

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

WHAT NEXT?

By Pastor Brian De Jong

With the old year gone, and a new year dawning, many people are asking, "What next?" The annual changing of the calendar offers the opportunity for fresh beginnings. Often this is codified in the form of "New Years Resolutions."

So what will your resolutions look like? What commitments will you make for the months ahead? Let me suggest some ideas for you personally.

As a first priority, why not commit yourself to daily Bible reading. That would mean that you must set aside some time each and every day to open your Bible and read. I would guess that you are in the habit of eating each day. Probably two or three times a day you sit down and feed your body. Why not make a similar commitment to daily feed your soul? There will be nothing more helpful to your spiritual life than a resolution to read your Bible regularly.

In order to do this, you may want to obtain a Bible reading plan. There are many available that will take you through the Bible in a set amount of time. Or you could start in the Old Testament and begin reading your way through the Bible. By following a plan, there is structure and accountability – a key to succeeding at your resolution!

Another resolution I might suggest is to spend time in daily prayer. Maybe you start modestly – just five minutes. Get that established, and then start expanding the time on your knees. There is so much

to pray for that I'm sure you won't run out of material for your daily prayer time. If you need some encouragement, look at Daniel's example in Daniel 6:10.

One resolution that I will be making might encourage you in a similar direction. I am resolved to practice more deliberate and systematic hospitality. As much

as our family enjoys having people into our home, weeks can turn into months and we still haven't had anyone in for a meal and fellowship. Our intentions are good, but our follow through can be spotty. So starting January 1st, the De Jong family is getting serious about hospitality. Care

to join us? You may even entertain an angel!

Another resolution near and dear to my heart is to be bolder in outreach. How many of us are too evangelistic? I don't think it is a common problem that we spend too many hours sharing our faith with unbelievers. To that end, wouldn't it be good to purpose to speak out for Christ to those who do not know Him?

A different type of New Year's pledge might be this: I want to be more encouraging to my fellow believers. I know how much encouragement means to me, and how helpful it is when I receive a large dose of that good medicine. Couldn't I find ways to be more thoughtful and encouraging to my fellow believers?

Maybe for you it would be good to resolve to spend your free time doing...

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Volume 6, Issue 1

January 2011

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Mnemonics...

- *Congregation & Corporation Meetings, 19th*
- *Session Meeting, 11th*

A Layman's Introduction to the Regulative Principle of Worship

by Rev. Brian De Jong

In my earliest days as an intern for Reformed University Ministries, I had the pleasure of studying through the Westminster Confession of Faith. G.I. Williamson's Study Guide was my textbook. As I worked through Williamson's comments on the Confession of Faith, I discovered an idea that I had never considered before. That concept is commonly called The Regulative Principle of Worship.

Although I had grown up in a Christian family, and attended reformed churches all my life, I had never heard of the RPW. I felt as if I had found one of the lost jewels of Reformed Christianity.

Since that time I have pondered the Regulative Principle and its application within the church. Let me share the fruit of my studies and ponderings by posing and answering pertinent questions about the RPW.

Q.1. What is the Regulative Principle of Worship?

A.1. The Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW) is the idea that God and God alone prescribes and regulates his own worship. He determines and defines true worship, He declares it in His word, He animates and empowers it, He controls and governs it, He judges and blesses it.

Q.2. What is the classical statement of the RPW?

A.2. The classical statement of the RPW is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 21, paragraph 1, which reads as follows

The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible

representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

Another complementary citation from the WCF is chapter 20, paragraph 2...

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

Q.3. Do other Reformed documents contain statements of the RPW?

A.3. Both the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms have similar statements, as do the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. A few samples are...

WSC Q. 50. *What is required in the second commandment?*

A. The second commandment requireth the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word.

WSC Q. 51. *What is forbidden in the second commandment?*

A. The second commandment forbiddeth the worshiping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word.

WLC Q. 109. *What sins are forbidden in the second commandment?*

A. The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counseling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; the making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons,

Regulative Principle Continued...



either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshiping of it, or God in it or by it; the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them; all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretense whatsoever; simony; sacrilege; all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.

Heidelberg Catechism Q. 96. What does God require in the second commandment?

A. That we in no wise represent God by images, (a) nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word. (b)

(a) Deut.4:15-19; Isa.40:18-25; Rom.1:23,24; Acts 17:29.

(b) 1 Sam.15:23; Deut.12:30-32; Matt.15:9.

