

JUDGE NOT

What did Jesus actually mean when He said, “judge not” (Matt 7:1)? Did He mean that we may never form or express an opinion about someone else’s actions? How far must we take this text? To illustrate with some examples:

Two schoolboys are walking into Woolworths. One says, “I’m going to pinch some chocolates!” The other protests, “You can’t do that. It’s wrong.” “Keep quiet,” says the first boy, “the Bible says you shouldn’t judge.”

A defendant is standing in the dock, accused of having committed some crime. Just as the judge is about to pass sentence, the man jumps up. “Just a minute, your Honour,” he shouts. “Jesus forbids you to judge others. You’re not allowed to judge me because you don’t know my heart.”

Clearly, taking Jesus’ words to these extremes is ridiculous. It is absurd to apply them in the sense that we may never judge others.

But then whom and under what circumstances may (or must) we judge?

Firstly, we must have been given the *authority* to judge. Therefore the relationship between the persons involved is important. For example, a mother may judge her child, an elder may judge those in his ward, and a teacher may judge a student. Here, God has granted authority, and with it the obligation to make judgments, and to act on them.

But in many instances, we do *not* have the authority to judge. In Luke 12:14, Jesus

Himself apparently did not have the authority to divide an inheritance between two brothers. He asks, “Man, who made Me a judge over you?” In the same way, it is not our task to judge where God has placed others in authority. For example, say you are driving past a building site and it appears to you that the workers are all loafing around wasting time. Do you judge their action as sin? Is it your duty to go and berate them for not doing their job? This is a situation where you could rightly be told, “do not judge”, for you do not have the authority to judge these workers. Their boss has a relationship of authority with them and he is obliged to judge their standard of work. As Paul says in Rom 14:4, “Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls.”

However, the obligation to judge is not always restricted to those in positions of power. The chapter which says “judge not” goes on to imply that we *must* evaluate a person’s character – whether he is a dog (vs.6) or a false prophet (vs.15) or whether his life shows fruit (vs.16). In the Church, as brothers and sisters, God has given each of us the authority

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Judge Not (*continued*)

to judge our neighbour. Because our profession of faith is done publicly we kind of authorize our brothers and sisters to warn us. It is our duty to encourage one another to flee from sin, and so strive to maintain the purity of the Church. In such cases, we are not only permitted to judge our brothers, but we are called upon to do so. Although we do not judge the heart, we must judge the action. We often feel uncomfortable with the idea of judging, because we know that of ourselves we are guilty. Therefore we tend to equate judgment with condemnation. But it is the sin that we must condemn when we judge.

However, we must also have *knowledge* of the specific situation in order to make a judgment about another's action. Jesus Himself warns, "Do not judge according to appearances." (John 7:24)

The second criteria is the *standard* we use to judge others. Do we judge according to the rules and commandments God gives us in His Word, or based on our own notions of right and wrong? We usually judge others more strictly and with a harsher standard than we do ourselves. We make a great fuss over slight faults in others, while we have a plank in our own eyes. This is what Jesus is warning against in Matthew 7: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure

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you use, it will be measured back to you." If we judge our brother without compassion, we can expect God to do the same to us. But if we judge him in accordance with the Word of God, using that as our measure, we can expect a similar standard from God. And isn't this what we anticipate anyway? Therefore, it is important to "judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24), that is, we must judge strictly according to God's standards - not our own.

And finally, what is our *motivation* in judging? It should never be to assert our own righteousness, or to show how holy we are. Nor should it be in an attempt to put our neighbour down. Instead, it should be done in love for our neighbour and for the Church. As for church discipline, the aim should be "to reconcile the sinner with the Church and with his neighbour", and "to remove all offence out of the Church of Christ." (Church Order article 66)

But it still seems strange to say that we *must* judge when Jesus says, "do not judge." How can we reconcile these two opposing commandments? We can only conclude that when we judge according to the Word of God, then it is not *we* that judge, but God Himself. As Calvin puts it, "He intends us to be *heralds* of the sentence which He pronounces upon the actions of men."

