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LOVE SHOWN IN FRIENDSHIP

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EDITOR'S NOTES: April 1990

by David Harbach

Prof. H. Hanko continues his series of articles prepared for his formal thesis about the history of the Janssen Case. Studying these articles has shown how our God has brought to existence our own Protestant Reformed Churches. In this issue you will find out what the Synod of 1922 decided in regards to the teachings of Prof. Janssen. This decision did not quell the uproar in the church. We are thankful that Prof. Hanko willingly writes for our young people.

What would you do if you confronted a person who was an Epicurean or a Stoic? Perhaps if we substituted the titles Secular Humanist or a New Ager would you still know what to do? Bruce Miedema guides us through a concise explanation of these two groups and provides helpful insights that will open the eyes of our minds so that we will be able to "understand the truth and understand the times."

Mrs. Carol Brands brings us another article from her series, "Letters To A Young Friend On The Book Of Ecclesiastes." In this fourth letter Carol has prepared a very helpful outline of Ecclesiastes that will be useful for anyone who wants to know the basic teachings found in this book. A good outline of a book of the Bible is often the key to keeping the main thought of the book in perspective.

The untitled articles by Len Holstege and Judy Hoven are written in response to the question asked by the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund Committee. Len and Judy wrote about how we are to live as leaders, either as a minister or as a teacher. There are several more articles written by other future ministers and teachers that will

be installed in later issues. From writer to writer, I was amazed at the understanding that these young people already possessed as to what it is to be a minister or a teacher. That can only be because God has used humble means to instruct them in this knowledge and given to us the knowledge of the Leader of Leaders, Jesus Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King. You will find an announcement from the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund Committee about this year's applications elsewhere in this issue.

"Love Shown In Friendship" by Becky Lotterman brings to mind the greatest love shown to us when God gave His Son to die for us. A definition of friendship might be ". . . the Covenant of Grace which God shares with His people in love through Christ. We are called as Christians to pattern our friendships after this one perfect friendship." Although Becky doesn't write an article with an Easter emphasis, she does bring out this thought especially with the quote from John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

April showers bring what? You guessed it. "May flowers." Emily Eldersveld writes about what these words mean to her as one of God's people looking at the spring season through the eyes of faith. Thanks Emily for providing me again and all our readers with a godly piece of writing. I have grown to appreciate Emily's writing not only because she writes good stuff but because she was a student of mine at one time.

Doug Dykstra has been our faithful treasurer for the last few years. His expert work in keeping the books and providing us financial leadership has been a blessing to the **Beacon Lights**. We are sorry to see him give up this work because of the pressures of other work. You should also realize that he has taken care of the mailing of our young people's magazine. We thank you, Doug, for many hours of faithful labor and pray that God's richest blessings will be upon you. We are looking for a new treasurer and hope to be able to announce a new one to you in our next issue.

Look for other changes in the **Beacon Lights**, not only the change in cover designs, but also in new type and page layout. We recently approved the purchse of typesetting equipment to replace the older equipment that our typesetter, Mr. Jim Van Overloop has used over the past several years. Out of a love for the **Beacon Lights** and our young people, Jim purchased typesetting equipment out of his own pocket several years back. Since then he has faithfully typeset each issue. In appreciation for his generosity and the desire to make it easier to typeset the **Beacon Lights** with different type styles, we have purchased new equipment for Jim to use.

Our printer, Mr. Jim Huizinga and those who help him, also deserve many words of thanks and appreciation for their Christian love shown to us for many years. It is a true fact that we will never know the many faithful hours of labor that Jim has put into printing this magazine and at a very modest cost to us. We look forward to seeing Jim print the **Beacon Lights** for many years to come.

It is because of godly men such as Jim Huizinga and Jim Van Overloop and many others that we thank God for caring for us and being faithful in providing us these workers in His

vineyard who show His love by the way that they give themselves willingly to the cause of God's kingdom.

Editorial

CHRISTIANS AND THE 20TH CENTURY MARS HILL

by Bruce Miedema

ACTS 17. Paul stood on Mars Hill and preached to two groups: the Epicureans and the Stoicks.

The Epicureans were the materialists of the first century and the Stoicks were the mystics. The Epicureans said "all is matter" and the Stoicks said "all is mind." The Epicureans said "there is no God at all" and the Stoicks said "God is all and all is God." The Epicureans were Atheists and the Stoicks were Pantheists.

