

The Standard Bearer

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A Generation Which Knew Not the Lord

And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

Judges 2:10

Knowing God—that is what the Christian religion is all about. To know God is unspeakably blessed. As Jesus says in John 17:3, it is eternal life. It is the spiritual knowledge of faith whereby we love God. Knowing God we delight in Him; we walk with Him; we serve Him.

So the children of Israel had been led into the land of promise by the hand of their faithful God. Knowing God, that He was with them, that He was their help and their strength, they had gone from victory to victory conquering the wicked inhabitants of the land. The context

here mentions that “the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua” (v. 7). But then it seems Israel began to change rapidly for the worse, and we read these tragic words: “there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord.”

These words ought to provide us with a word of warning and encouragement. We live in times of widespread doctrinal indifference and woeful ignorance of what the Bible teaches. Many have lost their commitment to provide Christian education for their children. Solid, systematic instruction in catechism classes is almost a thing of the past. Expository, exegetical preaching is widely despised. Opportunities for Bible study and discussion are often neglected.

As our covenant youth again take up their studies, as catechism classes soon resume, along with our Bible study societies, let us together resolve to know the Lord and to pass on that knowledge of God and His wondrous works to every generation following!

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The Swift Departure

Of course, all through history one generation succeeds another. That is also the case in the generations of God's people. Now in Israel, Joshua and those of his generation passed away. It had been, generally speaking, a God-fearing generation. Joshua had constantly held before the people the way they must go. Now a new generation was on the stage of the history of Israel. As we know, apostasy does not happen overnight. Gradually the previous generation had died and there had been the rise of the next generation. How can it be that already in the next generation they knew not the Lord nor the works He had done for Israel?

Certainly God is faithful to His covenant from generation to generation. He has promised that in the way of the instruction of their children by God-fearing parents the children will know Him and His wondrous works, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments (Ps. 78:7). This plainly shows that the fathers had failed to instruct their children as they should have in the truth of God and His wonderful works.

Now, our text does not mean that they knew nothing about God and His works. But, unlike the previous generation, they had not witnessed the acts of God; they had not lived that history. And they did not acknowledge the events in their history as being the works of God. They denied that they were now in possession of the land only because of the wonders of God's power. They, in pride, viewed it all as human achievements. Just as Moses warned they would, the people boasted in their hearts, "my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 7:17). It is no surprise then that they no longer considered the conquest of Canaan to be the Lord's battles carried out according to His commands. They would, rather, do what was convenient and expedient. It was certainly easier for them not to drive out the remaining Canaanites from the land. And soon enough they would make common cause with the Canaanites and be attracted to their idols.

All this makes clear that, generally speaking, the newly arisen generation did not truly *know* God. They did not know Jehovah as their God with a spiritual knowledge of faith. They did not know Jehovah as the only true and living God in distinction from the vain idols of the Ca-

naanites. They did not know Him as the Holy One who destroys all that which is contrary to His holiness. They did not know Him as the sovereign God who in love had chosen this people in distinction from all the peoples of the world.

No, this generation was not ignorant of Jehovah. They knew about Him alright. Even from their tradition in the midst of this people it was quite impossible to be totally ignorant of Him. Even the heathen nations round about knew of Jehovah, and they feared Him. But this new generation did not want to retain Jehovah in their knowledge. And after this period of the history of the judges, they will desire a king like all the nations around them. Already they would desire gods like the nations round about them that they allowed to remain in the land.

The following context here speaks of the fact that they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroath (vv. 11-13). This does not imply that it was an absolute disavowal of Jehovah. Israel did not blatantly proclaim, "Jehovah is not God; Baal and Ashtaroath are the only gods." It is plain that throughout the days of the judges Jehovah was known and served also. But the people became very open-minded and tolerant. They would insist that Jehovah was God, but they would also recognize the gods of the nations and worship them. It was a dismal picture indeed!

The Lesson for Us

We live in a society that, like the new generation in Israel, promotes open-mindedness and tolerance. Much of the nominal church today likewise is all too ready to compromise both with respect to doctrine (the knowledge of God) and life (how He is to be served). There is often little interest in learning and understanding the truth of Scripture. Many, young and old alike, are bored by doctrine or content with a very superficial knowledge of the truths of the Reformed faith. They are quick to argue that we must not be so narrow-minded. We must be open to different interpretations of the Bible.

The same attitude is often found with respect to lifestyle. Yes, it will be admitted that the older generation had strict views with regard to movies, worldly entertainments, modesty in dress, and Sabbath observance. But we need not be so narrow-minded, so old-fashioned. They insist that we have liberty to use or participate in many things that were formerly condemned. They will serve

the Lord, they say, but at the same time they go running after the gods of pleasure, lust, worldly fame, and success.

Where is the antithesis to be seen? For the children of Israel, it meant obedience to God's command to wipe out the nations of the Canaanites in the land. They began well, but they failed to finish the task. And the Canaanites remaining in the promised land became as a snare to Israel. Soon they were tempted to join with them, intermarry with them, and worship their idols. How urgent it is for us and our generations to live antithetically—living in this world but in spiritual separation! Departure into apostasy can take place from one generation to the next. Some may see it happen even in their own families.

All this comes down to a failure of parents in instructing their children in the knowledge of the Lord and His wonderful works. Not that there was no such instruction, but there must have been a carelessness, a laxity in providing that instruction on the part of many. "For there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." Certainly the passing generation knew the Lord and His works for the children of Israel. And Israel had the clear command of Jehovah to teach their children the fear of the Lord and His wonderful works on their behalf. But they fell far short in providing the necessary instruction and discipline for the next generations!

Certainly this means that the church must be faithful in proclaiming the full counsel of God. The church must be zealous in catechizing the covenant youth. The church must faithfully maintain the rich heritage of the knowledge of God that we have in our confessions and pass it on to the coming generations.

And we must maintain and never waver from the commitment to provide Christian education for our children. In all their learning they must learn the knowledge of the Lord! How thankful we must be for godly teachers who assist us in this task.

But at the heart of it all is the home. Let us examine ourselves in this regard. Is the Word of God at the center of our homes? Do we consistently read and discuss the Word together as a family? Not just going through the motions of devotions, but with understanding that our children might grow in the knowledge of the Lord and His wonderful works? Do we see that they are well prepared for catechism? Are we reading edifying books and literature in our homes? Do we read the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights* and see that our children and young people do too, according to their abilities? Are we setting a proper example for our children in preparing for and regularly attending our Bible Study or Society? Do we wisely limit the time spent on entertainment and sports? Are we showing our children our own love and concern for the knowledge of God and the things of the kingdom by how the family money is spent? Do our children see that we are willing to sacrifice for the sake of the truth? Are we consistent in showing the younger generation the seriousness of sin and disobedience? Do we lead them in the way of true sorrow for sin and repentance, in the way of forsaking sin and fleeing from temptation?

In all these things we are concerned with the knowledge of the Lord! Jehovah Himself says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6). Let us not grow lax in our calling to pass on the knowledge of God and His wonderful works to the coming generations. And to the extent that we have and do fall short, let us repent, and let us reaffirm our covenant vows assumed at our children's baptism! Let us seek God's grace and wisdom from on high to teach and live the truth, showing in word and deed who He is whom we serve! And, "let children thus learn from history's light to hope in our God and walk in His sight!"

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The Ministry: An Existence, Not an Occupation

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

I Timothy 4:13-16

Graduates and families of the graduates; delegates of Synod 2017, who by unanimous vote have approved the examination of these brothers; colleagues in the seminary; Theological School Committee; members and friends of the PRCA; this is a momentous occasion for us tonight. It is for you graduates. By the decision of Synod this afternoon, the door has been opened for you to receive a call to the ministry of the Word and sacraments. You have not yet received a call. One *more* significant

(The text, slightly revised, but maintaining as much as possible the spoken form and personal address, of the graduation speech for the Protestant Reformed Theological School. Commencement took place on June 15, 2017, in Hudsonville PRC auditorium, for seven graduates: Matthew DeBoer, Brian Feenstra, Joseph Holstege, Jonathan Langerak, David Noorman, Stephan Regnerus, Justin Smidstra.)

decision needs to be made before you *become* a minister: the decision of a church to *call* you. But the PRCA has declared you eligible for a call because they have judged you to be fit, qualified for the work of the ministry. This is of monumental significance for you.

