

# *The Standard Bearer*

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • September 1, 2014

## CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Knowing the Scriptures from Childhood <b>REV. JAMES SLOPSEMA</b>	458
<i>Editorial</i>	Herman Hoeksema Reappraised (1) <b>REV. KENNETH KOOLE</b>	461
<i>Letters</i>	The Psalter <b>MRS. MARY BETH LUBBERS</b>	464
<i>Search the Scriptures</i>	Fleeing Covetousness in the Fear of God <b>REV. THOMAS MIERSMA</b>	465
<i>All Around Us</i>	Islamophobia <b>REV. MARTYN MC GEOWEN</b>	467
<i>Taking Heed to the Doctrine</i>	Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (10) <b>PROF. RONALD CAMMENG</b>	469
<i>Understanding the Times</i>	Understanding of the Times <b>MR. CAL KALSBECK</b>	472
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	Book Review <b>MR. JOSHUA HOEKSTRA</b>	475
<i>Activities</i>	News From Our Churches <b>MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER</b>	477

# Knowing the Scriptures from Childhood

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

II Timothy 3:15

Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood.

What a blessing!

May the same be said for all our children.

Timothy was an evangelist whom Paul had assigned to labor in the church of Ephesus. Paul wrote this second epistle to Timothy to instruct him in his work. Among other things, Paul was concerned with evil men and seducers, who would grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. How important, then, that Timothy continue in the Holy Scriptures that he had come to know even from childhood. He must teach and preach these Scriptures in Ephesus. He must also follow them in his own personal life. And he must do so because the

Holy Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

How important it is that all covenant children come to know the Holy Scriptures, even as Timothy had.

This knowledge will make them wise unto salvation.

There is no greater joy for a covenant parent than to see his children become wise unto salvation in the knowledge of Holy Scripture.

There is no greater calling for a parent than to give to their children the knowledge of Scripture with its great wisdom.

A very appropriate thought to consider as the school and catechism season is once more upon us.



Blessed meaning!

The Holy Scriptures Paul had in mind were the Old Testament Scriptures that were given by God to Israel. They were written by various men of God over the course of centuries. They consisted of 39 books. We ought not to overlook the fact that these books are called the Holy Scriptures. The word “scriptures” means

*The Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

#### Reprint and Online Posting Policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting or online posting of articles in the *Standard Bearer* by other publications, provided that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; that proper acknowledgment is made; and that a copy of the periodical or Internet location in which such reprint or posting appears is sent to the editorial office.

#### Editorial Policy

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

#### Editorial Office

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra  
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Wyoming, MI 49418  
dykstra@prca.org

#### Business Office

*Standard Bearer*  
Mr. Timothy Pipe  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137  
PH: 616-457-5970  
tim@rfpa.org

#### Church News Editor

Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 40th Ave  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
benwig@juno.com

#### United Kingdom Office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham  
27 Woodside Road  
Ballymena, BT42 4HX  
Northern Ireland  
alisongraham2006@hotmail.co.uk

#### Rep. of Ireland Office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown  
Apartment 10, Block D  
Ballycummin Village  
Limerick, Ireland

#### Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$35.00 elsewhere  
New eSubscription: \$21  
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$10.50.

#### Advertising Policy

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (e-mail: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)  
Website for PRC: [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org)

writings. That they are “holy” writings means that they are set apart from all other writings. They were set apart in that they were inspired by God. The men who wrote these books were guided by the very Spirit of God, so that every word is the word of God. And in these Holy Scriptures God revealed Himself to His people as the God of their salvation.

More Scriptures were to follow. The revelation of the Old Testament Scriptures was not complete, being only prophecies of greater things to come in Jesus Christ. With the coming of Christ and the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, the Holy Scriptures were completed with the 27 books of the New Testament.

In our day of apostasy it must be emphasized that these completed Scriptures are the full revelation of God for His church, giving us all that we need to know for our salvation. For that reason they are also the standard for all truth, the rule to determine both faith and practice.

Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood.

The word “child” means infant, and sometimes even fetus, so that the meaning is that Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from a very early age.

This is an amazing thing! Because the Scriptures are the revelation of God, they are an infinite deep. The greatest of theologians will confess that they have only scratched the surface. Yet those Scriptures are clear enough for a little child to understand. When a retired theologian of no small reputation was asked what was the most profound truth he had found in Scripture, he cited a song we teach to our children, “Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so.”

Timothy had come to know the Scriptures from infancy. Timothy came to know the Scriptures from his mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice (II Tim. 1:9). Perhaps this instruction was first with songs and simple Bible stories. But as Timothy became older it was by reading and instruction in both the home and the schools that the Jews maintained. Timothy was also instructed by the godly example of his mother and grandmother, who lived the Scriptures in their home.

The result was that by the time he was a young man Timothy was well versed in Holy Scripture.

Many reading this meditation have also known the Holy Scriptures from childhood through the faithful in-

struction of the home, church, and Christian school. This is a great blessing of the covenant, especially in light of the fact that the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Jesus Christ.



Blessed result!

Wise unto salvation!

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. It presupposes that one knows reality. Wisdom is to act according to reality so that one prospers. Foolishness is to ignore or even act contrary to obvious reality so that one fails.

There is a natural wisdom that is found even in fallen man, a wisdom attributable to the remnants of natural light that man retains after the fall. Fallen man is able to discern many realities in the natural world and to act according to them, so that he prospers in earthly things.

But the wisdom attained from Scripture is much higher. It is a wisdom that reaches to the spiritual and eternal realities; and it is found only in Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures deal with the great reality of God and how to prosper under God’s blessing. There is no greater reality than that. To have the whole world but to perish under God’s wrath as a sinner is to have nothing. In His inspired Scriptures God reveals to us our sins and the curse due to us for them. He makes known the salvation He has provided for His own in Jesus Christ. He shows the way to attain that salvation—faith in Jesus Christ. And He demonstrates how to live that salvation so that we enjoy the fellowship of God.

Wisdom is to act according to these spiritual realities, so that you lay hold of the salvation God has provided in Jesus Christ and live that salvation in the fellowship of God.

Not only do the Scriptures teach this great wisdom, they are also able to make one wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Many who are taught the wisdom of Scripture are not made wise by that instruction. The great wisdom of God is laid before them, but they reject it to live in the foolishness of sin without Jesus Christ. This is because of their unbelief. Unbelief makes one spiritually blind to the wisdom of God. Unbelief makes one view the wisdom of God to be foolishness. This is true of all men by nature, including our covenant children.

But God uses the wisdom of Scripture to make fools wise unto salvation.

The key to becoming wise unto salvation is faith in Jesus Christ. Faith gives one the spiritual eyes to see the great spiritual realities set forth in Holy Scripture. Faith also leads one to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior, so that one is able to live according to the eternal realities of Scripture and to find in Jesus Christ the friendship and fellowship of the ever blessed God. The world calls this foolishness. This is because of the blindness of unbelief. But the believer becomes truly wise in his faith.

This all-important faith is a gift of God to His elect people. It was earned for them at the cross. It is worked in them irresistibly by the Holy Spirit. In the covenant this blessed faith is ordinarily worked in God's elect children at a very early age. It is worked through the instruction of the Scriptures that the parents give at home and provide in the church and Christian school.

Have you seen this faith and wisdom in your children and grandchildren?

Thank and praise the Lord!



Blessed calling!

God calls parents to instruct their children in the Holy Scriptures. They must teach their children the history of the covenant as revealed in Scripture. They are to teach their children the doctrines of Scripture. They must show their children from Scripture how they are to live in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. They must cause the light of Scripture to shine in every part of their children's learning and life.

This requires that parents spend time with their children in their home to instruct them.

Christian parents must also bring their children to church to be instructed in Scripture through the preaching on the Lord's Day and in the catechism room. Their children are also the church's children. Let every church be faithful to instruct her children in the Holy Scriptures. Woe to that church that fails her children!

Christian schools have also been an invaluable means for parents to meet their covenant obligation to instruct


their children. The Christian school provides godly teachers who are qualified to instruct the children of the covenant in every discipline they will need in order to live in this world of learning and technology. But, more importantly, the Christian school gives this instruction from a biblical viewpoint, so that covenant youth are taught how to live as citizens of God's kingdom in this wicked world. This is what covenant children need. And few parents have all the skills and learning necessary to provide such instruction alone. Thank God for good Christian schools.

This godly instruction is also the desire of all faithful covenant parents for their children. True covenant parents have been made wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. This wisdom leads them to treasure their children as children of the covenant, to desire the salvation of their children through faith in Jesus Christ, and to do all in their power to instruct

their children in the Holy Scriptures.

But parents must be encouraged. This work is often difficult, especially when they must deal with a large tuition bill. To encourage us, the Lord promises His blessing on this work. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

But a calling also comes to children and young people. Their calling is to receive and embrace with a true faith the instruction of their parents in the Holy Scriptures. The Proverbs are replete with instruction to children to receive the instruction of their parents. This command to children is necessary in light of the fact that children, and especially young people, often despise and reject the instruction they receive. This is often explained (not excused) by the inexperience of youth and the unbelief that remains in every believer.

