

THE *October 1, 2007* STANDARD BEARER

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Volume 84 ♦ Number 1

The Cleansing of the Leper

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will: be thou clean.

And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

Mark 1:40-42

Our Lord Jesus Christ had just finished His wonderful sermon on the mount and was in the process of descending from His mountain pulpit. All about Him the crowd was milling. And, in spite of whatever law the Jews might have had to cover such cases, a leper ventured to join himself to this large crowd.

He had heard about Jesus and His wonderful power to save and, in his dreadful condition, had sought Him earnestly. And now,

at last, he had found Him on that mountain preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Patiently he had waited until the Lord had finished His discourse. Then he made the most of his opportunity and, out-cast though he was, made his way through the multitude, prostrated himself before Jesus of Nazareth, and besought Him most fervently: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, touched him, and said: "I will; be thou clean." And the man was immediately healed.

This was no little miracle. This man had leprosy, one of the most terrible and loathsome of all diseases. One who suffered from this disease was barred from the cities of Israel and, when approached, had to shout: "Unclean! Unclean!" This was not due to this disease being contagious, for it was not, but for religious reasons. God intended to reveal to His people their true misery and to foster a desire for purity of soul and reconciliation with the living God. This deeper significance we will see shortly.

First, let us look at the disease

itself. Its symptoms first became manifest on the skin of the individual. Very small spots would appear, almost invisible, especially on the victim's face. Gradually these spots would become larger and more numerous, until finally the entire body was covered with white, scaly scabs. Although it first appeared on the skin, it was not essentially a skin disease. Rather, it was deeply embedded in the whole body, in every bone, muscle, and organ. As such it was very deadly, similar to our cancer of today. It might be in one's system for many months, and one would not be aware of it; but when the symptoms became pronounced, the disease had already taken a firm hold on the entire body.

Most dreadful! Slowly but relentlessly it gnawed its way through the body until every member and organ lost its vitality and the whole body disintegrated. It was a dying inch by inch. A person with this disease was nothing but a walking sepulcher. And, as far as human efforts were concerned, it was incurable. That some were healed was because of a miracle by Jehovah, Naaman being an example.

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Such a leper we have here. Luke says that "he was full of leprosy." Thus, he was a walking sepulcher, a loathsome, repulsive, incurable outcast in Israel. Patiently and believingly he had waited for the opportune moment to present himself before the Great Physician of body and soul, our Lord Jesus Christ. At last that time had come.

Kneeling before Jesus he beseeches Him fervently, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He completely ignored the multitude that milled about Jesus, many of whom must have shied away from him and pulled up their noses at the very sight of him. Like a little child he looks up to Jesus with childlike faith and humility. Surely he was a child of God, a re-born sinner. He calls Jesus "Lord!" More than likely he did not know much about doctrine. However, he recognizes in Jesus the living God Himself, and he ascribes to Him power and authority that belong to God alone.

He had faith. He had a disease that no man could cure. Yet he does not hesitate to say: "Thou canst make me clean!" With unwavering confidence of faith he stands before the Lord, knowing that Christ has power and authority over life and death, even over this disease.

Then the miracle. No earthly means were necessary. Jesus simply touched him, and by the power of His word alone the Lord cured him of this dreadful affliction. Truly proof of the eternal Godhead of the Lord Jesus Himself. A sign, we must remember, is always a representation of something deeper. A miracle is a demonstration, in the realm of the visible, of that same power of God that is working to redeem the world, in the remnant according to election, which is the church, from the entire yoke of the curse of God, and to bring it to the glorious heights of eternal life and glory with God. There is gospel in a miracle.

The question before us then, is this, What is the gospel in this par-

ticular miracle of the cleansing of the leper? This leper represents every child of God as he is by nature. Leprosy symbolizes sin in all its horrifying essence and results. Sin is deeply imbedded in man's inmost heart, and from there it involves man's entire being from the spiritual-ethical point of view. Sin brings nothing but misery. Like a cancer it devours the victim until he is consumed by the terrible wrath of an eternal God. Sin makes one entirely loathsome in the sight of God, who cannot behold sin without becoming for us a consuming fire. Finally, it is like leprosy in that it is incurable. There is nothing in man or of man that can even begin to accomplish anything toward deliverance from this spiritual disease. "Thou must save, and Thou alone!"

This is why the Levitical law barred lepers from the fellowship of the people of Israel. It was a picture of the lost sinner in Israel. It was to proclaim visually, pictorially, the truth of Scripture as found in Psalm 1:5, "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." And in Psalm 5:4, "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee." That means that this leper is a picture of you and me, by nature. We are loathsome, dead, incurable lepers in the sight of God. We are guilty, with nothing to offer in the way of atonement. There is absolutely nothing we can do in the way of cleansing.

As leprosy is a sign, so is the miracle. It signified the cleansing of spiritual lepers and the lifting up, in and through Christ, of a leprous world to the eternal glories and perfections of heaven. That is the purpose of a miracle. It represents the breaking through of the grace of God unto salvation. It tells us: the same power, the same Immanuel, is working mightily to save and cleanse and glorify the world forever. A blessed gospel!

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is healing for everyone who can pray this prayer as uttered by the leper. It does not matter what is his record, nor what are his memories of past sin—even adulterers and murderers and persecutors of the church of Christ. This is true of anyone who learns to pray this prayer from the heart. By the heart—for never does man, or can man, come to the point where he desires to be delivered. So deeply imbedded is sin in the innermost recesses of the nature, that it has also completely contaminated the mind and the will. If sin were merely a skin disease, something outward, while the heart, will, and mind remained basically sound, this would be different. Then man, of himself, might long to be cleansed.

But by nature this is not the case. The whole heart is sick (dead!), along with the whole mind and will. We are conceived and born in sin; thus all men are lepers, but not so that it grieves them. The leprosy of sin is man's sole delight, and therefore he never wants to be delivered from it.

The prayer of which we speak is possible only by grace. To desire deliverance, one must know his sin and loathe it. That is given by grace. That is part of the healing. Then, not before, it becomes our prayer: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "God be merciful to me, the sinner."

If you pray this prayer, you are cleansed, you are in Christ. Your sins are forgiven and you actually are born again. Only life can pray for life; only light can desire light. Only when we are in principle cleansed can we pray for more cleansing. All is of God. Nothing is of man.

And the answer to his prayer will always be, "I will; be thou clean." Christ tells us in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

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Always the earnest “Thou canst make me clean” finds the answer “Be thou clean.”

O, did we not say that this was a blessed gospel?! Christ has regenerated us and has taught us to pray. Then He points us to His Word, which assures the penitent and praying sinner that his penitence and prayer are the evidence

that he is saved already.

Therefore, He continues His work, begun by Him, until this wonder of cleansing is consummated in the new creation. Presently the work will be finished. Then we will be cleansed from all the leprosy that still clings to us. Then we shall possess in perfection

what we now have in part. Then this word of the Lord will be perfectly realized: “Be thou clean.” Then we shall render forever our sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord of our salvation, and be holy, as the Lord our God is holy.

That will be heaven! That will be glory! 

Editor's Notes

This October 1 issue is the beginning of our 84th year of publishing the *Standard Bearer*. We thank God for His goodness in preserving the magazine for all these years as a “standard” for the Reformed faith and life. We bear the standard gladly, with the confidence that the God of grace will use it to bless His church and people—worldwide. God give us faithfulness to His Word.

A few changes are in store for the coming volume year. The editors and staff express hearty thanks to two writers who are “putting down their pen.” Rev. G. VanBaren, emeritus minister, has written for the *Standard Bearer* faithfully for many years, most recently for “All Around Us.” His worthwhile contributions will no longer appear. Thank you, Rev. VanBaren. Mrs. Jan Miersma, whose writings have inspired this editor in many ways, has asked to be relieved of her duties. We hope that Mrs. Miersma can be convinced to take up her pen for us again, soon. To both of you, as well as to all of the writers, “...God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb. 6:10).

We have a goodly number of new writers. Rev. John Marcus, minister of the First PRC of Edmonton, AB, will be added to the ministers who write the medi-

tations. Rev. Audred Spriensma, recently returned from mission work in the Philippines and now pastor in Kalamazoo, has committed to helping out with “All Around Us.” With four men covering the news—ecclesiastical and more—the readers should remain well-informed. And in the rubric “Go Ye Into All the World,” the area devoted to missions, two new writers have been added. Our two home missionaries have committed to the cause. Rev. W. Bruinsma, missionary in Pittsburgh, PA, and Rev. T. Miersma, missionary in Spokane, WA, will instruct regarding missions.

The staff has renewed a part of the magazine that has been missing for a while. Three energetic ministers—Rev. A. Brummel (IL), Rev. G. Eriks (MI), and Rev. M. VanderWal (CA)—will write for the “Strength of Youth.” Parents will be able to give the magazine to their children, especially their teens, and ask them to start with the article devoted to the younger members of the church. No fluff, but good meat designed for the life of the youth. I look forward to the articles.

Rev. M. Dick will shift to the rubric, “In His Fear,” sharing it with Rev. D. Kleyn and Rev. R. Smit. Rev. A. denHartog will begin writing for “When Thou Sittest in Thine House.” New contributors for this “family” section will be Mrs. Shari Bosveld and Mrs. Margaret Laning. Mr. Rick

DeVries, teacher at Covenant Christian High School, will make contribution with his colleague Mr. Cal Kalsbeek to “Understanding the Times.”

And a new rubric on Church History is in the offing. The editors have asked Rev. Andrew Lanning (newly ordained minister of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI) to develop a lengthy paper he wrote on an important aspect of the early history of the PRC. My guess is that the readers will turn to these articles early when the mail comes, maybe even anticipate with eagerness the next issue for the next part of the history. When the first article appears, we’ll tell you more.

For the rest, the magazine will remain the same.

Please send us any suggestions you may have for the magazine. We are very interested in your opinions. Letters are also welcome—that is, letters responding to what’s written. We publish most of what the readers write. This is healthy for the magazine and for the cause of God and truth. (I remind the readership and the writers that each writer is “responsible for the content of his own articles.” See the “Editorial Policy” on the inside of the first page.) Questions are welcomed. So are contributions by the readers.

Gift subscriptions are still half price. Thank you for reading!

