



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

*A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine*

... the members of the PRC are grateful for the KJV and for the untold blessings that they have received and still do receive from God through this precious English version, God's Word.

They are thankful also that the prizing of this version is not merely a personal matter with some or even most of them, but an ecclesiastical matter. The KJV is the beloved Bible of the Churches.

See "The Bible Version of the Churches" — p. 221

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In This Issue

Several articles give instruction concerning the end-time, its dangers for the church, and the calling and comfort of the church in this time. The meditation on "The Unchanging Christ in an Ever Changing World" points us to "the changeless Christ" as "our only Refuge." The article, "The End of the World," explains Matthew 24. Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma finishes his two-part series on the new age movement, giving pointed, necessary warning against specific ways in which the saints are being tempted to fall away.

Because the end depends upon the beginning, the article by Homer Hoeksema on creation is important for faith concerning the end of all things. The article, part of a series on Old Testament history, is also important in its own right as explanation of the origin of the world. Explanation that takes the opening chapters of Scripture literally (and, therefore, seriously) is especially necessary in our day when many have abandoned the literal interpretation and, with it, the doctrine of creation. See "The Creative Work in the Beginning."

The speech by Prof. Herman Hanko for an Officebearers' Conference of Classis West last year was entitled, "A Pastor's Heart." We publish the first installment of this speech in this issue. It is not only the pastors among us who will benefit from Prof. Hanko's answer to the question, "What is a true and faithful pastor?"

Items of special interest appear in both the report of Classis East and "News from Our Churches." Stated Clerk Jon J. Huiskens informs us that Classis East has approved the organization of a new Protestant Reformed congregation in Western Michigan. News editor Benjamin Wigger reports on significant activities in the churches regarding our Protestant Reformed Christian School movement and regarding evangelism.

I could not possibly fail to call the attention of our readers to the poem by Suzanne Looyenga, "Mephibosheth." Suzanne is writing some of the finest Christian poetry to appear in the religious press today.

— DJE

The Unchanging Christ in an Ever Changing World

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever.

Hebrews 13:8

In the center of history stands, as it were, the cross of Jesus Christ, whereby we are reconciled to God by His precious blood.

Immediately after our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell into sin God gave the promise: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Our first parents, and we through them, lost every right to life and blessing. We deserve only God's eternal wrath in just condemnation. But God showed mercy by giving us His promise. This promise includes a twofold seed, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. In sovereign goodness God will save out of a fallen human race a people unto Himself. He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens in their sins in righteous condemnation.

We fell, as it were, into the arms of Christ. Our only hope of salvation is in the promised Seed, the Seed of the woman, born in the line of the generations of believers, to whom is the

promise, "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee."

The hope of the church of the shadows was in the coming of the Savior. Abraham longed to see His day. As he awaited the coming of Shiloh, Jacob breathed the sigh, "I have waited for Thy salvation, Lord." Job found his comfort in this: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

These all died in faith, not having received the promise, but having seen it afar off. Poets sang of it. The types and shadows pointed to it. Prophets spoke of it in ever clearer language. Parents gave their children such names as Joshua, Hosea, and Isaiah, all of which mean "Jehovah saves." The prayer continually ascended to heaven, "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down." Or again, "Rise, help and redeem us, Thy mercy we trust." For all the hope of salvation of all the saints was centered in the Deliverer who was still to come.

When the fullness of time came, Jesus was born to Mary and was laid in a manger. Angels brought the glad tidings to the shepherds: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord."

The Scriptures give us a full account of His earthly ministry, His suffering, death and burial, His resurrection and ascension to heaven as the fulfillment of the promise.

Today the gospel goes forth to the ends of the earth, gathering into the fold those who believe and confess, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God." He is the only, the com-

plete Savior. There is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved.

* * * * *

In this 20th century God has brought about amazing changes, inventions, and discoveries that boggle the mind.

Numerous conveniences are brought into our homes.

Schools and offices are supplied with machines that bring about an entire change in their operation.

We travel at the speed of some 500 miles an hour to any part of the world. And man dreams of going still faster.

Modern communication has brought the whole world within our reach almost in moments.

The world boasts: What we can imagine we can also do.

Yet their way is a dead-end road. For God has written over all man's works: Apart from Christ all is vanity and vexation of spirit!

The unchangeable Christ is the Rock of Ages. Jesus is His personal name. Christ designates His position of power and authority in heaven and on earth.

He is the Second Person of the holy Trinity, the Son, who rests in the bosom of the Father. He is the Word, the revelation of all the fullness of God through the Spirit.

He stands foremost in the eternal counsel and will of God. For He is the Firstborn of all creatures, as well as the Firstborn among many brethren. All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. He is before all things, and

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by Him all things consist, both in heaven and on earth. And He is the Head of the church. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.

We have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin and right to eternal life. For He triumphantly conquered all the powers of darkness — Satan, sin, and death — through His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. He is Lord over all, with a Name above all names. Every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

All power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth. Every creature that stirs must serve Christ's purpose toward the coming of His kingdom. Even the hearts of kings are in His hand. He turns them according to His will.

The Lord reigns out of Zion. He gathers, defends, and preserves His church, and no one can prevent Him. In Him is all our salvation. He blesses us with every spiritual blessing by His Word and Spirit. Christ, our eternal Lord and King, who carries out the counsel of God unto our salvation, causes all things, even the powers of darkness, to serve His purpose. To God be the glory!

The apostle Paul warns us of perilous times that are coming for the people of God.

We see evidences of it wherever we turn.

Tremendous changes are taking place in the home. Husband and wife both go out to work; children are brought to a nursery or are left to shift for themselves. Single-parent homes are no longer uncommon. The bitter consequences are evident throughout the world.

God is banished. His law is despised. Man determines for himself what is right and wrong. Such sins as sexual promiscuity, living together outside of the marriage bond, divorce

and remarriage, homosexuality and abortion are not only openly practiced, but even condoned, if not encouraged.

Violence and crime have increased to epidemic proportions. The innocent hide behind locked doors in fear for their lives, while criminals, even teenagers, multiply their offenses, virtually without punishment.

Heresy grows and spreads so rapidly that anyone who still defends an infallibly inspired Scripture, six days of creation, and predestination is considered out-of-date, a fanatic, a detriment to society.

The measure of iniquity is rapidly filling up. And God's judgments are increasing in a like proportion.

World shaking events follow one upon another. The Berlin Wall falls. The Soviet Union collapses. A hurricane brings destruction near Miami. The Mississippi plains are flooded. Devastating fires spread

along the west coast. Terrorism and warfare spread through many parts of the world. Not to mention the rapid spread of AIDS everywhere. Our Lord shouts louder than ever: Behold, I come quickly. Hold that which thou hast!

"Rock of Ages, Cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee."

The unchanging Christ is our only Refuge.

He is the only, the complete Savior for body and soul, for time and eternity.

We belong to Him. We are members of the family of God as sons and daughters, heirs of salvation. Beholding ourselves in the mirror of God's Word we are changed into the likeness of Christ, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, to know, love, and serve our God in intimate communion of life.

When our Lord returns we shall be like Him, partakers of His divine nature in as far as that is humanly possible. Dwelling in God's house,

*Our Lord
shouts louder
than ever:
Behold,
I come quickly.*

we shall be filled with His glory in an ever increasing measure, changed from glory to richer and still richer glory, to the praise of His glorious Name!

In the meantime, as we make our pilgrimage through this present evil world, and the way grows more difficult, even well nigh impossible, we still have the assurance: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

When we experience the perilous times of which Scripture warns, when Satan and the powers of Antichrist do their worst, we can still say, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:6).

For our eternal security rests in the changeless Christ, to the praise of the glory of the grace of our God now and forever. □

*An Inquiry into the
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by

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The Bible Version of the Churches

The Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) use the King James Version (KJV) of Holy Scripture in their worship services, catechism classes, and other official meetings and activities. They use the KJV exclusively. All of the many Christian schools established by the members of the PRC use the KJV. Overwhelmingly, the PR people read the KJV in family worship and in private devotions.

This is a rare thing today. There are many individuals and several extra-ecclesiastical organizations that promote the KJV. But there are few churches that use it. There are far fewer denominations that have it as their exclusive English version.

Altogether apart from the question, "Which English version?" it should be plain to everyone that the matter of a good, sound, clear version of the Bible is of fundamental importance to the church. Because of the central place of the Bible in a Reformed church, a good version will bless and build up every aspect of the life of the congregation and its members.

By the same token, a bad version will work evil in the church. The versions made by Rome and by the Jehovah's Witnesses will introduce their respective heresies into the church. A modern version that translates loosely will obscure basic biblical teaching, making it impossible to prove specific doctrines and to oppose particular errors. A version that deliberately sacrifices faithfulness to

doctrinal expression for the sake of "making the Bible intelligible to the man on the street" will change the great, doctrinal words of the Bible, so that the reader is ignorant of such words as "justification," "sanctification," "predestination," and the like. Another version may subtly promote the feminist agenda. Yet another will encourage the people of God to talk to and about God like cocky illiterates.

Everyone of these dangers is real.

It should also be evident to all that it is both proper and beneficial that the saints use one English version of Scripture. The use of one version is helpful, if not necessary, for knowing Scripture thoroughly. It is essential for memorizing Scripture, especially by the children.

There are reasons why the PRC use the KJV. For one thing, as Reformed churches we are not given to change. We are especially hesitant to change in a matter of such importance as the version of Holy Scripture. The notion that the church must constantly be changing her Bible, her songbook, and her liturgy is anathema to us. This is unsettling to the saints. Some change is necessary. But if immutability is a virtue of God, constancy is not a vice in His church. Divine wisdom tells us, "Meddle not with them that are given to change" (Prov. 24:21).

Second, and most importantly, the KJV is a faithful, reliable, and generally clear translation of the Word of God as we have it in the original languages of Holy Scripture.

Third, it has a majesty and beauty of style that are fitting for the Word of God.

Another reason why the PRC continue to use the KJV is that no modern English translation is superior. Most modern translations are unsatisfactory.

The version that is being touted in evangelical and Reformed churches in North America is the New International Version (NIV). This version must be unacceptable to the church and believer that confess the verbal inspiration of Scripture and are concerned to maintain sound doctrine.

