



# *THE* **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

Postmillennialism denies and opposes, with might and main, that Jesus' coming is soon, near, and quickly, exactly as I charged against it in "Jewish Dreams."

This is assault upon the fundamental hope of the church. Nothing less.

**See "Another Letter and Response on 'Jewish Dreams' "**  
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Vol. 71, No. 12  
March 15, 1995

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## In This Issue ...

Prominent in this issue of the *Standard Bearer* is controversy: debate over the right understanding of the teachings of the Bible. Controversy is unavoidable for the true church, as for the individual believer. Controversy is the sacred duty of the church and of the Christian.

A church and a professing Christian that refuse to press the claims of sound doctrine against opposition and to defend the truth when it is attacked show that they have no love for the truth.

Even a dog, wrote John Calvin, barks when his master is threatened.

God accomplishes good purposes with controversy. Out of controversy come a clearer understanding of the truth by the saints, the development of the truth by the theologians, and the maintenance itself of the truth by the church.

The debates in this issue concern eschatology (Scripture's teaching on the last things); the authority and adequacy of the Reformed confession; and the Reformed church's right to observe Christmas. This last involves the vexed questions of the "regulative principle of worship" and the church's liberty.

It will again be evident to the reader that the *SB* is open to responsibly stated opposing views. This is especially the function of our "Letters" column. We are willing to give lengthy space to opposing views, more than the rule allows, when we think that this is warranted.

This, as regards "In This Issue."

Something should also be said about "In That Issue," with reference to the previous, March 1 issue of the *SB*.

The pictures, including the cover photo, were taken by *SB* Managing Editor Don Doezeema.

The useful page of names and addresses of Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as their pastors, was the work of Judi Doezeema. Judi, our readers might like to know, sets up every issue of the magazine in its ready-to-print form.

—DJE



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# Reconciled to God

*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

II Corinthians 5:18-20

What an amazing and blessed experience! God has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.

Reconciled. The word implies that there was once a relationship of friendship between God and us, and, moreover, that this relationship was disrupted. And now (glorious reality!) it is restored.

God established that relationship of friendship between Himself and us already in Paradise.

In Adam we were created in the likeness and image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in love.

From the physical aspect, we were formed as rational, moral creatures, with mind and will and all our faculties, capable of being image bearers. Spiritually we bore the image of God as His friend servants

to live in covenant fellowship with Him.

As the highest of all God's earthly creatures we saw the glory of the Creator in all His creatures, walked and talked with Him in intimate communion of life, and served Him by devoting ourselves to Him in Adam, who was king over all the earthly creation. This was a small foretaste of heaven.

But that bond of intimate communion of fellowship and friendship was broken. And we are responsible for that. By the instigation of the devil and our own willful disobedience we sinned against God by eating of the forbidden tree. First Eve, then Adam. We were guilty of breach of covenant, allying ourselves with God's enemy the devil, rebelling against our Creator and our covenant God.

As a result, we are hopelessly lost, dead in trespasses and sins, prone to hate God and our neighbor, worthy only of everlasting condemnation in hell under God's holy wrath.

We could not save ourselves. There was no angel or other creature that could possibly save us. All the offerings and sacrifices of the Old Testament could not atone for a single sin. We were hopelessly lost in our sin and guilt.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for that great love wherewith He loved us from all eternity, has planned for us a way, the only way of salvation. The Holy One whom we so deeply offend with our transgressions has reconciled us to Himself in Christ Jesus.

At Christmas time we so thoughtlessly sing, "God and sinners reconciled," as if a third party came between God and us to reconcile God to us as well as us to God. No! A thousand times, No. God was in Christ reconciling us unto Himself.

God in Jesus Christ took the burden of our guilt and sin upon Himself and bore it away!

God is the Reconciler. We are the reconciled — by sovereign grace alone, rooted in eternal love in Christ Jesus!



Great is the mystery of godliness! God does far beyond all that we could ask or think.

He reconciled us, His people whom He has chosen from before the foundation of the earth in Christ Jesus. He appointed His Son to be the Christ, the Anointed One, to bring about this reconciliation with those given to Him of the Father.

He is the Firstborn of all creatures. All things were made by Him, and for Him, that in Him should be all the fullness of blessedness.

The Father sent His Son into the world to be born of a woman, to come under the law and thus be laden with the guilt of our transgressions. The Son took on our flesh and blood from His mother Mary to do the Father's will by bearing away our sin, the sin of the world.

Even more, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. When our first father fell into sin, he fell as king of the earthly creation and brought the creature with him

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under the curse. We see the evidences of that in the sickness, disease, and infirmities among the animals, as well as in the imperfections in trees and plants. Paul tells us that the whole creation groans, being made subject to vanity and corruption. But the creature groans in hope, waiting for deliverance from the bondage of corruption, to share in the liberty of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-22).

Christ did not die to reconcile only a certain number of individuals, or the totality of the elect. But He brought reconciliation to His fallen creation. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. That includes the whole creation, with the exception of the reprobate wicked, who perish in their sins.

God's reconciliation reaches even beyond that. For there had also been a fall in the angel world, a serious disruption when Satan and his host rebelled and were cast out. A large part of the angel world was cast out with Satan, so that the original unity of the angelic host no longer existed. Also the angels in heaven eagerly watch the unfolding of God's plan of redemption, for they are personally involved in the restoration of all things in Christ Jesus (I Pet. 1:12).

Christ came to reconcile all things unto Himself, both in heaven and on earth.

Therefore, as a reward for His accomplished work on the cross, our Lord was exalted to the highest heavens, far above all principalities and powers in heaven and on earth. He was given a name above all names, that every knee must bow, and every tongue must confess that He is Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

And He was exalted as Head of His church. He now reigns in heaven for the ingathering of the saints. He gathers His church from all nations and races, defends and protects her unto the day of His return. Therefore all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

God makes all things new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, united in one. Christ will bring His church into glory, and His saints will reign with Him over the new creation. Even the angels will be subject to us, that we may reflect the glory of the Father, world without end.



"We are ambassadors of Christ."

There is actually no end to all the wonders that are involved in our eternal reconciliation.

God through Jesus Christ as our exalted Lord in the heavens gathers unto Himself a people, His church, by His Word and Spirit.

He has given His inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of revelation, in which He makes Himself known to His people in all His glorious perfections, confiding in us His eternal thoughts, plans and purpose, and mighty works as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. God breathed His Word into holy men, who were moved to write exactly as the Holy Spirit guided them. All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

Our sovereign Lord has entrusted that Word to His church, that through the office of the elders and minister that Word may be proclaimed for the gathering of the saints. Ministers are servants, ambassadors of Jesus Christ, who are sent with the authority and mandate of their Lord. His mandate is, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Is. 40:1, 2).

That Word is powerful as the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. For "how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall

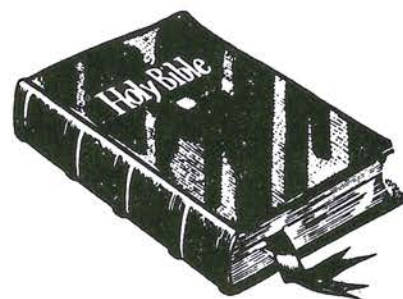
they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:14, 15).

By that Word the church is gathered, preserved, and defended unto the day of the ingathering of the saints when Christ returns. To her comes the Word of God: "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Is. 43:1).

As a bridegroom takes his wife into his arms and declares, "You are mine," or as a mother takes her newborn baby to her breast with the comforting thought, "You are my very own, even my flesh and blood," so God takes His bride unto Himself and claims us as His very own forever.

But the complaint arises within us, "My sins are so great and so many that they cannot possibly be forgiven. I am most unworthy of so great a salvation. I deserve only to be cast away forever, to die in my sins."

Are you weary? Heavy laden? Do you hunger after God? Do you thirst for His approval and blessing? Then to you Christ says, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Is. 55:1). Christ, who calls His sheep by name and carries His lambs in His bosom, beseeches by His Word and Spirit: Be ye reconciled to God! Believe only! For faith is God's gift unto salvation! □



# Another Letter and Response on “Jewish Dreams”

The editorial “Jewish Dreams” (*Standard Bearer*, Jan. 15, 1995) continues to draw response. Some of the response is sharp. This is not surprising. For some time now, as regards the doctrine of the last things, premillennial dispensationalism and postmillennialism have pretty much had the field to themselves. In their controversy with each other, both severely criticize Reformed amillennialism. From the Reformed quarter, little or nothing has been forthcoming in defense of amillennialism, much less a vigorous attack upon both forms of millennial error.

“Jewish Dreams” put the confessional Reformed doctrine of amillennialism into the field of discussion about the last things. The present age, from Christ’s ascension until shortly before His second coming, when Satan shall be loosed from his prison, is the thousand-year period of Revelation 20. The Messianic kingdom in history is not a future carnal kingdom, whether of Jews reigning from Jerusalem or of saints exercising political power from Vallecito, California or Tyler, Texas. It is, rather, Christ’s spiritual reign by His gospel and Spirit in the hearts and lives of the believing elect. The victorious kingdom of Christ is, as it has ever been, the true, faithful church in the midst of a hostile world.

The editorial took up the challenge to Reformed amillennialism from the postmillennial “Christian Reconstructionists.” For 30 years or

so now, these advocates of “dominion theology” have violently assailed confessional Reformed amillennialism. A kinder epithet has been “pessimillennialism,” that is, a doctrine of the last things that is pessimistic. Reformed amillennialists are “losers.” Although there have been Reformed and Presbyterian theologians who have debated “Christian Reconstruction” in terms of its teaching about Old Testament law (“theonomy”), few have insisted that the movement must be repudiated by Reformed churches because of its postmillennialism. This was the thrust of the editorial “Jewish Dreams.”

Postmillennialists have responded.

Enter now the postmillennial advocate of “Christian Reconstruction” Gary DeMar. DeMar is president of American Vision and a member of a congregation in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA). He is a prolific and influential author. His books include *God and Government*, 3 vols.; *Ruler of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for Government*; *Surviving College Successfully: A Complete Manual for the Rigors of Academic Combat*; *The Reduction of Christianity* (with Peter J. Leithart); and *Last Days Madness*.

What follows is the letter from Gary DeMar responding to my editorial “Jewish Dreams” and my reply to DeMar’s letter.

