

# *The Standard Bearer*

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## CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Blessedness in Affliction <b>REV. JOHN MARCUS</b>	434
<i>Editorial</i>	Polemics: Fighting Words (3) <b>PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS</b>	437
<i>Commencement Address</i>	The Commission of the Prophet/Preacher (2) <b>PROF. RONALD CAMMENG</b>	439
<i>Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass</i>	Postmillennialism (19) <b>PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA</b>	442
<i>Strength of Youth</i>	BFF <b>REV. GARRY ERIKS</b>	445
<i>O Come Let Us Worship</i>	The Regulative Principle of Worship (2) <b>REV. CORY GRIESS</b>	448
<i>Taking Heed to the Doctrine</i>	Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (1) <b>PROF. RONALD CAMMENG</b>	451
<i>News From Our Churches</i>	Activities <b>MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER</b>	454

# Blessedness in Affliction

Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble

Psalm 41:1

Every believer ought to expect affliction in this world. But, with the affliction, God will also make a way out. Psalm 41 is about affliction as well as God's deliverance.

David begins the Psalm with a reference to him who considers the poor. The poor is someone in a lowly state because of affliction. That affliction might be physical; but it could also be emotional or spiritual.

Although the wicked commit the most horrible treacheries against God's people, we can still count ourselves to be in a blessed situation. In that knowledge, we can meet affliction with great comfort.



Although David was in great affliction, he nevertheless counted himself blessed.

A blessed person is more than just happy; he is in a most desirable state. Scripture talks about the blessed

person as one "whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps. 32:1), who "trusteth in" the LORD (Psalm 34:8), and who is chosen by God and brought near to Him (Ps. 65:4). In short, a blessed person is a child of God saved by grace and who therefore enjoys the benefits of salvation.

Of all the mass of humanity, we who belong to Jesus Christ are in the best situation of all. We of all people have every reason to be truly and lastingly happy, no matter what our circumstances.

Being in that blessed state, a child of God will give evidence of that blessedness by considering the lowly. David says, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor" (v. 1). Those who are blessed give careful and wise consideration to the plight of the poor and afflicted. Not like Job's friends, who immediately concluded that Job must be under God's curse because of some great sin. This applies to all the afflicted who cross our path; but David is especially thinking of the poor as God's people in time of affliction. In David's past, he had shown mercy to the poor and needy in Israel. In this particular Psalm, David refers to affliction that he himself experienced.

But even in that afflicted position, David still saw himself as blessed.

*Rev. Marcus is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

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#### Editorial Office

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra  
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Wyoming, MI 49418  
dykstra@prca.org

#### Business Office

Standard Bearer  
Mr. Timothy Pipe  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137  
PH: 616-457-5970  
FAX: 616-457-5980  
tim@rfpa.org

#### Church News Editor

Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 40th Ave  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
benjwig@juno.com

#### United Kingdom Office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham  
27 Woodside Road  
Ballymena, BT42 4HX  
Northern Ireland  
alisongraham2006@  
hotmail.co.uk

#### Rep. of Ireland Office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown  
Apartment 10, Block D  
Ballycummin Village  
Limerick, Ireland

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Perhaps, in the midst of afflictions, the last thing that crosses our minds is our blessed situation. Our natural tendency is to imagine our troubles as a sign of God's curse. However, since David had already seen the evidence of God's grace working in him to give him a care for the poor and afflicted, he understood he was in a blessed situation.

David gives six reasons why he considered himself to be blessed and why we ought to consider ourselves blessed even in the midst of the most difficult trials.

The first reason is found in verse 1 of the Psalm: "The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble." Deliverance doesn't mean that God always keeps us from experiencing trouble. Nor does it mean that God always removes our trouble as quickly as we would like. Sometimes God decrees that our troubles remain with us until the day we die—remember Paul's thorn in the flesh. But God does deliver us nonetheless. He delivers us by sustaining us and comforting us in the midst of our troubles. He delivers us by working the trouble for our good. And He delivers us by quieting our minds to submit patiently to Him. Truly Jehovah delivers us in time of trouble.

The second reason why we ought to consider ourselves blessed during affliction is found in verse 2: "The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive." Although we may faint and be brought very low, God will never allow us to die spiritually. None can ever snatch us from His hand (cf. John 10:28).

Thirdly, our blessedness rises above our earthly afflictions. "[H]e shall be blessed upon the earth" (Ps. 41:2b). We need not wait until we are in heaven to experience God's blessedness; we experience blessedness "upon the earth," in the midst of this valley of tears. None of our afflictions can hinder or take away our blessedness.

In the fourth place, we ought to consider ourselves blessed because God will not allow our persecutors to drive us from Him: "[T]hou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies" (Ps. 41:2c). Our enemies, including the devil, want us to fall away from God; but

when we slip, God will continue holding us by our right hand so that we never deny Him.

In the fifth place, God will strengthen us to bear whatever trials He sends upon us. "The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing" (Ps. 41:3a).

When the apostle Paul experienced his thorn in the flesh, God told him, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (II Cor. 12:9).

Lastly, we have reason to consider ourselves blessed because God will always mitigate and moderate our afflictions so that we are able to bear them: "[T]hou wilt make all his bed in

his sickness" (Ps. 41:3b). Just as someone tenderly arranges a sick person's bed to make him as comfortable as possible, so God arranges our circumstances so that we are able to bear them (cf. I Cor. 10:13).

This is the blessed situation of every child of God.



However, being in a blessed situation does not mean the wicked will love us. David was certainly blessed, and yet the wicked hated him and committed wicked treachery against him. Such was their malice and hatred that they would stop at nothing to utterly destroy him from the earth.

Although most of us do not experience that kind of treachery, the hatred of the world towards God's people is becoming more and more evident.

David describes the treachery in verses 5-9 of the Psalm. "Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?" (Ps. 41:5). If the wicked knew that they could get away with it, they would annihilate God's people from the face of the planet—just as wicked Haman in Esther's day sought to get rid of the entire Old Testament church by killing the Jewish race.

Apparently David's enemy visited him pretending to be concerned for his welfare. In fact, all he wanted to do was to collect information that he could use to destroy David. "And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together

*We of all people  
have every reason  
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no matter what our circumstances.*

against me: against me do they devise my hurt" (Ps. 41:6-7).

How bad did it get for David? "An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41:8-9). Ahithophel, who had once been David's closest confidant, had lifted up his heel against David, as one might violently kick with his heel when his enemy is down and hurting.

Most of us have never experienced that level of treachery. But Jesus did. Although Judas Iscariot ministered to Jesus and had eaten with Him from the beginning of His ministry, he treacherously betrayed Jesus for a mere thirty pieces of silver. Jesus quotes from Psalm 41 to refer to Judas: "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18). Horrible wickedness!

But is not that precisely what we ourselves did to God as we were in Adam? When Adam and Eve sided with the devil in the Garden, that amounted to lifting up the heel against God. In Adam, we are as guilty as Judas.

Thankfully, God turned the treachery of Judas to our good. Christ was betrayed by His familiar friend, so that we could be received again into God's favor. He suffered at the hands of His own people, so that we could be blessed with all of God's elect.



When we know that, when we know we belong body and soul to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, the treachery of the wicked takes on a completely different light. Friends, children, parents, siblings, and spouses might rise up in treachery against us (cf. Matt. 10:21-22). But even that treachery fits into our blessedness: "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy [i.e., blessed] are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither

be troubled" (I Pet. 3:14). Treachery fits into our blessedness because God always works the treachery of the wicked to our advantage. Always! What solid material to comfort us in the midst of our trials.

Instead of dwelling upon our miseries, as if we had nothing to do except to weep and mourn, we should rather turn ourselves to God and confidently pray for His mercy. David does that: "But thou O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them" (Ps. 41:10a).

David is not praying for strength to carry out personal revenge. Instead, as God's officebearer, David desires to execute justice in God's name. Even so, Jesus Christ, raised up from the dead and ascended into heaven, will execute justice. On the Judgment Day, every injury done to one of God's children is an injury that Christ Himself will avenge.


But our comfort comes especially from the fact that God delights in us. "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me" (Ps. 41:11). We know God favors us because He will

not allow the wicked to triumph over us. They might kill our bodies; but our souls they cannot touch.

Just like David, we ought to know that God is on our side: "And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever" (Ps. 41:12). God holds us up and will never let us go.

In that confidence, David expresses the truth that God is strong to save: "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen" (Ps. 41:13). Jehovah is filled with strength to save and therefore to be praised and adored. As long as the world lasts, from everlasting to everlasting, He will be the God of His people Israel. He will never desert His people.

So certain was David of God's everlasting favor, he declares twice, "Amen, and Amen." It shall surely be; surely! This truth is firm and secure.

No matter what afflictions believers may face, we may always count ourselves blessed! 

