BEACON LIGHTS

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Contents

EDITORIAL
An Open Door - Peter Faber ......................................................1
The 1993 Young Adult's Spring Retreat - Bob Bos. ..........................2
What is it to be Reformed in Faith - Rev. R. Cammenga ...................3
What is it to be Reformed in Life? - Rev. C. Terpstra .....................6
DEVOTIONAL - Watching Daily At My Gates - Skip Hunter .............9
Question and Answer ..............................................................17
Testimonies - Tan Bak Wei ....................................................20

CONVENTION OUTLINE
Lessons From Our Beginning - Rev. M. De Vries .........................21

THE BINDING POWER OF THE WORD
The Authority of the Preacher - Rev. R. Dykstra ..........................24
Letter from Randolph School Society ......................................25
An Open Door

Jamaica, as I am sure you know, has been one of our mission fields for many years. I had the privilege of visiting some of our churches there this spring. Much could be said about the people and churches there. God has richly blessed us with a mission that truly needs our attention, work, and prayers. The people in Jamaica are enthusiastic and eager to hear the Word of God proclaimed.

For us as a denomination to have missions, we must be committed to them, be willing to work for them, and use everything that God gives us to diligently teach there. Mission work must be a priority in our churches and a priority that binds us closer together. Ministers must pray for all our mission fields, not one but all. A missionary is not just a job but a calling from God. All those called to be missionaries must be willing to sacrifice everything for Christ’s name. Our missionaries must eagerly confess as the Apostle Paul did, “for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

We as members of the church have an important job also. We must be a constant witness to all around us that Jesus lives within our heart. We must be eager to share this with all. Prayers must also be raised for mission work. Beside all this, we must also be ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Although we may be individuals or churches proclaiming the Word, we must remember that it is not our mission project but God’s. God will determine who will be converted. We are directed to a mission field to proclaim His name as revealed to us in His Word, and for His glory. If there are converts; they are His. If there are no converts; we can rest in His will. We will then be patient with the people that God has led to us. We live in an age of instant wants and needs. We want things now and besides wanting them now; we want lots of them. We want many converts fast or our attitude becomes one of “let us move on to another field”. We often decide when it is time to shut the door; instead of having faith that God will open and close the door.

Is it God that is shutting the door on the Jamaican people who confess His name? Is it God that is shutting the door on the people interested in the truth, and eager to hear the Word? It seems we are absorbed in closing the door; what are we afraid will get through the door? We must remember God’s Word never returns void.

Part of the purpose of doing missions is because God has commanded us to love our neighbor. In doing mission work we truly show our concern and love for the neighbor. If we love our neighbor who maybe unconverted, how much more love will we have for the saints in Jamaica.

We must accept that missions involves working with people who do not believe as we do. We must go out and teach all, not just Protestant Reformed people but all people.

Pray for our mission fields and missionaries!

-Editor

NOTES

This BEACON LIGHTS contains several interesting and exciting things in this issue. One, as you can see by the front cover is pictures, speeches, and a report from the spring retreat in Colorado. Two excellent speeches were given and you have them both right before you, make a special effort to read these timely and life changing speeches.

Second, this issue also contains the convention outline for discussion groups make sure to read and study it if you are attending the convention.

Have a great summer! - Editor
The 1993 Young Adult's Spring Retreat
Covenant Heights Conference Center
Estes Park, Colorado

by Bob Bos
1993 Spring Retreat Committee

The Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado held its third annual Young Adults Spring Retreat from March 29 through March 31, 1993. The setting was Covenant Heights Conference Center, Estes Park Co. in the majestic surroundings of the Rocky Mountains. A total of 24 young adults from Michigan, California, Washington, Iowa, South Dakota, Illinois, and Colorado helped make this year’s retreat a success. The following two pastors also attended the retreat: Rev. Cammenga of the Loveland congregation and this years visiting minister, Rev. Terpstra of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church.

The Retreat began on Monday, March 23 at The Egg and I Restaurant in Loveland, where those attending the retreat met for breakfast at 8 A.M. At 10 A.M. the group met at the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church for registration. They left church at approximately 11 A.M. and were at Covenant Heights by 12:15 P.M. Everyone dropped off their bags and supplies and headed for downtown Estes Park for lunch, bowling and shopping.

After supper at Covenant Heights, Rev. Cammenga gave a sermon (not a spelling error) on “What is it to be Reformed in Faith.” Several members of the Loveland P.R.C. congregation drove up to attend the sermon and the activities following. The activities consisted of a hot dog roast, games, volleyball, and fellowship. However, a day filled of activities still wasn’t enough to soothe some people’s souls. At 1 A.M., the words “let’s play volleyball” echoed through the halls of the lodge. So, at this early hour some people played volleyball while others played board games and card games. There were even a few crazy people sleeping at 1 A.M.! Imagine that!

People managed to stagger in to breakfast by 8 A.M. on Tuesday, March 30, the second day of the retreat. I’d like to take this opportunity to comment on the food at Covenant Heights. Most of you who have attended our P.R. conventions in the past have experienced some pretty horrible food. But I must say, Covenant Heights consistently served some of the finest and greatest tasting meals I have ever tasted - apart from a home cooked meal. Every meal was full course, along with several choices of drinks and a salad bar. I and many others, rated the food at Covenant Heights a “10”. Their service and hospitality was superb. (So don’t let the memories of bad food at conventions keep you away from next year’s retreat! It’s almost worth the trip.)

After an hour of free time, which usually meant volleyball, the group split into two discussion groups - one led by Rev. Cammenga and the other led by Rev. Terpstra. The topic of discussion was “Witnessing within the Church” in connection with Acts 8:26-40. It was a well spent hour of discussion and witnessing among those present.

After lunch the group split into two groups. One group of ten went horseback riding and the rest went snowshoeing in the Rocky Mountain National Park. These activities took most of the afternoon. Between Monday and Tuesday, about a foot of new snow fell in the mountains. But even though at times it snowed quite hard while snowshoeing and horseback riding, everyone had a good time. The falling snow gave a peaceful and quiet aspect to the wilderness - except when one would get attacked unexpectedly with handfuls of snow.

The group managed to gather once again in time for supper. Following this Rev. Terpstra gave his “leech” (lecture speech) on “What is it to be Reformed in Life.” Again that night, members from the Loveland P.R.C. came to attend the “leech” and the activities afterward. Around midnight part of the group again managed to begin a volleyball game. About 10 people participated in some of the craziest volleyball one can imagine. It was a great time!

Wednesday, March 31, the final day of the retreat, came too soon. It was time to pack up, clean up, move out, and say good-bye to new friends made, but not before playing 3 more games of volleyball! This was definitely a retreat of friendship made and friendships renewed. These were familiar faces and new faces all of which had a great time of fellowship and fun, all of one faith, all surrounded by God’s Majestic Creation and serene beauty. It was great to see 24 people from different parts of the country mix so well and have such a great time together.

We hope to see many repeat appearances and also many new faces in the years to come. A special thanks goes to all those who came this year. You made the Spring Retreat not only a success, but you have also created wonderful memories for everyone.
What is it to be Reformed in Faith

by Rev. Ronald Cammenga

You young people profess to be Reformed Christians. You are members of a Reformed church, a Reformed church that is part of a Reformed denomination, the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

Most of you have been Reformed Christians all your life. You have not been anything else but Reformed Christians. You were born into a Reformed family, to parents who are Reformed Christians. You were brought up from day-one in the Reformed church, sent to a Reformed Christian school attended catechism classes in the Reformed church, associated with other Reformed children and young people. Many of you have made confession of faith in that Reformed church in which you have been brought up, in your confession of faith acknowledging her to be a true church of Jesus Christ and promising to submit to her discipline.

But what really is it to be a Reformed Christian? What is it that distinguishes the Reformed Christian, not only from the children of this world, but also from others who call themselves Christians? What right do you have to consider yourself to be a Reformed Christian, a Reformed Christian not just in name, but in actual fact?

Historically, the Reformed churches trace their roots back to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. This is not to say that the Reformed faith began with the Reformation, for the Reformation was only the recovery and the rediscovery of the faith of the church that from centuries had been buried and concealed by the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed faith was not something new, discovered for the first time by the Reformers. But it was the setting forth once again of the age-old Christian faith, the faith of the apostles.

There were three main branches of the churches of the Reformation, the churches that repudiated and separated from Rome.

There were, first, the Anabaptist churches. The Anabaptist movement is sometimes referred to as the “Radical Reformation.” The Anabaptists are the ancestors of the modern-day Baptists.

There was, secondly, the Lutheran branch of the Reformation, those churches who took as their spiritual leader the great reformer, Martin Luther, and who were greatly influenced in their later history sadly by Luther’s colleague and successor, the compromising Philip Melanchton.

And there was the Reformed branch of the Protestant Reformation. These churches were known as “Reformed” in Germany, France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. In England, Scotland, and the north of Ireland, they were called “Presbyterian.” It is this latter branch that we are a part of historically and with which we identify ourselves theologically.

But what do these churches stand for? What is it to be Reformed? There are two aspects to the answer to this question, the subjects of the two speeches at this Retreat. To be Reformed is to be Reformed in faith, that is, in respect to what one believes. There is a Reformed doctrine. It is the “form of sound words” to which the Apostle refers in II Tim. 1:13. It is that aspect of the question that I will attempt to answer tonight. To be Reformed is also to be Reformed in life, or in practice. It is that aspect of the question that Rev. Terpstra will deal with tomorrow night.

“WHAT IS IT TO BE REFORMED IN FAITH?”

One truth distinguishes what is known as the Reformed faith; that truth is the sovereignty of God. Many people suppose that the heart of the Reformed faith is its teaching of predestination. When they hear of the Reformed faith or that someone is a Reformed Christian, they immediately think of election and reprobation. And certainly, it is true that the doctrine of predestination has an important place in the teaching of the Reformed faith.

Nevertheless, predestination is not the central truth of the Reformed faith. The heart of the Reformed faith is not election and reprobation, or, for that matter, any other single doctrine. The central truth of the Reformed faith is the absolute sovereignty of God. God is God!

Calvin saw the essential place that the confession of the sovereignty of God has in relation to the whole body of Biblical truth: “Unless we fully believe this (i.e., God’s sovereignty) the very beginning of our faith
is periled, by which we profess to believe in God Almighty.” (The Eternal Predestination Of God, p. 43).

