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Jesus Washed Their Feet

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded....

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

John 13: 1-17

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Jesus began the night on which He was betrayed with an act of selfless service. It was motivated by love for His own. He ended the night continuing to do the same.

Jesus and the twelve had spent most of the day ("the first day of unleavened bread," Mark 14:12) in the small town of Bethany. Sometime during that day Jesus had sent Peter and John into Jerusalem "to make ready the passover" (Luke 22:7ff.). The preparations consisted of locating a room large enough for Jesus and the twelve, of purchasing a lamb, bringing it to the temple, slaying it, taking back a portion of the meat and roasting it for the Passover meal. Also they had to purchase the wine for the four Passover cups, the unleavened bread, and the sauce of bitter herbs. In addition they had to make sure that the table was properly furnished. Last, but obviously not the least, they were to make sure that the basin, water, and towel were there for the dusty feet of the travelers.

Now late in the afternoon Jesus and the remaining disciples made their way from Bethany to Jerusa-

lem and to the large upper room. This was a trip of a couple of miles. Their sandaled feet would tread the dirt roads until they came to the cobbled streets of the city of Jerusalem. Ordinarily the host would see to it that a servant was present to perform the demeaning task of washing the guests' dirty feet. As Jesus and the ten were led by Peter and John into the large upper room, no such servant was present.

Prior to their arrival at the room, there had been some quiet, but intense, discussion among the disciples. Scripture's word is "strife." The strife among them had to do with "which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24). The likely occasion for this strife was the prominence given to Peter and John, who had been chosen to make the Passover preparations. They had no problem recognizing that Jesus was the greatest, but when it came to each other, then they had a great problem. They all instinctively compared themselves to the other eleven. While some of the twelve were ready to say that they were better than all the others, many were ready to say that they were not less than most of the

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others. They all saw themselves ahead of some of the others.

This "strife" is on their minds when they climb the stairs to the prepared room. It is one thing to compare ourselves to our fellow-saints when we are all sitting nicely together in a worship service. But it is quite another to compare ourselves to those fellow-saints with whom we've just had some "strife." Then it gets hard! Then the willingness to be less than them, to wash their feet, is very difficult.

It was in this frame of mind that the disciples entered the upper room. As the first one entered, he looked around for the customary servant, saw none, felt the pressure of the others climbing behind him, and then walked farther into the room — past the pitcher of water, the towel, and the basin. Each followed in kind. Eventually they all found themselves seated around the table, ready to eat. They all would rather sit and eat with dirty feet (possibly in such a position that a pair of dirty feet was close to their faces), than be the one who would take the part of the servant to the others. They each desired to excel, something which is done *only* at the expense of others. We never put ourselves above someone without stepping on them.

At this point, without saying a word, Jesus arises from the table and walks over to the servant's instruments. He took off His large outer garment, tucked up His remaining clothing so it would not interfere with His work, poured some water into the basin, took the towel, and walked to the feet of one of the disciples. After washing that pair of feet He went to the next, and then the one after that. The whole room had to be pretty quiet. Their embarrassment shut them all up. They did not know what to do or say. They certainly were not going to get up now and tell the Master to step aside.

What was on Jesus' mind when He did this? First, He was undoubtedly wounded by their strife, by the refusal of each of them to

acknowledge that he was His servant. Their fighting to be the greatest affects Him greatly. But something greater than those personal wounds was in His mind and heart. He "knew that his hour was come" (v. 1). This was the hour "that he should depart out of this world unto the Father." In Jesus' mind and heart, that which characterized this hour was obedience to His Father's will. But there was more than just obedience on His mind. His obedience was always from the heart, that is, His obedience was in love and with love. Yes, He loved His Father and would do His Father's will in love for Him, but also His obedience included love for His own. And He not only would do whatever His Father wanted Him to do for His own (the ones the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world), but also He would love His own. He "loved His own which were in the world." He loved not just in word, but also in deed. His love was kind and not easily provoked. His love bore all things, endured all things, and never failed.

Jesus was focused on the purpose for which the Father had sent Him into the world. He was thinking about the fact "that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God" (v. 3). He was also thinking about the fact that Satan was putting into the heart of Judas Iscariot the thought that now was the time to betray his Master (v. 2); and Jesus did not want to be passive before Satan, but wanted voluntarily and actively to give Himself up. And Jesus was thinking of His love for His own, whom "He loved ... unto the end" (v. 1). With these thoughts in His mind and heart, Jesus took upon Himself the task of washing the feet of His arguing, sinning disciples. He would wash them and cleanse them. He would teach them and show them real leadership.

Jesus taught the disciples (and us) that the purpose for His com-

ing is to manifest a love which cleanses from sin. The humble act of washing feet was for Jesus the beginning of the terrible suffering He would endure the rest of this night as well as the next day. This was the beginning of Jesus' resolve to love His own unto the end. This is Jesus willing Himself to enter *the* hour. He voluntarily sacrificed Himself. This was a willing action on His part, instead of His being a hopeless prey of Satan. His washing their feet was the powerful proclamation of His determination to go voluntarily to the cross. The path on which Jesus stepped when He girded Himself and took the towel and water-filled basin was a path that concluded at the cross on Calvary's mount. He poured water, and He would soon pour out His blood on the cross, cleansing them from their sins. By suffering and dying, the Master became the Servant of His own, so they might be perfectly clean.

The upper room is filled with silence. The silence was interrupted only by the sounds Jesus made as He went from one pair of feet to another. Silently they all let it happen, until ... Peter can't be silent. He waited until the Master came to his feet. Then He had to speak. "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" He is reluctant to let Jesus do it to him. He is embarrassed and amazed that Jesus would do this.

Jesus responds by telling Peter that something is taking place that he is not able to understand at this time (v. 7). This does not stop Peter. In his ignorance he is bold to speak, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Peter declares to Jesus and to the other disciples that he will not let it happen. The rest of them might allow the Master to be their servant, but he will not! In a mixture of ignorance, pride, and ardent love for his Master, Peter cannot bring himself to submit to this washing.

Jesus quietly and simply points out to Peter that by refusing this washing, he would miss every-

thing. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (v. 8). The Peter we know then had only one response. In his great (though ignorant) love for Jesus, Peter recants. He admits that he did not know that the implication of his refusal to have his feet washed meant that he was refusing Jesus altogether. That is the last thing Peter wanted. So he then declares himself ready to have Jesus wash not only his feet, but also his hands and head (v. 9), his whole body.

The Lord continues patiently. He is ready to teach Peter and us a necessary distinction. There is first the thorough and complete washing of regeneration. This is such a spiritual washing that one is left "clean every whit" (v. 10). This is justification, God's declaration of complete forgiveness and imputed righteousness on the basis only of the gracious acts of His Son. This cleansing is once accomplished forever. It does not need to be repeated. But there is another washing, which must follow the washing of regeneration and justification. It is the washing of sanctification, the on-going cleansing of the regenerated and justified child of God who still sins in this life. The daily washing of sanctification is for those who have already received the other washing. While in this life, Jesus' disciples still get their feet dirty. They still sin, and they are in need of having their feet washed, of having the constant reminder that they are forgiven and righteous.

Jesus very pointedly adds a new thought, "and ye are clean, but not all." The inspired record adds, "For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean" (v. 11). Not Judas! Not all of them are saved, even though all of them receive the sign of the washing. That which is taking place is not the reality, but only the sign of the reality. The sign is the physical washing (or baptism). The reality is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Eleven of them are clean; one is not.

Now that Peter is silenced, Jesus continues to make His way around the table. Now it is really quiet in that upper room. Nothing else is said. Now their minds are filled, not only with thought of embarrassment, but also with the question of who among them is not clean.

The Master dries off the last pair of feet, sets down the instruments of humility, puts on His outer garments, and returns to His spot at the table. They silently watch. He then speaks. They are ready to listen. He desires to teach them about real service and real greatness. Don't forget that their earlier strife was about who of them should be the greatest. "Know ye what I have done unto you?"

They all knew that He was Master and Lord. They had repeatedly spoken of Him as such. That meant that they should have washed His feet! But they were all so busy worrying about being better than the other that they neglected the Master (and their duty to Him). It is always that way. When we are trying to be better than another one of those for whom Christ died, then we are really neglecting the Christ.


This willingness to neglect our duties to the Master because we are focused on ourselves and our argumentative brothers and sisters indicates ignorance about greatness. None of the disciples had yet learned what constituted greatness in the kingdom of which Jesus was King. Admittedly, the way it is in Jesus' kingdom is different from the way it is in the kingdoms of men in this world. Rank in this world means that you climb on top of and over others. Rank in the Master's kingdom means a willingness to serve. One who leads in the Master's kingdom is one whose joy it is to serve those whom he leads. (That is why motherhood is so great!)

"I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Believing in Jesus means that we follow Him. Believing in

the foot-washing Jesus means that we follow His example. Jesus is not telling them and us that we must literally wash each other's feet. Rather He instructs them and us to have hearts (and then lives) of willing service to each other. All of Jesus' disciples must be ready to render to each other whatever service is needful, no matter how lowly it may seem. Instead of strife over greatness we must strive to want to serve. We must strive to serve. Jesus did so for us!

Any professing disciple of Jesus who is *not* willing to deny himself and to serve all or any of his fellow-saints is doing one horrific thing: considering himself to be greater than Jesus, the Master and Lord (v. 16). Following Jesus and His example means striving to have His attitude of heart and mind. We must have a serving spirit in our heart and in our lives.

The washing of dirty feet is a lesson about Jesus' loving His own to the end. His love flows freely and unconditionally. It will never end. Nothing can separate us from it — not even the sin of our strife. He loves us, not only to the end of His earthly life, but also to the end of this age, and then beyond into all eternity. Gratitude for such unending love should shame us of all our pride and motivate us to serve Him by serving each other.

It is one thing to know this. It is another to do it. You can know what it means to wash each other's feet following the example of Jesus. But then you will not find happiness. You will find anger at brothers and sisters who are not acting like fellow-saints because they are not willing to wash your feet. But you won't be happy! Happiness is found only in one way. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (v. 17). Happiness is found not just in knowing, but by doing! In loving Him and in following Him to the end we will know true and lasting happiness. This is delighting in Jehovah. This is rejoicing in the Lord always. 

