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Barabbas or Jesus?

Rev. John Marcus

My heart desires thy peace: Loving the church

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The Protestant Reformed Churches: Their beginnings

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A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments

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Meditation

Rev. John Marcus, pastor of Peace PRC in Lansing, Illinois

Barabbas or Jesus?

Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

Matthew 27:17

Early Friday morning, after the Jewish Sanhedrin condemned Jesus, they brought Him to Pilate asking for Jesus to be executed by crucifixion. Pilate had little difficulty recognizing that Jesus was innocent and that the Jews had brought Him there because they envied Him. Knowing Jesus was innocent, Pilate wanted to release Jesus; but he was afraid of the Jews.

As it happened, it was Pilate's custom to release a prisoner during the Passover feast. He thought that if he gave the people a choice, they would choose to release Jesus. So, he asked, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:17).

From a certain point of view, the choice was obvious: the people should have asked Pilate to release the innocent and leave the guilty under condemnation.

On the one hand, there ought to have been no question that Jesus was perfectly innocent.

Even Judas declared, "I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). Pilate's wife was so troubled by Jesus' trial, she sent a messenger to Pilate urging him to have "nothing to do with that just man" (Matt. 27:19). After examining Jesus, Pilate himself declared his legal finding concerning Jesus: "I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:38). Later in the trial, Pilate twice repeated the same finding.

Not only had Jesus never committed a crime worthy of punishment, He also never committed the least sin in thought, word, or deed. He was absolutely "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26).

Moreover, Jesus was perfectly devoted to doing God's will; He delighted in it His entire life (cf. Heb 10:7). Such was His determination to do the will of God, that He set His face to go up to Jerusalem even when He knew He would be condemned to death (Matt. 20:18).

Knowing His innocence, the crowd ought to have told Pilate to release Jesus, whose righteousness was obvious!

On the other hand, it was obvious that Barabbas was the worst of criminals, notorious for his violence. Barabbas was not merely a thief, he was a murderous robber. He had taken part in a violent uprising against the Roman government (cf. Luke 23:19). It is not unlikely that Barabbas was a ringleader in the sedition.

Barabbas' name means "son of a father." However, Barabbas was not a wise son who made his father glad. Ultimately, he was a spiritual son of his father, the devil. He spent his life doing the works of the devil.

One can hardly imagine two men more opposite in character: Jesus, the righteous Son of God and giver of life; Barabbas, a wicked and seditious murderer.

Pilate would have the people choose between the two: "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus?"

He hoped the people would choose Jesus. Surely, the people would not choose to have him release such a notorious criminal as Barabbas over Jesus. Surely, the people would know that Jesus and Barabbas were in two completely different categories of people. Surely, the people could tell the difference between light and darkness.

As for Jesus, during His ministry, He had instructed the people to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Barabbas, in contrast, led a rebellion against the Roman government. Jesus had made the lame to walk and the blind to see, and even raised the dead. Barabbas was guilty of murder. Jesus was the epitome of obedience and righteousness; Barabbas the epitome of rebellion and wickedness.

Why did Pilate want the people to choose? Because of his own wickedness. He should have executed justice by releasing righteous Jesus as well as scolding the Jews for their wickedness. But he could not bring himself to do what was right because the personal cost was too high. So, he set himself on a course with the

goal of absolving himself of his responsibility to judge righteously.

On the one hand, he was afraid of Jesus. Even his wife took the trouble to warn him to have nothing to do with Jesus, that just man. On the other hand, he was afraid of the Jews, and what Caesar would do if the Jews raised a tumult. So Pilate put the choice in the people's hands. By doing so, Pilate had already chosen against Jesus. The opinions of the Jews and of Caesar were more important to him than the will of God.

But now, the people must choose. Their choice would reflect their conviction as to who was most worthy of honor. And their choice would reflect their belief as to which of these two would bring them happiness, Jesus or Barabbas.

Barabbas represented the people's desire to set up an earthly kingdom through his rebellion against the government God had placed over them. Barabbas represented the kingdom of man and then of Antichrist. Jesus, on the other hand, represented a spiritual kingdom founded upon the principle of perfect obedience and the satisfaction of God's justice.

Ultimately, the people's choice implied their desire for one kind of kingdom over against another. Will you have God's anointed One? Or will you take the man of the world? Will you have God's kingdom? Or will you seek an earthly antichristian kingdom? Jesus or Barabbas?

God calls us to choose each and every day of our lives. Not in the sense that our choice determines whether or not we are saved. But in the sense of choosing what is right. By God's grace, the psalmist declares, "I have *chosen* the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me" (Ps. 119:30). Our choice must be to follow the way of truth, no matter what the cost. By grace we must pursue, not an earthly kingdom, but Christ's spiritual kingdom.

Given the choice between the two, the people chose Barabbas: "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus" (Matt. 27:20). The choice to release Barabbas was wicked in itself. Far worse, the choice *for* Barabbas was a choice *against* Jesus! Their choice was absolute wickedness!

Fallen mankind will always make that choice. Faced with the choice of Jesus or Barabbas, the world will always choose Barabbas. They will not choose Jesus, because they hate Jesus and His kingdom. Given the choice between the kingdom of Christ and the king-

dom of Antichrist, fallen mankind will always choose against Christ.

Apart from God's grace, we too would choose against Christ. The prophet Isaiah captures what our attitude toward Christ is apart from the grace of God: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is. 53:3).

Not surprisingly, the people chose Barabbas!

So Pilate tried one more time to absolve himself of his responsibility to judge righteously: "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified" (Matt. 27:22-23). Although Pilate knew Jesus had done no evil, he allowed the people to choose Jesus' fate. Jesus must be crucified.

Pilate washed his hands and declared "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (Matt. 27:24). He thought of himself as innocent; but in fact, he was guilty. He feared the Jews and Caesar more than God. Pilate chose to save his own skin rather than administer justice.

At the same time, the Jews made light of their own guilt, taking full responsibility for Jesus' death: "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). As if to say, "If we are guilty because we are putting Jesus to death, then let us and our children suffer the wrath of God." That is, in fact, what happened: forty years later, God sent the Roman armies to destroy the nation of Israel including Jerusalem and the temple. Most of them experienced the horrible wrath of God against them for their sinful rejection of Christ.

We ourselves deserve that same wrath. But thanks be to God, He ordained that very rejection for our salvation! Jesus was crucified on the cursed tree so that we might be freed from that curse. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). Jesus suffered God's curse so that we would be blessed. He was rejected and forsaken so that we would be accepted by God.

Jesus' blood is now upon us and our elect children, not in the sense of our paying for the guilt of rejecting Him, but in the sense of its cleansing power. His blood is sprinkled upon us to cleanse us from all the guilt and pollution of sin. His blood purchased for us all the blessings of salvation. By the power of the risen Lord, we put off the old man and put on the new. By Christ's power, we submit ourselves to the will of God.

By nature, we would only take the side of Barabbas and the earthly kingdom he sought. By grace, we renounce the earthly and choose the heavenly kingdom of Jesus Christ. By nature, we would only refuse the cost of following the way of Christ. By grace, we determine to follow that way no matter what the cost.

Praise be to God that the people chose Barabbas and that righteous Jesus was delivered to die. May we ever seek Christ's heavenly kingdom.



Editorial

Prof. Brian Huizinga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary and member of Grandville PRC in Grandville, Michigan

My heart desires thy peace: Loving the church

The previous six articles touched on topics that are crucially important for peace in the church. We have considered (1) the desire itself and why it is so urgent that we pray for the peace of the church in these perilous days; (2) the foundation of unity in the doctrinal truth of the Three Forms of Unity (Reformed confessions); (3) our calling to go to the brother/body with whom we have a serious problem; (4) the importance of *listening* to each other; (5) supporting victims of sexual abuse; and (6) confronting spousal abuse. Now we conclude with the heart of the whole matter: love for the church.

The church

What a glorious reality the church is! Not any sect in the world that fancies itself the church, but the true church of the living God is beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth. Not merely the invisible body of all of the elect, but the visible manifestation of that mystical body as a true instituted church of Christ on earth in a local congregation is glorious. Glorious things are spoken of Jerusalem of old, the many congregations established through mission labors in the apostolic era, and any true church where we have our membership today.

The church is the body and bride of the Lord of heaven, purchased by His blood. She is the royal city of the great King. She is the mountain of God's holiness. She is the dwelling place of the Most High. She is the grand palace of the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. She is the mighty citadel of truth that strikes fear and consternation into the hearts of great kings. She is the

assembly of believers and their seed where God has put His name.

There in the church God gives us a name and a place. There in the church we gather for the public worship of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There in the church we have our true family—those who do the will of the Lord, whether they be male or female, young or old, rich or poor, black or white. There in the church the Christ who is exalted over all in heaven is pleased to be present with us through the special offices of minister, elder, and deacon. He is pleased to operate by His Word and Spirit in dispensing grace through the preaching of the holy gospel (including catechism) and the administration of the sacraments. He is pleased to maintain purity in the exercise of Christian discipline. He makes His church a city that is set on a hill, a light that cannot be hid, as His members testify of Him in personal witnessing and local evangelism. He causes a congregation of His to seek to manifest true unity and catholicity in as far as that is possible, not only in denominational fellowship, but also in relation to all churches that have obtained like precious faith with her, both domestic and foreign.

A faithful congregation, as a manifestation of the one body of Christ, has a history in this world that begins at her organization with charter members in a certain-named locality. Her history continues with the joys of newborn babies, new members joining, marriages, baptisms, confessions of faith, and all the sweet fellowship that the members enjoy as they stand together in the gospel. Her history also includes the sorrows of death, departures, opposition, controversy, and myriad trials.

