



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 18

AUGUST 10, 2024

*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
Doxology of Deliverance

4 FROM THE RAMPARTS
Spirit-Led: An Examination (1)

14 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES
Article 70: The New King and His Kingdom (continued)



REFORMED
— PAVILION —

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

See reformedpavilion.com for all contact and subscription information.

And Moses told his father in law all that the LORD had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the LORD delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God.

—Exodus 18:8–12

Doxology of Deliverance

Delivered. It is a vivid word. It means to snatch one out of danger. For example, it is the word that Amos used to describe a firebrand *plucked* out of the burning (Amos 4:11).

It is a vivid concept. It carries the idea of one who has been overpowered by his enemy, when suddenly his enemy is overpowered by the deliverer. For example, it is the word Isaiah used when he informed Hezekiah that God would give him fifteen more years and would *deliver* Jerusalem out of the hand of Assyria (Isa. 38:5–6).

Delivered.

It was much on Moses' and Jethro's minds as they met in Moses' tent near the mount of God. When Moses told his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, this is what Moses told him: "how the LORD delivered them" (Ex. 18:8). When Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness that Jehovah had done to Israel, he described Israel as those whom God "had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians" (v. 9). When Jethro went on to make his doxology, his speech was full of deliverance: "Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand

of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians" (v. 10).

Delivered.

It is much on our minds, for we are out-matched. By whom? By the devil and his lies. By the world and its lusts. By the false church and its persecutions. By our own flesh and its corruption. What formidable foes! But look! Behold the captain of our salvation! And look! Through his burnt offering we are delivered from all our foes! "For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling" (Ps. 116:8).

Delivered. By Jesus Christ our Lord!

When Jethro heard it, he spoke a doxology. A doxology is a word or a song of praise. It is the response of faith to the work of God in order to extol him. Jethro spoke a doxology of deliverance. "Blessed be the LORD!" You and I have a doxology of deliverance as well. "Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore" (Ps. 18:49–50).

—AL

Spirit-Led: An Examination (1)

In the last article we considered the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his people and his work in the church.¹ We also considered the fact that every church claims to be Spirit-led. The calling of the child of God is to try the spirits of the church making that claim. It will be the burden of this article and the next to examine that claim as it has been made by the Reformed Protestant Churches (RPC).

That they are Spirit-led has been the claim of the RPC. Rev. Luke Bomers made that claim in the first sermon after Reverend Lanning's suspension.

They [those who know the gospel and taste God's goodness] sing. They sing to God. They can't do anything but sing. That Spirit brought the word to them, and that Spirit stirred them with that word. That word fills their soul and their mind, and they sing. And I sing too. I sing these words, these words that the Spirit has brought into my soul. I sing them with delight. I sing them in my soul. But now you have brought me two sermons that have said I can't sing them with my lips. I can't utter them from my mouth—that's a sin. I can't put any melody to this praise of God. I bubble over with this word, and I delight in this word and sing this word, and you call it a sin? Oh, you let me read this word. You let me preach this word. You'd even let me pray this word, but I can't sing it. You say it's a sin to sing it. What? Spirit put that song in my heart. Spirit caused that word to dwell in me

richly. If you're going to be consistent, then you better say that that song in my heart and in my soul is a sin too, and then you grieve the Spirit.²

That claim is also in their writings and from their pulpits. The members of the church have been quick to take up that claim. "The Spirit would not lead us into error!" "The Spirit is leading us!" It is that claim that we wish to examine.

Contradiction

From the beginning the case against Reverend Lanning was marked by confusion and contradiction.³ The spirit in the denomination that first agreed with the sermons and then forcibly turned against them, which resulted in the ouster of Reverend Lanning and three officebearers, was not the Holy Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of truth. Truth cuts through the fog of confusion and ignorance. Truth was in short supply in the RPC.

From the very beginning of the Reformed Protestant denomination in 2021, the congregation of First RPC was taught. The instruction came from the pulpit, it came from regular Wednesday night doctrines classes, and it came from *Sword and Shield*. When a letter or article would appear attacking the truth, instruction would soon follow. It is striking that when the controversy over worship started, that all stopped. There was no instruction. Reverend Lanning tried. He proposed that the subject of the next doctrines class be changed to the regulative principle, but the consistory declined. He was teaching the flock from the pulpit, then was removed from the pulpit.

¹ Dewey Engelsma, "Spirit-Led: An Introduction," *Reformed Pavilion* 2, no. 17 (August 3, 2024): 7–15.

² Luke Bomers, "Visited by the Dayspring," sermon preached on March 26, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=326231620336223>.

³ That history has been well documented in the pages of this magazine. The interested reader is invited to read through the first several months of *Reformed Pavilion* to see that history.

When someone in the RPC did try to teach about worship, it was disastrous. Consider Reverend Langerak’s sermon “The Indwelling Word,”⁴ his speech “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow,”⁵ or his articles in *Sword and Shield*.⁶ Did any of those manifest the work of the Holy Spirit? The answer is no, they did not. The Spirit does not harangue or traffic in lies. The Holy Spirit is not the author of confusion or contradiction. Consider these quotations from Reverend Langerak in the sermon “The Indwelling Word”:

I picked this text [Col. 3:16] deliberately because this is the strongest text that the advocates of exclusive psalmody have. It is their bulwark. If they’re going to promote exclusive psalmody, they must appeal to this text.