BLG

PS: Next issue: A special issue on “The Secession of 1834.” 

The Meekness Required in God's Servant (2)

The first part of this graduation speech for the Protestant Reformed Seminary defined meekness as a spiritual virtue (a power) that enables a Christian to be humble, especially in the face of reproach. It pointed out what it is about the office of the minister of the Word that demands meekness. It remains yet to examine how this humility is obtained, and what blessings result from this faithful ministry.

How is humility obtained?

Since meekness is a spiritual gift, its source is the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself is the meek and lowly one. He demonstrated that quality in His public ministry in Nazareth when the people rejected Him as the Messiah (Is not this Joseph's son?). He demonstrated His meekness before the Pharisees when they tempted Him.

But particularly in His crucifixion Jesus manifested His astounding meekness. Peter described the meekness of Christ as He endured the assaults of the ungodly. Peter wrote, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:23). This meekness was one of the aspects

of Christ's perfect obedience to His Father's will.

Thus meekness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit gives the powerful grace needed by a believer to be meek. Meekness is not a purely natural characteristic that some have at birth. Nor is the meekness of a preacher something developed out of his own efforts.

The Spirit works meekness by making us to see what we are before God. This explains something of the remarkable meekness of Moses. God spoke to Moses face to face. Moses was with God in the mountain for forty days and nights. He beheld God's glory. Surely no one could have been more conscious of his own insignificance than Moses. And to that spiritual understanding God added to Moses the grace to be—not puffed up at his significance—but very meek.

All God's people see God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. The more of God's glory they behold, the lower will be their opinion of themselves.

For this reason, preachers ought to be the most humble men in all the earth. A faithful preacher beholds God's glory every week as he studies the Word. He writes of God's infinite power, wisdom, love, and grace in his sermons. Then, as he preaches, he shows the people of God the glory he saw for himself in his studies. By God's grace, the preacher is humbled weekly as

he stands before God's matchless greatness.

Yet God also, and especially, teaches meekness through troubles and adversity. Scripture demonstrates that in Moses. Recall how Israel rejected Moses at his first attempt to deliver them, by killing the Egyptian, and he had to flee to Midian for forty years. Very humbling. When Moses returned and commanded Pharaoh to let Israel go, Pharaoh responded by making the life of the Israelites harder. Then the Israelites repudiated Moses and Aaron with the chilling threat, "The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us" (Ex. 5:21). Moses was humbled again. Even after the deliverance, time after time in the wilderness, the people reproached Moses—"Why did you not leave us to die in Egypt. Why did you take us out here to die?" Moses learned meekness.

The Spirit likewise taught Paul meekness. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the thorn in his flesh—some grievous affliction that made it hard to perform the work of an apostle. Paul understood the reason why God had given him this affliction. It was because he had received wonderful visions and revelations from Christ. These were revelations so wonderful that he did not even know whether he had been caught up to heaven or

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had seen them on the earth. No other man had seen such things. The possibility of pride corrupting Paul was large. In that connection Paul wrote, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (II Cor. 12:7).

The Protestant Reformed minister faces a reality in some ways similar to the situation of the apostle Paul. God has given to the Protestant Reformed Churches such a glorious heritage in the truth. And so few in all the earth have this blessing or even care about it. But God gives us the privilege of preaching this beautiful, this glorious truth of sovereign grace and the unconditional covenant to a people who love to hear that truth preached. Pride is an ever-present danger.

After years of studying that truth, a man gets out of seminary thinking, "Finally! I can go out and preach." He has high expectations that his labors will go well. And if at first things do go well, the deep pit of pride opens wide before him.

However, not far down the road, the feeling is quite different. He realizes that the task is too great for him. Two new sermons every week. Sermons that are fresh and interesting. Sermons that are faithful to Scripture, antithetical, and complete expositions of the text. Besides that, catechism classes demand extensive preparation, and Bible study is required for the various societies, and family visitation season looms. A man can almost despair because it is so overwhelming.

Then, perhaps, the troubles begin to mount up. He encounters criticism of his preaching. Or perhaps the problem is in some pastoral work—he may have made a bad mistake in his attempts to help. And if the preacher reacts in pride, the difficulties suddenly become

much, much worse. Or it may happen that troubles arise in the congregation, and they seem insoluble.

So God teaches the preacher humility. God teaches him meekness.

A seminary graduate needs to seek meekness right from the outset, for so much in the life of the young pastor engenders pride. You receive a call to your first church, are ordained, and people are grateful for the pastor God has given them. The fact is that in the Protestant Reformed Churches the people honor the preachers for their work's sake.

Then the people of God begin to come to a young minister with their troubles and their cares. "Reverend," one couple pleads, "our teenage son is giving us so much trouble. We cannot do anything with him. Can you help us?"

You get a phone call late at night. "Reverend, I am at the hospital. My husband had a heart attack, can you come?"

Or a couple members of the congregation, a husband and a wife, appear at his study door. "Reverend, our marriage is in shambles. Will you help us?"

And at the consistory meeting, where the elders are struggling with a knotty problem, one of the elders turns to you with the question, "What do you think about this, Reverend?"

It is so easy to respond with swelling pride. They are all looking to *me* for help!

So easily we ministers forget that the members look to the preacher as he represents *Christ*. The people need instruction from the One who commanded, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." They need rest for their souls from the One who promised, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

We ministers easily forget that we are a poor substitute for the Savior, and the best we can do is

to bring them the Word of the good Shepherd.

A meek preacher will do that, for he does not think too highly of himself. He does not imagine that he has the answers to the problems of the people of God. But he knows that the Bible does. What a good work of God, teaching preachers meekness.

The blessing of humility

Understand that God's blessing does rest on the servant who is meek, and the blessing is first of all for him.

However, we need to be clear also that a lack of humility will result in the destruction of the man and his work. The proud preacher will strike out at God's people when they criticize, and perhaps even attack him, his work, and his family.

Moses did this when he was so tired of the abusive language and the murmuring against him and his God. Recall that he struck the rock in anger and called God's people rebels.

This is a temptation for the preacher. Succumbing to such temptation will make him unfaithful. As a result he will strive with God's people. He will develop an adversarial relationship with them, rather than the loving relationship of a pastor for his sheep. Then he will seek to beat them down, and to drive them where he would have them go.

A minister who lacks humility will become unfaithful as a messenger of God. He once vowed to speak only God's Word to His people. But a preacher who lacks meekness will strike out. He might bring his reply to his critics into his congregational prayers. Or, in the study, he suddenly "finds" in the text the perfect answer to his critics, and he rushes to the pulpit to defend self and accuse his critics in preaching! And then adds, "Thus saith the Lord."

This is most dreadful sin. Then the preaching is no longer God's

Word to His people, but Reverend So and So's opinions and applications.

God will not tolerate that indefinitely. The one thing that must be true of a herald above all else is that he bring *God's Word*, not his own. That demands meekness, the spiritual ability to humble oneself, to listen to criticism, not to strike out, and never, ever, to use the pulpit as a whipping post.

On the other hand, there is a blessing given to the meek minister. God will speak *to* such a man. The Word will speak *to him*. Think of the glorious revelations Moses was privileged to receive from God. This would not have continued if Moses lifted himself up in pride before God and before the people. In fact, Moses' sin of not following God's specific instructions, and of calling the people rebels, resulted in Moses not entering the earthly Canaan—so important is meekness and faithfulness as God's servant.

God's blessing on a meek minister is that his study of God's

Word will mold the man. A sermon on fathers instructing their children will first teach *him* the proper way of rearing his own children. A sermon on election will first lead *him* to rejoice in God's sovereignty and to bow in utter humility and thankfulness that God has chosen him, unworthy sinner that he is. A sermon on stewardship will first teach him to be a careful steward of the money and possessions that God has given the minister.

God will use such a man to speak to His people, as He used Moses. God will give to such a servant strength, courage, and boldness to speak God's Word. And he will be approved of by God, as Moses was. Nothing is more important to a pastor than God's approval.

Such labors will bring blessings for the people. What a blessing to have a pastor who is self effacing, a minister of the gospel who models his life after the meekest one who ever lived, namely, Jesus Christ. Moses is but a type of Christ, and as type, Moses failed.

Ultimately, ministers must follow the example of the Chief Prophet, Jesus Christ, who never failed to show meekness.

God will speak clearly through such a man. The people will therefore know God. Led by a preacher who personally received the word meekly, they themselves will hear the word with meekness. What a blessing is a meek minister of the Word!

This is our word to the graduate. It is our prayer as a faculty, synod, Theological School Committee, and as Churches, that you, the graduate, will be blessed by God. That you will grow in the truth and boldly and courageously stand for the truth. It is our fervent desire that God will give you the courage, wisdom, and strength to be a faithful minister of the Word and pastor of the sheep.

And for that reason, our earnest prayer is that God will give you in all your ministry the meekness of Moses, the servant of God, and thus, the meekness of Christ.



Letters

Questions

I can always depend on spiritual nourishment and encouragement from the regular reception of the *Standard Bearer*. I have a couple of questions about the August edition.

Firstly, concerning the fourth commandment, how do you square the words of Paul in Romans 14:4-7 with sabbath-keeping. Paul seems to say that, like eating of meats, Sabbath-keeping is a matter of conscience, not of biblical command.

Secondly, regarding the Lord's Supper, your church does not seem to think that the eaten element matters much. When Christ instituted the supper, it was a Passover, and He is our Passover and He is our

unleavened (sinless) bread of life, so, surely, the element that rightly portrays our Lord is matzos (unleavened wafers) that are striped and pierced and available in every delicatessen or big store?

Julian Kennedy (Dr.)
Bournemouth, UK

■ Sabbath-Keeping and the Law

Your question concerning Romans 14:5, 6 and its application to the New Testament church's practice of keeping the first day of the week holy, setting it off from all other days, is a common one, and therefore worth considering. The passage reads, "One man esteemeth one day above another;

another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."

Briefly, the question can be answered along the following lines. It is for a passage such as Romans 14:5, 6 that the principle of interpreting scripture with scripture comes into play. Specifically, clearer passages, rather than doubtful passages, must determine Christian practice. The passage itself does not speak directly of

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what is known as the Lord's Day, or, if you will, the importance of a Christian Sabbath. And there is no compelling reason to interpret this passage as dealing with that issue.

