



REFORMED

— PAVILION —

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 25

SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

CONTENTS

3 MEDITATION

4 FROM THE EDITOR

5 REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

6 DOCUMENT
Singing with Christ

14 EDITORIAL
Reply to “Singing with Christ”

26 HERMAN HOEKSEMA’S BANNER ARTICLES
Article 25: The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)



Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning
From the Ramparts Editor: Dewey Engelsma

See reformedpavilion.com for all contact and subscription information.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land. And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips? And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt...And it came to pass on the day when the LORD spake unto Moses in the land of Egypt, that the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I am the LORD: speak thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say unto thee. And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?

—Exodus 6:10–13, 28–30

Moses had uncircumcised lips. What did Moses mean by this unusual statement? Moses meant that he lacked eloquence and persuasiveness. Moses meant that his speech was blundering and ignorant. Moses used the metaphor of circumcision because it captured in one word the difference between something special and something common, between something wise and something ignorant. The Jews were God's special people, and circumcision was the mark of God's favor upon them. All other men were uncircumcised—they were common; they were ignorant; they were not privy to the secrets of Jehovah. Moses applied this distinction to his lips by a metaphor. Moses' lips were uncircumcised—his lips were common, his lips were ignorant, his lips were blundering, his lips were not special, his lips were not wise, his lips were not eloquent. They were uncircumcised lips!

By this statement Moses was trying to explain why no one would listen to him. Moses was searching for the reason that Israel remained in bondage, even though God had said that he would bring Israel out of Egypt. God kept sending Moses to speak to people, but those people kept denying and disbelieving what Moses said. First Pharaoh and now the people of Israel.

Moses concluded that it had been all his fault. If only Moses could have said the right thing. If only Moses could have been more persuasive. If only Moses could have been more prepared. If only Moses could have been more nimble in conversation. But he had uncircumcised lips! When he most needed special powers of speech and persuasion, he was nothing but common. Why would Pharaoh even consider listening to him again?

It is a familiar lament, felt keenly by God's people who have endured the disbelief, scorn, and wrath of a hardened audience. If only I could find the right words to get through to them. If only I could keep up with their points better. If only we could have one more article, one more sermon, one more speech. But my lips are uncircumcised!

But the power of God is not found in the wisdom of men. The power of God's word is not carried upon the eloquence of men. God is God. God's word endureth forever. Even when stammered and stuttered by uncircumcised lips, God's word does not return to him void but accomplishes God's every purpose. And through the foolishness of preaching, it pleaseth God to save them that believe.

As for Moses, he had to realize that his lips were uncircumcised. Now every human being

involved had failed. Pharaoh had been hardened. Israel had not believed. Moses had despaired of himself. There was nothing left but God and God's promise. The only power that could bring God's word to pass was God himself. Man's helplessness is the perfect backdrop to highlight the wonder of God's power.

And as for Moses, he was only the type. Moses had uncircumcised lips. But behold the

antitype, the reality, Jesus Christ. And behold his gracious lips!

"Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever" (Ps. 45:2).

"And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke 4:22a).

—AL

FROM THE EDITOR

September has come and is almost gone. Green has started to bleed from the forests and fields and is steadily being replaced with the oranges and yellows and browns and reds of autumn. The smoke of some early burning leaves and the chill of the air announce that seedtime and summer and heat quickly flee. The season looks and feels and smells like change. Man is not exempt from such change. He flourishes in the spring of his youth, but his strength and glory soon fade away. Man is like the grass of the field, soon brown and sear. The glory of man is like the flower of the field, soon withered and fallen.

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting!

And the word of our God endureth forever!

Included in this issue is an announcement of a Reformation Day lecture. Be sure to check out the details. We would love to see you at the lecture and/or hear from you in the questions.

Also included in this issue is a document that has been widely distributed among the Reformed Protestant Churches and Remnant Reformed Church. Because the undersigned includes a response to that document as the editorial this week, the document is reprinted here for the readers' convenience. The document is a grief. How is the Reformed Protestant gold become dim! How is the daughter of my people become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness! Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.

—AL



REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

THE GOOD LAW & THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

OCTOBER 31, 2023
7:30PM

The distinction between the law and the gospel is the most important distinction in the Christian faith.

Martin Luther: "Distinguishing between the law and the gospel is the highest art in Christendom, one who every person who values the name Christian ought to recognize, know, and possess."

The distinction between the law and the gospel is of great comfort for the child of God. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

For these reasons, the distinction between the law and the gospel is the most heavily assaulted doctrine in the Christian faith. This Reformation Day, join us for an explanation and defense of the great distinction between God's good law and God's glorious gospel.

HOST

Remnant Reformed
Church

SPEAKER

Rev. Andrew Lanning

FORMAT

Lecture followed by
Q&A and refreshments

VENUE

The Pinnacle Center, 3330 Highland Drive, Hudsonville, MI 49426

Questions can be submitted either before or after the lecture via the Contact page of our website

www.remnantreformedchurch.org

Singing with Christ

Introduction

Singing with Christ: The Gospel at Stake

I believe the gospel is at stake in Rev. Lanning’s teaching of “singing with Christ.” The purpose of this document is to explain how I believe this teaching attacks the gospel and binds the worshiper back under the condemnation of the law. Rev. Lanning leads his people back into bondage by making the church’s song choice determinative in the experience of “singing with Christ,” of having fellowship with Christ, and in experiencing the blessing of “doing things and having things with Christ.” The gospel is that God chose, before the foundation of the world, a certain number of persons to give to Christ, to be saved by Him, and to effectually call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit.¹ It is God that powerfully chooses to preserve us in the fellowship of His Son in worship, regardless of the song choice of the church. That the church possesses unconditional fellowship in worship was established in the cross of Christ and purchased by His own blood. There at the cross, He established the unshakeable ground of the church’s liberty to be free from the bondage of needing to be pleasing and acceptable to God on account of our song choice. Believing that comforting gospel, the church is thankful for the gift of the psalms and we sing them only out of thankfulness and praise to our Savior. The believer does not sing in order to have the blessing of “singing with Christ.”

¹ Canons, Head 1, Art. 7

² “There is a question of the application of the regulative principle to the singing of the church, especially this question: Does the regulative principle require exclusive psalmody? We will look at that question tonight, but that does not mean that this topic for the church of Jesus Christ is something fearful, not something to be afraid of whatsoever. This is the matter of your worship. It is the matter of God dwelling with you and bringing you into his covenant fellowship through the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rev. Lanning, “The Regulative Principle of Worship” (<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=312232237135528>)

³ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf> (page 6)

⁴ Ibid

I. Singing with Christ: Definitions

A. Rev. Lanning clearly states when he is speaking of “singing with Christ,” he is referring to “doing things and having things with Christ.” In addition to singing, Rev. Lanning’s examples of “doing things and having things with Christ” are “fellowship”² and “suffering with Christ.”³

1. *“The truth of the matter is that we **do** sing with Jesus Christ. That is no snare; there is nothing sneaky about that. For example, in I John 1 we read that our fellowship is with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3). Again, in Romans 8:17 we read that we suffer with Christ. Doing things and having things with Jesus Christ is no false doctrine; it is no snare; it is simply the truth of the Christian life.”* (emphasis—Rev. Lanning)⁴

B. I agree with the expression that the believer has things with Christ. In “having things with Christ,” I understand this to be the teaching that, through the work of the Holy Spirit by faith, the believer receives, partakes and possesses the benefits Christ has earned by His blood. I would, however, like to add a few more examples from the creeds and Scripture that refer to “having things with Christ.”

1. Ephesians 2:5 teaches that God, “even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).”

2. We are “buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”⁵
 3. Rev. Lanning cited “suffering with Christ” from Romans 8:17, but that passage also includes being “glorified together.”
 4. Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 12 and many other passages in the creeds and sacraments speak of Christians being “a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of His anointing.”⁶
 5. In “having things with Christ,” we “suffer with Christ,” enjoy “saving fellowship” with Christ, are “partakers of Christ and all His benefits,” are “quicken together with Christ,” and “risen with Christ.” In essence, “having things with Christ” is to be “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”⁷
- C. The teaching Rev. Lanning refers to as “doing things with Christ” is a teaching I am not entirely certain he has clearly defined.⁸ “Doing things” is not the same

thing as “having things.” Doing good works is not the same thing as receiving and partaking. If one speaks of “doing things,” I understand this to be the teaching that “therefore we do good works,...we are beholden to God for the good works we do, and not He to us, since it is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”⁹ Good works, such as singing in obedience to the second commandment, are a doing, and as a doing are *only* a fruit of “having” received the benefits of salvation by faith.