Young people, lay hold of and embrace the instruction you receive from your parents, church, and school, remembering that this instruction will make you wise unto salvation. There is no greater joy or success than to be wise unto salvation. 

*God uses  
the wisdom of Scripture  
to make fools wise  
unto salvation.*



# Herman Hoeksema Reappraised (1)

A most interesting article. *Herman Hoeksema Was Right (On the Three Points That Really Mattered)*.

Surprising even.

Noteworthy because of who wrote it.

Not, as one might expect, a Protestant Reformed theologian reiterating that H. Hoeksema was right back in 1924, and that the Christian Reformed Synod got it wrong. Nothing newsworthy there. This is an article written by Dr. John Bolt, professor of Systematic Theology in Calvin Seminary no less—not exactly an institution that has been known as a source of articles siding with Herman Hoeksema on various controversial issues. Certainly not when it comes to the issue of common grace and the decisions associated with the Synod of the CRC, 1924.

But here is such an article.

It is not that Dr. Bolt merely sides with Hoeksema on various important issues in that controversy (beginning with a criticism of the synod's well-known 'three points'), but really in this article Bolt exonerates Hoeksema when it comes to various key decisions made by the broader assemblies involved in the case—both by the 1924 Synod itself, and then shortly

thereafter by Classis Grand Rapids East in prosecuting Hoeksema and subsequently expelling him and his consistory from the CRC. That is, the article exonerates Hoeksema (and by implication his colleagues, the Revs. Danhof and Ophoff with him) if Bolt's main proposition and his arguments stand as stated. We are persuaded they do—in the main. Those who read the article will have to judge for themselves.

As an aside, we must admit we find it rather curious where the article is found, namely, in a book entitled *Biblical Interpretation and Doctrinal Formulation In the Reformed Tradition*. The book is a collection of essays submitted to honor Dr. James De Jong, who happens to be a former president of Calvin Seminary. As Dr. De Jong comes to the end of a career as a teacher, scholar, and administrator, his friends and colleagues decided to publish this book in honor of his years of service. So this collection of fourteen essays.

Why Dr. Bolt and the editors thought an article entitled *Herman Hoeksema Was Right* appropriate in their honoring Dr. De Jong (in fact, the essay with which to conclude the book, chapter 14) we can only speculate. Perhaps something for De Jong to ruminate upon in

his years of retirement? We cannot imagine that it will add much sweetness to such ruminations.

More likely the title of this book of essays—*Biblical Interpretation and Doctrinal Formulation In the Reformed Tradition*—explains, at least in part, why Bolt's article was deemed appropriate to be included, namely, that the controversy in which Hoeksema played such a lead role in 1924 revolved about the teaching of common grace and the CRC's doctrinal formulation of it. And that in turn raises this question: were the (in)famous three points of common grace as formulated by the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924 really of the Reformed tradition—historically and confessionally?

Dr. Bolt's conclusion is, they were not. In the essay he gives his reasons.

That Bolt is not content to let this issue become a sleeping dog in CRC circles but is willing to confront his colleagues and others with errors made and wrongs done (as he judges matters at this point) takes no little courage. We commend him for it. To the two editors, Dr. A. C. Leder and Dr. R. A. Muller, who were willing by the inclusion of this article to confront their colleagues and the reading public with

the issues raised by Dr. Bolt, we also express our appreciation.

In their preface to the essays, the editors' opening comments on Bolt's article are worth noting.

Looking back on our past with honesty is not always an easy matter, particularly when so much that passes for history is written with a view either to the justification or the condemnation of a particular cherished point of view. John Bolt's penetratingly honest essay concludes the volume with a new look into one of the most contentious moments in the history of the Christian Reformed Church, namely, the adoption of the "three points of common grace" by Synod Kalamazoo in 1924. After presenting the rather blunt initial gambit that "Hoeksema was right," Bolt lays out both a significant case for the problematic nature of the "three points" on both confessional and ecclesiological grounds... (p. xvi).

The editors have more to say, also worth reading, but the above quote is sufficient to give the flavor of their estimation of Bolt's bold essay.

Describing Bolt's article as "penetratingly honest" is an honest assessment indeed.

The quote also serves to give a good synopsis of Bolt's essay. It has to do with the "problematic nature of the 'three points' on both confessional and ecclesiological grounds."

To avoid confusion, one must not strictly identify the title of Bolt's essay "The Three Points That Really Matter" with the three points of common grace drawn up by the Synod of Kalamazoo. Kalamazoo's

formulation of the three points of common grace is only one of the "Three Points" addressed by Bolt.

Bolt lays out three areas in which he argues Hoeksema was right and the Synod of 1924 wrong; the first has to do with the doctrine of common grace itself, that is, the synod's formulation of it (the confessional issue); Bolt's second and third points relate (in the main) to the area of the ecclesiastical procedures.

In an introductory paragraph Bolt informs us that he intends to defend the following proposition:

In this essay I want to...defend the following proposition: With respect to the issues and controversies surrounding the common grace controversy generated by the decisions of the CRC's Kalamazoo Synod of 1924 and its aftermath, including the suspension of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema by Classis Grand Rapids East, on the three fundamental issues—that grace is particular; that the doctrine of common grace is an extra-confessional matter on which Reformed people can have different opinions; and that Reformed church polity was violated in hierarchical actions—Herman Hoeksema was right and the Christian Reformed Church was wrong (pp. 296, 297).

So, one basic proposition (essentially as stated in the essay's title), but divided into three fundamental issues as outlined above, three issues on which Bolt judges Hoeksema to be right and his own denomination to have been in error.

To get the three issues clearly before us we restate them.

#1—that grace is particular.

#2—that the doctrine of common grace is an extra-confessional matter on which Reformed people can have different opinions.

#3—that Reformed church polity was violated in hierarchical actions.

It is our intention to give a brief summary of Dr. Bolt's arguments in each of these areas, and then assess his contentions.

At the outset we must state, regrettably, that we cannot agree completely with Dr. Bolt's assessments on all points. For instance, re-read the second issue referred to above. Many of our readers will understand why we would question whether, in the end, this was really Hoeksema's perspective. Though, that said, we can understand why in reading the 1924 history one might judge the statement as worded to be Hoeksema's view.

This is not to say that there is not much of which Dr. Bolt writes with which we are in basic agreement. There is. And even if we find that we cannot at this point be in full agreement with Bolt on all his conclusions, we much appreciate his attempt to set the record straight on these issues.

We take our cue in offering a critique of Bolt's conclusions from a footnote found in the essay itself.

While Bolt formulates his title in decisive and 'dogmatic' language—"Hoeksema Was Right," the footnote makes clear that he casts it in this language to some extent for its shock value, that is, to catch the reader's attention and then force one to consider his arguments. And then prompt a reply.

As Bolt states:

This brief essay is suggestive [!] rather than definitive [!]. On a number of issues, such as the historical record concerning the relation between covenant and election in the Reformed tradition, further analysis is required. My reformulations of the three points of Kalamazoo, it barely needs mentioning, are those of one person and not of the Christian Reformed Church. *My only goal in this essay is to argue that such further study is both an academic and an ecclesiastical obligation* (emphasis ours—kk) (footnote 9, p. 297).

So, brother Bolt has come to certain conclusions, conclusions to which his honest reading of the history of 1924 and its writings has led him at this point, conclusions certain not to be so very popular in his own circles, but conclusions that he wants his colleagues to (re)consider, ponder, and then respond to.

Bolt's essay, as the editors indicated, is an opening 'gambit' (a move in a chess game) meant to initiate response.

We are sure, therefore, that Dr. Bolt will not object to having his "suggestive" conclusions critiqued by a Protestant Reformed writer (or two). As Bolt's article makes plain, he has not only thoroughly researched the original source material—visiting the Calvin College archives to study the minutes of the broader assemblies involved (together with the multitude of supplements serving as background material), but he has familiarized

himself, as well, with the perspective of Protestant Reformed authors who have written on this history with its numerous issues. Quotes lifted from books such as *For Thy Truth's Sake* and *A Watered Garden*, along with quotes lifted from Hoeksema's own writings on the history with its issues, are scattered through Bolt's essay.

Bolt's concluding words in the above mentioned quote are striking.

Notice, he speaks of an "ecclesiastical obligation"! For his academic and theological colleagues of the CRC!

Bolt is bold indeed.

In the interest of truth and righteousness.

As we see it, what Dr. Bolt's essay implies is that what many in the Reformed church world would just as soon dismiss and consign to the backwaters of ecclesiastical controversy and church history—a smallish, provincial controversy that took place in an insulated West Michigan Dutch community on certain side issues back in 1924—was anything but that!

And this history with its issues needs to be reappraised by thinking theologians. Issues were dealt with back then that still loom large today, issues that need to be carefully thought through once again.

Common grace, exactly because it touches one's view of particular grace (which lies at the heart of the gospel, as any man who has a heart for what is apostolic and Reformed ought to understand), and then as well has everything to do with one's world-and-life view, simply is not some small, backwater issue.

The CRC—where she is today in comparison with ninety years ago—should be living proof of that.