“He Shines in All That’s Fair” (and Curses All That’s Foul) (2)

As the previous editorial pointed out, the recent book by Richard J. Mouw, *He Shines in All That’s Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Eerdmans, 2001), contends that the theory of common grace that was adopted by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in 1924 can be helpful to all Christians. Its usefulness is that, in a world of division and strife, it provides a basis for the friendship of Christian and non-Christian and, especially, for the cooperation of Christians with non-Christians in working for a decent, humane, and even God-glorifying culture.

With the notable exception of its teaching of a “well-meant offer of salvation” to all who hear the gospel, which was added by the CRC, the theory of common grace that the CRC adopted in 1924 is basically the doctrine that was developed by the Dutch Reformed theologians Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. The theory holds that God has an attitude of favor in history toward all humans without exception. In this common favor, God gives to all, the reprobate ungodly as well as the elect believers, such material gifts as health and family, rain and sunshine, and wealth and long life. In this favor, He also works in all men by His Holy Spirit. To this gracious operation of the Spirit in the unregenerated are due both his natural gifts, for example, the musical ability of a Mozart and the putting prowess of a Tiger Woods, and, more importantly, the restraint of sin in him so that he is only partially depraved. By virtue of the good that is in him by the

gracious, though non-saving, operation of the Spirit, the unregenerated can perform works that are truly good. This goodness of the non-Christian is the ground of the Christian’s friendship with him, of the Christian’s appreciation of much of the culture of the ungodly world, and of the Christian’s cooperation with unbelievers to develop a culture that is even better.

Dr. Mouw urges a more active use of common grace by those Calvinists who confess it. He is critical of the passivity of many, who seem to be content merely to recognize common grace in the falling of the rain on the wicked and in the good deeds of unbelievers. Calvinists who confess common grace must proclaim it as a basis of the shared life of all humanity and as a foundation of united cultural endeavor. These Calvinists must also aggressively practice common grace in “common grace ministries,” for example, teaching in the public schools, counseling non-Christians with psychological and marital problems, helping the poor, and addressing national policies and problems in the “public square.”

Mouw himself emphasizes the “empathy” of God that is implied by common grace. In His favor to all, God shares the feelings of unbelieving men and women. God rejoices with the non-Christian husband and wife who are reconciled after the husband’s adultery. He sympathizes with the Muslim mother whose child is brutally murdered before her eyes by her oppressors.

Even though he is an advocate of common grace, Richard Mouw

takes seriously the opposition to the theory of common grace by Herman Hoeksema and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). It is the arguments of Dr. Mouw in defense of common grace, against the objections of Hoeksema and the PRC, that are the concern of this editorial.

Absence of Scripture

Scripture plays almost no role whatever in Mouw’s apology for common grace. There is a reference to Revelation 21:24-26 as the passage that Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck explained as teaching that “the honor and glory of pagan cultures” will enter into the holy city in the Day of Christ. But this passage says nothing about a grace of God toward pagans. Verse 27 warns that nothing will enter the holy Jerusalem “that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” The notion of Kuyper and Bavinck is absurd. Will the angels carry into heaven a copy of Plato’s *Symposium*? Michelangelo’s *David*? Leonardo’s *The Last Supper*? the score of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*? Mouw himself is rightly dubious of the enthusiastic endorsement of heathen culture by the two Dutch theologians: “Those of us who endorse the idea of common grace would do well to recognize the ways in which its teachings frequently have fostered a triumphalist spirit that has encouraged false hopes for a premature transformation of sinful culture” (p. 50).

Mouw’s appeal to I Peter 2:11-17, the related exhortation in I Peter 3:15, 16, and a corresponding passage in the Old Testament,

Jeremiah 29, is not intended to prove a grace of God at work among the heathen and ungodly, but a certain calling of the people of God toward the heathen and ungodly (pp. 76ff.).

Only in the last chapter, late in the development of his defense of common grace, does Dr. Mouw bring up Luke 6:35, a text that is important in the controversy over common grace. Even then, Mouw's use of the text is cautious and limited. He appeals to it against Hoeksema's assertion that God "hates His enemies and purposes to destroy them, except them He chose in Christ Jesus." Hoeksema's assertion, says Mouw, "does not seem to comport well, however, with Christ's command to 'love your enemies, and do good, expecting nothing in return' even as the Father 'is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked' (Luke 6:35)." Then, overlooking that Hoeksema had denied that God loves His reprobate enemies, not that *we* should love *our* unbelieving enemies, Mouw adds, "When the Savior refers here to people who curse us and abuse us, is he thinking exclusively of our *Christian* enemies? It seems unlikely" (p. 83).

This is the extent of the reference to, and use of, Scripture. One text bearing on the issue of common grace is quoted in part and is then very briefly and hesitantly explained as favoring a grace of God to the reprobate ungodly.

This is not intended as a criticism of Dr. Mouw. There can be no doubt whatever that he knows all the passages that the defenders of common grace have adduced in support of the doctrine. We may be sure that he is thoroughly conversant as well with the interpretation of these texts by the defenders of common grace. But Richard Mouw is a candid man. The real reason why he embraces and promotes common grace is not the clear, compelling testimony of Holy Scripture. He says as much when he admits that, after forty years of

studying the issue, he is still not clear as to what common grace is.

Real Reasons for Common Grace

In *He Shines in All That's Fair*, Richard Mouw sets forth the real reasons for his acceptance and advocacy of a common grace of God. Mouw, a Christian and a Reformed man, sees in unregenerated men and women in Southern California and elsewhere a goodness that does not harmonize with the Reformed doctrine of total depravity. He sees non-Christians who are decent, moral, friendly, loving, kind, and compassionate. He sees men and women who are avowed unbelievers performing works that are good: reconciling in marriage, caring for their children, helping the poor, giving their life in selfless devotion to their country or their fellowmen.

The reason for Mouw's advocacy of common grace is that he finds in himself an empathy with ungodly people that seems to conflict with the Reformed faith's teaching that God hates the reprobate wicked. Mouw takes delight in the putting ability of a Sabbath-desecrating professional golfer. Much more important to the Fuller Seminary theologian is his pity for the Muslim mother, worshiper of Allah, whose infant child is killed before her eyes by the men who have just raped her.

And the reason for his embrace of common grace is that Dr. Richard Mouw, learned, influential Christian scholar and teacher, thinks that he and other Christians should be able to cooperate with unbelievers on behalf of a culture of justice, mercy, and peace. But he is well aware of the Reformed doctrine of the antithesis between the church and the world, believer and unbeliever, godly and ungodly. *He Shines in All That's Fair* has a lengthy section on the antithesis. Nor is Mouw of a mind to repudiate the antithesis. On the contrary, he takes issue with his mentor, Henry Stob, who was in-

clined to limit the antithesis to opposing principles of goodness and evil in the world. Mouw recognizes that the biblical antithesis comes between persons.

A theory that accounts for what Mouw sees, feels, and thinks is common grace. Does he see goodness in the world of fallen men and women? A common grace of God must be at work in this world. Does he feel pity for the tormented Muslim woman? This pity must be a reflection of a common grace compassion that God Himself has for the woman, idolater though she is. Does he desire to work together with non-Christians to hold together the fragmenting culture of North America and even to make it a good culture? This desire must be grounded ultimately in a purpose of God Himself to create good, "godly" cultures in history by the common grace efforts of decent unbelievers and especially by the united efforts of believers and unbelievers.

Common grace solves the problem of the discrepancy between what Mouw sees, feels, and thinks and what the Reformed confession maintains. Mouw sees goodness in the world of fallen, natural men and women, whereas the Reformed confession teaches total depravity. The solution is a common grace of God that gives some deliverance from the condition of total depravity without affirming the natural goodness of fallen man.

Mouw's pity for an idolater suggests a compassion of God for the reprobate wicked, whereas the Reformed confession teaches that God is compassionate toward the elect only and that His wrath is revealed from heaven against the pagans who hold the truth under in unrighteousness. The solution is a common grace favor of God toward the wicked, distinct from His special, saving grace to the elect.

Mouw thinks that he should form friendships with non-Christians and that he should work with them to create a good culture, whereas the Reformed confession

teaches separation and hostility between the believer and the unbeliever. The solution is a common grace of God that believer and unbeliever share and practice in the sphere of everyday, earthly life, while remaining separated as regards worship and salvation.

Common grace is the distinctly (not: distinctively) Reformed way of accommodating the Bible's severe judgment upon the world of the ungodly and the Bible's equally stringent call to believers to spiritual separation from this world to the seemingly contrary facts of our experience. Reformed people are not the only ones to have noticed the apparent good of the ungodly, or to have felt that God ought to have some sympathy for His reprobate enemies, or to have thought it proper for Christians to enjoy friendship with non-Christians and to cooperate with non-Christians in building a good society. Theological liberals explain these things in terms of the natural goodness and brotherhood of all mankind (now: humankind). Roman Catholics fall back on natural theology. These doctrines have been objectionable to Reformed theologians, although Rome's natural theology is now finding some favor. But common grace provides the very same conclusions and warrants the very same practices as liberalism and Roman Catholicism: the goodness of unregenerated man; a love of God for all; the friendship (brotherhood?) of believer and unbeliever; and the union of church and world in building a good culture, or, shall we say, kingdom of man. And the theory of common grace has the advantage of a Reformed reputation.

In basing the theory of common grace upon his own seeing, feeling, and thinking, rather than upon the Word of God, Dr. Mouw is not unique. What sets him apart from many other defenders of common grace is his candor in acknowledging what the real basis of common grace is. Common grace as devel-

oped by Kuyper and Bavinck, adopted by the CRC in 1924, and now widely advertised in the Reformed community as one of the hallmarks of Calvinism is simply not the doctrinal fruit of careful, thorough study of the Word of God. Scripture does not teach the partial depravity of the unregenerated. Scripture does not teach that the works of those who are dead in trespasses and sin are good—*good in God's judgment as the product of His grace*. Scripture does not share the enthusiasm of the defenders of common grace for the possibilities of a good culture as the result of the united efforts of the church and the world. It is tough going to find Scripture permitting, much less commanding, the friendship of the seed of the woman with the seed of the serpent.