The occasion is momentous for the churches. Seven graduates—a thing unheard of in our 92-year history! In His goodness to us, God provides pastors to feed us, teachers to instruct and exhort us, *faithful* men who have promised to devote their lives to our spiritual care. Synod has judged this as well. Synod has judged that the graduates have gifts—the ability to speak and teach, the wisdom to lead a consistory through quagmires, and the good qualifications to counsel a troubled marriage or a member ensnared in sin. But Synod has judged more than that. The PRCA has judged that these men are *committed* to giving their lives to this work, willing to sacrifice everything for the spiritual well-being—the salvation—of you and your children.

That is, the graduates recognize that the ministry is not merely an occupation but an existence (although I do not belittle other “occupations” tonight). This is the teaching of the apostle as he addresses the calling of young pastor Timothy.

That the ministry is an existence means that a man gives his life to

the ministry unlike anyone else gives himself to any other occupation. Unlike the occupations of your cousins and friends, which must *not* consume them, this occupation must consume you. In a very real way, it will become your existence. It will define you.

A minister is like Samuel, who was given to the Lord. When Samuel’s cousins and friends went their ways into various occupations, Samuel went to the ministry in the tabernacle. A minister is not unlike Jephthah’s daughter who devoted herself to the Lord, so much so that she and her friends requested a two-month observance to “bewail her virginity,” after which, for the rest of her life she remained a virgin in the service of the Lord. Again, all her friends and relatives went their way to marry and have children.

What Paul says about himself in II Corinthians 12:15—“I will very gladly spend and be spent for” the church, that is, be consumed in the service of God’s people—in I Timothy 4 he makes *obligatory* for newly ordained Timothy, and for every minister of the gospel today.

In five ways in this passage, Paul emphasizes that the ministry is an existence.

First: “Give thyself wholly to them” (v. 15b)

This translation gives the sense of the words in the Greek, but not

at all literally. Other translations also struggle—but do pretty well—to bring out the force of this imperative. “Give yourself entirely to them.” “Immerse yourself in them.” “Be absorbed in them.” “Devote yourself to them.” But none of these captures fully the original: “*Be in them!*” That is, “Exist in them.” The ministry is an existence.

Other occupations may demand a great deal of a person—time, lots of time, commitment, energy, focus, even a measure of devotion. This calling requires your being! *Be in them!*

Second: “Meditate upon these things” (v. 15a)

That is, “care for them; practice them; attend to them carefully.” *Meditate* is a good translation here because meditating is done by one’s *mind*—*thoughts* are involved.

The minister’s mind must be fully engaged in ministry of the Word. When he has quiet times (in the car, on his walk, lying in bed) the ministry is on his mind: how to make the truth clear, what to say to the burdened soul, how to find opportunity to address the young person in need. He is not meditating on his golf scores, his next fishing trip, the investment he considers making to increase his wealth, but the ministry!

For this reason, the formal “call letter” a consistory sends to a candidate says what it does: “Convinced that the laborer is worthy of his hire, to encourage you in the discharge of your duties, and to free you from all worldly cares [other thoughts] and avocations [other

ways to enrich yourself] while you are dispensing spiritual blessings to us, we...do promise and oblige ourselves to pay you....” Other occupations do not forbid an employee to take on a part time job to supplement his income, or some hobby that takes up all his spare time. The ministry says, “If you have much spare time at all, you are likely not allowing me to be your existence.”

The ministry is not a job a man puts away when he walks out of his study, as another man may do with his occupation, perhaps *should* do. In other occupations, when a husband comes home, his wife may say, “Let it go!” A minister *cannot* let it go. The ministry is his existence. When he sleeps, he does so in order to awake with reading, exhorting, teaching in view. When he *cannot* sleep, he probably ‘counts sheep,’ praying through the church directory from Aalsma to Zylstra. Abdelkader and Zetterberg are not on his mind, because the ministry—not hockey—is his life.

Third: “Give attendance to” (v. 13)

If that is possible, this expression is even stronger in emphasizing that the ministry is an existence. Also this expression means to turn the mind to, to take heed to, to be attentive to something. But “give attendance to” adds something new. It is an exhortation to *cleave* to, *attach* one’s self to, the ministry. It would not be wrong to paraphrase this, “Have such a relationship to the ministry that you are devoted to it and only to it.”

It is significant that this is the

same word Paul uses in I Timothy 3:8 regarding another relationship, one that God *prohibits*, the relationship between an officebearer and *wine*. An officebearer may not “give attendance to” wine. The KJV says that he may not be “given to” wine, that is, may not be occupied by it, love it, be controlled by it, have nothing stand in the way of his getting it, even to his own hurt! He may not be addicted to wine.

In a very real way, such *is* a faithful minister’s relationship to the ministry. He is *given* to it. So occupied by the ministry, he can do almost nothing else. As a drunk thinks of his bottle when he first awakens, the minister thinks of his work! Like an addict, who will let nothing stand in his way of getting at his fix, even to his great hurt, so a minister will let nothing stand in the way of his “giving himself wholly to the ministry.” It is his existence!

Fourth: “Take heed to thyself and to the teaching...” (v. 16a)

In addition to taking heed to the *work*, a minister must take heed to *himself*. So intimately and inseparably connected are the minister and his work, he must *first* take heed to himself. “Take heed to *thyself* and the doctrine.” Without taking heed first to himself, he cannot rightly take heed to teaching.

Men with other occupations may possibly, even to a certain degree successfully, separate themselves—that is, their own personal lives—from their occupation. A capable doctor may be a compulsive gambler, a good accountant an

alcoholic, a crack mechanic a wife-abuser. Not a gospel minister.

For His precious church's sake, God will (usually) not *allow* a man to go on in the ministry whose personal life is wrong. From the people's point of view, they will see behind the façade put up by the hypocritical minister—little children can—and reject his ministry. But even from the point of view of the man himself, I ask, "Except for absolute hardness of heart, how can he ever teach, if he himself personally is wrong?" Take heed to thyself! The ministry is your existence!

Fifth: "The gift that is in thee..." (v. 14a)

It is one thing to remember that the ability to do the work of the ministry—reading, exhorting, teaching—is a gift, a spiritual aptitude that is given *to* a man "by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." It is quite another to realize that this gift God puts *within* him. The gift is *in* him, not like a penny is in the belly of a child who accidentally swallows it, but like a medicine is *in* a man when it is injected into his veins. So closely are the man and the ministry related that the gift of the ministry is bestowed *upon* a man by God putting it *in* him.



That a man gives up his life for the ministry does not mean that he has no family life. If he does not care for his family, he is worse than an infidel. Why, his good care of his family is a prerequisite for his entering and continuing in the ministry.

Nor does it mean that he has

no recreation or exercise. He does understand Paul's point that bodily exercise profits only for a short time (KJV: "profiteth little"). So he focuses on exercising "unto godliness" (vv. 7, 8). But because "profiteth little" does not belittle bodily exercise, but only emphasizes the contrast between the temporal and the eternal, a minister budgets time for some physical exercise to keep both his mind and body in good shape.

Nevertheless, almost everything is different for a gospel minister, whose calling is not an occupation, but an existence. He does not have time to play very much, like others might, and may! His hours are not 9-5, or even 6-6, but every day and almost every night. Even elders and deacons—close as they may become to us, for which we thank God—have different lives. They serve *part time*; the minister serves day and night. They serve *terms*; the minister's term does not expire.

Even some of the minister's family life is different: He is always on call, day and night, 49 weeks of the year. And even those three weeks of vacation might be different. Many ministers have left campgrounds to drive four hours home, have even flown home from a vacation, to minister to a bereaved family and conduct a funeral. He will get up at 3 A.M. to visit a man whose wife just passed away in bed. Or, on Friday night, instead of the important family night he promised to his children, go to counsel the parents of a young man whom they just picked up from the police station.

Which all means that, when a minister speaks about the ministry

at one of our high school's career days, putting him right alongside of bankers, accountants, engineers, doctors, lawyers, or salesmen, may well leave a very wrong impression. Of none of these other occupations can it (should it!) be said, "You give your life to it, devote your existence to it..."

And, (this is far more than a "by the way" comment) I thank God that those of you candidates who have wives have wives who understand this reality. We thank God for the women who realize that *their* life and calling—inseparable from *your* life and calling—are from this point of view very different from the life and calling of most of the other women of the church. Your wife's calling also is a 'gift' from God. We celebrate them tonight, too!



What does this existence look like? It is the reading, exhortation, and teaching of Scripture.

In I Timothy 4, Paul teaches his son in the faith to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Because "doctrine," in this text, means the activity of teaching, the exhortation can be understood: "Read, exhort, and teach Scripture."