While glorious, Christ's church will never attain perfection here on earth because she is made up of sinners like you and me who are finite, foolish, and often sorely lacking in our love for her. Some never make a church their home because everywhere they go they find faults and leave, ricocheting their way through life off this church and off that church, in hopeless pursuit of perfection on earth. The church through history always has spots, wrinkles, blemishes, and other such things on her garments. She is never worthy in herself of being presented unto Christ a glorious church.

Her holiest prophets, priests, and kings of old had only a small beginning of obedience and often manifested unbelief and wickedness not unlike that of the neighboring heathens. When God's church first appeared in the city of Corinth during the apostolic era, she was a congregation troubled by members who denied the bodily resurrection, schismatically divided themselves according to their favorite minister, profaned the Lord's Supper, ran off to the civil courts to sue each other over petty issues, and tolerated a man living impenitently with his father's wife. Until the day of Christ, the church remains in constant need of the sanctifying Spirit and calls for repentance, reformation, and renewal. Through history, many instituted churches so degenerate spiritually in proudly promoting heresy and wickedness that Christ eventually comes and fights against them with the sword of His mouth.

All her imperfections notwithstanding, Jerusalem of old was the habitation of the mighty God of Jacob. The troubled church in Corinth was still the gathering of saints called unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ. A holy congregation today, even with all her blemishes, is a manifestation of the beloved bride of Jesus. Christ always preserves His church somewhere in the world. He sanctifies and cleanses her with the washing of water by the Word until the day He presents her unto Himself in eternal glory.

The church!

Love for the church

If you are begotten of God, then you *love* the church. You love *your* church as it is the body of Christ and a spiritual mother to you. To sing from the Psalter is to sing of our love for the church, and when we do, we are not singing about some abstraction. Nor are we merely singing about some gathering that is out of sight and hundreds of miles away so that its members cannot step on our toes. Rather, we sing of the gathering to which we belong with our fellow saints. For the singing Israelite, it was Jerusalem on Mount Zion where the temple was built and God was worshiped for many

years in the beauty of holiness by thronging worshipers. For us it is our own congregation where we have our membership.

The Psalms make very clear what love for the church looks like. When we love the church, we ask God to make us disabled or dumb if we do not maintain constant affection for her. In fact, we even personify the church and sing to her: "Let my right hand forget her skill, if I forget to love thee well. If I do not remember thee, then let my tongue from utterance cease; if any earthly joy to me, be dear as Zion's joy and peace." (Psalter #379).

When the church is distressed, and consequently our life becomes difficult, we do not forsake her, but we are also distressed and cease not to pray for her: "O Lord, regard the prayer of those, who love the walls of Zion well, whose hearts are heavy for her woes..." (Psalter #273).

If we are separated from the sweet communion and holy ordinances of God's sanctuary, we pine: "O Lord of Hosts, how lovely, thy tabernacles are; for them my heart is yearning, in banishment afar" (Psalter #227). For, there is little that stirs our hearts like "the welcome sound, the call to seek Jehovah's house of prayer" (Psalter #349).

Tireless is our devotion to our congregation where God and our brethren dwell: "For sake of friends and kindred dear, my heart's desire is Zion's peace; and for the house of God, the Lord, my loving care shall never cease" (Psalter #350).

From the heart of the believer who truly loves God's church bursts the joyful exclamation: "Blessed Zion, all our fountains are in thee" (Psalter #237)!

This kind of love for the church, a heavenly love that God alone can put in the heart, does not weaken when trouble comes to the church. This love for the church does not dry up when problems due to sin arise in the church, problems that directly affect our own personal life. This love does not cease when we find something disagreeable to us in the church.

On the contrary, it is in the day of trouble and distress, perhaps when some great evil must be resisted with strenuous effort, that true, Spirit-worked love for the church shows itself as never before. When we would otherwise become angry and vengeful and abandon the church, seeking our own personal advantage, God works a wonder of grace in our hearts so that we say to the church, "To thee my love shall never be denied" (Psalter #349). Right there, at that point of trouble, love for the church truly shows itself. At that point God tests whether all those stanzas we have been singing from the Psalter were rooted in our heart or only vain

words on our lips. When love for the church costs us something, we truly begin to reflect in a faint way the infinite love of our blessed Head who humbled Himself unto the deepest reproach and pains of hell, both in body and soul, on the tree of cross, confessing, “To thee, O church, my love shall never be denied.”

That love for the church, which is the love of Christ Himself, worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is magnified over against the carnal self-love of our wicked flesh and all the hatred that the enemies of the church have for her. The church is always despised and rejected in the world. She is harassed by Sanballats and Tobiahs in every age. Usually, the most lethal assaults against her come from those whose history is intertwined with hers. In the early church, the unbelieving Jews were filled with envy and rage and attacked the missionaries and believers more viciously than any other foe.

Few seem to love God’s church today. Seducers seek to spoil her with heresies and false doctrine. Lovers of contention and unholy disputations cause divisions and offenses, threatening to rip her to shreds. Some loudly damn and curse her as a brood of vipers, a den of unbelievers, or the whore of Babylon. Some live with a hair-trigger temper and, if the slightest matter does not go their way in the church, they open fire on her with both barrels. In self-aggrandizement, some write and speak vile slander against her to the glee of those who take pleasure in church-bashing. Some by their personal life of wickedness give the enemy occasion to ridicule God’s church. Others are ashamed of the church and disown any relation to her.

Do you love the church? Do I?

Desiring her peace

There is only one kind of church member who earnestly desires the peace of the church, and prays fervently for it. He is the man, or she is the woman, who *loves* the church. When God fills our hearts with love for Christ and His bride, we not only pray for her peace, but we take great care that no attitude, action, or word of ours is an unholy sin against the unity of the church. If the peace of God’s church is of no concern to us, and we will unleash our tongue as an unruly evil full of deadly poison against whomever we please, then we are revealing our loveless heart.

As hatred for the church increases in intensity, may God give us deeper love for His church, for only when we *love* Jerusalem, do we seek Jerusalem’s *peace*. The church never depends upon our love; if she did, she would be no more. It is in God’s love that the church abides and has joy and peace. May God show His love by causing us to sing from a heart of love Psalter #348: stanzas 4-6:

O pray that Zion may be blest
And have abundant peace,
For all that love thee in their hearts
Shall prosper and increase.

I pray the Lord that peace may still
Within thy walls abound,
And ever in thy palaces
Prosperity be found.

Yea, for the sake of friends and kin,
My heart desires thy peace,
And for the house of God the Lord
My care shall never cease.



Taking heed to the doctrine

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Antinomians? Without a doubt (6)

Previous article in this series: January 15, 2023, p. 179.

Gentleness is good to the core and is revealed toward adversaries and enemies. It does not hurt them, does not take revenge, does not curse, insult, or spread lies about them; does not even wish bad things on them, even though they might have taken away property, reputation, body, friends—everything.

Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works*

Introduction

In this series of articles we are examining the antinomian theology of the Reformed Protestant Churches. At the moment, we are primarily concerned with the RPC teaching concerning repentance and forgiveness, specifically their teaching that forgiveness precedes repentance. It is the contention of the leaders of the

RPs that the believer's God-worked repentance over sin has nothing to do with God's forgiveness of his sins. As we have seen, the RPs are adamant in maintaining that God's forgiveness takes place in eternity, altogether apart from and long before He ever brings the elect sinner to repentance. We have seen that this teaching is contrary to the Bible and to the Reformed confessions.

At present we are demonstrating that the RP teaching is in conflict with the Reformed tradition, especially the teaching of the Reformer John Calvin. Thus far we have appealed to Calvin's teaching in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and his Old Testament commentaries. In this article, we will hear what Calvin has to say in some of his New Testament commentaries.

From what we have already seen, it ought to be plain that the RP theologians are at odds with Calvin. Their theology is not a further development of Calvin. Rather, their theology stands in direct conflict with what Calvin taught. In the teaching of the RPs, we have an example of Calvin against Calvinists, or rather, Calvinists against Calvin. They are men who profess to be Calvinists and followers of John Calvin, but whose teaching is at odds with the Genevan Reformer—seriously at odds.

Calvin on the gospel accounts and Acts

In considering the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12), Calvin writes,

We ought always, therefore, to begin with the forgiveness of sins: for the first hope of being heard by God beams upon us, when we obtain his favour; and there is no way in which he is "pacified toward us," (Ezek. xvi.63,) but by freely pardoning our sins (*Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:326).

After explaining why Jesus calls our sins "debts," Calvin insists that our sins "alienate us entirely from God, so that there is no hope of obtaining peace and favour, except by pardon." He concludes by saying, "For, when he commands all his disciples to betake themselves to him *daily for the forgiveness of sins*, everyone, who thinks that he has no need of such a remedy, is struck out of the number of the disciples" (1:326).¹

Calvin implies that daily we receive the forgiveness of our sins. Daily we seek from God, and therefore also daily we receive, the forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness takes place *daily*—many times in a day—Calvin insists. They who do not suppose that they have need daily for

forgiveness have no right to consider themselves Christ's disciples.

By teaching that we are forgiven daily, Calvin denies by implication that we are forgiven eternally. Indeed, he would be the first to insist that God in eternity has decreed our forgiveness. He would be the first to insist that the basis for our forgiveness is the cross of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, forgiveness itself takes place daily, in the day-to-day life of the Christian. They who think that they have "no need of such a [daily] remedy," may have no assurance that they are among Christ's disciples. In fact, such a person "is struck out of the number of the disciples."

