

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Exhorted To Walk Honestly

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The Breakdown of Doctrinal Discipline

The Day of Shadows:

God's Earthly Masterpiece

Feature:

An Examination of Reach Out and The Greatest Is Love

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Meditation

Exhorted To Walk Honestly

Rev. M. Schipper

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

I Peter 2:11, 12.

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles," that is the positive and central thought of this text!

In fact, this will be the central theme which the

apostle will develop throughout the rest of this epistle. He will show how this honest walk of God's elect shall be clearly demonstrated in every department of life. As the elect strangers and pilgrims stand in respect to their

government, in respect to the servant-master relation, in respect to the marital relation, and in respect to the church; in each of these phases of life they are to walk honestly before the eyes of all.

Important it is, therefore, to understand clearly what the apostle has in mind when he speaks of the saints' walk, and what is implied in walking honestly among the Gentiles.

One's conversation or walk has to do with one's whole manner of life. And in the text the emphasis falls on the outward manifestation of this walk. This is also the implication of the term: "conversation." It implies a dialogue, an exchange of words, audibly spoken, between two or more persons. However, it can be easily understood that one's conversation, or one's walk, has more to it than mere outward form. Life and its manifestation is not only what can be seen of it. One's life and walk is always motivated by inward principles. From one's life and walk cannot be excluded the motivating, dominating, moral disposition of the man. It is the motions of the heart within that are reflected in the outward walk. As a man thinketh in his heart, says the Scripture, so is he. Especially does this become very clear when you consider that walk from the point of view of sin and grace.

In our text it is most important to note that the apostle is speaking of the walk of the elect strangers and pilgrims, the believers in Christ. It stands to reason that their walk will be quite different from that of the unbeliever. O, indeed, the unbeliever, or, as he is called in the text, the Gentile, has a walk too. And his walk, his outward conduct, is also motivated by inward principles, by a wicked, unregenerate heart. He is inwardly corrupt. He is ungodly at heart. All his thoughts are to do evil. His will is perverse. His root is unholy. Hence, all his outward conduct and manifestation of life is revealed in every kind of abominable work. When he speaks, he curses. When he works, he murders, steals, commits adultery. When he sings, he rejoices in darkness. Because he does not have faith, all his works are sin; for "what is not done out of faith, is sin" so Paul writes to the Romans. The converse of this is true of the believer in Christ, in the regenerated child of God. His walk is motivated out of a new heart, out of the principle of grace, out of the love of God.

O, it is true, that the children of God have only a small beginning of new obedience. And it is true also that they have this grace in an old nature. That is why they are exhorted in the text to walk honestly, and negatively, to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

Fleshly lusts!

Those carnal desires that have their seat in our old nature!

Flesh is not only the visible material of which our bodies are composed, that part of us which we can place before a looking glass and pamper. That is part of

it. That belongs to our nature as we are born in trespasses and sins. But flesh is much more than that. Flesh includes also all of our nature, our senses, our emotional life, etc. The lusts of the flesh are always those passions which come up out of that corrupt nature wherewith we are born naturally; those lusts which seek to satisfy the flesh, which always seek the carnal flesh. Make no mistake about it, these lusts of the flesh are not only in the Gentile world, but they reside also in the flesh of the Christian, as he is by nature. In one word, as long as the Christian dwells in the flesh, in the present evil world, he will have to contend with his evil, fleshly lusts.

To abstain from fleshly lusts means that we hold ourselves away from them, keep our distance from them. In no sense ought we to make provision for them or to indulge in them. It is as the apostle Paul puts it: "that we are to crucify, put off the old man with his deeds." The reason is very evident.

These fleshly lusts war against the soul!

