



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3

APRIL 29, 2023

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

CONTENTS

3 MEDITATION

4 FROM THE EDITOR

5 FAQ

9 FROM THE RAMPARTS
Grounded in the Word

22 PROTEST
Mr. Paul Starrett

24 PROTEST
Mr. Paul Starrett

28 BOOK REVIEW
Singing the Songs of Jesus

33 THE ALCOVE
The So-Called Evangelical Hymns

49 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S BANNER ARTICLES
Article 4: The Kingdom—A World Conception

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MEDITATION

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

—Exodus 1:8–14

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt. Let us meet this new king, for there is a precious truth of our salvation here.

What do we know of this king? First, the king was called *Pharaoh*. It was a conceited name. The Egyptians worshiped the sun as a god. They called their sun god *Ra*. They named their king after their god—*Pharaoh*—as a declaration that the king was *Ra*'s representative on earth.

Second, the king knew not Joseph. Not merely this: the king had not *met* Joseph. Oh, that was true too. Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation had died. The Pharaoh who now arose up over Egypt had not even been born when Joseph had died. Certainly, the king had not met Joseph. But it goes much deeper than a matter of meeting, for we are told this: the king *knew* not Joseph. Knowledge of one is a matter of love. Adam knew his wife. The Lord knoweth them that are his. The Good Shepherd knoweth his sheep. But Pharaoh knew not Joseph. You could say it this way and mean the same thing: Pharaoh hated Joseph. And hating Joseph, Pharaoh hated everything connected with Joseph. He hated Joseph's people. He hated Joseph's God.

Third, the new king afflicted the children of Israel. The affliction that Pharaoh visited upon Israel was slavery. The Egyptians brought Israel

under bondage. The Egyptians set up taskmasters over Israel. The Egyptians burdened Israel. Israel made mortar. She made bricks. She built treasure cities for Pharaoh. She plowed and planted and tended and harvested the fields of the Egyptians. Israel's life was bitter with her hard bondage. Pharaoh's affliction of Israel was born of his hatred of her. Oh, how Pharaoh hated Israel. Israel was more than the Egyptians. Israel was mightier than the Egyptians. The more Egypt afflicted Israel, the more Israel multiplied and grew. Pharaoh and all Egypt were grieved because of the children of Israel. In its loathing of Israel, Egypt made the children of Israel serve with rigor and made their lives bitter with hard bondage.

This much we know of the new king who arose up over Egypt. But how could it be? How could such a king arise up over Egypt? How could the people of God be so afflicted under such a king?

Ah, but here is the wonder of Israel's salvation. The wonder is in the word "arose." For when the new king arose up over Egypt, he was not raised up by his own might. He was not raised up by *Ra*. He was not raised up by Egyptian custom or culture. Pharaoh was raised up over Egypt by God. "I raised thee up!" (Ex. 9:16).

God had raised Pharaoh up over Egypt that Egypt might become a type of the church's bondage in sin. The land of Egypt was the house of bondage. God had raised Pharaoh up over Egypt that God might demonstrate his authority to harden the heart of whomsoever he will. And God had raised Pharaoh up over Egypt that God might demonstrate his gracious redemption of his lowly people out of their bondage through the blood of his only begotten Son, the Lamb of God.

And all of this God did according to his good pleasure and purpose of election and reprobation. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:17–18).

—AL

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome, one and all, to the third issue of *Reformed Pavilion*.

The highlight of this issue is the republication of an English translation of Hendrik De Cock's pamphlet against hymns. The father of the *Afscheiding* held to exclusive psalmody as part of the reformation of the Reformed church in the Netherlands. The English translation that is republished here was first posted online in 1998, back when the internet still came through your home phone line. Since then, an English translation of De Cock's pamphlet has become as rare as a wall-hung, corded home phone. We are thankful to God that we can republish the pamphlet here for the edification of another generation.

In this issue we also have two protests from Mr. Paul Starrett, published for the reader's edification. The ecclesiastical streets run with blood, and Mr. Starrett's protests chronicle a part of it.

We also have two rubric titles to unveil in this issue. First, Mr. Dewey Engelsma will be editing the rubric *From the Ramparts*. Dewey's rubric will be somewhat in the style of *All Around Us*, for readers familiar with the *Standard Bearer*, or *Understanding the Times*, for readers familiar with *Sword and Shield*. Because *Reformed Pavilion* has a castle theme, the undersigned thought that something along the line of walls, bulwarks,

or towers would be a fitting title for Dewey's rubric. Thus, *From the Ramparts*.

Second, there may be times when *Reformed Pavilion* republishes material from the past that applies to today. In fact, republishing material has been a significant part of the first few issues of the magazine. In this issue we introduce *The Alcove* as the rubric in which some of this material can be published. The idea is that of a nook or alcove in a castle passageway or in the castle gardens where the reader can sit and read.

In other news, it was brought to our attention that people who print the magazine at home have had to use a lot of ink for the dark background of the contents page. Thank you for the feedback, and we have changed to a white background for this and subsequent issues.

For those who may be new to the magazine, you can subscribe to *Reformed Pavilion* on the website reformedpavilion.com to get email updates when a new issue is published. Subscription is free. For those who prefer not to have your name and email address on a mailing list, you can always check the website reformedpavilion.com, where all the issues, old and new, will be archived.

With that, settle in amidst the sweet scent of the season's first fresh lawn clippings, and enjoy the magazine.

—AL

1. Since prayer and singing are essentially the same element of public worship, isn't it inconsistent to allow for free prayers but to require exclusive psalmody? Since we are allowed to pray free prayers, doesn't that indicate that we are free to sing something other than the psalms? If those who insist on exclusive psalmody want to be consistent, shouldn't they also insist that we exclusively pray scripture passages?

Answer: First, this question proceeds from the premise that congregational prayer and congregational singing are essentially the same element of public worship. The premise of the question is true. Prayer and singing are so closely related that they can be included together as a single element of worship. Our Heidelberg Catechism does this in Lord's Day 38, where it includes both prayer and singing as "publicly to call upon the Lord."

The close relationship between prayer and singing is found throughout scripture as well. David calls his psalms prayers: "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended" (Ps. 72:20). In the symbolic language of Revelation, the twenty-four elders in heaven, representing the entire church, have harps in their hands, representing their singing, and vials of odors in their hands, representing their praying (Rev. 5:8). The apostle Paul connects singing and praying in man's spirit and understanding: "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (I Cor. 14:15). Biblically and confessionally, singing and praying are so closely related as to be often identified as a single element of worship.

Second, although the premise is true that singing and praying are both publicly calling upon the name of the Lord, the conclusion does not follow that there is no distinction between singing and praying in worship. The conclusion does not reckon with the fact that it is possible for two distinct things to be essentially the same element in worship while retaining their distinctions. Examples of this abound in our worship. For example, baptism and the Lord's supper are both sacraments. They are both listed in Lord's Day 38 as a single element: "to use the sacraments." Nevertheless, they retain their own distinct administrations, their own distinct forms and formulas, and their own distinct objects. No one would think of appealing to their essential identity to argue that it is inconsistent for baptism to be administered one way and the Lord's supper to be administered another way.

For another example, the reading of the law, the reading of scripture passages, and the preaching of a sermon are all essentially the same element in worship, which Lord's Day 38 identifies as "to hear His word." Nevertheless, there is a distinction, not the least of which is that the law and texts are read word for word, while the sermon is freely preached. No one would appeal to their essential identity to argue that it is inconsistent for the law and texts to be read word for word but the sermon to be freely preached.

For another example, the reciting of the Apostles' Creed can also be considered the same element of worship as the preaching of a sermon, included in Lord's Day 38 as "to hear His word." There are some who would make the Apostles' Creed

to be the same as praying and therefore to fit in Lord's Day 38 as "publicly to call upon the Lord." I don't think I would have a doctrinal problem with that, but it seems to me that the Apostles' Creed fits better as part of the word of God proclaimed. After all, the Apostles' Creed is identified in Lord's Day 7, Q&A 22 as the brief summary of "all things promised us in the gospel." Either way, the recitation of the Apostles' Creed fits under an element of worship, while being distinct from other examples of that element.

So also, praying and singing can both be the same element of worship and yet be distinct in their practice. God himself indicated the distinction in practice when he compiled a book of congregational songs but did not compile a book of congregational prayers. Exclusive psalmody comes from the fact that God has given the congregation the songbook for her singing. God tells the assembled congregation ("in one body" [Col. 3:15]) to sing together ("teaching and admonishing one another" [v. 16]) the psalms ("psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" [v. 16]). Free prayers come from the fact that God has not given the congregation a prayer book for her praying. God appoints an ordained man (I Tim. 2:8) to pray (I Tim. 2:1, 8) in the congregation where God has given him his authority (I Tim. 2:12). Singing and praying are both publicly calling upon the Lord, but each retains its own distinct practice in the congregation.

Third, the conclusion of the question proves too much. That is, if one follows the conclusion through to its logical end, one will end up in absurdities. For example, even the most ardent proponent of singing as praying and praying as singing will allow *some* distinction between singing and praying in worship. No one argues that just as the minister calls upon the

Lord with a free prayer that he spontaneously composes on the spot, so the congregation should call upon the Lord with free songs that they spontaneously compose on the spot. Everyone recognizes that this would be chaos. But the conclusion of the above question leads to this absurdity. The conclusion obliterates *any* distinction between singing and praying. The conclusion calls any distinction between singing and praying inconsistent. The conclusion is absurd. The truth is that singing and praying are both publicly calling upon the Lord, but each retains its own distinct practice in the congregation.

Another absurdity to which the conclusion of the above question would lead would be trying to insert the word "song" everywhere one finds the word "prayer." After all, if the two are the same, then everything about one must be true about the other. One only has to try it with the Catechism's explanation of prayer to see how it breaks down.

Q. 116. Why is [singing] necessary for Christians?

A. Because [singing] is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us; and also, because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually [sing] them of Him, and [sing thankfully] for them.

I trust that it is obvious to everyone how absurd and even silly this project would be.

Finally, because prayer and singing are essentially the same element of worship, one will find many ways in which they overlap. For example, both must be done from the heart (I Cor. 14:15), both are calling upon the Lord (L.D. 38), and both are pleasing to God as he sanctifies them by his grace (Rev. 5:8). But this

does not obliterate distinctions between prayer and singing, especially in how they are practiced in the congregation.

2. Doesn't the fact that exclusive psalmody leads to endless calculations, rules, and regulations in the worship of the church prove that exclusive psalmody is a law of man?

Answer: First, exclusive psalmody does not lead to endless calculations, rules, and regulations in the worship of the church. Exclusive psalmody is not complicated. In fact, exclusive psalmody is as simple as can be. Here is exclusive psalmody: sing psalms in church. If one wanted to go really in depth, then here is exclusive psalmody: God has compiled a psalm book for his church; sing psalms in church. And if one wanted to go really, really in depth, then here is exclusive psalmody: God has compiled a psalm book for his church; Jesus Christ sings psalms in church; sing psalms in church. No matter how deep one wants to go in exclusive psalmody, it remains so refreshingly simple: sing psalms in church.

Second, exclusive psalmody is not a law of man but a principle from God. God composed a special book for his church to sing. God inspired each song in the book (II Sam. 23:1–2). God inspired the placement of each song in the book (Acts 13:33). God called the songbook the “songs of Zion” (Ps. 137:3), indicating that these are the songs the church sings. God called the book the “LORD’S song” (Ps. 137:4), indicating that these are the songs the people of Jehovah sing. The songs in the book are Jesus’ songs, for he is the sweet psalmist of Israel (II Sam. 23:1). Jesus sang from this songbook while he was on earth (Matt. 26:30). Jesus sings from this songbook now in the midst of his church (Heb. 2:12). God commands his church to sing that book: “sing psalms” (Ps. 105:2). The apostles

instructed the church to sing from this songbook (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13). From all of that comes this principle: sing psalms in church.

The principle of psalm singing leaps from the pages of scripture. The principle presses itself upon the consciousness of the church. So clear is the principle of psalm singing in scripture that one struggles to understand how anyone could call it a law of man. It is not as if God was unclear as to his will for the church’s singing. What more could men want from God in order to know clearly God’s will for their singing? Do men want God to say it in a direct command? Here: “sing psalms” (Ps. 105:2). Do men want God to hand them a book? Here: the book of psalms. Do men want God to show by Jesus’ example and institution? Here: “in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Heb. 2:12).

The term *exclusive psalmody* simply expresses what God has revealed: sing psalms in church.

Third, exclusive psalmody is so clear and simple that the only effective way to oppose it is to stir people up. That is, instead of dealing with exclusive psalmody as it comes out of scripture as required by the confessions, men whip up people’s feelings. Instead of instructing Christ’s flock, men fuel a mob.

One way to stir people up is to prey on their fear. One man makes everyone afraid of where exclusive psalmody came from. We are told that exclusive psalmody did not arise out of the scriptures but out of the desire of a few hearts, that the princes secretly moved the boundary markers when no one was paying attention, and that men were lying in wait to spring their traps on the churches, just to name a few. Another man makes everyone afraid of where exclusive psalmody will go. We are told that exclusive psalm-

ody will lead to endless calculations, to a resurrection of the cross controversy, to women being required to wear hats in church, to a rejection of the creeds, to a controversy about whether we may say the Apostles' Creed, to a controversy about silent prayer, and to a controversy about musical accompaniment, just to name a few. And all men raise the hue and cry "Legalism!" in the streets so that the whole denomination stampedes. But all of these are just fear tactics. They are all false narratives. It is gaslighting, to use the modern term. It is deceit, sleight of hand, and cunning craftiness, to use the biblical terms. It is falsifying men's words, to use the confessional term. In reality, exclusive psalmody comes right out of the scriptures, right out of the gospel of Jesus as the sweet psalmist of Israel, and right out of the regulative principle as the second commandment of gratitude.

Another way to stir people up is to deconstruct everything that scripture says about singing psalms so that people cannot find their answers in scripture. This deconstruction project goes after terms, definitions, and distinctions until no one can be sure that texts mean what they say. This leaves people in a frenzy to find an-

swers that no longer can be found. Just consider the things that we used to know that have been deconstructed to the point that we no longer can know them: what a psalm is; what "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" refers to; what Jesus sang; what the apostles sang; whether there is a distinction between public and private worship; whether there is such a thing as the regulative principle of worship; whether there is any distinction between singing and praying; whether we may sing hymns in church; and whether we can take the Bible literally when it says, "Sing psalms." When the scriptures and confessions are so deconstructed that no one can find answers in them, there is nothing left but to stampede in whatever direction men have laid out.

The reality is that exclusive psalmody is a very simple principle, taught by God with beautiful clarity in scripture. So far from being a menacing bondage, exclusive psalmody is a privilege of grace. Brought into the great congregation by the Lord, we are given Christ's songs to sing with him. "Sing psalms" is not a law of bondage. "Sing psalms" is a gift of grace.

—AL



The following article was written by Elder Dillon Altena of Sovereign Reformed Protestant Church in Northwest Iowa. He distributed it by email with the following note: "I have attached an article that I have written on our current controversy concerning exclusive Psalmody. Please feel free to share it as you wish." Dewey Engelsma's evaluation follows.

Grounded in Christ or in madness and confusion?

Since the outset of our denomination the Lord has led us through controversy. He has guided us down his path unto all truth in Jesus Christ. God in his eternal decree is leading us down his narrow path through major controversies that never seem to end. These controversies try God's people through fire and flames as the devil is making every attempt to rip the gospel away from the church of Jesus Christ. In doubt of the Lord's perfect plan, man seeks to leave the gospel, or to add to the gospel, but Christ as the good shepherd leads his sheep onto all knowledge and wisdom. Christ led his people out of the Protestant Reformed Churches by his truth. When the enemy laid conditions upon the hearts of his sleeping and unfaithful sheep, Christ spoke with his almighty voice. Christ spoke and his sheep followed. Christ spoke and revealed to his people that they are nothing and he is everything.

God through his Holy Spirit led us through our first major internal controversy. Men tried to limit the Spirit; they tried to place man-made laws upon the church. They limited the Spirit with a law that says the people of God must be within some physical proximity of each other when they partake of the sacraments. They made the sheep question if when they were in the outbuilding, they were truly receiving the means of grace, or were they disobeying the law of God. They limited the way that Christ could work in his people. They made questions that if

the preaching of the Word came through a screen was Christ truly feeding his people. God's people were forced into questioning if they had Christ or not. I damn this doctrine as legalism. The work of the Holy Spirit is magnificent! The Holy Spirit works in his people in many ways. He comes into his people's hearts and gives them the comfort that Christ's work has perfectly covered their sins. The Spirit works in his people when they hear the voice of Jesus Christ period. Christ calls and his people follow. Christ calls and his sheep know his voice. Christ's word comes unto his people through many means. Christ's voice can be heard in creation, his preaching, his people, his word as written in scripture, his people lifting up their voice in praise unto him, and many more. Man seeks to place a roadblock to limit the work of his Spirit, but Christ says, "I will not be limited for my people hear my voice." The argument that Christ could be limited by physical proximity was not grounded in the scriptures. The creeds are dead silent on the matter. The Spirit is not to be limited! The people that followed this teaching had bible verse after bible verse which they believed backed up their position. They twisted all the references to passages and to the creeds to prove that Christ doesn't work through a livestream. They placed the child of God under bondage by placing a man-made law over the congregation.