And it is not an issue that is going to go away. Kuyper's *Gemeene Gratie* (*Common Grace*) is being translated for wider distribution to an English-speaking world. A whole new generation of budding theologians and preachers is being introduced to Kuyper's stimulating writings on this doctrine, a theologian of stature with this theory so attractive to young, energetic, "let's change the world," impressionable minds.

What took place in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids in 1924 and 1925, and what was at stake, remains as relevant for today's ecclesiastical scene as ninety years ago.

Dr. Bolt's essay, in its own way, reminds us of that, and so warrants some response in the *SB*. The *SB*, after all, found its origins in this controversy and the closing of various doors to Hoeksema and his colleagues due to their opposition to the three points.

But before we conclude this article we take time to recommend the book in which Bolt's essay is found. Dr. Bolt's essay, of course, is what caught our eye, but it is not the only essay of value in the collection. Included are essays from writers such as Drs. R. Muller and R. Blacketer, well-known theological writers with significant things to say.

And there is a most significant little essay submitted by Dr. Lyle Bierma entitled *Beza's Two Confessions As a Source of the Heidelberg Catechism*. Theodore Beza, mind you! The same Beza

who is charged by so many with being the father of the scholastic branch of Reformed theology, the modifier/corrupter of Calvin's true and pure (not so rationalistic) Calvinism. To think that two catechisms written by Beza should have, as Bierma rather convincingly

demonstrates, a significant influence on Ursinus and Olevianus and the Catechism they drew up, our Heidelberg.

Talk about a surprise to many!

Why do we find this so interesting?

It raises the possibility, does it not, that others who, like Beza, have

been marginalized as theologians given to the 'scholastic, rationalistic brand of Calvinism' may not be so far removed from the mainstream of Reformed Calvinism after all!

Food for thought.

... to be continued. 

## LETTERS

### The Psalter

Thank you for the special issue on the Psalter (April 1, 2014). I always appreciate the special issues, and this one was especially dear to my heart. I read with interest all the articles and benefited from them. I can imagine the editorial committee sitting down last summer and coming up with eight to ten different topics on this subject, and I can only hope that at that meeting Prof. Dykstra was *assigned* the unfortunate topic "Improving the Psalter."

But when a summary of the daily acts of Synod, Day 4, 2014, was handed out in the churches and I read that "the CC was instructed to stay in contact with the Publication Committee of the Free Reformed Churches with a view to a possible revision of the Psalter," I detected that revising the Psalter was being seriously discussed in some circles. This concerns me. Hence, this letter.

I love the Psalter.

I especially love the 1912 Psalter that has been used in the Protestant Reformed Churches for nearly 100 years now. I, myself, have been singing these songs and teaching my children, grandchildren, and students to learn and love them as well for many years (I might even have had a small part in instilling the love of this precious book in Prof. Dykstra, whom I was privileged to teach when he was a student in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade), and I still don't know all the songs by memory or recognize every tune when it is played. Our Psalter is a rich and matchless songbook. It is a book for all seasons of the Christian life. We need to sing from it more often, daily in our homes and the Christian school, not neglecting this majestic book in

our church-sponsored and school programs; then we will learn to love it more.

The introduction to the 1912 Psalter tells us that the committee that was instrumental in putting together this book spent 20 years at its work. During that arduous, however delightful work, it's possible that this committee may have included some disappointing rhymes, an archaic word or two, or even a clumsy tune. After all, it was a committee, not a divinely inspired body. But isn't it likely that a newly-formed committee, also not divinely inspired, would make just as many—if not more—misadventures with tunes, phraseology, rhyming, and textual accuracy?

Proceed slowly when considering change. Just change your carpet sometime and notice that once the carpet is updated, the curtains in the room don't look so good. So you invest in new curtains, and, suddenly, the couches look really shabby...and the lamps no longer fit in at all. Change is a fickle mistress.

I do not support change in our Psalter. Not any change—even though I breathe a sigh of relief that no minister, in my experience, has ever chosen Psalter number 289, "Let's sing all 19 verses."

For the record, I oppose any change in tunes, words, rhymes, numbering systems, or versifications. All the improvements that Prof. Dykstra deems advisable for our Psalter are hardly egregious enough to warrant revision, in my estimation, and what we stand to lose by such tinkering is more than we would gain. (Make it your concern to find out what has happened in other denominations with making mischief in their songbooks



over the years. It's not pretty. Historically, changes in a church's music have separated those in the pew. Why, do you think, do the emergent churches need three or four songbooks or an overhead projection device in their services?) The Psalter stands on its own credentials.

While Prof. Dykstra in his well-written article laments the loss of the work that an earlier committee to improve the Psalter had accomplished, my earnest prayer is that these documents may never be dredged up. There must have been good reason at that time that synod abandoned such an ill-advised project, and we do well not to repeat this failed attempt.

Take a step back. Think carefully about the probable snowball effect of such a venture. The grandeur of the 1912 Psalter has served us and our children admirably for decades and requires no modifications.

Respectfully and urgently submitted,  
*Mary Beth Lubbers*  
Grandville, Michigan

## RESPONSE

It is always a pleasure reading letters written with the style and flair that yours have. And one of the many blessings of our schools is that one can have quality teachers who later in life transition to esteemed friends.

I appreciate the caution on possible revisions of the Psalter. Those who suggest changes to a songbook, even what many see as obvious improvements, do not know what the final product will be. The church's songbook is

a vital part of her worship in home, school, and especially in official worship.

The letter also expresses well the angst that we of the later generations feel when someone suggests changes to our venerable Psalter. The Psalter has indeed been an inestimable blessing to all who learned to sing God's praises, to confess sin, to cry out of the depths, and to teach and admonish each other using these versifications. From a personal point of view, I could happily use the Psalter just as it is until the Lord takes me home.

While it is true that I was more or less assigned the topic in the special issue, I had enough heart for it to be willing to write on the topic. I remain convinced that we can produce a better Psalter. Many synods, going back to the days before I was born, have taken decisions in favor of revisions. Although we certainly can use the Psalter as is, if the next generation will be able to worship God with a better Psalm-book, I am willing to learn some new versifications and tunes, though I would no doubt miss some of the old ones. I also have confidence in the men commissioned to serve at our classes and synods, that they will make wise and careful decisions on such a crucially important work.

That brings me to the decision of Synod 2014. The decision does not express any commitment to Psalter revision, but only recognizes that some other Reformed churches who use and love the Psalter are looking into improving it. Synod thought it wise at the very least to keep in touch with them.

— RJD 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

REV. THOMAS MIERSMA

# Fleeing Covetousness in the Fear of God

## Ecclesiastes 5:8-12

**E**ccl 5:7 ends on the note, "But fear thou God." This is the sum of the whole matter. Yet man shows

*Rev. Miersma is pastor of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta.*

*Previous article in this series: May 15, 2014, p. 368.*

that he himself does not fear God when, in his folly, he enters God's house and utters his vows before Him. It ought not to surprise us therefore when we see oppression and perverting of justice. He who does not fear God regards not his neighbor. "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter" (Eccl. 5:8).

With this observation Solomon introduces several observations concerning human life. Solomon's kingdom was a well-ordered one, with chief officers, princes, captains, and other rulers, not only in the military but in the levy for the work of the temple and other projects (I Kings 5:13-18; I Kings 9:17-23). This organization continued even into the reign of Ahab (II Kings 20:13-21). This ordering of the kingdom involved also judges and administrative officials, along with taxation. The division into provinces and their administration took the form of a hierarchy of officials exactly "that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained" (Belgic Confession, Art. 36). The need for it is that man, by nature a sinner, having no fear of God, walks in covetousness and abuses power and authority. It is the responsibility of those who are higher to watch over those under them. But corruption and oppression are still not abolished, for it pervades the life of men so that those who are higher are by nature no different. He tells us, "... marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they" (Eccl. 5:8). The king himself sees what is happening in the kingdom and beyond, and he sees also that God the eternal king, who is Lord of all, regards it. God will also judge the works of men. He is to be feared.

The second observation he sets before us is the boundary of man's life. "Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field" (Eccl. 5:9). The picture is that of tilling a field and of the earth yielding its increase to the advantage and profit of all who dwell in the land. All live by the fruit of the field. Food and drink are the necessary boundary of man's life, his portion of his labor under the sun (Eccl. 5:18, 19). However high a man's estate, even that of king, he is dependent on that most basic necessity of daily bread and the produce of the land.

Yet the root of so much oppression and corruption is the seeking of earthly riches in covetousness, although the things of this life are but vanity and for a moment.

*Earthly abundance  
does not satisfy.  
Enough, whether of  
gold and silver  
or any other abundance,  
is never enough.*

They are not an end in themselves, yet men seek them as if they were the treasure of a man's life. This yields the third observation: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity" (Eccl. 5:10). The things of this life are the necessary portion under the sun. The folly of sin is that it leads man to seek the things of this life as if they will satisfy his soul. Because of sin, the things of this world present themselves to the eye as that which is to be desired as an end in itself, as that which will make one happy. This belongs to the deceitfulness of sin, with which we struggle. But in the heart of a man who does not fear God, this desire brings him into bondage to uncertain riches and to covetousness, the lust for them. Earthly abundance does not satisfy. Enough, whether of gold and silver or any other abundance, is never enough.