Nor does the theory of common grace that is now a shibboleth in Reformed churches derive from John Calvin. Calvin on the rare occasion speaks unadvisedly of a "peculiar grace" in the ungodly, usually in connection with Calvin's recognition of outstanding natural gifts possessed by them. But one will search Calvin in vain for a grace that renders the unbeliever only partially depraved, that produces a positively good culture from the efforts of those who hate God, that is a basis of the friendship of Christian and non-Christian, and that expresses the purpose of God to create good cultures in history apart from His crucified and risen Son. The father of culture-building common grace in the Reformed tradition is not John Calvin, but Abraham Kuyper. Common grace is certainly not a main theme in the theology of John Calvin. It is not even a theme. It is barely a mention.

Doing Theology at Monroe and Division

Common grace is based on what we see, feel, and think as we observe our neighbors and the world. This explains its popular-

ity and its endurance, in spite of the contrary testimony of the Reformed confessions and in spite of its flimsy, scant support in the Bible. "Let the critics of common grace say what they will, we see good in the ungodly; we feel pity for them in their woe, and God should feel pity also; we cannot but think that we ought to pitch in with the decent non-Christians to make our society, and man's life in it, good—a society reflecting, not Christ, but 'Judeo-Christian principles.'"

If the issue is to be decided on the basis of what we see, feel, and think, the theory of common grace wins hands down. For we critics of common grace also see fine, decent, moral, friendly, likable unbelievers. We too see good in the ungodly, much good. Sympathizing with the suffering neighbor who worships another god, or no god at all, we too wonder why God does not feel pity for him. We also groan over the division, folly, injustice, and misery of human life in a society, a nation, and a world and are tempted to suppose that the Christian is permitted, indeed called, to join with non-Christians in what would then seem the noblest of all causes: creating a society, a nation, a world, of justice, peace, beauty, and goodness. Without the gospel and Spirit of Jesus Christ!

We see such things, feel such things, and think such things when we see, feel, and think apart from the Word of God.

This was what Herman Hoeksema was warning against, I now realize, when more than once during my seminary days he would say, "Do not do your theology on the corner of Monroe and Division" (in those days, the heart of the life of the city of Grand Rapids).


Neither may Richard Mouw do his theology on the streets of Southern California.

Regardless of the seemingly contrary evidence of our experience of the world, we must reso-

lutely form our theology from Holy Scripture, guided by the Reformed confessions.

Then it will be true that "He shines in all that's fair," but the "fair" must be truly "fair." And it will also

be true, and our theology will state it, that He curses all that's foul.

— DJE 

Letters

Extreme and Unrealistic

I read the article on dating (*Standard Bearer*, Dec. 15, 2001) and felt compelled to respond. The sarcastic manner in which this was treated was not necessary nor befitting an article to be published in the *Standard Bearer*. More importantly, I don't agree with the content of the article. How do you propose our young people get to know each other? People have dated for a long time and prayerfully came to the conclusion that being together for the rest of their lives would not be right. Yes, there is hurt in this but that is all part of life. To put dating in the same category as sinful, lustful, evolutionist, and ugly is an extreme position, to say the least. This may be a surprise to some people, but we don't all live five minutes from the local Poppin Fresh Pies and aren't able to gather with other young people of our churches for a simple


cup of coffee. We travel hours to the nearest PR church (other than our own). When our young people meet someone they would like to know better, they have to call for a "date." We don't have the luxury of seeing people in a group setting. Dating is *not* the same as promiscuity. To assume that the two automatically go together and are sinful and lustful is a false assumption. Let's hope that we as Christian parents have instilled these basic Christian principles in our children. If we haven't, then something is seriously wrong with our instruction. Christian parents have to be aware of temptations that young people have, but all dating does not end up in wickedness!

As far as the Young People's Convention is concerned, I'm sure there are many happily married people who met and "paired off" at the convention. I would hardly think they considered this as "stunting their life." For many, this may be the only week of the year

that they will have any contact with other young people in our churches. If that results in someone meeting his future spouse, let's be thankful, not critical.

I dare say every minister in our church "dated" his wife. Was their intent to be lustful, ugly, and evolutionist? Perhaps their intent was just to get to know [yes, sometimes by being alone] the person they would be alone with for the rest of their lives.

Let's not provoke our children to anger by such extreme and unrealistic demands. It takes away from our authority and supposed intelligence to come up with such far-fetched statements. Like crying wolf too many times, when an issue comes that we really do have to talk to our children about, perhaps our young people will not be paying attention because we have spoken without reason in the past.

Judy Reyenga
Streamwood, IL 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ "Theologically Correct?"

An article in the *Grand Rapids Press*, February 27, 2002, reports on "Implanting an I.D." A short lead-in statement is made: "The makers of VeriChip say they have checked to make sure it doesn't match the biblical 'mark of the beast.'" The subhead states further, "New biochip holds implications for security, privacy."

The news report states:

A Florida technology company is preparing to seek government approval for a computer ID chip that would be implanted inside the body and could be used to store everything from secret codes to sensitive medical information.

...The company also is developing another implant that would work in conjunction with the VeriChip to allow satellite tracking of an individual's every movement. The tracker is already attracting interest across the globe for tasks like foiling kidnappings, the company says.

Applied Digital, based in Palm Beach, Fla., says it soon will be-

gin the process of getting Food and Drug Administration approval for the VeriChip, and intends to limit its marketing to companies that ensure its human use is voluntary.

"The line in the sand that we draw is that the use of the VeriChip would always be voluntarily (sic)," said Keith Bolton, chief technology officer and a vice president at applied Digital. "We would never provide it to a company that intended to coerce people to use it."

...The makers of the chip also foresee it being used to help emergency workers, for instance, diag-

Rev. VanBaren is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

nose a lost Alzheimer's patient or access an unconscious patient's medical history.

Getting the implant would go something like this:

A person or company buys the chip for about \$200 and Applied Digital encodes it with the desired information. The person seeking the implant takes the tiny device — about the size of a grain of rice, to their doctor, who can insert it with a large needle-like instrument.

The doctor monitors the device for several weeks to make sure it doesn't move and that no infection develops.

The device has no power supply. Rather, it contains a millimeter-long magnetic coil that is activated when a scanning device is run across the skin above it. A tiny transmitter on the chip sends out the data.

Without a scanner, the chip cannot be read. Applied Digital plans to give away chip readers to hospitals and ambulance companies, in hopes they'll become standard equipment.

So: what's the big concern? There appears to be at least two: (1) the question of privacy, and (2) the question of the "mark of the beast" in Revelation (13:16-18). The *Press* article states,

Applied Digital Solutions' new VeriChip is another sign that Sept. 11 has catapulted the effort to secure America into a realm with uncharted possibilities — and also new fears for privacy.

"The problem is that you always have to think about what the device will be used for tomorrow," said Lee Tien, a senior attorney for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a privacy advocacy group.

"It's what we call function creep. At first a device is used for applications we all agree are good but then it slowly is used for more than it was intended."

What of the religious concerns?

Theologian and author Terry Cook said he worries the identifi-

cation chip could be the "mark of the beast," an identifying mark that all people will be forced to wear just before the end times, according to the Bible.

Applied Digital has consulted theologians and appeared on the religious TV program the "700 Club" to assure viewers the chip didn't fit the biblical description of the mark because it is under the skin and hidden from view.

All of the above raises some interesting questions. The idea of a "function creep" represents one of these. This device is presented as being useful in various situations. If a person is kidnapped, the police could find his location. One with Alzheimer's could, if lost, be quickly found. One who is unconscious could have his "chip" read concerning medical conditions which might be present. But there is that troubling "function creep." What if the government demands that all of its citizens have this chip? What if the government insists on placing on one's chip his religious connections (possibly identifying also then extremist Muslims)? What if the government makes demands of its citizens which the Christian could not meet (we must obey God rather than man)? What if all of this information is encoded in this chip the size of a grain of rice? It's "function creep."

But, someone might insist, the government surely will defend our privacy and not make demands such as those "what if's" above. But has not "function creep" become evident in many areas? What of our Social Security numbers? First, only the actual worker was required to have one — to make sure wages were correctly reported. Before long, the non-working wives of the workers were also required to have a number. And soon also the newly born infant needed such a number soon after birth. It's "function creep."

That "function creep" is seen in our phone system. Not only can

there be immediate identification of in-coming calls, but each call is recorded on a computer — where it was placed, how long it lasted, etc. And the computer which sends out one's e-mail has the computer identified, the destination recorded, so that such computers can later provide valuable assistance if a criminal employs this technology. It's "function creep."

Now cameras can be mounted almost anywhere to take continuous recordings of events in the area. It has many useful advantages. It can also register our every action — for future prosecution when necessary. One can easily imagine that such cameras would be placed in the churches as well, to record who attend there. It's "function creep."

But can this "grain of rice" chip be the number of the beast? The company making this chip insists that this is impossible. Revelation 13 states that this mark is visible — on the right hand or the forehead. The "grain of rice" chip is underneath the skin and invisible. This, of course, is foolish reasoning. The "mark," though presented as visible and a number, is nevertheless mentioned in the book of Revelation, which is filled with symbols (of which the number 666 is one). Revelation surely emphasizes a method of instant identification of every individual — so that without this identification method, he can neither buy nor sell. And together with all of the other marvelous inventions of the past 100 years, clearly the time is at hand in which Revelation 13 will be fulfilled. And the above article is another sign of how close the end of this age truly is.

■ Christians As Taliban

Taliban? We have heard of these on the daily news accounts. But, Christians as Taliban? *World* magazine, January 19, 2002, has an article by Gene Edward Veith, in

which the claim is made that this will be part of a campaign against the currently popular president in order to whittle down that popularity. The article states:

How will the Democrats campaign against a president whose approval ratings are in the upper 80s? The answer: Steal the war issue from the Republicans by scapegoating the "religious right," presenting conservative Christians as the moral equivalent of the Taliban.

In *Newsweek's* New Year's issue, Howard Fineman reports that "Democrats are planning a daring assault on the most critical turf in politics: the cultural mainstream.... The GOP is out of the mainstream, some Democrats will argue next year, because it's too dependent upon an intolerant 'religious right.'" As Marvin Olasky notes on page 38, Democrats will use expressions like "reproductive tolerance" to attack pro-life Christians.

"This is an incendiary battle plan," even Mr. Fineman says, "essentially comparing the GOP right with the Taliban." The ploy is "designed to draw an outraged response from the president. Then Democrats would have Bush just where they wanted him: in a fire fight at home."