Then God led us through our next major controversy. God worked in the hearts of his

people and told them that you must start a school. Christ taught us that we are the body of Christ and that out of love for Christ we must look unto our fellow saints before we look unto our own desires. God commanded us that we must not only train up our children in the home but we must also start a school. Out of love for our brothers and sisters in Christ we must bring God's covenant children together to learn all things in Christ. Men came in and said that we were placing them under bondage. That we were making an 11th commandment that states, "you must start a school". These men went to scriptures to try to prove that the commandment to train up your children only applied to their house and not unto others in their church. They hated the law that said love thy neighbor as thy love thyself. They quoted scripture that showed that God instituted the home as proof that God did not command a school. It is ironic that these men would never quote the creeds; I believe this is because the plain wording of the creeds condemned their position. They fought and they strived to get out from under the judgment of the God's law. They fought that the liberty of Christ merited them the right to sin and ultimately that any parent has the right to school their children however they wanted. They wanted the liberty of Christ to included home schooling, Christian schools that teach all matter of false doctrine, and even the public school. They used God's perfect eternal plan and election theology to teach that it is our liberty to give our children unto the world because we are saved. They said that ultimately it doesn't matter if we deliver our children unto the worldly schools because we are saved anyway. This was an utter hatred for the law of God. They hated that the law condemned them. When I look back at this controversy in light of our present Psalmody controversy, the thing that strikes me the most is God's people were already striving to start and maintain a school. The Spirit had worked in his people's hearts to love his law, the school, and his neighbor. This is in direct contrast to what the Spirit had led his people to sing before this

controversy. God's people were singing praise unto God with a hymn that completely agrees with scriptures. Then came a law that said we can no longer sing that hymn because it is a human invention. Now, only two weeks later, a large portion of the denomination is trying to damn all those who open their mouth and sing praise unto God with anything other than a Psalm.

There are two statements that were made in the sermon "The Regulative Principle of Worship" that I want to focus on. I am not going to speak to the sermon as a whole. If there is one thing that we have learned from our controversy with mother it is that words matter, and that one false statement corrupts the whole sermon (Galatians 5:9). I am going to state what these statements are and explain what they mean and then give counter arguments to them.

Statement 1: "The question is, does the regulative principle apply to exclusive psalmody? The answer is it does." (This statement is found at the 1:21:17 mark on the YouTube sermon.) What this statement means: I want to start with defining the words that are in the statement. The Regulative Principle is simply "the law of God as he has been demanded to worshiped in his worship service". I contest that you don't need to add "in his worship service" to the definition, but I will leave it there because it doesn't change the principle. You can, without doing any injustice to the statement, replace "the Regulative Principle" with "the Law of God". Now I want to touch on the definition of exclusive. I believe that we all know what exclusive means. To make "exclusive" mean something that it doesn't would be to not do our due diligence to the statement. The definition of exclusive is "not admitting other things". Lastly, Psalmody means "the songs that are contained in the 150 Psalms of the bible." This all brings us to the doctrine of the statement. The doctrine of the statement is "**The law of God applies to exclusive Psalmody**" or that to sing anything other than the Psalms would be to willfully disobey the law of God and commit idolatry.

Counter arguments:

1. God is unchangeable and what he sees as being in accordance with his law is unchangeable (Cannons Head I Art. 11). One cannot simply change the law of God to mean something other than what God engraved in stone. To change the law of God would be to add a manmade law to the perfect law of God (Belgic Confession Art. 32). Now focusing on the fact that the law is unchangeable. The law of God means the same thing for the church today as it did to Old Testament Israel. To be consistent with the statement from the sermon you would have to say that Old Testament Israel was erecting an idol when they sang the song that God gave unto them in Deuteronomy 32. I recognize that the Spirit brought the people of Israel to sing this song and also recognize that these people had sin in their hearts while singing this song. If exclusive Psalmody is a law of God then it was a law through all eternity, this law is nonsense because it condemns Old Testament Israel when they sang Deuteronomy 32. To say that Old Testament Israel could sing Deuteronomy 32 in worship because they didn't have the Psalms yet, would mean the same thing as saying that God's law changed when he gave his people the Psalms. Now I will say that when you sing the Psalms you are also singing Deuteronomy 32, but it also means that when you sing Deuteronomy 32 you are also singing the Psalms. This is because the Bible is noncontradictory; when you sing the doctrine of one passage of scripture, you sing the doctrine of all other parts of scriptures. This is evident in that you can find the Gospel of Jesus Christ all through the scriptures. There is one truth and one Jehovah who is the perfect allknowing God. Now to return to the principle of the statement made in the sermon: the law of God says

you can sing no other songs but the Psalms. If Rev. Lanning's statement is true, then it condemns the people of Old Testament Israel when the Spirit worked in them to sing praise unto their Lord in Deuteronomy 32.

2. The Creeds are dead silent on the matter of exclusive Psalmody. I contest that the appeals to Belgic Confession Art. 32 and Heidelberg Catechism LD 35 are not grounds to damn the use of writings or hymns that have been written by a man. However, they do damn the use of these items if they bring in the doctrine of man. The key and the ultimate question is, "Do the writings or hymns completely and fully agree with the word of God?" To speak foolishly, if someone was going to use these articles to damn anything that was authored by a man, they would have to use the very writings of the creeds to damn the use of the creeds themselves in the church service. This is the consistent following through of their principle. The question is do the writings and hymns fully agree with the word of God. If they do, then they are the very doctrine of God himself and can be used to praise the name of the Lord. The author of these writings has no bearing. If a hymn agrees with the word of God, then it also agrees with the doctrine contained in Psalms and the rest of scriptures. I have heard so much about who has authored these songs that it makes me want to puke. The men that have versified the Psalms and hymns in the current song book that we have are just men. We do not have to do a background check on these men to make sure that they were godly enough to versify scriptures into a song. We must remember what the term versifying scriptures is. It means to take the words that are found in scriptures and put them into a tune that is easily sung. Now our whole denomination is

arguing about what parts of God's Holy Writ can be sung in a church service. This is folly and I will never back the argument! I believe that the statement pits scripture against scripture itself. Once again, the only question you have to look at is, "Do these songs completely and fully agree with the word of God?" There was wisdom when the authors of the creeds left out exclusive Psalmody. This whole controversy can be settled on that one fact; the creeds say absolutely nothing about exclusive Psalmody!

3. As to Church Order Article 69. I will echo Rev. Langerak in his plea that there was wisdom when they included the other songs in the article. There was wisdom because there is nothing wrong with singing any chapter of scripture. I think that I covered this idea in the augments above, so I am going to focus on the rumbles that I have heard in the church that say, "If it is legalism to demand exclusive Psalmody then it is legalism to demand that the church only sing the songs that the church order approves". I want to say, nowhere in the Church Order does it say that to sing more than these songs would be against the law of God. The Church Order is a set of rules that the churches have agreed should govern the church. This government has been given to the elders. Belgic Confession Art. 32 states that "in the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted." This gives the elders of the church power to place rules over the congregation so long as they do not depart from Christ. There are many places where the elders have placed rules.

For instance, having two worship services. God does not say anywhere in scriptures that we need to go to church twice on each Sunday but God has given that authority to the local church. So much so that if you disobey the authority that has been given to the elders that you are breaking the fifth commandment (Lord's Day 39). It would not be against the law of God for a church to do three worship services each Sunday, but it you disobey the authority of the elders to call you to worship then you are breaking the fifth commandment. The wisdom of Church Order Art. 69 is that it leaves it up to the assemblies of the churches to approve the songs that we should sing in our worship. It would not be against the law of God to add songs to this list, but I do not believe that we have to. This is because the Lord has given us a song-book. He has given us the Psalms that completely cover the doctrine of the whole Bible. It would be extremely easy for a church to introduce a hymn book that doesn't fully agree with the word of God. This would result in the church singing false doctrine and erecting an idol in the worship service wherever those songs are sung. I would be opposed to changing the current wording of Church Order Art. 69 because the Spirit has already provided us with a beautiful song book. This is in line with the creeds with which our Churches agree. I cannot come up with a reason why we would ever have to add more creeds. This not to say that it would be wrong or that the Spirit couldn't lead the churches to add more creeds, but that currently I do not believe that we have to. No man-made rule will ever prevent false doctrine from coming into the church. I think that we can all agree that the creeds did not stop Mother from apostatizing and leaving the truth of Jesus Christ and the Creeds are the very doctrine of God himself. God

allows for false doctrine to creep into his church and he uses this false doctrine to bring his Church to a fuller understanding and knowledge of Christ.

Statement 2: “So there is a question of the application of the regulative principle to the singing of the church, especially this question, ‘Does the regulative principle require exclusive psalmody?’ We will look at that question tonight but that does not mean that this topic for the church of Jesus Christ is something fearful, not something to be afraid of whatsoever. This is the matter of your worship. It is the matter of God dwelling with you and bringing you into his covenant fellowship through the Lord Jesus Christ.” (This statement is found at the 51:35 mark on the YouTube Sermon.)

I also want to break down the doctrine of this statement. I will not go to the depth that I went to on the other statement because the same ideas apply to this statement. This statement does, however, add an element to the previous statement. That element is that exclusive psalmody is the matter of God dwelling with you in his covenant fellowship through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the plain teaching of the quote. Legalism is always conditional. Although it is true that the matter of worship is the matter of God dwelling with you, when you add exclusive Psalmody to this statement it makes God dwelling with you conditional on if you sing only Psalms. The statement is teaching that Christ is not with you when you sing a song that is in complete agreement with scriptures but is not a Psalm. I will also add that if Rev. Lanning’s statement is true then it means that God has not been dwelling with his church since they began singing “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” I realize that this statement is an openended question, but I believe that Rev. Lanning answers this question in statement 1 which occurred latter on in

the sermon. I believe that these statements go beyond what the law of God has commanded and that they wrongfully limit the Spirit. They limit the Spirit in such a way that the Spirit could not work in his people if they sang another part of scriptures other than the Psalms. These statements bring in a slew of questions and strivings about the law. Now the Church of Christ has to wonder if she has Jesus Christ when she is singing a hymn in the worship service. Not only that but at what time does singing a hymn in your heart turn into sin? Is it when you enter the church building? Is it when service concludes? When did it become a sin for Old Testament Israel to sing Deuteronomy 32? Was it when the first Psalm was written? Was it when the book of Psalms was finished? Does the author of the song have to be inspired? These questions are all folly and limit Christ to the rulings of man’s law. The Holy Spirit, through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, leads the church to what she sings. It does not take a manmade law to keep the church singing the Psalms that we all love. It is left up to the Spirit to guide the Church.

The school controversy was completely different because God does demand that his people come together in the training of their children. God’s people were already doing this under the grace of God. Now God’s people, who were all singing praises unto him with faithful versification of Scriptures, are left to question whether or not that was the work of Christ. God’s people have been singing hymns in God’s worship service without question or hesitation. There is no law against Praising God with the very doctrine of God himself. (Galatians 5:16–26).

To Rev. Lanning and all those that believe or teach this false doctrine of legalism, I call them to repent. Repent today, and do not trouble the churches with the laws of men. The law of exclusive Psalmody does not ground us in Christ but grounds us in the madness and confusion of men.

Titus 3: 8–11, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are

unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”

In the unity of the Spirit through Christ alone,
Dillon Altena

Grounded in the Word

Dillon Altena, an elder in Sovereign Reformed Protestant Church, recently sent out a missive titled “Grounded in Christ or in Madness and Confusion.”

I am glad he sent it out.

It helps to clarify things for me, as I am sure it did for others.

Just not in the way that Dillon intended.

His article makes clear the folly of the principle “sing the word” and shows the confusion it breeds.

The article contains factual inaccuracies that should be addressed.

Regarding the controversy that took place at First Reformed Protestant Church about whether or not all the members had to enjoy some level of proximity in order to participate in the official worship of the church, Dillon writes, “The creeds are dead silent on the matter.” Dillon is wrong. The creeds are not dead silent on the matter. As the consistory pointed out to those espousing this “proximity principle,” the creeds do address this in Belgic Confession articles 30 and 35 and Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 25. The consistory stood on the word of God and the creeds in their decision repudiating the proximity principle as false doctrine.

Regarding the school controversy, Dillon writes this about those who were opposed to making the Christian school a law according to the fourth commandment: “It is ironic that these men would never quote the creeds; I believe this is because the plain wording of the creeds con-

demned their position.” That is not true. These members—all able to read the English language—were aware that the Heidelberg Catechism in its instruction on the fourth commandment uses the word “schools.” If my memory serves me correctly, they interacted heavily with the creeds in their protests. It is not true that these members “would never quote the creeds.” The *issue* was that they gave a different interpretation of Lord’s Day 38, Q&A 103. So by all means let us debate the issues, but let us not falsify men’s words. (Perhaps the utter hypocrisy of men and women in using the same arguments they refused to hear during the Christian school controversy will be written about in more detail in the future.)

Dillon writes, “A large portion of the denomination is trying to damn all those who open their mouth and sing praise unto God with anything other than a Psalm.” This too is incorrect. What you are witnessing is continued church reformation (as we shall see in a minute). That means there is a minority—a small minority, to use a redundancy—of members contending for the truth of exclusive psalmody.

Contrary to his thesis, it is Dillon’s position that breeds madness and confusion. In I Corinthians 1:10 we read, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

The truth does that. It causes men to speak the same thing and to have the same mind and the same judgment. That is a hallmark of the truth; you will hear the same thing being taught.

When the lie is introduced and when the truth is compromised, then you will hear many different things and many different judgments. That is happening today in the Reformed Protestant Churches. The principle “sing the word” has led to utter confusion. Some members are pushing for hymns; others are saying hymns aren’t the issue at all. Some members want more hymns brought into the worship (as they recognize their principle demands it); others want to stick to “almost exclusive” psalmody. Some don’t know what to say, except for the fact that they are really, really mad at Reverend Lanning. Others say, “Repent!” but are not able to explain exactly what it is that one is supposed to repent of. What we are living right now is Acts 19:32: “Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.”

Consider Dillon’s judgments about the hymn by Thomas Ken, “Praise God.” He writes, “God’s people were singing praise unto God with a hymn that completely agrees with scriptures. Then came a law that said we can no longer sing that hymn because it is a human invention.”

I do appreciate that Dillon is forthright in characterizing that doxology as a hymn. This is not a new thing. It has always been understood to be a hymn.

Bishop [Thomas] Ken wrote a number of hymns, and it was always his desire that Christians be allowed to express their praise to God without being limited only to Psalmody and to the Bible canticles. He was one of the first English writers to produce hymns that were not merely versifications of the Psalms.¹

The opening doxology is a trinitarian hymn. “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” is scriptural, no doubt, and is a song sung in many churches historically, but it is not a Psalm. It is the last part of a hymn that was written by an Anglican bishop named Thomas Ken in 1674.²

Dillon’s position, however, does not agree with the position of the consistory of First RPC.

The consistory—recognizing the difficulty of simply re-inserting a hymn into the worship service even though it is not listed in article 69 of the Church Order—was forced to engage in sleight of hand. They did so by transforming that hymn into a psalm.

Dillon does not have the same conviction as the consistory. According to Dillon’s reading of things, “God’s people were singing praise unto God with a hymn that completely agrees with scriptures,” and then a law came along and told them they could no longer sing that hymn. The issue is that the Spirit led the people to sing that hymn, and now a law has condemned it.

(This awkwardness could be avoided if someone would just inform Dillon that “Praise God” is now a psalm.)

Dillon rightly understands that the principle “sing the word” allows for hymns in the worship service. (I will take care of the Church Order problem for him and the denomination later in this article.) The question to ask, then, according to Dillon, is this: “Do the writings or hymns completely and fully agree with the word of God?” He goes on to further explain that “if they do, then they are the very doctrine of God himself and can be used to praise the name of the Lord.”

But who gets to decide? Someone may like a hymn from Sandy Patty, and others may be partial to a few hymns by the Chuck Wagon Gang, so who decides what gets included in our worship services?

¹ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1982), 67, as quoted in R. Scott Clark, “Ken’s Doxology: A Subversion of the Psalter?,” March 31, 2015, <https://heidelblog.net/2015/03/kens-doxology-a-subversion-of-the-psalter/>.

² Cory Griess, “Praising the Lord in the Congregation (6): The Element of Singing,” *Standard Bearer* 90, no. 5 (December 1, 2013): 106. This article was republished on the website of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, <http://www.prca.org/resources/publications/articles/item/3545-praising-god-in-the-congregation-6b>.

Does God's word get to decide?

With chilling echoes from our recent controversy with the Protestant Reformed Churches, Dillon takes the authority away from the word of God and places it in the hands of the assemblies. "The wisdom of Church Order Art. 69 is that it leaves it up to the assemblies of the churches to approve the songs that we should sing in our worship."

Strangely enough, and showing a troubling lack of consistency, after having determined that the principle is "sing the word," he still goes on to try to make the case that we should sing the psalms. "It would not be against the law of God to add songs to this list [in Church Order article 69], but I do not believe that we have to. This is because the Lord has given us a songbook."

It becomes clear that Dillon is not governed by the regulative principle of worship (RPW). It is no longer "What does God command?" but now it is "Where is the Spirit leading us?" (Which is the cry of every apostate and apostatizing church in the world when they are confronted with their rebellion.)

By wresting the songs of the church away from the RPW, Dillon leaves the church at the mercy of her consistory and her broader assemblies as to what she may sing. In other words, the men with the loudest voices and the most clout will determine which songs may be sung. Having divorced their position from the creeds, the RPC have lost "one of the great functions of the Reformed confession regarding worship," which is that "it liberates believers from the tyranny of subjectivism in public worship."³ What is that teaching that liberates believers? It is exactly that which Reverend Langerak and those who are being led by him refuse to allow to be used in this controversy. "Because we regard the Scriptures as the sufficient rule for faith and

life (*sola scriptura*), we do only that in worship that is taught explicitly or required implicitly in God's Word."⁴

This has been done before by those who were opposed to exclusive psalmody.