The distinguishing feature of the Reformed faith is unquestionably its conception of God. What we believe about God matters most. Everything else that we believe stands connected to and is affected by what we believe about God. The most important question that any man faces is the question, “Who is God?” Or, to put it personally, “Who is your God?” This is the great issue that divides true religion and false religion! This is the great issue that separates the true church of Jesus Christ in the world from the false and apostate church! This is the issue that distinguishes faith from unbelief! This is the distinctive feature of the Reformed faith - its conception of God.

This is the explanation for the great wickedness in the world, not only, but for the falling away in the churches today: They have forgotten who God is! Noted historian, Joseph Haroutunian, laments:

Before, religion was God-centered. Before whatever was not conducive to the glory of God was infinitely evil; now that which is not conducive to the happiness of man is evil, unjust, and impossible to attribute to the deity. Before, the good of man consisted ultimately in glorifying God; now the glory of God consists in the good of man. Before, man lived to glorify God; now God lives to serve man.

Beloved young people, who is your God? If your God is not the sovereign God of heaven and earth, the God Who does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and if you do not see that the main, really the only purpose of your life is the glory of God, you have no reason to consider yourself to be a Reformed Christian.

This God reveals Himself in Holy Scripture. The second distinguishing doctrine of the Reformed faith is the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture.

To be Reformed is to subscribe to the Scripture’s divine inspiration and absolute authority. The doctrine of Scripture is at the very foundation of the Reformed faith. The Reformed faith has a high view, in the end, the only right view of Scripture. It is impossible to think of the Reformed faith apart from its confession concerning Scripture.

The Bible is the only authority in and over the church. In the end, the Bible is the only authority before which a Reformed Christian will bow. The reason for that is that the authority of the Bible is the authority of God. And the reason for that is that the Bible is inspired of God.

This is the Apostle’s teaching in II Tim. 3:16, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” The Reformed Christian does not ignore, question, or subject to criticism the Scriptures. But he receives them, believes them, and obeys them.

This is vital! For the Reformed faith teaches many things about which man complains and against which human nature rebels. Many respond to the teachings of the Reformed faith, “These are hard sayings, who can hear them?” For the Reformed Christian, the question is not, “What do 20th century men and women think about these things? How will people receive these things?” But the question is: “Does the Word of God say so?” That is the only question.

Beloved young people, I ask you, what is your attitude towards the Bible? Do you honor it as the sole authority in your life? Do you receive its teachings and obey its commandments? Do you turn to it for the solutions to the problems that you face? If you do not, you have no right to consider yourself to be a Reformed Christian.

There are many fundamental doctrines taught in Holy Scripture and maintained by Reformed Christians. Among these fundamental doctrines are what we often refer to as the doctrines of grace, or the Five Points of Calvinism. The Reformed faith is distinguished for being Calvinistic.

You are all familiar, I trust, with the Five Points of Calvinism, commonly remembered by the acronym “TULIP.” A Reformed Christian believes the doctrine of total depravity. He believes that all men are dead in sins and trespass-
es, unable and unwilling to do the good. Man’s sinfulness is not only the sinfulness of the deeds that he commits, but is the sinfulness of his very nature. And man’s sinfulness is not only his actual sins, but in the first place his original sin, his sin in father Adam.

A Reformed Christian believes the doctrine of unconditional election. He believes that those who are saved are saved, not because of a decision of their will, but because of the eternal will and decision of God. From eternity God has chosen some men unto salvation. Implied is the truth of reprobation, the truth that God has decreed to leave other men in the guilt of their sin, decreeing their condemnation in the way of their own sin.

A Reformed Christian believes the doctrine of limited atonement, the truth that Christ died for some men only and that all for whom He died are actually saved by His substitutionary death for them.

A Reformed Christian believes the doctrine of irresistible grace. This is the teaching that God’s grace and the work of the Holy Spirit cannot ultimately be frustrated by the will of man. When God determines to save a man, that man will be saved.

A Reformed Christian believes the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. All those chosen by God in eternity and in whom the Spirit begins to work in time, will be saved to the uttermost. They will be preserved in their faith so that they do not finally and fatally fall from grace.

Are these the fundamental tenets of your faith? Do you subscribe to these truths as the clear teaching of Holy Scripture? If you do not, you have no right to consider yourself a Reformed Christian.

* * * * *

In the fourth place, the Reformed faith is marked by a high view of the church, the instituted church.

That church it views as the gathering of the elect people of God and their seed, or children. The Reformed faith considers membership in the church crucial. This is not to say that all who are outwardly and formally church members are saved. But it is to say that ordinarily outside of the church there is no salvation.

You consider yourself a Reformed Christian. What is your attitude towards the church? Do you take your church membership seriously? Are you determined for no earthly or selfish reason to forsake your membership in the church? If not, you have no right to consider yourself to be a Reformed Christian.

* * * * *

In the fifth place, the Reformed faith is covenantal. To be Reformed is to confess the covenant of God. The church, we said, is the gathering of the elect people of God AND their seed, their children. The seed of believ-

ers ARE members of the church. And they are members of the church by virtue of the covenant of God.

By the covenant we simply mean that God’s decree, as well as His actual work of salvation in time and history, runs in the generations of believers. The passage that we read together tonight illustrates this truth. For II Tim. 1:5 speaks of the salvation of three successive generations, Timothy’s grand-mother, Timothy’s mother, and Timothy himself. What is the explanation for that? The explanation is the covenant of God.

That covenant is a unilateral and unconditional covenant. That belongs to the Reformed conception of the covenant.

Included in the Reformed conception of the covenant is also the calling of the covenant, our part in the covenant. That covenant calling is the calling to live a new and holy life to the praise of the covenant God.

You consider yourself a Reformed Christian. Do you confess the truth of the covenant of God? Are you thankful for His grace that caused you to be born in the covenant? Are you living faithfully as a member of the covenant? If not, you have no right whatsoever to consider yourself to be a Reformed Christian.

* * * * *

It belongs, yet, to the distinguishing features of the Reformed faith that it emphasizes the important place of preaching.

It is not enough that we have the Scriptures; we must have the Scriptures preached. This is the chief task of the Reformed church. This is the chief means of grace in the life of the Reformed Christian. Apart from the preaching there is no Reformed faith and there is no living the Reformed life.

You confess that you are a Reformed Christian. What is your attitude towards the preaching of God’s Word? If you have little or no use for the preaching, can only be critical of the preaching, neglect the preaching services of the church, you have no right to consider yourself to be a Reformed Christian.

* * * * *

This is the Reformed faith. A glorious faith! The faith of our fathers! Your faith and my faith!

Maintain it! Defend it! Share it! Adorn it with a godly life! “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us,” II Tim. 1:13, 14.
What Is It to be Reformed in Life?

by Rev. Charles Terpstra

I. INTRODUCTION

Pastor Cammenga has laid a good foundation for us in reminding us of what it is to be Reformed as far as our belief is concerned. In this second speech we want to examine together what it means to be Reformed in life. This is what we sometimes refer to as the practical side of our faith, Christian living or sanctification. There are a couple of things I want to bring out before we get into the subject of the Reformed life itself.

The first thing I want to bring out is the truth that there is such a thing as living a Reformed life. The Reformed faith does impact our lives. It does include godly, holy living.

As you know, the enemies of sovereign grace have always accused the Reformed faith of being opposed to sincere Christian living. They contend that the doctrine of salvation by grace alone without human works and merit kills a godly life, and makes one irresponsible and careless. It is said that the Reformed faith does not do justice to man’s will and man’s working, and so it makes him licentious. The ancient objection of Romans 6:1 is raised, “Let us sin that grace may abound” (cf. also the Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 64).

But this charge is false. The Reformed faith has always taught and stressed the necessity of living a Christian life, of being godly and living holy, of doing good works. In fact, Calvinism has always taught that this life is included in grace itself. God’s sovereign grace working in the sinner includes regeneration and conversion and sanctification, the making of the sinner to be new and holy and the turning of his heart and life from what is evil unto what is good (cf. Rom.6:3ff.; Heid.Cat., A. 64; Belg.Conf., art.24).

Further, because the Reformed faith is explicitly biblical in its approach, it has always taught what the Bible teaches about Christian living. It has taught and stressed holiness and obedience from the law of God. It has given full force to the practical admonitions of the Word of God and called redeemed sinners to obey them according to the grace given them. It has called believers to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

Plainly therefore, the Reformed faith teaches that the doctrines of grace have to do with your life, that they do impact your conduct in this world, and that you do have a responsibility to live holy.

The second thing which needs to be stressed is that this Reformed life is inseparable from the doctrines we hold by faith and is in fact based upon them and flows from them. There are two extremes we must avoid in this connection.

One extreme is to cut a Reformed life off from Reformed doctrine. This would be to say that you believe all the doctrines of Calvinism, but then stop there and never live a Christian life. That is to have the root and trunk of the Reformed tree but without any fruit. This position is called sometimes called “dead orthodoxy”, but it is really no orthodoxy at all. It is just plain deadness. A person who thinks and acts this way shows that he or she is really not a Reformed tree at all.

The other extreme is to cut Reformed doctrine off from Reformed living. There are some professed Christians who do this. They are very much concerned about living a Christian life, but they minimize and even ridicule sound doctrine. They are very busy acting like Christians, but do not know why they are doing it. This is to pretend to have the fruit of the Christian life without any root and trunk. This kind of Christian quickly withers and dies.

Rather must we see that doctrine and life go together, and that the Reformed life and practice is based on and flows from the doctrines of the Reformed faith. If we think of the Reformed Christian as a tree (and the Bible speaks of him and her that way), then the doctrines of the Reformed faith comprise the roots and the trunk of the believer, and the godly practice or the holy living comprises the leaves and the fruit of the believer. Where you have soundness of doctrine (good roots and trunk), you will have soundness of life (fruit) And where you have soundness of life, you may be sure that underneath it is soundness of faith.

The truth of this is easily demonstrated from Scripture itself. In Paul’s epistles, for example, we find this pattern: first he sets forth the sound doctrine the believers must hold, and then he sets forth the godly life which follows and flows from this. The books of
Romans and Ephesians especially show this pattern (see chapters 12 and 4 respectively). So true is this relation, that in Titus 1:1 the Bible calls the Christian's faith the “acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness.”

With these beginning points in mind, we want to examine in further detail some principles of living a Reformed life, and do that by considering certain young adults and saints in the Bible who exemplified these principles.

II. SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

There are two general principles about living a Reformed, Christian life which we ought to pay attention to first of all.

The first one is that leading a truly Reformed life is living out of the knowledge of our SIN and of God’s GRACE in Jesus Christ. No doubt this is basic, but this is so crucial to true Reformed living. As Reformed Christians we believe that of ourselves we are totally depraved and hopelessly lost. It is God's free and sovereign grace in His Son that has saved us.