*Instead of dwelling  
upon our miseries,  
as if we had nothing to do  
except to weep and mourn,  
we should rather  
turn ourselves to God  
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## Polemics: Fighting Words (3)

Now, the more difficult, but just-as-necessary call to engage in polemics *properly*. As necessary as it is to call the church to do polemics, it is as imperative to remind ourselves to do it in a godly manner. For some, in fact, whose nature and nurture may predispose them to fight, the warning to fight properly is urgent. There is a right way and a wrong way to use fighting words. Showing this will take care and wisdom.

The previous two editorials explained that polemics is necessary. Until Christ returns, the church is the church militant. She heeds the explicit command and plain example of Scripture to fight for truth. She wants to defend the name, the precious name, of God. God's name is revealed in His being and works, and when His being and works are maligned, the church rises to His name's defense. In the second editorial, I showed that an officebearer in a Reformed church that still holds to the Formula of Subscription has no choice. By taking his office he *vows* to defend the truth and oppose error. Members of Reformed churches expect this of their elders and pastors, in

fact demand it of them. In a church world where fighting words are rare and where being always and only nice is the fashion, our churches must be warring churches. Not to fight is fatal. The devil loves ecclesiastical pacifists.

But to fight properly is necessary because the devil also loves what we might call belligerent ecclesiastical "hawks." Warmongers, argumentative Christians, and confrontational church members do the devil's work.

Reformed folk appeal to Calvin. But we must remember that the same Calvin who set the bar for polemics by Reformed Christians as high as he did, also warned about fighting inappropriately, in a way unbecoming soldiers of Christ. The Calvin who said, "It is...not enough to teach faithfully what God commands, except we also contend.... We have a contest with the devil, with the world, and with all the wicked,"<sup>1</sup> also said, "Often the immoderate heat of the pastors...does no less hurt than their sluggishness," and "We may learn to moderate our desire, even in the best causes, lest it pass measure and be too fervent,"<sup>2</sup> and even cautioned that "We are much more courageous and ready

for fighting than for bearing the cross,"<sup>3</sup> a caution this writer always needs to hear. And the same Christ who called His enemies "vipers," and whose servants called some "dogs," also said "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all...," and "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." Of course, circumstances matter. Audiences matter. And motives matter. But this is exactly why wisdom and prayerful discretion are required for Christ's soldiers. "Onward," yes, but properly.

When? Why? How? All important questions that will guide Christ's warriors in the important battle for God's name.

When I speak of a proper and improper manner, the controlling word is "spiritually." And by "spiritual" I mean not only "not by physical means," as though the great danger for us is that we try to battle error with the sword or the fist; although that is a danger. But not even Luther, gritty warrior that he was, made that mistake, and the story of his throwing an ink-well at the devil is likely just that, a nice story. Luther fought the devil with ink, indeed, but the ink that flowed out of his pen. Though Luther may

*Previous article in this series: July 2012, p. 413.*

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, III: 334, 335.

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary upon... Acts*, II: 85, 89.

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on the Gospels*, III: 243



have been influenced by some medieval superstitions, he fought against evil *spiritually*. By “spiritually” I mean “according to the word of God,” which Word is the outstanding work of Christ’s *Spirit*.

Here is a list and explanation of what I judge to be several unspiritual ways to do battle against error. These improper ways of fighting have plenty of overlap, and any number of them are likely found in every battle that displeases God. The list is also not intended to be exhaustive, but illustrates the kinds of evils we must caution ourselves against.

### 1. The contentious spirit

Some men always are itching for a fight. These are quarrelsome spirits in the church. Like the schoolyard bully, they are not happy unless they are fighting. The Dutch have a proverb that translates something like this: “The one who wants to hit a dog can easily find a stick.” Some church members always seem to be eager to whack a dog.

That kind of man leaves the impression that he knows nothing of the life of peace within the walls of the city, and would be happy if the entire life of the church were lived on the bulwarks. If you tell him this, he probably would complain loudly. But his life evidences otherwise. He appears to know nothing of sweet fellowship among the people of God. Reflecting with humility on the peace that passes all understanding does not seem to be in his range of experience.

Scripture calls him to “seek peace and pursue it,” to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”

His response, of course, will be that the caution not to be quarrelsome misses the point, and may even incline the weaker saints to lay down their arms, probably allow some Trojan Horse of error to enter the church, or expose the Bride of Christ to other suitors. To which the wise pastor will say, patiently, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.... There is a time of war and a time of peace.” Blessed are the times, few though they may be, when we may quote Solomon: “the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence [occurrence].”

### 2. Fighting against without fighting for...

Closely related to the previous is the error of forgetting that we battle against the lie in order to *preserve truth*. Jude calls the church to “contend *for* the faith.” This does require doing violence against all other “violence that exalts itself against God” (see Lord’s Day 48). But every violent act against the enemies of God must be coupled with reminders: we have a precious *truth* we are defending, a truth that sets us free, without which truth we would perish everlastingly, the precious truth of the covenant-love of my Father for me—undeserving sinner—by the cross of Christ alone through faith alone by grace alone. And, correspondingly, we are defending a God-honoring *life* of gratitude we must offer to Him.

This is a good reminder to all pastors in their pulpit polemics and to

all writers who wield a pen or keyboard. Let us all commit to making plain which particular, vital truth is being denied by the error we are assaulting. How is God dishonored by this error? What comfort is lost by that one? What way of holiness is being threatened? Whether that’s the ancient error of Arianism, the Reformation heresy of semi-Pelagianism, the more recent lie of Pentecostalism, or the current evil of the Federal Vision, the people of God must know what aspect of the Christian faith and life is going to fall by the error.

Calvin offered this reminder when he said, “We must...see to it that the pulling down of error is followed by the building up of faith.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps better to my point: The pulling down of error is for the *protection* of the faith.

### 3. Contending with errors that do not threaten

This may be a convenient way to ignore other dangers that a man does not want to confront. It may be evidence that a man is ignorant of the most important issues that threaten his church or denomination. It may reveal a tendency to “play to the choir” because the choir will praise him. There may be other reasons. But when we do polemics, we must see what danger most threatens at the time. We will not contend with one error while a dozen others are more serious or more urgent threats.

C.S. Lewis put it well when he suggested one way by which devils

<sup>4</sup> *Commentary on the books to the Thessalonians*: 339.

ruin Christians: “The game is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers when there is a flood....” Israel did not amass their soldiers on their southern border when Syria threatened from the north, or in their northern regions when Egypt came to fight. Certainly, the people of God must beware of all threats that can harm the church. But, again, wisdom is required to know where to exert one’s energies.

When serious lack of wisdom is manifested, it may be time to hear Proverbs 26: “He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.”

#### 4. Failure to distinguish

Space runs short, so I list but do not explain, some of these mistakes: of failing to differentiate between incorrigible enemies and erring friends; between those who may be called “vipers,” and others who “oppose,” with whom we work patiently


and in meekness, “if peradventure God will grant repentance unto the acknowledgment of the truth,” so that they may be freed from the devil’s snare (II Tim. 2:25, 26). We must not fail to distinguish between fatal errors and lesser errors, between essentials and non-essentials, between confessional matters and differences of interpretation, between matters that must be contended hotly and others best left for friendly discussion.

As to different kinds of issues, in Calvin’s day the church at Geneva used common bread for the Lord’s Supper, which in Calvin’s judgment was proper. When Calvin was absent for a time, the churches in Lausanne and Berne convinced Geneva to use unleavened bread. When Calvin returned he did not dispute the matter because he considered it a non-essential.

As to different kinds of people, Luther advised: “...you may be harsh in dealing with the liars, the hardened tyrants, and be bold to do

things contrary to their teachings and their works.... But the simple people, whom they have bound with the ropes of their teachings and whose lives they have endangered, you must treat altogether differently.... You see, you must treat dogs and swine differently from the way you treat men, and wolves and lions differently from the way you treat the weak sheep.”<sup>5</sup>

A faithful polemicist in the church will know his opponent, will understand fully the error he is assaulting, will love the truth he is protecting, because he has truly experienced the friendship of the God whose cause he represents. We will pray for wisdom and a right heart to contend—neither shrinking from battle nor lacking in wisdom.

There is more to say, about the reasons we may err in polemics, about the results of improper fighting, and about how to respond to such. That, God willing, next time—September 1. 

<sup>5</sup> *What Luther Says*: 1056

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

PROF. RONALD CAMMENG

## The Commission of the Prophet/Preacher (2)

# Commissioned to Speak

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*Commencement exercises of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary were held on June 19, 2012 at First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. The text of Prof. Cammenga’s address on that occasion concludes here.*

*Previous article in this series: July 2012, p. 427.*

**I**t is God who commissions the prophet/preacher. God knows him, God sanctifies him, and God ordains him (Jer. 1:5). God commissions the prophet/preacher to *speak*. This is the great calling that God gives to the prophet/preacher.