It is a source of wonderment to me that the advocates of exclusive psalmody are shy about this text, some of them.

And I suspect that the reason that the proponents of this exclusive psalmody do not appeal to these texts is because of the long-standing disagreement about what those words mean and the fact the definitive explanation of what those words mean cannot be settled on the basis of scripture.

Was it the Holy Spirit who led Reverend Langerak to preach that? Or was it the spirit of a man, which is the spirit of confusion and contradiction?

Reverend Langerak also said this: “And those that disturb our peace with their legalism,

they must show with a specific text from scripture where God says, ‘You must only sing the psalms.’ That’s their job.” Three times he demanded a verse of those who taught exclusive psalmody. Besides revealing ignorance about the fact that many truths of God’s word are deduced by “good and necessary consequence” (to borrow the words of the Westminster Confession), that was an argument we had heard before in the RPC. That was exactly what those members had insisted upon who had opposed the teaching that the Christian school was the demand of the covenant. “Give us a verse!” is what we heard repeatedly. And that was exactly the position that Reverend Langerak at that time had summarily dismissed.

Anyone who says, “There is no demand in scripture for the good Christian school,” is actually saying, “There is no verse in the Bible that says, ‘Thou shalt form a good Christian school.’” When they say that, they take me for a fool. There are many things in the Christian life where there is no verse in the Bible that says, “Thou shalt” or “Thou shalt not.” And it is a demand for all that.⁷

Condemning an argument (the demand for a text) during one controversy but then adopting that argument yourself in another controversy reveals a double mind. A double-minded man, according to James 1:8, is “unstable in all his ways.” When the next controversy arises, what will be the approach of Reverend Langerak? Must the people find a text, or may they not? There is no way to know, and that represents an unstable man. You do not know what you will get

⁴ Nathan Langerak, “The Indwelling Word,” sermon preached on March 19, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=3192322435011>. It is not my intent here to analyze that sermon. That work has been done already. See Dewey Engelsma, “An Uncertain Sound,” *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 1 (April 15, 2023): 26–34. I will only highlight a few things to show that the sermon did not flow from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

⁵ Nathan Langerak, “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow,” speech given on May 12, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7Fn4iYmpyo>.

⁶ Nathan Langerak, “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow (1): Introduction,” *Sword and Shield* 4, no. 1 (June 2023): 9–18; “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow (2): Legalism,” *Sword and Shield* 4, no. 2 (July 2023): 7–12; “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow (3): Conditionality,” *Sword and Shield* 4, no. 3 (August 2023): 8–14. These have been examined and found wanting. See Dewey Engelsma, “*Sword and Shield*,” *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 22 (September 9, 2023): 4–20.

⁷ Nathan Langerak, “The Demand and Necessity of the Christian School,” *Sword and Shield* 3, no. 10 (January 2023): 19–20.

from one moment to the next. Men are double-minded and unstable. The Holy Spirit is not. The Holy Spirit has a single mind, and that mind is the glory of God in Jesus Christ. It was not the Holy Spirit working in Reverend Langerak in “The Indwelling Word” but the spirit of the prince of the air.

Not only does saying one thing at one time and a different thing at another time reveal a double-minded man, but it is also cruel. The child of God must combat false doctrine and seek the overthrow and destruction of any teaching that robs God of his glory or that sets itself against God and his kingdom (see II Cor. 10:4–5). But the child of God must not be cruel. It is cruel and capricious to say to one person, “You take me for a fool when you use that argument!” and then only a few short months later take that same argument on your own lips. The charge “Show me a text!” must be condemned as unbiblical, but we love those who make the charge and desire that they would see the truth as it is revealed throughout scripture, and we do not exhibit that love by being cruel.

There was a dire need for instruction during the time of the exclusive psalmody controversy, but it simply did not come. All anyone ever heard was “Legalist! Legalist!” but what they did not hear, what they did not receive, was instruction. That instruction should have come from the pulpit. It did not. Even when Reverend Langerak preached at First RPC in the time between Reverend Lanning’s suspension and classis’ decision to uphold the suspension, he did not preach on the topic of worship. This reminds me of our time at Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church while Reverend Lanning was off the pulpit. Minister after minister would mount the pulpit and studiously avoid the controversy. Reverend Langerak was no different.

Later, Reverend Ophoff tried to instruct on the principle of worship that governs the RPC. That too was an abject failure.⁸ The speech was

utter confusion. It was contradictory throughout. It showed what happens when you stand not on the principle of the word of God but on the principle of what suits man. Your principles will change from week to week and even, apparently, from moment to moment in a speech or sermon.

This characterizes Reverend Ophoff’s preaching. It was suggested to me that I listen to his sermon on Rahab based on Hebrews 11:31.⁹ So I did. It was more of the same. The sermon was a confusing jumble. The people would have left the sermon believing that the point of Hebrews 11 was to teach justification by works, which evidently is the key that allows the church to preach the gospel. “Was not the harlot Rahab justified by works and not by faith only, and it’s from that idea, then, that understanding that you have is that the church from that exhorts in the preaching of the gospel, calls sinners to repentance.”