What I am stressing is that the knowledge of this truth must be the governing principle of our Christian lives. This must not merely be a doctrine we are convinced of when we first come to salvation. It must not be a doctrine we put on the shelf once we come to faith in Christ. To the contrary, this must be the guiding and governing principle of our whole life. Always we must live out of the knowledge and experience of our sinfulness and of God's saving grace to us.

B.B. Warfield, the great Presbyterian theologian of the previous age, wrote this about the Reformed Christian:

“The Calvinist is the man who has seen God, and who, having seen God in His glory, is filled on the one hand with a sense of his own unworthiness to stand in God's sight as a creature, and much more as a sinner, and on the other hand, with adoring wonder that nevertheless this God is a God who receives sinners.”

Such is the kind of Calvinist we must be. The apostle Paul was a saint who lived out this principle. Throughout his epistles he testifies to the fact that he is a believer who continued to live out of the knowledge of his sin and of God’s grace to him (cf. Romans 7: 7ff.; 1 Cor. 15:9,10; 1 Tim.1:15).

Why is this so crucial? Because if we do not continually live out of the knowledge and experience of our sin and of God’s grace, we will soon become complacent and proud and self-sufficient. We will fall into work-righteousness and/or legalism, and thus into bondage. Only the constant knowledge that of ourselves we are lost sinners and that it is God alone who saves us will keep us on the right course in our Christian lives. The theme of our lives must be that found in the words of John Newton: “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!”

The other basic principle relates to the Scriptures. That is, that to live the Reformed life, we must be Reformed according to the Word of God. This was what the name “Reformed” originally meant. The Reformers were men who “reformed” the church according to the Scriptures. They acknowledged the Bible to be the only authority for the church’s faith and practice, and realizing that Rome had departed from this, they strove to restore the church according to this rule.

The same principle applies to the individual Reformed believer. He or she is a man or woman of the book, a person whose life is formed according to this Scripture. Our lives in all of their aspects are to be regulated by this infallible rule. That is a principle we must live by as Reformed Christians. That implies that the Bible has a dominant place in our lives - that we read it, study it, search it, follow it. What place does the Bible have in your life? Are you using it and are you following it?

There are a couple of young men in the Bible who understood and lived by this basic principle in their lives. The first is the psalmist of Ps. 119. Read just vss. 9-16 to find out how important the Word of God was to him. The second example is Timothy. Read 2 Tim.3:14-17 to discover what critical place and role the Scriptures had and would continue to have in his life. This too is being Reformed in life, having a life formed according to the Word of God.

III. SOME SPECIFIC AND DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Let us consider next some of the specific characteristics of a Reformed Christian. What are some of the spiritual marks that single them out as distinctive
in their living?

The first and dominant thing is that he or she walks in the FRIENDSHIP OF THE LORD. As Reformed believers we put a lot of emphasis on the truth of the covenant. We believe that when God saves us, He sovereignly makes an unconditional relationship of friendship with us through Jesus Christ. He becomes our Friend-Sovereign and He makes us His friend-servants. And the fruit and blessing of that relationship is fellowship. God draws close to us and takes us into sweet communion with Himself.

This is more than just an objective reality for the Reformed believer; it is also a subjective reality. And it has very practical implications too for his life and practice. It means that we live close to the Lord, that we walk in daily fellowship with Him. He is our best Friend in life. Listen to how David spoke of this fellowship in Ps.63 (read it!). Listen to how Asaph described his relationship to God in Ps.73:23-28 (read it!).

This friendship and fellowship with God is not something mystically experienced. It comes through the use of prayer and the Word and worship. Hence, the Reformed Christian is diligent in the use of these means. Are you? How close is your life to the Lord as your Friend?

This friendship with the Lord also translates into friendship with the Lord’s people. And that is the second thing which is distinctive about the Reformed Christian’s life. As he has the Lord for His friend, so he has the Lord’s friends for his friends. As he abides in fellowship with the Lord, so he abides in fellowship with fellow believers. We call this the communion of saints, and it is tremendously important for young adults to realize and practice. Probably the outstanding Biblical example is David and Jonathan, I Sam.18:1ff. (read it!). Their relationship was special but it is nevertheless a pattern for us.

This has implications for your whole Christian life. Friends make you or break you, the saying is. Evil friends can corrupt you and ruin you for life. The wrong marriage partner can bring untold grief into your life. Strive to make this spiritual friendship a distinctive part of your life. Make Christian friends and build the relationships you have. Seek a true covenant friend of the Lord for your mate. That will serve you well in all of life.

Another distinctive characteristic of the Reformed Christian’s life is HOLINESS. The Reformed man and woman are holy in heart and life. They are sanctified persons, through the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, and thus lead sanctified lives.

And holiness is first of all SEPARATION FROM WHAT IS EVIL. We know this as the truth of the antithesis. It is rooted in our view of God’s particular grace and our rejection of common grace. And it is good to remember that this is the negative aspect of sanctification. This is why holiness is a battle, because we have to reject and turn away from sin in ourselves and in the world. The Bible repeatedly points to this distinctive: Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:14ff; Col. 3:5ff.; Ja. 1:27; I Jn. 2:15—17.

Daniel is a good pattern for us. As he lived in a godless environment intent on making him conform, he lived in holiness. He refused to defile himself with the king’s meat, and in that way of rejecting sin he prospered (cf. Dan 1). This is the Reformed Christian’s ‘world-flight’ - not escaping the world, but fleeing it spiritually.

And then secondly, holiness in the Reformed Christian’s life is PURITY and CONSECRATION to what is good and godly. The Reformed believer is a person with a washed heart, a cleansed mind and will, and therefore is a person devoted to what is pure and clean in his daily living, cf. Phil. 4:8. He sets his heart on what is pure; he thinks what is pure; he wills what is pure; he is devoted to what pure. He loves what God loves, and consecrates himself to doing what pleases God. And so he strives to keep the law of God, which is his standard for holiness. Does holiness mark your life? If it does not, you have no right to call yourself a Reformed Christian.

IV. THE ESSENTIAL MOTIVES

Last of all, there are a couple of great spiritual motives from which your Reformed life must spring. The Reformed life is not lived by coercion from without, but by spiritual motives arising from within. It is always a danger that we live out of force and compulsion. Then we fall into legalism and even worse, into hypocrisy.

This must not be. And grace will not allow it.

No, the Reformed Christian lives first of all out of the motive of LOVE FOR GOD. He loves God because God has first loved him and has spread His love abroad in his heart. And so this love is the inner spring from which his whole life of conformity to the Word of God and his fellowship with God and with His people and his holiness arises. With an overflowing heart he seeks to thank the Lord and please Him.

Further, the motive from which the Reformed Christian lives is the GLORY OF GOD. The Reformed believer knows that God is the reason for all he is and has. He knows that God’s glory is revealed in the salvation of his soul. He knows that God’s glory is the purpose of his salvation, Eph. 1:6. He knows that he is to live to the glory of God, I Cor. 1:31; 10:31.

And because he knows the greatness of God and His saving grace, the Reformed Christian wants to glorify God in all he does. He does not need to be told; he is motivated to do it. It is spontaneous. That is, if we truly know our sin and truly know His grace.

May we strive to be Reformed in our lives, to live out of these Biblical principles, to be distinctive, and to live by these motives. Then we shall have the Lord’s blessing, and we shall receive His reward.
Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

Proverbs 3:19-26  Young people are you confident in what you do? Or are you afraid that whatever you do may turn out wrong? This portion of scripture has much to say on that matter. The first part shows the power of God. The second part shows the necessity of trusting in Him. Finally the last part shows the blessings of such trust. We do not have to be afraid when we sleep or any other time in our lives. Jehovah is our confidence. Sing or read Psalter 65.

Acts 9:36-42  Do you wonder how you can be thankful for the salvation God has given you? The third part of the catechism is about that idea. Dorcas found a way to express her thanks to God for His wonderful work. She helped those who were in need around her. Dorcas used her ability to work with her hands to help others and to glorify God. Are we helping others with our abilities? Are we glorifying God as we do it? Think about that, people of God. We must be thankful to God for our salvation. Sing or read Psalter 377 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 7.

Isaiah 65:17-25  Some of you will travel this summer and enjoy God's creation. Some people are fascinated by the trees in our land. Some of these trees are for food; in others we see a picture of the majesty of God. God also gives us trees as a picture of the blessedness of being a child of God. Some trees are known for lifespans of hundreds of years. God uses this to describe for us our lives in heaven. When we remember that the trees are only a picture, we see how much God will bless us in glory. Enjoy the trees this summer, but don't forget to see their beautiful picture. Sing or read Psalter 2.

Acts 15:12-18  Satan wishes the word of God to be silenced. He uses many means to accomplish that goal. Is he using you? He probably is not using us the way he used the girl in Philippi, but he definitely will use any means possible to stop the spread of the gospel. Are our actions means that Satan can use to stop others from attending our churches and hearing the truth? Do people see in us God's handiwork or Satan's handiwork? If we are being used by Satan to stop the spread of the gospel, let us fall to our knees and ask God to forgive us this sin and ask Him to use us to spread His gospel. Sing or read Psalter 141.

Acts 15:19-25  Could you sing God's praises while you are being tortured for doing His work? If someone mocks you for keeping the sabbath day or attending a Christian school, could you praise God for that? Paul and Silas did. They sang while their bruised and bleeding bodies were bound mercilessly in the stocks. They sang God's praises in that condition. How about us? Do God's praised come easily to our lips? Sing or read Psalter 13 especially 1-3 and 7.

Acts 15:25-34  The gospel will never return unto God empty; there will always be results. The familiar account which you read shows how God uses works of his people for his glory. The catechism uses this language: “tht, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ.” How godly is our daily walk? Will God wish to use it to bring others to Christ? We have been given His word to use. Let it permeate each part of our daily lives. Sing or read Psalter 68.

Acts 15:35-40  God uses many means for his people's advantage. Here it is a little matter of Roman citizenship. Sometimes we wonder why God's providence works the way it does. Sometimes we cannot fathom His way. But yet we must always know His way is best. Paul must have had this quite often in his work as missionary. Many things happened to him which would have us scratching our heads and wondering. We must see that God's ways are best and work to our good. Let us not ask why too often. Let us say, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Sing or read Psalter 62 especially stanzas 1 and 2.
Genesis 15:1-6
There are two little words which appear often in Scripture. These two words are always full of great comfort to me. These words are "fear not." Abraham had a great worry. He felt that God's covenant line would be broken because he had no children. He did not see how God was going to make in him a great nation. God came to Abraham and told him not to worry about things. He told him to "Fear not." Abraham believed and God counted that to him for righteousness. Sing or read Psalter 66 especially stanzas 1-3.