Belgic Confession: Article 32: The Order and Discipline of the Church

We also believe that although it is useful and good for those who govern the churches to establish and set up a certain order among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, they ought always to guard against deviating from what Christ, our only Master, has ordained for us.

Therefore we reject all human innovations and all laws imposed on us, in our worship of God, which bind and force our consciences in any way.

Q.4. But is this a Biblical idea? Where is it found in Scripture?

A.4. Yes it is. Consider the following passages:

Exodus 20:3-6 “You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵“You shall not worship them

or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Deuteronomy 12:28-32 “Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God. ²⁹“When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ ³¹“You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. ³²“Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Mark 7:5-9 The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?” ⁶ And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁷ ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ ⁸

“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” ⁹ He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.

John 4:21-24 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you

Regulative Principle Continued...

worship the Father. ²²“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. ²⁴“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Q.5. Are there other Biblical passages that have bearing on the RPW?

Q.5. Certainly. Look, for instance, at the story of Nadab & Abihu in Leviticus 10. Or consider Samuel’s words in I Samuel 15:22-23. Likewise, in many of the Psalms we find God directly regulating worship. A good example is Psalm 100, which governs our hearts as we enter into worship, as well as what we do when we worship God.

Q.6. Does everyone believe this?

A.6. No – Lutherans and Anglicans follow something called the normative principle of worship. According to this normative principle of worship, believers should use all the prescribed elements in worship, and they are free to include anything else that is not expressly forbidden by Scripture. In this approach, many things not specifically required can be included in worship, so long as they are not forbidden by God. Man can therefore introduce non-biblical innovations into worship that have no authorization from God. Man assumes legislative authority and thereby binds the conscience of worshipers to participate in these unauthorized worship practices.

Q.7. J.I. Packer has claimed that the RPW is a product of the Puritans and that such concepts are not found in earlier reformers, like Calvin. Is that correct?

A.7. No, Dr. Packer is not correct in his criticism. Look at this excerpt from Calvin’s book entitled The Necessity of Reforming the Church...

Moreover, the rule which distinguishes between pure and vitiated worship is of universal application, in order that we may not adopt any device which seems fit to ourselves, but look to the injunctions of him who alone is entitled to prescribe. Therefore, if we would have him to approve our worship, this rule, which he everywhere enforces with the utmost strictness, must be carefully observed. For there is a twofold reason why the Lord, in condemning and prohibiting all fictitious worship, requires us to give obedience only to his own voice. First, it tends greatly to establish his authority that we do not follow our own pleasure, but depend entirely on his sovereignty; and, secondly, such is our folly, that when we are left at liberty, all we are able to do is to go astray. And then when once we have turned aside from the right path, there is no end to our wanderings, until we get buried under a multitude of superstitions. Justly, therefore, does the Lord, in order to assert his full right of dominion, strictly enjoin what he wishes us to do, and at once reject all human devices which are at variance with his command. Justly, too, does he, in express terms, define our limits, that we may not, by fabricating perverse modes of worship, provoke his anger against us.

I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his word. The opposite persuasion which cleaves to them, being seated, as it were, in their very bones and marrow, is, that whatever they do has in itself a sufficient sanction, provided it exhibits some kind of zeal for the honor of God. But since God not only regards as fruitless, but also

“...if we would have Him to approve our worship, this rule, which He everywhere enforces must be carefully observed.”

Regulative Principle Concluded...



plainly abominates, whatever we undertake from zeal to his worship, if at variance with his command, what do we gain by a contrary course? The words of God are clear and distinct, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," (1 Sam. 15:22; Matt. 15:9). Every addition to his word, especially in this matter, is a lie. Mere "will worship" (*ethelothreeskeia*) is vanity. This is the decision, and when once the judge has decided, it is no longer time to debate.

Q.8. Is absolutely everything connected with worship regulated by God?

A.8. No it is not. There is a proper distinction between the elements of worship and the circumstances of worship. The Westminster Confession admits as much in chapter 1, paragraph 6, which reads *...there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.*

Elements would include such things as prayer, singing, the reading and preaching of God's word, and the sacraments. Circumstances would cover such things as the beginning time for the worship service, the length of the worship service, the color of the carpeting in the sanctuary, and the use of a sound system. We do not claim that God tells us what time worship is supposed to begin, or what color the carpeting should be. These are left to the light of nature and Christian prudence.

Q.9. How does the RPW impact our worship at Grace Church?