The sermon was contradictory. This appears to be a regular fixture in preaching in the RPC. This is what Reverend Ophoff said about Rahab:

Where was she? She was on a wall. They gave her a high, prominent place in the city of Jericho. *She wasn’t a nobody*. She was on familiar terms with the king.

And then, less than four minutes later, this is what he said about Rahab:

Think of that. Of all the inhabitants in the city of Jericho, of every single one of the wise, of the mighty, of the powerful, of the influential, *God saved a nobody*.

Listening to Reverend Ophoff and reading the transcripts reminds me of the preaching of Rev. Ken Koole. My advice to the consistory of First RPC would be the same as the advice I gave to an elder at Grandville Protestant Reformed Church: have Reverend Ophoff print off his sermon two weeks before he is planning to preach it so the elders can review it and correct the contradictions

⁸ See Dewey Engelsma, “Clomp. Clomp. Clomp.,” *Reformed Pavilion* 1, no. 41 (January 20, 2024): 5–14.

⁹ Tyler Ophoff, “The Faith of Rahab the Harlot,” sermon preached on April 21, 2024, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=421242225375673>.

and the theological errors before it gets spoon-fed to the congregation.

But that won't happen, and neither is it practical. The elders are in place to oversee the preaching once it has been preached; they are not in place to review or write the sermons before they are delivered.

This fact was lost on the classis of the Reformed Protestant Churches in January 2023.

Minister Training

To understand what went on at that classis and the motion that came for its consideration, you must go back to a Minister Training Committee (MTC) meeting in early January 2023. At that meeting a motion was brought regarding the upcoming examination of Luke Bomers. The examination was scheduled for the January classis, which was in only a few weeks. The motion that the MTC approved and brought to the January meeting of classis read as follows:

Motion is made to rescind our decision to examine Seminarian Luke Bomers at the January classis. Ground: It is the judgment of the committee that Seminarian Bomers requires more time in seminary training. CARRIES. This motion now proceeds to classis for their approval.¹⁰

It was understandable that some delegates at the January classis meeting wanted more of an explanation than was provided in the motion from the Minister Training Committee. The motion was vague and unclear, which means it was a poorly written motion. But that wasn't the fault of the man who brought the original motion. The deacon from Second RPC saw the preaching of Luke for what it was. So he brought a motion to the MTC regarding the upcoming examination. What that man needed was to have

a soldier standing next to him supporting him in that motion. Instead, he got a politician. I was that politician. The wording of the original motion as it came to the committee was strong. When I read it, I quailed. Instead of considering the terrible impact of sending out to the churches a man who couldn't find Christ in a sermon, I thought of the people's reactions. I thought that such a motion might plague the man throughout his ministry. So I did what all good politicians do: I found some middle ground. This resulted in the watered-down, milquetoast motion that came to the classis in January. I am sorry for my cowardice in not supporting my fellow office-bearer on the MTC.¹¹

The advice, weak as it was, was dead on arrival. Classis voted against it, in part because Reverend Langerak spoke so vociferously against it. Again revealing a spirit that was not the Spirit of Christ, Reverend Langerak threatened the classis that classis would need to replace him on the Minister Training Committee if the delegates did not examine Luke at this meeting of classis.¹² I have learned that threats are the attempts of a carnal man to get his way. I saw it in the consistory room of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church when we were threatened by a church visitor, Reverend Koole, and I saw it at the meeting of classis from Rev. Nathan Langerak.

Even though the motion failed, what was the concern that caused a majority of the MTC to vote against examining Luke at the upcoming meeting of classis? That was expressed well by a member of the MTC on the floor of classis:

There was a concern of mine that he [Luke Bomers] did not always find—in fact, often he didn't find—Christ in the text; and, although Christ was preached in the sermon, the root of the sermon and

¹⁰ Agenda for the classis of the Reformed Protestant Churches, January 19, 2023, 8.

¹¹ I grieve for it, and may those who find themselves under my care never forget what I am capable of. May their confidence always be in the officebearer of the church, Jesus Christ, who never shrinks from battle or turns away in fear.

¹² Reverend Langerak's comments were as follows: "I again am going to recommend to the classis that he be examined. And I'm going to say this: if he [Luke] isn't ready, then I don't know what ready is, and then you need to get somebody else to make that judgment" (Classis of the Reformed Protestant Churches, January 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2Tb7PWWWhU> [1:28:17]).

the comfort to the believer wasn't Christ essentially. And he did correct those sermons, and I agree that the reworking of them was good; but it's concerning to me that he does not find that on his own. And that is why my judgment is that he's not ready to go out into the churches until such a time that he would be able to do that in practice preaching because the reality is, is that he's not going to have someone help him correct his sermons once he's out in the churches. It's going to be up to him to make a good sermon, and it's going to be up to his consistory to make a judgment about it. And that's why I believe that he's not ready.¹³

The last two sermons preached by Luke for the committee were disastrous. The criticism was as serious as it could be—you did not preach Christ, and you fed the congregation on man. So a motion came to delay Luke's classical examination. The thought was this: we should not send him out to the churches until he can preach a sermon that finds Christ the first time and not just after being coached. By the time he goes out to the churches, there is no sermon review ahead of time. What's preached is preached, and if man is preached to the congregation, then the congregation will feed on man, whatever the consistory might do after the fact.

