

# THE *November 1, 2000* STANDARD BEARER

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# Withhold Not Good

*Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.*

Proverbs 3:27-28

**T**here are in the Bible a number of examples of this proverb being put into practice.

Think of Jesus instructing Nicodemus by night, when Nicodemus sought instruction about eternal realities (John 3). Think of Jesus ministering to the multitudes of Capernaum that followed Him across the Sea of Galilee. Even though He was weary, He taught them, healed them, and fed them with two fishes and five loaves (John 6). Think of the good Samaritan in Jesus' parable. Coming upon a Jew beaten and dying on the Jericho road, the Samaritan bound up his wounds, brought him to the next inn, and paid for his care (Luke 10).

"Withhold not good from them

to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."

These are words of wisdom. They are the wisdom of God given by inspiration through Solomon. These words of Solomon were spoken first to his son. But they are spoken to us as well.

How wise we will be if we follow this instruction; how foolish, if we neglect it.

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"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due."

There are those who are due good from you; they have a right to receive good things from you.

There are some very obvious examples of this. The employee who works for you is due the wages he has earned. The neighbor who loans you his tools has a right to receive them back. The government is due the tribute money it demands.

To see the true depth of this proverb we must understand that

it really speaks of good things of yours that others own. A more literal translation would be this, "Withhold not good to those who own it." The perspective is that the good things God has given to you are often not just for yourself but also for the neighbor. These good things that God has given to you for the neighbor are really owned by him.

For example, when God has blessed you with material wealth, this abundance is not just for you. It is also intended by God for the poor. The poor own your wealth. And you are not to withhold it from them. The same is true of your God-given talents. Has God blessed you with musical abilities or with great intellect or knowledge or leadership or experience? These belong not just to you but also to the neighbor. For that reason they are to be used not just for your pleasure but also for his benefit. Even the spare time the Lord has given to you is not just

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"...when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."

It is not always within the power of your hand to provide good things to others. Sometimes you do not possess the good that a particular neighbor needs. Perhaps he is poor, but you do not have even enough for yourself. Perhaps he is sorrowing, and you do not know how to comfort him. He may need guidance, but you do not know how to guide him in this situation. He may be sick and lonely, but you have no time to visit him.

Or it may be that the opportunity does not present itself to help the neighbor in his need. To provide good things to the neighbor requires a God-given opportunity. This does not always present itself. For example, it may be that your relationship with the neighbor or lack of it makes it impossible to help him with the good things God has bestowed on you. Maybe for some reason the neighbor doesn't trust you and therefore will not receive your advice. Maybe the neighbor in need would rather receive help from someone else.

But when it is in the power of your hand to do good for the neighbor, you may not withhold it.

The very language of this proverb suggests what often happens. We do withhold good to whom it is due. This is no doubt rooted in a lack of love for the neighbor. This also reflects a lack of love and devotion for the Lord, who entrusts His goods to us for the welfare of our neighbor. Above all it reflects a sinful love of self, which is nothing more than selfishness.

All this results in the sin of theft. If our neighbor owns the good things we have and we fail to give him what is his, we are stealing.

"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."

Even here there is a priority.

We must do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

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God will also teach us in this proverb the timely manner in which we are to provide the neighbor with good things. "Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee."

Sometimes you see the need of the neighbor as he struggles along, but he never comes to you for help. If you have it in the power of your hand to help him, you must then go to him. But in the case presented in this proverb the neighbor comes to you for help. Perhaps you never before knew of his need, but now he comes to you for food, money, guidance, comfort, encouragement, or help of some other kind. Sometimes you do not have what the neighbor needs, but in the case presented by the proverb, you do. You have the food, money, guidance, comfort, encouragement that the neighbor needs. "Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give."

How often haven't you and I said exactly that: Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give. Perhaps today is not a convenient time for us to help the neighbor. Or it may be that we are reluctant to help the neighbor in his need. After all, to help someone requires a great deal of time and energy. Perhaps we want time to evaluate whether we will help this needy neighbor of ours. Or it may even be that we mean to push the neighbor away, hoping that he will not return but go elsewhere with his problem.

No, if we have it by us, we are to help the neighbor today, as soon as possible.

This only underscores the great readiness we must have to give good things to our neighbor. According to Titus 3:1 we are to be ready to every good work. In giving good things to the neighbor or

doing good things for him we must never be reluctant or hesitant. We must be ready always to give to the neighbor the good things of ours that he needs.

There are a number of reasons for this. It may be, for example, that the need of the neighbor cannot wait until tomorrow. Or it may be that the opportunity to help the neighbor in his need may not present itself tomorrow. Besides, our readiness or reluctance to help the neighbor reflects the degree to which we truly love the neighbor.

The examples cited earlier demonstrate the readiness we are to have to provide for the need of the neighbor. Jesus gave the searching heart of Nicodemus the instruction he needed in the very dead of night. Jesus ministered to the multitude of Capernaum with teaching, miracles and finally food, even though He was tired and seeking rest. The good Samaritan was ready to help the Jew, whom he found at death's door on the Jericho road, even though he obviously was in a hurry himself to reach his destination.

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The instruction of this proverb arises out of God's great goodness to us.

No good thing has the Lord our God withheld from us. Never, when we come to him in our need, does He say, "Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give."

How great is our need! We need food and drink every day and are not able to provide for these in our own strength. As we pass through this valley of tears we need comfort and encouragement, guidance and direction. Above all, we need deliverance — deliverance from the power and penalty of sin. For of ourselves we are hopelessly lost in sin.

And we can claim none of these good things as rightfully ours. For we have forfeited any right to them by our miserable sins.

Yet God in His grace has freely given us all these good things and




more. In fact, He has withheld nothing good that we need. He withheld not even His only begotten Son, whom He sacrificed on the cross as payment for our sin.

Should you ever entertain doubts about this, reflect on Psalm

34:10: "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."

Imagine that! And all this in spite of our sin. All gifts of grace!

Certainly we who have re-

ceived such superabundance of good from the hand of our gracious, loving God must be ready to provide good to the neighbor. We who are due nothing must be ready to give good to those to whom good is due. 

## Editorial

# Shall We Please God or (Certain Kinds of) People? or, the Regulative Principle of Worship (4)

**I**n the April 15, 2000 issue of this magazine, I began the treatment of the regulative principle of worship that concludes in this issue. That opening article explained the regulative principle and contrasted it with the lawlessness of contemporary, "progressive" worship. The editorial in the May 1 *Standard Bearer* continued the treatment by demonstrating that the regulative principle is biblical, as well as confessionally and traditionally Reformed.

The May 15 editorial distinguished between the contents, or elements, of public worship and various circumstances that attend worship. It also entered into several areas of difference among sound Reformed and Presbyterian churches regarding the application of the regulative principle. These included instrumental accompaniment of congregational singing, the use of forms and formulas, and observance of the Christian festivals, particularly Christmas.

The purpose of looking at these controversial matters is to plead that such differences in applying the regulative principle do not betray fundamental disagreement

over the regulative principle itself. Thus, it is hoped, this examination of differing application of the regulative principle will make for peace among those who are truly one in ecclesiastical subjection to the second commandment.

One troublesome area of difference remains: what the Reformed congregation is to sing at church, whether the Psalms only ("exclusive Psalmody") or also songs based on, or versifying, other passages of Scripture, including the New Testament.

The May 15, 2000 editorial on the regulative principle ended this way:

There remains the question, whether the regulative principle requires exclusive Psalmody. Does the regulative principle demand that the Reformed church sing only the Psalms at church, or does it allow for the use of certain hymns? This is a controversial issue. Treatment of the issue in the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) has sometimes been ambiguous, leaving both members and those without in doubt, what precisely the stand of the PRC is.

At that point, other matters demanded attention in the editorial column, so that the conclusion of the treatment of the regulative principle of worship was delayed to this issue of the magazine.

### The Songs at Church

The question is this: Does the regulative principle demand exclusive Psalmody, or does it allow for hymns. By hymns are to be understood songs that are either based on Scripture other than the Psalms or that are versifications of biblical passages other than the Psalms.

Some Presbyterian and Reformed churches argue for exclusive Psalmody as the requirement of the regulative principle. This implies the judgment that the singing of a hymn in a worship service, whether it be the doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow," or the Lord's Prayer, is transgression of the second commandment. Obviously, this position makes close ecumenical relations with churches that sing any hymns impossible.

The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) are a Psalm-sing-

ing denomination. Singing the Psalms has been an important part of their heritage from the very beginning of their existence some 75 years ago. They maintain this part of their heritage without change to the present moment. The PRC sing only the Psalms in worship with the exception of a few specified hymns. What the churches sing in worship is governed by Article 69 of their church order:

In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung.

Of these nine hymns, five are never sung, most of them being unknown to the people. In addition to singing some of these hymns infrequently, all of the churches sing "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" as the opening doxology at every service, and one or two sing the hymn, "May the Grace of Christ the Savior," as a closing doxology on occasion.

The PRC are Psalm-singing churches. Hymns have almost no place in the services.

### Reasons for Singing the Psalms

But the reason is not that the PRC think that exclusive Psalmody is the requirement of the regulative principle. Obviously not! No church that thinks that the regulative principle demands exclusive Psalmody will permit any hymn to be sung at worship ever. The article that rules the singing in worship of this church will read: "In the church only the 150 Psalms of David shall be sung. Period!"

There are other reasons for singing the Psalms at church, virtually exclusively, than the regulative principle.

From 1959-1962, the PRC considered becoming a hymn-singing denomination. The occasion was an overture from one of the

churches to the synod of 1959 to change Article 69 of the church order to include many more hymns. In response to this overture, the synod of 1960 moved to change Article 69 to read: "In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David shall be sung, *as also such hymns which are faithful versifications of the Holy Scriptures*, in each case the General Synod being the judge" (emphasis added). This motion was not then adopted, but was referred back to committee for further study. The result was a lively debate in the churches until 1962 when the issue was finally decided by the synod. The debate was carried on in the *Standard Bearer*, in private discussions, and annually at the synods of 1961 and 1962. The conclusion was a decision by the synod of 1962 defeating the motion to open up the worship services to hymns.

The significant thing about the debate is that neither the friends nor the foes of hymns in worship argued on the basis of the regulative principle. The regulative principle simply did not figure in the discussion. Although the decision by the synod of 1962 included no grounds for the defeat of the motion to make the PRC a hymn-singing denomination (which is highly regrettable, since the issue was both important and controversial), the decision was certainly not grounded in the regulative principle.