A bit later in his consideration of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Calvin comments on Jesus' word in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." He explains why Christ added, "Forgive us, as we forgive":

The reason is that God will not be ready to hear us, unless we also show ourselves ready to grant forgiveness to those who have offended us.... Unless God pardon us every day many sins, we know that we are ruined in innumerable ways: and on no other condition [that is, in no other way] does he admit us to pardon, but that we pardon our brethren whatever offences they have committed against us.

Calvin concludes with a very serious wake-up call:

Those who refuse to forget the injuries which have been done to them, devote themselves willingly and deliberately to destruction, and *knowingly prevent God from forgiving them* (*Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:330).

It ought to be clear that Calvin knows nothing of an eternal forgiveness that takes place prior to repentance in time. God forgives us daily, he teaches, and He forgives us daily only if we "pardon our brethren whatever offences they have committed against us." If we do not forgive our brethren, we "knowingly prevent God from forgiving [us]."

In Acts 3, the apostle Peter is preaching to the multitude that gathered in the courtyard of the temple after he healed the lame man who was begging at the Beautiful Gate. In verse 19, he issued the call to repentance, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Calvin comments: "We must note, that when he exhorteth unto repentance, he doth also declare that there is remission of sins prepared for them before the face of God" (*Com-*

¹ Italics in the quotations from Calvin are mine, unless otherwise noted.

mentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, 1:149). In his comments, Calvin follows the order of the text: the call to repentance is first and then the promise, “that your sins may be blotted out.” Our sins are blotted out only when and after we repent of them.

Calvin on the New Testament epistles

Many a preparatory sermon has been preached on II Corinthians 7:10, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” Calvin begins his comments on this passage by noting that “Paul seems to make repentance the ground of salvation.” That would mean, says Calvin, that “we are justified by works.” This he rejects, noting that Paul “is not inquiring as to the ground of our salvation, but simply commending repentance from the fruit which it produces.” Repentance is not the ground of our salvation, but “it is like a way by which we arrive at salvation,” says Calvin. Further, “God by way of free favor pardons our sins, but only when we renounce them.”

Lest there be any misunderstanding of the expression in II Corinthians 7:10, “repentance to salvation,” Calvin adds,

Nay, more, God accomplishes in us at one and the same time two things: being renewed by repentance, we are delivered from the bondage of sin; and, being justified by faith, we are delivered also from the curse of our sins. They are, therefore, inseparable fruits of grace, and, in consequence of their invariable connection, *repentance may with fitness and propriety be represented as an introduction to salvation*, but in this way of speaking of it, it is represented as an effect rather than as a cause.

Calvin, then, defends his distinction—the distinction demanded by II Corinthians 7:10—by adding,

These are not refinements for the purpose of evasion [of the teaching of the text], but a true and simple solution, for, while *Scripture teaches us that we never obtain forgiveness of sins without repentance*, it represents at the same time, in a variety of passages, the mercy of God alone as the ground of our obtaining it (*Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 2:274-275).

That we “never obtain forgiveness of sins without repentance” does not mean that repentance earns or merits forgiveness. This is simply the God-ordained order: repentance precedes forgiveness; forgiveness follows repentance. And is this not the order of experience, as well? The teaching that forgiveness precedes repentance contradicts experience. As a parent, I cannot

forgive my disobedient and wayward child, until that child repents and beseeches my forgiveness. My wife cannot forgive me *until* I repent and beseech her forgiveness. We cannot and we may not forgive a brother or sister who has sinned against us, *until* they repent. Perhaps she has spread a false and hurtful rumor about me. Or, perhaps, he has stolen something from me. We can want to forgive them. We can pray to forgive them. We can admonish them so that they will repent and we can forgive them. But we cannot and we may not forgive them until they are repentant. We are called to deal with each other in this way because this is the way in which God deals with us.

Hebrews 6:6 is a passage often appealed to by those who deny the perseverance of the saints: “If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Besides addressing this issue, Calvin also treats the relation between repentance and forgiveness in his comments on this passage. “As then,” writes Calvin, “[so now] the Lord promises pardon to none but to those who repent of their iniquity; it is no wonder that they perish who either through despair or contempt, rush on in their obstinacy unto destruction.”

A little later, though still commenting on verse 6 and the phrase, “seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,” Calvin says, “for it would be wholly unbecoming, that God by pardoning apostates [that is, those who are unrepentant] should expose his own Son to contempt” (*Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, 139). God does not pardon apostates, so long as they go on in their apostasy. He pardons those apostates only who repent of their apostasy.

Calvin has a good deal to say on the proper relation between forgiveness and repentance in his extended commentary on I John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is true that the apostle speaks explicitly of the relation between those who confess their sins and God’s forgiveness. But none confess their sins—truly confess their sins—who are not repentant over their sins. And if the sinner is truly repentant over his sins, he will also surely confess his sins.

Calvin begins his explanation of the text in I John by affirming that the apostle

again promises to the faithful that God will be propitious to them, *provided they acknowledge themselves to be sinners*. It is of great moment to be fully persuaded, that when we have sinned, there is a reconciliation with

God ready and prepared for us: *we shall otherwise carry always a hell within us.*

If we cannot be assured when we have sinned that there is forgiveness for those who repent of and confess their sins, we will always carry “a hell within us.” A powerful and true statement. A statement that underscores the urgency of repentance, acknowledging ourselves to be sinners.

A bit later, Calvin appeals to the justice of God upon which rests the promise to forgive those who repent of and confess their sins. For this reason, all the more “it becomes us to receive with the whole heart this promise which offers free pardon to all who confess their sins.” To all those—only to those, but to all those—who confess their sins in sorrow over them, God promises free

pardon. Their repentance does not earn their forgiveness. For the sinner who is truly repentant casts himself or herself on the mercy of God. It is always mercy for which the repentant sinner cries out to God: “God *be merciful* to me the sinner” (Luke 18:13). And mercy and merit are polar opposites.

Thus, Calvin concludes that the apostle John “commends grace from its necessity; for as no one is free from sin, he intimates that we are all lost and undone, except the Lord comes to our aid with the remedy of pardon. The reason why he so much dwells on the fact, that no one is innocent, is that all may now fully know that they stand in need of mercy” (*Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, 167).



Pillar and ground of truth

Prof. Russell Dykstra, pastor of Byron Center PRC in Byron Center, Michigan

The Protestant Reformed Churches: Their beginnings (2)

Previous article in this series: March 1, 2023, p. 260.

As noted in the last article, in 1924 Herman Hoeksema was the pastor of the largest Christian Reformed Church in that day with over 500 families and 1300 members. He was a regular contributor to *The Banner*, and a member of the Curatorium of the Seminary. He was unquestionably one the most capable theologians and preachers in the CRC in that day.

But in 1925, Herman Hoeksema was deposed by a Classis of the CRC, as were Revs. Henry Danhof and George M. Ophoff as well as the respective consistories of the three ministers.

A shocking change of direction in the lives of these men and their congregations! It naturally raises the question: How and why did these depositions come about? Facing that question, we focus first on Rev. Hoeksema, and something called the Janssen controversy. The issues that led to the depositions and the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches cannot be understood with knowing something about this controversy.

Although the young and capable Rev. Hoeksema was clearly an up-and-coming minister in the Christian Reformed Churches, deep personal grievances against him arose in connection with the controversy over Dr.

Ralph Janssen, Professor of Old Testament studies in Calvin Seminary, a controversy in which Hoeksema was deeply involved.¹ Dr. Janssen had been Professor of Old Testament studies in the Theological School of the CRC from 1902 through 1906. At that time he was not reappointed, partly because he was not an ordained minister and partly because there were concerns about his views of Scripture. He went abroad for more education, returned to the United States, and began teaching in another institution. Then in 1914, Janssen was reappointed to the CRC Seminary.

Troubles began in 1919 when four of his fellow professors asked the Curatorium to investigate the teaching of Dr. Janssen in respect to the authority, infallibility, and credibility of Scripture.² The Curatorium investi-

1 For a complete treatment of the history and the doctrinal controversy, see Herman C. Hanko's thesis, *A Study of the Relation Between the Views of Prof. R. Janssen and Common Grace*. Available from the library and bookstore of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. For Hoeksema's personal reflections, see his editorial written thirty years later, “Of Love and Hatred,” *Standard Bearer*, vol. 30, pp. 340-41.

2 The four professors were Louis Berkhof, William Heyns, Foppe TenHoor, and Samuel Volbeda. These men had taught seminarian Hoeksema. Hoeksema and Prof. Berkhof were particularly

gated, but did not find errors in his teaching, and took the decision that the four professors should have gone to Dr. Janssen before taking the matter to the Curatorium.

The four professors then appealed to the Synod in 1920 with their concerns. Before the Synod of 1920 met, the Curatorium asked these professors to submit all their objections in writing, which they did. The Curatorium did another and more complete investigation, after which they exonerated Janssen unanimously.

The four professors pressed on with their appeal to the Synod of 1920 for an investigation. They claimed that Janssen taught 1) that there are exaggerations and inaccuracies in the Scriptures; 2) that many wonders can be explained in large part from natural causes; 3) concerning the Pentateuch, that he believed the four-source theory, and that only those parts specifically ascribed to Moses were written by him; 4) that the Song of Solomon was an oriental love song and not typical of Christ and His church. The Synod of 1920 exonerated Janssen again, but with a negative decision: "...it had not become evident that Doctor Janssen's instruction was in conflict with the Reformed faith."