The wise counsel of that member of the MTC at classis was ignored. The very next speaker disagreed. That speaker was Todd Ferguson, an elder at Zion RPC:

Just to briefly disagree with the previous speaker, he [Luke] would be placed in a consistory to help him in that regard. That training, though formally would stop, I believe Christ is in those consistories to help the minister in that way as well with that oversight.

Classis would go on to reject the advice of the Minister Training Committee. Luke was examined and sent out to the churches.

The spirit of man, which is to say the spirit of the prince of the air as it manifests itself in the heart of man, is known by its cruelty and violence.

Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. (Zeph. 3:3–4)

It would not take long for that cruelty and violence to manifest itself in the ministry of Luke Bomers.

Rev. Luke Bomers

Two months after classis, Luke would speak a word of edification on the pulpit of First Reformed Protestant Church, titled "Visited by the Dayspring."¹⁴ The occasion would be the suspension of Reverend Lanning by the consistory of First RPC. What was notable about this sermon was not the content. What was notable was the violence and the spiritual abuse that Reverend Bomers would visit on the congregation. Three days before this word was preached, Luke had been sitting at Reverend Lanning's feet, being taught of him in seminary. Now Luke was screaming at him from the pulpit.¹⁵ Luke brought the Holy Spirit into it. "The Spirit put that song in my heart." But what spirit was it? It was not the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not work by causing a song to "bubble" up in a man's heart. The Holy Spirit does not work apart from his word. Whatever was bubbling around in Luke, it was not the Holy Spirit. To single out members of the congregation and scream at them from the pulpit exhibits a spirit

¹³ Deacon Lee Wiltjer's comments at the classis of the Reformed Protestant Churches, January 19, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2Tb7PMMWhU> (1:29:14).

¹⁴ Luke Bomers, "Visited by the Dayspring," sermon preached on March 26, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=326231620336223>.

¹⁵ Do you think that is exaggeration? Don't take my word for it; watch it yourself.

of violence and cruelty that only the spirit of man can produce. It was as ugly a scene as I have ever seen from a pulpit.

And it was that brand of “shepherd’s heart” that Luke would bring to Zion RPC.

Zion RPC was Luke’s first charge. There he would be under the oversight of Elder Todd Ferguson, the man who had pushed for Luke’s examination and the man who did not understand the difference between seminary training and preaching.

Several months after Reverend Bomers’ arrival, Zion RPC would disband.

What took place at Zion would later be played out on the pages of *Sword and Shield* in the March, April, May, and August 2024 issues.¹⁶ The situation at Zion RPC came to a head when an elder wrote a letter of resignation to the consistory and distributed the letter to the congregation. Reverend Bomers took umbrage with the letter. Again revealing the spirit working within him, Reverend Bomers wrote this about the letter and the letter-writer:

I judge Mr. Meelker’s letter to be not only pathetically weak but also astoundingly wicked. Mr. Meelker may be soft in his condemnation of the preaching at Zion. But I will not be soft in my response to his letter.¹⁷

In his four-article series, Reverend Bomers was, indeed, not soft. He was cruel. He was vicious. His articles were a case study in defending one’s honor. It was just a longer version of Reverend Haak’s words in the consistory room when, as a church visitor, he asked Byron Center’s elders, “When do I get my day in court?”

This was Reverend Bomers’ opportunity to defend himself and get his day in court. And the Spirit of Jesus Christ was not in it. Do you want to know what the minister of God in whom dwells the Holy Spirit looks like? This:

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (II Tim. 2:24–26)

I have been told that the word out of the Reformed Protestant Churches is that Zion RPC was weak on the antithesis. If we grant that for the sake of argument, there are two approaches a minister could take.¹⁸ He could go to the new church and preach violent sermons about the antithesis, which violence would bring the response that it did. This approach allows you to blow up a church in a matter of months and then walk away from the wreckage claiming that your targets hated God anyway.¹⁹ Alternatively, a man could go to the new congregation and instruct. He could patiently teach the congregation. He could do so for years, perhaps for the man’s entire life if necessary, patiently, carefully, and in love teaching them the truth. The approach would be this: “This congregation has only, until recently, heard Protestant Reformed teaching. If all of us needed instruction on faith, repentance, forgiveness, and the Christian school as demand of the covenant, then it stands to reason we need instruction on the antithesis.” Understanding that, and having compassion on the flock, which

¹⁶ Luke Bomers, “What Happened at Zion?,” *Sword and Shield* 4, no. 11 (March 2024): 23–26; “What Happened at Zion? (2): Wrestling,” *Sword and Shield* 4, no. 12 (April 2024): 28–33; “What Happened at Zion? (3): Mr. Meelker’s Antithesis,” *Sword and Shield* 4, no. 13 (May 2024): 28–35; “What Happened at Zion? (4): No Comfort,” *Sword and Shield* 5, no. 3 (August 2024): 17–22.

¹⁷ Luke Bomers, “What Happened at Zion?,” 26.