The reasons why the PRC sing Psalms in worship (and the reasons, presumably, why the synod of 1962 defeated the motion to introduce hymns) include the greater spirituality of the Psalms, especially their God-centeredness; the fact that the Spirit has given the church one songbook — the Psalms — by inspiration; the danger that the inclusion of hymns will soon drive the Psalms out of the worship of the church altogether; and the lesson of history that good hymns are invariably followed by a host of corrupt hymns — songs that are superficial, songs that are

centered on man and his religious feelings, and songs that are Arminian.

This last was in the mind of Prof. G. M. Ophoff when he commented on Article 69 of the church order in his notes on "Church Polity":

The lesson of history is that when a group of Reformed churches begin to apostatize from the truth of God's Word, they also begin introducing the hymns for liturgical purposes. Let us never, as a communion of churches, substitute hymns for the 150 Psalms of David.

### The Reformed Tradition

In their stand that Reformed churches should sing the Psalms in worship, virtually exclusively, but on other grounds than that the regulative principle requires exclusive Psalmody, the PRC perfectly represent and carry on the tradition of the Dutch Reformed Churches. Dordt decided on Psalm-singing, in part because the Arminians were urging the introduction of hymns into the worship of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. The Arminians intended to have their heresy sung into the minds of the people. But Dordt did not ground this decision in the regulative principle and, therefore, Dordt permitted a few, specified hymns. The reason why Dordt mentioned these hymns was that they were part of the songbook in use at the time and were popular with the people. Nevertheless, Dordt could permit them, as a synod holding that exclusive Psalmody is a requirement of the regulative principle could not have done.

In his book, *Onze Eeredienst* (English translation: *Our Public Worship*), Abraham Kuyper gives six reasons why the Reformed churches sing, and should sing, Psalms at church, not hymns. These reasons do not include an appeal to the regulative principle.

According to H. Bouwman, the

grounds of the Dutch Reformed churches for singing the Psalms in worship are these: 1) God has given the church one collection of Psalms for singing, but no collection of hymns; 2) the Psalms far surpass the hymns in spiritual depth; also, the Psalms express the abiding truth of God of all ages, whereas hymns have a temporary character; and 3) the use of hymns invariably crowds the Psalms out of the worship altogether. To these should be added a healthy fear that the introduction of hymns will lead to the introduction of Arminian hymns.

In the main, these reasons for singing Psalms and for keeping hymns out of the service were the "conclusions" of the study committee that reported to the PRC synod of 1960. It was a puzzling move of that committee, on the basis of a report and "conclusions" that were overwhelmingly opposed to the introduction of hymns nevertheless to recommend that synod decide to open up public worship in the PRC to the singing of hymns (see "Acts of Synod 1960," pp. 115, 116). The "conclusions" really called for synod to *reject* the overture to introduce hymns. And that is what the synod of 1962 rightly and wisely did.

The churches ought to maintain their Psalm-singing position and practice resolutely, on the grounds that have prevailed in the Reformed churches of the Dutch tradition.

In terms of the regulative principle, which does, of course, govern our singing at church, the stand of the PRC is this: God requires the congregation to sing, and He requires the congregation to sing *His Word*; the soundest and safest and perfectly adequate policy is to sing His Word as found in the Psalms, which is, after all, the songbook that God has given us.

No one should suppose that this stand implies blanket rejection of hymns. With the Psalms, we sing good hymns in our homes, in

our choral societies and programs, and in our schools. Yes, also in our schools. We expect that the schools will teach the children to love and sing the Psalms. The Psalms should even have pride of place in the singing at school and in the singing by the school. But there must not be a reactionary insistence that the schools sing only the Psalms. There are many God-glorifying and edifying songs in addition to the Psalms that the people of God may sing themselves and enjoy. Handel's *Messiah* comes immediately to mind, and Toplady's "Rock of Ages," and the great trinitarian hymn of the early church, "Glory be to the Father." Neither the regulative principle nor deep piety has a word to say against our use and enjoyment of such music in our personal, family, and social life.

### **The Importance of the Regulative Principle**

The regulative principle governs the content, or elements, of the public worship of the instituted church.

This principle is important.

First, it safeguards our worship. How important this is in our day, when many of the churches are swept away in the movement of "liturgical renewal." All worship that originates in men's thinking, what Colossians 2:23 calls "will worship," is cursed of God. The second commandment itself makes plain how serious it is to ignore the regulative principle: God is a jealous God. Reformed and Presbyterian churches must take this warning seriously.

Not as though a church's holding the regulative principle automatically guarantees acceptable worship. The church must *practice* her worship "in spirit and in truth." Also, there are Presbyterian and Reformed churches that are zealous for the regulative principle, exceedingly zealous, so that they enforce not only the principle but also their own application of

the principle to indifferent circumstances. But these same churches preach a gospel of universal, resistible grace, which is the dishonoring of worship at its very heart.

Nevertheless, the regulative principle is important to keep the worship of the true church pure.


Second, the regulative principle enables the worshiping people of God to be sure that their worship pleases God and is edifying to themselves. The question arises at church, "Does this please God?" Inasmuch as we only do what He Himself prescribes, we can be sure of it.

On the other hand, the progressive crowd, amid their banners, dances, choirs, dramas, dialogues, and musical troupes, are subject to dreadful uncertainty: "All this pleases the professional worship leaders, but does it please God?"

Third, the regulative principle maintains the unity of the church. All of the members are bound to one and the same mode of worship. It is not that of the older or of the younger. It is not that of the educated or of the uneducated. It is not that of the white or of the black. It is not that of the "conservatives" or of the "liberals." It is God's way of worship—for old and young; for educated and uneducated; for whites and blacks; for "conservatives" and "liberals."

Abandonment of the regulative principle brings about division. Ask the members of the churches where it is thrown out.

Fourth, the regulative principle in the confession and practice of the churches glorifies God. God is glorified by the solemn, simple, Word-centered, and Word-based worship prescribed by the regulative principle. He is also glorified in this, that He—*He!*—determines how He will be worshiped.

The regulative principle is the application to worship of the Reformed church's confession, "Let God be God!" 

— DJE



## The Reunion of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches:

### IS IT DEMANDED, POSSIBLE, DESIRED? (2)

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

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

**W**ith regard to what I have said thus far there can be but little, if any, difference of opinion.

In the rest of this essay I now offer you an introduction, from our viewpoint, to the discussion of our doctrinal differences, submitting this introduction, of course, to your free discussion and criticism. I would consider it advisable if also one of the Christian Reformed brethren would present such an introduction. This makes the discussion definite. Besides, then we also have something black on white, so that any misunderstanding will be avoided which might arise concerning that which is discussed by us. And, finally, thereby it will be easier for our people to remain informed concerning the course and the results of our discussion. In this introduction I offer you our view of what is called common grace. I will first speak about the so-called common grace in general, then about the three points, and conclude by submitting twenty propositions for discussion.

The problem of so-called common grace concerns the question of God's attitude over against and influence upon the whole of created things in their mutual connection

and their development in time, in connection with and in harmony with God's counsel in general, predestination with election and reprobation, the realization of God's eternal covenant, grace and sin, favor and wrath, nature and grace, creation and redemption, Adam and Christ. It inquires into the place and calling of God's people in and over against the present world. Viewed thus it is a question of great importance with respect to both doctrine and life.

We proceed from the scriptural idea that all creatures are one. God did not create in the beginning an aggregate of creatures, loose, independent of one another, but a world, a cosmos, a harmonic, organic whole. God is *one*. The world is also one. In the midst of the earthly creation stood man. God had formed him after His own image, so that in a creaturely sense he resembled God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This man stood at the head of creation as king over the earthly world. And he stood in God's covenant of friendship from the beginning. In that covenant-relation God would be his sovereign Friend and would cause him to taste the blessedness of the communion of His friendship, in which is life. In that covenant-relation man stood as friend-servant of the Most High,

to represent Him in the earthly creation and take up in his own heart the praise and honor of all creatures, to interpret and express that praise and honor before the face of God, love the Lord his God with all his heart, and in the name of and according to the will of God rule over all creatures. He was officebearer, prophet, priest, and king, with the commission, the command and also the right, the power but also the authority, to subject creation unto himself and to cultivate it. In his heart lay the spiritual-ethical center of God's creation. Through that central point the entire creation was united in love with God Himself. Also the creatures, each according to its nature, were taken up in God's covenant of friendship and shared in the good favor of the Lord. Also those creatures, sustained by God's omnipresent power, stood, through man and each in its own place and according to its own nature, in the service of God. And also now, according to our confession, the Lord God sustains and governs all creatures, that they may serve man in order that man may serve His God (Art. 12, Confession of Faith).

In this harmonic relation of all things to God a breach was struck by sin. Only, we must immediately emphasize that the breach was struck in the spiritual-ethical cen-

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

ter of the earthy cosmos, in the heart of man. Man violated God's covenant. The break is, therefore, spiritual-ethical in character. An *essential* change in the relation of things was not brought about by sin. Sin can never have as its result that creation would be annihilated, neither that the mutual relation between the creatures and the relation of the creatures to man would be essentially changed, so that, e.g., the creation would have been turned into a chaos, if common grace had not intervened. To be sure, the creature bears temporally in connection with man the curse, is subject to vanity, but the unity of creation was not broken, the natural, organic affinity (Dutch: *saamhoorigheid*) continued undisturbed. To be sure, fallen man became very limited in his gifts and powers and natural light, so that he has retained merely remnants of natural light, but even in his fallen state he retained his position at the head of creation. And although it cannot be said that he is still officebearer of God, and that he therefore has the right to serve in God's House, he certainly continues to stand before the demand, in his position in creation and with all his gifts and means, to serve his God in love.

However, he cannot, will not, and cannot will to serve his God in love. For a spiritual-ethical breach was made in the relation of man to God. The life of his heart was subverted into its very opposite. The working of the image of God, whereby he with mind and will and all his strength went out to God in the state of rectitude, was turned about into its reverse. Upon this, all emphasis must be laid. It is not sufficient to say that man through the fall lost the image of God; far less correct is it to say that he lost that image only in part. If this last thought is the result of the distinction of the image of God in the narrower and broader sense, it is better to abandon this distinction. But the image of God turned

about into its reverse. His light became darkness, his knowledge changed into the lie, his righteousness became unrighteousness, and his holiness became impurity and rebellion in all his willing and inclinations. His love changed into enmity against God. Sin is not merely a defect or lack, but *privatio actuosa*. And the servant and covenant-friend of the Lord became a friend and covenant-ally of the devil. Also thus, however, the Lord continues to sustain and govern creation by His providential power. And the entire organic existence of things remained essentially unaffected. If now in this state of things no further change is brought about, then the final result of history will be that the completed spiritual-ethical fruit of the life of creation is the opposite of that which it should be according to God's creation ordinance.

