

The Standard Bearer

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CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Perish the Thought! REV. MICHAEL DE VRIES	314
<i>Editorial</i>	Book Analysis: <i>Ten Myths About Calvinism</i> (3) REV. KENNETH KOOLE	317
<i>Letters</i>	■ Psalter Revision and More ■ 1953: a Pruning?	320 322
<i>All Around Us</i>	Evangelicals and President Trump REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN	323
<i>Search the Scriptures</i>	Robbing Christ of His Honor (20) MR. DON DOEZEMA	326
<i>Ministering to the Saints</i>	Psalter Revision: Governing Principles (3), Text (cont.) REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER	329
<i>All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee</i>	Environmental Issues within the Creation MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD	332
<i>Activities</i>	News from Our Churches MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM	335

Perish the Thought!

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.... But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

I Corinthians 15:17, 20

Our lives are filled with uncertainty. So many changes take place, many of them unexpected. So many of our plans fall to pieces. So many of our hopes are dashed. And, frequently, we are considering and pondering different possibilities and scenarios. What if...? What if...? All sorts of hypothetical situations—some of which may cause much worry, anxiety, and fear.

But the scenario that the apostle Paul holds before us here is the most dreadful, the most horrible possibility that we could ever imagine! Did you ever ponder this: What if Christ be not raised? As God's children we spontaneously respond, "Perish the thought!" This expression or idiom expresses the urgent desire that what

was just mentioned would never be. It means: Do not ever consider thinking such a thing!

"Perish the thought!" is our response because what Paul sets forth as the dreadful consequences of this possibility, this "if," is true! "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain." And if Christ be not raised, and if consequently our faith is vain, then we are yet in our sins! And then it is surely true, as the apostle says, we are of all men most miserable!

"And if Christ be not raised"—perish the thought! Yet Paul would have us contemplate this horrible notion, not to raise doubts or fears in our hearts and minds, but so that we may again rejoice in the glorious significance of Resurrection Day! May the wondrous truth of Christ's resurrection fill us with joy and gladness!

The Awful Thought

Think about it, then. What a horror it would be if Christ remained in the cold clutches of death and the grave! "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain"! That means that our faith in Christ as our Lord and Savior is empty, without any validity, without any value or relevance. It is unprofitable; our faith does us no good.

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Our faith is in Christ; and if He be not raised, He is not able to do what we expect Him to do. Our faith in Him is worthless.

For if Christ be not raised, “ye are yet in your sins.” That means that we are guilty and remain guilty! We stand condemned. The only possible verdict that God, the Judge of heaven and earth, can give is: GUILTY! And then we are worthy of everlasting desolation—that must be our only end. For God is the perfectly righteous Judge. He cannot overlook our sins. If we are yet in our sins, He sees them. He cannot deny His own righteousness. We stand before Him without excuse, liable only to the sentence of death, everlasting death. For to be yet in our sins means, first of all, to be yet in our guilt.

Our justification—God’s declaration that we are innocent and righteous in Christ—rests solely upon the resurrection of Christ, as far as its certainty is concerned. If Christ be not raised, the blood of the Lamb is of none effect. For Christ is our Head; He represents us legally. He went to the cross for us, in our place. He bore the burden of God’s wrath as our representative. It was to make satisfaction for our debt of guilt that He poured out His soul unto death. It was to merit for us and all His people the right to eternal life and all the blessings of salvation that He willingly suffered and died upon the accursed tree. If Christ succeeded; if He really paid the price; if He actually bore the burden of God’s wrath to the end; if He really made satisfaction for sin and merited for us righteousness; if it is, in fact, true as He cried, “It is finished,” then He must receive life again as our Head!

If, therefore, Christ be not raised, then He remained in death. That could only mean that He failed! He did not accomplish what He set out to do. The burden was too great. Instead of sustaining the wrath of God, it crushed Him. He went down to defeat! If Christ be not raised, then our guilt has not been paid. If Christ be not raised, it can only be because He did not atone for sin, and then we are yet in our guilt. Perish the thought!

But that is not all. If Christ be not raised, then we have not been delivered from our sins. Then we are still in the *power* of sin. Then we are still under its dominion, and in need of deliverance. Then we are still dead in trespasses and sins! We are still slaves of sin and in need of being set free.

But, as children of God, we believe and confess that we

are delivered from the power of sin and death by our risen Lord. We confess that from our living Lord we receive the principle of resurrection life in regeneration. We believe that because of our union with a living Lord we begin to live lives controlled and directed by the love of God. We believe that the power of sin and death was broken forever when Christ died on the cross and arose again the third day.

But if Christ be not raised, then all of this is not true! Then our faith is vain. Then we are yet in our sins also in the sense that we are still in the power of sin and death. For deliverance from sin, our sanctification, presupposes redemption from guilt. If Christ has not removed our guilt, we have no legal right to be sanctified. If we have not been redeemed, then we have no right to be delivered. We cannot possibly be delivered from sin if Christ be not raised.

For, you see, our new life, our deliverance, our sanctification rests in unity with Christ. He is the vine; we are the branches. He is the Head, and we are the members of His body. We live out of Him, therefore. And if Christ be not raised, He is dead! And if the vine is dead, the branches are dead! And if the Head is dead, the body is also dead! Yea, *we* are also dead! We are yet in our sins. Perish the thought!

There is one more element that we must consider. If Christ be not raised, and “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (v. 19). You have hopes, do you not? Not just for the here and now, but hope for the future that lies beyond death and the grave? The hope of that day when we shall be raised up out of the dust and shall stand body and soul in the glory of the new heaven and the new earth. Is this your hope? If it is, you seek the things that are above. If it is, you are willing to suffer for Christ’s sake. You are not afraid to be reproached and hated and persecuted. And that will be our experience, to one extent or another, for Christ’s sake, in this present life.

But if Christ be not raised, then this life is all we have! Then our hope for the future is but a puff of vapor in the frosty air that quickly dissipates. It is a mere dream that fades away. Our hope is simply a figment of our imagination. Our faith is vain! Then death is the end; the grave has the victory. What is worse, then we perish forever when we die. If that is the case, we might just as well fol-

low the world's motto: "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." If our hope in Christ is only in this life, we are of all men most miserable!

We would be most miserable because Christ would not now be seated at God's right hand. Christ would not have received all power in heaven and on earth. Christ would not receive us into glory with Him when our earthly life is over. Then He would never come again. Then the resurrection of the body would never take place. Then there would be no new creation, no everlasting life. If Christ is yet in the grave, then the grave is the door to hell for us. If Christ be not raised, then we are losers, awful losers. And Christ Himself is a loser and a forlorn, would-be Savior. And all of the souls of the saints from Abel onward must be cast out of heaven! For "then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (v. 18). Think of it. If Christ be not raised, our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins; we are of all men most miserable. Perish the thought!

The Blessed Reality

But the inspired apostle asserts, "But now is Christ risen from the dead!" Thank God, Christ arose! Let that thought sink into your soul! That means our faith is not vain. We are not yet in our sin and guilt. We are of all people the most joyful, the most blessed!

Always the enemy seeks to rob us of our faith and comfort in the resurrection. Already from that very third day when Christ arose men have denied the truth of the resurrection. The Evil One knows how vital this truth is to the Christian's faith. Today, too, that is the case. And the unbelieving world and the apostate church insist that Christ's resurrection simply was not possible scientifically. They seek to hide the resurrection under the wrappings of carnal celebration.

But let there be no doubt in your mind and heart—Christ arose! And the Lord has taken care that the fact


and reality of the resurrection are established by faithful witnesses, yea, by many infallible proofs. Many were the witnesses of this risen Lord, and they all testify that they did not expect the resurrection. They did not expect the risen Savior. Just ask the women who went to the tomb with their spices that resurrection morning. It was the farthest thing from their thoughts. Just ask the grieving disciples whether their hearts were not thrilled at the sight of the risen Lord when He suddenly appeared in their midst. Yea, He was seen of more than five hundred brethren at once! And Paul himself proclaimed the gospel of our risen Lord as an eyewitness of His glory.

Many witnesses beheld the risen Lord. Because of that, the apostles made the resurrection the heart of their preaching. Mind you, they were willing to seal their confession with their own blood!

Rejoice, for Christ is "become the firstfruits of them that slept!" Our God beholds us from heaven, with His risen and glorified Son at His right hand, and declares: "Not guilty!" We are righteous in Christ. We are no longer in our sins, but in Christ and clothed in His righteousness. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with

Christ of all the glories of His kingdom. And we know that the risen Lord is but the firstfruit of a great and glorious harvest. We, with all those whom the Father has given Him, shall be raised and ushered into His kingdom.

The only doubt of the resurrection of Christ is the doubt of unbelief. The Lord is risen indeed! Believe it! Believe it and repent of your sins! And walk, then, in newness of life. Rejoice in the glorious hope we have in our living Lord! It is a hope that maketh not ashamed! It is a hope of everlasting life and glory! It is the hope of Christ's return! A life of joy and gladness is ours without end.

Relish the thought! 

*Christ arose!
Let that thought
sink into your soul!
That means our faith
is not vain.
We are not yet in our sin and guilt.
We are of all people
the most joyful, the most blessed!*

Book Analysis:

Ten Myths About Calvinism (3)

With this editorial we conclude our critique of Kenneth Stewart's book, *Ten Myths About Calvinism* (IVP Academic, 2011).

What Stewart's book makes plain is that he wants to retain the right to be called a 'Calvinist' while he calls into question the very doctrines that were central to Calvin himself—in fact, doctrines that are fundamental to any theology that has the right to call itself 'historically Reformed.' In particular, doctrines that have to do with God's sovereign will and grace (cf. the Oct. 1, 2016 editorial).

