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Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:3

These words of Christ are very familiar to us. They form the first beatitude in the first part of the Sermon on the Mount. In this part of the sermon Christ gives the characteristics of the child of God as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, characteristics which are found in every Christian.

The first three beatitudes show us that the citizen knows his sins and his misery. The fourth reveals that he seeks his salvation and deliverance in Christ. The final three tell us how he walks in thankfulness. Although each child of God has all these characteristics, they are not always clearly seen, because they are often hidden by the lusts of the flesh that remain in our members. You will not find these characteristics in the non-Christian.

Because this is the case these characteristics serve as a means to distinguish the Christian from the non-Christian as well as reveal what is in the heart of God's child.

The first beatitude is first and fundamental, for all the others flow out of it. The poor in spirit are they who mourn, are the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. They are all these exactly because they have that quality in their soul that they are poor in spirit.

This poverty is not material or physical. In a certain sense it can be said that the materially poor have certain advantages over the rich. Christ said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. On the average, the poor saint is drawn much closer to God than is the rich saint. Nor is spiritual poverty to be equated with spiritual ignorance. Certainly Christ does not

consider ignorance praiseworthy. There are saints that are very ignorant spiritually, but that is to their shame and not something of which to boast.

The word in the Greek used in our text to denote the poor carries the idea of "belonging to or befitting a beggar, one who crouches, who cringes." In the Hebrew it means "to long after, to breathe after, to be in want of." This we see in Psalm 69:32, 33, "The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners." It can also mean "to be lean or weak" as we see it in Isaiah 25:4, "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." And in Zechariah 11:7, 11 the prophet writes, "And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took

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unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock....And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord." Here it has the idea of being poor and oppressed. Thus it is a general word which covers all the other beatitudes; that is, the others flow forth from this one.

The poor, then, are those who know and confess that they have nothing in themselves spiritually. They have come to recognize their horrible position before the Lord. A change takes place, so that the citizen sees himself as he truly is. This is something that the unbeliever cannot do. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

The child of God sees that as he is born from his physical mother he is born dead in sins. He knows that, because of his sins, he is worthy of the just condemnation of God and deserves hell. That is bad enough. However, he also knows that he can do no good in the sight of God. He cannot pay for even part of his sins or satisfy the demands of God's law. Poor he is indeed — so poor that he cannot even will to receive the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven. He does not even want to be saved, for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

For the child of God, you and me, citizens of the kingdom of God, this knowledge of poverty is essential. We need to know this in order truly to see the riches of the grace, mercy, and love of God. Seeing ourselves as poverty stricken, we see how the whole of our salvation must come from God. Wholly of God means wholly through the cross of Jesus Christ. There can be no self-glory or credit, no laying claim to our own abilities or worthiness. Salvation is of our sovereign God alone and wholly.

Believing that, we then will re-

ject all doctrines and teachings that are contrary to it. Pharisaism and all self-righteousness must be repudiated. The Pharisee boasted in his own righteousness, what he could do for God. He could pray more eloquently, fast more often, give more abundantly, than anybody else. This would earn him a place in heaven. Never did he give a thought to the cross of Christ.

Free-willism must also be rejected. This is the idea that one has the ability to accept Christ, to open the door of the heart at which Christ is knocking, seeking to gain entrance. If one has this ability, then he is not poverty-stricken as presented here by Christ in the text. Then there is false humility. Such a one boasts because he believes himself so humble. He is proud of his humility. Also this is despicable in the sight of God.

In contrast, the citizen of the kingdom of heaven will confess from the heart and with the lips that he is of himself unworthy of any blessedness of God, for God alone has saved him. Knowing this, the child of God walks in humility toward the brother, for each esteems the other better than himself. As a result, he will by God's grace perform many good works. These works will not gain or earn him a place in heaven, but he will do them as a fruit of God's work of saving him through Christ.

As mentioned above, this knowledge, this mark of spiritual poverty, is essential. It is not optional or merely desirable, as if it were not really necessary. This is not just for older saints, but must be seen in each child of God from the youngest to the oldest.

Christ describes such a one as being blessed. To be blessed means to be happy, to enjoy one's well-being. This is the keynote of the Psalms. Let me quote just a few. In Psalm 1:1 we read, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." We see it also in chapter 32:1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,

whose sin is covered." Although there are many more, we quote just one more, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee" (Ps. 84:4). In the highest sense this is true of God. The apostle Paul in his first letter to Timothy writes, "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1:11). What Paul is saying is that God is full, content, happy, the fountain of every good and perfect gift. Now relate that to ourselves. When we are recipients of the blessedness of God in the kingdom, then we too are blessed — blessed with the blessedness of the blessed God.

This blessedness of the citizens of the kingdom of God consists in this, that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom here spoken of is the kingdom of final glory with Christ before the face of our God. It will be fully and finally established when Christ returns upon the clouds of glory. What a day that will be. All His people shall be perfected and the heaven and earth shall be renewed. There we shall have fellowship and communion with God Himself, praising Him in the beauty of holiness.

Even though this kingdom is not yet fully established in the final sense, the blessings of this kingdom are enjoyed, to a degree, already now. Wickedness abounds, even increases. And the kingdom is not earthly. Nevertheless the kingdom of heaven is enjoyed by God's children within themselves. Already now, as regenerated children of God, we have fellowship and communion with Him. We have the right to come before His throne of grace to ask of Him for His blessings upon us for Jesus' sake. In harmony with God's faithfulness, we receive according to our need.


This kingdom belongs exclusively to the poor in spirit. The proud, the haughty, and the boasters in themselves have no part in it. It is the possession only of

the spiritual beggars who have received all their benefits from the hand of God, saved by grace alone. We do not have to doubt this. No, this is a matter of certainty, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We can be sure, for this inheritance is ours exactly because it comes on the basis of the work of Christ, not our own. He came, suffered, died, rose again, ascended to the right hand of God. On that basis we, the citizens, know that we shall enter into the kingdom.

It is this truth that comforts us

while we are on our sojourn. Of great profit this is both for believers and for their spiritual seed, for it stirs their hearts to lead them to repentance. We then know the need for conversion. We know that we must depend upon the Lord for all our material needs and that we are dependent upon Him for our whole salvation. Being conscious of our helplessness and spiritual poverty, with nothing to give for our salvation, not even the desire to do so, we cry out with the publican,

"God be merciful to me, the sinner."

For such there is true happiness, a happiness which we did not and cannot earn. As citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we will enjoy all that God promises in the gospel for Jesus' sake. Standing before God as beggars, we will find that He fulfills our every need, the greatest need being the knowledge of salvation in Jesus Christ. Receiving this, you and I are blessed, yea, happy, for being poor in spirit we are eternally rich. 

Editorials

A Notable Meeting on Behalf of the Reunion of the CRC and the PRC

In the 75 years of the divided history of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), there has been one, and only one, notable meeting on behalf of the reunion of these two denominations. That was the all-day conference in the old Pantlind Hotel, now the Amway Grand Plaza, in Grand Rapids, Michigan on March 29, 1939.

By decision of those in attendance, Herman Hoeksema opened up the conference by reading his prepared address, "*De Hereeniging Der Christelijke Gereformeerde En Protestantische Gereformeerde Kerken: Is Ze Geeischt, Mogelijk, Wenselijk?*" (English translation: "The Reunion of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches: Is It Demanded, Possible, Desired?"). We are reprinting this speech in the *Standard Bearer*. The first installment appears elsewhere in this issue.

The occasion for the reprinting

is the ecumenical overture to the PRC in the April 2000 issue of the *Calvin Theological Journal*. Both the PRC and the CRC should know what Hoeksema said about reunion at the one notable meeting of Protestant Reformed and Christian Reformed men. Besides, the speech sets forth vital truths about ecumenicity in general. Not only the PRC but also other Reformed churches do well to give heed to these truths in our ecumenical age.

The one notable meeting itself was fascinating.

We have a reliable, full account of it especially in two editorials by Hoeksema in the issues of the *SB* that immediately followed the conference (May 1 and May 15, 1939). Both were in Dutch: "*Wat Op De Conferentie Voorviel*," and "*Wat Er Op De Conferentie Voorviel*" (English translation: "What Happened at the Conference"). Hoeksema's account was that of an eyewitness and leading participant. In addition, he had before him the com-

plete record of the meeting by one of the two clerks appointed by the assembly.

The "Pantlind Conference" was occasioned by the presence in the United States of the Dutch Reformed theologian Klaas Schilder. Schilder had been urging such a conference in order that the breach between the CRC and the PRC might be healed.

The Christian Reformed men arranged the conference. William B. Eerdmans, Sr., he of the publishing house, evidently took the lead. Sixteen Christian Reformed men were invited. Hoeksema reported that ten attended. In a later reference to the meeting, Gerrit Vos spoke of nine. Nine are identified, eight ministers and Eerdmans. Like Eerdmans, the eight ministers were prominent men in the CRC: Dr. Henry Beets, Rev. Van Wijk, Rev. Bel, Rev. J. K. Van Baalen, Rev. William Hendriksen, Dr. Y. P. De Jong, Rev. Daniel Zwier, and Rev. John Weidenaar.

Those who declined the well-meant invitation were also prominent: Prof. Louis Berkhof, Prof. Samuel Volbeda, Prof. Martin Wyngaarden, and Rev. H. J. Kuiper. Hoeksema observed that the "'Big Four' frowned upon the conference."

Fourteen Protestant Reformed ministers attended. Eight are identified in Hoeksema's account of the meeting: Rev. P. De Boer, Rev. W. Verhil, Rev. J. D. De Jong, Rev. R. Veldman, Rev. H. Veldman, Rev. L. Vermeer, Prof. G. M. Ophoff, and Hoeksema.

Dr. Schilder was also present as a very vocal participant.

The group chose Dr. Henry Beets as chairman. Beets opened by reading I Corinthians 13! Hoeksema praised Beets for the worthy and honorable way in which he had led the meeting.