This was done by Christian Reformed theologian R. B. Kuiper.

Consider R.B. Kuiper's arguments in 1926 in favor of the introduction of uninspired hymns and musical instruments into Reformed worship. He conceded that the Reformed practice was exclusive psalmody, but he did not demonstrate a sound grasp of the RPW as confessed by the Reformed churches.⁵

How striking that Kuiper is criticized for not demonstrating "a sound grasp of the RPW as confessed by the Reformed churches," and yet today in the RPC we have officebearers openly and brazenly denying the RPW altogether. That is quite something. The teaching that "was the universal confession of all the Reformed churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" is now to be discarded like an old rag.⁶

Regarding a movement in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands to add a few hymns to the Psalter, Kuiper wrote, "I would like to go on record as being heart and soul in favor of this project for the Christian Reformed Church in America. I would retain the Psalms and add some carefully selected hymns."⁷ Again, it is very striking that there are men in the Reformed Protestant Churches who are speaking for exactly this action in our denomination. As well they should, with the principle "sing the word" governing their hearts.

Thirty years later, Kuiper recognized the flood he had unleashed, and he tried to slow it down.

³ R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confessions: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2008), 261–262.

⁴ Clark, *Rediscovering the Reformed Confessions*, 261.

⁵ Clark, *Rediscovering the Reformed Confessions*, 255–256.

⁶ Clark, *Rediscovering the Reformed Confessions*, 261.

⁷ R. B. Kuiper, *As to Being Reformed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1926), 197.

The same author, however, published what might be considered a companion volume in 1959, in which he attempted to restrain the forces he arguably helped to unleash thirty-three years earlier. Nowhere in Kuiper's discussion of worship in 1926 does one find a clear, coherent statement of the principle by which Reformed churches had governed their worship since the sixteenth century. Having abandoned the confessional and historic Reformed understanding of the Reformed principle of worship, Kuiper attempted to preserve a "principle place" [sic] for the psalms. He insisted on "tasteful" music, and a limited place for the choir in public worship. Without the bedrock of the RPW, however, Kuiper's conservatism rested solely upon the good will and intentions of the consistories and pastors. On the face of it, this seems like a strange and futile position for Calvinists (who confess the doctrine of total depravity) to take, as the existence of Kuiper's later volume suggests. Calvin, Ursinus, the Dutch Reformed Churches, the Scottish Presbyterians, and the Westminster Divines understood this problem. This is why the only two choices they knew were the RPW and "will worship."⁸

But what about the Synod of Dordt and its decision to leave certain hymns in article 69 of the Church Order?

Reverend Langerak, in his sermon on March 19, 2023, taught that Dordt included the other hymns in article 69 because that action faithfully represented the principle "sing the word."⁹

Dillon agrees with Reverend Langerak's interpretation of Dordt's action.

As to Church Order Article 69. I will echo Rev. Langerak in his plea that there was wisdom when they included the other songs in the article. There was wisdom because there is nothing wrong with singing any chapter of scripture.

The "wisdom" of which Dillon speaks could be summarized this way: "The fathers at Dordt were being governed by the principle 'sing the word,' and that is why they included those other hymns in article 69."

Others in the denomination are taking this up as well by saying that Dordt had no problem with hymns and by denying that Dordt included those hymns as a concession to the people.¹⁰

Mr. Altena, Reverend Langerak, and many others with them are wrong.

If Dordt's principle was "sing the word," they would have had no reason to remove hymns or to suggest a path for removing hymns. But they did exactly that. The Synod of Dordt (1618–19) added the following clause to article 69: "All other Hymns shall be barred from the Churches, and where some have already been introduced, these shall be set aside by means found to be most appropriate."¹¹

If your principle is "sing the word," you would have no reason to remove any orthodox, godly hymns.

So why did Dordt include those hymns?

After laying out the history of the movement of Reformed churches away from the RPW (which history we see being repeated today in the RPC), theologian and church historian R. Scott Clark writes the following:

⁸ Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confessions*, 256–257.

⁹ Nathan Langerak, "The Indwelling Word," sermon preached on March 19, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=3192322435011>.

¹⁰ Neither would this be the last time a church kept hymns as a concession to the people. Writing about the hymns included in his Psalter at the time, R. B. Kuiper writes this: "By way of a concession the Christian Reformed Church once upon a time decided to allow their use in certain eastern churches." Kuiper does go on to recommend their ouster, as "almost all of them are lacking in poetic value" (*As to Being Reformed*, 199). As good a reason as any, I suppose.

¹¹ Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1941), 283.

Thus, by the time the Synod of Dort promulgated its Church Order it was still trying to implement the RPW (*semper reformanda*) among recalcitrant congregations.¹²

And then this:

It should be remembered that, in many cities in the Netherlands, the Reformation was still virtually a novelty as late as the early 1570s; thus congregations were being asked to move from the Roman mass to the RPW in one step. Further, local congregations were often controlled by “church wardens who were appointed by the town magistrates, and who frequently were not Reformed.” Educated Reformed ministers were in short supply. Many of the congregations had little knowledge of the Reformed faith. Thus, for pastoral reasons, congregations were permitted to sing two inspired texts but “all other hymns” were restricted. Whatever one makes of the synod’s approach to a thorny problem, their intent was the elimination from worship of all uninspired songs. That this is the case becomes clearer when one considers that the delegates to synod had no idea that national synods would become virtually impossible for many years. Thus, the reformation of worship undertaken at Dort was left incomplete not by principle but by political circumstances.¹³

The “reformation of worship” was left incomplete in 1618.

And again in 2023.

To our shame, we have learned nothing in 405 years.

Even worse, when God was working such a “complete” reformation in our midst, we withstood God to his face and opposed him and put a stop to it. (I speak as a fool. God has never once had his will thwarted or his reformation

stopped. God will see to it that the reformation of his church—and the church’s worship—will continue.)

Dillon states that he does not want to change Church Order article 69. “I would be opposed to changing the current wording of Church Order Art. 69 because the Spirit has already provided us with a beautiful song book.”

But here he shows himself unprincipled, as he *must* see to it that Church Order article 69 is changed. He may not sing “Praise God” because the article does not permit it. Church Order article 69 makes a law as to what may be sung (“In the churches only...”), and Mr. Ken’s hymn is not included.

But neither is the current Church Order article consistent with Dillon’s principle governing singing in the church. His principle—and the principle of the denomination, apparently—is this: sing the word.

That is not the principle of Church Order article 69.

So what to do about that pesky Church Order article 69?

I will save Dillon and the rest of the denomination a lot of wrangling and give them the proper wording of Church Order article 69 so they can live (and sing!) according to their principle.

The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. Hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity may be sung, provided they are approved by the Consistory.

As far as motions go, this one would be a slam dunk at classis.

It fully accords with Reverend Langerak’s preaching, the mind of the people, and the article written by Dillon Altena.

¹² Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confessions*, 253. With great effort, I will leave out any comments about “recalcitrant” congregations.

¹³ Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confessions*, 253–254.

You're welcome.

But I can't take credit for it.

I borrowed it from another denomination.

That is the Church Order article that governs the singing in the United Reformed Churches (URC).

Where does Reverend Langerak's principle, the principle of Elder Altena, and that of the consistory of First RPC lead? Where does their "reformation" lead?

It leads to the position of the URC.

Even United Reformed theologian R. Scott Clark recognizes that the language of that article is the "language of conservative settlement not *semper reformanda*." How does this then go for the churches? "Recent history, however, suggests that conservative settlement has not served the churches very well."¹⁴

Some reformation.

Dillon addresses two statements made in Reverend Lanning's sermon "The Regulative Principle of Worship"¹⁵ and then provides his counter-argument to each statement.

The first statement is this: "The question is, does the regulative principle apply to exclusive psalmody? The answer is it does." Dillon attempts to rebut that statement by saying that because Israel was commanded to sing a certain song in Deuteronomy 32, proponents of exclusive psalmody would have to say that Old Testament Israel was sinning when they sang the song in Deuteronomy 32.

Dillon is incorrect. And his argument is ridiculous.

What Dillon failed to do is to find the principle and then apply that principle to the worship of God in both the Old and the New Testaments. That principle is this: "only worship God as he has commanded in his word" (see Ex. 20:4–5).

Was Israel sinning when they sang the song of Deuteronomy 32? Of course not. There is much that was done in the Old Testament that

belonged to the age of types and shadows that finds fulfillment later in time and history. That which may not be clear in the Old Testament is made perfectly clear in the New Testament. Dillon gets close to the truth when he says that to sing the psalms is to sing the song of Deuteronomy 32. The truths of Deuteronomy 32 are found in the psalms which the Spirit has given to the church to sing.

This is why the word of God commands psalm singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) and Jesus Christ practiced it (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26; Heb. 2:12).

Mr. Altena continues his rebuttal of the first statement by saying that "the Creeds are dead silent on the matter of exclusive Psalmody."

Mr. Altena avoids the clear instruction of the creeds when he says that the primary question is this: "Do the writings or hymns completely and fully agree with the word of God?" But that is not the primary question. The question is this: "How does God command that we worship him?"

Which is where the creeds fairly shout the answer.

For, since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them [the Holy Scriptures] at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures; nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. (Belgic Confession 7)

Q. What doth God require in the second commandment?

A. That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word. (Lord's Day 35, Q&A 96)

Yet they [the rulers of the church] ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. (Belgic Confession 32)

¹⁴ Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confessions*, 255.

¹⁵ Andrew Lanning, "The Regulative Principle of Worship," sermon preached on March 12, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=312232237135528>.

Dillon says this means only that we do not bring in the doctrine of man. It appears he is following the lead of Seminarian Tyler Ophoff, who taught this in a recent sermon:

So what the proponents of exclusive psalmody are doing is they say, “Well, this confession, Lord’s Day 35, what it’s doing here, yes, yes, we understand the previous controversy, the confessions settle scripture; but not here. What this is telling us is that we need to go back to the scriptures now to find the answer.” But that’s not what the confessions are doing here. What the confessions are doing is they’re saying something about worship. The confessions are saying about worship, it’s word-regulated worship. That’s what that’s saying. It’s the word that’s preached. It’s the word that’s read. It’s the word that’s administered. It’s the word that’s prayed, and it’s the word that’s sung. The question here isn’t man-made hymns versus psalms. It’s not even what we desire or what we don’t desire. The question is, is exclusive psalmody the law? Is exclusive psalmody the law as grounded in the regulative principle? And the confessions say no.¹⁶

The problem is that Tyler ignores the plain meaning of the creed and tries to put an interpretation on it that is incomprehensible at best and a corruption of the creed at worst. (Weren’t we taught in the last controversy to take the plain meaning of the creed?) The hearer is left utterly confused. When the creed says only to worship God as he has commanded in his word, that doesn’t mean we are to go to God’s word to see how he is to be worshiped?

Tyler certainly mocks the proponents of exclusive psalmody when he says, “Well, this confession, Lord’s Day 35, what it’s doing here, yes, yes, we understand the previous controversy, the confessions settle scripture; but not here.”

In times of controversy the Reformed church turns to the creeds. And when the controversy involves the worship of God in church, we turn to the creeds and receive the instruction from those creeds that we are to look to scripture to see how God has commanded us to worship him.

Dillon—no doubt all turned around and confused by Tyler’s interpretation of Lord’s Day 35—would do well to stick to the simple and clear explanation of the Lord’s Day. And Tyler should stop confusing the people.

Dillon then goes on to address a second statement by Reverend Lanning that he finds problematic.

So there is a question of the application of the regulative principle to the singing of the church, especially this question, ‘Does the regulative principle require exclusive psalmody?’ We will look at that question tonight but that does not mean that this topic for the church of Jesus Christ is something fearful, not something to be afraid of whatsoever. This is the matter of your worship. It is the matter of God dwelling with you and bringing you into his covenant fellowship through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dillon charges this with being conditional.

There is a saying that arises from Miguel de Cervantes’ novel *Don Quixote* that refers to a man’s “tilting at windmills.” The phrase is used to describe a man who is fighting an imaginary enemy. Mr. Altena is tilting at windmills. Not even the consistory of First RPC could muster up the courage to cite this phrase as teaching conditional theology (although that did not stop them from making the slanderous charge that Reverend Lanning was teaching that we do not have God dwelling with us until man’s law is met).

What Reverend Lanning taught here was beautiful. God dwells with us and brings us into his covenant fellowship through the Lord Jesus

¹⁶ Tyler Ophoff, “The Old Paths,” sermon preached on April 2, 2023, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=4223131895335>.

Christ. Knowing that truth causes you to worship God. You can't help it. It is the matter of your worship! Out of gratitude, then, you worship God as he has commanded you, by singing his psalms.

But that raises the question, "Why does that charge arise now?"

To answer that question, we only have to go back a few years.

Do you remember what Trinity Protestant Reformed Church and Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches did when they were called in to speak to Reverend Lanning's deposition? They recognized how pathetic Byron Center church's grounds were, so they tried to add their own grounds to give the whole process an air of respectability.

And that is what is happening now.

Men realize that the material distributed by the consistory of First RPC was dung. That is why no one will appeal to it when they try to make the case that Reverend Lanning was wrong.

Recognizing the fact that the consistory has given them nothing to stand on, men try to compensate for that by coming up with their own grounds for why Reverend Lanning should be deposed.

But it just makes them all look silly in the process.

Adding more dung just makes for a bigger mess.

So I appreciate the article by Mr. Altena.

It shows me the righteousness of exclusive psalmody.

And the folly of the position "sing the word."

There is a doctrine that brings madness and confusion, and that is the position espoused by Elder Dillon Altena.

But because his position reigns in the RPC, madness and confusion now reign in the RPC.

Exclusive psalmody, on the other hand, is a glorious doctrine.

It is glorious because it is grounded in the word of God.

It is glorious because it exalts Christ, who sings the psalms amid the congregation (Heb. 2:12).

It is glorious because it is grounded in the word, which is never confusion and which is never madness.

—Dewey Engelsma



REFORMED
— PAVILION —

PROTEST

The following two protests by Elder Paul Starrett have a sad history. On Thursday, March 23, 2023, the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church suspended its pastor from the ministry of the word and sacraments for preaching exclusive psalmody, which the consistory charged as the heresy of legalism. On Sunday, March 26, Candidate Luke Bomers read from the pulpit the announcement of suspension and preached in harmony with the consistory's decision. Elder Starrett and Elder Steve Van Dyke did not shake Mr. Bomers' hand after the service. Members of the congregation saw this, and Elder Starrett explained to them that he did not agree with the decision of the consistory and that he also believed exclusive psalmody. The consistory of First RPC met on Tuesday,

March 28, to deal with the two elders who did not shake Mr. Bomers' hand. Elder Starrett brought the first of the two following protests with him to the meeting and handed it to the clerk before the meeting. The consistory never opened the protest but proceeded to suspend Elder Starrett from the office of elder at that very meeting. Because of his suspension and its related implications, Elder Starrett lost the right to protest anything except his own suspension. The first protest fell away and will not be answered by the consistory. Elder Starrett's right of protest was taken away in the blink of an eye. Elder Starrett wrote and submitted the second protest against his own suspension. The protests are published here as a believer's witness to the truth.

—AL

Dear Consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church,

I hereby protest three of your decisions that took place at your March 23rd 2023 meeting.

Those three decisions that I protest are

Protest # 1. Article 11 of the minutes: That we judge Rev. Lanning's teaching to be legalism.

Protest # 2. Article 18. in the minutes: That the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church seeks the sentence of Second Reformed Protestant Church regarding Rev. Lanning. That is regarding the suspension of Rev. Lanning from his office of minister. What of course is implied here in this article is that we at First Reformed Protestant church have decided to suspend Rev. Lanning and that is what I am actually protesting here.

Protest # 3. Article 19 of the minutes: That the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church place Rev. Lanning under Christian discipline by suspending him from the Lord's table.

Regarding protest number one. **I protest your charging Rev. Lanning with teaching legalism.**

Grounds: Legalism according to Wikipedia—"In Christian theology, legalism [or nomism] is a pejorative term applied to the idea that 'by doing good works or obeying the law, a person earns or merits salvation.'" Pejorative according to Wikipedia—"A pejorative or slur of grammatical form expressing a negative or a disrespectful connotation, a low opinion, or lack of respect to someone."

On March 5 in the P.M. Rev. Lanning preached a sermon entitled "No Image Worship" based on L.D. 35, which is one of the sermons in which Rev. Lanning allegedly taught legalism. There was not a shadow of anything that man could do to earn any of God's favor in that sermon and the truth and fact of the matter is that the **VERY!, VERY!, VERY! OPPOSITE OF LEGALISM WAS TAUGHT!!!** Here are a few quotes from the above mentioned sermon;

“If you take hold of the second commandment this evening and try to make it say that there is something that you must do and thou shalt live then you have misused this commandment,” “our salvation flows down to us like a 250 foot water fall always coming from above and always flowing in only one direction and that one direction is from God’s eternal counsel” “completed salvation which He earned for us,” “If you go down to the bottom of this waterfall and see this tree which is the second commandment and the worship of God and I am going to take the fruit from this tree, do this and I am going to live than you have used this commandment wrongly.”