First, the translators of the NIV employed the method of "dynamic equivalence" in translating. This theory permitted them to depart far from the very words that the Holy Spirit inspired and to express what they supposed to be the thought in a text in freely chosen words and phrases of their own. It was this that caused Christian Reformed theologian Sierd Woudstra, himself no advocate of the KJV, to remark about the NIV that it is "so imprecise as to make it difficult to teach from.... When I use it for Scripture reading from the pulpit, I have become reluctant to add, 'Thus says the Lord' " ("A Teacher Looks at the NIV," *Banner*, April 10, 1989, pp. 8, 9).

Second, the NIV contains errors of translation that have serious implications for the faith and life of the church. One such erroneous translation with serious doctrinal implications is the translation of the word in

John 1:14 and 3:16, as well as in other places in John, describing Jesus as God's "only begotten" Son. The NIV translates the word as "one and only" Son. The omission of "begotten" is serious. First of all, this is the meaning of the Greek word. But, second, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the second person of the Trinity, and with this the truth of the Godhead of Jesus, rests largely on this word in the gospel and first epistle of John. Jesus is God because He is begotten out of the very being of God the Father. The confession at Nicea that Jesus is "of one substance (being) with the Father" was based on the biblical teaching in John that Jesus is the "only begotten." Omit "begotten," and you have seriously weakened the doctrine that Jesus is God. Besides, it simply is not true that Jesus is the "one and only" Son of God. Every elect believer is a son or a daughter of God. Jesus has many brothers and sisters.

An error of translation, due to the liberties that the translators felt free to take with the text, with serious implications for the lives of the members of the church is that in I Corinthians 7:15. The text is important for divorce and remarriage. Referring to a believer who has been deserted by an unbelieving husband or wife, the apostle wrote, as the KJV correctly translates, "A brother or a sister is not *under bondage* in such cases." With supreme indifference to the very word inspired by the Spirit, the NIV translates, "A believing man or woman is not *bound* in such circumstances." Whereas the apostle was teaching that the believer abandoned through no fault of his or her own is not in a state of spiritual slavery, the NIV teaches that desertion dissolves the marriage bond, so that the deserted believer is free to divorce and remarry. This mistranslation by the NIV brings Paul into contradiction with the teaching of Jesus, who teaches an unbreakable

bond of marriage, and opens the way to grievous sin on the part of the members of the church who take their instruction from the NIV.

A third reason for rejecting the NIV as the modern replacement of the KJV in a Reformed church is the fact that the NIV bases itself in the New Testament on a different Greek text than did the KJV and, in fact, than did all the Bibles of the Reformation. This recently discovered text has significant weaknesses. For one thing, it omits sizable sections of the New Testament, including Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11. The NIV remarks in all these places, "The most reli-

able early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have...." Also this Greek text weakens the teaching that Jesus is God and, therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity at certain key places in the New Testament. One example is I Timothy 3:16. Where the KJV correctly has, "... great is the mystery of godliness: *God* was manifest in the flesh," the NIV translates, "*He* appeared in a body." (This says nothing about the mistake in translating "flesh" as "body.")

The KJV is the best available translation of Scripture in English.

It is not the position of the PRC that the KJV is inspired Scripture in the only form that may ever be used by the English-speaking church. It is conceivable that the Churches would someday decide that the language of the KJV is unclear to the contemporary reader. They might have reference to the archaic terms, e.g., "conversation" for behavior, "wottest" for know, and the like. They might think that the "thee" and "thou" pronouns with their peculiar verb forms, "wast," "hast," "wouldest," and all the rest, should be changed into modern forms.

If ever a change of Bibles would be made, it would be made synodically. No congregation is permitted to replace the KJV on her own.

A modern version that translates loosely will obscure basic biblical teaching

This is not permitted even though as far as I know there has never been a synodical decision declaring the KJV to be the only approved version in the PRC. Use of the same version of the Bible, like use of the same songbook, use of the same translation of the creeds and liturgical forms, and use of the same catechism materials, belongs to the unity of the church as expressed and maintained in the denomination.

A congregation, or individual, convinced that a change is needed would overture synod to study the matter, in order either to adopt a different English version or to arrange for a new translation of Scripture. Such a significant matter as this would demand the wisdom of the multitude of counselors. In such an important matter, the churches would have to act together, that is, synodically.

But this is merely hypothetical. The fact is that the members of the PRC are grateful for the KJV and for the untold blessings that they have received and still do receive from God through this precious English version, God's Word.

They are thankful also that the prizing of this version is not merely a personal matter with some or even most of them, but an ecclesiastical matter. The KJV is the beloved Bible of the Churches. □

— DJE



1. The End of the World

The 24th chapter of the gospel according to Matthew is Jesus' prophetic teaching about the end of the world. It is one of the most important chapters in the Bible on the truth of the last things.

Jesus gave the doctrine in Matthew 24 in response to a question put to Him by His disciples, the question of verse 3: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" This question came up because of that which Jesus had said in verse 2: "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The disciples had called Jesus' attention to the beauty, majesty, and size of the temple in Jerusalem. It was a magnificent structure. It was some 40 years in the building. The stones which Jesus said would be thrown down were huge, nearly 40 feet long, 20 feet high, and 10 feet wide. Besides, the temple was lavishly adorned. But Jesus prophesied that this temple would be destroyed, and destroyed so completely that not one stone would be left upon another. The disciples, of course, understood that Jesus was

predicting the destruction not only of the temple but also of the entire city of Jerusalem. They remembered His weeping over Jerusalem and His warnings of judgment impending on that city, as that is recorded in the last part of chapter 23. So, they ask Him: "Tell us, when shall these things be...?"

In their question, however, the disciples connected the destruction of Jerusalem with the end of the world: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" As an answer to this question, a question linking the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, Jesus gave the instruction found in Matthew 24.

Were the disciples correct when they saw in Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the temple a reference also to the end of the world? They were. This is plain from the fact that Jesus did not point out that they were mistaken in their thinking. He did not say, "Just a minute. I am talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, not about the end of the world." On the contrary, throughout Matthew 24 Jesus speaks of two distinct realities. On the one hand, He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is simply impossible to understand the chapter, if one does not recognize this. For example, we read in verses 15, 16 of an "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place, at which time the people in Judea must flee into the mountains. Also, verse 34 cannot be understood unless one keeps in mind that Jesus is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem: "Verily I say unto

you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." On the other hand, the chapter speaks of an event that is still future as far as we are concerned who live in the 20th century — the end of the world. This is plain beyond all doubt in verses 27-31, which foretell the coming of the Son of man in the clouds with His angels and with the great sound of a trumpet. And Jesus speaks of these two events *as closely related*; Matthew 24 speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the end of the world *as constituting one reality*.

The question is: "How are the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world related?" The destruction of Jerusalem is a *type* of the end of the world.

Anyone in the least bit familiar with the Bible knows that the use of "types" is common. The Old Testament king, David, was a type of Christ Jesus; as indicated a little later in Matthew 24, the flood in the Old Testament was a type of the destruction of the wicked at the second coming of Christ. So with the destruction of Jerusalem. Not only was it a significant event in its own right, but it was also an event that God Himself designed to represent beforehand the end of the world. It is not surprising that the disciples associated Jesus' prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction with the end of the world, for the Old Testament prophets had repeatedly done this. Throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit revealed the end of the world under the figure of the destruction of Jerusalem.

With this article, we begin a series of studies by Prof. Engelsma on the main topics of eschatology, that is, the doctrine of the last things. These studies were first given some years ago as radio messages for "The Reformed Witness Hour." This will explain the style of the articles.

The correct interpretation of Matthew 24, therefore, will find the fulfillment of the prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem. But it will not stop with that. It will find the ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Jesus and the end of the world.

In A.D. 70, Rome razed Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were slaughtered, and the remainder were scattered as slaves throughout the world. There was a literal fulfillment of Jesus' words in verse 2: Not one stone of the great temple was left standing upon another. This happened during the lifetime of the disciples and their contemporaries, as Jesus said in verse 34. Prior to this event, many of the things took place that are set forth in Matthew 24. There were wars. There was severe persecution. There were heretics and false christs. There was even a certain fulfillment of the prophecy of verse 14 that the gospel would be preached in all the world, for by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem the apostle Paul had finished his missionary labors in most of the then-known world.

Nevertheless, that was not the reality that Jesus had His eye on in Matthew 24. Ultimately, Matthew 24 was not fulfilled then. Matthew 24 itself makes this plain beyond the shadow of a doubt. The main subject of the chapter is *the coming again of Jesus Christ*. This was the question of the disciples: "And what shall be the sign of thy coming?" This is the main thing of which Jesus speaks. He prophesies the great event of the coming of the Son of man which shall be like the lightening that comes from the east and shines to the west; of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds with power and great glory, visible to all men; of the coming of Himself with the hosts of angels, with the sound of a trumpet, and at the time when all the elect are gathered. So we read in verses 27-31. The simple fact of the matter is that Jesus did *not* come in A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was

destroyed. We are still looking for the fulfillment of Matthew 24.

From the fact that Jesus made a twofold prophecy, a prophecy of a type and a reality, an important practical consideration is evident. At the time that Jesus spoke these words, both the type, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the reality, the end of the world, were in the distant future. It would be about 40 years before Jerusalem was destroyed and more than 1,900 years before the world would end. Incredible though it seemed at the time, His prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem came true. This guarantees the truthfulness of His prophecy of the end of the world, incredible as it may seem to us now. There *will* be an end of the world. It *will* be preceded by every one of the signs mentioned in Matthew 24. This *will* occur at the personal, visible, glorious, and powerful coming again of Jesus the Christ.

In the minds of the disciples, this coming of Jesus is of paramount importance. They saw clearly the profound truth that the meaning of the end of the world is that *Jesus comes*. This is not always remembered by us. Sometimes we become engrossed in our study of the things that must be expected in the future — wars, natural calamities, Antichrist, and persecution — but we forget the return of Jesus, the goal of all these other things and the one

thing that really ought to grip us. The disciples did not make this mistake. Their question showed this: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" they asked. They viewed the coming of Christ and the end of the world as related. There will be one sign of both. Both will occur at the same time. They mentioned the coming *first*. The disciples rightly saw that the central significance of the end of the world is that *Jesus comes*.