Colette Groenewold

Personal holiness

Some time ago while surfing the net I came across a few articles which I downloaded and then promptly forgot to read. I stumbled across them the other day and enjoyed the read. Here's one by Arthur Pink. The fact that it was written about 80 years ago does nothing to lessen its power and relevance...

It was a sad day when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit. They fell, and we fell with them. The consequences were far reaching, because by our fall in Adam we not only lost the favour of God but also the purity of our nature. As a result of this, we now need to be both reconciled to God and renewed in our inner man, for without personal

Eric Dekker

holiness "no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). "As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). God's nature is such that unless we are sanctified there can be no communication between Him and us.

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Personal holiness (*continued*)

A question: can persons be sinful and holy at one and the same time? Genuine Christians discover so much carnality, filth, and vileness in themselves that they find it almost impossible to be assured they are holy. Nor is this difficulty solved, as it is in justification, by recognizing that though completely unholy in ourselves we are holy in Christ, for Scripture teaches that those who are sanctified by God are holy in themselves, though the evil nature has not been removed from them.

None but "the pure in heart" will ever "see God" (Matthew 5:8). So there *must* be that renovation of soul by which our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. There *must* be an absolute compliance with the revealed will of God and also a total abstinence from evil which issues from faith and love. There must be that directing of *all(!)* our actions to the glory of God, by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. There must be a spirit of holiness working within the believer's heart so as to sanctify his outward actions if they are to be acceptable to Him in whom "there is no darkness". True, there is perfect holiness in Christ for the believer (that is to say that Christ has achieved that perfectness required of all believers), but there must also be a holy nature received from Him (which is to say that the believer must yet act in a holy manner). There are some who appear to delight in the obedience Christ has obtained for them so that they make little or no effort for personal holiness. They have much to say about being dressed in "the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10), who give no evidence that they "are clothed with humility" (1 Pet. 5:5) or that they have "put on. . . tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another" (Col. 3:12).

How many there are today who suppose that if they have trusted in Christ all is sure to be well with them at the last even though they are not personally holy. Under the pretense of honouring faith, Satan, all dressed up as an angel of light, has deceived and is now deceiving multitudes of souls. When their "faith" is examined and tested, what is

it worth? Nothing at all so far as insuring an entrance into Heaven is concerned: it is a powerless, lifeless, fruitless thing. The faith of God's elect will "acknowledge the truth which accords with godliness" (Titus 1:1). It is a faith which purifies the heart (Acts 15:9), and it grieves, truly *grieves*, over all impurity. It is a faith which produces an unquestioning obedience (Heb. 11:8). They therefore simply delude themselves who suppose they are daily drawing nearer to Heaven while they are following those courses which lead only to Hell. He who thinks he'll come to the enjoyment of God without being personally holy, makes Him out to be an unholy God, and puts the highest indignity upon Him. The genuineness of saving faith is only proved as it bears the blossoms of experimental godliness and the fruits of true piety.

In Christ God has set before His people that standard of moral excellence which He requires them to aim and strive after (Eph 5:1-2). In His life we can see Him walk the same walk of obedience which He demands of us. Christ conformed Himself to us by His demeaning incarnation; how reasonable it is that we should then conform ourselves to Him in the way of obedience and sanctification. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). He came as near to us as was possible for Him to do; how reasonable then it is that we should endeavour to come as near to Him as it is possible for us to do. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me" (Matthew 11:29).

If "even Christ did not please Himself" (Rom. 15:3), it is more than reasonable that we should be required to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24), for if we do not we cannot be His disciples (Luke 14:27).

If we are to be conformed to Christ in glory how necessary that we first be conformed to Him in holiness: "he that says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

And so, the challenge: either put on the life of Christ or drop the name of Christ. There's no alternative.

Reference:

http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Miscellaneous/personal_holiness.htm

Luther *the Revolutionary*

What would you do if we were persecuted in Australia? We read about people in India and China and other parts of the globe who are, what if it happened to us? In the last issue of contender we could read about progress of Religious vilification laws in Victoria. In this state of Australia you can be imprisoned for speaking the truth about the Islamic religion to other Christians. Should the same legislation ever be introduced in WA would we hold our tongues?

Paul writes to the persecuted Christian Church in Corinth. "... but God is faithful: who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with temptation will also make the way of escape that you can bear it."

