

Week Two: Definition



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Knowledge of God

- Ephesians 4:23 “and to be renewed in the spirits of your minds.”
- Romans 12:2 “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

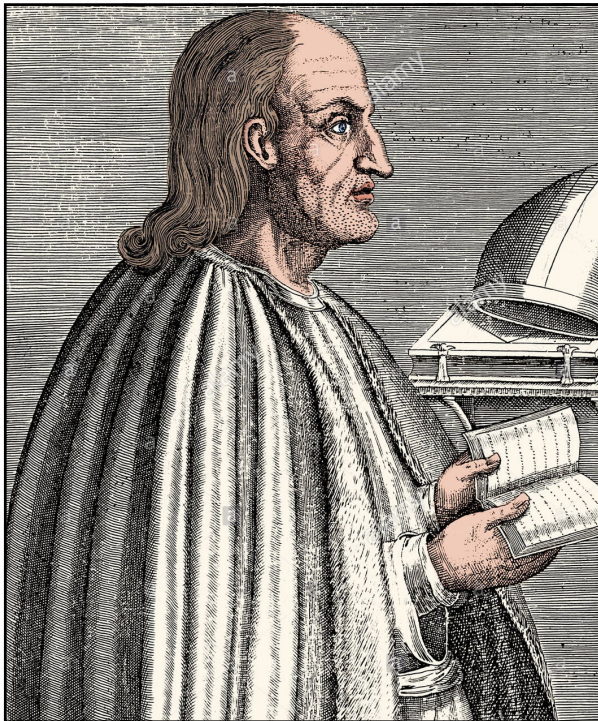
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Knowledge of God

- If I stopped a random ruling elder, at the General Assembly, could they provide me a simple definition of the Trinity?
- I have become increasingly convinced, that knowledge of God is the key towards healthy Christian formation.
- How often do we “get fired” up about acquiring knowledge about topics such as sports, the stock market, politics, music, or other topics we care deeply about?

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Knowledge of God

- Catechism fills our mind with the knowledge of God.
- If we are working through a catechism we learn about the Trinity, God’s plan for salvation, and the doctrine of the church.
- The more we read through our creeds and catechism, the more we learn to “speak God.”

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Jesus and Catechism?

- ▶ All Scripture is God breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). We do not want to say the gospels are more important than the epistles.
- ▶ But, Jesus does give a catechism in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 5:1-48).
- ▶ In Matthew's gospel, Jesus is the new Moses and teacher of Israel. Does that sound like catechism?

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Jesus and Catechism?

- ▶ Learning "The Jesus Catechism" of "loving our neighbor" just doesn't stop with that simple axiom.
- ▶ We learn to love our neighbor through all of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16).
- ▶ God the Father catechizes us in/through the Son by the Spirit.

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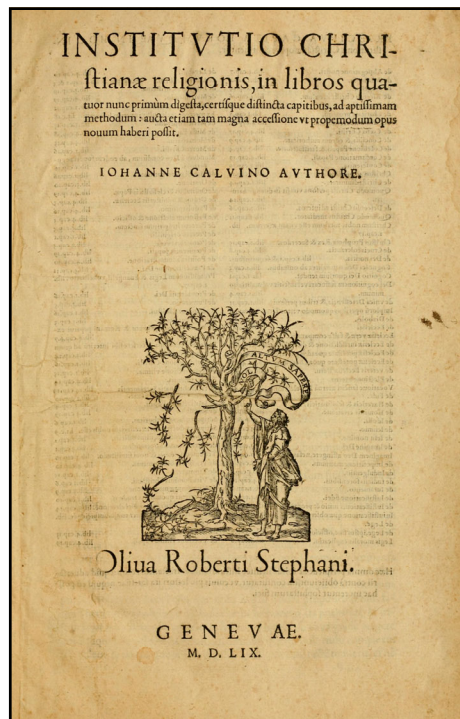


LUTHER'S INTRODUCTION OF THE CATECHISM INTO THE SCHOOLS.