This is plain from Jeremiah 1. All the emphasis in the passage is on the prophet’s calling to *speak*. Jeremiah’s

objection when God first called him had been, “I cannot *speake*” (v. 6). According to verse 7, God sends Jeremiah to speak: “...and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt *speake*.” The action of the Lord in verse 9 concerns Jeremiah’s speaking: “Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.” And that’s verse 17: “Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and *speake* unto them all that I command thee.”

The Lord does not commission the prophet/preacher to entertain. He does not commission him to run the social programs of the church. He does not commission him to be a good human-relations man. He does not call him to head up the many special programs that are designed for all the different age groups in the church. He does not commission him to be the CEO of a church that is structured after a business model.

But the Lord commissions the prophet/preacher to *speake*. He must proclaim. He must preach. He must declare. He must teach, warn, and exhort.

What the prophet/preacher must speak, the Lord makes plain in His commission of Jeremiah. He may not speak just any word. It is not left up to the prophet/preacher what word he will speak. He may not bring his own word. Neither is it the decision of the church what word he will speak. Rather, the prophet is sent by God to speak the Word of God. That is verse 7: “the word that I command thee thou shalt speak.” In verse 9 the Lord touches the prophet’s mouth and says, “Behold, I have put *my words* in thy mouth.” And in verse 17 He says, “...and speak unto them all that I command thee.”

Jeremiah is commissioned to speak the Word of the Lord. This is the Word of the Lord, not only because it is a Word that comes *from* the Lord, a word having its source in the Lord, true as that is. But this is chiefly the Word of the Lord because it is a Word *about* the Lord, a Word that has the Lord God as its content. It is the Word that He is the Lord, the only Lord God, and that the idols whom the children of Judah have been serving are no lords. It is the Word that because He is the only Lord God, Judah must worship Him and Him alone. It is the Word that He is the Lord who graciously and with a stretched-out arm brought His people out of the bondage, misery, and death of Egypt.

In New Testament terms, it is the Word concerning the Lord Jesus Christ who by His cross and death has delivered His elect people from the bondage, misery, and death of their sin and the guilt of their sin. It is the Word that the Lord has made them to be members of the covenant of His grace. It is the Word that out of love and gratitude Judah is to keep His commandments and live thankful and holy lives, not as conditions unto the covenant but as their part *in* the covenant. It is the Word that sets before God’s people the hope of Canaan, which is in reality the hope of heaven and everlasting life—the covenant perfected.

At the same time, the Word that the prophet/preacher is called to bring is the Word of warning and judgment against all who go on impenitent in their sins—all in Judah, that is, the church, who profane and despise God’s covenant. They will be judged by God, both in this life and in the life to come. That, too, belongs to the Word of the Lord, as verse 16 makes abundantly plain: “And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.”

Since God’s Word is set down in the Holy Scriptures, the calling of God’s prophet/preacher today is the calling to preach the Holy Scriptures. He must bring these Scriptures as the Word of the Lord, from beginning to end the very Word of the Lord. As the Word of the Lord, these Scriptures are the rule of faith and of life, both for the individual believer and for the church. Here is defined the task of the preacher: the exposition of the Word of the Lord. All of your training the past five years, brother Ibe, has focused on this great calling. All of your training has equipped you to exegete and proclaim these Scriptures. This is the one great calling that God gives you in your ministry in the Philippines. Don’t let anything distract you from this calling. Expend yourself in this calling.

### The Prophet’s Effectiveness

Commissioned by the Lord, called to bring the Word of the Lord, the prophet/preacher has the assurance from God that that Word will be effective.

That the prophet’s word would be effective is the point of the two visions that the prophet is given in the



chapter. The first of those two visions is the vision of a branch from an almond tree. “Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.” The almond tree was the first tree to bud in the spring. The budding of the almond tree was the sure word of God in nature (creation) that spring was coming, and that the earth would soon be renewed again. Just so would the prophet’s word be the Word of God, and so certainly would that Word come to pass. “Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it” (v. 12).

The second vision is of a seething, that is, boiling, pot. “And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north” (v. 13). Jeremiah sees a large pot boiling on account of the heat of the fire beneath it. He sees a wind from the north fanning the flame under the pot, causing it to boil over. So certainly would God bring to pass the warning of His prophet concerning Judah’s judgment at the hand of Babylon. “Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah” (vv. 14, 15).

The Word of the Lord out of the mouth of His prophet shall surely come to pass. This is also the assurance that God gives the prophet in verse 10: “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.” The prophet’s word would be a powerful, effective word. The people may disregard the prophet/preacher; many do. The people may become upset and angry with the prophet/preacher; many do. The people may reject the prophet/preacher, oppose him, and persecute him; many do. This has always been the experience of the faithful servants of the Lord. This was Jeremiah’s experience as well. This will, undoubtedly, be your experience, brother Ibe. Sooner or later, you will experience the opposition and rejection that every faithful prophet/preacher experiences.

Nevertheless, the word of the prophet/preacher is effective. That word cannot be successfully resisted or silenced, as Judah found out. There is one explanation for that: the word of the faithful prophet/preacher is the Word of the Lord, the almighty, the efficacious Word of the Lord. That is verse 9: “Behold, I have put *my* words in thy mouth.” God is pleased to speak His Word through the mouth of those whom He commissions to be His spokesmen. This underscores the calling of the preacher, that he must proclaim God’s Word, only and ever God’s Word. And this underscores the calling of God’s people, that they must receive God’s servants who proclaim His Word faithfully.


The effectiveness of the Word of the prophet will show itself in two ways. According to verse 10, there will be a twofold effect of the Word brought by the prophet/preacher: “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.”

The first result of the Word brought by the prophet/preacher is negative: “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down.” This is not simply the result of the proclamation of the Word. But this is the very purpose of God in commissioning the prophet/preacher. Contrary to the teaching of the well-meant offer of the gospel, God’s will in the preaching of the gospel is not a positive will in the case of all who hear the Word. He does not love and desire the salvation of everyone who hears the Word. Neither does He express His love for all and desire to save all in an offer of salvation to all who hear the Word. Rather, God’s purpose with the preaching of the gospel includes rooting out, pulling down, destroying, and throwing down. This is God’s will: “See, *I have this day set thee...* to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down.” God touches the mouth of His servant and puts His Word into His servant’s mouth, and uses that Word in such a way that by it some who hear are rooted out, pulled down, destroyed, and thrown down. To use the language of the apostle Paul in the New Testament: “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” (II Cor. 2:15, 16).

But there is also a positive purpose of God in the

bringing of the prophetic Word. God accomplished that positive purpose in the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah. And God accomplishes that positive purpose in the preaching of the Word by the faithful preacher of the gospel today. This is truly amazing! God uses the preaching of the gospel as a means of grace and salvation. In the words of Jeremiah 1:10, God uses the Word “to build, and to plant.” That God should use the word of a mere man, a sinful man at that, in order to

save His elect people out of the nations, that He should be pleased to use His sermons in order “to build, and to plant,” that is truly an amazing thing. How humbling that truth is, that God should use and be pleased to use our preaching to gather and build up His church. How thankful to God we should be that He is pleased to use our preaching as a means of grace and salvation.

He does it so that all the glory for salvation may be His and His alone. 

THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMAS

## Chapter Four

### Postmillennialism (19)

# The Reformed (Amillennial) Critique of Postmillennialism (cont.)

**A**s is true of all doctrinal error, postmillennialism stems from culpable misunderstanding, or deliberate corruption, of Holy Scripture.

#### The “Millennial Glories” of Old Testament Prophecy

The basic exegetical error of postmillennialism is its interpretation of Old Testament prophecy concerning the coming Messianic kingdom. Postmillennialism gets its doctrine of a future “golden age” from Old Testament prophecy of the glories of the coming Messianic kingdom. With its prominent, consistent teaching of abounding lawlessness, appalling apostasy, and great tribulation in the days leading up to the return of Christ, the New Testament does not lend itself to postmillennial optimism. Indeed, postmillennialism dismisses the confession of this New Testament teach-

ing as “pessimism.” Postmillennialism sits in the Old Testament, especially in the Old Testament prophecies of the coming kingdom of Messiah.

But postmillennialism explains Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom of Christ in such a way that the New Testament realization is physical rather than spiritual, earthly rather than heavenly.

Deliberately, I refrain from describing postmillennialism’s erroneous exegesis as a “literal” interpretation. Much as postmillennialists boast of their literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy (as do also the dispensationalists), they do not, in fact, interpret Old Testament prophecy literally. They cannot.

For example, the prophecy of Isaiah 2:4 concerning peace in the coming Messianic kingdom, a favorite passage of postmillennialism, has the nations beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks. No postmillennialist interprets this prophecy literally. Were the great, military nations of the world, now armed to the teeth, one day to live in peace, under the reign of the saints, they would not beat literal swords

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*Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

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into literal plowshares. They would scrap tanks, jets, nuclear carriers, and missiles and concentrate on agriculture, industry, and trade. American generals would not stand by forges transforming swords into plows.