¹⁸ After reading the material, I would not be so quick to grant that Zion RPC was weak on the antithesis. Reverend Bomers’ view of the antithesis is twisted, ugly, self-serving, and proud. It could be summarized this way (and my proofs for these charges are in parentheses): 1. Insist you are the only church in the world that preaches the truth (Luke Bomers, “What Happened at Zion?,” 24). 2. Spiritually abuse anyone who does not agree with you (Reverend Bomers’ entire ministry to this point). 3. Practice shunning (Luke Bomers, “Final Doxology,” sermon preached on December 10, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiQJZYfRII>).

¹⁹ This is not hyperbole. See Luke Bomers, “What Happened at Zion?,” 26.

compassion would have exhibited the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he would have provided that instruction. And later, if they throw you out, okay, well and good. But Reverend Bomers was not thrown out for teaching the truth. He violently destroyed the church in southern California and scattered the sheep. May God in his grace gather them (Jer. 23:2–3).

This quotation regarding Martin Luther is instructive:

Luther’s idea that God’s Word—that the good news of the Gospel—would have its way and needn’t be forced or rushed is at the heart of most of his theology. In one of his *Invocavit Sermons*, he preached,

Do you know what the Devil thinks when he sees men use violence to propagate the gospel? He sits with folded arms behind the fire of hell, and says with malignant looks and frightful grin: “Ah, how wise these madmen are to play my game! Let them go on; I shall reap the benefit. I delight in it.” But when he sees the Word running and contending alone on the battle-field, then he shudders and shakes for fear.²⁰

In the August 2024 issue of *Sword and Shield*, Reverend Bomers tried his hand at some instruction.²¹ He was responding to an article by Reverend Lanning in the June 15 issue of *Reformed Pavilion*.²² His response to Reverend Lanning’s article further revealed the spirit that is at work in Reverend Bomers. The Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ hates the lie. Reverend Bomers traffics in it. In the article Reverend Bomers juxtaposes two imaginary conversations that are taking place, one in which a Reformed man

and a Seventh-day Adventist are speaking and one in which a Reformed man and an exclusive psalmist are speaking. The point Reverend Bomers is trying to make by this juxtaposition is that just as a Seventh-day Adventist demands a text to prove that the sabbath day was changed from Saturday to Sunday, so too does the exclusive psalmist demand a text for exclusive psalmody.

Nowhere in scripture does it *explicitly* state that the sabbath day was changed from Saturday to Sunday. (Seventh-day Adventist)²³

God never gave a literal command that the church must sing something other than psalms. I will remain unconvinced of your position unless you can give to me a specific text where God commanded the church to sing something other than the literal 150 psalms in corporate worship. (exclusive psalmist)²⁴

Throughout his article Reverend Bomers constantly adds the word “explicitly.” By this he is teaching that those who teach and defend exclusive psalmody are those who demand that a specific text be given to disprove their position. Reverend Bomers has a problem though. He cannot give one example of someone defending exclusive psalmody who has ever demanded, “Give me a specific text where God commanded the church to sing something other than the literal 150 psalms in corporate worship.” In fact, he cannot give even one example where a man teaching or defending exclusive psalmody has even *hinted* at that. But I can give him a few examples of times when someone who defends Reverend Bomers’ principle of singing (whatever that happens to be these days) demanded a specific text. This one will suffice: “And those that disturb our peace with their legalism, they must

²⁰ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 284.

²¹ Luke Bomers, “But What Does God Require?,” *Sword and Shield* 5, no. 3 (August 2024): 33–35.

²² Andrew Lanning, “But What Does God Require?,” *Reformed Pavilion* 2, no. 10 (June 15, 2024): 4–10.

²³ Bomers, “But What Does God Require?,” 34; emphasis is Bomers’.

²⁴ Bomers, “But What Does God Require?,” 35.

show with a specific text from scripture where God says, ‘You must only sing the psalms.’ That’s their job.”²⁵

What the exclusive psalmist says is this: “What does God require?” That may be found in a specific text, or it may be found throughout the entire scripture so that no specific text is necessary to prove the position. That is the Reformed approach and understanding of the truths of scripture. Reverend Bomers does not even disagree with this position, as he points out when he writes from the Reformed man’s perspective, “To be Reformed is to insist that the church of Jesus Christ must not worship God in any other way than he has commanded in his word.”²⁶

Reverend Bomers lies. Neither is his lie very hard to identify. He writes this as being the position of the exclusive psalmist:

The question is, what does God require? *What does God explicitly require?* God never gave a literal command that the church must sing something other than the psalms. I will remain unconvinced of your position unless you can give to me a specific text where God commanded the church to sing something other than the literal 150 psalms in corporate worship.²⁷

Nowhere in Reverend Lanning’s article did he demand that someone give him an explicit text to prove that person’s position. What Reverend Lanning asked was, “But what does God require?” This is not a novel or unreasonable question for a Reformed man to ask another Reformed man when it comes to worship. This is the ABCs of worship. The second commandment commands that we do not worship God “in any other way than he has commanded in his word” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 96), so that, when it comes time to discuss worship and decide on worship, the question is, what does God require? Reverend

Bomers’ article proves that Reverend Lanning was correct when he wrote, “What is more, the Reformed Protestant ministers reveal that they do not understand how the regulative principle works.”²⁸