Hoeksema and the other Protestant Reformed men obviously regarded the meeting as important. Hoeksema told the readers of the *SB* that he had taken a full week off from his normal work in order to concentrate on preparing the speech that he would give at the meeting. Three Protestant Reformed ministers drove all the way from Sioux County to attend, and in those days there was no I-80. In addition, the entire April 15, 1939 issue of the *SB* was devoted to the printing of Hoeksema's address to the meeting. The full text was given first in the Dutch original and then in English translation. All the regular rubrics made way for the conference.

The meeting was a failure.

The reason was that the Christian Reformed men refused to discuss the issues.

Hoeksema presented his thorough analysis of the doctrine of common grace as adopted by the Christian Reformed synod of 1924. He concluded with twenty propositions for the meeting to discuss and debate. Schilder spoke at length, and more than once, on Hoeksema's speech and on the doc-

trine of common grace.

The Christian Reformed men would not discuss the three points of common grace.

William Eerdmans repeatedly urged his colleagues to discuss the specific aspects of the doctrine of common grace. This was the purpose, he said, of the committee that arranged the conference. At one point in the afternoon, the no-nonsense businessman told his ministerial confederates to stop their jabbering, whether to discuss the three points, and to begin discussing the three points so that the conference could get somewhere. Schilder called on the Christian Reformed ministers to state their views. In order, as he said later, to provoke them to discuss, Hoeksema finally accused them of being afraid to enter into a doctrinal discussion.

Nothing availed. They all were determined to sit as "silent listeners." Two of them were at pains to advertise their complete disinterest by ostentatiously reading the newspaper.

Dr. Y. P. De Jong responded to the pleas by stating that the meeting was not the time to say much about common grace. In his report, Hoeksema remarked that De Jong's statement struck him as odd. "If a meeting which was called to conduct a scientific dialogue is not the time to say much, when is it then the time? At a closed committee meeting perhaps, where the opponent is not present? Or at a hierarchical synod, where one can deny the accused the right to speak? What danger can there be in a scientific discussion of the questions, if one does not feel himself too weak to do this?"

Something might be said in defense of the silence of the Christian Reformed ministers. Obviously, they were not prepared to debate the issue of common grace as adopted by their synod 15 years earlier. None of them had a paper. One reason may have been that they mistook the nature of the meeting. From a line that

Hoeksema had dropped in the *SB* prior to the conference, they may have supposed that his opposition to the three points was weakening. They would then have regarded the upcoming conference as a forum for (church) political negotiations, both parties cooperating to find the right words to paper over the division between the churches and to make the return of the Protestant Reformed people as painless as possible. Hoeksema's uncompromising address disabused them of that notion and left them speechless.

A second reason why they refused to discuss the issues was likely the warning issued just before the conference by the "Big Four." An unofficial gathering had no business discussing official decisions of the CRC. That, no doubt, was a shot across the bow of the good ship ecumenicity manned by the Christian Reformed ministers at the Pantlind Conference.

The conference came to a sorry end. The last three hours were a wrangling, whether the group should discuss the doctrine of common grace. Common grace was never discussed. The conclusion was the charge to the committee that had arranged the meeting to call another meeting in about two months.

Whether he was referring to the outcome of a subsequent conference or to the holding of it at all is not clear, but Hoeksema ended his report with the admission of pessimism about a future conference. "After the meeting we just had, I really do not have such optimism as to expect anything of it."

History has validated his pessimism.

Sixty-one years later, we must report that another meeting was never held.

Indeed, as far as I know, the committee never reported.

I doubt that it even met.

— DJE

A Notable Insight at the Meeting on Behalf of the Reunion of the CRC and the PRC

At the Pantlind Conference in 1939 regarding the reunion of the CRC and the PRC, one of the participants gave expression to a notable doctrinal insight. He expressed this insight in the clearest, most forceful manner.

The insight was not that of Herman Hoeksema. At least, it was not he who expressed it. In fact, the insight was not that of any of the Protestant Reformed contingent at the conference.

The insight belonged to Dr. Y. P. De Jong, one of the Christian Reformed ministers at the conference.

It was profound insight into the radical, all-comprehensive nature of the common grace theology of the three points adopted by the CRC in 1924. Therefore, it was also deep insight into the fundamental difference between the theology of the CRC and the theology of the PRC after 1924. The insight implied that the only possibility of the reunion of the two denominations—the only *honest, honorable* possibility for bodies that take at all seriously what it means to be church of Christ on earth—is either that the CRC repent of and repudiate the three points or that the PRC repent of and repudiate their doctrine of particular grace.

De Jong was responding to the suggestion of his colleague, chairman Henry Beets, that in the interests of ongoing ecumenical contact with the PRC

a future synod of the CRC might declare the 1924 decisions adopting the three points “non-active.” De Jong gently but firmly chided Dr. Beets: “Those three points cannot be declared non-active (*op non-activiteit gesteld worden*). Dr. Beets knows better than this.”

And then Dr. De Jong expressed his profound insight into the significance of the theology of the three points of common grace: “The whole of theology is bound up with the three points. The synod [of 1924] has expressed three truths in the three points.”

From this significance of the three points of common grace, De Jong drew the necessary conclusion as regards the reunion of the CRC and the PRC: “Concerning this [theology of the three points], we must first of all be one.”

De Jong went on to inform the meeting that, in harmony with his conviction that the theology of the three points is a radically different theology from the theology of particular grace held by the PRC, he did not agree with the declaration by the Christian Reformed synod of 1924 that Herman Hoeksema was fundamentally Reformed. De Jong had not voted for that declaration. Fifteen years later, he was still of a mind officially to protest against that declaration.

That was a notable insight. It contradicted the superficial notion that

many had then, and still entertain today: that the theology of the three points of common grace and the theology of particular grace can peacefully, cooperatively, and fruitfully live together in the same church federation.

The insight of Y. P. De Jong was sound. The theology of the three points of common grace is an essentially different theology from the theology of particular grace. The teachings embodied in the three points affect all of doctrine and all of life. Over time, the theology of the three points forms an entirely different church from the church that believes and practices the doctrine of particular grace.

Seventy-five years of history have proved Dr. De Jong’s insight sound. The common grace doctrine of 1924 has shaped, and is shaping, a church whose mind, message, mission, and manner of life are universalistic and wide open to the world. The doctrines of particular grace, in contrast, have formed, and still are forming, the PRC as a denomination of churches characterized by particularism and the antithesis.

Two radically different theologies.

Two theologies affecting all of doctrine and all of life.

Two theologies forming increasingly different churches.

De Jong saw it and expressed it.

A notable insight.

— DJE

A Notable Speech at the Meeting on Behalf of the Reunion of the CRC and the PRC

At the Pantlind Conference of Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed men in 1939, Herman Hoeksema gave a notable speech.

He himself knew the importance of the speech. He took a week off from his regular work in order carefully to craft it. Immediately after the conference, he de-

voted an entire issue of the *Standard Bearer* to the publication of the speech both in the Dutch original and in English translation. Soon the RFPA published the speech as

a pamphlet, in fact *two* pamphlets—one in Dutch and another in English.

It is this speech, in the English translation by Herman Veldman, that we are reprinting in the *SB*. The editor of the *SB* has edited the printed speech for publication here. This editing does not affect the content. The first installment appears in this issue. Those who like to read the entire speech at one sitting can find it in the April 15, 1939 issue of the *SB* (vol. 15, no. 14).

The speech is of more than historical interest.

It shows the way for ecumenical contact with the CRC, should such contact result from the recent articles on the common grace controversy of 1924 in the April 2000 issue of the *Calvin Theological Journal*.

But the speech also lays down the principles and points out the procedure for all of the ecumenical endeavors of the PRC. Manifesting the unity of the church is a solemn calling. Carrying out this calling is beset by alluring, deadly temptations. The PRC do well to heed the ecumenical Hoeksema of this speech. Other churches may benefit by giving him a hearing.

I call attention to the following aspects and implications of the speech.

First, there is zeal for the unity of the church. This moved Hoeksema to attend the conference. He was willing to set aside his personal grievances, which were great. He was willing to sit down in

friendly conference with the likes of J. K. Van Baalen, a bitter foe. He carried on trying to get somewhere with church unity when two of the Christian Reformed participants had their noses in the daily newspaper.

Second, true ecumenicity must be based upon truth. In his speech, Hoeksema called for thorough discussion of the issues, that is, *the issues that separated the two denominations*. "A thorough discussion of the differences is ... imperative." The conference must not be a meeting of "good old boys," who drink coffee, impress each other with their titles, accomplishments, and friendliness, and stick to the safe areas where they suppose they are in agreement.

There may be no compromise. Within two or three minutes, Hoeksema was reminding the group, "I am an enemy of all compromise." The reason was that "no blessing can be expected from a superficial discussion of the issues and a subsequent reconciliation and reunion."

Hoeksema warned against being carried away with a superficial enthusiasm, a real danger in ecumenical contact.

The issues must be soberly examined in the light of Scripture and the creeds, so that there may be agreement in the truth. Only then is church unity advanced.

Third, the people, the members of the churches, must be kept informed. It is a grievous fault, Hoeksema thought, that leaders conduct ecumenical discussions

without fully informing the members of the churches, indeed without taking the people—the church—into account. It is not right, it is detrimental to ecumenicity, that the people ask, with some nervousness, "What is going on?"

Fourth, as regards the objection of the PRC to the Christian Reformed doctrine of common grace, Hoeksema showed that the objection is grounded in a positive theology of the sovereignty of God, the primacy and preeminence of Christ, the fundamental truth of election and reprobation, the centrality of the covenant as living fellowship, the organic oneness of all things earthly, and the necessity of the spiritual antithesis.

Let the critics say what they will, is this not a profound, rich, moving, consistent, defensible, biblical, confessional theology? Should this theology be reprobated by Reformed churches?

Regarding Hoeksema's specific criticisms of the three points, it is enough here to remark that Hoeksema laid out the issues clearly, indicated that the issues are serious, and demonstrated that the Protestant Reformed objections demand and deserve a response.

This speech was before the house at the only meeting on behalf of the reunion of the CRC and the PRC that has ever been held.

If ever another meeting is held and if that meeting goes about ecumenical things rightly, it will be before the house again.