All this, although effected through the willful disobedience of the first man, took place, however, according to the counsel and the will of God. Accidents, from the viewpoint of God, never occur. God is God. He is in heaven and does all His good pleasure, not merely in spite of the attempts of Satan and sin, but also through those attempts. At all times He proceeds directly to His goal. Never is He hindered by the creature. There is with Him no change or shadow of turning. Also the fall is wholly according to the counsel of His will and it serves Him in the realization of His purpose. He had provided something better for us. His objective was not attained with the rest of the seventh day. That rest was but a figure of the eternal rest in the eternal and heavenly tabernacle, in the eternal kingdom, in which all things will be united in Christ as their Head, when all things in heaven and upon earth will eternally be concentrated in the heart of Christ. For He is the Image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creatures, and that, to be sure, as the First-

born from the dead, the Head of the body, the Beginning, in order that He in all things should be the First. Through Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him. For it pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell (Col. 1:15-19). Thus it is according to God's eternal decree. The eternal covenant of friendship of God must be established in Christ and be realized by Him unto its final eternal and heavenly destiny, when the tabernacle of God shall be with man. Therefore God, immediately at the fall of man, maintains His covenant, in spite of Satan and sin, but that covenant now as eternally and firmly established in Christ. Through the realization of that covenant immediately at the fall, the friendship with Satan in the heart of man is brought to nought, and through the operation of grace enmity is wrought in the heart of man against Satan.

Here, however, we face the decree of predestination. For not all the children of Adam have been predestined to enter into the eternal covenant of God's friendship. Grace follows the line of election. Only the kernel is affected by grace; the shell or bolster is rejected. It is exactly through this that the antithesis is realized in the midst of the world. Fact is, also now the creatures in the natural sense continue to exist in organic connection. Also grace, even as sin, does not bring about an essential change in the temporal existence of things. Out of one blood God created the entire human race. From a mere natural viewpoint all men are one. And man ever continues to stand in organic connection with the cosmos, in the midst whereof he moves and develops. There is, therefore, no dualism. Nature and grace are no contrasts. Even now we may remark that grace can



never become the cause for man who becomes partaker of it to go out of the world. To be sure, the antithesis of sin and grace is called into being by the breach of sin and the entrance of grace, the latter developing along the line of election. All things continue to exist and develop according to their own nature, sustained by God's almighty power, in natural affinity. But amidst this temporal existence of things there arises and develops the spiritual-ethical antithesis of sin and grace, of light and darkness, of the love of God and enmity against Him, of life and death, of heaven and hell. And through all this God does all His good pleasure, and He leads all things to their eternal destiny, the eternal separation of chaff and wheat, the eternal realization of the covenant of His friendship.

Grace is, therefore, never common.

The word "grace" has a variety of meaning in Holy Writ. We lack time to enter into these details. But allow me to present to you the line which we believe to find in Scripture relative to this concept. The [Hebrew] word *chen* has in Scripture the meaning of bending, inclining, attraction, beauty, charm, favor. The derivation of the [Greek] word *charis* is less certain, although it is plain that also in the New Testament the word has a great variety of meaning. It signifies pleasantness, favor, forfeited favor, operation of grace and benefits of grace, thankfulness. In the epistles of the apostle Paul the word is often used in contrast with merit and work.

A comparison of many scriptural passages where the word "grace" appears teaches us the following. God is in an absolute sense the Gracious One. He is gracious irrespective of any relation to the creature. Grace is a virtue of God. He is in Himself gracious. For He is the absolute and infinite good and glorious God, the implication of all perfection. Therefore, He is

also the charming, the attractive, the gracious God. At His right hand there are pleasures for evermore. As the triune God He beholds and knows Himself perfectly, He is attracted to Himself, loves Himself, has pleasure in Himself.

But God also has pleasure in the creature. That creature, especially man, who is formed after His image, and in the highest sense of the word His church in Christ, He has willed as beautiful. Therefore, He also has pleasure in the creature for His name's sake, and it finds grace in His eyes. He lavishes upon that creature the evidence of His favor and draws it unto Himself with chords of love into His eternal covenant of friendship. When that creature lies in guilt and sin, so that in itself it cannot be an object of God's pleasure and favor, but, on the contrary, of His wrath and aversion, and if that creature then in Christ is from eternity beheld, elected, foreordained by God's sovereign grace to become conformed unto the image of the Son, justified and glorified, found precious in His eyes and engraved in both the palms of God's hands, and when then that eternal grace goes out to the creature, that grace is, first of all, forfeited favor and stands wholly in contrast with work and merit. That grace blots out all our transgressions, justifies us in the blood of the cross, grants us the adoption unto children, the right to eternal life.

But, secondly, that grace is also a power and operation within us, whereby we are redeemed from the repulsiveness and domination of sin, become conformed unto the image of the Son, become pleasing to God, formed according to the image which He has engraved of us in the palms of His hands. Then, finally, God once more becomes for that sinner redeemed by grace, in his consciousness and experience, the only Good, the attractive and charming God, whose loving kindness is better than life and who is alone worthy to receive all

praise and adoration and thanksgiving. In adoration he falls down before God and gives Him *charis*.

Thus in general we would draw the lines.

We, therefore, are convinced that there is essentially no distinction between such concepts as grace, love, goodness, mercy, and whatever related concepts may otherwise appear in Scripture. Some have thought that they came closer to the truth when the last word in the expression "common grace" would be replaced by another, such as favorable inclination, goodness, or mercy, but essentially this makes no difference. Fundamentally all these concepts have the same meaning and are one.

It can readily be understood that, in the light of the above definition, we can never speak of common grace. The sinful and corrupt creature can *qua talis* never be pleasing to God, but is the object of His dislike, wrath and indignation, hatred and curse. Only as that creature has been incorporated into and is eternally beheld in Christ can it be pleasing to God and be an object of His sovereign favor. Only from that eternal counsel of election can the grace of God in Christ go out to him. And this is indeed the case. There proceeds out of the eternal good pleasure of God in Christ an operation of grace upon the elect kernel of our race in connection with the organic whole of all creatures. By that wonder of grace that elect kernel in Christ, always in connection with the whole of things, is redeemed, saved, liberated, glorified, lifted up out of darkness and guilt and sin and death and curse and vanity into the state of the heavenly glory of God's covenant of friendship. But likewise the wrath of God abides upon the reprobate shell outside of Christ, and an operation proceeds from God's aversion and wrath, indignation and repulsion and hardening whereby this reprobate shell becomes ripe for destruction.

In all this God proceeds directly to His goal. He never takes a detour. He never retraces His steps. His work is never frustrated. His purpose is never thwarted at any moment in history. This development and operation of God's grace and aversion, drawing and casting off, blessing and curse, softening and hardening, continues constantly according to His eternal good pleasure and in connection with the operation of His providence and the organic development of our race. In the actual sense of the word one can, therefore, never speak of a checking of this process. To be sure, the end does not appear immediately at the beginning. The development or, if you will, the process of grace and sin is according to God's good pleasure and connected by His providential management with the organic existence of all things. But that process is not restrained. It proceeds as rapidly as it possibly can. For Christ comes quickly, and His reward is with Him to give unto every man according as His work shall be.

This is our conception of the attitude and operation of God with respect to the organic whole of temporal things, in connection with the counsel and the good pleasure of God, the covenant of His friendship, sin and grace, creation and redemption, Adam and Christ, the natural and the spiritual. We have, therefore, this will be understood, indeed no individualistic, particularistic conception of the tremendous work of redemption by the grace of God. Neither do we involve merely the church as the body of Christ, as the new mankind, in the organic conception.

This latter is done by Dr. Kuyper. He does, indeed, have an eye for the fact that God did not elect a number of individuals, to redeem them as the severed branches of the tree of our race, but that the organism, as the body of Christ, as the actual mankind, is saved and glorified by God. But he

does not further apply this thought to the organic whole of all creatures. Therefore, he speaks of an original creation-idea. It is because of this that he always presents the matter as if a breach, an essential breach, was made by Satan in the work of God and that sin and death would actually hinder God in the realization of His original creation-idea, were it not for the fact that at this juncture common grace intervened restrainingly. Unto this end he presents God as concluding a covenant of friendship with the godless world outside of Christ, in order that sinful man may choose God's side against Satan. Thus, he has man living a relatively good world-life from the principle of a certain righteousness which was left him by common grace, and he has made possible a conception of sinful man who by the grace of God practices culture. All of history actually thereby becomes an interim. God carries out the covenant of His election and saves the new mankind, but parallel runs a certain line of common grace, along which God realizes His original creation-idea.

We, however, include all creatures in mutual connection within the circle of the organic conception and make the distinction between the elect kernel and the reprobate shell. And we maintain that upon the whole of created things, in organic connection with each other, an operation of God's grace but also of His aversion, of His favor but also of His wrath, of election but also of reprobation proceeds, according to the counsel of His will and according to the nature of the creatures, each in its own place in the whole.

In that sense we understand that God loves the world, in its elect kernel, so that whosoever believeth shall be saved, but the wrath of God abideth upon whosoever believeth not. Thus, we understand that Christ is the Head of the church, but also the Beginning of the creation of God and, therefore, also the End, the First-born

of all creatures and the First-born from the dead, in whom all the fullness should dwell, and by whom and for whom all things were created. In that sense we understand that God purposed by Himself to gather together in one in Christ all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Then we can also understand the covenant with Noah, which certainly is no separate covenant with the world outside of Christ, but God's eternal covenant of friendship, revealed to the church as recently delivered by the flood, with the elect kernel in Christ in connection with the whole of eternal created things. Noah becomes heir of the world by the grace of God. The sign thereof we have in the all-embracing rainbow, painted by the sunlight upon the dark clouds. Thus, we also understand that an operation of God's grace issued through the preaching of Jonah upon Nineveh, a figure of the world, in which the resurrected Christ will presently celebrate His triumphs, and that Nineveh repented upon the preaching of Jonah. Fact is, there were also thousands of children, who could not discern between their right and left hands, and, besides, much cattle!


In the light of the preceding it will be understood that we have nothing in common with the Anabaptists, who would avoid the world. To be sure, we would not be of the world. We know of no synthesis whatever. We do not join Athens in wedlock with Jerusalem. We do not cultivate culture in the name of common grace in cooperation with the godless world. We recognize the antithesis. We do acknowledge the natural affinity of our entire race in connection with all things. We would not go out of the world. We have all things in common. We work with the same means, gifts, talents, and powers as the world. We must deal with and make use of the same institutions, of the home, society, church, and state. Neither can it be the



calling of the Christian to improve the world as such, which is impossible. But it surely is his calling to live, throughout his life, in connection with all things and with all possible means, out of the new life-principle of regeneration, and over against that life which comes up out of the principle of sin. And it is surely also his calling to represent in the midst of the world the cause of Christ, the cause of the Son of God, in word and walk. To that purpose he subjects as much as possible all things, and unto the realization of that purpose he uses all means and institutions which may be in His service.