Reformed men should not be offended by the question, what does God require? To the man justified by his works, that is indeed a terrifying question. But to the child of God, that is a lovely question. It warms my soul and the soul of every child of God who knows who he is by nature. Because I know what I want in worship. I want my own will to be done. I want to worship God in whatever way pleases me; so today I want to sing the psalms, but tomorrow I will be okay with singing hymns, and the day after I will be back to singing psalms but only because I want to. But God is so good to us not to leave us to our own devices or will but to tell us exactly what he requires of us in worship. And I use the word “exactly” not because I need a specific text to make that clear but because the entire word of God testifies to what God requires. What God requires is no mystery, even if it is an offense to my flesh. Neither is it hard to see the gospel’s answer to that question of the law. Borrowing from Augustine, this prayer gives the gospel’s answer to the question posed by the second commandment: “O Lord, grant and impute to me the perfect and complete worship of Jesus Christ my Savior, and command what you will concerning my worship.”²⁹ I stand before God today having worshiped God perfectly—not because I did it but because Christ did it, and he is my head, and I am in him. Now, Lord, command what you will regarding worship.

Reading Reverend Bomers’ article reveals the spirit that motivates and drives him. You see a spirit of deceit in his lies, a spirit of confusion in his use of familiar words and concepts yet in a strange manner, and a spirit of ignorance in his

²⁵ Nathan Langerak, “The Indwelling Word.”

²⁶ Bomers, “But What Does God Require?,” 34.

²⁷ Bomers, “But What Does God Require?,” 35; emphasis is Bomers’.

²⁸ Lanning, “But What Does God Require?,” 8.

²⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. E. B. Pusey (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003), 233.

continued inability to provide clear instruction on his principles and to answer the simple question, what does God require?

The one thing you do not see in Rev. Luke Bomers is the Spirit of the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Confusion and Ignorance

The RPC has been filled with confusion and continues to be to this day. Ignorance has been on full display and is to this day. The RPC have lied about what exclusive psalmody teaches, and they are filled with confusion about their position. This is not a surprise. Where does a Reformed man go in times of controversy? He goes to the word of God. And he goes to the Reformed confessions as a faithful exposition of the scriptures. Leaders in the RPC took both away from their people.

These appeals to the creeds are wrong. They are wrong because the creeds, for the peace of the churches, the creeds are dead silent on the matter, absolutely dead silent.³⁰

The creeds never send us back to scripture, ever. There may be things that are elicited from scripture that perhaps are not clearly stated in the creeds, but the creeds never send us back to scripture.³¹

The legalism of exclusive psalmody shows itself in biblicism. It is taught that in Lord's Day 35 the confessions are sending us back to scripture to find the answer of what God commands. That is biblicism. That is what the biblicist does. He picks away at the confessions of the church, and he tries to open the door for him to proof-text from the Bible. Proof-texting is that one has a doctrine, and instead of going to

the word to find out what the word says, he goes to the Bible and he tries to prove his doctrine. That's proof-texting.³²

What Reverend Ophoff said in that last quote is nonsensical. "Proof-texting is that one has a doctrine, and instead of going to the word to find out what the word says, he goes to the Bible and he tries to prove his doctrine. That's proof-texting." What? That makes no sense. "He goes to the Bible and he tries to prove his doctrine. That's proof-texting." But ignore that for a moment. Consider what was just done. Just like that, the creeds and the Bible were taken out of the hands of the denomination. Where do you turn if the creeds are dead silent and you can't go to scripture? You go where the denomination went, which is inward. And they went there with a vengeance. They began to spout whatever seemed right in their own eyes. Their guide was that which "bubbled" up within them, rather than God's word. To the question, what governs their worship today if the creeds are silent and they may not use scripture? the answer is that they are governed by the will of the violent men who are in charge.³³ And the people love to have it so.

Violence

Stripping the people of the Bible and the creeds breeds ignorance, and that ignorance leads to something ugly. It makes men violent. What do I mean by violent? Do I mean that sharp words are used? It can't be that, or every faithful prophet in the Old and New Testaments and Jesus himself would fall under that judgment. A city (church) is violent when it is ruled by the will of man and not by the will of Christ. Christ's rule, whereby he carries the lambs and gently leads his people (Isa. 40:11), is gentle (II Cor. 10:1).

³⁰ Nathan Langerak, "The Indwelling Word."

³¹ Nathan Langerak, "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow."

³² Tyler Ophoff, "Singing According to Article 69 of the Church Order," speech given on November 3, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzkL6KLHdZg&t=1896s>.

³³ I cannot improve on what Reverend Lanning wrote in the June 15, 2024, issue of *Reformed Pavilion* in the article titled "But What Does God Require?," responding to the slander that continues to come from the RPC against Reverend Lanning and those who love the truth of exclusive psalmody, so I will not try. I encourage everyone to read that article not only to understand the issues but also to see how a pastor ought to teach and instruct.