When they spoke of the end of the world, the disciples literally used the

word that means "age." They asked: "What shall be the sign... of the end of the age?" The "age" is our world as characterized and limited by time. "The age" is all of earthly history, begun in creation and affected by sin after man's fall. It is the great panorama of people and deeds that has been unfolding down through the ages and that is still unfolding today.

There is going to be an *end* of the age, an *end* of the world. The disciples' question and Jesus' answer to it prove that the position of the evolutionists and other scoffers who hold that all things always will be developing as they have from the beginning is a lie. There will be an end, and that end will be *cataclysmic*. It will be similar to the end of the temple and of Jerusalem. Verses 38 and 39 compare it to the flood of Noah's day. The end will not be on the order of a gradual fading away of life, nor will it be the gradual, almost imperceptible, development of this age into a future golden age, but it will be a violent, destructive judgment of this age, a cosmic upheaval, a universal conflagration. It will be a wonder — terrible beyond all description.

Look around you. See you not all these things — these skyscrapers, these cities, these civilizations, this creation itself? Truly, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

But the end of the age will not only be the *cessation* of the age. It will also be the realization of a *goal*. We use the word "end" in these two ways. When someone dies, we say, "That was the *end* of him," meaning that he does not go on any further with his earthly life. But we also speak of the *end* that someone had in mind, meaning the goal at which he is aiming. The end of the world will be a stopping of all earthly things. History will cease; the heaven and earth will disappear; time itself, at least as we know it now, will run out. But that very moment will be the attainment of a *goal*, and this is the main idea of the "end of the world." The world does not merely peter out. God has a *purpose* with His creation and with the history played

... the central
significance
of the end
of the world
is that
Jesus
comes.

out in the creation. When everything is ripe for that purpose to be realized, when the stage is set, the *end* shall come, that is, God will fulfill the purpose that He has always had with this world.

This is great comfort for the Christian. The world is not purposeless. History is not blind. There is a goal, and everything, even things that are in themselves evil and painful, for example, war, moves towards that end. Nor is this world ungoverned, like some great ship, rudderless, tossed hither and thither before the waves of chance on the stormy sea. God governs it by His eternal counsel in which He has decreed its "end," and by His almighty power by which He achieves that "end."

What is this end? The coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of man. The coming again of Jesus in the body, the personal, visible, triumphant coming described in verses 27-31, will put a stop to this age, this present world. After His coming, there will be no more earthly history, but the everlasting heavenly Kingdom. Also, His coming is that which *determines* the end of the world. All things are ripe for the end when they are ready for His coming.

Most importantly, the coming of Jesus is the *goal* of everything. The glorious coming of the One who was crucified and rose again is the purpose of God with the world and its history.

For it will be the coming of the One who is the revelation of God, so that by His coming God will be perfectly justified and glorified. It will be the coming of the Savior of the church, so that the church will be perfectly delivered.

It will be the coming of the One who renews the creation, delivering the brute creation, the world, from the curse of sin, so that the world itself becomes a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell.

Never may we who believe think

of the end abstractly, in terms merely of the world, or even in terms only of our salvation. Think of it, long for it, expect it as the coming of the Son of man!

But *when*? This is a burning question, is it not? Whenever a man speculates on the *time* of the end of the world, he never lacks an attentive audience. Long after the rest of the sermon is forgotten, men will remember that a preacher said that he thinks the end will come in forty years, or in the lifetime of his grandchildren. "When, when will the end come?" The disciples of Jesus were curious about this too. *This* was their question, "Tell us! *when* shall these things be?" And "what shall be the *sign* of the end of the world?" If we know the *sign*, we will know *when*, and we desire to know *when*. With bated breath, we wait to hear Jesus' answer. But we are disappointed, for apparently Jesus misses the point. The disciples ask, "When?" and Jesus answers: "Take heed that no man *deceive* you."

It is fascinating to note how Jesus frequently "missed the point" of questions that people directed to Him. You may remember the time His disciples asked Him whether there would be only a few who would be saved. His answer was: *You* strive to enter in. Again, "He missed the point." Not really, of course. As the great Teacher of God, Jesus not only knew the right

answers, but He also knew the *right questions*. He spotted misconceptions in the questions asked Him and corrected them. In this case, Jesus stressed that the doctrine of the last things and the truth about the end of the world have practical significance.

The disciples may not just be curious about the time. Nor may you and I. The teaching of the truth of the last things may never be a matter of some teacher or preacher's spinning fine theories for the entertainment of others. It is necessary to be concerned about the end. It is even required to be concerned about its

nearness. But this concern must be rooted in the desire of heart to fear God and walk in His ways faithfully even to the end. It must bring forth the fruit of a life of spiritual watchfulness over against the many evils of the last days. Otherwise, a man's interest in the last things is mere superficial curiosity. And Christ has no time for that.

Christ will go on to tell the disciples when the end shall be and what the signs are, but first He warns them — and us — that the last days are a time of trouble for the church and that the church does well to view the end in a practical, spiritual manner.

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (vv. 4, 5). There is a great danger for us in the last days, and that danger is *deception*. The greatest danger for disciples of Christ, that is, believing members of the church, is not physical, but spiritual. It is the danger that the Devil, sin, and evil men fool one, so as to bring him to spiritual ruin. The instrument of this deceit is the *words* of certain men: Beware lest anyone deceive you. For many shall come saying, I am Christ. The danger is *false doctrine*, the *preaching of alleged gospels*, *religious men*, *churchmen* even. There will be *many* such men, and there will be *many* who are deceived. *Beware!*

The message of deception that the false prophets proclaim is this: "I am Christ." It is the denial that the Jesus of the Scriptures is the one and only Servant of God and Savior of the world, and the turning of the hopes of men to other christs and saviors. This deceiving message is present in our day. It is everywhere. Many are deceived unto their everlasting ruin. It is the insistence of men that they can and will overcome their miseries, improve society, and save the world. It is the claim of almost every politician and world-ruler that he, *yes he*, has the wisdom, the ability, and the desire to redeem his nation. It is the message of the pagan religions — and how many millions are not blinded by it? — that their gods and heroes are

The greatest danger for disciples of Christ ... is not physical, but spiritual.

the savior. It is a message heard in the Christian churches: Our unions and mergers will bring peace and plenty to the suffering world; our own works and will accomplish our salvation; we will build the kingdom of God.

So, "take heed."

Do *you* concern yourself with the end of the world? Are *you* busy, perhaps, discerning the signs? But does this all move you to watchfulness and prayers? And does this

watchfulness drive you to *the truth* and the *preaching* of the truth in the church: *Jesus is the Christ; He saves by grace alone through faith alone; He establishes the Kingdom?*

Take heed. □

Poetry

Mephibosheth

In Lodebar, the Pastureless,
I languished, far,
Far from the courts that I had known
Near to Grandfather's throne.
A dead dog such as I
Could cry
And none would hear
From Lodebar.
And who would understand
The wretched poverty,
The burden of infirmity
That swallowed us
The day we fled in fear
To this poor, barren land?

And then the summons came:
"King David calls,"
They cried to me.
And I was carried to Jerusalem,
Not even able to go up myself,
With these frail, useless legs you see.
And when he called me by my name,
"Mephibosheth,"
My heart could scarce reply.
He was the king,
Reigning in splendid majesty,
And who was I?
Misshapen man
From Saul's ill-fated line,
Devoid of my inheritance,
(And rightly so,
Saul's penalty was mine).
But oh,
The eyes that looked on me!

Pure pity,
Mercy as I'd never known
Shone from that kingly face.
He told me of a covenant he'd made
With Father long ago —
David and Jonathan,
Whose love joined soul to soul
In a forever bond.
I heard his words
And his compassionate decree,
But I felt only grace —
The love he had for Jonathan
So freely given to me.

And now,
Now I am far
From Lodebar.
Inheritance restored,
I feast at table with my gracious lord —
Adopted son
And honored guest,
And I have lived to see my little one
Within the palace
At Jerusalem, place of eternal rest.
Gladly would I have served
For such a great reward,
Gladly have labored with my hands
For such a one, but he
Who has my God's own heart,
Bestowed a mercy undeserved
Upon Mephibosheth,
On servant and on son,
For Covenant's sake,
And we are royalty.

Suzanne Looyenga

Exercising Unto Godliness

Lesson 11

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.

I Timothy 4:6-9

Putting the Brethren in Remembrance of Faith and Good Doctrine (v. 6)

This is an urgent assignment from an apostle to an evangelist. It is the call to holy duty. Timothy must demonstrate in his actions that he is a "minister." The title refers to all who are officially called to feed the "flock of God." "Flock of God" is the term used here for the men and women who are called the "brethren" by the apostle Paul. It is a term of distinction. This distinction is given to those who have been foreordained of God to receive the Spirit of adoption; those who are anointed with the holy anointing of Christ—prophets, priests, and kings.

In the text they are singled out as the brethren. They are thus set apart as a class of men and women from those who are not brethren in the Lord Jesus, and who are not recog-

nized by God as belonging to the flock of God that was bought with the blood of the Son of God on the Cross.

These "brethren" must not be deceived by the very adversaries of the Gospel, called by the text "apostates from the faith." And what must Timothy do? Is he sent to seek the agents of the demonic world to repent? Agents and servants of the demonic world cannot be renewed unto repentance. (Compare Hebrews 6:4-8 and Hebrews 10:26-31.) To attempt to do this would be disobedience to the will of God. The glorious task of an evangelist in this regard has the same great design as does that of all the other officebearers who are called to be busy in a work that results in the perfecting of the saints. (Cf. Eph. 4:11-16.)

Evangelists also have an office that is very carefully circumscribed and limited. It is limited to the gathering of the church and to the spiritual nurture of the "brethren." Only the brethren are able to be anchored firmly in the "words of faith and good doctrine." They can perform this exalted "ministry" only if they themselves have "obtained" a thorough expertise and training in teaching and exhorting.