II. Singing with Christ: The Rub

- A. Rev. Lanning has taught that “the rub” in the division between the Remnant Reformed (RR) and the Reformed Protestant Churches (RPC) is the RPC believes “*that we do not sing with Jesus*” and that it is false to say that we as a congregation “sing with Jesus.” In addition, Rev. Lanning points out that the RPC asserts “*that the truth of singing with Jesus was laid out as a kind of sneaky trap to ensnare the people of God.*”¹⁰
1. “*Therefore, on the one hand there is the historic doctrine of the Reformed Protestant Churches that we do sing with Christ, and on the other hand there is the*

⁵ Col.2:12

⁶ LD 20 teaches “that He is also given me, to make me, by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits, that He may comfort me and abide with me forever.” LD 25 continues explaining that “we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only.” The Lord’s Supper form speaks of this same comfort: “we see that He directs our faith and trust to His perfect sacrifice (once offered on the cross) as to the only ground and foundation of our salvation,..for by His death He hath..obtained for us the quickening Spirit, that we by the same (who dwelleth in Christ as in the head, and in us as His members) might have true communion with Him, and be made partakers of all His blessings, of life eternal, righteousness, and glory.” As those who have “obtained the pardon of sin and life eternal,” LD 28 explains the beautiful truth that we “become more and more united to His sacred body by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us; so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; and that we live and are governed forever by one Spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.” The Lord’s Supper form ends in prayer with the beautiful request that “through the operation of Thy Holy Spirit, the commemoration of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ may tend to the daily increase of our faith, and saving fellowship with Him, through Jesus Christ Thy Son.”

⁷ Ephesians 3: 16, 17

⁸ As a side note, Rev. Lanning does not teach our activity of singing as only a fruit in the entirety of the doctrine’s class or subsequent article in the Reformed Pavilion. In fact, “fruit” is not even mentioned. If there is any terminology that should be used in regard to singing, the Reformed creeds and Scripture are at pains to teach our good works are only fruits of thankfulness. Instead of using prevalent Reformed terminology like “fruit,” Rev. Lanning dabbles with “doing things with Christ.” Even if Rev. Lanning would use the word “fruit,” it wouldn’t help matters as our activity of singing is not given the function of a fruit of thankfulness in his doctrine of “singing with Christ.” <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf>

⁹ Belgic Confession Article 24.

¹⁰ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf> (page 6)

*new doctrine of the Reformed Protestant Churches that we do not sing with Christ. Those two positions demand that the question that faces us at the beginning of this speech is a question of whether— whether we sing with Christ or not when we sing psalms in corporate worship.*¹¹

- B. I disagree with Rev. Lanning’s representation of this controversy. “The rub” is **not** over whether or not Christ **actually** does sing with us. Rev. Lanning attempts to prove that because the RPC dislikes the un-Reformed terminology of “singing with Christ” that therefore we also reject the fact that we sing (fellowship) with Christ in worship. That is untrue.
1. Rev. Langerak has agreed that “singing with Christ” is dealing with the matter of fellowship.¹² In explaining Hebrews 2:12, Rev. Langerak has even taught that because “*we are one with Him, there is no other way that you can sing, but singing with Jesus.*”¹³ Rev. Langerak has expressed his dislike of the phrase “*Jesus sings psalms*” because it has been used as the crucial ground to be “enticed” with the “bait” that when, and **only** when, the church sings the 150 Psalms does Jesus sing with the church.¹⁴ Rev. Langerak has asserted that the teaching of “*Jesus sings the psalms*” is “*not Reformed language*” because it leads the church “*down the trail of legalism.*”¹⁵ The **terminology** “sing

with Christ” is what is being rejected by the RPC because we believe that Rev. Lanning has taught it in such a way that it teaches conditional fellowship.

- C. I contend the “rub” is the teaching that “*when we sing psalms we sing with Jesus, and only when we sing psalms do we sing with Jesus.*”¹⁶ The “rub” is the teaching that “*He [Jesus] doesn’t sing with the church if her doxology is not a psalm.*”¹⁷ The “rub” is the teaching that when we sing anything other than a psalm, we are not “singing with Christ.” Rev. Lanning has caused confusion and division when he makes the controversy to be over **the fact of** whether or not Christ sings with us. The question that **does** face us is: when does that reality of “singing with Christ” come into effect? How is “singing with Christ” and “doing and having things with Christ” made effective in worship? Is Christ’s blood applied through the work of the Holy Spirit by faith the decisive thing in fellowship? Does the activity of man’s singing in obedience to the second commandment remain only a fruit of thankfulness?

III. Singing with Christ: Whether the Church Sings with Christ

- A. It is Rev. Lanning’s belief that “*the teaching of the Reformed Protestant Churches from their beginning was that when we sing psalms in church, we sing with Jesus Christ; and when we sing psalms in church, Jesus*

¹¹ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf> (page 6)

¹² “Singing with Jesus, if we may use that terminology for a moment, singing with Jesus is fellowship.” (minute 1:08) Lecture: Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow <https://reformedbelieverspub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Sword-and-Shield-August-2023.pdf> (page 9)

¹³ Lecture: Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow (minute 1:31) <https://reformedbelieverspub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Sword-and-Shield-August-2023.pdf> (page 14)

¹⁴ “I do not like that language: Jesus sings the psalms.” <https://reformedbelieverspub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Sword-Shield-July-2023.pdf> (page 8)

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf> (page 6)

¹⁷ <https://reformedbelieverspub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Sword-Shield-July-2023.pdf> (page 9 footnote 7, “Recompensed according to My Righteousness”)

Christ sings with us.”¹⁸ Rev. Lanning clearly teaches “singing with Christ” depends on the song choice of the worshiper. If the church sings the psalms, she is singing with Christ. If she does not, she is not singing with Christ. Rev. Lanning goes into great detail in proving his assertion that only the psalms (and what he means are the exact words of the 150 Psalms only) are the songs of Christ.

1. *“The teaching of the Reformed Protestant Churches from their beginning was that when we sing psalms in church, we sing with Jesus Christ; and when we sing psalms in church, Jesus Christ sings with us.”*¹⁹
2. *“...the question that faces us at the beginning of this speech is a question of whether—whether we sing with Christ or not when we sing psalms in corporate worship. That answer will be decided by this one truth: the psalms are Jesus’ songs. The psalms are the songs that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, sings with his own mouth and with his own voice. If it is true that the psalms are Jesus’ songs—so that he sings the words of Psalm 22, and he sings the words of Psalm 1 and Psalm 100 and all the rest—then when the church sings those songs, she is singing with Christ. They are his songs. They are the songs he sings with his own voice and his own mouth. If it is not true that the psalms are the songs of Christ, then it is a lie that the church sings with Christ when she sings the psalms in corporate worship. The whole question of whether we sing with Christ or not is answered by whether the psalms are the songs of Jesus Christ.”*²⁰

3. *“The church becomes dissatisfied with versifications of the psalms that are only summaries of the psalm and that are close but not quite the psalm and that are only man’s interpretation of the psalm. That becomes after a while intolerable to the church because when she sings a man’s summary of a psalm, she’s not singing the word of Christ. And Christ isn’t singing that song with her. Only the church’s voices are heard, but the voice of Christ is not heard in heaven in that song.”*²¹

- B. It is my belief that Scriptures and creeds do not teach that our fellowship (singing with Christ) depends on whether or not we sing the psalms. I believe the church fellowships (sings with Christ) regardless of her singing. Fellowship and “having things with Christ” is through the work of the Holy Spirit alone by faith alone. The Spirit *alone*, “defends and preserves us in (the enjoyment of) that salvation He has purchased for us.”²² Just as much as Christ abides with me forever, Christ sings with me forever.²³ We are made “partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only.”²⁴ Singing the psalms does not make it possible to “sing with Christ.” Even if we sang the psalms perfectly (as only Christ can do!), that does not level us up to “singing with Christ.” The church’s song choice does not make fellowship with Christ effectual, nor does it give her access to “singing with Christ.” The church’s song choice does not make “doing things and having things with Christ” a reality in worship. Our doing the law does not make effectual “doing and having things” with

¹⁸ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf> (page 6)

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ “Recompensed According to My Righteousness” <https://www.sermonaudio.com/solo/72773/sermons/522115542507/>

²² Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 12

²³ “What dost thou believe concerning the Holy Ghost? ...The He is also given me, to make me, by a true faith, partaker of Christ and all His benefits, that He may comfort me and abide with me forever.” Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 20.

²⁴ Lord’s Days 12, 20, 15

Christ. Christ's blood alone is the only ground for any activities we have "with Christ." The false teaching that only when we sing the psalms are we singing with Christ has placed the enjoyment of salvation effectual upon the activity of man. When some activity of man is accomplished (singing the psalms), then that man in worship can enjoy fellowship with Christ (singing with Christ).

IV. Singing with Christ: Are the 150 Psalms the ONLY Songs of Jesus Christ?

A. Rev. Lanning has asserted that only the fixed collection of Psalms found in Scripture are the songs of Jesus Christ. He uses the word "psalms" throughout the Reformed Pavilion article on "Singing with Christ,"²⁵ but he clearly means only the 150 Psalms of David as found in the Book of Psalms.

1. This is easily proven with the RR adopted change to Church Order Article 69. Singing any part of Scripture other than the 150 Psalms is seen as a "human invention" because "*the regulative principle of corporate worship also forbids man from appointing his own song selections above and beyond what God has appointed. This would include the scriptural songs...*"²⁶
2. Rev. Lanning teaches in his adopted change to Article 69 of the Church Order: "*God gave all of scripture to be read, preached, confessed, and prayed in the church. When it comes to singing, God gave his church a specific and complete songbook: the psalms.*"²⁷

B. I do not believe Rev. Lanning has grounds to prove that the 150 Psalms are the only songs of Jesus, or the only Christ appointed songs for the church to sing in worship.