Jesus makes the same point that Solomon is making in this chapter, when He warns us, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). He then proceeds to tell the parable of the rich fool, who will build bigger barns, and God says unto him, "Thou

fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20). Jesus continues, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Jesus is, in effect, summarizing this and much of the following chapter in Ecclesiastes.

The viewpoint, however, is slightly different. Solomon points us to the vanity of covetousness and of seeking earthly riches as it is manifested even in this present life. We read, "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with the eyes?" (Eccl. 5:11).

He makes a twofold point: first, that as wealth increases, so do the demands upon it. The cost of living expands with one's paycheck, so that there is no real progress or getting ahead. They simply increase that eat it up. Pursuing earthly riches is a vain treadmill that


does not profit. Second, where riches do increase and are heaped up as stored treasure, there is no real good or profit in them. Solomon had great storehouses for treasure and armories. He asks what genuine good it did him. All he can do is look at it. To put it in another form, a closet full of shoes, once the latest fashion and style, what good are they? You can wear only one pair of shoes at a time. Heaped gold, if you spend it, is eaten up; if you hoard it, all you can do is look at it.

But that is not the end of the matter. Hoarded treasure needs to be kept, housed, guarded, so that a man can become a slave of his possessions. Jesus says of this, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19, 20).

Solomon, looking at the vanity of such treasure from the viewpoint of this world under the sun, makes essentially the same point in a slightly different manner. We read, "the sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" (Eccl. 5:12). The laboring man, by way of contrast to the rich, is poor; he has little. He has the fruit of the hard work of the day, his portion or daily bread. It was obtained by hard work, whether he eats a small meal or a large one, and by implication also in the light of verses 18-20, he eats it with thanksgiving as from

the hand of his heavenly Father. He is tired from the day's labor and can sleep at night. Jesus said, "Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

The rich man, like the rich fool in Jesus' parable, cannot do so. He must either build bigger barns or live in fear of losing what he has because moth and rust do indeed corrupt and thieves break through and steal. He lives in anxiety and fear, full of fretful care. He tosses and turns on his bed. The very "abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." By implication the rich man here is also like that of Psalm 73, a man ruled by covetousness in unbelief. "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. 73:19). Fear of loss, fear of being robbed or cheated, troubles his sleep. Beholding it with his eyes only adds to his worry. Behind it all stands the reality that he must die and then whose shall those things be?

For a child of God, earthly prosperity is a passing thing of this life at best. It is not our treasure. It is a means to serve the Lord and His kingdom, never an end in itself. When it becomes an end in itself, through the infirmity of the flesh and covetousness, then we also will spend sleepless nights to no profit. The sinful weakness Solomon describes cleaves to us. Hence, as he has said, "But fear thou God." 

## ALL AROUND US

## REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN

### Islamophobia

Most of us are familiar with the charge of homophobia, that we Christians, allegedly, have an irrational fear of, hatred for, and intolerance toward homosexuals. We are labelled thus because we have the audacity to teach that homosexuality is sin. Much has been seen in recent years—bakers sued because they would not make cakes for "gay marriages"; florists and photographers sued because they refused to participate in such ceremonies; and

Christian street preachers arrested for calling homosexuality a sin.

A new phobia controversy erupted in Belfast, Northern Ireland some months ago—Islamophobia.

Pastor James McConnell is the septuagenarian preacher of Ulster's largest church, the Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle. On Sunday, May 18, 2014, he preached a sermon with the provocative title, "The Sermon that Ministries and Pastors Will Not Be Allowed to Preach in the Future." The text of the sermon was I Timothy 2:5-7 (a better theme would have been "The One Mediator between God and Men," a theme that actually encapsulates what the text teaches). The sermon was a typical Fundamentalist, Arminian presentation delivered with

---

*Rev. McGeown is missionary-pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland stationed in Limerick, Republic of Ireland.*

rhetorical bluster—much shouting, hand waving, pulpit thumping, and little exegesis, the kind of sermon an *SB* reader would hardly care to hear.

However, the sermon caused a stir because of what McConnell said about Islam: “The Muslim god—Allah—is a heathen deity. Allah is a cruel deity. Allah is a demon deity.... Islam is heathen. Islam is satanic. Islam is a doctrine spawned in hell.” Later in the same sermon, McConnell opined, “Now people say there are good Muslims in Britain—that may be so—but I don’t trust them.”

Soon after the sermon was preached, it became the most talked about story on local BBC media. Opinions varied. Some called McConnell a courageous preacher of truth; others labelled him a bigot. The PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) launched an investigation, treating the case as a possible “hate crime incident.” McConnell was unapologetic; he claimed that he was preaching the gospel; he insisted that he did not have a hateful bone in his body; and he defended his right to free speech. Even some prominent Northern Irish politicians weighed in on the controversy. As part of the investigation, McConnell was interviewed for almost two hours at Newtownabbey police station on Friday, June 6. Afterwards McConnell issued a statement apologizing for any offense but refused to retract the sermon itself. “I had no intention of causing any offense or insulting any member of the Muslim community,” he said, adding, that he did not intend to “arouse fear or stir up or incite hatred” toward any member of the Muslim community. Ostensibly, McConnell’s aim had been to raise awareness for the plight of Meriam Ibrahim, the Sudanese woman condemned to death for “apostasy from Islam.” The PSNI have not pressed charges, but surely the prospect of an interview at a police station has a chilling effect upon anyone who might dare to speak in the future.

Let me make some comments on the case.

First, McConnell, while he has freedom of speech, was not wise in his words. The pulpit is not the place for political advocacy, and his congregation would have been served better if McConnell had carefully and systematically explained the core differences between Islam and Christianity on the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the atonement of Christ, and other matters. If McConnell would like to equip his people to witness to

Muslims—and not just to rant against them or about them—he needs to teach doctrine. McConnell and his flock should read the Qur’an, so that they know what Muslims believe and can effectively witness to them. There are also excellent Christian-Muslim debates online by James White, where White respectfully engages with the arguments of Muslim apologists and presents the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is not compromise—it is doing research; it is knowing why you believe what you believe, and what the person to whom you witness believes and why. To say, “Islam is evil” is true, but it will not open many doors for a fruitful discussion with a Muslim co-worker.<sup>1</sup>

Second, the reaction of the media was grossly hypocritical. Had the BBC not taken the story and run with it for several weeks, very few would have heard about or cared about it. Does the BBC really believe that those who would commit racially motivated attacks—Islam is not a race—need a theological justification for their behavior, or that such thugs ever darken the door of a church, or that any of them would ever have heard of the sermon, had the media not broadcast clips of it on TV and radio? If anyone is guilty of stirring tensions, it is the media. Moreover, McConnell was demonized and ridiculed as a bigot because he had the audacity to criticize Islam, and (regrettably at the same time) to lump all Muslims together with their violent Jihadist coreligionists. His infamous “I don’t trust them” statement drew most of the ire of the media—although “Islam is satanic” was more suitable headline fodder. Several Islamic spokesmen were interviewed. While McConnell was subjected to gruelling interrogations, the Islamic representatives were thrown softballs. One would imagine that Islam had never said anything negative about Christianity!

Third, the churches in Northern Ireland—and elsewhere—need to have an answer to Islam that goes beyond foolish, ignorant ranting on the one hand, and craven fear and compromise on the other. As a case in point, the Irish Presbyterian Moderator was interviewed on Sunday 25 May on BBC Radio Ulster. When asked


---

<sup>1</sup> Interested readers may view a number of blog posts on Islam on the Limerick Reformed Fellowship website, [www.limerickreformed.com](http://www.limerickreformed.com); and James White’s ministry can be accessed on [www.aomin.org/](http://www.aomin.org/).



about McConnell's comments, Rev. Dr. Rob Craig reluctantly said about McConnell's comments: "They are not consistent with the Gospel of Christ and the love of God." This was later reported sensationally with the headline, "Presbyterian Moderator Slams Pastor's Islam Comments." In the interview, it was clear that Dr. Craig had "slammed" no one, but had only very reluctantly commented, and a condemnation—if one wishes to call it that—was dragged out of him. When asked if he planned to follow the example of a colleague who had visited the local Islamic center to show solidarity and support, he said he had no immediate plans to do so, but was not entirely opposed to the idea. This is the same Presbyterian Church in Ireland whose Doctrine Committee reported to the 2007 General Assembly, "If we are guided by biblical vocabulary, it seems difficult to extend the word 'idolatry' to Islam, for example. Judaism is clearly not a case of it." Islam is difficult to describe as idolatry? Islam, which denies the one true God and His Son Jesus Christ, is

not idolatry? What the Moderator should have said was this: "While Pastor McConnell's words were ill chosen, it should not be a surprising thing to learn that Christianity and Islam are two religions diametrically opposed to one another. Islam denies that Jesus is the Son of God; Islam denies that Jesus made an atonement for sin on the cross; Islam denies the only way of salvation. Of course Islam is a false religion."