It was to this class of evangelists in the church that Timothy had attained. (Cf. verse 6.) The verb in the Greek, translated in the KJV as "attained," deserves careful attention. Let us try to see this. The verb in the Greek means: "to follow behind closely; to pay good attention to; to listen well." In II Timothy 3:10 Paul

makes the important point that, since Timothy has followed this manner of life and doctrine for nearly fifteen consecutive years (A.D. 50-65), he is completely knowledgeable about the pure apostolic doctrine. In the KJV we read, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life...." In II Timothy 3:10 the Greek perfect tense is used. The text reads as follows: "But thou hast closely followed my teaching...." This could not be said about any other evangelist. Besides, it cannot be said of every evangelist that God gave him the Spirit, "not of weakness, but of power, love, and sobriety." This was given in a special manner with the laying on of hands by Paul in the midst of the brotherhood. (Cf. I Timothy 1:18ff.)

It is certain that Timothy understood very well the character of such arch-heretics as Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander, whose heresies and words ate as a canker or gangrene and whose teaching took away a good conscience. (Cf. I Timothy 1:19, 20, and II Timothy 2:17.) These suffered shipwreck in the faith. Could these heretics have known the warning of Jesus to the twelve disciples, "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matt. 16:6, 12)? Did not the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees permeate all the doctrine of these heretics—Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Alexander? The Pharisees' doctrine of work-righteousness denied the need of the perfect redemption of God's people by the blood of the Lamb. The leaven of the Sadducees was revealed in this denial of the resurrection.

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Yes, Timothy was very aware of these horrible heresies. Paul must have spoken often and repeatedly of them already in the first sermon during the first missionary journey when Timothy was converted some fifteen years earlier. (Cf. Acts 13-15.) Timothy knows intimately that only the truth of the Gospel makes a sinner free. He knows that all other preaching is mere Jewish proselytizing which prevents a sinner from entering the kingdom of heaven—a proselytizing that makes the unbeliever far more a child of hell than he was before in his unbelieving ignorance. Timothy must have learned that all the teaching of those who denied and departed from the faith were so many profane and old wives' fables—Jewish fables. Even as a lad, when he believed the Holy Scriptures, he must have known that the religions of the Greeks (of his own Gentile father) were so many lies when compared to the teaching of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, i.e., the God of the burning bush. (Cf. Exodus 3:16; Matthew 22:28-33.)

Refer to Matthew 22:23-28 and notice how the "fable" concerning the woman who had seven husbands is used by the Sadducees to dispute the resurrection. Notice too how this fable withers before Jesus' "searching of the Scriptures." With a careful review and search of the Scriptures this fabulous idea of the Sadducees concerning the resurrection is demolished by Jesus' infallible use and explanation of Exodus 3:16. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Paul says, "Yes, Timothy, you will prove yourself to be a 'good' minister if you rebuke the errors of all who depart from the faith when you preach the full counsel of God without flinching." (Cf. Acts 20:25-32.)

Exercise Thyself unto Godliness (vv. 7-8)

Timothy is instructed by Paul that he must exercise himself unto godliness. This exercising is part of his holy duty. When we are exercised unto godliness this is done by the Holy Spirit through the inspired Scriptures. Timothy had known the Holy

Scriptures since he was a "child." He had learned these first from his grandmother, Lois, and then from his mother, Eunice. He had tasted the power of these Scriptures. He had experienced that these Scriptures were able to make one "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:14-16). This is the bottom-line for Timothy as a mature evangelist, a good minister of Jesus Christ, one who can be addressed as a "man of God" (I Tim. 6:11). He knew the Gospel which powerfully works true godliness.

In these "last days" which Paul vividly and graphically describes in II Timothy 3:1-7 it is proudly asserted that men and women must seek "godliness." There will be those who are "ever learning" to bring about a certain morality in life and in government. Yet, the very best that can be achieved is an impotent form of godliness. It is a powerless godliness. All fails because of a lack of the true "exercise unto godliness." At bottom it is all pure and simple "ungodliness."

The Holy Spirit tells us in II Peter 2:1 that false prophets privily shall bring in damnable heresies. They are those that shall "deny the Lord that bought them," and thus bring upon themselves *swift destruction*. These God will not spare. These will be like the world that perished in the Flood. They are like the evil angels who were cast down by God into hell. In His righteous wrath God delivered the angels that sinned and put them in chains of darkness to be preserved unto the great judgment (Jude 6). Among the ungodly are those who are exercising themselves from ungodliness unto more ungodliness. These are in the gymnasium of the false prophets who teach, let us eat, drink, and be merry. They have the fear of torment in their empty boldness. They flee from the preaching of the Gospel and the royal law of liberty. (Cf. James 2:7.)

All that these, who once claimed that they were saved, can do is "exercise" themselves unto more ungodliness. The Holy Spirit writes of these

sinner that they are those "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous (idolatrous) practices; cursed children" (II Pet. 2:14). Read II Peter 2:17-21.

Turn again to I Timothy 4:6-9. Was it not impossible for Timothy to do anything but exercise himself unto godliness with every fiber of his being? As a well-informed and godly evangelist, could he do anything but "refute" such profane teachings? Does not every good minister of Jesus Christ cast away all that is profane and that which does not belong in the living confession of the church? That which is vile and blasphemous must be cast out because it violates the holy and saving mystery of godliness, which is as great as God is great in loving kindness and mercy. Profane teachings that must be "refused" by the good minister is that which blasphemes God—a God which no vile, unsaved sinner can see and live (Ex. 34:19-23; II Cor. 3:7-16).

Is it even conceivable to propose that Timothy would try to demonstrate with rational grounds the error of those who "depart from the faith" and put a yoke of the law's bondage upon the "brethren"? Timothy is called to reject these profane preachers and their demon-inspired teachings once and for all. He is to give no quarter to the lie of the great Liar from the beginning.

There is another "exercise" unto godliness—an exercise unto more godliness. This exercise unto godliness can be seen both in the preaching and in the walk issuing from a pure conscience—a conscience that has been purified from dead works to serve the living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This exercise is not an exercise in old wives' fables but it is an exercise in the gymnasium of God. It is an exercise according to which we receive God's sure promise—the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Paul says that the bodily exercise of the profane profiteth little, but the true exercise of godliness has a "promise" of God.

This is a Faithful Saying and Worthy of All Acceptation (v. 9).

This promise of God is yea and amen unto the glory of God the Father. Writing as a saved minister of the gospel, Paul, the chief of sinners, wrote, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). Paul wrote this as he looked forward across the entire first epistle to Timothy. Using the same phrase in I Timothy 4:9 Paul, who is counted worthy to be a minister, writes looking back on the words we have studied in this lesson. In this instance the apostle Paul gives an attestation concerning the spiritual unity between the words of faith and good doctrine.
...to be concluded

Some Questions to Consider:

1. Is it not a trivial matter to develop an argument for or against bodily exercise from I Timothy 4:8? Does the

"little profit" with respect to exercise spoken of here fit into the category of the "spiritual exercise" of those who are chastened of the Lord because they are "sons" and not spiritual bastards?

2. Does not the question persist, What can be said about the little "profit" of those who do bodily exercise? To what does the bodily exercise (*somatikoos*) refer? Does it refer to physical exercise that we all need? Does it refer to the Jewish abstaining from eating too much food? Does it refer to the practice of severe moderation in all things? Does the man eating without moderation not suffer the ill effects of eating too much? Why did Timothy need to be admonished to drink a little wine for his "oft infirmities"? Is Paul thinking about bodily, self-inflicted exercises where everything is relative and basically meaningless?

3. What should be our judgment

concerning the view that Paul has reference to the physical self-mortification as practiced by the ascetic who attempts by his rigid ascetic exercises to liberate himself or herself from the physical creation and thus liberate his spirit from the imprisonment of the "evil body"? Would the Holy Spirit permit the teaching that the "work-religion" of theosophical-mystical gymnastics has a little profit in this world apart from the exercise unto godliness? Does it not seem that all spiritual sobriety is lacking when the bodily exercise of paganism and work righteousness is permitted to have even a little place in spiritual exercises? Could this exercise refer to an exercise permitted by God in the battle against all ungodliness of the flesh as Paul speaks of this in I Corinthians 9:19-27? I welcome any good answer to this question which operates according to the teachings in which one is exercised unto sound doctrine of godliness. □

Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

The Problem of "Scholasticism"

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

There can be little question but that the deposition of Dr. Schilder and his colleagues by the synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, was

extremely unjust, a ruthless and unchristian act. After all, there was a war going on, with a very wicked and ungodly enemy overwhelming their land, while Dr. Schilder himself — one of the few with the courage to speak out against the evil of this enemy — was in hiding and unable to speak in his own defense. Nor was it an especially pressing matter, for it was over a doctrinal issue which had been under debate for decades, and about which a synod already in 1905 had made allowance for both sides to be taught. And yet suddenly it was held to be a matter demanding imme-

diately resolution. Dr. Schilder, and all who agreed with him, could be tolerated no more, and without delay had to be purged. One can hardly escape the conclusion that this was not so much a matter of conviction as the use of an opportunity by some to rid themselves of a man whose popularity had proved to be greater than their own.

Nor, for that matter, did they anticipate the consequences which followed. Clearly they had underestimated Dr. Schilder's following. For quickly, in spite of the troubled times, sizable numbers of people were fol-

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lowing him into the organization of a new denomination, what we now know generally as the Liberated Churches. The loss of so many members was certainly painful; but far more serious was the wound that their unethical behavior inflicted on themselves. It perhaps was not so immediately apparent — in many ways church life went on with the majority of their people as it always had, at least for a time — but with the leadership something had happened. A spirit of apostasy set in which has left that denomination in our day virtually a spiritual wilderness. Undoubtedly there are still oases of spirituality and doctrinal conviction to be found among those churches, perhaps mostly in the villages; but to the world they have become the picture of apostasy, a Laodicean church if such there has ever been.

And, in turn, what happened there was not without effect for us on this side of the ocean. As long as the war continued, everything was wrapped in silence; we hardly knew what was happening, although what rumors did come through did not sound good. But when the war was over, the news began to flow with all of its sad details. To say the least, we stood aghast.