1. Rev. Lanning does not include in Jesus' songs the psalm of David in I Chronicles 16 as written in the Old Testament. He only means this psalm as divided up and written in the Book of Psalms.²⁸ I Chronicles 16 is called in Scripture a "psalm,"²⁹ but Rev. Lanning does not include this psalm in his view of what the songs of Jesus are. Even though Rev. Lanning acknowledges that Christ "*sang them (psalms-CO) in the Old Testament,*"³⁰ the church of today may only sing the truth of I Chronicles 16 as found in the Book of Psalms, but not from I Chronicles 16.
2. In addition, Rev. Lanning does not include in his definition of Jesus' songs the "*last words of David,..the sweet psalmist of Israel*" as found in II Samuel 23. Rev. Lanning acknowledges that "*Jesus Christ is the sweet psalmist of Israel, who was also raised up on high and is the anointed of the God of Jacob.*"³¹ Rev. Lanning even uses this passage in the adopted change of Church Article 69 to prove that "*God inspired each song in the book (II Sam. 23:1-2).*"³² But in proving that Christ is the sweet psalmist of Israel and that Christ therefore inspired each song in the Book of Psalms, Rev. Lanning cannot include the following last words of the sweet psalmist of Israel because that psalm is not included in the 150 Psalms. Even

²⁵ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf> (pages 6-13)

²⁶ CO 69 Proposal - Adopted 2023-7-5

²⁷ CO 69 Proposal - Adopted 2023-7-5

²⁸ I Chronicles 16 is reproduced in three different psalms: Psalm 105:1-15, Psalm 96 and Psalm 106:1, 47-48.

²⁹ "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the LORD into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." I Chronicles 16:7

³⁰ CO 69 Proposal - Adopted 2023-7-5

³¹ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-15-Final.pdf> (page 7)

³² CO 69 Proposal - Adopted 2023-7-5

though II Samuel 23 is the last psalm written by Christ through David, this psalm is not a part of “Jesus’ songs”³³ because it is not found in the Book of Psalms.

3. Rev. Lanning’s teaching has the conclusion that the use of two verbatim songs in Scripture (found in two different books of the Bible) are at such odds with each other that the use of one is condemned as idolatry and the use of the other is seen as commanded in worship. Rev. Lanning can only sing the words of a song out of the Book of Psalms, even if verbatim words are found in another chapter of the Bible. An example is II Samuel 22 and Psalm 18.³⁴ Psalm 18 is seen as a song of Jesus, but the same words in II Samuel 22 would be seen as idolatry to sing in worship.³⁵
4. In the adopted Church Order Article 69 Proposal, Rev. Lanning states “*the regulative principle of corporate worship requires that the church sing the 150 psalms, since the psalms make up the divinely appointed songbook for the church’s worship...That psalms are God’s appointed songs for corporate worship is evident from the fact that God composed a special book for his church to sing.*” The very first ground used to prove that the regulative principle requires only the 150 Psalms is that God provided the church with a songbook, a fixed collection of songs, and so therefore those are the only songs to be sung. That, in itself, is merely the logic of man (not a divine command found in Scripture). There is not a passage in Scripture that proves **because** the Book of Psalms is a

fixed collection of songs found in Scripture as a songbook that therefore those songs are the **only** God-appointed songs for worship. Is the Book of Psalms Christ’s songs? Absolutely! Are they divinely inspired? Absolutely! Are the Psalms a marvelously ordered, beautiful, gospel-filled book of the Bible intended for us to sing? Absolutely! Has God given us the Book of Psalms to sing in worship? Absolutely! Does Scripture teach us to sing the Psalms? Absolutely! Did God say that **because** He has gifted the church with a songbook, those are the only songs the church may sing in worship and all other words and songs in Scripture are to be considered idolatry? No. That is neither Scriptural nor creedal. I do not agree it is a “human invention” to teach God has appointed other passages of Scripture to use in the church’s singing. In labeling I Chronicles 16 a “psalm” and II Samuel 22 a “song,” and in ascribing the “last words” of David to the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, the Holy Spirit has taught us that the 150 Psalms are not the only songs of Christ.

V. Singing with Christ: Implications

- A. The implications of Rev. Lanning’s assertion is that the Psalter, even a revision, is unacceptable because the **actual words** of the 150 Psalms are the **only** words which are pleasing and acceptable to Christ.
 1. “*The church becomes dissatisfied with versifications of the psalms that are only summaries of the psalm and that are close but not quite the psalm and that are only man’s interpretation of the psalm. That*

³³ CO 69 Proposal - Adopted 2023-7-5

³⁴ See this document comparing II Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 for example: II Samuel 22/Psalm 18 Comparison

³⁵ To condemn the singing II Samuel 22 as idolatry in corporate worship is to deny the truth of II Timothy 3:16. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

becomes after a while intolerable to the church because when she sings a man's summary of a psalm, she's not singing the word of Christ. And Christ isn't singing that song with her. Only the church's voices are heard, but the voice of Christ is not heard in heaven in that song."³⁶

2. Rev. Lanning even goes so far as to say "the most important thing about the psalms: [is - CO] the actual words of the psalms"³⁷ and "the Psalter sacrifices the most important thing—faithfulness to the words of the psalms."³⁸ Rev. Lanning directs the eyes of the church to the faithfulness of the actual words of the psalm instead of the beautiful truths of the faithfulness of our Savior throughout the psalms. Rev. Lanning leads the people's focus to the teaching that the "psalms are Christ's song" because of the words, and not because of the Word contained in them.^{39 40} The direct implication of Rev. Lanning's teaching is:

"It is the Psalter's infidelity to the words of the psalm that makes its

*principle of aesthetic paraphrasing unsatisfactory and eventually intolerable for the church...the problem with the Psalter is not that it needs to be tweaked here and there. The problem with the Psalter is that its underlying principle is wrong. Aesthetic paraphrasing is not faithful to the words of the psalms. One cannot fix an underlying principle with a revision."*⁴¹

- B. I disagree with Rev. Lanning's conclusion that the Psalter should be rejected on the basis that the words of the Psalter are not the exact words of the psalms. I have no problem with a revision of the Psalter or even a change to the Scottish Psalter, but not on the grounds that we will be closer to singing with Christ on account of our "more faithful" songbook choice.^{42 43}

VI. Singing with Christ: "But Now Added to That"

- A. Rev. Lanning has taught that, in addition to the preaching of the gospel, singing is also a means of grace in the ministry of the church.

³⁶ "Recompensed According to My Righteousness" <https://www.sermonaudio.com/solo/72773/sermons/522115542507/>

³⁷ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-12-Final.pdf> (page 14)

³⁸ Ibid (page 22)

³⁹ "The psalms are Christ's songs that he sang in the Old Testament by his Spirit (II Sam. 23:1-2), that he sang on earth (Matt. 26:30), and that he continues to sing now in the midst of his church (Heb. 2:12)." - Rev. Lanning <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-12-Final.pdf> (page 14). Interestingly, Rev. Lanning can't include the following "last words of David" (II Sam. 23: 3-7) that "the spirit of the Lord spake" in II Samuel 23 as a song of Jesus because the words of that last psalm are not included in the 150 Psalms.

⁴⁰ I would encourage a reading of Tyler Ophoff's transcript of Rev. Lanning's view of Biblicism and the confessions found on page 22, footnote 11: <https://reformedbelieverspub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Sword-and-Shield-June-2023.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RP-1-12-Final.pdf> (page 16, 17)

⁴² Just in observation, I read Rev. Lanning's review of John W. Keddie's book "Sing the Lord's Song" and his Psalter book review back to back. Even though Keddie's intent in writing a book on exclusive psalmody is to teach an "impression ("impression only" according to Rev. Lanning) that psalm singing is unto God's blessing instead of because of God's blessing," he still thinks "this is your book" to "explain exclusive psalmody to your teenagers." If Rev. Lanning finds the Psalter intolerable on account of its "underlying principle," I don't know how he can recommend this book to teenagers on account of the author deceitfully promoting conditional fellowship under the guise of a "sound plea for exclusive psalmody in the worship of the church." (this would apply as well to another book Rev. Lanning has noted elsewhere: "Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms" by Micheal Lefebvre) (<https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/RP-1-10-Final.pdf> - page 7)

⁴³ Two things are very confusing to me at this point: 1. When does idolatry ever "become intolerable"? Isn't idolatry always intolerable? 2. Rev. Lanning views the Psalter as intolerable; he is past the "becoming intolerable" part because he can't even acknowledge a revision will fix the Psalter. How can he lead his congregation in worship with a clear conscience using words that he considered idolatry and sin?

