

Clarion



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CELEBRATING 450 YEARS WITH THE
HEIDELBERG CATECHISM



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Evidence

What is evidence?

The Crown Attorney had finished his summation. In his mind the accused was hopelessly guilty. The evidence was clear and convicting. There was no doubt: the accused had committed the crime and now had to pay.

The attorney for the defence, however, stated that guilt had not been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. The evidence presented was entirely circumstantial. In fact, the evidence pointed in a different direction and exonerated the accused. The Jury could reasonably come with only one verdict: not guilty!

"The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him" (Prov 18:17). What was first thought to be an airtight case later appears to be full of holes. Every witness is "cross examined" and his statements are carefully scrutinized and dissected.

From the above paragraphs we understand the importance of *evidence*. Circumstantial evidence is not primary. There must be concrete evidence that unmistakably connects the accused to the crime.

What is evidence?

There are those who believe that the theory of evolution provides sure evidence regarding the origin and development of all that exists. I use this example because many consider this theorem to be proven without any doubt. To deny the central notion of evolutionism would mean going in against all scientific proof. There is simply too much evidence that the earth is millions of years old. In public high school I had a science teacher who was appalled at the fact that someone actually believed what is in the Bible. "But. . ." he sputtered. . . "evolutionism has been clearly proven and is widely accepted." I was only a fourteen-year-old boy. I still remember his name.

I leave aside now the question whether the evidence for evolutionism is really solid and strong. That's something for scientists to discuss and decide. I am merely a Bible thumper. Thump, thump. My interest lies mainly in what the Bible has to say about something.

Actually I am looking for *evidence*, too. The evidence that I seek is not found first in the book of nature but in the book of Scripture. *What is evidence?* In Hebrews 11:1 we read, "Now faith is being *sure* of what we hope for and *certain* of what we do not see." Let's lift out the words *sure* and *certain*. The NKJV has the following translation, "Now faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen." Lift out the words *substance* and *evidence*. What we believe is sure and certain, has substance and evidence.

Perhaps here lies the difference between secular scientists and mere Christians. Believers are sure and certain that what the Bible says is indisputably true. That is the character of faith. Faith does not say "maybe" or "I think so, but I could be wrong;" faith says *it is true and certain*. Amen, Amen, a believer's favourite words. The evidence is overwhelming and undeniable. Faith says: we hold as true *all* that God has revealed in his Word.

It is noteworthy that the Bible directly bestows the terms *sure* and *certain* on God's work of creation, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed by God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb 11:3). Natural scientists focus on what is visible and quantifiable. Some use the term "hard science." But Christians focus first on what has been revealed in God's Word. The evidence is recognized and embraced by *faith*. The Heidelberg Catechism explains faith as follows, "True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as *true* all that God has revealed in his Word" (Q/A 21).

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Rev. Klaas Stam begins Issue 6 with his editorial "Evidence." Here we read about the important role evidence plays – in the courtroom, in science, in faith.

We have been running a few series recently; Issue 6 contains the final of three articles by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam on Prophetesses, Then and Now. We also have Dr. Theo Lodder's article on Musical Instruments and Musicians in Worship, this time looking at the confessional perspective on music as well as some musings and application.

In this issue we bring you a report on the CRTS Conference of January 2013: "Your Only Comfort: Celebrating 450 with the Heidelberg Catechism." Rev. Rodney Vermeulen gives you an overview of the conference while Rev. Clarence Bouwman provides readers with some take home thoughts.

There is a report on the welcome of Rev. Van Woudenberg and his family to Dunnville, as well as an ARPA Update and a Women's Savings Action report.

Issue 6 contains the Ray of Sunshine column, a Letter to the Editor, and a Mission News insert. In addition, the Treasures New and Old meditation and a Canticle from Rev. George van Popta focus our attention on the celebration of Good Friday, commemorating the crucifixion of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Laura Veenendaal

- 142 EDITORIAL
Evidence**
- 145 TREASURES, NEW & OLD
Worship the Crucified Christ!**
- 146 Phophetesses, Then and Now (3)**
- 149 Musical Instruments and Musicians in Worship:
A Confessional Perspective**
- 152 Canticle**
- 153 Your Only Comfort: Celebrating 450 years with the
Heidelberg Catechism**
- 157 Take Home from the Heidelberg Catechism
Conference**
- 158 ARPA Update**
- 159 Welcome Rev. VanWoudenberg and Family**
- 161 News from the Women's Savings Action**
- 163 RAY OF SUNSHINE**
- 164 LETTER TO THE EDITOR**



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A closer look

It may be good to look closer at Hebrews 11:1. There are two words for which I want to ask your attention. The expression “being sure” is literally the word “hypostasis.” The word means something that is *standing under another thing* as a solid basis. Everything is built on this immovable and unshakable foundation.

Christians do not hope for something that is *perhaps* true in a certain way, but faith is a solid basis on which we place all our expectation. Something is undeniably true because God has revealed it in his Word. We know for a fact that God who created this world is also creating a new heaven and a new earth through Jesus Christ, our glorious Saviour. Scientists cannot prove or disprove this. It is a matter of faith.

Something is undeniably true because God has revealed it in his Word

Then there is the second word “elengos.” This word means certainty and conviction. It is the convincing proof that has decided an experiment or debate. In other words, we are not dealing with circumstantial evidence, but convincing proof and hard evidence. Case closed. The judge has gathered his robes together, adjusted his wig, waved his hand, and left the building.

Compelling evidence

There are Christian academics today who have nilly-willy (Latin: *nolens volens*) succumbed to secular thinking. They do so because they feel that “science” has provided

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CHURCH NEWS

indubitable proof that the earth is millions of years old and that things evolved over a long period of time.

The evidence is so compelling, they suggest, it would be foolish to oppose it or teach otherwise. Hence the fierce reaction when I suggested that evolutionism is *only* a theory. On the contrary, I was told, it is not a theory but a scientific *theorem*. A theorem, you must understand, is *an embodiment of some general principle that makes it part of a larger theory*. A theory in a scientific sense is something that has been proven without any doubt.

Faith and science are strange bedfellows. Faith is being certain of something you do not see and cannot empirically prove. Science is based on what is visible and demonstrable. This does not mean that all science is wrong. It does mean that science should take in a humble spot without grandiose claims that militate against Scripture.

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. The case is closed.

C





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Worship the Crucified Christ!

"It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."

(John 12:7)

When Mary anointed Jesus with perfume, Judas Iscariot and the disciples objected. But Jesus vindicated her, "Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this for the day of my burial." It's a strange expression. It sounds like he's saying that Mary was intending to use that perfume for his burial, so we don't know why she would've poured it at that moment.

What Jesus meant becomes clearer when we compare it to Mark 14:8, "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare my body for burial." What Jesus is saying is something like this: "Mary set the perfume aside to use it to honour me and show her love. And what she has done, in fact, is to prepare my body for burial."

What Mary did to Jesus was what people in those days did to dead bodies: they anointed them with perfume, from head to foot, to cover the stink of death. Did Mary know then, that he was about to die? She should've known it; Jesus had told them often enough. She also knew the Sanhedrin was planning to arrest him. And if she put two and two together, she would've recognized what Jesus was doing by coming out into the open at Bethany, where his enemies would find him. We can't say whether she knew or not. She obviously didn't understand why he had to die. Otherwise she would've expected him to rise again, because he'd said that, too. Maybe this is like

what happened with Caiaphas in John 11:51-52; maybe Mary was expressing more than she realized.