The battle, we learned, had been especially over the doctrine of the covenant — and concerning that we felt no great affinity to either side. But the ruthlessness with which Dr. Schilder and his companions had been ejected, and the impropriety of it all, was more than we could comprehend. It was much like what we had been through in 1924, only worse, to the point where our hearts went out to Dr. Schilder and his newly formed churches. We had differences, we knew that; but it was believed that, with good-will and a willingness to talk together as Christians should, we could come to terms on that — and sadly mistaken we were, due possibly as much to our men as theirs. For the moment, however, if ever there was a group of churches to which we felt drawn, the Liberated were it. But those differences were there; and in

the end they had to be reckoned with.

From the very start this produced a problem, one that remains to this day, namely that of determining exactly what it is regarding the covenant that the Liberated believe. After all, it was a doctrinal debate over which this schism had taken place, the matter of the covenant of grace; and that for us was not something new. It was a subject with which we had been concerned from before our origin as churches; in fact, it might well be argued that the common grace issue had been a sub-point under it. As far as the covenant view of Dr. Abraham Kuyper is concerned, that known as Presupposed Regeneration, and held by the synod that deposed Dr. Schilder, we wanted nothing of that — even if, superficially considered, we are often identified with it. But, even more, we were opposed to the position most commonly held in the Christian Reformed Church, that of Prof. Heyns, with whom Rev. Hoeksema had done battle already in his seminary days. He taught that God promises and gives grace to every child baptized in the church, enabling him to accept or reject the covenant, but leaving it up to him. As far as we were concerned, this was nothing less than a form of Arminianism applied within the covenant of grace, and perhaps had much to do with the fact that the common grace of the Christian Reformed Church was even more dangerous than that adopted by the synod which deposed Dr. Schilder. But that was also where the problem set in; for when the Liberated Churches began to talk about the covenant of grace they sounded more like Heyns than anyone else. To be sure, they insisted they were different, and the fact that they rejected common grace seemed to indicate they were; but when it came to explaining how that was, although Rev. Hoeksema pleaded in public editorials and private correspondence for it, the answer never really came.

Now, to a degree, the problem was that the Liberated Churches were rather naturally preoccupied with the synodicals who had ejected them. But

it was also to be found in their tendency to be more involved in pointing out the faults of their opponents than in developing their own views positively, as, for example, their repeated tendency to label their opponents, now including also us, as “scholastic” and “logicians,” implying this to be some terrible sin. Now this might well seem to be but a passing thought; but it has an importance worthy of our concern.

To begin with the word “scholastic,” we should note that it has several levels of meaning, each distinct in itself; and, if we are to be accurate in our expressions, each must be understood.

In the first place, the word “scholastic” has a popular usage which does little more than indicate that which is related to study and scholarship, sometimes, although not always, in a rather deprecating sense. And, as we have noted in the past, there was a good deal of this false scholasticism among the Dutch Reformed during the early part of this century, growing perhaps out of their fondness for “common grace,” or the view that God is pleased with the learning of this world even if it is done in unbelief. Thus, to master the learning of this world was a cause for pride and something that deserved respect in itself. It was indeed a form of superficial scholasticism which was worthy of being scorned.

But generalities are usually dangerous; and “scholastic” abilities are not always to be despised. After all, Paul himself urged Timothy, “Study to show thyself approved unto God”; and the fact was that both Dr. Schilder and Rev. Hoeksema were scholars in their own right. To be sure, neither of them was inclined to make a show of it; and certainly they were not inclined to presume that their scholastic abilities automatically justified their cause. But they were men of scholastic ability, and no one should disparage that. Humanly speaking neither of them could have done what they did if that had not been the case.

But there is also another use of the term, more substantial perhaps, wor-

thy of warning in a special way. Scholasticism was a philosophy which dominated the Middle Ages, particularly through the influence of its chief advocate, Thomas Aquinas, the great saint of the Roman Catholic Church. This philosophy of Scholasticism is always to be rejected because of the fact that it was rationalistic in its thought, which is to say, Aquinas and his followers taught that, while there are certain truths which are gained only by revelation from God and must be grasped by faith, there are also many other truths that can be arrived at only through the intellectual activities of the mind. When those activities are used, man is walking in the image of God, whose essential being is pure intellect, and rises toward the *summum bonum* — the highest good. By the use of his mind man comes to participate in the being of the divine.

For us an understanding of this philosophy and its dangers is of special importance, for we only too often are accused of holding it. Because of his propensity toward logical and systematic thought, Rev. Hoeksema has often been called scholastic and a rationalist, even though there was nothing more alien to his thought. If there was anything that his rejection of common grace included, it was certainly any suggestion that human

reason can ever arise to truth by itself. To him there was always but one way of truth, that which comes directly by revelation from God, and is grasped by faith alone. No one could have been more opposed to rationalism, or in this sense scholasticism, than he; and yet, he has repeatedly been accused of just that.

Nevertheless, there is another use of the word "scholastic," or "scholasticism," which we must also note.

This word in its most basic meaning arose in reference to schools of the Middle Ages and the method of study followed in them. In those schools, or Universities, which arose in almost every major city of the day, there was a method of study that centered in the use of disputations and the logic on which they were based. From the very beginning, when children entered these schools — sometimes at ages as low as seven — they were taught with a view to that. First it was grammar, then rhetoric, and finally logic, each for several years in a stretch. Only then were they permitted to move on into their chosen areas of study, which they had to learn to defend in disputations, or very formal logical debates, in which they were expected to defend their chosen propositions by logical reasoning over

against the challenge of another student. For it was thought that only when one was able to defend his thinking in accord with the strict rules of logic was he ready to work professionally in any chosen area of life.

Now, in our modern Post-Barthian world, it has become the popular thing to disparage such insistence on logical thought as but a false remnant of that former age, and it is disappointing that apparently the Liberated Churches also have joined in that, as we see with Dr. DeJong in his articles in the *Clarion* a while back:

It is only on the basis of this strict logical scheme that Engelsma is convinced that we compromise the position of Dort. However, this scheme of thought has been superimposed both on Scripture and the confessions. Basically it represents a scheme in which the Canons of Dort and the teaching of Scripture itself is made subject to the logical categories of human reason. (*The Covenant and the Children of Believers - A Reply*²)

And that is only the start. It is to this disparagement of logic that he returns again and again, making it worthy of our further consideration. Just exactly how does logic relate to Scripture and our Christian faith? □

Special Article

Prof. Herman Hanko

A Pastor's Heart (1)*

Introduction

When the committee which plans these conferences approached me to speak on the topic, "A Pastor's Heart," I mildly demurred. My reasons were two. Pastors who are actively and almost continually involved in pastoral work, it seemed to me, hardly need anyone to tell them about their work. One does not go to a skilled neural surgeon to explain to him how

to go about operating on a tumor of the brain. The other objection was that, if someone were indeed going to tell pastors how to go about their work, it ought to be one who is as actively involved in the work as they are. You are pastors, engaged in the work of busy pastorates. I have long ago laid that work aside.

Richard Baxter offered me some grounds for overcoming the first ob-

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jection. In his book, *The Reformed Pastor* (London: S. Couchman, 1808), Baxter begins by reminding the people of God in general that they are called to "exhort one another daily." He then goes on to say:

So ought ministers all the more to do this among themselves because we have the same sins to mortify, and the same graces to be quickened and corroborated, as they have. We have greater works than they have to do, greater difficulties to overcome, and no less necessity is laid upon us. We have therefore need to be warned and awakened, if not instructed, as well as they (p. 1).

I overcame the second objection, at least in my own mind, by thinking that it is good for each one of us, from time to time, to step back from his work, ponder it, compare what he is doing with Scripture, and evaluate his labors in Scripture's light. But the opportunity for a busy pastor to do this seldom comes, for the pastoral problems which engage him press upon him with unrelenting force, so that for him to step back from them to evaluate his work seems perilously close to dereliction of duty. There is then some advantage to hearing one who, by the pressing circumstances of God's call, has been forced to step back. He just may have the eye to see what one embroiled in the trials of the pastorate is unable to see.

And so I venture on the task with some trepidation.

Rooted in His Office

To begin by expressing the obvious, one with a pastor's heart is, obviously, a pastor. A pastor holds an office. This office is created in the church by Christ; and one who holds this office is called by Christ. Our Church Order defines those distinct elements which are the necessary parts of the lawful calling. I need not enter into that here.

While in a certain sense a distinction may be made between the work of the ministry of the Word and pastoral labors, this distinction must not be so pressed as to divorce the one

from the other. On the pulpit, a minister is a pastor. And in his pastoral labors, a pastor remains a minister.

I shall assume that you are all aware of this, but this stark truth is the basis for everything I have to say.

When one takes the time to examine the Scriptures, one is quite amazed at how many different names are given to those who hold this office of pastor/minister. And each name, in its own right, has something to say about what a pastor's heart really is.

I shall very briefly mention these names. The list is quite imposing, and, I may add, frightening. The order is arbitrary.

A pastor/minister is an evangelist. "Do the work of an evangelist," Paul admonishes Timothy in II Timothy 4:5.

A pastor/minister is a teacher. Christ gave to the church upon His ascension pastor/teachers, as Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4:11.

A pastor/minister is a shepherd, as Peter expresses it in I Peter 5:2. He must feed the flock of God. And all that is implied in the earthly figure of a diligent shepherd tending his sheep is carried over with force to the relation between a pastor and his congregation.

A pastor/minister is an elder. Patrick Fairbairn is correct when he says that the chief idea of an elder is the idea of authority to rule (*A Treatise on the Office and Duties of the Christian Pastor* [Audubon, NJ: Old Paths Publications, 1992] p. 40). He comes with the Word of God and the authority of his office, not to give advice or to discuss alternatives of action, but with the stentorian word, "Thus saith the Lord."

A pastor/minister is an *episcopos*. He is one who oversees the life of those entrusted to his care. He does this, not as a busybody, meddling in other people's affairs, but as one appointed by Christ to this work.

A pastor/minister is a steward. Paul, in I Corinthians 4:1, speaks of himself and his co-workers as "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." This same idea, though not specifically mentioned by name, is expressed in Hebrews 13:17, where elders are said to be those who watch over the souls of God's people *as those who must give account*. Stewards are entrusted with things and people who belong to another.