Today we face the same two groups only they have different names. The Epicureans are Secular Humanists and the Stoicks are New Agers and they each believe as their earlier counterparts. Therefore, Christianity stands again between these two great movements of Atheism and Pantheism; there is no God at all and God is all.

One invaded our country from the west and the other invaded from the east. The Stoicks invaded from the west because the Eastern world is closer to the west coast and the Epicureans invaded from the east because the Western world is closer to the East coast.

Secular Humanism came by way of the schools and the New Agers by way of the theater. Secular Humanists believe "Salvation is through education" and the New Agers believe "Salvation is through meditation." Secular Humanism stresses "the world out there - space" and the New Ager stresses "the world in here - the soul." Secular Humanism is portrayed by Carl Sagan looking through a telescope studying the far reaches of outer space. The New Age movement is portrayed by Shirley McClain in a lotus position studying inner space - the depths of the soul. Both of these people epitomize the movements they represent. Carl Sagan received the Humanist of the year award a few years ago and Shirley McClain certainly has become the "pop theologian" of the New Age movement after writing three of her more recent books: **Out On A Limb, Dancing In The Light,** and **It's All In The Playing.**

How are we to confront the world of Epicureans (Secular Humanists) and Stoicks (New Agers)? In the book of I Chronicles (chapter 12:32) God's Word says, "the men of Issachar, were men that had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do."

THE THESIS is simple. We must understand that truth and we must understand the times. If we are going to be effective communicators of/for Christ we must understand the content as well as the context. We must understand the absolute truth of God as well as the relative days in which we

live. Somebody once said, "We live in a strange age in which the relativity of Einstein is considered absolute and the Absolutes of the Bible are considered relative." We must understand our obligation to be anchored to the Rock as well as geared to the times.

TWO ANALOGIES: I am told that government experts do not study counterfeit bills, they study the genuine bills for the reason that you cannot recognize the counterfeit unless you know the genuine. The counterfeit in some crucial area falls short. You and I must understand the Word before we can see how the world does not measure up. Without the genuine we will not recognize the counterfeit.

Found in the song book of many conservative Protestant churches in America today is a New Age hymn entitled, The Celebration of Life. It sings, in part, these words to God: "You are the grass I walk in, You are the water I swim in, You are the air I breath." This is New Age Pantheism. God is not grass, He made the grass.

The difference between a Theistic world view and a Pantheistic world view is a Theistic world view says God is (at least) as different from the world as a painter is from a painting. The Pantheistic world view says God is to the world what a pond is to the drops; we are all little drops in an infinite pond - some perhaps drips. Nevertheless all is God and God is all.

In these days it is more important than ever to understand the genuine because it is increasingly more difficult to recognize the counterfeit. Government experts are only able to tell the difference under microscope; we need to use the microscope of Scripture.

SECULAR HUMANISM never intended to be a counterfeit. We believe in God, they believe there is no God. We believe there is a soul, they believe there is no soul. We believe in afterlife, they believe there is no afterlife. We believe in creation, they believe in evolution.

NEW AGE is different. They believe in God, in prayer, in Christ, and in the Bible. All that sounds the same as we believe they hold also; and so they have become the great counterfeit of our day.

The last 200 years of America have been a swing from a Judeo-Christian world view to a Secular Humanist world view and now to a New Age world view.

Judeo-Christian. In 1776 the Manifesto of America included three indelible principles: (1) Creator (2) man is created (3) belief in God given moral absolutes. Through 1860 the intelligentia of the western world - virtually every scientist who founded virtually every area of modern science - believed in Creator, man is created, and God given moral absolutes.

Secular Humanism. This changed after 1859. Charles Darwin wrote, **The Origin of Species** and concluded, "evolution has replaced creation and if there is no creation then there is no creator, natural selection has replaced design and if there is no design there is no designer." Again in 1871 Darwin in his book, **The Descent of Man** says, "There is no evidence that man was aboriginally endowed with the ennobling belief in an omnipotent creator." By 1900 the bright minds as well as the institutions of Europe were converted to the Secular Humanist world view.

A bitter price was paid for the writings of Carl Marx. Stalin - who weeded out the undesirables - killed 18 million; Hitler - after reading Darwin -

began to weed out the unfit and killed 12 million. Someone described the 19th and 20th centuries this way; "In the 19th century God died, In the 20th century man died." In the 19th century man killed God and in the 20th century man is killing man.