Fourth, it is a sign of things to come that Islam, many of whose adherents persecute and oppress Christians on a massive scale worldwide, can call upon the police to investigate a pastor for "hate crimes" simply because he criticizes that religion. The hate crime charge may not have stuck this time, but there will be more cases. Pastors need to be courageous, but they also need to heed Christ's words: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16). 

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (10)

## What the Bible Says about the Bible: The Testimony of the Psalms (2)

### Introduction

The Bible is the word of God. This is what the Bible says about the Bible. In our previous installment in this rubric we began our consideration of the testimony of Psalm 119 to the truth that the Bible is the word of God. This is a very unique psalm. In the book that has the most chapters (150 psalms), this is the longest chapter (psalm). It is a chapter that magnifies the Bible

as God's word. In nearly every verse, reference is made to God's word: His law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, and judgments. As an acrostic psalm, Psalm 119 sets forth every important truth regarding the word of God.<sup>1</sup> No important truth regarding the nature of God's word, the authority of God's word, the purpose and power of God's word, as well as the effect of God's word is missing from Psalm 119. The Bible is everything that Psalm 119 declares it to be. Most importantly it is the word of God.

*Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

*Previous article in this series: July 2014, p. 422.*

<sup>1</sup> See the previous article in this series (July 2014, p. 422) for an explanation of the term acrostic.

Up to this point we have assumed something that we do well now to make explicit. What we ought to make explicit is that Psalm 119 magnifies the *written* word of God—sacred Scripture. To be sure, God’s word as it is proclaimed by faithful servants of God who have been sent out by Him is also the word of God. This is how God’s people must regard the official proclamation of God’s word. But God’s word proclaimed is the word of God because what is proclaimed is God’s word written—the exposition and application of the written word of God. For this reason, Jesus told His disciples: “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (Matt. 10:40). True as this is, the subject of Psalm 119 is God’s word as it has been written under the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

That it is the written word of God that is on the foreground in Psalm 119 is plain. The many references to God’s law, commandments, and statutes indicate that the psalmist has in mind the written word of God. He has in mind the revelation of God containing His will for the life of His covenant people in the world. The oft-repeated resolution of the psalmist that he will meditate in God’s precepts indicates that he was able to read and study God’s law. Certainly, one can meditate on the spoken word. But what facilitates meditation is that it is meditation of the written word of God that one can read over and over again. The importance of meditation on God’s law seems to indicate that the psalmist has access to the written word of God, the word of God that he is able to reference, examine, inspect, and contemplate.

Verse 89 of Psalm 119 seems also to indicate that it is the written word of God that is magnified in the psalm: “Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” God’s word stands firm forever, established not only on the earth, but in the heavens, the very dwelling place of God. This implies that what the psalmist possesses is an exact copy of words that have been permanently decided upon by God and subsequently committed to men. That which God has permanently decided upon and is forever settled in heaven is the written word of God.

And the effect of God’s word upon the psalmist, the enduring effect, would also seem to point to the fact that it is the written word of God in which the psalmist delights. That he can say “sweet are thy words unto my

taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (v. 103), or confess “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (v. 105), or pray “Order my steps in thy word” (v. 133) would seem to indicate that he has access to and is able to read God’s word.

## The Perfection of Scripture

Because Scripture is the word of God, Scripture partakes of the perfection of God. As God is perfect, so is His word also perfect. Because God is perfect, His word sets forth “the way of truth” (v. 30) and is “the word of truth” (v. 43). Because His word shares in His perfection, the psalmist esteems “God’s precepts concerning all things to be right” (v. 128). Because Scripture shares in the perfection of its author, God’s “testimonies...are righteous and very faithful” (v. 138) and His “word is very pure” (v. 140). In acknowledgment of Scripture’s perfection, the psalmist exclaims: “Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth” (v. 151). And again: “Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever” (v. 160). In verse 163 he says, “I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love.” That he abhors lying and loves God’s law implies that he loves God’s word because it does not contain lies, but is the truth—is entirely the truth. Further, he is resolved that his “tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness” (v. 172).

Everything that the psalmist teaches about God’s word in Psalm 119 depends upon and follows from Scripture’s perfection. Because of Scripture’s perfection, because Scripture is the very word of God, the psalmist is determined to submit to Scripture. He regards Scripture as the authority in his life, even if obedience to the word of God brings suffering and persecution into his life, as indeed it had. Still, because of Scripture’s perfection, he is determined “to keep God’s precepts diligently” (v. 4) and to “have respect unto all thy commandments” (v. 6). He will “cleanse his way” and “take heed thereunto according to thy word” (v. 9). Because of Scripture’s perfection, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (v. 11). Because of Scripture’s perfection his prayer is: “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (vv. 35 and 36). In light of Scripture’s perfection, he is

determined to be “a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts” (vv. 63 and 65). He will “meditate in God’s precepts” even though his enemies have “dealt perversely with me without a cause” (v. 78). Because of Scripture’s perfection, he is able to say, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (v. 103). Because of Scripture’s perfection, Scripture can serve as “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (v. 105). On the basis of Scripture’s perfection, the psalmist prays: “Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (v. 133). Because of Scripture’s perfection, “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law” (v. 136). On the contrary, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (v. 165). And as far as the psalmist himself is concerned, because of Scripture’s perfection, “My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly” (v. 167).

### The Perfections of Scripture

It is plain that on the basis of Scripture’s perfection, there follow what theologians in the past have referred to as the perfections of Scripture. Because Scripture is perfect, Scripture is authoritative, necessary, perspicuous, sufficient, and reliable. These are the perfections of Scripture. We will have more to say about these perfections in the future. But already now it is worth noticing that all of these perfections are taught in Psalm 119.

It is plain that Scripture is the authority, the only authority in the life of the psalmist. He regards Scripture as God’s law, God’s statutes, and God’s commandments. These are terms that presuppose authority. He is resolved “to keep God’s precepts diligently” (v. 4). He is resolved to “cleanse his way” and “take heed to his way according to God’s word” (v. 9). His prayer to God is, “Order my steps in thy word” (v. 133). More than once he mentions that he is horrified and grief-stricken at the wicked who do not obey God’s word: verses 53, 136, 139, and 158. Even though his enemies and persecutors are many, yet he resolves that he will not “decline from thy testimonies” (v. 157). His honoring of Scripture is not only outward and formal, but his “soul hath kept God’s testimonies” and he “loves them exceedingly” (v. 167).

Psalm 119 also teaches Scripture’s necessity. Scripture is necessary for the faith and life of the psalmist. Apart


from Scripture there is no pleasing of God: “I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments” (v. 7). Scripture is necessary for holiness: “And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts” (v. 45). He confesses: “Before I was afflicted I went astray [in unholiness]: but now have I kept thy word” (v. 67). Scripture is necessary for the believer’s comfort: “This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me” (v. 50). “I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself” (v. 52). And verse 76: “Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.” As Scripture is necessary for the believer’s comfort in the present, so is it also necessary for the believer’s hope that stretches into the future: “And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments” (v. 43). “My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word” (v. 81). What all this comes down to is that the necessity of Scripture is the believer’s salvation. By means of His word, God brings to salvation, preserves in salvation, and finally realizes the full salvation of His people.

Scripture is perspicuous or clear. In its main message Scripture is able to be understood by those who read it. The outstanding proof for Scripture’s clarity is that Scripture is addressed to the believer, the ordinary believer. Even a young person, as the writer of Psalm 119 was, can understand Scripture. Scripture could hardly function as the authority in the believer’s life, and could hardly be the means of the believer’s salvation, if Scripture could not be understood. If Scripture is to function as the believer’s guide, it must be understood by the believer. Clearly the human writer of Psalm 119 understood the Scriptures. That he delights in God’s word, loves God’s word, hopes in and is comforted by God’s word, that he is willing even to be persecuted for the sake of God’s word implies that he knows God’s word. This is also his confession: “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts” (v. 100). And he adds in the same stanza: “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (vv. 103, 104). The psalmist celebrates the clarity of God’s word in verse 130: “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”

Scripture is sufficient. This perfection of Scripture is also very clearly evident from Psalm 119. Since Scripture answers to his every need and since Scripture serves to bring him to faith and preserve him in the faith, Scripture is sufficient. Nothing need be and nothing may be added to the Holy Scriptures. “Order my steps in thy word [alone]: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (v. 133). God’s word is all that is necessary for salvation and for eternal life: “I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me” (vv. 174, 175).

And, finally, Scripture is reliable or trustworthy. Since Scripture is the word of God, and God is reliable, Scripture is reliable. We can depend upon its promises, be guided by its precepts, be warned by its admonitions, and be comforted by its assurances. It is plain that the psalmist put his trust in God’s word. “So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word” (v. 42). So reliable is God’s word that the psalmist prays, “Order my steps in thy word: and let

not any iniquity have dominion over me” (v. 133). Because God’s word is reliable, the psalmist “rejoices at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil” (v. 162).

Because Scripture is the word of God, blessed is the man who delights in and who honors Scripture. That is how Psalm 119 begins. Significantly the psalm begins with two beatitudes: “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart” (vv. 1, 2). Blessed are they who walk according to God’s law in their life in the world because in their hearts they love and seek after God. Apart from Scripture there can be no upright walk and no seeking after God in the heart, and thus no blessing from God. But they who seek after God, who seek after God in their hearts, and who demonstrate that they seek after God by honoring His word in their lives are blessed. They are blessed now and they are blessed forever. “Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (v. 111). 

## UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

## MR. CAL KALSBECK

# “Understanding of the Times”

**“And the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.”**

**(I Chronicles 12:32)**

“**S**o that will be the burden of this rubric: to scrutinize the times in which we live in order that we may grow in our understanding of the times, and consider what we ought to do.”

---

*Mr. Kalsbeek is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.*

That quote from the first article written for this rubric back in September of 2002 has governed the subsequent 43 articles that have found their way into this column. For the most part those articles examined the primary worldviews of our day and traced some of the consequences of the ideas that they advance. In this, the last article for this column, we will discuss the critical importance for modern-day Issachar to grow in understanding of false worldviews in order rightly to do battle against them.

### Ignorance Is Not an Option

Modern-day Issachar ignores present-day world-



views at her own peril. A December 13, 2013 *Worldview Weekend Exclusive Newsletter* warns that worldview ignorance results in self-professing Christian adults and young people ending up with worldviews that are no different from those who are outside of the church. The newsletter goes on to demonstrate that with the following statistics for present beliefs among Christian adults:

- 64% believe moral truth depends on the situation.
- 84% believe male/female co-habitation outside of marriage is acceptable.
- 55% believe a good person can earn his or her salvation.
- 44% believe Jesus Christ committed sins while on earth.

Some statistics for college students are even more troubling:

- 65% embrace socialist and communistic ideals.
- 88% of students from “Christian” homes deny their faith before they graduate from college.
- 91% of students from evangelical churches do not believe in absolute moral truth.

No doubt these statistics reflect the fact that college students are under the influence of some very liberal professors. If these grave statistics are even close to reality, modern-day Issachar has much work to do. This work, some would say, includes the church joining the ranks in the Culture War.

### The Culture War

It is true there is a Culture War that is going on in the West against what is called the Judeo-Christian worldview. Since the 1930s there has been a striking similarity between the tactics being used in the battle against the Judeo-Christian worldview and the battle *plan* laid out by Italian Communist, Antonio Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci maintained that a successful Marxist revolution in the West must first address the culture.

Rather than seize power first and impose a cultural revolution from above, Gramsci argued, Marxists in the West must first change the culture; then power would fall into their laps like ripened fruit. But to change the culture would require a “long march through the institutions”—the arts, cinema, theater, schools, colleges, seminaries, newspapers, magazines, and the new electronic medium,

radio. One by one, each had to be captured and converted and politicized into an agency of revolution. Then the people could be slowly educated to understand and even welcome the revolution.

Gramsci urged his fellow Marxists to form popular fronts with Western intellectuals who shared their contempt for Christianity and bourgeois culture and who shaped the minds of the young. Message to the comrades: “It’s the culture, stupid!” Since Western culture had given birth to capitalism and sustained it, if that culture could be subverted, the system would fall of its own weight.<sup>1</sup>

It is this leftist attack on Western culture that many religious groups are using as a rallying cry around which to unite for the purpose of “taking back the culture.” Typical is this cry of televangelist James Robison, “...I’ve got to be honest with you. If Catholics, evangelicals, protestants, if we would just come together on common ground, you talk about a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. You talk about a city set on a hill that could light up the way the world should walk and reveal the way not to walk as well as to walk. I think it’s going to happen.”<sup>2</sup>

### Responses to the Culture War

In response to Robison’s and many other similar take-back-the-culture cries, organizations like the Freedom Federation have mobilized to rescue Western Culture. This strange alliance of conservatives, evangelicals, neo-evangelicals, the New-Religious Right, the Word of Faith, and the New Apostolic Reformation says this about themselves on their website:

These organizations represent some of the Nation’s largest constituents of youth, Hispanics, African-Americans, women, clergy, and churches. The common shared interests include faith, moral values, and freedom. The Freedom Federation is committed to core values expressed in the Declaration of American Values, a document which sets forth foundational values. Based on these shared core values, the leaders of these national organizations will work together on common interests to plan, strategize, coordinate, message, and mobilize their various constitu-

<sup>1</sup> Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West* (St. Martin’s Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York, 2002), 77.

<sup>2</sup> Brannon Howse, *Religious Trojan Horse* (Collier, TN; Worldview Weekend Publishing, 2012), 320.

ents to mobilize a movement to advance these shared core values.<sup>3</sup>

Freedom Federation is but one of a number of strange convergences that have united to push back against the attacks on the freedoms present in Western Culture. It's hard to imagine the Religious Right, the Tea Party, the dominion theology crowd, and even Mormon Glenn Beck agreeing on much of anything, but it appears to be happening as they align themselves to do battle for God and country. It is amazing what a common enemy can sometimes accomplish.

Even more surprising is the movement to bring evangelicals and progressives together. The leadership team responsible for promoting this union included on the agenda a report titled: "Come Let Us Reason Together: A Fresh Look at Shared Cultural Values Between Evangelicals and Progressives." One wonders what those "shared values" might be. No doubt the Marxist "social justice" theme is high on the list. The leadership team also provided a document that calls for these evangelicals and progressives to merge. Responding to this call are a number of neo-evangelicals, members of the New Religious Right, New Apostolic Reformation, and Emergent Church leaders. *Standard Bearer* readers may be familiar with some of the names of those who endorsed it: Rev. Brian McLaren, author of *Everything Must Change*; Dr. Richard Mouw, president, Fuller Theological Seminary; Dr. Tony Campolo, professor emeritus, Eastern University; Rev. Jim Wallis, president, Sojourners; and Dr. Ronald Sider, president, Evangelicals for Social Action.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, these unholy alliances promote religious pluralism, solidarity, common good, and interfaith dialogue. Expression of their approach to this agenda is provided by Douglas Kindschi, director of the Kaufman Interfaith Institute at Grand Valley State University:

We acknowledge there is ultimate truth but in our own finite creatureliness, we acknowledge we do not possess the ultimate truth. This kind of respect can lead to acceptance of the other as a truth seeker, but, like oneself, not perfect in understanding.

<sup>3</sup> The Freedom Federation website, posted at: <http://freedom-federation.org/content/members>

<sup>4</sup> Howse, 341-342.

This reminds me of the concept of "holy envy" from Krister Stendahl, former dean at Harvard School of Divinity.... He urged that our dialogue be so respectful and open to new insight that we would experience holy envy—that is, being "willing to recognize elements in the other religious tradition or faith that you admire and wish could, in some way, be reflected in your own."<sup>5</sup>

No doubt our Lord understood nothing of Kindschi's false humility of not possessing ultimate truth or Stendahl's "holy envy" of the religious traditions of the Greeks, Romans, and Jewish leaders of His day when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

### Not a Culture War, But a Spiritual Battle

Clearly these unholy alliances lead to outcomes that Issachar must avoid. While one might sympathize with the concern for the growing cultural decline that these movements intend to correct, jumping on the "take-back-the-culture" bandwagon is not present-day Issachar's answer. Some well-meaning Christians may think that by joining this conflict they will be defending liberty for the sake of the gospel, when in reality they will be compromising the gospel for the sake of liberty. Make no mistake, these compromising unions are rooted in a false worldview: a worldview that declares that there is good to be found in all men and that by joining them in their good Culture War good things will be accomplished. Nothing else but a false worldview rooted in common grace theology is this.

Modern-day Issachar understands that the Culture War confronts only the *consequences* of a much deeper malady: a false worldview. Issachar's is the spiritual battle of the antithesis, not a culture war. A culture that is rooted in the totally depraved nature of fallen man is a lost cause and fit for destruction. Instead, while living *in* this world with its doomed culture, modern-day Issachar is privileged to fight for a far different cause: the noble cause of the Lord Jesus Christ:

15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven,

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Kindschi, "How can we move beyond mere tolerance?" *The Grand Rapids Press* 20 February, 2014, B, 1.

and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him:


17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

19. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell (Col. 1:15-19).

With this grand understanding of Christ as the heart and soul of his worldview, modern-day Issachar is pre-

pared to fight this battle of faith. And what a tremendous incentive this truth provides Issachar in the home, church, and school to arm her children with the knowledge of the Scriptures, an understanding of false worldviews, and the sanctified judgment to evaluate them correctly, lest those raised in covenant homes end up as one of those troubling statistics earlier listed in this article.

To understand the times is to understand worldview. Thus equipped, Issachar's battle cry continues to be "understand the times and live!" 

## BRING THE BOOKS...

## MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA, review editor

*The Psalms in Worship: A Series of Convention Papers Bearing Upon the Place of the Psalms in the Worship of the Church*, Editor: John McNaugher, United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1907. Available as a Google eBook. [Reviewed by Joshua Hoekstra.]

Have you ever wondered where your Psalter came from? Why did the world need a new Psalter? What issues surrounded the creation of our Psalter? Who wrote these lyrics? What were they thinking when they wrote these lyrics? Lastly, and most commonly thought when struggling with an uncommon song, who picked this tune?