What the apostle is dealing with in Romans 14 is not a contention over the permanency of the moral law, the ten commandments, and hence of the fourth commandment and its reference to having a sabbath day, and keeping it holy, but the apostle is dealing again with the issue of the ceremonial (or Levitical) law, with its reference to various Jewish feast days. That the apostle has in mind the 'holy days' (feast days) of the Levitical law is supported by his reference to 'eating,' which had to do with the Jewish scruple over unclean food and diet, and is clearly Levitical. The apostles did not insist that Jewish Christians *had to eat* what they judged to be unclean food (pork, for instance). If they for conscience sake could not bring themselves to eat such, fine. They could serve the Lord with such a diet. But the apostles did forbid Jewish believers from imposing such a prohibition on their Gentile brothers, and then charging them with sin if they ate 'unclean' food. So with these holy days (or feast days). It was one thing if the Jewish believers wanted yet to observe them in some fashion (some of which required fasting from morning to evening), but it was another if they sought to require the same of the Gentiles in the church. Let each man be fully persuaded in his own mind how he was going to treat such days; just do not try to impose the same on your brother as obedience to God.

Significantly, Paul himself, on occasion, for the sake of the Jews to whom he was bringing the gospel, would observe certain Jewish ceremonies and rites (Acts 21:20-27). But he did not require the rest of the Christian church to do so. What Paul did he did "unto

the Lord," that is, he had his own reasons before the Lord why he viewed such an observance as wise at certain times, namely, not to give offence to the Jews to whom he was bringing the word, and to refute certain unfounded accusations.

Further, that Paul does not have in mind in this passage the first day of the week (the new Christian Sabbath) should be plain. The apostles themselves distinguished the first day from the other six. They esteemed it above other days of the week. They called it "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10), the day on which their Lord arose from the dead. That the label "the Lord's Day" had reference to the first day of the week is clear from the writings of the ancient church fathers. That the apostles themselves designated the first day of the week as "the Lord's Day" makes it clear, then, that by the phrase "another esteemeth every day alike" the apostle Paul was not making an allowance for Christians to disregard the first day of the week, allowing them to view it (esteem it) no differently than every other day. Jewish feast days could be marked or disregarded without repercussions for faith and true godliness, but the same did not hold true when it came to the Lord's Day.

That the fourth commandment has the same binding authority for the New Testament church as it did for the Old Testament church makes perfect sense when you consider the following. It is of no little significance that in Deuteronomy 5:15 Moses tied in Israel's keeping of the seventh day holy with *their remembrance of the great redemptive event of the Old Testament* whereby God saved His Israel from bondage and death, namely, the Passover and the Red Sea. ("Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.") So the New Testament church is to keep a day *for the remembrance of the great redemptive*

event of the New Testament whereby God saved His Israel from bondage and from death. And on what day did that great redemptive event culminate and take place? I believe the gospel record points us in compelling fashion to the first day of the week. "But now is Christ risen from the dead!" And, "Behold, I make all things new." Just as the cross and the resurrection replace the Passover and exodus as the great redemptive event for God's New Testament church, so the first day of the week replaces the seventh as the time to remember, worship, reflect, and rest. The point is, the law for the keeping of a Sabbath Day holy is not simply tied in with seven-day creation, but with remembering God's redemptive work as well. And for the New Testament church, that has to do with what took place on the first day of the week long ago, namely, the power of Christ's resurrection whereby He at once destroyed the power of bondage and death, and set His people free.

So the day we call Sunday is to be esteemed above other days—a matter of law, not mere preference and liberty.

Those interested in further analysis of the Romans 14 passage and its application are encouraged to read John Murray's commentary on Romans, Appendix D, pages 257-9 (New International Commentary).

—Rev. Kenneth Koole

■ Matzos and the Lord's Supper

I thank you, brother, for your brief remark concerning the element of bread in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It gives me occasion to expand a bit on this subject. I had considered treating this subject and decided against it because of the length of my treatment of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which will involve eight ar-

ticles before I finish. Your remarks, however, compel me to call attention to this matter briefly. That will be for the benefit of all our readers.

As I point out in an article yet to be printed, while there is a relationship between the Passover and the Lord's Supper, they are not equivalent. There are, in fact, significant differences between the two.

For one thing, the institution of each is significantly different. That also affects the element in question.

The reason the Passover feast was prepared with unleavened bread is not that leaven symbolized sin. The lack of leaven was necessary rather to picture and to reenact the *haste* with which the feast had to be prepared and eaten in the flight out of Egypt. "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover" (Ex. 12:11).

So we read in Exodus 12, verses 34 and 39: "And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.... And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual."

The Lord's Supper is different. Its symbolism is not one of eating with haste, but rather communing in covenant fellowship with the God of our salvation. We partake of the Lord's Supper in rest and at peace, as partakers of the finished salvation wrought by God in our Lord Jesus Christ. We partake to be nourished by the bread of life.

Secondly, while it is true that leaven is used figuratively in I Corinthians 5, e.g., with reference to sin, and particularly malice and wickedness, that does not mean

that leaven is always to be interpreted by that figurative reference.

The fact is, such an interpretation cannot hold up to the test of the rest of Scripture. Among the parables that Jesus spoke to unfold the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we read in Luke 13:20-21: "And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

Even in the Old Testament there were offerings that God required of His people, which were to include leaven. Leviticus 23:17 is just one example: "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the fruitfruits unto the LORD."

So it is evident that leaven does not necessarily symbolize sin, and in fact usually does not symbolize sin. With reference to the element of the Passover feast there is no indication that the leaven has any significance other than the haste with which the Israelites had to leave Egypt.

The importance of bread in the Lord's Supper, therefore, is its symbolism of Christ being the nourishment for our hungry souls. Christ Himself, by His broken body, nourishes our hungry souls unto life eternal. Thus bread is the important element, not leaven or the lack thereof.

Likely for those reasons, the church historically has used common leavened bread for the sacrament.

George Bethune, in his lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism first published in 1864, wrote the following concerning this question:

It is decided by learned men that the use of unleavened bread and wafers was unknown in the church, except among the heretical Ebionites, until the eleventh century at the earliest, the bread

before that time being taken from the offerings of bread and wine brought by the communicants for the use of the poor, when of course the bread was leavened. Some of the early fathers (as Ambrose, De Sac. iv. 4) expressly say that the bread they used was common bread (*panis usitatus*). The only scripture bearing upon this point is that in 1 Cor. v. 7, 8: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." There is no reason, however, to think that the apostle there is giving directions about the eucharist, but that he only uses a striking figure to signify the purity and humility and unanimity which the church should maintain. There was a commemorative reason for the use of unleavened bread in the Passover, which commemorated the haste of the Israelites in escaping from Egypt, but it has no significance under the New Testament; and it should be rejected as a part of the painful services required under the now obsolete yoke of bondage. Bread in our sacrament is an emblem of strength and confidence, which the absence of leaven would impair. But it is essential to the sacrament that bread, not wafers,—substantial, home-like, every-day bread,—should be employed and partaken of, in order to our more complete realization of our constant dependence on Christ for the support of our Christian life.*

May God give us grace to continue to maintain the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in all its significance.

—Pastor Steven R. Key 

* Bethune, George W., *Guilt, Grace and Gratitude: Lectures on the Heidelberg Catechism* (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2001), v. 2, pp. 269-271.

Union of the URC and the CanRC

Recently, one of our readers asked me to give an update on the proposed union of the United Reformed Churches (URC) and the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). Probably most of our readers are familiar at least with the fact that this is happening. Our interest in this as Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) stems from our involvement with these two denominations in the past.

Our involvement with the CanRC occurred in the 1940-50s, when the first Dutch immigrants of the Liberated churches came to North America. With them they brought their conditional covenant view, which proposes a gracious promise to all natural children of believers. With time it became clear that their conditional covenant view included the idea of a general offer of the gospel, something rejected already by the PRC in 1924. Apart from this important doctrinal difference, the CanRC seemed to line up with the PRC in many ways—conservative in worship, strong family values, even a rejection of the main teaching of common grace—though of course there were differences in church government, particularly in the interpretation of Art. 31 of the Church Order.

Our involvement with the URC as a denomination is more recent, though in many ways it does extend all the way to our origin as churches, in their mother church, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). After the formation of the URC as a denomination in the 1990s, there was discussion with the PRC, but it became clear that

any really meaningful relationship between our denominations, with a view to union, was quite impossible. The differences were too great. The URC, though willing to discuss the matter of common grace with the PRC, did this only through men on a committee, who held a number of different opinions on common grace. There was no denominational position against the error of common grace. Besides this, as the 2002 Acts of the PRC indicate, the URC allowed the remarriage of divorced parties, tolerated the error of a framework theory of creation, and also tolerated the erroneous teachings of postmillennialism and theonomy. These differences made it impossible for the PRC to continue fruitful discussions with a view to ecumenical union.

Even though we have no official communications with either of these denominations, our involvement with them in the past and our familiarity with their doctrinal positions do give us an interest in their efforts toward ecclesiastical union. What about common grace, the framework hypothesis, the conditional covenant, and some other obvious issues that, one would think, need discussing if the CanRC and the URC are to come together? Are these issues being discussed? Do they matter to the denominations involved? These things become even more important in light of recent developments in Reformed denominations on the doctrine of justification, and its relationship to the doctrines of the covenant and the offer of the gospel.

So of course, we're interested in how this relationship is developing.

The proposed union began in the 1990s, following a three-phase guideline. The first phase was the "corresponding" phase, during which the denominations got to

know each other in areas of doctrine, history, liturgy, and practice.

The second phase, which is one of "ecclesiastical fellowship," began in 2002. This phase has the intent of recognizing and accepting each other as true and faithful churches and is preparatory to eventual integrated federative union. This phase is less "denominational" and more "local" and involves such things as acceptance of membership certificates, exchange of pulpits, and mutual consultation over major decisions. Also, during this phase several joint committees of the two denominations have been working on the songbook, the church order, theological education, and the liturgical forms and confessions.

The third phase, which is still in the future, would be the actual union of the denominations. This phase was recently revised, so that it will involve two steps: first, the development of a timeline for union, and second, the actual union. The second phase and the two steps of the third phase all require ratification by local congregations.