We devote one more editorial to Stewart's book because we are convinced that, in too many instances, this is becoming the 'Calvinism' of our day. What Stewart is proposing is a 'neo-Calvinism' that he wants others, new to Calvinism, to adopt as their own.

Stewart himself came to Calvinism from the 'outside,' filled with zeal for Calvinism. But now, upon reflection, he is convinced he was overly zealous for a 'too stringent' brand of Calvinism and would like to counsel other young Calvinists to temper their zeal and focus their energies on doctrines that are of a

"truly abiding value in Calvinism" (93). And, according to Stewart, those of a "truly abiding value" are the ones that would "serve the interests of 'our common Christianity.'" (93)

And "our common Christianity," of course, extends beyond those who profess any brand of Calvinism. This is plain from Stewart's telling remark in connection with two Anglican evangelicals of Calvinist repute in the late 1700s, who wrote to criticize their bishop who had publicly opposed Calvinism. But, remarks Stewart, they wrote in such a way that showed "...they were determined not to contend for the Calvinist system so much [!] as what they termed 'our common Christianity,' that is, things held in common by all scriptural Christians" (83).

This Stewart found commendable.

Telling!

You may recall that Stewart's book is divided into two sections: The first is labeled: "Four Myths *Calvinists* Should Not Be Circulating (But Are)"; the second is labeled: "Six Myths *Non-Calvinists* Should Not Be Circulating (But Are)" (emphasis added).

As previously stated, our main concern is not with the 'myths' of the second section, but with Stewart's first section, namely, "Four Myths

Calvinists Should Not Be Circulating (But Are)."

Having critiqued the first two of what Stewart labels as myths spread by Calvinists, namely, "One Man (Calvin) and One City (Geneva) Are Determinative" and "Calvin's View of Predestination Must Be Ours," we offer a brief critique of Stewart's criticism of what he labels the third myth about Calvinism, namely, that "TULIP [should be] the yardstick of what is truly [!] Reformed."

Upon reading that some fellow, in the name of what is *truly* Reformed and Calvinistic, wants to jettison TULIP as an orthodox and proper description of Reformed Calvinism, one might be inclined simply to dismiss that fellow as an 'egghead' of the 'first water,' and proceed to the next 'chicken coop' to gather something worth one's time.

But we would not call Stewart an 'egghead.' An apostatizing Calvinist perhaps, but not an 'egghead.'

Keep in mind that Stewart represents a movement within Calvinism that wants to change Calvinism's time-honored doctrines and perspective by claiming that it is the traditional interpretations of Calvin's writings, and even of the Reformed creeds (in particular of the Canons of Dordt), that has had it all wrong. It is this new per-

Previous articles in this series: Oct. 1, Nov. 1 and Nov. 15, 2016 editorials.

spective that must be adopted and proclaimed.

As there is a 'New Perspective on Paul' that has become all the rage among the new generation of biblical scholars (how could men so 'ancient' as Luther, Calvin, Turretin, Hodge, Bavinck, *et al* correctly understand Paul's writings?), so there is to be a 'New Perspective' on the reading of Calvin and the Reformed creeds, in particular of the Canons of Dordt.

It is Stewart's thesis that the points of doctrine represented by the acronym TULIP are *not* "a faithful...theological shorthand for a much more comprehensive statement of Calvinist theology delivered at the international Reformed Synod hosted at Dordrecht, the Netherlands in 1618-19" (76).

Notice, Stewart speaks of the Canons in terms of being "much more comprehensive" [!] than the doctrines represented by TULIP.

And make no mistake, by "much more [!] comprehensive" Stewart wants us to believe that the Canons do not *really* condemn the very doctrinal errors they were drawn up to condemn. This is why Stewart takes aim at TULIP and, in particular, the doctrines represented by the descriptive labels 'total depravity,' 'limited atonement,' and 'irresistible grace' (cf. p. 77).

According to Stewart, to use such terminology to describe what Calvin and the Canons have taught is to have misread and misunderstood both Calvin and Dordt.

Really?

And where, pray tell, is the proof of that?

To be blunt, we find Stewart's proof and evidence of this startling contention altogether baffling.

Mind you, we are not baffled by what doctrines Stewart, by some theological sleight of hand, wants to have disappear in order to replace them with some newly minted, and less offensive, doctrines. We are baffled by what Stewart offers as proof for his contention that TULIP is not the right 'flower' to correctly represent the positions of Calvin and the Canons when it comes to the doctrines of sin and grace, baffled that Stewart should think his 'brief' against the use of TULIP to describe historic Calvinism should carry any weight.

Stewart spends a number of pages demonstrating that the acronym TULIP is of relatively recent vintage, an acronym that almost certainly did not occur until the early 1900s.

Stewart then proceeds to list a number of theologians with a reputation as Calvinists who used terms other than the ones represented by TULIP to describe the five points associated with Calvinism, men such as the Presbyterians B.B. Warfield and R. L. Dabney, the Anglican Bishop W. Parks (a close friend of Toplady), as well as John Gill, and more recently J. I. Packer. Other names are enlisted, men such as C. Spurgeon and H. Bonar of Scottish extraction. Men, one and all, whom most have identified with historic Calvinism, but who used labels other than those of TULIP to describe the five points—labels such as the Fall of man, original sin, particular atonement, general

redemption, and effectual calling in place of total depravity, limited atonement, and irresistible grace (cf. p. 80ff).

All of which may be true. But proving what?

That the acronym TULIP might be of twentieth-century vintage is not surprising. It is used, after all, to identify and describe the five heads of the Canons of Dordt, which is a *Dutch* Reformed confession. And TULIP is an *English* acronym.

When did our Dutch Reformed fathers come to the States and begin to translate their confessions into English and use English as their theological language?

In the early part of the twentieth century!

Is it, then, really at all surprising that the acronym TULIP should spring up and become popular at that time? To be sure, Presbyterians were familiar with the Canons. But as for tulips, would such be their flower (label) of choice?

And looking over the names on Stewart's list, there are more than one whose consistent Calvinism leaves something to be desired. Dabney? Packer these days? And others as well.

What becomes plain is that Stewart wants to have Calvinists maintain depravity without describing it as *total*, atonement without maintaining it is *limited* (as to its scope), and salvation all of grace but not a grace that is *irresistible* in its power.

After all, when it comes to the latter, how can you justify proclaiming a God who is gracious to all (in

some sense, as in a well-meant offer), if you are fully persuaded that His Holy Spirit has determined to be gracious unto and to work grace only in some?

Out with “irresistible”!

Let it be understood that what determines whether the descriptive adjectives “total,” “limited,” and “irresistible” are accurate, truthful descriptions of Calvin’s teachings or of Dordt’s declarations is not what this or that self-professed Calvinistic theologian wrote or taught. The question is, what did *Calvin* and the *Canons* themselves declare concerning the doctrines at issue?

Nor is the question whether either Calvin or Dordt used the adjectives total, limited, or irresistible. The question is, do these adjectives accurately describe the language of Calvin and Dordt when it comes to these doctrines?

Without equivocation, we say, they do!

For instance, when it comes to the doctrine of the depth of fallen man’s corruption, what do you find in Calvin’s writings?

One quote from his *Institutes* should suffice.

Therefore let us hold this as an undoubted truth....: the mind of man has been so completely estranged from God’s righteousness that it conceives, desires, and undertakes only that which is impious, perverted, foul, impure, and infamous. The heart is so steeped in the poison of sin that it can breathe out nothing but a loathsome stench. But if some men occasionally make a show of good, their minds nevertheless

ever remain enveloped in hypocrisy and deceitful craft, and their hearts bound by inner perversity.¹

We submit to you this is a depravity as *total* as depravity, a being dead in trespasses and sins, can get.

Turning to the Canons, Heads III/IV, we find language just as uncompromising. What underscores the Canon’s perspective on this truth about man can be found in Dordt’s rejection of errors. There the Synod rejected the error (#4) of those

Who teach that the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly [!] dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God.

Utterly dead in sin.

Totally depraved.

Not even those given to escape plain truths by resorting to ‘nuances’ can nuance a difference between the two phrases, we would think.

In the interest of space, we must leave unaddressed the issue of applying the adjective “limited” to “atonement.” Perhaps in a later article.

We content ourselves with addressing the ‘correctness’ of describing Dordt’s doctrine of saving grace as being of an ‘irresistible’ sort.

The Canons, in its rejection of

errors, is quite illuminating on this point. Dordt’s synod rejected as guilty of error,

Those who teach that God in the regeneration of man does not use such powers of His omnipotence [!] as potently and infallibly bend man’s will to faith and conversion, but that all the works of grace having been accomplished, which God employs to convert man, man may yet so resist[!] God and the Holy Spirit when God intends man’s regeneration and wills to regenerate him, and indeed that man often does so resist....

Rejection: For this is nothing less than the denial of all the efficiency [!] of God’s grace in our conversion, and the subjecting of the will of Almighty God to the will of man (Head III/IV, B, Error 8).

So grace is defined by Dordt in terms of an “omnipotence” that “infallibly bends man’s will,” and then states that those who would challenge this are guilty of denying “the efficiency of God’s grace.”

If you can find a difference between what the Reformed have described as irresistible grace and what Dordt calls the ‘efficiency of God’s grace,’ all I can say is, you are more ‘nuanced’ than I am.

But I would then challenge your orthodoxy.

And it is this matter of *orthodoxy* that is the key point!

That is the issue. Not, what does this theologian of Calvinistic reputation say?, and how does that one couch his description of this “Calvinistic” point or that? In fact, not even what might be found in some writing by Calvin himself is decisive.

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. I, ed. John T. McNeill; transl. Ford L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 340.


Once the Lord Christ spoke *through His church* at the Synod of Dordt (1618-19), not even Calvin himself may define what is Reformed or what has become known as 'Calvinism,' not if you claim to be a *truly* Reformed officebearer.

The question is, what saith the Canons?