We would be in the world but not of the world. We desire the Christian home, the Christian soci-

ety, the Christian government and state, Christian school, Christian science, and Christian culture in general. It lies in the nature of the case that the realization of these things *in concreto* does not always and everywhere succeed. The world is powerful and often deprives us of our means and position. It may be possible to a certain extent in a small country as the Netherlands, with a relatively strong Christian population, e.g., to maintain Christian politics and speak of a Christian government, but in our country this is well-nigh impossible. Some periods in history are thereunto more conducive and favorable than others. God does, indeed, at times give unto His people the power and the

means to assume control in various phases of life. Then again almost everything is denied them. Nevertheless, whether we have power or not, never may we become of the world and affiliate ourselves with that world. If we do adopt this procedure to exercise power we are lost. At all times we must represent the cause of Christ, even if we do so only by witnessing of the Word. And if then we must suffer, we will remember the Word of Scripture, that it is given us of grace, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also with Him to suffer! And the victory is always ours. We have therefore good courage, knowing that Christ has overcome the world! 

... to be continued

Commencement Address

Prof. Herman Hanko

## The Church and Her Catholicity (1)

**F**rom time to time over the past years we have come to experience in the halls of the seminary something of what it means to be part of a catholic church. That was true again this past year. It seemed to me, therefore, that "The Church and Her Catholicity" would be an eminently suitable topic on which to meditate for a little while this evening.

There are other reasons, however, why I wish to speak on this topic. Those of our Protestant Reformed churches who confess together every Lord's day the Apostles' Creed confess our faith as including this truth: "We believe in one catholic church." While we confess this truth, we do not always understand and appre-

ciate what it means. In our thinking and in our actual life, however, that confession of a faith in a catholic church becomes a bit abstract. We tend to have the notion that the denomination of which we are a part happens to be the most important denomination on the face of the earth and that, although God has His people in every land and gathers His church from every tribe and tongue and nation, nevertheless the rest of the church in the world somehow revolves around us. It is almost as if we think to ourselves that God would be hard pressed to do the work of the church if it were not for our diligent labors and for the crucially important place which we occupy in the unity of the entire church of Christ. That is a serious and sad mistake. It is because I see this in myself and in others, that it is not without profit to address ourselves to this question tonight.

There is one more reason why I chose to speak on this (this may

be, after all, the most important reason of all). Over the years I have come to appreciate the doctrine of the catholicity of the church more and more. As a matter of fact, personally, I consider it to be one of the most beautiful doctrines in the whole of Scripture. Perhaps you will not agree with that; that makes no difference. It grows on me — the truth of the catholicity of the church. It is amazingly beautiful. It has innumerable implications for doctrine and life. But its beauty especially is to be found in the fact that the Scriptures point us to one rather startling and, in my mind, extraordinarily significant truth: the fullness of the riches of the grace of almighty God cannot be revealed in all their beauty except through a catholic church. That especially is the point of view which I wish to emphasize.

### What Catholicity Is

The eternal purpose of God as He determined it in His counsel

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from before the foundations of the world is this: to glorify Himself and His own great name through a church redeemed in Christ. That is the one purpose of God. That is the reason why He does all things and has done all things. He created heaven and earth and all that they contain for the church. He created angels and devils for the church. He created man for the church. He created Paradise in Eden for the church. All things are only to serve the purpose of the church. All that He did, all that He does, is centered in His purpose to reveal Himself in all His glory in the church.

From the very beginning, in a certain sense of the word, that church was a catholic church. Although that did not become immediately evident before the Flood, it was only a very short time after the Flood that one crucial event in the history of the world pointed with unmistakable clarity to God's purpose to save a catholic church. I refer to the catastrophe, the fiasco, of Babel. The immediate purpose of God at Babel was to prevent the Antichrist from revealing himself prematurely and from establishing a universal kingdom before the time was ripe for that. If Antichrist had established such a kingdom at Babel, the church would never have been saved. The existence of the church in the world would have been impossible.

Nevertheless, that was secondary. That deadly wound with which the beast was wounded cannot eventually be healed except in the blood of Christ. And it is healed in the blood of Christ in such a way that Babel is reversed and the curse of Babel is lifted. The fiasco of Babel becomes the triumphant victory of a catholic church. It was at Babel that God created the nations, the races, the tongues, and the peoples that inhabit the earth. Babel serves a catholic church.

In the days of the patriarchs that church was, in a certain sense

of the word, catholic, although gradually the church became limited to Abraham and his descendants. One could also find the church in Jerusalem, of all places, where a people were being ruled by Melchisedek, priest of the Most High God. You could find it at Sinai, where Jethro instructed his family in the ways of Jehovah and took care of his sheep. You could find it in Haran, where Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. Nevertheless, God narrowed the line to the descendants of Abraham until Israel became His chosen people.

We often like to think of the fact that the nation of Israel was composed of Jews. As a matter of fact, it was not. It had more foreign blood, more heathen blood, more Gentile blood than Jewish blood. It was a catholic church in the making, even in the days of Israel's history. All the sons of Jacob, without exception, married either Canaanitish or Egyptian women. Israelite blood, therefore, at the very outset, was fifty percent non-Jewish.

God continued to bring heathen into the nation of Israel in strange and startling ways, almost as if to remind Israel, "The church is catholic. You are a chosen people, set aside from all the nations of the earth. You, above all the nations of the earth, are favored by God. But don't ever forget: The catholic church is in embryo form in you." He brought Rahab out of the smashed city of Jericho. He brought Ruth out of Moab to be a mother of Christ. He brought Egyptians out of Egypt to journey with Israel on the long way to Canaan. He brought the Gibeonites to Israel and incorporated them into the nation so that they became part and parcel of the nation of Israel. He even brought the daughters of Moab into the nation when the unmarried daughters of Moab were saved at the time Israel visited its fury upon the nation after the sin of Baalpeor.

So it was. Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, was a Hittite. Araunah, on whose threshing floor David offered his sacrifices to stay the plague, was a Jebusite. Even some of David's chief men and fiercest warriors were from other lands.

There was one thing, however, about the nation that persisted in the old dispensation simply because Christ had not yet come. That is, although in a certain sense of the word and from a particular point of view the nation of Israel was the catholic church, it was not quite that. It was not quite that because anyone who was joined to the church of Christ in the old dispensation had to become a Jew. He became a Jew through the rite of circumcision. He was incorporated into the Israelitish nation. He adopted the culture of the Jews and he was a part of the nation that went to Jerusalem to worship God in the temple. He was, to all intents and purposes, no longer a Hittite, or a Jebusite, or a Gibeonite, but a Jew — all because Christ had not come.

There is something about the Old Testament, though, that is always looking beyond this dispensation of shadows. When one reads the psalms and the prophets, he cannot miss that tone of eager anticipation of a better day to come. Think, for example, of Psalm 68, that beautiful psalm that David wrote at the time when the Ark was brought up to Jerusalem as a picture of the exaltation of Christ. David sings: "Princes shall come out of Egypt (the house of bondage from which God had delivered His people!), Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." That was the psalmist. That was at the time when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem. And then, "Sing unto God ye kingdoms of the earth; sing praises unto the Lord" (vv. 31, 32). It is no wonder that that verse ends with the word "Selah," which means, "pause for a moment, take a breath, meditate



on this, this is staggering." Egypt, Ethiopia? Yes, another day is coming.

So it was with the prophets — Isaiah in particular. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (60:1-3).

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to this earth, He came as a Jew. So much was He a Jew that He could trace His genealogy all the way to Abraham. He was so much a Jew that He had to undergo the rites and rituals of the Jewish nation that had been given to Israel at Sinai. He was conscious of His Jewishness. He was conscious that all the life of His earthly ministry He remained a Jew. He would not stray outside the boundaries of the promised land. His ministry was to the Jews.

When the Syro-Phoenician woman pleaded with Him to heal her daughter, He turned a cold shoulder to her and told her it was none of her business. She prevailed upon Him to make an exception because she anticipated the faith of Gentiles (Matt. 15:21-31). When the Greeks asked to see Jesus, and asked Thomas in particular on the eve of His crucifixion to make arrangements with the Lord to see Him, the Lord told Thomas in no uncertain terms, "Tell them, No." And the reason which He gave was this, that He had not yet ascended. So He began to speak of His cross, of His death, of His resurrection, and of His ascension. He was a Jewish Christ (John 12:20-33).

He was a Jewish Christ when He hung on the cross. The superscription on the cross said that: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews." Nevertheless, if you watched closely, there was an al-

most perceptible change in the Lord as He hung there suffering. The change was reflected even in the fact that Pilate, God's instrument, directed that the words of the superscription of the cross be written not only in Hebrew, but also in Latin and in Greek. It's as if the Lord is saying, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews indeed, but take note, you Greeks, and observe, you Romans, that presently He will be the King of (what Paul calls in the last chapter of Galatians) the true Israel of God — the church gathered from every nation, tribe, and tongue."

He arose, no longer a Jew, but a catholic Christ. That was why Mary was not permitted to touch Him — "I have not yet ascended. You want to touch Me in the wrong way. I am not a Jew any longer. You may not treat Me as one of your nation. I presently will ascend." He ascended, not as a Jewish Christ, but as a catholic Christ. He did that because His death was the shedding of His blood for a universal church. John, in his marvelous gospel, wants us always to recognize that. Already when he describes the ministry of John the Baptist he describes John the Baptist as preaching this gospel: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Jesus reminded Nicodemus of the same thing: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:14). Lest there be any doubt about the implications and meaning of that expression of the Lord to Nicodemus, He goes on to make it unmistakably clear: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). It is almost a jubilant shout concerning the universality of the work of Christ that echoes again and again in the Gospel according to John.

The climax was in the exalta-

tion of Christ. Read Daniel 7. There one sees with Daniel, in a stirring and extremely beautiful vision, the exalted Christ being brought before the throne of the Ancient of Days, and one discovers that all the nations of the earth were given to Him as His possession.

So Christ poured out upon the church a catholic Spirit. The catholic Christ poured out upon the church a catholic Spirit. The Spirit is not parochial. The Spirit is not narrow. The Spirit is not the possession of one people. He is catholic in the truest sense of the word. That is the meaning of the sign of speaking in other tongues. We must not be mistaken about that sign. That speaking in other tongues does not simply mean that, now that the Spirit is poured out, things are going to be different from the old dispensation. It means that the church will now burst forth from her national boundaries of Jewry and spread over the length and breadth of the earth. God saves every nation as a distinct nation.