This past summer, both the General Synod of the CanRC and the Synod of the URC met, and their mutual relationship was an important item on both agendas. If nothing else, the one thing that became clear is that this union will require a lot of work from the committees and will take some time to eventuate. Both synods focused especially on the work of their joint committees, recognizing "the difficulty of establishing a definite timeframe for federative union" (CanRC Acts).

The songbook committee faced two main issues. First, because their task is so great, they asked for the appointment of a separate committee to revise the liturgical forms and confessions. Both syn-

Rev. Kleyn is pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

ods approved this. Second, there are obvious problems in coming up with a common songbook for the denominations. The CanRC wants a common songbook in place before federation, and wants this to be the exclusively used songbook in the churches of the federation, and at the same time they have a strong preference for the inclusion of the complete English version of the Genevan Psalter. The URC, on the other hand, is interested in a songbook for their own denomination at present, which takes into account, not only the CanRC interests, but also the interests of other denominations with whom they are pursuing relationships.

The church order committee also has a lot of work to do. To the synods this year they presented a chart of comparison between the URC and CanRC church orders, as well as a proposed revision of the church order that should work after federation. This will be sent to the congregations for their input, and the committee will come with a revised proposal to synod 2010.

The theological education committee has been dealing with the difference between a denominationally run and independent seminaries. The CanRC, like the PRC, at present has a denominational seminary, while the URC uses a number of independent seminaries for the training of its ministers. This issue was resolved by the synod of the CanRC, which decided that having a denominational seminary was merely a matter of "practice" and "preference" and not something that should stand in the way of unity.

It is interesting, in reading all this material from the CanRC's Acts (www.canrc.org), from the press releases of the URC synod (www.covenant-urc.org), and from the various periodicals (*Christian Renewal*, *The Outlook*, *Clarion*), that there is very little discussion of doctrinal issues and doctrinal unity. Much attention is paid to practical and administrative differ-

ences, but there is little discussion on doctrine, and till now, little or no work on the liturgical forms and confessions. In fact, you have to dig to find material that deals with these matters, and, when you do, it is rather disappointing. The Acts of the CanRC Synod includes this note,

The matter of responding to questions of federal vision, justification, common grace, covenant of works, internal and external covenant, etc., is complicated by the fact that synod does not wish to make extra-confessional statements and that there is no other means to answer on behalf of the churches. Synod considers the possibility of the coordinators to request capable men to write personal articles about these topics or to organize conferences to discuss these matters.

The only matter that the CanRC seek an opinion from the URC on is the question of creation and the framework hypothesis. The URC committee has consented to provide a written response to the CanRC, and the CanRC synod is "grateful" for this commitment. Otherwise, there is little discussion on doctrinal questions, and the CanRC seem to be saying that they will not engage in such discussion on an official basis, just in case they should make "extra-confessional statements." And, at the same time, the CanRC are willing to give up on having a denominational seminary, which trains its men specifically from the perspective of their own positions on the Reformed faith, for using one of any number of interdenominational independent seminaries, with men who hold to a variety of doctrinal positions and, in some cases, errors.

Is this a step forward? It seems not. Very little is made of the main doctrinal issues facing Reformed churches today, and there is no effort to maintain a strong doctrinal heritage by insisting on a denomi-

national seminary. What is sure to result is the loss of an intra-denominational unity, that is, a unity within the newly formed denomination. There will be many issues that are considered non-essential, or on which the churches do not have a position, and so there will be differences between congregations and ministers, and the unity will focus, much like these discussions, not on spiritual and doctrinal unity, but administrative life and cooperation.

Six years ago, when these denominations entered into the second phase of their union, these concerns were raised, not only here in the *Standard Bearer*, but also by at least one minister in the URC, Rev. Christo Heiberg. His opinion at that time was that the second phase should not begin because discussion on doctrinal issues should be finished in the first phase and it was not. He wrote,

Any reformed endeavor for unity must always honour at least two simple principles: not to compromise truth and not to sacrifice the edification of God's people in their faith and worship for the sake of such unity. If we violate these principles, then our drive for unity stems from another source than from the Word and the Spirit. Some would like to argue though, that Phase Two will sort these kinds of problems out. To be honest, I also thought so initially. But then I studied the "Guidelines." Debate and dialogue about possible concerns or differences should have taken place under Phase One already. Phase Two is a steep slope towards "complete unity," as CERCU's mandate puts it. I have talked to many people and have read everything within reach, but certainly no public dialogue of any real significance has got off the ground. I don't foresee that CERCU would start such a dialogue either, because you simply don't start to bicker with your fiancée once you are engaged. I therefore ask: is this a case of ignorance about possible differences, a fear for addressing

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them or perhaps hoping that they will never surface?

These are legitimate concerns. Perhaps they are partly answered by a revision of the guidelines for union by the synod of the URC this year, the synod removing the language of commitment to federation from phase two and putting it into phase three, so that the second phase is one of recognition and in-

teraction but not yet of commitment, but still there seems at present to be little discussion on the important doctrinal questions that bear on the crucial matter of justification and Federal Vision. And even though the URC Synod is beginning to make statements against the Federal Vision and have appointed a committee to study this, how will the CanRC respond to statements made by a Synod on

a current doctrinal issue? Will they view them as extra-confessional and extra-scriptural as they have in the past?

Our prayers for the peace and unity of Zion are prayers in which we must keep our eyes open to important doctrinal issues and implications. Peace may not come at the expense of truth. Disaster and departure will come from compromise. 

Go Ye Into All the World

Mr. Peter VanDerSchaaf

Contacts in Germany

From July 6 to July 23 Prof. Russell Dykstra and I traveled to Germany and Russia as delegates of the Contact Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Our purpose was to meet with congregations and individuals with whom the Contact Committee had already had some correspondence, in order further to explore areas of agreement in the Reformed faith. We were then to make recommendations to the Contact Committee on the profitability of continued contact. In this article, I will briefly describe our week in Germany. In a future article, D.V., I will tell about our experiences in Russia.

In Germany, we met with the consistory and members of the Confessing Evangelical Reformed Congregation in Giessen. Giessen is in the province of Hessa and is approximately a one-hour drive north of Frankfurt. The German name of the congregation is Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde in Giessen, henceforth, the BERG. The founder of the BERG, and one

of its elders, is Dr. Jurgen-Burkhardt Klautke.

The BERG began in 1999 as a house church, met in the Klautkes' living room, and included one other family besides the Klautkes. The congregation grew and now meets in the third floor of an office building, in rooms well suited to the needs of a congregation of approximately thirty people, plus another fifteen or so regular visitors. The congregation includes people of all age groups and families, with the heads of households present and active. Most of the members live in the areas of Giessen and Frankfurt. A few families travel as long as two and a half hours in order to attend services.

The BERG was founded out of a desire for sound Reformed preaching, and a belief that the preaching must be grounded in the infallible and inerrant Scriptures. The members of the BERG want a reverent, orderly worship; and they believe in the importance of the antithetical life. They were convinced that these spiritual qualities are not to be found in the state protestant churches of Germany. Nor could these qualities be found, with the consistency that Reformed believers should want, in other, independent protestant churches. (Inde-

pendent in this context means independent from state funding.)

Perhaps a brief explanation of the BERG's name would be appropriate. The full name is Confessing Evangelical Reformed Congregation (Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde) in Giessen. The word "Confessing" is meant to communicate the way in which the BERG holds its confessions. Many churches in Germany have confessions, but they ignore or deny those confessions in their doctrine and practice. The BERG holds its confessions as binding documents, the truths of which must govern the worship and the preaching of the congregation and the lives of its members. The term "Evangelical" should not be confused with American evangelicalism. The German language actually has a different word for what we understand as evangelicalism. The German word "Evangelisch" is usually understood in Germany to mean "Protestant." Perhaps the BERG's name could as well be translated Confessing Protestant Reformed Congregation. The BERG did not take the name Protestant in order to emulate the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, but it took the name "Protestant" for the same reason that the Protestant Reformed Churches did,

Mr. VanDerSchaaf is an elder in Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, and a member of the synodical Committee for Contact with Other Churches.

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namely, to witness that they are direct, spiritual heirs of the Reformation of Luther and Calvin.

Our first contacts with the BERG were informal, personal contacts. A member of the BERG by the name of Carsten Linke discovered the PRCA through its website. He subsequently translated a Protestant Reformed book and some Protestant Reformed sermons into German. Mr. Linke also introduced the elders of the BERG to the PRCA, again through our website. The Contact Committee came into contact with the elders of the BERG while Jochen was staying in Grand Rapids. That was in 2005. In March of 2006, when Dr. Klautke came to the United States for a theological conference, the Contact Committee invited him to come to Grand Rapids also. Our conversations revealed extensive agreement in important aspects of the Reformed faith. Soon after that meeting, the consistory of the BERG invited the Contact Committee to visit them in Germany.

(Some of our readers may remember, incidentally, that when the Klautkes were in the Grand Rapids area in 2006, Dr. Klautke spoke at our seminary on the topic, "The State of the Reformed Faith in Germany." We could mention also that two of Dr. and Mrs. Klautke's children [their son Jochen and their daughter Elsbeth] lived for a short time with Protestant Reformed families in the Grand Rapids area, and even attended Covenant Chris-



Mr. Carsten Linke

tian High School for three and six weeks respectively.)

The Contact Committee, as we have already indicated, decided to accept the BERG's invitation, and to send Prof. Dykstra and Mr. Peter VanDerSchaaf to make this visit. In Giessen, we attended two services of the BERG, on July 8 and 15. At the worship service on Sunday, July 8, Dr. Klautke preached (in German, of course) on I John 3:8-11 under the theme, "The Commandment to Love." It happens that the undersigned knows German. For Prof. Dykstra and our wives, and for two other visitors to the service who were from Russia, Dr. Klautke's son Jochen gave a running translation of the sermon into English.

The worship services of the BERG are orderly, simple, and reverent. The congregation sings Psalms from the Geneva Psalter, accompanied by organ. It uses a recent German translation of the Scriptures that is based on the Majority Text.

The worship service is followed by a time of fellowship over coffee or a light lunch. The congregation then reconvenes for a creedal study. During our visit on July 8, the congregation was studying a creed that expounds the infallibility of Scripture.