Dordt defines what is orthodox truth for one who would call himself Reformed and consistently Calvinistic. The Reformed officebearer is bound by its explanations through the Formula of Subscription.

And one subscribes because he is fully convinced that what Dordt's

international synod in its five heads of doctrine set forth is in full accord with the Apostolic Scriptures.

Say what Stewart will, it is TULIP (and what its letters describe) that is the flower that properly represents the Canons of Dordt with its doctrines so firmly rooted in the soil of the Scriptures. 

LETTERS

■ Psalter Revision and More

The work undertaken by the PRC to revise the Psalter we all recognize to be a very important work, because it involves changes to the songbook we have used to worship God for ninety-plus years in the PRC. While I do not disagree that improvements can be made to the Psalter, my concerns and apprehensions about the project rest upon the scope and magnitude of the changes made, so that the revised edition may no longer be very familiar to myself and my children.

As decided by the 2015 PRC Synod, a newly formed Interdenominational Psalter Revision Committee was formed, which then submitted a sample of their work (Psalter #s 203-243) for evaluation to Synod 2016. Synod 2016's evaluation of that work, while I am sure knowledgeable of the interdenominational committee's mentioning in 2015 that the revision could be as much as 15-20% of the Psalter, was this: "we have a concern that the scope of the revision has become too broad," and that the lyrics "would result in a Psalter that is no longer familiar to our people." This seems to confirm that my concerns and apprehensions are justified.

In the October 1, 2016 issue of the *SB* Rev. Douglas Kuiper reported that "the three PRC men on the committee understood Synod's concerns and conveyed and explained them to the rest of the interdenominational committee." (20) The rest of the article and those that have followed from Rev. Kuiper's pen have explained the work that the committee has and is doing, but he has not told the readers what the rest of the committee's reaction to the PRC Synod's evaluation was, nor how the scope of

the work has been narrowed down. Could Rev. Kuiper allay my apprehensions and the possible concerns of others?

Psalter revision necessarily involves working with the Psalms. The Psalms are cherished by God's people because they give expression to every aspect and emotion of the Christian's life and, therefore, are often the book to which the Christian turns for comfort and guidance. In addition, the Psalms are rich in doctrine. In articles entitled "God's Covenant of Grace in the Psalms" published recently in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* (April and November 2016), Prof. R. Dykstra demonstrates the doctrinal nature of the Psalms clearly. He proves from Psalms 89, 105, and 132 that God's covenant is eternally established with Christ and the elect in Christ. Prof. Dykstra states that the Psalms clearly teach that God establishes His covenant with believers and their seed, citing Psalms 78, 90, 103, 105, 127, and 128. And the Psalms teach the eternal nature of God's unbreakable covenant as reflected in believers' marriages and families in Psalms 45, 48, 73, 78, and 128.

Rev. Kuiper wrote "Although the FRC (Free Reformed Churches), HRC (Heritage Reformed Congregations), and PRC (Protestant Reformed Churches) have their differences, all have in common a commitment to be faithful to Scripture, a desire to worship God in a way that pleases Him, and a love for the Psalter" (*SB*, Oct. 1, 2016, p. 20).

The doctrines of the covenant of grace, particular grace, and marriage, which are clearly taught in the Psalms and elsewhere, would necessarily have to be in-

cluded in the “differences” that Rev. Kuiper acknowledges separate the three denominations working together on the Psalter revision. In light of the PRC’s extensive writings explaining the correct biblical and confessional understanding of these doctrines, I ask Rev. Kuiper to elaborate and explain what he means by the words, “all have in common a commitment to be faithful to Scripture.”

Respectfully submitted,
Ronald Koole
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Response to Ron Koole

Mr. Koole reflects on my article regarding Psalter revision that was published in the October 1, 2016 issue of the *SB*. I will respond in turn to the two key points in his letter. At the outset, I thank brother Koole for his comments and questions. In answering, I aim to be as concise as possible, without sidestepping his question or withholding pertinent information.

Concerns and Apprehensions

Mr. Koole’s first point is to express “concerns and apprehensions about the project.” He is concerned that “the scope and magnitude of the change made” will result in a “revised edition” that “may no longer be very familiar to myself and my children.” He considers statements that Synod 2016 made to have confirmed that his “concerns and apprehensions are justified.” He asks me to allay those apprehensions, in part by telling “what the rest of the committee’s reaction to the PRC Synod’s evaluation was” and “how the scope of the work has been narrowed down.” I respond:

1. As brother Koole indicated, the Synod and members of the PRC *may expect the committee to propose revision to as much as 20% of the Psalter*. Synod was aware of this figure of 20% before it committed to the project. Synod 2016’s concern did not regard the figure of 20%, but the figure of 33%, because the committee reported that it was proposing changes to 33% of the tunes of Psalters 201-243.

2. At the heart of Mr. Koole’s concern is that the revision will no longer be very familiar. Of course, revision means change, and some changes will result in unfamiliar tunes. If synod adopts the revisions, the PRC will face a period of relearning the Psalter. But, *not all of the pro-*

posed changes will leave us with something unfamiliar. Consider:

a. What is familiar or unfamiliar to one person is not necessarily so to another. Even from one congregation to another, there is difference in what is considered familiar. And one of our goals is that, even if we must go through a learning curve, in the end we become more familiar with the Scriptures on which our Psalter is based.

b. The committee has data to support the contention that some of our current tunes are not very familiar to our congregations. We might know that those tunes are there, but we seldom sing them, and find them awkward. Replacing these tunes will not result in a significant loss of familiarity. At times, the replacement tune will be more familiar than the tune it replaces.

c. As regards *proposed change*, 33% (the figure the committee presented to Synod) is correct; but as regards *familiarity*, it is not. I remind Mr. Koole of these crucial sentences that begin at the bottom of the first column on page 21: “Apart from the Genevan selections, the proposed revision of Psalms 73-89 includes 41 selections. The tunes of 34 of these 41 selections are current Psalter tunes. That is 83%! Of the remaining 17% (7 tunes), at least two will probably be unfamiliar, possibly two will be somewhat familiar, and perhaps three will be very familiar to most members of the PRC.” Mr. Koole’s concerns should be alleviated: none should find less than 83% of the proposed tunes for Psalters 201-243 to be familiar, and some will find as much as 95% to be familiar.

3. As to the reaction of the committee to the concerns of Synod 2016, I can say that the committee heard us respectfully. The secretary noted in the minutes of the September 9, 2016 meeting: “The constructive comments from [PRC] synod: a request for more rationale for decisions, and some cautions about the amount of change.”

4. How has the scope of the work been narrowed down?

a. *Psalters 201-243*: three specific changes in lyrics that the committee originally was going to propose it is no longer proposing. Some in the committee want the committee to abandon two proposed new tunes and revert back to the current tunes. The committee has not yet faced the issue, and I make no promises about the outcome.

b. *Psalters 1-200*: the draft report to the 2017 synods contains this statement: “Proposals for books I and

II (that is, Psalms 1-72, DJK) are being developed. Currently, it appears that from Psalters 1-200, approximately only 15% will receive any substantial changes.” I did not compile that statistic, and did not check it for accuracy, but it rings true to the work my own team did on Psalters 1-68. This should alleviate your concerns.

5. Finally, let me not mislead on this point: even though Synod expressed caution about the scope of the revision, the committee is still reviewing every Psalter number using the principles that Synod 2016 approved. In other words, at no point does the committee intend to say: “We have reached our 20% limit, and we are only 75% of the way through this section, so we had better not even evaluate the rest of the section.” You may expect we will evaluate the entire section and apply the principles. If, as a result, we end up proposing more revisions than Synod wants, Synod may reject the proposed revisions, but the committee will not have neglected to review the Psalter as it was mandated to do.

Explanation of a Statement

The other matter that Mr. Koole raises regards the statement I made in my article that the FRC, HRC, and PRC “all have in common a commitment to be faithful to Scripture.” Pointing out that the PRC differ from the FRC and HRC regarding the doctrines of the covenant of grace, particular grace, and marriage, Mr. Koole desires that I elaborate and explain what I mean by my statement.

I distinguish between the *degree to which* a denomination is faithful to Scripture, and the *commitment* of a denomination to be faithful to Scripture. My statement regarded the commitment of the denominations, and made no assessment of the degree to which they are faithful. Nor did I mislead the reader of the *SB* on this point; I clearly indicated that the PRC differs from the FRC and HRC in significant areas, and did not suggest that the differences are trivial.

I bring forth two evidences to support my statement that the FRC and HRC do have a commitment to be faithful to Scripture.

First, though the PRC judges them wrong in certain key areas of doctrine and practice, they are not apostatizing, that is, they are not continually moving away from truth, adding error to error. Consider the case of the de-

nomination that adopted a position on common grace in 1924, proceeded to tolerate the idea that Christ died for and God loves every man (1960s), adopted a document that exposes its low view of Scripture (1970s), defends and promotes theistic evolution (1980s), permits women to hold church office, is not sound in its view of homosexuality...and the list could go on. I am demonstrating a path of apostasy. The PRC strongly disagrees with the FRC and HRC on significant points, but it would be wrong to conclude that the FRC and HRC are moving in the direction of rejecting Reformed and biblical truth.

Second, they desire to sing Psalms in worship, almost exclusively! The very project of Psalter revision in which we are jointly engaged, and which the FRC initiated, indicates they have a high view of the worship of God. Not many denominations place such emphasis on Psalm singing in worship today. The FRC, HRC, and PRC do.

I find these two evidences weighty. May God preserve the PRC in our own love for the truth and in our desire to apply the doctrines of sovereign, particular grace and an unconditional covenant to all areas of doctrine and life. May He also keep us from supposing that one who does not agree with us on every point thus shows that he lacks a commitment to be faithful to Scripture.

Rev. Doug Kuiper ☞

■ 1953: a Pruning?