On March 12th in the P.M. Rev. Lanning preached another sermon from L.D. 35 this one entitled “The Regulative Principle.” Rev. Lanning is charged with teaching legalism in this sermon as well as the above mentioned sermon. I maintain that this sermon as well as the above mentioned sermon is free from any trace or shadow of legalism. Listed below are some quotes from “The Regulative Principle Sermon.” **“This matter of Christ on the regulative principle goes deeper, way, way, deeper than this, it goes this deep that Jesus has fulfilled the regulative principle for First Reformed Protestant Church, He fulfilled it already,” “Jesus fulfilled the second commandment,” “First Reformed Protestant Church is not under the regulative principle in her worship, your not under it, if you were under that regulative principle in worship that would mean that you would have to fulfill that regulative principle perfectly, that you would have to fulfill that regulative principle not only in regards to what happens but to the perfection of those things, If the people of God were under the regulative principle for their salvation, for their acceptance with God they would never get to Him; they would never get into His house for dinner,” “Christ fulfilled it,” “because when He came to earth He worshiped God exactly as God required, and He still does, He always has and He always will worship God absolutely perfectly,” “That’s your free-**

dom, that’s the liberty of the gospel, for the church and now the church hearing that loves that regulative principle, you could not love it if you were under it, you would have to hate it.”

Regarding Protest number two. I protest your suspension of Rev. Lanning from his office of minister of the gospel and the sacraments.

Grounds: I don’t believe that Rev. Lanning is guilty of teaching legalism as charged and therefor should not have been suspended from office. The quotes that I have included in the grounds for my Protest Number One are decisive proof that Rev. Lanning is not guilty of teaching legalism. He in the above mentioned sermons as has been the case with all his teaching was to bring us to a better understanding and a greater appreciation for the green pastures and still waters of God’s Word. Rev. Lanning has without a doubt been teaching the congregation things we have never heard before and this is always the case with reformation, I repeat this is always the case with reformation. I call your attention to something here that may not be ignored or dismissed. First of all after hearing the above mentioned sermon of Mar. 5 we as a consistory showed interest in the teachings of this sermon, and at least three of us on consistory learned that “Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow” is not one of the hymns listed in Article 69 of the Church Order. Secondly, we decided as a consistory three days after the March 5th sermon was preached to temporarily cease from singing “Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow.” That which we at least in seed form approved is that which is now reason for our minister’s suspension.

Regarding Protest number three. I protest your decision to place Rev. Lanning under the first step of christian discipline.

Grounds; My grounds for protest number three are the same as the grounds for the two protests above.

I submit this protest as is my God given duty to defend our beloved faithful minister, God helping me.

— Elder Paul Starrett.

PROTEST

Dear Consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church,

I hereby protest two of the decisions made at your March 28, 2023 meeting. Namely, Art. 4, motion 1. [to suspend Elder Paul Starrett from the office of elder. And motion 3. of the same above mentioned Art. [to place Elder Paul Starrett under Christian Discipline, by suspending him from the Lord's Supper.]

Grounds: 1. I am not teaching the false doctrine of legalism to the congregation or to anyone else. What I am teaching is the same truth that our faithful minister Rev. Lanning has taught us in his evening sermons of Mar 5, 2023 and Mar. 12, 2023. What is implied in this ground, I now state explicitly; you as a consistory have misjudged the teachings of the two above mentioned sermons. Though the committee of Elders Bodbyl, Schipper, and Overway brought a lengthy report, it must be held up to unbiased examination. Because you have charged me with teaching the false doctrine of legalism I must go back to the above mentioned report that declared the teachings of Rev. Lanning to be the false doctrine of legalism. To begin with, that report of the committee should have been out a week or two for the entire consistory to study it before we acted on it. Elder Meyer's motion to call the meeting out of order was very much in place. Under the heading of "Regarding the History of Reformed Church," the committee has a couple of quotes, one from Abraham Kuyper and another from Herman Hoeksema. Following are some quotes from an article in the Jan. 15, 1998 issue of the Standard Bearer. This article entitled "Sing the Songs of Zion" is by Professor Herman Hanko. In the above mentioned Standard Bearer article, the opening sentence in the introduction reads "It is my conviction, expressed in this article, **That the Word of God requires the exclusive use of psalms in the corporate worship of the church.**"

The last sentence of the above mentioned introduction reads as follows "it is the theses of this article that the regulative principle of worship requires the use of psalms in the church's worship." The above mentioned article has four parts 1. An Argument From History; quoted from this part "anyone who is at all acquainted with the history of the church especially since the time of the Reformation, will know that **exclusive psalmody in the worship services acts as a deterrent to the introduction of heresy into the pulpit.**" Part 2 of Professor Hanko's above mentioned article. "Direct Biblical Proof": the opening sentence of this part "Such proof from history, however, is not sufficient to make psalm singing in the worship services an element incorporated into the regulative principle of worship. For that we need to go to scripture itself." Professor Hanko makes clear that to understand the Biblical instruction for exclusive psalmody in our worship is that the church of the Old Testament and the New Testament are but one church. Professor Hanko brings the very same exposition that Rev. Lanning brought in both the above mentioned sermons. The third part of the above mentioned article is entitled Covenantal Worship and Covenantal Psalms; quoted from this third section and pay attention to two passages, well known and usually quoted in the debate of exclusive Psalmody.

They are Ephesians 5:18-19 and Colossians 3:16. Professor Hanko maintains that there are faithful Hebrew scholars who maintain that the Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs of these texts refer together to the Old Testament Psalter found in the 150 psalms. Both of these passages instruct us to speak, teach, and admonish one another with singing of the psalms, and that is what we do in corporate worship when singing psalms. There is no instruction to the church either in the Old Testament or the New Testament for man to compose any other songs to be sung.

And though there are spiritual songs recorded in scripture, the scriptures in no wise instructs the church to sing them in corporate worship. The last part of the above mentioned article is entitled "Our Spiritual Biography." Quoted here is the first sentence of this part of the article "The last line of argumentation for exclusive Psalmody has to do with another unique feature of the Psalms. The book of Psalms taken as a whole constitutes the spiritual biography of the people of God." Rev. Kortering wrote along the same line; see "Psalm singing a Reformed Heritage" on the PRC website. The above mentioned committee included a report from our mother church from 1960. While the history of the church is important and must be known, that report is as moldy bread. We have known most of what that report included for decades, and most of that material is available on internet in a matter of minutes and much more besides. But the reason that the material comes as moldy is that the committee presents it as dead orthodoxy. We look at church history and walk away and say yes we're okay. We are right in line. Have we really come out of the PR; have we really come out of the PRC?? The deadly error of the PRC is that we set principles but never act on them entirely.

Rev. Lanning preached against the deadly formalism; really two positions very much opposed to each other, but plenty of room in the PRC to see it either way. That deadly principle worked through the entire denomination. Yes we proclaim that the demand of the covenant includes the christian day school but plenty of room for other means of education. God has saved us by grace through Christ alone, but plenty of room for our good works in order to experience joy and assurance in the Christian life. This present controversy in the Reformed Protestant Churches is as much a part of church history as any thing thus reported so far. The true church is reformed but always reforming as well. The Reformed Protestant Churches came out of an apostate denomination. The errors of that denomination were brought to light from our pulpits and other avenues of instruction. And now we get to pointing out her errors regarding worship and we run

up against a wall right from within. I add here the kind of sermon that those who oppose the teachings of the two above mentioned sermons of the evenings of Mar. 5th and Mar. 12 from Rev. Lanning in our pulpit, would include lines like "so First RPC I see your practice is in line with Art. 69, you sing the doxology, not the one referred to in Art.69, but that's O.K; we don't want to be legalistic you know, and you still sing the psalms, and you have included the other Biblical songs to use just in case of whatever, good job, that is all I got to say until next year when we get to this Lord's Day again." The minister preaches that we have sinned and that our mother has sinned and that that sin is grossly imbedded in all of us, and people react, and the gospel that was boldly proclaimed in both the sermons being scrutinized was not heard by those crying legalism.

Under the heading of the report "With Regards to the Church Order," the committee teaches that the Church Order is binding. Nowhere do we read that the Church Order is binding. Art. 86 of the Church Order does not maintain that the Church Order is binding, neither do any of the confessions maintain that the church order is binding. Granted we as churches agree to it through her office bearers by way of common consent and adopt it as churches for the sake of order. No one is arguing that we don't need the church order. However for those in our churches who make a big deal out of the church order being binding when truth is at stake I ask these questions; Where were you when we came out of the PRC? What were you reading in 2020 when the battle for the truth was raging? Do you not know the history of the PRC?

You are called to be watchmen on the walls of Zion and you put church polity above the truth?

Following are some quotes from the Oct. 2020 and Nov. 2020 issues of the Sword and Shield; "I begin with the criticism that the organization [RPA] and magazine are committed to a schismatic principle because of a wrong understanding of article 31 of the church order." From the same Sword and Shield article,

"The argument is that article 31 [of the Church Order] forbids voicing 'objections with any decision of an ecclesiastical body' except by way of protest and appeal." Further, since every office bearer has subscribed to the Church Order and Formula of Subscription, so as to criticize an ecclesiastical decision is the profanity of breaking one's vow." Also in the same Sword and Shield article; "But such is the ignorance of the Church Order and of the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches that even a mild statement about an activity in which our fathers engaged and for which they fought and was part and parcel of the Standard Bearer earns a serious charge." And from the same Sword and Shield article, "Hoeksema called the whole classical report a 'concoction of truth and sophistry' [159]. It was. Using language that sounded correct, church politically, the classis under minded good church polity and used good church polity to destroy the truth. The truth must bow to the decrees of men! Sounding like high minded defenders of church polity, the classis used polity as a weapon to silence the truth and ran roughshod over its principles."

And quotes from the Nov. 2020 Sword and Shield; "but a consistory is patently wrong in its assertion that the office bearer subscribes to the Church Order when he signs the Formula of Subscription." "I agree that article 31 is the orderly way. But the exception clause 'unless it prove to be in conflict with the Word of God,' may never be left out of the explanation of that orderly way. That exception ought especially to be understood by the members of the PRC because it was instrumental for the beginning of the Protestant Reformed denomination."

Under the heading of the report "With Regards to the Scriptural Arguments"; To quote the committee "Rev. Lanning made much of 2 Samuel 23:1-2". I call your attention to the fact that Professor Hanko in the above mentioned Standard Bearer article, "The Songs of Zion: What shall the Church Sing?" also makes something of 2 Samuel 23:1-2. Professor Hanko's article also instructs us with the connection be-

tween David being the sweet psalmist of Israel as 2 Samuel has it and the pure worship of the Lord under King Hezekiah's faithful reform which included foremost reformation of worship.

Also in this part of the report several songs from scripture are mentioned and quoted as follows "if the Old Testament church could sing other songs than the Psalms in their worship of Jehovah then so can the New". Regarding this statement I ask where in all of scripture did the Lord command his church to sing these songs? These songs must be loved as God's children love all of scripture, but God has not in the Old Testament or the New Testament commanded that these songs be sung by his church in worship or apart from worship as well. And consider this: Deuteronomy 12:32; What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. Maintaining this truth does not make us guilty of legalism. When we look at what is required we know that we could never fulfill the demand. As Rev. Lanning faithfully taught in the sermons mentioned above, Christ kept the Regulative Principle for us. Knowing that our Father in Heaven was all together pleased with Christ's work we now seek to worship God as He has commanded. The committee's understanding of Col. 3:16 proves that they do not understand what the Regulative Principle teaches or simply ignore it. Quoted "The principle is that the believer sings. He sings scripture, which includes the Psalms but not exclusively."

Again the Regulative Principle is that only what the Lord has commanded is to be part of worship. The above statement "he sings scripture, which includes the Psalms but not exclusively" indicates that the position of the committee is that what the Lord has not forbidden may be included. Also, the last paragraph of the section "With Regards to Scriptural Arguments" the committee again shows that they do not understand the Regulative Principle or choose to ignore it. The teaching of 2 Timothy has to do with all of life not just our corporate worship. And the committee tries to use Hebrews 2:12 as a

proof text with not a hint of explanation! That very text that proves Exclusive Psalmody in the New Testament. The text Hebrews 2:12 is a direct quote of Psalm 22, verses 22 and 25 that is Christ in the midst of the church, and the following verse of the same chapter a direct quote from Psalm 18. The committee's last sentence of this part of their report; "This is an arbitrary limitation and imposition of the texts." In regards to this statement I remind you that you are by the way of implication charging Professor Hanko, Rev. Kortering, the teaching of the Westminster Standards, and many others regarding the Regulative Principle to be arbitrary and to be guilty of imposition of texts.

In regards to the last part of the committee's report, "With Regards to the Creeds";

The first sentence of this part; "The 2nd commandment is a principle that applies to the believer's whole life, which includes the home as well as the assembly of believers on the Sabbath day." This statement is not accurate and is not according to the reformed creeds. The first commandment as explained in Q 94 and Q 95 of the Heidelberg Catechism applies to the believer's whole life. The second commandment as explained in Lord's Day 35 applies to how we worship God in corporate worship as assembled on the Lord's Day. For one thing, the last part of Lord's Day 35 "but by the lively preaching of His Word"; Do we literally hear the preaching of God's Word the other six days of the week? of course we don't; is it however true as Rev. Lanning maintained in his teaching that our lives echo what the lively preaching did to us? Ursinus himself put it this way, "Idolatry is forbidden in the first commandment. In the second also. Therefore they constitute only one commandment and the first commandment forbids one form of idolatry, as when another God is worshiped; the second forbids another species of worship of idolatry, as when the true God is worshiped differently from what He ought to be." It is true that those who violate the second commandment also violate the first commandment, but nevertheless there is a distinction

between the first and second commandments; the second having to do with corporate assembled worship as in Hebrews 10:25; to teach otherwise is not confessional, period!

Ground 2. When Second's consistory zoomed in for concurrence of my suspension there are some key points that need to be addressed. There were at least two remarks from Second's consistory regarding my tone and or attitude, which had bearing on their concurrence; my tone and attitude were not part of the grounds of which they were to concur or not concur with; those remarks were made after they knew that my protest was shoved aside and a motion was on the floor to have me suspended before my protest was even opened. This is a repeat of what the PRC did to Rev. Lanning; it was not false teaching but behavior. The other unjust act you are guilty of is when Rev. Langerak asked if the entire consistory was in agreement you failed to tell them that two elders resigned, at or after your decision to suspend me from the office of elder, and bar me from the Lord's table. That is a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts that had a weighty bearing on Second's concurrence or refusal to concur.

Ground 3. In the history of our mother church in 1924 as recorded in "The Protestant Reformed Churches in America" by Rev. Herman Hoeksema, Rev. Herman Hoeksema said on the floor of Synod that he did not agree with the three points and would never abide by them, and Rev. H. Danhof delivered a written protest to synod in which he expressed elaborately his objection against the declarations and decisions of synod regarding the three points, and plainly stated that he would employ every means at his command to oppose them. These men were not disciplined. There was a committee of pre-advice that came with a round about way to eventually have these men disciplined by their consistories of course, but synod did not approve of that advice. With that in mind I again support Rev. Lanning's teachings that you call the false teaching of legalism.

My contention in this protest is that you have suspended me from the office of elder unlawfully and that you have put me under Christian discipline unlawfully as well. The three grounds and all the presentation above that goes with them is in defense of myself only. I ask that you prayerfully reconsider your actions and lift the suspension and the discipline. May the Lord grant you

wisdom as you consider these matters. I ask too that if possible you rule on this soon, so that if needs be, I may appeal to the May classis which has an April 17^m deadline for material going to the classis.

In Christian service,
your brother Paul Starrett

— Elder Paul Starrett.

BOOK REVIEW

Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms. Michael LeFebvre. Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2010. 160 pages, paperback, \$11.99. [Reviewed by Rev. Andrew Lanning.]

Introduction

Michael LeFebvre's book is about the psalms, as the subtitle indicates: *Revisiting the Psalms*. It is a winsome explanation of how the psalms function in the worship services of the church. "My purpose in this book is to explain how the Psalms work as Christian praise songs" (xii).

LeFebvre's audience is those instituted churches that either have lost or never had the practice of psalm singing. Such an audience, reared on traditional hymns or the latest worship songs, may very well be skeptical and perhaps even hostile to revisiting the psalms. LeFebvre himself grew up in such churches and only came to appreciate psalm singing later.

Then, as a young man, I moved to a church that sang the Psalms—all 150 of them. It was not love at first sight. Singing the Psalms seemed awkward. All that moaning and groaning. So much talk of confusion and judgment, of sacrifices and temple festivals. Frankly, the Psalms seemed hard to understand. (xi)

LeFebvre came to love the psalms and advocates their return to the worship of the church.

Writing out of sympathy for those who are not eager to revisit the psalms, LeFebvre's tone is irenic and winsome. Harshness is entirely

absent from the book. This does not mean that LeFebvre is without conviction. He informs us that his personal conviction is exclusive psalmody. He is a minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, which is known for exclusive psalmody. LeFebvre also writes out of the conviction that the psalms in worship are a means of grace to God's people, though LeFebvre himself does not use the term "means of grace."

It is a rediscovery [of the psalms] that I believe is necessary, and in which I hope others will take part—for the strengthening of our own relationships with God in Christ, for the reformation of the church, and ultimately for the glory of God as mediated through the Person and prayers of Christ our Mediatorial King and Psalm singer. (151)

LeFebvre engages in polemics, and his teaching is antithetical. He just does it in such a way that the reader does not feel the crash of the battle. For example, "The Psalms are qualitatively different from all other songs of Christian devotion in at least two key ways explained in this book" (xii–xiii). And "Like the rest of Scripture, the Psalms are fully God's Word to us. But unlike the rest of Scripture, the Psalms are further designed to become our words to sing back to God" (17).

Nevertheless, LeFebvre's purpose in his book is not to argue his convictions but to instruct the broader church world about the glorious Christian practice of psalm singing. Indeed, even those who already sing the psalms need instruction.