The Democratic PR machine is denying Mr. Fineman's report, but liberal columnists and pundits are already sounding the theme. Thus, those whose theology motivates them to try to save innocent lives are portrayed as being the same as those whose theology motivates them to kill innocent lives. Those who call for good music are lumped with those who want to abolish music altogether. A religion that has brought freedom wherever it goes is branded as the same as a religion that has brought tyranny. Christians exercising their constitutional liberty to express their convictions in the public square are identified as terrorists.

...The new hostility to orthodox Christianity goes beyond just wanting to keep moral considerations out of public policy. It aims at the theological content of Christianity, the very substance of the faith: that salvation comes through Jesus Christ.

What galls the new anti-Christian bigots is evangelism. Even the private conviction that one has been saved by Christ implies that there is something wrong with all of the other ways by which people try to save themselves. The first state of overt persecution would be "anti-proselytizing laws," which already exist in several countries (including, in particular, Islamic countries).

In the same issue of *Newsweek*, religion editor Kenneth Woodward defines the kind of religious expression that the cultural elite will allow. "Mere tolerance of other religions is not enough," he says. "Even the acceptance of other religions as valid paths to God is insufficient"! He says that religious people must "develop a deep understanding and appreciation of at least one other religion" in addition to their own....

So — you know where we fit if this is the explanation of "Christian Taliban." One can be certain that, whatever the approach, there will be increasing attempts to silence the Christian "message" about the one way of salvation: Jesus Christ our Lord. Nor is it inconceivable that a required "rice grain" chip would contain also this information. Would it be possible, perhaps, that the Christian would not be required to deny his Christianity — as long as he is willing to recognize and study a second religion as also a legitimate way of salvation? That an encoded message in the implanted chip about this would enable one to buy or sell — and without that message, one would be "left out in the cold"?



Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Steven Key

Saving Faith — A Certain Knowledge

As we proceed in our consideration of what has been called "The Golden Chain of Salvation," we come to the activity of saving faith. We have seen that faith must first be understood as the bond by which God through the Holy Spirit grafts

us into Christ. Nobody is saved without that bond, without being grafted into Christ. That includes infants. For all, the Bible teaches, are conceived and born in sin.

But in the doctrine of salvation, it is the activity of faith that is on the foreground. The living graft of salvation must of necessity come to expression in the conscious activity of the Christian.

Indeed, the call to conscious, active faith may well be called the keynote of the entire gospel. Among the last words that Jesus spoke to His disciples on this earth were these (Mark 16:15, 16): "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." John writes in

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John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This truth runs through the Bible like an unbreakable thread. And therefore it is a matter of practical importance that we each personally consider the matter of the activity of faith, and see it in our own lives.

When it comes to the activity of saving faith, there are two elements that must be considered. The Heidelberg Catechism identifies them in Question and Answer 21 as "a certain knowledge" and "an assured confidence." So true faith is defined — in its activity — as "not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Spirit works by the gospel in my heart; that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits."

Both elements of saving faith, knowledge and confidence, come to expression in Paul's confession, as we read in II Timothy 1:12b: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Intellectual Knowledge Is Insufficient

It should immediately be evident that a theoretical knowledge of God, a mere intellectual knowledge, is not sufficient for saving faith. Mere Bible knowledge (that which is sometimes called "historical faith") is not to be identified with saving faith.

That is not to belittle intellectual knowledge. That is not to downplay the urgency of knowing sound doctrine. If you and I begin to neglect the study of God's revelation, if we personally neglect the increase in knowledge of God's

Word and truth, it will not be long and we will hear very concretely the judgment of God as spoken in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

Don't minimize biblical, doctrinal knowledge! Don't do that! The consequences are devastating! Many have departed from the truth, and have been lost in their generations because they ignored the necessity of knowing the truth of the Scriptures.

You cannot believe in the one only true God unless you know about Him. There must be more, of course. But intellectual knowledge you must have! Faith never separates itself from the Scriptures and the knowledge of the truth.

Nevertheless, mere intellectual knowledge is not sufficient to save us.

Spiritual, Experiential Knowledge Is Necessary

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The knowledge of faith is a heart knowledge. It is a personal, spiritual knowledge of intimacy and love.

In II Timothy 1:12, Paul says, "For I know whom I have believed."

Have you ever been struck by the fact that the apostle does not even say whom he believed? You might say that Paul isn't very specific here.

But Timothy immediately understood the reference, and so do we. The meaning of those words are familiar to all who have received the benefits of Christ by a true faith. They are heart words with all who have been taught by God and made wise unto salvation.

The One whom Paul knew and believed was the Christ of God.

The apostle had not always

known Him. Even though Paul knew the Scriptures well, he had not always known Him who is the Subject of all God's revelation in Scripture. In fact, Paul counted Christ an imposter! Anything spoken by Jesus of Nazareth was enough to prejudice Paul against it, and make him judge it as false doctrine. It wasn't that Paul didn't know intellectually the Old Testament testimony of the Messiah. But he did not know that Messiah with the spiritual knowledge of faith, until on the way to Damascus he "saw that Just One, and heard the voice of his mouth" speaking from the midst of heavenly glory, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And when Paul answered, "Who art thou, Lord," the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The man who was to become an apostle of our Lord could not believe until he heard those words.

The knowledge of faith is that knowledge that the Holy Spirit works in us by the power of the gospel. While a mere intellectual knowledge about Christ will never bring a sinner to his knees and will never bring life out of death, the knowledge of faith brings us into such a relationship with God through Christ that we cannot cling to our sins, but must confess them and flee from them. It is to know that we now live in an intimate union with Christ. Our life is in Him!

So our Heidelberg Catechism speaks in very personal language of "a certain knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word."

That knowledge the apostle John writes about in I John 5:19, 20, when he says, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and life eternal."

A Fruitful Knowledge

Such certain knowledge of true faith can be known from the counterfeit, mere intellectual knowledge by its fruits.

The true and certain knowledge which is life eternal is a knowledge which fires up my affections toward God, sanctifies my will, and raises my mind to a level above that which I had known before.

It is a knowledge that produces in me love for God and for His Word, submission to Him, faith in Him.

It is such a knowledge that causes me to join Asaph in Psalm 73, as I proclaim from the depths of my soul: "Whom have I in heaven but thee: and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." That is the knowledge of which Paul speaks to Timothy when he says, "I know whom I have believed."

Do you see, then, how this

knowledge differs from a mere intellectual knowledge?

The head knowledge which is all that many possess today, and that in very small measure, is a knowledge that has no influence upon their walk. It bears no fruit of practical godliness. It illustrates that horrible truth expressed by Jeremiah: "They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:3). Jeremiah wasn't speaking of what we might call the unchurched. He was speaking of the children of *Israel*, who had the law of God and His temple, who had the sacrifices and ceremonies pointing to their Messiah, who had God's prophets proclaiming His gospel to them. They had been favored by God with so much; yet they were strangers to Him!

Whereas mere head knowledge does no more than fill one with pride and conceit, the knowledge

of true faith brings us humbly to our knees before God, and moves us to seek the face of Christ our Savior.

Whereas the knowledge of the Pharisee caused him to pray, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," the knowledge of faith causes us to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

While those who are the possessors of mere head knowledge may loudly sing the praises of God, that doesn't change the fact that their home is the earth, and their longings the things of this world.

When you possess this knowledge of true faith, however, you look upon God as your Friend-Sovereign, and you long for His fellowship and glory. You know by experience what Paul meant when he wrote to the Philippian church, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).



Letter from the Seminary

Prof. Russell Dykstra

Protestant Reformed Seminary
4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, Michigan 49418

February 25, 2002

To: The Protestant Reformed Churches and friends and supporters of the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus,

Greetings in the love of Christ!

Under the indispensable blessing of God, the seminary is enjoying a good and profitable year. We reported last fall that we have seven full-time students in school this year. The two senior students, Mr. Rodney Kleyn and Mr. David Overway, completed their internships in Faith PRC and Hull PRC, respectively. Both men were enthusiastic about their internships, affirming that they enjoyed and profited greatly from the work. The congregations likewise (through the reports of the consistories and pastors) expressed appreciation for the young men and their labors. The faculty takes the opportunity to express hearty thanks to the congregations (Hull and Faith) for welcoming the student interns into their midst, and to their consistories and pastors for the fine work performed with the students.

From our perspective, the return of the two last-year students to school is welcome, be it for but one semester. The Lord willing, these two men will complete their requirements and be recommended by the faculty for an examination by the synod at the end of this school year. The synod, to be held in Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, is set to convene on Tuesday, June 11. Synods ordinarily adopt an examination schedule that requires the students to preach a sermon on Tuesday, and sit for oral examinations on Wednesday and Thursday. Visitors are most welcome to attend all these sessions.

Our third-year students have great changes in store for them as well. Both Mr. Paul Goh and Mr. Bill Langerak have been licensed by the faculty to speak in the churches a word of edification. They have had numerous opportunities to fill the pulpits in the churches. The major change in their lives will be their internships, set for July-December of 2002. The Lord willing, Mr. Goh will be in Bethel Protestant Reformed Church under the direction of Rev. Haak, and Mr. Langerak will be under Rev. Dale Kuiper in South-east Protestant Reformed Church.


In the ranks of the instructors, this school year has also seen some major changes, due to the partial sabbatical of Prof. Decker. This is called a partial sabbatical because Prof. Decker taught one course each semester (as did Prof. Engelsma in his partial sabbatical of 2000-2001). Prof. Decker's courses were picked up by emeritus Prof. Hanko, as well as Revs. R. Cammenga and K. Koole.

Prof. Decker, who teaches missions (among other subjects), took on a gigantic project for his sabbatical, namely, a critical study of the main world religions. The study includes four different Chinese religions (Chinese Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism), in addition to Islam and Buddhism. When you realize that these world religions have many sects and movements within each (something like the many denominations in the Reformed or Presbyterian camps), you get some idea of the magnitude of the project. Prof. Decker is committed to producing a syllabus for the seminary (and available to others) on these various religions which will include the founder and a brief history, the beliefs and practices of each, as well as a critique of each from a Reformed/biblical perspective. Additional chapters in the syllabus will be provided by Rev. T. Miersma (on Hinduism) and Rev. R. Cammenga (on Judaism). Prof. Decker intends to finish the project this spring, D.V. — just in time to prepare for the conference in Australia with the EPC of Australia and the ERC of Singapore. Prof. Decker and Rev. Cammenga have been commissioned by the Committee for Contact of the PRC to speak at that conference. We suspect that Prof. Decker's summer vacation will be short indeed.

