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A Letter to a Boston Minister about Dispensationalism
REV. R. C. HARBACH

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?
JASON KORTERING

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YOUNG PEOPLE and the Future

JAMES JONKER

Once more we have crossed the threshold into a new year. And once again, from pulpit, school-room, or even newspaper ads, we are reminded of “the future.” Young people have always been associated with the future. The coming generation, tomorrow’s citizens and homemakers, the church of tomorrow are but a few of the descriptions of youth. These descriptions are correct, to some extent. It is true that young people are thought of as potential adults by others and that they themselves think about the future quite a bit. But often overlooked is the fact that young people are much more than the coming generation, tomorrow’s citizens, or the church of tomorrow. They are also today’s generation, today’s citizens, and part of the church of today. They have a present as well as a future. They are not mere potentialities.

Preparation for the future is very important and emphasized, correctly so, to a great extent. Our physical, social, mental, moral, and spiritual development is geared toward the future. We are trained and educated to perform our life’s work. Spiritually too, we receive extensive training, as soldiers preparing to fight. And, without question, such training is necessary. He is a fool who makes no preparation for the future, true. But it is more. It is that the present is also very real and very important. The present is a preparation for the future, true. But it is more. It has meaning now.

In the church this neglect of the present place of young people is great also. Preparation for the future, which must be emphasized, often is the only thing that is emphasized. Many people tend to equate the church and adults. But have we as young people no calling today? Must we look only at the future?

The church, we know, is made up of the elect, historically the believers. In the church we experience the communion of saints. The elect in this communion are one unity, the body of Christ. This body, however, is made of different members and these members have a diversity of talents and gifts. Not only do different people have different talents, but the talents which one person has may change, either by being buried in the earth and thus lost, or by being developed. Now, young people are also part of the communion of saints and they too have talents, talents that can and must be used now, not foolishly buried until “the future.” Youth is an integral part of the church of today. Therefore, their talents and gifts must be employed for God’s glory and for the edification of themselves and others.

But what about the future? What are the prospects? It would be well to take a look. In the world things do, and probably always will, seem gloomy. Confusion and unrest, distrust and fear are prevalent. But how do things look in the church? And, more specifically, how do they look in the Protestant Reformed church? What will your future be like there?

If you’re looking for size and honor and prestige, you’re simply in the wrong location. It’s a small, struggling group and apparently for quite some time it will continue to be small and struggling. It’s a little esteemed and often despised group and it’s doubtful whether it will ever become universally acclaimed and praised. From a purely human standpoint, you could do much better. But are you perhaps interested in a purer manifestation of the truth of God’s Word and is that what you consider important? You’ll find it here.

That should be a challenge to you. God will preserve His truth, we know. But we have a responsibility, namely to guard
and develop it, since it has been entrusted to us. And that will be a battle. No area is immune from the plague of secularism and liberalism.

That is a problem, also for the Protestant Reformed Churches. We must develop our thinking, perhaps revise some deep-rooted traditional ideas, and progress onward. But progress brings danger; in a farmer's field weeds are bound to spring up with the planted crop. We must be careful. But we may not stagnate. There are those who fear the dangers of progress so greatly that they use that as an excuse in their effort to halt all progress. That is very wrong. We must fight uncompromisingly against all evil, both old and new, but we must be willing to change. The problem comes in drawing the line—deciding what is progress and what is evil innovation.

Note one prominent example. In the future we will probably see a hymnal in the Protestant Reformed Churches. (At least we would hope so.) What is that going to be? A sign of progress and development? Or will that be, as some seem to think, the great tragedy of tragedies, the day when we must give up all hope for the future of the Protestant Reformed Churches?

Young people, we must look at the future. But we must not idly wait for it to come.

Preparing for it we must act in the present, that we may develop our spiritual life and gain experience in the affairs of the church. Our calling is here and now. We have a responsibility not only, but we have many opportunities. Through our interest and devotion we can do much, and in the future, to make our churches the sphere in which the truth is further developed, in which the cause of education is advanced, and in which intellectual progress is made.

How can you do this? Make the specific causes of our young people your own. Support the cause of Beacon Lights and the Federation. Attend our hymnals and mass-meetings. Be a faithful and lively member of your society. Being careful, but having sound basis, don't be afraid to change the status quo. Criticize, not in bitterness or sarcasm, but helpfully. Talk and write on issues needing discussion. Read your Bible, and pray, and learn to follow God's will, for without his motivation and guidance all your efforts will be futile.

Our hope is in God, and therefore we can have hope in regard to the future. He will preserve His church and finish this work He has begun. So let us earnestly labor, abounding in the work of the Lord, for we know our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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**CONTEST EXTENDED**

Due to the erroneous deadline given in the October-November issue of Beacon Lights, the Federation Board is extending the rubric naming contest to February 1, 1960.

A year's subscription to Beacon Lights will be given to the individual whose suggestion most correctly indicates the nature of the column written by Agatha Lubbers. Send as many suggestions as you have to:

**BEACON LIGHTS TITLE CONTEST**

1312 Rosewood, S. E.
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Here Today Gone Tomorrow?

JASON KORTERING

Day follows upon the night, season upon season, the naked tree is transformed into a verdant bough, the arid and parched land, scorched in the summer sun, becomes inundated in the abundant showers which follow. The long sunny days melt into the grasping hand of night. Such is the whispering voice of time sounding forth in the oracle of nature.

Let us stop for a moment and focus our attention upon the tide of relativity as we encounter it every day. The food which we eat, tempting and succulent, is crushed and chewed for assimilation by the body. The words we speak can never be repeated in an identical manner. The air is quivering with sound and light waves carrying communications of every sort. The newspaper arrives, is read, and finally finds its abode encasing the refuse. Our body cells multiply and die daily. Moments speedily pass by, never to be relived. Even the "stable" objects as e.g. a chair or the piano are composed of protons, neutrons, and electrons battering one another. Every day is different even though we naively speak of the monotony and routine of life. On one day we may be vibrant, filled with zest for life, on another we may be filled with gloom and despair. Love — anger, suspicion — trust, confidence — fear, light — darkness, cradle our attitudes toward life.