1. *“Paul has spoken about the preaching of the gospel, and certainly the preaching of the gospel is the chief means of grace in the church. By the preaching of the gospel the church is filled up with the word of Christ, filled up with the knowledge of Christ. By the preaching of the gospel, the church is given her fruit of gratitude. But here in verse 16, Paul speaks of another ministry of the word. And that other ministry of the word is the ministry of the office of believer in singing. When Paul says, “Teaching and admonishing,” he is saying, “By teaching and by admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” That is, one means by which God teaches his church the gospel is the psalms....This does not mean that the singing of the church is in competition with the preaching of the gospel or the preaching in competition with the singing. The preaching of the gospel is the chief means of grace. The sacraments also are a means of grace added to the gospel to teach God’s people his work. But now added to that is also the singing of the church.”*⁴⁴

B. Rev. Lanning’s assertion that “the singing of the church” is “now added” to the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments as the church’s officially instituted means of grace is in direct contradiction to the Reformed creeds. The clear teaching of Lord’s Day 25 is that the Lord has led the church to acknowledge only two instituted means of grace in the official ministry of

the church: the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments.⁴⁵ The Compendium agrees.⁴⁶ The Canons of Dort concur.⁴⁷ There is no creedal or scriptural proof that “but now” singing has become a newly added instituted means of grace for the official ministry of the Word.

Singing with Christ: In Conclusion

There are clearly two very different positions presented in this controversy. Rev. Lanning and the RR Church teach a doctrine of “singing with Christ” dependent on man’s activity of singing the 150 Psalms. The RP Churches teach a doctrine of “with Christ” dependent only on the blood of Christ as the only ground for our benefits of salvation. Rev. Lanning puts his church under bondage to the law when he teaches you must live a holy life (sing the psalms) to be “with Christ” in singing. The RP churches teach freedom from bondage to the law in teaching that our fellowship with Christ (singing with Christ) is by faith alone and that our holy life (singing) is only a fruit and manifestation of Christ’s perfect work. Rev. Lanning teaches you must have Christ **and** sing the psalms in order to fellowship with Christ (sing with Christ). The RP churches believe you must have Christ **alone** to fellowship with Christ. Rev. Lanning believes that singing the psalms brings you into contact with singing with the living Christ. The RP churches believe faith alone through the work of the Holy Spirit alone brings you into contact with singing with the living Christ. When you are in Christ, you have all of Christ (including singing with Him). There is nothing man must do to

⁴⁴ <https://www.reformedpavilion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RP-1-18-Final.pdf> (page 7)

⁴⁵ “Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed? From the Holy Ghost who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.”

⁴⁶ Q4,8 Who worketh that faith in thee? The Holy Ghost; Q4,9 By what means? By the hearing of the Word preached (Rom. 10:14-17); Q50 How does He strengthen that faith? By the same Word preached, and by the use of the holy sacraments.

⁴⁷ “...man cannot by this law obtain saving grace. What therefore neither the light of nature no the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hath pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testament.” Canons, Heads ¾ Art. 5, 6; “the apostles and teachers...piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God... neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the gospel in the exercise of the Word, sacraments, and discipline; ...for grace is conferred by means of admonitions” Art 17 – see also Art. 11, 12)

partake of the benefit of “singing with Christ.”

In heartfelt and sincere prayer that eyes are opened to the fact that the benefits of Christ are not dependant on our activities, and this is the

freedom we have in the gospel that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone,

—Christina Overway

EDITORIAL

Reply to “Singing with Christ”

Mrs. Christina Overway emailed a document to an undisclosed number of recipients on September 3, 2023. The document was evidently intended for public distribution and has been forwarded widely to members of the Reformed Protestant Churches (RPC) and to members of Remnant Reformed Church. Several people have asked for my thoughts on Mrs. Overway’s document. To satisfy that request, I offer this article.

I regret that I must speak about myself in parts of this response. I find it unavoidable because there are charges against me and my teaching. Though the members of the RPC ought to be confirming to each other that I taught them the gospel without ceasing—which gospel was for their great comfort, joy, and salvation—the RPC instead charge me, cast me away from themselves as some plagued thing, and compel me to defend myself. “I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you” (II Cor. 12:11). However, though I must speak of myself, the glory of the Lord’s work through his servants belongs to the Lord and not to the servants. Therefore, I speak of myself in the spirit of the apostle Paul, who, when he had to speak of his labor, ascribed the glory to God alone: “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (I Cor. 15:10).

I also grieve that such an article must be written in response to one such as Mrs. Overway. She represents many in the RPC who once knew better regarding their singing in church. Prior to March 2023, the doctrine of exclusive psalmody

was taught from the pulpits of the RPC and was received by the members with hearty agreement. All the elders without fail shook the minister’s hand after every exclusive psalmody sermon. Most, if not all, of the members of the RPC had been staunch and ardent exclusive psalmodists all their lives. If you had asked a member of the RPC what he sang in church, his immediate response would have been, “Psalms!” If you had suggested to a member of the RPC that the churches should introduce just a single man-made hymn into the worship of the RPC, he would have run you out of town on a rail. If you had informed a member of the RPC that the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) were considering adding a man-made hymn to their psalter at an upcoming synod, the Reformed Protestant man would have condemned it as typical Protestant Reformed disobedience. In the RPC the universal and beloved doctrine of congregational singing was exclusive psalmody.

But in March 2023 the RPC left those old paths overnight. When the doctrine of exclusive psalmody was actually applied to the RPC—through the gentlest possible sermon on the second commandment, informing the RPC that she sang the man-made hymn of Thomas Ken in every worship service—the RPC panicked. Men and women lamented with tears, not that they had disobeyed God’s law but that someone had told them that they had disobeyed God’s law. In their panic the churches decided that they did not believe exclusive psalmody after all and that, in fact, exclusive psalmody was the heresy of

legalism and conditionalism. The pulpits and the consistory rooms opened fire on the people. A minister and one elder were suspended, two other elders were deposed, and all four of them were slain by being barred from the kingdom of heaven. A barrage of flimsy but ferocious sermons and speeches pounded the people into a cowed but confused submission. Several members of the RPC barely escaped with their sanity and their lives when God led a deacon in First Reformed Protestant Church to sign an Act of Separation and Joining, by which these members left the RPC and by which Remnant Reformed Church was formed. Today, the Reformed Protestant Churches do not know what their principle of singing is, but they know very well that it is heresy to teach exclusive psalmody. And the RPC work overtime in their sermons, their magazine articles, their public emails, and their classis meetings to demonize me as a legalist and to demonize my doctrine of exclusive psalmody as conditionalism.

Nevertheless, in spite of personal grief over the sudden opposition and treachery of so many, my hope and prayer with this article is that some in the Reformed Protestant Churches will remember the beautiful doctrine of the psalms that they used to believe and that they used to receive with joy. “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:5). My prayer is that some will heed the Lord’s call: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). And my prayer is that the members of the RPC will not respond as Israel so often did to the Lord’s prophets: “But they said, We will not walk therein” (6:16).

The Charge: Singing in Order to Have Blessing

Mrs. Overway states the purpose of her document at the outset:

I believe the gospel is at stake in Rev. Lanning’s teaching of “singing with Christ.” The purpose of this document is to explain how I believe this teaching attacks the gospel and binds the worshiper back under the condemnation of the law.

Mrs. Overway continues with the charge, Rev. Lanning leads his people back into bondage by making the church’s song choice determinative in the experience of “singing with Christ,” of having fellowship with Christ, and in experiencing the blessing of “doing things and having things with Christ.”

Mrs. Overway’s charge of bondage to the law is essentially the same charge that the Reformed Protestant Churches have been making against me and against exclusive psalmody since March 2023. For example, the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church suspended me from office and set me outside the kingdom with this as its fourth ground:

The teaching of the sermon is that if we sing anything other than the 150 Psalms in the official worship service, we are committing idol worship and sinning against the 2nd commandment. To teach that if the congregation sings any versification of the scriptures (other than the Psalms) then the congregation does not have God dwelling with them nor experiencing his covenant fellowship through Jesus until man’s law is met is legalism. It is an extreme and legalistic application of the law in the life and worship of the believer.¹

My Response: There Are No Such Things Done

My response to these charges is the same as Nehemiah’s response to Sanballat’s false charge against him: “There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart” (Neh. 6:8).

¹Agenda for the classis of the Reformed Protestant Churches, May 18, 2023, 41.

When it comes to *what* God requires, my doctrine is that God requires the church to sing psalms in her public worship. When it comes to *why* God requires it, my doctrine is that God requires it as his church's grateful response for her salvation, which salvation has been fully accomplished by Christ according to God's eternal decree. I have never taught the RPC obedience to God's law as being *unto* their salvation. I have always taught the RPC obedience to God's law as being *because* of their salvation. Ask any member of the RPC about "election theology." Ask any member of the RPC about "the works principle versus the grace principle." Ask any member of the RPC about the Heidelberg Catechism's "waterfall" and "lagoon." Any member of the RPC with a shred of honesty will have to acknowledge that they learned nothing but the gospel at my feet and from my mouth. I labored—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me—in the pulpit, in the catechism room, in the seminary, and in *Sword and Shield* to deliver to the members of the RPC their glorious freedom in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even when strictly preaching and applying the law of God to the members of the RPC, I delivered that law to them as something that Christ had completely and perfectly fulfilled on their behalf. I never put the RPC under the law as something that they must keep for their salvation or for their experience of salvation or for their fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. I always gave the RPC Jesus Christ and his gospel for their fellowship with God and for their joy. And I always gave the RPC the law as the rule of their gratitude for the salvation that was already finished in Christ.