*Psalms in Worship* addresses all of these questions. This is a book about the blood, sweat, and tears that went into the first 413 songs we sing. (Remember, the other songs come from the old Dutch Psalter, which is nothing more than a translation of the original Genevan Psalter used in John Calvin's day.) *Psalms in Worship* is a collection of fifty-four papers given at two conventions held in 1905 in Pittsburgh and in Chicago. The purpose of the conventions was "to promote the claims of the Psalms in the field of worship" (5). Additionally, the committee hoped that God would be pleased to use the work in "re-

storing the Psalms to their true place in the hearts and lips of Christian believers" (6). John McNaugher, the book's editor, was also the chair of the Psalter committee and wrote the preface to the Psalter that we use today.

There were a number of pressing issues when our Psalter was produced. Clearly, modern hymns were being used in the church at the time and needed to be pushed back out of the worship service. One of the writers said this of our Psalter: "Possibly it is too free for us, and too literal for liberal hymn-singers. Examine it closely, and mark all its failings; but consider it mainly as an introduction of the Psalms to those who have long used the hymns exclusively" (*The Psalms in Worship*, 435).

Many concerns and criticisms are dealt with in this book. Christ is not present in the Psalms, said some. The Psalms are doctrinally incomplete, claimed others. Should we even sing imprecatory (cursing) Psalms? Psalms are detrimental to mission work! The children need something different! Will the versification be careless? Is this the proper tune to use?

Have you heard these same criticisms today?

Let's face it: the Psalter we sing from isn't perfect, nor will it ever be. The lyrics will never be quite right, and the tunes could always be better. It is a work of man; actually, twenty-three men. These men worked over the course of five years, privately studying, and meeting twice per year. Nine public sessions were held—not short sessions but ten to fifteen days per session and ten hours per day. This was not a hurried project; no accusation of rashness or

---

Mr. Hoekstra is a member of Hudsonville PRC.

carelessness can seriously be made. However, it is worth considering a few quotes in support of their work. “Some shuddered at every word of the original that was omitted, and trembled for the Ark when a word or phrase was added to the text; and yet one or the other must be done, or the work would stop. In nearly every case, after careful comparison of views, the form closest to the exact thought of the original was followed, and the truth of the text was retained without sectarian bias” (433).

And this: “The difficulties in the way of Psalm versification are neither few nor small. The Committee was charged to keep close to the original text, to conform to the language of the Authorized and Revised translations, to avoid extended paraphrases, to provide a variety of meters, and to express the inspired thought with chasteness and elegance of style in accordance with modern standards and tastes. It has been well said that a translation must not be so literal as to convert rich prose into poor verse, not so faithful as to be punctilious in interpretations, nor yet bound to the Hebrew idioms, while preserving the precise form and color of the inspired sentiment” (432).

Yet for all this effort there is no claim of perfection. Rather, we find this quote: “Ultra-conservatism may damage the cause by attaching the same importance to venerable customs as it does to divine appointment. At another time it insists on the use of tokens or antiquated versions of the Psalms, when good reasons exist for a change” (540).

A few points come out of the speeches that can aid us in using our Psalter. This committee did not compose new tunes; instead they leveraged existing tunes. So the next time you see Lowell Mason’s name on a Psalter number, remember that he wrote the tune you are singing but did not write the words. Longer Psalms were broken into sections and set to unique tunes. As an example, see Psalter 225 and 226. In the lower right of 226 you will see that it is actually verses 4–6. The use of verses here does not correlate to the Scripture verses but instead to the poetic verses that the Psalter committee drafted. Sometimes multiple versifications for a Psalm were used. For example, Psalters 52–56 are all versifications of Psalm 23. The Psalter committee deemed 52 to be most faithful to the original and so they listed it first. The reason for associating specific tunes to versifications

was to allow church members more easily to memorize and recall the words based on the tune. Additionally, multiple tunes are used for some Psalms to provide variety.

If there is ever an undertaking to revise the Psalter, this book should be a required read for every person on the committee. In addition to some of the quotes above, it gives helpful tips on making a Psalter. Versification must employ simplicity, not ambiguity. It must strive for the best poetic expression, correct accent, and a natural rhyme. It must not be so rigidly literal that words and phrases “jar upon the modern sensibility” (426). It must conform to current literary standards. Suitable meters must be paired to the Psalm. “Tyre, Philistia, Cush, might give place to some such expression as ‘Gentile nations’ without any perceptible loss to him who would sing with the spirit and the understanding” (426). Tunes must be strong and suitable. It must be singable. “Never must we so strive to make music easy as to make it cheap” (441). There must be a variety of tunes and meters—the songs can’t all have the same beat! Music should generally be composed by Christians because their compositions will have more depth and feeling since their hearts are not stony. The music selected should be judged in light of the Psalms themselves; in other words, the tune must fit the words that are sung. Avoid ditties; a “hip” tune is more likely to do the Psalm a disservice. Some tunes simply belong together because they have been fused to the words that are sung—can you imagine singing “In sweet communion Lord with thee” to ANY other tune? A balance needs to be struck between changing tunes, refreshing tunes, and keeping tunes. How wonderful when tunes can last from infancy to grave so as to provide “rallying points” (450) for the days of one’s life here on this earth. What a daunting task to compose a Psalter! Could you have done any better?

There is much in this collection of speeches that also addresses our attitude toward the use of Psalms in family worship. “The praise service should not be crowded out of the worship at the family altar. It is not true that there is no time for this service. We cannot afford to give it up in order to find a little more time to get gain or pleasure” (42). Not for work, not for school, not for soccer. Are we concerned that we cannot sing well? Are we afraid that our neighbors will hear? Perhaps a simpler way to



witness could not be conceived. Would your neighbor really object to a few poorly sung psalms if the other choice were a heavy metal rock band? (Side note and shameless plug for the Psalm Choir: if you would like assistance singing in your family worship, please use [www.youtube.com/prpsalmchoir](http://www.youtube.com/prpsalmchoir); there you will find a playlist of Psalters from the many choirs that sing in our denomination.)

Regarding our singing of Psalms in the worship service, we can never emphasize enough the importance of focusing on the words. “The tendency is to minify the words and magnify the music. When the whole attention and thought must be given to the music in order to sing at all we sing by rote and scarcely know what we sing. The music gets ninety-nine parts of our attention and the sentiment one lone part” (43). This alone should keep us from hastily changing tunes. Additionally, our ministers have an important calling in regard to focusing on the words. “Let the pastor spend a few moments in each service in pointing out the beauty, sweetness, and richness of the portion selected for the praise service. The people can then more easily sing with the spirit and the understanding” (43).

Do you enjoy singing from the Psalter? Do you open wide your mouth when you sing? Are you excited for the Psalms and for our Psalter? Consider some of these quotes in conclusion. Read them with understanding.

“I hear the choirs of the land invisible. Their melody is wafted through the gates of pearl and over the crags; the music of the throne-land is in my ears; and the songs that I hear are the lyrics we are singing, the old, old songs which bore the Hebrew hopes to the gates of gold, and strengthened our Saviour’s heart in the shadow of the cross—God’s songs, the songs of the redeemed, the songs of the covenant, thine and mine and those of the Church triumphant for evermore” (383).

Even more stunning: “In their exaltation of God the Psalms are incomparable, and in this they are truly catholic. A self-conscious age may sing its own emotions instead of the praises of God; but the Bride of Christ cannot be held for long with her eyes upon the sheen of her own garments, and when she turns from these to gaze upon her Bridegroom’s face, then will her praise burst forth again in the Songs of the Ages, and the Psalter of the Church Catholic will have come to its own” (403).

Finally, “Too little have we appreciated the importance of the musical interpretation of the Psalms, contenting ourselves with bearing witness when we might have been bearing trophies” (445). Trophies! Display pieces. Things you brag about. These are the Psalms. These are God’s words. Is there anything else worth bragging about? ☞

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

### Young Adult Activities

Once again this summer the Young Adult Society of the Lynden, WA PRC, with the help of their congregation, hosted their annual Young Adults Retreat on June 30 through July 3 at the Warm Beach

---

*Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

Camp, about an hour’s drive from Lynden in Stanwood, WA. The theme of this year’s retreat was, “Wisdom: A Gift from God.” Rev. Ron Hanko, pastor in Lynden, spoke on Monday evening from God’s Word found in James 1:5, 6 on “Asking for Wisdom,” and Rev. Allen Brummel, pastor at Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD, spoke Tuesday evening from Ephesians 5:15

on “Walking in Wisdom.” While activities started already the Saturday before due to retreaters coming into town that weekend, the formal retreat did not begin till Monday morning, June 30. In addition to the two speakers and discussion, highlights of the retreat included mud sliding and mud fights in the mud flats after the tide went out at Warm Beach and a boat tour of Deception

Pass. The formal retreat ended after breakfast on Thursday morning, but other activities continued on for two more days. On Thursday those who remained at the retreat enjoyed white-water rafting, which was very good due to high water and raging mountain streams. Friday included a trip to Mt. Baker, where there remained 30 feet of snow, allowing the retreaters opportunity to play in and do some sledding in the snow.