Or, to refer to another prophecy that is dear to the hearts of postmillennialists, Isaiah 65:17-25 cannot be interpreted literally even by the most ardently literalistic postmillennialist. Postmillennialism does not think that the millennial kingdom will be a re-created “Jerusalem” (Is. 65:17). The citizens of the kingdom will not be “[Jerusalem’s] people,” that is, Jews (Is. 65:18). It will not literally be the case that all weeping and crying will cease during the “golden age” (Is. 65:19). Penitent sinners and new-born babies will still cry during the millennium. Postmillennialists do not even hold that God will “create” new heavens and a new earth to be the site of the millennial kingdom, as Isaiah 65:17 promises. He will make some significant changes in the earthly creation, according to the postmillennialists, but He will not create it anew.

Even the postmillennialists are forced to acknowledge that the Old Testament prophecies use symbolic language, which must not, and cannot, be interpreted literally.

### Earthly Fulfillment

But the error of postmillennialism—the *grievous* exegetical error of postmillennialism—is that it interprets the figurative language of Old Testament prophecy, specifically concerning the coming Messianic kingdom, in such a way as to make the fulfillment earthly, physical, sensual, carnal.

The prophecy of Isaiah 2 concerning the peace of the Messianic kingdom is explained by postmillennialism as earthly peace. During the millennium, the Republic of Ireland will co-exist peacefully with Northern Ireland. The Arab states will smile on the United States. The various tribes in Africa will no longer exterminate one another in murderous hatred, but live together harmoniously.

The long life foretold in Isaiah 65 is interpreted as referring to greatly extended physical life on earth for all the citizens living during the millennium, at least for all the saints. All the godly will live hundreds of years before they die. Likewise, the related prophecy con-

cerning houses and vineyards is explained of physical security and material prosperity.

Some postmillennialists, more consistent than their fellows, do not hesitate to explain the prophecy of wolves feeding with lambs and of lions eating straw like cattle as fulfilled in a millennial change of the physical nature of animals.

### Spiritual Fulfillment

This interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, particularly prophecy of the Messianic kingdom in the new dispensation, is utterly mistaken. It is a deviation from classic Christian exegesis of Old Testament prophecy. It is certainly contrary to established Reformed principles of the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy.

Commenting on the very passage that is of extraordinary importance for postmillennialism, Isaiah 65:17-25, John Calvin wrote:

Now the Prophets hold out those things which relate to the present life, and borrow metaphors from them; but it is in order that they may teach us to rise higher and to embrace eternal and blessed life. We must not fix our whole attention on these transitory blessings, but must make use of them as ladders, that, being raised to heaven, we may enjoy eternal and immortal blessings.<sup>1</sup>

Herman Bavinck expressed the Reformed principle of the right understanding and interpretation of Old Testament prophecy.

This kingdom [of Messiah] is sketched by the prophets in hues and colors, under figures and forms, which have all been derived from the historical circumstances in which they lived.... But into those sensuous earthly forms prophecy puts everlasting content.... Prophecy pictures for us but one single image of the future. And this image is either to be taken literally as it presents itself—but then one breaks with Christianity and lapses back into Judaism—or this image calls for a very different interpretation than that attempted by chiliasm [millennialism].<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 401.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4: *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, tr. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 654, 658.

This “very different,” and correct, interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, Bavinck continued, is a “spiritual” interpretation:

The New Testament itself—and there can certainly be no doubt about this—is the spiritual and therefore complete and authentic fulfillment of the Old Testament. The spiritualization of the Old Testament, rightly understood, is not an invention of Christian theology [much less of Reformed amillennialists—DJE] but has its beginning in the New Testament itself.<sup>3</sup>

Postmillennialism is guilty of the egregious error of forcing the New Testament reality of the kingdom of Christ into the mold of the typical, earthly, sensuous language of the Old Testament. Reformed, Christian exegesis, in contrast, understands Old Testament prophecy in the light of the New Testament. The New Testament reveals that the reality—the fulfillment—of Old Testament prophecy, particularly concerning the Messianic kingdom, is spiritual.

The new temple of Ezekiel 40-48 is not a pile of bricks, however splendid, reared up one day on a hill in Palestine. It is far, far better. It is the resurrection body of Jesus Christ and His church, made up in the New Testament largely of Gentile believers and their children (John 2:19-22; I Pet. 2:1-10).

Amos 9:11-15 did not foretell the restoration of a dilapidated building. Neither did it prophesy the restoration of an earthly rule of the royal house of David, resulting in a carnal kingdom of racial, national Jews and in their fertile fields and healthy vineyards. Rather, the prophet was foretelling that the gospel of Jesus Christ would go out to all nations, so that elect Gentiles would be translated into the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Acts 15:13-18). In this spiritual kingdom of Christ, the Gentiles would enjoy the riches of spiritual salvation. This began at Pentecost.

In symbolic language, familiar and expressive to the spiritually immature saints of that time, Old Testament prophecy promised the coming, spiritual reality of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. It looked ahead to the coming of the kingdom as one. The New Testament distinguishes this one coming of the kingdom as two-

fold: the beginning of the coming in New Testament history by the gospel, and the perfection of the coming by the wonder of the return of Christ in the body.

The prophecy of Isaiah 2:4 concerning peace among the nations is fulfilled today in the communion of saints, who are from all nations. Gentile believers live in peace with Jewish believers in the church by virtue of their mutual reconciliation with God through the blood of the cross. They also live in peace with each other, Germans with Dutch and whites with blacks. “He [Jesus Christ] is our peace, who hath made both one... and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh” (Eph. 2:11-22). This spiritual harmony *is* the reality of the beating of swords into plowshares. Meanwhile, the world of ungodly nations is convulsed with physical war. And toward the end of history, the united world of the ungodly will make war on the saints in the great tribulation.

This present, spiritual reality of peace, Christ will perfect at His coming. By the wonder of the resurrection of the elect from all nations into sinless life and by the banishing of the reprobate ungodly into outer darkness, Christ will so establish peace among all the nations in the new world that there is not, and never again will be, so much as a ripple of discord. Perfect holiness makes perfect peace.

### The Prophecy of Isaiah 65

Isaiah 65:17-25 promises a new creation in the day of Christ, that is, the wonder of His re-creation of the present world. This is the authoritative interpretation of Isaiah 65 by the New Testament. In the “day of the Lord,” when the “heavens shall pass away with a great noise and...the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,” there will be “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Reformed amillennialists, with Peter and the apostolic church, hope for this day and for this new creation (II Pet. 3:10-13; see also Rev. 21:1).

Then, and not before then, there will be no death in the creation, or sorrow, as Isaiah 65 prophesies in highly figurative language. All the inhabitants of the new world will live forever. It will be a world of security, joy, satisfaction, and prosperity. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 660.



death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Cursed sinners, on the other hand, will die forever, outside the new creation.


Because Christ will have liberated the new creation from the curse, also the non-rational creatures—the animals—will share in the blessing of the perfected kingdom of Christ, as once they shared in the blessedness of the kingdom of Adam (compare Isaiah 65:25 and Gen. 1:30). All the creatures will share in the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).

There is already, in New Testament history, a beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 65. This beginning does not await a “golden age” still in the future. It was a reality in the time of the apostles. It is a reality today. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17).

The fulfillment of Isaiah 65 is the spiritual life in Christ by faith of every regenerated child of God in the time between Pentecost and the second coming of Christ. The new world that is coming in the day of Christ already breaks into the present world by the gospel in the power of the Spirit of Christ. It breaks into the heart of every elect child of God. It makes him a new creature—a heavenly man on the earth, a spiritual human in a physical universe. To him and for him, all things have already become new.

There is already in his life a beginning, not only of deliverance from sin, but also of transcendence above earthly life. He lives the life of heaven (Eph. 1:13, 14; Heid. Cat., Q&A 51). Not only does he not sorrow as those who have no hope, but he now also rejoices with unquenchable joy. He rejoices always in Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:4). Already now, his work is not in vain, but useful and profitable, for his work is in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, from whom it will have its reward (I Cor. 15:58). Indeed, already now he is very really delivered from death. There is no elect, covenant infant whose life is cut short, though it dies at birth. Nor is there an old saint who has not filled his days. Whoever lives and believes in Jesus Christ shall never die (John 11:26).

Enjoyment, by faith, of the beginning of the Messianic kingdom and hope for the perfection of the kingdom at Christ’s coming—this is the New Testament application of the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom.

Of earthly, sensuous, carnal pleasures, peace, and prosperity in a future millennium, the New Testament knows nothing.<sup>4</sup> 

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed critical examination of postmillennialism’s explanation of “those glorious prospects in Old Testament prophecy,” especially Isaiah 65, and a more thorough Reformed, amillennial interpretation of Isaiah 65 regarding “a spiritual fulfillment,” see David J. Engelsma, *Christ’s Spiritual Kingdom: A Defense of Reformed Amillennialism* (Redlands, CA: The Reformed Witness, 2001), 90-115.

## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

## REV. GARRY ERIKS

### BFF\*

Friendship is a good gift from God. God wired us for friendship. In the beginning God said it is not good for man to be alone. While this relates directly to the creation of Eve and the beauty

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*Rev. Eriks is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

*\* Parents and grandparents, if you do not know what BFF stands for, ask your young people.*

of marriage, it also says that man was created with a need for friendship. We were not created to live in isolation. God has a purpose for friendship—that we grow in knowledge, faith, godliness, and holiness. Do you have a good, godly friend? Are you part of a group of friends who love the Lord? If you are, give thanks to God and continue to grow in these friendships. If you are not, I encourage you to seek for and develop such relationships.

To answer the questions above we need to know what good, godly friendship is. Just like all other biblical truth, a biblical understanding of friendship is under attack. One of the dangers that threatens our understanding of friendship is Facebook “friends.” Before you stop reading because I appear to be another Facebook-bashing adult who does not know anything about it because I do not use it, please keep reading (it is true that I do not have a Facebook account, but not because I believe Facebook is evil). The danger of Facebook is that we allow it to redefine and devalue friendship. Many who are simply acquaintances are called “friends” on Facebook. On Facebook, quantity of friends (how many do you have?) could be seen as better than closeness and quality of friendships. Friendship can become very self-centered, as a person may write about self while showing little genuine concern for others. These wrong perspectives of friendship do not originate with Facebook. We all fight them, whether or not we are on Facebook. But Facebook provides a place where these wrong ideas of friendship are promoted. I am not telling you all to cancel your Facebook accounts, but I want you to be aware of the danger that we view friendship differently because of social media websites. Instead, may our starting point for understanding good friendships be the Scriptures and not social media.

The starting point of a Christian understanding of friendship is God’s covenant, because being a Christian is being in a relationship of friendship with God. Friendship with God in Jesus Christ is the essence of God’s covenant. Friendship also describes our relationship with Christ Jesus, because He calls us His friends in John 15:14. Because we together are the friend-servants of the living God, we must develop Christian friendships with each other. What does this friendship look like?

Scripture gives a beautiful example of friendship in the relationship of David and Jonathan. A lasting, God-honoring friendship developed between them. Before this friendship developed, you can imagine that Jonathan felt very alone because of the sin and ungodliness in the home of his father, Saul. Jonathan was a young man who loved and trusted in the Lord, which is evident from the time he fought against the Philistines with only his armor-bearer. Assured that God would deliver them, the two of them launched an attack upon

a Philistine unit that resulted in twenty dead Philistines (I Sam. 14).

Jonathan must have felt very alone until David called out to the giant, Goliath, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.... This day the Lord will deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee.... And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands” (I Sam. 17:45-47). Assured that God would give him the victory, David slung a stone that nailed Goliath between the eyes. You know the rest of the story.

Can you imagine the joy in Jonathan’s soul when he heard David say these words to the Philistine giant? In David, Jonathan found a friend—another whose heart was in tune with his. This is what we read in the next chapter: “the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (18:1). The idea here is that the soul of Jonathan bound itself to the soul of David. This describes the beginning of a beautiful friendship between Jonathan and David. From this relationship we learn that true friendship includes the following elements: *spiritual oneness*, *love*, *loyalty*, and *encouragement*.

True friendship develops where there is *spiritual oneness*. Jonathan and David viewed life from the same divine perspective. They both believed the sovereignty of God—He is the God who does what He pleases. He is a God to be trusted. They believed that Jehovah God saved them by grace alone. They desired to live their lives for His glory. When Jonathan saw this same perspective in David, his soul clung to David’s. They were both young men who loved the Lord.

This is the way it works with deep, lasting friendships. Friends do not think alike on everything. Often it is the opposite. They do not like the same foods, teams, or hobbies. But good Christian friends share the same truth of God, worldview, and approach to life. This is why a Christian’s trying to be friends with the world does not work. This is why Christian friendship is so much better than anything that exists between unbelievers. True friendship is based on a supernatural oneness of the soul. This oneness is something God creates by His Spirit within our hearts. True friends

know the same God, assent to the same authority, walk the same way spiritually, long for the same things, and desire to worship and glorify God in all of life. If you have such a friendship, you have a treasure of greatest value. This is the kind of friendship you should seek. When you understand this about friendship, so many more possibilities for friends can be found at school, at a convention, and in your local congregation. I can remember being part of a small congregation when I was in high school. There were very few in the church who were my age. But I had many friends to talk to after church, and some of them were 70 years old.

Spiritual oneness will lead to *love*, which is what the next phrase in I Samuel 18:1 says: “And Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” This is an amazing statement. This love did not develop in a month or in a year or even in a day, but in a moment. Jonathan was thrilled to find someone who loved the Lord and viewed life like he did. He loved David and David loved him. What an encouragement to those who want such a friendship but feel very alone. Watch for those who love the Lord and seek friendship with them.

Notice how Jonathan expressed this love to David in I Samuel 18:3, 4—“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of his robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.” Remember that Jonathan was a prince and David was a lowly shepherd. But Jonathan stands humbly in his undergarment while the shepherd boy wears the prince’s robe and weapons. Jonathan’s gesture placed David side-by-side with him. Jonathan honored his friend and esteemed him better than himself (Phil. 2:3).

We see in Jonathan’s humble, selfless act, the true love of friendship. Friendship is not about what I get out of it or what others can do for me to make me feel good. The deepest friendships have a common desire to make the other person royalty. A true friend works for and rejoices in the elevation and achievements of the other. Love in friendship has no desire to manipulate or control. There is no jealousy or exclusiveness in friendship, wanting only that person to oneself. Love desires the best for the other. This love in friendship is the selfless love of Jesus Christ Himself. This is the love

He has shown to us, making us His friends by dying on the cross.

As their friendship grew, Jonathan maintained a fierce *loyalty* to David. This was remarkable because as long as David lived Jonathan could not be king. Saul, Jonathan’s father, reminded him of this (I Sam. 20:31). Yet, Jonathan spoke well of David. On one occasion, Jonathan even persuaded his father to take an oath not to harm David (an oath that Saul did not keep).


Are you loyal to your friends? Many friendships do not last because of what one “friend” says about another “friend” to someone else. This report gets back to the “friend” and it hurts. In other friendships, loyalty is mistaken to mean that one friend will not rebuke another for sin. In other cases, loyalty is mistaken as preserving secrets of sinful behavior. Loyalty in friendship means speaking well of your friend and not forsaking when your friend walks in sin, but helping your friend overcome that sin without joining in sin.

Friends *encourage* each other. When David was disheartened, hurting, and discouraged, Jonathan went to David to encourage him. We read in I Samuel 23:16, “And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.” What a friend Jonathan was, for “a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17). The encouragement Jonathan gave was more than “everything will be okay.” Jonathan pointed David to God—he “strengthened his hand in God.” Jonathan brought the truth of God to David and prayed with him. They were comfortable talking about God, the truth of His word, and what it meant for their lives.

This is the good encouragement that friends give to each other. When your friend is going through a hard time, do you think about what God wants you to say at that moment? Do you think about what truth of God will help your friend? God sends adversity for us to grow in faith and godliness. Good friends remind each other of this truth. Because true friends see things from the same godly perspective, they remind each other of that perspective. When your friend wants to turn to shopping, drugs, or alcohol for comfort, a good friend says, “Let’s pray to God for help.” When have you last prayed with your friend or for your friends?

David and Jonathan’s friendship shows us what a

deep, lasting friendship can and ought to be. It reveals the beauties of a friendship grounded in God and His Word. Instead of using “BFF” (how can you have more than one anyway?), as those who know true friendship

in God’s covenant we could use “GFF”—Godly Friends Forever. May we not settle for what we have in our friendships, but may they ever rise higher to be what God calls them to be in His Word. 

O COME LET US WORSHIP

REV. CORY GRIESS

## The Regulative Principle of Worship (2)

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

Jeremiah 7:31

What doth God require in the second commandment?

Answer. That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.

Heidelberg Catechism Question 96.

### Introduction

We have been engaged in a study of three great principles of public worship. The first of those principles is that public worship is a covenantal assembly gathered to meet with God. The second principle is that God carries out that covenantal meeting as a dialogue between Himself and His people. And last time we began an exposition of the third principle, that God is the one who determines what happens at this assembly. He has us gathered into His presence, and He is the one who tells us how to interact with Him. He is the sovereign God also of worship. This principle is called the regulative principle of worship. We explained that principle and proved it from the Old Testament, especially from the passage quoted above from Jeremiah chapter 7. Now let’s turn our attention briefly to some New Testament

proof for the principle itself and then apply the principle to public corporate worship.