— DJE 

Editorially Speaking

With this issue begins volume 77 of the *Standard Bearer*.

At their annual meeting this summer, the staff, made up of the current writers and the managing editor, reappointed the editor (Prof. Engelsma), the secretary (Prof.

Dykstra), the general adjunct (Prof. Hanko), the managing editor (Mr. Don Doezema), and the special issues committee (Prof. Engelsma, Prof. Dykstra, and Mr. Don Doezema).

The several rubrics and their

writers will also be the same as in volume 76, except that Rev. Mitchell Dick will write regularly for the young people. We welcome Rev. Dick back to the staff of writers.

The next issue of the *Standard*

Bearer will be our annual special Reformation issue. We will feature the Scottish Reformer John Knox.

Contributions and letters from our readers are welcome.

May we who write be encour-

aged by the worthiness of this witness to God's truth on behalf of the church. May the people of God within and without the Protestant Reformed Churches consider it a profitable and enjoyable calling to read the magazine. May subscrip-

tions increase, not for revenue but for the spread of our testimony to the Reformed faith. And may God glorify Himself through our humble efforts.

— DJE



Letters

■ Superb Special Issue

The latest, special, 75th anniversary issue of the *Standard Bearer* was just superb. It redoubles my wish that I could have been in Michigan in June for the outpouring of "pleasant bread." The whole issue was scintillating.

I cannot do without the Protestant Reformed Churches mainly because I believe they are the only body left which holds tenaciously, enthusiastically, studiously to supralapsarian fullness in sovereign grace theology. In this great feature they are truly the "remnant." That is very sad for the world and very laudatory for the PRC. Or, more correctly, glorious and mysterious of God.

I have rejoiced at times that I found in 1975 or so a rained-on old copy of *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America* by Herman Hoeksema for 10 cents in a Negro's used-goods sale. Rev. Hoeksema's clear logic and determination therein that right prevail was winning and unforgettable.

I am still waiting eagerly and maybe a bit impatiently for the RFPA's release of Abraham Kuyper's *That Grace Is Particular*. I love much about Kuyper and Hoeksema.

Lewis Price
Batesville, AR

RESPONSE:

Patience, brother.

Kuyper's book is now translated — by Marvin Kamps, for the first time in the English language.

The RFPA is working on the publication process.

They will be encouraged by your lively interest.

— Ed.

■ Baptized in the Spirit

May I question the heading, "Being Baptized in the Spirit," used in the Rev. James Laning's articles of March 1 and April 15, 2000.

There are six references (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16) which follow the general pattern, "I indeed have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8). Now the core meaning of the Greek word "*en*" translated "with" in the above phrase is undoubtedly "in" and is consistently so translated by the American Standard Version in all twelve places in the six texts, while the Authorized has "with" throughout.

When, however, the Greek is consulted we find that Luke, both in his gospel and Acts, consistently omits "*en*" before water. Now I am no Grecian; my studies, such as they were, having lain with science, so I am open to correction. But my understanding is that this is an example of the instrumental dative and must be translated "with."

Further, when we look at how this Spirit baptism is described, we find such phrases as "fallen upon," "poured out," "sat upon each of them," etc. In Ephesians 1:13, we read: "you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." I submit that "with" is the only appropriate preposition to describe such actions.

The matter of the correct translation is important as it bears on one main point in the baptismal controversy.

Michael Kimmitt
Trelawnyd, Wales

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your response. It is certainly proper to say that we are baptized *with* the Holy Spirit. But it is also proper to speak of our being baptized *in* the Holy Spirit. I chose the latter phrase because this is what the Scriptures literally say.

When the Bible speaks of our being baptized *in* the Spirit it indicates that it is only one who is in the Spirit who experiences Christ's baptism. To be in the Spirit is to be in the sphere of the Spirit's gracious operation and control (Rev. 1:10). It is one who is in the Spirit who experiences the real baptism, the cleansing of his soul by the shed blood of our Savior.

— Rev. James Laning

■ Indigenous Churches

I refer to the special article by Rev. Richard Smit entitled, "Akwaaba" in the July 2000 edition of the *Standard Bearer*. I humbly offer a few suggestions to the FMC. First, the PRC Mission in Ghana should aim to have a local congregation instituted which is self-governing, self-financing, and self-propagating. Personally, I do not share the enthusiasm of the secretary of the FMC that the worship services in the Ghanaian Mission has a similar order of worship to

the Protestant Reformed Churches in the United States and Canada. The very obvious and simple reason is that it is foreign — not indigenous. A “foreign” mission in the long run will be short-lived. The history of missions has abundantly demonstrated that missions which is not local will in the long run incur the displeasure of the local. They will resent the intrusion of a foreign church in their own ecclesiastical affairs. In times of a change in policy of the government of the land, persecution will result, and if the church does not have its local officebearers to bear up the church, the church will be deci-

mated. I cannot emphasize enough that only a church which is self-governing, self-financing, and self-propagating can bear up to persecution and begin to gather the elect through the pure preaching of God’s Word. In other words, that church will grow in spite of persecution. The history of missions in China and Myanmar attest to this fact. Therefore, the missionary in Ghana and Northern Ireland should work themselves out of the job so that the local churches are indigenous, have their own officebearers, have their own funds to support themselves, and are able

to gather the elect through the preaching of God’s Word.

Second, I would like to suggest that the missionary learn the local language or dialect in order better to minister to the locals. This is not optional but very necessary in missions. The door to greater ministry in a foreign land will open wider if an American missionary takes the time and trouble to learn the language. Plus, the people will be drawn closer to the missionary.

Remember, the heart language of the people is in their own local dialect or language.

(Seminarian) Paul Goh
Grand Rapids, MI

Ecumenicity

Herman Hoeksema

The Reunion of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches:

Is It DEMANDED, POSSIBLE, DESIRED?

Essay read at a Conference of some Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Ministers

(Translated from the Dutch by Rev. H. Veldman)

The immediate occasion of this meeting of certain leaders of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches was, no doubt, the visit of Dr. K. Schilder among us. Now and then, also before the coming of the professor at Kampen, the sentiment was expressed that the difference between both churches was not sufficiently important or fundamental to justify their sepa-

rate existence. Never, however, did this lead to any definite action. It was Dr. Schilder who in his lectures among us not only expressed the idea, but also urged, that both groups should seek one another anew, should try to arrange a conference at which the points that had caused their division would be discussed, and, if possible, once more live together under one ecclesiastical roof. At the conference which we, as Protestant Reformed ministers, held with the professor, one of the first questions which he laid before us was whether we would be found willing and pre-

pared to attend such a colloquy. As I wrote in the *Standard Bearer*, the hope was expressed in more than one quarter in the Netherlands that one of the fruits of Dr. Schilder’s trip might be that such a reunion would be effected. Therefore, I think the conclusion wholly justifiable that it was especially upon his urging that certain of the Christian Reformed brethren ventured to call a meeting like this together. Personally I desire to express my appreciation and gratefulness for the invitation which we received to attend this gathering.

Meanwhile, I deem it of the

Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the *Standard Bearer*.

greatest importance for the success of such an attempt that we understand one another correctly, and that some preparation for our discussion of the various questions, which now or later will be discussed, could not be considered undesirable. Even in general this is true. I am an enemy of all compromise. No blessing can be expected from a superficial discussion of the issues and a subsequent reconciliation and reunion. A thorough discussion of the differences is therefore imperative. But I believe that especially the circumstances under which this meeting was called together prompt us to be careful.

In the first place, I believe that the coming of and association with Dr. Schilder here and there has aroused a certain enthusiasm which has beclouded the judgment of some. When presently the esteemed professor will have returned to the Netherlands, both he and we will reflect more calmly and soberly upon these matters, which is an indispensable requisite for a clear and sound understanding of them. I am of the opinion that it must not be considered impossible that there is also at present strange fire upon the altar. Matters, especially now, must not be hastened.

In the second place, I deem it not impossible that our esteemed guest from the Netherlands views the matters which separate us, I would say, in a different light than we. It is his judgment, if I am not mistaken, that we in 1924 fought a too severe battle relative to the question of common grace, and that our differences are not sufficiently serious as to warrant our separate existence. To such a judgment I could agree only if it should be based upon a thorough discussion. And in this view of the matter I do not stand alone. In one of the last numbers of *De (Christian Reformed) Wachter* one may read that we, according to the judgment of the writer, are walking a deeply sinful

way, are, to be sure, not to be viewed as heathens and publicans, but must nevertheless be treated as objects of admonition, that we may repent of our evil way. I certainly need not assure the brethren present here that my presence here must not be viewed as a proof of my readiness to submit myself to a brotherly admonition. I do not say this because of a lack of brotherly spirit. On the contrary, I declare myself ready, for the success of this meeting, to lay aside for the present the grievances which I think to have and to forget them insofar as possible, and to adopt an attitude of friendship. However, in order to express at the very outset my opinion, I do maintain that a meeting of this nature is justifiable and can be a blessing only then when it purposes to discuss thoroughly the issue which now separates us. This essay may be viewed as an introduction to such a discussion and as an explanation of our viewpoint.

Then I would begin with that concerning which we undoubtedly all agree. First of all, we certainly all agree on this, that the church of Christ is one. It is one body, one in its Head, Christ Jesus our Lord, one in the Spirit, united in the bond of peace through the one faith, even as there is one God and Father, who is above all and in all. This unity must also be realized and manifested as much as possible in the church upon earth. Therefore it is the sacred and solemn calling of all believers to seek that true unity with all that is in them. That which as church of Christ belongs together must not be separated, much less live in a relation of enmity. All schism must be avoided. And whoever causes that that which is truly one and belongs together is torn asunder shall bear the judgment. We agree with Calvin, who teaches us that "the church is therefore called 'general' or 'Catholic,' because one cannot contrive two or three churches without dividing Christ, which is

not possible" (Inst. IV, 1, 2). We would subscribe to the word of Bavinck: "As Christians we cannot humble ourselves enough because of the schism and discord which has existed in the church of Christ through the ages; it is a sin against God, in conflict with the prayer of Christ, and caused by the darkness of our mind and the uncharitableness of our heart" (Dogm. IV, 344).