Herman Hoeksema, after supporting Janssen twice in the Curatorium and once at Synod, then came into possession of a set of student notes. What Hoeksema found there raised serious questions in his mind about Janssen's teachings.³ He began to publish his concerns in his rubric in *The Banner* and carried on an exchange there with Dr. Janssen. In addition, early in 1921 the four professors printed a pamphlet entitled, "A Further Explanation Concerning the Janssen Matter." The discussions in *The Banner* and this pamphlet raised alarms in the denomination. As a result, in June of 1921 the Curatorium faced overtures from eight of the thirteen Classes in the CRC asking for an investigation of Janssen's teachings.

The Curatorium commissioned a committee to do a thorough study of Janssen's teachings and report to this body. Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof were part of the

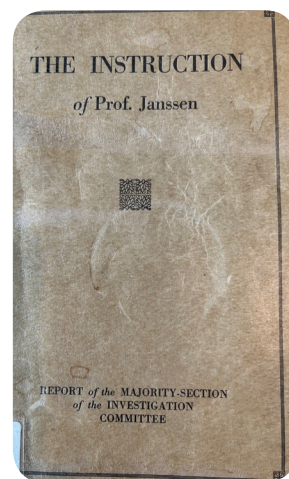
seven-man committee. After a thorough study of Janssen's classroom instruction, the committee split in its conclusions, four to three. Because Janssen refused to cooperate with the committee, they were forced to use individual student notes. The majority, led by Hoeksema and Danhof, issued a detailed, 152-page report (cf. image) explaining and condemning his teaching.⁴ Their findings are summarized by seven main points, but the first point indicates the essential error: "Dr. Janssen fails, in his theological instruction, to treat the Scriptures throughout as *the inspired and infallible Word of God*" [emphasis in the report].

A careful study of his teaching indicates that Dr. Janssen had higher-critical views of the Bible. He viewed the various theological disciplines as sciences that *sought for* truth, rather than as disciplines that are *based on* the Scripture as truth. In these "sciences," the investigators must be critical. Even Scripture itself must be evaluated as any other literature as far as authorship, composition, purpose, and more. In addition, he taught that general revelation is incorporated into special revelation, so that, for example, the writings of the heathen could have influenced the Psalms or been incorporated into the law of Moses.

As to the miracles of the Bible, Janssen maintained that they could be explained as God's work using natural means. Jericho's walls could have fallen by an earthquake. The miraculous part was the moment that it happened. The water from the rock resulted from Moses striking a rock in the right place and his rod piercing through the surface, allowing the water to flow.

Here it is important to notice that the central support behind his teaching was *common grace*. Janssen defended his views almost entirely on the basis of common grace. For example, general revelation is the result of common grace, he insisted, and gives man a certain knowledge of God. This general revelation to all men serves special revelation. Thus general revelation also has value in the study of the Bible.

As to miracles, he taught that the natural sciences are needed to explain the miracles since God used natural



close as is evident from the fact that the latter officiated at Hoeksema's wedding.

3 Hoeksema made it plain that his opposition to Dr. Janssen was not personal animosity but concern over the doctrine taught in the seminary. He later stated, "When I left school in 1915 I respected Dr. Janssen with whom I had one year of instruction." In addition, he wrote, "And, strange to say, ever after, Dr. Janssen...regarded...me as his friend." Hoeksema recounted that whenever a friend of Janssen (Quirinus Breen) visited Hoeksema "in the parsonage on Franklin St. he never failed to bring me the sincere regards of Dr. Janssen." Hoeksema's explanation for that? "Because, although I had to become his opponent for the truth's sake, he knew that I had been honest with him and never did anything behind his back." (SB, "Of Love and Hatred," p. 341.)

4 This report is available in English: *The Instruction of Prof. Janssen: The Report of the Majority Section of the Investigation Committee*. No publication information.

means. It is common grace that allows men to gain their knowledge in these sciences. Thus common grace is necessary to explain the miracles.

While all the above is plain in the classroom material that the committee studied, and briefly alluded to in the majority's report, the report itself concentrated on Dr. Janssen's erroneous view of Scripture. It virtually ignored the *basis* for the errors, namely, common grace.

The aftermath

Largely based on the report of the majority of the investigation committee, the Synod of 1922 (meeting in Orange City, IA) condemned Janssen's teachings and removed him from his position as professor in the seminary.

With this, Dr. Janssen was finished in the CRC. But he was not without significant support in the churches. And it was commonly reported that his friends and supporters were determined to go after Hoeksema and Danhof.⁵

⁵ This idea that the friends of Janssen were determined to go after Hoeksema and Danhof was relayed to me from the personal testimony of my seminary professors, whose fathers had lived through 1924. It was confirmed by an eighty-year-old neighbor of mine while I was a seminary student in the 1980s. A member of the CRC, he was no supporter of Hoeksema or his theology—his favorite preacher was Billy Graham. Nonetheless, without me asking him, one day he began talking about Hoeksema and the 1920s and confirmed what my professors had told me, namely, that after 1922 the friends of Janssen said: "Let's get Hoeksema."

On the other hand, as a result of their study of Dr. Janssen's teaching, Hoeksema and Danhof had become convinced not only that the root error was common grace, but also that it was a deadly serious error.⁶ In spite of the fact that most leading theologians of the Netherlands (led by Herman Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper) and the CRC in America promoted and developed this teaching, Hoeksema and Danhof began to expose the errors of common grace in their writing and preaching. At that point, the very men who had joined them in condemning Dr. Janssen turned against Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof. All this would lead, with astounding swiftness, to the adoption of the Three Points of Common Grace (1924) and the deposition of the three ministers and their respective consistories. The formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America followed.

More on the common grace controversy and depositions next time.

⁶ Hoeksema's studies of Janssen's teaching led him to examine and develop three areas of doctrine that had been affected by the doctrine of common grace. The first is the notion of general revelation. Hoeksema became convinced that there is no such thing as a gracious revelation of God to the ungodly. God's revelation in creation to the wicked is His wrath and its purpose is to leave unbelieving man without excuse. Second, Hoeksema developed the biblical doctrine of miracles over against Janssen's common-grace explanation. Third, he rejected any grace (favor) of God to the reprobate. There is one grace, namely saving grace, and it is upon the elect alone. All these developments would have a significant impact on the theology of the Protestant Reformed Churches.



When thou sittest in thine house

Mrs. Margaret Laning, wife, mother, and grandmother in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Encouraging our youth

Are you having any difficulty communicating with your teenager? Do you hear a lot of truncated, unclear sentences? Maybe you tried hearing aids only to find they do not solve your problem. Well, look no further! "Mumble Unjumble" is here to help! This cutting-edge translator app will make the most muffled mumbling discernible. Consider this for example: "Canhamburgerout?" Within seconds your translation

reads, "Can I hang out?" Or, "Nuttneats" quickly deciphers, "There's nothing to eat." "Candybarcar?" instantly appears, "Can I borrow the car?" Gone will be the days when you say, "I can't hear you." Or, "What did you say?" You won't miss a beat. What an incredibly useful tool for parents, relatives, even teachers!

I must admit there was a time when I contemplated

hearing aids. This led to a rather lighthearted brainstorm with my husband. I know, there are a zillion apps on the market geared toward interacting with one another. Why not a zillion and one? “Mother’s Mutter Maid” was in the running, too, but do not bother to look, it is not on the market, either.

Parents want to know what their teens are thinking about because they love them. It is striking that from the same family there might be one child who readily shares thoughts and feelings while another is quiet and reserved. Some view life with their cup half filled, while others half empty. Parents learn to make an extra effort at drawing out the quiet ones. What they have to say is important to us. The Lord has made each unique for his or her own place in the body of Christ.

Sometimes communication difficulties surface from a deeper problem that no app can fix. Is my child angry or afraid of something? Our teens can feel discouraged, lonely, and confused. In a world of constant chaos, violence, and blatant wickedness, there is so much for them to sort through. We live in dangerous times with many temptations. Sexual sins are flaunted all over the Internet, including homosexuality and transgender ideologies. The world judges good as evil and evil as good. Scripture is mocked. Some surveys show that Generation Z is more likely than previous generations to identify as atheist or agnostic. The devil wants nothing better than to destroy the church.

Our denomination has faced a number of painful trials in the last several years. We may wonder how it is affecting our children. Now more than ever it is invaluable to have heart-to-heart talks with them, listening to them, helping to sort through what troubles them or does not make sense. We would like to think our congregation and denomination is a bastion untainted from the wicked world. Perhaps those from other denominations would like to think the same about theirs. Yet in reality we all know that as long as there is sin, every church will continue to battle against it from within. We pray that the Lord turn such trials to our profit, that there is repentance and restoration, that we grow in wisdom, humility, and a greater love for Him and one another.

Truly being a good listener to our young people is a skill that may not come naturally. As mothers, we tend to want to give advice. There are excellent times for advice and wise words, but we can miss wonderful opportunities just to listen. I have known some mothers who are very talented listeners. For many teens, listening to what they have to say translates that you respect and think highly of them. Nobody wants to be looked down upon. Rather, they need to hear from

us what God has done and is doing within them right now. Think about the fruit of the Spirit, for example, and start listing things we can tell them from our observations. They would be encouraged to hear anything we have noticed that is positive. Our children need correction, but encouragement goes a long ways. When an adult is asked to name a teacher they appreciated the most while growing up, it is almost always someone who noticed their strengths and encouraged them accordingly.