We do not need to worry about whether we have the faith to deal with struggles. Our strength will come from God. But is this where we should leave the issue? I believe not. We can think concretely today about how we should behave toward a government that is hostile to Christianity. We are not the first to do this either, but we must also learn from believers of the past.

October the 31st is Remembrance Day, a special day for Reformed believers. We remember God's work in 16th century Europe, calling his Church back to the truth. The fathers of the Reformation lived in a world where the government was not sympathetic to the truths of scripture. The believers at that time searched God's Word to determine whether they must still obey a government that was persecuting the Church.

In this article and in a second one to be published on November 6th in this magazine

I would like to look at what two of the Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, wrote about a Christian's obedience to earthly authorities. I will here argue that there is a fundamental difference between the position of Luther and Calvin. This article, as the title suggests, will try to explain how Martin Luther's teachings left Christians open to react to unjust rulers with violence. Calvin's writings, which will be dealt with in the next issue, condemn this reaction.

October the 31st is Remembrance Day

**We remember God's work
calling His Church back to the truth.**

After centuries of darkness under the Catholic Church God's people in Germany were beginning to experience the true light of the Reformation. The Bible had been translated into the language of the ordinary people and they were for the first time able to read scripture for themselves. Luther himself lived under the protection of the Elector Fredrick of Palatine, a German noble and believer of the Protestant faith.

But Luther's situation was not as rosy as it first appears. Elector Fredrick himself also had a superior to answer to, the King of Germany, Charles IV who was also King of Italy, Holy Roman Emperor and the secular head of the Roman Catholic Church. Emperor Charles issued an edict commanding all subjects to surrender their

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Luther *the Revolutionary* (continued)

copies of the German New Testament.¹ The question therefore facing the Protestant nobles, and the emperor's subjects was: should they obey the Emperor?

In 1523 Martin Luther wrote an essay entitled *On Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed* in response to this pressing situation. Luther begins by upholding the scriptural doctrine that all earthly government receives its authority from God.² It is God's will "that the temporal sword be used for the punishment of the wicked and the protection of the upright."³ Luther provides biblical proofs for this doctrine, quoting Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2. The core of his argument is this: obedience to earthly authorities is a matter of obedience to God because earthly authorities receive their position from God. To resist the temporal authority is equal to resisting God.

However, by stating the doctrine of obedience to authority, Luther is not suggesting that governments might have unlimited authority over the lives of their subjects. In the second part of his essay he also outlines the definite limits on earthly governments. Luther says that we have to see that there are two kingdoms in this world: a temporal and a spiritual kingdom. The temporal kingdom has jurisdiction over the external affairs of a man's life such as property. The spiritual kingdom has jurisdiction over man's soul and faith. Says Luther "God will not allow anyone but Himself to rule over

***"God will not
allow anyone but
Himself to rule
over man's soul"***
(Luther)

man's soul."⁴ The practical result of this teaching is that if a government makes laws about faith and religious practice, then it encroaches on God's government.

This distinction builds the framework in which a Christian could disobey the government. When a government commands something that is against the law of God a Christian must not obey. Luther's answer is: Christians must not surrender their copies of the German New Testament.

Luther here prescribes passive resistance. This means that the Christians should disobey the government but must also be willing to suffer the consequences for this.

Luther says, "Should he [ruler] seize your property to punish disobedience, blessed are you."⁵ In March of 1522 Luther wrote a letter to Elector Fredrick advising him not to oppose his superior the Emperor should his representatives come to take Luther.⁶

At this point you may be questioning the title of this article: *Luther the Revolutionary*. Luther does not seem to be advocating rebellion. But the story doesn't stop here. In 1530 the Emperor held the Diet (meeting) of Augsburg to address the challenge of the Protestant Reformation to the Church of Rome. After this meeting it seemed inevitable that the Emperor would go to war against Frederick and the other Protestant princes.⁷

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¹ Cargill Thompson, J. *The Political Thought of Martin Luther*, Sussex, 1984, p. 13

² Ibid. p. 96

³ Luther, M. *On Temporal Authority to what extent it Should be Obeyed* (1523), in Luther's Works, vol 45. Eds Brandt & Lehmann, Philadelphia, 1962, p.87