This is important. Everyone who was gathered together in Jerusalem on Pentecost; everyone who came together at the sound of the rushing mighty wind; everyone who heard the 120 speak could understand the Aramaic. There was no need for the miracle of tongues in order to make people from other nations understand. They all knew Aramaic. They all knew the spoken language of Jerusalem — even though they were from the dispersion. It was not in order to make the speech of the 120 intelligible and understandable that the Spirit gave to them this remarkable gift. When one of the 120 came to an Egyptian and spoke to an Egyptian in the language of Egypt, the Holy Spirit was saying to that man, "What in the world are you doing here in Jerusalem celebrating a feast of the Jews? Go back home. Stay there. You don't have to come to Jerusalem to be saved. You

don't have to speak Hebrew in order to be incorporated into the church of Christ. Stay at home. Live your life as an Egyptian. Don't change anything in your life as far as the country in which you live is concerned. God will save you there. And God will save you as an Egyptian, with all your national and racial characteristics. The need to become a Jew in order to be saved is forever gone."

That was, after all, the great battle in Galatia. That was the reason for Paul's writing of the epistle to the Galatians. There is no need for circumcision. There is no requirement of it, because no one has any longer to become a Jew to be saved.

So the Holy Spirit, as a catholic Holy Spirit, sent by a catholic Christ, gathers a catholic church. He goes into all the nooks and crannies of the globe. He travels into all the by-ways and alleys of the world. There is not one corner of the globe where the Holy Spirit does not go to collect and to gather those for whom Christ died, those who have been chosen by God from all eternity to be a part of the catholic church.

The wonderful part of it all is that they must be saved as their nationality and racial characteristics require. There is an almost infinite diversity in the church of Jesus Christ. I can only mention some of it. Fundamental to it all is the reversal of Babel, the healing of the wound of the beast, a real and true healing — by the blood of reconciliation in the cross of Jesus Christ. But the wonderful thing, the altogether astounding thing, is that not *Egypt-becoming-Jewish* will be saved, but *Egypt* will be saved. Not Ethiopia by coming to the temple will be saved, but Ethiopia will stretch out its hands to God as Ethiopia.

Nations have personalities. Races have personalities. Families have personalities. Individuals have personalities. God wants those racial, national, family per-

sonalities saved and preserved. A German is saved as a German. A Dutchman is saved as a Dutchman. He is not made Polish. A Chinaman is saved as a Chinaman. He is not made an Occidental. It has to be that way. Any effort to make it different is contrary to the will of God, who has a greater purpose in mind than that of creating a church which is composed of racial or national clones. His purpose is to reveal the riches of His grace.

There is an infinite variety in the church. This variety is of race, of nation, of family, of individual. That is what is so important about the marvelous work of salvation. As a pastor, I have often had the feeling in my soul when dealing with a particular recalcitrant sheep, I wish he were not so stubborn! If only God would make him less stubborn, maybe we could get somewhere with him. He is like a billy goat.

Well, God is not going to make him any different. God gives to every man his personality. Whether that is stubbornness or weakness; whether that is spinelessness or foolhardiness; whether that is a tendency to be happy in one's life or forever down in the dumps — God gives to each man his personal characteristics. Those characteristics are never going to be changed. Those characteristics are not going to be changed by grace.

Grace does not make a stubborn man less stubborn. What grace does do is make him stubborn about the right things, which Scripture happens to call "steadfastness." Grace does not make the mild character bold as a lion. But grace puts the mildness of an individual in the service of a church. Grace does not make a tactless person tactful. But grace does put tactlessness under the subjection of grace in order that it may serve the purpose of the church.


So it is. What a variety of characteristics. Even the attributes of

old age — the glory of the hoary head — or the attributes of children are preserved in the catholicity of the church. The glories, the beauties, of every age of life are preserved by God through death into His everlasting kingdom of heaven.

All these things become a part of that infinite variety that goes to make up the church. In fact, even sin comes in the service of the catholicity of the church. It takes a different kind of a grace (I don't profess to understand the mysterious ways of God) to save a prostitute than to save a smug, self-righteous hypocrite. The same grace will not do. It takes a different kind of a grace (all unmerited favor; all God's amazing irresistible power to save) to save a Dutchman than to save an African. The same kind of grace will not do.

Each sinner, saved by grace, has his own unique, personal, individual, spiritual pilgrimage, which is in the most marvelous way tied to the particular and unique place which that same individual will occupy in the church in glory. How the Lord delivers this one sinner from the depths of depravity and fits him as a sinner saved by grace for his place in glory is the grace unique to him.

That is what the Bible means, for example, when in the letter of the Lord to the church of Pergamus the Lord promises to those who overcome that He will give them a white stone, in which there will be written their name, which no other man can know. It is their name. It is their name because it fits them. It fits them because it precisely defines how that one sinner saved by grace was brought by the power of grace, in distinction from all the others, into the unity of the one church of Jesus Christ (Rev. 2:17).

In the church, therefore, we find the infinite variety that we confess when we confess one catholic church. 

... to be continued.



## Knox and Church Order (2)



### Summary of the Church Order

**T**he main subjects that the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Common Order* dealt with are as follows:

#### The Officebearers of the Church

The offices of Christ's church according to God's Word were recognized as ministers, elders, and deacons. Two *temporary* offices were also allowed, to meet the abnormal situation in the Reformed Church of Scotland at that time, when there was an acute shortage of ministers. These were the "offices" of "superintendent" and "reader." The "superintendent" was an experienced minister who had oversight of a region with other, less experienced, ministers and readers under him. The "readers" were educated, godly men, who would take "reading" services.

Each congregation had the right to elect its own minister, but ministers had to be examined by the church. Ministers are responsible to see that the gospel be "truly and openly preached in every church and assembly of this realm." The gospel was defined as the whole spectrum of divine truth.

The sacraments could not be administered except where there was the preaching of the Word. The preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments was to be in the language of the

people. In Scotland at that time, that meant three languages! — English, Scots, and Gaelic, after the manner prescribed in the *Order of Geneva*. There was an insistence on a high standard of preaching. Merely to read a sermon was "alike to have no minister at all, and to have an idol in the place of a true minister, yea, and in some cases it is worse." They felt that none should content themselves with having only a shadow of a real minister.

The principle of "extraordinary things may be done in extraordinary circumstances" was the concept behind the "superintendents" and "readers." This principle was also adopted at the time of the Westminster Assembly. The Westminster divines embodied it in the following way in the *Form of Church-Government, Concerning the Doctrinal Part of Ordination of Ministers*, No. 11: "In extraordinary cases, something extraordinary may be done, until a settled order may be had, yet keeping as near as possibly may be to the rule."

Elders have an important place in the government of the church according to the *First Book of Discipline*. They, with the minister, formed a local Presbytery, or council, that guided the spiritual affairs of the local congregation. They also, with the minister, assisted in all public affairs of the church. They judged and decided causes, gave admonition to the ungodly, and exhorted men to godliness. They also were to take heed to "the life, manners, diligence, and study of the minister." They were, for example, to admonish and correct

him where desirable, and if worthy of deposition to proceed against him in the church courts. There was a parity of minister and elders, and the minister was seen simply as an elder set apart for the special work of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. Elders were elected for one year only by a free vote of the congregation, but they could be re-elected.

Deacons were to look after the financial interests of the church but also were to care for the needy materially. Deacons were also elected for one year by a free vote of the congregation.

#### Church Government

The *First Book of Discipline* did not lay down a graded series of assemblies of elders, such as a Kirk Session, Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. They are, however, easily seen in a rudimentary form. For example, the minister, elders, and deacons of a local congregation were required to meet at stated times — a Kirk Session. Ministers within six miles of the larger towns had to meet weekly, where there was the study and interpretation of the Scriptures or "prophesyings." It was to be also a time for considering doubts and for admonition — a Presbytery. The supervising minister had to meet with the other ministers of his region from time to time — a Synod. Also, from the beginning the Reformed Church of Scotland had the General Assembly. This body was representative of the whole country, and the ministers and elders of each place had a seat on it.

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The local church eldership or Kirk Session, as on the continent, originally exercised authority over more than one congregation. For example, there was one Session for all the congregations of Edinburgh, Glasgow, etc. This was called the "lesser Presbytery" or "eldership." As more congregations within a city called their own Sessions, this "lesser Presbytery" became known as the "greater eldership" or "classical Presbytery" and absorbed the "prophesyings" assemblies. It then assumed the present character of a Presbytery or Classis. Note also how from the beginning it was seen as very important that ministers meet together regularly for discussion and prayer.

### Worship & Discipline

Worship was basically required to be the same as practiced by the Reformed Churches on the continent. There was only the singing of the psalms unaccompanied by musical instruments. There was a sermon and prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. The Christian Sabbath was "straitly kept" with a morning worship service and in the afternoon there was an all-age Catechism class. All holy days, except the Lord's Day, were abolished as having no biblical warrant. All vows of celibacy and the assumption of special religious apparel were declared to be sinful.

In baptism, only water was to be used, and all the Romish additions of oil, salt, wax, spittle, etc. was forbidden as the inventions of men.

The Lord's Supper was administered in both forms, and with simple ceremony. The reformers of Scotland thought the celebration of it four times a year sufficient. Common communion cups were used, and those wishing to profess their faith and come to the Lord's Supper had to be able to repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed before the elders. The people sat around a common table, and the elements of

bread and wine were passed from member to member. It was laid down that, "The Table of the Lord is most rightly ministered when it approacheth most nigh to Christ's own action" at the Last Supper.

The offering could be taken at the door, as was the Jewish custom.

There was essentially a Calvinist insistence on ecclesiastical discipline, to which princes and preachers were also subject, contrary to the pre-Reformation practice. The administration of discipline was entrusted to the ministers, elders, and deacons, and is distinguished from the civil magistrate's administration. The church had the power of biblical excommunication. There was to be also mutual censure and admonition of ministers.

The administration of the church was basically at a congregational level. It was for the local officers to establish good order at this level so that the preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and the other parts of the worship of God could proceed unhindered and in a way edifying to the congregation.

### The Monies of the Church

The Roman Church had virtually ceased to exist in Scotland by 1560, yet vast revenues came in from lands previously owned by it. The question was, what was to be done with this revenue? *The First Book of Discipline* proposed that three things be done with it. It was proposed that it be used for the maintenance of a gospel ministry, for the promotion of general education from a Reformed (biblical) world and life view, and for the support of the poor. This last work was seen as a sacred trust from Christ. The section in this document on Education is most extensive. The reformers of Scotland, as on the continent, placed such an importance on the Christian education of the youth of the church, it was scarcely less than the impor-

tance they gave to the true preaching of the Word and the right administration of the sacraments. The ideal was "a kirk and a school in every parish."

The care of the poor was also very close to the heart of the church. There was a desire that, in a material and practical way, the mercies of Christ be extended to those most in need of it.