Even within a denomination that sings the Psalms exclusively in worship, moreover, I find that there is need to relearn what it is that we are doing as we sing these curious specimens of ancient hymnody. (151)

LeFebvre's approach makes his book a good entry point for those who wonder why someone would hold to exclusive psalmody. Even though LeFebvre's book is not about exclusive psalmody, it beautifully sets forth the gospel foundation of exclusive psalmody: the psalms are "the songs of Jesus," as the title puts it. Before the exclusive psalmist ever finds exclusive psalmody in the law, he finds exclusive psalmody in the singing of his savior. Understanding what it means that the psalms are the songs of Jesus, what is left for the believer other than *Singing the Songs of Jesus*? In this book those in the Reformed Protestant Churches who are skeptical about exclusive psalmody or even hostile to it will at least come to understand why their brethren in their midst are so excited about it.

Overview

In seven brief chapters and an epilogue, LeFebvre introduces his readers to the glorious Christian practice of psalm singing.

Chapter 1 establishes the unique place of the book of psalms among all the other books of the Bible. All sixty-six books of the Bible are inspired and are the God-breathed word. But the psalms were God-breathed as the songs that the church would speak to God.

God designed most books of the Bible to be read as his words to us... But the Psalm-book is different: it alone is composed as a collection of songs from men to God. (15)

The Psalms are words for God's people to sing to him. This does not mean the Psalms are any less God's Word to us than other books of the Bible...But because they

are inspired hymns, God has given us these words for a further purpose also. In the Psalms, God speaks to us about the things we need to sing to him. (16)

Like the rest of Scripture, the Psalms are fully God's Word to us. But unlike the rest of Scripture, the Psalms are further designed to become our words to sing back to God. (17)

In this connection LeFebvre recognizes that there are other songs in scripture—many other songs. But in scripture there is a difference between song and song. Some songs are God's singing to his church. Other songs were inspired by God and compiled by God into a book for his people to sing to him.

There are other books of songs in the Bible. Prophets, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, composed much of their writings in song-like poetry. But these 'lyrical prophecies' are songs from God to his people (cf., Zeph. 3:17)...With the exception of the Psalms, the many song-filled books of the Bible are addressed to God's people: in them, God's truth sings to us.

The Book of Psalms is unique. It is a hymnal. It is the only book of the Bible with God as the audience and God's people as its appointed speakers. (16)

LeFebvre concludes the first chapter with a tour of history to find out when hymns began replacing psalms. He finds that

God's people sang the Psalms from at least the 10th century before Christ (the time of King David) until the 16th and 17th centuries after Christ (the time of the Reformation). Other hymns written during these millennia supplemented the Psalms, but never replaced them. It was only in the 18th century A.D., with the modern hymnwriting movement, that an effort to replace Psalm singing emerged. (23)

Chapter 2 is the crown jewel of LeFebvre's book. Entitled "The Power of Psalmody: Two Specialties of the Biblical Psalms," the chapter

shows how firmly the psalms are anchored in Christ. What is true of the psalms as the songs of Jesus is true of no other songs composed by men.

There is a profound difference between what the Psalms accomplish in worship and what all those other kinds of devotional songs can accomplish. We are not comparing apples and apples here. There are at least two characteristics of the Psalms that make them unique—and uniquely powerful—for modern Christian worship. (32)

Before identifying the two characteristics of the psalms that make them unique songs, LeFebvre explains David's "hymnwriting workshops" (32). Exegeting 1 Chronicles 25:1–7, LeFebvre unfolds the work of Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman under King David, with the sons of these men and their ensembles under them.

The result is an elaborate production center with twenty-four instrumental ensembles composing music for the hymns being written by the top three chiefs: Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman. Elsewhere we learn that there was a 4,000 strong army of additional musicians to draw from for the temple services (1 Chron. 23:5). But it is this team, described in 1 Chronicles 25, which David set up to help produce Israel's worship hymns—the Psalms. (34)

This was a fascinating section of the book. I had not known or had not remembered that the production of the psalms was such a tremendous undertaking. LeFebvre's description of David's organization of this undertaking as "hymnwriting workshops" and "an elaborate production center" and "temple hymnwriting teams" (34) rightly captures the scale of David's psalm writing. And one staggers at God's miraculous work of inspiring the psalms. In my imagination I might picture David sitting alone at his table at night with a candle flickering while God breathed the next psalm and David wrote it on the page. But 1 Chronicles 25 reveals a busy workshop filled with many people in organized

teams, as Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun "prophesied according to the order of the king" (v. 2). God inspired these men to write the psalms together, with many other ensembles in attendance and helping them but always under the leadership, command, and direction of King David. What a marvel of inspiration are the psalms of David!

Having explained the writing of the psalms, LeFebvre turns to the two features of the psalms that make them unique among all other songs for the church's worship.

The first lesson we learn is that the hymns of the temple were *divinely inspired*. In 1 Chronicles 25:1–7, we are told no fewer than four times that prophetic inspiration was a prerequisite for writing worship songs in David's workshops...

This is one feature that sets apart the Psalms from all other songs composed in the church. (36–37; emphasis is LeFebvre's)

What a gift for the church! God not only gives us inspired teaching in the Bible, but inspired songs too. Songs often do as much as sermons (if not more) to shape our faith. The Scriptures preached *and* the Psalms sung provide an ideal curriculum for shaping the faith of the church. (38)

After applying the truth of the inspiration of the psalms to the worship of the church, LeFebvre turns to the second feature of the psalms that makes them unique.

There is a second prerequisite of hymnwriting in the guilds of King David. The songs prepared in the temple workshops were all *king-led*. Temple hymnwriters needed to have the king's imprimatur on each of the hymns they composed...

David was 'the sweet psalmist of Israel' (2 Sam. 23:1); these men were his 'ghostwriters' so to speak, aiding him in what remained fundamentally his own responsibility. Others helped David and his heirs in the production of Psalms for worship, but the whole collection is

rightly called ‘the Psalms of David’ because they all speak ‘in the king’s voice.’ (41–42)

This was another fascinating section of the book. I had not known or had forgotten how important the king was for worship in Israel. The worship of the congregation was always something that was led. Throughout Israel’s history, the leaders—like Moses, Joshua, and the judges—led the congregation in worship. So it was for David. He was the worship leader of the children of Israel.

When Scripture identifies David as ‘the sweet psalmist of Israel’ (2 Sam. 23:1), this is not simply a statement affirming his musical talents. It is a statement of a royal office he held. (42)

Because David is a type of Christ, Jesus is the reality. Jesus is the worship leader and the song leader in the congregation. It is especially this truth of Jesus as the worship leader and song leader of the congregation that makes psalmody—and exclusive psalmody—so exciting.

In biblical worship, it is the king who leads the congregation into worship, and it is the king’s own songs that the congregation sings with him. (43; emphasis is LeFebvre’s)

Many other songs of faith and joy appear throughout Scripture, but whenever we find examples of the congregation gathered *in public worship*, it is consistently with the songs of the ruler on their lips...

Of particular significance to Christians, we find the public praise gatherings in the New Testament also sang the Davidic Psalms—and they did so with the Son of David as their acknowledged song leader. The New Testament church saw in Jesus, the ultimate Song Leader for the church’s praises.

Have you ever thought about that before? *When you sing the Psalms, you are actually singing the songs of Jesus, with Jesus as your songleader.* That is an exciting thought. It is an exciting thought

celebrated in the book of Hebrews with these words: ‘[Jesus]...is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise”’ (Heb. 2:11–12, quoting Ps. 22:22). It is King Jesus who takes the Davidic Psalms to his lips and sings them ‘in the midst of the congregation’—and he invites us to join his songs with him. (50–51; emphasis is LeFebvre’s)

It is the fact that the psalms are the songs of Jesus as the song leader in the church that sets the psalms apart from any other songs.

It is in the biblical Psalms alone that Jesus himself, our priestly king, leads our sung proclamations in the presence of the Father. (51)

From the beginning, the Psalms were composed for Jesus—as his songs. No wonder the New Testament church never set the Psalmbook aside. They took up the Psalms in great delight, singing in them with Jesus. (53)

Our divinely anointed leader, King Jesus, leads our praise. Jesus sings his own songs in his own words (composed prophetically for him). They are his praises of the Father which he calls us, as his subjects, to join him in singing. Rather than disappearing from view, we are supposed to sing in conscious identification with Jesus as our Psalm leader, and with his experience of the cross and resurrection before us. (54)

If you only have time and energy for one chapter in this book, I highly recommend chapter 2.

In chapters 3–7 LeFebvre takes the reader into specific psalms to show examples of how the church sings Jesus’ songs with him. Chapter 3 shows how many psalms are written as “praising conversations” (59), with Jesus always at the lead and the center of the conversations. Chapter 4 shows how psalms in which there is confession

of sin are Jesus' songs. The chapter also shows how psalms that refer to specific events in the life of David can be Jesus' songs. Chapter 5 explains how the psalms lead God's people to meditate on the truth. Chapter 6 explains how the psalms of imprecation, in which the singer prays for God's curse upon his enemies, are to be understood and used by the church. Chapter 7 explains how the church is to understand lament and sorrow in the psalms, as those laments carry the believer to the praise of God.

Finally, in the epilogue, LeFebvre connects psalm singing with the reformation of the church. "Throughout history (including biblical history), reformation in the church has generally taken place within the context of a recovery of biblical worship" (148). "It is a rediscovery [of the psalms] that I believe is necessary...for the reformation of the church" (151).

Chapters 3–7 and the epilogue are well worth the read. The brevity of this review of those chapters does not reflect their worth. The foundation that was laid in chapter 2 is given substance and color in chapters 3–7.

Two Criticisms

There are two points by way of criticism. First, I did not agree with every point of LeFebvre's theology. There was much that I rejoiced in and heartily agreed with. But I did not agree with every point. For example, a comment seemed to imply that Adam's fall was a failure of God's purpose, which purpose was rescued by Christ (66). For another example, I did not agree with the author's call to use the imprecatory psalms "sparingly" (132). Also, LeFebvre's language sometimes failed to capture the authority of Jesus Christ, as, for example, the statement that Jesus "invites us" to sing with him (51). There were a few other things too, so let the reader read with discernment, as always.

Second, I thought LeFebvre gave far too much credit to the hymn writers who deliberately set out to replace the psalms. LeFebvre did indicate

his disagreement with the hymn writers, but his praise of their motives and purpose struck me as discordant. I think I understand what LeFebvre was doing. It is very easy to mock or dismiss psalmody. Israel's captors mocked Israel and her psalmody by the rivers of Babylon. The general church audience today starts out hostile, or at least skeptical, to psalmody. Even within churches that sing psalms, there can be a streak of opposition to psalmody. In his determination to be winsome to such an audience, LeFebvre bent over backward to be irenic. Nevertheless, his book would have profited from some polemics at that point instead. When hymn writers dismiss the psalms as "sub-Christian," "Jewish," "out of harmony with the gentler melody of Christ," "unsuitable," that which "required modification for Christian worship," and that which "should therefore be 'renovated' as if David had been a Christian" (24–25), then it is appropriate and necessary to condemn the hymn writers as wrong. The psalms are the songs of Jesus, as LeFebvre's book abundantly demonstrates. There is no need to praise, as LeFebvre did, the motives and efforts of those who would displace the songs of Jesus: "We do not need to discredit the intentions of the modern-era hymnwriters, nor demean the value of the religious poetry they produced" (27). LeFebvre returned to that line several times throughout his book. I did not find it to be the gentle treatment that it was probably intended to be but instead found it to be discordant, strange, and unconvincing, set against the theme of the book.

Recommendation

But with those criticisms noted, I highly recommend *Singing the Songs of Jesus*. The theme of the book—that the psalms are Jesus' songs that the church sings with him—warms the believer's heart. And that truth sown in his heart will make the believer a psalm singer, who hears with joy the Lord's call to sing psalms.

—AL

The So-Called Evangelical Hymns

Reformed Pavilion's Preface

The matter of exclusive psalmody was prominent in the *Afscheiding* of 1834. Hendrik De Cock, minister of the Reformed congregation in the Dutch city of Ulrum, rejected the hymns introduced by the state church and wrote against them. De Cock's rejection of hymns was based on his maintenance of exclusive psalmody, which De Cock traced to the Reformation. For his rejection of hymns, which included his maintenance of Reformed exclusive psalmody, De Cock was disciplined by the state church.

De Cock's witness raised the ire of his opponents, and soon charges of slander, misrepresentation, and evil confronted him. Three distinct actions by De Cock gave the department of religion and the various classical and provincial administrators occasion to discipline him. These three actions were his baptizing infants of parents who had their membership in another congregation; his rejection of the state church hymns and his writing an introduction to another's pamphlet critical of the theology of the hymns of the state church; and the charge he made against pastors Brouwer and Reddingius of violating the oath they took when they signed the Formula of Subscription.¹

In addition to writing an introduction to another's pamphlet critical of hymns, De Cock wrote his own pamphlet. The shortened title is *The So-Called Evangelical Hymns*. The full title is *The so-called evangelical hymns, the darling of the enraptured and misled multitude in the synodical Reformed church, and even by some of God's children from blindness, because they were drunk with the wine of her fornication; further tested, weighed and found wanting, yes, in conflict with all our*

Forms of Unity and the Word of God; by H. De Cock, Reformed Minister of Ulrum, under the cross for the sake of Jesus Christ.

By the time he has finished reading the title, the reader has no doubt what De Cock thought of hymns.

De Cock's pamphlet has been exceedingly difficult to find in English translation. Perhaps I just have the wrong books on my shelf, but at least a few others have also had trouble locating the pamphlet. Our hearty thanks to a reader of *Reformed Pavilion* who was able to track down an English translation on the "Way Back Machine" internet archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20110917023204/https://gcc-opc.org/docs/DeCock.dir/hymndecock.htm#r14>.

The translation republished at this site was prepared by J. A. Wanliss and W. L. Bredenhof in 1998. In addition to their translation, these men also wrote a translators' preface, a brief note to the reader, a historical introduction, and two appendices, in addition to copious historical footnotes within the translation itself. Wanliss and Bredenhof published all of this on the internet under the title "Rev. H. DeCock's Case Against Hymns." It is reprinted in *Reformed Pavilion* with the permission of Rev. Wes Bredenhof, one of the translators. I regret that I was not able to locate J. A. Wanliss, the other translator.

"Rev. H. DeCock's Case Against Hymns" is republished in *Reformed Pavilion* as originally published by Wanliss and Bredenhof, except for three omissions and one annotation. First, the table of contents has been omitted since its main purpose was to provide hyperlinks to the headings in the document. Second, the first appendix has been omitted. This was an English translation of the Act of Secession or Return, which

¹ Marvin Kamps, 1834: *Hendrik De Cock's Return to the True Church* (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2014), 158.

document was the *Afscheiding*'s official break with the state church in 1834. Interested readers can find an English translation of the Act of Secession or Return in Marvin Kamps' book *1834* (245–246). Third, the second appendix has been omitted, which was the exegesis of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 excerpted from the book *The Psalms in Worship* (John McNaugher, ed. [Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1992]). Interested readers can pursue the exegesis of those passages in that book.

The reader will find *Reformed Pavilion*'s annotation to Wanliss and Bredenhof's work following one of the paragraphs in the translator's preface. The undersigned disagrees with the translators' explanation of "faith alone" as it relates to worship, and that disagreement is briefly stated in brackets.

Finally, in addition to the historical introduction provided by the translators, the reader would profit from Marvin Kamps' telling of the history. A few excerpts to whet the appetite and to encourage the reader to page through the relevant sections of *1834*:

The second occasion for discipline was De Cock's refusal to use the hymnbook of the state church. This was not his decision, but that of his consistory under his leadership. His consistory agreed with his rejection of the hymns as being unbiblical in general, specifically promoting Arminianism in the church, and not God-glorifying, and consequently as inappropriate for the official worship services. The consistory wanted to abide by article 69 of the Church Order of Dordt, which requires the singing of the psalms.²

De Cock's position was that the Reformed church may sing only the psalms, which God has provided for his church, and which our fathers required in article 69 of the Church Order of Dordt.³

Without further delay, here is De Cock's *The So-Called Evangelical Hymns*, beginning with the translators' material.

—AL

Rev. H. DeCock's Case Against Hymns

Translated, Edited and Annotated by J.A. Wanliss & W.L. Bredenhof

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"...We know from experience that singing has great strength and power to move and to set on fire the hearts of men in order that they may call upon God and praise Him with a more vehement and more ardent zeal. It is to be remembered always that this singing should not be light or frivolous, but that it ought to have weight and majesty...Now, what Augustine says is true, namely that no one can sing anything worthy of God which he has not received from Him. Therefore, even after we have carefully searched everywhere, we shall not find better or more appropriate songs to this end than the Psalms of David, inspired by the Holy Spirit. And for this reason, when we sing them, we are assured that God puts the words in our mouth, as if He Himself were singing through us to exalt His glory..."

— John Calvin (1543)

² Kamps, *1834*, 163–64.

³ Kamps, *1834*, 166.

Translators' Preface

The true church of Jesus Christ is not for sale. It is not for liberalism, nor is it for dead orthodoxy. It is alive and living for Christ the King. It is only when the doctrine and life of the true, historic Reformed church is lost that it becomes deformed and spiritually dead. When Christ's Church shows a greater zeal for her immense heritage, then the Biblical religion (in all its glorious splendour) of the Reformed faith is bound to be appreciated and applied anew. The late twentieth century has seen a far from vibrant Christian church and repentance and reformation are unquestionably needed.