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While I am impressed by the creeds and confessions of the church, they are not equal to Scripture. Prof. Engelsma is fond of quoting confessional statements while giving little regard to biblical exegesis. Have we become Romanists? Yes, Engelsma does reference a few Bible passages, but he only uses them as props to support an already accepted confessional statement. Proof-texting is no substitute for exegesis.

Engelsma calls postmillennialism a “heresy.” Is he willing to include, for example, John Owen the principal author of the postmillennial Savoy Declaration, Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, and Marcellus Kik as heretics because of their postmillennial beliefs?

It is somewhat curious that Engelsma fails to quote the Westminster Confession and its catechisms and instead quotes Peter Toon’s *interpretation* of the assembly’s work. Engelsma is selective in the way he presents the confessional statements of the church. He chooses what suits his purpose. In the *WC Larger Catechism* the kingship of Christ is said to be evidenced to God’s people by Christ’s “overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory” (LC, Q. 45). Thomas Ridgeley (c. 1667-1734), in his massive commentary on the *Larger Catechism*, published between 1731 and 1733, gives a decidedly post-millennial interpretation of the Assembly’s position:

We freely own, as what we think agreeable to scripture, that as Christ has, in all ages, displayed his glory as King of the Church, so we have ground to conclude, from scripture, that the administration of his government in this world, before his coming to judgment, will be attended with greater magnificence, more visible marks of glory, and various occurrences of providence, which shall tend to the welfare and happiness of his church, in a greater degree than has been beheld or experienced by it, since it was planted by the ministry of the apostles after his ascension into heaven. This we think to be the sense, in general, of those scriptures, both in the Old and New Testament, which speak of the latter-day glory!<sup>1</sup>

The *Shorter Catechism* is no less postmillennial. "Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies" (SC, Q. 26). The evidence of His exaltation is made visible to His Church when He does "gather and defend his church, and subdue [her] enemies" (LC, Q. 54).

The *Larger Catechism* in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer states, "we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, [and] the fullness of the Gentiles brought in ... and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends" (LC, Q. 191). None of this squares with Engelsma's notion that "the church in the end-time will be a persecuted church, not a triumphalist [sic] church" (173). By the way, the answer to LC Question 191 is almost identical to that of The Savoy Declaration (26.5), which Engelsma condemns! It seems, therefore, that the Helvetic Confession is out of step with the other great confessional statements of the Reformed churches. This is why Scripture must be the determining factor.

Prof. Engelsma insists that pas-

sages like Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2, and 2 Timothy 3 address conditions near the time when Jesus returns at the end of history. While this view is popular today, especially among dispensationalists, it cannot survive exegetical scrutiny. There is a great deal of biblical and historical evidence to demonstrate that these passages refer to conditions leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Postmillennialists do not do their work in an exegetical vacuum. I devoted more than 120 pages of detailed exegesis to Matthew 24:1-34 in my book *Last Days Madness*. More than fifty pages were devoted to 2 Thessalonians 2. I also discussed Titus 2:13 in great detail. In each case I showed that these passages, and many more like them, refer to events of the first century. Moreover, I was able to demonstrate that numerous Bible commentators agree with me, most of whom are not postmillennial!

Prof. Engelsma claims that the solemn duty of the Protestant Reformed Churches "from the soon-coming Christ [is] to expose the hopes of postmillennialism as 'Jewish dreams.'" The "soon-coming Christ"? Prof. Engelsma sounds more like Hal Lindsey and Dave Hunt than a Reformed Christian. Dave Hunt, an anti-reformed author, has written *How Close Are We: Compelling Evidence for the Soon Return of Christ*. The church has been preaching the "soon-return of Christ" for centuries. This doctrine has been the bane of Reformed theology and the benefit of dispensationalism. How can Christians claim that Jesus is coming soon in light of the time references set forth in the New Testament?

Jesus said that He would return in judgment before the last apostle died (Matt. 16:27-28; cf. John 21:18-23). Jesus promised His disciples that He would return in judgment to destroy the temple before their generation passed away (Matt. 24:24). The Thessalonians knew the identity of the man of lawlessness

and the restrainer. In fact, they believed that the "day of the Lord" had already come (2 Thess. 2:2). "The mystery of lawlessness was already at work," Paul writes (v. 7). It is quite evident, therefore, that Paul is describing events that the Thessalonians were quite familiar with.

Revelation 1:1 states that the events depicted therein "must shortly take place." The time is said to be "near" (1:3) for those who first read the book. We are told in the last chapter of Revelation that the described events "must shortly take place" (22:6). Jesus said that He was coming "quickly" (22:7). And to confirm what was said in the first chapter, "the time is near" (22:10). Revelation was written nearly two thousand years ago. If words mean anything, then the events of Revelation are now history.

Prof. Engelsma can follow the dispensationalists and claim that these time indicators are fluid and do not necessarily mean what they seem to mean, or he can deal with them honestly and get back to doing exegetical work and quit relying on the confessions to do his thinking for him. Until Prof. Engelsma deals with *exegetical* issues, the only ones who will listen to him will be those who already agree with him, a number that is steadily declining.

Why not open the campus of the seminary of the Protestant Reformed Church to a debate on the topics of "the last days" and "postmillennialism"? I would be willing to pay my own way to participate in such a debate. How about it, Prof. Engelsma?

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Ridgeley, *Commentary on the Larger Catechism*, previously titled *A Body of Divinity: Wherein the Doctrines of the Christian Religion are Explained and Defended, Being the Substance of Several Lectures on the Assembly's Larger Catechism* (Edmonton, AB Canada: Still Waters Revival Books, [1855] 1993), 1:562.

Gary DeMar  
American Vision  
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## Reply

Gary DeMar is "impressed" by the creeds. I am bound by them. I have vowed in the Reformed "Formula of Subscription" that I believe "that all the articles and points of doctrine contained (in the 'Three Forms of Unity') do fully agree with the Word of God." I have also promised "diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine." Further, I have sworn "not only (to) reject all errors that militate against this doctrine ... but (also) ... to refute and contradict these and to exert (myself) in keeping the Church free from such errors." Included is adherence to the eschatological teaching of the creeds. This fidelity to the confessions is not "Romanist." It is Reformed. The Reformed faith is confessional.

## Heresy?

I never used the word "heresy" to describe postmillennialism. Not once. This was deliberate. The reason was my very high regard for some of the theologians mentioned by DeMar, especially B. B. Warfield, as well as others. Now that DeMar presses me, I call the postmillennialism taught by J. Marcellus Kik in his *An Eschatology of Victory* and by "Christian Reconstruction" a heresy. By heresy, I mean not only a serious departure from the teaching of the Scriptures but also a grievous corruption of the gospel. The error is that the spiritual kingdom revealed and realized by the gospel is changed into a carnal kingdom, and the spiritual triumph of the exalted Christ in history is changed into an earthly triumph. The evil practical effect of the error is to turn the hope of Christians away from the coming of Christ to the carnal millennial kingdom. This subversion of the Christian hope tends to affect all of the Christian life.

Warfield and some of the Puritans before him were far more restrained in predicting a future earthly "enlargement" of the church than Kik and the "Christian Recon-

structionists." Insofar as Warfield and other earlier Presbyterians shared the error of postmillennialism, this was "stubble" in their work of building upon the foundation. Their stubble must be burned, but they themselves shall be saved (I Cor. 3:10-15).

If DeMar and others are determined to present my attack on the postmillennial doctrine as an attack on the persons of those who held, or hold, this doctrine, so be it. But I vehemently deny this accusation. I yield to no one in regard for, and even love of, Martin Luther. But I call his miserable doctrine of the Lord's Supper a heresy for all that.

I charged heresy, not against postmillennialism but against the "judaizing" of the "Christian Reconstruction" brand of postmillennialism. As I carefully indicated, this refers to "Christian Reconstruction"'s imposing upon New Testament Christians "a vast array of Old Testament laws that, according to Article 25 of the Belgic Confession, have been accomplished in Christ, so that the 'use of them must be abolished among Christians.'"

This error I not only called "heresy" but also "the fundamental heresy." To this the church said "no" by the leading of the Spirit in Acts 15. Against this Paul fought in the book of Galatians.

Warfield never taught this.

## The Westminster Standards

That I did not quote the Westminster Confession and its catechisms is not at all "curious." I pointed out why I did not: "I leave to those whose creeds they are to demonstrate that the Westminster Standards rule out the illusory dream of postmillennialism." The creeds that bind me (and the majority of readers of the *SB*) are the "Three Forms of Unity." Therefore, I limited myself to references to them.

I offer my judgment, nevertheless, that the four quotations by DeMar from the Westminster Larger

and Shorter Catechisms prove absolutely nothing for a postmillennial interpretation of the Westminster documents. No amillennialist has any difficulty with these expressions whatsoever. All of these statements square perfectly with "Engelsma's notion that 'the church in the end-time will be a persecuted church, not a triumphalist church.'" Christ has been restraining and subduing His and our enemies by His sovereign power since His ascension into heaven (Eph. 2:20-23). The fulfillment of this sovereign restraint and subduing in history does not require the "Christianizing of the world" and a kingdom of earthly power and glory. The risen Christ restrains and subdues His enemies by His secret providence, and He governs and exalts His church by His grace.

The right understanding of the Larger Catechism's explanation of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, in Question 191, an explanation that is virtually identical with the explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism in Question 123, will serve to make clear the meaning of all of DeMar's quotations from the Westminster Catechisms.

In the second petition, the Catechism explains, believers pray that God in Christ will destroy the kingdom of Satan and build up the kingdom of Christ, which is the church. DeMar thinks that this refers to some future time before the coming of Christ. Also, he supposes that the destruction of Satan's kingdom and the victory of Christ's kingdom in this future time are *earthly*, that is, physical, political, social, and visible to the bodily eye. The saints will have dominion: the carnal kingdom.

He is mistaken on both counts. Christ has been destroying the kingdom of Satan and building up His own kingdom, the church, ever since He ascended into heaven. The nature of the defeat of Satan's kingdom and of the victory of Christ's kingdom is *spiritual*. It consists of the gathering out of Satan's kingdom of the elect; of the sanctification of the elect to serve the Lord in every

sphere of life; and of the preservation of the church in truth and holiness against the onslaughts of the devil. The perfect answer to the second petition will be granted in the Day of Christ.

How does the Larger Catechism itself sum up its explanation of the second petition? "... that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever."

There is not so much as a hint of postmillennialism in Question 191 of the Larger Catechism or in the other quotations adduced by Gary DeMar. One finds postmillennialism in these confessional statements only if he has decided beforehand to understand "restrain," "subdue," "defend," and "conquer" in the earthly sense they had for Old Testament Israel in the day of shadows.