He gives rest (Matt. 11:28–30). The verses could be multiplied where we read of Jesus’ having compassion on his people, but Matthew 9:36 is representative: “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” To have compassion for God’s people is exactly the opposite of violence. It bears repeating that this does not mean that there may be no word of rebuke or strong words used (see Matt. 17:17). But it does mean that the faithful minister of Jesus Christ will patiently instruct, even to his hurt, and, bearing every personal reproach, will lead the flock not according to his whim or will but according to God’s will, as that will is revealed in Jesus Christ. He will instruct according to the word of God, and that instruction has an end: the glory of God in Jesus Christ. So when we see in a denomination ignorance, we must not be surprised that violence is soon to follow. It is that violence that has been on full display in the RPC from the moment that Reverend Lanning was suspended, in the sermons of her ministers and the violent, abusive prayers of her elders. The people have been only too eager to follow suit with their family and former friends and have done so in ways that would at times cause the cruelty of the Protestant Reformed Churches to look like child’s play.

John Calvin explains this in his commentary on Isaiah 51:23, which reads, “But I will put it

[the cup of God’s fury] into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.”

In order to describe more fully the insolence and haughtiness of their enemies, such as we too experience every day in our adversaries, he quotes their words, by which they slandered and insulted the unhappy children of God. *Impiety is always accompanied by pride and cruelty; for, as the true knowledge of God renders men gentle, so ignorance makes them ferocious and savage. They who are ignorant of God please themselves, and pour out unmeasured reproaches against God and those who truly worship him.* This truly is most wretched and base; but since he frequently permits his name to be exposed to the insults of wicked men, let us not wonder that we are assailed on account of his name; for we are not more excellent than God, and our condition ought not to be better than that of the ancient Church. David employs a different metaphor, (Ps. 129:3,) when he says that the Church resembles a field which is cut and broken up by the plough; for he shews that frequently it is deeply furrowed and trodden upon, that we may not think that our condition is different.³⁴

—DE



³⁴ John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 4 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 91; emphasis added.

Article LXX. The New King and His Kingdom (continued)

We entered upon a discussion of the counsel of God, His eternal decree in regard to all things.

The connecting link between this doctrine and that of the Trinity we found to be in Christ Jesus.

Naturally, God's counsel, His eternal decree, His secret will, according to which He works all things in time, is in harmony with His own Being, with His own mode of existence. Also the Trinity is reflected in that counsel. Surely, the counsel of God is in no wise limited. It is absolutely free. We shall elaborate upon this in the future. But we must understand even now that this freedom of God in regard to His own counsel exactly consists of the harmony between that counsel and His own Being. And now it is clearly in harmony with the Triune existence of God that, according to the counsel of God, Christ, the son of God come in the flesh, shall ultimately be the head of all creation. King in glory and Head of the eternal covenant of grace. He is the image of God's being. And, therefore, it stands to reason that in Him God will reveal Himself in the highest sense of the word.

We pointed out the great importance of again emphasizing this doctrine, which constitutes the very backbone of Reformed faith, in our own age. Our age is averse to specific doctrine. All the more reason why specific doctrine should be emphasized. The doctrine of God's eternal counsel is most fundamental. It deals with the question whether God shall be acknowledged sovereign and whether the creature shall be willing to assume his place as creature. It deals with the most fundamental relation of all religion, namely that

between God and the creature. It is a doctrine that militates against all our sinful hearts may dictate, our sinful minds may imagine. It is calculated to root up from our hearts even the last shadow of sinful conceit and self-righteousness. And it casts the sinner in the dust before the glorious God of heaven and earth. It is this doctrine that must again be emphasized more strongly than has been done in the past, that must again live in all its significance in the minds and hearts of our people. It above all is the strong barrier against sinful humanism that exalts man and makes of God man's servant.

It must be given its rightful place in all our preaching and teaching, in all our study of the truth, in our minds and hearts. And that place, that rightful place of the doctrine of God's decree, is that of the heart and backbone of our entire view. It cannot be allowed a subordinate place in our conception. It cannot be looked upon and treated as of minor importance, as something that belongs to the Reformed conception of the truth and that, therefore, must be taught though we do it reluctantly and timidly. It must be given the place of honor, the place at the foundation, and it must ultimately dominate our entire conception of the truth. Only if it is allowed this fundamental place in our minds will this doctrine again come into its own.

Now, we must clearly understand that for the present we are speaking of the counsel of God entirely in general. The term predestination is often used, especially in circles where they have weaned away from the correct and full knowledge of this doctrine more or less, in a way that is confusing. Predestination is made to refer

to the entire counsel of God. And even the term “election” is not so infrequently employed loosely and promiscuously with counsel or decree and predestination. It is necessary, therefore, first of all that we clearly distinguish. In the first place it is important that we differentiate between God’s counsel, His purpose, His decree in general on the one hand, and predestination on the other. These two are not identical. True, it is very well conceivable that the term predestination is used in a broader sense so as to cover the entire will of God with respect to all things in nature and grace. I can say, for instance, that rain and sunshine, life and death, war and peace, prosperity and adversity are all predestined from eternity. I may say on the basis of Scripture, that it is predestined whether the hairs of my head shall fall. And, therefore, it is possible to employ the term predestination in a general way. But it is well to remember that in the strict sense of the word, as a doctrinal term predestination is not to be employed in that broad sense of the word. Predestination is used only to refer to one of the subdivisions of the counsel of God in general. It is perhaps hardly necessary to make the same remark with respect to the terms election and predestination. Also these are not to be confused. Election is the narrower, predestination is the broader term. Election is only one half of predestination, reprobation being the other.