But it doesn't matter whether she knew Jesus was about to die. For Jesus says, "I recognize her love, and I rejoice in it." Such extravagant love is beautiful in the eyes of God. And under the circumstances, what Mary has done is completely appropriate. Her priorities are perfectly in order.

The disciples had said that the perfume could've been sold and the money given to the poor. Jesus said, "You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me" (v. 8). Some people think that Jesus is saying the poor will always be with you, so giving them this money wouldn't have made much difference anyway. Or that Jesus means to say, "You have to choose between giving your money to the poor, and giving it to me." But Jesus would never discourage us from helping the poor. And he'd never suggest that we have to choose between them and him. We only have to think of his words in Matthew 25:40, "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Jesus is actually quoting from Deuteronomy 15:7, "Do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother." And then it says, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be open-

handed toward your brothers, and toward the poor and needy in the land" (v. 11). Jesus is drawing a contrast between what the disciples could always do, and what they could do only at that moment. "You'll always be able to give money to the poor. But I won't always be with you. Disciples, understand who I am, and what I have come to do." The hour was growing late, the cross was a few days away, and they still didn't know. Jesus is saying, "I'm on my way to the grave. Whether Mary knows it or not, she has prepared my body for burial." And this is how Jesus wanted his disciples to see him, and how Jesus wants us to see him: to see that he laid down his life for us.

Jesus says in Mark 14:9, "I tell you the truth: wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what Mary has done will also be told, in memory of her." And so we have also heard the story of Mary's devotion to the Lord. The Holy Spirit holds her out as an example of the joy, thankfulness, and selfless love that belongs to faith in Jesus Christ, the faith that sees and claims him as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. That is the worship that Christ seeks from his church, the love he deserves from his bride. Let us pray that the Spirit will give us the power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is, that we may offer him our hearts, our lives, all that we are and ever will be.





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Prophetesses, Then and Now (Part 3 of 3)

Prophetesses in ancient Israel were an exception and, as we saw in the preceding two articles, their presence does not justify opening the office of elder and minister of the Word to women today. But, one can ask, do we not now live in the age of the Spirit? The prophet Joel predicted that not only our sons but also our daughters will prophesy. Furthermore, the New Testament speaks of prophetesses in Christ's church. What does the reality of the Pentecost outpouring of the Holy Spirit mean for admitting women into the offices of elder and minister? To answer that question we need to consider Joel's prophecy and its fulfillment as well as how prophets and prophetesses functioned in the church.

Joel's prophecy

Through Joel, his prophet, God promised: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29). It is clear that the gift of the Holy Spirit was promised to all, both male and female. On the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter told those assembled that this prophecy was now being fulfilled (Acts 2:16-18). What is the meaning of everyone, male and female, prophesying? Does this, for example, mean that all will now be able to receive revelation, proclaim a new authoritative Word of God, and so contribute to the writing of the canonical Scripture, as the Old Testament prophets did? Will everyone also be able to predict the future, as the Old Testament prophets did? When one considers the evidence of the New Testament, the answer is clearly no.

The apostles are the ones who have a task similar to that of the Old Testament prophets. They receive revelation and speak God's Word. Did the Apostle Paul not write to the Thessalonians: "When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (1 Thess 2:13; also see 4:8). Christ speaks through an apostle (cf. 2 Cor

13:3). The word of the Old Testament prophets and that spoken by the apostles are on the same level (2 Pet 3:2). We therefore accept the writings of the apostles as the very Word of God. They form part of Scripture.

What then was Joel predicting when he spoke of the Spirit being poured out on all people and enabling sons and daughters to prophesy? Joel's reference to the ability to function as a prophet is very general and covers all believers. Receiving new revelation from God is not referred to here. The context indicates that Peter quoted this prophecy to explain why the believers filled with the Spirit were all "declaring the wonders of God" in languages which all visitors to Jerusalem could understand (Acts 2:11). In other words, the prophesying here is equivalent to effectively communicating and declaring the wonders of God. They were able to do this because of the outpouring of the Spirit. According to God's promise, the Spirit would write God's Word on their hearts (Jer 31:33-34; cf. 2 Cor 3:3) and they would thus be enabled to pass it on.

The Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit thus means that believers today are endowed with Christ's Spirit and thus share Christ's anointing, also as prophets and prophetesses (cf. HC, LD 12). This identity enables believers to do their prophetic calling. Believers have been entrusted with the Word of God (cf. Rom 3:2) and through the Spirit can now speak God's Word to those around them (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27). The gospel can and should be communicated through believers in fullness. Thus they do their prophesying by confessing Christ to a world lost in sin (Matt 10:32-33; Mark 8:38).

However, besides this general prophetic office of all believers made possible by the pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, there were also those with special prophetic gifts.

The special prophetic gift

In the early Christian church some were endowed with a special ability to prophesy which set them apart from the average member of the congregation. The Apostle Paul mentions this gift of prophecy, along with

other special gifts such as speaking in different kinds of tongues and the gift of healing and miraculous powers. The Spirit gives these gifts as he determines (1 Cor 12:1-11). In 1 Corinthians 14, the gift of tongues and prophecy are treated as complementary and belonging together. But the gift of prophecy is more than the gift of tongues. “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified” (1 Cor 14:4-5; also see vv. 1 and 39).

This special gift of prophecy appears to be similar to that experienced by the Old Testament prophets for revelation was given through it (1 Cor 14:30, also see v. 26). As in the Old Testament (Deut 13:1-5; 18:20), also in the New Testament, one therefore had to be on guard against false prophecy. The words of those who claimed prophetic revelation had to be evaluated and weighed (1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1; 1 Thess 5:20-21; cf. Rev 2:20). Positively, those with the gift of prophecy “can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge” (1 Cor 13:2). Such mysteries of the gospel were previously unknown and therefore needed to be revealed (cf. Rom 11:25-27; 1 Cor 15:51-54). The mystery of the gospel was made known by revelation to the apostles and prophets – in that order (Eph 3:3-5). These New Testament prophets therefore stand on the same line as the apostles in terms of receiving revelation. Luke tells of anonymous prophets from Jerusalem and Agabus, a prophet, who predicted a severe famine (Acts 11:27-28). Prophets were also active in Antioch (Acts 13:1). The book of Revelation is a prime example of a long prophetic work (cf. Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). Indeed, the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph 2:20).

The very fact that these prophets, along with the apostles, had a foundational function means that their function as conveyers of revelation was temporary. They served a one-time need for setting the foundations of the church in the beginning of “the last days” (Acts 2:17). Once that foundation had been established with all the revelation given that the church required, the need for apostles and prophets ceased.

With this background into the prophetic gift, we can consider this gift in relation to women.



Women and prophecy

Philip the evangelist “had four unmarried daughters who prophesied” (Acts 21:9). Women clearly had the special gift of prophecy, as is also indicated elsewhere (1 Cor 11:5). We are told very little about these prophetesses. Since the special gift of prophecy was a temporary gift to the church in this first period after Pentecost, prophetesses also ceased to exist after the apostolic age.

How did such women endowed with the special gift of prophecy function in the church? When prophesying, presumably in public worship, “every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head – it is just as though her head were shaved” (1 Cor 11:5). This means that when a woman passed on revelation from God she had to do so in a manner which honoured the creational gender distinctives. In the culture of those days that meant that women should wear head coverings in worship. Thus even when passing on divine revelation, such specially Spirit-gifted women were to be mindful of the fact that “the head of the woman is man” (1 Cor 11:3).