Amidst this ocean of change, the question necessarily arises, what about it? How must we view this change?

This is a very fundamental question. Philosophers, dogmaticians, men of letters of every age have faced this same question. We face it as we stand before a new year.

Perhaps the most human and natural reaction is that of the skeptic. His depraved nature looks around and sees everything hanging. He simply throws up his hands and declares, I don't know, I doubt. He places a question mark behind everything. His mind simply reflects the instability round about him. Progression along the ideas of the skeptic will inevitably lead one to the threshold of agnosticism. Everything is relative, therefore I cannot know with any certainty, and uncertain knowledge is no knowledge at all. I cannot positively know anything.

Some look at the changes round about us and reason, everything changes. My body changes, all nature about me changes, laws change, attitudes of society change, even to such an extent that what is condemned today may more than likely be condoned tomorrow. They conclude that each may just as well live the way he pleases. Laws can have binding force only as long as they are approved by common consent. If common opinion changes, laws change also. Everything is relative.

What shall we say in answer? Is it true that as we are enshrouded in change and decay, nothing is abiding? Is everything in life clasped in the turmoil of change?

We know that there is an abiding surety. True, there is change, in fact very much of it. Yet in the midst of all the variations, there is the unifying Revelation of our God. That Word is a rock, a flint, which the ravages of time can never affect. It stands secure. By prayerfully letting that Word fill our life, so that its guiding principle becomes vital to us, we will surely have a foundation that shall be secure. That Word reveals to us the unchanging God. He is eternally the same. He deals with us in our faithful Savior. He expects from us the same reverence and fear that is due unto His holy name.

As we begin this new year, may we as young people of the church of Christ focus our sights upon the lighted pathway of the Word, seek to understand it, so that we may apply it to our lives and thus experience its abiding truth in the midst of change and decay.
In the last issue of the "Beacon Lights", we discussed the underlying and fundamental truth of the sovereignty of God. This is fundamental to any discussion of the subject which faces us. Before we can understand what view we ought to take of the world and of life—and that particularly as Protestant Reformed people, it is first of all essential to understand that God is sovereign over all. And this sovereignty of God is always revealed and realized through Jesus Christ His Son. This we have already noticed.

**SOVEREIGN OVER HIS PEOPLE**

Without saying anything more about this subject in general, the point to be observed is that this has particular significance for the rule of Christ over the affairs of men.

Christ rules first of all however, over His people. It is, of course, true and always remains true that God rules over His people. But this rule of God is realized and manifested through Jesus Christ. God chose a people unto Himself. This people He chose to be His own possession from all eternity. And it is this people whom He gives to Christ. Christ came into the world and walked among us the long and dark path that led to Calvary at the Head of His people. They belonged to Him because they were given to Him from eternity. And He purchased them with His own precious blood to make them His own. He took away all their sins and redeemed them from the power of sin and death which held them in unbreakable chains. He rose again from the dead in order that they might be justified with Him before the face of God. But because He bought them with His blood, they belong to Him alone. And because they are His possession, He is their King. He marched ahead of them in the bitter contest which was to be fought against Satan and His hosts. He challenged in their place all the powers of darkness to battle on the cross. And when He arose triumphant from the dead, He defeated completely all the forces that hell could muster and all the powers that sin had at its disposal to overthrow the kingdom of God. Thus He became the King of His people. But as their King, He rules over them by making them citizens of His kingdom which He had come to establish. He frees them from the guilt of sin and the influences of corruption so that they are no longer citizens of the kingdom of darkness, but translated into the kingdom of light. He establishes His throne within their hearts so as to rule over them by the gracious power of His Spirit.

The result of this is that they become willing subjects of His kingdom. Their eyes are opened to see the things of the kingdom of God which formerly they failed to notice because of the darkness of sin which closed their eyes and made them blind. Their ears are attuned to the sounds of the everlasting gospel of salvation which comes to them through the preaching of the Word so that while formerly they were deaf to all that was spiritual and heavenly, they now embrace in joy that which they hear. Their hearts are cleansed completely from the foolish notions of sin and the vanity of iniquity so that they set their inclinations and thoughts upon the things which are holy and just and good. While once they lived in open rebellion against their God, now they bow in humble adoration before the throne of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. They are not dragged by the scuff of the neck, so to speak, to acknowledge against their will the universal rule of Christ. Instead they love that rule of Christ, gratefully and willingly confessing it. They bow in recognition of their Lord's sovereign rule before the throne of His grace. They never cease to sing doxologies of praise and adoration to Him Who is
enthroned in the heavens. They see their hope and comfort, their joy and salvation, their peace and happiness in the rule of their Lord over their lives. There is no greater joy which life can afford than to kneel before their Lord and Maker. They see delight in serving their God. They are grateful that they may lay all their life on the altar of thanksgiving. They sing with the Psalmist of Israel, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Psalm 84:10.

And it is well for us to notice that this rule of Christ over their lives they are ready to acknowledge as a sovereign rule. Those who are the people of God and who bow in allegiance before the throne of Christ are eager to confess that Christ's rule is absolutely sovereign. Their Lord died for them. Their Lord saved them by His power and grace. Their Lord bestowed all the blessings of salvation upon them. Their Lord is always with them to rule over them, continuing to bless them, leading them through life until they are finally with Him. They will not and do not dare to introduce any element of their own power and strength as equal with or aiding and abetting the sovereignty of their Lord. For they know that if they do this, all their hope vanishes as a mirage in the heat of the desert. If their Lord is not their absolute Sovereign and King, they are destined to hopelessness and despair, for He alone can save them and their own efforts are always futile and vain.

Oh, perhaps this is not completely true of them in this life. Indeed, they know that they only very imperfectly recognize all this and direct their lives according to this principle; but they cling in faith to the cross where all their sins are washed away and they look for a better day to dawn when the weakness and sins which now characterize so much of their life will disappear as a bad dream.