During the reformation in Europe the rediscovery of Biblical religion led to reforms in doctrine, and especially in worship. People who had been bound for centuries to singing man's songs once again sang the hymns of God that are commonly called the Psalms of David. From Switzerland to Scotland to the New World churches were once again hymning to God the songs that Christ Jesus hymned, the songs that He declared were about him (Luke 24:44). Indeed, this key from the Lord is used by the apostles to further open our eyes to the New Covenant importance of the Psalms in worship (e.g. Acts 2:25ff, Hebrews 10:3ff etc.)

The proper motive for reform in the Church comes out of a love for God and fear of Him. Obedience is the offering that is acceptable and pleasing to Him, and it is the mark, of true love (John 14:15). Even seemingly innocent traditions of men are offensive to God unless they are what He has commanded. Indeed, what sacrifice of man's making is acceptable to the Lord? Who may approach "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light" (1Timothy 6:15, 16)? No man in whom is sin may approach or offer sacrifices worthy of God.

Faith alone is not sufficient when it comes to acceptable Christian worship. Only what comes by faith and obedience to Jesus Christ is acceptable. It is ultimately through the faith and

obedience of Jesus Christ to the will of the Father that man's redemption is made possible. By His once and for all sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 10 and Psalm 40) the Lord Jesus accomplishes the redemption of His people. Now Christians may approach God with confidence through faith and obedience in Jesus Christ.

[Annotation: The above paragraph does not correctly express the truth of worship. Contrary to the statements above, acceptable Christian worship is indeed by faith alone in Christ alone. Contrary to the statements above, Christians now may approach God with confidence through faith alone and not by obedience. Christ alone has clean hands and a pure heart, and he alone may ascend the hill of the Lord (Ps. 24:3–4). His perfect obedience is imputed to us, and his atoning blood covers our sins, so that we also may come before God in worship in our Head. The Christian's obedience in worship is not the means by which he approaches God but the gracious fruit of his salvation in Christ. The believer's good works of gratitude are not acceptable to God because of the obedience of those works but because God sanctifies them by his grace (Belgic Confession 24). All similar statements throughout this document to those expressed in this translators' preface should be understood according to this annotation.—AL]

The Lord Jesus freed His people from slavery to sin and makes them His slaves to righteousness. His people no longer worship God with offerings of bulls and goats, but in simplicity of the Holy Spirit and truth. Thus the reformers sought to offer acceptable sacrifices of praise to their beloved God. For example, the reformer Zacharias Ursinus, one of the composers of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, writes:

The other species of idolatry is more subtle and refined, as when the true God is supposed to be worshipped, whilst the kind of worship which is paid unto him is

false, which is the case when one imagines that he is worshipping and honouring God by the performance of any work not prescribed by the divine law. This species of idolatry is more properly condemned in the second commandment, and is termed superstition, because it adds to the commandments of God the inventions of men. Those are called superstitious who corrupt the worship of God by their own inventions. This will-worship or superstition is condemned in every part of the word of God.⁴

Abraham Van de Velde, a seventeenth century minister of the Word of God at Middelburg in the Netherlands, notes that, when she worships, the Christian Church ought not to follow “useless hindrances” such as “the introduction of new hymn-books, and present day ditties, which we do not find in God’s Word...”⁵ The present work is very much in this vein. Hendrik DeCock, the author of this work, is another prominent Dutch reformer who argued for worship regulated by God’s Word alone. In his small work, first published in 1835, DeCock considers the use of praise material in the worship of God. Beginning with Scripture he proves that nothing but the songs that God has provided are acceptable for use in worship. The circumstances that prompted DeCock to begin this work are elucidated in the historical introduction which follows this preface. In the late twentieth century there are still some churches of Dutch heritage that worship God in simplicity of “spirit and truth” as enjoined by our blessed Lord Jesus (cf. John 4:22–26).

It is sad that in these times of ever-increasing religious declension the exclusive singing of psalms is at best considered eccentric, and at worst an attack on Christian liberty and a return to the bondage of the Law. How strange it is that freedom to obey God in these matters is

considered bondage. The liberty purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ was precisely that His people may know pleasures forevermore in knowing their Lord and doing His will.

This tract by Hendrik DeCock may also serve to dispel any myths and false witness that the exclusive use of psalms in worship is an invention of the Scottish and English branches of the Reformed Churches. In fact, Church history supports the view that it was the practice of the early Church to sing psalms exclusively and without musical accompaniment for at least the first two centuries of her existence, and until the fourth century to sing nothing but the psalms and a few snatches derived from Scripture.⁶ The Council of Laodicea, which met about 360 A.D., forbade “the singing of uninspired hymns in church, and the reading of uncanonical books of Scripture.” This canon of the Laodicean synod was confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon which met almost a century later (451 A.D.). Much of this was forgotten, but the reformation in Europe revived such knowledge and restored this understanding of Scripture. The work of Abraham VandeVelde (1614–1677) references several Dutch Reformation-era Synods that reiterate these practices.

The Reformation served as impetus for many churches that in varying degrees returned to the apostolic practice of singing only songs that bear the divine approval. Almost three hundred years after the Reformation it fell to Hendrik DeCock and his colleagues, living in the nineteenth century Netherlands, to revive the old ways. DeCock provides new and insightful arguments, that to our knowledge no other apologist has used, for the exclusive use of psalms in worship. Particularly commendable are his references to Israel which, during periods of religious declension, sang songs of their own composition that God rejected.

It is our prayer that the Lord will once again revive His Church and bring her to repentance.

⁴ *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed (1852), p. 518.

⁵ *The Wonders of the Most High: 125 Years History of the United Netherlands*, Abraham Van de Velde (G. Zekveld, trans.), Newcastle: Semper Reformanda, 1997, p. 151.

⁶ “The Psalms in the Post-Apostolic Church,” by John A. Wilson in *The Psalms in Worship*, J. McNaugher, ed., Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1992 (1907), p. 171.

May this short message by His servant Hendrik DeCock prick her to re-evaluate her worship of a holy and awesome God and return to the old ways.

A Brief Note to the Reader

DeCock's pamphlet in its original form consists of 64 pages. We have only translated the parts that are directly relevant for today, which consists of the first chapter and a portion of the second. The remainder of the pamphlet might be interesting for historical purposes, but its relevance for today is minimal since it deals with errors in a hymnal which has long since disappeared.

In our work here we have endeavoured as much as possible to provide the historical background against which DeCock was writing. For those living on the brink of the twenty-first century in another land, much of what DeCock is saying needs further elucidation. We have provided extensive footnotes to serve that purpose. Much of the information in the footnotes here has been gleaned from the Dutch edition of DeCock's *Collected Writings* (*Verzamelde Geschriften* (2 Vols.), D. Deddens, W. van't Spijker et al. eds., Houten: Den Hartog B.V., 1984). Those footnotes where we are indebted have been marked with a "VG" in parentheses.

Furthermore, we have included two appendices which we hope will also prove useful. Appendix One contains what is, to our knowledge, the first full English translation of the Act of Secession and Return of 1834. A brief introduction is also included. Appendix Two contains the text of two chapters of *The Psalms in Worship* (J. McNaugher, ed.). We selected these two chapters since they deal with the important and currently controversial exegeses of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 which DeCock only briefly mentions.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Gilbert Zekveld of Hamilton, Ontario for his willingness to proofread our work. May it all serve for the honour of the King!

J.A. Wanliss
W.L. Bredenhof

Historical Introduction

More than 160 years have passed since the first appearance of this publication by Rev. Hendrik DeCock. 160 years is a very long time. Much has changed since then, especially in ecclesiastical life. Moreover, DeCock was writing in the Netherlands, whereas we expect that most of those who will read this English translation live in North America or some Commonwealth nation. It is therefore necessary that we provide some of the historical background to this brief work.

Imagine a time, if you can, when the name of John Calvin was almost entirely unknown, even in the Reformed churches in continental Europe. A time when Reformed ministers in the Netherlands subscribed to the Reformed confessions without ever having seen, much less having carefully studied them. Imagine hearing Reformed ministers attack such cardinal doctrines as the Trinity, the atonement and the resurrection. Imagine these men mocking the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper and what it signifies. But this is exactly what the situation was in the Reformed Church of the Netherlands in the beginning of the 19th century. Modernism had infected the Dutch State Church—it would seem that there was little hope. Indeed, these were the darkest of the dark ages for the Reformed faith in the Netherlands.

But the fire of the Reformed faith was never completely extinguished. Here and there the Lord preserved some faithful remnants, as He always does. Faithful believers who took note of the church deformation would gather together regularly in conventicles to read the Scriptures, listen to read sermons, to pray together and to sing Psalms together. There was a similar situation in Switzerland, where a movement developed which came to be known as the *Reveil*. *The Revail*, broadly speaking, was a reaction against modernism and as such it stressed a return to Scriptural faith, including a belief in the inspiration and authority of God's Word. It was pietistic, and as such weak on the doctrine of the Church, but there can be little question that the Lord used this movement for the purposes of Reformation.

In like manner, the Lord also raised up men such as Hendrik DeCock, the author of this booklet. DeCock was born in 1801 in Veendam, the Netherlands. When he was 15 years old, in 1816, the Dutch government reorganized the Netherlands Reformed Church (the state church). The old Church Order of Dort was replaced with regulations which again introduced hierarchy into the Reformed churches. The highest authority in the Church was a national synod whose members were appointed by the king. All local churches were to bow under this yoke.

It was in this ecclesiastical environment that the young DeCock entered into manhood. He was taught all the typical liberal drive of the day both by his parents and his minister. A sole catechist, Hendrik Nieman, had taught him about the necessity for saving faith and the sovereign grace of God. DeCock went on to study for the ministry at the University of Groningen and there became more aware of the contrast between what he was taught by Nieman and what his university professors were espousing. In 1823 he graduated and was called to the congregation of Eppenhuisen. There he met and married Frouwe Venema. He earnestly urged his congregation to forsake the sins of the day and to live honorably. Though he was at this time already a sincere man, he was yet in ignorance of the depths of the Reformed faith.

In 1829 the definitive change came with his move to the congregation at Ulrum. Here DeCock met Klaas Pieters Kuypenga who had hitherto conscientiously been prevented from making profession of faith because of the state of deformation under the previous preacher, Hofstede de Groot. Kuypenga has been forever immortalized because of his memorable words to DeCock: "If I would have to add a single sigh to my salvation, I would be forever lost!" DeCock's relationship with Kuypenga led him to the riches of the Reformed faith in all its confessional fullness. He providentially "discovered" Calvin's *Institutes* as well as an old copy of the Canons of Dort (to which he had subscribed as a minister, yet had never seen!). Then the change came in

the preaching, much to the appreciation of his congregation who were hungering for Scriptural food. Ulrum's minister preached the need for repentance and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was going back to the old Scriptural truths of the Confessions! Attendance at Ulrum soared and along with that came opposition from many in the State Church who disapproved of the "new" teachings coming out of DeCock's study.

DeCock was not to be turned away from the path of reformation. He published a number of booklets calling his fellow Dutchmen back to the old ways. This only further aggravated the church officials until finally DeCock was suspended from office. The final straw was DeCock's attacks on the hymns that were introduced into the State Church in 1807. DeCock first composed a short preface to a pamphlet by Jacobus Klok, a painter from Delfzijl, and then later wrote his own treatise attacking the hymns which you find in this booklet. This led to the Classical board first suspending him and then later deposing him. The grounds were specious: baptizing children of parents who did not belong to his congregation, composing a pamphlet in which he attacked two fellow ministers (Brouwer and Reddingius) for their modernistic teachings, and finally for acting schismatically. The controversy concerning the hymns was not even explicitly mentioned, although it did play a significant role in the background.

In vain, DeCock appealed his suspension to the Provincial Board, the Synodical Board, and even the King. The old ways taught in the Reformed confessions were no longer loved or respected in the Netherlands Reformed Church. DeCock was treated with ever increasing disrespect until finally the church at Ulrum had enough. On October 13, 1834, the church at Ulrum, under the leadership of DeCock, drew up a document entitled the Act of Secession or Return. You can find this document in the first appendix of this booklet. With this Act, the church seceded from the Netherlands Reformed Church. Many others soon followed. By 1836, the Seces-

sion (or *Afscheiding* as it is called in Dutch) had grown to include approximately 20,000 people. And so the Church-preserving work of our Lord Jesus Christ continued!

As mentioned, this booklet contains one small (but important) document from the Secession struggle. Herein Rev. DeCock calls for a return again to the old ways. He militates against the introduction of the modernistic hymns in 1807, not because they were *modernistic*, but because they were *hymns*, songs not ordained by the Lord in Scripture for use in public worship. DeCock's controversy is with hymns as *such*, not just bad hymns. Contrary to what the esteemed P.Y. DeJong writes, we do not regard DeCock's struggle against the hymns to be less praiseworthy than any other element of his reformatory work.⁷ Rather we think that de Cock's

voice on this subject is one that deserves a new hearing in a day when the songs of Scripture are being increasingly disparaged and traded in for the fools' gold of uninspired songs. As in the days of DeCock, so we too live in a time when the Reformed faith is often mocked and denigrated. This pamphlet speaks to our age as well. May it result in a revival of deep passionate love for God's covenant-song book, the Psalter of David.

Sources: *De Afscheiding van 1834: Haar Aanleiding, Naar Authentieke Brieven en Beschiedenen Beschreven*, G. Keizer, Kampen: J.H. Kok. 1934.

Secession, Doleantie and Union: 1834-1892, Hendrik Bouma (T. Plantinga trans.), Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1995.

**THE SO-CALLED
EVANGELICAL
HYMNS
THE DARLING OF THE
ENRAPTURED AND MISLED MULTITUDE IN THE
SYNODICAL REFORMED CHURCH**

and even by some of God's children from
blindness, because they were drunk
with the wine of her fornication,
further tested, weighed and found wanting,
Yes, in conflict with all our
FORMS OF UNITY
AND
THE WORD OF GOD
BY
H. DeCock, Reformed Minister of Ulrum
Under the cross for the sake of Jesus Christ.

⁷ "The Dawn of a New Day," Appendix 111 in *Secession, Doleantie and Union*, Hendrik Bouma, Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1995, p. 242.

Original Publisher's Preface

The pamphlet drafted by Jacobus Klok, regarding hymns, published by me and remarkably crowned with God's blessing, almost totally sold out.⁸ It appears to me that the true Church of Christ has great interest in this work, so much so that another pamphlet has been drafted in a more concise format, this time more easily accessible to everyone and with fewer proofs; these are unnecessary since in that respect the studious and inquiring reader can frequently refer to the more important work that we have mentioned.

It could then to some degree be organised more suitably to convince people who are prejudiced or who have little knowledge, but are otherwise sincere. May God's mercy make the blind to see, the deaf hear and the dumb to speak.

The First Chapter deals with the objections regarding the introduction of hymns, and a rebuttal of what some have said which appeared to be reasonable.

The Second Chapter deals with the composers and their compositions, tried by their own witness and their own confessions and their reasonings, and found wanting.

The Third Chapter encompasses the report of certain grave falsehoods and unseemly innovations, as well as other uncertainties and improbabilities.

May the Lord use it for His glorification, for the edification of His Church and congregation, so that those who have strayed will be corrected, also so that many will return to the congregation of the redeemed.

⁸ For more on the pamphlet of Klok, cf. the Historical Introduction.

⁹ We owe the rhymed translation of this poem to Mr. Gilbert Zekveld.

¹⁰ DeCock seems to base this remark on Amos 5:23, which he mentions a little later. In so doing he would be giving the same exegesis of this passage as John Calvin. Calvin understands the Hebrew word usually translated as "noise" to be better translated as "multitude" (thus also the English *Geneva Bible*). "Take away from me the multitude of your songs." Calvin comments: "He might have simply said, 'Thy songs please me not;' but he mentions their multitude, because hypocrites, as I have said, fix no limits to their outward ceremonies: and a vast heap especially follows, when once they take to themselves the liberty of devising this or that form of worship. Hence God testifies here, that they spend labour in vain, for He rejects what he does not command, and whatever is not rightly offered to him." (*Commentary on Amos*)

¹¹ Cf. John 4:24.

¹² Cf. Deut. 4:2.

Mournfully, and with no delight
O Lord of Hosts, O Lord of might,
Are Ashdod's songs, these sorry samples
Which are heard in Holland's temples.
Alluring, and souls deceiving,
A tragedy for those believing.
My soul cries out...O Father! Ghost!
That lies may die and truth may, boast.⁹

—J. Kool

Chapter 1—Objections Against the Introduction of Hymns

Hymns were never introduced into the church, except to cause degeneration and contempt for the welfare of the church, or perhaps in cases of incomplete Reformation.

We see firstly, that in the Old Testament no other hymns are recognized except the collection of Psalms. Through contempt and degeneration of the welfare of the church (a state wherein the Jews often resided), instead of singing to God's honour with His own Spirit-inspired Psalms, they went against God's will and composed their own songs, even taking delight in these compositions. These have itching ears resulting in them being unable to bear the truth. It is because of these that the Apostle Paul warns Timothy (2 Timothy 4:3) concerning self-willed worship, likewise forbidden by our Lord in the New Covenant (Matthew 15:9). In the Old Covenant they also did not delight in God, and would not be subservient to His Word in Spirit and in truth.¹¹ That is why in Deuteronomy 11:8, 32 there is the sharp command:

"You shall not at all do as we are doing here today—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes...Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it. You shall not add to it nor take away from it."¹²

It is for this reason that God so earnestly warns His Prophets during times of deformation, for example in Amos 5:23:

“Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.”

Also Amos 8:10:

“I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; I will make it mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day.”

And also in Isaiah 23:16, with reference to Tyre:

“Take a harp, go about the city, you forgotten harlot; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that you may be remembered.”