Today God no longer gives revelation to men or women and so this special prophetic gift no longer exists and women also have no task here.

Does the fact that women were prophetesses mean that women should therefore be admitted to the office of elder or minister and teach in church? Can we deduce from God's using women to prophesy in the apostolic age the principle that he also uses women to have an official teaching function in the church today so that they can and should be admitted to ecclesiastical office of elder and minister?

Women and teaching

It is important to note that there is a difference between being a prophetess and being a teacher in the church. Prophecy and teaching are two distinct gifts (Rom 12:6-7; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). A prophet or prophetess receives revelation by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God speaks directly through such a person and the words are therefore authoritative. "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20-21). Teachers cannot make that claim. Teaching or preaching explains the Word of God. It interprets the text and derives its authority by being in harmony with Scripture. It is telling that God made use of female prophets in both ancient Israel and in the apostolic period of the Christian church, but he never used women in the main teaching offices of Israel, namely as priests (Lev 10:11; Deut. 33:10) or as elders (Deut 32:7; 1 Tim 3:2). These offices were reserved for men only.

Does the fact that women were prophetesses mean that women should therefore be admitted to the office of elder or minister and teach in church?

This pattern continued after Pentecost. When it comes to teaching in the church today, God's Word is clear. "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim 2:12-13). This authoritative apostolic injunction occurs within the context of instructions for the church when gathered for worship. Since an elder (either teaching or ruling elder) is one who is "able to teach" (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17), this prohibition would exclude a woman

to be ordained in that office since she is not permitted to teach in an official capacity in a church service. Furthermore, this prohibition is based on creation and not on a passing cultural phenomenon (1 Tim 2:13). Outside the official worship services of the church, women are able to teach as the example of Priscilla and Aquila shows. They explained to a recent convert, Apollos, "the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26). Women were also active in the church in other supportive roles, as the case of Euodia and Syntyche showed. These women contended at Paul's side in the cause of the gospel (Phil 4:3). Phoebe was likewise of great help (Rom 16:2).

Those who wish to see women admitted to ecclesiastical office will ask, but what then does Galatians 3:28 mean? "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Does this passage not indicate that gender is no longer a factor for determining one's role in the church? Scripture must be interpreted with Scripture. Taken in isolation this text can be used to defend almost anything. The context indicates that male and female are the same in terms of sharing fully in Christ's salvation (Gal 3:26-29). No one is excluded because of race, social standing, or gender.

In conclusion

The egalitarian spirit of our time urges us to ordain women into the offices of elder and minister. If we accept Scripture as authoritative, then we have to say no to that pressure that is also exerting its influence on churches with a Reformed name. However, forbidding women admittance to these offices does not in any way mean that women have no task in the church. They certainly do! The Holy Spirit also endows women with many gifts for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. But the use of these gifts is not dependent on being ordained into a specific office.

With respect to the prophetic task, both male and female are recipients of the promise of God that he will pour out his Spirit on his people and raise up prophets and prophetesses (Acts 2:17). *All* believers have the full freedom and obligation to prophesy and bear witness to our Lord and Saviour both in church and in society at large. One does not need to be ordained into an ecclesiastical office to fulfill one's prophetic task as Christians. All believers are under holy obligation to use one's prophetic gifts and talents both within and outside the church to the glory of our God.





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Musical Instruments and Musicians in Worship: A Confessional Perspective

In previous articles, we've surveyed the biblical data concerning musical instruments and musicians in worship. We now turn briefly to our Reformed confessions. Although the Three Forms of Unity do not address the subject of musical instruments and musicians in particular, Articles 7 and 25 of the Belgic Confession and Lord's Day 35, Q/A 96 of the Heidelberg Catechism do provide some clear direction.

The whole manner of worship which God requires

The sufficiency of Holy Scripture, including its teaching on the worship of God, is the subject of Belgic Confession Article 7, with which the church confesses:

We believe that Holy Scripture fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein. The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length. It is therefore unlawful for any one, even for an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in Holy Scripture: yes, *even if it be an angel from heaven*, as the apostle Paul says (Gal 1:8). Since it is forbidden to add or to take away anything from the Word of God (Deut 12:32), it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.

Our confession declares here not merely that Scripture says something about worship, but that "the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length." The church of the New Covenant is simply not permitted to ignore the length to which the Holy Spirit goes in teaching about Old Covenant worship, particularly of the Mosaic and Davidic eras which are described in expansive scriptural detail. On the topic of musical instruments and musicians, furthermore, the Christian church is duty-bound to heed the in-depth writings of Holy Scripture concerning the Davidic liturgical period.

The fulfillment of the law in Christ

Belgic Confession Article 25, which addresses the relationship between the Old and New Covenants, also offers some guidance that is vital to the Christian church's perspective on musical instruments and musicians in worship. This article states that

We believe that the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased with the coming of Christ, and that all shadows have been fulfilled, so that the use of them ought to be abolished among Christians. Yet their truth and substance remain for us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have been fulfilled. In the meantime we still use the testimonies taken from the law and the prophets, both to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel and to order our life in all honesty, according to God's will and to his glory.

The New Testament offers no indication whatsoever that musical instruments are among the shadows of the law that ought to be abolished, as is clearly the case with the sacrifices and other associated ceremonies of the law. On the contrary, as was observed in the previous article, musical instruments and musicians in the Revelation to John make the song of the Lamb ring forth from the multitude of worshippers around God's throne like never before.

As commanded in his Word

The Heidelberg Catechism also addresses the manner of worship in its formulation concerning the second commandment of God's law, where it says that the faithful may not "worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word" (LD 35, Q/A 96). The positive thrust of this teaching, then, is that we are to worship God only as he has so prescribed in his Word, namely, in the Old and New Testaments.

Musical Instruments and Musicians in Worship: Preliminary Musings and Applications

Drilling down into God's revelation

In previous articles, we surveyed the biblical data. Some have claimed that “the Bible says virtually nothing about church music.”¹ One might argue, however, not only on the basis of our survey of Holy Scripture, but also on the basis of what follows from a closer study of it, that it says *a lot* about church music. At the very least, “what it does say is of great assistance to us in determining the decisions we have to make in church music.”²

We are to worship God only as he has so prescribed in his Word

Before drilling down into God's revelation in the Bible concerning instrumental song in future articles, we do well to contemplate the significance and practical implications of what we have discovered so far, and its relevance for the church's worship today.

Music as human cultural enterprise

When we gather before God in worship, we come as humans who are part of a long musical tradition. Music is one of the most integral, instinctive elements of the human cultural enterprise (Gen 4:20-22), and thus, of who we are as human beings. From the establishment and development of instrumental song in worship over the course of Israel's early history, it is evident that our Creator-God expects us, as human creatures, to worship him with instrumental song. Making music to God is instinctive to his creatures; making music with instruments is both *instinctive* to, and *distinctive* of, his *human* creatures. This makes our subject all the more pressing.

Instrumental music an ordinance of God

Making music with instruments in worship was not something that was merely dreamed up by humans, even though it seemed natural to them as a way of expressing praise and gratitude (Exod 15:20-21). Rather, God

himself commanded it (Num 10:1-10; 2 Chron 29:25). Through King David, he even established an elaborate ministry of music and song among the Levites (1 Chron 16:4-6). In seeking, then, what is the best way to use musical instruments to praise the LORD, we do well to open up God's revelation and look for clues.