But it can never be true that this kingdom of which the people of God are now citizens is a kingdom of this world. This is the vain dream of post-millennialism, but not the hope of the believer. This is true for more than one reason. In the first place, their Lord is not in this world. It is true that He was in this world for a little while. But when He came into this world, He came with the burden of our sins and guilt upon Him. And when this burden was all taken away by His suffering on the cross, then in this world He could stay no longer. When He arose from the dead, He did not come back to this life to establish His kingdom as the disciples fondly hoped, but He stood on the far and other side of the grave — on heaven's side. He went on into His glory. We see our Lord only now in faith, but exalted high above all principalities and powers at the right hand of God. Repeatedly He told His disciples that His kingdom could not be established here below, because the way to His kingdom was not the way of the acclamation of the crowds that thronged about Him to be healed and to be fed with earthly bread. His kingdom was from above, and a kingdom therefore, which He could only enter by going first to the cross and the grave and then by leaving His disciples and us for a time.

In the second place, we do not wish to see a kingdom of Christ established in this present world, for it is from this world that we are delivered. It is into this world that once we were born. Here we lived under the power of sin until we were delivered by the power of the cross. It is in this world that we suffer and are killed all the day long. It is here that we speak of life as a valley of tears and of the shadow of death. It is from this world that we are principally taken. And our hopes do not rest in a world from which we have been delivered. Our hope is fastened to another world, a heavenly world, where Jesus our Lord is and where we shall be free from sin and death to dwell with our Lord forever and ever.

And even though we must live here below for a little time, we nevertheless always appeal to our heavenly citizenship, that we are after all only pilgrims and strangers here below, that we look for a city which hath foundations, that we have all our hope and treasure above, that we cannot rest till we depart this life and rest in Jesus. Our Lord and Sovereign rules over us! To His kingdom we belong! We hasten on our way to arrive at the door of that kingdom. And in the measure that we do, the world fades away into insignificance!
"Junior, an important thing you must learn is that sin is not what you do, but where you do it."

Once upon a time, not too long ago, there lived a group of people known as the Logicians. They lived in their own secluded country, quite apart from the rest of the world, and few of them ever ventured forth from their homeland. These people were a distinct race and had many fine characteristics. But they had one that appeared rather strange. It involved their attitude toward popcorn. They did not believe in eating it, they would not include it in their diet, and most of them had never tasted it. And they, being Logicians, had a reason. They felt that popcorn was bad for a person. It often, they said, caused indigestion and heartburn. It made people sluggish. It was habit-forming too, and its addicts usually neglected more wholesome food. The unpopped kernels might crack your teeth; parts of the popped ones might lodge between your teeth, or, worse yet, under your gums, at least if you had false teeth. The older people, for the most part, had no urge to eat it; the younger people were forbidden to eat it. This principle of not eating popcorn had great influence and for quite some time was accepted unquestioningly by all.

It began to be a problem, however, when some of the younger Logicians temporarily left their country to learn a trade or to receive a higher education. For, in the countries around them, popcorn was a regular part of the menu and was highly relished. The young Logicians were often urged to try the popcorn. For a time, they resisted. But soon a few, and the number gradually grew, began to taste it, usually on the sly so that their own countrymen wouldn't see them. They found, to their great surprise, that popcorn didn't taste so bad after all. In fact, it had a pleasant flavor. Also, none of the dismal after-effects seemed to follow. More and more of them began to try it, and more and more of them began to eat it very frequently.

Word of the young Logicians' actions soon reached their elders. There were appalled. But, being practical thinkers, they tried to find a remedy. No longer could they talk of the horrible results of such eating because the young Logicians would not believe it anyway. After much planning, however, they found a very nice solution. Since, they felt, it was obvious that the young Logicians would continue to eat popcorn, and since some of them also had an urge to try it, they said: "If you're going to eat popcorn, eat it at home. Don't go to the popconeries in the other countries. If you must eat popcorn, you'll do it under our supervision." This decision made the young Logicians, and many of the older ones too, quite happy. Many purchased electric popcorn makers so that they could make popcorn in their own homes, just by plugging in the machine and turning it on. None of the older Logicians, and few of the younger, went anywhere else to buy it. They ate at home, and they all found eating popcorn so enjoyable.

It was very, very strongly insisted upon, however, that popcorn might be eaten only at home. Severe condemnation was on those who dared to taste it elsewhere.

"No, Junior, you may not ever go to a movie, nor to your class play. All drama is an abomination to the Lord. Be a good little boy and stay home with us and watch television."
Dear Frank:

True, the so-called “amillennial” doctrine is said by modern dispensationalists to be dangerous. We were taught this in the Bible School founded by Dr. C. Scofield, the father of American dispensationalism. But we have asked them, especially Baptist dispensationalists, where they find support, for example, for their premillennialism in any of the creeds of the church? Will they find it in their “Philadelphia Confession”? Some have answered us with the cliche, “No creed, but Christ.” In answer we tried to show our “Fundamentalist” brethren that they cannot defend themselves with the platitudes of Modernism. And there lies a danger! But search the great creeds of the Protestant Church of the ages, the Westminster Confessions, the Reformed Confessions, the Netherlands Confession, Canons of Dordt and the Heidelberg Catechism, and find that they furnish no basis whatever for either dispensationalism or premillennialism. They uphold the real, substantial and eternal kingdom of Christ which shall be forever. But they know nothing of a premillennial reign. When we say this, we hear the Dispensationalists (Arminian to a man) claim that then the creeds are inadequate and need eschatological development. But if we begin to interpret the creeds on predestination, election, reprobation and the fact that they contain no “common grace” (except in the mouth of the Arminian), then we hear the objection that the confessions are sufficient; we need no additional standards!

But our premillennialist friends must face the problem of the ground and basis for their own theory. For within the ranks of premillennialists there are not only the “pre-tribulationists” (that Christ returns before the Great Tribulation), but the post-tribulationists” who are but the next logical step from the amillennial position. Proof that the premillennialist must re-examine his entire position! There is an increased interest in eschatology revealing that dispensationalists are unable to answer such works as O. T. Allis’ “Prophecy and the Church,” and H. Hoeksema’s “The Book of Revelation.” Yet many, though they are more slowly drawn off from Arminianism, are being led to see the errors and inconsistencies of dispensationalism.