We are very thankful for the interest our youth have in spiritual things. It is a blessing to listen to them contribute in Bible studies, young people’s and young adult discussions, to read articles they write, or hear them talk with others from church in a way that shows genuine interest and kindness. When we see them having devotions on their own without being told, seeking to live according to the Scriptures, our cup runneth over.

Something in the news caught my attention recently, of which you may have heard. What started as a routine college chapel service in Kentucky on February 8 grew into an enormous, continuous impromptu gathering with singing and praying around the clock for days. Visitors from across the U.S. and even from foreign countries traveled to the college to see it for themselves. At times the line into the auditorium was two miles long in freezing temperatures. People wanted to hear what these young people had to say.

Such spontaneous meetings are not foreign to Wesleyan-Holiness theology in which Asbury University has its roots. Though there are dangers associated with revivalism and some modern forms of worship, it serves to illustrate some aspects regarding youth. Many youth are lonely, desiring to be a part of a group. This can leave them vulnerable. It has been said by some who have left the gay community after their conversion to Christianity that they still missed the feeling they formerly had of belonging to a close group of people. This is an area in which the church can improve. The church should be that close group of people. We view one another as the family of God, but we must remember to live like it. This includes talking with and encouraging one another, visiting together in our homes, going out together, truly communing with the saints. Today there are many youth sitting at home alone. The only socializing that they are doing is scrolling on social media. There is nothing more lonely than that. Our youth are in real danger if this is a significant pattern.

The students from Asbury University who were interviewed or who posted on social media seemed visibly

excited to talk about their faith in Christ. How can we not be thankful for a young person who shares his or her joy in turning from sin toward God? Surely, it warms our heart when we hear what our own young people have to say about their faith, especially when our quiet and reserved children speak. Do we not desire that they freely communicate the hope that lies within them with those who will listen?

There is something about youthful zeal that is especially invigorating and contagious. They tend to have an excitement that lacks fear, an enthusiasm, an eagerness to witness to others, and a curiosity that they should never lose. During the time of Zerubbabel in the book of Ezra the youth stood out in their hearty rejoicing in the work of the Lord.

Faithful Zerubbabel led the first group of captives out of Babylon back to Judea. The people returned to a wasteland and had the enormous task of rebuilding. They had many obstacles and hostile neighbors, but the Lord was with them. In time they completed the foundation of the new temple. This was a momentous occasion as they gathered to sing and praise God for His mercy. The younger ones shouted with shouts of great joy from the tops of their lungs. Their thankfulness for what the Lord was doing in their lives could not be contained.

We can be guilty of discouraging our youth at times with our negative, pessimistic comments, especially when they have new ideas. Youth are good at thinking of new ideas, and just because it is new does not mean it cannot be considered. We do not want our children to be discouraged (Col. 3:21). Our youth will have many trials in life. May we remember to direct their attention to what God is doing and how amazing He is. He is always with us, listening to our prayers, and teaching us in His Word.

We are thankful for our older generation who have so much love and wisdom. The older certainly benefit the younger. They help the youth direct their zeal in the proper direction, encourage, and instruct from Scripture. No matter our age, we are all sinners constantly in need of God's grace and Holy Spirit. As different parts of Christ's body, we need each other's fellowship and desire to know others really care.

Our young people are blessed with many years of catechism instruction. Lord's Day 23 says something very appropriate for a young person who might forget the big picture of why he or she needs to study and memorize the Scriptures so much. It helps direct the young person in a moment of weakness and frustration who might ask, "Why do I need to know all of this?" Question 59 phrases it this way: "But what doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this? Answer: That I am righteous in Christ, before God, and an heir of eternal life." That answer is a lifetime of motivation right there. So when we encourage them, we are to lead by our example, too. It is good for them to see our own desire to study the Word and to grow spiritually.

They need to see our zeal for praying for more men to train for the ministry, too. Our need for more men is great. Are we encouraging our sons to consider this high calling? Some might think they are too weak a

means to pursue the ministry. The fact is, everyone is a weak means. The power is not the person who speaks but in the message itself. A mother recently shared with me that she told her little girl not to sleep in church because Jesus is speaking to her. With wide eyes her daughter said in utter surprise, "I didn't know that!" How stunning for all of us to contemplate the awesome blessing of Christ speaking to us through the preaching. May we hang onto that youthful amazement.

Our need is great for more Christian school teachers also. What a blessing our schools are for our children. It can get discouraging when we have difficulty filling teacher positions. May we encourage our youth to aspire to this important vocation as well.

Whether our youth are called to the ministry or teaching, all of our children are prophets who are called to bear witness to the truth. The Lord has given them many gifts. May we guide their youthful zeal, and appreciate their enthusiasm and curiosity. May we continue to be good listeners and encouragers for them, praying for the grace as those who have hope in Christ.

We can be guilty of discouraging our youth at times with our negative, pessimistic comments, especially when they have new ideas. Youth are good at thinking of new ideas, and just because it is new does not mean it cannot be considered. We do not want our children to be discouraged (Col. 3:21). Our youth will have many trials in life. May we remember to direct their attention to what God is doing and how amazing He is. He is always with us, listening to our prayers, and teaching us in His Word.



Remembering the days of old

Mr. James Holstege, member of Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan and administrator at Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Komt te achter aan? or, Are good things coming later?

A Regnerus family history in the PRCA

[A hearty thank you to all who have been and are working on the research and writing of their family history, for the benefit of us who are readers of the Standard Bearer. As we consider the past and look to the future, may God's grace shine through, for our encouragement and blessing.]

Jim Regnerus, the author of the following history, is principal of Trinity Christian HS in Hull, IA, elder in Doon PRC, husband of Brenda, and father of six children, including Rev. Stephan Regnerus, soon-to-be new pastor of Hull PRC.

A study of the Regnerus family history in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) is not only a look back but, from various points in history and even yet today, is a look forward in anticipation of what is coming. Hence, the curious title of this article.

It may help to understand the title if one first understands a few things about my parents. First, my dad was a rather loyal defender of my mom. Secondly, the two of them knew some Dutch. So as supper would be winding down, Dad might start wondering about dessert. However, to ask mom outright whether she had made a dessert was too risky in front of us kids. The answer might be no, and Dad worried that such could reflect negatively on mom. So the question was put in Dutch, *Komt te achter aan?*, or something like that. Crudely translated, it means, “Have you thought about something good that comes later?” While the ploy only faked us kids out for a meal or two, the phrase lives on in my mind as a bit of a snapshot of our family history. *Komt te achter aan?*¹ Have you thought about the coming good? While the family history includes

shipwreck, epidemics, deposition, and a Protestant Reformed church that most of the current generation never even heard of, it is still a story of God's covenant faithfulness. But I am getting way ahead of myself. Join me in a trip back through the years of God's way always being good, even when His people could not see that goodness coming.

Friesland to the Americas

The Regnerus² family history starts in the Dutch province of Friesland. My great-grandparents, Louis and Gertrude Regnerus, resided in the area of Marrum, Friesland. This was in the 1880s. They had a number of children and were quite Reformed in their outlook. They had many spiritual blessings, but they were also extremely poor materially. Louis worked as a hired man for an area farmer. The opportunity for career and economic advancement was completely zero at this time in Friesland. Louis knew this. He would never rise above being a hired hand. For that matter, neither would his sons nor his sons' sons. That is the way it was. Louis was usually content with this, but one can also imagine that sometimes Louis wondered what it would be like elsewhere, to live in a land of opportunity.

Indeed, the opportunity came! An agent came to Friesland who was recruiting men, especially men with sons, to relocate to a Dutch settlement in South America. *South* America, mind you! Land was cheap and fertile in Argentina. A ship was leaving soon for Buenos Aires, and one could join the other Dutchmen who were already gathering in the bounty of this new land. Louis made a decision driven by economics. He sold what

1 In my upbringing, the Dutch phrase was only used in reference to a dessert after supper. Relocating to northwest Iowa later in life, I encountered other Dutchmen who were also familiar with the phrase. However, they did not use the phrase to refer to dessert. It was no small source of amusement to me that, rather, they referred to a situation where a family seemingly has reached the end of child-bearing years, and the quiver seems to be full, so to speak, when five or ten years later another baby is born. That is what my Iowa friends call an *achter aan*. I guess that is like a dessert as well!

2 The name *Regnerus* does not sound very Dutch. It has no meaning in Dutch. However, take off the Latinate suffix *-us* and in French the name *Regner* means “to reign.” That is the first evidence that maybe, just maybe, we are of French Huguenot ancestry. The second evidence is that some of the persecuted Huguenots fleeing France at the time of the Reformation did actually find refuge in Friesland. The third, and flimsiest, evidence of French ancestry is that our pedigree is littered with family members with the common French first name of Louis. The name supposedly means “valiant warrior” in French, but there are still plenty of Dutchmen named Louis.

little he had and bought passage for his young family on the *SS Leerdam I* (photo below). My grandfather, Reindert Regnerus, was two years old at this time. Born in 1887, it was 1889 when his parents were on the move. Argentina, here we come!



And then, the fatherly hand of God showed that Argentina was not His plan.

The *Leerdam* was hardly at sea when calamity struck. In the thick fog that can envelop the North Sea, the *Leerdam* collided with a British merchant ship. The two vessels, impaled together, began their slow descent into the cold waters. The *Leerdam* is at the absolute bottom of the North Sea to this very day. No more Argentina. God had a different goodness planned for the family.