Musical instruments and singing

While the playing of instruments was not always for the purpose of accompanying or leading singing, it seems that in most cases it was. Thus, the musical ministry of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, was called “the ministry of prophesying” (1 Chron 25:1; cf. 1 Sam 10:5). Furthermore, the Levite musicians could not just make music of any kind; they were “put in charge of the service of *song*” (1 Chron 6:31, emphasis added). Even more significantly, the musical instruments of the Levites were called instruments *for* or *of* sacred song (1 Chron 15:16; 16:42; Neh 12:36, etc.). Evidently, there was a close connection between music and word – between playing on instruments and singing – in Scripture. This was to be reflected by the musicians in how they played their instruments, namely, to carry and enhance holy song.

Music is one of the most integral, instinctive elements of the human cultural enterprise

This connection between the music of instruments and the words that were sung has obvious implications for the place and role of musicians and their instruments in the Lord's service of worship. Musicians must make music on their instruments to enhance the words that are sung, not to detract from those words, nor to draw attention to themselves or their instruments. Church musicians are to remember that they play instruments *for* song. Voices and instruments should blend together into one sound, rather than competing to be heard (2 Chron 5:13).

The LORD's musical instruments

Even the instruments which King David made were called “the LORD's musical instruments. . . made for praising

the LORD” (2 Chron 7:6). The kings did not cheap out on the instruments, but imported the highest quality materials to manufacture them, along with the other building materials for the temple, costly as that was (1 Kgs 10:11-12). Like the temple itself, the musical instruments were to display the glory of Yahweh, who made his dwelling there!

Church musicians, then, must remember that their musical instruments cease to be theirs, in a sense, in worship. They belong to the LORD God who is worshipped. Furthermore, quality instruments are worth every dollar that is invested in them. Although this principle does not give license to purchase musical instruments irresponsibly, it does require musicians to search for the highest quality instruments that they can afford. Churches, furthermore, should see to it that church musicians are not forced to purchase the cheapest, lowest quality instruments available.

Instrumental song and spiritual vitality

Instrumental song, since it was a reflection of the spiritual vitality of Israel and the favour of her God (Neh 13:10; Ps 137; Jer 7:34; Ezek 26:13; Amos 5:23), and also of their spiritual prowess (2 Chron 20:21; Ps 144), remains an indicator of the spiritual health of the church.

The favour of Christ our Lord upon us and our spiritual vigour and valour can be measured, to some degree, by the attention, vigour, time, and money that we devote to the church’s musical ministry (2 Chron 23:18; 35:15; Neh 13:10-12; Jer 33:10-11; Amos 9:11-12). A careful reading of the Psalms confirms this (Ps. 33; 92; 98; 144; 150, etc.; cf. Eph 5:18-20).

Christ, the song-leader

If one should question, as one might, whether such practical implications and imperatives for the present-day church can be drawn from the Old Testament, it can hardly escape the attentive Bible-reader’s notice that the New Testament doesn’t seem to let up on instrumental song.

Church musicians are to remember that they play instruments for song

Jesus sings God’s praises using psalms (Heb 2:12; Ps 22:22; cf. Rom 15:7-13; Luke 24:44), with no indication that he means less by song than his Old Covenant brothers and sisters experienced and enjoyed.

Paul’s command to make music “with your heart fully engaged” includes both singing and instrumentation (Eph 5:19-20).

John’s vision from the Lord Jesus in Revelation is thundering and ringing with instrumental music and song all around (Rev 1:10; 4:1; 5:8; 8-11; 14:2).

The Holy Spirit tells all Christians, furthermore, to cock their ears for the sound of the trumpet call of God!

So tune your instruments under the baton of the Master-Musician. Warm up your voices with his songs. Develop and master new musical skills by the power of his Spirit. Let the music for the King, still thunder and ring!

¹ Erik Routley, *Music Leadership in the Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1967), 54.

² Ibid.





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Canticle

It's Midnight in the Garden

1. It's mid - night in the gar - den;
our Lord has fal - len prone.
With an - guished prayers he cries out;
he strug - gles all a - lone.
It's mid - night - how he's suf - fering;
his friends are fast a - sleep.
They can't keep watch one hour;
their sleep is ve - ry deep.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>2. It's midnight – he's in anguish;
his sweat falls to the earth.
His perspiration's bloodied;
he's troubled near to death.
It's midnight – he is burdened;
our sins caused him his grief.
God's wrath poured out upon him
to bring us full relief.</p> | <p>3. It's midnight – deepest sadness
engulfs the Holy One.
And yet he prays, "O Father!
O God, your will be done."
It's midnight – and the Father
now strengthens his dear Son.
Our Lord goes on to victory.
Dear friends, the battle's won!</p> |
|--|---|

Text: © George van Popta, 2009

Tune: Ick wil mij gaen vertroosten

76 76 D



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Your Only Comfort: Celebrating 450 years with the Heidelberg Catechism

Third Annual CRTS Conference, January 18-19, 2013

The timing of this conference to coincide with the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism added a festive and thankful note to the proceedings. As much as being an opportunity for growth and learning, it was an opportunity for celebration. That so many from Reformed backgrounds are still interested in this 450-year-old document, affectionately known as the Heidelberg, was evidenced in the fact that over 300 persons had registered for whole or part of the conference. In addition, others were given the opportunity to participate via satellite on Friday evening and Saturday morning. The modern technology that allowed for the live streaming of a number of the plenary sessions to remote locations also allowed the presenters to answer questions that came in from those locations.

I suspect that for all participants, whether remote or local, the conference proved to be a blessing in many ways.¹

Dr. Joel R. Beeke: Catechism and preaching

Dr. Beeke is president and professor of systematic theology and homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and a pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He had the privilege of being the first to address the conference. He began by taking us back to the original purpose for which the catechism was written. While more catechisms were written in the years following the Reformation, one



Dr. Joel R. Beeke
delivering his speech on
Catechism preaching

thing that is unique about the Heidelberg Catechism is that it was also written to be a guideline for preaching. However, the use of the Heidelberg Catechism for preaching has been, and continues to be, challenged.

In his thorough and well-structured presentation Dr. Beeke outlined for pew sitters and preachers alike the immense value in catechism preaching for churches of the twenty-first century. In order to make his point he began by speaking about the development of catechism preaching. As those who preach the catechism or sit under catechism preaching week by week, we often have the impression that catechism preaching began with the publication of

the Heidelberg Catechism. However, the basic truths and norms of Scripture have, from the very early church, been preached using the Apostles' Creed, the sacraments, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments as guide. It is not surprising then to learn that catechism preaching found a place in all strands of the Reformation, including Calvinism. The publication of the Heidelberg and its incorporation into regular church life gave a significant boost to catechetical preaching. The fact that a number of synods, including the well-known Synod of Dort 1618-1619, ruled that catechism preaching should be the norm cemented its place in Reformed church life.

While catechism preaching enjoyed a place of prominence during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, it has declined since then. The decline began in the Netherlands Hervormde Church where, after much discussion during the eighteen hundreds, catechism preaching became optional. In North America doctrinal preaching also began to lose its appeal, particularly among those Reformed churches which have the longest history on North American soil. Thankfully, it maintains its rightful place in faithful Reformed churches today.