The BERG holds to four creeds: the Heidelberg Catechism, the Berlin Declaration of 1909, the Chicago Declaration of 1978, and the Kamen Theological Declaration. The Berlin Declaration is a creed that was written in 1909 by several German denominations in opposition to the Pentecostal movement. The Chicago Declaration of 1978 is a statement and defense of the truth of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible. Both of these creeds are sound on the issues that they address. The BERG adopted them because they state the truth on issues that are very current, and with which their members must deal in Germany. The Kamen Theological Declaration is a



Prof. Dykstra with translator Jochen Klautke

statement and defense of the basic truths of the Reformation.

On Sunday, July 15, Prof. Dykstra preached for the BERG on Psalm 103:17-18, "Jehovah's Everlasting Covenant of Mercy." The sermon was well received by the congregation. It was the first time that the members of the BERG had ever heard an entire sermon in a foreign language. Prof. Dykstra spoke a sentence or two at a time, and Jochen Klautke would then translate them into German. Jochen's language skills are excellent. He very accurately conveyed the ideas of Prof. Dykstra's sermon. Those of our readers who are interested can listen to this sermon on the web site of the BERG (www.berg-giessen.de/predigtarchiv), where they will find the audio downloaded.

We had an open and honest discussion of similarities and differences with the elders of the BERG and with Mr. Carsten Linke in a six-hour meeting. We had time



Dr. and Mrs. Klautke with children (l. to r.) Elsbeth, David, Eva, Jochen.

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to become especially well acquainted with Dr. Klautke, his wife Ute, and his children, Jochen, Elsbeth, Eva, and David. The Klautkes graciously provided all of our transportation, and Ute fixed us several delicious meals. We also visited with the other elder of the BERG, Mr. Thomas Tanetschek, and his wife, Miriam, and with Mr. Linke.

It was a joy for us to come to know the Klautkes, the Tanetscheks, Carsten Linke, and many members of the BERG. During the times of fellowship after the worship services we met people who had come from nominal and from evangelical Protestantism, from Catholicism, and even from Marxism. When we asked them how they had come to the Reformed faith, one person told us that an acquaintance had sent him a copy of the Heidelberg Catechism. The most common answer was, "I read the Bible." One man said, "I read the Bible, especially Ephesians One."

Both of us took our wives along with us, at our own expense. We thought that Carol (Dykstra) and

Dorothy (VanDerSchaaf) would enjoy meeting some of God's people in Germany and Russia. They certainly did. But we found that the presence of our wives brought also a benefit to our work that we should have anticipated. Wherever we went, the women of the congregations opened up to Carol and Dorothy, and shared with them experiences and thoughts that they would not have shared with us. In turn, Carol and Dorothy were able to give them insights into the life of Protestant Reformed people that a professor and an elder could not have given. People in the BERG expressed their appreciation specifically for the fact that our wives had come along.

As we have already pointed out, there are extensive areas of agreement between the BERG and the PRCA on the Reformed faith. The BERG holds to the inerrancy and the infallibility of the creation account, and indeed of the whole Bible. The leadership of the BERG agrees with the Canons of Dordt, including the truth that there are no prerequisites to salvation, and the truth of double predestination.

The BERG's preaching is expository and Reformed. The congregation's leaders are willing and able to refute the errors that the congregation encounters in its native land. There is agreement with the PRCA on important aspects of the doctrine of the covenant. One member of the congregation is translating Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics* into German.

There are also differences between us that have to do with doctrine and practice. It is our prayer that we may have further contact and discussions with the brothers of the BERG in order to work through these differences.

Those of our readers who know German will find edifying materials on the website of the BERG and on the website of the journal, *The Confessing Church* (in German, *Die Bekennende Kirche*). This is the journal of which Dr. Klautke has been the editor and in which he regularly publishes articles. The website that contains current and archived editions of *The Confessing Church* is www.bekennende-kirche-online.de. The website of the BERG is www.berg-giessen.de. 

Special Article

News from Seminary Hill

Ten full-time seminarians are studying for the ministry at the Protestant Reformed Seminary this school year. For the Protestant Re-



Prof. David J. Engelsma, Rector

formed Seminary, this is a large enrollment.

A picture of the four faculty members and ten seminarians (courtesy of Don Doezema) is published on the opposite page.

As rector, Prof. D. Engelsma addressed the faculty and student body at the opening-day assembly for worship and registration. The text of his speech, "The Work of the Ministry of the Word," appears elsewhere in this issue of the *Standard Bearer*.

Of the ten seminarians, seven seek ordination in the Protestant

Reformed Churches as pastors or missionaries. They are senior (fourth-year) seminarian Heath Bleyenbergh; third-year students Nathan Dykstra and Cory Griess; second-year student Daniel Holstege; and first-year students Nathan Decker, Brian Huizinga, and Jonathan Mahtani.

The other three are preparing for the ministry in other churches. Second-year seminarian Martyn McGeown intends to return to the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland, sister church of the Protestant Reformed



Students and faculty:

Standing: H. Bleyenberg, M. McGeown, N. Dykstra, D. Holstege, B. Huizinga, V. Ibe, N. Decker, J. Mahtani, C. Griess, D. Torlach

Seated: Profs. R. Cammenga, D. Engelsma, B. Gritters, R. Dykstra

Churches, whence he came. Second-year seminarian Dr. David Torlach will become a minister in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. Vernon Ibe is being trained for the ministry in the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines.

It is a particular joy of the Theological School Committee and of the faculty that we can instruct men of several nations and races for the gospel-ministry in various parts of the world.

In addition to the regular seminary curriculum, Prof. Gritters is teaching a pre-seminary Greek



Mr. Vernon Ibe

course to a pre-seminary student and to one of the seminary students.

Senior seminarian Heath Bleyenberg is doing his internship in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church under the supervision of the Hudsonville Council and Rev. G. Eriks. The internship runs from July 1 to December 31, 2007. Heath will then return to seminary for his last semester of instruction. The faculty expresses its gratitude to Hudsonville, and particularly to its pastor, for their willingness to help with the training of this man for the ministry.

Recently, the faculty licensed third-year seminarian Cory Griess to speak a word of edification in

the churches. Cory spent much of the summer on the mission-field in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, helping, and learning from, missionary W. Bruinsma.

Prof. R. Cammenga will teach the interim course in January 2008, the Lord willing. His subject will be, "Contemporary Roman Catholic Theology." This class will be open to visitors.

Indeed, several of the courses being taught this year are attended by a goodly number of visitors, both ministers and lay-persons, from within the Protestant Reformed Churches and outside.

Convocation exercises marking the opening of the new school year were held on September 5 at the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church. Prof. Cammenga spoke on "The Minister as Man of God."

We ask for the prayers and other support of the churches (as well as of all those who love the gospel of salvation by sovereign, particular grace), that the seminary may stand fast in the Reformed



D. Holstege, C. Griess, M. McGeown, N. Dykstra, D. Torlach

faith of the confessions, as God has given to the Protestant Reformed Churches to know and love it, on the basis of inspired Scripture, and, thus, teach men to be sound, able, and diligent ministers of the word and sacraments in the churches and on the mission fields.

For the faculty,
Prof. David J. Engelsma 

The Work of the Minister of the Word*

"Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

I Timothy 4:13

Introduction

In this section of I Timothy, the apostle treats of the offices in the church.

Chapter three lays down the qualifications of bishops and deacons.

In chapter four, attention is given to the pastoral office. This is the office described in I Timothy 5:7 as that of the teaching elder: "the elders...who labor in the word and doctrine."

That chapter four concerns the office of the pastor, or minister of the word of God, is evident from verse six, which speaks of "a good minister of Jesus Christ." A duty of the man who exercises the office in view in I Timothy 4, according to the first verse of the chapter, is to warn the brothers and sisters against "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." This, of course, is the calling of a minister of the word and sacraments.

Also the charge in the last part of the chapter makes plain that the apostle addresses ministers: "Put the brethren in remembrance of these things"; "refuse profane and old wives' fables"; "these things command and teach"; "be thou an example of the believers"; "take

heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine"; as well as verse thirteen, which we consider more closely on this occasion.

I Timothy 4 describes the work of the pastor in the congregation. The description comes to the pastor in the form of an exhortation and admonition: "give attendance to" (v. 13); "neglect not" (v. 14).

I limit myself to that aspect of the minister's work expressed in verse thirteen: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

Another important aspect of the minister's work is his taking heed to his own personal spiritual life and to his own personal godly behavior. This aspect of every minister's calling is linked inseparably to his work of taking heed to the doctrine. In fact, taking heed to his own spiritual condition and conduct comes first, both in verse twelve ("be thou an example of the believers") and in verse sixteen ("take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine"). Emphasized in chapter four concerning the minister of the word is the same thing that chapter three stresses concerning bishop and deacon, namely, the essential importance of godliness in the officebearer. Such a life empowers and adorns the pastor's work of giving attendance to doctrine.

It is this work of the minister that I consider with you as we begin a new year of study, instruction, and learning.

It is obvious how the description and exhortation of the work of the minister apply to us in the seminary. For us who teach, this is the work we are doing in the

way appropriate to the seminary. For the students, this is the work to which you are called and for which you are preparing.

Teaching Doctrine

The work of the minister of Jesus Christ can be stated very simply: "teaching." "Doctrine" both in verse thirteen and in verse sixteen ("take heed...unto the doctrine") is the activity of teaching. Three related activities are required of the minister in verse thirteen: reading, exhorting, and teaching. Teaching is the fundamental activity, which the other two activities serve.

Every pastor is a teacher, and he carries out every aspect of the pastoral office by teaching. Every sermon and catechism class must be teaching. His work with the young man or young woman who has fallen deeply into sin must be teaching. At the bedside of the sick, in the hospital with the dying, and at the grave with a bereaved family, he teaches. When he counsels a couple regarding marriage and speaks at their wedding, he teaches.

This is the significance of Paul's reference to the office of the minister in Ephesians 4:11: "pastors and teachers." One is a shepherd of the flock of Christ, and can only be a shepherd of the flock, by teaching.

The content of the prescribed teaching is the "doctrine," that is, the truth revealed in Holy Scripture. This content is an integral part of the activity of teaching. The pastor may not teach anything he pleases, or anything that pleases his audience, as long as he teaches some-

* This is the text of the speech given by Prof. Engelsma as rector at the opening of the 2007/2008 school year of the Protestant Reformed Seminary—submitted at the request of the editors.

thing, or even as long as he teaches something religious, but he must teach the doctrine of Scripture.