Yet it will not do to urge a union of whatever upon earth calls itself with the name of church. Although it is understandable that men, prompted by a fervent desire for an erroneously conceived unity of the church, oftentimes permitted themselves to be misled to seek the realization of such a unity by power or artificial means, or by syncretism and denial of principle, yet we may not cooperate with such movements. The division within the church upon earth is simply a fact.

That which calls itself church upon earth may certainly, in the first place, be distinguished as true and false church. With the latter group we must certainly number those so-called churches which no longer reckon with the Word of God, which proclaim human wisdom instead of the gospel of Christ, and which have broken with the broad fundamentals of Christianity, such as the Godhead of Christ, the atonement through His blood, the resurrection and the return of the Savior.

But also that which in a broad sense of the word must be considered as belonging to the true church, because the Word of God is known and proclaimed there in a greater or smaller degree, is characterized by various degrees of purity. There is difference in purity of confession, difference with respect to the administration of the sacraments, difference in church-government and in the form of divine worship. Irrespective even of the false church it will not do to bring under one ecclesiastical roof

whatever may have any claim to the name of church. This must be considered impossible already because of practical considerations. But of far weightier importance is the fact that it is the chief calling of the church upon earth to preserve and proclaim the Word purely, and that by such an attempt unto fusion, the truth would not only be beclouded and more and more adulterated but erelong be wholly lost. Especially for this reason the church is called unto progressive reformation, in order that it may continue to keep and maintain the truth over against evil influences from within and without, as well as to seek its further development. Also because of this a church can have the calling, under specific circumstances, when it has become impossible within a certain church connection to maintain the truth purely, that it return and separate.

Finally, because of this very reason it is the calling of every believer to affiliate himself with that church which according to the conviction of his heart is the purest revelation of the body of Christ. "There is," writes Bavinck, "great difference in the purity of the confessions and the churches. And we must abide by and strive for the purest. Whoever, therefore, becomes convinced that the Protestant Church is better than the Roman Catholic, and the Reformed is purer than the Lutheran or Remonstrant or the Baptist, must, without necessarily condemning his church as false, leave the one and affiliate himself with the other. And to remain in one's own church, notwithstanding much impurity in doctrine and life, is obligatory as long as we are not hindered in being faithful to our own confession, and, be it indirectly, are not forced to obey men rather than God" (Dogm. IV, 347). To this we add that whoever does otherwise simply aids the false church. This also signifies that when one is hindered within his

own church in confessing and in walking according to the purity of the truth, and there is no other church in the vicinity with which he would be able to affiliate himself, he is called upon to strive for a new and purer revelation of the church upon earth.

Therefore, the Reformed have always emphasized the knowledge of the earmarks of the true church. Generally three, at times two, such characteristics are mentioned. They are: the pure preaching of the Word of God, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline. These three, however, do not exist independent of each other, and in the final analysis can all be reduced to the first: the pure preaching of the Word of God. Where the purity of God's Word is maintained, there the sacraments will also be administered according to that Word, and there church discipline will also be enforced. Moreover, as we have already declared, it is the chief calling of the church to preserve and proclaim the Word of God and to confess it in the midst of the world. Where God's Word is, there is the church; where the church is, there God's Word is kept, believed, confessed, proclaimed, and practiced. Where God's Word is preserved, believed, confessed, and proclaimed most purely, there you have the purest revelation of the body of Christ. With that church we must affiliate ourselves. In behalf of the purity of that church we must watch. The unity of that church we must preserve. And that church must be kept pure from whatever reveals itself as not belonging to it.

The purest revelation of the church upon earth is for us, beyond any doubt, the Reformed. This we must express without any hesitation. The maintenance of the pure Word of God signifies, according to our sincere conviction, the maintenance of the Reformed truth, as expressed by the Three Forms of Unity. According as a church more

purely maintains the Reformed truth, it is more pure; according as it departs from that confession, it is in that measure less pure. Whoever is not willing to maintain this has never considered his own confession seriously. And whoever does not dare to express this publicly, especially in our day, is unfaithful to the truth of God. With respect therefore to our meeting and colloquy, the situation is this: whatever stands upon the basis of that Reformed confession, maintains and practices that confession, belongs together. They who embrace that confession should either live under one ecclesiastical roof or, when language and distance render this impossible, enter as sister churches into correspondence with each other. But it is also equally true that whatever departs from this confession, be it in doctrine or life or both, must remain separate, or be compelled to separate from the Reformed churches.

With this, I believe, we all agree.

Now since 1924 two church-groups exist among us, the possible reunion whereof is the subject of our discussion. Before 1924 these church groups were one. Both profess to stand on the basis of the Reformed confession as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity. However, mutually they accuse one another of departing from that confession.

I will attempt to describe as objectively as possible the cause of this separate existence. About 1920 a difference of opinion arose with respect to the issue of common grace. Two brethren, noticing an ever-increasing spirit of world-mindedness which revealed itself in more than one way in the churches, as well as the clamor of some within the churches for a broader interpretation of the Reformed truth, revealing itself in what was known at that time as a "new mentality," and the fact that this "new mentality," although rejecting the Kuyper of the antithesis,

was very enthusiastic, fanatic, about Kuyper's "common grace" examined this "doctrine," compared it with Scripture and confession, and came to the conclusion, not only that the *name* "common grace" or "general grace" was not proper, nor that we were in need of a better presentation or further development of that doctrine, but that the doctrine itself was principally in conflict with the Reformed world and life view, and, therefore, must be rejected.

Already in 1924 the undersigned, as co-editor of the *Banner*, in connection with his description and evaluation of the covenant with Noah, revealed his sentiments with respect to this doctrine in unmistakable terms. At that time nobody opposed his presentation. In connection with the Janssen case, however, in which the undersigned took an active part, the opposition broke loose. A controversy ensued. From both sides brochures were written. Protests were lodged at the respective consistories. Shortly before the synod of Kalamazoo, 1924, the matter came before the classes. From the classes the case went to the synod.

The synod of Kalamazoo settled the issue of common grace in the well-known three points. These teach that, besides the saving grace of God, which concerns only the elect, there is also a non-saving grace, a "gracious disposition" in God, which is general, in which also the reprobates share, which also appears from the preaching of the gospel to all men; that there is an operation of the Holy Spirit, besides regeneration, whereby sin in the natural man and in the community is restrained; and that by an influence of God upon him the natural man is enabled to perform civil good.

Subsequently the synod declared that the accused brethren are Reformed with respect to the fundamental truths as formulated in the confession; that, however, vari-

ous expressions in the writings of the accused brethren could not very well be harmonized with the above-named three points; it decided further to admonish the brethren, as well as the churches in general, to guard themselves against onesidedness, and also that there was cause for warning against worldmindedness and the misuse of the doctrine of common grace.

The synod took no further action. It did not admonish the brethren personally at the meeting; it did not demand of them a declaration or promise of agreement with the adopted points, and it did not make the case pending at the respective consistories, which did take place, e.g., in the Bultema case, 1918. And all this the synod neglected to do, notwithstanding the fact that the advisory committee *ad hoc* had advised such an admonition and a demand of a promise by the brethren at the very meeting of synod; and although the accused brethren had declared at the meeting of synod, by word and in writing, unequivocally, that they could not submit themselves to the decisions of synod. The conclusion of the protest presented by Rev. H. Danhof at the very same synod reads as follows:

Although I readily agree that various expressions in the writings of the brethren Danhof and Hoeksema cannot very well be harmonized with that which the synod sets forth in points A, B, and C, yet it is my sacred conviction that their expressions, if but left in their proper context, are not essentially in conflict with the Confession and Scripture. Irrespective, therefore, also of the fact that each particular work concerning any definite point, just because it is special and concerns a definite point, must lead in a certain definite direction, I contend that the brethren earnestly strive for a rich and complete presentation of God's revealed truth and that such is also clear from their writings. Although they then may differ

from the present three synodical declarations, yet I deem it necessary to maintain emphatically over against synod that their sentiments are in harmony with Confession and Scripture.

Whereas this is my earnest conviction, the synod will certainly understand me when I hereby declare that I deem it my calling before God and the churches, not only to protest formally against these synodical decisions, but also to adopt practical measures over against them, both as delegate of Classis Grand Rapids West and as one of the two brethren condemned with respect to the above-named three points. I believe that for the sake of honesty it was necessary for me to say this.

Although the synod took no further action, both classes where the accused brethren belonged did, especially when a beginning was made in the *Standard Bearer* to fulfill the promise which both brethren had expressed at the meeting of synod and they began to submit the synodical declarations to a thorough criticism. The classes demanded of the consistories involved that they place their pastors before the question whether they would agree with the adopted three points and promise, with the right of appeal, never to teach anything, privately or publicly, which conflicted with those points. The consistories refused to heed this demand of the classes, and appealed to the synod of 1926. And the pastors were in agreement with the consistories. Thereupon the ministers were suspended from office because of insubordination to the "proper ecclesiastical authorities." Upon the same ground the consistories were deposed. True, there was formally a slight difference between the action of Classis Grand Rapids East and that of Classis Grand Rapids West. The first declared the consistory of Eastern Avenue outside of the church connection; the latter simply deposed the consistory of Kalamazoo I. But essentially there

was no difference also in this respect, inasmuch as also Classis East advanced as the ground for its action that the consistory of Eastern Ave. was guilty of insubordination to the "proper ecclesiastical authorities." The ministers were deposed from office by a later classis.

However, the consistories and ministers continued to function in their office, and paid no attention to the decisions of the classes. The overwhelming majority of their congregations, moreover, supported the consistories. They also united at the very outset and provisionally, together with the consistory of Hope, which with its pastor, Rev. G. M. Ophoff, had meanwhile become involved in the issue and also been deposed by Classis Grand Rapids West. Later also Rev. D. Jonker, after he had presented his objections against the "Three Points," was deposed by Classis Zeeland. Until 1926 they called themselves the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches. But when their appeal to the synod of 1926 was disallowed, dismissed by this gathering because they stood outside of the church connection (*Acta* 1926), they organized themselves into a definite church organization adopting the name of Protestant Reformed Churches. To the present day we have remained standing and also increased in membership. I believe I may say that we all can agree on this presentation of the origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches and the historical occasion and cause of our separate existence.