Exodus 14:8-14
Israel thought itself trapped in a trap from which there was no escape. The Red Sea, mountains, and Pharaoh's host doomed them to death. Moses spoke the words of verse 13. In it he speaks of salvation. God's salvation is great. He can save us from all kinds of situations. We must let Him fight for us. We must hold our peace and see the salvation of the Lord. Are you perplexed or frightened by something in your life? Fear not, stand still, hold your peace, and see the salvation of our great God. Sing or read Psalter 249 especially stanzas 1, 3, 4, and 6.

Deuteronomy 1:19-25
Moses was recounting to Israel their history. In it he brings up the shameful day at Kadesh-Barnea where Israel refused to do the work of the Lord. They thought the work too hard for them even after they had been encouraged by God's word to fear not. What about us? Do we as workers in God's kingdom fear the work as being too hard? Do we rebel against God as Israel rebelled? We don't have to. With God saying "fear not", what more do we need? Sing or read Psalter 7.

Isaiah 51:1-8
Do you seek righteousness? Do you seek the Lord? Are you troubled because of this? Sometimes these troubles come from within, and sometimes these troubles come from without. That is not unusual for the people of God. Scripture records many places where God's people are troubled because they sought the Lord. In today's passage God gives us much comfort for these afflictions. We are told not to fear those from without because their end is sure. We also need not fear them because God's salvation is everlasting. Sing or read Psalter 73 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 6.

Luke 2:8-15
There are many instances of the comforting words "fear not" in the Christmas story. Angels came to Zecharias, to Mary, and to Joseph with these words of comfort about the Word of comfort. God also sent angels to the shepherds with these words. The shepherds are a picture of the church. It had been over four hundred years since Malachi was written. The people of God felt need of comfort and God sent it. What a comfort he sent as we can plainly see in the message of the angels to the shepherds! That message Is ours! Turn to it often when you feel the need and fear not. Sing or read Psalter 71 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 5.

In these verses Christ gives us instruction about our daily lives. The first instruction is to seek the kingdom of God. Christ then tells us by way of such earnest seeking all our physical cares will be met. Often we worry about both of these things. We feel a lack of assurance about God's kingdom in our hearts. We wonder if we are really saved. According to verse twelve we need not worry about such things. It is God's will that His people come to eternal life. When we put that worry out of our mind, the second worry too will vanish. Sing or read Psalter 75 especially stanzas 1, and 4-6.

Matthew 28:1-8
The small band of Christ's followers had spent a very restless Sabbath. They did not know what would happen to them now that Christ had been killed. They worried about their own lives. The women went to the tomb that Sunday to finish the task of embalming their Lord. They did it out of love for Jesus. When they saw the angel, all of their fears leaped to their faces. The angel saw the fear and spoke the comforting words "fear not." The reaction of the women Is found in the word "joy" in verse eight. What about us? Do we still react with joy over Christ's resurrection? Or do we still have many fears? Take the angel's words to heart; they are for us as well as the women. Sing or read Psalter 77 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 5.

Revelation 1:10-20
John had been exiled on the island of Patmos for doing the work of God. While he was there, Christ came to him. Even John the beloved disciple fell at His feet in fear. Then Jesus spoke to him those comforting words "fear not." Jesus comes to us with the same words. As we have seen over the past few days those words came to God's people in many situations. Those are also God's words to us as God's people. We need not be afraid because He is with us. In Revelation John writes of many seeming distressing situations for the church. They are not distressing when we remember to fear not. Pray for this comfort young people. Pray for it for yourselves but also for others of the church of God. Fear not. Sing or read Psalter 397 especially stanzas 1, 5 and 8.
Genesis 34:1-4; 27-30  June is traditionally the month of marriages. What about you young people; is that your desire? I hope it is. God has given us marriage as beautiful picture of the relationship of Christ and the church. But how are you dating? If you are dating the way Dinah dated, be assured that God will bring upon you the troubles that Jacob's family encountered in this chapter. This chapter teaches a strong lesson. Do you want a blessing upon your dating and marriage? Then, young men and women, do not seek your dates and mates among unbelievers. Sing or read Psalter 271 especially stanzas 2 and 3.

I Corinthians 13  This is often called the great chapter on love. It is, too. As children of God we must examine the kind of love spoken about in this chapter. Love is easily spoken about. Of what kind of love is spoken in this chapter? The answer is easy—the love of Christ. Yesterday we spoke about marriage. If the true love of Christ cannot be found between you and someone else, do not date them. If you do not date them, you won't have to worry about marrying them. We must make sure the love of Christ is found in us at all times. The love of Christ must characterize all of our life. Read the chapter again and examine your life in its light. Sing or read Psalter 11.

Amos 5:1-9  Young people do you look at God's creation often? Are you given to lying on your back at night and looking at the stars? Do you enjoy the beauty of nature? Summertime is a good time for this experience. Why should we do that? We should look at creation because God gives pictures of Himself. We can learn about our Creator in His creation. The chapter says to seek the Lord and we shall live. As we look in creation we will want to go to God's word and see what He is saying about Himself. Seek the Lord, young people, even as you enjoy His Creation. Sing or read Psalter 15.

Amos 5:8-15  Amos wrote these words to a people who were going astray. The prophecies concerning Israel's captivity were increasing. But yet the call came to the people of God to repent. These calls are summed up in verses thirteen and fourteen of this chapter. These verses illustrate for us the great truth of the antithesis. We are called to live an antithetical walk in which we seek good and hate evil. What about it? Are we doing that? Are we seeking the good things God has given us? Are we fleeing the evil? Sing or read Psalter 260 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 5.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7  These are fitting words to use as we approach the house of God today. Are we ready to hear what the Lord will say? Are our offerings given with thanksgiving? Do we sing in a way that is pleasing to the Lord? Going to church is serious. We cannot treat it any other way. When we step into his presence, we need to be ready to worship. We must be holy as we worship, for God is holy. Above all as we worship we must fear God. Sing or read Psalter 225.

Galatians 5:1-13  Do we use Christian liberty correctly? Do we use our Christian liberty to mask a multitude of sins? I hope not. That is not the idea of Holy Spirit through Paul in this chapter. Some of the early church had the idea that they could "sin that grace may abound." The Holy Spirit said, "Definitely not!" We have liberty to live lives not bound by the Old Testament law. But that same liberty allows us to live in a way that we love God, keep his commandments, and then love one another. That is the way we must use our Christian liberty. Sing or read Psalter 84.

Esther 2:15-20  Have you ever heard such a wicked commandment as is given in verse 20? Is this the way a child of God should act? Are we so ashamed of our salvation that we hide who we are? Must we fear Satan and the world so much that we hide our true identity? Hopefully the answer, young people, is obvious. We must show who we are all the time to all people. We may never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ that we hide it. Paul states this in Romans 1:16. He was ready to show who he was even to a wicked emperor in Rome who could take his life. Are you Esthers trying to win the favor of the world, or Pauls trying to show your love for God? Sing or read Psalter 261.

Hebrews 13:1-6  How does verse one strike you? Before you say, "No problem," answer this question. Is every one in church your brother, or do you pick and choose? These words of Hebrews' author should cause us to stop and think. Are we willing to give a hand to anyone who needs our assistance? Christ puts many circumstances in front of us so that we have opportunity to show His mercy. Do we use those opportunities or will we say at the end of time, "When did I see thee hungering, thirsting, naked, etc." We must show love to all of our brethren in Christ all of the time. Sing or read Psalter 25.
Hebrews 13:7-9; 17-21 Do you know what verse eight means? Is there room for boredom in our church lives with such a statement? Does this statement bring great comfort and stability in our lives? I hope the answer to the second question is no and to the third yes. I hope this because then we can serve God in our lives and worship in peace. We will not need to wonder if our worship needs to be updated. We will not need to wonder if the Bible is timebound. We can be assured that the Word of God is changeless and in Him is no shadow of turning. With this confidence we can honor those who have the rule over us in church knowing that they are placed there by God. Sing or read Psalter 245 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 5.

Ezekiel 28:1-10 What a horrible thing the prince of Tyrus had said! He claimed for himself God's authority. This was the sin of Satan; this was the sin of Adam and Eve; this was the sin of those at the tower of Babel; this is the sin of those today who belong to the New Age. People of God, are you tempted by some of the New Age philosophies? Some of them sound pretty nice. But when you get to the root of them you see that they wish to set themselves up as God. Try those philosophies against the word of God and then run to the shadow of His wings. Sing or read Psalter 248 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 4.

I John 4:1-6 Notice the connection between this passage and yesterday's. The Old and New Testaments are both relevant for today's Christian. Not one word needs to be left out or changed. In fact if you leave one word out, you will have nothing with which to try the spirits. As we draw nearer and nearer to the end of time we must be constantly putting this commandment into action. One of the signs of the end will be those who say, "Lo, here is Christ or there is Christ." We must be able to discern those who are antichristian and be ready to walk in the spirit of truth. Are you trying the spirits? Sing or read Psalter 321.

Ezra 9 Do we blush as we bring our sins to God? We should, because God is holy. We are no different than the people of Israel that returned from captivity. We have been brought back from sin through Christ's death on the cross, but yet we still do those things we know we should not. We had better go to our God in prayer. We can do this in the confidence that God will show his grace to us. He has given us a nail in his holy place. Just as a nail secures a board in a building, grace assures us of our place in the church. Pray for forgiveness and the grace that brings it. Sing or read Psalter 83.

I Peter 1:1-5 What a glorious word God gives to His elect. We are begotten to a lively hope. Our hope is not dead. Our hope is based on the living Christ. What can be more sure than that? Are we looking for that incorruptible inheritance? Are we building up treasures in heaven? We can have no doubts, you know. We are kept by the power of God. Christ's work for us on the cross is sure. What a glorious thought that is! Live in that assurance, waiting the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sing or read Psalter 28.

Habakkuk 3 In this prayer Habakkuk recounts the works of God as he brought judgment upon the wicked. He sees the destruction brought by God even in the world of plants and animals. In verse 16 he says he was frightened by all of it. Habakkuk knew that such judgment was because of sin among God's people. How about us? Do we see God's judgment in the world around us? Do we see so-called acts of nature as the hand of God? Habakkuk was not afraid. In the last two verses he talks of his joy because God is his salvation. Do we have the same confidence? Sing or read Psalter 37.