Every year the seminary has an interim course between the semesters, in which the students and one professor concentrate for eight days on one subject. The topic of this year's interim was "The Reformation of 1953 and the Covenant." Prof. Dykstra led this class, which was attended by the regular students and a few auditors. The course examined the history of the "split of 1953" in the Protestant Reformed Churches, some of the church polity issues, the place of the "Declaration of Principles," as well as the various covenant views being taught in the first half of the twentieth century. One major goal of the class was to observe how this controversy sharpened the doctrine of the covenant. The controversy made clear that notwithstanding all the variations in the doctrine of the covenant, the great dividing line is this — whether the covenant is conditional or unconditional. The Protestant Reformed Churches and Seminary continue to preach and teach that the unconditional covenant is the only biblical and confessional view of God's everlasting covenant of grace. We remain profoundly thankful to God that He has maintained that truth in our churches and seminary.

There is one item for note to those seeking to fulfill the pre-seminary requirements. The Protestant Reformed Seminary teaches a few pre-seminary courses, among which is Greek grammar and Greek reading. However, these grammar and reading courses are taught in alternate years. The Lord willing, Greek grammar will be taught in the 2002-2003 school year. Anyone interested in taking that course for preparation for seminary should contact the registrar, Mr. D. Doezeema, very soon.

The seminary continues to enjoy the support of the churches which it serves, for which we are deeply grateful. May God continue to bond the churches and seminary in the one task of spreading His truth far and wide, gathering His church and building up Zion, through faithful preaching. We covet your prayers on behalf of the seminary.

Yours in Christ,
Prof. Russell J. Dykstra, Rector 

Introduction (3)

The Prominence of Eschatology in Scripture

The abounding errors concerning the last things are by no means the only reason why eschatology must have a prominent place in the teaching of the church today. The truths of eschatology are a vitally important aspect of the content of Holy Scripture. It is a complete misunderstanding to suppose that the doctrine of the last things is merely a body of truth added at the end of a treatment of all the other doctrines of Scripture. Still worse was the omission of any separate treatment at all of the last things in older dogmatics, as though eschatology were unworthy of such attention. The truth is that the last things—centrally the coming of Christ—are the purpose and goal of all the revelation of God in Scripture. The gospel of Scripture is eschatological from beginning to end.

First and fundamentally, the promise of the gospel, which runs through the entire Bible as the very heart of biblical revelation, is eschatological. This is evident in the first proclamation of the gospel: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). By this promise Jehovah God

taught His Old Testament people to hope for the Man, who is Jesus Christ, who would deliver all of the woman's children by crushing the head of the serpent, who is Satan. The goal and ultimate fulfillment of this promise is the second coming of Jesus Christ, even though Christ did destroy the power of Satan by His cross. For Romans 16:20, obviously referring to the promise of Genesis 3:15, directs the hope of the New Testament church to a future crushing of Satan's head at the return of Christ. The very first announcement of the promise, by which all the Old Testament saints lived and which was the source of all subsequent promises of salvation, aimed at the second coming of Christ and the end of all things.

Other announcements of the promise in the Old Testament also clearly point to the second coming of Christ as their goal. For example, Isaiah's prophecy of the sprouting of the branch from the stump of Jesse ends in the peaceable kingdom in which the knowledge of God fills the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11).

The eschatological force of the promise in the New Testament is even stronger and clearer. The apostles cannot simply promise the repentant Jews the blotting out of their sins, but must add that the spiritual refreshment of forgiveness finds its fulfillment in the future "restitution of all things" at the

coming of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21).

The promise of God in Jesus Christ is eschatological. By the power of this eschatological promise, not only is the life of those who believe the promise a "wait[ing] for his Son from heaven" (I Thess. 1:10), but also history rushes on directly to the end, and creation strains and presses toward the goal. The apostle teaches this about the creation, and by implication about history, in Romans 8:19-22. With reference to the non-personal world of the heaven and the earth with its various creatures that God made in the beginning, the passage declares that the "whole creation" is eagerly waiting for the "manifestation of the sons of God" at the second coming of Christ. Such is its eagerness for the coming of Christ that creation waits with uplifted head and outstretched neck (KJV: "earnest expectation"). This is the equivalent in creation of the "Come, Lord Jesus" in the church.

The eschatological promise of Christ and His redemption of both the elect church and the creation presupposes the fall of man into sin and the curse upon the creation. But God did not ordain the coming of Christ as the end, or goal, of all things in response to the fall of Adam. The purpose, or goal, of God in creating, prior to the fall, was the gathering together of all things in Christ. It is the eternal

purpose of God "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph. 1:9, 10).

Colossians 1:16-20 teaches that all things were created by God for the Son of God's love in whom we have redemption through His blood, that is, for Jesus Christ. From eternity, it was the pleasure of the Father that "in him," not in Adam, all the fullness should dwell and that the Father would reconcile all things to Himself by Jesus Christ. It never pleased God that all things would be related to Him by creation, or even by some development of the original creation. God willed that all things be related to Himself by *reconciliation*. The goal of creation was Christ. The purpose of God with man's wicked fall into sin and his irresponsible plunging of the creation under God's just curse was to lift elect humanity and the creation to a much higher, more glorious state than obtained, or was attainable, in the first paradise.

Only this conception of God's one goal with all things in Christ from the beginning rescues the history of creation, the fall, and redemption in Christ from the dreary cyclical view of history that is found among the pagans. God makes a good world. The world is ruined. Christ brings the world back to its original state (except that many people perish in the process). Such a view of creation, the fall, and redemption is also demeaning to Christ. He is merely an afterthought on God's part, an emergency-purpose when the main plan failed.

Contemporary theologian Hans Schwarz is rightly critical of this understanding of the redemptive work of Christ, as though He merely restores what the fall lost, and, by implication, of the notion that God's purpose with the original creation was man and the world apart from Christ.

In its opening sentences the Gospel of John sees the coming of Christ from the perspective of the creation in the beginning. Also Paul points out a clear correspondence between the appearance of the first Adam and the appearance of Christ as the last Adam (Rom. 5). It would be erroneous to interpret this perspective of creation as if the resurrection were to open the opportunity for us to return to an ideal state of the past. Such an interpretation would force us into the cyclical view of history represented by most religions and mythologies: after the cataclysmic end dawns a new beginning, the wheel of world history moves on to a new revolution. But a different course of history is indicated by Paul when he writes: "For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16). This means that everything is created toward Christ. When Paul calls him the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15), he wants to emphasize that Christ, being equal to God, does not stand only at the beginning of creation. Through his resurrection Christ is also the goal toward which creation moves. Clearly, such an understanding cannot condone a static view of creation that often sounds like the following: God created the world; through the fall this good and perfect creation was distorted; then came Christ and enabled its restoration; and in the final parousia the creation will be returned to its original beauty. Against this cyclical view we must assert that the "very good" which God pronounced over his creation in the beginning does not mean that it is unsurpassable. There lies the fallacy of understanding our world as the best possible one (Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology*, Eerdmans, 2000, p. 284).

A second way in which the truth of the last things is prominent in Scripture is the specific prophecies of important eschatological events and persons. The Old Testament contains these

prophecies especially in Daniel and Ezekiel. Daniel 7-12 forecasts antichrist, the abomination of desolation, the great tribulation of the people of God, and the resurrection of the dead (Dan. 7:7, 8, 19-28; 11:21-45; 12:1-3). Ezekiel 38, 39 prophesies of Prince Gog of the land of Magog.

These Old Testament prophecies become the core and basis of New Testament eschatological doctrine in II Thessalonians 2, Revelation, and Jesus' lively eschatological discourse in Matthew 24. For example, Jesus makes Daniel's prophecy of the abomination of desolation part of His own instruction concerning the sign of His coming and of the end of the world: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place ... then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" (Matt. 24:15, 16). That this eschatological event is not exhaustively fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, but finds its ultimate, real fulfillment at the time of the coming of antichrist immediately before the second coming of Christ is shown in II Thessalonians 2:4. With reference to the future "man of sin," whom the Lord Jesus will destroy at His coming, the apostle says that he will sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Thus, in fulfillment of the prophecies both of Daniel and Jesus, he will desolate the true worship of God.

The New Testament is pervasively and emphatically eschatological. Here I merely sketch the contours of the landscape. In Acts 2, the apostles announce that with the coming of Jesus the Messiah, particularly His "shedding forth" the Holy Spirit, the last days have begun (vv. 14-18). They will end with the bodily return of Jesus Christ for judgment, "that great and notable day of the Lord," which will be preceded by "wonders in heaven above, and signs in

the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood" (vv. 19, 20). The entire age, from Pentecost to the second coming, is the last days. The main purpose of God with these days is that men and women may call upon the name of the Lord Jesus and be saved (v. 21).

Concerning the events that must be expected throughout this age in connection with Christ's return, the New Testament gives clear, detailed teaching. Fundamental is Jesus' own instruction in Matthew 24, 25. The instruction promises and describes His coming and the end of the world by means of the historical type consisting of the destruction of Jerusalem. It mentions several signs of His coming. There is sharp admonition to His people to be ready for His coming. The instruction

concludes with an account of the final judgment, which issues in everlasting life for some and everlasting punishment for others.

In dependence on Jesus' own teaching in Matthew 24, 25, the apostles proclaim the victorious spread of the preaching of the gospel throughout the world in the present age effecting the repentance and salvation of all of the elect church to the last man or woman (Rev. 6:1, 2; II Pet. 3:9).

II Thessalonians 2 and II Timothy 3, 4 warn of eschatological lawlessness in society and of apostasy in the visible church.

I John, II Thessalonians 2, and Revelation, particularly Revelation 13, teach the coming of antichrist.


The coming of Jesus itself is the subject in I Thessalonians 1, 2, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, and many other passages.

I Corinthians 15 is the *locus classicus* on the resurrection of the bodies of all those who die in Christ.