The answer to Question 191 of the Larger Catechism is by no means "almost identical to that of The Savoy Declaration (26.5)." Chapter 26.5 of the Congregational Savoy Declaration (which I quoted in the editorial "Jewish Dreams") differs radically from Question 191 of the Presbyterian Larger Catechism. The Savoy Declaration posits "enlarged" churches enjoying "a more quiet, peaceable, and glorious condition than they have enjoyed" *"in the latter days, Antichrist being destroyed ... and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken"* and *"in this world."*

Take note: *"in this world."*

The Independents who drew up the Savoy Declaration, dissatisfied with Presbyterian Westminster's refusal to do so, gave clear expression to the postmillennial dream of an earthly kingdom. Their churches are taught to look forward to earthly peace, earthly prosperity, and earthly power!

Even the quotation from Thomas Ridgeley, although obviously originating in a misguided longing for "latter-day glory," only very cautiously advances the mildest form of postmillennialism: "... greater

magnificence, more visible marks of glory ... the welfare and happiness of his church in a greater degree." A sleepy amillennialist might let this get past him.

This is worlds apart from the "Christianizing" of America, and then of the world, envisioned and promoted by "Christian Reconstruction" as the real triumph of Christ in history.

### "Behold, I Come Slowly"

With DeMar's remarks on the Bible's teaching concerning the second coming of the Lord and the condition of the church in the days preceding that coming, I am simply delighted. I knew these things, of course, as do all those who have read in "Reconstruction" literature. But many of the readers of this magazine have not read the "Reconstruction" books. They are largely dependent upon the analyses of others. Now they can read for themselves from a leading, authoritative "Christian Reconstructionist" the main teachings of that movement concerning the end of the world.

The church of the last days will not be persecuted!

All of the prophecy of the New Testament of apostasy, tribulation, and Antichrist in the last days has already been completely fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70! Nothing of all of this sizable and significant portion of New Testament Scripture, as well as Old Testament Scripture, including nearly all of the book of Revelation, *applies to the New Testament church of our day and the future!*

Most astounding of all, and well-nigh incredible, is the flat, bold denial that the coming of Jesus Christ — the second, bodily, visible coming of Jesus Christ — is "soon" and "near"! The Reformed church has been mistaken in her teaching that Jesus' coming is "near"! Indeed, "this doctrine has been the *bane* of Reformed theology"! (emphasis mine — DJE)

Postmillennialism denies and

opposes, with might and main, that Jesus' coming is soon, near, and quickly, exactly as I charged against it in "Jewish Dreams."

This is assault upon the fundamental hope of the church. Nothing less.

I ignore the tactic of blackening Reformed eschatology by linking it with that of premillennial dispensationalism. It is not Reformed amillennialism that agrees with premillennialism in denying future persecution to the church and in affirming an earthly kingdom of Christ.

### Eschatological Apostasy

DeMar may well be right when he says that the number of Reformed and Presbyterian amillennialists "is steadily declining." The reason, in part, is the great apostasy now fulfilling the apostle's prophecy in II Thessalonians 2:3. This falling away is due, in part, to the failure of Presbyterian and Reformed churches, ministers, theologians, and editors of religious periodicals vigorously to defend amillennialism and equally vigorously to expose and condemn postmillennialism.

Lest I be guilty of failing to do what little I can to stop the decline from the truth of amillennialism, I intend to devote future editorials to a biblical, confessional defense of amillennialism against the erroneous doctrine of postmillennialism. These will have the "Christian Reconstruction" movement especially in view.

### The Challenge

Gary DeMar throws out an intriguing challenge: a public debate on postmillennialism on the campus of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. My only hesitation is that I must not be responsible for giving a platform to error. I certainly would not want to leave the impression that the Bible is unclear on this important doctrine of the last things, so that amillennialism and postmillennialism are two legiti-

mate options for Reformed and Presbyterian Christians.

But DeMar is the well-known, popular theologian. *He* would draw

the audience. *He* would be giving a platform to a defense of amillennialism.

There is nothing wrong with *this*. I am interested.

—DJE

## Letters

### ■ The Sum of Christian Doctrine

Is it really true that the Heidelberg Catechism contains "the sum of Christian doctrine" as stated in the October 15, 1994 *Standard Bearer*, "The Good Practice of Two Services, One Given to Catechism Preaching," by Rev. Dale Kuiper, and so often affirmed in our circles? I can think of several important doctrines not covered by the Catechism. The obvious one, of course, is the doctrine of the last times. Much of the Bible is devoted to this important subject since it is an integral part of His coming into this world. Yet the Catechism chooses to ignore it except to mention that He is coming again as judge.

Another example is the doctrine of the efficacy of the blood of Christ. The Catechism devotes very little time to this subject, although we all agree that it is of central importance in the life of God's people. The result is a general ignorance in our churches of the twofold purpose of our Savior's blood sacrifice on the cross. We are all familiar with the fact that in the sight of God the blood of Christ is a payment for sin. As such it is a propitiation, a redemption price, a sacrifice which makes satisfaction for our sin. It is a covering for sin in the sight of God, for without shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb. 9:22).

But this is certainly not all. The blood of Jesus Christ also has a profound effect on us, His people. The author to the Hebrews makes this abundantly plain. He says, for example, that we are sanctified by the body and blood of Jesus Christ, not just in the sight of God, but also in our own experience. This is clear

from the fact that the blood of Christ cleanses our conscience so that we can come with boldness to God's throne of grace to ask for those things of which we have need (Heb. 10:22). Furthermore, he says that the blood of Christ, who through the eternal covenant offered Himself without spot to God, purges our conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). And he closes his discourse with this prayer: "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Curiously, the Catechism, in its one reference to my free and good conscience in Question and Answer 32, makes no mention of the blood of Christ. What is more, it seems to contradict itself when it says in Lord's Day 23 that my conscience accuses me that I have sinned against all of God's commandments and kept none of them. How can a free and good conscience, cleansed by the blood of Christ, still accuse me of all sin? It seems to me that the writers of the Catechism would have done well to explain this apparent anomaly. Since they did not, but rather chose to ignore it, among other things, I would suggest that we refrain from calling the Catechism, "the sum of Christian doctrine." Perhaps we could call it the sum of what we choose to believe of Christian doctrine, which might well be quite another matter.

Len Houweling  
Lynden, WA

### RESPONSE:

It is clear that your objections are not so much against my article, but against the high esteem the Reformed churches have for the Heidelberg Catechism. After all, the words "the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism" are taken from Article 68 of our Church Order, which requires the minister to preach the Catechism (ordinarily) each Sunday. That Reformed churches maintain that the Catechism contains "the sum of Christian doctrine" is further shown by the second question asked of the full consistory by the classical church visitors, "Is the Heidelberg Catechism regularly explained in the services for divine worship, so that no doctrine is left untreated?" Make no mistake, Reformed churches historically, and the Protestant Reformed Churches today, believe that all the doctrines of Holy Scripture are treated in the 52 Lord's Days of our Catechism.

Your positions that "several important doctrines (are) not covered by the Catechism," that the Catechism "seems to contradict itself," that we refrain from calling the Catechism "the sum of Christian doctrine," and that "we could better call it the sum of what we choose to believe of Christian doctrine," are a far cry from the Reformed position on the contents of the Catechism and the value of its being preached. You ought to bring your objections to your consistory for instruction on this matter.

1. As to your contention that the doctrine of the last times is short-changed by the Catechism, consider that its treatment of the Apostles' Creed is sufficiently broad that the pastor may treat any aspect of

Christ's return that he believes the congregation needs to hear, including instruction against false eschatological heresies. In doing so, he must be guided by what A. 52 states, as well as by what the other two Reformed creeds teach.

2. As to your contention that the Catechism emphasizes the blood of Christ as payment for sin but does not do justice to another benefit of His blood, namely, "purging our consciences from dead works to serve the living God," (or sanctification, or renewal), the following will show that the Catechism does this in many places.

a. L.D. I: "He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely *willing* and *ready*, henceforth, to live unto him."

b. L.D. XX: "to make me by a true faith partaker of Christ and *all* His benefits, that He may *comfort* me and abide with me for ever."

c. L.D. XXI: "and that I am and for ever shall remain a *living* member thereof" and "readily and cheerfully to *employ* his gifts for the advantage and salvation of others."

d. L.D. XXVI, which explains what it is to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ, gives the twofold purpose of the Savior's blood: "It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He shed for us by His sacrifice upon the cross; and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives." (See also L.D. XXVIII on the explanation of the Lord's Supper.)

e. L.D. XXXII: "(Christ) also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image..." (this in connection with good works).

f. Really the entire third part of the Catechism, with its treatment of the Law and Prayer, develops the truth that the believer is renewed unto good works, also the good work of calling boldly upon God in prayer.

3. As to the "contradiction" between Q. and A. 32 and Q. and A. 60 (regarding the conscience), have you never heard of the apostle Paul and the great conflict between his inward and outward man (Rom. 7:22-25)? Have you never experienced the accusing voice of conscience? Thanks be to God that the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is able to overcome that accusing voice, and give us peace with God!

— Rev. Dale H. Kuiper

### ■ Against Dordt's Observance of Christmas

Firstly, let me say that I hold you, your fellow ministers, and the Protestant Reformed Churches in high regard, and we do appreciate your care and regard to us over the years from when we first made contact with you. More recently, we have really appreciated the love and care and sound teaching given to David Higgs and Chris Connors, and their respective families. May the Lord continue to bless all of you in His service and stablish, settle, and strengthen His people in the earth.

What prompted me to write was the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 71, no. 6, December 15, 1994, "Letters": "Observance of Christmas."

The matter I address has been entrenched in continental Reformed theology for some 400 years to varying degrees, so I do not expect Peter Torlach will change anything, but truth is mighty above all things in the hands of our God.

One of the great principles of the Reformation was that the Word of God was the only rule to direct us how we are to glorify and enjoy Him. Another was that the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture. Yet a third was that all synods or coun-

cils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred. Therefore, they are not to be made the rule of faith and practice, but to be used as a help in both.