Stalin - 18 million, Hitler - 12 million and America said that would never happen in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Enter John Dewey (1933) with a group of intellectuals who signed **Humanist Manifesto I** wherein these words were written; "there is no creator, there is no creation, and there are no God given moral absolutes." That should ring a bell, a Liberty Bell. The exact antithesis to the Declaration of Independence had been espoused in America.

In 1973 Humanist Manifesto I was reaffirmed and the moral implications were added: abortion, euthanasia, and suicide are acceptable. Since then we in America have killed more than 22 million lives.

Between 1961 and 1981 Secular Humanism won every major battle in the Supreme Court and we became a Secular Humanist nation. The courts ruled in that 20 year period that we cannot teach creator, creation, or God given moral absolutes in the public schools - some of the very reasons these schools were instituted in the first place. That means the courts ruled the Declaration of Independence unconstitutional.

New Age. While we were fighting Secular Humanist out the front door through the back door and basement windows crept in Pantheism - the embrace that smothers.

It began in the 1960's when the Beetles embraced the Maharishi and George Harrison wrote, "My Sweet Lord," and combined praise to God - Hallelujah and praise to Krishna in one song; and said, "I wanted to reach young people for Eastern religion."

It began when the hippies reacted to the materialism of their parents and went to the mysticism of the East. There was a "New Consciousness" that took over and people began to read **Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance**. In America there was a turn east.

Mysticism says, "to make a person happy don't add to his possessions (materialism) take away from his passions." Neither is right. One ends in Howard Hughes and the other ends in a Hindu Guru sitting along side the road turned totally inward with no desire whatsoever. The Bible does not say to take away possessions or passion to attain happiness, rather redirect the passion to God. God alone is able to fill the God-size vacuum in the human soul. The book of Ecclesiastes, in this regard is very relevant to this century. There is no happiness under the sun. Happiness is not found under the s-u-n, it is found in the S-O-N (chpt. 12; the great Shepherd).

MESSAGE DIRECTED. The Christian message on Mars Hill is not only to the rationalist who says "man is the ultimate authority and his mind should determine all" - the Secular Humanist; but it is also to the Mystics who say "Feel the force flow, Luke. Put down your visor, close your eyes, don't trust your senses."

When Luke Skywalker had to make a pinpoint bombing on the space station at the end of the book/film he even shut down his computer. Why? You can't trust technology, you can't trust science, you can't trust your senses or your mind. Just feel the force

flow!

We have moved from rationality to mysticism. We have moved from reason to feeling and Shirley McClain summarized it this way; "Total acceptance is what we are after, that's what we're all struggling for. When we totally accept experience without judgment we are operating on a higher level of understanding and thus a higher frequency." And this styrofoam. filled quote from **Dancing in the Light** (p. 312), "Now relax, let your mind go, don't evaluate and don't let the left brain judge what you are thinking. Give your right brain more space. As a matter of fact, don't think."

CONCLUSION. Here we stand, Christians and the 20th century Mars Hill. What's needed? To understand our times but to proclaim God's Truth; to see the experientialism of our day but to proclaim the authority of God's Word.

With reference to two aspects of this article I would strongly urge the reader to purchase and listen to two (taped) sermons preached recently in Faith and Hudsonville PR churches respectively:

1. THE VANITY OF LIFE (Ecc. 1:12 - 14; 12:13)
12/31/89 p.m. Rev. Gritters
*This sermon for a proper perspective of Christian life.
2. THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (Rev. 13:1 - 10)
01/28/90 a.m. Rev. Van Baren
*This sermon for a proper understanding of the present days. Series on the end of times.

For much of the content of this article I am deeply indebted to Dr. Norman L. Geisler, whose lectures I was privileged to sit through.

To Lose The Battle and Win The War
The Janssen Case
Chapter I [cont.]
THE HISTORY OF THE CASE

by Prof. H. Hanko

(Dr. Janssen had been exonerated by the Synod of 1920, but this did not stop the uproar in the church. The Theological School Committee appointed a study committee to study the teachings of Dr. Janssen and report their findings back to the TSC.)

When the study committee began its work, it had, obviously, first of all to learn what Janssen actually taught in the classroom. To accomplish this, the committee made a formal and public request for "Student Notes" and also requested Dr. Janssen to submit his notes from which he lectured to the committee for investigation. The first letter to Janssen was ignored; the second letter was answered with a brief statement in which he refused to

cooperate with the committee on the grounds that cooperation would involve him in responsibility for the many violations of Reformed Church Polity which, in his judgment, had been committed in the treatment of his case up to that point. This was the policy which Janssen was henceforth to follow throughout his treatment of his case including its final resolution at the Synod of 1922.

