

...for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...
Heidelberg Theological Seminary in the Philippines

THE HEIDELBRIEF

News from Heidelberg Theological Seminary

Special Philippine Issue, 2020

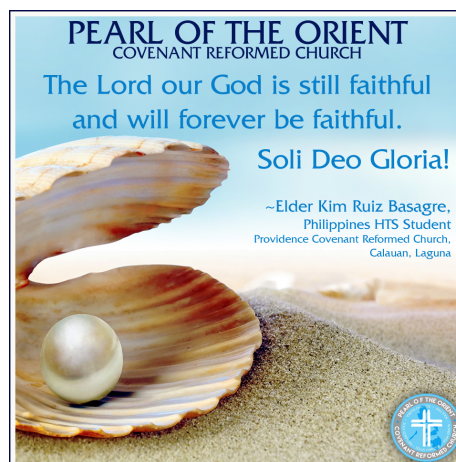
Voices from the Pearl

Rev. Chuck Muether, Director of Advancement



In previous issues of *The Heidelbergbrief*, we have reported on the growth of the Pearl of the Orient Covenant Reformed Church. This faithful church in the Philippines has numerous students enrolled in the HTS M.Div. program. For years the seminary has sent professors to the Philippines through the generous support of many congregations in the Reformed Church in the United States.

Some months ago, Executive Administrator Kevin Te Slaa suggested that we share some of the writings, posts, and musings from our colleagues and students who hail from the Pearl of the Orient in a future issue of *The Heidelbergbrief*. So we have rounded up some for your edification. Enjoy!



The Discipline of Prayer

Rev. Vic Bernales, Pastor of Davao Covenant Reformed Church
HTS Student Advisor for Mindanao, Philippines

Prayer is essential to the Christian life. One cannot be a disciple of Christ and at the same time neglect prayer in his life. Prayer is important for us as children of God. It is as valuable as the air we breathe.

Yet I have to confess that prayer is one of the often neglected disciplines in my life. Not that I don't say or utter prayers to God. I could argue that I mumble some short and simple prayers every day and every week by just looking at our church bulletin and my Facebook friends' timeline. In fact, I have prayed for several people who are having medical issues these past few days.

The problem is that my prayers are haphazard, heartless, i.e., not from the heart, as the prophet Hosea decries in Hosea 7:14a. Most of the time my prayers are perfunctory and not motivated by the tenderness of the heavenly Father and by the sweetness of the grace of God in Christ.



I know that God is eager to listen to us when we come to Him in true faith and when we pray from the heart that which God has commanded us to ask for. Every time we approach God with boldness in the name of Christ, He is pleased to incline His ears to us. When we acknowledge our need and misery, hiding nothing from Him and humbling ourselves in His majestic presence, God is delighted.

The Lord will surely be pleased to answer our prayers when we rest on the solid truth that even though we do not deserve it, He will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ, His Son and our Lord, as He promised us in His Word (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 117). I know these things are true but usually my prayers are contrary to these principles. No matter how flowery and pious my words are if they were uttered in careless and thoughtless ways, the things that I mumble are words that God does not really bother to hear. So I repent. I ask God to forgive my heartless prayers.

Ultimately prayer is not just words that we say but also the attitude we have toward the God to whom we pray. Prayer also includes our disposition toward the Lord who has established His gracious covenant with us in and through His Son. He continually strengthens that covenant with us by His Spirit by means of feeding us with His Word and the holy sacraments.

When we forget that prayer is not just words that we say to but also attitude of the heart toward the One who created and redeemed us, it could become careless and thoughtless. However, when we come to Him in reverence and utter dependence, prayer can become a meaningful communion with our heavenly Father who delights in blessing us, His children.

What is your only comfort in life and in death?
Is it having your family and relatives beside you?
Is it being financially stable and secure? Is it acquiring
a lot of friends? Is it achieving a physically fit body?

Christ Is with Us

Mr. Morris Morales
HTS M.Div. Student, Bulacan, Philippines



To be able to spend precious moments with your loved ones brings color and happiness to one's life. Having plenty of money so you don't get to worry about what you will eat or drink for today or for the whole year gives a feeling of security. Being surrounded by friends who cheer you up when you're down promotes a sense of belonging and relieves the fear and pain of loneliness. Developing a healthy body to gain stronger defense against illnesses boosts one's confidence. To enjoy most or all of the wonderful things mentioned above is an awesome privilege.

But wait, there's more. There is even far more astonishing and amazing comfort than all of them combined. The Heidelberg Catechism, a famous and widely used catechism from the Reformed tradition, answers the question of



what is (and should be) the Christian's only comfort in life and in death. And here it is: *"That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him."*

All those who have repented of their sins and placed their faith in Christ are united with their Lord and Savior. We, Christians, who belong to Jesus, have an ultimate and unlimited source of great comfort and indescribable joy.

While we do not have the capacity to pay for our sins and earn our salvation, but through the precious blood of Christ, which is more valuable than all the diamonds, gold, and silver in the whole world, we have been redeemed from our slavery to sin, rescued from the penalty of our sins, and delivered from the power of the devil. Since we are in Christ, we have God as our heavenly Father. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

We have the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. We are sealed by Him and are guaranteed of our heavenly inheritance. His presence in us gives us a deep and genuine assurance that we have eternal life. The Spirit of God, our Helper and Comforter, preserves us so that we may persevere and continue in the faith. He is our God.