In the light of the above, would you please expound from the Scriptures the derivation and meaning, *not* of the birth of Christ, but of the term, "Christmas," and the basis from the Scriptures for the instituting of this day of public worship of the living God on the 25th December, annually, as a commemoration day of our Lord's birth. What I am driving at in making this request is the upholding of what we Reformed Christians have always aimed at: a casting off of the baggage of men, gathered over the centuries, and a reformation, as far as is practical, back to biblical, New Testament doctrine and worship, uncluttered and unfettered by that baggage which we (by nature) are so prone to add in our ignorance and with the "best of intentions." If you are able to demonstrate that "Christmas" is not some of that baggage, I will be happy to accept it as a God-given part of His worship.

In your exposition of the Word on this subject, would you please deal with the fact that there is no reference to such a commemoration in God's Word and, further, that it appears not to have been part of the worship of the early church for 200 or 300 years.

Would you also please explain its first appearance, which seems to have been associated with a church sliding away from its moorings of apostolic doctrine and worship and entering into sacramentalism and syncretism. Amongst other things, the mass of the Christ Child seems to have been associated deliberately with heathen feasts in order to make Christianity "fit in" and be more "appealing" to the unbelieving and heathen.

Coming to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 21, Section 1 on the regulative principle, it says in part: "the acceptable way of wor-

shipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture." Again I look for you to show me where the observance of "Christmas" is prescribed in the holy Scripture. It may be highly offensive to you, but to my understanding of the history of the "feast," it comes possibly within the gamut of "suggestions of Satan," for the reason of its close association and origin in sacramentalism and the mass. Its fruit, as evidenced in nativity scenes and worship of "the baby Jesus" and of "Mary, the Mother of God," also points to its suspect origins. Please do not misunderstand my argument: I am not suggesting that these excesses in any way exist in your worship.

I found it offensive for you to attempt to use the Westminster Confession of Faith in support of your position. The WCF and associated Standards and Scottish Presbyterianism have always been clearly and emphatically opposed to the observance of Christmas. To get it clear what the Westminster Standards say on the subject of worship other than on the Lord's day, let me quote and explain. The WCF, Chapter 21, Section 5, says in part that "religious oaths and vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions" are part of the worship of God.

The surrounding context and the Directory for Public Worship make very clear what is intended here. The Directory under the headings "Concerning the Observation of Days of Public Thanksgiving" and "Touching Days and Places of Public Worship" should be carefully read. The clear teaching that will come out of such a careful reading is that all other days of worship called for by the church were special occasions called by the church for a particular purpose on a par-

ticular day by public notice — in the colloquial, they were "one-offs."

For unambiguous clarity, here is a quote: "There is no day commanded in scripture to be kept holy under the gospel but the Lord's Day, which is the Christian Sabbath. Festival Days, vulgarly called *Holy Days*, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued."

You may not see a conflict with the regulative principle, and the Synod of Dordt may not have either, but that does not mean there is not one. The historical Presbyterian Reformed Church clearly says "yes, there is a problem."

The "how" of your worship of God in the PRC regularly includes worshiping God in the context of Christmas. That is "how" you worship him, amongst other "hows."

Your argument against worshiping *exclusively* on the Sabbath day is a "red herring" not worthy of comment, as no such concept exists in Reformed circles to my knowledge.

The "kind of wisdom that we defenders of the regulative principle" must demonstrate is heavenly and not earthly. Your bringing in of the suggestion of "rigid, stifling (and divisive) legalism" smacks of the earth's wisdom, i.e., "throw enough mud and some of it will stick." My answer to such a charge of "legalism" in this matter is, who is it that is binding something on the people of God, that is not bound in His Word?

The Son has made us free. If any minister of our church were to call for the observance of Christmas, both myself and all my family, who are grown, responsible, believing members, would not attend because we would see it as an infringement of the liberty we have in Christ, as dishonouring to our Lord, and as will worship.

(Elder) Peter Torlach  
Woodridge, Queensland  
Australia

#### Response:

The term "Christmas," accord-

ing to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, derives from a word meaning "Christ's mass." From this, nothing follows concerning use of the word by the true church. According to *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (ed. Carl F. H. Henry, Baker, 1973), the word "Sunday" is "derived from pagan sources and denotes the day devoted to the sun" (p. 653). This does not rule out Christians meeting for worship on this day or using the word to refer to the day on which they engage in public worship.

There is no basis in Scripture for the Reformed churches' commemoration of Christ's birth on December 25. Neither is there basis in Scripture for their observing a Day of Prayer on the second Wednesday of March annually. Nor is there such basis in Scripture for services of public worship in observance of "notable judgments," "some special blessing," and "days of public thanksgiving," as allowed by the Westminster Assembly's "Directory for the Public Worship of God" and as actually held by Presbyterian churches in the Scottish tradition.

The Reformed and Presbyterian churches have the liberty to observe these special occasions by worship services on other days than the Lord's Day. This is really our liberty. It is our liberty in Christ Jesus. The Belgic Confession asserts this liberty in general terms: "it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church" (Art. 32). The Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, in its day a Reformation creed of standing, distribution, and influence, expresses this liberty in specific terms:

Moreover, if in Christian liberty the churches religiously celebrate the memory of the Lord's nativity, circumcision, passion, resurrection, and of his ascension into heaven, and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, we approve of it highly (Chapter 24, in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*,

ed. Arthur C. Cochrane, Westminster, 1966).

That which churches maintaining the "regulative principle" do *not* have liberty to do is to introduce into the worship service itself, whether on the Lord's Day or on a special occasion, any other element of worship besides those commanded by Scripture. As the Heidelberg Catechism explains, God requires in the second commandment that we not worship Him "in any other way than He has commanded in His Word" (Q. 96).

The "regulative principle" of public worship does not care on what day, in addition to Sunday, the church may gather for public worship, or that the occasion may be celebrating the birth of Christ or some notable judgment. The concern of the "regulative principle" is that when the church does gather for worship she worships God only as He has commanded in His Word, that is, by hearing His Word; using the sacraments; publicly calling upon the Lord (which includes congregational singing of the Psalms); contributing to the relief of the poor; and doing all in spirit and in truth

(see Heid. Cat., Q. 103; John 4:24).

The Reformed churches that stand in the tradition of Dordt do not accuse, and never have accused, their Presbyterian brothers and sisters who stand in the tradition of Westminster of any wrong-doing as regards their worship. It is perfectly alright in our judgment that the Scottish Presbyterians do not observe Christmas by a public worship service on December 25, or any other date. We make no effort to bind their consciences.

When, on the other hand, our Presbyterian brothers and sisters accuse the Reformed churches standing in the tradition of Dordt of transgressing the second commandment, because they do observe Christmas, we warn them, "Beware, lest in applying the good principle you 'fall into a rigid, stifling (and divisive) legalism, and, thus, imperil the principle itself.'" This was, and is, my warning, not to those who choose not to observe Christmas, but to those who are inclined to charge Article 67 of the Church Order of Dordt, and the Reformed believers adhering to it, with violation of the second commandment.

You inform us what you would do, should any minister call for the observance of Christmas: flatly refuse to attend.

It may be profitable to you to know what I would do, if the situation were reversed. If the consistory decided to drop the observance of Christmas by a special worship service on December 25, I would acquiesce, although regretting the unnecessary giving up of a delightful, edifying service. If the consistory gave as its reason, that it desired to avoid practical dangers, e.g., the secular corruption of Christmas or the threat of Roman Catholicism, I would still acquiesce, although believing the thinking of the consistory to be faulty.

But if the consistory gave as its reason for dropping the observance of Christmas that observance of Christmas is *per se* violation of the second commandment, I would move heaven and earth to restore the observance and, certainly, to attend an observance myself.

It is a precious principle with us Reformed of Dordt not to allow our liberty in Christ to be infringed. □

— Ed.

*A Cloud Of Witnesses*

*Prof. Herman Hanko*

# Andrew Melville: Father of Presbyterianism

## Introduction

Although some time ago we spent time in England in the early days of the Reformation, we left England after meeting only a few men and returned to the continent of Europe to talk with men there, men who were deeply involved in the Reformation in Switzerland, Germany, and the Lowlands. It is time now to return for a while to the Brit-

ish Isles, only this time we shall travel to the northern part, that part called Scotland.

We have already been there once, briefly, to meet John Knox, the father of the Reformation. We return now to meet his successor, Andrew Melville.

## Background

There are a few things to know

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as far as the Reformation in Great Britain is concerned to understand the work there and the men whom God used in the work.

The Reformation in the British Isles differed from that on the continent in the first instance in that, while on the continent the Reformation churches left the Roman Catholic Church to form new denominations, in the British Isles the Reformation attempted to reform the Roman Catholic Church itself so as to create a Protestant church out of the old institution. This always made complete Reformation very difficult; and, indeed, in England the Anglican Church emerged as the Protestant Church, an Anglican Church which retained a great deal of Romish liturgy and church government.

In Scotland this same method was followed; and the result was a profound struggle which lasted for over a century. The struggle was chiefly between a basically Roman Catholic church government and a genuine presbyterian church government. It was in this struggle that Andrew Melville played an important role.

### Melville's youth and education

Andrew Melville was the youngest of the nine sons of Richard Melville. Richard Melville lived on a small estate on the banks of the South Esk near Montrose, a city on the east coast of Scotland about halfway between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Andrew was born in the year 1545.

Tragedy entered his life early. At the age of two he lost both parents. His father was killed in the battle of Pinkie and his mother died later the same year. Because Andrew was now an orphan, his oldest brother, a minister in Maritoun, assumed responsibility for Andrew's education.

Though of a somewhat delicate constitution, Andrew proved to be an exceptionally good student. He was educated till 14 years old in the grammar school in his home town;

and, after completing his work there, he went to St Mary's College at St. Andrews, a bit to the south, for four more years of study.

He proved to be such an excellent student that he soon gained a reputation for being the best philosopher, poet, and Greek scholar among all Scotland's university students. The rector of the school took a special interest in him and said to him when he left the college to pursue his studies elsewhere: "My silly fatherless and motherless boy, it's ill to wit what God may make of thee yet."

At the age of 19, his studies led him overseas, first to Paris for two years and then to Poitiers, both cities of France. He determined to study law, not because he had any intention of entering the legal profession, but because of the mental discipline which studies in law required. But his reputation preceded him at Poitiers, and no sooner had he arrived than he was asked to take a professorship. After he was there for three years, troubles between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics made it advisable for him to go elsewhere. He chose Geneva and in 1567 began a seven-year stay which was perhaps the most happy and carefree time of his life. Beza, Calvin's successor and rector at the Academy, offered him a professorship in the Humanities, and in Geneva he enjoyed his work, his surroundings, his students, and his contacts with the great men of the Calvin Reformation. Here he would have liked to stay; but an urgent call from his friends in Scotland persuaded him that God had assigned him a place and a work in his homeland from which he could not turn away.