The main headings of *The First Book of Discipline* are: *Of Doctrine; Of the Sacraments; Abolishing Idolatry; Of Ministers; Of Provision for Ministers; Of Superintendents; Of Schools; Of Universities; Of the Rents of the Church; Of Discipline; Of Election of Elders & Deacons; Of the Policy of the Kirk.*

### Conclusion

The Reformed Church of Scotland had a great spiritual battle to fight to bring order to the church of Christ as based upon His Word. While the fruits of their labors did not receive the support of the Parliament of its day, the church bravely and faithfully worked at organizing itself after the principles of God's Word in spite of every discouragement. The church did not believe it was dependent upon the State to give effect to how it should order itself. It refused also to accept that the State should be excused from recognizing the ideals of God's Word for the ordering of the church. These various sentiments found fresh expression in *The Second Book of Discipline* of 1578. By that time, however, Knox had been gathered to a better country, and the labors of that work fell to other faithful soldiers and servants of Christ Jesus.


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## Contribution

Mr. Hugh Lindsay Williams

### British Reformed Fellowship Conference

Wales, July 2000

## "The Kingdom of God"



**O**n Saturday 22nd July 2000, at Cefn Lea, a thousand feet above sea level amongst the beautiful hill country of Mid-Wales, we gathered for the sixth BRF Conference. We came, not only from all over the British Isles, but from as far afield as the USA, the Netherlands, and even from far-off New Zealand. All ages were represented, but specially it was heartening to see the happy phalanx of interested young people there, many over from the PR churches in the USA. Old friends met joyfully, and new friends were made, as we settled in for a week of Bible teaching interspersed by leisure activities.

Our concern was to be instructed on the matters of the *Kingdom of God*. For seven days we focused on this theme, right from the excellent introduction given by our chairman, Brian Harris, at the welcoming meeting on the first Saturday night. The main speakers during the ensuing week were PRC Professors Herman Hanko and David Engelsma. In addition, Prof.

Euros Jones of the University of Wales delivered a well-appreciated and apposite address concerning a famous Welshman, one Griffith Jones, and his work for God's kingdom.

On the Sunday afternoon, after morning worship conducted by Prof. Hanko, Sunday school and catechism classes were conducted. The classes were divided according to age (although some were slightly confused about which class they belonged to!). Angus Stewart's class held an excellent discussion of the meaning of Psalm 145. Mr. Lammert Lubbers' class (ages 17+) studied Acts 1. Ryan Hanko's class (ages 12-17) reviewed the morning sermon. Mrs. L. Lubbers led the youngest group.

The afternoon also provided time to fellowship, discuss, and sing. Prof. Engelsma led the evening worship on Romans 8:35-39: "More Than Conquerors."

On the Sunday evening, after the worship service, Mr. Jonathan Moore, currently submitting his doctoral thesis to Cambridge University, gave us a fascinating overview of his research. It concerns the historical origins and development of the so-called "well-meant offer of the Gospel." We learned that

he had traced it back from the Scottish marrow-men (Thomas Boston and the Erskines) to Bishop John Jewel of Puritan times, involving also Bishop John Davenant.

In the UK, as in the USA, a new form of "Calvinism" is arising, which promotes very strongly the idea that the kingdom of God is either separate from the church, or in some way an extension of the church. As such, it claims that Christians have a duty to "reconstruct" society by Christianizing it, thus establishing God's kingdom. This "Christian Reconstructionism," entwined with an extreme form of postmillennial eschatology, teaches that the kingdom of God thus developed will last thousands, if not millions of years. This present material world is therefore necessarily their primary focus, the return of Christ dropping to a low-profile status, being remotized far into the future. "Reconstructionism" claims confessional support from Belgic Confession Art. 36 and Westminster 23, III. They see churches as being "boot-camps" to train "soldiers" for this work of the "kingdom," and as a result, secular disciplines especially, such as Economics, Politics, Business Studies, Law, and Philosophy, figure

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high on their agenda. Politico-material concerns come therefore to dominate the Christian life.

The BRF has been subject to certain inroads from the direction of these "Reconstructionist" ideas, such that a certain amount of disconcerting destabilization has developed amongst us. Centered as these ideas are in the theme of the "Kingdom of God," it was appropriate that we subjected the topic to serious analysis.

On the Monday, Prof. Engelsma addressed the Conference on the theme: "The Nature of the Kingdom." In taking his text from Colossians 1:1-13, he focused on verse 13 as a key verse for determining the nature of the "kingdom of His dear Son," which kingdom, he proved from 1 Thessalonians 2:12 and Ephesians 5:5, is one and the same with the kingdom of God. And Colossians 1:13 determines that the kingdom of God is a *spiritual* kingdom, distinctly *not* earthly or politico-material. It was not, therefore, the kind of entity posited by the premillennialists on one hand, or the Reconstructionist postmillennialists on the other. This the professor further established by a plethora of biblical evidence.

The Monday afternoon excursion to Powys Castle was rescheduled to the Friday, so we all remained at Cefn Lea. The "Brits" challenged the "Americans" to a football match. All sides enjoyed the ensuing fun, and meanwhile Prof. Engelsma amazingly defeated the young and athletic Angus Stewart in a tennis match!

After the lighthearted recreation, everyone settled in for Prof. Hanks' discourse in the evening. His theme was: "The Coming of the Kingdom in History." Building up his text (Matt. 11:1-19) he noted the fascinating dual nature of the old creation in Genesis 1, that there God created the heavens (spiritual) and the earth (material). These two realms are separated such that it is impossible to cross

from one to the other except by divine operation or permission. The kingdom of God is located in heaven, and it breaks through to earth like an alien invasion. This invasion unfolds in three phases, first the typological-spiritual Old Testament dispensation, then the anti-typical and maturer New Testament era, and finally, the full revelation at the return of Christ. At that final juncture the two creations, spiritual and material, would be gathered up in Christ in one. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15; Eph. 1:10.)

On the Tuesday, we explored the country. One group, with Mr. Tony Horne, climbed to the summit of Cader Idris, 2928 feet above sea level. From this vantage point they were able to look down on the valley wherein lies the little village of Llanfihangel. From there, some 200 years ago, the young Mary Jones set out barefoot to cross the mountains and walk to Bala, some 20 miles to the northeast. She was on her way to buy a Welsh Bible, for which she had worked and saved since she was a little child. She had learned to read, and she loved the Bible stories she heard in the local Calvinistic Methodist chapel. As there was only one Bible in her village, she was determined to get one for herself and her illiterate parents.

While Tony led the "mountaineers," two mini-bus loads and some automobiles took the rest of us along the rest of young Mary's long trek, through the mountain passes to Bala, and there we stopped where she stopped 200 years previously at the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in Bala, where she hoped to buy a Bible from the minister, Rev. Thomas Charles. Alas! He had only one Bible left, which was already reserved for someone else. And it seemed unlikely that any more Welsh Bibles would be printed. At this, young Mary broke down and cried, and moved by her story and her tears, Thomas Charles decided to give her the one Bible he still had, and disappoint

the other customer, who, I believe, was a rich man. We saw the monument to Thomas Charles outside the chapel in Bala, and on the plinth we saw a sculpted frieze commemorating the event. So moved was Thomas Charles by the little girl's tears, he thereupon helped to organize the British and Foreign Bible Society, to print, not only Welsh Bibles, but Bibles in all world languages.

Back at Cefn Lea in the evening, we heard Prof. Engelsma expatiate on "The Kingdom of God and the Church." Taking his texts from John 18:1-14 and 33-38 he laid down "his fundamental thesis" that the "kingdom of God in this present age is the church." From many scriptural proofs he demonstrated that, regarding the *kingdom of God*, it is:

- a) the realm of the rule of God by grace by Jesus Christ
- b) the realm within which Christ's reign holds sway
- c) where the citizenry of this kingdom are a united commonwealth
- d) where the blessings of salvation are provided.

As regards the *church*, he noted that it was:

- a) the universal body of Christ consisting of all elect from all nations/peoples
- b) manifested in local congregations, this being the New Testament "mature-level" formation of the church.

He criticized "Reconstructionists," who distinguish between kingdom and church, and make the latter either just a boot camp for training troops to serve in the kingdom, or otherwise regard the kingdom as an extension of the church. He said that all such deviations required that the saints in this world should concentrate on worldly politics and prosperity, in opposition to the general teaching of Scripture. He noted that the Reformed confessions (Westminster 25, II; Heidelberg Q. 123 & 128) and the writings of the reformers (e.g.,

Calvin: Commentary on Amos 9:13) agreed with him in identifying the kingdom with the church, as against the Reconstructionists. Citing a long list of Scripture texts (e.g., the Beatitudes; Col. 1:13; Rom. 14:17, etc.), he elucidated the spiritual nature of the kingdom. Again, to the church is given the "keys of the kingdom" (Matt. 16:19), hardly congruous if the church is not the kingdom. And so, brought before Pilate, the Lord asserts the spiritual nature of His kingdom, that it "is not of this world" (John 18:36), and therefore his "servants" will not fight.

On Wednesday morning, Prof. Hanko lectured on "Kingdom, Gospel and Law." Beginning from Psalm 19, he explained that every creature of God is subject to God's law in some way that is appropriate to that creature vis a vis its purpose in creation. God's law is expressed at its highest manifestation with respect to man, who was created in God's image. In confronting the law, man is confronting the very "profile," as it were, of God's nature. Fundamental to this law is the requirement to love God with all one's heart, soul, strength, and mind, and one's neighbor as oneself. (Cf. Deut. 6:4; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37-40.) Thus the keeping of God's law cannot be a matter of mere outward observance, which would be sham. Only Christ thus completely fulfilled the law, and did so on behalf of all His elect people.

The Biennial General Meeting of the BRF took place through Wednesday afternoon. It was a protracted and harrowing event with deep undercurrents of internal dissent. A motion to dissolve the BRF was tendered, on the grounds that it was a parachurch organization which had outlived its usefulness. With a church established at Ballymena now, and the recent sort-out in the Free

Kirk, we should look to such to carry the torch on from here. The motion failed. However, we nearly foundered on the matter of a new Constitution, which, on eventually passing with the required majority, means a future big change in the BRF and the British Reformed Journal. This new Constitution, however, produces severe internal problems. The future for the BRF looks precarious just now.

However, we emerged eventually with a new Constitution, five officers elected to a new "General Council," and a tremulous hope that we could work together for God's glory in the future.