In a way, it was too bad that Janssen did this. Whether or not he was right in his insistence that church political errors had been committed, it would have been well if, while protesting these errors, he nevertheless took the opportunity to defend his own position. By refusing to do this, Janssen made himself look like he was being evasive with something to hide, and made many people suspect that he was truly heretical in his teachings.

These "Student Notes" then formed the material on the basis of which Prof. Janssen's teachings were examined.

For a period of time each member of the committee worked independently in his study of the material. After this was finished, the entire committee met for ten days in Chicago to attempt to come to unanimous conclusions and to draw up a report for the Theological School Committee.

But it soon became apparent that the committee was hopelessly divided. And so two reports were drawn up, a majority report and a minority report, which were submitted to the Theological School Committee. The majority report was signed by Revs. Manni, H. J. Kuiper, H. Danhof, and H. Hoeksema. It was completely critical of Janssen's teachings. The minority report attempted to explain Janssen's teachings in a way which made them acceptable in the church.

The Theological School Committee considered both reports and adopted the report of the majority. Although both were sent on to Synod, the Committee recommended that Synod adopt the Majority Report.

Before the Synod of 1922 actually met, the uproar in the churches increased. This was partly because the Majority Report had been published in the Synodical Agenda for all to read, and partly because both Janssen and his opponents engaged in a kind of debate through pamphlets. Janssen attempted to defend his teachings, and his opponents attempted to prove him wrong. All this controversy led to much discussion and debate within the churches, with the result that much of the opinion in the churches turned against Janssen. By the time, therefore, that the Synod met, the majority of the people were convinced that Janssen was guilty of heresy.

While it was true beyond question that Janssen was teaching heresy in his classrooms, it was somewhat sad that, to all intents and purposes, the issue was already really decided. Within Reformed Churches, including our own, the broader assemblies (classes and synods) are **deliberative** bodies. That means that these assemblies are called by God to consider carefully and prayerfully all the material that comes to their attention and requires decisions, and, after debate and discussion, come to conclusions which are in harmony with the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions. But sometimes it happens, as it did in the case of Dr. Janssen, that these cases are decided by popular opinion within the churches before the assemblies meet. The result

is that the assemblies, because of public opinion, find it difficult, if not impossible, to deliberate carefully on the matters before them. This is what actually happened at the Synod of 1922.

But, however all this may be, the Synod met in June of 1922, and the big item on the agenda was the Janssen Case.

Once again Prof. Janssen refused to cooperate with the Synod. He refused to appear; he refused to defend himself; he refused to answer questions. And the Synod was forced to come to its decisions without him.

The Committee of Pre-advice (which was appointed by Synod to study the matter and come with advice to Synod itself) came with a unanimous report condemning Janssen.

The Synod itself debated the various issues and come to the same conclusion: the teachings of Dr. Janssen were heretical. Janssen was condemned and he was relieved of his teaching responsibilities in the Seminary.

The final decision read:

With regard to **the question as to what to do with Prof. Janssen:**

Concerning this question the Committee decided to submit the following as its advice to Synod:

(1) Whereas it has become evident that the instruction of Prof. Janssen, as reflected in the "Students and Individual Notes" is unreformed in character, and

(2) Whereas, Prof. Janssen, through insubordination on his part has made it impossible for Synod in its investigation to go back of the "Student Notes". Your Committee judges that Synod is called to the sad task of deposing Prof. Janssen from his office, in accordance with the Formula of Subscription. . . .

In this way the controversy was brought to an end.

Rev. H. Hoeksema was not only a member of the Study Committee, but was also a delegate to the Synod. He, therefore, played a crucial role in Janssen's condemnation, and began already his strong defense of the faith which characterized him all his life.

Really, with the end of the Synod of 1922 the Janssen Case was over. There remained a few "aftershocks."

Shortly after Synod an attempt was made by some to organize opposition to the decisions of Synod, but this attempt failed.

Twelve protests were filed against the condemnation of Janssen at the Synod of 1924, but by the time the Christian Reformed Church was immersed in the common grace controversy, and had little time or inclination to talk again about Janssen.

One minister, Rev. Quirinius Breen, pastor of the Twelfth St. Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, made known his opposition to the decisions of Synod; but he resigned from the church before he could be disciplined.