Truly in Christ, we have all that we need. What a majestic, magnificent, and marvelous Savior we have! Let us all rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!



Learning to Grow in Reformed Ecclesiology

Elder Filip Cruz, Sovereign God Covenant Reformed Church in Cabanatuan City, Philippines

The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

I was in awe when the Lord three years ago, by His sovereign grace called me out from Pentecostalism and started our family worship every Sunday afternoon. My intention at first was to teach my family the truth of the gospel and to be familiarized in hymns (because we only know contemporary songs) and also to be trained in doing Reformed liturgy. Every Sunday morning my wife and I travel 43 miles to Malolos City so we can worship at God is Faithful Covenant Church which is pastored by Pastor Edmund, then we travel back home to worship with my family.

And as it progresses, by God’s grace, the simple family worship grew as a church named Sovereign God Covenant Reformed Church here in Cabanatuan City and the Lord called me to be an elder/pastor here. Now as a church, we are having our public worship. And as the church has grown, some men are now being trained to become elders and deacons and the Lord has used Heidelberg Theological Seminary as one of the instruments to teach us significant truth of the Scriptures that we need in taking care of this local church. HTS has provided some of the essential knowledge we need to be equipped in this service to our Lord.



We are now excited as Dr. Koerner will be having a class in Ecclesiology this coming September 2020 via Zoom teleconferencing. I believe that this will be a great help to us as we grow as a church. Thanks to the Lord God our Father for all these wonderful gifts He has given us that we may continue to serve and worship Him. Amen.



When Knowing Is Not Enough

Mr. Enrico Calalang Marcos
HTS M.Div. Student, Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines



In Romans 7:7, Paul tells us that if not for the law, he would not have known sin. But in the next verses he showed us that sin is too deeply rooted in human nature to be overcome by knowledge alone. Even pagan philosophers admitted that our reason is far from always being able to control our passions.

How often do we find ourselves in the situation where we know that what is before us is wrong but we still do it; we still pursue what is displeasing to God! This is what Paul tells in Romans 7:14-23. Relying on knowledge alone is not sufficient to free us from the bondage of sin. And in Romans 7:24-25, Paul told us that the answer for all of this is Christ. Christ is our Savior and He is the only One who can save us from our wretchedness.

And the Bible tells us that even our "good" works are like filthy rags before the Lord (Isa. 64:6). This includes even the works that we think we have done with good intentions. The Bible is telling us that our righteousness is in Christ alone. He already paid the price and penalty of sin on our behalf and imputed His righteousness to us. He is also the reason why we can now obey and follow His commandments because it is Him who works in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13). This is the message entrusted to us as we are being trained to serve the church and spread the gospel. We must always remember to trust in Him alone!



Pursuing Biblical Order

Pastor Edmund Monterery Delos Reyes, GIF Malolos City Covenant Reformed Church, Philippines

We Reformed believers maintain that the standard for personal, public, and ecclesiastical life is God's Word, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. We declare our complete subjection and obedience to that Word of God. We also declare that we are a confessional church, in that we believe and are fully persuaded that the Three Forms of Unity – the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort – summarize and do fully agree with the Word of God. Therefore, we fully agree with these Reformed Confessions.

Both the Word of God and these Reformed Confessions demand that in our ecclesiastical structure and rule we openly acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the church. Christ exercises His headship in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the ordained offices, for the sake of purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and order in the churches. The congregations of our union, although distinct, willingly display their unity and accountability, both to each other and especially to Christ, by means of our common Confessions and this Church Order. Our congregations must manifest this unity when their delegates meet together in the major assemblies.



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In the next issue. . .

- Advancement Director Rev. Muether introduces new students at the seminary.
- Dr. Koerner teaches in two lands without leaving the classroom.
- New professor, Dr. Mosley, walks us through his classes.

Mark your calendars!

On September 4 (7:00 p.m.) at the seminary, we will be having convocation, commencement exercises, and Dr. Mosley's inauguration. More details will be on the HTS FB page. The ceremonies will be livestreamed.

It is the duty of our church members to live sober, righteous and godly lives, and to labor faithfully to bring others to Christ. Members shall obey the laws and rules of life prescribed in the Word of God and abide by the Church Order and contribute liberally, in proportion to their means, to the support of the Gospel and for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ.

Every member shall attend faithfully the public services of the Church and shall engage diligently in private devotions; and those who have been confirmed shall partake regularly of the Lord's Supper. Parents shall give attention to the Christian training of the members of the household.

These duties may seem elementary to the established Reformed church in other places, but in forming and growing the Pearl of the Orient Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines, establishing good church order is paramount to our spreading the Reformed witness.

I thank God for the opportunity given to us by Heidelberg Theological Seminary so that Reformed Filipino ministers and leaders can be trained to become useful to the Master's works. Through the seminary, we are blessed to learn sound teachings, biblical principles and discipline that we need as ministers of the Gospel and to further the reformation in our country.