And will you, *children of God (!)*, follow after adulterous Tyre, and depart from God’s express command, to bring the plagues on us or to multiply them, when Amos 8:10 stands as a warning, or when Moses gives God’s threatening words with respect to adding or subtracting from His commands (Deut. 12:8, 32)?

No, beloved! Let us fear the Lord of Hosts and His command (cf Isaiah 8:11–15); then He will be for us as a sanctuary, give us comfort and protection, but to His foes He will be a stone of stum-

bling and a rock of offense, He will be as a trap and a snare, and many among them shall stumble, they shall fall and be broken—those who deviate from the Lord and rebel against His anointed.¹³ See also Psalm 2.

We see as well, amongst other things in the New Covenant, that in the best of times, and in the purest churches, hymns are never found or tolerated. Our fathers similarly always showed the greatest disapproval, and kept watch against this as they were so much against it, as evidenced by their decisions, based on God’s word and experience. Where, therefore, were the hymns, or other whorish songs ever used in the days of the apostles in the congregations of the Lord? Do we find any reference to them? Never! It is true that we find even early references to heretics that our Church rejects, such as Arius, Paul of Samosata, and the Valentinians in the second, third, and fourth century.¹⁴ These heretics, I say, had innovations in mind, and caused the congregations to become perverse, blinded through errors, and they did these things by means of new songs of human composition. See Van de Velde, *The Wonders of the Most High (De Wonderen des Allerhoogsten)*, p. 596.¹⁵ And will you, *children of God (!)*, the *Reformed of the Netherlands (!)*, go against our confession and follow these heretics? Will you disregard the decisions of our fathers? Amongst other things you may see page 17 in my *Preliminary Report (Vooloopig Berigt)*,¹⁶ the meetings of 1578 held in

¹³ De Cock here paraphrases Isaiah 8:14–15. H.P. Scholte preached on this text in Ulrum on October 10, 1834—shortly before the *Act of Secession or Return* was made public and the Secession had officially begun (which took place on October 14, 1834). De Cock himself preached on this text on Friday, November 21, 1834 in Assen. This text functioned as a Scriptural foundation for the stimulation of the Secession. (VG)

¹⁴ Arius was a fourth-century theologian whose anti-Trinitarian views were condemned at the Council of Nicea in 325. Paul of Samosata was the bishop of Antioch from 260–272. He was excommunicated by a synod in 268. He believed that God worked through Jesus, but denied that Jesus was the Second Person of the Trinity. Valentinus was a gnostic who lived around the end of the first century. The school of Valentinus was the most influential Gnostic school of the second century and it was these that Tertullian wrote against in his book *Adversus Valentinianos*.

¹⁵ Van de Velde’s book has recently been translated into English: *The Wonders of the Most High: 125 Years History of the United Netherlands*, Abraham Van de Velde (G. Zekveld, trans.), Newcastle: Semper Reformanda, 1997. The quote to which de Cock refers can be found on pp. 151–52 of the English translation. Incidentally, there is a discrepancy between the page number given in the original and the version given in the *Verzamelde Geschriften*. The original, given above, is p. 596. The edited version reads p. 396. The print in the original pamphlet is sometimes unclear and this may account for the discrepancy.

¹⁶ Full title: “Voorloopig berigt aan mijne Gereformeerde geloofsgenooten. nopens mijne verantwoording en de onredelijke handelwijze van het Provinciaal Kerk-bestuur ten mijnen opzichte, waaruit het tegenwoordig willkeurig en Tijranniek gezag onzer Kerklijken. In tegenstelling van de regten der Gereformeerde Kerk. ons gewaarborgd bij art. 7 van onze door het goed en bloedonzer Voorvaderen gekochte Geloofsbelijdenis, blijken kan,” H. de Cock, Groningen: J.H. Bolt, 1834. This can also be found in *Verzamelde Geschriften* (Vol. 1), D. Deddens, W. van’t Spijker et al. eds., Houten: Den Hartog B.V., 1984, pp. 517–539.

Dordrecht, in 1581 in Middelburg, in 1586 in Gravenhage, and in 1618 and 1619 in Dordrecht.¹⁷ Will you, I say, trample and disobey and stray from the path and do away with all the decisions of the general Synods of our fathers regarding their pronouncements from God's Word against these songs? This ought to be far from you, the faithful and upright, who tremble before God's word, and who, along with our God-fearing forefathers should resist degenerate lies and perverse sin. They opposed Rome and Spain, and will you be charged with the blood of our fathers?!

Beloved, these songs were not imported solely by the early heretics and emigrants from God's Word, but also by those who came after. Of this the learned and God-fearing Peter Martyr¹⁸ gives evidence, as well as the Reformers in Italy and in Germany, that by this means the Roman church received copper in exchange for gold.

It was soon after the Reformation that the Remonstrants in the 17th century moved and shook the church painfully, and brought the state to the edge of the abyss. These also once again brought in songs¹⁹ even as their forefathers the Arians, the Samosatians, the Valentinians, and the Romish. Therefore our forefathers, in session 162 of the Synod of Dort, write amongst other things the following, "The rest of the songs shall be taken out of the church, and similarly any which have previously been imported into the church shall be omitted in the most decent way possible."²⁰

History alone is sufficient to acquaint us with the stinking source from which they i.e. hymns flowed forth, and so we are able to judge them shameful and abominable, and furthermore we hear the word of the wise King in Proverbs 24:21: "Do not associate with those given to change."

But here I expect that the worldly wise and those inclined to the flesh will make two objections:

1. Are "hymns and spiritual songs" not spoken of in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16? To those who say thus I would ask that they show me, clearly and in a well-grounded fashion, not by means of surmising or guessing, but in a concise and thorough manner, that the Apostle speaks of hymns and songs outside of God's word. If not, then I hold forth one proof, which both men and children cannot argue against, although perhaps this will not satisfy those who first of all point to Revelation when it says that, in heaven a "new song" will be sung and content themselves with that.²¹ With such *ad hominem* proofs, (to make the people blind as well as to blind themselves) I am not satisfied, and keep with our learned, God-fearing, and truly wise commentators who write: "The three sorts of Spiritual songs point to one purpose, namely to delight the Holy Spirit. And some also

¹⁷ De Cock quotes these decisions in his *Voorlopig berigt*: The National Synod of Dort 1578, Art. 76: "The Psalms of David in the edition of Petrus Dathenus, shall be in the Christian meetings of the Netherlands Churches (as has been done until now) shall be sung, abandoning the hymns which are not found in Holy Scripture." The National Synod of Middelburg, 1581, art. 51: "Only the Psalms of David shall be sung in the church, omitting the hymns which one cannot find in Holy Scripture." The National Synod of 's-Gravenhage, 1586, art. 62: "The Psalms of David shall be sung in the churches, omitting the hymns which one does not find in Holy Scripture." The National Synod of Dort, 1618–19, session 162: "In the Church only the 150 Psalms of David shall be sung. The 10 Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon, the hymn 'O God who is our Father,' and so on, shall be left in the freedom of the Churches, whether they want to use them or not, as they see fit. The rest of the songs shall be taken out of the church, and similarly any which have previously been imported into the church shall be omitted in the most decent way possible."

¹⁸ Petrus Martyr Vermigli (1500–1562) was active in Strasbourg, Oxford and Zurich as a Reformed theologian. (VG)

¹⁹ For example, the collection of hymns *Hymni ofte Loffsanghen op de Christelijcke Feestdagen ende andersins* (Hymns or Praise-songs for Christian Feast-days and other times) published in 's-Gravenhage in 1615. (VG)

²⁰ *Voorlopig Berigt in Verzamelde Geschriften*, Vol. 1, p. 526.

²¹ De Cock implies here that the people who would simply mention the "new songs" mentioned in the book of Revelation (5:9 and 14:3) are simplistic and prefer to remain ignorant. They do not want to consider his arguments and content themselves with one Bible passage which seems to justify their present practice.

make the distinction that all the Psalms are types of Spiritual songs, not only practiced with the voice, but also with the stringed instruments: hymns, thanksgivings to God or poems of praise regarding the Lord's mercy towards us. And by "spiritual songs" we understand that these poems are the means through which all kinds of Spiritual things are learned. See also Colossians 3:16, where the various names mentioned for the titles appear to be found in the Psalms of David."²² I reckon that with these references this objection is taken away and dealt with.

2. But certain others say, "Luther was surely a man of God, and he brought new songs to the church!" I acknowledge this in front of the world! But would you not say that God-fearing people sometimes make mistakes? Luther was certainly wrong in more than one respect, in everything not free of Romish influence (likewise one can point out, amongst his other views, his view regarding the consubstantiation of the Lord's physical presence upon, within, and amongst the bread and the wine, during our Lord's Holy Supper). The Anglican Church is much the same, although we are together on the point of free grace. Surely you must agree with me, all those who know the truth as well as the history, as I have said in the beginning, that overall, where Reformation has broken out in its purest form, the hymns are completely done away with. However,

it happened also with us that the hymns soon crept in again. We went back to following the bastard children of the Romish beast, who are able to sing like the Sirens.²³ We newcomers try to exceed what has gone before.

So then we see that, not with us, nor in France, nor in Geneva, are hymns tolerated or found, and certainly not in Scotland. However, in England, where episcopalian church government remains and where Romish ceremonies are still partially allowed, one will perhaps also find hymns being sung.

Why will you follow after the abuses of particular churches, and forsake and forget the good of our fathers and the other Reformers, and be subject to God's displeasure? I hope to be preserved by God's mercy from those who wish to do that. Furthermore, I rather prefer to agree with the letter, regarding another matter, but applicable here also, that was written by the great John Knox to the English Bishops in 1565. It was written by the charge of the National Synod of Scotland held in that year to ask the English Bishops and ministers to deal leniently with such of their brethren who were scrupled to use the sacerdotal dress enjoined by the laws—the white raiments and other vestures. Knox writes thus: "If surplesse, cornett-cap and tippet and I would include here the hymns, HDC, have been badges of idolaters in the very act of their idolatry, what has the preacher of Christian liberty and open rebuker of all superstition to do with the dregs of that Romish beast; yea, what is he that ought not to feare either to take in his hand or forehead, the print and mark of that odious

²² This quote is taken from the *Staten Bijbel* (the States Bible). This was a Dutch Bible translation ordered by the Synod of Dort 1618–19. It included a great number of explanatory footnotes and is comparable to the English *Geneva Bible*. The quote is taken from the footnotes on Ephesians 5:19 and reflects a different understanding of this passage (and its parallel in Colossians 3:16) than is commonly found today. The 1927 *Psalter* of the Christian Reformed Church in North America also reflects this understanding: "The hymns, songs, and psalms of Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 evidently do not refer to NT compositions but to the OT Psalms which in the Greek version bear the titles above given." *The Psalter*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1927, p. 4. A modern exegetical defense of this understanding can be found in *The Songs of Zion*, Michael Bushell, Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant Publications, 1977 (second edition, 1993), pp. 83–93. Older exegeses can be found in *The Psalms in Worship*, J. McNaughter, ed., Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1992 (1907), pp. 128–168. For a modern Reformed (from a Dutch background) defence of this position, see *The Songs of Zion* [the rest of this footnote was corrupted on the website and basically ends here—AL].

²³ In Greek mythology, the Sirens were three sea nymphs, half-bird and half-woman, who by their seductive songs would lure sailors to their deaths on rocky coastlines.

Beast?...If the commandment of the Authority urge the conscience of you and of our brethren farther than they can bear, we unfeignedly crave of you that ye remember ye are called the ‘light of the world,’ and ‘the salt of the earth.’ All those called to authority have not the light of God always shining before the eyes in their statutes and commandments; but their affections savour over much of the earth and of worldly wisdom, and therefore we think ye should boldly oppose yourselves to all that power that will or dare burden the consciences of the faithful, farther than God has burdened them in his own word.”²⁴

And what was the effect of Luther’s false step upon his followers? These are once again forming the majority among our so-called “Reformed” or “Liberals.” Do they not have much more in common with the Pope of Rome than with Luther or Calvin? Even as blindness is met with blindness, sin with sin, deviation with deviation, so the Lutheran Church has been visited with God’s righteous judgment and punishment.

I am not exhaustively familiar with their history, but this I do know: Luther had the highest esteem for the Psalms, so much so that he certainly never compared them with any of his songs. And amongst Lutherans there are still those who hold the same views.²⁵ But there are those who have gone far away from those views and hold that among the 150 Psalms, 125 are not

reckoned suitable for our times, and the remaining 25 are still just better left alone. In their opinion, they are able to compose more spiritual songs. But their songs were actually beastly, and the result of using them is that God’s work has almost completely vanished.

O what times! O what customs! Must we await (if the Lord does not mercifully prevent this, as He will, nevertheless we must gird up and call the young to stand and battle for the faith, once for all delivered to the Saints) this judgment?!!! Absolutely and most certainly. And these, alas, have been the mournful results that we know exist: I don’t know of one book of songs that has been compiled by men, whether big or small, in which one can see the indwelling of God’s Spirit, notwithstanding that these songs may be based largely on God’s Word. What then should come of our responses to the Synodical Reformed Hervormde Church regarding such a large compilation, whose shortcomings have been pointed out? Some of the songs are great enemies of free grace, and are similarly sometimes openly Arminian. They are largely not based on truth either, but on frauds and lies. Regarding these the Apostle Peter speaks in 2 Peter 2:1: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.” That will presently be dealt with in Chapter 2, the Lord willing.

²⁴ “The Superintendents, Ministers, and Comissioners of Kirks Within the Realme of Scotland, to There Brethren the Bischops and Pastours of England, who has Renunced the Romane Antichryst, and Does Professe with Them the Lord Jesus in Sinceritie, Desyres the Perpetuall Increase of the Holie Spirit,” in *The Works of John Knox* (Vol. 6), collected and edited by David Laing, Edinburgh: Thomas George Stevenson, 1864, pp. 439–440. The English in this quote has been modernized. Thomas M’Crie writes concerning this letter: “The Reformer was charged with a letter from the Assembly, to the bishops and ministers of England, interceding for lenity to such of their brethren as scrupled to use the sacerdotal dress, enjoined by the laws. The controversy on that subject was at this time carried on with great warmth among the English clergy. It is not improbable, that the Assembly interfered in this business at the desire of Knox, to whom the composition of the letter was committed.” *The Life of John Knox*, New York: Eastburn, Kirk, & Co., 1813, p. 311.

²⁵ “When the Lord brought the testimony of his witnesses out of obscurity in Piedmont, Bohemia, &c., by the ministry of Luther, his contemporaries and successors; then the psalms were restored to their place in the churches of the Reformation. Luther was skilled in music, himself composed many hymns; but he carefully distinguished between the Psalms and his hymns. An old lady in eastern Pennsylvania is said to have in her possession ‘a German Psalm-book, published by Luther himself.’ The book closes with a collection of Luther’s hymns; but the old lady says that in her young days in Germany, ‘its directions were rigidly obeyed, and in public worship they sang only the Psalms of David.’ ‘The same order, as is well known, prevailed in all the other reformed churches of Europe and the British Isles.’ David Steels, “Psalms and Hymns,” *The Original Covenanter Magazine* (Vol. 3:1–3:16, March 1881 to Dec. 1884), p. 41.

Chapter 2—The Composers and their Compositions, Tried by their own Witness and Confession and Found Wanting

1. We may point out the excellencies in the life of Luther as being evidence of God's Spirit. For example, his desire to honour God and not himself, even when his life was in danger. He glorified God greatly and humiliated men very much, and as a result he was persecuted—all because he wanted to live a godly life. On the other hand, all the composers of our hymns lack these qualities, and we even find in them precisely the opposite qualities:

a. Because firstly, regarding Lodenstein,²⁶ Sluiter,²⁷ or other godly men of previous times, their songs have scanty representation in the songbook under discussion. I believe that this is the case so that men may be brought across the bridge, and then it will be so much easier to have the rest follow, and from there to find an entrance into the entire nation. And then, when people do notice that the songs of Lodenstein and other godly men have been scandalously twisted, knotted and warped with gross and inferior deviations and omissions. What can and must men judge regarding this, provided that the people don't want to be blind, and the light that is in us doesn't change to darkness? Or will men believe that the changes are simply in the form that is prepared for church use? If after investigation a person can actually believe this, then I will not bother him anymore.

b. Mr. Rhijnvis Feith²⁸ from Zwolle, recently deceased, is one of the most renowned composers. He composed 35 of the 192 hymns on the list that recently came into my possession. He was a notable opponent of the distinguishing marks of the Reformed doctrines that were established at Dordrecht. Rev. Scholte reports about him in his piece about the Psalms²⁹ that he had the most shameful opinion about the Psalms, and that he proposed an unprejudiced examination in conclusion. Scholte wrote: "No matter how outstanding the Jewish songs of olden days appear, they are in reality rather diminutive, at least they certainly do not present sufficient food to heart and mind, as is found in the greater and more complete light of the Gospel. That he [Feith] is of this opinion after mature investigation, speaks of an untimely confusion prior to thinking the issue through, and this truly does great harm to Christian morals." [This is surely how the Pope of Rome reasons to forbid his lay people to have the Bible, HDC.]

"And moreover in general (with the exception of some of the more moral Psalms), the majority of the people in the Church of the New Testament no longer wish to hang on to mere sounds." [This is the same thinking all over again of the earlier and later heretics like Arius, Paul of Samosata, the Valentianians, the Romish, the Remonstrants etc., which they used to bring in all kinds of hymns, HDC.]

"Indeed it goes against the true spirit of Jesus' doctrine."