### The beginning of the struggle

The first General Assembly<sup>1</sup> had met in 1560 under the leadership of John Knox. That General Assembly had adopted a confession and prepared a book on Church Order. Knox spent all his later years struggling to establish a church in Scot-

land which would be Calvinistic in doctrine, liturgy, and church government. But the forces opposed to him, especially in the areas of liturgy and church government, were strong. The ruling monarch, Mary Stuart, Queen of the Scots, was a perpetual obstacle.

By the time Melville returned to Scotland, Knox had been dead two years, James VI<sup>2</sup> sat on the throne<sup>3</sup>, and the church was governed by a sort of highbred polity composed of elements of presbyterianism and prelacy.<sup>4</sup>

Melville's considerable ability was soon recognized, along with his devotion to Presbyterianism and his threat to prelacy. Morton, regent of the king, understood perhaps better than anyone else what a threat Melville could be. Upon Melville's arrival, Morton offered Melville a position of private tutor in the court of the regent, with promises of good wages and advancement. If Melville had accepted, it would probably have happened that Melville would have become an enemy to the church of Christ in his land. But he saw the danger and instead accepted the position of principal at Glasgow College, offered him by the General Assembly of the church. That began his active work in his homeland.

Soon he was deeply involved in the affairs of the church. He reorganized the college of which he was principal; was, as professor of divinity, present at ecclesiastical assemblies; and was involved in conferences within the church and conferences between the church and

<sup>1</sup> The broadest assembly of the church, comparable to a Synod in Reformed churches.

<sup>2</sup> Later James I of England, the one for whom the King James Version of the Bible was named.

<sup>3</sup> Although Scotland was also ruled, as England was, by a Parliament, just as in England so also in Scotland there was a constant struggle for power between the king and parliament.

<sup>4</sup> Prelacy was the form of church government favored by James. It was similar to Roman Catholic church government, without the pope. It had its archbishops, bishops, and lower levels of clergy.

Parliament, or the church and the king.

Melville's stay in Geneva where biblical principles of church polity had been developed and practiced by Calvin and the Company of Pastors had convinced him that Presbyterianism<sup>5</sup> was the only biblically sanctioned system of church government, and he began now to exert all his efforts to establish such a biblical system in Scotland. But this brought him into direct conflict with the king and his court. And Morton, who had originally offered Melville a lucrative place in the court, now became Melville's bitterest enemy.

But Melville's courage was well known in the land. On one occasion, when Morton threatened Melville in an extraordinarily menacing way (and Morton's threats had before made bold men quail), Melville responded: "Tush, man! threaten your courtiers so. It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground; and I have lived out of your country as well as in it. Let God be praised; you can neither hang nor exile his truth!"

It would carry us too far afield to describe in detail the long struggle between the king and the church with Melville at its head. The issue was not only whether prelacy or presbyterianism was to be the government of the church; the question was also whether James Stuart, king of Scotland and England, was to rule in the church of Christ. Just as in England the king (or queen) was the head of the church, so also James insisted that the king in Scotland be supreme in all matters of church government. That principle could not be tolerated by men concerned that Christ rule in the church as the church's only Head.<sup>6</sup>

I am personally convinced<sup>7</sup> that the relation of the church to the secular government as defined by the Presbyterians in Scotland was not in all respects biblical.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, in their firm insistence that not King James but Christ is the Head of the church, they were absolutely correct.

Melville himself set forth the principle in words that have become famous. Melville was chosen as a leader of a delegation to bring to the king the protest of the Synod of Fife against royal encroachments on the church's autonomy. James was not impressed. After the king had expressed his displeasure, Melville said: "Sirrah, ye are God's silly vassal; there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is king James, the head of the commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but a member."

In 1584 matters came to something of a head. Melville was summoned before the Privy Council for preaching a sermon at the General Assembly of the church in which he condemned the tyrannous measures of the court. He was cited for high treason and threatened with imprisonment. Although Melville appeared as directed, he denied the Privy Council the right to try him until he had been tried by an ecclesiastical court. This so infuriated the head of the Privy Council that he completely lost his temper. Melville, unmoved, took his Bible from his belt and put it on the table, telling his accusers: "These are my instructions: see if any of you can judge of them, or show that I have passed my injunctions."

Although in 1578 the Second Book Of Discipline which sanctioned a pure Presbyterianism was adopted by the General Assembly, and although this became the standard in the Presbyterian churches and was sworn to in the National League and Covenant of 1581, James VI won the battle over Melville. The success of Presbyterianism had to wait for a better day.

When James was in London<sup>9</sup> he summoned Melville to London with guile and, at the first opportunity, had him imprisoned. Four years Melville was kept in the tower of London, famous for the imprisonment and torture of reformers who

suffered for the cause of the gospel. The first year was the worst, for he was deprived of all opportunities to communicate with others. But the rigors of his confinement were relaxed a bit and he was permitted to have visitors and to correspond from prison with his colleagues in the ministry. Men of prominence consulted him and he could use his imprisonment, as Paul did, for the extension of the gospel (Phil. 1:13, 14).

At the age of 66 Melville was released. Though his heart cried out for Scotland, and though he wanted to have his bones laid to rest in his homeland, the king adamantly refused, and Melville was forced to go to France to spend his last years in exile. There history lost him and, though we know that he died somewhere around 1622 at approximately 77 years old, nothing is known of his last days or the date of his death. He died alone, an exile in the cause of the gospel, with no one to mourn his passing.

One of his biographers summed up his life. Though he was short of stature and physically somewhat frail,

As a preacher of God's Word, he was talented in a very high degree — zealous, untiring, instant in season and out of season, and eminently successful — and as a saint of God, he was a living epistle of the power of religion on the heart. Sound in faith, pure in morals, he recommended the Gospel in his life and conversation — he fought the good fight; and as a shock cometh in at its season, so he bade adieu to

<sup>5</sup> Presbyterianism is that form of church government which is rule by elders. It is the basic form of church government followed by all Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

<sup>6</sup> Our own Church Order devotes an article to this truth — Article 28.

<sup>7</sup> Some of my good Presbyterian friends differ with me on this point.

<sup>8</sup> The Scottish Presbyterians believed that if the king ruled in violation of the law of God, the members of the commonwealth had the right to overthrow the government.

<sup>9</sup> He became king of England as well as Scotland and has gone down in history as James I of England.

this mortal life, ripe for everlasting glory. If John Knox rid Scotland of the errors and superstitions of popery, Andrew Melville contributed materially, by his fortitude, example, and counsel, to resist, even

to the death, the propagation of a form of worship uncongenial to the Scottish character.

Some noble men of God have died unknown and unrecognized in

their own lifetime, especially when evil men come to power, but the legacy of their works has survived the centuries and has come down to us as a sacred trust. □

*A Word Fittly Spoken*

*Rev. Dale Kuiper*

## Sacrifices

From the earliest times, God taught His people that there is no remission of sin without the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22). Surely Cain and Abel were taught to sacrifice by their parents, from whom God took the fig leaves, replacing them with bloody animal skins (Gen. 3:21). Animal sacrifices could not make the conscience of him that did the service perfect (Heb. 9:9); yet Abel obtained witness that he was righteous through the excellent sacrifice that he brought (Heb. 11:4). The excellence of his sacrifice was not only that it was a firstling of the flock, but an animal offered to God in faith, the faith that looked forward to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Christ was the excellence of Abel's sacrifice!

We may assume that, from Abel on, the people of God were a sacrificing people. Noah offered burnt offerings to God (Gen. 8:20); Abraham built altars unto God wherever he went (Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:18); so did Isaac (Gen. 26:25) and Jacob (Gen. 31:54). With the giving of the law at Sinai, and in connection with the temple and Aaronitic priesthood, God instituted six types of sacrifices or offerings: sin offerings; trespass offerings; burnt offerings; peace offerings; meat and drink offerings; and heave and wave offerings. These were brought either every day, on the Sabbath, or on special feast days. The first three kinds were brought to gain covenant fellowship with God by the way of removal of sin, while the latter three were an expression of gratitude for the enjoyment of this fellowship. Some involved animals (always with salt), some crops, and some flour and wine.

When God sent forth His Son in the fullness of time, made of a woman, made under the law (Gal. 4:4), Christ removed the curse of the law for all those given to Him for redemption. When He offered Himself on the altar of the cross through the eternal Spirit, Christ fulfilled every typical sacrifice. He was made a priest with an oath; the Old Testament priests were not (Heb. 7:21). He has an everlasting, unchangeable priesthood, while Old Testament priests died (Heb. 7:23, 24). He entered into the holy place made without hands with His own blood (Heb. 9:24), and He did this once, while Old Tes-

tament priests had to do this often, i.e., every year. "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). How terrible to teach that Christ must be offered repeatedly for sin (the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass), or that men must atone for some of their sins themselves (the notion of purgatory). The willing sacrifice of Christ was full payment for the sins of the elect; it was full satisfaction of the justice of God; it reconciled God's people to God in the way of atonement. Thus, the bloody, Old Testament ceremonies of circumcision and the Passover are replaced with Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We have the circumcision made without hands; Christ is our Passover and our Red Sea. Since Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, we look for Him to appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation (Heb. 9:28).

Are we to sacrifice no more? Our reasonable service is that we present our bodies living sacrifices to God, antithetically, by not being conformed to this world, but by being transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1, 2). Specifically, the sacrifices that please God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart (Ps. 51:17), mercy and the knowledge of God (Hosea 6:6), careful listening and obedience (I Sam. 15:22), thanksgiving with singing (Ps. 107:22), of righteousness and trust in the Lord (Ps. 4:5; Mal. 3:3), of doing good and giving to the poor (Heb. 13:16). Because Christ's sacrifice removed the curse of the law from us, and because He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes, our sacrifice of self is the fruit of His sacrifice, and consists in thanksgiving and praise for so great and so free a salvation.

As Christ is a priest forever, ever living to make intercession for us, so will we forever be priests under him unto God (Rev. 5:10). As pillars in His temple, we will serve God endlessly and sinlessly, never to go out from His presence (Rev. 3:12). □

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# A Return Visit to a Beloved Church in Singapore

It was truly the fulfillment of a dream when last September we received an invitation to return to Singapore to visit the Evangelical Reformed Churches there. It has been eight years since we left Singapore after seven years of labors in the ERCS. The occasion for this visit would be the dedication of the new church building and the celebration of the 13th anniversary of the First Evangelical Reformed Church on January 22, 1995. A few months later we received a check in the mail for more than sufficient funds for airfare for my wife Sherry and me.