### The Regulative Principle in the New Testament

The regulative principle stands as God moves His people into the New Testament. Though many things about worship change from the Old Testament to the New Testament, this principle stays. Why would this fundamental principle fall away? “What does God desire in worship?” remains the question of worship in the New Testament as well. Only now it is, “God, what dost Thou desire in this New Testament era, where types and shadows have fallen away?”

The principle is specifically re-stated in the New Testament. When the Pharisees were pressing their own desires on the people with respect to their life and worship of God, Jesus responded this way in Mark 7:7: “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” The Pharisees’ desires were imposed upon the people as though they were God’s, and God’s desires were brushed aside. This led to vain worship. What is needed is the commandments of God, not men, whether those commandments of men are old or new.

In Colossians 2:23 the apostle Paul calls worship according to the hearts of men, “will-worship.” There the apostle really teaches us that the issue is not whether or not you will have a regulative principle. Everyone has a regulative principle. The question is, will worship be regulated by the will of man or by the will of God? Will it be man’s will worship, or God’s will worship? That is the question.

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*Rev. Griess is pastor of the Calvary Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.*

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## The Application of the Regulative Principle (Elements and Circumstances)

God answers this question in the New Testament by saying to us in His Word, “There are specific elements I require in worship, and I require them to be carried out in the worship of my name.” We see God telling us this in the explicit *commands* regarding worship and in the *example* of the New Testament church. Through commands and examples in the New Testament, God tells us what the *elements* of worship are for the New Testament church.

There is a difference between elements and circumstances. The elements of worship are the actual things we do. They are the *what* of worship: singing, praying, reading Scripture, etc. The circumstances are what attend those elements. They are the *how* of worship: tunes of songs, length of prayers, place and time of meeting, etc. They are not the things we do, but how we do them.

In the New Testament God tells us what the elements of worship are. The regulative principle governs only the elements of worship. God leaves the circumstances to His people’s judgment, governed nonetheless by His church’s understanding of who He is as the Holy and Majestic God.

You see this distinction between elements and circumstances going back to the command given to Moses to build the tabernacle. God gave specific commands for what to build and how to use the tabernacle. But He did not give specific commands for every last detail. He gave Moses dimensions and told him what type of material to use, but did not tell him which trees to cut down, or from where to get his gold. This is the difference between elements and circumstances. God specifically ordained elements, and circumstances are not prescribed. There is no liberty regarding elements. There is some regarding circumstances.

### Elements

What are these elements of New Testament worship? The worship of the church as recorded in the New Testament Scriptures, and as recorded in history up until the corruptions of Rome, was basically the worship of the Jewish synagogue modified by the truth of the coming of Jesus Christ. The elements in this worship were

the reading and preaching of Scripture, prayer, singing, and the giving of alms. The New Testament church continued to use these elements in worship, giving us an example of what God desires in our worship in the entire New Testament age. We see this in Acts 2:42 where Luke records the worshiping life of the New Testament church: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Praying is an element of worship commanded by God. It is commanded not only in Acts 2:42, but also in I Timothy 2, where the apostle gives Timothy commands for the church. I Timothy 2:1: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”

The reading and exposition of Scripture is an element commanded by God. Acts 2:42 and the various commands to Timothy to preach the Word and to labor in the Word and doctrine prove this (II Tim. 4:2; I Tim. 5:17).

Singing was also part of the synagogue and early church worship, and is commanded in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19.

The sacraments as instituted by Christ were added to worship. Acts 2:42 makes that plain when it speaks of “breaking of bread,” a reference to the Lord’s Supper.

Finally, the giving of alms is a commanded element of New Testament worship. We see this in I Corinthians 16:1-2, where the apostle Paul commanded that the Corinthian church collect alms for the Jerusalem church, and that it do so specifically on the Lord’s Day.

These are the biblically mandated elements that God desires in New Testament worship of His name. And therefore, they are the ones the Heidelberg Catechism tells us to use in Lord’s Day 38 (explaining the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment.). There the catechism says that it is my duty on the Lord’s Day to frequent the house of God, “to hear His Word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord [song and prayer<sup>1</sup>], and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian.”

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<sup>1</sup> I will argue in a future series, the Lord willing, that reciting the Apostles’ Creed in public worship is part of the biblical element of prayer and therefore is justifiably part of Reformed worship.

## Circumstances

There are also circumstances. As I said, their job is to facilitate the carrying out of the elements. God does not regulate these things *specifically* in His Word. That's not to say they are not regulated. They are just not regulated specifically. God does govern the circumstances of worship, and He does so in two ways. First, the circumstances are governed in a general way by the other principles of worship we already discussed—reverence, simplicity, etc. Second, they are governed by the fact that these circumstances are not elements, and must not become elements in worship.

Tunes of songs are not mandated by the Word of God. There is liberty here. But that does not mean there are not principles that affect what type of tunes ought to be used. The circumstances must be subject to the other principles of worship. Therefore, tunes must be reverent and simple, and they must not take attention away from the Word being sung, which is the power of the element. The tunes must not become a separate element in themselves, they are to be in the background and attend the element.

Musical accompaniment is a circumstance. It facilitates the element of singing. There is liberty here. But yet this circumstance too is subject to the principles of God's Word. Musical accompaniment must submit itself to the other principles of worship. It must be reverent, simple, and must not distract from the Word, which is the power. And it must not become an element of worship in itself. Musical accompaniment is there for the carrying out of the element; it is not the thing itself. Entertainment-driven worship often makes the musical accompaniment an element of worship, whether that is the intent or not. It is not there simply to facilitate the singing; it is there to be something wholly on its own. The element itself, where the Word is, is the spiritual power of worship. The circumstances are never to point to themselves; they must point to the elements and magnify the elements. As soon as they point to themselves, they are no longer circumstances, but elements. In this way, there is liberty, yet God governs the circumstance of musical accompaniment.

We must apply the principles to the circumstances. We must recognize that there are perhaps other ways of applying these principles that are not exactly the way "we do it." We must also recognize that there are many

ways churches worship that are in direct contradiction to God's Word and are not the desire of His heart. We must judge wisely and with biblical discernment.

## Analyzing Worship

Based on what has gone before, when we analyze worship according to elements and circumstances, I submit we must ask at least these four questions.

First, what elements are in this worship? The elements are commanded by God and may not be added to or taken away from worship. They are the express desire of His heart.

Second, are the circumstances (especially music) becoming elements themselves?

Third, are the elements being carried out in submission to the other principles of worship—with reverence, with simplicity, recognizing the character of the God we are worshipping?

Fourth, is there a distraction from the Word in the elements, or is the Word truly the center and power, not only of the sermon, but of the service in every respect? There may be other questions, but I believe these four arise naturally out of a biblical discussion of the regulative principle of worship.


## Conclusion

Worship is a means by which we reflect God back to Himself. Our understanding of God will therefore shape the way we worship. Theology not only leads to doxology, it shapes doxology. Therefore when we stop asking the question, "God, what dost Thou desire in the public worship of Thy name?" it is generally because we have the deeper spiritual problem of not caring deeply about God Himself and the truths concerning Him. In other words, it is when we have no regard for truth, that we have no regard for God, and worship decays into an expression of our idolatry.

This is the way it was for Israel in Jeremiah's day. In Jeremiah 7:28 (a number of verses *before* verse 31, where God appeals to the regulative principle to chastise His people), God says that "truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth." The Israelites did not care about the Word of God and discovering who God really is. This led them to twist God into something they saw in the pagan gods around them. For this desecra-

tion of God's character, and therefore of the worship of His name, there was the chilling judgment recorded in Jeremiah 7:29: "the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath," and the calling to "take up a lamentation for a people who had forsaken their God." This is the reaction of God to false worship also today, and you see this judgment in that God has forsaken many parts of Western Christianity.

But for those who by grace seek to answer the ques-

tion, "What is the desire of God's heart," in their worship, and to carry out their worship according to His commandment, there is a peace and a true joy. The husband who brings home to the wife he loves a gift she truly enjoys is joyful that he has made her happy. So too those all over this planet who bring worship according to God's Word have the confidence and the joy of knowing that they have offered worship that He has commanded and that He desired from His heart. 

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (1)

## *Deus Dixit!* God Has Spoken!

**D***eus dixit!* The words are Latin. For centuries, Latin was the language of theology. The English translation is: God has spoken! That God has spoken means that God has revealed Himself. By speaking, God has made Himself known. Words, whether spoken or written, reveal. Words are the means by which we communicate our thoughts, purposes, feelings, desires—our inner self. So it is with God.

God has *revealed* Himself! This is the possibility of the knowledge of God. That a man knows God and, knowing God, knows also himself and all other things is due to the fact that God has spoken. Apart from God's revelation—if God does not speak—there is no knowledge of God. There *cannot* be any knowledge of God. Man is shut off from God in ignorance and spiritual blindness. It all depends on *Deus dixit!*

There are several erroneous positions regarding the possibility of the knowledge of God.

*Agnosticism.* Agnosticism is the belief that God *cannot* be known at all.