Doctrine

Put last in Paul's exhortation, "doctrine," or the activity of teaching, is the heart of the minister's work. Implied, of course, is the *content* of his instruction as the truth of the gospel, the Reformed faith. But Paul is not referring to *what* he teaches as much as his calling to teach!

The context shows that Paul is speaking of the activity of teaching. “These things command and *teach*” (v. 11). Verse 13: “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to *teaching*.” Verse 16 should be understood: “Take heed to yourself and to the *teaching*...”

Teaching is what Jesus’ ministry consisted of, as the gospels record Jesus going into the synagogues, and everywhere, to *teach*. What Jesus *began* both to do and *teach*, says Luke at the beginning of Acts, the apostles *continued* to do, and *teach*. According to Acts, Paul’s apostolic ministry ends with him, under house-arrest, “preaching the kingdom of God, and *teaching* those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” Twice in the epistles to Timothy, Paul said “I am ordained a preacher, an apostle, a *teacher*...” (I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:12). The gift, therefore, that the ascended Christ gives to the church, still today, is “pastors and teachers...” that is, pastors who are teachers.

A preacher is not a comic, a psychologist, a culture critic, a redeemer of society, a business adviser, a manipulator of emotions. He is a teacher. In the pulpit and the catechism room, doing pre-marriage counseling and broken-marriage counseling, helping someone ensnared in sin, at the bedside and at the graveside, he is a teacher.

Reformed Christians may not forget that the preaching is a means of grace only insofar as preaching is teaching. We are not Roman Catholic. That is, we do not believe that the minister’s sermon is a means of grace even if it is not un-

derstood. We do not believe that, as long as the minister says some good words, incomprehensible to most, those words are God’s power unto salvation for the hearers. No, God’s work of grace in His people is by means of a word that is understood.

I am always glad to hear praise of a preacher’s sermon, but most impressed when the one who offers the praise says, “I learned something in that sermon.” Or, “He is a good teacher!” Or, “I understand now what I did not ‘get’ before!” And, by the way, that indicates one good way for elders to judge sermons—by asking the question, “Are the people of God learning from the sermons? Was truth reinforced, or the doctrine made clearer, by these words? Can the young people grow in grace by growing in *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18) from the sermons?”

People of God, this is our task at the seminary. We train men to be teachers of the Word. And we judge, all through their training, whether they have an aptitude to teach.

Graduates, look at yourself, think about yourself, always consider yourself: Teacher of the Word of God. “*Teach* those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:31).

Reading

In order to teach, a preacher must read. *Reading* is first in the text, as the indispensable means by which a man is prepared to teach. “*Reading*, exhortation, teaching.”

By “reading” the apostle does not mean reading good books in theol-

ogy, or church history, important for the minister as this reading is. He means reading the Scripture! To teach Scripture, the minister must read Scripture. He reads from the pulpit, with carefulness, clarity and reverence; for this is God’s own Word! Privately, he reads with even greater carefulness. In the original languages (God forbid that any preacher ignores the Greek and Hebrew), in order that he is able with utmost carefulness to teach the words of his text.

Let your existence be in reading! Look at yourself, think about yourself, always consider yourself: Reader of the Word of God.

Luther’s practice of reading Scripture is a model for us preachers: “For a number of years I have now annually read through the Bible twice. If the Bible were a large mighty tree and all its words were little branches, I have tapped at all the branches, eager to know what was there and what it had to offer.”

My dear brothers, soon to be colleagues, God willing, budget your day so that you give more time to reading Scripture than you do the news (certainly), and possibly more time to reading the Scripture than you do other good books! Give attendance to—be in!—reading!

Exhortation

Yes, the gospel we preach is primarily in the indicative. It tells you what God has done. Facts predominate. But what IS (the indicative) does not preclude what *must be* (the imperative). Reading, *exhortation*, teaching!

Preaching is not only the decla-

ration, in the indicative, that only those who repent and believe will be saved. It is also, "Repent, believe, and be saved; or perish in your unbelief!"

Preaching is not only imparting the information that God calls His people to holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. It is also the exhortation, "Be ye holy! And you who are not will not see him, now or in the day of your demise and death."

Good teaching by a faithful minister is not only *telling* the people about God's covenant, graciously established with His elect through Jesus Christ. Good preaching *exclaims* it with comforting words for every believer, with exhortations to these believers to live with God faithfully, obediently. It also warns against violating that covenant, threatening with the judgments of God those who do not.

I am convinced that, if the ministry is your existence, it will be *impossible* for you to preach in any other way than with urgent imperatives and fervent exhortations. For apart from repentance and faith, men perish; and those "men" are the objects of your love and desire for good.

Progress

In all these—reading, teaching, exhorting—there must be *progress*. "Profiting" in verse 15 is *progress*.

Progress is always needed. Early in his ministry a young man will be quite limited. Do not think too highly of your abilities, no matter what grades you got in seminary or how the people commend you.

One great temptation of gifted young men is that they think far too highly of themselves.

But when you give yourselves wholly, your progress will be manifest. It makes me happy to remind you that when you work hard, the people of God will not only be patient with your youthful inabilities and even overlook many faults in you, they will also see you grow in your abilities to read, teach, and

Good teaching by a faithful minister is not only telling the people about God's covenant, graciously established with His elect through Jesus Christ. Good preaching exclaims it with comforting words for every believer, with exhortations to these believers to live with God faithfully, obediently.

exhort. Your profiting "will appear unto all."

If it makes the hearts of your teachers glad when they hear that

you are teaching well, how much more when they hear, "Our pastor is growing! He's becoming better every month!" The people of God love to tell us this of their young ministers.

Graduates, do not be satisfied with yourselves unless you are growing. Work hard, so that your reading is more careful, and frequent; your teaching clearer; your warnings sharper; your exhortations spoken with greater urgency; your consolations deeper...because you are growing in your own heart's ability to be first partaker of the fruits of the gospel.

People of God, hold your ministers to these standards. Yes, be patient with them. Do not expect them to be great preachers overnight. Remember that they are just beginning their ministry. But hold them to the promise they have made: "The ministry is my life." Give them no pass for sloth or indolence in any respect. Give them the time they need for study, and then expect growth and development for their entire ministry, even when they are old.

And their profit will be your profit, and your children's!

Salvation!

Brothers, of no other occupation can it be said as is said of a minister's: The salvation of those whom you serve *depends upon* your work.

It does. "...in doing this [reading, exhorting, teaching], thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (v. 16).

Your work in the ministry is the means God is pleased to use to save

His beloved. We all know that your labors are not the basis for salvation. They are not the cause or ground of salvation. We preach Christ alone!

But the reading, exhorting, and preaching of the Word is the indispensable means by which God expresses His love and administers saving grace to His beloved people. It saves them. Very really saves them. And you! A recognition of this is what drives a man to make the ministry his existence, and to grow in it, dying to himself. God, our good God, gives grace to save through *this* means—clear reading, good teaching, heartfelt exhortations.


I am so thankful for our tradi-

tions. How humbly glad we may be that they have been delivered to us—thorough catechism instruction of the children, preaching doctrinal sermons twice each Lord's Day, preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, and all the other traditions that center in the ministry of the Word of God. How sad when some abandon them.

Do not betray these traditions by making the ministry another 'occupation.' *Be* in them. Let them define you! Let them be your existence. And thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee!

I may conclude this evening by telling you all what one of the graduates said to me after lunch last week. It gladdened my heart in

a way he had no idea. "You know prof," he said, "when I first started seminary, I didn't know whether I had the qualifications for the ministry, because I didn't know whether I had the will-power to study, and read, and hunker down to write and to make sermons. But the Lord changed me. He truly made me a new man. And now I'm hardly happy unless I'm reading, studying, and preaching." He could not have known the chills that went down my spine when I heard him say that. The angels in heaven join in that rejoicing.

Brothers! The blessing of Jehovah God be upon you and your ministries. 

Quote from Calvin

Nor ought they to think it strange that Paul ascribes to Timothy the work of saving the Church; for, certainly, all that is gained to God is saved, and it is by the preaching of the gospel that we are gathered to Christ. And as the unfaithfulness or carelessness of the pastor is ruinous to the Church, so the cause of salvation is justly ascribed to his faithfulness and diligence. True, it is God alone that saves; and not even the smallest portion of his glory can lawfully be bestowed on men. But God parts with no portion of his glory when he employs the agency of men for bestowing salvation.