Now I come to the question which faces this gathering, be it not in an official sense: Is it required that the breach be healed? Is it possible? And is it desirable?

The first question is here the most important, and, in a certain sense, the decisive question. It may and must be worded thus: Is it the will of God that the above named church groups unite? If it is God's will it must be done. Then we certainly face the calling to exert our-

selves to the utmost, through faith, in order to realize this union. More than once Dr. Schilder has emphasized this calling, in the Netherlands and during his stay among us. We agree with him that that which according to God's will belongs together may not be separated by us or remain separated. And I have sufficient confidence of faith to declare that that which according to God's will is our calling can also be carried out. If it becomes clear to me that it is truly the will of God that the Protestant Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches heal the breach which has been made and that they again live together as brethren under one ecclesiastical roof, I declare myself prepared, with all that is in me, to settle accidental and personal matters and grievances in the proper way. The important question before which we stand is therefore: Does God will it?

The answer to this question depends entirely, as far as I am concerned, upon the answer to another: do we really stand together upon the basis of the Reformed confessions? The question of the truth must govern, dominate this discussion. That implies that we must discuss thoroughly the issue of common grace, which also includes the three points adopted in 1924. To unite first, in the hope that we then will be able to solve the questions, would now be impossible. This could have been done before 1924. Since then we have made history, and it is impossible simply to ignore that history. The Christian Reformed Churches have adopted the three points, and later defended them; we have rejected and in every way opposed them, have in detail presented the grounds upon which we deem them un-Reformed. If we ever are to unite, a discussion of the truth, of the question of common grace and of the three points, is first of all demanded.

There are, in my opinion, but two possibilities which we in the

abstract may mutually agree to be possibilities. In the first place, the possibility is conceivable that the Christian Reformed brethren convince us that we erred in 1924 when we refused to subscribe to the three points. To do this we offer to give them, by means of this discussion, ample opportunity. On the other hand, the possibility exists that we convince them that the three points are un-Reformed, that the synod of 1924 never should have adopted them, and that they therefore must be retracted unconditionally. Unto that end they, the Christian Reformed brethren, should give us equally full opportunity. If they succeed in convincing us, we will acknowledge that we erred and that we must unite with them upon the basis of the three points. If we succeed in convincing them, they must acknowledge that they erred in 1924. Then the three points will presently be recalled, and then they will stand with us upon the same confessional basis. Only in this manner may we proceed. Any other way is the way of compromise, which I will continue to refuse.


If we succeed in this way to come to an agreement, certainly the most important purpose of this colloquy has been realized. Also then difficulties will remain. We may not deceive ourselves into believing that they do not exist. In the first place, we may not ignore the attitude of our people, especially our Protestant Reformed people. The majority of the present generation lived through the history of 1924 and still feel deeply grieved. Synodical reunion side by side with local division, as in the Netherlands with the A and B churches, we do not deem desirable. Also our people must be convinced that reunion is our calling. They, therefore, must be kept fully informed concerning the course and the results of our discussions. Moreover, there are grievances which must certainly be adjusted according to the Word of God.

Besides, history has been made also in the last fourteen years. We have our own churches, now twenty-one in number. We have our own organization. Already for years we have met as classis and are now ready to organize into a synod. We have our own theological school, to which we are about to add a preparatory course. We have formed our own ministers. We have acquired new properties with a value of some hundreds of thousands of dollars, mostly free from debt. But also our own churches have developed in these last years, and this development, I believe, has been of such a nature that we have separated from one another still further since the breach of 1924. Not only have your churches developed in the line of the three points, whereas we have moved on in the opposite direction, but since 1924 declarations have

been made which have made the breach between us more pronounced. There is the question of the relation of broader gatherings to the consistory. We have maintained the autonomy of the local church; you have declared that classis and synod are actually clothed with higher power above the consistory. Moreover, we differ in regard to unions, to divorce, to the baptism of adopted children. All these differences simply exist. And they do not render the reunion any easier.

Nevertheless, I will take the stand that, if we actually may come to an agreement in the issue of common grace, especially the three points, we have in the main achieved the purpose of this colloquy and may cherish the hope that the reunion will be effected. Therefore, all emphasis must be laid on this point. It is a question of no

significance how long these discussions may continue. No matter how often we should have to confer we will remain by our purpose to discuss these issues thoroughly. If we desire to hold these conferences under the leadership of Dr. Schilder, we can arrange for his coming to us again. If we would also invite one or more of the other Netherlands professors to confer with us, there is no objection whatsoever. The world today is small and the finances are assured. If the Christian Reformed brethren prefer that Dr. Hepp should be present at our gatherings, we have no objection. But we will insist on one point: thorough discussion of common grace and of the three points in particular is the absolute requirement. These conferences may not have or conceive of any other purpose.

(to be continued...) 

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. James Laning

The Order of Salvation

The *order of salvation* is the order which the Holy Spirit follows when He applies to the hearts of His elect people the blessings Christ earned for them on the cross. Although it is true that we receive all the blessings of salvation in the moment in which God engrafts us into Christ and regenerates us, it is also true that Christ causes us to experience these blessings in a logical order as we mature spiritually. God is a God of order, and the Spirit of Christ blesses us in an orderly way.

Every day that we are walking

in obedience to God we experience the blessings of salvation in a certain order, even though we are often not consciously aware of this. For example, the more we place our trust in God throughout the day, the more we experience the blessings of justification by means of this faith. We find that we have peace in our heart, being assured that God is our Father and that He has washed away our sins in the blood of Christ. And the more we experience these blessings of justification, the more we then experience what it is to be sanctified. The more we are conscious of our justification, the more we are thankful to God for what He has wrought in us. Then God causes us to repent of our sins out of

thankfulness, so that we are consciously and willingly drawn more and more out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Salvation is a process, a lifelong process. Ephesians 2:8 says literally that by grace we are "being saved." This means that, although in a sense we have already been saved, there is also a sense in which we are being saved throughout our entire life. From the womb to the grave we are more and more drawn out of our sins and conformed to the image of Christ.

Proof That There Is Such an Order

For a summary of the order of salvation we turn to Romans 8:30, which reads: "Moreover whom he

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did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Here we see that this order can be summarized under three headings:

- 1) Calling
- 2) Justification
- 3) Glorification

All those whom God has predestinated to salvation receive all of these blessings, and they receive them in the order listed above.

But this is not the only passage that teaches us about this order. There are a multitude of passages that speak to us of the relation between two or more of the blessings of salvation. Romans 5:1, for example, says that we are justified by means of faith, thus putting faith before justification. Romans 10:14 says that we must first hear Christ before we can consciously believe on Him, which means that God's efficacious call must come before conscious faith and produce it. These are just a couple of passages that indicate for us part of the order of salvation, and which we can use to expand upon the order listed in Romans 8:30.

The Denial That There Is Such an Order

Some, however, have denied that we have a specific order given here. They point to passages in which, they say, a different order is given. A passage cited by some is I Corinthians 6:11. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This passage, they say, puts sanctification before justification, and thus proves that there is no set order according to which the blessings of salvation are always experienced.

The truth is that this latter passage in no way contradicts the order given to us in Romans 8:30. Although it mentions sanctification before justification, this is simply a passage in which a certain bless-

ing is mentioned before its basis. In the context, God calls us to separate from sin and impenitent sinners, reminding us that we have been cleansed from our sins and sanctified. Then He goes on to add that the blessing of sanctification that we have received has an unshakable basis. It has been given to us not because of our own righteousness, but because we have been "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." Thus we shall forever be sanctified, and separated from the impenitent sinners listed in the previous verses.

When interpreting I Corinthians 6:11, we must remember the principle that passages which are more clear are to be used to explain passages which are less clear. Of the two passages, Romans 8:30 is much more clearly setting forth an order. It clearly teaches that those who have been called are the ones who then are also justified, and that those who have been justified are the ones who then are also glorified.

There are also some who find fault with the order of Romans 8:30 because it does not explicitly refer to sanctification. But sanctification is included in what is referred to as glorification. Although we often think of glorification as referring only to that which will happen to us after this life, the fact is that we are beginning to be glorified right now. We read of this in II Corinthians 3:18. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Expanding on the Order Given in Romans 8:30

Instead of denying Romans 8:30, we need to expound it and build upon it. The first blessing referred to is the *calling*. Included in this blessing is both regeneration in the narrower sense of the word, and what is commonly referred to in Reformed theology as

"the saving call." The saving call refers to God's act of speaking to us through the preaching of the Word and writing that Word in our heart by the Spirit, so that we consciously believe it and embrace it. These two blessings are first, and are included in what is referred to as the "calling" in this verse.

The next blessing spoken of is *justification*. Justification is God's act of declaring us to be righteous in Christ. This blessing is received by means of faith, as we know from Romans 5:1 and from all the rest of Scripture. This faith is worked in us by means of God's efficacious call, which was just discussed. Then, through this faith, we receive the blessing of justification.

Along with faith goes the blessing of *conversion*. By the power of the efficacious call of the gospel, God causes us continuously to repent and to believe upon Christ. This is commonly referred to as "conversion."

Thirdly, we have the blessing of glorification. This blessing refers not only to our ultimate glorification on the last day, but also to the blessing of sanctification that we receive throughout this life. As has already been pointed out, the blessing of sanctification is essentially an act of glorification.

Putting it all together, we come up with the following order.

As Summarized in Romans 8:30

- ◆ Calling
- ◆ Justification
- ◆ Glorification

The Order in More Detail

- ◆ Regeneration
- ◆ Calling
- ◆ Conscious Faith and Conversion
 - ◆ Justification
 - ◆ Sanctification
 - ◆ Glorification

In future articles we intend to look at these different blessings in more detail. 