In 1936 a controversy broke out in Chicago over the teachings of Dr. Wezeman, teacher of Bible in Chicago Christian High School. Dr. Wezeman was teaching the same things for which Janssen had been condemned. But this controversy lasted only a short time and Dr. Wezeman was also condemned. After Janssen's deposition, he lived in the Chicago area where he taught for a while at the Y. M. C. A.

college, and he worked for an investment firm. But his work in the Christian Reformed Church was over and his views condemned.

Scholarship Fund Article

by Len Holstege

What a tremendous example we have placed before us! Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is very God of very God, Who came into our flesh, Who gave Himself willingly for our sakes, Who died that we might live, now reigns over the Church as its head. We have Him held before us as an example of how we are to live in this world in the calling in which God has called us. Moreover, with respect to the particular calling of the ministry of the gospel, the example of Jesus Christ provides us with the knowledge of how we are to be leaders in the Church. This does not mean that we are to be leaders in the Church in the same capacity in which Christ is the leader, that is, as the organic head of that Church, without which there would be no Church. Ministers ought never to take the attitude concerning the Church, that without them, God could not have a Church. Nevertheless, there are certain practical truths involved in Christ's example which we can and must apply to ourselves as future ministers. In what ever circumstances they find themselves, these truths will take on the two-fold dimension of the life of the antithesis. The two-dimensions of this life are the negative and the positive dimensions. Just as Jesus Christ's life and leadership is an antithetical one, so ours ought to be.

The negative side of this life of leadership is characterized simply by saying "No!" The minister must be firm in his conviction both with respect to false doctrine and to sin. He must not be afraid to say "No" to both of them. False doctrine is on every side and it will tempt him. The minister is tempted to deny the power and effects of sin. To preach that we are all sinners and that we all are worthy of God's wrath and judgment is not very appealing. There is a real temptation to conveniently forget those truths. However, he must not fall into these temptations.

This negative side also deals with particular sins. The minister, though far from perfect, and though he is in the same condemnation with Adam as the rest of the congregation, must realize that God has placed him as an example to the Church; and therefore, he must fight his own sins very seriously. When he realized that this or that act is sin, he must avoid it like the plague. Otherwise he will find himself in a situation where the members of the Church engage themselves in these same deeds. Moreover, they will be justifying their actions on the basis that if the minister is doing it, so can they. The minister must watch his steps ever

so closely so that he practices what he preaches. The congregation learns a substantial amount from the life-style of the minister. Therefore, he must say "No" to the temptation of sin.

There is also the positive side. The positive side of the example-life of leadership of our Lord Jesus Christ is characterized by both humility and giving. Our Lord Jesus Christ was humble like no other man has ever been or will be. Our humility should reflect that humility. And we will be humble when we recognize both Who God is and who we are. God is the Almighty, sovereign Creator of every atom in this vast creation. He is perfectly holy and righteous. He demands the same righteousness and holiness from us. Then we look at ourselves. We are not creators; we are not perfectly holy or righteous; we are weak and frail and terribly sinful. Such weak and sinful people God has called to the office of the ministry. And before we boast, we beiter realize that we are neither better nor more able than anyone else. We, too, must fly to the cross and confess our sins and our dependence upon Him. We must rely solely upon God's sovereign grace, and not on ourselves.

This humility must show itself in relationships with the fellow members of the congregation. We must heed the exhortation of the apostle Paul in Philippians 2:3-5, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory: but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. . . ." Our calling to the ministry takes on a leadership which does not lord over the congregation. Rather, the minister leads the congregation with the attitude that each member in the congregation is to be esteemed over himself. The Church is not there to serve him, but rather he is there to serve the Church.

The positive side of Christ's example also includes giving. Christ gave His life for the Church. So should a minister. A minister should devote his entire life to the cause of the Church. He must be concerned with her. He must be sympathetic and compassionate to her concerns. He must also be ready to help her at all times. The apostle Paul says to the Corinthian church that he "will very gladly spend and be spent for" them (II Corinthians 12:15). Every minister must have that attitude that willingly he will give himself to the cause of the Church.

Christ has placed before the eyes of the minister an awesome talk. He knows that he will never be able to perform it. However, God promises that because He is also our covenant God and Father for Jesus sake, He will give us sufficient grace, not only will we be able to do it, but we shall also be successful. When we use ourselves as our examples, we fail: when we use Christ's example by God's grace, our labors will be fruitful.