I always look forward to receiving the next *Standard Bearer* in the mail. When I received the March 1, 2017 issue, and read “Trivia Answer” on page 263, I became upset.

The author quoted that only four congregations of the eleven that were in Classis West in 1951 remain today, “as God used the history of 1953 to powerfully prune this portion of His vineyard.” In John 15:1 and 6 we read, in part, that every branch that does not bear fruit is destined for the burn pile (destined for hell). In 1953, the majority of Protestant Reformed members did not go along with the Hoeksema faction. So now, are we all destined for hell?

I am looking forward to seeing the author print a public apology for such a rash statement.

Sincerely,
Herman VanderVos
Bozeman, MT

Response

I am glad to hear from a reader in Montana and I am pleased he wrote with his concern. I have often said it is hard to have too much communication. Often the opposite is the case and there is too little.

The reader takes issue with the sentence “Only four of the 11 (churches in Classis West in 1951) exist today, as God used the history of 1953 to powerfully prune this portion of His vineyard.”

When I used the word “prune,” my attention was focused on the act of removing..., God removing seven of 11 churches from Classis West as a pruner removes parts of a plant.

The reader looked at the action of pruning in the light of the familiar passage of John 15, and focused on the fact that individuals who do not bear fruit are taken away by the Father, the husbandman. He correctly states that these individuals are destined for hell. And I certainly understand his natural progression from pruning to discarded branches.

The reader then states that “in 1953 the majority of Protestant Reformed members did not go along with the Hoeksema faction.” Because of my statement about pruning, he appears to conclude that I believe God has

pruned these individuals when he asks if they are all going to hell.

I see the reader’s concern.

To clarify, I do not maintain that all those who “did not go along with the Hoeksema faction” are destined for hell, nor do the Protestant Reformed Churches teach that. God alone is the judge of each heart.

Due to the fact that my comment could be taken to state something I did not intend to, I believe it would have been better to simply say “God used the history of 1953 to greatly reduce the number of congregations in Classis West.” That is what I meant to say, after all. And hindsight is pretty good..., just leave the vineyard out of it.

I am sorry for contributing to the misunderstanding. No accusation was intended. Thanks again to the reader for taking the initiative to write with his concern. It has convinced me to be more careful in the future. To the brother in Montana..., please keep reading the *Standard Bearer*. We value you as a reader.

And yes (sigh), I grow grapevines. And yes, they are due to be pruned in April.

Perry Van Egdom 

ALL AROUND US

REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN

Evangelicals and President Trump

Introduction

In 2016, many Christians, and especially many Evangelicals, voted for Donald Trump. Of course, the *SB* does not make political endorsements, and it would be out of place for me, a non-American writer resident in Ireland, to write either in favor of or against Donald Trump’s presidency. It is not difficult to see why many Christians

voted for Trump, for perhaps the alternative was too horrifying.

The last U.S. administration aggressively pushed an agenda of abortion, LGBT rights, and crucially, threatened religious freedom. Hillary Clinton promised more of the same. In a speech before the Human Rights Campaign (a LGBT advocacy group) in September 2016, Senator Tim Kaine, Mrs. Clinton’s running mate, promised that, if elected, Mrs. Clinton would work to pass the “federal equality act,” gushed about “marriage equality” and even said about his own (Roman Catholic) church’s teachings, “I think that’s gonna change.... Who am I to challenge God for the beautiful diversity of the

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human family?”¹ On abortion, Mrs. Clinton herself said, “Deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs, and structural biases [against abortion] have to be changed”² and, “The unborn person does not have constitutional rights”³ (Her use of the word “person” was a gaffe for which she was criticized by her left-wing followers. Abortion enthusiasts must perpetuate the myth that unborn children are not persons). “The only people whom I would ever appoint to the Supreme Court are people who believe that *Roe v. Wade* is settled law,” she promised.

Given those facts about Hillary Clinton, it is little wonder that the prospect of a Clinton presidency terrified many Christians.

Candidate Trump’s Meeting with the Evangelical Base

Several months before Clinton labelled “half” of Mr. Trump’s supporters “a basket of deplorables” (at a LGBT campaign event in New York City), Mr. Trump met with Evangelical leaders in Trump Tower.⁴ It is clear what the presidential candidate promised the Evangelicals in exchange for their political support—a protection of their religious liberty, the abolition of the Johnson amendment (a provision in the U.S. tax code that prohibits non-profit organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates), protection for Israel, protection for second amendment rights, and most importantly, conservative, pro-life judges.

None of that is particularly troubling. It is good and sensible for Christians to meet with a political candidate and petition him or her to protect their religious liberties. (Mrs. Clinton hobnobbed with the elite in California and New York, while Mr. Trump listened to the concerns of

Evangelicals). What is troubling is the attitude of these men toward Mr. Trump himself.

How (Some Leading) Evangelicals Behave toward President Trump

At the meeting, Franklin Graham set the tone:

Some of the individuals are our patriarchs: Abraham, great man of faith, but he lied. Moses led his people out of bondage, but he disobeyed God. David committed adultery and then he committed murder. The Apostles turned their back on the Lord Jesus Christ in his greatest hour of need, they turned their backs and they ran. Peter denied him three times. All of this to say, there is none of us perfect.

What Graham says is correct, but it is his implication that is troubling. Because these men were sinners, it is acceptable to overlook Mr. Trump’s sins. Now, Mr. Trump’s sins are not necessarily disqualifying for the presidency, and these men were not interviewing him to be a pastor. Nevertheless, Mr. Trump personally needs to be called to repentance. Abraham, Moses, David, and Peter repented!

Mike Huckabee continued the flattery: “The relationship that you have with your family, the relationship and bond that you have with your adult children, is one of the most admirable I’ve ever seen from any father with children.... It was one of the reasons that I have had no hesitation endorsing you.” (The fact that Mr. Trump is on his *third* marriage was not mentioned). Candidate Trump responded, “I’ve been a Christian and I love Christianity. And the evangelicals have been so incredibly supportive.... They really get me, they understand me, and it’s an amazing group.”

No one in the room contradicted him—“Sir, you are not a Christian. We appreciate you want our support, and we appreciate some of your policies, but you are not a Christian. You do not *live* like a Christian. You might be presidential material, but you need to repent.”

The “Christians” at Trump’s Inauguration

When Mr. Trump defeated Mrs. Clinton, Franklin Graham declared that the people had wanted someone in the White House “who believed in God, and was willing to listen to God’s voice.” Does an impenitent adulterer *re-*

¹ Senator Tim Kaine delivers the keynote address at the 2016 HRC National Dinner, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4UeXY_w57E.

² Hillary Clinton’s Keynote Address at the 2015 “Women in the World Summit,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVTiAJ1e9SM>.

³ Interview with MSNBC on April 3, 2016.

⁴ Transcript: Donald Trump’s Closed-Door Meeting with Evangelical Leaders, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/transcript-donald-trumps-closed-door-meeting-with-evangelical-leaders-195810824.html>. Around the same time, Mr. Trump’s campaign website announced the formation of an “Evangelical Executive Advisory Board,” <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/trump-campaign-announces-evangelical-executive-advisory-board>.

ally listen to God's voice? "I believe in this election God's hand was in it," he remarked.⁵ Graham even claimed that "God turned up" on election day to defeat the secularist agenda of Mrs. Clinton. If Graham, an Arminian, meant that God is sovereign over leaders, he is correct. However, his statement was met with ridicule and disbelief from the world's media. God was also sovereign in 2008 and 2012 when Barack Obama was elected—did God not "turn up" then? At the inauguration, Graham assured the president, "Mr. President, in the Bible rain is a sign of God's blessing, and it started to rain, Mr. President, when you came to the platform." By such foolish remarks, Graham makes a laughing stock of Christianity and does a disservice to the president. By telling him that God's blessing is upon him, he gives him no reason to repent. Does God *bless* impenitent adulterers? Does not God send rain on the just *and the unjust* alike (Matt. 5:45)?

Another enthusiastic supporter of President Trump is Dr. Robert Jeffress, who gave an inauguration address, "When God Chooses a Leader."⁶ In that address, Jeffress referred to Nehemiah, whom he dared to compare to President Trump: "The man God chose was neither a politician nor a priest. Instead, God chose a builder." Actually, as the king's cupbearer, Nehemiah *was* a politician, or in modern terms, a high-ranking civil servant. He was not a real estate developer or a builder by trade. The closest that Jeffress came to mentioning repentance was to declare, "The good news is that the same God who empowered Nehemiah nearly 2,500 years ago is available to every one of us today who is willing to humble himself and ask for His help." He did not call on President Trump to humble himself and repent of his sins.

Most controversial of all, however, was the presence of Paula White and Bishop Wayne T. Jackson, proponents of the heretical prosperity gospel. "Donald Trump is an example of someone who has been blessed by God," Jackson told the *Conservative Chronicle*. "Look at his homes, businesses, his wife and his jet. You don't get

those things unless you have the favor of God."⁷ Actually, you *do* get those things without the favor of God. Asaph learned that in Psalm 73. Solomon understood that in Proverbs 3:33. Paula White (also on her third marriage) is called Mr. Trump's "spiritual advisor."⁸ In the inaugural prayer, she asked God (among other things) for "the compassion to yield to our better angels." Representative of White's teachings is the need to sow a seed (into her ministry): "Now when God begins to speak to you, you get up and go to the phone, because God is telling you [to give] \$68.19 for the next 12 months, which happens to be \$818—Deuteronomy 8:18 says that God will give you the power to get wealth."⁹ (White should read I Tim. 2:12 and II Pet. 2:3). In an interview to the *Christian Post* (July 2016), White stated, "I can tell you with confidence that I have heard Mr. Trump verbally acknowledge his faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins through prayer, and I absolutely believe he is a Christian who is growing like the rest of us. I know that from many personal conversations."¹⁰ That remark shows both the shallowness of White's theology and the spuriousness of Mr. Trump's conversion. Even James Dobson of "Focus on the Family" opined,

Only the Lord knows the condition of a person's heart. I can only tell you what I've heard. First, Trump appears to be tender to things of the Spirit. I also hear that Paula White has known Trump for years and that she person-

⁵ The *Christian Post*, "Franklin Graham: Donald Trump Is the Answer to People's Prayers for a President Willing to Listen to God's Voice," <http://www.christianpost.com/news/franklin-graham-trump-answer-prayer-president-willing-listen-god-voice>.