The soul here is looked at from the point of view of its spiritual substance which must be sanctified. Man's complete nature is composed of body and soul. In the child of God dwells a new heart, but an old nature, in the center of which is the soul that controls the body in all its actions. And his regenerated heart has to bring the soul so under control that the body abstains, yea, that the whole man abstains from fleshly lusts. And it is therefore the experience of each child of God that there is a constant battle going on within him against these fleshly lusts. In other words, fleshly lusts are like so many evil soldiers seeking to bayonet the very seat of his life. And in this struggle the soul is not, nor may it remain passive. It must, under the control of the regenerated heart, become spiritually aggressive. The very fact that the apostle mentions warfare against the soul shows that it takes two to make a fight. And if you ask: Why is this reason to abstain from fleshly lusts? the answer is two-fold: in the first place, the Christian has a new principle of life; and secondly, he is a pilgrim and a stranger in the world. Fleshly lusts do not belong to the world from which he is reborn. And living out of the new principle of life which is from above, he becomes a stranger and a pilgrim who principally does not belong here. Consequently he will have to fight against all that has a tendency to hold him here. Hence, he will have to fight against fleshly lusts. In the measure he fights, in that measure also he overcomes and is sanctified. In the measure that he does not fight, in that measure is he overcome.

Positively, the walk of the pilgrim will be good. There are two words in Scripture for "good." One is what is good essentially; the other is what is good in appearance. The apostle uses the latter word in the text. It refers then to that which is beautiful, pleasing, acceptable. In the ethical-moral sense it is that which is excellent, noble, worthy of recognition, praiseworthy.

When the translation uses the term "honest" in connection with our walk, it means that our behaviour is good. We are honest in our walk when in every respect we manifest what we essentially are, namely, a Christian. If we walk hypocritically, and can easily play ball with sinners, we are dishonest, and our walk is not good. That Christian who is consistent and reveals in his walk his Christian principles is honest, and his behaviour good. The possibility of the latter, of course, lies only in the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit within him. So, and so only, is it conceivable that the Christian will constantly and consciously fight against sin and carnal passion, and desire to walk in a new and godly life.

And where shall the dearly beloved conduct this conversation and walk?

The apostle says: "among the Gentiles."

Those to whom Peter addresses himself were scattered among the Gentiles, that is, the heathen, those outside of the Church of Jesus Christ. In a wider sense, the term Gentile refers to the present evil world. That world which apparently is in control of the government, the master-slave relation, and all other political, social, and economic relationships, all of which are brought under the control of sin and darkness.

Notice that the apostle says emphatically *among* them. There is not, nor should there ever be, anything anabaptistic about the Christian. Never is he exhorted to seclude himself from the world. O, indeed, he is constantly warned not to live as the world. This also our text clearly teaches. In the spiritual sense of the word, we are called to live in opposition to the world. But never does the Word of God exhort us to hide ourselves away from the world. Always there have been those who advocate this isolation. It is well known in such movements as asceticism, monkery, anabaptistic, world-flight movements. And because we oppose the world and its philosophies and practices, and do not allow ourselves and our children to participate in these worldly practices, we too have often been accused of being anabaptistic, guilty of asceticism. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Christian who understands his calling is found going about his business in the very midst of the world. Not you understand, in the world's places of wicked amusement, and cesspools of vice and sin; but wherever his vocation in life takes him, in the shop, in the office, in the school, in the street, in the home. In the midst of the world he is called to walk honestly, be a stranger and a pilgrim in it, letting his light shine, revealing the life of regeneration antithetically. Not with a view to converting and saving the world, as some would have us believe today; but rather, showing the grace of God which is in us unto the praise of His glory. It is not without good reason that the apostle addresses himself to the dearly beloved, strangers and pilgrims in the text. It is that in the midst of the world they shall live

and walk like that.

Difficult calling, indeed!

Difficult it is, in the first place, because they have always to contend with the lusts of their own flesh. Always they remember that once they also were like the Gentiles, steeped in corruption and wickedness. They remember that once they were children of darkness even as the rest. But now they have obtained mercy. Their lives have been principally changed. Their citizenship is now in heaven. They are strangers in the world, and the world has become stranger to them. And yet they have this new life in an old nature that always still wants to do as the Gentiles; and they have constantly to struggle with their carnal lusts. Their greatest difficulty they discover is within them. The evil which they would not, they do; and the good which they would perform, they find not.