I Timothy 2:1-8 Do you mention government leaders in your prayers? If you do, do you pray for their salvation? These are the two aspects in these verses. True, we must not imagine that God will allow the sinful acts of leaders to go unpunished. Leaders that permit the evil to triumph are not doing good in God's sight. Yet, we must pray for them. We pray so the church may have rest as long as possible. We also pray for the salvation of those whom God will save. When Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," He prayed for the centurion. Pray for your leaders because it is God's command. Sing or read Psalter 223.
Haggai 2:1-9  
As Israel began to rebuild the temple after the captivity it became apparent that this temple would not approach Solomon's temple in beauty. God came to Israel to console them. He first reminds them that He is still with them even as He was when they came from Egypt. He then tells them that this temple will have Christ come to it. We need these words as well. Some times we forget that God is with us. We look back at the time of the Reformation and wonder if we could do what Luther and the others did. God comes to us and tells us to look ahead when Christ will return to this earth. Sing or read Psalter 33.

II Corinthians 5:1-8  
Death is hard for us who are earthly. It is hard for those who are dying because they have families who seem to need them. It is hard for those who watch loved ones waste away in bed. Yet if we read the words of this chapter we can find great comfort in death for the child of God. While we remain on this earth, we are absent from the presence of our heavenly Father. Therefore death is nothing to be feared. Death for the child of God is that entrance into heaven where we can sit at the feet of Jesus with all the saints who have gone before us. Sing or read Psalter 312.

II Corinthians 5:9-13  
Now that we see death has such great promise, what about our life on this earth? Paul makes it plain that we have a calling here. We must carry out all God has given for us to do to the utmost of our abilities to His honor and glory. Why is this true? Verse 10 has the answer. Each of us must appear before Christ and give account of all we have done. Therefore while we remain on this earth we must always strive to glorify God in all that we do. Sing or read Psalter 161 especially stanzas 1, 4, 5, 8, and 9.

II Corinthians 5:14-21  
Why do we have such confidence that death will not defeat us? Do we have confidence that we will appear before Christ in heaven? The answer is found in these last verses. Christ loved us and died for us sinners. Not only that God raised Christ from the dead and even now He is in heaven preparing for each of us our mansion. We struggle against the old man of sin daily, but we can struggle in the confidence that we have an advocate in heaven even Jesus Christ who went the way of the cross for our salvation. Sing or read Psalter 55.

Hosea 6  
Hosea through his prophecy brought many hard words to the church. The church had fallen far from what God had made it. But there is comfort in this prophecy as well. In verse one of this chapter we see that God chastises his church; but He also brings comfort to the chastised church. Read verse three and six again. Verse three talks of the benefits of returning from sin to Jehovah. Verse six speaks of the life that God wants. Here we see the two great commandments, love God(knowledge of God) and love the neighbor (mercy). Let us see that God is merciful even when we walk in sin. Let us see that we must have a knowledge of our merciful God. Sing or read Psalter 386 especially stanzas 3-5.

II Chronicles 22:6-13  
David had desired to build God's house. God had told him that he could not do it, but that his son Solomon would perform such a task. David obeyed the word of the Lord, but he made as many preparations as he could so that his son could do the work. One of the last preparations was that he called Solomon to him and charged him with the task. David gave Solomon great help, but the greatest help is found in verses 11-13. Fathers, do you give your children great help? Are you making preparations so that they can carry out God's work in the future? Do they know as Solomon did that they will only prosper when they keep the law of Jehovah? Sing or read 367 especially stanza 3.

John 6:25-37  
Jesus had fed the five thousand. Now the huge multitude had followed him across the Sea of Galilee wanting more. They wanted the wrong bread. They wanted physical bread and other physical needs. Jesus had to show them and us that true disciples of Christ hunger after the bread of life. That bread cannot be found by earthly means. This bread comes from the Father who freely gives to His people Christ the bread of life. Do we hunger after the bread of life? Is that what we feed our children? Sing or read Psalter 297 especially stanzas 1 and 3.

John 8:12-20  
Most of us reading this are not blind. We have the ability with our physical eyes to discern those things around us. Even as physical light shows to us our physical surroundings, spiritual light makes plain our spiritual surroundings. Do we follow the light of the world? Do we trip spiritually because we do not follow Jesus the light? Psalm 119:106 says, "Thy word is a lamp unto our feet and a light upon our paths." Jesus is the Word. Follow him and walk in the light. Sing or read Psalter 334.
John 10:1-9  
Do you want to go to heaven? Do you want to be with the other saints around the throne of God? How do you get there? Can you get there by yourself? Do you get there by doing good things for others? Will you get there by attending church regularly or because your family has gone to church for years? You can't get there on your own works. You can't get there by someone else's works either. We know that our best works in this life are but filthy rags. How do we get to heaven? Jesus is the door to heaven. Only through Him and His grace can we go to heaven. Sing or read Psalter 30.

John 10:11-18  
In the days that sheep wandered through the lands of Israel and other countries, a good shepherd was an absolute necessity. Sheep need a shepherd, to feed them, water them, and keep them from danger. A shepherd who shirked his duty often caused the sheep to die. We need a spiritual shepherd who is good. We are like sheep. That is the testimony of Isaiah 53. We have a good shepherd as this portion of the Bible tells us. We must always give thanks that the father has given us Christ, the good shepherd, who was willing to give His life for His sheep. Sing or read Psalter 56.

John 11:14-27  
The story of the raising of Lazarus is familiar to the child of God. Using this circumstance in the life of His dear friends, Jesus taught them of His death and resurrection as well as the resurrection of all believers. Are you comforted by these words? Spiritually we are dead in our sins without Christ. This truth cannot be disputed. But we become alive in Christ because he is the resurrection and the life. He has proved that with his resurrection. What must our reaction be to this great truth? We, like Martha, must believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Sing or read Psalter 47 especially stanzas 5, 10, and 11.

John 14:1-11  
Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Where does that way lead? What truth are we talking about? What is this life? Jesus's disciples had a hard time discerning spiritual truths and earthly truths. Let's not be too hard on them. We often have the same trouble. Earthly cares cause the beautiful truths of this passage to fly from our hearts. We need to stop and realize that through Jesus is the only way into heaven. There is no other truth but Him. The life that we should desire is a life that is spiritual on this earth and eternal in heaven. When we confess these truths, then truly our hearts will not be troubled. Sing or read Psalter 203.

John 15:1-10  
Jesus is the vine; we are the branches. Notice the vine comes first. That is only right since the sap of the plant must go from the vine to the branches. Jesus comes first and then the church. From Jesus the church draws its life. As the vine Jesus gives character to the branches. A grape vine will have branches that bear grapes. Jesus also gives character to the church. The members must not decide what type of gospel must be preached. Jesus, as he is described throughout all the pages of the Bible, must be preached. We are allowed no other gospel. The vine is not cut down; branches are cut off. Sing or read Psalter 355 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

II Kings 7:1-9  
Four lepers had found that God had provided them with food and riches. After eating and securing for themselves many riches, they began to think about those around them. They realized that they should not hide the good that the Lord had given them. They called it a day of good tidings. What about us? God has given us good tidings as well. We have the gospel. Are we telling those about us? Are we carrying out his command to go into all nations to preach the gospel? The lepers worried about "some mischief" coming upon them. Do we have the same worry? Sing or read Psalter 49.

II Samuel 1:17-27  
David deeply mourned the death of his friend Jonathan. What kind of friend was he? Verse 26 supplies us with the answer. Their friendship was pleasant. Their friendship was wonderful. Their friendship was closer than a man and his wife. Why is this true? There can be only one reason. Their friendship was based on the love of God. Jonathan willingly gave up his claim to Israel's throne because he saw that David was the man of God's choosing. On what are our friendships based? Are we willing to give up what we desire for our friends in Christ? Sing or read Psalter 369.

Jeremiah 36:21-32  
Young people, are you jealous for the Word of God? Do you fight for it? Do you let it be trampled under the feet of those around you? Why must you be jealous for the Bible? The answer is found in today's reading. Satan through Jeholakim attempted to destroy the Word of God. He attempted to do so because in that Word was salvation. Satan is trying to do the same thing today. Oh, he does not use the obvious means about which we just read. He has more subtle means at his control. We must first of all know what God's word says. Then we must be jealous that His Word is not destroyed. Sing or read Psalter 336.
Colossians 1:1-8  Do people in other areas hear of your faith? In this day and age of communication we hear news about others rapidly. What do they hear about us? When the telephone rings, what is the news? Paul heard about the faith and love of the Colossians when he received messages about them. That love was the love of Christ as manifest toward other saints. Does that love characterize our lives so that it is told to others? Don’t misunderstand, this is not for the sake of bragging; we know what pride does. A sincere walk of life gives the Christian assurance of the hope which is in heaven. Sing or read Psalter 365.

Colossians 1:9-17  Do we confess that by Christ not only all things were created but by Christ all things continue to exist? Is this our daily confession or do we fall into the error of trying to make it on our own? It is easy to fall into this error. We let the words “luck”, “fortunate”, and other such expressions slip into our vocabulary. We make plans for our future without considering if these plans are in accordance with the Word of God. We must stop and ask if we are causing glory to fall upon Christ by our actions. We do this because we must be conscious of the salvation that only comes from Him. Sing or read Psalter 363.

Colossians 1:18-29  Is our faith “grounded and settled” upon the hope of the gospel? Yesterday, if Lord willed, you heard the preaching of the Word. I pray that the hearing was with spiritual ears. Did something happen since then to move you away from that gospel of hope? Was it something you did? Was it someone with whom you met. Was Satan able to whisk God’s Word away from you before you could digest it? I hope not. We must be conscious of the bread of heaven. We must never let it be taken from us, but rather we must use it in this life as preparation for the life to come. Sing or read Psalter 362.

Colossians 2:1-7  “Enticing words” are all around us. They come from the printed page, from the radio, from the television, and from every other medium of communication known to man. Satan loves to use media’s enticing words to lure us from the Word. In order to stay away from such enticing words, we need to use utmost caution when we use these things. We must be discerning viewers and listeners and make sure that what we see and hear is completely God-glorifying. God has given us His Word; we must walk in Christ and Christ alone. Sing or read Psalter 41 especially stanzas 1,2, and 4.

Colossians 2:8-15  If we have any thoughts of trying to gain our own salvation, we can put them to rest as we read these verses. Do any of us have the power to do what Christ did? He took those who were dead in sins and blotted all memory of those sins with his death on the cross. He spoiled the power of evil and openly triumphed over it. Let’s be happy with being buried with Him in our baptisms and risen with Him by the power of the Father. Let’s be so happy that we show it with lives of gratitude for such an unspeakable gift. Sing or read Psalter 83.