A pastor/minister is an angel, as John calls the pastors of the seven churches of Asia Minor. The meaning is not that pastors are as sinless as angels, but that pastors hold divine credentials as sent by Christ.

A pastor/minister is a co-laborer of God. Two ideas come to the fore. Pastor/ministers work in a small corner of Christ's domain along with others, and are, therefore, to put aside all jealousy, competition, struggles to maintain their own turf, labors which are at odds with their fellow laborers. But the genitive in II Corinthians 6:1, "of God," means also to emphasize that we all together belong to God whose work we do.

A pastor/minister is a soldier of Jesus Christ. He must, as a soldier, endure hardship (II Tim. 2:3). It is an apt description of the work which you are called to do under orders from the Captain of your salvation.

A pastor/minister is a deacon. The term is specifically applied to ministers in I Corinthians 3:5 and carries with it the connotation of one who ministers to the needs of

others.

A pastor/minister is a leader. The epistle to the Hebrews uses this term in 13:7 where the congregation is admonished to "obey those who have the rule over you."

The list is a daunting one. One with a pastor's heart must be all these things, and all at the same time.

In summing up these names with what they imply, James M. Hoppin

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quotes from a letter written by F.W. Robertson, which the latter addressed to a friend newly ordained (*The Office and Work of the Christian Ministry*, by James M. Hoppin, New York: Sheldon & Company, 1870):

Most sincerely I congratulate you on your prospect of a curacy, but much more on the approach of the highest earthly honor,— the privilege of working for Christ,— and welcome you to a participation of its joys and sorrows. Perhaps the latter predominate here, but they are not worthy to be compared to the joys which shall be revealed in us, if we suffer with him. I think the strictness of self-examination for ministerial fitness is contained in that solemn, searching question of our Lord, thrice repeated, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" And if we can answer from our inmost souls, as Peter did, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," I believe the injunction which follows, and the warning of martyrdom, would be received with equal joy as our Master's will. I am sensible that it is a test that makes me humble.

Requiring Specific Gifts

What kind of gifts does it take to be a pastor/minister — that is, one with a pastor's heart?

It is not my intention to set before

you those qualifications for office which the apostle Paul lays out in I Timothy 3. You know them, and it would be repetitious to go over them.

There are other points made by Scripture which, while presupposing these and building upon them, give some insight into what is involved in being a pastor/minister with a pastor's heart.

These can be roughly divided into three groups: 1) those required of a pastor/minister in his relation to God; 2) those required of a pastor/minister in his relation to himself; and 3) those required of a pastor/minister in his relation to his sheep.

In speaking of a pastor/minister's relation to God, I take my starting point in Galatians 1:10: "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

The apostle sets up a contrast here between being a slave of Christ and pleasing men. He presents them as mutually exclusive. If one pleases men, one is not a slave of Christ. And if one is a slave of Christ, one does not please men. It is as bad as that.

Obviously, the apostle does not mean to say that God's people may not be pleased with the work of a faithful pastor. He looks at the matter from the viewpoint of the pastor/

minister's motives. He is not to labor out of the motive of pleasing men. He is a slave of Christ, owned by Him. He has only one to please, Christ to whom he belongs.

Putting it in a slightly different way, Calvin writes in his commentary on John 7:18:

We are also reminded by it that no man can faithfully discharge the office of teacher in the Church, unless he be void of ambition, and resolve to make it his sole object to promote, to the utmost of his power, the glory of God.

Such faithfulness implies two things: 1) A pastor/minister must know the will of Christ, which is contained in the Scriptures. He must be wholly and completely given to it with his entire being and in all his work. 2) A pastor/minister must do all his work in complete dependence upon Christ, looking to Christ for strength for himself and for effectiveness in his work.

How easy it is to forget this. How easy it is to have our finger in the wind to judge the prevailing gusts of popular approval; to labor for the applause of the balcony; to keep our eyes fixed on the people who can harm us unless we cultivate and curry their favor. Such conduct is abhorrent to Christ.

... to be continued □

The Strength of Youth

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

The New Age Movement and Entertainment (2)

Rev. Bruinsma is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

The media and entertainment industries have become big business, and are a powerful means of shaping the thinking of our present society. This is true because the tools which these industries use, those of radio and television, are, without a doubt,

the most popular form of leisure and recreation in the 1990s. This can be said not only of the generation of the 90s in general, but of the church of the 90s as well.

This was not always the case. Though many of the older generation

had a radio in their homes since their childhood, their listening pleasure was limited. The church then frowned upon the use of radio because it was thought to be a tool of the devil. But those days are apparently long gone. And that is not all bad, since the sin was never in the thing as such. But is it not true that much that is aired on radio today is inappropriate for the sanctified listener? Yet, despite this fact, many members of the church today do not exercise the discernment necessary in the use of it.

And I am thinking not only of radio, of course, but also of television. The latter has in fact long ago displaced radio as the popular means of home entertainment. By the 1970s it was a rare home that did not boast at least one TV set. And again, though the television set in itself is not sin, nevertheless, there is precious little discernment exercised even in "Christian" homes.

Many young Christians have been so conditioned to television and radio from childhood, on that almost every program on them is accepted without question as a legitimate form of entertainment. After all, radio and television have been accepted by several generations of believers already. Our parents and grandparents have enjoyed the radio, and the television has for the most part always been accepted in our homes as well. What could be so wrong with the entertainment we find on them?

Despite the solemn warnings given by the church on this subject through the years, the vast majority of parents in the church today, along with young people and children, watch TV and movies. Some parents even go so far as to rent movies in order that their children can have video parties in their homes with their blessings. Every television program is allowable, even for the littlest of children. And if these parents are told from the pulpit that this is sin, they either become defensive or shrug it off as the personal opinion of the minister. These parents do not even worry about the question of whether drama is a legitimate art form or not.

That question has already been answered for them by their own parents who have allowed drama into the home. Instead, today's parents have gone one step farther and do not even monitor what is being watched on television. With the advent of the VCR they even watch movies that according to the world's wicked standards are unacceptable for viewing. And as a result their children are offered as sacrifice to the gods of the heathen.

Here is something new to think about with respect to both television and radio: these have become the chief means of spreading New Age thinking. The drama, the talk shows, and even the news reports are influenced, for the most part, by New Age ideals. Writers, producers, and directors of television programs have become obsessed with the "para-normal." Many programs on television alone, aside from the movies now playing in the theater, are saturated with the occult, something which God's Word condemns out of hand. Scanning the TV reviews I see such programs as *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*; *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (top on the viewer ratings); *Highlanders*; *Raven*; *Quantum Leap*; *Sightings*; *Superman*; and *Kung Fu*. This season there is a whole new wave of these programs: *Babylon 5*; *Tek War*; *Time Trax*; the *X-Files*; *Sea Quest*; and probably more. Most of these programs are aired at a time when all of the family, young and old alike, can enjoy them.

But what about cartoons? What about television for little people? All under the guise of good, our children are fed by the entertainment industry a steady diet of: *Care Bears*, *Smurfs*, *Rainbow Brite*, and *My Little Pony* — all programs that stress the occult: magic, incantations, spells, and the power of man. There are also available such animated features as: *Transformers*, *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, *She-Ra*, *Thundercats*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and *Power Rangers*. All these blatantly teach the power of the occult, even Satan worship, using all the symbols

of occult worship.

But, you may say, my children and I are ignorant of all of this nonsense that the wicked attempt to teach us. Surely, then, it does not influence us if we do not recognize any of it! Ah, but it does influence us. Especially is this true of the impressionable minds of little children who believe everything they watch. If our families are avid TV viewers, then we with our children have been exposed to much of the relativism, humanism, and self-gratification of New Age thought. Maybe we have even seen our children imitating some of the atrocities they view on television. If this is happening in our families, then New Age proponents are accomplishing exactly what they have set out to do: persuade the younger generation to turn from God and the objective rule of His Word for their lives, and to follow after man and His own values of right and wrong.

In addition to those programs that overtly teach the occult and Satan worship, there are many others which promote the relativistic world-and-life view of the New Age: nothing is to be condemned. Bill Cosby — good program? What are the interests and goals of this television family? Are they compatible with the aspirations of a Christian family? Is the ungodly music and the dancing on it acceptable too? *Murphy Brown* — there is nothing wrong with becoming pregnant and having a baby out of wedlock? Are swearing, murder, fornication, and rebellion against authority (all of which can be seen in almost every television program) no longer violations of the laws of God? There are movies made for TV introducing homosexual characters and presenting them as the average, acceptable next door neighbor. These same programs condemn as narrow-minded bigots those who oppose such sins. There are movies which play so effectively upon the sympathies of their viewers that by the end of the program those viewers are fully persuaded that a particular woman did right by having an abortion. Comedies spoof those who remain virgins

until marriage, mocking religion and the laws of God. Talk shows and the media are quick to condemn any person who takes a strong stand against abortion or homosexuality, especially if this is on the basis of biblical truth. There is no more right and wrong. That is the New Age ideal, certainly not the faith of the Christian.

Ah, but we know better. We can stand against all this. We see it, but we do not allow it to influence us. Do our little children see it when they are watching TV? And do our junior high students see it, especially if they have watched TV from infancy on? Television conditions, or programs, people. When we are constantly exposed to the themes of the New Age movement, our opinions are being shaped and our feelings conditioned. The result is that our reason may tell us something is wrong, but our feelings are now telling us that it is right. It is repeated over and over again on television and in the movies: if it feels right, then it is right; so do it! This is in part the reason some young people (and adults too) enjoy their drinking parties and fornication despite what they have been taught by parents and church. Do not underestimate the danger of television and movies! New Age advocates know of the power the television has, and they use it to their advantage. We must be aware of this!

Music, too, has developed since we were children; from the relatively innocent tunes of Doris Day, Bing Crosby, and Frank Sinatra, to the rock and roll of Elvis Presley, to the music revolution of the Beatles, and so on. Today we have heavy metal music. I do not even call that music anymore. It is really noise that charades as music. From my reading I understand that there are three types of heavy metal music: Party metal, Trash metal, and Black metal. The last of these is purely Satanic, calling upon Satan for power

to commit the most heinous of sins, even the killing of God and the eradication of Christianity. Trash metal is obsessed with killing and suicide. It urges its listeners to show their hatred toward parents and those in authority by murdering them. Party metal singers enjoy screaming about sex, drugs, partying, and living for today. All heavy metal music is to be condemned out of hand. It is evil. All who listen to it are sinning outrightly and ought to be disciplined for it.