Difficult it is, so the apostle informs them, that those Gentiles falsely accuse them as evildoers. Literally this was true concerning the early Christians, and it has been true throughout all the ages. The record will show that when there happened to be an earthquake or a pestilence in the earth, the Christians were blamed for it. When they refused for God's sake to obey an evil edict of the king, they were counted as criminals. And so it is, that when the church of Christ or the child of God reveals the grace of Christ from within, they are ridiculed to scorn, or persecuted unto the death. Indeed, the way of the child of God is not easy, but most difficult. Yet, in spite of it all, he is called to walk honestly in the midst of the world.

And why must this be done?

That the Gentiles may see your good works, and glorify God in the day of visitation!

This is in complete harmony with the instruction of Jesus. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The day of visitation can refer to one of two things, or to both. Either it is the day when God will also visit the Gentiles with His grace as He had done to the beloved pilgrims; or, it is the day when He will visit them in His just and holy wrath, the day of judgment, the day of Christ. We see no reason to exclude either of these possibilities. On the one hand, God has also among the Gentiles His people, who, when He visits them in His grace will turn from their evil way, and through the good works and honest conversation of His beloved shall be converted unto God, and render praise unto His Name. On the other hand, there are also among the Gentiles those who, falsely accusing God's people while they behold their good works, shall go on in their sin until the day that God shall come to them in judgment. In that day even the wicked shall justify God when He righteously shall condemn them according to their works, and in this theodicy shall

glorify God. For that reason, that God may be glorified in and through the Gentiles, let the pilgrims and strangers walk honestly among them.

In the light of this, what a beautiful and urgent

calling is here given to the Church of Christ in the world, and unto each one of the children of God!

May He continue to give unto us His grace that we may faithfully fulfill that calling, even unto the end!

Editorial

The Breakdown of Doctrinal Discipline In The Netherlands

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Our regular readers know that the *Standard Bearer* has reported rather frequently on instances of blatantly un-Reformed and heretical teachings on the part of leaders in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands. All of these instances are evidences of on-going deformation in the Dutch churches, a deformation which by this time has reached appalling proportions. Again and again, professors of theology and ministers in good standing in the churches have come out with eye-popping pronouncements about Scripture, about various doctrines, about the Christian's calling in various spheres of life, to the point that one would think that now at last some ecclesiastical assembly will call this or that man on the carpet and suspend and depose him. But in no single instance, until now, have the churches there taken any disciplinary action. In other words, ecclesiastical discipline with respect to doctrine has broken down.

The latest example of such a breakdown concerns the heretical teachings of Dr. H. Wiersinga about the doctrine of atonement and reconciliation. Prof. Hanko reported on this matter in *All Around Us* in the May 1 issue (p. 343). Rev. Herman Wiersinga wrote a doctoral thesis (and received a degree from the Free University!) on "Reconciliation in Theological Discussion." According to a brief report in the *R.E.S. News Exchange* of Feb. 23, "The contention of the book is that the Bible teaches that Jesus' sacrifice was not directed to God but to man. In the author's view the sacrifice of Christ is not a gift to God that makes God gracious or provides satisfaction but rather God's great gift of salvation to man by which he reconciles, delivers and converts man. The blood of Jesus Christ speaks of our liberation from a 'blood-shedding existence.' The blood of Christ was not offered to God but was a saving, cleansing, and renewing gift of God to man." Subsequent reports and discussions in some of the Dutch papers have made it abundantly clear that Wiersinga's teachings are indeed as heretical as first reported. He denies the vicarious nature of Christ's death

and His satisfaction for sin through the bearing of the wrath of God. Reconciliation is given the horizontal twist which is characteristic of the social gospellers. Probably one of Wiersinga's sharpest critics has been the Rev. J. Hegger, editor of *In De Rechte Straat*, and himself a converted Roman Catholic and therefore quite understandably offended by this denial of the only sacrifice of Christ.