"False prophets . . . divide God, as it were, in half, since they speak only of His freeness, to forgive, and declare His clemency to be set before all, while they are profoundly silent about repentance."

- John Calvin (on Ezek. 13)

Scholarship Fund Article

by Judy Hoven

As Christians we are called to be prophets, priests and kings. As Christian school teachers we are called to be servants. As teachers it is also our calling to be leaders. But how do we do this? How can we be prophets, priests and kings yet servants? How can we be leaders and also serve others? Who do we follow as an example?

As prophets, we must consciously interpret subject matter in a biblical view. Through this we must show the student what effect his faith has on every aspect of his life.

As priests, we must, by our own walk, show the student the truth and faith we live and are trying to communicate to him. If we do not live what we teach to be true, the student is not likely to believe what we teach is the truth.

As king, we must rule. It is important to remember, however, that we rule under Christ and must not use this authority wrongly. We must rule in love, always teaching the student that there is one greater to whom they owe their obedience.

In all this, as prophet, priest and king we must be servants. We are servants to the students and to their parents. We must remember that in all we do we may not take away from the authority of the home. We must assist the parents in bringing up their children "in the fear and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) We are servants of God and are called by Him. To Him belongs the glory and honor, for without Him we can do nothing. To God we must ultimately answer for what and how we teach.

For this calling, God has given us the perfect example to follow in Jesus. Jesus Himself is our only Prophet, our Great High Priest, our Eternal King and yet a lowly servant. All this is shown to us in that; as Prophet, He instructs us by His Word and Spirit; As Our Great High Priest, He sacrificed Himself for us in His atoning death and intercedes for us by the Father; and as our eternal King, He reigns over us, protects us, and leads us. (Doctrinal Review Question 30). That He is a lowly servant is shown to us in His lowly birth, His washing of our feet and His death on the cross for us.

We must remember that all this must be done in love and with much prayer. If we do not have love, our teaching is meaningless and bears no fruit. We see this in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: (Chapter 13:1-3 A.S.V.)
"If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbol. And if I have the gift of prophesy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

The apostle Paul and Jesus teach

us that through prayer we can accomplish anything.

". . . but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (Phillipians 4:6) "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22) Our responsibility then, as teachers, and servants is to rule, nurture, and serve as an example for our student in love, through earnest prayer to God.

Sources Consulted:
- Rev. David J. Engelsma; **Reformed Education**; Federation of Prot. Ref. School Societies; 1977
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Letter #4: Outline of Ecclesiastes

by Mrs. Carol Brands

It took days and days of concentrated study to be able to work out a good outline of Ecclesiastes. I copied every outline from my six commentaries and was unsatisfied with any of them. I tried to get a fairly accurate outline before my in-depth study just as a beginning and then revised this outline continually during the study. I thought I had a fairly good outline until I had studied past the first six chapters and then realized it didn't fit just right for the second half of the book. And so, it has been real "labor" to get this outline finished!

What makes a satisfactory outline? To my mind, it must not merely state some of the concepts in the book but must correctly get at the overall ideas and purposes of the development of the book. The outline should not merely tell the "trees in the forest" but should reveal the main areas of the forest; it should be the "map" which stops a person from getting lost in the new terrain. It must, in short aid to make the book **clear**.

The outline I now have has done that for me. It seems to me that this outline accurately summarizes the book's divisions and makes the main thoughts of each new section clear and easier to understand as well as remember.

Basically, the book of Ecclesiastes has two main divisions. Each division is exactly half of the book, six chapters. Ecclesiastes 1-6 try to find meaning in life APART FROM GOD but conclude that this is futile, that meaning in life is to be found only in God. The Ecclesiastes 7-12 start with this conclusion from the first six chapters and approach the problems of life from the opposite viewpoint, seeking to see how GOD'S WISDOM can be seen in the apparently vain and troubling situations of life. So the twelve chapters have six chapters dealing with life as seen apart from God and six dealing with life as seen in submission to God . . . or, stated another way, six analyzing THE UNBELIEVER'S ATTEMPTS TO FIND WISDOM and six

analyzing THE WISDOM OF FAITH IN GOD.