²⁶ Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620–1677) was a student of G. Voetius and preacher in Zoetermeer and Zegwaard (1644), Sluis (1650) and Utrecht (1653). He belonged to the "Nadere Reformatie" ("Further Reformation") movement. He wrote a number of songs that were not only popular in his day, but also later among the Secessionists of DeCock's time (though only outside the church services). (VG)

²⁷ Willem Sluiter (1627–1673) studied theology in Utrecht and was also a student of Voetius. He was a preacher in Eibergen (1653) and Rouveen (1673). He is also a representative of the "Nadere Reformatie." Sluiter was a poet and he composed a collection of "Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs" (1659) and a rhyming of the Song of Solomon (1633) and other Scripture passages. (VG)

²⁸ Rhijnvis Feith (1753–1823) graduated at 17 years old from the faculty of law at the College in Harderwijk. Ten years later he became the mayor (burgemeester) of Zwolle. In 1797 his *Odes and Poems* appeared, in 1804–05 his *Specimen of Hymns* (*Proeve van Gezzangen*) followed. 35 hymns from Feith are found among the "Evangelical Hymns." (VG)

²⁹ H.P. Scholte, *Iets over de Psalmen* (Notes on the Psalms), Amsterdam, 1834. (VG)

So according to this reason given by Mr. Feith, would not the Lutherans be correct who, except for a very few, ban the Psalms from their public church-singing?

Are there evidences of God's Spirit and can they therefore be judged to be enlightened? Was this man able, in accordance with the promises of the compilers of these hymns, to present the doctrines of our confessions in a clear manner? No, that is prevarication and fraud. After our Psalms one also finds the names of the ones who rhymed them, viz. J.E. Voet,³⁰ H. Ghijsen³¹ and the partnership: *Laus Deo Salus Populo*,³² why are they not behind the hymns? Have men forgotten, or are they simply ashamed of them???

- c. The remaining composers are in general less renowned. They have taken over some German songs. We see in these songs that the liberal spirit is present as it was commonly in former years amongst the Germans. And we also see in them the infections and deviations from the truth that is common in the spirit of our days. Who then amongst the composers is able to search for the true wisdom, and not the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness with God? And who would dare to compare these men to Luther, who had so many evidences of God's favour and Spirit?
2. And now, in the second place, the basis of these songs is considered. They are based largely on God's word, but that is not the case for our collection (this is probably no longer true for the Lutherans, since they have repeatedly been revised).

In their preface, the compilers of the hymns write: "We propose that the pieces contained herein agree clearly and powerfully with the character of our confessions. Furthermore, old and even ancient Church history, as well as experience from the present time, shows that such songs are always of great value to protect the Congregations and to aid the learning of purity, amidst a stream of numerous dangerous innovations."

In both these aspects, the compilers are trapped in their own lies right from the beginning. They are not blind, but rather are willfully swindling the Congregation. And they fulfill their wishes, namely by the importation of their hymns, with great passion and fervour.

- a. Certainly, they could not show us (as Klok has shown, and here I hope to travel along his trail), as they have proposed, that their pieces clearly and powerfully reflect the character of our confessions. At this point I would dare to ask the leading proponents of the hymns, before their consciences, and in the presence of the all-knowing God, who tests the heart and the innermost parts,³³ whether they are brave enough to believe what they have said? To believe that all the composers and proponents of the hymns, agree wholeheartedly with what was established in Dordrecht in 1618 and 1619:
 1. The doctrine of God's eternal election and reprobation, established on the grounds of God's Word.
 2. That the Lord Jesus suffered only for his chosen people.

³⁰ Johannes Eusebius Voet (1706–1778) was a doctor in the Hague, known foremost for his edifying poetry and his important part in the Dutch Psalm version of 1773. (VG)

³¹ Hendrik Ghijsen (1660–1693) was an Amsterdam silversmith and also a precentor. He made some Psalm rhymings from older versions and in 1773, ten of his psalms and four of his hymns were included in the State version (*de Statenberijming*). (VG)

³² *Laus Deo Salus Populo* (Praise for God, Salvation for the People) was a society of poets in Amsterdam who mostly had an Anabaptist or Remonstrant background. Fifty-eight of their psalms and three of their hymns appeared in the State song book (*de Statenberijming*). (VG)

³³ Literally: "kidneys."

3. That mankind is by nature dead in sin and trespasses, totally unable to do any good, even unable to pray, which is the last support of those who seek a self-righteousness.
4. That he therefore must be powerfully changed by the almighty and irresistible power of God's Spirit. And finally, the elect and born again cannot fall away, nor be completely overcome by sin?

And if someone is shameless enough to allege this, then for my part I ask: how then can such men use the rhymes and poetry of Mr. Rhijnvis Feith who was a public and renowned opposer of the dogmas? Can one expect one clear or powerful defence from these men? In this light, one or both of them must then be either liar or hypocrite.

- b. And now to deal with the second assurance: "Furthermore, old and even ancient Church history, as well as experience from the present time, shows that such songs are always of great value to protect the Congregations and to aid the learning of purity, amidst a stream of numerous and dangerous innovations."

Who would believe that? Perhaps only the simple and those who are ignorant of church history, those who would eat everything as if it were tasty cake and who think that even what the Pope says is good. It appears in the meantime that the unlearned and dishonourable of our century are also found among the so-called "learned." In the case of those who know and understand and still do not witness against this, among those we see the

Laodicean coolness and lukewarmness that the Lord will spit out of His mouth. In both respects, no matter how men take it, this is one great objection against the spirit of this age, just as Mr. Da Costa³⁴ already mentioned and pointed out in earlier times.

As I have shown earlier it is one great public lie that amongst the Ancients, just so amongst the New Covenant, "such songs would be of great value to protect and preserve the purity of the Congregations." Quite to the contrary, such things were always the death in the pot,³⁵ the beginnings of the miseries, just as we have seen from Arius, Paul of Samosata and the Valentianians, and from the Romish and the Remonstrants. And God's Word and experience does not teach us anything different than that. By the last action we see that since that time the doctrine is still not improved, but greatly worsened...

Mr. Dermout,³⁶ the court preacher to our King, is another example; and if one judges by the discussions and writings of others in our day, the majority are still too old fashioned, because at present everything before them is love and mercy...all snoring softly on the edge of the cliff, the very portal of hell.

In the first place, God's word calls us to "Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen"; and in another place: "I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourn-

³⁴ Isaac Da Costa (1798–1860) was the main leader of the Dutch "Reveil" movement. He was both a poet and preacher and in 1823 wrote a pamphlet entitled *Objections to the Spirit of the Age* (*Bezwaren tegen den geest der eeuw*)—it is this writing to which DeCock here refers. (VG)

³⁵ Cf. 2 Kings 4:40, where Elisha is told that the stew in the pot contains poisonous plants.

³⁶ Isaac Johannes Dermout (1777–1867) was the Netherlands Reformed (State Church) preacher at 's-Gravenhage from 1805–1818. For 30 years he was also the Synodical secretary and in 1822 he became the court preacher for the King. He is also remembered for co-authoring (with Annaeus Ypey) a four-volume history of the Netherlands Reformed Church. (VG)

ing for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day.”

The godly VandeVelde, speaks about this on p. 596, and oh if only everyone would read him, so that the children will not forget the wonders the Lord did for their fathers, and witness to the truth of the deeds that have been shown: “The words of Mr. van Aldegonde (the ghost-writer of William I, a learned and God-fearing man) in this respect are remarkable. In the introduction to his Psalm-book, he says: ‘The experience of earlier days has taught us that it is often harmful to introduce something which is not based on the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.’”

This is completely and utterly opposite language to what the writers of the preface in the hymnbook claim. And they do not come up with a favourable and healthy reason, one that is grounded on experience and God’s word. Their lie has been made clear. Then I shall say that the veritable God has been conquered by Baal which yet implies an impossibility. So I have demonstrated how the composers

and compilers are worthy of the collection—they have been entrapped and found out as open liars. I do not believe it is remiss to hope that we can look forward to better things beloved readers. You too must be sure to be prepared, and I would point you to the steps of Jacobus Klok, so that you might have hope in the might of the Lord. We will continually remind you of their witness, “that the pieces contained herein agree clearly and powerfully with the character of our confessions.” We will hold this before you, and then you judge whether they have done this, or will do, as they have promised. I assure you now that one and all will be seen to be false and liars, and I hope that you have seen this clearly, so that the light which is in you does not turn to darkness.

[Here ends the English translation. From here to the end of his pamphlet, Hendrik De Cock evaluated specific hymns in the state church’s hymnbook.]



Article IV. The Kingdom—A World Conception

We agreed so far, that we should look at all the different points of doctrine from the point of view of the Kingdom. That is to be our main topic. In its light we wish to consider all the different problems that may be discussed in connection with our Reformed view of life.

In order, then, to get on the right track, we must first of all attempt to answer the question: What is that Kingdom of God? What does it contain? And this time I do not mean to philosophize in the abstract, but I intend to be very concrete. That the Kingdom of God is a Kingdom in which God is Sovereign, in which He and He alone issues the laws and maintains them, in which He combines within Himself the legislative, judicial, and executive departments of the government, all this is very plain. That this must be taken in the most absolute sense of the word, so that no one escapes the sovereignty of the King and no one can ever question successfully His authority or say: “What doest Thou?” is also plain. We will refer to this Sovereignty of God later. What concerns us now is the question: where do I find the Kingdom of this King? What is that Kingdom? Where can I lay my hands on it? How can I point it out? How far does it extend, and what does it include? What sort of a Kingdom is it, and how is it governed?

These are questions which are of the utmost importance.

Our very life-view depends upon the right answer to them.

And in answer to these questions I would say in the first place that the Kingdom of God is simply everywhere, and that it includes all

things. The world is the Kingdom. Of course, you understand that I use the word “world” in the sense of God’s creation. I know it, the same word is used in more than one sense in Scripture; sometimes it occurs in the sense of “the wicked world,” sometimes in the sense of “all kinds of men.” But I now employ it in the sense of God’s creation, when I say that the Kingdom of God is the world. And then you must conceive of it in the widest possible sense, and not be afraid to call a thing by its name. The Kingdom of God in this sense includes the inorganic world, includes simple matter, with all its elements and powers and forces, still hidden or already brought to light by the ingenuity of man. It includes the silver and the gold, the wood and the stone. It includes the seas and the rivers, the quiet waters and the rushing streams, rivers and lakes, with all that they contain, with all their power. I take delight in being very concrete in this matter. When you watch the roaring sea, you are listening to a sound of God’s Kingdom, when you stand by the murmuring brook, you are again listening to a sound of the Kingdom of God. To that Kingdom of God belongs the air, and again that air with all its powers and possibilities. When the tempest is raging you may know that a part of God’s Kingdom is upset. When through the vibration of the air you are able to catch the sound of the chirping bird, you may know that it fulfills its purpose in the Kingdom of God. And even when in our age man is borne aloft for thousands of feet, we must remember that by doing so he employs a power of the Kingdom of God. To that Kingdom belongs the power of steam and electricity. When your train speeds ahead, pulled by a steam-moved locomotive, a

force of God's Kingdom is employed. When you are able to light your homes in less than a second by pressing a button, you are using a power that belongs to the Kingdom of God. In a word, nothing is excluded, all the elements of creation are implied when we say that the Kingdom of God is the world. To that Kingdom of God belongs the realm of plants and animals. When your orchard yields its fruit, you must remember that the fruit tree is an element in the Kingdom of God. When the grain ripens on your fields, you must know that also that grain belongs to that Kingdom. When the trees spread forth their fresh foliage in early summer and the flowers bloom in all their beauty, you shall not forget that all these beauties belong to the Kingdom of God. To that Kingdom belong the beasts of the forest, the cattle in your stalls, the flying birds and creeping things, the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. And finally, to that same Kingdom belong God's rational creatures, man and angel. Man, with all his powers, with body and soul, with intellect and will, with his imagination and feeling, belongs to that Kingdom over which God Almighty is Sovereign. In a word, when we speak of the world in this connection, we mean creation in its widest sense, earth and sky, sun, moon and stars, dead matter, plant and animal, and man and angel, with all the powers and talents which the Creator from the beginning has bestowed on His world. It all belongs to the Kingdom of God! All the powers and forces that are developed and employed in connection with the great world-war, that is now raging across the sea, the power of cannon and gun, of airplane and submarine, together with all the ingenuity and power of man that comes to manifestation in these instruments of destruction, are nothing but elements in the Kingdom of God!

Don't be startled.

We do not say, that as such they are employed in God's Kingdom. That is a far different question.

But forces and talents of God's Kingdom, however they may be employed in this dispensation, they certainly are.

We must maintain this very emphatically.

Our God is Ruler over all things, nothing excluded.

"The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine: the world and the fullness thereof, Thou hast founded them," sings the poet of Psalm 89. "Oh come, let us sing unto Jehovah...For Jehovah is a great God and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also. The sea is His and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land," thus the poet of Psalm 95 exhorts the people of God. "Jehovah hath established His throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom ruleth over all," declares the author of Psalm 103. And speaking of the glorious works of God, the poet in Psalm 145 sings joyously: "All Thy works shall give thanks unto Thee O Jehovah, and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak and talk of Thy power." In Matt. 11:25 the Lord Jesus says: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes." And in Acts 7:49 we find that Stephen quotes O.T. scripture and says: "The heaven is my throne and the earth the footstool of my feet."

Surely, the world is God's Kingdom!

But now we must, in the second place, also grasp the significance of this other truth, that this Kingdom of God is at the same time a Kingdom of man.

Of course, the central idea of a kingdom is that there is a king who governs, who exercises authority, who issues laws and is obeyed. And thus it is also with the Kingdom of God. What makes the world a Kingdom in the first place is that God is Ruler, and that in all the universe He is obeyed. All the world must obey Him. The earth and the sky, plant and animal, man and angel, all creatures in this world are created to do His will only. The stars must move as He ordains, the tree grows as He decrees, the flower blooms in harmony with His precepts. All the forces of the world are under His laws. All the world is ruled by Him, obeys His will, must

acknowledge His Sovereignty. And the highest purpose of this all is that this entire creation shows forth the glory of Him that called it into being by an act of His omnipotent will. All creatures reveal the glory of His holy Name. That is their purpose, the common reason for their existence.

You understand all the while, is it not, that I am as yet disregarding the fact of sin altogether? I know it, sin wrought a tremendous change in regard to all these things. But just for the moment we must leave the work of Satan and sin out of consideration and just busy ourselves with the world as the Kingdom of God. And, then, we readily see, that all creatures exist to God's glory, are a manifestation of His glorious Name, and that they all obey His will.

But there is a difference.

We must consider that in any kingdom there is order and gradation. You do not all of a sudden descend from the king to the common people. There are classes, authorities, officers between the king and the people. The king does not in person execute all his laws, but others, that have his authority, maintain them for him and in his name. So there is also order and gradation in creation. It would pay us to study this order in detail for some time, but that would lead us too far from the main line. Just let us notice the fact as such, that there is, indeed, gradation in this Kingdom of God. Not all creatures are alike, not all serve the same purpose, not all fulfill the will of God in the same manner. There is the order of lifeless matter, the order of the animal world, the order of the rational creation. The lower serves the higher. Just think how the soil and the water, the sunshine and the rain, the silver and gold, the wood and the stone must serve the purpose, the existence and the life of the world of plant and animal and man. Just notice, how the world of vegetation must serve man and animal alike, and finally, how also the animal world must serve the highest creature in the world: man. And man himself is subject to no other creature!

Again, I know it, that sin has in many respects disturbed this order and gradation in the Kingdom. We are not forgetting that the creature groaneth and travaileth in pain. But we are just leaving that fact out of consideration for the time being. And then it is plain that this order actually exists, and that also the Kingdom of the world, as God created it from the beginning, is a Kingdom in the which the lower must serve the higher.

And, then we come to this conclusion, on the basis of the Word of our God, that man is served by all and that he himself serves no other creature. Man is king of the world. He must have dominion. But king, not in the absolute sense of the word, but under God. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom over which man rules in His name. That this is true is plain from the very first chapter of Scripture. Twice it is mentioned that man is to have dominion over all things. In the first place in Gen. 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image and after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." And after man is created he receives the commission: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." vs. 28.

In man the climax of creation is reached. Man is the king of the world.

For that reason he is endowed with tremendous powers and great gifts. He is created after the likeness of God! Evidently, for the very purpose, that he might be king over the world, he is created in the image of God. "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness," that he may have dominion! This seems to be the idea. There is a reflection of God's glory in man! Just as there must be a reflection of glory and authority in the appearance of any viceroy or regent upon earth, who rules over a certain part of a kingdom in the king's name, so there is a resemblance of God in man, so that all creation may acknowledge him as its king. Only, just as the viceroy has no au-

thority of himself and for himself, but derives it from the king he serves, has, therefore, authority above him, so also man in relation to his God. He was king of the world, surely, but under God. He possessed no absolute authority. He might not rule at random. But knowing God and His precepts, knowing that this God was his Sovereign and acknowledging Him as such, he ruled over the world in His Name.

With respect to God, man was servant. He bowed in the dust before Him.

With respect to creation, he stood in sovereign majesty, manifesting God's image, lording it over all creatures, having dominion over the kingdom of the world.

And, therefore, when we speak of the Kingdom of God as such, regardless still of the influence of sin, the Kingdom as it originally was created, we refer to the entire world and all that it contains, with man, created after the image of God as the climax of creation, and the king of the kingdom, himself glorifying the Most High and ruling all things according to His will!

That Kingdom was surrendered to Satan.

That Kingdom must be redeemed by Christ, the Servant of God, the King of kings.

That same Kingdom shall again in glory appear when all shall be finished, all shall be subjected to Christ, the God-Man, and this Servant of God shall also subject Himself to the Father, that God may be all in all!

—Holland, Mich.



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