It must be remembered that what is especially significant about this instance of heresy is the fact that it involves the theological faculty of the Free University, not only Dr. Wiersinga. For it was by that faculty that Wiersinga was granted his degree of doctor of theology, and that, too, on the basis of this heretical doctoral thesis. Moreover, the theological faculty members are all ordained in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, and subject to the provisions of the Formula of Subscription. As has already been remarked in the Netherlands (by Dr. Herman Ridderbos) these faculty members, therefore, bear not only a scientific but also an ecclesiastical responsibility; and the two cannot be separated. The faculty members, therefore, cannot properly approve from a scientific point of view what they have vowed to oppose in the church and according to their ordination vows. In other words, they cannot approve a heretical doctoral dissertation such as Wiersinga's without becoming co-responsible for Wiersinga's heresy, and therefore, like Wiersinga, liable to discipline for heresy. In fact, it might be argued that the responsibility of the faculty in such a situation is even heavier than that of Wiersinga. For of all people, these theological professors ought to recognize — and condemn — heresy when they see it!

And this means, of course, that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* have come to be confronted by a highly serious situation!

What has happened?

The *R.E.S. News Exchange* carried the following report in its October 26 issue:

The General Synod of the Reformed Churches in

the Netherlands at its September meeting issued a "Synodical Message" concerning the biblical doctrine of reconciliation.

The declaration was occasioned by the recent discussion in the Dutch churches concerning this central doctrine of the Christian faith. The Synod received a number of protests concerning the book of Dr. H. Wiersinga on the doctrine of reconciliation in Reformed theology (see RES NE 2/23/71). Dr. Wiersinga had also lodged a protest with his church council against the teaching of the church confessional standards on reconciliation. The text of the Synod's declaration follows.

The General Synod of the Reformed Churches (Dordrecht 1971-72) in session in Lunteren, feels itself under compulsion to issue a statement regarding the central doctrine of reconciliation.

The examination of new thoughts concerning reconciliation, as these have arisen and have been published, takes place in the proper way by scientific reflection and ecclesiastical process. The carefulness which this requires demands a necessary calmness and time.

The Synod appeals to the churches to await in trust the results of this testing by the light of the Holy Scripture. At the same time this naturally does not mean that as long as the above mentioned examination has not yet been concluded there would have to exist any uncertainty regarding the confession and the church's preaching on reconciliation with God in the substitutionary power of the suffering and death of Christ our Lord.

The Synod recognizes herein its oneness with that which the church of all ages has confessed: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And it understands hereby nothing else than that which is contained in the confessional standards of the Reformed Churches, namely that God in His infinite goodness has sent His Son to be a reconciliation for our sins, has caused all our unrighteousness to fall upon Him who knew no sin and was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, and, converted to God by Him, should lead a new life. Therefore the church praises and adores her Lord as the holy Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

It is the intention of the Synod in this declaration to point to and emphatically affirm in all its continuing reflection on the confession of reconciliation, that which the church has always confessed and the classic formulary for Holy Communion rightly calls the only ground and foundation of our salvation. (RES NE 10/26/71)

At first glance, this action of the General Synod may seem to be discreet; and Synod's declaration may seem to have an orthodox, and even a rather sternly orthodox, ring.

In the first place, however, judging by past performances, this means nothing. Do not forget that only last year the General Synod adopted the utterly contradictory decision in which they plainly found Dr. Kuitert

and others to be guilty of heresy, but nevertheless declined to take any disciplinary action. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that also in this instance the Synod will make a similar finding. In fact, I would dare to say that this is quite *likely*, especially in view of the great influence of the very Amsterdam theologians who are inextricably involved in this case with Wiersinga. I could even conceive of it that the Synod will make one of those insipid, lukewarm, Laodicea-like, "both . . . and" decisions: the confessions are right, but Dr. Wiersinga also has a point.

In the second place, even the present declaration of the Synod represents a breakdown of doctrinal discipline, in spite of the fact that Synod seems to reaffirm the confessional doctrine of atonement.

Why do I say this?