On Wednesday evening, Prof. Euros Jones, of the University of Wales, delivered a sterling lecture entitled: "Griffith Jones and the Welsh Christian Schools." Interspersed by some wittiness, profound doses of wisdom, (and some excellent examples of real Welsh spoken by a native Welshman), Prof. Jones delighted the audience in his account of the life of this man who, according to many authorities, was the "greatest of all Welshmen." A Churchman of the Anglican tradition, Griffith Jones (1683-1761) worked within the parish system of the Established Church of England in Wales. He was ordained in 1709. His ministerial career extended over 53 years, during which time his herculean labors reaped astounding results. Rarely does one man achieve so much in a lifetime. Griffith Jones was a

powerful and orthodox preacher. Large numbers were converted under his ministry, and with ecclesiastical approval he began to address himself to the plight of the whole of Wales, sunk in a prison of gospel ignorance and illiteracy. Extending his preaching ministry across large tracts of Wales, he also inaugurated in each community a school for teaching literacy using the Bible and the church Catechism as the main medium of instruction. At the height of his labors between 1737 and 1761 there were some 3,225 Christian schools set up in 1,600 different locations, with some 200,000 scholars of all ages, or nearly half of the then native Welsh population. The ensuing reformation produced family worship with godly living emerging at all hands. Central in all this were the Christian schools and the Catechism classes. Prof. Jones encapsulated Griffith Jones' work with this quotation from the man himself: "without catechizing, preaching is in a manner lost and thrown away."

Appropriately, after this stimulating lecture a presentation of Catechism certificates was made to ten young people from Covenant Protestant Reformed Church at Ballymena. Preparatory to communicant membership at Covenant, they had studied and learned all the Westminster Shorter Catechism. They were: David Crossett and his sister Cherith; Neil Hanko, and his sisters Rosanna and Jessica;





Joel Clarke and his sister Rebecca; and Ruth McAuley and her brothers Aaron and Mark. Each certificate carried the signature of Elder Jonathan McAuley, and indicated that they had “answered to all 107 questions” of the Westminster Shorter Catechism “with accuracy, understanding, and Christian conviction.” Some of them learned quite a few of the Scripture proofs as well, and Jessica Hanks actually learned all of them!

Thursday was mainly for leisure activities. Some journeyed by car southwards to the border town of Hay-on-Wye to explore its larger-than-life plethora of 40 secondhand bookstores. Every narrow street boasts several of them, bulging with old volumes that include everything from antiquarian works to recent publications. Just to name two: in Richard Booth’s shop alone, over 400,000 books line shelves in this “largest secondhand bookshop” in the whole of Europe. In the Old Cinema, some 200,000 more can be found. Amongst it all, one finds Theology. A fascinating place.

But the majority of our conferees set out aboard the mini-buses and by automobiles for Aberystwyth, the university town on the shores of Cardigan Bay. After a delightful drive through the Mid-Wales mountains they arrived at the town’s railroad station, where most of them boarded a little old-fashioned steam-powered train, on the two-foot gauge. With snorting chuffs the old train took them up the picturesque Vale of Rheidol, where, from the carriage windows high above the valley below, they could admire its quaint scenery.

Returning refreshed to Cefn Lea, we awaited Prof. Engelsma’s final lecture, entitled: “The Kingdom and Civil Government.” Romans 13:1-14 provided the platform for his thesis, which he adumbrated in the following three propositions, viz.:

Prop. I The kingdom of God is not an earthly political entity.

Prop. II God does not call the state to enforce Christianity via the sword.

Prop. III God calls the state to serve the church by keeping order in the nation.

This lecture touched at the very nub of the problems that have caused division amongst the BRF. Prof. Engelsma isolated the two extremes of position possible in this debate thus:

1) Ought the state to promote the true gospel using the sword if necessary?

2) Is the work of the state only to provide social stability and peace for all?

In a long but fascinating exposition he showed that the Scriptures will not support the idea of 1) above, but he proved from Romans 13 that the task of the civil magistrate is to maintain a peaceful society on the basis of natural law, which law is adumbrated in Romans 2:13-14. The state cannot, as per the Reconstructionists, impose the Decalogue, because that is fundamentally a spiritual law, requiring death as the penalty for any breach. That the Reformed confessions have, however, indicated a proclivity for the use of the sword (cf. Belgic Confession Art. 36 and Westminster Confession 23, III) was to be acknowledged. But most worldwide Presbyterian denominations have modified Westminster 23, III, and the Protestant Reformed Churches have, in harmony with this, added a rider to Belgic Confession Art. 36, to obviate its dangerous requirements.

The professor was able to show abundantly from Scripture that the church has no business with the sword, its weapons being spiritual not carnal (cf. 2 Cor. 10:4). Also, he pointed out that the civil power in the time when Paul wrote Romans 13 was the pagan Roman Empire, and that Romans 13 actually denominates such a power as the “minister of God.” Such facts hardly harmonize with the idea of “establishment” of the church as a

necessary requirement. And the history of “establishment” is a history of disaster in most, if not all instances. Such is admitted by none other than Scots theological giant William Cunningham, who said, in his magisterial tome “Historical Theology,” that “establishment has done more evil than good.” This lecture was specially useful in that it illustrated from Scripture the true limits of civil government, viz., to preserve order in society. To enforce the Decalogue is outside the competence and authority of the magistrate.

Thursday then drew to a close, for most of us. But Prof. Hanks had given us some “homework” when he gave his second address on the Wednesday morning, to be done before his final lecture on Friday morning. It was, therefore, during the wee small hours just after midnight that, replete with Bibles and torches, the young folk climbed the hill alongside the Conference center and, sitting under a gloriously clear starlit sky to do the “homework,” they read the Sermon on the Mount by torchlight. After that, they gazed at the heavens, named as many constellations as they could, and sang Psalter numbers from memory. It was a thrilling and memorable way to draw towards the close of a memorable Conference. Jessica Hanks recorded it as one of the “highlights.”


On the Friday, Prof. Hanks delivered the final address of the Conference. His topic was “The Life of the Kingdom.” He based his exegesis on Colossians 3:1-25, a chapter which has a lot to say concerning the difficulties and duties involved in being a citizen of God’s kingdom in this evil world. He drew out from this and a plethora of other texts the fact that Christians are “strangers and pilgrims” in this world (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11; Heb. 11:13), where we have to endure suffering for the glory of Christ and count such as a privilege (Matt. 5:10-12; Phil. 1:29). We are to seek first the kingdom of



God (Matt. 6:33). Thus our life was to be regulated by the principles of the kingdom, which itself meant centering our lives in the church, since therein is the kingdom to be found. From the text in Colossians 3 it was evident that this meant we are to set our affection on things above, in heaven, *not* on the things of earth. Our goals are to be spiritual, not carnal and physical.

On the Friday afternoon, a large group visited Powys Castle and found it and the gardens to be enchanting. In the evening, the two professors rounded off the Conference by answering questions that had been deposited by the various members of the audience during the week. Significantly, they emphasized that Christians may certainly become involved in civil

government, or lobby such institutions to persuade them to preserve social order. The Scriptures allow this, but they do not allow enforcement of Christianity by the sword.

Despite setbacks, troubles, and turbulence, this Conference proved a time of spiritual enlightenment and blessing. It was with a tinge of sadness that farewells were said on the Saturday morning. 

## Book Reviews

*Reformed Education, The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*, David J. Engelsma. Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000. Pp. x-101 (no price available). [Reviewed by Ron Koole.]

The Reformed Free Publishing Association has done all Reformed believers a great favor by publishing a revised edition of *Reformed Education*. This is a book which Reformed parents who seek to rear their children in the fear of the Lord, and Reformed teachers who seek to assist believing parents in this calling will want to read and periodically reread. This book provides encouragement as well as biblical direction to parents, teachers, and all involved in the task of educating the children of believers.

The original edition of *Reformed Education*, out of print for a number of years, contained five lectures which Prof. David J. Engelsma presented in 1975 to a gathering of Protestant Reformed teachers at a summer mini-course sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies. This revised edition has undergone thorough editing and contains a few significant additions which add to the quality and value of the book. One such addition addresses the increasingly popular home-schooling movement. Prof. Engelsma shows why home-schooling is not an option for Reformed parents where good Christian schools exist or where the possibility

of the establishing of a Christian school presents itself.

The author shows from Scripture that the basis of Christian education is God's covenant of grace. This covenant is explained as a relationship of friendship between God and His people in Jesus Christ; as a cosmic covenant, a covenant established with believers and their children in the line of continued generations. On this basis the whole endeavor of Reformed, Christian education depends. This basis determines the nature of the instruction in the Christian school and also defines the goal. Many attack this covenantal basis and establish Christian schools on other bases today. Some seek simply to escape the evil of the public schools, others seek to evangelize the children, while so many today attempt to provide education which will work to reform society and Christianize the world. Fail to establish the Christian school on this covenantal basis and the school will fail to accomplish its proper biblical goals, or the school will pervert the goals to fit its own basis.

The nature of the instruction in the Christian school must be biblical and confessional. The teaching of all the subjects in the light of God's Word gives unity to the instruction and is the only possible way to teach the truth. The activity of rearing covenant children in the fear of the Lord finds its foundation in the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions, which are the authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures. This, says the author, is the hard work which every Reformed teacher must strive to carry out.

The goal of Reformed, Christian education flows out of the covenantal basis. The author warns that Christian education must not start in the Spirit and then end with some fleshly goal such as the successful, cultured gentleman. The goal rather is the "mature man of God, who lives in this world in every area of life with all his powers as God's friend-servant, loving God and serving God in all of his earthly life with all of his abilities, and who lives in the world to come as a king under Christ, ruling creation to the praise of God, his Maker and Redeemer" (p. 84). This goal has two aspects. One aspect is that the child eternally praises God, and the other is a temporal aspect in which the child lives a life of holiness in this world.

Yes, the Reformed child of God must be taught to live antithetically in this world. A chapter entitled "Reformed Education and Culture" deals specifically with the justification and possibility of a Reformed school's teaching a liberal arts education and making use of the works of unbelievers. The author warns against the dangers of world-conformity on the one hand and world-flight on the other. The Reformed world and life view recognizes that this world is God's creation, which has been redeemed by Jesus Christ. It is in this context especially that the author shows the devastating effects of the false doctrine of common grace. This false doctrine minimizes the fall, breaks down the antithesis, and calls the Christian to cooperate with the world to build up society. Following this doctrine to its con-

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clusion eliminates any need for Christian education.

God places the responsibility to teach covenant children on believing parents. This is why Christian schools must be parental schools. This is also why the teacher stands in the place of parents and is a humble servant. The teacher must love the children of God's covenant. In a chapter dealing with the Protestant Reformed teacher, the author states the following as the credentials of the good teacher: full of the Spirit and grace of God, thoroughly Reformed, and possessing the ability to teach. Every teacher should be awestruck with his calling and "should feel that he would not accept such a position for a million dollars, and that he

could not leave it for two million" (p. 78). With a proper understanding of the relationship of parent and teacher there will follow a close unity of home and school.