The doctrine, as the content of our teaching and in the precise meaning of I Timothy 4:13, must not be understood in a restricted sense: truths to be believed, or the “five points of Calvinism,” or the “essentials of Reformed doctrine.” Rather, the doctrine is all the truths of Holy Scripture. To say it differently, the doctrine is the one body of revealed truth that is the Holy Scripture.

The doctrine that we must teach is the truths that Christians must *believe*, but also the truths that Christians must *practice*; truths that make up the Christian *confession*, but also truths that comprise the Christian *life*; double predestination, but also submission of servants to their masters.

What the apostle has in mind with the doctrine that he commands Pastor Timothy (and us) to teach is evident from I Timothy itself. Centrally, it is the great mystery of godliness: “God was manifest in the flesh” for the salvation from their sin of elect sinners, who believe on Him by the irresistible working of the Holy Spirit. The Reformed, Christian minister of the word must teach the incarnation of the eternal Son of God in Jesus Christ, implying Christ’s atoning death, bodily resurrection, and return to judgment, as the saving work of the triune God in sovereign grace (I Tim. 3:16).

In relation to this central truth, the doctrine we are called to teach includes many other truths: creation and the fall (I Tim. 2:13, 14; 4:1-5); redemption (I Tim. 2:5, 6); the necessity of officebearers in the instituted church, and their qualifications (I Tim. 3, 4); and the godly behavior of believers and their covenant children—submission of wives at home and in the congregation (I Tim. 2:8-15), the modest apparel of women at church (I Tim. 2:9), the subjection of employees to their employers (I Tim. 6:1-5), the contentment of all Christians re-

garding material possessions (I Tim. 6:6-10), and the liberality of rich Christians (I Tim. 6:17-19).

This is what the professors at this seminary mean when we insist on, and teach the students to make, expository, doctrinal sermons: The minister must explain and apply the truths of Scripture.

Teaching that Exhorts

This teaching is to be hortatory. It is not on the order of a learned lecture that only informs the congregation, but it is preaching that exhorts and admonishes. This kind of teaching the apostle requires of pastors when he writes, “give attendance...to *exhortation*.” Exhortation and doctrine are not two different activities, as though on Sunday morning the minister teaches doctrine and on Sunday evening he exhorts. Rather, his teaching of doctrine is a teaching that exhorts. The apostle charges the same kind of teaching in verse eleven: “These things *command* and teach.”

We teach the gospel of salvation in the blood of Jesus with the call—the *urgent* call—to repent and believe this gospel. We teach a godly walk with the exhortation to walk in this way. We teach concerning false doctrine and a wicked way of life with the warning that the people who hear us reject this doctrine and avoid this behavior.

The exhortation is urgent.

The warning is vehement.

The preacher beseeches the people of God to be reconciled to God.

He urges any unconverted or backslider to turn to Christ Jesus as set forth in the teaching of the gospel in heartfelt sorrow over sin and with a true faith.

The youth of the pastor does not detract from the validity and urgency of the exhortation, as verse 12 points out: “Let no man despise thy youth.” This is something that no longer is any concern of mine. But it will be a concern for you seminarians. Remember, and convey to your congregations, that you



Professor Barrett Gritters

come in your exhorting with the authority of the Lord Christ who has called you and whose word you are teaching.

Two dangers are to be avoided. One is exhortation without teaching. In this case, there is mere emotional and oratorical bluster. We have all heard the radio preacher, or seen the television evangelist, whose exhortation is empty bellowing, consisting of loud repetition of some command, whether “love your neighbor,” or “don’t get drunk.”

The other danger is teaching devoid of exhortation. In this case, there is dry logic and abstract dogma.

The ideal, which must also be the rule, is the kind of teaching that characterized the Scots Reformer John Knox, as described by the Reformed church historian, J. I. Good, in his *Famous Reformers*: “When he preached, he fused logic and passion, and stormed at once the head and the heart of his hearers.”

A fusion of logic and passion!

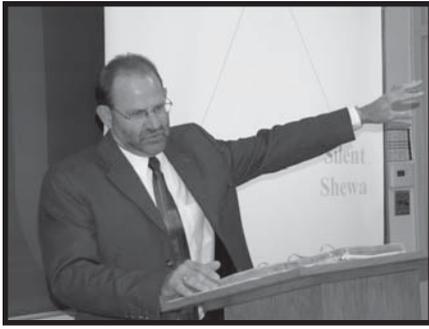
Storming at once both the head and the heart!

Hortatory teaching!

To this hortatory teaching of the doctrine, the minister must apply himself with zeal and diligence. This is exactly what “give attendance to” expresses: “apply yourself zealously to.” In verse eight of I Timothy 3, the word translated “give attendance to” in I Timothy 4:13 is translated “given to” in the warning that a deacon must not be addicted to wine. As a deacon must not be addicted to wine, a minister must be addicted to teaching.

Teaching the doctrine is not for

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Professor Ronald Cammenga

a pastor an eight-to-five job, five days a week.

I heard firsthand once from a Reformed consistory seeking a minister for their vacant church that the man whom the congregation called informed the consistory that he would never work or be “on call” on Mondays since this was his “day off,” that during the summer he would always be away at his cottage on a lake from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening, and that he expected at least five weeks of vacation in the summer.

My advice to the consistory was that they summarily inform the man that they withdrew the call. I added that they ought also to inform him that the reason was that it was evident that he was no undershepherd of Christ at all, but a mere hireling. Christ is “on call” for His flock every Monday; Christ works for His church on Fridays and Saturdays also during the summer; and, although Christ certainly allows His men to go away and rest awhile, and although it is certainly good for the church that she give her pastor a vacation (a vacation that he willingly gives up in case of need), undershepherds of Christ do not “expect” and demand long vacations.

For the minister of the word, teaching is not a duty to be gotten out of the way. Something is seriously amiss if, on Monday, he looks up against the need to make two new, good sermons as a dreary task.

The minister is to be devoted to teaching. He must spend long hours at it. He must work hard at

it. He must pour himself into the work.

“Give thyself wholly” (to the work of the ministry), we read in verse fifteen—the Authorized Version’s forceful translation of the apostle’s even more forceful word, ‘be’ (in the work). Teaching the doctrine must be our life, and this is why the church supports us financially.

In the way of giving attendance to teaching, we heed the warning of verse fourteen: “neglect not the gift that is in thee”—a warning against laziness, carelessness, and, thus, neglect of duty in the minister. This is not a remote danger for, or a rare sin in, ministers, I fear. Neither is it a minor evil. When I read this warning, I think of the “slothful servant” in Jesus’ parable of the talents, whose punishment is the “outer darkness” (Matt. 25:14-30).

Jesus condemns the slothful servant as “unprofitable” (Matt. 25:30). The careless, lazy, neglectful minister is unprofitable to the church and churches, and to Jesus Himself—a damning indictment.

The description of the work of the minister in I Timothy 4 also refers to his “profiting.” Verse 15 holds before him the eminently desirable prospect that “thy profiting may appear to all.” Out of lifelong, diligent application of himself to the work of teaching will come progress and development in the minister, so that he is profitable to the church and to Christ—an exhilarating, and rewarded, privilege.

This giving of attendance to the work consists, chiefly, of diligent, careful preparation of sermons. The Lutheran homiletician M. Reu wrote this about the minister’s preparation of sermons: “He [the minister of the word] will...hold himself to the rule to prepare his sermons with a meticulous care extending to individual words, and to write them out in full, for years and years” (*Homiletics*). The Presbyterian R. L. Dabney wrote this, in his *Lectures on Sacred Rhetoric*:

Whatever may be your method, excellence can only be the result of strenuous effort. He who labors most on each sermon is usually the best preacher.... To preach a sermon is a great and awful task. Woe to that man who slights it with a perfunctory preparation and a careless heart.

Required Reading

Of the preparation of oneself to teach, reading is an important, indeed necessary, part. The work of the ministry includes reading: “give attendance to *reading*.” Like the activity of exhorting, reading bears on the one, great work of teaching the doctrine—teaching the doctrine in the right, hortatory manner.

A minister must read. He must read, not only in preparation for a specific teaching assignment—a sermon, a catechism class, a Bible study—but constantly, as ongoing preparation of himself for his lifelong work.

A minister must read widely: important secular works—history, literature, philosophy, and science; heretical theological books; and, especially, sound theological books.

He ought to read a good daily newspaper, not only the sports section, but also the sections of local, national, and international news, the business section, and even the entertainment section. The reason is not that he harbors the lust to step down from his exalted position as minister of the word into the realm of politics, or that he himself has investments, or that he plans to take his family to the movies. But he must know the world—the culture—in which the church and the churches are living and in the midst of which and against which the church (and himself!) are called to shine as light in the darkness.

By all means, the minister must read the theological magazines and journals that keep him abreast of current issues and ecclesiastical developments. Since we are determined in this seminary to be concrete and practical, I recommend that you seminarians read the lat-

est issue of the Canadian Reformed Churches' *Clarion* magazine (August 3, 2007) and the latest issue of the United Reformed Churches' *Christian Renewal* magazine (August 22, 2007). These issues confirm the longstanding charge by the Protestant Reformed Churches that the heresy of the Federal Vision now troubling many of the reputedly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America—the doctrine of justification by works and of salvation by the will and work of the sinner *within the covenant*—is the fruit of the covenant doctrine of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (“liberated”). This is the doctrine that holds that by a gracious promise to all the children alike God establishes the covenant of grace with all the physical children of believing parents alike. The promise, however, and the covenant itself with all its saving benefits depend upon a condition—a work that the children must fulfill, not upon the eternal, gracious election of God.

If a man does not care to read, he is not called to the ministry. If a man in the ministry does not read, he will be a poor stick of a minister, at best.

I offer some practical advice to the students, not because I think that you do not enjoy reading, but because I know that the many other demands upon a minister will put pressure on you that squeezes out reading.

Set aside time for reading: the first thing Monday morning; late in the evening, when meetings have ended, your wife and children are in bed, and the telephone mercifully falls silent; an hour or two late in the afternoon; during the summer months, when there is some relief from the other work, including certain hours of your vacation, as long as the reading does not adversely affect the family.