Our salvation is, therefore, the gift of God alone, because from him alone it proceeds, and by his power alone it is performed; and therefore, to him alone, as the author, it must be ascribed. But the ministry of men is not on that account excluded, nor does all this interfere with the salutary tendency of that government on which, as Paul shews, the prosperity of the Church depends (Eph. iv. 11). Moreover, this is altogether the work of God, because it is he who forms good pastors, and guides them by his Spirit, and blesses their labour, that it may not be ineffectual.

If thus a good pastor is the salvation of his hearers, let bad and careless men know that their destruction must be ascribed to those who have the charge of them; for, as the salvation of the flock is the crown of the pastor, so from careless pastors all that perishes will be required. Again, a pastor is said to save himself, when, by faithfully discharging the office committed to him, he serves his calling; not only because he avoids that terrible vengeance which the Lord threatens by Ezekiel—"His blood will I require at thy hand" (Ezek. Xxxiii. 8), but because it is customary to speak of believers as performing their salvation when they walk and persevere in the course of their salvation. Of this mode of expression we have spoken in our exposition of the Epistle to the Philippians (ii. 12).

■ Homosexual Parenting Deemed “Unhealthy” by the American College of Pediatricians¹

In July of 2017 the American College of Pediatricians (ACP) posted an update of a 2004 article that asks if it is time to accept parenting by homosexual couples as a legitimate alternative to parenting done by a father and a mother. This question is faced because “Within the last decade...professional health organizations, academics, social policymakers and the media have begun asserting that prohibitions on parenting by same-sex couples should be lifted.” The ACP criticizes this movement to approve homosexual parenting because it is not based on “supporting evidence that is comprehensive and conclusive.” Rather, the evidence leads the ACP to conclude that “it is inappropriate, potentially hazardous to children, and dangerously irresponsible to change the age-old prohibition on same-sex parenting, whether by adoption, foster care, or reproductive manipulation. This position is rooted in the best available science.”

According to the ACP article, research shows, “that children fare best when reared by their two biological parents in a loving low conflict marriage.” The article recognizes that there are times when “single parenthood, adoption, and remarriage” are necessary. In these situations children “face unique challenges” that are not “insurmountable,” but they “can have a negative impact on a child’s development.”

We would agree that in some situations it is not possible for children to be raised by one or both of their biologic parents because of the way God has arranged the circumstances of their lives. Yet the parents (single, divorced, remarried after their spouse has died, or adoptive) and children who trust in God may be certain that He is able and willing to use their trying circumstances to bless them.

But ordinarily and ideally children need a father and

a mother. The father and mother are different from each other in a good way. Because of the differences between males and females, “mothers and fathers parent differently and make unique contributions to the overall development of the child.” With a father and a mother, both boys and girls, research shows, enjoy better emotional and mental health.

On the other hand, studies show “that children exposed to the homosexual lifestyle may be at increased risk for emotional, mental, and even physical harm.”

[The] children reared in same-sex households are more likely to experience sexual confusion, engage in risky sexual experimentation, and later adopt a same-sex identity. This is concerning since adolescents and young adults who adopt the homosexual lifestyle are at increased risk for mental health problems, including major depression, anxiety disorders, conduct disorders, and especially suicide attempts.

This is an indictment of homosexuality itself, as well as of same-sex parenting! But there is more. The ACP goes on to describe the risks of exposure to the homosexual lifestyle for children.

Violence between same-sex partners is two to three times more common than among married heterosexual couples. Same-sex partnerships are significantly more prone to dissolution than heterosexual marriages with the average same-sex relationship lasting only two to three years. Homosexual men and women are reported to be promiscuous, with serial sex partners, even within what are loosely-termed “committed relationships.” Individuals who practice a homosexual lifestyle are more likely than heterosexuals to experience mental illness, substance abuse, suicidal tendencies and shortened life spans. Although some would claim that these dysfunctions are a result of societal pressures in America, the same dysfunctions exist at inordinately high levels among homosexuals in cultures where the practice is more widely accepted.

It is not surprising that there are studies that demonstrate that homosexuality is destructive to those who are active in the lifestyle and to those who are exposed to it. God condemns homosexuality as a sin. Even social re-

¹ www.acped.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/parenting-issues/homosexual-parenting-is-it-time-for-change (accessed August 1, 2017).

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searchers who do not have faith can see the curse of the Lord upon the evil of homosexuality, even if they do not acknowledge it as the Lord's curse.

What shall we take away from this study? What application must we make to our lives? Merely that we must condemn and flee from the sin of homosexuality? Of course, we must take it a step further, and maintain and live according to the truth of God concerning marriage and the family. The truth of marriage as revealed by God in Scripture is not merely that man and woman stay together in marriage to seek the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of their children. Many are the husbands and wives of the world who are committed to their marriages and to their children as fathers and mothers. Yet, for all their efforts they do nothing for the souls of their children.

Let us turn to Scripture, not mere science, and be reminded that we must seek to serve God in our family life and activity. Even science recognizes the importance of a husband and wife living together in love or in a "loving low conflict marriage." How ashamed we ought to be when we as Christians lack love in our marriages, when our marriages become filled with bitterness, envy, hatred, anger, and an unwillingness to forgive and live at peace. Even science says, STOP IT, for the sake of your children! But we are directed by God's Word, in which He tells of His covenant and the blessings of His covenant that we enjoy in the way of following His will for family life. The way of God's covenant blessing is for a believing man and a believing woman to live together in love in marriage. Yes, for the sake of their own peace and happiness. And yes, for the sake of the well-being of their children—mental, emotional, physical, and *spiritual*. But most of all for the sake of the glory of God. For such a position is rooted in the unchanging will of God.

■ Game of Gender Identity Politics Played in the OPC and PCA

On July 5, 2017 *The Atlantic* published an article by Emma Green entitled "A Conservative Christian Battle over Gender."² The article covers two significant events. One is a recent podcast in which three women used the

phrases "gender apartheid" and "toxic patriarchy" to describe the oppression they believe women face in certain denominations. The other significant event is the reception of a study committee report by the PCA's General Assembly in June on "women serving in the ministry of the church."

The three women on the podcast are Christina Edmondson, Ekemini Uwan, and Michelle Higgins. Edmondson is the wife of OPC Pastor Mika Edmondson. She serves as a dean at Calvin College, while her husband is the pastor of a church plant sponsored by Harvest OPC. Higgins received a Masters of Divinity from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis and is on the staff of a PCA church. Her biography on the church's website says she is married to Sean Loftin, but she is still listed as Michelle Higgins. It is not clear where Uwan has her church membership, but the article mentions that she received a Masters of Divinity from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.

The women complained about "churches where women aren't allowed to greet at the door, pastors who minimize emotional language in worship, and men who avoid friendship with women for fear of violating biblical standards of purity." Based on a little Internet research, it does not appear that these women belong to congregations where these issues are a problem. And although I have not conducted a study, I doubt that these are widespread issues in the OPC or PCA denominations. But let's say for the sake of argument that these are real issues that women face in the church; does this warrant the characterization of "conservative" churches as places where women are as oppressed as blacks were in South Africa under the rule of apartheid?

This claim of "gender apartheid" is both "implausible" and "offensive," as R. Scott Clark explained in his response to the podcast.

First, those who make the claim did so on their own, public podcast. Under *apartheid* black South Africans were not freely, without government interference, doing the equivalent of podcasts. Our podcasters were in no danger of authorities breaking down the door of their studio. Indeed, our podcasters have the ability to control with whom they will talk—they block on social media even the mildest critics and potential dialogue partners. Further, our female podcasters were theologically educated or had

² www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/07/truths-table-gender-race/532407/ (accessed August 1, 2017).

other advanced academic degrees. Again, for prosperous females in North America, who have earned masters and doctoral degrees, to complain of *apartheid* is just silly. It is offensive because it demeans the very real oppression that black South Africans suffered under *apartheid*. It is the equivalent of comparing standing in line at Starbucks to standing in a chow line in prison. It is not a thoughtful way to argue.³

The real issue for these women and, thus, the one these denominations must face, is women's ordination. Supposedly, the women on the podcast "weren't pushing for women to be pastors." Yet, the women openly talked about women's ordination and their desire for women to have authority in the church. On the podcast Higgins spoke vulgarly and disparagingly about the ordination of only men. During the interview with *The Atlantic* reporter, Emma Green, Higgins said, "I believe it's important for my denomination to refuse to demonize people who interpret ordination differently than they do." Higgins says no to women pastors, but yes to women's ordination—to what office(s) she does not state (elders and deacons, or only deacons). She is also open to allowing people to disagree with her on ordination. So it is fine with her if members of the PCA advocate for women pastors.