Words cannot describe the joy that filled our hearts at the occasion of meeting many of the beloved saints in the ERCS. The ties of our Christian love with them have not weakened over the years. Floods of memories of experiences of the past came back immediately.

It was also a great joy to see the new church building for the first time. What a contrast with the kampong that we worshiped together in during our days in Singapore. We think also of the various buildings in Singapore that we investigated for possible use as a church building, some of them pretty humble places. Again and again efforts during those years were disappointed for various reasons. Usually the places under consideration either proved to be unsuitable or government regulations prevented a "change of use" of the buildings to

permit their use for a church. The present building is a pretty far cry from anything we looked at, more beautiful than anyone at that time would have imagined possible. The Lord in His providence enabled the church in Singapore to raise the funds for the new building and to obtain governmental approval for its use as a church. The story of how this all came about would be long enough to fill the space allotted for this article.

Compared to our church buildings in the U.S.A. the new ERCS building is pretty unusual. Its design was largely determined by the relatively small piece of property which could be purchased in the Singapore situation and the peculiar shape and grade of this property. The building occupies almost all of the land. Even the driveway into the church is not property owned by the ERCS. The ground floor is used as a car park. This was required by city codes. The sanctuary has a seating capacity of between 250 and 300. There is a balcony which allows for future expansion. The two lower levels which are underground will eventually be used for the church office and classrooms. These have good potential for various endeavors which the ERCS have in mind for the future. The sanctuary is air-conditioned, something very nice for the hot tropical weather in Singapore.

The great highlight of our trip was of course the dedication ceremony for the building. The church was filled almost to capacity. Pastor Lau Chin Kwee preached the special sermon on I Peter 2:5: "Ye also,

as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus." The message was inspiring. It exhorted the congregation to remember that though we ought to be thankful for the beautiful building the Lord has given, the true church is spiritual in its nature. The beautiful figure used by the inspired apostle was nicely explained in the sermon. The application was especially the calling of the church as a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ. The worship service was followed by a short dedication ceremony that was held in the car park. This was followed by a whole afternoon of fellowship. We were quite overwhelmed by it all, especially by our fellowship with many dear saints of God in the church.

Our ten days in Singapore were obviously far too short. Sherry kept a diary of all the things that were crammed into those days. Looking back, we find it all quite incredible. I preached three times. We joined six Bible Study groups, called "cell groups" in Singapore. All of these were blessed times of fellowship. We were often put on the docket for the typical types of questions about the "then and the now." Besides this we visited in many homes. We heard about many different situations in the lives of the saints there. There was an outpouring of Christian love toward us.

There are of course many changes which have taken place since we left Singapore eight years ago. The city-state of Singapore never ceases to amaze us. The evi-

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dence of tremendous prosperity is on every hand. Huge skyscrapers and large new housing estates are still being built almost everywhere. The immense population on this tiny island is astounding. The way the population is accommodated and controlled, the cleanliness and orderliness of the city, the schools, the general good public behavior of the people, the many new shopping centers, the ever more beautiful housing estates — all these things are quite remarkable.

During our last several days in Singapore we stayed with a family that lives on the 20th floor. Looking out the window in every direction one can see tall apartment buildings as far as the eye can see. Within a five-minute walk of this apartment is a shopping center where one can buy almost anything he might need or want, a subway station to take him very quickly to some of the main districts in Singapore, a bus terminal in which he can board a bus to most places in Singapore, and several food centers with the typical variety of Asian foods and even popular Western fast-food places. Schools for the children are nearby. In short, almost everything one needs in life is within walking distance. What a different life-style than we are used to in America!

Though we were again fascinated by all of this, seeing this was not our main objective. We spent most of the time visiting with the members of the church. We especially enjoyed visiting with new families. The biggest change in the eight years since our leaving Singapore is the many new families. The two churches now have more than eighty children. There were none when we first came. Now whenever you go to church you see one mother after another with a baby in her arms and families with two, three, and four children. What is so amazing is that most of the families in the church are in about the same stage of life. The oldest children are just beginning their teens. There are only few members over forty.

The second biggest change is that most of the members are now involved in their careers. When we lived in Singapore, many of the members were still students in colleges and universities. Some of the members have prospered greatly in their careers. The main reason for this is, of course, that many are college and university graduates with advanced degrees. Opportunities in Singapore for people with degrees are almost without limit. Many are employed with multi-national companies. The demands and pressures of work in terms of time and commitment, and opportunity for continual advancement, are very great.

The two above-mentioned factors are responsible also for the greatest changes in the church, and they are the ones that have the greatest significance for its future. We had opportunity to observe family living in many homes with its joys and also its struggles. We saw that at least some of the members are having problems balancing commitments to work on the one hand, and the family and involvement in the life of the church on the other. I was impressed by how similar all this is to the situation in our own churches in the U.S.A. The dangers of prosperity and materialism are a constant threat to the spirituality of God's people. Some by God's grace know how to maintain proper priorities, while others give way to the temptations of the world and become so involved in careers and advancement in this life that their spiritual life suffers. I was impressed especially by some of the mothers who seemed to be doing a good job with raising their children.

We experienced both joys and sorrows while we were among the members of the church. Our great joy is to see that the vast majority of members who were brought by God's grace into the church during our years in Singapore are still members today. The Lord preserves His people, some through great trials and temptations. It was also a joy to meet many new people who have

joined the church in recent years. Some of these are very actively involved in the life and work of the church. The Lord continues to add to His church in Singapore in wonderful ways.

It was sad to see that some had left the church for various reasons. Others were discouraged and were having spiritual struggles. A number who had not been in church for some time showed up nevertheless at the worship services while we were there to meet with us. Our hearts go out to those who are struggling and to some who, for various reasons, even left the church. Sins and weaknesses in the church of Jesus Christ cause offenses and divisions and problems among her members. Some also are led away by the temptations of the world. We hope and pray that our short visit with some of these will help to bring them back.

Besides the ongoing challenge of evangelism in the midst of a heathen nation such as Singapore, the ERCS faces the new challenges of a new stage of development the church is in today. There must be a solid ministry to families and growing children. We were happy to hear that there is catechism training for the children. Because the members of the church are quite spread out over the island, and because transportation still presents some problems for members living in the more remote areas, getting children together for regular catechism classes is not always easy. Young families in their homes have more to learn regarding the urgency of strong training for their children and the urgency of setting aside time and energy every day for this purpose in the midst of a very busy and high-pressured way of life. No one may make excuses for neglect in this area. Sacrifices must be made and priorities maintained. Many of our Reformed homes have a strong covenant tradition, something we must never stop being thankful for and something that we need to strive very hard to maintain. Establishing

such a covenant tradition in families of relatively new converts who did not inherit this tradition from their fathers and others is a real challenge.

We also see the need in the ERCS for continued emphasis on doctrinal and theological development and growth among her members. There is hardly a church in the world anymore that pays any attention to this. Young people and new converts do not always appreciate the urgency of doctrinal development and strength as much as do those who are older and who have seen the serious consequences of apostasy in the history of the church. We were happy to hear about the efforts of the ERCS, under the leadership also of Pastor Kortering, to begin Bible school training in the church. We hope that this will benefit not only future ministers and church workers but also some of the so-called ordinary members. The church as a whole will benefit greatly if a number of members attend these classes with the purpose of being more solidly grounded in the doctrine of the Reformed faith. The proposed Bible school training

we believe could fill a need in the ERCS that in our churches in America is served by regular training of our youth in Essentials in Reformed Doctrine in our catechism classes. Our prayer is that the Lord will greatly bless the proposed Bible school training in the ERCS.

We were excited to meet several brethren in the church from Myanmar. They are regularly attending the worship services at First ERCS. The church is praying for an open door for doing mission work some day in Myanmar. We hope that our Protestant Reformed Churches can in some way be involved in this as well.

We had opportunity to spend one day with Pastor and Mrs. Kortering. They live in a nice apartment similar to the kind of place that many of the ERCS members live in. During our visit in Singapore we heard many comments about how much the Korterings are appreciated in Singapore. Pastor Kortering evidently is ministering very effectively in the church. The Lord sent him there at a crucial time in the development of the church. His labors

have greatly helped the church with some large problems they are facing. The Lord is using Pastor Kortering to strengthen His church in Singapore. He is a much-needed encouragement to Pastor Lau and the other members of the sessions of the two churches. We were also impressed with how Mrs. Kortering is giving a lot of wise advice and encouragement, especially to mothers in their struggles and problems with young families.

We are thankful to our God that He continues to use our Protestant Reformed Churches, especially now through our missionary-pastor, in the work of missions in Singapore. Our prayer is that this may continue for many years if the Lord tarries. The presence of a missionary pastor from our churches in the U.S. also does a lot of good in many ways to maintain and develop a good relationship between our churches in America and the churches in Singapore. Our prayer is that this relationship will grow stronger over the years and that we will be able to help each other in our respective strengths and weaknesses. □

*Search the Scriptures*

*Rev. Carl Haak*

## John 4:1-26

# Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

We have seen that the gospel according to John shows the personal and private ministry of Jesus with individuals. In chapter 3 the Lord dealt with Nicodemus, a man from the self-righteous, formalistic Pharisees, who had to be taught that one cannot enter the kingdom unless he is born again by the Spirit of God. Now the Savior confronts an entirely

different person, who is also one of the sheep entrusted to Him of the Father. The Samaritan woman belonged to a people despised by the Jews. Besides, she herself was ignorant, carnally-minded, and living in adultery. He gathers her to Himself in a way which is again filled with the knowledge and compassion of the Shepherd of the sheep. The Sav-

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ior reveals her sin and opens her eyes to see Him as the Christ, the living water of salvation.

The setting for this memorable encounter is found in Jesus' return from Judea to Galilee. He leaves Judea because He knew His increased popularity would bring the resentment of the religious leaders. The Lord does not want a premature crisis. He therefore separates Himself from them.

When we read that "he must needs go through Samaria," we should understand that at the heart of this necessity is the will of His Father. The Lord knew this woman as one given to Him of His Father's election, and He goes forth to seek and to save.