Particularly in my doctrine of psalm singing, I gave the RPC Jesus Christ. God opened the windows of heaven to us by teaching us that Jesus Christ is the psalmist and that the psalms are Jesus' songs. With Jesus Christ as their head, God's people have the right and privilege to sing unto God with Christ the impossible words of the psalms. Ask any member of the RPC how it is that they could possibly sing, "The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness" in Psalm 18:20. Or, in the psalter's paraphrase, how

it is that the members of the RPC could possibly sing, "For good the Lord rewarded me, because I kept His ways aright" (Psalter 34:10). Those words are not about the reward of grace that God graciously bestows upon his people. Those words are about the reward of righteousness that was merited by someone and which reward God pays to someone as his due. The only—only!—thing that I taught the RPC was Jesus Christ. Psalm 18:20 is Christ's song. The reward of righteousness is Christ's reward for his perfect obedience to God's holy law. Christ pours the blessings of his reward that he earned upon his people, who did not earn the reward and for whom the reward is a reward of sheer grace. Such is the unity of Christ the head and his body the church that when the church sings Psalm 18:20, she is not singing of what she has done, but she is singing with Christ what Christ has done. Christ puts his own words in the mouths of his people, and they sing the psalm with Christ and about Christ.

After that, when one says about my doctrine of psalm singing that it "binds the worshiper back under the condemnation of the law," my response is, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart."

Or what about the sermon on the second commandment out of Lord's Day 35 on March 5, 2023, in which the RPC were informed that they sang the man-made hymn of Thomas Ken in every worship service? Were the RPC put under the law in that sermon? Here was the doctrine of that sermon:

- If you take hold of the second commandment tonight, "Thou shalt not make any graven images," and you try to make that commandment teach "Do this, and thou shalt live"—that is, if you take hold of the commandment as that which you will do unto your life and unto your salvation—then you will have misused this commandment grievously.
- You are to take hold of this commandment, rather, this way: not "Do this and

live” but “Live and do this.” You have the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, perfect and complete. He has accomplished it and finished it, so that now this commandment for you is the rule and guide of your gratitude, your thankful life to God for what he has given in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- That’s how you hear the commandment tonight. The commandment is meant to expose you as those who have not worshiped perfectly, as those whose worship has been full of sin, and to do that in order that we may have no hope in ourselves but only in Christ. And the use of the commandment for you tonight is to show you the life of gratitude that belongs to those who have been redeemed by the blood of the savior.
- The Lord Jesus Christ heard this law and loved this law and was eaten up by the zeal of God’s house in his perfect worship of Jehovah; and that counts for you, so that when you appear before God in your own conscience, appear before God at the final judgment, and the question is put to you, “How did you worship? How did you do in worship?” and the answer of Jehovah God himself to that question is “You were perfect. You were perfect. Jesus was perfect. I count his worship as yours.” You live, congregation, for the sake of Jesus Christ. And now what is your response? Live and do this in gratitude to God for the perfect worship and salvation of your savior.²

After that, when one says about my doctrine of psalm singing that it “binds the worshiper back under the condemnation of the law,” my response is, “There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.”

Or what about the follow-up sermon on the second commandment out of Lord’s Day 35 on

March 12, 2023, in which the congregation was taught the regulative principle of worship? Were the RPC put under the law in that sermon? Here was the doctrine of that sermon:

- This matter of Christ and the regulative principle goes way deeper, way, way deeper in the matter of what Jesus sings in the church. It goes this deep, that Jesus has fulfilled the regulative principle for First Reformed Protestant Church. He’s fulfilled it already...First RPC is not under the regulative principle of worship in her worship. You’re not under it.
- The people of God, if they were under the regulative principle for their salvation, for their acceptance with God, would never get to him. He’d never get in the house to his dinner. But Christ fulfilled it because when he came to earth, he worshiped God exactly as God required. And he still does. He always has and always will worship God absolutely perfectly. That’s your freedom. That’s the liberty of the gospel for the church.³

After that, when one says about my doctrine of psalm singing that it “binds the worshiper back under the condemnation of the law,” my response is, “There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.”

Or what about the speech and corresponding article on singing with Christ that the above document focuses on? Was anyone put under the law in that speech? Here is the doctrine of that speech:

We in him means that Jesus Christ as our head is the worshiper. It is not only that Jesus Christ *watches* our worship, observes our worship. It is not even only that Jesus *receives* our worship. But it is this: Jesus *is the worshiper*. Jesus was appointed by God as the head and mediator

² Andrew Lanning, “No Image Worship,” sermon preached on Sunday, March 5, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=35232335114953>.

³ Andrew Lanning, “The Regulative Principle of Worship,” sermon preached on March 12, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=312232237135528>.

of his people (Canons of Dordt 1.7). Jesus as the head is the one who does all things on behalf of his people. Jesus Christ as the servant of Jehovah worships Jehovah. The psalms, which are the songs of Christ, are full of Jesus' worship of Jehovah. Everywhere that the psalmist says, "I will praise thee," that is Jesus Christ saying to God, "I will praise thee." When the psalmist says, "I will rejoice in thee," that is Jesus Christ saying to God, "I will rejoice in thee." And that is not only for his thirty-three and a half years upon the earth. That is all through history, from the beginning to the end. The Lord Jesus Christ is the worshiper of Jehovah.

That is true with regard to Jesus' praying. Jesus prayed night and day. The members of the church of Jesus Christ often bemoan the lack of fervency in their prayers. And when your conscience accuses you that you are not a very good pray-er, then the solution and the answer of the gospel to that wounded conscience is that the Lord Jesus Christ was an *excellent* pray-er, the perfect pray-er and worshiper, so that your prayers are finished, all finished, in the praying of Jesus Christ. And now the praying that he gives you to do is simply the life of gratitude, the worship of gratitude, for what Christ has already finished.

And that goes for all your worship. Did you do a very good job of worshiping this past Sunday? How often did your mind wander? Well, your mind ought not wander, and you ought to do a better job worshiping, and I ought to as well. But our worship is finished in Christ. He already perfectly worshiped God; and all of his worship is counted as yours, so that the reason you go to heaven is not because of any of the worship that you brought but entirely because of the worship that

Christ brought. He kept the first commandment perfectly: worship God alone. He kept the second commandment perfectly: worship God as he has commanded. He kept the third commandment perfectly: worship God according to his name. He kept the fourth commandment perfectly: worship God on the Lord's day. Christ kept all of the commandments of God. And that counts as yours. And now your worship that he gives you is a gift of his grace to you and is your thankful life to him for his perfect worship.⁴

And this, then, is a joyful, glorious thing, to sing with the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of his congregation. He himself sings in the church the praises of Jehovah. And as our head and mediator, who has delivered us by his blood, he graciously says to us, "You may come into God's house and worship him with me."⁵

After that, when one says about my doctrine of psalm singing that it "binds the worshiper back under the condemnation of the law," my response is, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart."

The Proof of the Charge: Singing with Christ

Mrs. Overway offers proof for her charge that my doctrine binds the worshiper under the condemnation of the law. Her proof is my terminology that the believer *sings with Christ*. "I believe the gospel is at stake in Rev. Lanning's teaching of 'singing with Christ.'"

How does this terminology teach conditions?

It is Rev. Lanning's belief that "*the teaching of the Reformed Protestant Churches from their beginning was that when we sing psalms in church, we sing with Jesus Christ; and when we sing psalms in church, Jesus Christ sings with us.*" Rev. Lanning

⁴ Andrew Lanning, "Singing with Christ," *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 15 (July 22, 2023): 11.

⁵ Lanning, "Singing with Christ": 13.

clearly teaches “singing with Christ” depends on the song choice of the worshiper. If the church sings the psalms, she is singing with Christ. If she does not, she is not singing with Christ.

Mrs. Overway then states her doctrine of fellowship with Christ, which she takes to be the opposite of my doctrine of fellowship with Christ.

It is my belief that Scriptures and creeds do not teach that our fellowship (singing with Christ) depends on whether or not we sing the psalms. I believe the church fellowships (sings with Christ) regardless of her singing. Fellowship and “having things with Christ” is through the work of the Holy Spirit alone by faith alone.

And in summary of her proof, Mrs. Overway states:

The false teaching that only when we sing the psalms are we singing with Christ has placed the enjoyment of salvation effectual upon the activity of man. When some activity of man is accomplished (singing the psalms), then that man in worship can enjoy fellowship with Christ (singing with Christ).

My Response: Falsifying a Man’s Words

My response is that Mrs. Overway’s proof is an exercise in falsifying my words.