⁶ First Baptist Dallas Church Blog, "When God Chooses a Leader," <http://www.firstdallas.org/blog/when-god-chooses-a-leader-dr-jeffress-inauguration-day-message>.

⁷ The *Business Standard News*, "Detroit Pastor Wayne T. Jackson Says Trump's Wealth Is A Sign of God's Blessing," <http://bizstandardnews.com/2016/09/24/detroit-pastor-wayne-t-jackson-says-trumps-wealth-is-sign-of-gods-blessing>.

⁸ "Business mogul Donald Trump, supermodel Tyra Banks, and the late superstar Michael Jackson called faith teacher Paula White their personal pastor" (Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 236-237).

⁹ Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis: 21st Century* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009), p. 73. In 2015, Paula White joined several leading figures of the prosperity movement *in praying over* Mr. Trump. Kenneth Copeland thanked God that Trump is an "obedient man." Another man spoke God's blessing over him. And Paula White "secured him by the blood of Jesus" and applied Isaiah 54:17 to him, an egregious mockery of the Word of God! (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQ18exdhR6>).

¹⁰ *Christian Post*, "Paula White on Donald Trump's Christian Faith (Exclusive Interview)," <http://www.christianpost.com/news/paula-white-on-donald-trumps-christian-faith-exclusive-interview>.

ally led him to Christ. Do I know that for sure? No. Do I know the details of that alleged conversion? I can't say that I do.... If anything, this man is a baby Christian who doesn't have a clue about how believers think, talk and act. All I can tell you is that we have only two choices, Hillary or Donald. Hillary scares me to death.¹¹

This is the typical "sinner's prayer" approach to evangelism—ask Jesus into your heart and all is forgiven, *even if there is no repentance from sin*. Indeed, Pres. Trump is on public record as saying that he does not need to ask God for forgiveness. This is troubling because it brings the prosperity gospel into the mainstream by giving it the legitimacy that it does not deserve.


Conclusion

Pres. Trump may have some good policies. He may

¹¹ Cited in the "Pulpit and Pen" blog, "James Dobson Says False Teacher, Paula White, Led Donald Trump To Christ" <http://pulpitandpen.org/2016/06/29/james-dobson-says-false-teacher-paula-white-led-donald-trump-to-christ>.

even keep his election promises. Time will tell. But will the church retain her credibility when, after four or eight years of "hitching her wagon" to Pres. Trump (for the sake of fleeting political influence), she seeks to fulfill her calling to preach the Word of God?

My concern is for the credibility of the church and the consistency of her witness. When Pres. Trump's sins, which are so obvious that even the world notices them, are overlooked, where is the credibility of the church when she (rightly) speaks out against the corruption of marriage?

Our calling as Christians is clear: we pray for our leaders. Pres. Trump is not a pastor—he is not even a Christian. Nor is it necessary that the U.S. president be a Christian. Whether any president is a Christian or not, we Christians have the responsibility to submit to, pray for, and respect our leaders (Rom. 13:1; I Tim. 2:1-2; Tit. 3:1-2; I Pet. 2:13-17). That was true of the last administration, and that is still true of Pres. Trump and his administration. 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

MR. DON DOEZEMA

Upon This Rock (28)

Robbing Christ of His Honor (20)

The saints of old were able to 'see' the coming of Christ. Jesus Himself said as much when He testified to the Jews that "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he *saw* it and was glad" (John 8:56). Nevertheless, in a very real sense they did *not* see. As Jesus said to His disciples, "For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have *desired* to see those things which ye see, and have *not* seen them; and to *hear* those things which ye hear, and have *not* heard them" (Luke 10:23-24).

There are, as we saw last time, "*degrees* of seeing Christ"—which was Calvin's explanation for what would

otherwise appear to be conflict between those two assertions of our Lord.

That helps. That is, it helps, in our consideration of the patriarchs' comprehension of the meaning of the shadows by which they were enshrouded in their day, to remember that we are not dealing with an all-or-nothing proposition. Did the saints of old *understand* the types? To be sure, they *did*. But how *well*? That is the only, and the intriguing, question.

Helpful, too, is what has been said *about* those degrees—that is, in *explanation* of the difference between the 'seeing' of the prophets and kings on the one hand, and of ours on the other. Calvin, for example, devotes the whole of Book 2 of his *Institutes* to "The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel."

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Previous article in this series: January 15, 2017, p. 177.

Seventeen chapters. No fewer than 289 pages. Fascinating stuff. Well worth your while to study. More than a little helpful.

But what I have found, for myself, to be even more so, is to examine how the differences play out in the lives of the people involved. To study what Ophoff wrote in those old SB articles on, for example, the life and work of Moses. And then to compare *that* with what we read of the ministry of the *last* of the prophets of the old dispensation, John the Baptist. Already, in this series of articles, we have seen some of the insights of the king/prophet David, and we considered the difficulty of Jesus' disciples in comprehending the fulfilling of the types as it unfolded before their very eyes. Before leaving this series I would like still to look briefly at Moses. And at John the Baptist.

First, though, a couple of quotes (emphasis added) from Book 2 of the *Institutes*, for Calvin's perspective of the concepts involved in the difference between the knowledge of Christ as first disclosed to the fathers in the *types* on the one hand, and then that to us in the *gospel* on the other.

It was fitting that, before the son of righteousness had arisen, there should be no great and shining revelation, no clear understanding. The Lord, therefore, so *meted out* the light of his Word to them that they *saw it* [the realities in Christ] *afar off* and *darkly*.... What did the Law [that is, the *form of religion* handed down by God through Moses] and the Prophets teach the men of their own time? They gave a *foretaste* of that wisdom which was one day to be clearly disclosed, and pointed to it *twinkling afar off*. But when Christ could be pointed out *with the finger*, the Kingdom of God was opened. [Think old Simeon, with the baby Jesus in his arms: "...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God."] In *him* have been revealed "all the treasures of wisdom and understanding" (Col. 2:3), whereby we attain almost to the inmost sanctuary of heaven.



Not that the teaching of these things [the types and shadows] was useless to the ancient people or without value for the prophets themselves, but because they did not *come to possess* that treasure which God has transmitted to us by their hand! For today the grace of which they *bore witness is put before our eyes*. They had but a *slight taste of it*; we can *more richly enjoy it*.... But,

by comparing their lot with ours, he [Peter, in I Pet. 1:12] teaches that those mysteries which they but *glimpsed in shadowed outline* are *manifest to us*.

Calvin's insights in this regard reappear whenever applicable in his commentaries. Take, for example, his comments on Romans 16:25-26, where Paul identifies the gospel as the preaching concerning Jesus Christ, which, he says, is the revelation, at last, of the "mystery which was kept secret since the world began." Writes Calvin:

Although the prophets had formerly taught *all that Christ and the apostles have explained*!, yet they taught with so much obscurity, when compared with the shining clarity of the light of the Gospel, that we need not be surprised if those things which are now revealed are said to have been *hidden*.... Only when God appeared to His ancient people face to face through His only begotten Son, were the shadows dispersed and the treasures of heavenly wisdom finally *revealed*.

As we have seen before, that dispensing of the shadows was not all of a sudden. Hardly did John the Baptist accomplish it by pointing his hearers, with his finger, to "the Lamb of God." John, in fact, as the last of the prophets of the old dispensation, remained himself very much enshrouded by those shadows.

But the Daystar, the bright and morning Star, had at last appeared. In fact, the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2) had peaked, as it were, over the horizon. And the darkness was being dispelled, by degrees. The types were beginning to touch the Antitype. John saw it. Which privilege made of him the 'greatest' of the prophets of the day of shadows (cf. Matt. 11:11).

Not, however, was this 'touching' visible to the naked eye. John 'saw' it the only way it can ever be seen, namely, by *revelation*.

So it was with old Simeon. Simeon, you will remember, was one of the relatively few in Israel who longed still for the "consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). O, yes, "the *Messiah* was spoken of on every lip" (Calvin). But not the "consolation of Israel" for which Simeon hoped. And it was "revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (v. 26). See Him how? With the physical eye, surely. That was the promise. And that was what Simeon must have had in mind when he exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for

mine eyes have *seen*...” (vv. 29-30). And he could have added: “...and my physical arms have *held*.” Abraham, too, had ‘seen’ Christ. But only in his *mind*’s eye. He had Him in his *heart*. By *faith*. Simeon now is privileged to see with his own eyes the *reality*, the *fulfillment* of 4,000 years of prophecy. That was the object of his hope. And that’s what the Lord gave him.

But there was more. As Calvin put it: “From this canticle [the ‘song’ of Simeon, as it begins in verses 29 and 30] it is plain that Simeon beheld the Son of God with eyes other than the eyes of flesh.” Though seeing “with the eyes of flesh” was in fact what had been promised, it was not with *those* eyes that he beheld...the *Son of God*. For *that*, Simeon, and then Anna also, had to be given ‘vision’ of another sort. Eyes of flesh would have seen nothing beyond the commonality of this scene in the temple court. Nothing there to distinguish *this* couple and *this* infant from any of the other young parents who may have likewise come to “present [their child] to the Lord” (v. 22) at the temple on the fortieth day of his young life. When the priest on duty that day received the required offering at the hand of Joseph and Mary, he was oblivious to the incredible reality that he was presiding, in this instance, over the ‘redemption’ (cf. Ex. 13:11-15)... of the Redeemer!