⁴ Ibid. p.106

⁵ Ibid. p.112

⁶ Cargill Thompson, p.96

⁷ Ibid. p.106

Luther *the Revolutionary* (continued)

In November of 1530 a delegation of lawyers sent by the Elector Fredrick knocked on Luther's door. Their mission was to persuade Luther that a constitutional basis for resistance by the Electors (Noblemen) to the Emperor did exist.⁸ They pointed out that the Emperor did not gain his position by inheritance but was elected by the 7 Electors. Fredrick's lawyers argued that the Electors were therefore co-rulers and so could depose him if he neglected his duty as expressed in the conditions of his election. They wanted Luther to encourage the Protestant population to join the Electors in resisting the Emperor.

It is difficult to evaluate the validity of these arguments. However it is clear that Luther was not wholly convinced by them. In early 1531 Luther wrote another essay entitled *Dr. Martin Luther's Warning to His Dear German People*. In this essay he writes that if war were to occur he would "not reprove those who defend themselves...but I will accept their actions and let them pass for self defense."⁹ However Luther hastens to add that he does not want to "incite or spur anyone to such self-defense or to justify it."¹⁰

If Luther were convinced that there was a legal basis for resistance he would not have said he could not justify it. But if he could not justify it, why does he say he will not reprove those who do it?

... escape can only be found by obedience to what God says in His Word

Luther tries to excuse himself by saying that it is not "fitting" for him, being "vested with a spiritual office, to wage war or council war or incite it."¹¹ But if that were the case he should not write about it at all.

Luther is contradicting himself. However, what his readers would take away is this: physical violence against the Emperor's forces is allowed. This becomes even more clear when Luther, in his typical hot blooded fashion, audaciously adds that "A Christian knows very well what he is to do, namely to render to God the things that are God's and to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but not to render to the bloodhounds the things that are not theirs."¹²

How are we to deal with a government that opposes the Church? A practical lesson to be learned from Luther's life is that we must be convinced in our own mind what God's Word demands of us, and hold to that conviction even when the stakes get higher. Luther moved from a black and white approach to a pale shade of grey at the thought of his dear German people suffering at the hands of their Emperor.

Paul speaks about a way of escape in times of temptation to the Corinthians. Yet this way of escape can only be found by obedience to what God says in His Word. This way is never ambiguous.

In the next issue of *Contender* I hope to show how Calvin's teaching on this point contrasts Luther's.

Arend Witten

⁸ Shoenberger, Church, "The Development of the Lutheran Theory of Resistance: 1523-1530", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Apr. 1977, p. 64

⁹ Luther, M. *Dr. Martin Luther's Letter to his Dear German People* (1531), in *Luther's Works*, vol 47. Eds Brandt & Lehmann, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 19

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.19

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.18

¹² *Ibid.* p.19

LIFE after DEATH

In America there was a flood. Latest reports at the time of writing inform me that there are nearly 400 confirmed corpses. Horrible.

In Sumatra a plane crashed, killing all on board. Horrible.

In Palestine – well, you've all heard about the misery of those living in the war torn areas around there. Horrible.

This is the result of what would normally be an insignificant event, the eating of a fruit. Unfortunately, it was a special fruit, a forbidden fruit, and the warning which had been given prior to its eating came true.

And so, into a perfect paradise came death. The previously unknown stench was overwhelming. And Adam walked slowly away from the Garden, the smell trailing along behind, slowly spreading across the once perfect horizon. The odour grew more foul as time went by. Man had died, was dead.

Each and every one.

Read Romans 3, a quote from the Psalms:

***There is none righteous, no not one,
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.
Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practised deceit,
the poison of asps is under their lips;
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Their feet are swift to shed blood...***

*"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins"
(Eph 2:1)*

To whom does this refer? Paul is clear: US ALL.

And so Creation was doomed, it was a failure. The crowning glory of the new earth had fallen, died.

But wait ... there was a sound. A sound of joyful singing coming from Heaven. A baby had been born. A child had come, sent by God, charged with the duty of restoring life to a dead race. A Man, also true God, had arrived, willing and able to restore a soul to that which had disintegrated.

