

Christian Reformed Church Grows

Neal De Young

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Mr. Charles Westra
Editor, Beacon Lights
1722 Alto Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dear Sir:

I have recently seen a copy of your April issue of "Beacon Lights." One article drew my attention and I could not leave it go without making some comment. This article is entitled "Christian Reformed Church Grows" by Jim Jonker.

First of all, I must say that Mr. Jonker is biased and seems to write to degrade the Christian Reformed Church. There is little or any good in this article about the Christian Reformed Church. Being a member of the Christian Ref. Church, I wish to defend my church against his attack which I believe is untrue and is not proved.

Mr. Jonker seems to think that the Protestant Reformed Church has a claim on the truth. He allows for no difference in opinion or doctrine. Everyone else is wrong except the Protestant Reformed church.

He states that the issue of Common Grace is a heresy of the Christian Reformed Church, in his opinion, yes, but we as Christian Reformed of course are wrong, because we don't have the truth. The Protestant Reformed Church is the only church with the truth. We cannot have anything in our doctrine that is different. This makes our whole system corrupt and a heresy. Mr. Jonker seems to argue in this fashion; he leaves no opening for difference in doctrine. If you don't believe like the Protestant Reformed Church, you are wrong.

Mr. Jonker brings up the union issue which the Christian Reformed Church leaves an open question. Our Synod has said that the church members may belong to unions, but I'm sure this decision was not made to avoid trouble. Can Mr. Jonker prove that Synod's decision was based on the issue of avoiding trouble? I don't believe he can. He also fails to realize that members of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids belong to the IGA (Independent Grocers Assoc.) This is a union of grocers. It may be called an association but it was organized so that grocers could buy things cheaper to compete with the chain stores such as A&P. A working man cannot belong to the union to gain advantages, but a grocer can belong to the IGA and such organizations for his benefit. Is the IGA employing union help? Remember that an IGA member supports their policy and pays for its operation. It seems to me that there is an inconsistency in the Protestant Reformed Churches on this issue.

Mr. Jonker also comments at the theatre attendance of Grand Rapids Christian High School students. Has Mr. Jonker conducted a poll to find this out or has he heard the students talking. Is he judging the youth of the Christian Reformed Church by the acts of a few hundred at Grand Rapids Christian High School? Is Mr. Jonker so sure that there are not young people of the Protestant Reformed Church attending movies also?

The Back to God Hour and The Banner show that our doctrine is impure and corrupt. Yes, this is true to anyone who doesn't agree with our doctrine. I could say the same about the "Reformed Witness Hour." He uses no proof to back his rash statements, he cites no program or article in The Banner.

I would like to know how Mr. Jonker can say that we have woman suffrage in our church. We don't have women elders and deacons. Women have no voice in congregational matters. How can Mr. Jonker make such a brash statement without proof. It is easy to make statements, but where is his proof? He shows me none.

Can Mr. Jonker prove that we sing Arminianistic hymns in the Christian Reformed Church? Does he realize that all hymns are not Arminian and that we also sing the psalms in our churches? Had he read the hymns in our Psalter Hymnal, he would soon realize that we have changed the words to fit our doctrine. What does he have against hymns like "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "Have Thine Own Way, Lord," and others. I'm sure Mr. Jonker has sung these hymns also. As for what hymns they sing in schools, I do not know.

The growth of the Christian Reformed church is not due to lowering of denominational walls, as Mr. Jonker says. Has Mr. Jonker ever evaluated the growth of the Christian Reformed Churches? I don't think so; otherwise he would not make such a statement. Allow me to quote a few figures from our 1956 yearbook.

Children baptized, 6,871. Deaths, 1,099. Net gain in membership, 5,772. Can Mr. Jonker say that a 5,000-member gain is due to lowering of denominational walls? This is internal growth. He didn't even suggest the possibility of internal growth.

We received from other denominations 1973, less than 1%. This includes people coming from Protestant Reformed, Reformed churches, etc. Another factor which caused our churches to grow rapidly which Mr. Jonker did not mention is that since 1946 we have received approx.. 33,000 members from Reformed churches in the Netherlands. By accepting these 33,000 members, did we lower our standards?

The Christian Reformed church received 506 people through our program of evangelism. The Protestant Reformed Church has not active mission fields and such a program. This figure is about ½ of 1% of our total membership. Does this suggest lowering our standards to accept members.

Mr. Jonker is also inclined to believe that a split makes a church better and purer. How does he prove this? When I read the Standard Bearer and saw the names that people called others, I shuddered. How a true Christian can call a brother a liar and heretic when a week ago he was worshipping with him is beyond me. Is this brotherly and Christian love? If it is, I don't want any part of it.

I believe in constructive criticism, but this article cannot be considered such. It can be classified as fault finding, with the Christian Reformed Church, and on the other hand, praising the Protestant Reformed Church for how good and pure it is. It might be a good idea for Mr. Jonker to have proof and investigate the things he writes. And another idea that might be good is that he evaluate his own church before criticizing others for faults that cannot be proved. I'm sure that the Protestant Reformed Church is not 100% pure and all its members holy. I'm sure that all is not pure and undefiled in the Protestant Reformed Church. I know it is not in the Christian Reformed Church. There are signs of becoming liberal in some aspects. We are not blind in the Christian Reformed Church, but we don't go calling others liberal and running them to the ground as Mr. Jonker's article does.

I hope I have enlightened you and not offended you; if I did, please pardon me. It is hard for one to let such an article as Mr. Jonker's pass without comment.

Sincerely,
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