II Corinthians 5:10, Romans 2:5-12, and Revelation 20:11-15 teach the final judgment.

A renewed creation of heaven and earth is promised in Romans 8:19-22, II Peter 3, and Revelation 21:1.

And then there is that most eschatological of all the books of the Bible, Revelation.

The church must preach the last things. She must emphasize eschatology. All of the sermons of her preachers must be eschatological. The reason is not only that false teachings about the end abound, although this is indeed the case. But Scripture, the source of all the church's preaching and teaching, is eschatological through and through. 

Western Ideas (1)

Introduction

"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment."

I Chronicles 12:32

God is dead!
If German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was right when he said that, God has been dead now for over one hun-

dred years. Nietzsche saw the death of God as necessary if man is to arrive at his potential for greatness. However, a contemporary of Nietzsche, Russian novelist Feodor Dostoevsky, gave warning concerning the consequences of such a thing. He said through one of his characters in his novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, if God is dead, then everything is permitted.

So, who was right, Nietzsche or Dostoevsky? Nietzsche and his disciples believed that, with God out of the picture, enlightened man could now get down to the business of establishing a better society. Dostoevsky, on the other hand, was convinced that if man

executed God, everything *evil* would be permitted and in fact carried out.

One need not look too deeply at the subsequent events of the twentieth century to see that Dostoevsky proved to be the better prophet, as the two main godless totalitarian systems of that century, Communism and Nazism, clearly demonstrate. Both were forms of social engineering based on scientific foundations designed to produce an earthly utopia. Communists saw themselves as creating the "new Soviet man" as described by Father Marx, and the Nazis would purify the human race and even create the "superman"

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breed of human as foreseen by Nietzsche. The staggering results are well documented: everything evil *was* permitted, and that with a vengeance! Tens of millions perished during the final solution of Hitler, in the gulags of Stalin, during the Cultural Revolution of Mao, and in the "Killing Fields" of Pol Pot!

And the evil continues, every conceivable form of it continues, even in American society! How could this happen? God was not always dead, was He? Isn't it true that in the Middle Ages just about all of Western civilization believed in God? How then could God evolve (devolve?) this way in Western thought?

To understand these evil times and know what the church ought to do, modern-day sons of Issachar should have some understanding of the development of Western ideas that spawned this evil. (The danger of attempting to accomplish this in a brief article is that gaps in the history will inevitably result. On the other hand, not to attempt it would likely result in a frown from the late Francis A. Schaeffer, who once said that Christians suffer from viewing the world in "bits and pieces instead of totals." So attempt it we will, but with some generous help from Gene Edward Veith, Jr.'s book, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*.¹) For our discussion, the history will be divided into three not-so-precise time periods: premodern, modern, and postmodern times.

Premodern Times

The premodern period of Western civilization is sometimes considered to be the period before the French Revolution of 1789.

During this phase of Western civilization, people and the culture as a whole believed in the supernatural. However, it was a period of tension among existing worldviews. Veith writes:

For over a thousand years, Western civilization was dominated by an uneasy mingling of worldviews—the Biblical revelation, classical rationalism, and even the remnants of native pagan mythologies. Often Biblical truth was compromised by human reason and pagan superstitions. Other times the Christian worldview emerged clearly and with authority.

During the Middle Ages (A.D. 1000-1500), Christian piety, classical rationalism and the folk-paganism of European culture achieved something of a synthesis. Although medieval civilization was impressive in its own terms, scholastic theology subordinated the Bible to Aristotelian logic and human institutions, sacrificing the purity of the Biblical revelation. Medieval popular culture further obscured the gospel message, often keeping much of the old paganism under a veneer of Christianity, retaining the old gods but renaming them after Christian saints.

In the 1500s and the 1600s Western civilization returned to its roots. The Renaissance challenged the somewhat muddled medieval synthesis, as the West returned to both of its sources. Renaissance humanism rediscovered and reasserted the Greeks; the Reformation rediscovered and reasserted the Bible. Both classicism and Biblicism came back to life in a purified form.

Myth, classicism, and Christianity—these three different worldviews, in different configurations, defined the Western world for centuries. Not everyone was a Christian in the premodern world. Biblical Christianity was always in tension with its culture. Mythology and humanistic rationalism continually tempted the church.²

Not only was the church tempted, it often succumbed to the temptations. In the process the Roman Catholic Church would adopt many pagan holy days and celebrations. She would even accept much of what Renaissance humanism had to offer and adorn her cathedrals with paintings and sculpture

which reflected it. Corrupt practices and false doctrines would fuel the fire of the great Reformation.

That being said, through it all Western civilization was still a civilization that could not deny the ultimate reality of the existence of God. But that would begin to change with man's growing knowledge of the world in which he lived and his achievements in science and technology. Enlightened, modern man would question the wisdom of the past.

Modern Times

Reason would characterize modern times, man's reason! That's why it is sometimes called the "Age of Reason." And science, which, it seemed, could explain everything, would be modern man's god.

The view of premodern times that God was Creator and that He ordered the affairs of His creation by His providence was questioned more and more, as man's understanding of the physical creation advanced in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Following, in the words of Veith, is one example of the results of this new "enlightened" way of thinking:

The trust in human reason and the rejection of the supernatural took many forms, but nowhere did the modernistic impulse reach further or more ambitiously than in the invention of the Marxist state. Marxism, beginning with the assumption of "dialectical materialism," sought to find material, economic causes for all human problems. Marx reduced the human condition to issues of class struggle and economic exploitation. In doing so, he worked out a quasi-scientific alternative that would supposedly bring on an

1. Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books, 1994).

2. Veith 31.

earthly paradise. Under communism there would be no private property. There would be no more exploitation. Under socialism individuals would find meaning by losing themselves in a large group. The economy and all phases of society would be planned for the good of the whole.

Soviet leaders put these seemingly “enlightened” ideals into practice with the Russian Revolution. But instead of bringing a worker’s paradise as the theory promised, oppression and brutality resulted, on a scale unparalleled in human history.³

It should be observed, however, that not all those who were “enlightened” rejected religion as did the followers of Marx. Veith explains:

This does not mean that Enlightenment thinkers entirely rejected religion. Rather they sought to devise a rational religion, a faith that did not depend upon revelation. The result was Deism. According to the Deists, the orderliness of nature does, in fact, prove the existence of a deity, a rational mind that created the universe. This God is, however, no longer involved in the creation. He constructed nature in all of its intricacy and then left it to run like a vast machine. Miracles, revelation, and the supernatural doctrines such as the incarnation and redemption are excluded on principle. According to this religion, human beings, armed with reason, are basically on their own.

The Enlightenment rejected Christianity but did affirm the existence of God, at least at first. There is, however, no need of a God who is not involved in His creation. Eventually, the deity withered away. Enlightenment rationalism saw the whole universe as a closed system of cause and effect. Every phenomenon must be understood in terms of a cause *from within the system*.⁴

So it is that God died!

And Charles Darwin buried Him!

While it was true that early en-

lightened man needed God to get the universe started (Deism), once Darwin’s *Origin of Species* arrived on the stage of history, it became clear that God was not even necessary to explain the origin of the creation. To the utter amazement of enlightened man, he discovered that God had never really existed! All along God had merely been a figment of his “enlightened” imagination.

Devastating would be the results! Not only would Communism and Nazism raise their ugly heads; another segment of the West, left without a God who demands moral absolutes, would make decisions based upon “what works.” Right and wrong would be decided by what appeared to work best for enlightened society. Was slavery wrong? Not necessarily, especially if it could be seen to benefit the economy. Was child labor as practiced in the nineteenth century wrong? No! Again, one only had to be able to see its economic benefits to answer that. Was stealing wrong? Yes, but not because it was a violation of God’s commandment. Rather, it was wrong because it was harmful to society. So it went. And so it continues to go. Yes, for modern man there were moral absolutes; not because God said so, but because enlightened man did.

Postmodern Times

When enlightened man put God to death, he in effect did away with truth at the same time. Although that did not become immediately obvious to modern man, postmodern man sees that very clearly. And so it *must* be! If He who *is* “the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)” does not exist, then neither does truth exist.

Exactly *when* the shift to postmodernism happened in the history of Western civilization is a matter of dispute. However, “Most scholars associate the postmodern shift with the counterculture of the 1960s. Many young people began

questioning the fruits of modern civilization—technology, social regimentation, rational planning. They sought instead a way of life organically related to nature and free of moral and rational restraint.”⁵

In the words of Veith, their postmodern reasoning goes something like this:

If scientific rationalism cannot be depended on to give us objective truth, maybe there is no objective truth. Truth is relative, dependent on the individual’s experience and culture. Morality is also relative, a function of the individual’s choices and the prevailing cultural norms.

If truth is relative, one idea is as good as another. In the absence of any reliable means of arriving at truth — with both revelation and reason discredited — the only criterion for adopting a particular idea, if only provisionally, is desire. Reason is replaced by the pleasure-principle. Instead of people saying they agree or disagree with a proposition, we hear how much they “like” or “dislike” a particular idea. People pick and choose what they enjoy from a wide range of theories and religions, dependent solely on their personal preferences and choices. The intellect is replaced by the will. Moral issues are similarly relativized. “You have to decide what’s right for you,” we are told on the talk shows. “What’s right for one person might not be right for someone else.” “Who are we to judge?” Moral issues are not seen in terms of absolute transcendent standards as in the Bible, nor in terms of what is good for society as a whole, as in modernism. What makes an action moral or immoral is whether or not the person made a choice.

In a relativistic climate, the only remaining virtue is tolerance. The only philosophies that are wrong are those that believe in truth; the only sinners are those who still

3. Veith 27-28.

4. Veith 33.

5. Veith 40.

believe there is such a thing as sin.⁶

A Few Conclusions

So what must the present-day children of Issachar make of the progression of premodern, modern, and postmodern thinking of Western civilization?

In the first place, it should be clear from our discussion that the natural man *develops* in sin. This should not surprise us, since Scripture confirms it in Romans 1:21: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Also confer Genesis 6 verse 5.) The rest of Romans 1 demonstrates how the darkened heart of the natural man develops in his sin. In connection with this idea, Prof. Herman Hanko writes:

Through it all, God's purpose is accomplished. It is in the way of this organic development of sin, although under the sovereign control and direction of God's providence, that man becomes ripe for judgment. He shows in all his life

that he will do nothing but sin — even when God gives him such great gifts as are found in the creation. The greater the gifts, the more man becomes worthy of his final punishment in hell.