Recall the basic principle of interpretation used by dispensationalists, that of extreme literalism. They often ask, Is Scripture to be interpreted literally, or spiritually? We answer, Both! depending, of course, on the context and the usage all Scripture makes of its own vocabulary. But it is false to distinguish between the literal and the spiritual. Scripture, rather, distinguishes between the natural and the spiritual. We are asked, Is Israel literal or spiritual? One might also ask, Is the New Birth literal or spiritual? It is both, if “literal” be understood to mean that it is objectively real. But “natural” it is not; it is spiritual, a spiritual objective reality. But dispensationalism’s literalistic viewpoint concerning, e.g., Isaiah 66 and Revelation 20 overthrows the spiritual meaning of Scripture. Treat Isaiah 53 in this same absolute literalism and nothing remains but “the old, rugged cross” of wood, which stood “on a hill far away.” But the Cross is much more than a Roman gibbet. But how shall we interpret the concept “virgin”? naturally or spiritually? In Isaiah 7:14 there is no question that the word is to be understood in the natural sense. We are assured of this by the Holy Spirit in Matthew 1:23. However, “virgin” in Jeremiah 31:4 can be taken in no other sense than the spiritual. Both of these passages are by nature prophetic; both use the same term, yet it has both a natural and a spiritual usage.
So it is with the passages usually appealed to by dispensationalists. Zephaniah 9:9 contains both natural and spiritual elements. Our King is said to come “having salvation.” Make this salvation natural (“literal”, as they erroneously distinguish), and Christ is made a mere political and economic deliverer. Furthermore, the fact that “thy King” came upon an ass, and not a camel, war horse, chariot or palanquin of state is indicative of the spiritual character of His kingdom. The whole emphasis of the Book of Zechariah is predominantly spiritual, and its natural aspects are subservient to the spiritual. The same is true of Psalm 41:9 which speaks of “lifting up the heel against” Messiah. To interpret this in the natural sense would require a physical kicking of Christ on the part of Judas, a thought repugnant to Scripture. The natural and the spiritual, then, should be distinguished, not confused, nor garbled in one and the same text of Scripture as dispensationalists do. Who but Modernists question the natural physical presence of Christ before the tribunal of God in intercession for us? Nonetheless, the priesthood of Christ is preeminently spiritual. His work there does not consist in natural prostrations and genuflections.

The Incarnation was both natural and supernatural: God came in a natural body! The second coming of Christ shall be both natural and supernatural: coming bodily, visibly, and from heaven! Yet this does not warrant interpreting biblical concepts in the natural sense exclusively. What is natural about a chain which can bind a spirit being? What is natural about a bottomless pit? And shall a natural dragon deceive the nations? Dispensationalism has a mutilated hermeneutical principle. So the “thousand years” are not natural years, but a figure of an indefinite period of time. Both Luke 1 and II Samuel 7 teach that Christ’s kingdom is not for a mere thousand years, but “forevermore.” In Psalm 89:29, “His seed” may not be understood in the natural sense, for this would limit the passage to Solomon and tribe of Judah lineage. If dispensationalists were consistent here they would put Christ and all true believers out of the scope of psalm (Galatians 3:16, 29).

Why isn’t an extreme literalness applied to Matthew 11:28? This would make the rest of Christ a natural rest, so that Jesus calls the physically tired, and His promise is reduced to a guarantee against insomnia. This is to lose the scriptural conception of rest which is to enter into the enjoyment of a perfect finished work (The Cross!).

To what absurdities this method of interpretation leads! The throne of David is to be restored in the strict natural sense. A resurrection of pieces of furniture! The natural David himself is to rule on that “thousand year” throne, according to Hosea 3:5. The resurrected sons of Zadok will be restored to their levitical priesthood according to Jeremiah 33 and Ezekiel 40, whereas this priesthood has been forever set aside in favor of the unchangeable priesthood which is after the order of Melchizedek. Here is a reversion to the type in the face of the family and actually realized Antitype!

You are already familiar with the root error of dispensationalism which fosters the idea of two distinct peoples of God, Israel and the Church, a saved natural Israel with natural blessings unto eternity, and a saved spiritual church with a different category of blessings. Thus dispensationalists intentionally dichotomise the Word, making one part for Israel, “their Scripture,” and another part for the Church, “our Scripture.” The truth is, within the organism of the one true church of all ages and of both Testaments, there are two seeds (Genesis 3:15), the spiritual and the carnal; there are two Israels (Romans 9:6), elect Israel and reprobate Israel; and two churches, the true church and the false church. But the spiritual seed, the Israel of God and the true church are identical! The promises of God belong to that one, same people. The carnal seed, reprobate Israel and the false church are also essentially one, and of them God swore with an oath that they would never enter into His rest! Thus God’s promises are not only unconditional, but have a basic unity all through Scripture, are made to the one people of God in every age (believers, the elect), and flow from The Covenant, which is necessarily and essentially one throughout all the books of the Bible. The true Israel always had and shall for ever have all the blessings the Jesus died to purchase for them. Other blessings there are none!
You see, everything we have is founded on the Reformed conception of absolute election. Dispensationalists, to be sure, do speak of an unconditional election of Israel as a nation; so expect the restoration of a Jewish state. But the true Israel was never distinguished because it was of the Jews, but because it was of Christ (Galatians 3:26-29). And Romans 9-11, which says nothing of the restoration of the Jews to their own land, or their enjoyment of special rights or privileges, does tell us of an election that is God's eternal, absolute, unconditional choice of all His people from all eternity, not out of any preference to good in them, and even before they did any evil,—all according to His eternal purpose which He works according to the counsel of His sovereign will. This doctrine of election is the heart of the Gospel. Then let “Fundamentalists” be truly fundamental and hold the heart and core of the Gospel which alone will guarantee preservation from “the error of the wicked.”