Blessed in Reflecting God

Matthew 5:7-9

The next three beatitudes are, in their character, rather different from the first four. We must identify this difference primarily as development in blessedness. These three words of blessing show the power and efficacy of the reception of the first four. The blessed citizens of the kingdom are not simply filled with the things that they need. They are also so transformed, that they appear as citizens of that kingdom. They share in the glorious attributes of their king. We find the doctrine of sanctification reflected in these three attributes. Those whom God justifies He also sanctifies. He grants them to walk as citizens of that kingdom. Thereby they know and experience citizenship in the kingdom of heaven by their very conduct. Their blessedness, then, is not only in being filled with what they lack, but also in reflecting the One who has so blessed them.

Since these attributes are a reflection of the nature of God, we must take special care in understanding them as very particular. They may not be regarded as belonging to any other than those identified in the first four of the beatitudes. It must never be thought that men in general are capable of showing these virtues. The inclination to do so exists especially with the first and last of

these three. That is, it might be thought that there are many besides believers who do show mercy, or who make peace. In order to avoid this error, let it be understood that these three beatitudes may not be separated. The only ones who are truly merciful and peacemakers are also pure in heart before God. The only true mercy is that which seeks deliverance of others from true misery, the corruption and guilt of sin, through reconciliation with God. The only true peacemaking is that which strives for peace on the part of others with the one true God. Those interested only in mercy that alleviates physical suffering forget that the objects of mercy are still dead in sin. Those interested only in peace among nations or within families or in any earthly relationship forget that there still remains enmity toward God. Alleviate all earthly pain and suffering and all strife among men, and nothing ultimately has been accomplished.

Only in light of the antithesis can we find the true blessedness of those who walk in these ways. They show that they are blessed with the particular, saving grace of God.

The Blessed Merciful

We can well see why this beatitude is the first of the three. It follows closely upon the heels of the preceding words of blessing from the Lord. These have already (obtained) certain mercy. Knowing their wretched poverty and God's blessed fullness, all by illu-

minating grace, they have called upon God to bless them. Abundantly have they received. Their hunger and thirst have been satisfied and quenched. Their tears have been dried and their souls comforted. Their poverty has been turned into riches.

How could they not then strive for the blessedness of others, whom they see in that same misery and poverty? They to whom much mercy is shown must necessarily be likewise merciful. In their blessed position they do not forget those about them who are yet in the misery of their sin. They reach down to them and work to lift them up, using the means that God has given to them. They speak to them of the things that they know, the things that have made them blessed. They speak of the blessings of the Word, and bring them that Word, and bring them under that Word, all in order that they might receive that blessedness.

The blessedness of these is exactly as merciful. The mercy that these blessed show is different from the mercy that God shows. God's mercy always accomplishes the intended deliverance. His mercy is always sovereign and efficacious. It is never frustrated. All those upon whom He is determined to bestow mercy are actually delivered. Salvation is all of God that showeth mercy, not of him that runneth nor of him that willeth. He is pleased to use human instruments to declare His mercy, even these merciful. When they do so, they are often frus-

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trated. They may speak to many people. They may give a solid witness. But that mercy will not be received, for God is not showing them mercy. Nevertheless, those who deal in such mercy are still blessed. They are blessed in the way of being merciful, not because they have attained certain results.

The blessedness of these merciful is that they shall obtain mercy.

They shall obtain mercy in the way of a seal. As they show mercy they demonstrate most clearly that they have received the mercy of God. As they have received mercy in the past, they know that they shall continue to receive mercy into the future. When they stumble and fall in the way, they may know that God's mercy is always there to pick them up and to restore them. For God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.

They shall obtain mercy shown in the day of the Lord. The mercy of the Lord is particularly shown when in the last days of the church's persecution at the hands of the Antichrist the church is delivered through the wonder of Jesus' blessed appearing. Zion will be redeemed out of her afflictions by the judgments which will fall upon the world. These shall obtain the mercy that triumphs over judgment. When they stand before God on the day of judgment, they may be assured that the mercy of Christ will cover their sin, cleanse their works of mercy to make them acceptable before God, and bring them into the glory of eternal life. We can see this from the use of this word in II Timothy 1:18 regarding Onesiphorus, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." That same use we find in Jude 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

The Blessed Pure in Heart

With this particular beatitude we enter into a place unseen by

men. It is unseen and unknown before men. This is the place where a man keeps his innermost thoughts and desires. This is the place of the issues of life, the fountain that determines a man's works, whether they are good or evil. But that heart lies open before the sight of God. Since it is the thing that only God knows, it is here where true purity is to be defined.

Purity has reference to two different aspects of the heart. It first addresses the nature of the heart as a whole. Purity refers to something unmixed and undiluted. Purity means a certain integrity and unity of the heart. It is here that we find the idea of the psalmist when he wrote, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." Second, that integrity relates to *holiness*. The reprobate wicked have a heart that is wholly evil. There is no mixture of good and evil there. But purity is of an ethical and moral character. It identifies a holiness that is undefiled by sin.

It is therefore in the nature of the case that these pure in heart shall see God. Their hearts beat in harmony with the heart of God. As their purity is a reflection of the absolute purity of God, they shall certainly see God. They have a ready entrance before Him.

The sight of God to them will be most blessed. Note well, that the vision of God is a blessing only to those who are pure of heart. Those who harbor sin and evil in their hearts find the vision of God to be nothing short of terrifying. They know that the very nature of God's presence spells their doom. By that awesome, holy Presence, they know that they shall be cast into eternal damnation. How exactly opposite is the case with the pure of heart! For them, it is no bare fact that they shall stand before the glory of God and survive. They have a deep longing to behold this same God. The pure in heart desire to behold the Pure. Out of that desire they purify themselves, casting away all sin from

their hearts. Anything that causes them to shudder in the presence of the pure God they put away from them. They shall certainly behold Him, even as He will grant them mercy in the day of His appearing. That is the incentive unto purification.

We must observe that such a thing as purity of heart is almost unheard of. In our day, even in Christian circles, great concern falls upon outward matters. Quite in harmony with the error of Pelagianism, a Christian is defined by what he does—WWJD. Superficial nonsense. The language of this beatitude speaks otherwise. Here is the greatest blessing: the sight of God. That greatest blessing belongs to those who are of a particular nature: pure of heart.

The Blessed Peacemakers

The last of these three beatitudes we find as a particular reflection of God's grace of reconciliation. Blessed are the peacemakers. Having been brought to peace with God through the mercy of Jesus Christ, they seek peace. As much as lieth in them, they live peaceably with all men. They do not provoke needlessly. They do not cause strife through sinful behavior, being arbitrary or unreasonable in their dealings with other men. The purity of their heart will shine through in their lives. Nor do they breed contention, even in matters of religion, for the sake of contentiousness. They are not provoked, neither do they provoke, for the sake of personal pride. They recognize and strive to show meekness, knowing the blessedness of that virtue.

All that being true, they cannot rest content only with that peace. The peace they make is not the fragile peace among men alone, within households, among friends, or even between nations. They know that such peace cannot last. That peace does not touch the roots of hostility: enmity against God. They make for true and last-

ing peace by bringing others to the peace of God—reconciliation through the blood of Christ. Then, on the ground of that peace alone, do they seek to maintain peace among men.

Their distinct blessing is that they shall be called the children of God. Who will call them such? The world will not call them peacemakers or the children of God. Far from it! The world will identify them as troublemakers. These peacemakers will hear in their ears the same words that were spoken against Paul by his own countrymen. "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5). The blessedness of these peacemakers is that they are called such by Christ as revealing the Word of God. God shall call them His own children. For, as children of their Father, they have brought peace and made peace, even according to the good pleasure of their Father.

All these things we can well summarize as true blessedness with the inspired words of the apostle John. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be

called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall


appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:1-3).

Questions for Meditation and Further Study

1. How can we see development in the blessing of these three beatitudes in light of Matthew 10:8; Acts 20:35; II Corinthians 8:8, 9? Why is it necessary that these three be built upon the first four, giving due respect to the antithesis?

2. How many opportunities are there for showing mercy? Why is the attribute of mercifulness necessary before one can show mercy? How does the truth of the antithesis define true mercy and mercifulness? Can certain acts of mercy on our part be not merciful on God's part? Confer Romans 12:20, 21.

3. There can be no doubt that purity of heart is identified among these beatitudes as having special importance. What things cultivate purity of heart? What things contribute to its destruction? Does purity of heart have a bearing on your attitude toward the visible presence of Christ at His return? How is your longing to see God face to face in the face of Christ affected by the condition of your heart?

4. How is peace with God necessary before one can be a true peacemaker? How must this necessity affect our endeavor to make peace among men, particularly in the church? Is it wrong to pursue any sort of peace with the world? Confer I Timothy 2:2. How do we avoid any compromise in the making of peace? 

In His Fear

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Is Once Enough?

Is once enough? That is, is it enough to attend church once on Sunday? Scripture does not specifically state that we should

attend twice. So why go twice? Is this required and necessary?

No one should dispute the fact that poor church attendance is a sin. The Scriptures make this clear, for example, in Hebrews 10:25. There we are admonished "not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Obviously there were those,

already in the early New Testament church, who were not regular in their attendance. They were unfaithful members. They neglected the worship services on the Lord's Day. They were "oncners." Or, worse still, they did not attend at all.

This same sin is prevalent today. In fact, in the great majority

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of churches poor church attendance has become a serious and extreme problem. Attendance at the morning services continues to dwindle. And as far as the evening service is concerned, attendance is nothing but a shame. Often only a few elderly members attend. The minister preaches to a mere handful of people.

The main reason for this is the way in which poor church attendance is dealt with. Generally churches and consistories do not regard and treat this as a sin. It is not addressed in the preaching or through discipline. Instead, churches attempt to overcome this problem by devising numerous ways to attract people to their second worship service. They introduce gimmicks. The big draw is the choir, or the special music, or a visiting singer, or movies and plays. Some churches even televise the "Super Bowl" in order to fill up the pews. What unbelievable desecration of the Lord's house!