Colossians 2:16-23  The early Christians had a problem with people who tried to insist that they follow the Old Testament laws. While the church was in transition, some Christians felt a necessity to follow some of the old traditions. Paul had to show the church that those things were no longer necessary because Christ had died. What about us today? We must see that we must not try to go back to a worship of ordinances. Christ has come, and we must only worship Him in spirit and in truth. Sing or read Psalter 227.

Colossians 3:1-7  Are we risen with Christ? Do we seek heavenly things or earthly things? Are we ridding ourselves of all manner of ungodly practices that cause the wrath of God to be poured out on us? I have put these in the form of questions even though Paul used commands. These are commands of God which must be followed daily by us. Each day we must examine ourselves and see if we are walking in a way worthy of someone risen with Christ. Sing or read Psalter 383.

Colossians 3:8-15  Now that we have examined our spiritual walk within ourselves, let us see how we are walking with the brothers and sisters in Christ. Are we guilty of the sins of verses eight and nine? In fact do we love the sins of those verses? Or have we put on the new man and walk in the ways of verses twelve through fifteen. There is a big difference in the first and last parts of this section. There will be a big difference in our churches and lives depending in what way we live. If we are constantly looking out for self, we will wallow in the sins of verses 8 and 9. If we show we love God through our love for the brethren we will have the peace of God ruling in our hearts. Sing or read Psalter 371.
Colossians 3:16-25  
This section is full of practical application of letting the Word dwell richly in us. It starts out with a glorifying worship of God. Was ours today? Then we must glorify God as husband, wife, child, father, or servant. Each of these is a calling from God. We must carry out that calling to His glory using the talents He has given us. That is the teaching of verse twenty-three. Praise from men will get us nowhere In heaven. Praise from the Lord gives us the reward of the incorruptible inheritance. Does the Word dwell richly in us? Sing or read Psalter 38.

Colossians 4:1-6  
Have you ever eaten something so bland that you wished to spit it out? Are you conscious of the tastes of the food that you eat and do not wish to eat food that is unpalatable? Now that you have gotten some sensory images in mind you can understand verse six better. Speech with grace seasoned with salt is our goal. Why? We need to talk to every man about our love of Christ. This does not mean that we become a nuisance with our love of God, but rather that we use every opportunity to show that love. Sometimes it will be a long talk about things of the kingdom. Other times it will just be by an honest conversation. The only way we can be ready is if we study the Word and pray that we can have grace to have our speech seasoned with salt. Sing or read Psalter 105.

Colossians 4:7-18  
Do we care for those who God has given a special calling in the kingdom? Are we mindful of those earthly needs so that they can carry out their spiritual calling? Paul was thankful for all those who had helped him in his labors. God has given to ministers, elders, and deacons a special calling. We can help such men by bearing their physical cares for them. Sometimes even just a word of appreciation can make their burdens lighter. Remember, they watch over our souls! Sing or read Psalter 243 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 15.

Job 42:1-6  
In the preceding three chapters of Job, God shows Job that He has made all things and causes all things to continue to exist. God makes Job to see that God alone is great and man is nothing in comparison. Job needed such a lesson because he had made himself wiser than God. Job understood and realized that he had sinned and asked for forgiveness. Do we understand the same lesson as we look at creation? Do we realize that God’s creation proclaims his majesty? Sing or read Psalter 286.

Joel 2:1-14  
Joel had to sound an alarm of great doom for the children of Israel. Their enemies were all around them. But the problem was self-inflicted. God had to bring the enemies because of Israel’s sin. But there was comfort as well for God’s people. That comfort is found in verses twelve and thirteen. These verses are for us as well. Our enemies are all around us. Quite often the troubles are self-inflicted. We must rend our hearts and turn unto Jehovah who is gracious and kind toward all his people. Sing or read Psalter 266.

Jonah 1:9-17  
We often forget that the book of Jonah is one of the minor prophets. We see in it a nice story with a good lesson for God’s people. Look at verse seventeen again. Does the time have any significance for us? It should. Christ told the Pharisees to look at the sign of Jonah as a picture of his authority. Jonah was in the fish for three days. Christ was in the earth for three days. Both came forth to carry out their work. Do we seek after the sign of Jonah and serve a risen Christ? Sing or read Psalter 310 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 6.

Joshua 24:13-24  
Joshua told the children of Israel about their history and the greatness of their God. But Israel had a problem. They were serving idol gods. From Joshua’s words it seems that there was a great variety of idols in Israel. Joshua told them that they needed to choose one god and serve that god alone. He, however, with his house was going to serve Jehovah. He told them that because they lived unholy lives they could not serve Jehovah. What about you, young people, can you serve Jehovah in your present life? Sing or read Psalter 309.
In the March issue of the Beacon Lights Seminarian Doug Kuiper (hereafter I will refer to him as the reviewer) reviewed J. Gresham Machen’s book Christianity and Liberalism. In the last five paragraphs of the review he made some claims about what liberalism is and he ends the review with a criticism of Machen for not including certain things in his definition of a liberal, which the reviewer thinks should be included. I will discuss some problems with the reviewer’s definition of liberalism, and show that Machen cannot be faulted for not combining the reviewer’s definition of a liberal in his own view.

The book review begins by showing that Machen in this book is attempting to show that Liberalism, even though it uses a similar vocabulary to Orthodox Christianity, is in fact a separate religion. The Liberalism which Machen is distinguishing from Christianity is the belief system of Higher Critics who denied and redefined all the major Christian doctrines: the doctrines of God, man, atonement, Bible, sin, and Christ.

Machen is using the word ‘Christianity’ in the title of the book to denote Orthodox Christianity. The doctrines of Orthodox Christianity are those agreed to by the churches of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the churches of the patristic period. Machen is showing in this book that the Liberals are using the same words that Orthodox Christianity uses, but redefining them.

The reviewer correctly explains what the book’s main points are. He shows how the Liberalism with which Machen is taking issue redefines Christian terms. Machen takes it for granted that the liberalism and the way the word ‘liberal’ is being used denotes the Higher Critics and their radically different religion. In the fifth to the last paragraph of the book review we see a turn in the way which a liberal is being defined in the article. Up until this point a liberal has been a liberal in Machen’s sense. But now the definition of a liberal is considered faulty.

Liberalism is rampant in the church world today. But who are the liberals? In the Reformed tradition, he is a liberal who does not believe the teaching of the Synod of Dordt: TULIP. In the Presbyterian tradition, he is a liberal who does not subscribe to the teaching of the Westminster Assembly. Any person who denies that God loves some men and hates others; any person who says that Christ died for all men; any person who ascribes any work of man to salvation; any person who does not view every part of the Bible as inspired by God and authoritative; he is a liberal.

(page 17, Beacon Lights, March 1993)

A liberal is defined by the reviewer to be someone who neither agrees with the teachings of the Canons of Dordt nor believes in infallibility (in the contemporary theological sense). The reviewer is implying that people who disagree with the Canons or support the above quoted faulty doctrines should fit under Machen’s use of the term ‘liberal’. Machen has defined some liberals, but has not gone far enough, so the reviewer prescribes more belief systems which should be classified with Machen’s liberals. But this is a misunderstanding of how the word ‘liberal’ is being used and defined by Machen. The Liberals against whom Machen is writing are not Christians in any orthodox sense. The persons the reviewer is calling liberals are orthodox Christians.

There is nothing wrong with Machen stipulating and using ‘liberal’ in the sense in which he does. The meaning of a word is defined by its use. The word ‘liberal’ is used in many different ways by different people in politics, religion, and other fields - meaning different things in different contexts.

The reviewer makes this claim in the third to the last paragraph of his article:

"The major weakness of Machen’s book is that he is too lenient to certain people who fit into the category of liberalism. On page 51, he excludes Arminians from the camp of the liberals. On page 52, he excludes Roman Catholics from the camp of liberals. Yet the Arminians have a different view of God and man than do Reformed Christians; that was the very reason for the Synod and Canons of Dordt! And the Church of Rome has an entirely different view of the church and of salvation than do the Reformed; that was the very reason for the Reformation of 1517! Machen fails here."

It is true that Roman Catholics and Arminians have a different view of God and man than the Calvinists. But so does any belief system which is at variance with the Reformed Creeds in any way. Any belief in any wrong doctrine whatsoever gives a wrong view of the nature of God. Christian doctrines came from God, therefore they express what His nature is. Therefore, anybody disagreeing with any true doctrine does have a wrong view of the nature of God. Hence it follows that if one has a small wrong doctrine, that one
has a small misconception of the nature of God. When one has a large wrong doctrine (a supposedly ‘necessary’ belief) then one has a big misconception of the nature of God. It seems that we do not have Biblical principles which will point out to us which of the ‘necessary’ or ‘contingent’ beliefs is a big enough misconception of God that we must include them in our definition of a liberal, as the reviewer would like to do.

The reviewer confuses what Machen’s definition of Liberalism is with his own, running them together. He misunderstands Machen’s project in the above quoted paragraph. Machen’s project is to distinguish Orthodox Christianity (which involves all Protestant and Catholic churches) from the modernism or higher critical liberalism of his day. He is distinguishing the orthodox Christian doctrines of God, Christ, man, salvation, the atonement, and the Bible, from the doctrines of the Modernists of his day. By Orthodox Christianity one is usually referring to the churches of the patristic period, the Roman Catholic church, and the Protestant churches. This is the way that Machen is using the term ‘Christianity’, he is defending Orthodox Christianity against the non-supernatural religion of the higher critics. This book is not a defense of Machen’s brand of Christianity (Orthodox Presbyterian) and its world view against Roman Catholicism and Arminianism - one will have to look elsewhere in his writings if one is interested in this project. Therefore, yes, Machen does exclude “Roman Catholics from the camp of liberals” as well as Arminians, because under his definition of a liberal - they do not fit. One needs only read the Liberal definition of who God is, who Christ was, what the Bible is, what is meant by salvation, as Machen presents and argues against them in this book to realize that Arminians and Roman Catholics are not liberals in this sense at all.

by Doug Kuiper

A.

Mr. Brummel’s objection to my review of J.G. Machen’s book Christianity and Liberalism as it appeared in the March, 1993 issue of this periodical is that I misrepresent Machen’s definition and use of the term “liberal,” and therefore also misrepresent the purpose of Machen’s book. Mr. Brummel writes:

“Machen’s project is to distinguish Orthodox Christianity (which involves all Protestant and Catholic Churches) from the modernism or higher critical liberalism of his day. . . . This book is not a defense of Machen’s brand of Christianity (Orthodox Presbyterian) and its world view against Roman Catholicism and Arminianism.”