PENCILS AND CHALK

Teaching Foreign Languages
in the elementary school

This is a report of a panel discussion held at the Protestant Reformed Teacher's Convention last October.

The subject of foreign language study in the elementary school has received much attention in the past few years. Many schools in our country have been putting such a program into practice. The reasons for studying a foreign language are many. One of the reasons for this is the fact that the world seems to be getting smaller all the time. Countries that used to take days and weeks to reach can now be reached in a matter of hours. With this growing proximity of nations comes a growing need of understanding between these nations. One important step toward better international relationships is the knowledge of one another's language. The current trends and problems in business and trade as well as literature and art can be far better understood if one is able to read that country's newspapers and periodicals.

Of course this is not the only reason for studying a foreign language. Study of a foreign language makes one more familiar with sentence order and the parts of speech. This familiarity often contributes to a richer use of one's own language.

But when must this foreign language study begin? Tests have shown that the third grade is the best time to begin the study of a foreign language. At this time the child has a very absorbent mind and mimicry is natural for him. He is also very inquisitive at this age and will thus be eager to learn. Tests have shown that at this age and up to the age of twelve the child has a natural bilingual ability.

So we see reason for the study of foreign language not only, but also for this study in the elementary school. Foreign language study is mandatory for most high school students, especially those who plan to go on to college. The study of a language in the elementary school is a good foundation for this later study. If we compare the language study education of our country to that of Europe and Asia we will find that we are quite far behind. In Russia the children acquire a writing and speaking knowledge of English before they reach nine years of age.

The aural-oral method is cited as the best approach to language teaching at this age. This involves, not the memorization of vocabulary words and grammar rules, but rather the speaking of the teacher (oral) and the listening of the student (aural). This method can be carried out in various ways. The teacher can teach her class a
song in the language which they are studying. There is much enjoyment in this activity and at the same time the children increase their vocabulary. Reading Scripture is also an effective way to increase the child's vocabulary. When reading they are familiar with the English and there is little difficulty with translation. After a year or two of foreign language study the child is presented with flash cards bearing the words already established in his speaking vocabulary by the aural-oral method. Often the teacher merely converses with her pupils in the language she is teaching. Any approach may be used as long as it is kept in a pleasurable context.

There may also be questions as to which foreign language should be taught. Those recommended by individuals who have made a study of this subject are French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish and Dutch. These languages are chosen because of their prominence in the world today.

As to the question of who would learn these languages, there are two alternatives. They can either be compulsory for all or they can be taken only by those who wish to do so. A very workable plan would be a first year course which is compulsory; then only those who have done well during the first year may continue during the second year.

The only questions left are "Who will teach?" and "When do we start?". Of course the teacher is the key in any instruction and must be well qualified. The ideal set-up would be qualified classroom teachers, but this is not always possible. In a 'college town' like Grand Rapids it would not be difficult to find foreign students who would be eager to teach their native tongue and make some extra at the same time. There may also be qualified parents or friends of the school who would be interested in joining in this program. Of course such an addition would have to be worked out in conjunction with the school board, perhaps through the educational committee.

Don't you think it's worth looking into?

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**In Our Opinion**

**SOUTHEAST PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUNG PEOPLES SOCIETY**

"Should the singing of hymns be introduced in the Protestant Reformed churches?" This question was submitted to our Young People's Society, subject to our discussion. We did not attempt to solve this question, but merely stated our individual opinions.

Why should we (our churches) avoid the singing of hymns? First, and most popular, is the argument of Arminianism. One could easily make a fairly good-sized list of hymns which are definitely Arminian. How true! However, this list would prove inconclusive, for these hymns we would avoid singing.

Would the entrance of hymns mean the exit of psalms? Would hymns dominate our singing? Probably this would happen, but for a short time. Anything "new" focuses special attention. However, do you think that the psalms which we have loved so long would pass from our hearts? Definitely not! Hymns would only expand our field of church singing.

*Why should our churches introduce the singing of hymns?* As previously stated, hymns would expand our field of singing. Moreover, hymns would more fully realize our sole purpose of existence, living to the glorification of God. We could select a number of hymns which, in their entirety, would depict the life of Christ from H. conception to His return as Judge. Thus, when singing these hymns, we would
Who should decide which hymns are not contradictory to the Protestant Reformed Truth? The Synod, with much prayer and study, could adopt the hymns to be sung in our churches. God gave us these hymns. We must begin to use them.

STANDING: Ken Teitsma, Don Veldman, Gerard Teitsma, Larry Postoor, Dick Ezinga, Everett Veldman, Dave Postoor, Ben Hendricks.


HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE

Book of REVELATION

by REV. H. HOEKSEMA

LESSON IV (Revelation 2:1-7): The Church of Ephesus

1. The letters to the seven churches all follow the same pattern: a. An address and self-announcement of Christ. b. An appreciation of the condition of the church that is addressed, with its good and bad features. c. A message of encouragement, exhortation to repent, threat of judgment, promise.

2. Address and self-announcement: vs. 1: “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write”: (1) For “angel” see vs. 20. He is addressed as the representative of the church. (2) Ephesus: situated on the coast of Asia Minor. Rich and flourishing metropolis. Idolatrons. Temple of Diana.

cf. Acts 19:23, sqq. Church there had enjoyed the labors of Paul, Timothy, John. The Lord announces Himself as (1) He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. (2) He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Cf. 1:13, 20.

Note here: (1) That this self-announcement is derived from the vision in ch. 1. (2) That the Lord is said to hold (fast) the stars, and to walk in the midst of the candlesticks. (3) That this announcement is related to (a) The defect of the church, vs. 4. (b) The threatened judgment, vs. 5.