No matter how caring and attentive the church may be to women, as long as it does not ordain women, the church is guilty, so these women claim, of "gender apartheid" and "toxic patriarchy." Though the women rejected Pastor Richard Phillips's characterization of their views, he was accurate when he said that the title "gender apartheid" "implies there is a maliciousness and an abusiveness to what I believe is a well-meant desire positively to live out in the church the teaching of the Bible on gender relationships." Basically, Phillips is saying that these women are charging as sexist those who believe that it is biblical to limit ordination to men. This is an attack, then, on the Bible.

³ heidelblog.net/2017/07/gender-apartheid-and-toxic-masculinity-in-naparc-1/ (accessed August 1, 2017).

And the charge of sexism belongs at the feet of God, not merely the OPC, the PCA, or the apostle Paul.

If the women are not basing their views of the role of women in the church on the Bible, then they are, as Phillips explains, adopting "ideas and positions that are coming out of a secularized culture" and giving them "credence in the church." R. Scott Clark provides a proper Christian response to the ideas of our culture:

Whatever the prevailing post-Christian (neo-pagan) culture may tell us, Christians may not doubt God's Word.

That is skepticism. God's Word gives us a place to start whereby we can criticize both the John Wayne persona and the "gender bending" culture trends of the 2000s. Males and females are both created in God's image. They are both given dominion over creation. They are intimately related and meant to relate intimately. They are meant to "be fruitful and multiply" (v. 28). These are creational basics. It was to this fundamental pattern that our Lord Jesus appealed when it said, "But from the begin-

ning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh (Mark 10:6–8; ESV).

I am quickly running out of space. So let me briefly summarize my thoughts on this matter.

1. As Clark's article points out, this issue of women's ordination is a serious issue for the churches that belong to NAPARC.

2. It is important for the church of Jesus Christ to maintain in the face of all the pressure of feminism that the Bible limits ordination to men.

3. It is also important for denominations to shut down those who would play gender-identity politics through the exercise of Christian discipline. Those who argue for women's ordination are not to be demonized. But they are to be disciplined for their false teaching.

The PCA's report on "women serving in the ministry of the church" will have to wait until next time. ☺

It is important for the church of Jesus Christ to maintain in the face of all the pressure of feminism that the Bible limits ordination to men.

Treasure

Treasure is a hoard, store, or accumulation of riches. Although the word may conjure up in our mind chests filled with gold and jewels, a treasure can consist of anything considered valuable. The main Greek word is *thesaurus*, which we know as a treasury of synonyms. And God's Word, a treasury of wisdom, teaches us much about seeking, working for, and keeping the right kind of treasure, while being indifferent to, leery of, even abhorrent of the wrong kind.

God taught such lessons throughout the Old Testament. Early on, Pharaoh enslaved Israel to build treasure cities, a picture of what we all do under the bondage of sin. By faith, Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Heb. 11:24-26). And given more treasure than most, Solomon spoke by faith many proverbs about it: "In the house of the righteous is much treasure; the treasures of wickedness profit nothing; better is the little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith" (Prov. 10:2; 15:6, 16). He also said, "I gathered the treasure of kings...so I was great...[but] all was vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 2:8-11). Indeed, only five years after death, Solomon's vast earthly treasure was carried away by Pharaoh (I Kings 14:26). And so it would go with the treasure of many kings, good and bad.


The fundamental truth about treasure is this: God is our treasure, and we, the church, are chosen to be His treasure (Ps. 135:4). Our God is an infinite store of life, righteousness, power, wisdom, grace, and mercy. The world and its fullness is His treasure (Ps. 50:12). He has treasuries of rain (Deut. 28:12), snow and hail (Job 38:22), wind (Ps. 135:7), darkness (Is. 45:3), and food for the belly of man (Ps. 17:14). And yet to His church alone He says this: "If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exod. 1:11; 19:5).

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The fundamental attitude we must have toward treasure is this: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). Jesus taught this. It is essentially the command to believe and trust alone in Him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

Do we? Jesus, knowing both His rich beneficence in giving earthly treasure and our propensity to covet it even while trying to establish our own righteousness, said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21). Similarly, He likened the kingdom of heaven to treasure in a field, which when a man finds, he sells everything he has, and buys that field (Matt. 13:44).

We must also. Jesus says if we lay up earthly treasures but are not rich toward God, we are fools because our souls could be required at anytime (Luke 12:21). He warns such fools: "Ye have heaped up treasure together for the last days" and its corruption "shall eat your flesh as it were fire" (James 5:3). God declares to all who despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering in Christ: "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5).

So, lay not up treasure on earth. And we will not, if God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. How can any earthly treasure compare? This is the gospel treasure of Jesus who, although rich and presented at birth with treasures of gold, for our sakes became poor that through His poverty we might become rich (Matt. 2:11; II Cor. 4:6-7; 8:9). This gospel is a treasury of God's power to save and make exceedingly rich everyone so instructed in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:52). Lay up for yourselves such treasures in heaven! 

Chapter Five—Premillennialism (15):

The Premillennial Explanation of Romans 11

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

“For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”

Romans 11:25-27

Introduction

Scarcely less important to dispensational premillennialism than Revelation 20 and Daniel 9 is Romans 11.

Indeed, expressing the importance of Romans 11 to premillennialism this way does not do justice to the importance of Romans 11 for that eschatology. Romans 11 is every bit as important to premillennialism as are Revelation 20 and Daniel 9 (both of which passages of Scripture I have already treated in this critique of premillennialism).

A contemporary advocate of premillennialism has written that “Romans 11 is, by common confession, the crucial passage with regard to the NT teaching concerning the present nature and destiny of national Israel.”¹

If Romans 11 is the crucial passage in the controversy between dispensational premillennialism and Reformed amillennialism, verses 25 and 26 of Romans 11, quoted at the head of this article, are the heart of the chapter, the meaning of which is disputed by the two theologies of the last days. Exactly this is the description of the passage by

¹ Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 253.

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Previous article in this series: May 15, 2017, p. 372.

Herman Hoeksema, in his commentary on Romans 11: “The expression *and so all Israel shall be saved* [v. 26]” may be called “the heart of this eleventh chapter.”²

It is the purpose of this article in the present series on premillennialism to set forth the premillennial explanation of Romans 11.

Refutation of this explanation will follow in future articles.

The Premillennial Explanation of Romans 11

Romans 11 concludes that section of the book of Romans that begins with chapter 9. Therefore, the relationship of chapter 11 to the preceding context, especially the last part of Romans 10, must be established.

Verses 19-21 of Romans 10 proclaim God’s salvation of the Gentiles upon the rejection of His Son and salvation by the nation of Israel. Those in verse 20 who had not sought God, or asked after Him, were all the Gentile nations and peoples of Old Testament times. After the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, by the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost and especially through the ministry of the apostle Paul, God revealed Himself to the Gentiles, so that He was found of them and known by them.

Not only did this salvation of the Gentiles take place at the same time that the nation of Israel—the Jewish people—rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ, but the rejection of God’s gospel by Israel was the occasion of the gathering of the Gentiles by the gospel. As the apostle writes in Romans 11:11, 12: “Through their [Israel’s] fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles.” “The fall of them [Israel]” became “the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles.”

Romans 10 concludes with a damning indictment of Israel: “But to Israel he [God] saith, All day long I have

² Herman Hoeksema, *Righteous by Faith Alone: A Devotional Commentary on Romans* (Grandville, MI: RFP, 2002), 561.

stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gain-saying people" (v. 21).

Naturally, this indictment raises the question with which chapter 11 begins: "Hath God cast away his people?" Is it all over then for Israel, the Old Testament people of God, with regard to salvation?

At once, the apostle emphatically denies that God has utterly and forever rejected Israel: "God forbid...God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Rom. 11:1, 2).

To the dispensational premillennialist, this denial already suggests that, at some time in the future, God will save multitudes of racial Jews and restore the nation of Israel to prominence as the earthly kingdom of God in the world, with headquarters in earthly Jerusalem in what once was the land of Canaan.

Verses 11-32 are especially important for the dispensational, premillennial theology of a restoration of Israel—a nation of racial Jews—as the earthly kingdom of God in the world. The passage foretells a "fulness" of the Jews (v. 12), a grafting in again of the Jews into the olive tree (vv. 23, 24).

The heart of the passage for the dispensational premillennialists is verses 25 and 26: "...Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." As all agree, the coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles is the salvation of the entire church, gathered for the most part from the Gentiles—all nations and races other than the Jews. The characteristic explanation of the passage by the dispensational premillennialists is that, after God has completed His saving work among the Gentiles of gathering unto Christ the entire church, He will take up again the work of saving the Jews.

