Proof of God

I went in for a burger, but it was my soul that was fed.

HOW DO I KNOW THERE IS A GOD?
Today I was given another reason to be sure.

I was at McDonald’s. Just wanted a snack and a moment to sit down. Shortly after I sat down, in walked an elderly man and his wife. That is, the man walked in. He wheeled his wife, who was lying on some sort of wheelchair/bed device, to a table. This was no powered chair, and the man, who was short, could barely see over the top.

The whole time, he talked to her. He stroked her hair and doted on her, wiped her chin and held her hand. I never saw her move, not even her eyes. Except for one moment when he put some ice cream in her mouth—she may have reacted to that for a second. But he never rushed her. Never looked bored or distracted. He was just there with and for her.

This was love. Such love doesn’t just happen at the whim of an unfeeling universe. There is no logic to it, no profit or personal benefit. Just continuous service and sacrifice. It’s the opposite of successful behavior for survival.

How do I know there is a God? Because I live in a world where our heroes are men and women reaping their own rewards and honor, and we celebrate celebrity for celebrity’s sake. Or perhaps because we are taught that love is an abstract quality—that emotions like love and hate are not part of the physical world; they are just concepts.

But that’s wrong.

We are also taught that humans are driven by survival instincts. That we are motivated by the need to succeed and survive.

But that’s wrong too.

How are we, as Christians or even just as humans, supposed to react to such a momentary glimpse into others’ lives? I’m not entirely sure. But it does call for some sort of reaction. And if the reaction is to be reminded of the nature of love, that’s not a bad thing. But what about love was I reminded of? Three things come to mind.

1. God does not tire of me in my broken state. In my helplessness, God’s grace is sufficient.
2. Love is tangible. It was right there making itself known in the quiet of the scene I witnessed at McDonald’s.
3. God is real. Such love comes from God.

I don’t know if I can love like the man at McDonald’s loves his wife. Such sacrifice and selflessness are goals to reach for. But I am grateful, now and forever, that God can and does love us like that.

I went in for a burger, but it was my soul that was fed.

Marriage as Covenant
Thank you for the solidly biblical article “Marriage as Covenant” (Nov. 2015). “The church must call people to holy living” is something we need to hear and take seriously. I’m reminded of Ephesians 4:22-24 (“. . . put on the new self . . .”) and Leviticus 20:7-8 (“Consecrate yourselves and be holy . . .”).

The Bible is very clear about the meaning and purpose of marriage. Will we submit to the divine authority of Scripture?
—Carmen Reitsma
New Sharon, Iowa

Preaching
Thank you for Scott Hoezee’s fine article (“The Future of Preaching,” Nov. 2015). But there is a significant lack in Hoezee’s analysis. Preaching is vital for the church to be strong. Period. But we forget that when we ordain men and women we say they are “ministers of Word and sacrament.” In reality, they preach each Sunday but give the sacrament of Holy Communion (“the means of grace”) much less often, though most churches are doing better than the four times a year of former times.

In John Calvin’s view, the Word gives context for the sacrament, even as the sacrament gives culminating fulfillment.
It does say, “I believe in God the father . . .; in Jesus Christ . . .; in the Holy Spirit.”

The creed goes on to say “I believe the holy catholic church, the communion of saints. . . .”

The word “in” is left out because we do not have faith “in” the rest of the statements. We believe those statements to be true, but they are not a matter of faith.

Perhaps it would be more correct to say, “I believe that there this is a holy catholic church. . . .”

—Robert W. Lubbers
Spring Lake, Mich.

Lessons of Liberation
The memorable article “Lessons of Liberation” (Nov. 2015) deteriorated into a partisan political diatribe after asking the question “Have we learned anything?” Every issue selected was clearly intended to show that because of [U.S.] President Obama’s actions and policies we haven’t learned anything. President Bush’s questionable actions and policies are conveniently ignored. This partisanship has no place in The Banner.

—Ronald M. Leistra
Tigard, Ore.

Theological Keys
Thanks for your editorial “Doctrine Still Matters” (Oct. 2015). I grew up in a contemporary evangelical church that focused heavily on Scripture but did little formal theological instruction. So I grew up knowing the Bible but wasn’t able to see the big picture or to really make sense of it until I was taught Reformed theology. As you write, I needed those “theological keys to open up the treasures of the Bible.”

Your idea to use the Contemporary Testimony for catechesis is worthy of further consideration. I say that because I used it recently for a pre-Profession of Faith conversation, and the young adult student expressed appreciation for this contemporary expression of our faith.

Thank you for encouraging us to rediscover our common identity as a denomination.

—Leon H. Johnston
Lacombe, Alta.

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In the editorial “Doctrine Still Matters” there is a sentence that troubles us: “But the Bible is not enough.” We see the danger that Reformed theology is used as a template over the Bible: what fits in the theology is accepted; what the theology does not address is disregarded. Theology is human work. The Bible is sacred: God’s unfailing Word, which we are not to add to or take away from (Rev. 22:18-19).

Is not the Holy Spirit able to explain God’s Word?

—Jan and Jacoba Voorbij
Lacombe, Alta.

Correction
We apologize for incorrectly identifying the man on page 24 of the November issue. While the testimony of Luis is accurate, the photo above the caption was used in error. The man in the photo is Eliberto Juarez, who lives in El Salvador.

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