Do not allow yourself to be waylaid by much recreation. You will be a pastor of many men who work only eight hours a day, five

days a week, and who therefore have much time for many recreational activities—golfing, tennis, hunting, fishing, boating, traveling, running, biking, playing ball, and what not more. I am not criticizing these men or these activities. But as a minister you do not have such time. Do not allow yourself to suppose that you may pattern your life after theirs. Do not indulge the notion that somehow you miss out on life if you do not waste an equal amount of time in similar activities. Do not often yield to their well-meaning invitations to join them in these pleasant pursuits. Note well that the apostle of Christ addressed the well-known and oft-quoted words, “bodily exercise profiteth little,” *to us ministers* (I Tim. 4:8). Recreation must not distract us from the required reading that is useful for teaching the doctrine, to say nothing of the many other, indeed endless, responsibilities of the pastor of the congregation and minister in a denomination.

Build up your library. A large library does not necessarily indicate a good preacher, but a meager one usually indicates a poor minister. Be bold to suggest to your consistory that it ought to encourage your reading and, if possible, designate money in the budget for books and magazines for the minister.

A minister who does not read becomes stale. His well soon runs dry. His teaching becomes monotonous. The congregation quickly tires, if not of him, then of his teaching.

Quite unconsciously, the apostle himself set us the example of giving attendance to reading. An old minister, in prison, about to end his ministry in a martyr's death, as almost his last words, he requested that one “bring...the books, especially the parchments” (II Tim. 4:13).

A cloak to keep him warm, and some books to read!

Every minister worth his salt smiles through his tears as he reads this pathetic plea of that most amaz-



Professor Russell Dykstra

ing of all the servants of Jesus Christ, but understands the request.

Reading Scripture

Above all, however, the pastor is to read the Scriptures. They are chiefly in view in verse thirteen.

A pastor must read the Scriptures publicly, as an aspect of his teaching. *How* he reads them is a topic in itself. There is a scandalous public reading of the Bible by ministers. They stumble through the chapter as though it is new and strange territory. There is no regard for proper emphasis on the right words and phrases. They mispronounce words. They skip words. Their tone is dispassionate. They ignore commas and periods. The teachers of English in the congregation are giving them an “F.” Some members are amused. Other members are irked.

We must give attendance to *how* we read the inspired word of God at church. Reverence for the holy word of God demands it. It was said of Abraham Kuyper that his reading of the Scripture passage for the service was itself a sermon that moved the congregation deeply.

But the pastor must also read Scripture privately in a studious fashion. Scripture must be our main reading. We must read it in preparation for every task. We must read it particularly in preparing every sermon—read it with concentration that produces sweat. We must read it as part of our daily personal worship of God. We must read it as the sacred object of our continuous study.

Oddly, if my own experience is any indication, the minister is

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tempted to fail here: *we find ourselves too busy to read the Bible.*

The reading of Scripture comes first in the charge to the preacher: "Give attendance to reading." There is good reason for this in light of the minister's main work, namely, teaching the doctrine. Scripture is the source and content

of all the teaching. The Spirit gives us our message out of Scripture and by means of a studious, believing reading of Scripture. Thus does the Spirit put our gift to good use for our own progress and for the profit of the church.

Colleagues and seminarians, this is our work!

And the incentive?

"For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (v. 16).

Do we hear the Holy Spirit so that we are motivated to read, exhort, and teach the doctrine?

"In doing this, *thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*" 

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (4)

We began our consideration of the sacramental operation of the Lord's Supper by seeing that the Lord's Supper is our spiritual feast.

Christ instituted the sacrament for our spiritual nourishment in much the same way that He gave us means for physical nourishment when it comes to the health and strength of our physical bodies.

The spiritual nourishment necessary for our spiritual life is *Christ*. We must eat and drink Christ. That is the truth Jesus set forth in John 6:53-56. That is confirmed in I Corinthians 10:1-4. Christ is the spiritual food necessary for our spiritual life.

The question we face now is this: How is this fulfilled in the Lord's Supper?

How by partaking of the sacrament are we partaking of Christ, of His body and blood? When we eat the bread and drink the wine of the Lord's table, how is that eating and drinking Christ? What

does it mean that the Lord's Supper is our spiritual feast?

Fundamentally these are questions that concern the grace of God. How is the Lord's Supper a means of grace?

In answering these questions we get into the heart of the controversy concerning this sacrament.

The Roman Catholic Doctrine

We begin with the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Rome says that in the sacrament the bread and wine change. The signs change. When the bread and wine are consecrated by the priest, those natural elements change physically into the body and blood of Christ.

From its own writings, Roman Catholicism teaches the following:

What is the Holy Eucharist?

The Holy Eucharist is a sacrament and a sacrifice. In the Holy Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine, the Lord Christ is contained, offered, and received.

(a) The whole Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist. We use the words "really, truly, and substan-

tially" to describe Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist in order to distinguish our Lord's teaching from that of mere men who falsely teach that the Holy Eucharist is only a sign or figure of Christ, or that He is present only by His power.

(b) All Christians, with but few minor exceptions, held the true doctrine of the Real Presence from the time of Christ until the Protestant Revolution in the sixteenth century.

(c) The word "Eucharist" means "Thanksgiving."¹

After treating the institution of the sacrament, the following Roman Catholic doctrine is set forth:

What happened when Our Lord said: "This is My body...this is My blood"?

When Our Lord said, "This is my body," the entire substance of the bread was changed into His body; and when He said, "This is my blood," the entire substance of the wine was changed into His blood.

When presenting the question of whether anything remains of the bread and wine after their substance is changed into Christ's

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body and blood, the answer is that there remains “only the appearances of bread and wine.”

The change of the entire substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is called Transubstantiation.

It still looks like bread. It still tastes like bread. But it is no longer bread, but Christ’s physical body.

And what is in the cup still looks and smells like wine. It still tastes like wine. But it is now the physical blood of Jesus.

Then we read that which leads into Rome’s teaching concerning the mass, a matter to be treated separately:

Why does Christ give us His own body and blood in the Holy Eucharist?

Christ gives us His own body and blood in the Holy Eucharist:

first, to be offered as a sacrifice commemorating and renewing for all time the sacrifice of the cross;

second, to be received by the faithful in Holy Communion;

third, to remain ever on our altars as the proof of His love for us, and to be worshiped by us.

Such is the heart of Rome’s teaching concerning the sacrament.

Not to be overlooked, however, is the significance of the sacrament. For the sacrament is a means of grace. According to Rome,

When the sign is applied to the one who receives the sacrament, it signifies inward grace and has the power of producing it in the soul. The external action performed by the minister of the sacrament is called a sign of the inward grace because it signifies and represents outwardly what is produced inwardly and invisibly in the soul. The sacramental signs actually effect what they represent.²

And so all who partake of those elements in the Eucharist eat and drink *grace*, providing they aren’t carrying mortal sins that prevent them from receiving that grace. That is what Rome teaches.

Lutheran Teaching

Martin Luther, on the other hand, defined the sacrament this way: “It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in and under the bread and wine which we Christians are commanded by the Word of Christ to eat and to drink.”³

Luther rejected the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation.

As regards transubstantiation, we care nothing about the sophisticated subtlety by which they teach that bread and wine leave or lose their own natural substance, and that there remain only the appearance and color of bread, and not true bread.⁴

But when Luther speaks of the “true body and blood,” he makes the same reference as does Rome to the natural and physical body and blood of the Lord. Instead of speaking of the elements changing, he speaks of the true body and blood of Christ being “in and under the bread and wine.”

Luther’s error was in speaking of Christ’s presence in the sacrament as a physical presence. His doctrine of the Lord’s Supper was affected by an erroneous view concerning the two natures of Christ and particularly what is referred to as the *ubiquity* of Christ’s human nature.

But what is the nature of Christ’s presence in the sacrament? Is it merely symbolic? Is He only present in our minds, by way of remembrance?

The True Nature of the Sacrament

We must remember that sacraments are spiritual institutions or ordinances of God. They are *spiritual*, not natural. To put it another way, the sacraments are natural signs that signify and seal spiritual realities.

The water of baptism itself does not wash away our sins, as if sin is something that only clings to our skin. Baptism is a sign of a spiritual reality, a tremendous wonder of God’s grace that leads us spiritually to Christ, who alone

cleanses all our sins. So it is also with the Lord’s Supper.

It is from that point of view that the Heidelberg Catechism (Q & A 78) answers the question: “Do then the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ?”

Not at all; but as the water in baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, neither is the washing away of sin itself, being only the sign and confirmation thereof appointed of God; so the bread in the Lord’s Supper is not changed into the very body of Christ, though agreeably to the nature and properties of sacraments, it is called the body of Christ Jesus.

Notice, the Catechism speaks of the elements being *properly* called the body of Christ, according to the nature and properties of sacraments.

The Lord’s Supper is not merely a feast of remembrance.

We partake of the body and blood of the Lord. We must. But we partake of His body and blood not with the natural mouth, but with the mouth of faith.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, which arose out of the English and Scottish branch of the Calvinistic Reformation, has this to say about this matter in Q & A 170:

How do they that worthily communicate in the Lord’s Supper feed upon the body and blood of Christ therein? As the body and blood of Christ are not corporally or carnally present in,

1. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine, Revised Edition of the Baltimore Catechism* (Paterson, New Jersey, St. Anthony Guild Press, 1941 and 1949), Lesson 26, pp. 273-281.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

3. Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism, Part Fifth, “Of the Sacrament of the Altar.”*

4. Martin Luther, *The Smalcald Articles, The Third Part of the Articles, 6. Of the Sacrament of the Altar.* 1537.

with, or under the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, and yet are spiritually present to the faith of the receiver, no less truly and really than the elements themselves are to their outward senses; so they that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not yet after a corporal and carnal, but in a spiritual manner; yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.

The Belgic Confession, written years before the Westminster, states the same in its treatment "Of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ." In Article 35, as it unfolds this doctrine, the Confession states:

...as certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do as certainly receive by faith (which

is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life. Now, as it is certain and beyond all doubt that Jesus Christ hath not enjoined to us the use of His sacraments in vain, so He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. In the meantime we err not when we say that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ. But the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth, but by the spirit through faith. Thus then, though Christ always sits at the right hand of His Father in the heavens, yet doth He not therefore cease to make us partakers of Himself by faith. This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates Himself with all His benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both Himself and

the merits of His sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of His flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood.