My first reason is that, according to all that has been reported of Wiersinga's position and according to all that I have read in the way of criticism of that position, the Synod could have analysed the heresy of Wiersinga and produced grounds for condemnation just about as quickly as to have prepared the above declaration. In other words, the statement of the second paragraph is false: "The examination of new thoughts concerning reconciliation, as these have arisen and have been published, takes place in the proper way by scientific reflection and ecclesiastical process. The carefulness which this requires demands a necessary calmness and time." At the very best, the above statement represents the weakness of hesitation. At its worst — and one finally comes to expect the worst, even when he would like to expect better things — it represents an attempt to pull the wool over people's eyes. It is the typical sop which liberal-minded ecclesiastical assemblies so frequently have thrown to the "poor, unenlightened traditionalists." But when one's house is afire, he should not first spend a long time deciding whether there is indeed a fire, and then ponder the question whether or not he will put it out, and then consider dilatorily what means to use. Yet this is what the Synod has done, and, I fear, is doing. Meanwhile, the house is rapidly being destroyed!

My second reason is undeniably objective, in case you cannot accept the first. It is this: Dr. Wiersinga has himself lodged a protest with his church council against the teaching of the church confessional standards on reconciliation. In other words, if indeed the Synod affirms the confessional teachings, then Dr. Wiersinga is *by his own admission* a heretic. Why, then, should it require so much carefulness and time to reach a decision?

But what is worse, Dr. Wiersinga is liable to *de facto* suspension from office. For according to the Formula of Subscription, one does not first publish abroad sentiments which are contrary to the confessions, and then file a protest against the confessions. On the contrary! One first files a gravamen, and that, too, without

in the meantime teaching his deviating sentiments either publicly or privately. Failure to follow this promised procedure is in itself sufficient grounds for discipline.

Hence, the Synod is already guilty of "too little and too late."

As we have already remarked, the above is by no means the first evidence of a breakdown of doctrinal discipline in the GKN. The fact is that by this time those churches are wide open for all kinds of winds of doctrine. The situation is such that by this time the churches are paralyzed, constitutionally unable to cope with heresy any longer. The only hope would be a miraculous and complete about-face. And then, of

course, there would be a good many steps to retrace.

Neither does a situation such as that in which the GKN now find themselves arise suddenly. It is the end of a *process*, more or less gradual.

And what is the moral of the story?

This: Never take the first step in that process!

For it is not the last step that is fatal, but that first step. When once you open the door to false doctrine, there is no stopping — unless, miraculously, you repent and return all the way!

And therefore, the moral of the story is also this: Abiding vigilance and resolute discipline of doctrine are the price of purity of doctrine and preaching!

Let us never forget it!

All Around Us

Ecumenicity The Consequences of Disobedience Varia

Prof. H. Hanko

ECUMENICITY (cont.)

In the Oct. 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer* we called attention to some more recent ecumenical developments. There are still a few such developments which deserve mention. This is especially in the light of the fact that many now believe that the so called COCU plans are not making any appreciable progress in efforts to unite protestantism. Many have given up on COCU and are looking for alternatives. COCU stands for "Consultation on Church Union" and envisions an eventual merger of nine protestant denominations with a combined membership of over thirty million.

One such new development is an impetus towards a worldwide union of Lutherans and Reformed. Talks between Lutheran and Reformed theologians have been going on for over a decade. Many have concluded that there are no insuperable obstacles to such union and that the time has come to take positive steps towards bringing the Lutheran and Reformed branches of Protestantism together. A first step which has been proposed is the establishment of fellowship which would permit pastors and members of participating denominations to receive communion in churches other than their own. It will be interesting to see whether the breach between Calvin and Luther is eventually healed. One point to remember however is that many Lutheran and Reformed Churches have departed far from the teachings of both Luther and Calvin.

Another development is the formation of the National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship. What this is can best be described by means of a quote from the *Presbyterian Guardian*.

The news item (in a former issue of the *Guardian*, H.H.) noted the presence of participants at a planning meeting in Philadelphia from the following churches: The Presbyterian Church U.S. ("Southern"), the United Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church N.A. ("Covenanter"). At least some of the participants from the Orthodox Presbyterian and the two Reformed Presbyterian Churches were there with the approval of some official agency within their churches; all others were there without ecclesiastical endorsement of any kind.