A.9. For one thing, we seek to be thoroughly Biblical in our worship services at Grace OPC. Every aspect of our worship service is consciously conformed to the Biblical pattern. Therefore any element that we include in worship must have a clear Biblical warrant. If no warrant exists, we ought not to include it in

worship. We also seek to consider Biblical elements that are not included in our worship. This has led to the introduction of the reading of the law, confession of sin, and assurance of pardon. It has also been the reason we have been singing Psalms in our worship services. Not only does the RPW inform us about the proper elements, but it helps us understand the proper ordering of those elements. This includes an idea from our OPC Directory for the Public Worship of God called "the Dialogical Principle." According to this idea, worship is a meeting of God with His people. The worship service is a dialogue between God and His church. He speaks to us and we respond to Him.

Q.10. Is there any aspect of the RPW that is often overlooked?

A.10 Yes, I think the positive aspect of the RPW is too often ignored. This Principle is not just a negative idea – forbidding inappropriate innovations. It has a positive aspect. We are to worship God in all of the ways He has commanded – in a positive sense. So we are to heartily give to God the glory, honor and praise that is due to Him. After all, the Regulative Principle is not only about outward actions, but about our internal attitudes. God wants our hearts to be right when we come before Him in a worship service. If our hearts are not humbly submitted to Him, it doesn't really matter whether we go through an outwardly correct worship service. God wants us to come into His presence with joy and thanksgiving, and to worship Him in Spirit and truth.

Q.11. Does the Regulative Principle cover every area of life?

A.11 Technically, the RPW is focused on the corporate worship services of the church and does not speak to every other aspect of our lives. Yet we profess that the Word of God is "our only rule for faith and life." Hence we believe that our lives should be governed by God's word.

January Birthdays



Congregation Meeting

The annual Congregation & Corporation

Meeting will be held at Grace Church on Wednesday, January 19th starting at 7:00 p.m. All those in charge of reports are asked to hand them in by Wednesday, January 12th so the reports can be distributed the Sunday before the meeting.





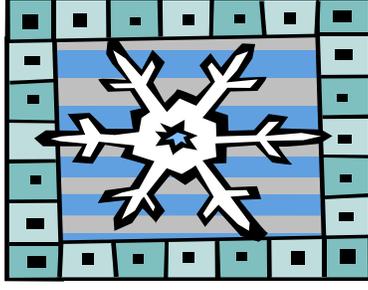
Grace OPC

January 2011

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	4	5	6	7 Dordt College Concert Choir, 7 p.m. at Sheboygan First CRC	8
9 Missions Sunday	10 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	11 Session Meeting, 6:30 p.m.	12 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	13	14	15
16	17 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.	18	19 Congregation Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	20	21	22
23	24 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Theology, 3:30 p.m. Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m.	25	26 Prayer Meeting, 7:00 p.m.	27	28	29
30 Lord's Supper, (a.m.)	31 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.					



Church Office:
4930 Green Valley Ln
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160
Website:
graceopcsheboygan.com
Email:
graceopc@tds.net
briandejong@earthlink.net

A New Cousin Found

by Harlan Harmelink

November 10th, 25 years ago, the iron ore vessel, the Edmond Fitzgerald sank during a vicious storm on Lake Superior. All 25 crew members went down with the ship. November storms on the Great Lakes can be life threatening to anything afloat.

November 21st, 163 years ago, 2 hours before dawn, the steamship Phoenix was just 8 miles from Sheboygan. On board were about 300 passengers and crew. Most of the passengers were Dutch immigrants hoping to begin a new life in Wisconsin. They left behind family and friends, hoping to find religious freedom in a land called America.

The ship named Phoenix was boarded in Buffalo, New York for the 1000 mile journey across Lake Erie, Lake Huron and finally Lake Michigan. The weather was stormy all nine days of the journey.

On Saturday, November 12th, a gale was raging as the Phoenix limped into the tiny settlement of Manitowoc. As the evening passed and the storm subsided, the captain decided on leaving Manitowoc at 1 a.m. on Sunday morning; one reason being the ship was running behind schedule. However, the crew was enjoying their brief stay in Manitowoc, and were extremely unhappy to be called back to the ship at 1 a.m.

The Phoenix was a fairly modern ship for its time, run by wood and water turned into steam.

Shortly after leaving Manitowoc, a passenger and Irishman, relaxing below deck, felt unusually warm and noticed and heard a faint whistling sound. The ship's boiler, for lack of water was ready to explode. The Irish man was told by an inebriated crewman to mind his own business.

At 4:45 a.m. Sunday morning, the Phoenix was dead in the water. The top deck was engulfed in smoke and flames, and the passengers below deck were engulfed in smoke and lack of air. Very few would make it to the deck above and the lifeboats.