Hence, in this sense, there is "organic" development of sin because it takes place along with and is inseparable from the organic development of the world of reprobate men.⁷

It should be noted, in the second place, that Western civilization has given birth to many false worldviews that currently plague Western society, some of which we will consider more specifically in future articles, the Lord willing.

Finally, children of Issachar should view this development of Western thought in connection with its influence on the church in Western society in light of Revelation 12. There the church is warned that Satan seeks to lead the church away from her God-ordained calling by casting "...out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman (the church), that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (Rev. 12:15). To avoid this flood the church must limit her

scope of labor to preaching "the pure doctrine of the gospel," administering "the sacraments as instituted by Christ," and exercising church discipline "as instituted by Christ" (*Confession of Faith*, Article 29). To involve herself in the social and political concerns of the day spells trouble for the church.

To be understanding of the times means that the sons of Issachar never lose sight of the fact that Israel has been, is, and always will be at war (Gen. 3:15). This will not change until the Lord returns. Issachar must take warning from the decomposing denominational victims of Satan's deluge as they increasingly befoul the contemporary, Western, ecclesiastical landscape.

Children of Issachar, understand the times and live! 

6. Gene Edward Veith Jr., "Postmodern Times: Facing a World of New Challenges and Opportunities." *Modern Reformation* September/October 1995:17-18.

7. Herman Hanko. *For Thy Truth's Sake*. (Grandville, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000) 255.

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Abraham Kuiper

Home-Life

The "house" is no invention of man, but a creation of God in our behalf.

The question whether, had Paradise remained, we would have had houses need not trouble us. It is enough to call to mind that our

Savior speaks of a *Father-house* in the heavens; of one mighty, all-embracing Father-house; the "Father-house with its many mansions."

In Israel our Lord Himself dwelt in a house on Zion, the house of the God of Jacob; and as now Zion's temple lies in ruins, believers are built as living stones into a spiritual house which is a habitation of God.

Yea, Scripture goes yet further, and does not hesitate to call God Himself a house, even as He is

called a fortress and a high tower, as the psalmist prays in Psalm 31:2: "Be Thou, O God, a strong house unto me, for me to dwell in" (Dutch version).

He who is familiar with the Word knows how high, throughout Scripture, the house and life in the house are held in honor.

Even in Scripture you can observe how the honor of the house is allied to the honor of God, and how "the curse of the Lord comes into the house" (Prov. 3:33) when

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the soul wanders off in strange paths and abandons her God.

But this contrast is still more strongly evident when you look out upon the world without God, and hear how in that world that has gone astray the foundation of the home is undermined, till finally it must be ruined.

This is not new, for already centuries before Christ Greek philosophers have elaborated ideas that attack the very existence of home and family.

In this respect also the bold language of our times is not new.

Then as now it was told abroad that marriage is an unnatural tie, and only free love responds to the ideal. Then, as now, plans were rife to take newborn infants away from father and mother and bring them up in large state houses for children and large boarding schools. Yea, even the home meals were to be sacrificed, and all people together were to sit at long tables in great halls.

This is the spirit from below, which stands over against the Spirit of the Father-house.

And to this extent you can say that the home, and family life in the home, is a symbol of salvation, and that the underestimation and presently the abolishing of the home is the sure sign of the working of demoniac powers.

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The "house" stands to this extent even over against "the world."

Just as Moses makes the contrast: "When thou sittest in thine house" or "when thou walkest by the way" (Deut. 6:7).

Going out or staying home are even now the words which imply two proper spheres of human life. And he who knows the Scripture knows very well that it does not confine us to our house, but rather calls us out of our house, that in the world also we may serve our God. But this makes it no less a fact that a good many more souls are lost in the world than in the

house, that the Holy Spirit is considerably more grieved in the world than in the house, and that the danger of moral poisoning and of getting away from God menaces far stronger in the streets than when you sit in your house.

So is the house a haven of refuge, a tent of salvation, in which you withdraw from before the evil storm of the world, and in this sense too it may be said that the house brings you nearer to God, and that almost all going out from your house menaces to estrange you from your God.

You know the man and his character by it, for one dwells and literally lives in the world, while the other dwells and lives in his house. Both are on the street at times and at other times sit in their house, but with this difference, that the man of the world lives outside and merely sleeps in his house, while the other truly goes out, but presently to come back to his house, as to the center of his life.

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Even between people and people you observe this difference.

When you come to Italy and other southern European countries, you find that everyone lives in the street. The houses are less attractive and are not planned to spend the day in them. But there are everywhere large halls, where, when work is done, everyone repairs. Mostly even one's midday meal is taken out of doors, and on a summer's day you can certainly see half of the population sitting in the squares.

In countries where the Christian gospel in its soberer form exercised power this was altogether different.

In Scotland and in the Netherlands, home life is almost the all-in-all, and life in the street and by the way has only taken form in this last half century.

In villages and small towns it is not so far yet, but in great cities the custom has more and more

gained ground that he who can afford it eats and drinks away from home and spends the evening in all sorts of public places, preferably with wife and children.

"Going out," that magic word for those who had long to stay at home, is becoming more and more the urge, we would almost say the passion, that rules life, not only with men but equally with women.

He who still "sits in his house" a good deal of the time is scorned as a "house-sparrow," and already there are many families where, when the weather permits, both afternoons and evenings almost no one can be found at home.

Everyone is out.

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From another angle you find something of this even in very Christian homes.

One has friends, dear brothers and sisters, Christian associates, and the temptation is to spend time in their company, to the neglect of home and dear ones.

Already in the church of Christ in Paul's day this was observable.

At Corinth, believers would leave their houses, that they might come together with their friends in a large hall and there have a common meal, a kind of love feast. Each brought his own food and drink, and so they were not in their houses but in the hall of feasting.

But Paul would have none of it, and he asks, "Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" (I Cor. 11:22).

And when later he observed that certain believers devoted themselves to the things of the kingdom in such a way that they neglected their homes and their families, he did not hesitate to witness against this by his sharp saying, "He who does not provide for his own, is worse than an infidel" (I Tim. 5:9).

No, faith in Christ Jesus should not loosen the ordinances of God respecting life, but sanctify and draw them closer.

Not by letting home life down in appreciation, but by exalting and consecrating the same, one opens for himself the way to the Father-house that is with God.



Our "house" is so much smaller than the "world." It is as an oasis in the wilderness of earthly barrenness, as an island in the world-sea.

At home we do not lose ourselves as we do outside. There we are more master of ourselves. There we *are* more ourselves. And the small dimension of the house is more proportionate to the small dimension of our small personality.

In the house it is quieter, more restful and calm. The wind of the day does not blow there so strongly and the noise of life has no entrance there.

Therefore you hear at home what you do not hear in the street,

and at home you can overhear far better the voice of your conscience, the anthems of God's angels, the voice of your God, that calls to you.

At home you are used to your surroundings, hence by what there you see and observe you are not so diverted, not so distracted, not carried so much outside of yourself.

On the street, others in a sense direct your life for you, but at home you direct your life yourself.

At home there are fixed customs and usages that have been practiced by your relatives, by your generation, in your own family, and this fixed manner of life offers you a support, suits your nature and inclinations, is in harmony with your entire inner existence, and thereby holds you in paths of holier sense.


At home there is more *truth*. In the street, in the open, and with the great public almost everything

is camouflaged and dissembling. Always a smile about the lips. Always the urge after interesting conversation. But at home the mask is laid aside, and you know the man as he is.

In the street is cool politeness, as the head is uncovered before one another and mutual bows are exchanged, but at home is the habitation of love, the glow of affection.

Above all, when you go on the street, everything tends to break up fellowship of soul with your God; while in your home you pray, at home God's Word lies open before you, at home with your own you can sing the praises of your God.

That God's people might be wise and not fall into the snares of evil.

When so much cooperates to undermine the power and the blessing of home, in our circles the foundations of the home life must be strengthened. 

Book Reviews



Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology, ed. David W. Baker. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001. 383 pp. \$29.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

The worth of this volume on eschatology is not at all the astigmatic look into the future, but the penetrating glimpse it provides into the present condition of "evangelicalism." Evangelicalism is shot. The best of the evangelicals are the bizarre premillennial dispensationalists. The worst are the "open theists." Much of the book is taken up with Clark Pinnock's defense of a god who does not even know the future, much less ordain it and direct all toward it. What feeble opposition there is to this idolatry is pathetic. The reason is that open theism is the logical, natural, inevitable de-

velopment of the theology of Arminianism: a god dependent on the will of depraved man. And evangelicalism is committed, heart and soul, to Arminian free-willism. The few who still hold out for something of the sovereignty of the God of Christianity refuse to condemn Arminianism as a false gospel.

Open theism is not even original. Its favorite figure for the relation between God and humans is that of a master playing chess with mere novices. The master chess player—open theism's god—neither knows nor governs the moves of the novices, but because of his superior ability he is able in the end to counter all their moves, checkmate their king, and win the game. This was the philosopher William James' defense of free will against the sovereignty of God long ago. In his essay, "The Dilemma

of Determinism," James wrote (about 1900):

The belief in free will is not in the least incompatible with the belief in Providence, provided you do not restrict the Providence to fulminating (*sic!*) nothing but *fatal* decrees. If you allow him to provide possibilities as well as actualities to the universe, and to carry on his own thinking in those two categories just as we do ours, chances may be there, uncontrolled even by him, and the course of the universe be really ambiguous; and yet the end of all things may be just what he intended it to be from all eternity. An analogy will make the meaning of this clear. Suppose two men before a chessboard—the one a novice, the other an expert player of the game. The expert intends to beat. But he cannot foresee exactly what any one actual move of his adversary may

be. He knows, however, all the *possible* moves of the latter; and he knows in advance how to meet each of them by a move of his own which leads in the direction of victory. And the victory infallibly arrives, after no matter how devious a course, in the one predestined form of check-mate to the novice's king. Let now the novice stand for us finite free agents, and the expert for the infinite mind in which the universe lies. Suppose the latter to be thinking out his universe before he actually creates it. Suppose him to say, I will lead things to a certain end, but I will not *now* decide on all the steps thereto. At various points, ambiguous possibilities shall be left open, *either* of which, at a given instant, may become actual. But whichever branch of these bifurcations become real, I know what I shall do at the *next* bifurcation to keep things from drifting away from the final result I intend. The creator's plan of the universe would thus be left blank as to many of its actual details, but all possibilities would be marked down.... So the creator himself would not need to know *all* the details of actuality until they came; and at any time his own view of the world would be a view partly of facts and partly of possibilities, exactly as ours is now. Of one thing, however, he might be certain; and that is that his world was safe, and that no matter how much it might zig-zag he could surely bring it home at last.