The passengers on the *Leerdam*, rescued by the French *Emma* and brought back to the harbor from which they had just departed, faced this hardship with strong resolve. The Regnerus' minimal existence resumed as it had before, albeit now with even less money. Louis did not shake his fist at the sky over his waylaid plans, although he did have some advice for his children. His advice was that as soon as they reached an age when they could subsist on their own, they get out of the Netherlands and live somewhere that offered more opportunity, even if it meant leaving one at a time for faraway lands.

My grandfather Reindert listened to his father. He eventually got out of the Netherlands. Although, this time North America was the destination.

The Ellis Island record shows that Reindert Regnerus immigrated in 1916. That would make him about age 29. He settled in the southwest Chicago suburb of Oak Lawn, IL, at that time a rather rural setting. Reindert was an active member in the Oak Lawn Christian Reformed Church. Dora Leistra became his bride. As with the case of many Chicago Dutchmen, Reindert's first jobs were in the garbage industry. Later, he rented a twenty-acre vegetable farm near the intersection of 87th and Ridgeland Ave. from a relative, and that is how and where he raised his family the rest of his working days. He was content.³ Yet, while God had trials for

Reindert and Dora, God also had a great goodness in store for them. *Achter aan*.

The Oak Lawn years

Reindert and Dora were blessed quickly with three young children, Margaret, Louis, and Evelyn. However, their early happiness was soon shaken to the core. An epidemic swept through the Chicago area. Louis and Evelyn contracted the dreaded disease in 1922 at ages 3 and 2. I am unsure which one perished first, but I do know that Reindert and Dora hardly dared to leave the bedside of the living to attend the funeral of the deceased. It was decided that Reindert would attend the funeral of the deceased child while Dora stayed with the ailing child. And then, while Dora sat alone with the ailing child, and Reindert buried the deceased child, the one under Dora's care also fell into the sleep of death. Unutterable grief for this young couple. Two funerals in the span of a few days. That was 1922.

1923 started a whirlwind of events for Reindert and Dora.

First, the Lord who had taken away also gave. Twin sons! Jacob and Louis! Except Dora was *not* immediately saying, "Blessed be the name of the Lord," at least according to oral history. Her response almost seems unnatural, but can we find a little understanding for an anguished mother? There she stood twisting her hands together, her eyes moving back and forth between two shoe boxes, each containing a twin. Twins born at home. Premie twins. Twins with a hernia. One twin with a severely crooked back. It is 1923, remember. Having buried two toddlers in just the year prior, and the two newborns not looking so great either, Dora anguished of how she could possibly face two more funerals.

Yet, God had something better ahead. *Achter aan*. Dora heeded the minister's word of encouragement and eventually took to the twins. They did not die. In fact, they flourished and brought great joy to Reindert and Dora. The twins both enjoyed about fourscore years. Great joy! But we will get back to the twins in a bit.

The second big event going on for Reindert and Dora centered about their church life. This was not so joyful. Reindert was now an elder in the Oak Lawn CRC. Common grace, and the CRC adoption of the Three Points in 1924, was on everybody's mind. Reindert was wrestling mightily. He was not in agreement with his

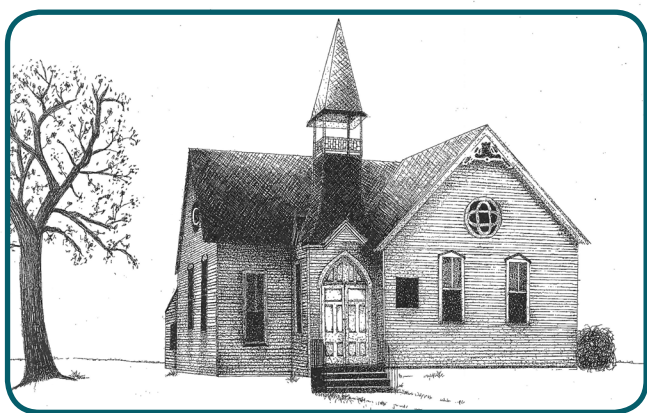
sion where one might start as a hired hand for another farmer, then become a tenant farmer on rented land, and finally be a land-owning farmer. Reindert reached the level of being a tenant farmer and no more. The only plot of land in America to ever have his name on it is his burial plot.

³ In America's agricultural economy, there is a desired progres-

denomination's position on the matter. Such is not a comfortable spot to be in, and I can only imagine the turmoil in Reindert's soul.

I am unsure of the exact sequence of events, but I can figure out that three things happened starting in 1923 and spilling into 1924 and 1925. The first is that Reindert protested the Three Points to the CRC Synod. The second is that Reindert was part of a group that invited Rev. Herman Hoeksema to lecture in Oak Lawn, a lecture that Reindert attended. The third thing is that Reindert got deposed.

Yet, once again, God had something better in store for Reindert and Dora.



Drawing of the Oak Lawn PRC by Pam (Regnerus) Teunissen, Jim's daughter, for a high school art class in 2016

The Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church was organized in 1927. Reindert and Dora now had a church home that was small but sturdy. Oak Lawn was never a large church, but it was lively, spiritually strong, and even hosted the third Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention in 1941. The Oak Lawn church weathered the split of 1953 with minimal effect. It was in the Oak Lawn Protestant Reformed Church that my dad, Louis, married my mom, Martha Wierenga,⁴ and Dad's twin brother, Jacob, married Rena Rutgers. All of the twins' children, including myself, were baptized in the Oak Lawn church. Several of their older children made confession of Faith in Oak Lawn. It was a good church that the Regnerus clan loved.

⁴ The Wierenga emigration to America differed from the Regnerus emigration, although both families ended up as neighboring farmers in Oak Lawn. The Wierenga emigration was later, happening in the late 1920's. My mother, Martha, was born in Groningen and emigrated just in time for first grade. The Wierenga emigration was not for economic reasons, but for spiritual. Willem Wierenga, my grandfather, had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the direction of the church in the Netherlands. Hearing of the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America was the motive for the emigration.

The church was spiritually-minded, as were the families. I list one exhibit of how it translated into family life. Some readers may be aware that the fare for supper on a Saturday night at a Regnerus home runs a fairly high likelihood of being hamburgers. While today it is maybe observed as tradition, Saturday night hamburgers started as a spiritual decision. You see, the next day is Sunday, and preparation for Sunday started Saturday afternoon. The Sunday noon meal was largely prepared to the point where it only needed to be placed in the oven. Sunday shoes were polished and lined up by the door so there would be no scramble to find them on Sunday morning. And the Saturday evening meal was going to be simple and predictable so that the mothers of the home were not burdened with any extra *drukte*.⁵ Hamburgers it would be.

Oak Lawn PRC was a sturdy church home for the Regnerus family. However, the church was not to last.



l to r: Reindert Regnerus, Willem Wierenga, Rev. C. Hanco, John Buiter, Richard Kort

Sadly, the Oak Lawn church did not endure to see its 50th anniversary. One can look to three matters that contributed to its demise. First, the post-WWII economic boon skipped right over this little flock. If the reader ever reads Rev. C. Hanco's memoirs, *Less than the Least*, they will remember how he vividly recounts the pre-war poverty that clung to Oak Lawn. When things did not change a lot after the war, the subsequent decades saw families move away in pursuit of a fresh start elsewhere. Secondly, a school controversy in the mid-1960's rocked the church. And thirdly, hard on the heels of the school controversy came another controversy that would be the final blow to Oak Lawn. A minister who had been a faithful and diligent shepherd

⁵ Dutch for "busyness."

became embroiled in a turmoil that scattered what was left of the little flock.

Concerning the Regnerus family, Jacob Regnerus moved his family to Randolph, WI, in 1968. The Oak Lawn congregation limped along a bit and then disbanded in 1971. The family of Louis Regnerus, my dad's family, stayed around to the end. I was about nine years old at this time. I remember Rev. R. Decker coming over from South Holland PRC to lead the final worship service. And then the lights went out in what had been a good congregation. My parents grieved deeply.

And still, in His covenant faithfulness, God again had something better for us. *Achter aan*.

God's faithfulness to the present

With Oak Lawn's disbanding, the Jacob Regnerus family continued to flourish up in Wisconsin while the Louis Regnerus family made preparations to move to South Holland, twenty miles to the south.

There was a certain level of nervousness involved in this move to South Holland. It was not just the scariness of going to a new church and meeting new people. Nor was it even that the Regnerus clan thought of itself as rather plain, even borderline cruddy, and we wondered how we would ever fit in with what we thought were the suave and cosmopolitan people of South Holland. Our fear ran even deeper. The reader should understand how an embarrassing part of our history is that the school controversy of the 1960's had been *between* Oak Lawn and South Holland. The controversy was over, but would South Holland still welcome us?

In a great testimony of God's healing mercy, and as a miraculous exhibit of people with big hearts and spiritual fortitude, the South Holland congregation welcomed us with open and loving arms! What followed were many years of a spiritual feast of solid preaching and a fully-orbed congregational life. We even found

the saints there to be more like us than we had thought! What a blessing!

From this point on the Regnerus family history in the PRCA gets too spread out to keep the reader's mind clear. Generations grew old and were taken to glory, and new generations arose. Through marriage and career relocations, the Regnerus clan got more scattered. If Oak Lawn was the bastion of the clan in the early days, I would probably give the nod to Randolph PRC for the present. Most of the Jacob Regnerus family worships there, and also several of the Louis Regnerus family have migrated there. A portion of the family is still in the Illinois/Indiana area, and others of us have spread out to sundry spots across the denomination. We still love our church life. Our vocational callings are nothing unheard of. We drive dump trucks, raise families, make waffle mix, teach, preach, pound nails, wire houses, and so on.