3. Commendable features; vs. 2, 3, 6: “I know thy works”. a. “Works” is the
general term further defined in what follows. Refers to the entire conversation of the church. b. Christ knows them. (1) Is acquainted with them. (2) Correctly evaluates them. These works are further mentioned as: a. "Thy labour", i.e. difficult toil in the face of opposition, suffering. Hence, b. "Patience", endurance under suffering for Christ's sake. c. Intolerance with respect to evil workers. This had become manifest in (1) In their trial of false apostles: false teachers that claimed apostolic authority. They had tried them and exposed them as liars. (2) In their hatred of the works of the Nicolaitanes, which Christ also hates, vs. 6. The name is probably derived from their leader, Nicolas (not the deacon of Acts 6:5). They were libertines, men that used their Christian liberty as a pretext for a corrupt life. See vss. 14, 15. d. And this was still the condition of the church, vs. 3: "Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not tainted, i.e. in the midst of much opposition the church had not grown weary and not given up the battle.

Note: Aparently an ideal church: strong in doctrine and discipline; faithful in confession and walk. Yet there was a very serious defect:

4. Defect; vs. 4: "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee" (1) Something the Lord condemns. (2) In respect to which He stands opposed to the church; for which He holds her responsible. "Thou has left thy first love". Concerning this note: (1) That love here refers to the love of God in Christ, the very root of the life of the church. (2) That first love refers to the early condition of the church, when the church was filled with this love and abounded in it. (3) That they had forsaken this first love: no longer was the church filled with it; in some this love was not at all; others had fallen asleep. (4) That the church was held responsible for this: they had not watched, not emphasized the necessity of spiritual reality and truth. (5) That the church, therefore, lived partly by what love there was left, and partly by tradition. There was no true zeal.

5. Christ's message to this church; vss. 5, 7. a. Exhortation, vs. 5: (1) "Remember whence thou hast fallen" (a) Recall the blessedness of the former state. (b) And compare the present sad condition with it. (2) Repent: acknowledge this condition as thy sin and deplore it. (3) And do the first works: as the fruit of true repentance. b. Threat: (1) "Or else I will come to thee quickly", vs. 5. (2) And will remove thy candlestick out of its place: so that Ephesus would no longer be a representation of the true church on earth. This the ultimate result of "leaving our first love". c. Promise: vs. 7: (1) To whom: (a) To him that hath an ear to hear (spiritual) what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Note, that the Spirit speaks the Word of Christ. Note also the plural: churches. (b) To him that overcometh: endures to the end in the battle. (2) What promise: (a) The paradise of God is the eternal, heavenly realization of the covenant of God in the new creation. (b) the tree of life is the antitype of the tree of life in the first paradise: perpetuation of life, pledge of life in God's fellowship, favor. (c) To give to eat is to give the right and the power to eat of that tree.

LESSON V (Revelation 2:8-11): The Church In Smyrna

1. The Church of Ephesus represents the Church in the beginning of her decline. The Church of Smyrna is the Church rich and strong in tribulation.

2. Vs. 8: Address and Self-announcement: a. For "angel" see 1:20. b. Smyrna was a beautiful city, rich in trade, situated north of Ephesus on a bay of the Aegean Sea. Some think that Polycarp, who suffered martyrdom there, is the "angel" here addressed. c. The Self-announcement of Jesus is wholly in harmony with the condition of the church in Smyrna (tribulation): (1) He is the first and the last (see 1:11). He is the "Firstborn of every creature", unto Whom all things are created. Hence, He will be the end, the victorious Last. (2) And the resurrected One: He was dead and is alive with a
new and victorious life, victorious over all the power of death. The Church whose Lord He is has nothing to fear, not even death itself.

3. Vss. 9, 10: External condition of the Church: a. “I know thy works ("thy works" does not occur in the R. V.) and tribulation”. This is the general statement concerning the condition of the Church. Its chief feature is that it suffers tribulation. (1) The word denotes a state of being pressed on all sides so that there is no room to stand in the world. (2) Suffering for Christ’s sake. b. Poverty. (1) This part of their tribulation, most probably due to the persecution by the rich Jews. They could not find a position, a job. (2) The members were poor, and therefore, the Church as such had no means. c. Slander, reproach, denunciation: (1) Blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. (2) They were Jews according to the flesh. (3) But not in heart. On the contrary they were a gathering (synagogue) whose spiritual lord was Satan (adversary); his will they performed. (4) And their blasphemy consisted most probably in denouncing the Christians before the civil magistrates: the Christians said that Jesus is Lord! Christ versus Caesar! d. And this would lead to more tribulation. (1) Some would be cast into prison. (b) And they would have tribulation “ten days”. Notice, that there is a threefold comfort implied here: (a) The devil (liar, slanderer) would cast them into prison. There is comfort in the thought that the devil hates us and persecutes us. (b) The purpose would be that “ye may be tried”. The devil’s purpose was temptation, their downfall. But God’s was trial, for their good, unto “praise and honor and glory”. And God’s purpose is reached even through the work of the devil. (c) The tribulation would last “ten days”. Ten is the number of a complete measure according to God’s determination. Hence, the tribulation would last as long as God willed. And “days” denotes that the time would be short. Tribulation is always short in comparison with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

4. Its spiritual condition, vs. 9b: a. “But thou art rich”: (1) Notice that this is all that is said about the spiritual condition of the Church. (2) But it really implies everything good. And there is no rebuke in this letter! b. Meaning: (1) The Church of Smyrna consciously, by a living faith, possessed all the spiritual riches in Christ. (2) And was endowed with all the spiritual virtues that are in Christ: faith, hope, love, meekness, patience, etc. c. Why should a church in tribulation be rich? (1) Because God reveals His strength in weakness, glorifies Himself by revealing the wonder of His grace. (2) Because tribulation causes the Church more closely to cling to Christ by faith. (3) Because in tribulation the wicked do not join themselves to the Church.