*Skepticism.* Skepticism is the belief that God cannot *truly* be known, that we cannot be sure that our knowledge of God is accurate.

*Rationalism.* Rationalism is the belief that God can be known *by the mind of man*, unaided human reason.

*Mysticism.* Mysticism is the belief that God can be known *immediately* and *directly*.

Over against all these erroneous views stands the teaching of Scripture: *Deus dixit!* God has spoken!

Because God has spoken, God *can* be known by every man. Because God has spoken, God *must* be known by every man. And because God has spoken, God *is* in fact known by every man. Man may stop his ears at the speech of God. He may turn away from God's word. He may attempt to shout down the voice of God. No matter. *God* has spoken! And no man can alter that fact.

God has spoken loudly. God has spoken clearly. And God has spoken authoritatively.

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*Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

## The Necessity and Nature of Revelation

We know God *only* through His own revelation. Apart from revelation there is no possibility of the knowledge of God. Apart from revelation God remains essentially unknowable. This is the necessity, the absolute necessity, of revelation.

By his own efforts, man can never arrive at a knowledge of God. “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?” (Job 11:7, 8). The questions are rhetorical questions. The answers are implied and obvious. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” Of course not! Impossible! Our own searching can never result in the true knowledge of God. “Canst thou find out the Almighty so as to know Him aright, know Him perfectly?” And, again, the answer is the same: Of course not! Impossible! God is God. He is high as the heavens, deeper than hell. No man can discover God or by his own efforts attain the knowledge of God.

In order for us, therefore, to know God, God must make Himself known to us. In revelation, God takes the initiative, as He does in all His works. God is first, always first. God reveals Himself, and in response to God’s revelation of Himself, we know God. All our knowledge of God, as well as our knowledge of the truth of all things in their relationship to God, depends on God’s revelation.

Revelation is simply God’s work of making Himself known to man, making Himself known to man in such a way that man is able to receive that revelation of God. Herman Hoeksema defines revelation in connection with his treatment of God’s incomprehensibility in the first locus of Theology. He says that “... revelation consists in that God speaks concerning himself and imparts his knowledge in a form the creature can receive, in a creaturely measure.”<sup>1</sup> He goes on to describe revelation as a supreme act of divine condescension.

In revelation God comes down to us; he does not lift us up to his infinite majesty. He gives his word a finite form; he does not communicate to our hearing an infinite capacity. While on the plane of revelation, he

<sup>1</sup> Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2004) second edition, 1:60.

reaches out for us and speaks to us in language adapted to our capacity; yet at the same time and through that same medium of revelation, he deeply impresses upon our minds and hearts that he is always greater than his revelation, that while he is revealed, he is still hid, and while he is known, he is still the incomprehensible.<sup>2</sup>

Through revelation we know God. In revelation, God stoops to make Himself known to His creature man. By means of revelation we know God *truly* and *accurately*, that is, we know God as He actually is, and not mistakenly. Through revelation we know God *adequately*, that is, sufficient both for our worship of God and for our own salvation.

Yet, through revelation we do not and we cannot know God *exhaustively*. He still remains God and we ever remain the creature. Even after He reveals Himself, an infinite chasm remains between us. An eternity spent in knowing God will never exhaust the knowledge of God. The apostle Paul exclaims in Romans 11:33, 34, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?”

## Revelation and the Covenant

That God reveals Himself rests on the truth that God is the covenant God. Everything depends on the truth of the covenant, including the truth of revelation. God reveals Himself, desires to reveal Himself, and delights in making Himself known because God is the covenant God. Not only is the truth of the covenant at the heart of God’s revelation, and not only does it form the glorious content of revelation, but the truth that God is the covenant God lies at the *basis* of revelation itself.

The question is: Why? Why has God spoken? Why has God chosen to reveal Himself, when He was under no compulsion to do so? He is the self-sufficient God, in need of no one and nothing, eternally self-satisfied. Why, then, does He deign to speak to man? Why even bother to make Himself known? It’s not as if He needed to speak to someone. He enjoys perfect

<sup>2</sup> Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:60.



communion within Himself, in the relationships within the blessed Trinity.

Why has God spoken? The altogether amazing answer is that God has spoken because it is His desire to make us *His friends*. Because God is the covenant God, and because it is His desire to take us up into His own covenant life, God has spoken. *Deus dixit!*

This is what friends do: they speak to each other. We even say that about friends who are angry with each other, whose friendship has been strained or even broken: “They’re not speaking to each other.” A terrible tragedy! The blessed reality of friendship is that friends speak to each other and delight in each other’s company so that they can speak to each other.

God made man capable of being His friend, capable of receiving His revelation. He made man different from all the other creatures. He made him different from the inanimate creatures, the rocks, and trees, and heavenly bodies. That is the reason on account of which it is so foolish for man to make of these inanimate creatures his gods. “They have mouths, *but they speak not!*” (Ps. 115:5; Is. 46:7; Jer. 10:5; Hab. 2:18). They cannot speak; they are dumb (non-speaking) images.

God made man different even from the animals—dogs, and cows, and monkeys. Even though, in a way, you can make an animal your friend, it cannot be the kind of friend that a person can be, a friend who talks with you, a friend who shares his thoughts and secrets with you, a friend with whom to commune. By contrast, God made man a rational, moral creature, a creature capable of standing in a conscious relationship to God. He made man capable of receiving and understanding His speech. And He made man capable of responding to His speech, capable of speaking to God and with God. Thus, He made man capable of standing in a relationship of friendship with Himself.

To a degree, man experiences this in his own covenant relationships. Parents and children, as covenant friends, speak to each other in the life of their family, revealing to each other their thoughts and desires. Husbands and wives, as covenant friends in their marriage, delight in each other’s company and in time spent talking with each other. And brothers and sisters in the church, as covenant friends in the body of Christ, enjoy

one another’s company and conversation in the bond of the communion of the saints. This is the way it is with friends—they speak to each other. And so it is in our relationship with God.

### God’s Revelation to His Friends

That God made man as His covenant friend in order to enjoy His fellowship is plain from what we read in the opening chapters of the Bible. In Genesis 3:8 we are informed that God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden in the cool of the day. God came to His friends, walked with His friends, and spoke to His friends. We read the same thing about Abraham. More than once, God appeared to Abraham and spoke to him, confirming His covenant and revealing His secret will. For this reason, Abraham is called “the friend of God” in the Bible, as for example in II Chronicles 20:7: “Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever.” And again, in Isaiah 41:8, we read: “But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.” Alluding to these passages, James says, “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”

With a view to friendship, the friendship of His covenant, God has revealed Himself. *Deus dixit!* God has spoken! Friendship—this is God’s purpose in revelation, loving friendship. His purpose is to establish a bond of friendship with us to whom He reveals Himself, a bond in which He is friend to us and we are friends to Him. Loving friendship is not self-seeking or self-serving, but has as its aim simply being friend to the other to whom we show ourselves friendly. Friends find their highest joy in giving themselves to each other as friends. This is the great purpose of God in revealing Himself and speaking to us.

This is the way we make friends. The only way to make friends with someone is to speak to him. If you never speak to him, there is no possibility that you will ever become his friend. Friendship without conversation is impossible. You must speak to him, and hopefully he will respond by speaking to you. This is the meaning of the proverb that “a man that hath friends


must shew himself friendly” (Prov. 18:24). In the way of speaking to each other, you become friends, stay friends, and deepen your friendship.

Friendship requires that friends speak to each other *face to face*. In the end, nothing less than this satisfies true friends. Friendship can never be fully enjoyed at a distance, as long as the friends are separated from each other. Seeing each other’s faces *while speaking*—this is the height of friendship. Reading a letter from one’s friend, let us say one’s fiancé who was across the ocean fighting on the battlefields of Europe during World War II, was gratifying. At least you heard from him and knew that he was alive. Still more gratifying it was to hear his voice over the telephone once he had returned state-side: “I’m coming home! I love you! I can’t wait to be with you!” But then finally to see him again face-to-face, to look into the face of one’s dearly beloved as he spoke—that was friendship fulfilled.

That is the way it will be one day for the people of God, according to the promise of God’s Word. That will be the day when we will not only hear our Lord’s voice, but will also stand in His presence and see His glorious face. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God,

and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2). Revelation 22:4 promises that we “shall see his face.” “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (I Cor. 13:12).

Revelation is, strictly speaking, then, a covenant concept. God reveals Himself. But God reveals Himself as the covenant God, and always with a view to His covenant. In the end, He reveals Himself only to His covenant people, in order to be known by them. Also the truth of revelation is controlled by the covenant of grace and by election. That is the teaching of the psalmist in Psalm 25:14: “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them [lit., ‘will cause them to know’] his covenant.” That is revelation. God making His secrets known and causing men to know His covenant—to know Himself as the covenant God.

God reveals Himself to man in two ways, or better, God’s revelation is twofold: general revelation and special revelation. That is where we will begin next time, the Lord willing. 