In some instances the gimmicks work. Crowds flock to hear a musical performance, watch a ball game, or listen to some high-powered evangelist. But worship is no longer worship. Church is no longer church. The preaching of the Word is no longer present. And even when an attempt is made to include preaching, it occupies a mere fraction of the worship time. It is considered unnecessary and unimportant. There are far more exciting things to do during worship. The result? The people of God are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6).

But often even the gimmicks fail. The reason for this is that worship has been reduced to just another form of entertainment. Thus people find better places for entertainment than church. They would much rather be at the beach, or on the golf course, or at a ball game. Eventually, therefore, the second service is abandoned altogether.

In considering this matter,

however, we ought to look, not just at others, but especially at ourselves. We are not unaffected. Thankfully consistories deal with the sin. In the way of loving discipline, and out of a deep spiritual concern for those who keep themselves from the worship services, they make visits and bring admonition. This they must do, and had better do. God requires it of them for the sake of the eternal welfare of the sheep He has placed under their care. But the fact still remains that the sin is present. All too easily church is skipped.

The world itself puts much pressure on us to neglect the worship services on the Lord's Day. To the world, Sunday is synonymous with a day filled with earthly leisure and pleasure. It is a day, not for God, but for "me!" It is a day for travel, for golf, for hiking, for fishing, for waterskiing, for ball games, or for family. Of all the days of the week, Sunday is best suited to such activities. All are encouraged and tempted to view Sunday and use Sunday in these ways.

Can we honestly say that we are unaffected by the world's use of the Lord's Day? How often isn't it said, even amongst us, "We were traveling. We were visiting relatives. We were on vacation. — But we did listen to a sermon on tape!"

Sometimes the pressure comes even from those who profess to be Christians. They attend church once and believe that is enough. The rest of the day is for themselves. And they beckon and tempt us to join them in their fun and recreation.

Those who neglect church usually convince themselves that they have legitimate reasons for doing so. Perhaps one is too tired — which usually means he hasn't properly prepared himself for the Lord's Day. Per-

haps one does not feel well — well enough no doubt for the beach or a ball game, but not well enough for church. Perhaps one attends other churches, thinking he does not have to be in his own church both times. Perhaps one finds the sermons boring and difficult to follow, and says he doesn't get much out of worship — which means, of course, that he has a total misunderstanding of what worship is all about.

Another reason why some do not attend church services regularly is Sunday work. Usually the work is either a work of necessity or a work of mercy (e.g., nursing, farming, being a doctor). But church services are missed.

While it is certainly true that God's people may perform works of necessity or mercy on the Lord's Day, the question is, is it always proper? And is it good? Should a child of God have such a job if it keeps him or her from being able regularly to attend church twice?

Remember, we are officially called to worship God on Sundays. And it is Christ Himself who, through the officebearers in the church, calls us to worship. Are we, each week, heeding this call of Christ?

Other arguments and excuses arise. But for the most part they are shameful. It is difficult to believe that as God's people we convince ourselves that these are legitimate reasons for missing church.

Poor church attendance, and the excuses for it, demonstrate a total misunderstanding of what Sunday is for. One way in which we can know what the day is really for is through the names given to it in Scripture.

It is called, first of all, the "Sabbath" day. This name tells us that it is a day of "rest." And that does not mean it is a day in which we

How often isn't it said, even amongst us, "We were traveling. We were visiting relatives. We were on vacation. — But we did listen to a sermon on tape!"

may be lazy. But it means we rest from the normal, daily activities of our earthly lives. We rest as much as possible from earthly things. And we spend the day busying ourselves with things spiritual. We rest in the enjoyment of the work God has done for us in Christ. In this way we are spiritually strengthened and refreshed. We have a foretaste of the eternal rest God is preparing for us.

Another name given to this day in Scripture is the "Lord's Day." This name teaches us that this day is not, as the world thinks, "our" day, with which we may do as we want. Rather, it is the "Lord's" day. It is a holy day. It is a day in which the believer refrains from doing his own ways, finding his own pleasure, and speaking his own words (Is. 58:13). Instead he delights himself in the Lord his God. He calls the Sabbath a delight.

Perhaps we ought more regularly to use these names to refer to Sunday. They are names that serve as a good reminder to us of what the day really is and ought to be.

Although Scripture does not give a direct injunction which states, "Be in church twice on Sunday!" nevertheless it sets forth basic principles that show that it is definitely not enough to be in church once on the Lord's Day.

Hebrews 10:25, for example, admonishes us not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. Positively this means we should seek out such assembling with the people of God. We should always want to be there when there is a call to worship. For there we have the opportunity to praise and thank God, and to hear His gospel proclaimed to us.

Isaiah 58:13, 14 is significant too. The Sabbath must be a delight. It ought to be a day we look forward to. It ought to be a day we enjoy more than any other day of the week. As those who are pilgrims and strangers on this earth, we become spiritually weary on ac-

count of our daily struggles with sin and temptation. We become weary with the constant, spiritual battles we face in this wicked world. What a blessing and privilege, therefore, to have a whole day in which we can put aside earthly things and do the things in which we, as God's people, delight.

In agreement with and as an explanation of these and other passages of Scripture, the Heidelberg Catechism has something profitable to say concerning church attendance. As part of its explanation of the fourth commandment, the Catechism states, "and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian" (Lord's Day 38).

If there is one thing we ought to learn and remember, it is this: the *whole* day should be devoted to the things of God.

Worship of God on the Lord's Day should be the one thing that occupies us on that day. And all our earthly life should revolve around this. During the week we must look forward to and prepare ourselves for church on Sunday. And especially on Sunday itself we should seek the house of God. Everything we do on that day should revolve around and be based upon our desire to worship and praise our covenant God and Father for the wonderful work He has done for us through His Son. We should hunger and thirst after the preaching of the Word. We should long for a drink from the living waters of life, our Lord Jesus Christ.

If one does not have such a desire, if one does not delight in the Sabbath, if one does not want to be in church in order to hear the preaching of the Word twice on


Sunday, then he has a serious spiritual problem. Something is radically wrong. Even to ask the question, "Is once enough?" is a sign of that spiritual problem.

One who keeps himself from church shows, by his actions, that he has no desire for the Word which God uses to feed and nourish his soul. No doubt he would never miss a meal of earthly food, but spiritual food he thinks he can do without. Christ calls him to worship in order to hear the preaching of the gospel. But his response is, "I've heard enough from Christ today. I don't really care to hear Him again.

Once is enough for me."

Failure to attend church twice on Sunday is a serious sin. It is so because it is a neglect of the chief means of grace, the preaching of the gospel. The preaching is the chief means God uses to work grace and faith in His people. To neglect this is serious. It is neglecting the essential spiritual food we need for our souls. God graciously provides this food for us. He sets before us on the Lord's Day a spiritual feast. The table is laden with the heavenly riches each of us needs for his soul. In addition to that, God gives us the freedom to gather for worship. Yet all too easily we neglect it. All too easily we despise the blessing of fellowship with God through His Word and Spirit. All too easily we skip the spiritual feast God provides, and we starve our souls.

The faithful child of God gladly attends church. Not because it is expected of him. Not because he is afraid of receiving a visit from the elders if he does not. And not because he can think of nothing better to do on Sundays. But he does it because he delights in doing so.

Is once enough? Is twice? 

What a blessing and privilege, therefore, to have a whole day in which we can put aside earthly things and do the things in which we, as God's people, delight.

Boldness


In the Old Testament the word "boldness" is found but a few times. The root meaning is a place of refuge; then to take refuge; then to be confident, sure, without care. In the New Testament the word comes from two smaller words having the meaning of "all" and "to flow, to run like water." Together this compound word has the meaning to be outspoken, frank, even blunt; to be confident in utterance, and bold in spirit and demeanor. Sometimes the King James translates this word as confident.

The Lord Jesus was always bold in His preaching and teaching. "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29). Jesus even said, "I spake openly (boldly) to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20). There were times when Jesus spoke in parables (John 16:25) and did not walk openly or boldly among the Jews (John 11:54) because His hour was not yet come. But Jesus always insisted that He told them openly that He was the Christ, and that the works which He did bore witness of Him, even though the Jews complained that He made them doubt because he did not teach plainly, boldly, without ambiguity (John 10:24, 25). When Jesus died on the cross, taking our sins out of the way, and spoiling principalities and powers, "He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them personally" (Col. 2:15). The work of Jesus was not performed in a corner, but openly, publicly, boldly, without any concealment, hesitancy, or ambiguity.

The child of God is called to reveal the same boldness that Jesus always demonstrated. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth" because they are plagued with a guilty conscience and have no peace, "but the righteous are bold as a lion" because they know all things are right before their God and them (Prov. 28:1). Thus, Joseph of Arimathea "went in boldly unto Pilate" because he would bury the body of Jesus in his tomb (Mark 15:43). Because we have an High Priest who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities and is sinless, "we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Because of the blood of Jesus, the new and living way, we may have boldness to enter into the Holiest, which is the presence of God (Heb. 10:19). Because Jesus promised never to leave us nor forsake us, we may boldly say that He is our helper, and we need not fear what man shall do unto us (Heb. 13:6). This bold access with confidence is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:12). And this faith will see the child of God to the very end, so that we have boldness in the day of judgment (I John 4:17).

The question arises, of course, what is the relationship between boldness and humility, and how does this boldness differ from pride? Pride is self-confidence; boldness is confidence in Christ. A proud man looks to all that he has done; a bold man openly rejoices in the perfect work of Christ in gaining his righteousness, and imputing that righteousness to him freely. Thus this boldness is essentially humility. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Tit. 3:5). Boldness in God! The boldness of faith that unites us to Christ and makes us partakers of all His benefits!

Most often, the word boldness occurs in connection with the preaching of the gospel. Peter and John, though ignorant and unlearned men, preached with boldness the name of Jesus, so that the Sanhedrin took note of them that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). When they had been released from prison, they met with the church, praying that they might with all boldness speak God's word; their prayer was heard, for God shook the house with an earthquake; and they continued to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:29-31). Paul spoke with great boldness to the Corinthians (II Cor. 7:4). He was unwavering in his boldness, for he spoke boldly as always (Phil. 1:20); and once even for the space of three months in one place (Acts 19:8). Paul did not have a natural boldness of character that fitted him for preaching, but this was given him by God as an apostle. Hence he solicited the prayers of the church at Ephesus "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). Even though he is in bonds he wants to continue to speak boldly, as he ought to speak (Eph. 6:20).