Sometime, when you have time, read Ephesians 2. Focus especially on verse 1, which proclaims that most glorious Gospel message of salvation. You'll read and be overwhelmed, because "He made alive". In the Geneva study Bible that passage is in italics. I wish it was in bold print too.

Yes, there is none righteous – except for those MADE righteous in Christ. All turned aside, until CHRIST turned them back. No one did good, no one COULD do good, until Christ restored that ability to

those whom He had chosen.

I read somewhere that a main objective of studying the Bible is to ensure that you consider the riches of God's grace toward sinners. Think about it: RICHES (the blessing of life is certainly a rich one), of GOD'S GRACE (nothing earned, nothing contributed – sola gracia), toward SINNERS (no one is righteous, no one DESERVES the riches).

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LIFE after DEATH (*continued*)

It's wonderful to have this message in your bedside drawer, within easy reach. It's even better if you have it in your hands and you read it.

What better pastime could you have then to allow yourself to be reminded that you have been made alive in Christ.

You have been raised and made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places (no less).

All this God did by His love, by His grace, by His mercy. And while it involves faith, it does not involve any works "whereby one could boast." The end result is that now we can rejoice as a new creation, a re-creation, able, in Christ, to walk in good works, as God planned beforehand.

Paul once wrote in Ephesians that we walked the walk of the prince of the power of the air. Not only was all mankind dead, but he was also subject to the control of the devil. Not only was He unable to crawl out of the pit he had cast himself into (being dead), but the devil was keeping him there. Man was a slave of Satan, subject to his will. And that is still the lot of those who are not

liberated by Christ today. No wonder the horrors in the news!!

And so the surprise at man's degeneracy suddenly disappears.

And so the foolishness of those who suggest that man is able to do good suddenly becomes clear.

And so we laugh at the ludicrousness of those who think that reason can guide us.

Because it has become clear – man is dead.

Fortunately, that's not the end of the story though. For Christ has ensured that he be made alive again.

And that's why I can continue to go through life with a smile. A smile that will continue so long as I open my Bible and get reminded of what Christ has done for me.

So take the Bible, and have a lovely week.

Eric Dekker

On the Other Hand

We all know that dancing is wrong (don't we?).

But is this true?

Who says?

What is this statement based on?

Email replies to eric.dekker@frsa.asn.au

A Christian Environmentalist?

The Australian Institute¹³ recently conducted a survey of the attitude of Australians concerning the environment. The aim of the study was to establish if the current level of environmental awareness being taught was resulting in young people being more environmentally conscious than the older generations. The participants were asked several questions regarding their thoughts and views on the environment and the effect human impact has on it. In one of the questions, for example, the participants were asked whether they agreed with the following statement:

'At heart I am an environmentalist'

The results of this question were graphed according to age. Just over 40% of Australians between 14 and 17 years of age agreed with this statement. The number went up as the age increased with just over 60% of 25-34 year olds agreeing. The graph reached its highest point with over 75% of 50-64 year olds considering themselves to be an environmentalist at heart.

The results from this survey were somewhat surprising to the Australian Institute. They expected a greater proportion of young people to be concerned about our environmental impact. This study was conducted over 56,344 people aged 14 years and over across Australia.

But what sort of result would we get from this same question, if it were posed to all the members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia?

What percentage of people would agree with the statement; *'At heart I am an environmentalist?'*

Is it possible for an individual to be both a Christian and an environmentalist?

The term 'environmentalist' usually conjures up in our minds images of long haired hippies chaining themselves to trees, or political parties that treat the earth and nature as a god, putting human life on par with animals. The environmentalists presented to us through the media often are extremists and their beliefs obviously contradict our Christian worldview. There are hundreds of environmental groups established around the world today, ranging from protecting rainforests to the marine ecosystem. But of all the many groups throughout the world, it is very rare to find an environmental group with a Christian viewpoint. The term environmentalist has been hijacked by the green movement in such a way that the word is often responded to with ridicule and contempt, even in our church circles.

When discussing the need for environmental awareness among Christians, the point is often raised, 'But God gave the earth for man to use.' But is this actually what the Bible teaches us?