Objections to catechism preaching are still raised, however. Four of the most common objections to catechism preaching were outlined and more than adequately answered during the presentation. Dr. Beeke then proceeded to list and explain the strengths of catechism preaching, various approaches to catechism preaching, and finally the practical aspects of catechism preaching. In a word, today's Reformed churches do well to maintain this practice for the wellbeing of their members and the glory of God's name.

Dr. Lyle Bierma: The doctrine of the covenant in the Heidelberg Catechism

The second plenary session of the conference began at 1:30pm on Friday afternoon. Dr. Bierma, professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, took to the podium to address the conference on the doctrine of the covenant in the Heidelberg Catechism. It is, at times, lamented in Reformed circles that the Catechism



makes so little mention of a doctrine so prominent in Scripture. The word covenant occurs in the catechism only three times, while there are a number of other less explicit references to it. However, there is much more covenant theology in the Heidelberg than a casual read might suggest.

To understand this, one must consider the Heidelberg Catechism alongside another of Ursinus' catechisms – the Larger Catechism. Ursinus wrote the Larger Catechism, intended for a more academic setting, about the same time as he wrote the Heidelberg Catechism. In that catechism he uses the word covenant much more frequently. That can be seen by comparing the corresponding questions and answers of both catechisms. Such a comparison reveals that the doctrine of the covenant is much more prominent in the Heidelberg Catechism than its rather infrequent use of the word “covenant” suggests. The reason that the Heidelberg Catechism is much less explicit than the Larger Catechism is that Frederick III, the ruler of the Palatinate who oversaw the writing of the Catechism, wished the Catechism to have a wide an appeal as possible, including an appeal for Lutherans who did not place much emphasis on this doctrine.

That the doctrine of covenant is indeed pervasive throughout the Catechism can also be seen in the fact that the double benefit of belonging to Christ – justification and sanctification – can be seen throughout the catechism. Dr. Bierma furnished us with numerous examples. He finished his presentation by highlighting how the doctrine of covenant, which is prominent in both the Catechism's structure and contents, should inform the way we teach and preach the catechism. In a word it should be done covenantally or relationally.

Dr. Herman J. Selderhuis: The Heidelberg Catechism: the secret of its success

On Friday evening the satellite locations successfully joined us for Dr. Selderhuis' speech. Dr. Selderhuis is professor of Church History at the Theological University Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. He traced out for us the early distribution of the Catechism in both Germany and The Netherlands. It did not take long for the Heidelberg Catechism to surpass other catechisms in popularity and use. There are a number of reasons that this catechism became so popular. Reformed believers took the catechism along with them whenever they were forced to flee as a result of persecution. Another reason was its broad theological appeal. Among the catechisms that resulted from the Reformation it was less bound to a particular controversy than others. As such, it was not geographically bound to a particular area as other catechisms were. Further, the Dutch, who were active in trade and commerce around the world, adopted the catechism as a binding confession and so they took it with them and had it translated, for example, into Malay as early as 1619. Another reason it saw wide spread acceptance is the fact that it was, and still is, often published together with church service books. That practice began in The Netherlands in the years immediately following its publication and still continues today. Finally the publication, in 1591, of Ursinus' lecture notes on the catechism provided a ready resource to explain its contents.

Given all that, however, the main reason for the success of the Heidelberg Catechism is its contents. From the first question and answer to the last, it is grounded in Scripture and thus speaks to the everyday lives of God's people. As a result the catechism has had, and continues to have, an enormous impact on Reformed spirituality. It

addresses its readers as those who have a living bond with Jesus Christ. Its contents make that clear.

Opposition to the Catechism was not long in coming, though. It came from both Lutherans and Catholics. Various treatises were published outlining supposed errors in the Catechism. After Frederick III's death, his son, who took over the rule of the Palatinate, branded it a heretical document. Sadly, however, opposition also came from within the Reformed camp. The focus of that opposition was on its binding character.

Notwithstanding, under God's providential hand the Catechism continues to be used in Reformed churches where the emphasis needs to be on the internalization of what it teaches rather than just on its memorization.

Dr. J. Van Vliet: The comforted I in the Catechism

Dr. Van Vliet's presentation was also broadcast via live stream to the various satellite locations. Dr. Van Vliet, who is professor of dogmatics at Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, began by displaying a chart



which highlighted those questions and answers of the catechism in which the authors wrote in the first person singular – I, me, my. Hence the title of his presentation – “The Comforted I in the Catechism.” The chart highlighted the fact that the “comforted I” questions and answers are spread throughout the catechism and that each of the three major parts of the catechism contains some “comforted I” questions and answers. The catechism also begins and ends with reference to the “comforted I.”

The first question Dr. Van Vliet sought to answer was whether the use of the “comforted I” was intentional or more-or-less accidental. It became clear that the authors of the Catechism switched to the “comforted I” on purpose and at strategic moments. This can be seen, for example, in the final question and answer of the Catechism which uses the “comforted I,” while the previous Lord's Days on prayer all speak of “we” or “our.” Such a change from the first person plural to the first person singular would appear intentional. Another indicator of intentionality is that the entire section on the sacraments is written using “we” and





“our” as well as a few occurrences of “they” and “them.” However, Question and Answer 69 and 75, the first on baptism and the first on the Lord’s Supper respectively, are both written using the “comforted I.” Finally, Questions and Answers 56–61, which deal with such personal topics such as forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and being righteous before God are all written using I, me, or my. Clearly the use of the “comforted I” is intentional.

Given that it was intentional, where did the authors of the Catechism learn to write in this way, or was it something new with them? That’s the second question Dr. Van Vliet sought to answer. It’s clear that others wrote catechisms in this way too, so it’s not new with the catechism’s authors. However, Ursinus and Olevianus appear to have refined that style of writing catechisms to a higher level.

Although the authors of the Catechism were intentional in their use of the “comforted I,” it is good to ask whether such use of the singular first person pronoun is theologically sound, particularly given today’s world in which the focus is far too much on the self. However the “I” of the Catechism is a “radically anti-ego I,” as Dr. Van Vliet phrased it. The first question and answer says it: I am not my own but belong to Jesus Christ. The “I” of the catechism is not at all about individualism but has everything to do with Christ-centredness.

In the final part of his presentation Dr. VanVliet beautifully outlined some of the personal and pastoral benefits of the “comforted I” by explaining a number of its occurrences in the Catechism.

The Launch of www.heidelberg-catechism.com

There was a buzz of excitement in the air at the beginning of the Friday evening session. Due to the tireless

work of Dr. Van Vliet of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and his able technical partners, the brothers Jamie and Bernie Harsevoort, the website www.heidelberg-catechism.com was ready for launch. I won’t say more about it here other than to strongly recommend you check it out. I expect that it will quickly become a go-to resource for all things Heidelberg Catechism related.

Workshops

In addition to the plenary sessions four workshops were held at different times during the conference. The conference was structured so that those who attended the entire event could participate in each of the four workshops. The four workshops were titled: Catechism and Preaching; Catechism in Church, Home, and School; The Catechism and Future Generations; The Catechism and Mission and Church Planting Work. The workshops were run by the students of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. Space does not permit me to outline the contents of each workshop – the titles speak for themselves. One highlight, however, stands out and that is that the workshops provided a wonderful opportunity for different age groups to interact about the use of the Catechism in all areas of church life. That interaction was enhanced because the Roots Youth, an Ontario-based Reformed youth organization, were holding a conference to coincide with the main conference. Their attendance at the workshops was helpful and instructive.