The Jews despised the Samaritans as a people of mixed origins and perverted religion. The Samaritans were a mixture of the remnants of the ten tribes left in the land at the time of the destruction under the Assyrians and people of other eastern nations brought to Canaan by the Assyrian kings in order to denationalize the Jews (see II Kings 17, especially verses 24-27). They had developed a religion which was a combination of the Pentateuch and paganism. The center of their worship was on Mt. Gerizim, where the ruins of a temple remained. Mutual contempt prevailed between the Jews and the Samaritans. We should not think that they had no business contact with each other and never traveled through each others' land. Yet plainly there was no kindness lost between them. The Jews saw the Samaritans as being of mixed blood and of corrupted worship.

At least four things stand out in the way the Lord drew this woman to know and believe in Him as the Christ.

1. *Jesus uses the illustration of "living water" to show the truth of the spiritual blessings of salvation which He has come to give to His people.* These blessings include righteousness and the true knowledge of God, the favor and love of God, and eternal life in

communion with God. These alone can satisfy man's deepest need. As without water we die, so without the salvation that Christ alone can give we are dead and dwell in a dry and thirsty land where we can never find satisfaction.

2. *In order for the Samaritan woman to come to know her need of the salvation that is to be found alone in Jesus, it was first of all necessary for her to come to the knowledge of her great sinfulness.* This woman was living in adultery, and probably had committed that sin with one man after another. Jesus does not ignore her life of sin. He never does. His question about her husband is like an arrow which pierced her conscience. Until one is brought to feel his sinfulness and to see himself as God sees him, he cannot taste the living water Christ gives.

3. *Jesus teaches her of the true worship of God.* This worship shall no longer be confined to one place, or any place. It does not center in the external. Rather it consists in the renewed heart rendering sincere homage to God and is to be conducted in full harmony with the truth of God as revealed in His Word.

4. *Jesus clearly identifies Himself to the woman as the promised Christ.* This was the point to which He had been leading her from the outset. She must know two things: who she is — a sinner; and who He is — the Christ of God. Then she (we) shall never thirst again!

#### Outline

1. The setting for Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (vv. 1-6).

a. The reason for Jesus' leaving Judea and going to Galilee (vv. 1-3).

b. The necessity for His going through Samaria (v. 4).

c. Jesus stops at Jacob's well near the city of Shechem and under the shadow of Mt. Gerizim (vv. 5, 6).

2. The conversation between Jesus

and the Samaritan woman (vv. 7-26).

a. Jesus' request of the woman and the surprised response of the woman that He (a Jew) would speak to her a Samaritan (vv. 7-9).

b. The Lord provokes her curiosity by telling her of the living water which He has, and the woman's resultant perplexity (vv. 10-12).

c. Jesus explains the spiritual character of the living water which He gives, and the woman's request (vv. 13-15).

d. Jesus exposes her sin of living in adultery (vv. 16-18).

e. The woman's question about the true place of worship, and the Lord's response (vv. 19-24).

f. The woman's statement about the promise of the Messiah, and Jesus' declaration to her that He is that Christ (vv. 25, 26).

#### Questions

1. Why did the Lord leave Judea when He knew that the Pharisees had heard of His growing popularity?

2. What is the significance of the fact that Jesus Himself never personally baptized but only His disciples? (see I Cor. 1:13-17).

3. Why must He needs go through Samaria? (see Luke 19:10).

4. What do you know of the Samaritans: their origins? beliefs? place of worship? relationship to the Jews? (see II Kings 17; Ezra 2, 3; Nehemiah 4).

5. In Matthew 10:5 the Lord instructs the disciples whom He sends out not to enter Samaria. Yet He Himself goes there to seek and save this woman. Explain the significance of this, especially in light of the fact that at His Ascension He commands the church to go to Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8; 8:5, 6).

6. Show the perfect wisdom of the Lord in dealing with this woman, how He draws her out and instructs her in the truth of salvation. Show that the Lord is in control of the conversation and directs

it in such a way that the woman is shown her need and that Jesus is the Christ. What lesson may we learn from this?

7. What does Christ mean when He likens salvation to "living water" which He alone is able to give? Enumerate the different thoughts suggested in this figure.

8. Why did Jesus say to her, "Go, call thy husband"?

9. Explain the need of the woman to know her sin if she is to understand what this living water is.

10. Why does the woman ask about the proper place of worship?

11. What does it mean that salvation is of the Jews?

12. What does the Lord teach about the true worship of God in response to the woman's question?

13. What is the significance of the woman's introducing the truth of the promise of the Messiah? Does this show that the Spirit was indeed at work in her?

14. What is the significance of Jesus' plainly identifying Himself to her as the Christ, especially in light of the fact that He would often forbid His disciples from doing so? □

*Day of Shadows*

*Homer Hoeksema*

## Chapter 4

# The Last Four Days of Creation-Week (cont.)

### God's Creation of Man (2): Created a Living Soul

Concerning the manner of the creation of man, Scripture informs us in Genesis 1:27 that "God created man (Adam) in his own image" and, further, in Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man (Adam) of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

We may well caution ourselves at this point that we must not think finitely and earthly concerning the divine work of creation, nor imagine that we can comprehend the work of the infinite Creator. Nevertheless, the Lord God Himself unfolds to us in this language something of His own marvelous work of creation and reveals to us something of the work that He performed.

And all that Scripture tells us reveals that in man there is created in every respect a special creature of God.

God formed man of the dust of the ground. While the animals were simply called forth from the earth and thus given their distinct form, Scripture points us to the fact that when God created man in His own image, forming him from the dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, the Lord God did something other than merely causing the earth to bring forth man. Man is created by a special act of God. Even the form, the impress, of his nature, both body and soul, is different from that of the animals. On the one hand, God did not form a mere body, a clay image, lifeless. This is often the crude conception which is presented of this work of the Almighty. That man is body and soul is perfectly true. But we are inclined to separate that body and soul, as if the body were a mere material house in which the soul dwells. But this is not the presentation of Scripture.

How would we conceive of this? Did God make a mere form of clay? Or did He make a living human body? Or did He make something like a corpse? Or did God perhaps make an animal from the dust and then make of that animal a man by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life? Moreover, what is that breathing into his nostrils the breath of life? Must we crudely conceive of God as performing some kind of act of artificial respiration upon a clay image or upon a lifeless corpse? All such conceptions are precluded by the language of Scripture. For Scripture reminds us, on the one hand, that in whatever it tells us it is telling us concerning the marvel of creation, the unfathomable work of God whereby He calls things that are not as though they were; on the other hand, it reminds us that God specially formed man, and that, too, by one creative act with a twofold aspect.

Man is created, not by two separate acts of God but by one creative act, even though this one creative

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act of God has two aspects. By this one creative act God formed man's one nature with its physical and spiritual sides. Thus, Genesis 2:7 presents the creation of man. He is so created that by the one act of God his physical and psychical, or spiritual, parts are so closely connected that he is one personal, thinking, willing, rational, and moral creature. Note that the text informs us that God formed man of the dust of the ground, that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and, thus, man became a living soul. The whole man, therefore, by his being formed from the dust and by the inbreathing of the breath of life, is a living soul, according to the text. We may also note that by this expression as such, man, while he is indeed distinct in his position and nature, is put in the same class as the animals. The animals, as we noted earlier, are also called living souls in Scripture (Gen. 1:20, 24).

What are the implications as to the nature of man in this expression? There are especially three factors to be mentioned.

1. Man is a being that moves freely upon the face of the earth, even as do the animals. This, as we saw in connection with the creation of the animals, belongs to the nature of a living soul: it moves upon the earth freely by an impulse from within.

2. It is emphasized that man is of the earth, earthy, when he is called a living soul. As formed from the dust of the ground, man is an earthy creature. Thus the apostle also teaches us in I Corinthians 15:45, 47, 48. After he informs us that the first man Adam was made a living soul, he writes: "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." By virtue of his creation man is closely related to the earth from whence he is formed. He lives an earthly life. As created, he cannot reach to heaven. He is dependent upon the

earth for his very subsistence, and from it his life must constantly be sustained. He has earthy sensations and perceptions: an earthly eye with which he perceives earthly things, an earthly ear that can hear earthly sounds, an earthly sense of taste and touch and smell that brings him into contact with earthly objects. He is in all his existence earthy, and bound to the earth. And so we read also that there are things which eye cannot see, and ear cannot hear, which have never arisen in the heart of man, things which only the Spirit of God can reveal unto him.

3. As a living soul man is mortal, that is, able to die. As he was created, indeed, death had no dominion over him. But he was not beyond the reach of death. The possibility was there for man to fall and to die.

Let us also note the significance of the preceding items. This explains, in the first place, why God's revelation of the things of the kingdom must necessarily come to us in the form of human language and an earthly Bible. It explains why, in the Bible, heavenly things must needs be pictured to us in earthly forms and symbols. That is the only way in which we can, in our present state, have any understanding of and contact with heavenly things. We cannot yet see face to face; for we are of the earth, earthy, and as such can see only in a glass darkly. In the second place, this explains also why we must be changed in order to inherit the kingdom of God. That kingdom is heavenly, and we are earthly; as the apostle says, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50). There must be a change from the mortal to the immortal, from the natural (or psychical) to the spiritual, from the earthy to the heavenly, before we can possibly inherit the everlasting kingdom of glory.

In the third place, this explains

in part the tension in the life of the Christian. This is not merely a tension of the sinful and the holy, of the carnal and the spiritual, but also a tension of the earthy and the heavenly. That is why a spiritually healthy child of God, who lives in the hope of the city that hath foundations, can nevertheless be reluctant to depart from this present life and can cling to this life as long as possible. The Christian is betwixt two: the earthy and the heavenly. In regeneration he received the beginning of a new life, a life which is both holy and heavenly. Yet, as long as he is in the body, he is earthy; he is bound to the earth by many ties. Death is, from the point of view of our earthy existence, a being unclothed, and we do not like to be unclothed. Yet, at the same time, we desire to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, when mortality is swallowed up of life. But to be clothed upon with our heavenly house it is first necessary that we be unclothed, that is, stripped of all that which is of the earth, earthy. For man was made a living soul, and the flesh and blood of that earthy living soul cannot possibly inherit the kingdom of God.

Yet, man is more than a mere creature of the earth, earthy. Like the animals, he is a living soul.