But there is other music out there too. It was prevalent in the sixties and the seventies and is still heard today, songs which boast in the Age of Aquarius and imagine a kingdom of man without God. "There's a Whole New World" and "There's a Hero Inside of You" are a couple of recent examples.

Then there are also popular songs, both country and pop, that glamorize the sins of fornication and adultery. In these instances they teach us to follow our feelings. And all the while we listen to these songs we are being conditioned once again to accept the things that are sung about. Now, the latest: combine music with the movie.

Pay attention once to the background music when listening to a simple program on TV, and determine whether it is good or bad. Most of it, on commercials and children's TV programs, is heavy metal. Ought Christians to listen to this? Can we really convince ourselves that it has no effect on us or on our children?

New Age influence even reaches beyond television and radio. There are toy stores filled with

every toy imaginable to entertain our young. There are toys that teach occult practices to little children. There are toys that are out to make that which is ugly and evil beautiful and good. For older children and young people there are video games available, inside the home and out, which actually teach them to fight and kill.

When we are constantly exposed to the themes of the New Age movement, our opinions are being shaped and our feelings conditioned.

There are even mind-altering video games such as "Dungeons and Dragons," readily available for use by one of any age. All these are but a few of the many items of entertainment monopolized by the New Age Movement. Let the child of God beware!

Allow me to issue an urgent warning. There is nothing wrong with entertainment. Solomon tells us that God has given us the things of this world to enjoy. Neither am I an ascetic who wants to take away all pleasure from a person's life. I enjoy having a good time with my family and the people of God. But my study of the New Age has caused me to re-evaluate my own life and the life of the church in light of God's Word. Especially is this true of what we do for recreation and entertainment. Jesus asks a probing question in Luke 18:8: "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The influence of the New Age Movement is no little challenge which we face. This movement has its grip on our society, and even now it reaches out to strangle the faith of God's people in this world. We may not simply go along with the fun and entertainment of this world because it feels good. We must judge it according to the objective standard of the Word of God. We must follow what God tells us is right and wrong, and put far from us everything that would violate His Word and commands. We cannot stand in our own strength against Satan and this mighty movement to establish the kingdom of man. We must constantly equip ourselves with the Word of God. We must study it diligently at every opportunity. It will give us the necessary knowledge to stand in these latter days.

And we must pray fervently, that God sanctify not only our thoughts but also our feelings, in order that what we feel is in line with what we believe. Then we can be assured that through Christ we will receive the victory over our enemies. Not even the gates of hell can prevail against the church of Christ, the elect of God.

There are two passages of God's

Word which ought to guide us in the entertainment we enjoy. The first is Isaiah 5:20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for dark-

ness." The second passage is the one Paul gives us in the last verse of Romans 1: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things

are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

God give us the grace to stand against the New Age Movement! □

Day of Shadows

Homer Hoeksema

Chapter 2

The Creative Work in the Beginning

If we remember that creation is a unique work of God, and therefore a history, and if we look upon the narrative in Genesis not as Moses' conception, nor as derived from ancient myth, but as God's own narrative with regard to His own work, then we shall recognize that the narrative is full of a merciful attempt on the part of the infinite God to get into our puny little minds a bit of the great work which He wrought; and we shall sit humbly at His footstool, to learn of Him facts which we could never find out, and truths of which we could never conceive, and mysteries which mere human mind could never probe.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:1, 2).

There are three closely related questions which must be answered in the light of this passage. The first is, "What did God create?" The second is, "How did God create?" And the third is, "When did God create?"

To the first of these questions we now turn.

What Did God Create?

The text informs us in the first place, in verse 1, that God created "the heavens and the earth." In the second place, it goes on to tell us in verse 2 that the earth was "without form and void." It informs us further that "darkness was upon the face of the deep." And, finally, it refers to that deep also as "the waters" upon the face of which the Spirit of God moved.

There is a question here, first of all, concerning the general meaning of the text in verse 1. How must we understand the fact that God created the heavens and the earth? Is this statement of verse 1 to be understood, perhaps, as simply the heading of the entire chapter, so that the entire creation-week and the entire creation-narrative is included in this first statement? Or must we understand that the text refers to the first moment of time and to the fact that God gave being to the chaotic, or unfinished, form of the entire universe — the unfinished heavens and earth?

There are those who hold to the former view and who conceive of verse 1 as a general heading, claiming that the word "create" points to the finished product, and claiming that the finished product is mentioned in

this verse, namely, the heavens and the earth. Nevertheless, we must understand the text not as a general heading, but as a statement of the very first creative act of God, by which He gave being to the entire universe in its unfinished form, to the chaotic heavens and earth. That this is correct is evident from the fact that verse 2 speaks of this "chaos" as existing, at least as far as the earth is concerned. And if, therefore, the creation of the chaos is not meant in verse 1, then it is not mentioned at all; and then the origin of that chaos of verse 2 is not recorded. Besides, the expression, "in the beginning," literally refers to a mere, indivisible moment of time, and could hardly cover the entire six days of creation. We must understand, therefore, that in that very first moment the chaos was created. The creation of the chaos and the beginning of time are simultaneous.

In the second place, we may notice that the heavens are mentioned here together with the earth, while in the rest of the narrative the heavens are not further mentioned. There are interpreters who understand that by the heavens in this connection are meant simply the expanse above the earth, or the firmament, which was definitely separated from the waters below on the second day. They maintain that the reference here is not at all

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to the heaven of heavens, the heaven of glory. Now although it is true that in the rest of the creation-narrative the earth and the starry heavens only are mentioned, and the heaven of heavens is not further mentioned, nevertheless we cannot agree that in verse 1 by "the heavens" is simply meant the firmament, which was definitely separated from the waters below on the second day, and not the heaven of heavens. We believe that in Genesis 1:1 the whole universe is included, and that this universe is denoted by the common expression in Scripture, "the heavens and the earth." And to those heavens belongs the heaven of glory, the central dwelling place of God in the universe, and the abode of the angels. Whether this also implies that the heaven of heavens was finished already on the first day and that the creation of the heavenly spirits, the angels, was also completed on the first day, we cannot tell. There are those who hold to this opinion. The narrative in Genesis simply gives us no further description of the creation of the heavens; and beginning in verse 2, which speaks of the earth being waste and void, all the attention of the narrative is concentrated upon the earthly creation.

Nevertheless, it is certain that in the beginning the entire universe was created, including that heaven of heavens. The heaven, or heavens — because in the original the plural form is used — is not merely the heaven of our firmament. Scripture itself often speaks in other places of another heaven. Thus, for example, in I Kings 8:23, in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, we read: "Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart." And again, in verse 27: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" And in verse 30 of the same chapter Solomon speaks of "heaven thy dwelling place." In Deuteronomy 10:14 we

find the same ideas: "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also with all that therein is." The same distinction is made in the address and in the third petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven." And again: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9, 10). Matthew 18:10 speaks of heaven as the abode of the angels: "For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." And very often, in harmony with the narrative in Acts 1:9-11, the Scriptures speak of heaven as the place to which Christ ascended on the 40th day after His resurrection. Thus, we have a great High Priest "that is passed into the heavens" (Heb. 4:14). And again, "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1). And according to Hebrews 9:24: "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Moreover, it is from this heaven that the Lord shall come again in the end of the world: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (I Thess. 4:16).

About this heaven of glory we may say, briefly:

1) That it is certainly a place, and not a mere condition or state. Just where this heaven of glory is cannot be stated definitely, although the Bible always pictures it as "above." Whether this means physically above the firmament we know not.

2) That this heaven was originally the abode of the holy angels, and that now also it is the abode of the church triumphant.

3) That it is a place of higher revelation of God than the earth is. God's face is there, His throne, His dwelling place, His sanctuary.

4) That heaven also, as well as the earth, has a history. To that history belong the fall of Satan and his

angels, the entering in of the church down through the ages, the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the casting out of the devil — to mention a few specific items.

5) That there are degrees of heavens — the higher and the highest. Christ is in the highest heavens.

6) That in the end, heaven and earth will be renewed and united forever.

Here, however, the two — heaven and earth — are presented as separated. And from this point on the narrative limits itself to the description of the earth and to all that belongs to the earthly creation.

That earth is pictured as waste, without form, and void, or empty. And it is said that darkness was upon the face of the deep, or the waters.

The terms *waste* and *void* occur elsewhere in Scripture. Thus we read in Isaiah 34:11: "But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness." The same terms occur in Jeremiah 4:23. Both of these passages picture the utter desolation of a depopulated and waste land.

There are those who speculate, in this connection, that there must have been a previous creation which was laid in ruins, and that this chaotic state in verse 2 does not refer to the first creative work of God. This is called the restitution theory. It places a long period of time between verses 1 and 3 of Genesis 1. According to this view, the earth had originally been created the abode of the angels; but they fell, and their abode was made desolate; and this allegedly explains the desolation described in verse 2. That desolation is not to be attributed, then, to creation, for, they say, God would not create anything without form and void. This entire view, however, is speculative; and it has no ground in the text whatsoever.

In the first place, the words "in the beginning" ought to be sufficient proof against such wild speculation. If in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, it certainly

cannot be that prior to this beginning there was still another universe, which was first ruined and out of whose ruins God created the present earth. Moreover, in Isaiah 45:18 we read that God created the heavens and the earth, and "he formed it to be inhabited." Hence, we must understand that the terms *waste* and *void* do not refer to some long ages of a world that previously existed and fell into ruin, but to the chaotic, or unformed state of the present universe as it was immediately after the "beginning" of verse 1. And the meaning is not that there was imperfection in God's work, nor that the earth was completely empty and had no substance and form whatsoever. But the text means that there were as yet no finished creatures. The creative Word of God had not yet given specific form to anything.