Catechism and Conservative Presbyterians

- Sociologists of religion have demonstrated, through data, that “conservative” Protestants produce more children who are adult believers (Christian Smith).
- What is one of the major boundary markers that distinguishes the PCUSA from the PCA or OPC? The later typically catechized their children.
- The EPC's BOO (taken from the PCA originally) mentions “rearing children in the faith” several times.

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Catechism and Conservative Presbyterians

- “The older model of church growth and planting was inherently organic and covenantal.....it was also zealous about retaining the covenant children” D.G. Hart
- Catechism is cheap!
- Calvin's Institutes was originally a catechism on the Apostle's Creed for children.

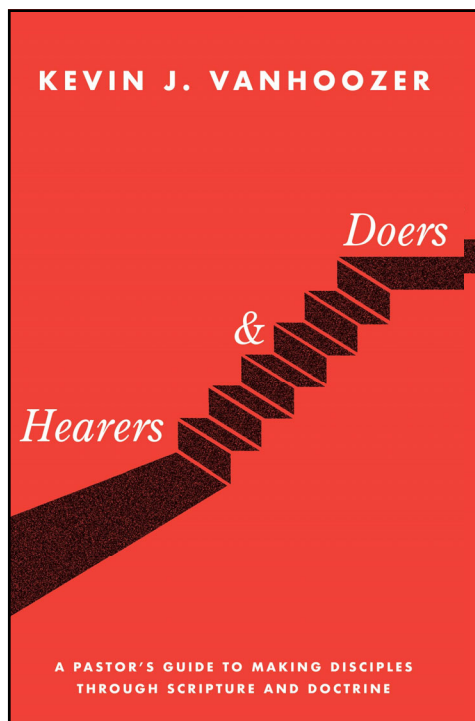
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The Reformed Pastor

- It wasn't long ago that Reformed pastors wrote their own catechisms for their particular congregations.
- I have been attempting to do this through my blog postings recently by offering my commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith.
- I want to start a campaign "make catechism great again"!

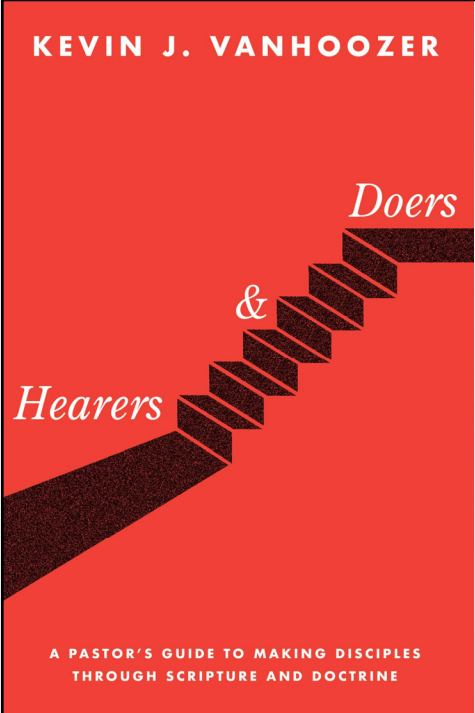
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Hearers and Doers

- Kevin Vanhoozer's book *Hearers and Doers* argues for the importance of learning the faith through catechism.
- If we are being actively catechized every moment of our lives. We need to learn to be catechized through Scripture, creeds, catechisms, and confessions of the church.


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Hearers and Doers

- Vanhoozer argues for the primacy of Scripture. Amen!
- But one gets the sense from reading the book that maybe reading the Westminster Shorter Catechism for devotional purposes might be more helpful than the newest and coolest book.

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Isn't The Bible Enough?

- Those of us who grew up in a fundamentalist or Baptist church would have practiced Bible memorization.
- But is Bible memorization enough? I believe no. We would not have the doctrine of the Trinity without theological language.
- This is exactly why we have Unitarians!

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Isn't the Bible Enough?

- ▶ As Presbyterians, let's reclaim our past and incorporate creeds and catechisms in the life of the church and our Christian formation.
- ▶ Knowledge of God is very very very important!
- ▶ Next week we will talk about Reformed catechesis!