5. The message it receives, vss. 10, 11: a. Exhortation, vs. 10: (1) “Fear none of the things which thou shalt suffer”: there is no reason to fear if we look on Him that was dead and liveth! (2) “Be faithful unto death”. (a) To be faithful is to walk and speak according to the covenant-relation. (b) Unto death is: even if we must die for Christ’s sake. b. Promise, vss. 10, 11: (1) “I will give thee a crown of life”. (a) The crown here is not the royal crown, but the wreath of victory. (b) And “crown of life” is a crown that consists in eternal life. Life as a wreath of victory! (2) “Not be hurt of the second death”, i.e. of eternal death in hell, after the resurrection. (3) For whom: (a) For him that is faithful. (b) That overcometh (see 2:7). c. And that hears what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. This means all the Churches. The Church of all times!

LESSON VI (Revelation 2:12-17): The Church of Pergamos


The Church of Pergamos was in especially difficult circumstances: (1) Satan’s throne was there, i.e., he had dominion there in a special sense. (2) And he dwelled there, i.e., he was permanently at home in Pergamos. (3) This refers to (a) The fact that Pergamos was especially given to idolatry. (b) That believers suffered martyrdom there. (c) Perhaps to the worship of Aesculapius as healer and saviour, whose symbol was the serpent. b. Already they had suffered bloody persecution at the time of Antipas, of whom we know nothing further. Is called “faithful martyr”, i.e. in this case: “witness even unto death”. c. And the church had been faithful: (1) “Thou holdest fast my name”. The Name is Christ revealed to us in all His riches and power. To hold fast to that name is to adhere to Christ in confession and walk, by faith. (2) “And hast not denied my faith”. The faith of Christ is the faith concerning Him, in Him, that which is believed concerning Christ. Not to deny is to confess that faith, the truth. Here expressed as “hast not desired”, because the Church was hard pressed to deny Christ’s faith.

3. Vss. 14, 15. Defect of the Church: a. She permitted false teachers in her midst: (1) They were the Nicolaitanes. Cf. vs. 6. (2) Here they are described as those that hold the doctrine of Balaam, etc. Cf. Num. 23:1ff.; 31:16. Having failed in his attempt to curse Israel Balaam instructed Balak to entice Israel to commit adultery and idolatry with the Moabites, thus causing them to stumble. (3) Thus the Nicolaitanes were those who taught the people to partake of the sacrificial feasts of the heathen and their accompanying fornication. Under the pretext, no doubt, of Christian liberty. Libertines. b. Hence, the weakness of the Church. (1) Was not one of doctrinal nature: the Church as a whole did not teach this false doctrine. (2) But laxity in discipline: they tolerated these false teachers in their midst. Is responsible for their presence and activity.

Note. Question: How must it be explained that in a church such as Pergamos, which was in tribulation and faithful (1) Such false teachers existed? (2) And were tolerated? Answer: (1) The severest form of persecution was past (in days of Antipas). (2) Men like the Nicolaitanes, who compromised with the world, had little persecution to fear. (3) The Church perhaps afraid to stir up more hatred.

4. Vss. 16, 17. Exhortation, threat and promise: a. Exhortation: repent! (1) This is not addressed to the false teachers, but to the Church as a whole. (2) She must change her attitude over against the false teachers and (a) Admonish them. (b) Put them away from their midst if admonition is of no avail. The Church may not tolerate evil men. b. Threat: (1) “Or else I will come unto thee quickly.” This means that the Lord will come to judge His church in Pergamos, and cause her to experience His displeasure if she does not repent. See I Cor. 11:30. (2) “And will fight against them with the sword of my mouth”. He Himself would send judgments upon the evil ones by His almighty Word. c. Promise: (1) Hidden manna the Lord will give the victor. Manna was the food Jehovah gave His people in the desert. It is a type of Christ, the Bread of life, as He imparts Himself to His people. Hence: grace, the favor of God. Cf. John 6:31ff. This manna is said to be hidden: (a) Not because it is spiritual. (b) But because it refers to the future enjoyment of God’s favor in His heavenly tabernacle. “Eye hath not seen!” (2) The white stone: (a) Stones were used for different purposes among the ancients. (b) The reference here is probably to the custom of casting a white or black stone in rendering verdicts; the white stone indicting acquittal, the black stone condemnation. In that case the white stone denotes the future public justification of the saints. (3) New name (a) Name denotes the person, character, nature. (b) New: because it denotes the glorified nature. (c) Only the bearer can know it; there will be individual difference in the future kingdom of glory. Endless variety with fundamental unity and harmony. Hence, this name is the proper name of each individual saint.
As is usually the case, the Federation Board has been very busy this fall. Its biggest concern was to plan new rubrics and appoint new editors for these rubrics in Beacon Lights. The Board appointed Miss Agatha Lubbers to edit a, as yet unnamed rubric, one especially for the young people pointing out the problems facing young people today. The Board appointed Rev. R. Veldman to edit a meditation which will be known to us as “From the Pastor’s Study”. It also appointed Rev. Harbach to edit “Truth vs. Error” from which Rev. Vanden Berg was recently released. And last, but not least, Rev. H. Hoeksema has given us his outlines on Revelation to aid the Young People’s Study on this book.

There have also been a few new appearances on the Beacon Lights Staff. Roger Harbin was appointed on Public Relation Staff in the place of Jim Jonker; Nancy Heemstra was appointed Proof Reader to assist Jim Jonker; (How much assistance will that be?) Lam Lubbers was appointed on Photo and Art in the place of Seymour Beiboer who has served the young people for many years; and Mary Pastoor was appointed Assistant Clerk in the place of the undersigned. Our greatest task was to appoint an editor of Beacon Lights to replace our former editor, Charles Westra. For this, Dave Engelsma, our Federation Board President, was appointed.