Mrs. Overway makes my terminology *sing with Christ* to refer to how one can obtain fellowship with Christ. The truth is that my terminology *sing with Christ* refers to those who are already in Christ. They are already members of Christ by faith. They are already united to their head by the Spirit of Christ. The word of Christ is already nigh them, even in their mouths and in their hearts. They already have Christ. They already have Christ’s fellowship. They already have all Christ’s blessings. Singing with Christ is not a blueprint for how to *obtain* Christ’s fellowship. Singing with Christ is not a recipe for how to go *get* some fellowship that they do not already

enjoy. Rather, singing with Christ is what is required of them *because* of their fellowship with Christ. Their head sings psalms; they are to sing psalms with him. Singing with Christ is what is graciously given to God’s people as their right and privilege because of their fellowship with Christ. Their head sings psalms; they may sing his songs with him. They are not to sing other than the psalms in church because their head does not sing anything other. None of this singing with Christ ever becomes *unto* fellowship with Christ. All of this singing with Christ is *because* of fellowship with Christ.

My terminology of doing something *with Christ* is thoroughly biblical. For example, Paul speaks of our suffering with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Suffering with Christ, just as singing with Christ, is not *unto* fellowship with Christ but *because* of fellowship with Christ. Christ the heir suffers; we joint-heirs suffer with him. Peter drives this home when he speaks of the exact same suffering as follows:

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. (I Pet. 4:15–16)

What Paul means by “suffer with Christ” (Rom. 8:17), Peter means by “suffer as a Christian” (I Pet. 4:16). Notice what Peter says about suffering. Peter says that there is some suffering that is not done “as a Christian.” To put that in Paul’s language, there is some suffering that is not done “with Christ.” If you suffer as a murderer, you are not suffering as a Christian, that is, you are not suffering with Christ. If you suffer as a thief, you are not suffering as a Christian, that is, you are not suffering with Christ. But if you suffer reproach for the sake of the gospel, then you are suffering as a Christian, that is, you are suffering with Christ. In all of this Paul and Peter are not teaching that our suffering is *unto* fellowship with Christ but that our suffering the reproach of the gospel is *because* of our fellowship with Christ. The child of God is always in

fellowship with Christ. The believer's fellowship with God is not because of the believer's obedience or disobedience. Rather, the believer's fellowship with God in Christ is because of God's faithfulness, according to his promise: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). The fruit of that fellowship is the believer's obedience.

The exact same truth in the exact same language of Paul and Peter can be applied to singing with Christ. Sing as a Christian in church, and let none of you sing in church as Thomas Ken or as Isaac Watts or as Garth Brooks. Sing with Christ in church; and because Christ sings psalms, let none of you sing anything else.

But Mrs. Overway falsifies my words by transforming my terminology *sing with Christ* into a matter of *obtaining* fellowship with Christ. The falsification is evident in the fact that she must continually substitute her words for my words to make the charge work. She summarizes and restates my doctrine this way:

The false teaching that only when we sing the psalms are we singing with Christ has placed the enjoyment of salvation effectual upon the activity of man. When some activity of man is accomplished (singing the psalms), then that man in worship can enjoy fellowship with Christ (singing with Christ).

In all my teaching of singing with Christ, I have never taught that man's activity makes fellowship with Christ effectual. That restatement of my doctrine is as egregious as it would be for one to restate Paul's and Peter's doctrine this way:

The false teaching that only when we suffer as a Christian do we suffer with Christ has made the enjoyment of salvation effectual upon the activity of man. When some activity of man is accomplished (refraining from murder and confessing Christ), then that man in life can enjoy fellowship with Christ (suffering with Christ).

By falsifying my words Mrs. Overway is only doing what the Reformed Protestant Churches have taught her to do. The following is a quotation from my protest to the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church against my suspension. The same tactic that the consistory used in March has now trickled down to the members in September.

Ground 4: The teaching of the sermon is that if we sing anything other than the 150 Psalms in the official worship service, we are committing idol worship and sinning against the 2nd commandment. To teach that if the congregation sings any versification of the scriptures (other than the Psalms) then the congregation does not have God dwelling with them nor experiencing his covenant fellowship through Jesus until man's law is met is legalism. It is an extreme and legalistic application of the law in the life and worship of the believer.

Reply: The consistory asserts that the sermons taught "that if the congregation sings any versification of the Scriptures (other than the Psalms) then the congregation does not have God dwelling with them nor experiencing his covenant fellowship through Jesus until man's law is met." This assertion is entirely an invention of the consistory. The sermons taught no such thing. The sermons cannot even be misunderstood to teach any such thing. The sermons taught that Christ has already completed and fulfilled all our worship, including fulfilling the regulative principle. The sermons taught that our worship is our gratitude for salvation already accomplished. The sermons cannot be construed in any way whatsoever to be saying that the congregation does not have God dwelling with them nor experiencing covenant fellowship until man meets some law.

In making its argument, the consistory makes a fallacious leap from breaking a commandment to not having God's fellowship. The consistory says that the sermon taught that to sing something other than the psalms is a sin against the 2nd commandment. The consistory then argued that this was the same as teaching that "the congregation does not have God dwelling with them nor experiencing his covenant fellowship through Jesus until man's law is met." This is a fallacy. Even when we worship as God has commanded, we are still breaking any number of commandments, because our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. But this does not mean that God withdraws his fellowship from us. God always maintains his fellowship with his elect people in Jesus Christ. The pulpit shows God's people their transgressions, but they remain God's people (Isaiah 58:1).

If the consistory's logic is allowed to stand, then the pulpit may never tell the congregation that it has sinned against this or that commandment, because that would be the same as telling the congregation that they do not have fellowship with God until they have met this or that condition.

The consistory's explanation of legalism in this ground is preposterous. I don't say that to talk down to the consistory or to cast it in their teeth, but to wake the consistory up to the weakness and folly of its arguments.⁶

The consistory did not wake up but instead set a course for all the members of the RPC, who are now walking in lies by their false charges and by their falsifying of my words. Let them remember God's law: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The Issue: What Does God Require?

Mrs. Overway touches on the real issue that divides the Reformed Protestant Churches from Remnant Reformed Church when she writes about "the only Christ appointed songs for the church to sing in worship." Although Mrs. Overway's point in this section of her paper is to find passages outside the psalms for the church to sing, she is at least dealing with the right question: What songs has God appointed for the church to sing in worship?

This is the right question, first, because what the church does in worship is a matter of the second commandment. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Ex. 20:4) means that man may not invent his own worship of God but must worship God only as God has commanded in his word.

What God has appointed is the right question, second, because the Reformed confessions make what God requires in his word the determining factor for the Reformed church's worship. "The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them [the Holy Scriptures] at large" (Belgic Confession 7). Church rulers are "studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore, we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever" (Belgic Confession 32). "Q. 96. What doth God require in the second commandment? A. That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 35).

What God has appointed is the right question, third, because man has no natural internal sense whatsoever of what pleases God in worship. Man has a highly developed sense of how to please himself in worship. Man is an expert at generating religious feelings and affections and fervor in his soul, but man has nothing in himself that he can trust to guide him in worshiping

⁶ Agenda for the classis of the Reformed Protestant Churches, May 18, 2023, 45–46.

God. God is infinite; man is finite. God is the creator; man is a creature. God is a spirit; man is flesh. If man is to worship God, man must learn God's worship entirely from God, as God reveals that worship in his word.

It is over this question that the RPC and Remnant Reformed Church are divided. Remnant teaches that God requires his church to sing psalms in her public worship and that God does not require his church to sing anything other than psalms in her public worship. This is also what the Reformed Protestant Churches taught until March 2023. Since March 2023, what exactly it is positively that God requires the RPC to sing in her worship is anyone's guess.⁷ But the Reformed Protestant Churches have made it heresy to teach that God requires the church to sing exclusively psalms in her public worship.

Mrs. Overway's position apparently is that "Scripture teach[es] us to sing the Psalms" and that "God has appointed other passages of Scripture to use in the church's singing." I have stated my belief about singing other passages in previous issues of *Reformed Pavilion*, so I simply refer the interested reader to those places.⁸ But what is interesting is that Mrs. Overway sees these other passages as appointed by God himself for his church to sing.

I do not agree it is a "human invention" to teach God has appointed other passages of Scripture to use in the church's singing. In labeling I Chronicles 16 a "psalm" and II Samuel 22 a "song," and in ascribing the "last words" of David to the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, the Holy Spirit has taught us that the 150 Psalms are not the only songs of Christ.

The question is, when are the RPC going to start singing these other passages? If these other passages are appointed by God himself to be sung in worship, then the church must sing them. That is how God's appointments for worship work: "nor worship him in any other

way than he has commanded in his word" (Lord's Day 35, Q&A 96). If God requires the singing of psalms, then the church is to sing psalms in worship but nothing else. If God requires the singing of psalms and other passages of scripture, then the church is to sing psalms and other passages of scripture in worship but nothing else. If God requires the singing of psalms and other passages of scripture and man-made hymns, then the church is to sing psalms and other passages of scripture and man-made hymns in worship but nothing else. If God requires the singing of psalms and other passages of scripture and man-made hymns and religious country western songs, then the church is to sing psalms and other passages of scripture and man-made hymns and religious country western songs in worship but nothing else. So if members of the RPC have found that God has appointed psalms and God has appointed other scripture passages to be sung, then when are they going to start singing these other scripture passages?