The Fellowship is open to any ordained minister or elder from any church in the Reformed or Presbyterian tradition who will share in the new organization's objectives. These goals include a joining together for "encouragement and mutual assistance of those who seek in our time the unity of a pure witness to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ"; and this is avowedly a seeking after true ecumenism that is both Reformed in doctrine and Presbyterian in church government. In other words, the Fellowship at least is open to working toward a "National Presbyterian and Reformed

Church" that might include all the various remnant groups who are still true Calvinists.

Several things are evident from the above quotation. In the first place, this group is still "unofficial" in the sense that it is a voluntary meeting of men who are not appointed by their respective denominations or authorized to act on behalf of their churches. In the second place, it is also evident that the Fellowship is composed of "conservatives" within the Reformed and Presbyterian church world who are alarmed at the apostasy of their denominations and who are interested in preserving the Reformed and Presbyterian heritage. In the third place, although this also is quite unofficial, the Fellowship has as its goal the formation of a new denomination in which conservatives in these (and other) denominations could find a refuge.

The organization is in its infancy. Developments should prove interesting.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE

The child of God whose life is governed and guided by the Scriptures is able to know the will of God in these evil days and is able to define, in the light of God's Word, what is the great sickness of our times. He is in a position to evaluate present day trends and point out their evils and their dangers. He can do this because the Word of God sheds light upon his pathway.

Sometimes, in surprising ways, worldly men are able to see these same things. They write, sometimes as if their writings are original findings, things which God's people have been saying right along. A rather striking illustration of this is a column in *Newsweek* written by that thoughtful and, often, provocative, but unbelieving columnist, Stewart Alsop.

The column was written soon after Daniel Ellsberg broke his pledge to protect government secrets and handed masses of papers dealing with the Vietnam War to the *New York Times* which promptly proceeded to publish them.

Referring to several acts of law-breaking which took place about the same time (the sealing off of Manhattan's bridges, the invasion of Washington by thousands of young people who committed many lawless acts, the arrest of many of these young people by police who disregarded constitutional procedures, the illegal strike of workers in public services such as postal workers, firemen, etc.), he asks whether these things would have happened twenty, or even ten, years ago. His answer is "No." And he quotes from the dissent of Chief Justice Burger in the *New York Times* case:

It is hardly believable that a great institution (like the Times) would fail to perform one of the basic and simple duties of every citizen with respect to the discovery . . . of stolen property . . . That duty, I had thought — perhaps naively — was to report forthwith, to responsible public officers. This duty rests on taxi

drivers, Justices, and The New York Times.

Alsop goes on to make some interesting observations about this.

The conclusion is obvious: nobody plays by the rules any more. Not the kids, not the cops, not the garbagemen, not the editors of the Times, not the keepers of Manhattan's bridges. This has, to be sure, never been a notably law-abiding country. Even so, there was a national consensus even as recently as ten years ago that law breaking was pretty risky business, and morally dubious to boot.

This is no longer so. If Daniel Ellsberg goes to jail, he will be widely hailed as a martyr-hero like the Berrigan brothers. . . .

What has happened to make the great change. . . ? One thing that has happened is that "civil disobedience" — a euphemism for breaking those laws in which the law breaker does not believe — has become both respectable and relatively safe. The civil-rights movement of the early '60s began to make it respectable, and the increasing unpopularity of the Vietnam war has helped to make it safe as well as respectable. . . .

The unpopularity of the war has also lent respectability to the "revolution" of the radical young. . . . The young have taught the angry workers and other interested onlookers an important lesson — that if a great many people are breaking the law at the same time, an individual doing so runs little risk of severe punishment. . . .

In other areas, breaking the law involves very little personal risk. The "kids" who are "busted" risk at most a whack on the head, maybe a whiff of tear gas, possibly a night in jail. They thus become, almost painlessly, instant heroes. The garbagemen or postal workers who strike don't even risk that much — on the contrary, they are rewarded with fat pay raises.

