court in the past. Demanding repentance in a mere ninety days without any counsel and
29 without engaging the substance of his writing with him seems to lack charity.

30
31 We also believe that Mr. LeFebvre is worthy of being given more time and attention. In the past,
32 he has always operated in good faith. He even sought clarity from presbytery on multiple
33 occasions regarding how to understand the meaning and application of "system of doctrine" and
34 how Ordination Vow 9 relates in cases of disagreement. The report of the LeFebvre Writings
35 Committee also notes this in footnote 60. Although he requested clarification from us, the
36 presbytery declined to answer his questions. Perhaps mistakes have been made by him and/or
37 by the presbytery, but Mr. LeFebvre has been quite straightforward in his labor. He has acted in
38 good faith, and we believe the recommendations 3 & 4 are premature. He has proven eager to
39 maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) and we should believe that
40 he will in the time in which we would work with him.

41
42 Some may object that Mr. LeFebvre's exception is too serious and too dangerous to the church.
43 No doubt, Mr. LeFebvre's disagreement with the RP Testimony is significant, and the implications
44 which have not all been explored have varying levels of severity. However, it is also helpful to

1 note the limits of his disagreement with RPT 4.4. For instance, he does not assert that Adam *had*
2 progenitors, he is stating his belief that the Scripture does not address the issue one way or
3 another. Yes, there are serious possible implications, but his objection is not of such a nature that
4 should require such immediate action (90 days) without presbytery reasoning with him. Further,
5 we would not be approving his exception at this time in any way; we would be noting it and
6 declaring our affirmation of RPT 4.4 and our desire to win our brother back to it.

7
8 Further, we have the benefit of knowing that Mr. LeFebvre has a good reputation in his teaching
9 and preaching ministry at a local level without stirring dissension; we believe he can continue to
10 serve profitably as we labor with him.

11 **Winning Our Brother - A Fresh Ecclesiastically Oriented Approach**

12
13
14 We also think that because of Mr. LeFebvre's faithful relationship with us for many years, that
15 his case would be a good one in which to attempt a fresh ecclesiastical approach to overseeing
16 doctrinal discussions as we seek to win our brother. To win him, we will need to leverage the best
17 responses to his work which we expect may come from sources beyond our own presbytery and
18 perhaps beyond our denomination. And yet, we would oversee this work and potentially model
19 a better way forward for robust theological discussion to be had under the oversight of the
20 courts. We must guard the sound doctrine handed to us, and we must do it well (2 Timothy 1:12).
21 The creation debate at hand will go forward here or elsewhere. If we believe in a strong doctrine
22 of the church, we should be more eager to see the debate unfold, in a certain way, under our
23 auspices to the glory of God rather than in a parachurch environment.

24
25 The committee urges that Mr. LeFebvre's thoughts should have been brought to the courts of
26 the church (p. 28). In spite of the circumstances that have led us to this point, it is certainly worth
27 noting that these ideas are now before the court. The court could, of course, decline to consider
28 them, or it could take this opportunity to lead the church forward in thinking clearly about these
29 topics. Since we really are obligated to seek to win our brother and will need to do some work
30 along these lines anyway, why not now take up more of the substance of his work and related
31 topics? For the work to be done well, there will need to be time for give and take in writing among
32 the best scholars we can engage. But, the wider church will see the strength of the church courts
33 in such debate by allowing it to proceed with appropriate guardrails. The fruits of this labor, as
34 we trust the Lord by his word and Spirit could profit the church in far better ways than by farming
35 the work of heavy theological dialogue to parachurch ministries.

36
37 It can be argued that most doctrine through history, while usually resolved in the courts of the
38 church, has unfolded in debates that occurred outside the courts. Today's era of immediate
39 nature of communication and the ubiquitous reach of digital documents is also changing the
40 playing field. In prior generations, theological debate could simmer among universities in the
41 code of the Latin language without disrupting lay members. Only a half-century ago, theologians
42 and churchmen could much more peaceably consider theological development without
43 immediately lighting the world on fire because Twitter still ran on the telegraph.

1 We want to encourage theological exploration in our circles that would foster freedom for the
2 likes of Augustine, Anselm, Luther, or Calvin in the RPCNA. And, we want a model that will protect
3 the church from heresy by testing all things well. We will need a model that will oversee robust
4 theological interaction that bakes slowly. We need a place where give and take is permitted, but
5 monitored well. We need a place where questions may be raised and not fully answered or that
6 are raised and leave fresh questions unanswered immediately, but not irresponsibly.

7
8 Our presbytery seems well united in agreeing with the position of RPT 4.4. We are not in danger
9 of doctrinal drift on this issue, and are, thus, in a strong position to allow time to win our brother.
10 To act hastily will actually give the appearance of undue fear, when rather we should act
11 deliberately with confidence believing the power of our risen Savior, his word, and the Spirit.

12
13 Has the Lord given us a unique opportunity with a man who has shown himself trustworthy in so
14 many ways to attempt a new endeavor as a presbytery in overseeing theological discussion? Is
15 there an opportunity to clearly state to the church our concerns, note that he is out of accord,
16 but that we find him to be serious in his endeavor and willing to engage in robust dialogue? An
17 opportunity to show the watching world that we are serious about being theologically zealous
18 and with a deep care for a man and his positions in such a way that the purity of the church is
19 guarded as best as possible at every turn? We think perhaps so. The work of the LeFebvre
20 Writings Committee is certainly already a significant contribution to such study, but we believe
21 more work is needed and would benefit everyone greatly. Let us labor for truth, so that the
22 church is strengthened and our brother won.

23
24 **Working as Peacefully as Possible Within the RPCNA**

25
26 Before moving to our recommendation, we would simply make another observation about the
27 wider church. The wider church, especially, but not limited to, the RPCNA, is interested in our
28 proceedings. We may feel a need to act decisively against one who takes exception to RPT 4.4
29 and has published contrary to it. But, for the peace and unity of the church, as well as to develop
30 a growing consensus on appropriate boundaries of theological exploration, it may be wisest to
31 take the matter more slowly to be sure we seek God's word and the counsel of many brothers
32 since the implications will be wide ranging. Certainly more time would allow for further
33 discussion of proper procedure to be sure that whatever action is needed ultimately, everything
34 is done decently and in order.

35
36 We pray the Lord would use the model we now propose to win Mr. LeFebvre through healthy,
37 robust theological development in a sensitive area of theology under the oversight of the church.
38 We trust that the Lord will give the greatest aid to the church widely by summoning the best
39 arguments possible for true and faithful positions regarding creation.

1 **Recommendation (one piece):**

2

3 We acknowledge that Mr. LeFebvre is out of accord with RPT 4.4.

4

5 We affirm our confidence in Mr. LeFebvre's pastoral ministry as we give more time to seek
6 diligently to win our brother and to evaluate his progress.

7

8 We seek to win Mr. LeFebvre to the RPCNA's position by appointing a committee of three men
9 to be named by the moderator to work with Mr. LeFebvre over the next three years.

10

11 The committee will seek input from qualified parties from within and without the RPCNA to
12 engage with Mr. LeFebvre's writings. The committee will actively seek contributions from those
13 who support the RPT 4.4 position, but may also receive submissions from those whose opinions
14 differ. Helpful submissions will be made available to RPCNA elders and contributors. This would
15 allow for robust give and take among contributors as questions are raised.

16

17 After three years, the committee will lead presbytery in evaluating what the Lord has done and
18 recommend the best course of action for all of the parties.

19

20 Respectfully Submitted,

21

22 James Faris

23 Richard Holdeman