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

### Young Adult Activities

Try for a moment to imagine the excitement in the Lynden, WA PRC congregation the first week in July. Their Young Adult Society was hosting another Young Adults Retreat that week, and some 50-60 young adults from the United States and Canada were scheduled to be in attendance. A quick look at the 2011 Yearbook shows that Lynden’s total membership is right at 99 souls, so that week Lynden grew by at least 50%. What an exciting and

busy time, especially for the families able to host young adults that first weekend. To help these families with transportation issues on the Lord’s Day, Lynden’s consistory decided to change the time of their second worship service to 2:00 P.M. A lunch was provided for all members of Lynden and the visiting young adults between the services. A singspiration followed the second service. The congregation and young adults in town for the retreat were also invited to a picnic Saturday, June 30. In addition to a dinner of fried chicken, those who could come out for the evening enjoyed bocceball, volleyball, softball, and socializing. The retreat

itself started on July 2 and went through July 5. Rev. R. Hanko and Rev. R. Kleyn were the scheduled speakers, and each spoke on an aspect of “Walking in the Light... in the Church and in the World.” This summer’s retreat was held at Warm Beach Christian Camp in Stanwood, WA. In addition to the speeches and discussion around this year’s theme, some other activities included white-water rafting, a high rope course, canoeing, a climbing wall, and mud flats.

### Denomination Activities

Prof. B. Gritters and Mr. Peter VanDerSchaaf and their wives

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*Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

left for Germany on June 21 on behalf of our denominational Contact Committee to visit Dr. Jürgen Klautke and the saints of the BERG (Confessing Protestant Reformed Church). The purpose of the trip was to strengthen and advance the contact that we have had with the BERG for several years, as well as to encourage these fellow saints in the spiritual wasteland that once was Luther's home. We should also add here that the members of our Faith PRC in Jenison, MI once again had the opportunity to fellowship with two of the young people from the BERG. David Klautke and Thilo Tanetschek were in Michigan for the month of July and stayed with a family from Faith.

On June 27 Prof. R. Dykstra and his wife, Carol, left for Singapore and our sister church, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, where Prof. Dykstra will, the Lord willing, provide pulpit-supply seven weeks for the CERC, in addition to giving several lectures and speeches.

### Young People's Activities

A spring lecture was sponsored by the members of the Pittsburgh, PA PR Fellowship for June 22 in their church. Rev. G. Eriks, pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, gave a speech on the topic, "Christian Money Management." The reason we include that news here is because Rev. Eriks and his wife also took a number of young people from Hudsonville with them on the trip to Pittsburgh. They wanted to be able to help the saints there in some way,

so Pittsburgh scheduled a cleaning bee at their church on Saturday morning, June 23. Saturday afternoon the group was able to spend some time at a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game. Rev. Eriks also preached for the Fellowship on Sunday evening before the group returned home.

The Young People's Society of the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD scheduled not one but two fundraisers for Saturday, June 23, for this summer's Young People's Convention. The first was a Skeet Shoot fundraiser at Clay Bird Shotgun Sports from 9:00 - 11:00 A.M., and the second was a car-wash from 1:00-5:00 P.M. at META Bank.

The young people of the Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN invited their congregation, as well as others in the area, to a car-wash Saturday morning, June 30. Anyone with a dirty car was invited to stop by and enjoy coffee and baked goods while his car enjoyed a thorough cleaning.

The young people of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA invited their congregation to a combined volleyball tournament/ice cream social on June 29. Money raised from entry fees and the sale of ice cream went toward this summer's convention expenses.

### Congregation Activities

On Sunday morning, June 17, after their worship service, the members of the Hudsonville, MI PRC gathered together to say farewell to Seminarian Erik Guichelaar and his wife, Cherith. They left the end of that week for the Loveland, CO PRC where Erik began his six-month internship.

The July 1 bulletin of the Loveland,

CO PRC included a welcome to Seminarian Erik and Cherith Guichelaar as he officially began his internship there through the rest of this year, with their pastor, Rev. S. Key, serving as a mentor to fulfill the practical part of his seminary training.

### School Activities

The Loveland, CO PR Christian School invited all those interested and able to join them on June 22 for a celebration of 50 years of education as well as a dedication of their new church building and high school addition. The evening of celebration included a dinner and a program. The school was also open for visiting.

The Federation of PR Christian Schools hosted a Summer Seminar on June 21 at our Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. This presentation featuring Laurel Falvo of the Grey Center gave strategies for increasing social success for those who themselves have autism, or for those who know someone with autism. This presentation was open to teachers, family members, friends, and colleagues.

### Minister Activities

Rev. J. Marcus, pastor of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada, declined the call he was considering to serve as the next pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. Hope subsequently extended a call to Rev. C. Griess, pastor of Calvary PRC in Hull, IA.

Rev. A. Lanning, pastor of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, declined the call extended to him from the Randolph, WI PRC, to serve as their next pastor. ☞

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Wedding Anniversary

■ On August 28, 2012,  
**ALVIN and BETTY BLEYENBERG**  
will celebrate 50 years of marriage. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for the many years that He has given them together. We are thankful for the godly example they have been to us. We pray that the Lord will give them many more years together and continue to bless them. "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- ✿ Wanda and Nelson Oostra  
Keri, Heidi, Katie, Vernon, Brandi,  
Kindra, Mariah, Brandon, Kalaya
- ✿ Twyla and Alden DeJong  
Erika, Jordana, Dana, Seth
- ✿ Cheryl and Randy Corson  
Jason, Steven, Rachel
- ✿ Ruth and Herman Boonstra  
Ranae, Stephen, Karmin, Dolan, Phil,  
Lenora, Karlen, Kyle
- ✿ Wayne and Brenda Bleyenbergh  
Titus, Levi
- ✿ Laura and Ryan Kats  
Avery, Kenedie, Trayle, Macy, Boden
- ✿ Dawn and Chad Andringa  
Jacilee, Shayna, Mandi, Silas, Shelby,  
Amos, Eliza
- ✿ Daryl and Melinda Bleyenbergh
- ✿ Sara and Jeff VanMeeteren  
Easton, Taryn, Landon
- ✿ Nancy and Mark Kooima  
Connor, Ethan, Gracia, Jolie
- ✿ Evan and Kim Bleyenbergh  
Ben, Dean
- ✿ Myron and Amy Bleyenbergh  
Aftyn
- ✿ Janna Bleyenbergh
- ✿ Jerry Bleyenbergh
- ✿ Derek Bleyenbergh  
3 grandchildren in glory

Hull, Iowa

### Convocation

■ Reminder: Seminary Convocation is planned for September 5 with Prof. Cammenga speaking on "The Protestant Reformed Seminary and the 'Good Christian Schools.'"

### Teacher Needed

■ The Board of Reformed Heritage Christian School is currently seeking applicants for a full-time high school math and science faculty opening for the 2012-13 school year. Successful applicants will be able to serve the kingdom of Jesus Christ by teaching His covenant youth. Reformed Heritage is committed to distinctively Reformed Christian education. Our goal is to train our young people to be servants of Christ in all areas of life.

A cover letter and resumé can be mailed to: Reformed Heritage Christian School, 700 N. Fletcher Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49006, attn.: Mr. Dave VanderMeer; or e-mail: dnjvm5@att.net.

David Pryor  
RHCS Board President

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hope PRC in Walker express their Christian sympathy to Elder James Koole and his wife and children in the death of his mother,

#### MRS. JOSIE KOOLE.

May they be comforted by the truth of the resurrection. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

Dan DeMeester, Vice-President  
Joel Minderhoud, Clerk

### Wedding Anniversary

■ On August 15, 2012, our parents,  
**STUART AND BETTY BYLSMA,**  
will celebrate their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, D.V. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for blessing us with God-fearing parents. Their steadfast love for each other and for each one of us, their faith through the trials in their lives, and the many sacrifices they made, continue to teach us what a true marriage should be. We celebrate this milestone with them and pray God will continue to guide them and keep them in His loving care. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Gary and Marilyn Bylsma
- ✿ Marcia and Richard Flikkema
- ✿ Carole tenHaaf
- ✿ Phyllis Bylsma
- ✿ Sharon and Tim Rus  
22 grandchildren (3 in glory) and  
57 great grandchildren  
(2 in glory)  
Jenison, Michigan

### Classis

■ Classis West will be meeting on September 5 in Calvary PRC; Classis East will meet on September 12 in Grace PRC. All material should be to the Stated Clerk of Classis one month prior to the meeting of Classis.

## Reformed Witness Hour August 2012

Date	Topic	Text
	Nehemiah (14-17)	
August 5	"The Dedication of the Walls"	Nehemiah 12:27-47
August 12	"The Separated Life"	Nehemiah 13:1-3
August 19	"Why Is the House of God Forsaken?"	Nehemiah 13:4-14
August 26	"Why Is the Sabbath Day Profaned?"	Nehemiah 13:15-22