Only 3 lifeboats were on board with a capacity of 20 people per each life boat.

The temperature of Lake Michigan water was probably a few degrees above freezing. Most of the passengers had little choice— either stay on board and be burned to death, or drown in the freezing waters.

Needless to say, the panic was horrific and only two life boats made it to shore. Parents were separated from children, spouse from spouse. There just were not enough lifeboats. People in the water grasped for anything afloat to hang onto. However, they ultimately lost their grip and sank into the freezing water. Rescue boats saw many bodies floating, having arrived too late to save many.

The 2 over-loaded life boats that made the 4 miles to shore contained only 24 Dutch immigrants. Among the survivors were Hendrik Jan Wilterdink and the family maid Willemina Ten Dollen. Mr. Wilterdink's invalid wife, Janna Willemina Mennikk, 4 sons and 1 daughter perished.

Mr. Wilterdink lost all his financial resources and could not speak the language. He settled in the town of Lima, west of Gibbsville and became a member of the Gibbsville Baptist Church. He eventually married the maid and 8 children were born to the family.

On a beautiful Sunday morning at Grace OPC, two descendants of Phoenix survivors met for the first time: great, great grandsons of George Wilterdink, (2nd child of the 8, born in 1849), and William Wilterdink, (6th child of 8, born in 1854).

Ken Wilterdink and Harlan Harmelink are the two great, great grandsons!

Pastor Ivan is also the descendant of a survivor— a 3 year old girl, Hanna Gerdina Landeweerd. This 3 year old girl was raised by a surviving sister. Please ask Ivan for details.

Swedish Corn Pudding



- ★ 1 can cream-style corn
- ★ 1 can whole kernel corn
- ★ 2 eggs
- ★ 8 oz. sour cream
- ★ 1 Tbsp. sugar
- ★ 1 box Jiffy corn muffin mix

Mix eggs lightly with a fork. Mix eggs with corn (do not drain), sour cream & sugar. Add cornmeal. Pour into a 9x13 dish and bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Fluff up before serving.

Megan Boss

“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open Your
hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

Church Office:
4930 Green Valley Ln

Phone: 920-565-2160
Website: graceopcsheboygan.com
Email:
graceopc@tds.net
briandejong@earthlink.net

CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

**SERMONAUDIO.COM/
GRACESHEBOYGAN**

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



Spurgeon Corner

Rejoice!

“We will be glad and rejoice in Thee .” (Song of Solomon 1:4)

We will be glad and **rejoice** in thee. We will not open the gates of the year to the dolorous notes of the sackcloth, but to the sweet strains of the harp of joy, and the high sounding cymbals of gladness. “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation.” We, the called and faithful and chosen, we will drive away our griefs, and set up our banners of confidence in the name of God. Let others lament over their troubles, we who have the sweetening tree to cast into Marah’s bitter pool, with joy will magnify the Lord. Eternal Spirit, our effectual Comforter, we who are the temples in which thou dwellest, will never cease from adoring and blessing the name of Jesus. *We WILL*, we are resolved about it, Jesus must have the crown of our heart’s delight; we will not dishonour our Bridegroom by mourning in his presence. We are ordained to be the minstrels of the skies, let us rehearse our everlasting anthem before we sing it in the halls of the New Jerusalem. *We will BE GLAD AND REJOICE*: two words with one sense, double joy, blessedness upon blessedness. Need there be any limit to our rejoicing in the Lord even now? Do not men of grace find their Lord to be camphire and spikenard, calamus and cinnamon even now, and what better fragrance have they in heaven itself? *We will be glad and rejoice* IN THEE. That last word is the meat in the dish, the kernel of the nut, the soul of the text. What heavens are laid up in Jesus! What rivers of infinite bliss have their source, aye, and every drop of their fulness in him! Since, O sweet Lord Jesus, thou art the present portion of thy people, favour us this year with such a sense of thy preciousness, that from its first to its last day we may be glad and **rejoice** in thee. Let January open with joy in the Lord, and December close with gladness in Jesus.

January 1 (evening), Morning & Evening, by C. H. SPURGEON

Front Page... Concluded

...more spiritually edifying activities. Television, the internet and movies can be huge time wasters. Why not cut back on those pursuits so that you can read a good theological book, or spend time with one of our widows.

Here is a resolution I wish everyone would adopt – Purpose in your heart to come to prayer meeting on Wednesday nights. There is great benefit in store for all who participate – why not be one of those who receive the blessings of prayer meeting?

So what is ahead in 2011 for you? What’s next?