And so, at the table of the Lord, in the Lord's Supper, God has given us a spiritual feast, the spiritual food of which is His own Son.

You and I eat and drink *Christ* in the spiritual sense of the word.

We partake of His righteousness. We eat and drink His holiness, and by the work of the Holy Spirit assimilate it into our own spiritual life. We eat and drink knowledge, the true knowledge of God.

We eat and drink *Him* in whom alone is the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

We are partakers of all the blessings of salvation when we eat and drink with mouths of *faith* at the spiritual feast of the Lord's Supper. 

Report of Classis West

In its regular session on Wednesday, September 5, 2007, Classis West met in Lynden, Washington, and enjoyed the warm hospitality of the saints of our Lynden Protestant Reformed Church. The main highlight of the work of classis was the examination of Pastor-elect Clayton W. Spronk, who had received and accepted the call to serve as pastor of the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois. A special worship service was called by the consistory of the Lynden PRC for Tuesday evening, September 4. Pastor-elect Spronk led the special worship service and preached on Psalm 122:6-8. In attendance were not only the saints of Lynden, but also the twenty-four delegates of Classis West and the three synodical deputies from Classis East (Rev. C. Haak, Rev. D. Kleyn, and Rev. R. Kleyn). The following day, classis examined Mr. Spronk in the six sections of Reformed Dogmatics, in his knowledge of Scripture, in his knowledge of the confessions, in Controversy, and in Practica.

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After each fifteen-minute section of questions, opportunity was given for follow-up questions from the delegates.

Classis West, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies of Classis East, unanimously approved the examination of Pastor-elect C. Spronk, and advised the Peace PRC to proceed with his ordination and installation as their new pastor, which took place on Friday evening, September 7.

We may give thanks to our heavenly Father for His continued provision of well prepared and qualified men to labor as ministers of the Word and sacraments in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. We express our thanks to our Seminary professors for the evidence of their faithful labors.

The next highlight of the agenda was the approval of the request from 46 signators, who represent 37 families and 9 individuals, for a total of 172 souls from the Hull PRC, to organize a daughter congregation in the Hull, Iowa, area. This decision of classis received the concurrence of the

synodical deputies of Classis East. The council of Hull PRC was appointed to oversee the organization of the daughter congregation, and Rev. S. Key was appointed to serve as her moderator. The new daughter congregation plans to organize under the name Calvary Protestant Reformed Church. We rejoice in this blessing upon our churches in the addition of another sister in our federation of churches.

In other work, classis advised a consistory to proceed to the second step of Christian discipline with one of its members. A pulpit supply schedule was adopted for the soon to be organized Calvary Protestant Reformed Church. Classis approved Lynden's request to reduce their synodical assessments for 2007 because of their loss of five families since the beginning of the year. Classis decided to raise the amount for remuneration of elders' lost wages, while serving at classis, to \$140 per day. The travel and food expenses of classis totaled \$11,923.42.

Under the able leadership of the chairman, Rev. J. Marcus; the vice-chairman, Rev. Rodney Miersma; and, the clerk, Rev. J. Mahtani, classis concluded its work by 3:30 in the after-

noon. After the exchange of farewells, the delegates dispersed and returned to their respective church homes and families. Classis looks forward to be-

ing hosted next by the Hope PRC in Redlands, California, for its regular winter session on Wednesday, March 5, 2008, the Lord willing.

Rev. Richard J. Smit, Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

Rev. Michael DeVries, pastor of the Wingham, ON, PRC, declined the call he had been considering to serve as our churches' next missionary to the Philippines, and the Berean PRC.

On Sunday morning, September 2, Rev. Rodney Kleyn announced to his congregation, the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, that he was declining the call he had been considering to serve as missionary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

School Activities

A special congregational meeting was held August 22 at the Wingham, ON, PRC. The purpose of that meeting was to consider a proposal from their consistory regarding submitting an offer to purchase the Lucknow Christian School property. At this special meeting it was unanimously decided to submit an offer for the purchase of the school property. However, Wingham was notified the following week that Lucknow Christian School had received an offer substantially higher than theirs, which they would pursue at this time. In all these things may we ever commit our way unto the Lord.

The congregation of Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB was informed that the Board of Genesis PR School had found an alternative facility in town for their school. In the Lord's providence, a vacant church building in town became available in late August, and now the school plans for the 2007-2008 school year to rent and hold classes in that facility instead of in their

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

own church building. For this positive development the Immanuel congregation gives humble thanks to our heavenly Father, who again shows that He faithfully and amazingly supplies all our needs (Phil. 4:19).

Members of our churches in Iowa and Minnesota were reminded to reserve Labor Day morning, September 3, for a pancake breakfast for the Midwest Society for PR Secondary Education. Not only was the breakfast good, but those who attended enjoyed good Christian fellowship, and had the opportunity to support a worthy cause, all at the same time.

At the request of Faith Christian's Education Committee and School Board, the consistory of the Randolph, WI PRC has given their pastor, Rev. Doug Kuiper, permission to teach Bible in the lower room for the 2007-2008 school year, if no full-time teacher is hired by the start of the school year.

Students enrolled at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI for this fall, and anyone interested in the work of Christianity on Campus, were invited to our Grace PRC in Standale, MI on Saturday, August 25, for breakfast, followed by a presentation on the work of Christianity on Campus.

Evangelism Activities

Christianity on Campus and Grace PRC of Standale, MI had separate booths at Grand Valley State University's annual Campus Life Night on September 4. The booth, hosted by members of Grace, was there to introduce and welcome students to Grace and their worship services, and to invite students to the weekly meetings of C on C held on the campus

of GVSU each week.

The Bible study at Trinity Christian College in Chicago, IL, begun last year by Rev. Jai Mahtani and the congregation of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL, will continue this school year. Pastor Mahtani planned to meet with all interested students the first Thursday of each month at the Alumni Hall classroom. The first meeting was scheduled for October 4 at 6:00 P.M. All PR students attending Trinity were encouraged to attend and also to invite others to join this Bible study.

Denomination Activities

This year's annual Seminary Convocation, marking the beginning of another school year for the preparing of men for the ministry of the gospel, was held September 5 in the auditorium of the Grandville, MI, PRC. Prof. Ronald Cammenga spoke on the topic, "The Reformed Minister as Man of God." The Hope Heralds once again this year provided the special music for the Convocation.

Mission Activities

Rev. Jason Kortering, one of our denomination's "retired" pastors, along with his wife, planned to move to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and the Heritage PR Fellowship, the last week of August. Plans called for Pastor Kortering to preach and work in that mission field until the middle of December, or until a full-time missionary is obtained through calls extended by the Edgerton, MN PRC.

Congregation Activities

We can only imagine the mixed emotions going through the

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THE STANDARD BEARER

hearts of the South Holland, IL congregation on Sunday evening, September 2, when they met together for the final time in their recently sold church building. Their pastor, Rev. Allen Brummel, preached a confession of faith/last service sermon from Psalm 48:14. After the service everyone was invited to stay for a song service marking the event. Rev. Brummel read a history of South Holland, and the

grade school children sang Psalter 243. There was no coffee that night because all the coffeepots, cups, etc. had been moved out already. In an interesting side note, the South Holland church building had two block faces, one with the date of organization, and the other with the date the church was erected. These were removed and replaced with blank stones. Behind one they found a copper box that was placed

there when the church was erected. There were pictures of the consistory and council, bulletins, a copy of a court-ruling about the name of the church, and documents discussing the choices for general contractor. The Lord willing, the block face with the organization date and the original copper box, with updated information, will be used when South Holland builds their new church. 

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 10, 2007,

JAY and NORMA BOONE

will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.

- ❖ Dan and Jennie Boone
 - ❖ Randy and Shelley Boone
 - ❖ Doug and Francine Boone
 - ❖ Richard and Kim Bronkema
- 14 grandchildren
6 great-grandchildren

Wyoming, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On August 8, 2007, the Lord in His infinite wisdom and immeasurable love, took to her eternal home

MRS. WILMINA VAN DEN TOP.

The council of the Doon PRC expresses Christian sympathy to her husband, Peter VanDenTop, to her sons, elder Gene VanDenTop and Floyd VanDenTop, and their families.

May they find comfort in God's Word found in II Timothy 4:7, 8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Rev. David Overway, President
Jim Hoogendoorn, Clerk

Loveland Prot. Ref. Church Fall Lecture

The Deterioration of the Christian Church

- I. From Deformation to Reformation and Back Again
- II. From Carnal to Spiritual and Back to Carnal
- III. Deformation: A Sign of the End

Speaker: Rev. T. Miersma
Wednesday, October 31, 2007
7:30 P.M. at Loveland PRC

Tapes or CD's available for sale

NOTICE!

Faith Christian School in Randolph, Wisconsin is seeking applicants for a combined first and second grade classroom starting in the 2007/2008 school year. Interested applicants are encouraged to contact Mr. John Huizenga, administrator, at (920) 326-6186 or principal@randolphfcs.org. Resumes may also be e-mailed or sent to Mr. Huizenga at Faith Christian School, 611 N Columbus St., Randolph, WI 53956.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Doon Adult Bible Society expresses Christian sympathy to Gene and Daris VanBemmel in the death of Gene's dad,

MR. HENRY PAUL VAN BEMMEL.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).

Rev. David Overway, President
Mary VanDenTop, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of Southwest PRC express Christian sympathy to Mrs. Fran Feenstra in the death of her step-mother-in-law,

MRS. LaVERNE FEENSTRA.

May she be comforted by Psalm 121:2, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Mr. Marvin Kamps, Pres.
Grace Kuiper, Sec'y.

Reformed Witness Hour

October 2007

Date	Topic	Text
October 7	"Husbands, Love As Christ"	Ephesians 5:25-27
October 14	"Husbands, Love with Purpose"	Ephesians 5:25-27
October 21	"The Husband Is the Head of His Wife"	Ephesians 5:23
October 28	"Justification by Faith Is the Catholic Gospel"	Romans 3:29, 30