James' zigzagging deity is one of the more interesting gods of the philosophers. If he existed, I would challenge him to a game of chess. Novices sometimes accidentally beat masters. Master chess players sometimes make a stupid move. This now is the god of open theism. Accordingly, open theism's doctrine of the last things is that everything is up for grabs. This is some "gospel"! This is some "hope"! The god of James and Pinnock, however, is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. At least, the open theists in *Looking*

into the Future should have credited William James for their theology.

In addition to his bold espousal of an ignorant, hapless Christian God, evangelical Pinnock proclaims the salvation of pagans by their own good works of service to their heathen deities. This teaching is advertised as the development of Christian doctrine "toward a more inclusive eschatology."

The evangelical falling away from the gospel of God carries with it the publishing houses as well. The book is published by Baker, once known the world over for producing solid Reformed works. Rather than publish this vain volume on eschatology, Baker should have scoured the Reformed community for men of God who would write the truth about the last things — Reformed amillennialism — and defend it. Admittedly, Baker would have had to have "run ... to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem" to find a few.

There is one exception. Presbyterian Bruce Waltke's opening article on "The Kingdom of God in Biblical Theology" is sound, scholarly, and helpful. His detailed explanation of the typology of Israel's relation to the land of Canaan is particularly good. ■

Holy Fairs: Scotland and the Making of American Revivalism, by Leigh Eric Schmidt. Second edition with a new preface. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Pp. xxix + 278. \$27 (paper). [Reviewed by the editor.]

"Holy fairs" was the fitting name for a peculiar, if powerful, institution in Presbyterian Scotland not long after the Reformation: the communion season. Hundreds and sometimes thousands of people from all over a certain large area of Scotland would gather at set times for an elaborately ritualized celebration of the Lord's Supper. Usually, the celebration lasted four

days. It was held out of doors. This communion season was promoted among the Presbyterians as the high point of the spiritual life of the people. Numbers of preachers preached many experiential and emotional sermons. The gatherings aimed at personal conversions and at revival of the churches. To a student of the history of the Presbyterian church in Scotland, the Cambuslang revival of 1742 represents an exceptional instance of such communion season revivals.


The book *Holy Fairs* is a thorough study of this strange, long-lasting practice. The author offers well-grounded criticisms. The communion season was expected to provide what ought to be found in the regular worship of God within doors every Sabbath. It elevated the sacrament above the preaching of the gospel. The preaching at these events encouraged mystical experiences and indecent, disorderly bodily behavior on the part of the audience. The exaltation of the Lord's Supper at these services was virtually a Presbyterian counterpart to the Roman Catholic ritual of its Eucharist. And these large gatherings in the open air for days on end often took on a holiday atmosphere that resulted in drunkenness and sexual immorality. They were "holy fairs."

The special importance of the book lies in its demonstration that the Scottish holy fairs contributed to American revivalism. The immigrant Scots brought their communion seasons to America, where they became camp meetings and revivals. The famed Cane Ridge revival (in Bourbon County, Kentucky in 1801) had its origin in the Presbyterian communion season. Even the frenzied physical manifestations of the Spirit at the American revivals owed a great deal to the communion seasons in Scotland. The weepings, groanings, visions, falling to the ground, and jerking had their source, if not in most cases their exact equivalents,

in the holy fairs in Scotland. They are all now continued, and intensified, in the charismatic movement.

Scottish Presbyterianism has long suffered from the serious

weakness of looking to revivals for the conversion of sinners, the heightened experience of salvation, and a richer season of grace for the

church. This book is further confirmation of this reviewer's growing conviction that nothing good has ever come from revivals, and nothing ever will. 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

We could not help but note this spring, when our family received its yearly church directory, how much these have changed over the years. Directories still have all the important information like name, address, and phone number, but some of our churches have gone way beyond that by including, in addition to that, vital information, any cell phone numbers the family may have, fax numbers, as well as any e-mail addresses. It seems there is now no excuse for not being able to reach someone in the congregation. At least with so many choices available no one can ever say he didn't receive your message.

The Hudsonville, MI PRC has even gone so far as to send out weekly news up-dates concerning their congregation via e-mail. This information, written by their pastor, Rev. B. Gritters, is entitled simply, News/Prayers, and provides a nice link between Sundays to a list of Hudsonville members who have access to a computer and e-mail. Besides giving up-to-date information about Hudsonville's sick and those with special burdens, it also gives a good reminder of those we need to pray for.

The Hudsonville, MI PRC served as the host church for "Praise with the Piano," an evening of sacred piano music, on February 17. Nineteen area musicians each performed one piece of sacred music for a fitting end to the Sabbath Day. The full auditorium cer-

tainly testified that many were interested in this type of program. Perhaps if you were there you were surprised, as I was, that some of these nineteen participants ever played the piano. We certainly appreciated their willingness to share with us the gift God has given them.

The congregation of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI hosted a "Request Night Program" on February 17 after their evening service. There were vocal and instrumental numbers, with participation by people of all ages, from children to the young and not-so-young adults. Members of First could even go so far as to request a special number from someone else in the congregation, or perhaps volunteer themselves.

The Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI held their annual "Church Conference" on February 22, 23 at Camp Geneva, on the east shore of Lake Michigan between Holland and Grand Haven, MI. The theme for this year's conference was "Washing One Another's Feet."

School Activities

Spring is officially here (at least on the calendar), but it is not too late to include one note concerning last Christmas which just arrived in the mail in a school note from Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA. "Please pass this on to your students. Thank you for the excellent tape of Christmas music you put together for me to play on the radio! It was awesome! It will be put on the radio as part of KGMI's 'Family Christmas Special.' You will be on the radio from 2:30 until 3:00 P.M. on Christmas Eve

and from 9:30 until 10:00 A.M. Christmas Day. The hundreds of thousands of Whatcon County listeners will be treated to music that defines the true meaning of the holiday, the birth of Jesus Christ." Shane Kussmann, News Director, Cascade Radio Group.

The School Board of the Midwest PR High School sponsored a lecture on February 22 in the auditorium of the Hull, IA PRC. Rev. S. Key, pastor at Hull, spoke on the theme, "How Shall We Proceed?"

Supporters of Christian education in and around the Grand Rapids, MI area were invited to attend a speech given by Mr. Jon Huisken on "History, Principles, World-view: Things Parents and Teachers Ought to Know." Mr. Huisken talked about what should be considered when carrying a Reformed viewpoint into our teaching and lives. This speech was given on February 27 at Eastside Christian School, located in the lower level of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI.

Evangelism Activities

With advice from their Evangelism Committee, the council of the First PRC in Holland, MI approved plans to host weekly meetings at the Holland Mission for one more year. These meetings continue to be a source of encouragement for First, with some members of the mission attending worship services at First on a regular basis. The Evangelism Committee also was able to send out a special mailing to those on their mailing list. The mailing included a new pamphlet and a *Standard Bearer* subscription offer among other things.

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

Young People's Activities


The theme of the 2002 PRYP Convention (August 12-16) is "Youth, Examples of Godliness." If you need more information, please see the convention web site at www.Georgetown-prc.org/convention2002.

Minister Activities

At the beginning of the second semester at our seminary,

Rev. K. Koole, pastor of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, began teaching a course two mornings a week, an introduction to each of the Old Testament books of the Bible.

The Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI extended a call to Rev. C. Terpstra, presently at First PRC in Holland, MI, to serve as their first pastor. With Rev. Terpstra on that trio were the Revs. D. Kleyn and

K. Koole. Rev. W. Bruinsma, pastor at the Kalamazoo, MI PRC, declined the call he had received from the Grandville, MI PRC. Grandville has now formed a new trio of the Revs. R. Cammenga, B. Gritters, and J. Slopsema. Rev. M. DeVries declined the call he had been considering to serve as the next pastor of the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ. 

Announcements

TEACHER NEEDED

Faith Christian School in Randolph is accepting applications for a lower room teacher (grades 1-3). Applicants may call the school at (920) 326-6090, or Mr. John Huizenga, the administrator, at (920) 326 6186, or Mr. Joe VanBaren at (920) 326-6190.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 8, 2002 at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 10, 2002.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

LECTURE

Grandville PRC
Evangelism Committee
April 19, 2002
7:30 p.m.
in Grandville PRC

Speaker:

Prof. Herman Hanko

*"The Events of September 11:
The Devil's Work or God's Plan?"*

YEARBOOK CHANGE

Please make the following change in your 2001 Acts of Synod and Yearbook: telephone number of Lynden's parsonage should be: (360) 354-0496.

Genesis 1-11: Myth or History?

This 36-page pamphlet written by Prof. David J. Engelsma of the Protestant Reformed Seminary is now available from the Byron Center PRC. The pamphlet includes sections on the idea that Genesis 1-11 is a myth, on the framework hypothesis, and on other compromises with evolution that theologians are making. The pamphlet clearly points out that the rest of the Scriptures and the Reformed creeds view Genesis 1-11 as historical. The pamphlet also demonstrates that the first chapters of Genesis are the foundation for all of Scripture and that if the historicity of these chapters is compromised all of the great doctrines of the Christian faith are lost.

This pamphlet will be useful to give to others as a testimony to the vital importance of maintaining the truth of the history of Genesis 1-11.

For copies, call or write Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, 1945 84th St., Byron Center, MI 49315 or call (616) 878-1811.

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for March

Date	Topic	Text
April 7	"The Wonder of Nineveh's Repentance"	Jonah 3:5-9
April 14	"God's Dealing with Repentant Sinners"	Jonah 3:10
April 21	"A Sinful Response to Sovereign Mercy"	Jonah 4:1-5
April 28	"God's Rebuke of a Pouting Prophet"	Jonah 4:6-11