This future salvation of the Jews will not consist of

adding the saved Jews to the church. The time of the church will have passed. The reader will recall that this premillennial saving of the Jews will begin with the rapture of the church out of the world into the air. Rather, God will restore the nation of Israel to its prominence as the earthly kingdom of God. Israel will become again the glorious kingdom that it was once under David and Solomon in the time of the Old Testament. Indeed, its power, dominion, and glory will exceed that of Old Testament times.

Such will be God's saving of the Jews as His restored kingdom that huge numbers of Jews, certainly the vast majority, will be brought to faith in God, thus becoming citizens of God's kingdom.

Asks the premillennialist, "Does not the statement in verse 26 that 'all Israel shall be saved' predict a future sal-

vation of multitudes of Jews, and then not simply as saved individuals, but as a restored kingdom of Israel, similar to the Old Testament kingdom in the days of its glory?" "And does not the relation of verse 26 to verse 25 indicate that this salvation of all Israel will happen *after* 'the fulness of the Gentiles be come in'?"

In fact, the answer to these questions is an emphatic "no."

Verse 26 does not prophesy a future conversion of multitudes of racial Jews.

Verse 26 certainly does not envision a future salvation of Jews that restores the nation of Israel as an earthly kingdom of God in the world, a kingdom different from and alongside the church.

Nor do verses 25 and 26 teach that the salvation of "all Israel" will *follow* the saving of the church in time and history.

To these egregious errors of dispensational premillennialism, fatal to this eschatology, I return in my critique of the heresy.

... to be continued. 

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"Does not the statement in verse 26
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In fact, the answer to these questions
is an emphatic "no."*

Psalter Revision: Governing Principles (4)

Music

In explaining the principles that govern the interdenominational Psalter revision committee in its work, I am treating the how of Psalter revision. In my three previous articles I have examined the principles regarding format and text (lyrics). Next up is to examine the principles that govern us in evaluating the music.

But before examining those principles, I will in this article explain *why*—not why Psalter revision in general, but why the committee would suggest changes to some *music* of the Psalter. In my next article, God willing, I will present data to support the “why” regarding music changes. So, stay tuned.

Why Change the Music?

The members of the revision committee have heard various concerns regarding the work of Psalter revision. Most of these concerns regard the changes to tunes.

I can appreciate why these concerns mostly regard tune changes. One reason, I am sure, is that more changes are being proposed to tunes than changes to lyrics.

Another reason is that words find their way into our hearts and souls through music. We who love the Psalter, love the Psalter *tunes*! By means of these tunes we have been singing God’s praises! The Psalter’s words are so intertwined with the tunes that, when the organist plays the tunes during a prelude or offertory, some in the congregation are singing along in our heads.

In 1905, when our 1912 Psalter was still being compiled, the United Presbyterian Church sponsored a convention in Pittsburgh and another in Chicago to promote Psalm singing and the Psalter that would be presented for use in those churches. At both conferences, this close association in our minds between the words and the tune to which they have always been sung was noted. At the

Pittsburgh conference, one man wrote: “We take it for granted that the praise value of the Psalter is linked in a very real sense with their musical setting.”¹ And another, at the Chicago conference:

Sometimes word and melody are so sacredly wedded that it is almost heartless to tear them asunder. A particular tune by reason of long association comes to interpret a Psalm for a large number of believers as nothing else can. One need not acknowledge relationship to the old lady of whom Dr. Guthrie tells, who vowed she ‘wad sing the Psalms o’ Daavit to the *tunes* o’ Daavit, an’ naething else, in order to sympathize with the protest...against a too rapid substitution of new tunes for old where the old have become fused with particular words.²

Why did they note this association? In part, to prepare the people to *break* this association in their minds, and to realize that melodies can be used with more than one set of lyrics. In the 1912 Psalter new words (recently developed lyrics) were set to existing tunes that had been set with other lyrics.

We recognize this association between tune and lyrics, and we appreciate it. This association enables one to sing in one’s heart while the organist is playing. It allows a family sitting at family devotions to join in song when they have no songbook before them.

So why change the tunes? I do understand the question.

The Tunes Serve the Lyrics

Although poetry finds its way into our souls through music, the essential part of our Psalter is the lyrics, not the

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Previous article in this series: April 15, 2017, p. 329.

¹ Rev. Charles F. Wishart, “The Musical Interpretation of the Psalms,” *The Psalms in Worship: A Series of Convention Papers Bearing Upon the Place of the Psalms in the Worship of the Church*, ed. John McNaugher, (Pittsburgh, PA: The United Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1907), 439.

² Rev. William Fulton, “The Musical Interpretation of the Psalms,” in *The Psalms in Worship*, 450.

tunes. Both are important, but the tunes must serve the lyrics, rather than the lyrics serving the tunes.

As evidence that the tunes serve the lyrics, note that our lyrics are based on the inspired Scriptures, while the tunes are not. There are no “*tunes o’ Daavit*.”

The men who compiled our current Psalter understood that the lyrics were primary. To provide a solid songbook for their churches to sing, they commissioned the writing of new lyrics, then paired those lyrics with existing tunes. They did not include hymn *lyrics*, but they *did* pair the new lyrics with the *tunes* of familiar hymns (Psalters 134, 187, 200, 204, 221, 241, 285, 381, 382, 387, and others), Christmas carols (Psalters 3, 57, 127, 238, 399, and perhaps others), and patriotic songs (Psalter 126). What distinguished their end product from the hymnals of the day was the *lyrics*, all Psalm-based.

Because the tunes must serve the lyrics, it is within reason that the committee face the question: are the tunes serving the lyrics *well*? Or, in some instances are they not, and would a change of tune help the congregation to sing the lyrics better?

One only has to refer to Psalter 136 for an instance of sobering lyrics that set forth the reality of the death of the fool, paired with a tune which, from the amount of movement in it, can be interpreted as being more joyful and light-hearted. (I use the word “interpreted” intentionally, for that is what one does when pairing a certain tune to certain lyrics; he finds a tune that will interpret the lyrics best). The example of Psalter 136 is only one example but, because it is obvious to many, I use it as case in point.

Let’s take one more specific example to show that a tune might serve a psalm of praise better than one of lament. The hymn “Immortal, invisible, God only wise” is a hymn of praise to the one true God. Its tune (St. Denio) is lively; its movements help the singer sing with joy. In our current Psalter, that tune (Psalter 201, second tune) is paired with words that describe the oppressions that the righteous suffer at the hands of the wicked, at times causing the righteous to despair. The lyrics of Psalter 201 require the tune to be played and sung more somberly than its lively movements suggest. However, the tune is very suitable to the words of Psalter 57. The committee has not finished its proposals for Psalms 1-72, but it is considering propos-

ing to use St. Denio in place of the Christmas tune “Adeste Fideles.” Even if we do not make this specific change, this example was intended to demonstrate that the tunes serve the lyrics.

The work of Psalter revision includes the work of evaluating whether the tunes fit the lyrics, and proposing different tunes when the tunes seem not to fit the lyrics well.

The Tunes Serve the Congregation

Not only must the tunes serve the lyrics but they must serve the congregation in her worship of God. Reformed churches emphasize congregational singing. If the congregation will sing, the songs must be singable, not only by a trained choir, but by believers trained in the praise of God, if not in music.

So, even though we associate certain tunes with certain Psalm versifications, we ought still face the question: has every tune served the congregation well?

Is the tune sung in the higher ranges for a long time? This can tire the voice.

Is the timing of the tune difficult for the organist to play accurately, with the congregation following? In the case of Psalms 22, 180, and a few others, that argument can be made.

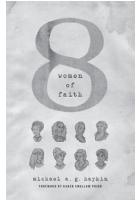
Is the singer required to hold a note for too long, so that the singing is hindered? I will give a personal opinion (I note that, because in these articles I am consciously speaking for the committee, and not giving personal opinions): to hold a note for 15 eighth beats, as the chorus of Psalter 42 requires us to do, is too long.

Does the music have a soprano/alto/tenor/bass harmony throughout the entire music, or are parts of the music not completely harmonized? At times they are not—Psalms 190, 219 and 226 are examples, but not the only ones.

Do not conclude that changes are being proposed to every Psalter number tune that I have used as an example in this article. Rather, I have used them to show why the tunes must be examined with a view to whether or not they serve the congregation well.

A third reason for changing some of the music can be given. That reason is that some Psalter numbers are rarely sung. To demonstrate this third reason, I intend to provide you with extensive data. This can be best done in a separate article—next time, God willing. 🌀

Eight Women of Faith by Michael A. G. Haykin. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. 160 pages. Paper. [Reviewed by Sarah Mowery.]