Obviously, it is possible, and always has been, to break the law in a good cause. Undoubtedly, the editors of the Times most sincerely believed that their cause was good. So did the kids, the cops, the bridge keepers and the garbagemen. But surely there is a real danger here. In his Farewell Address, that eminently sensible fellow, George Washington, had this to say: "The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government."

Many Americans now regard it as the duty of the individual to defy "the established government." Past history suggests that mass defiance invites, sooner or later, an authoritarian and repressive response. Today in this country there is less repression of dissent than in any other nation. . . .

So the danger is not immediate. But the disintegration of the authority of the "established government" could produce an authoritarian regime, if it were combined with a severe economic depression. That combination could happen here.

While Alsop certainly does not understand that God has ordained government, and that it must be obeyed

for God's sake, he does see that, if the right is granted to every man to decide for himself whether or not he will obey or disobey an existing law, that government cannot long continue. And he sees, too, that the result is totalitarian regime which denies its citizens all rights. He sees what many churchmen, who openly advocate and themselves practice civil disobedience, refuse to recognize. Often the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

VARIA

The world synod of bishops is, at the time of this writing, still engaged in its month-long meeting at the Vatican. It is more than an average and routine meeting. While the results of the meeting will not be known for some time, the church faces crucial issues. And the issues meet in the struggle between conservative and liberal factions of the church. While the problems of modernizing the church and of taking a stand on the issues of "world revolution" engage a great deal of the bishops' time, nevertheless, the problem which is hitting the headlines is the problem of clerical celibacy. The church is in a sort of a crisis on this point. The problem is that for every two or three men who are joining the priesthood these days, five are leaving. And, as often as not, the reason is clerical celibacy. The bishops, however, can only advise; the pope has the last word. And the pope is a conservative.

* * * *

Recently the World Council of Churches has, under a program of aid to combat racism in 1970, given

grants amounting to \$200,000 to various liberation groups in southern Africa. It has also given an equal amount of money to other organizations within Africa, many of which have been insurrection groups under communist domination. A loud cry of dismay and a howl of disagreement have risen throughout the world; and even the *Reader's Digest* has pointedly asked whether this is the real business of the Church. It is an indication of how far the W.C.C. has gone in the direction of the social gospel.

* * * *

There are several bills now pending in Congress which are bills aimed at giving the government the right to take, without the agreement of parents, children from parental control and place them under government care. The reasoning is ostensibly that many children do not receive proper care and training in the home, grow up uneducated and underprivileged and become problems for society. The supporters of the bills argue that if parents cannot do a proper job of taking care of their children and if the result is that these children become burdens on society, the government must step in and do what the home is failing to do.

But it is not all quite that simple. Many supporters of the bill already speak of the long-range goals as being government care of all children. The propaganda mills are already at work and the country is being subtly prepared for such a program. What a monstrous crime it would be if this ever came into existence.

Feature

An Examination of Reach Out and The Greatest Is Love (1)

Rev. David Engelsma

Reach Out and *The Greatest is Love* are versions of the New Testament Scriptures. Both are illustrated editions of "The Living New Testament," the copyright to which is held by Tyndale Foundation, Wheaton, Illinois. The date of the copyright is 1967. The text of both of these New Testament Bibles is the same. They differ only in the illustrations which they contain and in the comments that accompany the illustrations. These Bibles are being widely disseminated and widely used, today. They either replace the older versions of the New Testament, such as the King James Version, or they are used with the older versions as an aid to understanding those allegedly obscure versions. They

are especially urged upon the children and young people of the Church as the Bibles that will make the Word of God clear and relevant. The charge is made that the older versions, particularly, the King James Version, are unclear and generally unsuited for the use of moderns, especially, the youth.