Simeon and Anna had other eyes. On seeing Jesus, probably still in Simeon’s arms, Anna “gave thanks likewise unto the Lord” and then “spake of him [this *little baby*] to all them that looked for *redemption* in Jerusalem” (v. 38). And Simeon: “...mine eyes,” he said, “have seen thy *salvation*” (v. 30).

Evidence that is, already, that Simeon saw with eyes “other than the eyes of flesh.” But Simeon did not stop there. The salvation he saw, he says, is that “which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (vv. 31-32). A salvation that would be “the glory of thy people Israel”—ah yes, *that* was to be expected; that was the Messiah that was “spoken of on every lip,” a restoration of the happy days under the reigns of David and Solomon. But “a light to lighten the *Gentiles*”? *That* was something different. Simeon knew the *Scriptures*. That is, he grasped prophecy that remained ‘dark’ in his day because it conflicted with the prevailing mentality. And Simeon did not stop there.

What Simeon had already said was enough to make Joseph and Mary “marvel” (v. 33). What he went on to say must have *startled* them.

“This child,” Simeon said, “is set for....” *Is set for*. That is, He is *divinely ordained to*.... To what? Old Simeon had already spoken to that. *Salvation*. For *all* people. A *light*. *Glory*. Very much in keeping with what Mary had heard from the angel Gabriel: “The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33). And in keeping with what Joseph and Mary together must have heard from the shepherds: “Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people...a Savior...on earth peace, good will toward men” (2:10-14). But now, from Simeon, in what must have seemed to be sharp contrast, there is *this*: “Behold, this child is set for the *fall* and the *rising* again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be *spoken against*;... that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (2:34-35). The long-awaited *Messiah*? Not welcomed—with open arms? By *everyone*? Who would ever have anticipated *that*?

Well, Isaiah, for one. Just as that prophet had foretold that the Messiah would be “a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my salvation unto the ends of the earth” (49:6), so also did he say concerning Him that “he shall be...for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken” (8:14, 15); and, in chapter 53: “He is despised and rejected of men” (v. 3).

Clearly, by the enlightening power of “the Holy Ghost [who] was upon him” (Luke 2:25), Simeon apprehended the spiritual promises of the Old Testament Scriptures ahead of his time, as it were. When Jesus would later show Himself to be exactly what Simeon foretold, His disciples were baffled by His total lack of concern for the growing animosity of the leaders of the Jews. Jesus seemed, in fact, to be deliberately *provoking* them—rather than trying tactfully to gain from them the support they were convinced He needed for the establishment of the kingdom of their still vain imagination. “Ye hypocrites,” Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people


draweth nigh unto me with their *mouth*, and honoreth me with their *lips*; but their *heart* is far from me" (Matt. 15:7-8). Indeed, Jesus was "set" for the "fall" of many in Israel, a sign that would be "spoken against," the occasion for the "thoughts of many hearts [to] be revealed." Thus, writes Calvin, Christ "strips hypocrisy bare. So it is right to assign Him this role of driving the secrets of the heart out into the open." Exactly as Simeon had foretold. But the disciples? "Knowest thou," they ask of Jesus in their bewilderment, "that the Pharisees were *offended*, after they heard this saying?" "Let them alone," Jesus had to tell them, "they be blind leaders of the blind" (15:12-14).

Then one more word, of Simeon, specifically for Mary.

"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35).

Words, those were, that Mary would undoubtedly recall when some 33 years later she stood devastated at the foot of her son's *cross*.

Was Simeon, do you suppose, anticipating *that* too? The *cross*? Here, I think, the answer must be an emphatic no. The "mystery" of which Paul spoke in Romans 15:25, the mystery kept secret since the world began, the mystery, that is, of the *incarnation*, and of the *death*, of the *Son of God*, remained as mysterious as ever.

And we still have not touched on Moses or John the Baptist. Next time, the latter. 

MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS

REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

Psalter Revision: Governing Principles (3) Text (cont.)

My last article explained two principles that the interdenominational Psalter revision committee is using to evaluate the text, or lyrics, of the Psalter. Those two principles are *completeness* ("Is all of the scriptural Psalm represented in the Psalter? Is there one Psalter that captures the whole Psalm?") and *faithfulness* ("Is the text faithful to Scripture? Is it theologically sound? Is it the language of Scripture? Are all things included that have been omitted in the past? To what degree is it a paraphrase or does it include unnecessary poetic license?").

Five more principles govern the work of the committee regarding the text of the Psalter. Summarized, they are "3: Valuable overlaps. 4: Poetic value. 5: Archaisms. 6: Effective meter and rhyme. 7: Appropriate Christian language."

In a moment, I will quote them in full and explain them.

"Lord" or "LORD"?

One point that fits under "text" but does not fit clearly under any of the seven governing principles regards our Psalter's versification of the Hebrew name for God, "Jehovah."

Many Bible versions—among them the KJV, NKJV, RSV, NIV, and ESV—translate this word as "LORD" with all capitals. This distinguishes it from the Hebrew word "Adonai," which means lord or master and, when referring to God, is translated "Lord."

Those who compiled our current version of the Psalter had no qualms about using "Jehovah"; it occurs over 200 times in the first 413 Psalter numbers. But, because not every Hebrew word gets worked into English poetry, at times the name is not versified at all. Other times, because the meter and rhyme require it, the word is translated "Lord." You find no instance of "LORD" in our Psalter.

The committee has decided to propose spelling "Lord" as "LORD" in those instances in which the Hebrew has "Jehovah." When the Hebrew word is "Adonai," or when the name "Lord" is not found in the original language but is supplied for the sake of meter and rhyme, we will use "Lord." This will help us sing with understanding!

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

Previous article in this series: February 15, 2017, p. 279.

The Last Five Principles Regarding Text

I quote again from the original (not supplemental) report of the interdenominational committee to the 2016 Synods of the FRCNA, HRC, and PRCA. This quote comes from paragraph 4, “The Principles,” and from point a, “Text.”¹

- 3) Is there unnecessary overlap between the Psalters, and how the Psalm is represented? It was suggested that the more commonly sung psalms should have more Psalter renditions, including less comprehensive ones.
- 4) Are the lyrics good poetry and do they demonstrate effective use of language? While we strive for faithful text, some license and freedom must be allowed so that the versifications are not rigid, and lists of names and nations are not necessarily included, etc.
- 5) Are there any archaic or unfamiliar words that should be replaced? [It was noted that all three Synods agreed that all pronoun references to the Lord be retained in their archaic form. This would also demand some archaic grammatical structures. Archaic language may also be retained if it is central to the poetry.]
- 6) Are the meters and rhymes effective?
- 7) Does the Psalter promote/retain Christian language, so that appropriate NT idioms in the poetry are maintained?

The general accuracy of the text must be considered in relation to what is already familiar and will be revised and compared with other versions only if the Psalter is seen as inaccurate.

Before I explain these principles, you should know that our Psalter is now 105 years old. The musical tunes used in it are usually much older. However, the lyrics of Psalters 1-413 were versified from 1895 on, and the final version approved in 1909, specifically for use in the Psalter.² I will be returning to this point twice in what follows.

¹ In the PRC *Acts of Synod 2016 and Yearbook*, this is found on pages 167-168.

² An essay by Rev. J. C. K. Milligan contains some brief comments about the history of the versification of the Psalms in our current Psalter. See his chapter “Psalm Versification—the Uniform Metrical Psalter,” pages 428-435 in *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: The United Presbyterian Board of Publication), 1907. A free, scanned PDF file of this book is available from Google Books. The interested reader might also read an article by Rev. Ray Lanning, “The Songs of Zion: An Appreciation of *The Psalter* of 1912,” *Standard Bearer*, vol. 69, no. 17 (June, 1993): 402.

Valuable overlaps

Here the committee is looking for at least two things. First, when a Psalm is versified more than once in our Psalter, is each different versification helpful? Second, when a later Psalter number has exactly the same lyrics as an earlier one, and thus is essentially a second tune (cf., 41 and 42, 65 and 68, 218 and 219, 355 and 356), is the duplication valuable?

Psalter numbers 60-68 are nine different numbers based on Psalm 25. It is helpful to look at these as an illustration of what I am saying, because from these numbers we can see both points.

Those who had been appointed to set the Psalms to verse for use in our Psalter made two different, complete versifications of the 22 verses of Psalm 25. The first had 17 “stanzas,” and is set to music in Psalters 60-63. The second had 14 “stanzas,” set to music in Psalters 64-66. The bracketed references to “stanzas” in the bottom, right-hand corner of our Psalter selections refer to these versifications of the Psalm.

So, do both of these different versifications have value? Should we have two renditions of Psalm 25? In the case of most Psalms, if not all, the committee sees value in having two different renditions of the same Psalm; at times one rendition brings out an aspect of the Psalm that the other does not. In fact, we are proposing a number of new selections because we desire a second rendition of most Psalms, and often our Psalter has only one rendition of some Psalms. But here is the issue for now: we still evaluate the different versifications to judge whether both are a valuable contribution to our Psalter.

The second point regards Psalter numbers that take lyrics already found in a previous Psalter number, and put the same lyrics to a different tune. I am not referring to those instances in which our Psalter clearly has two tunes to the *same* number. I am referring to instances in which two *different* Psalter numbers have the same lyrics. For instance, the lyrics of both Psalters 67 and 68 are already found in Psalters 64-66. Is this *valuable* overlap? The committee faces this on a case-by-case basis, looking also at the different tunes and how often our churches sing them.³

³ As to “how often,” we have objective statistics from our churches. In addition to several “data points” from worship services of some PRCs and HRCs in other years, we have gathered a list of every Psalter number sung in every PRC worship service in 2015.