There is great value in reading Christian biography. In the words of Hebrews 12:1, the witness of those who have lived—and died—by faith encourages us to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” and “run with patience the race that is set before us.” Arguably, the majority of Christian biographies are about men, men whom God used mightily in the preservation and reformation of His church and in the spread of the gospel to foreign lands. *Eight Women of Faith* is precious because it serves as a reminder that women, too, are given vital roles in Christ’s church, supporting roles though they may be.

The book consists of brief sketches of eight godly women. Two of the women were single. Of the six who married, three were childless. All embraced the faith of the Protestant Reformation; some identified as Evangelicals, others as Puritans, and several, like the author, were Baptists.

The first chapter of the book is set in sixteenth-century England and recounts the witness of Lady Jane Grey. Jane’s legacy lies not in her nine-day reign over England in the middle of the sixteenth century, but in the earnest, eloquent defense of the Protestant faith she gave even as she faced execution. Though only sixteen years old, she loved not her life unto the death. The description of her witness on the scaffold moved me to tears. Though faced with per-

Mrs. Mowery is a former school teacher, and currently a wife and mother in Loveland Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

secution in seventeenth-century England, Margaret Baxter, the wife of Puritan minister Richard Baxter and the subject of the book’s second chapter, served as a succourer not only of her husband, but of many others as well. Bountiful fruit radiated from the Baxter’s loving, God-centered marriage. In chapter three, Haykin describes how twice-widowed Anne Dutton ministered with her pen, publishing critiques of John Wesley’s Arminianism and his teaching that Christians can attain “entire, sinless perfection” in this life as well as an exposition of Calvin’s view of the Lord’s Supper. Near the time of Mrs. Dutton’s death in 1765, a friend described her this way: “A woman of seventy-four laden with the fruits of the spirit.”

The reader crosses the Atlantic in chapter four to consider Sarah Edwards’s profound, perplexing “views of divine things.” I have read about Sarah’s extraordinary encounters before and especially appreciated Haykin’s note that “Sarah’s experiences were proven genuine by her refusal to look for God in any other place but his divine

Word.” I also appreciated the attention that he gives to the fruits of these experiences, namely, serenity and absolute submission to God’s sovereignty, even as she attended to the “worldly business” that, as a mother of eleven children, constituted so much of her “service of God.” Chapter six also bears testimony to the godliness of Sarah Edwards: her daughter Esther Edwards Burr was also a notable woman of faith. Esther esteemed Christian friendship characterized by religious conversation as “one of the best helps to

keep up religion in the soul” and lamented the neglect she saw in fellow believers when it came to the cultivation and maintenance of such friendships.

British hymn-writer Anne Steele is the focus of chapter five. Though plagued by ill health for most of her life, Anne was a prolific author of hymns that extol our glori-

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ous Savior and His sacred Word. Haykin writes about a third American in chapter seven. As a young woman, Ann Judson determined “to give up all my comforts and enjoyment here, sacrifice my affection to relatives and friends, and go where God, in his providence, shall see fit to place me.” That place was Burma, the foreign land to which Ann accompanied her husband Adoniram, the first American missionary, and where she faithfully labored with him until her death at age 36 in 1826. The subject of the last chapter of the book is likely its most

famous: novelist Jane Austen. Haykin quotes a prayer that Jane wrote in its entirety. It is a “simple, unvarnished prayer” that evidences a “deep and sincere religious [Christian] faith.”

Eight Women of Faith is interesting and informative, but by no means exhaustive. It is a delicious *hors d’oeuvre* that serves to whet the appetite for more Christian biography. The author’s extensive notes at the back of the book might be a good place to look for your next course. ∞

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Trivia Question

At the time of this writing schools have not yet started the 2017-2018 school year. But when you read this, they will have begun all the activities of a new year. Do you know how many Protestant Reformed Christian schools exist in North America? Answer later in this article.

Mission Activities

Pastor Vernon Ibe of the Berean PRC in the Philippines, along with missionary-pastor Rev. Daniel Holstege and Seminarian Matt Kortus, visited with the saints in Sitio Karugang, Gabaldon, in the Province of Nueva Ecija. Rev. Ibe led the saints there in the study of

“Essentials of Reformed Doctrine,” lesson 12. The consistory of the Berean PRC asked the congregation to pray for continued blessings on the labors there. Gabaldon is a four to five-hour drive northeast of Manila.

The outreach work of Bulacan PRC in Albura, on the Philippine island of Leyte is progressing. The saints there were visited by Committee #2 of the PRCP in late July and according to missionary-pastor Rev. Kleyn the trip went well, as did the visits and the fellowship with the members there. It is possible, if God wills, that the denomination could take over the work there, and that we might see an organized church there some day! Seminarian Kortus accompanied the committee and experienced firsthand the 5.9-magnitude earthquake with an epicenter less than five miles from Albura! We are told Seminarian Kortus was pretty impressed by the feeling of the quake. For a time

electricity was lost, but everyone was fine and it seemed no buildings were affected. We are thankful to God for His safe-keeping. Seminarian Kortus also accompanied Rev. Kleyn on the monthly trip to Southern Negros. A trifecta for him—Gabaldon, Albura, and Bacolod/Sipalay!

Missionary-pastor Daniel Kleyn and his wife Sharon recently spent about a month in the USA on furlough from their work in the Philippines.

Denominational Activities

The Contact Committee of the PRCA sent Prof. R. Dykstra and Rev. J. Engelsma to Australia to visit the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches on behalf of the PRC. They took part in a two-day Reformation Day conference, attending the meetings of the Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on the island of Tasmania, and preaching in the EPC. The

Mr. Van Egdome is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

2015 Synod of the PRC approved holding a conference with the EPC on the ground that “such face-to-face meeting and discussions with the men of the EPC are excellent ways both to make the corresponding relationship meaningful and to further the relationship.” Prof. and Mrs. Dykstra left July 18, and returned (after a time in Singapore) August 16. Rev. and Mrs. Engelsma left July 24 and returned August 7.

Advance Notice: Classis West is scheduled to meet this Fall on Wednesday, September 27, at Hull (IA) PRC. There will also be an Officebearers’ Conference on Tuesday, September 26 at Hull PRC on the “Five Solas of the Reformation and How They Matter for the Ministry.”

Save the Date: The dates for the 2018 Family Conference have been finalized! First PRC of Edmonton, AB, Canada will host the conference July 20-22, 2018. The theme for the conference is “Seeking the Lord” and Revs. B. Huizinga, N. Langerak and J. Marcus will be the speakers, D.V. Mark your calendars and plan to attend what promises to be a spiritually encouraging time of growth and fellowship.

Minister Activities

Rev. R. Kleyn declined the call from First PRC of Holland, MI. Rev. A. Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls) declined the call from Immanuel PRC of Lacombe, Alberta, whose Council then formed a new trio of Rev. E. Guichelaar and Candidates Matthew De Boer and Brian Feenstra. On August 6

Rev. Guichelaar received this call. Byron Center PRC Council called Rev. A. Spriensma (Byron Center) to serve as home missionary, a call he accepted on July 30. On July 23, the congregation of Edgerton, MN PRC called Candidate Matthew De Boer. On July 16, the congregation of Southwest PRC called from a trio of Rev. J. Mahtani, Candidate Joe Holstege, and Candidate Justin Smidstra, with Candidate Smidstra receiving this call. On July 23, Zion PRC called Candidate Joe Holstege. On July 30, Holland, MI PRC, from a trio that also included Revs. G. Eriks, and C. Spronk, voted to call Candidate Justin Smidstra.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper planned to preach his farewell sermon in Edgerton, MN PRC on August 13 and move his family to the Grand Rapids, MI area that week. The installation service as professor in our seminary is set for September 20 in Faith PRC, D.V.

Evangelism Activities

From the Hudsonville PRC Evangelism Committee: “Ye Are My Witnesses!” At 7 p.m. on July 26 and August 16 the Evangelism Committee sponsored two lectures for the congregation on personal evangelism. Prof B. Gritters spoke, concentrating on especially three things: the calling to 1) Be who you are: Witnesses of Jehovah; 2) Grow in the three fundamental graces, in order to be qualified to witness; 3) Do the first things. The speeches emphasized that all of God’s people must be, but especially can be, witnesses.

Congregational Activities

The men of the congregation at Kalamazoo, MI PRC made “lighter” work of moving rock around the church building by showing up with many hands. Soon after, the parking lot of the church was resurfaced.