Within these two distinct halves, each half has three distinct parts. The first half of the book has **one** chapter which is INTRODUCTION, **two** chapters which recount PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, and **three** chapters which REFUTE AGNOSTIC ERRORS. The second Half of the book has **three** chapters which teach the basic PRINCIPLES OF GODLY WISDOM and then **two** chapters which APPLY GODLY WISDOM to certain situations in life and finally **one** chapter of CONCLUSION

Notice how easy the divisions are to remember 1-2-3-3-2-1! If you can remember the titles of the main divisions along with this 1-2-3-3-2-1 chapter division, then this should help you remember which chapters go with each division of the book

In outline form, then, here is Ecclesiastes:

ECCLESIASTES
"THE PREACHER'S SERMON"

Theme "The Search for Meaning in Labor and Life"

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

PART I Vanity in labor/life apart from God

CHAPTERS 2-3 Personal Experiences

CHAPTERS 4-6 Refuting Agnostic Errors

PART II Meaning in Labor/Life Found In God

CHAPTERS 7-9 Principles of Godly Wisdom

CHAPTERS 10-11: Applications of Godly Wisdom

CHAPTER 12: Conclusion

So think through the book a minute with your eyes closed . . . and repeat this once a week (or so) as we go on in this study. Just think:

1 chapter = Introduction
2 chapters = Personal Experiences
3 chapters = Refuting Agnostic Errors

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3 chapters = Principles of Godly Wisdom
2 chapters = Applications of Godly Wisdom
1 chapter = Conclusion

That's not really so difficult, is it? I had no idea when I first started trying that the book would divide up so well for easy memory . . . until it actually did!

A good outline is not our primary goal in this study, of course. Rather, a good outline is a good aid towards reaching our goal. May our goal continually be to understand correctly God's message to us, putting His Word into our hearts so that we may walk in wisdom before Him.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the usefulness of a good outline?
2. What are the two main divisions of Ecclesiastes?
3. What are the subpoints of each half?
4. How can you easily think through Ecclesiastes?

"Nothing is more precious to God than that worship which He has commanded."
John Calvin (on Ezekiel 5)

APRIL SHOWERS. . . .

by Emily Eldersveld

You've all heard the saying, "April showers bring May flowers", right? Well, what does it really mean? To me it means not only what it says literally - flowers will bloom after the rain - but something further: the rain and bad weather won't last forever; be patient and look on the bright side. Soon it will be sunny and warm and the flowers will bloom. Don't complain, for God sends both the showers and the flowers. So this saying is true of our spiritual lives as well. Hard times and persecution will come, but when it does, we must not complain, because it's sent by God, and it means that everlasting glory is soon coming.

We should realize that the end is coming, and it will be difficult, but also know that it isn't the end for us; it's the beginning. Be patient and look forward to it.

But are we ready for the "rain"? Persecution, sorrow, even death, will be everyday burdens for us in the last days. Are we frightened? We shouldn't be - it's important for us to realize that those days are coming soon and we must be ready. Are we even ready for the "sunshine" after the rainstorm? Judgment and everlasting life in glory follow persecution. For some it is the end - eternal damnation is all they have to look forward to; but for us, it's the beginning - eternal glory in heaven.

So we mustn't be afraid of the thunder and lightning in the midst of the storm. Look for God's hand, listen for God's voice, even in that darkness. Don't be afraid, but praise God because everlasting glory is soon approaching.

Right now we don't even experience these April showers yet. But the storms will come. It will be hard times - we'll experience true hunger, poverty, sickness, and death of loved ones. It will be a time of grief and strife for us, but also one of joy, because we know "spring" is coming. It might seem dark, dreary, and scary, but God will be there with us. So says Ps. 27:1 "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" And Heb. 13:6 "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Those trials that last for a short time will lead us to the "sunshine" and "flowers" that will last for eternity.

You know the pun, "If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?" The answer is . . . Pilgrims. That's true for us, too. We're pilgrims on this earth, just traveling thru this life with one goal in mind - everlasting glory. So the "May flowers" bring us to the end of our pilgrimage. And into heavenly glory for eternity. Because Christ is coming and then spring has sprung forever - the dark rains are over for us. Jn. 12:46 illustrates this: Jesus says "I am come

a light into the world that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." Only beauty and happiness - the flowers and warm sunshine - remain in dwelling with God. Ps. 16:11 tells us ". . . in thy presence is fulness of joy; at they right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

Then will the sun shine eternally. We won't need that physical May sunshine that helps the flowers bloom. Our light and heat and beautiful spiritual "flowers" will come from God's glory in the springtime of the new heavens and new earth. There it will **always** be bright and beautiful. And Rev. 21:4 says "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Now you see what we have to look forward to? God may send those storms, and the "thunder and lightning" may seem to overwhelm us, but don't fear because God cares for us and protects us. He **will** send the springtime flowers and sunshine, and bring us into his beautiful glory. Look forward to that in anticipation, for it's coming soon, as Christ Himself says in Rev. 22:20 ". . . Surely I come quickly Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus." And the April showers will bring those May flowers.