In Genesis 1:26 God says, *'Let them [i.e. mankind] have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'*

In verse 28 of the same chapter God gives this command to Adam and Eve along with the command to be *'fruitful and multiply'*, a command which we believe still applies today. David echoes this command in Psalm 8. He considers the wonder of all around him that God created, and is

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¹³ <http://www.tai.org.au/>

A Christian Environmentalist? *(continued)*

amazed how insignificant man is compared to the rest of God's creation.

Yet He also proclaims, *'You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen - even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the sea. O LORD, our Lord how excellent is Your Name in all the earth!'* (Ps 8:6-9)

The key word in both these Bible passages is dominion. God did not create the earth for man to use; He placed man in dominion over His Creation.

The NIV has a slightly different translation of verse 6: *'You made him ruler over the works of Your hands...'*

The same word is used by the NIV in Genesis 1:26, *'Let them rule over the fish of the sea...'*

Both the word *rule* and *dominion* carry with them a certain amount of authority as well as responsibility. Adam, and likewise all mankind, was not given the earth to use for his own selfish desires, but was made a ruler over the earth and all that dwells on it: he was made the **king** of Creation.

In Deuteronomy 17 God told the Israelites of the qualities He expected in a king. It is the king's primary duty to rule over his people, not in a way benefiting himself, but as a benefit to the nation as a whole.

Unfortunately, throughout history many kings and rulers have abused their position of authority. Even in recent history, governments have destroyed and persecuted the very people who they are supposed to protect and serve!

Through God's command to Adam, all mankind has been placed in authority over

God's Creation. In Genesis 1:26, the Triune God reveals why He created mankind. By having dominion over, and caring for creation man is bringing honour and glory to the Almighty Creator!

Much has changed since the beginning when God created all things good. Not long after Adam received his commission from God, he was tempted by the devil and fell into sin. The Fall had dramatic effect on the creation of God. The things which were good became corrupt and wicked. The earth brought forth thorns and thistles, and creatures which were vegetarian became carnivores, devouring each other. In Chapter 3:17, God curses the ground (Creation) because of Adam's sin. The Fall did not change Adam's task on earth as described in Chapter 1:28, the job just became more difficult.

As Christians, we also acknowledge that God has allowed us to enjoy the gift of Creation. Just as the Old Testament kings were allowed certain privileges with their position, so we also may use the earth responsibly for our well-being and comfort. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 9 that a laborer is worthy of his wages. In Chapter 7:31 of the same letter, Paul reminds us that this sinful world is passing away. We do not, like many environmentalists today, demand that we abandon our technologies and return to the stone-age to restore the earth to its former condition. God has given us many riches on this earth and blessed us with the ability to discover ways to use these resources. Minerals may be mined, land may be cleared, etc, but it is important that while we 'use' God's Creation, we remember that we are kings ruling His Kingdom.

Since the beginning of the world, it has been our duty and privilege to rule over

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A Christian Environmentalist? *(continued)*

God's Creation. Unfortunately the people of the world no longer regard the earth and all its life as special Creation of God. The accepted view is that we, along with all life, evolved over millions of years. By nature man is inclined to hate God and all things which remind him of God. This is evident in the world around us. God and His commands are ignored, and His Creation is being systematically destroyed in man's insatiable desire for wealth and luxury.

Can we leave the important and God-given task of caring for Creation to those who do not honour or acknowledge God?

The first environmental damage occurred with man's fall into sin. Since then the damage has increased, particularly after the Industrial Revolution a few centuries ago. We, as God's people, still have the commission God gave in Genesis 1:28. We still are required to *'be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'*

Our task is by no means an easy one. We seem to be fighting a losing battle. Caring

for God's Creation is not our only task here on this earth. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples, and also us, shortly before He was taken up to Heaven. This commission does not replace Genesis 1:28, but is an extra task. God has given us much work to do.

O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is Your Name
in all the earth

Is it possible to be a Christian and not spread God's Word?

Is it possible to be a Christian and not be a creationist?

Is it possible to be a Christian and not be pro-life?

Is it possible to be a Christian and not an environmentalist?

Adrian Hordyk

Aim:

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

This magazine will encourage its readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. Its basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the Una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

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