I agree with Mr. Brummel’s characterization of Machen’s project; nor did I mean to suggest otherwise in my review. I further acknowledge that I do offer my own definition of “liberal” which is broader than Machen’s, and thus my definition of “Christian” is narrower than Machen’s. I would say that this is my evaluation and critique of Machen’s work, rather than a misunderstanding of it. If this was not clear in the review, I thank Mr. Brummel for pointing it out.

The fact is that those whom Machen calls liberals were within the Presbyterian Church of the United States. As officebearers in that denomination, they had signed the Westminster Confession of Faith. Then they propagated views which denied its teachings. Furthermore, they adopted a higher critical approach to the New Testament. Machen rightly calls them liberals. Admittedly what distinguishes these liberals from the Arminians and Roman Catholics is that the latter two groups do not question the New Testament’s authority; they simply interpret it in a way different from that of the Reformed and Presbyterian.

I of course am in no position to determine whether an individual is or is not a true Christian (by which term “Christian” I now mean anyone who is “a member of Christ by faith, and thus . . . partaker of his anointing”, Heidi. Cat., Answer 32). I understand that God has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and that He saves many who are not members of Reformed and Presbyterian churches and who do not subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Standards.

But I maintain that the system of teaching of the Arminians and Roman Catholics is not Christian (now meaning not Biblical as judged by creedal standards). In my opinion, Machen pays too little attention to this fact, especially regarding the Arminian body of doctrine. (He does make statements which show that he seriously differs with Roman Catholicism’s teachings.) Regarding the Arminians our own forefathers have said that they “bring again out of hell the Pelagian error” and that they “seek to instill in the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors” (Canons, 2nd Head, Rejection of Errors, Arts. 3 and 6). One who subscribes to Arminian doctrine or Roman Catholic doctrine is not a Christian as regards his body of belief, although he may be an elect child of God, by the grace of God and in spite of his belief.

This the child of God MUST believe: that by Jesus’ death on the cross his sins are washed away. Liberalism denies this; it “regards the Cross of Christ as a trifle” (Machen, p. 161.). In essence Arminianism and Catholicism do exactly the same thing. Clearly the Roman teachings of meritorious works belittle the doctrine of the cross, the central doctrine of Christianity. Arminianism’s body of teaching does so as well, although how it does so may be less clear and thus need more detailed support for which I do not have
time here. But if Arminianism is essentially Pelagianism, it makes the doctrine of the cross trivial. In this respect, the system of teaching of Catholicism and Arminianism is not essentially different from the system of teaching of Liberalism; and I contend that Machen does not do justice to this fact.

But let me not be understood to think that no person will go to heaven who does not subscribe fully to the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards.

One of the discussion groups led by Rev. Terpstra on "Witnessing Within the Church"

Snowshoeing in Rocky Mountain National

Playing volleyball at Covenant Heights

The group bowling at the Estes Park Rec. Center

Still playing games in the early hours of the morning
Testimonies

by Tan Bak Wei

I've come to know the Lord for more than two and a half years. Before becoming a Christian, I was a free-thinker. So much so that I (together with some classmates) made fun of Christians in school. Never did it occur to me that the very person I made fun of will be made use of by the Lord to introduce me to the Christian faith.

In 1990, I began to develop some interest in the New Testament. After reading through some of the books (mainly the Gospels) I felt that I was not benefiting. I called up this ex-classmate of mine (the Lord has placed her in the same college as myself) to bring me to her church. Though it was a charismatic church, I stand in awe to the glory and majesty of God on high. However, the frequent healings and tongue speaking made me think twice about my faith. I left the church towards the end of 1990. Thank God that a JC classmate brought me to the Evangelical Reformed Church through the Youth Gospel Meeting. I began to be a regular worshipper since Jan. 1991.

Though I "made the decision" to follow Christ and said the sinners' prayer on 31 May 1990, I found myself to continue walking in sin and unrepentant. I continue to enjoy the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. My life was very un-Christian! Elder Siew began to give me Bible Study on the first book of John from March '91. I began to see my sins more and more and I felt very unworthy to be called a Christian.

Then persecution came. My brother returned from further studies and my mother told him about my faith (my mother had been tolerating my rebellious ways). She increased the frequency of bringing me to worship the idols. One day in July-Aug., I left school without following her instruction to burn joss-sticks. How the Lord provided me with the strength, I do not know. To my relief, nothing happened that night.

However, when I returned home from church the following Sunday, my brother questioned me. He asked me whether my future is more important or going to Church is more important. (I was in the midst of my pilgrims). Without hesitating, I answered that church is more important. He fumed with anger. In my desperation, I paged a church member, and the conversation managed to calm him down. Subsequently, there was no objection to me going to church on Sunday without my examinations. To ensure this, I work doubly hard during the week. (I was a very lazy student).

Having to stand for my faith through persecution has strengthened my faith. I began to see my sins more and more and God's guiding hand. I see that He is controlling all things for our benefit. I reconsecrated my life to the Lord the same year.

Having new directions/interest (or rather genuine interest) in the faith does not mean that there is no more problems. I have to constantly struggle against sin. For most of last year, I was very defeated in my struggle. However, the Lord has showed me that I am only a sinner, saved by grace. I came to realize that throughout this life, no matter how hard I try, I will never by my good works earn my salvation. It has been done of me on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. With this conviction, I began to fight against sin and triumph over it.

I am thankful to the Lord for placing me in my current National Service vocation, and in thankfulness, I wish to give of my free time to serve Him. Thus, I kept myself busy serving in various ministry.

Then the Lord tested my faith. My father passed away on 17 Feb. this year. Many questions came to my mind. Have I done my best for the Lord? Will I face pressure to participate in ancestral worship? The Lord brought me out of this wonderfully. Firstly, He sent brothers and sisters in Christ to comfort me and encourage me in the faith. I gathered enough courage to tell my mother about my position. Amazingly, she agreed. Praise the Lord! I also find that, out of thankfulness, I began to love my family more. I began to see the understanding side of them.

My baptism is coming and I am thrilled by that prospect. I earnestly pray that the Lord will work in my mother that she will have no objection to that.
Lessons From Our Beginning:
What 1924 has to teach us today concerning our calling as
"Spiritual Youth in a Carnal World"

by Rev. M. De Vries

Introduction:
Perhaps, as young people, we are inclined to consider the history of 1924 as irrelevant for us today. Of what value is "dry and dusty" history of several generations ago? Is there anything in that history that is applicable to our modern times?
I would emphasize that if we are to be faithful members of our Protestant Reformed Churches, we must know our history! We must have a knowledge of the truths and principles upon which our churches were founded. We must be aware of the battles fought by those who have gone before us. That which our spiritual fathers believed, confessed, fought for and were willing to die for is our heritage, entrusted to our care, which we must also believe, confess, and if need be, die for. A generation which ignores, or worse, despises, her past is a generation that enters the battle of faith without weapons or training. As the Church of tomorrow, you young people must be able to carry on the great heritage of the truth.

1. Learning from Our Beginning:
   A. The History of 1924
      1. The controversy began with an exchange of pamphlets and writings.
         a. Rev. Herman Hoeksema, who was minister of Eastern Ave. Chr. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, MI, Rev. H. Danhof, who was minister of the First Chr. Ref. Church of Kalamazoo, MI, and a bit later Rev. G. Ophoff of the Hope Chr. Ref. Church in the Grand Rapids, MI area of Riverbend, were the men who especially raised their voices against the doctrine of common grace, showing the anti-Scriptural character of this doctrine.
         b. The result was that several protests were filed against Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof and were treated by Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West in May of 1924.
         c. Several of these protests came to the Synod of Kalamazoo in June of 1924. This Synod of the CRC adopted the "Three Points of Common Grace."
            1) The second part of the decision judged Hoeksema and Danhof to be Reform "even though it be with an inclination to one-sidedness."
            2) The third part of the decision stated that there was reason for the warnings against worldlimindedness that Hoeksema and Danhof had sounded "with a view to a possible misuse of the doctrine of Common Grace."
            3) The fourth part of the decision contained a plan for further study and development of the doctrine. But the Synod specifically repudiated advice from the advisory committee that Synod ask Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof to subscribe to the Three Points of Common Grace and that discipline be exercised in the event that they did not.
      2. Nevertheless, as the matter came again to Classis G. R. East and Classis G. R. West this was what was demanded of these ministers, i.e. to approve and promise fidelity to the Three Points of Common Grace.
         a. The result was that these three pastors with their consistories were deposed from office.
         b. They did not separate from the CRC but were illegally expelled from that denomination.
         c. The ultimate outcome of these decisions was that a new church-group originated, known as the Protestant Reformed Churches.
   3. Questions:
      a. How did the "Janssen controversy" of 1922 form the occasion for the common grace controversy?
b. Does a Classis have the authority to depose ministers and consistories?
c. In what ways was the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches a Church Reformation?

B. The Three Points of Common Grace

1. The Three Points remain a part of the official doctrine and teaching of the CRC. They are not mere interpretations of the Confessions but are additions to the Confessions, additions which were departures from the truth of our Three Forms of Unity, as well as contrary to Scripture.
2. The First Point of common grace teaches a favorable attitude of God towards all men in general, and not only toward the elect. Another very significant teaching contained in the First Point is that God is gracious in the preaching of the gospel to all who hear, i.e., that the preaching of the gospel is a well-meaning offer of salvation to all who hear the preaching.
   a. What alleged proof was given for the First Point?
   b. How is the First Point contrary to Scripture? and specifically, how does it deny sovereign predestination?
3. The Second Point of common grace teaches that God restrains sin by the general operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart which is not regenerating. This point set forth the negative result of the operation of God's grace upon humanity in general.
   a. What alleged proof was given for the Second Point?
   b. Does God restrain sin? Does God restrain sin by a gracious operation of His Spirit and in an attitude of favor in the natural man?
   c. What other possible reasons are there that prevent a man from committing every sin imaginable?
   d. How is the Second Point a denial of the truth of total depravity?
4. The Third Point of common grace teaches that unbelievers who are not regenerated can do good works, not saving good, but civil good. This point is a statement of the positive result of the favorable attitude of God that is taught in the First Point.
   a. What alleged proof was given for the Third Point? Why did the "proof" quote only the first half of Canons III, IV, article 4?
   b. How is the Third Point a denial of the truth of total depravity?
   c. What are good works in the light of Scripture and our Confessions?