Komt te achter aan. So what's coming next?

Of course, only the Lord knows the future. However, we do not continue in fear. We stand with our forefathers in the principles of the Reformation. The truth of God's church is strong and beautiful. We mark the bulwarks of the church. We consider her palaces. And we tell it to the generation following (Ps. 48).

We love the instituted church. We are still in the age of the church. Congregations are a beautiful manifestation of the body of Christ, but even congregations rise and fall. Yet, God is always faithful. God did not abandon the Regnerus generations with the closing of the Oak Lawn congregation. Neither will God abandon His people when the age of the instituted church reaches its end. He will be with us until Christ returns on the clouds of glory.

And then, finally, we will not say *achter aan* any more. Then we will *live* that glory with Him for eternity.



Bring the books...

Mr. Charles Terpstra, member of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan and full-time librarian/registrar/archivist at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary and SB book review editor

The following book is reviewed by Dr. Marco Barone, member of Southwest PRC in Wyoming, Michigan and book coordinator at the Reformed Free Publishing Association.

James Durham, *A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, ed. Chris Coldwell. Dallas, TX-

Grand Rapids, MI. Naphtali Press and Reformation Heritage Books, 2018. Hardcover. \$40.00. 432 pages.

The idea that Reformed preaching should “focus on what God does in our lives rather than emphasizing how we should live” is popular in many Reformed corners. However, that a life of thankful obedience can take place only on the basis and by virtue of Christ’s redemption does not warrant this false dichotomy between redemption and gratitude. In fact, both the Bible and the creeds emphasize both our redemption and our holy walk in gratitude, without contradiction. In the Old Testament, God’s call to His covenant people to be holy as He is holy is loud, mighty, and present everywhere. Every book of the New Testament emphasizes both redemption and gratitude. Finally, the third part of the Heidelberg Catechism is entirely dedicated to our gratitude.

James Durham (1622-1658) disagrees with said false dichotomy, as is testified by this 348-page exposition of the ten commandments. Durham was a great seventeenth-century Scottish divine and minister. After his conversion, he dedicated himself to the study of theology and to the ministry with inflexible assiduity, leading biographers to believe that those efforts contributed to his early death. *A Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments* is one of the fruits of his labors.

Durham discusses the ten commandments in ten chapters, one commandment in each chapter. The author expounds on the meaning, the reasons, and the practical applications of each commandment. The book, however, is not limited to exterior Christian behavior. In fact, Durham understands the spirituality of the law and, therefore, he places his exposition on the commandments in its proper context, that is, in a biblical doctrine of sin, of the nature of God, of salvation, and of Christ. More importantly, Durham clarifies in several places the main goal of his work on the law, that is, not only to expose our misery but also to lead us to Christ, the only place to find pardon and grace for renewed power unto holiness.

The scope of all is to discover your superficialness and overliness [*carelessness*] in examining yourselves,

to put you to be more serious in that necessary and useful exercise and to teach you by what command you should most examine yourselves, even by this tenth command, as being that which will make the clearest and most thoroughly searching discovery of yourselves to yourselves, and will best rid marches [*mark the borders*] between you and hypocrites; to put you in thankfulness to acknowledge, and with admiration to adore the exceeding great goodness of God, in providing and giving a Mediator on whom He hath laid all these innumerable iniquities of all His people, which would have sunk them eternally under the unsupportable weight of them; to let you see how absolutely necessary, how unspeakably useful, and steadable He is to so many ways, and so deeply guilty sinners; and withal to lead you to improve and make use of Him for doing them away, both as to the guilt and filth of them—which when God shall, for Christ’s sake, be graciously pleased to do, will not every believing soul have reason to say and sing to the commendation of His grace: *Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity?* Micah 7:18. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.* Psalm 103:3. *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sin in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.* Revelation 1:5-6. (348)

Durham’s English is seventeenth-century English, which slows down the reading for a contemporary reader. Not all readers will agree with every point and conclusion set forth in this treatise. Nevertheless, this book is a remarkable piece from the Protestant orthodoxy of the past. Relatedly, Durham’s book can be considered not only an exposition of the ten commandments, but also a work of Christian ethics from the Puritan era, a fascinating window into the seventeenth-century Reformed view of Christian life and morality.

The title is a good library addition for all those who love church history and exegesis, or simply for those who would like a challenging but spiritually rewarding reading of a significant book from the church of the past.

Report of Classis West

Meeting March 1-2, 2023

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met on March 1-2, 2023, in Lynden PRC (Lynden, WA). This small congregation did an outstanding job of hosting the twenty-eight delegates from the fourteen churches in the Classis.

Classis began on Wednesday, March 1, with opening devotions led by the chairman of the previous meeting, Rev. M. Kortus (pastor of Hope Redlands PRC), who gave a fitting meditation on Psalm 20. After Classis was legally constituted, the meeting was capably chaired by Rev. Jonathan Langerak (pastor of Covenant of Grace



Lynden PRC

PRC), who was serving in this capacity for the first time in his ministry.

Five first-time delegates to Classis signed the Formula of Subscription, the minutes of the previous meeting of Classis were approved, and the four questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered. Routine reports of the stated clerk, classical committee, and reading sermon committee were read and approved. The church visitors reported on their work over the last year and the presence of unity, peace, and love prevailing in the churches in spite of the hardships of the last year.

After recessing for the late morning and most of the afternoon for the committees of pre-advice to prepare advice, Classis met and gave approval to Prof. D. Kuiper to publish some material from the Classis West archives in upcoming articles he intends to write in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* on the history of Classis West.

Classis made a schedule of pulpit supply for the five vacant congregations in the Classis: Doon (IA) PRC, Hosanna PRC (Edmonton), Loveland (CO) PRC, Lynden (WA) PRC, and Randolph (WI) PRC. Due to the large number of vacancies in Classis West, it was decided to ask Classis East for assistance in covering two Sundays for each of the vacant congregations in the next six months.

Classis approved the subsidy requests for 2024 for five congregations and forwarded them on to Synod 2023 for its approval.

Classis treated in closed session an appeal in which a victim of child sexual abuse objected to a consistory's discipline work with the perpetrator of the abuse. Classis permitted close loved ones of the victim to be present in the sessions and also allowed a pastor and another individual to speak on the victim's behalf. Classis unanimously sustained the first part of the appeal and declared that the consistory erred in accepting the initial confession of the perpetrator. Classis judged that a more thorough investigation of the nature and extent of the sin was required, that confession of sin to those

sinned against should have taken place before an announcement of reconciliation was read in the church, and that later events seriously called into question the genuineness of the confession. Classis also unanimously sustained the second part of the appeal and declared that the consistory erred in their announcement of the perpetrator's sin. Classis judged that the announcement of sin should have included more information regarding the specific nature of the sin committed: rather than merely a general reference to sin against the 7th commandment, the announcement should have included a reference to the 6th commandment and that this was a case of child sexual abuse by an adult in a position of authority over a period of several years. Classis also explained how this was necessary for the covenant community, the sinner, and the victim. Classis also appointed a special committee to provide assistance to the consistory in this case.

Having met until about 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Classis decided to recess until the following morning.

The next day, Thursday, March 2, Classis began by treating an overture from a consistory. The consistory submitted to Classis an overture to be forwarded to Synod 2023 that Synod appoint a committee to research and engage an independent, third-party investigation to conduct an investigation into sexual abuse in the PRCA. Classis decided not to forward the overture to Synod, on the grounds that: 1) the overture had insufficient information for Classis to make an informed judgment to approve the request, and 2) that with the limited information provided about what would be the nature and work of a third-party investigation, the overture did not show the necessity of such an investigation from the Scriptures.

Throughout the meeting, Classis also voted for various classical functionaries. Rev. J. Engelsma was reappointed to a three-year term as Stated Clerk, and Rev. J. Langerak was reappointed to a three-year term as Assistant Stated Clerk. Rev. M. De Boer was reappointed to a three-year term on the Classical Committee, and Rev. R. Barnhill was appointed to a one-year term to fill a vacant position. Rev. A. Brummel was appointed to a three-year term as a primus synodical deputy, Rev. M. De Boer was re-appointed to a three-year term as a secundus synodical deputy, Rev. J. Marcus was appointed to a one-year term as a secundus synodical deputy to fill a vacant position, and Rev. S. Regnerus was appointed to a two-year term as a secundus synodical deputy to fill a vacant position. Classis appointed Revs. A. Brummel, R. Hanko, S. Key, and J. Marcus as church visitors, with Revs. R. Barnhill and J. Engelsma as alternates.

Ministers delegated to Synod 2023 were Revs. R. Barnhill, A. Brummel, J. Engelsma, M. Kortus, and J.

Marcus. Alternates are Revs. H. Bleyenbergh, M. De Boer, J. Langerak, and S. Regnerus. Elders delegated to Synod 2023 were Keith Bruinsma (Peace), Chester Hunter, Jr. (Edgerton), James Regnerus (Doon), Peter Smit (Hope), and Ryan Van Overloop (Crete). Alternates are Robert Brands (Loveland), Travis Feensstra (Hope), Steve Huizenga (Crete), Alvern Miersma (Hope), and Joel Moore (Loveland).

Classis appointed Rev. J. Langerak as the moderator for Lynden PRC in their upcoming vacancy. Classis finished its work around 12:30 p.m. on Thursday.

The expenses of this meeting totaled \$17,638.94.