Conclusion

I expect that the conference was experienced as a real treat by all who attended. It was very well organized and ran very smoothly. It was an opportunity to learn but also an opportunity to express thankfulness to our Father in heaven who led men in history to author the Heidelberg Catechism. That thankfulness was expressed not just in prayer but also by whole hearted singing throughout the conference. The conference had the added bonus of being a wonderful occasion to catch up with friends and colleagues as well as become acquainted with Reformed believers from different parts of North America and the world. We could experience the catholic nature of Christ’s church in a very tangible way. To him be the glory!

¹ If you didn’t have the opportunity to attend or would like to listen to any of the presentations again you can find all the videos at www.heidelberg-catechism.com



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Take Home from the Heidelberg Catechism Conference


- Elector Frederick III, who commissioned the Heidelberg Catechism, wanted to help his subjects come to know the Saviour. He encouraged preachers to read one ninth of the Catechism each Sunday (so that the congregation would hear the entire Catechism every nine weeks), advised the preacher to have the catechism students recite the answer to a given question in unison in church each Sunday (they'd have to memorize it in the week prior, with the assistance of their parents), and instructed the preachers to preach from the Catechism in every PM service. Lofty aspirations he had for the Catechism!
- In 1586 the Synod of The Hague made it mandatory that the Catechism be preached in church every Sunday. The Arminians objected to such staunch teaching of solid biblical doctrine, but the Synod of Dort in 1618/19 pulled out all stops to protect catechism preaching. Consider these decisions of this synod: if a preacher failed to preach from the Catechism, he was to be censured; even if attendance was poor (eg, only the preacher's family!), the preacher was still to preach the Catechism as an illustration of how important proper doctrinal preaching was; Synod would petition government to ensure that the people would (be able to) attend church twice each Sunday so as to get a full diet of solid Bible preaching and teaching. As a result, among Dutch people (be it in Holland, be it in lands of migration) the seventeenth century was a golden age of faithful catechism preaching – and therefore a good understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. And getting doctrine right is the first step to getting life right!
- In the eighteenth century, love for the wealth of the gospel as uncovered in the Great Reformation shriveled in much of Europe, and so the door was opened for the thinking of the French Revolution. There was a predictable response in relation to catechism preaching; its value was questioned, the sermons detached doctrine from real life, church attendance dried up, etc. But in the churches spawned by the Secession of 1834 catechism preaching revived – and the same thing happened amongst the churches spawned by the Doleantie of 1886. This remains our heritage today, where North America's small Reformed federations (be it Canadian Reformed, Heritage Reformed, United Reformed, Free Reformed, etc.) continue to treasure catechism preaching Sunday by Sunday. As a result, the members of these churches have a doctrinal knowledge and a resulting biblical worldview and lifestyle that makes these churches stronger within and without than the more mainline churches of our continent who have discontinued the practice of catechism preaching.
- Zachariah Ursinus (one of the Catechism's authors) very much *thought in terms of the covenant* when he wrote Lord's Day after Lord's Day. As we today seek to understand the depths of the Heidelberg Catechism, we do well to think the thoughts of the author – and that means that we need to think in distinctly covenantal terms: God is *our* God, we are *his* people.
- The *little ones* should be taught to think in terms of belonging with body and soul to Jesus Christ; they're not to see themselves in their growing years as outside God's interest and care, but to see themselves as deeply loved. So *children* (yes, long before they are teenagers) should memorize the Catechism, should be able to say with Lord's Day 1 that "I belong. . . to Jesus Christ," and to say with Lord's Day 21 that "I am and forever shall remain a living member of" the church – for God loves *me*. Try that on your four-year-old! Believe me, their minds are sponges!
- The Catechism is never dry doctrine, never just interesting truths distanced from self or from daily life, but always God's promises to *you*, very personally, in the grunt of daily living. That gives colour and life to catechetical instruction, not just in the minister's catechism class but also – and especially – in the parents' catechetical instruction. And it's parents first of all who stand beside their children in life's ups and downs, and so have opportunity to keep directing them to God's

claim upon them and the resulting double benefit of redemption and the Holy Spirit promised to each little one. I came away from the Conference convinced we'd do the next generation a great service if the family would recite the Lord's Day together at the kitchen table every day, and Dad explain in age-appropriate fashion what that Lord's Day means. That's distinctly working with the reality of the covenant as found so richly in Scripture and reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism.

- The Heidelberg Catechism has had a greater impact on more people and in more cultures and countries around the globe than any other confessional document. It expresses personal answers to one's real questions: "I belong, with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ" – and subsequent Lord's Days work out why that reality is so and how that reality helps in daily living.
- The authors wanted the readers to express their *own* faith in the struggles of real life. "I" need to confess my personal bankruptcy. Then Jesus told us to pray using the plural form "*our* Father," and in its explanation of the Lord's Prayer the Heidelberg Catechism

zealously uses the plural "we" and "us" and "our" – until with the word "Amen;" it wants the confessor to get so personal again: "God has much more certainly heard *my* prayer than *I* feel in *my* heart that *I* desire this of him" (LD 52, Q/A 129).

Conclusion

- How do I expect to work with what I learned? To have the personal character of the Heidelberger emphasized served to focus my attention again on the need to think of God's promises as (by God's grace) *actually for me* – which in turn means that I confess in daily life not simply "the" faith or perhaps "our" faith, but "my" faith.
- In catechism class, on the pulpit, and in the home, congregation and children are not to see *the faith* as detached from *self*, but are to see instead that God's promises in Scripture are *for you* – and that is why *you* need to respond not just with intellectual knowledge about what the faith is but need to respond with heart-felt assurance that God's promises are actually "mine;" "I – *fill in own name* – belong with body and soul, both in life and death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ." 

An Update from ARPA Canada

The Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) has as its mission to educate, equip, and encourage Reformed Christians to political action and to bring a biblical perspective to our civil governments.

Under the blessing of the Lord, this work is growing and we give thanks to him for what he has given to us as an organization. With the retirement of our chair, John Voorhorst, we herewith publicly acknowledge God's gifts through John as he has shepherded ARPA from its small beginnings in 2007 to what it is today. We are grateful for his dedication to and love for the cause of ARPA as chair and as the one responsible for donor relations. His efforts will continue to bear fruit for a Reformed voice in the political arena.

ARPA welcomes Bruce DeBoer (Toronto) as its new chair and Frank Oostdyk (London) as its new board member. With the rapid growth of the work, ARPA is also pleased to welcome to the organization a team of fund-

raisers: Ian Moes (Fraser Valley), Tyler Van Vliet (Fraser Valley), Jeremy Penninga (Smithers), Peter VanAssen (Neerlandia), James Teitsma (Winnipeg), and Marco Zwaan (Niagara).

Please remember the work of ARPA with your prayers and financial support as it seeks to face the challenges of responding biblically to the increasingly secular and anti-Christian spirit influencing politics today. In particular please support the efforts of Mark Penninga as director, André Schutten as legal counsel, and Mike Schouten as director of WeNeedALaw.ca as well as the many local ARPA groups spread around our nation.

Feel free to visit our website, ARPACanada.ca and make use of the many resources available there. You will also find the latest political and legal challenges and how to inform your member of Parliament of your views on the issues of the day.

The Board of ARPA Canada 

Welcome Rev. VanWoudenberg and Family

On Friday June 1, 2012, the Dunnville Congregation had been an evening of reminiscing, thankfulness, appreciation, and enjoyable fellowship. Rev. D. deBoer and family had accepted a call to Chatham and were leaving after eight years of service in Dunnville.