But the animals are living souls whose life, or soul, is in their blood. Pour out their blood upon the earth, and there is nothing left anymore of the existence of the animals. Not so with man. His very creation reveals this. While of the animals it is said that God called them forth from the earth, and while in that sense it is also said of them that God formed them from the ground, yet, Scripture points to the distinct and special character of man in the very narrative of his creation. For we read that God "formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;

*There is a sharp boundary, therefore, between man and the creature nearest him, the animal, and between man and all the earthly creation.*

But the animals are living souls whose life, or soul, is in their blood. Pour out their blood upon the earth, and there is nothing left anymore of the existence of the animals. Not so with man. His very creation reveals this. While of the animals it is said that God called them forth from the earth, and while in that sense it is also said of them that God

formed them from the ground, yet, Scripture points to the distinct and special character of man in the very narrative of his creation. For we read that God "formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;

and so man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Moreover, Genesis 1:26-28 teaches very plainly that by this creative act there is created in man the position of dominion over the earthly creation. There is a sharp boundary, therefore, between man and the creature nearest him, the animal, and between man and all the earthly creation.

This design to be lord of the earthly creation is, in the first place, evident even in man's physical organism. This is to be expected; man is one, and his physical organism must also needs be adapted to the whole of his existence and nature. While he is made a little lower than the angels, he is so made that he must and can exercise dominion over all the earth, and subdue it. While man is indeed limited to the sphere of things earthly, he stands at the pinnacle of created things, as their lord. Even his physical organism as specially formed from the dust of the earth bespeaks this: it is created as an instrument and manifestation of his lordship. This need not be belabored; it is self-evident. Man is not as to his nature like the beasts. His upright bearing, his intelligent face, his finely shaped hands — all these bespeak the fact that he was as to his physical side created above the rest of the earthly creation, created to be king, created, too, so as to be capable of bearing the image of God.

But above all, Scripture makes the distinction that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. This aspect of man's creation is absent from the creation of the animals altogether. This can mean nothing less, in the light of what Scripture tells us about man as a living soul, than that man was so formed that he is a personal, rational, and moral being. The animals are purely earthly and material living souls: their soul is in their blood. Man was made a psychical body, a body fit to be the instrument for a personal spirit. By the inbreathing of

the Spirit of God he is formed into a personal, rational, moral spirit. God so wrought upon man that he became a personal being, with mind and will, with a moral nature, capable of standing in a free, personal, covenant relationship of friendship to the living God, capable of being adorned with the image of

God, as he was originally, so that "he might rightly know God, his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal happiness, to glorify and praise Him" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 7). By virtue of the two-sided act of

God whereby He created man a living soul, man was so created that he was a creature capable of occupying the position of lord of the earthly creation and servant of the living God.

This also means that man's existence does not end with his physical and earthly end. He is a personal spirit who continues to exist even through physical death, which is not to be confused with immortality in the Scriptural sense. Mere continued existence is no immortality. There is continued existence either in everlasting death, under the wrath of God, or in everlasting life and immortality in the heavenly tabernacle of God. But Scripture points us to this fact of man's being a personal spirit, standing in relation to the living God. It tells us, for example, that when the dust returns unto the earth, the spirit shall return to God who gave it. It reminds us: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." And it teaches us that the rich man opens his eyes in hell, while Lazarus is carried into Abraham's bosom.

Such, therefore, is man's creation. He is one physical-psychical-personal being. He is re-

lated to God, yet he is earthly. He is dependent upon the creation, yet he is lord over the earthly creatures. He is created as the bearer of the image of God — a personal, rational, moral being — and created actually bearing that image, too; yet, he is capable of falling into the bondage of sin and of perverting that image into its very opposite. He is created living, yet also mortal and capable of dying and returning to the dust.

For, as we indicated before, the first man Adam, according to Scripture, was made a living soul. He is not the last man. He is not a quickening spirit. But as far as the spiritual is above the natural, the incorruptible above the corruptible, the immortal above the mortal, the heavenly above the earthly — so far is the last man, Christ, above the first man, Adam.

Nor is there any process of evolution between those two, Adam and Christ. Between them lies the chasm of sin and death — the chasm that is bridged only by the wonder of sovereign grace. Or, if you will, between them lies the whole process of sacred history. The first man, Adam, who was made a living soul,

did not regard his honorable position; he violated the covenant of God and fell into the abyss of sin and death, dragging with him all that bear the image of the earthly.

But God in His eternal and sovereign purpose of election and redemption had provided some better thing for us. Even the fall of the first man was to serve that purpose, must serve to make room for the coming of the last man, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord from heaven, who is made a quickening spirit. He came in the fullness of

time — He, the Lord from heaven, in the likeness of sinful flesh. He died to blot out the guilt of our sins, the sins of all His own.

*As far as  
the spiritual  
is above  
the natural,  
the in-  
corruptible  
above  
the corruptible,  
the immortal  
above the  
mortal,  
the heavenly  
above the  
earthly — so far  
is the last man,  
Christ,  
above  
the first man,  
Adam.*

He is raised and exalted into heavenly glory, immortal glory, and has received the promise of the Spirit, in order that He may impart to all His own His incorruptible and immortal and heavenly resurrection life, and, finally, raise them all up at the last day. In and through Him

this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption. We who have borne the image of the earthy shall bear the image of the heavenly and shall inherit the kingdom of God. It is in this light, therefore, that we must

understand the creation of the first man Adam. He was created, and he was created specifically as the kind of creature that he was, with a view to the great work of our God, the revelation of the wonder of grace, which is the object of our study in sacred history. □

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Evangelism Activities

Along with some bulletins from our Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL this past week came information from their Evangelism Committee giving quotes from contacts they have received lately. These contacts came from Florida, the Philippines, Pennsylvania, and Hawaii. Each excerpt spoke of how much the information sent to them was appreciated. These opportunities, along with those of our other churches, can only make us aware again and again of the power of the truth of God's Word to penetrate all languages and social barriers. We also can not help but be aware of the calling God has given His church to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). It is humbling to know that we as churches have been privileged to be used in a small way to carry out this calling.

In a recent bulletin from the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA, we find word that for several months their pastor, Rev. A. denHartog, has been conducting monthly Bible studies on the book of Ephesians at the home of a family in Victorville/Apple Valley, which according to my California map appears to be approximately 40 miles north of Redlands. At this time a number of families are attending these meetings, and the Consistory of Hope has decided to support and supervise this work.

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

### School Activities

The Hope School Foundation, of our Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI sponsored three travelogues, one on February 4 entitled "Americana," one on March 4 entitled "Exploring the Northwest," and one still to come on April 1 entitled, "Canadian Maritimes." All three were planned for the auditorium of Grandville Public High School, and were intended to introduce the travelogue-goers to the services the Hope Foundation could provide.

### Congregational Activities

What better way to spend a cold wintry night than to find a warm spot with a good book. Perhaps this was the thought that accompanied an announcement in a recent bulletin from the Bethel PRC in Elk Grove Village, IL. Their entire congregation was encouraged to read the book *Having a Heart for God*, by Sinclair Ferguson — and then not only to read it but also to get together and discuss what they had read.

The Trinitarian Bible Society, whose stated purpose is to promote and distribute the King James Version of the Bible, held an organizational meeting with the assistance of our Immanuel PRC congregation in Lacombe, AB, Canada. While the Consistory of Immanuel did not officially endorse this organization, it did recognize that its stated purpose

is a good one. This meeting was held in the Anglican Church, where Immanuel holds their regular worship services.

In our last issue of the SB, we noted that Rev. and Mrs. A. denHartog of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA were able to return to Singapore for two weeks in January. What we failed to tell you then was that the denHartogs were invited back so that they could be included in the dedication of the new church building of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. Needless to say, they were overjoyed by this invitation to return to the saints among whom they labored for seven years. (See "Go Ye Into All the World," in this issue, for a report on this activity of Rev. denHartog.)

### Young People's Activities

The young people of the Randolph, WI PRC invited young people of area PRC's to join them for a ski outing on February 18 at Cascade Ski Resort. Young people were invited to come already the night before for supper at Randolph Church, followed by an overnighter in their new gym at Faith Christian School and then a full day of skiing on Saturday.

### Minister Activities

Rev. M. DeVries and his family are waiting for clearance from the Canadian government which will al-

low them to move to Canada and begin their stay in our First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada. This will very likely take a couple of months yet. In the meantime, Rev. DeVries and his wife were able to go on Rev. DeVries' scheduled classical appointment to First on February 12 and 19. This gave them a time to get acquainted with their new labors and to look at the parsonage into which

they will be moving.

After Rev. W. Bruinsma's decline, the Council of Edgerton, MN PRC has formed another trio from which a call to serve as pastor was to be extended. From a trio of the Revs. W. Bekkering, R. Dykstra, and K. Koole, Rev. Dykstra received the call.

The Byron Center, MI PRC has extended a call to Rev. R. Dykstra

of the Doon, IA PRC to serve as their next pastor.

The Lynden, WA PRC formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. Mitch Dick, Meindert Joostens, and Richard Moore.

## *Food for Thought*

*A prayerless man is a careless man.*  
— William Tiptaft (1803-1864) □

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### TEACHER NEEDED

The Hope Christian School in Redlands, California, is in need of teachers. Either class 1-2 or 3-5 is available at this time. Please mail resumé to

Hope Christian School  
1309 E. Brockton Ave.  
Redlands, CA 92374.

Or please contact Ron Van Voorthysen at (909) 794-6457, Steven Feenstra at (909) 794-5933, or Ed Gritters at (909) 792-4923.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids expresses its heartfelt sympathy to its fellow officebearer, emeritus, Rev. George Lubbers and family in the death of his sister,

**HENRIETTA MARING.**

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Rev. M. Joostens, President  
R. VanPutten, Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's and Ladies' Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lubbers in the death of Henry's sister,

**HENRIETTA MARING.**

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

Cornelius Doezeema, President  
Wilma Kamstra, Secretary

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 2, 1995

**MR. and MRS. CONRAD  
DEVRIES**

observed their 65th wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents and for blessing them with many years together.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

Mrs. Vernon DeVries (Marilyn)  
Mr. and Mrs. Loren DeZwarte  
16 grandchildren  
36 great grandchildren

Pella, Iowa

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 11, 1995, our parents,

**MR. and MRS. GORDON  
WASSINK,**

celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We wish to thank them for the love and support they have shown through the years but most of all for the God-fearing upbringing we have received. We pray that God will richly bless them as they continue to serve Him.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage" (Psalm 16:6).

Deane and Donna Wassink  
Darle and Colleen Wassink  
Tim and Linda Mowery  
Douglas and Kathy Wassink  
Ryan and Karla Feenstra  
25 grandchildren

Holland, Michigan