At the moment, the committee is of the opinion that we do not need both Psalters 65 and 68, or 218 and 219. We expect to propose eliminating 65 and 219. The result will be that we have two less tunes in our Psalter, but no lyrics will be lost.

How about Psalter 42? Because its lyrics are found in Psalter 41, consistency might lead us to get rid of it. But if our congregations sing it regularly, perhaps it would be wiser to keep it.

Poetic value, and effective meter and rhyme

Principle 6 (effective meter and rhyme) might seem to be the same as principle 4 (poetic value). In fact, the principle regarding poetic value is broader than that regarding effective meter and rhyme; the effective meter and rhyme is one specific application of poetic value. But these two principles are close enough in idea that I treat them both here.

Reality is that those who compiled our current Psalter wanted a quality product, so they used good English versifications. I am using the word “good” now in reference to the poetry. Whether the poetry is faithful to Scripture falls under Principle 2; but the poetry of our Psalter numbers is always good English poetry in every respect. I have not been able to find a single instance to this point in which the committee judges a Psalter number to be of inferior poetic value.

When we evaluate different versifications with a view to including them in the Psalter, we look for ones that also have good poetic value. I hope to introduce you to some of these after I finish surveying the principles that guide us in our work.

Archaisms

Because our Psalter is over a century old, no one should be surprised to find in it some words that are archaic. Not the only instance of this is our Psalter’s use of the Old English “thee/thou/thy” in the singular both in reference to God as well as to men and places, and its use of “ye” (plural) with reference to humans.

Addressing archaisms, then, the committee is looking at three main areas.

First, if we can replace an archaic word with a word or words that convey the same idea *while not destroying the meter and rhyme*, we stand ready to propose doing

so. For example, Psalter 48 stanza 2 reads: “The suff’ring one He has not spurned Who unto Him for succor turned.” No harm is done to rhyme or meter by replacing “succor” with “help has,” so that we sing “Who unto Him for help has turned.”

Second, we intend to keep all uses of “Thee/Thou/Thy” with reference to God, but stand ready to change them, as well as the word “ye,” when they refer to people or places. Psalter 4 contains two examples. In stanza 4 we sing “Be wise, ye rulers of the earth,” and in stanza 5, “Delay not, lest his anger rise, and ye should perish in your way.” No harm is done to change the two instances of “ye” to “you.” More examples can be found in Psalter 223. In Psalters 237-239, pronouns referring to the church (“Zion”) include “thy” and “thee.” We are proposing changing them to “your” and “you”—though this gets tricky, because in each of those numbers “thee” concludes a lyrical line, and rhymes with “see” or “be” or “agree.” We are not interested in destroying the rhyme; in fact, to maintain it is one of our principles. How this matter will finally be resolved remains to be determined.

Third, verbs such as “hath” and “hast” and “didst” are archaic, and we are considering fixing them. We realize that “Thou have” in place of “Thou hast” is an awkward attempt to combine Old English (“Thou”) and modern English (“have”), so not every such verb will be changed. However, in a number of places the change will work well. What does not work as well with “Thou” will work better with “Who.” See Psalter 206 for instance: “And Thou Who didst establish it....” “Who did” is grammatically acceptable.

Appropriate Christian language


The Psalms were written in the Old Testament era of types and shadows. We sing them in the New Testament era, enjoying realities to which the pictures pointed. At times the versifications found in our Psalter use the language of the New Testament.

One example might be in the Messianic Psalms. Israel of old knew that the Messiah, or Christ, was coming. But Israel did not know Him by His name “Jesus.” Yet the word “Jesus” appears in the titles of seven Psalter numbers. Psalter 54 is an instance: “Jesus Our Shepherd.” Under the point of “appropriate Christian language,” the committee is evaluating whether the New Testament language is properly used.

Perhaps the example I just gave is not the best, because we are not proposing to use the current titles. Remember that we propose replacing them with the first line of the first stanza of each song, so we are not reviewing the titles.

But here are two other examples. Psalm 72 is a Messianic Psalm, and yet the Hebrew word “Messiah” is not used in it. Is our Psalter warranted for making us sing “Christ shall have dominion...” (Psalter 200)? The Psalms were written for Israel of the Old Testament. Is it appropriate for us to use the word “church” in place of “Israel,” as in Psalm 63:4, “Thy church, O God, do Thou redeem From all adversity”?

Generally, we are finding that the Psalter uses appropriate New Testament language when versifying the Psalms. In other words, it gets the typology right. Clearly, the answer to the two questions in the previous paragraph is “Yes.” But we are reviewing the Psalter with this in mind, to ensure it is always accurate. And we intend that any proposed additional selections would do the same.

Seven principles govern the committee in evaluating the text of the Psalter; five govern the committee in evaluating its format; and six govern us in evaluating the music itself. To this we turn next time. 

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD

Environmental Issues within the Creation

Various environmental issues are brought to our attention from time to time in news reports. Yet, these reports often leave us with more questions than answers. Are these environmental issues a hoax, or scientifically proven phenomena? Or perhaps, something in between? We are left to wonder, “Is there anything to be gained from looking into these issues?” I believe there is.

I see value in examining various environmental issues—not to determine the extent to which certain of them are caused by human pollution or not, nor to wade judiciously through all the politically motivated and media-biased information on the topics—but, chiefly, to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the creation, and thereby, of its Creator. And, therefore, we can:

a) Honor and praise the name of God as we observe this absolutely fascinating creation that He has made, with all its parts and processes, working as a cohesive unit by His Almighty power and wisdom;

b) Become better equipped faithfully to care for this creation as our understanding of it grows; and

c) Find comfort, despite the many feeble attempts of man to “fix” the creation or to “govern” it for his own ends, for we acknowledge the sovereign and all-wise control of God in His creation.

Also, it is good for us to be aware of and to be able to discuss that which is going on in the world around us. Let us, then, briefly consider two key environmental issues, global warming and acid rain, and then look more closely at how these two are connected.

Global Warming

One of the interesting aspects of research on this topic is that the “global warming” issue is not of recent origin. The February 24, 1895 (yes, that is correct—1895) the *New York Times* carried an article entitled “Prospects of another glacial period; Geologists think the world may be frozen up again.” In contrast, the July 1, 1950 *Saturday Evening Post* asked the question “Is the World Getting Warmer?” However, the *National Geographic Magazine* was suggesting in the early 1970s that a period of global cooling was to be expected. Interestingly, throughout the 1970s, the term “climate change,” rather than global cooling or global warming was uti-

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lized because it was not certain which of the competing environmental phenomenon would dominate. By the late 1980s the term “global warming”—referring to the effect of greenhouse gases on earth’s global temperature—was well entrenched in our vocabulary, while more recently the general trend in the scientific community is to utilize the broader term “climate change” to refer to a broader set of issues affecting earth’s climate or some of its various regions.

What the research history reveals is that global warming is highly complex. The complexity of the issue stems from a number of factors. It has been and continues to be difficult to predict what effect a particular factor will have on the climate. For example, how sensitive is the global temperature to carbon dioxide levels? In addition, there is the interaction of all the various factors that could have an effect on the global climate: man-made pollution, natural pollutants, and solar flares, to name but a few. Also, the influence of political agendas and media bias impact what information is presented on the various environmental issues. To understand to some degree why scientists would sometimes predict global warming while at other times global cooling, we must understand the “greenhouse effect.” In addition, it is helpful to be aware of some of the science connected to other environmental issues, such as acid rain, and how such an issue interplays with the global warming issue. With a better scientific understanding of the factors surrounding these environmental issues, we will be in a better position to discuss and evaluate them—because of how interconnected they all are. The knowledge of these interconnections will not surprise us, because we confess an Almighty God, whose sovereign hand guides and directs all things—including the inter-related, multifaceted creation, which is truly an organic unity.

Greenhouse Effect

It is important to realize that “greenhouse effect” is a term given to describe the natural phenomenon directed by God so that life can exist on this planet. God wisely governs what we call the “greenhouse effect,” so that the necessary heat is trapped below our atmosphere to keep us warm and to sustain life.

God provides a layer of gases that traps heat. The sun emits light in various forms—most notably ultra-

violet (UV), visible, and infrared (IR). As the sunlight approaches earth, some of it bounces off clouds and atmospheric gases, scattering back into space. Some of it causes the gases of the atmosphere to vibrate, thus generating heat in the atmosphere. But much of it passes through our atmosphere, giving us the light we need to see.

When this penetrating sunlight hits objects on earth, it causes the objects’ particles to vibrate—generating heat. This heat is radiated away from the object and, therefore, away from earth, in the form of IR radiation. As this radiation leaves earth it interacts with the atmospheric molecules. Some of these molecules are able to absorb the IR radiation—resulting in a warming of the atmosphere and, therefore, of earth. Some of the IR radiation even passes through the atmosphere and back into space.

The gases of the atmosphere that do most of the trapping of heat are: water (60%), carbon dioxide (26%), ozone (8%), methane (4.5%), and others (1.5%). These gases trap heat to give us the warmth and climate we need to live—without which earth’s surface temperature would be about 57 degrees Fahrenheit (F) colder.

As the concentration of atmospheric gases increases, the expectation is that more heat will be trapped. The “thickening” of the atmosphere is akin to putting another blanket on your bed. In addition, the *kinds* of gases in the atmosphere also influence how much heat is absorbed. Carbon dioxide, for example, is capable of absorbing much heat. For comparison purposes, Venus’ atmosphere is composed of approximately 96% carbon dioxide and has a surface temperature of 860 degrees (F), while earth’s atmosphere has only 0.04 % carbon dioxide and, consequently, a much cooler surface temperature. While it is true that Venus is closer to the sun than earth, the difference in distance plays only a small role in the temperature difference. The difference in temperature is primarily due to the thickness and make-up of their atmospheres.