Hence, we obtain the following. There is first the most general concept of the counsel of God with regard to absolutely all things, in its all-comprehensive sense. This counsel you may call decree, purpose, will, plan, counsel, secret will, will of decree. If it is only remembered that in this general sense it is all-comprehensive. In this counsel of God, however, we distinguish between the counsel of God’s providence and the counsel or decree of predestination. Not as if they were two counsels, two different decrees. On the contrary, they are one and are most closely related. But we distinguish them as elements in one and the same counsel of God. The decree of providence, then, is God’s eternal will

with regard to all things in time outside of the sphere of God’s moral creatures. And the counsel of predestination is His eternal decree or will with regard to the eternal destiny of His moral creatures, both angels and men. And again, the decree of predestination is distinguished into the counsel of election and that of reprobation. The former constitutes the will of God with regard to the eternal destiny of the saved in Christ, the latter with regard to those that remain lost in sin.

Now we are discussing for the present not predestination, neither election and reprobation, but the most general conception of the counsel of God as such, His eternal will with respect to all things. We discuss this first, for the simple reason that the counsel of God is one and indivisible. We may logically distinguish between the counsel of God’s providence and the counsel of predestination, in very fact they are one. And they are closely and most intimately related. There is a danger that we separate the two, and speak of the counsel of God’s providence with respect to all things in history and nature as being entirely separate from the decree of predestination. Yet this may not be the case. We must understand, therefore, first of all that they are one, and that the counsel of predestination is not even to be conceived of outside of the counsel of God in general. That this is true will be plain if we consider for a moment the works of God in their unity. God’s creation knows no individualism. God did not create a mass of independent and separate creatures, without any interrelation. On the contrary, God’s creation is one whole, it is essentially a unity, and the separate spheres and creatures of that creation are mutually dependent. There is order and gradation, there is dependence and interrelation in the whole of God’s work. Inorganic and organic creation are closely interlocked. Man, the highest creature in God’s world, is dependent for his very existence upon the rest of the world. He is dependent upon the atmosphere to breathe, upon the water he drinks, upon the world of plants and vegetables, upon the animal world for his food and

clothing. Thus he is dependent upon the rain and sunshine, upon the winds and clouds, upon the constellation of the bodies in the firmament. And not only that man individually is dependent for his existence upon the entire world, but the very history of mankind is evidently shaped and directed under the influence of such things as rain and sunshine. It depends upon the proper amount of rain and sunshine whether we are to have sufficient crops. And again, to a large extent it depends upon these crops whether a nation in war shall be victorious or not. What an important part crops and, therefore, rain and sunshine play in the wars of the world we have forcibly learned in recent years. And, therefore, the history of all mankind, the development of the nations, and also the development of the kingdom of God in the world and of every individual child of God personally, — all these are very closely interlocked with the conditions of the world in general. And if this unity and interdependence exists in the works of God, it is plain that the same is true of God's counsel according to which He effects to highest realization. Never must we separate the counsel of God into a few different little counsels. But we must first of all understand that this counsel of God is one and indivisible and that also in that counsel all things stand in close connection with one another and are subservient to one single purpose.

This brings us to the first characteristic of that eternal counsel of God. About this counsel of God we confess that it is One, Eternal, All-comprehensive, Irresistible, and Unchangeable. And when we describe that counsel as one, as being a unity, we mean that in that counsel there is one dominating purpose that controls the whole counsel and that all other things and elements of that counsel are subservient to that single purpose. Just as the purpose of a home is to be a convenient and comfortable dwelling-place, and all the different parts of the home are made subservient to that single purpose, so there is a single purpose in respect to the counsel of God and all the details of the entire counsel

are subservient to that single purpose. And the question, therefore, is: what is that single purpose of the counsel of God? It is, of course, a most fundamental question. It is a question the answer to which determines our entire life-view. It is equivalent to the question: what is the purpose of all the works of God? What is the single purpose of all that exists? What is the purpose of my existence? For it stands to reason that according to that counsel God made and still does all things. And, therefore, even as the counsel is dominated by the single purpose, so all that exists and lives must be subservient to that same purpose of God's will. What, then, is the single purpose that dominates the whole of God's counsel?

There are, of course, who answer: the happiness of the creature, particularly the salvation of man. If this answer is accepted as the true conception, our entire life-view will necessarily be dominated by man and his salvation, will be soteriological, will be anthropo-centric. Man's salvation will then be our highest aim, since it is the very purpose of God's counsel. And in our lives and our efforts the salvation of man will be the central aim, the highest purpose. According as we emphasize this answer more or less strongly we will be more or less Arminian in our doctrine, Methodistic in our practical lives. The well-being of man will always occupy the central position in our field of vision, and the glory of God will be transferred to its periphery.

Of course, this is not the Reformed conception. One and all Reformed people have always condemned this view as not in harmony with Scripture and unworthy of God, and they have always maintained that if one purpose must be mentioned of the counsel of God, it is God's own glory.

About this fundamental principle there is in Reformed circles no difference.

And yet, there are two different aspects of this one view. About this next time.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.