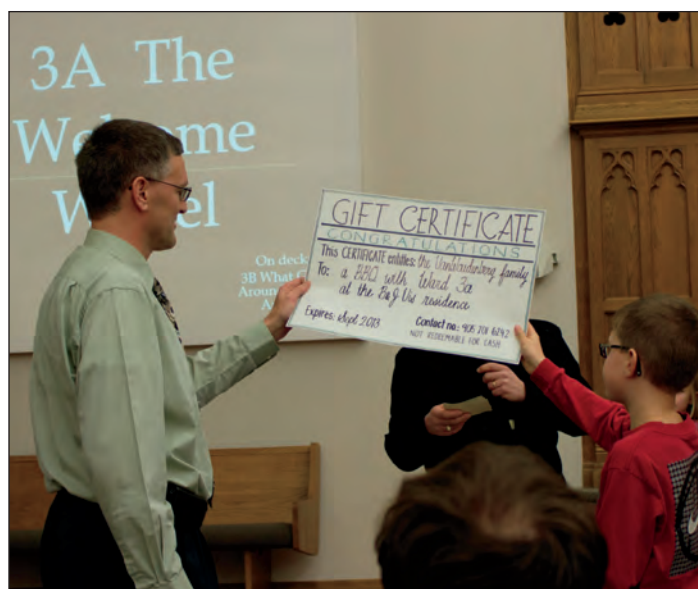
Welcome evening

Now Saturday January 12, 2013 a joyous Dunnville Congregation gathered together again, this time to welcome Rev. J. VanWoudenberg, their newly called minister, and his family. It was a full house. An early start to the evening ensured that the children could also participate. Our M.C., Br. Ralph Vis, set the tone by reading from Romans 15:1-7, "So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Each half ward in the congregation was responsible for an item of entertainment. This included giving practice in name recognition, knowledge of members' occupations, information about the VanWoudenbergs, provision of "necessary supplies," and pitting the new minister's Bible knowledge against two grade five students. Even the fortune wheel was used (we will probably be receiving a heavy sermon about the difference between "chance and providence") to spell out the Dunnville mascot!

Under name recognition, our "best usher" was sure that his neighbour was meant instead of him. Accepting such distinction was just too much. Under the "V" of VanWoudenberg we heard: "I would like to verbalize how vivacious you feel when you fall victim to a volcanic vessel of velvety hot chocolate or vibrant French vanilla. However, you need not venture your Visa when you can victoriously volunteer this voucher."

In the pitting of the two youths' Bible knowledge against the new preacher's, they confidently answered such questions as what were the names of the first and the last books of the Bible. Rev. VanWoudenberg discovered that the honest answer of "no" was not suitable for



the question, "Could you provide the names of the eight sons of Abraham?" He made up with answering correctly "the winner take all" question of, "Which half ward did the best, '2B or not to be'?"

Installation

The following morning our former minister Rev. D. deBoer preached the installation sermon on Exodus 19:1-9, with the theme being "God is using his Word to make you a kingdom of priests." Israel was freed from slavery; but God wanted to do much greater things for Israel. He would become their king. The Lord does this in a beautiful and classic covenantal style, using a historical prologue, a declaration of intent, duties of the people, and consequences if they did not obey. The congregation was also encouraged to be "in awe" of God's promises and to respect "the Word" as it would come through Rev. VanWoudenberg. Rev. VanWoudenberg was encouraged to "let the Word dwell in him."



Afterwards, Rev. VanWoudenberg said his “I do” to taking on his tasks and responsibilities as laid out in the form for installation and the congregation pledged their support for their new pastor. We concluded the service by appropriately singing “Ye servants of God, your master proclaim” and “Then let us adore and give him his right.” The subscription form would be signed later at the next council meeting. Congratulatory remarks in person or by letter were thankfully received from surrounding United Reformed and Canadian Reformed churches, and the Niagara Classis. Some personalized comments slipped in, such as, “Please send us a copy of your secret handbook on how to receive ministers quickly” (Grassie), or “as Dunnville land types (loamy to rock hard clay) and livestock vary in how they are handled so Rev. VanWoudenberg will need to work in varied ways with different Dunnville members” (Attercliffe).

Inaugural sermon

In the PM service Rev. VanWoudenberg treated us in his in-

augural sermon to Paul’s instruction to Titus about how the work of the evangelist is to be done (Titus 1:1-4). The glory, goal, and promise of this ministry were highlighted. It was profound that Titus worked on God’s special project which had already been worked out, before the

beginning of time! In the same manner a minister’s agenda is not his but God’s, which may at times bruise toes. Faith will not be “fixed” in us but “fostered” through the knowledge God provides us with the ministry of his Word. The Lord therefore gives us hope. We are destined for success in a world that is replete with disappointments and failures.

After having communion with the Lord in the auditorium, the congregation and many guests had fellowship spiced with drinks and snacks in the meeting hall, completing the ceremony and celebration of receiving a new pastor and teacher in Dunnville.

The Lord has blessed us richly. **C**



News from the Women's Savings Action for the Theological Seminary

Whenever our family moved to a new town, we did a little research into the history of that place. I remember one supper when I was growing up, Dad gave us some historical tidbits that he had uncovered about the 100-year-old house we had moved into as well as the neighbourhood. We have had the opportunity to do the same for our children in the times that we have moved.

Upon "moving in" to the WSA, two stuffed binders filled to the point of bursting were handed over to me. What a treasure trove of history! Some of the first pages are filled with beautiful Dutch handwriting, some with the smeary Gestetner print, and many with typewriter print.

Can you imagine what the reoccurring theme in all the letters and newsletters is? "With gratitude." This theme has not changed in all the years of the WSA's existence. We are deeply grateful for all the work done in each congregation to collect for the library. How could we have a seminary without a library filled with commentaries, books, journals, and digital resources?

In the past year, the total collected was \$40,256.82. We were able to give a cheque of \$40,000 to the principal at the Convocation in September.

At our annual meeting with the library committee, the librarian, Margaret Vandervelde, reported on how the li-

brary serves everyone. The librarian was able to answer 130 reference questions. She was also able to host a workshop in January of 2012. At that workshop she taught about the more advanced qualities of the online databases. She also gave time saving techniques, and how to use the interface more effectively for research.

Thank you to everyone for sending in your donation to make the convocation cheque possible and ultimately to make a library possible. Soon the annual collection drives will start again. Could we ask you to prayerfully consider donating? Whether by pennies, change, dollar bills, or by cheque, it is all very much appreciated.

Thank you also to our heavenly Father for the blessing he has given our federation in this seminary so that we may have faithful servants to proclaim his Word.