What is also interesting in Mrs. Overway's paper is that she stops far short of her denomination's position. The RPC have not only said that the church may sing psalms and other passages of scripture but also that the church may sing man-made hymns. In fact, the RPC learned in March 2023 that she has been singing a man-made hymn (Thomas Ken's doxology) all her life. After a confused panic and cover-up, in which the hymn was deceitfully declared to be a psalm, the RPC finally acknowledged that it is indeed a man-made hymn. And the RPC have been commanded that they must sing that hymn and that they must glory in singing that hymn. But where does God require all of this? Where has God appointed the last verse of Thomas Ken's hymn to be sung in church? And if God appointed the last verse of Thomas Ken's hymn, why didn't he appoint the rest of the verses of that hymn? Or all of Thomas Ken's other hymns? Or the hymns of Isaac Watts? Or the hymns of Fanny Crosby?

⁷ See Dewey Engelsma, "Sword and Shield," *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 22 (September 9, 2023): 10–13.

⁸ Andrew Lanning, *FAQ*, *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 2 (April 22, 2023): 11–13; "Response," *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 4 (May 6, 2023): 12–17.

I point this out not to be pedantic but to illustrate to members of the RPC that they have backed themselves into a corner in their doctrine of singing. They don't want the word of God to require exclusive psalmody. One Reformed Protestant church in March (and every congregation that was livestreaming that service) even eliminated all but one or two psalms from one of its worship services as a kind of temper tantrum against exclusive psalmody. The RPC want the right to sing what they please (as long as it is orthodox, of course). But in the matter of singing, we are dealing with God's appointment. We are dealing with what God requires. If the RPC are going to maintain that they *may* sing this, that, and the next thing, then they *must* sing this, that, and the next thing too.

I encourage Mrs. Overway and all the members of the RPC to take firm hold of the "God has appointed" and "Christ appointed" language that Mrs. Overway uses regarding singing. If God has appointed passages outside the psalms, then those must be introduced into the worship of the church. And if God has not appointed man-made hymns like Thomas Ken's doxology, then those must be excluded from the worship of the church.

But I believe that those who deal honestly with the "God has appointed" view will have to settle on exclusive psalmody. Why? Because God composed a special book for his church to sing. God inspired each song in the book (II Sam. 23:1–2). God inspired the placement of each song in the book (Acts 13:33). God called the songbook the "songs of Zion" (Ps. 137:3), indicating that these are the songs the church sings. God called the book the "LORD's song" (137:4), indicating that these are the songs the people of Jehovah sing. The songs in the book are Jesus' songs, for he is the sweet psalmist of Israel (II Sam. 23:1). Jesus sang from this songbook while he was on earth (Matt. 26:30). Jesus sings from this songbook now in the midst of his church (Heb. 2:12). God commands his church to sing that book: "sing psalms" (Ps. 105:2). The apostles instructed the church to sing from this songbook (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13). From all of that comes this principle: sing psalms in church.

The principle of psalm singing leaps from the pages of scripture. The principle presses itself upon the consciousness of the church. So clear is the principle of psalm singing in scripture that one struggles to understand how anyone could deny it. It is not as if God was unclear as to his will for the church's singing. What more could men want from God in order to know clearly God's will for their singing? Do men want God to say it in a direct command? Here: "sing psalms" (Ps. 105:2). Do men want God to hand them a book? Here: the book of psalms. Do men want God to show by Jesus' example and institution? Here: "in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. 2:12). What God has appointed for the church's singing is not some unfathomable mystery but is refreshingly clear. Sing psalms!

Faithfulness: Actual Words Versus the Word?

Mrs. Overway brings up a couple of other matters toward the end of her document. First, Mrs. Overway takes issue with my teaching that faithfulness to the words of the psalms is the most important consideration in the church's choice of a psalter. This is a strange objection to come from a member of the Reformed Protestant Churches, which churches deliberately use the King James Version of the Bible exactly because of its faithfulness to the very words of scripture. The reason that the RPC use the KJV and not another version is because the KJV is the most faithful English translation of the scriptures. The reason that the RPC find other English translations unsatisfactory and even intolerable is that they are not faithful in their translations of the scriptures. So important—and rightly so!—is this matter of Bible translation for the RPC that at least one of the Reformed Protestant schools has written the KJV into its constitution. From article 2 of the constitution of Grace Reformed Protestant School: "The basis...shall be the Scriptures as set forth in the Old and New Testament, which are the inspired and infallible Word of God, faithfully translated and preserved for us in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible." If you would

suggest to the RPC that they should discard the KJV in favor of the New International Version or in favor of some modern paraphrase, the RPC would instruct you in the importance of having a translation that is faithful to the very words of scripture. If a teacher at Grace Reformed Protestant School would introduce the NIV for classroom devotions, that teacher would be fired.

Why, then, such determined opposition from the RPC to my teaching that one's psalter should follow the same fidelity in translating and versifying the psalms that the KJV follows in translating all of scripture?

It seems that the opposition to my teaching stems from yet another attempt to strengthen the charge of legalism against me. "The implications of Rev. Lanning's assertion is that the Psalter, even a revision, is unacceptable because the **actual words** of the 150 Psalms are the **only** words which are pleasing and acceptable to Christ." If what is being done is just more asserting that I make fellowship with Christ depend on what man does, then I can only say again, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart."

In making her case Mrs. Overway falls into the serious error of introducing a division between the actual words of the psalms on the one hand and the message of the psalms on the other hand.

Rev. Lanning directs the eyes of the church to the faithfulness **of the actual words** of the psalm instead of the beautiful truths of the faithfulness **of our Savior** throughout the psalms. Rev. Lanning leads the people's focus to the teaching that the "*psalms are Christ's song*" because **of the words**, and not because of **the Word** contained in them.

The implication is that insisting on faithfulness to the actual words of the psalm interferes with seeing the beautiful truths of Christ's faithfulness in the psalm. A focus on *the words* distracts from a focus on *the Word*. But this is the

error of the modernist, the error of the higher critic of scripture. The modernist makes a division between the actual words of scripture on the one hand and Jesus on the other hand in order to dismiss the actual words of scripture while still supposedly holding on to Jesus. The modernist pits *the words* against *the Word* to discard *the words* while assuring everyone that he still has *the Word*. Now, I don't believe that Mrs. Overway is a modernist. But in grasping for proof that I am a legalist, she has landed upon the same pitting of *the words* against *the Word* that underpins the modernist's doctrine.

The truth of the matter is that there is no conflict between *the words* and *the Word*. *The Word* is made known by *the words*. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). All the beautiful truths of Jesus Christ are taught by the actual words of scripture. Insisting on faithfulness to the actual words of the psalms does not distract from or interfere with or replace seeing the beautiful truths of our savior throughout the psalms. Rather, the beautiful truths of our savior throughout the psalms are made known by the actual words of the psalms. This is why God's people eventually are not satisfied with a mere paraphrase of the psalms, whether in their Bible or their psalter. Their desire for a Bible and a psalter that are faithful to the very words of scripture is not because they have lost sight of their savior but because they do see him and they do desire to hear him speak.

If the RPC dig in their heels on this idea that "Rev. Lanning leads the people's focus to the teaching that the '*psalms are Christ's song*' because **of the words**, and not because of **the Word** contained in them," they will reap the plague of paraphrasing. They will have to condemn any attempt to sing more closely *the actual words* of the psalms as a shifting of focus away from *the Word* contained in the psalms. They will have to defend the inaccurate paraphrasing of the psalter as not only acceptable for the church but desirable for the church. And if paraphrasing the psalms is good enough now, then paraphrasing

all of scripture someday will be good enough too. Someday, generations hence, when a controversy over Bible translations rears its head in the RPC and everyone starts combing through old material in their studies of the issue, they will find that their principle has “always been” that they need not be faithful to the actual words of the psalms. They will find that their principle has “always been” that it is acceptable and desirable to paraphrase the words of the psalms. And they will find that fussiness over the actual words of the inspired psalms has “always been” a characteristic of legalists.

Means of Grace

The second matter that Mrs. Overway brings up toward the end of her document is whether the congregational singing of psalms is a means of grace in the worship of the church. Mrs. Overway objects to my teaching that singing psalms is a means of grace in the official ministry of the church. Having recently answered a similar question in *Reformed Pavilion*, I refer the interested reader to that article.⁹

A few comments could be added at this point to Mrs. Overway’s insistence that Reformed churches in Lord’s Day 25 “acknowledge only two instituted means of grace in the official ministry of the church: the preaching of the gospel and the sacraments.” This is incorrect. First, there is no indication that Lord’s Day 25 is giving an exhaustive list of what is or is not a means of grace in the official ministry of the church. For example, catechism instruction is a means of grace in the official ministry of the church, for by catechism instruction the church feeds Christ’s lambs (John 21:15). Yet the creeds do not list catechism instruction. This does not mean that catechism instruction is not a means of grace in the official ministry of the church. It just means that catechism is a special kind of administration of the word in the ministry of the church.

Second, it is incorrect to say that there are “only two instituted means of grace in the official ministry of the church” because the

Reformed confessions do list other aspects of the worship of the church as means of grace. Canons 5.14 lists “reading of His Word” as a means of grace. Canons 5.14 also lists “hearing... of His Word” as a means of grace. Canons 3–4.17 lists Christian discipline as a means of grace. All of these are special kinds of the administration of the word in the ministry of the church; and, as administrations of God’s word, they are means of grace.