It is important to note that many associate global warming with ozone depletion. The lack of ozone (due to its being destroyed by CFC molecules, as we investigated last year) in the atmosphere does not enhance the greenhouse effect or, consequently, cause global warming. In fact, an ozone hole should lead to global *cooling* rather than global warming. This is because ozone is particularly effective at absorbing IR radiation, which is radiated

off earth. With less ozone in the atmosphere, more IR radiation should be able to escape into space, preventing our planet from warming.

The debate regarding this environmental issue, in recent decades in particular, is whether or not man-made pollution is causing more heat to be trapped below the atmosphere—thus contributing to global *warming*; or whether man-made pollution is causing an opposite effect—contributing instead to global *cooling*. Perhaps the broader question is whether or not global heating or global cooling is a result of man-made pollution, or a normal result of numerous other “natural” factors, such as solar fluctuations and volcanic activity, or of both. Before we look any closer at these questions, let us briefly examine another environmental issue—acid rain.

Acid Rain

Acid rain forms when sulfur and/or nitrogen oxides are released into the atmosphere and react with water vapor. The burning of coal is the major contributor of sulfur oxide compounds into the air. This is because coal—primarily a carbon compound—contains particles of sulfur. As the coal burns, chemicals are released into the atmosphere. One of those chemicals is sulfur dioxide. Coal, particularly bituminous coal, has up to 4% sulfur by weight. As the coal burns, carbon combines with oxygen to form carbon dioxide, while the sulfur atoms combine with oxygen to form sulfur dioxide. These gases are released out of smokestacks into the air.

As the coal burns at very high temperatures, it causes a chemical reaction between the natural nitrogen and oxygen found in the air in the furnace, producing nitrogen oxides. This reaction occurs in the combustion chambers of coal-burning power plants. (A similar reaction occurs in automobile engines.) In addition, coal itself contains nitrogen, so that nitrogen oxides are also a natural by-product of the combustion of coal. The various forms of nitrogen oxides that can be formed, either from coal power plants or from automobile exhaust, are collectively called NO_x emissions.

The sulfur dioxide and NO_x emissions react with water in the atmosphere to form acid rain. Acid rain is precipitation (snow, sleet, fog, rain, etc.) that forms with a pH less than “normal” clean rain (pH of about 5.5).

Acid rain lowers the pH of soil and water. It damages the leaves of plants and trees, which over time can kill the vegetation. It reacts with important minerals in the soil, so that those minerals are dissolved—resulting in a less fertile soil. The leaching of certain minerals, including aluminum, from the soil can also result in an increase of these minerals appearing in stream and lake water, as the rain’s runoff finds its way to these waterways. Also, the pH of lake water can be lowered over time by the presence of acid rain. This change in pH, along with the increase in aluminum-ion concentration, has an effect on various forms of aquatic life and on the overall health of the lake. Interested readers can find more information online regarding the effect of acid rain on lakes—particularly on the lakes in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State, which receive acid rain deposits due to air pollutants released in the Midwest U.S. Readers may also recall that Lake Erie was once declared a “dead lake” due to the many industrial pollutants, including acid rain, that caused great harm to the lake.

Interrelated Processes

What should be abundantly clear is that there are real chemical processes in operation in the creation. These processes are no less important or less active than the chemical processes in our bodies. Few in society would deny the fact that the chemicals in an aspirin aid in the reduction of a fever or take away the edge of a throbbing headache. No less should one deny that chemical pollution has an effect on the creation. On a small scale, we recognize that pouring used motor oil into the soil of one’s garden will not serve the good of his plants and flowers. The salt one uses to melt the ice on the sidewalks/driveways eventually is shoveled onto the surrounding lawn, and the grass at the edge of the sidewalks and driveways is inevitably harmed by this. Similarly, the use of chemical pollutants on a larger scale—which in this case centers on the air pollution that plays a role in an increase in greenhouse gases and acid rain—has an impact on the larger ecosystems around the globe.

But this is only half the story. Global warming and acid rain may seem, at first glance, to be unrelated environmental issues. What we hope to emphasize next time is that the creation is an intricate and unified whole. When we understand that God’s creation is an organic

unity, with all the various parts harmoniously knit together, we will see that disturbing one aspect of the creation will have its effects on other parts of the creation. I will demonstrate that, although there are man-made pol-

lutants that adversely affect the creation, there are other “natural” calamities and processes that have tremendous impact on the environment as well. ☞

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Trivia Question

How did it come to be that the small town of Hull, IA (population about 2,500) is home to two PR churches? Answer later in this column.

Congregational Activities

At their meeting held in March the congregation of Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI voted to change the time of their second worship services from 6:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. beginning April 2.

The choir of Faith PRC presented their spring concert on March 26. Many attended this evening of praise to God! Psalter 259 comes to mind: “Sing to the Lord, sing His praise all ye peoples, New be your song as new honors ye pay; Sing of His majesty, bless Him forever, Show His salvation from day to day.”

Minister Activities

The Council of Doon, IA PRC presented to the congregation a new trio from which to call a third missionary to the Philippines. From the trio of Rev. A. Brummel, Rev. G. Eriks, and Rev. B. Huizinga that call was extended to Rev. Huizinga on March 19.

Zion PRC called Rev. C. Haak to be their first pastor. Southwest

PRC called Rev. S. Key, who also received First PRC-Holland’s call on March 19. On March 26, Rev. W. Langerak declined the call from Byron Center PRC to serve as home missionary. May the King of the church guide and direct these men to determine His will for them.

Senior Activities

Advance Notice: A senior retreat is planned for September 26-29, 2017 at beautiful Gull Lake Ministries in Michigan. The theme “Magnifying Christ in Life and Death” is taken from Philippians 1:20, 21. Speakers will be Rev. G. Eriks, Prof. D. Engelsma, and Rev. J. Slopsema. Registration is May 1-July 31.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA is organizing a lecture to be held August 1 and to be presented by Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary to the Philippines. In addition to the lecture, Rev. Kleyn will be giving a presentation on his missionary labors in the Philippines, D.V.

Mission Activities

Rev. Daniel Kleyn supplies this story:

In the process of helping Rev. Holstege get a phone line and DSL, I called PLDT to find out what services and speeds they offered.

They currently have a 3,000 peso plan that gives you speeds up to 15 MBPS. That sounded odd to me, specifically in relation to my memory of our current plan. So I checked, and my plan was a 4,000 peso plan with speeds up to 10 MBPS. So I was paying more and getting less. That prompted me to call them back and ask if I could switch to a new plan. Eventually got that to work. It involved “downgrading” (their word for it) and yet really it was an “upgrade” to a faster speed. I am paying less and getting more.

You may remember that each car in Manila is prohibited from driving on city streets one day a week, with the day determined by their license-plate number. The reason is to alleviate some of the traffic congestion. As it turns out, because both the Kleyn and Holstege vehicles are prohibited on Monday, they recently had to hire someone to drive them downtown to the immigration office for the Holstege’s visa processing. The Holsteiges had to sign papers and get their pictures and fingerprints taken. They finished in time to beat the rush hour, so the trip that took 2-1/2 hours in the morning took only an hour in the afternoon. Lots of adventures in the Philippines!

Rev. Kleyn traveled with a delegation of the Classis of the Protestant

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

Reformed Churches in the Philippines to the island of Leyte in late March to investigate the possibility of doing more mission work there. You may recall that the PRC of Bulacan has done past work in the city of Albura, Leyte, located on the western shore of the island with a population of about 50,000. A group called the "Protestant Reformed Fellowship" exists there.

Young People's Activities


The Young People's Easter Mass Meeting is scheduled to be held at Grace PRC on April 23 at 2 P.M. with a speech by Rev. R. VanOverloop. All young people are encouraged to attend for a time of fellowship and growth.

The YPS of Immanuel PRC, Lacombe, AB, Canada is selling Easter flowers and spring Mother's Day flowers as a fund raiser to help their members attend the convention or retreats. A variety of beautiful flowers are available.

Trivia Answers

Hull Protestant Reformed Church was organized in 1925, one of the original churches in Classis West. They worshiped in their new church building that still stands in the center of town at 1204 3rd Street. In 1953 the congregation lost possession of that building, but gained it back in 1964. In 1993 the congregation built a new church building on Hayes Avenue on the

west side of town; the old church building was sold to the Heritage Reformed congregation, which continues to worship there. Hull PRC grew larger in the late 90s, and in 2007 a daughter, Calvary PRC, was born. Calvary constructed a new church building and parsonage on the very east end of town. Since that time both congregations have continued to grow and their buildings are again beginning to fill. God has blessed these congregations in this small Midwest town. May He be praised for His covenant faithfulness!

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:3 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 10, 2016 at the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk

■ On May 9, the evening before Classis East, the BC PRC Council invites all past and current officebearers (including anyone desiring to serve in the future) to hear a timely speech regarding ungodly behavior that has found its way into God's church. Professor David J. Engelsma will speak on "Pastoral Treatment of Spousal (wife) Abuse in the PRC." The conference will be held at Byron Center PRC at 7 P.M. A time for Q & A, refreshments, and fellowship will follow. Anyone may send questions/comments confidentially to hkuiper44@msn.com, sid@1800lastbid.com, or directly to Prof. Engelsma at engelsma@prca.org. He will address them in his speech, the Q & A following, or within a week on our BCPRC website. This speech will not be live-streamed or recorded, so we hope you can attend.

Notice

■ The Board of Reformed Heritage Christian School is currently accepting applications for a full-time position. The faculty opening is for any combination of math, science, or language arts for junior high and high school for the 2017-18 school year. We are committed to teaching from a distinctively Reformed perspective. Our goal is to train covenant children to be servants of Christ in all areas of life. If you would like more information about our school, visit the website: www.refhcs.org. A cover letter and resume can be mailed to:

Reformed Heritage Christian School
700 N. Fletcher Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI. 49006

Attn: Mr. Dave Vander Meer Or email: dnjvm5@att.net.