The Board also planned a Young Peoples’ Mass Meeting for the people in and about Grand Rapids. It was held at Hudsonville Church on November 3. We began by singing a few Psalter numbers after which Dave Engelsma, our President, read a few verses from I Corinthians 1. Mrs. Anne Ezinga rendered a vocal solo accompanied by Nancy Ezinga. The important part of the program was a speech by Rev. B. Woudenberg entitled: “What is Implied by the Inspiration of Scripture?” In his introduction, Rev. Woudenberg pointed out that the Infallibility question was already discussed at the time of the Protestant Reformation. Already in Luther’s time, this question was debated. He went on to say that inspiration is found only twice in Scripture; the one in Job which is irrelevant to the matter at hand and in II Timothy where it states that all Scripture is inspired or God-breathed. The authors were not mechanically inspired; it was a much greater inspiration than that. God, in the first place, prepared men for this task already on this earth. Secondly, God implanted His word in the hearts of His men so that it might be a living reality. And thirdly, God moved them to write so that every word written was accurately written. How do we then know that the Bible was inspired? The word of other Scriptures were quoted by Jesus and others with great power and authority. Rev. Woudenberg said in his conclusion that there is no other evidence than Scripture, neither is it necessary for us to have any other evidence. God swears by His name for there is no greater name to swear by. We know that the world won’t accept these arguments, because their reason must be satisfied. They can’t accept it in faith as we can.

As Rev. Woudenberg sat down, the audience sat motionless realizing that what they had heard, truly was the Word of God. We were then favored by an organ solo played by Mrs. Ruth Lubbers on Hudsonville’s new organ. The tone of the organ and of the piece she played was beautiful.

After a brief recess, we heard a very interesting debate on: “Resolved that Protestant Reformed Churches should sing hymn in their Church services”. Wayne Lanning and Roger Harbin were on the affirmative; Dave Ondersma and Jerry Kuiper on the negative. The affirmative pointed out that the Church has always been a singing church from the beginning of time and there is no proof that they sung only Psalms during that time; we know certainly that they couldn’t have, because the Psalms were not written until David’s time. The Psalms are only a paraphrase of Scripture and then only of the Old Testa-
Also, the birth, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ are told from an Old Testament view only. The New Testament is completely omitted. They also pointed out that there are Arminian errors in the Psalms as well as in the Hymns; specific numbers were given as proof. The negative also gave some sound arguments. However, since the negative could not overthrow the affirmative's arguments, it was ruled that the affirmative won the debate. Our President thanked the debaters for their contribution and asked Rev. M. Schipper to close with prayer. It was felt by all that the evening was very worthwhile and profitable to all, ministers and young people alike.

In closing, there are just a few items. The Board has investigated somewhat in starting a Scholarship Fund for all prospective ministers and teachers in our churches. At this writing there is nothing we can report. The Board also decide to discontinue the society visiting schedule for the young people in the Grand Rapids area because so often it is not convenient for the societies to visit on the date scheduled for them. However the Board does not want to discourage our societies from meeting with one another. We suggest that the Societies take it upon themselves to meet with the other societies.

Will the societies that have not done so, please send the name and address of their President, Secretary, and Treasurer, and the list of all their society members to Karlene Oomkes, 1312 Rosewood, S. E., Grand Rapids Mich.

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**Memoriam**

On December 21, after a lingering illness, Miss Alice Reitsma passed away. Her death comes as a severe blow to the young people on Beacon Lights' Staff, since she was closely affiliated with many of them for a long time. Miss Reitsma was a mainstay on Beacon Lights Staff for more than 10 years, was teacher and principal at Hope school for 10 years, and was the editor of the church news rubric in Beacon Lights. The part that God enabled her to take in the history of the Protestant Reformed church was great. For this we are thankful.

The Federation Board and Staff of Beacon Lights extend their sympathy to the bereaved family in the words of St. Paul in Romans 8:18. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
On November 27th, Hull church held a congregational meeting, and from a trio consisting of Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. G. Lanting, and Rev. G. Vanden Berg they extended a call to Rev. Vanden Berg to become their pastor.

Rev. M. Schipper, Rev. H. Hanko, and Rev. R. Veldman comprise the trio which Randolph's consistory recently made.

Our Oak Lawn congregation has decided to install a new gas furnace in their church. Also from Oak Lawn— their Ladies’ Society hopes to sponsor a social, program, and sale on December 11th.

According to one member of the recently appointed Constitution Committee for our High School, considerable progress has already been made in the formulation of the constitution; also a gift of $115.00 has already been presented by the Hope Male Octet. This represents the collection taken for this purpose at their November 22nd program.

Kalamazoo Men’s Society has changed its time of meeting to Thursday evenings in order to enable more of their men to attend. Rev. Mulder was scheduled to speak on an interesting topic at one recent meeting. The subject— “Scripture’s Errors”.

The Young People’s Society of Kalamazoo is studying the book of Romans at present. Their after-recess discussions are centered around “The signs of the End of the Ages” from Matthew 24.

Hope church’s bulletin announces a future conventioneer—a baby girl born to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Van Den Top. Congratulations!

At the annual congregational meeting, Hope Church voted to take a monthly collection “to set up a fund for the printing and mailing of pamphlets which will contain the development of our truth as we confess it, and which will be sent to all parts of the country as a witness to that truth.” More details were promised and we’ll try to keep you informed on the progress of this worthy project.

Holland congregation is eagerly awaiting the arrival of their pastor-elect, the Rev. G. Lanting; however, according to our latest report they have not yet been able to locate a suitable home for him and his family.

The ushers of Southeast church are launching a “friendliness campaign” to help strangers feel more welcome when visiting the services. The ushers make it a point to greet as many parishioners and visitors as possible by name, present them with the bulletin, and usher them into the auditorium. The Young People’s Society decided to furnish each usher with a lapel ribbon badge on which will be printed the individual’s name and the word “Usher”.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Miedema of Hope Church celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary recently. Heartfelt congratulations to you both, and may God’s blessing ever rest upon you.

On December 3rd, Adams St. School children presented an inspiring Christmas program for their Mothers’ Club. The fathers were also invited.

Hope School presents its annual Christmas program on Thursday evening, December 17th. This year the theme will be “God’s way Out”, and the material will be based on the Heidelberg Catechism.

Mr. E. Pluger (First Church) suffered a heart attack on Thanksgiving Day. According to latest reports he is getting along well in Butterworth Hospital.
As Time Goes By
Let Us Never Forget
Our Savior's Unfailing Promise:

"... lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."
Matt. 28:20

May each of you experience
A Blessed New Year
The Staff