In the preface the author informs the reader that in this revision he resisted the temptation to expand the subjects. The average reader thanks him for this. The book presents the truth concisely, as well as defends and warns against dangers and attacks on that truth. For those who desire to read further on particular topics, the author provides an extensive list of other works, in a bibliography and within the footnotes.

As has been stated, all believers will benefit from reading this book. Parents will strive with greater zeal and

with all their heart to maintain or establish a good Christian school. Teachers and administrators will grow to understand better their calling and the nature of their work. Board members will be better qualified to observe, interview, and hire teachers. They will also glean principles which should govern decision making in the areas of enrollment and curriculum. Aspiring teachers will be better prepared to interview for a teaching position. And all believers will grow in their understanding of this glorious work. There is power in education. May Reformed Christians use that power to the development of the whole of the child to the service and glory of God — because Christian education is a demand of the covenant.



## Report of Classis East

September 13, 2000  
Faith Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 13, 2000 at the Faith PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates; Rev. J. Slopesma chaired this session. The agenda of classis was light and the session ended at noon.

But before giving a report on the business of this session, first, a correction in the Report of Classis East for May 10, 2000 as published in the July, 2000 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. With reference to Rev. Richard Flikkema's credentials, it would have been better

to use the language that this brother used in his letter to the classis. So, rather than stating that "The first dealt with Rev. Richard Flikkema's request not to extend ... Article 12 of the Church Order," the report should have said that "After much prayerful consideration, I have decided that I am not going to ask for an additional extension...." The word *request*, as used in the previous report, gives the sense that Rev. Flikkema actively sought to terminate his credentials, which is something that he did not do.

In the September session, classis received an appeal to synod from a brother concerning a decision taken by

the January 12, 2000 session of classis. The appeal questions whether classis may let "fall away" what the appellant calls "doctrinal decisions." Classis decided not to make further response to the issues raised in this appeal, but will forward the appeal to synod with the materials pertinent to this appeal.

Classis heard reports from its Classical Committee and its Stated Clerk. The expenses of classis amounted to \$945.00. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, January 10, 2001 at the Georgetown PRC.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken,  
Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

### Mission Activities

On October 10 Rev. Barry Gritters and Rev. Ken Koole were scheduled to go to Northern Ireland for our churches' annual visit to that mission field. The purpose of these visits is to investigate the welfare of our missionary and his family and to conduct a

"church visitation" with the elders and deacons of the Covenant PRC in NI. Each year a delegation is sent, consisting of one representative from our Hudsonville, MI PRC, the calling church, and another representative from either the Mission Committee or the Contact Committee. Both of these committees are involved in the work. Even though there have been sister-church relations established (Contact Committee), Rev. Hanko is yet our missionary and performing mission work

in the British Isles (Domestic Mission Committee).

We can also report that Rev. Gise VanBaren, emeritus minister in our churches, along with his wife, have been in Northern Ireland for awhile to help Rev. Ron Hanko and his wife Nancy while she recovers from recent surgery.

From Rev. Richard Moore, our missionary to Ghana, we learn that work has begun on the septic system and on the storage building necessary for the

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*Mr. Wigger is a member in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*



storage of construction materials. Our missionary hoped to have work permit applications made that week, so that work could actually begin on the footings for the structure of their church building.

The government in Ghana has also licensed the Ghana Mission of our churches to marry couples on their property. Rev. Moore can now perform marriages and record them for the government.

All of this is, of course, encouraging for our missionary. We are sure a permanent church home will be most welcome, since Rev. Moore reports that the last few Sundays well over 100 people have attended the worship services. They are obviously outgrowing the use of the missionary home for worship services.

We recently learned that our Domestic Mission Committee has decided to provide preaching services two Sundays each month for the group of believers in Fayetteville, NC with whom they have been working for some time. So, in addition to our missionary, Rev. Jai Mahtani, making regular visits to Fayetteville, various of our pastors will be preaching there. Rev. James Slopsema, pastor of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, was there on October 1 and 8.

### Evangelism Activities

Regular readers of the "News" may remember that from time to time we have included evangelism news from the First PRC in Holland, MI and their efforts to provide Spanish literature to the sizable Spanish-speaking segment of Holland and beyond. We are happy to report that these efforts have been very successful — in fact, you could almost say too successful. Demand is far outpacing supply. Requests have come from Columbia, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Bolivia, and Spain, to name a few. Besides the three pamphlets already printed, there are five more waiting the necessary funds to have them printed. First Church did not ask us to do this, but it is very clear that they could use some help here. *Ayuden nos!* If there is anyone who would like to make a

special contribution to the printing of this literature, you can mail it to First at 3641 104<sup>th</sup> Ave., Holland, MI 49424.

### Denomination Activities

On September 19 there was a combined meeting of all the Adult Bible Societies in the west Michigan area at the Hudsonville, MI PRC. This meeting brought together for the first time members of Mr. and Mrs. Societies as well as from Men's and Ladies' Societies, who up until that night had each had their own League Mass Meeting. Mr. Angus Stewart, a 4<sup>th</sup> year student in our seminary from Northern Ireland, spoke very practically on the subject, "How to Make Bible Study Profitable for Our Daily Walk." A collection was taken for the Covenant PRC of NI.

A couple of days later, on September 21, Rev. James Laning, pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI, was the featured speaker at the annual meeting of the RFPA, held this year at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. Rev. Laning spoke on the topic, "Studying to Answer Rather Than Studying Destruction."

### Congregation Activities


Members of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI were recently asked whether they would like to refresh their Bible knowledge, and whether they would like to learn better how to apply the Word to today's issues. If they were interested, then they were invited to attend a special class taught by their pastor, Rev. Mitchell Dick. Rev. Dick promised to go through the entire Bible in this class over the course of two or three years, with the aim to teach/review the history of the salvation of the people of God from the point of view of the covenant of grace.

### Minister Activities

The congregation of the Randolph, WI PRC met on October 2 to call a pastor from a trio of the Revs. A. denHartog, M. Dick, and J. Slopsema. Voting resulted in a call being extended to Rev. Dick.

### *Food For Thought*

"You may trust the Lord too little, but you can never trust Him too much."

—Anonymous 

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 2, 2000, our beloved parents,

#### BERNIE and RUTH LUBBERS,

will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We, their children, thank the Lord for the many years He has given them together, for the precious instruction we have received, and the godly example that they have been to us.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).

- ❖ Jerry and Bonnie Lubbers
- ❖ Linda Lubbers
- ❖ Bruce and Deb Lubbers
- ❖ Gord and Sue Lubbers
- ❖ Ed and Melanie Hekstra
- ❖ Ken and Machele Elzinga
- ❖ Brad and Heather Lubbers
- ❖ Doug and Lisa Lubbers
- 24 grandchildren
- 2 great grandchildren

Byron Center, Michigan

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing,

#### MR. and MRS. JOSEPH FOLKERTS

celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on October 4, 2000.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our heavenly Father for their many years together. We are grateful for the loving home they provided for us and the godly instruction they gave and continue to give to us. We pray that God will continue to be gracious and daily strengthen them, and that He may grant them many more years together.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

- ❖ Fred and Rose Iwema
- Pat and Margaret Alsum
- Jared and Mary VanOverloop
- Sarah
- ❖ Rich and Judy Reyenga
- Steven, Laura, Matthew, Nathan
- ❖ Joseph and Joanne Folkerts III

Schaumburg, Illinois



## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 13, 2000 our covenant parents, who have spent their lifetime in service to each other, their children, their church, and their God, were blessed to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren thank God for our parents,

**BARTEL and TILLIE ZANDSTRA, Sr.,** who by the grace of God have given of themselves for us, in training us in the fear and nurture of God. We continue to pray for them, also in their later years, that God will bless them and keep them in His gracious care. And we confess with the psalmist, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory" (Psalm 72:18, 19).

- ❖ John and Claire Zandstra
  - ❖ Peter and Julie Zandstra
  - ❖ David and Karla Zandstra
  - ❖ Charles and Karla Zandstra
  - ❖ Rev. Wilbur and Mary Bruinsma
  - ❖ Daniel and Dawn Zandstra
  - ❖ Glenn and Joanne VanMilligan
  - ❖ Bartel and Janice Zandstra
  - ❖ Jeffrey and Betty Berens
  - ❖ Mark and Brenda Zandstra
  - ❖ Chris and Rose Ignowski
- 39 grandchildren  
6 great-grandchildren

Lansing, Illinois

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Harry and Mary Kaiser in the passing of Mary's brother,

### DONALD VER WYS.

May they find comfort from these words of Scripture: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

Rev. Dale Kuiper, Pres.  
Ed Hekstra, Clerk

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Pete Boverhof and family in the death of his brother,

### MR. WILLIAM BOVERHOF.

May they be comforted by the words of the psalmist in Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Rev. Audred Spriensma, President  
Jack Brands, Assistant Clerk

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Sr. Mr. & Mrs. Society of Hope PRC expresses Christian sympathy to its members Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Engelsma and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Vermeer in the death of their mother,

### MRS. GREDA HOEKSTRA.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Rev. J. Laning, Pres.  
E. Rau, Secretary

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Randolph PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. Jackie Hoekstra and Brian and Becky Buteyn in the death of their mother-in-law and grandmother,

### GENEVIEVE HOEKSTRA.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting" (Psalm 100:5a).

Lou Regnerus, Vice President  
Gary Buteyn, Clerk

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Ladies' Society of Hudsonville PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to Mrs. Donna Boven in the death of her father,

### HILBERT KUIPER, SR.

May the family find peace from God's Word in Psalm 116:7, 8, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee, For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."

Angus Stewart, Pres.  
Freda Zwak, Sec't.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 6, 2000 our parents and grandparents,

### JOHN and MARILYN DYKSTRA,

will celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We thank God daily for the continual inspiration, patience, and love shown to us their children, as they live their lives before God. We pray that God may continue to show His covenant faithfulness through them, bless them in their marriage, and care for them in the years to come.

"Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,

There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions  
they fail not;

As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be."

❖ Gerry and Theresa Dykstra

Michael, Eric, Heather, Carl, Eileen

❖ Ken Dykstra

❖ Dave and Wanda Kamminga

Shawn, Shannon, Kendra, Ryan, Audra,

Shane

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Martha Society of the Doon PRC express their Christian love and heartfelt sympathy to fellow member Mrs. Henrietta Klein and family in the death of her brother,

### MR. HIB KUIPER.

It is our prayer that they may be comforted with the words of our Lord in II Timothy 4:7, 8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Rev. Richard Smit, Pres.  
Cindy Altena, Vice-all