Third, it is incorrect to exclude congregational singing from the means of grace in the official ministry of the church because Paul calls the church to *teach* one another in one body by singing psalms. Paul calls the church to *admonish* one another in one body by singing psalms. This teaching and admonishing is done by those in the office of believer, who are “called in one body” (Col. 3:15–16). By virtue of their office of believer, the members of the body represent Christ as prophets, priests, and kings. As God’s officebearers, singing the psalms that God has given them to sing, they teach one another and admonish one another. Just as with catechism instruction or Christian discipline, God ministers grace to his people through this special administration of the word in the ministry of the church.

None of this threatens the preaching of the gospel as the primary means of grace. The Reformed confessions are very clear that preaching is primary, and the other means of grace, including the sacraments, are only added to the preaching. Lord’s Day 25 says about the preaching of the gospel that the Holy Spirit “works faith” by it.

Conclusion

Let the Reformed Protestant Churches and her members stop making false charges about the doctrine of exclusive psalmody and about my teaching of it. Let the Reformed Protestant Churches heed the Lord’s call: “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk

⁹ Andrew Lanning, *FAQ, Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 23 (September 16, 2023): 4–8.

therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). And let the members not respond as Israel so often did to the Lord’s prophets: “But they said, We will not walk therein” (6:16). And may the members of Remnant Reformed Church, against whom many false things are alleged, stand in the strength of the Lord.

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. (Neh. 6:8–9)

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA’S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

March 20, 1919

(Pp. 181–82)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article XXV. The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)

The power of grace, so we concluded in our last article, was revealed and put in operation immediately after the sin of man in paradise had been committed. How this grace must be explained we left for the moment out of consideration. The fact that grace became active immediately, and that it was thru the power of that grace that the king and the kingdom were saved from utter ruin had to be perfectly plain first of all. We found that there are many indications of the operation of this power of grace immediately after the fall. There is in man a manifestation of the consciousness of his fall and of resulting feeling of shame. Realizing their corruption, being aware of their nakedness the man and the woman are ashamed of each other. Moreover, man reveals that same sense of shame and of fear before his God. He is keenly conscious of the presence of the Holy One in the garden, he also realizes that it is against Him that he sinned, and that the righteous Judge of heaven and earth is upon him. And he hides. On the other hand we found that God does not forsake His creature, looks him up, seems ready to discuss the matter with him, and in His entire approach clearly leaves the impression that the situation is not entirely hopeless. And though it

is true that the ground is cursed for man’s sake, and that it shall bring forth thorns and thistles, and that Adam eating his bread in the sweat of his brow does no more show forth the glory of his original royalty, the fact remains that the same ground shall bring forth what is needed for the sustenance of Adam’s life, and that man shall eat his bread. In all these facts we found abundant proof that grace was revealed and immediately set in operation for the salvation of the king and his kingdom.

The most significant revelation of grace, however, is after all contained in that important sentence pronounced against the serpent as it is found in Gen. 3:15. The entire situation is deeply significant when viewed in the light of this sentence. It seemed as if the devil had gained a glorious victory. His aim was to subject the king and the kingdom of the world unto himself and thus to continue his rebellion against the Sovereign of heaven and earth. For that purpose he had launched an attack against man, the representative of God on earth, who was appointed to be king, knowing right well that if he succeeded completely the kingdom would lay at his feet and God would have been robbed of the glory of His Name. Apparently he succeeded in bringing

him to subjection. It must have been a moment of hellish joy for the devil, even though he must have been struck with surprise that the destruction he wrought was not more complete than it actually appeared to be. Whatever may have been his joy and his expectation certain it is that it was short-lived. For presently the Almighty approaches him and thunders in his ear the message of his complete defeat in that one sentence, so pregnant with significance: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

We may notice in the first place, that not the man or the woman, but the serpent is addressed in this prophecy. It is of importance that we keep this clearly before our minds. The element of grace and of promise it contains with a view to the seed of the woman is generally emphasized too exclusively. And, of course, we do not wish to minimize the importance of this word from the point of view of its being a rich manifestation of God's gracious gospel. But the fact remains, that it is not given in the form of a promise but of a threat, and that it is not directed against the woman but against the devil. The battle was pre-eminently one between God and the devil. The seed of the woman would play an important part in that battle, the salvation of man formed undoubtedly one of the great objections in that battle, but the fact is, that it was a battle between God and the devil. The question had been raised: who will be sovereign, God or the Devil? Historically the devil had given his proof that he could be sovereign, for he had subjected the king of the world. Prophetically, however, God announces that He shall give His glory to no other and that the devil shall ultimately be defeated. Hence, the sentence is addressed to the devil, and although it naturally contains in principal the promises of all the blessings of salvation, the fact is that it assumes the form of a declaration of war.

We need not dwell long on the fact that in the first place the serpent is addressed as the instrument in the power of the devil to tempt man. That not in the first place satan but the

serpent is the object of God's curse is very evident from the preceding verse. There we read: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." That this could not be addressed to the devil is plain. It would have no sense to say that he would be cursed above all cattle and above all the beast of the field; the comparison would be an improper one. It might be possible to express a curse upon the devil above all the spirits of the abyss, not to pronounce him cursed above the animals. The same applies to the nature of the curse which evidently is such as to have no reference to satan whatever. "Upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" are words that are applicable only to the serpent proper. And, therefore, we must accept two things in regard to the serpent. In the first place, that there was such a relation between this animal and the devil as to make the serpent worthy of a special curse according to the righteous judgment of God. For us this is a mystery not to be scrutinized. We cannot understand how that serpent as a mere instrument in the power of the devil could possibly become worthy of God's curse. But the fact remains nonetheless. God judged the serpent as such, just because it had served as instrument in the temptation by satan, worthy of a greater curse. And in the second place, I think we must agree with those interpreters of the passage who draw the conclusion that in its original form the serpent did not crawl on its belly in the dust of the earth. We know not, nor is it possible to conjecture what may have been the former appearance and mode of life of this animal, but it would seem rather clear that its present appearance is the result of God's curse upon the serpent race. If the serpent always went on its belly and always "ate dust" the curse would have no significance.

Neither do we have any objection to admit that even in the fifteenth verse it is first of all the serpent proper that is addressed. There is something very natural in the thought that the

woman, after the power of God's grace has been operating in her heart, so that she has been snatched from under the fascinating charm of the snake that beguiled her, will hate not only the devil, but also the serpent that served as instrument in his power to make the temptation possible. And that this enmity is perpetuated in the human race, so that there is a sort of natural abhorrence in the human heart for the serpent-race is nothing so very strange. Hence, there is nothing objectionable in the interpretation which explains the enmity here expressed as referring first of all to the hatred that is to exist between the human-race and that of the serpent perpetually. The form of the entire prophecy rather makes us think that this is entirely correct. It is announced that the serpent shall bruise the heel of the seed of the woman and that the latter shall crush the head of the serpent. And in these we have evidently a very plain picture of the way in which the enmity of the serpent against man and of the latter against the former comes to manifestation. It is serpent-like, crawling stealthily over the ground to attack man from behind and bite his heel. It is the only way in which he can launch his attack. On the other hand, there is but one way in which the serpent can be overcome, and that is by crushing its head. And, therefore, on the face of it and in the first place we have here an announcement of enmity between the serpent and man in the literal sense of the word.

But, of course, we hasten to add that this by no means exhausts the significance of the prophecy. It would be trifling in the light of all that happened to maintain that God announces here nothing but a sort of perpetual abhorrence on the part of man for the serpent-race finding its root in the knowledge that it served as an instrument in the temptation of man. The king of the world has fallen. The sovereignty of the Most High has been attacked. The Prince of darkness apparently scored a victory. How trivial it would seem in the light of all this if nothing more was announced at this moment, but that there would

be divinely wrought enmity between the serpent and man! Besides, we know from Scripture, that it was not the serpent as such that tempted man. As to outward appearance it was the serpent, as to the real spiritual agency it was the devil. It is for that same reason that the devil is called "the old serpent." In Rev. 20:1, 2, we read: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." Although it is not directly indicated in these words, that the devil is the serpent of paradise that tempted man, yet the reference to this incident is sufficiently plain. And finally, in the light of history there is no doubt that no mere enmity between the serpent and man but far more is implied in this prophecy addressed to the tempter. It may be said that principally all history is the realization and the unfolding of this first announcement of enmity. In practically every single period of history, though in some periods more clearly than in others, we may find the fulfillment of this prophecy: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, he shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." And therefore, the fact remains that we have here an announcement of enmity, first of all between man and the serpent, but in the second place, between a twofold seed, that of the woman and that of the devil the manifestation of which will be seen in the conflict of the ages between the "world" and the kingdom of God.

Two seeds are promised.

Between these two seeds perpetual enmity is announced, deeply rooted hatred that will know of no compromise and cannot be satisfied till either is destroyed completely.

And the final victory of the seed of the woman over that of the serpent is definitely assured.

To these different elements we hope to call your attention next week.

—Holland, Mich.