

INTERDENOMINATIONAL MATTERS AND HERESY

Chair: Andrew R. Sytsma
Reporter: Matthew Borst

Response to Overture 12 (*deferred from 2021*): Declare Denials of Penal Substitutionary Atonement as Heresy and Instruct Classes to Guard the Reformed Confessional Teaching of the Cross, from Classis Illiana

A. *Materials: Overture 12 (Deferred Agenda), pp. 479-88*

B. *Recommendations*

1. That synod declare that it is a serious deviation from the teachings of the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church to in any way deny that Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide a substitutionary work of bearing God's wrath on our behalf because of the just punishment we deserve for our sin.

Grounds:

- a. While we recognize and celebrate the importance and Scriptural backing of various theories of the atonement, we see increasing confusion in the CRCNA about the necessity of the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement, such that its denial by officebearers is being tolerated within our denomination.
 - b. The Scriptures and confessional standards make clear the substitutionary nature of Jesus Christ's work.
 - c. To deny penal substitutionary atonement is to take away from the glory of our Savior.
2. That synod declare that any officebearer who explicitly denies penal substitutionary atonement is worthy of special discipline in accordance with Church Order Article 83.

Grounds:

- a. Church Order Article 83 states, "Special discipline shall be applied to officebearers if they violate the Covenant for Officebearers, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office, or in any way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct."
 - b. Tolerating denials of foundational gospel truth puts the CRCNA in danger of transgressing its own boundaries for what a true church is, which includes the proper exercise of church discipline (Belgic Confession, Art. 29).
3. That synod instruct all classes, councils, and officebearers in the CRCNA that it is our duty to uphold the clear teaching of the Scriptures and confessions on the nature of Christ's substitutionary work.

Grounds:

- a. As Christians, we are called to be people of the truth, with integrity and honor, and failure to defend the faith is to break the Covenant for Officebearers.
 - b. The church must make every effort to correct such a grievous error, that we might not continue to sin in the eyes of God.
 - c. Local councils are accountable to the classis, and the classes are to “ascertain whether the officebearers of the church faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the provisions of the Church Order, and promote the building up of the body of Christ and the extension of God’s kingdom” (Church Order, Art. 42-b).
4. That synod declare this its response to Overture 12.

Jim C. Bolhuis
Patricia L. Borgdorff
Matthew Borst, reporter
John Harold Caicedo
Bradley S. Diekema
George Koopmans
Todd Kuperus
KwangBae Lee
Kurt A. Monroe
Kyle W. Nutma
Marshall R. Pater
Benjamin J. Petroelje
Mary A. Rupke
Soon O. Yi
Andrew R. Sytsma, chair
Jake H. Van Dam
Mark Vandervliet
Steve Vogel
William S. Wilton
Stephen J. Zielinski