As already indicated, discussion groups were held after each speech, on the subject of that particular speech, and were led by Revs. Brummel and Hanko, as well as two of the retreaters. The young men took turns opening in devotions for each meal, and two of them introduced the speeches and led in singing and opening prayer. Sixty retreaters were present from 23 different churches, including a couple of young men from a URC in Lynden and Jessica Higgs from Australia. Rev. Brummel writes that the Lynden congregation did an outstanding job hosting the retreat, even though it involved a lot of work and sacrifice for the members of the congregation. It was very encouraging for all involved. But Revs. Hanko and Brummel were especially encouraged by the spiritual maturity of the young people involved, and the good discussions they had with them. They were thrilled to see God's covenant faithfulness in providing our churches with spiritually gifted young adults, which bodes well for the future of our churches.

### **Sister-Church Activities**

The British Reformed Fellowship had its biennial conference in Scotland on Saturday, July 26 through Saturday, August 2. Prof. D. Engelsma and Prof. H. Hanko, emeriti professors of our PR Seminary, were the main speakers. Each spoke three times on the topic, "Be Ye Holy, the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification." The venue for this year's gathering was the beautiful and historic Gartmore House, a magnificent eighteenth-century country mansion set in Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

### **School Activities**

On May 8, the Lord in His providence led the members of the Society of the Hope Christian School in Redlands, CA to vote for the approval of adding high school grades, beginning with grade 10, in the 2017-2018 school year. The Society is planning to add a building consisting of two classrooms, restrooms, a library, and a storage room. The estimated cost for this building is \$360,000. Hope Christian School currently has \$100,000 in their building fund to begin this project. Hope hopes to break ground on this building project in 2016 and begin the search for a high school teacher in 2016 for the 2017-2018 school year.

### **Denomination Activities**

On July 16 Rev. Nathan Decker and Prof. Russell Dykstra (traveling from Singapore) traveled to Brisbane, Australia on behalf of our denomination's Contact Committee. While there, they participated in a

conference on the doctrine of the covenant (July 19), led worship in the Brisbane congregation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (July 20), and were observers at the denomination's presbytery meetings (July 21-24). On July 24 Rev. Decker traveled to Singapore in order to lead the worship services of the Covenant ERC on July 27, while Prof. Dykstra remained in Australia to deliver some speeches on Christian education.

Rev. Audred Spriensma and Elder Peter VanDerSchaaf left in mid July for a visit with the Confessing Protestant-Reformed Congregation (Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde [the BERG]) in Giessen, Germany. They went as a delegation from our denomination's Contact Committee. Plans called for time spent preaching and speaking to the students of the seminary where Dr. Jurgen Klautke teaches, and carrying on theological discussions with the men of the BERG.

### **Evangelical Activities**

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC was looking for volunteers to man a booth at the Alto Fair on August 6 and 7. Those two days provided an excellent opportunity to witness to others about the gospel.

The members of the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD enjoyed a little more than their monthly fellowship dinner on July 14. In addition to that highlight, they also took part in an Evangelism Workshop on the theme: "Witnessing

to the Church.” The children of Heritage also took part by doing a craft and Bible lesson in connection with the theme.

The First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI presented a four-part marriage seminar series on four consecutive Friday nights from July 18 through August 8 entitled, “Biblical Love and the Christian Couple.” Rev.

Ron Van Overloop and Rev. Garrett Eriks, along with video presentations by Paul Tripp, were featured. Rev. Van Overloop spoke on “The Foundation of Marriage” and “One-Two-Three-Four: The Hierarchy of Love,” and Rev. Eriks spoke on “Love in Marriage” and “Worshiping God as a Couple.”

## Minister Activities

Candidate Josh Engelsma received calls from Doon, IA; Faith, Jenison; and First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. Steve Key considers the call to labor as missionary to the Philippines. ☞

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of First PRC of Holland express their Christian sympathy to Henry Bierling and family in the death of their wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother,

**PAULINE BIERLING.**

May the word of God comfort them in the assurance of her salvation in Psalm 23:6: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

Rev. D. Holstege, President  
Mr. Greg Bos, Vice-president

### Congratulations!

■ We are thankful to our heavenly Father and rejoice with all of God’s church for the faithful **35 years** of ministry that our Lord has given to our husband, father, and grandfather,

**PROFESSOR RONALD  
CAMMENGA.**

Especially in this evil world, where temptations abound, we pray that the Lord will continue to keep him faithful in God’s work. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15: 58).

Rhonda Cammenga  
11 children (Daniel in glory),  
and 27 grandchildren

### New Clerk/Treasurer

Byron Center PRC:

Clerk:

Mr. Dale Bartelds  
8338 E. Chester Ave. SW  
Byron Center, MI 49315  
(616) 878-9019

(e-mail: [dalebartelds@comcast.net](mailto:dalebartelds@comcast.net))

Treasurer:

Mr. Jason Elzinga  
938 Greenly St.,  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
(616) 896-8346

(e-mail: [jason.elzinga32@gmail.com](mailto:jason.elzinga32@gmail.com))

Please make the changes in your 2014 Acts of Synod & Yearbook.

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sympathy to Alex and Amy Mowery and their sons in the death of their infant daughter and sister,

**ALLIE RAE.**

“O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all of thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

Rev. Carl Haak, President  
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

### Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, July 24, 2014 marked the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

**ALVIN and BRENDA BYLSMA.**

Through the years we have been blessed by the wonderful gift of God-fearing parents who have raised us to love His truth. We are forever grateful for their prayerful guidance and instruction. We pray that the Lord will continue graciously to keep them in His care and use them for good not only in our family, but also in the body of Christ.

“But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness until children’s children” (Psalm 103:17).

✿ Joel and Belinda Brummel

Noah, Brynn, Jonah, Eli, Jacob

✿ Rev. Clayton and Allison Spronk

Courtney, Ashley, Brandon, Brooke,  
Cristina, Amber, Blake

✿ Alex and Pam Bylsma

Adalyn, Cole

✿ Brent and Brittany Looyenga

Calvin, Zachary, Alexis, Charlie

Hull, Iowa

### Seminary Convocation

■ Seminary Convocation will be held in Grandville PRC on September 17, at 7:30 P.M. Prof. Gritters will speak on “Who Trains the Churches’ Preachers?” The seminarians will be introduced as well. You are welcome to join the seminary in this convocation for the new year and to fellowship with professors and students alike.

### **Congratulations!**

■ With deep gratitude and praise to our loving Father, the Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express our congratulations to our Pastor,

#### **REV. CARL HAAK.**

God has blessed him for **35 years** in his calling as a faithful shepherd of God's people. In August of 1979 Rev. Haak began his work in the ministry in Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids. In 1986 he was called by God to Lynden PRC in Washington and in 1994 to Bethel PRC, in Roselle, Illinois. Since 2004 Pastor Haak has served faithfully in Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, Michigan. We thank God for his humble devotion to the high calling that God has given him. He and his family have been a great blessing to all of the congregations in which he served. We pray God may continue to give him strength in his work. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring good tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15).

Philip Vander Wall, Vice President of Georgetown PRC Council  
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

### **Resolution of Sympathy**

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their sympathy to Brad and Becky Butgereit and family in the recent passing away of Brad's mother,

#### **JUDITH BUTGEREIT.**

May they take comfort from the words of Psalm 121:2: "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres.  
David Kregel, Asst Clerk

### **Resolution of Sympathy**

■ The Men's and Ladies Bible Study Society of First PRC of Holland express Christian sympathies to member Henry Bierling and family who grieve the recent loss of Henry's wife,

#### **PAULINE.**

The Lord in His infinite wisdom and love called her unto her eternal home. We pray for the strength and comfort that can be found in God's Word: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

Paul Starrett, President  
Kim Warner, Secretary

## **Annual Meeting**

**REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION**



### **Rev. Clayton Spronk**

**"The Importance of Reading Church History"**

September 25, 2014 at 7:30pm  
Grandville Protestant Reformed Church  
4300 40th St SW, Grandville, MI 49418

### **Resolution of Sympathy**

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their sympathy to John and Lori Schipper, and to Rich and Jane Van Til, David and Sarah Bleyenbergh, and Jason VanTil in the death of their stepmother and step-grandmother,

#### **EDNA SCHIPPER.**

May comfort come from the words of Psalm 91: "I will say of the LORD, he is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, Pres  
David Kregel, Asst Clerk

### **West Michigan Lecture**

**September 26, 2014**

**7:30 P.M.**

in

Sunshine Community Church  
3300 East Beltline NE

**"Kuyper's Common Grace  
'Christianizing of Culture'—  
Reformed Calling or  
Ecclesiastical Suicide?"**

**Prof. David J. Engelsma**

Sponsored by:  
Southwest Protestant Reformed Church  
Evangelism Committee

### *Reformed Witness Hour* **September 2014**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Text</b>
September 7	"A Sinful Response to Sovereign Mercy"	Jonah 4:1-5
September 14	"God's Rebuke of a Pouting Prophet"	Jonah 4:6-11
September 21	"A Greater Than Jonah Is Here"	Matthew 12:41
September 28	"The Baptized Walk in Newness of Life"	Romans 6:3, 4