Why ought the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed with boldness? First, because it is *true*! No one can ever gainsay the preacher who preaches the Word of God. Secondly, because it is *important*! "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Faith is worked by the Spirit in connection with the true preaching of Christ. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). And thirdly, preaching must be with boldness because of the *authority* of the one who preaches! Prophets, apostles, pastors are ambassadors for Christ. God speaks through them. They speak in Christ's stead (II Cor. 5:20). With the authority of their office, they boldly command repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. The only possibility for lively preaching and true eloquence is boldness based on these points. 

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A New PR High School

On a December evening twenty years ago, a group of men met in South Holland PR church building with hopeful accord to discuss a high school and their covenant children. They desired a high school which would embrace the importance of teaching their children every subject of knowledge in the light of the truth of God's Word as maintained by the Protestant Reformed Churches. The group read psalm 89 and sang Psalter number 241. The desire to walk in the light of the Lord's countenance was apparent.

An association was formed under a constitution in May of 1981. Over the years membership gradually increased from the original 37 interested men to the current 113 Association members. The constitution was fine-tuned over the years. Fund-raising drives were held, and an annual fund-raising dinner was started with encouraging results. Funds grew steadily, and land was purchased in 1998. The board worked with enthusiastic help from area ministers and teachers to formulate a base curriculum. The finance committee drew up an estimated budget

showing the feasibility of starting a high school. Rental spaces are being examined for use by our faculty and students until our own building becomes a reality. By God's grace, the efforts of all the boards were beginning to bear fruit, and the association displayed excitement and anticipation at the most recent association meetings.


Twenty years of organizing and raising funds for a new Protestant Reformed high school have brought us to a new threshold. Yes! The threshold of reality. The Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education, Cook County, Illinois has at the annual association meeting held in April of this year approved the opening of a new high school in the fall of 2001! This decision was reinforced when at the June association meeting of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School, the ninth grade was released to the new high school.

The Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education, Cook County, Illinois had very humble beginnings. However, the Lord has worked mighty works through the organization and op-

eration of the association and boards. We proclaim His faithfulness and are profoundly thankful for His grace and mercy. Our prayer is that He will continue to provide according to the needs of our churches, schools, and families as He has so richly done in the past and that, above all, God's name may be glorified by our efforts. We ask also that your prayers may be with us as we endeavor to open this institution. We, the board, believe it to be the Lord's will that a new Protestant Reformed Christian high school open in the fall of 2001. We firmly believe that the Lord will bless our new high school, if we remain faithful to Him and to His Word.

May God's people continue to pray that future generations will know the peace and comfort afforded those who desire to please Him.

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance" (Ps. 89:15).

Board of the Association for
Protestant Reformed Secondary
Education
Lansing, IL 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

Once again this summer the Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC sponsored a booth at the Hudsonville Commu-

nity Fair. Fair-goers were able to stop by this booth and pick up free pamphlets and other materials from our churches.

Mission Activities

Rev. R. Miersma, pastor of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, CN, and Rev. R. Smit, pas-

tor of the Doon, IA PRC, returned safely from their trip to the Philippines on August 22. From all reports, the Lord is indeed blessing the work there. In the Daet/Labo area, where there are established churches, the congregations desire a missionary so that the ministers they do have can be given further

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instruction in doctrine and in preaching. In other areas there are contacts who want to begin worship services with Reformed preaching, with a view to establishing a church. May the Lord bless the work of these two men for the furtherance of the cause of the Reformed faith in the Philippines. May He also continue to bless and provide for the saints there according to their needs.

Rev. R. Moore, our churches' missionary in Ghana, writes in early September that land for a future church building has been cleared of stumps and brush and now they await the final approval of their plans to proceed with the building. This decision will be made in about ten days, the Lord willing. The saints in Ghana are no doubt pleased and thankful to God for the way things are proceeding.

Congregation Activities

The deacons of the Hudsonville, MI PRC served as hosts for a series of seminars at their church on consecutive Wednesdays in September on the office of deacon. Week one, Rev. B. Gritters, Hudsonville's pastor, spoke on "The Office and Work of Deacons," followed the next two weeks by Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, speaking on "The Authority of the Office of Deacon," and Prof. H. Hanko, of the PRC Seminary, speaking on "The Deacons in Relationship to other Agencies of Mercy."

Families of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI spent a week camping at the Christian Reformed Conference Grounds, located on the shore of Lake Michigan, between Holland and Grand Haven, in early August. The last day of that week the remainder of their congregation, who were not camping, were invited out to spend the evening together at what has become their annual hot dog/brat cookout.

Jack and Judie Feenstra were able to worship with the congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA just prior to their departure back to Singapore on August 13. You may remember that the Feenstras are volunteers working with Rev. J. Kortering and the ERC of Singapore, especially to help establish a school there for the training of men called to the ministry from countries around Singapore. Jack and Judie gave a short report about their work while there that Lord's day. You may also remember that the Feenstras depend on financial support from individuals, mostly in the U.S. They do not receive financial support officially from our churches. For this reason, there was also a freewill offering taken at that program for their support.

The Hope Heralds, a chorus of some forty men from various of our churches in west Michigan, presented two concerts recently. August 27 they sang at the Grandville, MI PRC, and they followed that with a repeat performance two weeks later at the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

Young Adults Activities

The young adults of our west Michigan churches, along with the young adults from our Chicago area churches, were invited to their annual Fall Retreat in late August at Van Buren State Park, located in extreme southwest Michigan on the shore of Lake Michigan. In addition to an overnight camp-out and recreational activities usually associated with sun, sand, and water, the young adults took part in a discussion led by Rev. A. Brummel on financial stewardship and giving.

In mid-August the young adults from our Edgerton, MN PRC sponsored a Young Adults Summer Retreat. This retreat was held at a Lutheran Bible Camp on the shores of Lake Shetek, about an hour from Edgerton. The Sunday before the retreat, Edgerton's congregation was invited to a singspiration after

their evening service, followed the next morning with a pancake breakfast for the young adults and congregation. Forty-one young adults attended this year's retreat, which featured three speeches dealing with various aspects of Christian stewardship. Rev. M. VanderWal, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ, spoke first on "Political Stewardship," followed the next evening by Mr. Jon VanOverloop, a teacher at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI, speaking on "Environmental Stewardship," followed the last evening by Rev. D. Kleyn, Edgerton's pastor, speaking about "Financial Stewardship." Other activities included a trip to a water park and a museum and a dinner cruise on Lake Shetek.

Minister Activities

On September 5, the congregation of the Hope PRC in Walker extended a call to Rev. Koole to serve as minister-on-loan to our sister churches in Singapore.

Food For Thought

"A church membership does not make a Christian any more than owning a piano makes a musician."

— Douglas Meador 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Society of the Hull PRC extend their sincere sympathy to fellow member Wanda Oostra and her family in the death of their stillborn son,

JAMES LEE.

May they find comfort in God's Word in the promise found in Romans 14:8, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's."

Verna Westra, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father we are privileged to celebrate, on October 1, 2000, the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

ALVIN and PHYLLIS RAU.

We are grateful to our heavenly Father for their love and faithfulness to one another and to the church these many years. We give thanks to God for providing us with Christian parents and grandparents who have guided and instructed us in the way of Christ.

We pray that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care. "For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

❖ Jim and Lois Rau

Dan and Carol Boeve,
Kimmy and Cheryl Kooiker,
Jeff and Kim Scholten,
Rodney

❖ Rev. Kenneth and Pat Koole

Justin and Cathie,
Bruce, Catherine, Audra

❖ Dave and Mary Kregel

Mike and Lisa DeBoer,
Brent, Jason, Ryan, Emily

❖ Dave and Norma Rau

Dawn, Kevin, Lydia, Renae, Laura

❖ Mike and Elaine Rau

Nathan, Benjamin, Erin, Joel
8 great grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville PRC express their heartfelt Christian sympathy to Mrs. Gert Teitsma, their children and family in the sudden taking home of

MR. RICHARD (Dick) H. TEITSMA

on August 16, 2000 at the age of 85 years.

May they, as well as all of God's children, continue to find our comfort in the words of Psalm 4:8: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

Erv Kortering, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their Christian sympathy to elder Jay Kuiper, his wife Jone, and family in the death of her father and his step-father,

MR. RICHARD H. TEITSMA.

May the Lord's rich mercy and grace sustain them in their sorrow, and may they be comforted in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Romans 14:8: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Rev. R. VanOverloop, Pres.

David M. Ondersma, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies' Society of the Hull PRC extend their Christian sympathy to Margaret Vogel, Wilma Vogel, and Martha DeJong and their families in the death of their husband, father-in-law, and brother,

FRANK VOGEL.

May the Lord continue to be their strength and comfort. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

Verna Westra, Sec'y.

Reformation Lecture

Friday, October 27

7:30 pm

Holland PRC

"Suffering for the Faith"

Prof. Herman Hanko

Refreshments following

NOTICE

The Association for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education in Lansing, IL is seeking an administrator/teacher and teachers for our high school's inaugural year beginning with grades nine and ten in August, 2001. Interested individuals please contact:

Education Committee chairman

Bill DeJong

(708) 946-6126

[bill@dejongequipment.com]

or Board chairman

Don Terpstra

(219) 838-3600

[dwterp@juno.com].

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 6, 2000, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. EDWIN VAN GINKEL, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them and give thanks to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents who have shown us the truth of God's Word in their covenant instruction and in their walk. Our prayer is that God may continue to bless them in their marriage and care for them in the years to come. "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

❖ Marlowe and Pam Van Ginkel

❖ Warren and Marshonn Boon

❖ Warren and Cheryl Van Ginkel

❖ Joel and Natalie Van Ginkel

16 grandchildren

5 great grandchildren

Doon, Iowa

REMINDER

Those wishing to have their own issues of volume 76 of the Standard Bearer bound must have them to the business office by October 15.