In that same connection the darkness that is meant here is not the darkness of our present night, which is never absolutely dark and without its reminders of the day; but it refers to the absolute darkness, such as we cannot even imagine, which preceded the creation of the light. And the

"deep" and the "waters" do not refer to the finished and created waters as we know them today and as they were separated and finished on the third and fourth days of creation; but all these terms together refer to the earth as it was completely without any definite shape and finished form and as it was in that sense a formless mass of solid and liquid and gaseous substances mixed together. They refer to that one, shapeless, lifeless, un-moving substance out of which the entire earthly creation was formed and became through the Word of God a harmonious and finished whole. Nor must we understand that the earthly creation continued to exist in that unformed state for a relatively longer or shorter period of time. But rather, in that original chaos God immediately commenced to create the order which is depicted in the narrative of the six successive days, the order which was brought to manifestation in our present well-ordered cosmos.

Finally, we may note that already here there is a hint concerning the history that is to come. For in the beginning heaven is separated from

the earth, and Genesis simply tells us that God created the heaven, in order then to describe in detail the formation of the earth and its creatures. But it is suggested even here, and confirmed in the Scriptures, that when the earth is ready, we must not forget that it is not the highest and not the final earth. God also created the heavens. And Scripture teaches us that all things were created with a view to Christ and that all things are to be united in Christ. Presently a wider separation comes between earth and heaven through sin. Then Christ comes from heaven, the Lord from heaven, to unite our nature to His, earth to heaven. He comes in order to remove the separation and breach wrought by our sin. He makes reconciliation through His blood. Moreover, He came in order to unite all things in heaven and on earth in Himself. The day is still coming, therefore, when the present order of things must pass away, and when God in Christ will create all things anew, so that the earth is also heavenly, and so that all things are one and in the highest, heavenly sense perfect.

... to be continued □

Report of Classis East

January 12, 1994
Southeast
Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 12, 1994 in the Southeast PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. This session was chaired by Rev. G. VanBaren. Special welcome was given to the delegates *ad examina* from Classis West, to the students of Cal Kalsbeek's church history class from Covenant Christian High School, and to Rev. R. Cammenga who attended as a delegate for the first time.

The highlight of this meeting was the approval by classis of the establishment of a new congregation in the Georgetown area of Western Michigan. The delegates *ad examina* from Classis West concurred with the deci-

sion of Classis East. Classis appointed the consistory of Hudsonville to serve as its committee to effect this organization.

In addition to hearing the reports of the stated clerk, the Classical Committee, and the church visitors, classis dealt with three overtures to synod. The first was from Hudsonville, which proposed a change in the wording of footnote #4 of Article 38 of the Church Order. Hudsonville proposed that supervising consistories of new congregations be given the right to form nominations for officebearers for a new congregation. This overture was sent to synod with the approval of classis.

The second overture was from Rev. W. Bruinsma, who requested that a synodical Catechism Committee be re-established for the purpose of approving new catechism materi-

als. This overture was sent to synod with the disapproval of classis on the grounds that material of this type should come to synod by way of overture from a consistory or individual, and synod would then appoint a committee to deal with these materials.

The third overture to synod was from Donald Lotterman. Mr. Lotterman proposed that changes be made to the decision of last year's synod relating to the examination of ministerial candidates from other churches. Mr. Lotterman proposed that these ministers be members of one of our churches prior to their examination and that a sermon be preached by these candidates the evening prior to classis so that the public could hear him. Classis forwarded this overture to synod with its disapproval on the grounds that the matter of membership is not always practical, and that on the second matter of preaching, classis needs

to arrive at its own independent judgment regarding all aspects of the examination.

Classical appointments were granted to the Georgetown group as follows (Evening service only): January 23 — Gritters, January 30 — Spriensma, February 6 — VanBaren, February 13 — Joostens, February 20 — Bruinsma, February 27 — Cammenga, March 6 — Koole, March 13 — Kuiper, March 20 — Woudenberg, March 27 — Slopsema, April 3 — Gritters, April 10 — Spriensma, April 17 — VanBaren, April 24 — Joostens, May 1 — Bruinsma, May 8 — Flikkema, May 15 — Cammenga.

Subsidy requests for 1995 were received from Kalamazoo (\$7,000) and from Covenant (\$37,300). These requests were approved and forwarded to synod for approval.

Voting for synodical delegates resulted in the following: **MINISTERS:** *Primi* — B. Gritters, K. Koole, D. Kuiper, J. Slopsema, G. VanBaren; *Secundi* — W. Bruinsma, R. Cammenga, M. Joostens, A. Spriensma, B. Woudenberg. **ELDERS:** *Primi* — D. Doezeema, G. Kaptein, T. Spriensma, G. VanOverloop, G. Wassink; *Secundi* — T. Hugg, C. Kalsbeek, M. Kamps, C. Kuiper, P. Machiele.

Rev. B. Woudenberg was elected

to serve a three-year *primus* term as delegate *ad examina* and Rev. W. Bruinsma to a three-year *secundus* term. Rev. D. Kuiper and Rev. G. VanBaren were elected as church visitors, with Revs. Slopsema and Woudenberg as alternates. Rev. B. Gritters was elected to serve a three-year term on the Classical Committee. Classis re-appointed J. Huiskens for a three-year term as stated clerk.

Expenses for this session amounted to \$1,647.60. Classis will meet next on May 11, 1994 in Holland.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon J. Huiskens

Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

School Activities

The Board of Covenant Christian High School recently called a special meeting for the Society for PR Secondary Education for the evening of January 10. The Board proposed to the society that it be authorized to proceed with final plans and construction of Phase II of Covenant's long-range building expansion plan. This plan would include five classrooms, a music room, additional rest rooms, storage, plus parking and grounds improvements, including another exit for traffic unto Wilson Ave. Current estimates place the cost of this project somewhere in the range of 1.1 million dollars. Covenant's Board felt the time was right for this project to be implemented, since current enrollment projections show continued growth in student-body size through the year 2000.

The Board also looked at the possibility of a dual-shift schedule for the students. This schedule would have six classes from 7:00 A.M. to 12:00 and six classes from 12:00 to 5:00 P.M. But the Board discovered that this "solution" to Covenant's problem would prove to be more costly in the long

run than a building expansion. The Society agreed and voted to adopt the Board's proposal. The Lord willing, the expansion project should be completed by this time next year.

It is also interesting to note that the Association for PR Secondary Education in the South Holland, IL area may also vote, at its annual meeting, on a proposal to purchase property for a future school facility.

The students of the Heritage Christian School collected money this past holiday season for the Randolph, WI PR Christian School. The money collected was intended to be used for the purchase of an overhead projector and accessories.

Congregational Activities

At its January meeting, Classis East gave the go-ahead for organization of the group of families meeting in Bauer, MI (Georgetown) to become our churches' newest congregation. Classis also appointed the Council of the Hudsonville, MI PRC to serve as a committee to see to that organization.

In keeping with that decision of Classis, the Council of Hudsonville has tentatively set the date of Bauer's organization for February 23 at the Hudsonville PRC. Hudsonville's Council has also recommended that the group be organized with three

elders and two deacons.

While filling a classical appointment to the Loveland, CO PRC, Pastor Mahtani of our Trinity PRC in Houston, TX was asked to show his slides on Singapore and India after the evening service on the 16th of January.

Evangelism Activities

Late last year the Church Extension Committee of the Lynden, WA PRC sponsored a special congregational evening on Personal Evangelism. The purpose was to grow in an appreciation of congregational involvement in the mission calling of the church. A handout was prepared which contained a copy of Rev. R. VanOverloop's paper on *Active Congregational Involvement*, a list of questions for study and discussion, and *The 10 Commandments for Mission Work*, by Rev. S. Houck.

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI has decided to feature a pamphlet of the month for their congregation's enjoyment. The pamphlet for the month of January was *Knowing the True God*, by Rev. S. Houck.

The Reformed Witness Committee of the Doon and Hull, IA PRC, along with the Edgerton, MN PRC has decided to discontinue the Bible Study Meeting in Sioux Falls, IA due

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

to a lack of outside interest. The last meeting was held at Calvin Christian School in Sioux Falls on December 20.

The congregation and Council of the Loveland, CO PRC continues to support the work involved with the SanLuis Valley Mission in Alamosa, CO. In December, Loveland arranged for Rev. A. Spriensma and Seminarian Doug Kuiper to spend consecutive two-week periods there, with

Doug Kuiper conducting the services over Christmas. I can not help but notice from the bulletins I receive from both Alamosa and Loveland that there are many weeks when Loveland has arranged for preaching in Alamosa, when they, in turn, are having services on the Lord's day led by one of their elders. I believe this shows just how committed Loveland is in this regard.

Minister Calls

After Rev. Gritters' decline of Loveland's call, Loveland formed another trio consisting of the following pastors: Revs. R. Dykstra, C. Haak, and G. VanBaren.

Food for Thought:

"A faith that does not influence a man's practice is not worthy of the name."

J.C. Ryle □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies for the 1994 - 1995 academic year in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches should make application at the March 17, 1994 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and high school and college transcripts must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements

are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 17 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418.

Jon Huiskens, Secretary

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The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

TEACHERS NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School of Grand Rapids, Michigan is accepting applications for teaching positions for the 1994-1995 school year. Those interested in the position of choir or band director are also invited to apply. Call Miss Agatha Lubbers at school (616) 453-5048 or home (616) 458-2057, or Mr. Rick Noorman (616) 457-6087. Applicants may also write the school at

1401 Ferndale S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of Faith Protestant Reformed Church extends our sympathy to the families of Harv and Marilyn Holstege, David Sr. and Nancy Ondersma, Randy and Sue Dykstra, David Ondersma, Jr., and to Craig and Heidi Ondersma in the death of their father, grandfather, and great-grandfather,

MR. SIMON ONDERSMA.

May the families take comfort in the words of Question and Answer 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism, that I "am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ...."

Rev. K. Koole, President
Jan Talsma, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, CA on Wednesday, March 2, 1994 at 8:30 a.m., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the Clerk of Hope's consistory.

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop,
Stated Clerk

NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year, are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee Secretary, Mr. Larry Meulenberg. (Phone [616] 453-8466.) This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting of March 17, 1994, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Larry Meulenberg, Secretary