

From the Pastor's Desk 1980-1989

The Law

Except for the singing and the offerings, the minister of the Word is the only one who leads the Worship Service. His specific role is taken for granted in our Reformed circles. But this was not always so. Years ago there was one who led the congregational singing and one who read the law and the Scriptures. For these functions men who could sing and read well were chosen. The position of singer (voorzanger) was the first one to become defunct. I suppose that the increasing use of the organ in the worship service made this position no longer necessary. The position of the reader lasted into the beginning of the 20th century and in some places, even longer.

I don't intend to research why readers are no longer used. But in the 1930's Rev. D. Sikkel of Amsterdam complained that the church services had become poorer without the participation of a good reader. He believed that this position emphasized the priesthood of believers.

Why read the law in the worship service? Is this practice more Judaistic than Christian? Don't we live in the age of grace? The preface of the Ten Commandments makes the need for the law unmistakably clear. "I am the Lord Who redeemed you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Exodus 20:2). An obedient response to that redemptive work involved the Israelites in following the moral laws of God. As someone wrote: "The law is not the ladder whereby the unsaved seek in vain to climb into the presence of God. The law is a divinely given pattern of life for those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb". Law directs, Love motivates. "Law is love's eyes, Love is law's heart beat".

Paul writes in Romans 7:12 that "the law is holy righteous and good". God has given commandments, which if obeyed, will result in our good. The law leads to wholeness. How important it is to remind ourselves of this in our secular age! It is good that all of life is to be governed by the will of God. As we listen each Sunday to the reading of the law, we hear the proclamation of our redemption in Christ and what our grateful and obedient response to God ought to be.