ATTENTION STUDENTS!

The Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for scholarships to be awarded to future Protestant Reformed ministers and teachers for the 1990-91 school year. Each applicant must also submit an essay of at least three hundred words, answering this question: "What's the responsibility of the teacher/minister in relationship to the parents in covenant instruction?" For an application blank, contact Jim Holstege, 1637 Sylvan S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506. The application, accompanied by the essay, must be returned by June 1, 1990.

James Holstege, secretary

LOVE SHOWN IN FRIENDSHIP

by Becky Lotterman

Proverbs 17:17 reads, "A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity." What does this mean to the child of God? Brothers don't get along well. But friends love at **all** times. They don't fight. They love each other and desire to be together.

Love is one of the many virtues that result from that all-important virtue friendship. You can't possibly have a friendship without love. This means that love is shown in joy, sorrow, and sin, as Proverbs tells us, at **all** times.

What exactly is friendship? There are many definitions of the term. Often, it is used in a very broad sense, for example, you might say, "I don't know her very well, but she's my friend." There the better term may be "acquaintance." Others view the term friendship as a relationship of strong bonds between two or more people. Bonds symbolize glue, and glue sticks things together. This indicates that true Christian friends can tell each other everything and trust the person to keep it a secret. Friends - true friends - don't laugh or mock when you have a problem. They sit down with you - and a Bible - and help you to solve your problem in the light of God's Word.

The Biblical definition of friendship goes something like this: The covenant of grace which God shares with His people in love through Christ. We are called as Christians to pattern our friendships after this one perfect friendship.

Just the other day, I had the opportunity to talk to a person in this school about what friendship meant to her. Friendship meant having one especially close person who is "best" friends only with you. That person is someone you can tell everything and who will understand and not laugh. Someone who is a Christian and who believes what you believe. Someone who won't participate in the worldly sins such as movies, dancing, drugs and drinking. That's true friendship.

Friendship is also caring. I recently read a story in the Readers Digest called **A Town That Cared.** It was about a boy in high school who needed a heart transplant. His community raised $80,000 to pay for his anti-rejection drugs which his insurance wouldn't cover. In God's eyes, that is true friendship for He tells us in Matt. 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

These are characteristics of what our friendships should be like, but what are they really like? Our friendships are full of sin. All of us have held grudges, and been angry with our friends. There is jealousy and a certain amount of competition. Peer pressure is always a problem, for example, we were once riding in a car full of kids. We passed by Studio 28. Everybody wanted to go

in except me and my best friend. These are times when you must stick together and hold up what is right. Proverbs 18:24 states this when it says, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Friendships aren't easy. You have to work hard to make your friendship reflect the love of God and the life of the church. This takes courage and help from all parties involved.

We must pattern our friendships after the most beautiful friendship we know - between God and His church. Ways in which we can do this are to pray for our friends. Seek God's guidance in our friendships. Discuss God and His church with your friends. This will also benefit your spiritual life. Help each other, don't try to make each other fall. Stick up for your friends in persecutions and troubles. John 15:13 reads, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." We must show this love to our friends and we will see the greatest of results. Christ loved us so much that He died for us. This is a prime example of love in friendship. Even through our sin He loved us and made us His friends. He tells us in John 15:15 "Henceforth I call you not servants . . . but I have called you friends." Let us strive with all our hearts to show this love to our friends at all times.

"God has appointed civil government, and His Providence supports it. All the numbers, and wisdom, and combination of men against existing powers, are generally of no avail. In one way or other, God, in His Providence, disappoints their purposes. When He sees fit to effect a revolution, the sons of Belial are always ready unconsciously to be the instruments. God does not employ His children in this vile work."

- Alexander Carson, The History of Providence

Singspiration Schedule

May 20 Hope
August Pre-Convention 1st Jenison CRC

The Young Peoples' Society of Hope Prot. Ref. Church of Redlands, CA welcomes you to the 50th Anniversary Young Peoples' Convention to be held August 6 - 10.