Classis will meet next in Crete (IL) PRC on September 27, 2023, the Lord willing.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma
Stated Clerk, Classis West



News from our churches

Mr. Charles Terpstra, member of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan and full-time librarian/registrar/archivist at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

PRC news (denominational)

Loveland PRC's Consistory published a new trio of Rev. D. Noorman (Southwest PRC-Wyoming, MI), Rev. J. Smidstra (First PRC-Holland, MI), and Rev. C. Spronk (Faith PRC-Jenison, MI). On March 12 they extended a call to Rev. Smidstra.

Randolph PRC has a new trio from the Consistory to consider: Revs. N. Decker (Grandville-MI PRC), J. Maatman (SE-Grand Rapids PRC), and D. Noorman. The congregation called on March 26.

In PRC Seminary news, the second semester is over the halfway point, which means that mid-term exams/tests were recently taken, and students are working

diligently on their major Reformed Dogmatics papers among their other assignments. After a long 'no-break' stretch, the faculty and students will enjoy a much-anticipated Spring Break April 3-7. Due to the shortage of ministers in the area, the professors and two eligible students have been extra busy with preaching assignments. During the spring semester the seminary usually receives some special visitors—students from area PR Christian Schools. In February the 5th graders from Adams Christian School paid a visit. In March the 4th graders from Hope PRCS visited. And plans are being made for the annual May visit of the church history students from Covenant CHS. These are busy but wonderful times for the seminary and, we trust, for the students. Work is being done on the Spring 2023 issue of the *PR Theological Journal*. Watch for the news of that publication soon! And, if you wish to be added to the mailing list to receive it, call or email the seminary.

Most of us have seen the early notification about the PRC 100th anniversary celebration. The February/March announcement ran like this: "With gratitude to our faithful God, the PRCA look forward to our 100th anniversary. The celebration is planned for June 23-27, 2025 at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, MI." And then members were asked to respond to a survey about attendance. We certainly hope that you did and are planning to be part of this wonderful event. Allow me as denominational archivist to ask that you



consider donating any and all items of archival (historical) significance before then—photos, recordings, documents, souvenir booklets, YP’s Convention items, etc.—denominational, congregational, and personal (family). Please send to or stop by the PRC Seminary with your items. I’ll be looking for you!

Congregational news

It’s the spring season of family visitation in the churches, and what a blessing it is that our pastors and elders take seriously their calling to shepherd the flocks entrusted to them in this way. A glance at various themes published in the bulletins reveals the variety of perspectives taken in visiting the members. Here’s a few examples:

- Edgerton-MN PRC: Pure Religion (James 1:26, 27)
- Faith PRC-Jenison, MI: Strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10-18)
- Georgetown PRC-Hudsonville, MI: Thanksgiving for One Another (Phil. 1:3-9)
- Hudsonville-MI PRC: Trusting in the Lord (Prov. 3:5, 6)
- Peace PRC-Dyer, IN: Searching the Scriptures: A Personal, Family, and Congregational Duty (Acts 17:11)

Heritage PRC-Sioux Falls, SD is hosting the annual Spring Ladies League on Thursday, April 27th.

Hope PRC-Walker, MI has found an interesting way to finish its Bible society season on April 25: “We would like to invite all societies, young and old, to an end of the society season special talk and slide show presentation on the 1953 history of the PRCA. Come join together for a fitting close of the society season. Any adult member of the congregation who is not a member of a society is also invited to join us.”

Sister-church news

Did you know the catechism season begins in March in our sister church in Singapore? In an early March bulletin of Covenant ERC, all the classes were laid out and the students were asked to meet with Pastors Tan and Wee for a “briefing.”

Also, Covenant ERC has her annual church camp planned out according to recent bulletins:

- Speaker: Rev Angus Stewart, Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Northern Ireland
- Theme: Come, Let Us Build the Wall! (Neh 2:17)
- Venue: Pulau Spring, Johore, Malaysia
- Date: 19-22 June 2023 (Mon-Thu)

In the PRC, Philippines, this notice about Berean PRC’s mission labors regularly appears in her bulletin: “Rev. V. Ibe and family will visit the saints in All of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship (AGPRF), Gabaldon, NE., today.... Rev. Ibe will lead the saints there in their worship service at 9 A.M. and followed by their Bible study at 10:45 A.M.” But in her March 5 bulletin, it was added that Rev. Ibe led “‘the Dumagat’ also known as the Agta tribe in Bugnan, Gabaldon, N.E. in the study of God’s Word based on Acts 17 at 3 P.M. on Saturday [March 04, 2023].”

In Provident PRC, Rev. R. Smit leads the Wednesday night Bible study on the book of Acts, while Rev. D. Kleyn teaches the catechism to the children on Saturday mornings (OT History) and to the young people (Belgic Confession) on Sunday afternoons.

And, would you meet for a Bible study on Saturday mornings at 9:30? How about online? That’s what they are doing in Covenant PRC in Ballymena, Northern Ireland! They are studying I Thessalonians currently.

Food for thought

“And what were some of the darts hurled by Satan at Jesus? The devil tempted Him to distrust God, to commit self-destruction, to yield to the splendor, riches, and possessions of the world, to pay him religious homage. Such was the fiery ordeal through which the Son of God passed. O my soul! count it a great honor to be tempted by the same tempter and with the same temptations as your blessed Jesus, through whom you shall get the victory. Jesus was now being made like unto His brethren. It was necessary, in order to His perfect sympathy with us, that He should be in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

Fly to Him, then, O tempted one, accept your present temptation as sent to make you better acquainted with His preciousness, His sympathy, His grace, His changeless love. Regard it, also, as a part of that spiritual discipline that is to teach your hands to war, and your fingers to fight in the present with the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to prepare you to take your place among the palm-bearing conquerors of heaven, who overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, who shout the victor’s song, and cast their crowns at Jesus’ feet. “Take the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

—Octavius Winslow
(found in Covenant of Grace PRC’s bulletin)

Announcements

Wedding anniversary

With thanksgiving to our covenant-keeping God, we congratulate our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents **Prof. Russell and Carol Dykstra** on their 50th wedding anniversary on March 23, 2023. We thank God for His goodness shown to them in their marriage and the blessing that they have been to their children and grandchildren. We pray that God continues to bless them and keep them for many more years to come. “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. (Psalm 103:17, 18)

Craig and Heather Hoksbergen
Mike and Heidi Poortinga
Chris and Laura Dykstra
Ryan and Michelle Dykstra
Nathan and Melanie Dykstra
Jordan and Kaylynn Dykstra

Doug and Emily Zwak
Thomas and Courtney Andringa
Phil and Holly Cnossen
43 grandchildren
4 great-grandchildren

Byron Center, Michigan

Wedding anniversary

With joy and thankfulness to God, we honor and celebrate our parents, **Pete and Julie Zandstra**, as they celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on April 6, 2023. The Lord has been faithful to them and our families throughout the years. We are so grateful for their godly example and upbringing. We pray that God may continue to bless them! “For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

Matt and Brenda Bennett
Jeff and Laura Schaaf
Andy and Sandra Dykstra
Dale and Cindy Zandstra
Chad and Pam Dykstra

Joanna Zandstra
Brett and Denise Zandstra
24 grandchildren
1 great-grandchild

Dyer, Indiana

Reformed Witness Hour reformedwitnesshour.org

Prof. Cory Griess

April 2—Irresistible Grace (1)
John 6:37
April 8—Irresistible Grace (2)
John 6:44, 65, 66
April 16—Preservation of the Saints (1)
John 10:27-29
April 23—Whosoever Will
Revelation 22:19
April 30—Preservation of the Saints (2)
John 10:27-29

PRC Synod 2023

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2023, are hereby notified that all material for this year’s synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Doug Mingerink Sr.
(dougi@mingerink.com)
or mail to the same at
4949 Ivanrest SW
Wyoming, MI 49418

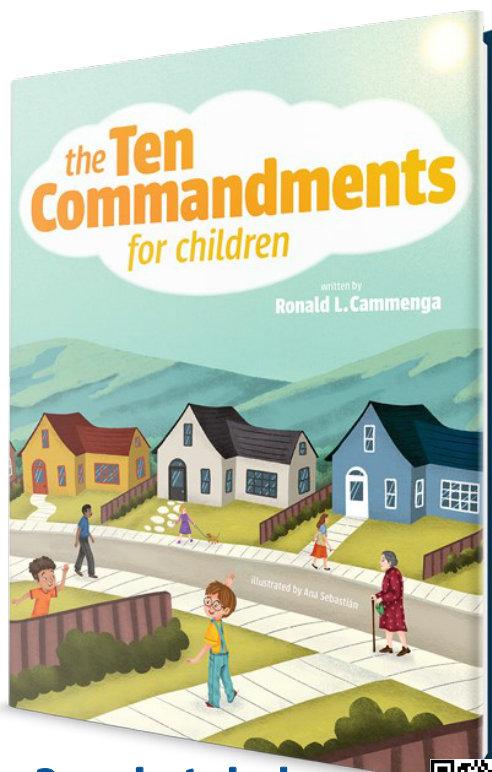
Announcements continued

Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 10, 2023 at 8:00 A.M., in the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, MI. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 10, 2016.

Rev. Clayton Spronk, Stated Clerk

The Ten Commandments for Children



Coming May 2023!

Written by **Prof. Ronald Cammenga**

Illustrated by **Ana Sebastián**



Teaches kids what God's law is, the reason we keep God's law, and how we obey—by loving God and our neighbor.

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