II. Developing Out of Our Roots:

A. In General:

1. Our Protestant Reformed Churches have not stood still, but, by the grace of God, have maintained and developed the truth.
   a. From our beginning we have done so antithetically, overagainst all the departures from the Reformed faith, initially especially overagainst the teaching of common grace.
   b. We have often been criticized for this and we have been accused of being too negative.
      1) Is such criticism valid?
      2) Why is it necessary to expose and condemn the lie?
2. But our development has also been in the positive development of the truth, particularly the precious truth of God's eternal covenant of grace.
   a. Over against notions of the covenant as a pact or agreement between God and men or of the essence of the covenant being a general conditional promise, our churches have set forth the Scriptural truth of God's covenant as the gracious relation of living fellowship and friendship between God and His people in Christ.
   b. In hope of the final realization of that covenant of God, we have emphasized our calling, our part of the covenant of grace.
   c. Rev. Herman Hoeksema explained that calling beautifully in the twenty-fifth anniversary booklet of our PRC: "And as we thus live in the midst of the world as of the party of the living God, it is our calling as a church and as individual believers to keep His covenant, to live from the principle of regeneration, and to stand antithetically as God's people in every department of life."
   d. Questions:
      1) How does an "agreement" differ from a relation of friendship?
      2) What Scriptural evidence is there that the covenant is a bond of friendship?
      3) What does it mean that the covenant is "unilateral"?
      4) How does the Baptism form describe our "part" of the covenant?

B. Specifically:

1. In connection with our Convention theme, "Spiritual Youth in a Carnal World", it is especially in
connection with this calling to stand antithetically that we must see the significance of our beginning and development.

a. Virtually from the beginning of the controversy re common grace, Rev. Hoeksema warned that to maintain common grace would mean the denial of, and therefore, the loss of the truth of the antithesis.

1) What is the antithesis? cf. II Cor. 6:14-18, James 4:4, I John 2:15, 16.
2) How does common grace deny the antithesis?
3) What does it mean to be "in the world but not of the world?"

b. Strikingly, the CRC Synod of 1924 had warned, in the third part of the decision regarding common grace, "against all one-sided emphasis on the misuse of the doctrine of Common Grace."

1) This warning that the result would be worldliness was indeed prophetic.
2) But the spirit of worldliness against which Synod warned was not due to a misuse of the doctrine, nor even a one-sided emphasis of it; rather the doctrine of common grace itself was responsible.

2. The consequences were inevitable and are plain for all to see: it led to a breakdown in the truth of the antithesis.

a. The churches from which we came had formerly taken strong stands against worldly amusements, drama, and dancing for example. In recent years the same church has been speaking in high praise of the "film arts" and has supposedly "redeemed the dance".

1) How has common grace served as a basis for the Christian to participate in drama and dancing?
2) Are we consistently opposed to such entertainments?

b. The same is true of the sphere of labor - very early in our history our people realized that the denial of common grace and an antithetical life in this world forbids us from joining the existing labor unions.

1) How has common grace served as a basis for membership in labor unions?
2) Why is union membership contrary to Scripture?

c. We can see this breakdown too in regards to membership in secret organizations, and in connection with the emphasis placed on the church's calling to improve society and culture.

III. Understanding Our Purpose and Calling:

A. In relation to the World

1. We may not conceive of the history and development of man's culture, of his science and art, of his technology and labors as a positive development from a spiritual point of view as common grace would have it.

a. From a spiritual point of view all of man's cultural activity serves the coming of Antichrist and stands in opposition to God.

b. In the so-called culture of our own day and the developments taking place we see more and more clearly revealed that process of development under the wrath of God which is described in Romans 1:19ff.

c. Give examples which demonstrate that:

2. From the perspective of Common Grace, increasingly it is emphasized in Reformed circles, and perhaps especially in Reformed schools and colleges, that our attention and our efforts are to be directed toward this earth and world.

a. It is asserted that it is our calling to reform or transform this world, to redeem the so-called good culture of this world, the fruit of common grace, and to christianize it.

b. Don't worry about heaven - get busy and do something here and now to solve the social problems. That's the popular philosophy today.

c. What is our calling towards this earth? What does it mean to be a good steward?

3. Our calling is to manifest ourselves as "spiritual youth in a carnal world."

a. We are spiritual pilgrims and strangers here, and must live the lives of citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

b. Again consider the previous quotation of Rev. H. Hoeksema: "... it is our calling as a church and as individual believers to keep His covenant, to live from the principle of regeneration, and to stand antithetically as God's people in every department of life."

c. Give examples from different departments of life.

B. In relation to our heritage:

1. We must be aware that Common Grace is not a dead or irrelevant issue; it is still appealed to
today.
   a. Common grace continues to build a bridge over the chasm of the antithesis which separates
the church from the world. In recent years that bridge has been reinforced and widened.
   b. We must continue to deny and repudiate common grace without hesitation or compromise.
2. We must not weary of hearing or neglect the study of who we are, where we came from, and
why.
   a. Only then will we be able to "stand fast and hold the traditions which we have been taught."
      (II Thess. 2:15)
   b. Only standing in this awareness will we adhere to the faith of our fathers and defend this
heritage entrusted to our keeping.
IV. Resources for reference and further study:
   The Protestant Reformed Churches in America, by Herman Hoeksema, Second Edition 1947, Grand
Rapids, MI.
   A Watered Garden: A Brief History of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, by Gertrude Hoekse-
   A Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth, (booklet) by Herman Hoeksema, reprinted
1992, Evangelism Committee of Southwest PRC, Grandville, MI.
   Grace Uncommon (pamphlet) by Rev. Barry Gritters, Evangelism Society of Byron Center PRC, Byron
Center, MI.

THE BINDING POWER OF THE WORD

The Authority of the Preacher

by Rev. Russ Dykstra

[In the introduction to this rubric, The Binding Power of the Word, we noted that authority in the
Church of Christ is the right [from Christ] to speak the Word of God, and pointed out several areas of author-
ity found in the Church. The first area to be examined is that of the preaching. But to understand the
authority of the preaching, we must first know the authority, or right, of the preacher to speak the Word
of God. This is the purpose of the following article.]

Must we listen to [and obey] the preaching? The answer to that question depends on the authority
of preaching and the preacher. The authority of the preacher is that he speaks the Word of God as a repre-
sentative of Christ Himself! Let that sink in a moment. Did you ever wonder why the preacher has the right to
"speak for Christ"? Or, to put it differently, how is preaching different from any believer giving a sound,
Biblical speech? The answer is that the preacher is called by Christ to be an official spokesman. That is
the key — CHRIST CALLS THE PREACHER!
How does that happen? Christ could and did personally call His disciples to preach because He was on
the earth; but how can He call preachers today, since He is in heaven? The call of Christ has two aspects,
which can be described by the terms "internal call" and "external call". With the external call we are all
familiar - it is the call of a congregation to a particular man to be their minister. This call results from a nom-
ination by the consistory (usually a trio of ministers) and the election of one through the voting at a congre-
gational meeting. Through that official call from a congregation, Christ speaks, calling a man to preach.

But before that call, the man must have an internal call from Christ. This call is much more difficult to
describe. The individual hears no "voice," sees no vision, and receives no sign, as did Gideon in the Old
Testament, for example. Yet he becomes convinced that Christ calls him to preach. Certainly a major part
of the internal call is the desire to be a preacher. In addition, the circumstances of his life may well direct
his thoughts continually to the work of the ministry. The gifts God has given will point to the ministry. But
what ever the exact combination, that man becomes convinced that Christ calls him to labor in the min-
istry of the Word! Determining whether or not one has received this call can be a great struggle because the
call is impressed upon the heart of that individual, not
his parents', not his wife's, not his friends'.

Regardless of exactly how God impresses this call upon him, the man MUST have this internal call. If he does not, even if a congregation calls him to be their minister, CHRIST HAS NOT CALLED HIM! Such a man will be most miserable in the office of the minister, and will finally bring ruin upon himself. The reason for that is simply that if Christ does not call a man, Christ does not equip him to carry out the duties of the office. On the other hand, with this call, the preacher can have the confidence of the prophet Jeremiah to whom God said, “Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). Thus called, the minister arrives at the point where he echoes the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9: 16 — “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”

These two parts, the internal and the external calls, give the right for a man to be ordained into the office as a spokesman of Christ. Romans 10:15 asks, “And how shall they preach except they be sent?” Christ, the King of His Church, sends, using the call.

That Christ sends His ministers is also evident from the main New Testament words for preacher and preaching. A preacher is a “herald.” You probably know that long ago, before the days of radio and television, and before the days of the printing press, when the king wanted to inform his citizens of a new law or decree, he sent out the word by means of heralds. Such men were chosen because of their dedication to the king, for they would be his official spokesmen. A herald’s calling was to bring the message of the king, and nothing more. He was not to add to nor subtract from the king’s words. He was not to give his impression of it. He was called only to bring the official word of the king.

In the Church, Christ is the King. He chooses His “heralds” and sends them forth with the message from the King. Thus, even though it does not literally state this every week, the minister’s preaching asserts: “Christ sent me to you. The word I bring is not my own, it is Christ’s. Hear the Word of the King!”

This is why Jesus said that His sheep know His voice — the voice of the Good Shepherd (John 10). While He was on the earth Jesus called, and His sheep followed. But He added, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (vs. 16). This refers to other elect who would yet be gathered into the sheepfold (Church) of Christ - some Jews, but many of them Gentiles, and many not even born at that time. How could they hear the voice of Christ after He ascended into heaven? Only through the preaching of a herald, called and sent by Christ. To this agrees Romans 10:14, where Paul writes [literally]: “... and how shall they believe on him [Christ] whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

What does all this mean? Simply this. When you sit in church Sunday hearing a man preach, a man called by Christ, then believe that Christ is speaking to you. Now face the question - Do you have to listen? ***

Next time, the Lord willing, we will examine the content of authoritative preaching.

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**LETTER**

**D**ear Beacon Lights Staff,

We appreciate the concern and your generous donations, you and your readers have shown for us, in our effort to establish a Protestant Reformed Christian School here in Randolph.

Our goal was to open a school in the fall of 1993. In God’s providence this is not possible. The Lord willing we are planning on opening our school in the fall of 1994, in temporary space generously made available to us.

We have purchased land for a building site, but because of development and building cost, and limited funds, our building project is in the future.

We again thank you and your readers for your generous donations. We covet your prayers for us in our desire and effort to bring our children up in the fear of the Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Randolph Protestant Reformed School Society

William Buiter, Treas.
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   by: Rev. R. Van Overloop

TEXT:
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