The congregation at Kalamazoo, MI PRC is preparing to produce a new photo directory.

At Loveland, CO PRC the church carpets were recently cleaned and in the school there the gym, science lab, and kitchen floors were briefly off-limits for chemical stripping and a nice shiny new coat of wax! The grade-school carpets were cleaned too.

Volunteers from Randolph, WI PRC manned the church booth recently at the Alto Fair.

Two air conditioning units were replaced in the Doon, IA PRC.

Trivia Answer

If our calculations are correct (hopefully they are) there are 17 Protestant Reformed schools in North America. That number includes grade schools and high schools. And, of course, our own theological school (seminary) is in full swing again also. We thank God for His provision of schools and ask His continued blessing upon them as they are a flurry of activity again. More trivia next time.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Doon PRC express their sincere sympathy to Henrietta Van Oort in the death of her husband,

JOAWN VAN OORT.

It is our prayer that she and her extended family may be comforted by the Holy Spirit in Revelation 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, President
Jim Hoogendoorn, Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ On August 26, God in His infinite wisdom and perfect counsel has blessed our parents and grandparents,

MIKE and HELEN CNOSSEN,

with 40 years of marriage. We have been blessed by their godly example and pray that God will give bless them in their marriage in years to come.

Psalm 128:5, 6 "The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

- ✿ Mark and Cynthia Koole
Taylor, Corey, Logan, Jake, Drew
- ✿ Mike and Rachel Cnossen
Michael, Joelle, Lucy, Lillian, Allyson, Annabelle
- ✿ Kevin and Audra Gritters
Derek, Jared, Hayley, Alex, Luke
- ✿ Derek and Leanne Cnossen
Aiden, Elsha, Shane, Miriam, Bennett
- ✿ Pete and Megan Cnossen
Nelle, Clair, Tyler, David, Maryelis
- ✿ Phil and Holly Cnossen
Breslin

Zeeland, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With gratitude to God for their godly upbringing and example of faith, the children of

CLARENCE and JANICE KUIPER

join in celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on September 8, 2017. Their wedding text was Psalm 127:1: "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it." In His grace and mercy, God has built their house, continued His covenant with them in their generations, and given them to see their children's children. We pray that God continue to bless them richly out of Zion and cause them to see the church's good, continually sanctifying and preserving them until He brings them to glory. "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

- ✿ Deb and Nick Kleyn
- ✿ Rev. Doug and Teresa Kuiper
- ✿ Brian and Karen Kuiper
- ✿ Marc and Rebekah Kuiper
- ✿ Cara Kuiper
- ✿ Kevin and Amy Kuiper 32 grandchildren
- ✿ Rachel and Doug Feenstra 2 great-grandchildren
- ✿ Randy and Kim Kuiper

Jenison, MI

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Tim and Heather Bartelds and family in the death of their mother,

MRS. DORIS KREUZER.

We pray that they may receive comfort and assurance from the word of God in Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
David S. Miedema, Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thanksgiving to God for His covenantal faithfulness, we rejoice with our parents and grandparents,

KEITH and WANDA BRUINSMA,

who will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary on September 9, 2017. We are thankful to God for the godly example they have shown to us over the years. We pray that God blesses them with many more years together. Psalm 48:12-14: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

- ✿ Brian and Stacy Bruinsma
Dora, Rylee, Claire, Brynn, Ashlyn
- ✿ Greg and Liz Bruinsma
Nolan, Logan, Hudson, Reagan
- ✿ Steve and Sheila Griffioen
Austin, Parker, Natalie, Brielle
- ✿ Michael and Janelle DeJong
Derek, Kyle, Owen, Tessa, Simon, Ross, Lindsey
- ✿ Calvin and Alisha Bruinsma
- ✿ Micah and Megan Bruinsma

Lynwood, Illinois

Wedding Anniversary

■ Giving thanks to our heavenly Father, we honor and celebrate our earthly parents,

RODRIGO "DICK" and VIOLETA ESPIRITU,

as they celebrate on September 14, 2017 their 40th wedding anniversary.

The Lord continues to be faithful to our family through many years and we are thankful to Him for giving us such faithful parents and grandparents. "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- ✿ Roderick
- ✿ Herbert Joseph and Maria Niña
- ✿ Andrew and Mary Cris
- ✿ Achaicus Zion

Berean Protestant Reformed Church
Antipolo City, Philippines

Installation

■ Please note that the Installation of Rev. Douglas Kuiper as professor in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will take place on September 20 in Faith PRC at 7 P.M.

Change of Address

■ Please note the new address of Rev. Doug and Teresa Kuiper is:

1055 Lumina Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Hull, IA, on Wednesday, September 27 2017, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 28, 2017. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Hull's consistory.

There will be an Officebearer's Conference on Tuesday, September 26 at Hull PRC on "The Five Solas of the Reformation and How They Matter for the Ministry."

Rev. J. Marcus,
Acting Stated Clerk

Men, women, young people—you are all cordially
invited to attend the

Reformed Free Publishing Association's ANNUAL MEETING

Prof. David J. Engelsma will speak on:

"After 500 Years:
What about James on Justification?"

September 28, 2017 at 7:30pm

Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

(This meeting provides the opportunity for men to join the Association.)

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Notice

■ Trinity Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, MI is soliciting for private, unsecured 5 year loans to fund the construction of their new sanctuary addition. These notes will bear interest at a rate of 3% per annum with interest paid annually and with principle due in full at maturity. Interested parties should contact either Tom Holstege (616-802-7751 / Tom@miedemaconcrete.com) or Marc Velthouse (616-890-6332 / marc.velthouse@yahoo.com) for further details.

Notice

■ The Byron Center PRC Council is making preparation for a follow-up speech by Prof. David Engelsma regarding the reality of spousal abuse in the Reformed community. This will be an expanded version of his speech given at the well-attended Classis East officebearers' conference in May. This timely speech is planned for October 5, 7:00 P.M., at the Van Singel auditorium in Byron Center. All are welcome regardless of age or denominational affiliation. Please mark your calendar. More details will follow.

Standard Bearer
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Jenison, MI 49428-7137

PERIODICAL
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MICHIGAN

the REFORMATION 500TH ANNIVERSARY

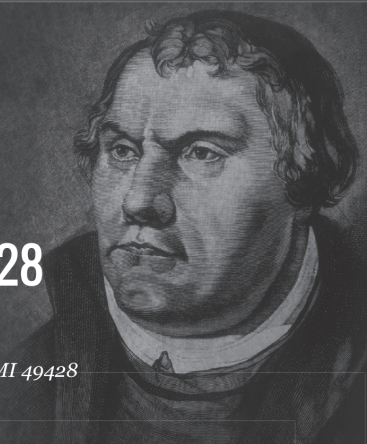
A 2-day conference

HERE WE STAND

OCTOBER 27-28

@ FAITH PRC

7194 20th Ave. | Jenison, MI 49428



FRIDAY

4:00PM What was the Reformation?

Prof. Ronald Cammenga

7:00PM The Reformation's Return to Sola Scriptura

Rev. David Torlach

8:15PM The Reformation's Restoration of the Office of Believer

Prof. Barrett Gritters

SATURDAY

8:30AM The Reformation's Recovery of Right Worship

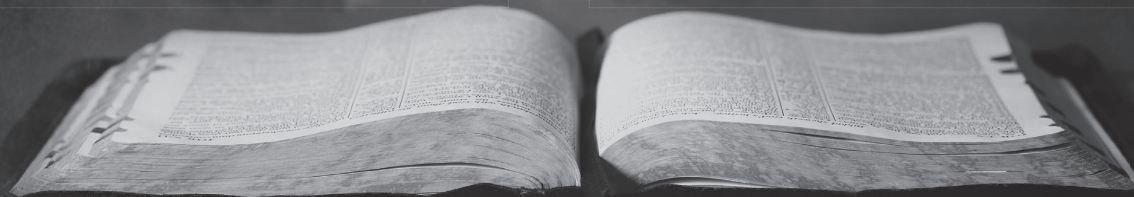
Rev. Martyn McGeown

10:00AM The Reformation's Response to the 'Radical Reformation'

Prof. Russell Dykstra

11:15AM The Reformation's Progress in the Lowlands

Rev. Steven Key



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Reformed Witness Hour

September 2017

Rev. Carl Haak

Date

September 3
September 10
September 17
September 24

Topic

"True Faith"
"The Creation"
"The Secret Providence of God"
"Who Is Jesus?"

Text

II Timothy 1:12
Genesis 1:1
Psalm 57:2
Acts 4:12