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Women's Savings Action

Contributions for the year July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012
(with comparative figures for the previous year)

Congregation	2012	2011	Congregation	2012	2011
Abbotsford	2290.00	1430.00	Hamilton/Providence	750.51	238.45
Aldergrove	1385.00	1410.00	Houston	--	--
Ancaster	843.38	863.66	Kerwood	249.00	165.00
Attercliffe	2212.00	799.00	Langley	1640.00	2015.00
Barrhead	--	170.00	Langley/Willoughby Heights	1200.00	1155.00
Brampton	150.00	320.85	Lincoln	365.00	505.00
Burlington/Ebenezer	1057.25	1210.65	London	--	--
Burlington/Fellowship	255.00	370.00	Lynden	466.44	346.62
Burlington/Waterdown	--	--	Neerlandia	420.00	--
Calgary	--	689.32	Orangeville	200.00	300.00
Carman/East	440.00	505.00	Ottawa	175.00	150.00
Carman/West	407.00	328.00	Owen Sound	545.00	--
Chatham	411.95	502.50	Smithers	430.00	--
Chilliwack	780.00	730.00	Smithville	2184.00	2133.50
Cloverdale	345.00	--	Spring Creek	283.55	135.00
Coaldale	522.50	700.00	St. Albert	1635.00	1525.00
Dunnville/Wainfleet	1056.75	--	Surrey	170.00	485.00
Edmonton/Immanuel	3185.00	3215.00	Taber	--	210.00
Edmonton/Providence	1385.00	1152.00	Toronto	100.00	146.00
Elora	297.00	477.00	Vernon	595.00	585.00
Fergus/North	70.46	146.00	Winnipeg/Grace	620.00	520.00
Fergus/South (Maranatha)	480.50	636.50	Winnipeg/Redeemer	950.00	760.00
Flamborough	505.00	175.00	Yarrow	185.00	335.00
Glanbrook	1033.49	951.85			
Grand Rapids	331.05	344.19	Launceston, Tasmania	3958.00	880.97
Grand Valley	325.11	209.22	Royalties Selles	873.52	--
Grassie	379.28	280.57			
Guelph	574.61	465.30			
Hamilton/Cornerstone	1539.47	1767.70	Total Collected	40256.82	32439.85

One Day at a Time

One day at a time, with its failures and fears,
With its hurts and mistakes, with its weakness
and tears,
With its portion of pain and its burden of care;
One day at a time we must meet and must bear.

One day at a time to be patient and strong,
To be calm under trial and sweet under wrong;
Then its toiling shall pass and its sorrow shall
cease;
It shall darken and die, and the night shall bring
peace.

One day at a time - but the day is so long,
And the heart is not brave, and the soul is not
strong,
O Thou pitiful Christ, be Thou near all the way;
Give courage and patience and strength for the
day.

Swift cometh his answer, so clear and so sweet;
“Yea, I will be with thee, thy troubles to meet;
I will not forget thee, nor fail thee, nor grieve;
I will not forsake thee; I never will leave.”

Not yesterday’s load we are called on to bear,
Nor the morrow’s uncertain and shadowy care;
Why should we look forward or back with
dismay?
Our needs, as our mercies, are but for the day.

One day at a time, and the day is his day;
He hath numbered its hours, though they haste or
delay.
His grace is sufficient; we walk not alone;
As the day, so the strength that he giveth his
own.

Birthdays in March

- 3 TREVOR HOF SINK will be 35**
14407 McQueen Road,
Edmonton, AB T5N 3L3
- 9 DAVID RAWSON will be 51**
Apartment #206, 1105 Jalna Blvd.
London, ON N6E 2S9
- 10 JAMES BOONE will be 17**
5404 LadBrooke Dr. S.W.
Calgary, AB T3E 5X8
- 12 GERRY EELHART will be 51**
c/o Mrs. Grace Eelhart
#120 13425-57 Street, Emmanuel Home
Edmonton, AB T5A 2G1
- 14 TINEILLE VANROOTSELAAR will be 17**
1488 Highway 3 E,
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W7
- 14 LISA ALKEMA will be 32**
3217 Twin Oaks Crescent
Burlington, ON L7M 3A8
- 15 JIM VANDERHEIDEN will be 54**
653 Broad Street West,
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

Congratulations to all of you celebrating a birthday in this month of March. Wishing you a very enjoyable day together with your family and friends, and above all may you receive God’s rich blessings again for this new year.

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

If there are any address or other changes that we need to be aware of, please let us know as soon as possible. You can contact us by the following means:

Mail: Corinne Gelms
8301 Range 1 Road, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0
Phone: 905-957-038, email: jcorngelms@porchlight.ca

Dear editor,

The report of the SCBP could be considered a milestone of significant importance to the Canadian Reformed Churches, as it presents a final version of the *Book of Praise*. Reviewing the SCBP report (*Clarion* Jan 11, 2013), Dr. Lodder lists what he would like to see improved. However, the report contains other important aspects that should be considered by the churches as well.

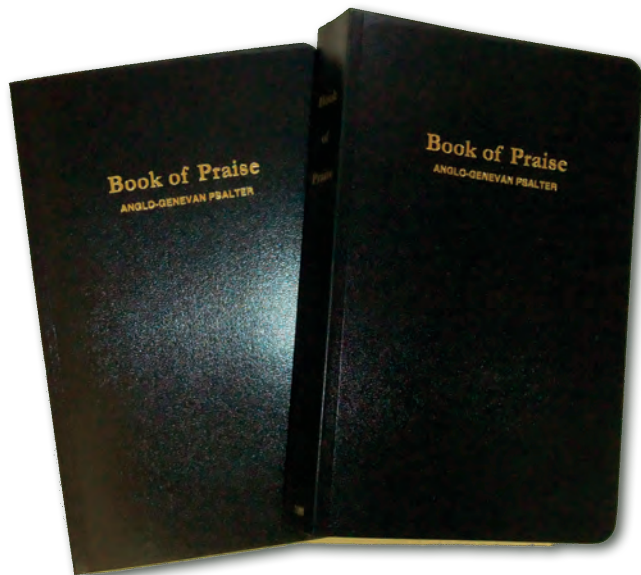
The churches have provided ample feedback to the committee, and this feedback was thoroughly reviewed by subcommittees, external advisors, and the committee itself. Recommendations in the report are guided by, and based on, the input from the churches. Feedback regarding the psalm and hymn texts has carefully been reviewed and consequently many textual improvements are proposed. Churches have requested the old musical notation of the hymns, which is granted in many cases. Churches have also requested inclusion of the new tunes, which is also realized in Hymn 31a and 48.


Regarding the four-part harmony request, the committee considered several aspects. For example: church musicians appreciate the sheet music they know, including preludes and postludes, which are needed in church ser-

vices. A one-harmony-fits-any-text may be common in hymn playing in other denominations: our practice of unison singing is distinctively different. Dr. Lodder mentions the current capabilities of technology: on www.genevanpsalter.com some four-part harmonies are readily available.

In this context Dr. Lodder mentions accompaniment that “does not aid the congregational singing.” This should not be addressed on a synodical level in my opinion; rather, this is the responsibility of the local church council. When it comes to sheet music, Dr. Lodder is asking for quality harmonizations for the hymns, which is addressed in section 3.0 of the report. Harmonizations in an accompaniment book for the eighty-five hymns were published, and there is an expectation that more sheet music will be published in the future.

The matter of difficult Genevan tunes sparks the committee’s question, “What constitutes a difficult tune?” The committee mentions the developments of psalm singing in our Dutch sister churches, and asks Synod for direction in this matter. Dr. Lodder elaborates on the historical value of the Genevan tunes as a collection. It would also be beneficial to consider the question itself. If the issue is correctly presented: are the tunes unknown and therefore not frequently sung, or are the tunes not frequently sung and therefore unknown? There is a significant difference, especially considering or recommending a solution. Churches could also consider if the texts of the “difficult” psalms play a role: is there really a desire to sing, for example, Psalm 88, 120, 129 regularly, as some churches have suggested? The direction that Synod gives could have far reaching consequences for the psalm singing in our churches.



Frank Ezinga
Organist, Langley CanRC 

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*