In fact, the translation of the New Testament Scriptures, God's holy Word, that is found in *Reach Out* and *The Greatest is Love* is, in its entirety, wretchedly bad, so that one cannot know and understand God's Word from it. It is a loose paraphrase of the New Testament Scriptures, rather than an accurate translation. This paraphrase is, throughout, corrupted with

the private interpretations of the one who did the paraphrasing, so that the very Word of God in the particular text is obliterated. What is still worse, these "Bibles" represent a deliberate, wicked attempt to destroy certain fundamental doctrines in Scripture which the producers of these "Bibles" hate. This attempt is made by distorting, or eluding, the words of the New Testament Scriptures that teach these doctrines. These Bibles are an all-out attack upon the Reformed faith, or Calvinism. They have the effect upon a man who is Reformed and rears his children to be Reformed that he burns with holy anger.

I will demonstrate these charges to the complete satisfaction of every man that is willing to weigh the evidence honestly, before the face of God, Whose Word the Scriptures are.

The text, or translation, of these two versions is the main thing. There are, however, several other serious objections to these New Testament Bibles. The very first objection must be registered against the titles of these books. It is wrong to put a title of our own choosing on God's Word. The only title it may have is "Holy Bible," or "New Testament." Putting a title on the Scriptures forces all of God's Word into the mold of that title and leaves the impression that the title expresses the one, main truth of the Scriptures, to which all of the contents are subordinate. What audacity, not to mention falsity, to subject the whole Word of God in the New Testament to the human concept of "Reach Out." Even though "The Greatest is Love" tries to be a Biblical quotation (in fact, it is not a quotation, for I Corinthians 13:13 says: "the greatest of *these* is love," in reference to faith, hope, and love), it, too, is a selection by men of that which they think to be most important in the Bible and a subjection of the whole New Testament to that truth.

The second objection concerns the pictures and accompanying comments in both of these Bibles. A Bible should not have pictures, certainly not pictures that are intended to be illustrations of the truth of Bible, aids in understanding the Bible. The fundamental reason for this every Reformed man, woman, and child knows. It is the reason given in the Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 98, in connection with the prohibition of images: "God . . . will have his people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of his word." The comments accompanying the pictures in *Reach Out* are bad. These comments appear as an introduction to the entire New Testament Bible and as introductions to each of the books in the New Testament. Not once is the word, "sin," mentioned in these comments. It is amazing that someone could introduce the meaning of the entire New Testament and the meaning of each book without mentioning sin. Never once do the comments, in any way, say that Jesus died for the sins of His people. Instead, these comments prefer to describe the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world

this way: "Into this world He came . . . not as an emperor, but as a low-born person, to taste of the poverty, the sorrow, the anguish, to be just one man in a system in which men exploited men" etc. (Cf. the introduction to the book, no page number given). When they do mention His death, the comments say, "He was murdered" (cf. the introduction to Luke). The comments make false statements concerning Christ and concerning the calling of Christians. They do so in order to cater to the sin of modern youth of engaging in revolution against authority. The introduction to Mark, boldly entitled, "Be a Rebel with a Cause," takes issue with those who object to the rebels of our day and denies that it is necessarily bad to rebel. It then defends as good the revolution of the colonies against England in 1776. In this context, it refers to Christ as a rebel. "Be a rebel!" it says to young persons, as long as "in your rebellion — in your uprooting of the evils and inequities of contemporary society — (you) replace them with integrity, reality, and God's love flowing through your life." All of this is sheer devilry, especially, in light of the circumstances of revolution among the youth in our day. Christ was no rebel, nor a revolutionary. It is monstrous, a blasphemy, to call Him one. Christ calls all rebellion against authority, sin, whether that authority be parents, civil government, or the elders of the Church. The calling with which the Word of God confronts the young people of Christ is: Do not be a rebel. The warning is: Every rebel that continues impenitently in his revolution will be damned (cf. Romans 13:2 in the King James Version). In addition, the comments are simply worthless as introductions to the books of the Bible. For example, what must one think of an introduction to Ephesians that does not so much as mention the Church, or God's election of the Church in Christ to be Christ's Bride, but instead shows three pictures of the war in Viet Nam and declares that in Ephesians Paul talks about the basic hatred behind war "and goes on to describe the only cure and the only weapons which will really change planet earth." The overwhelming emphasis of the comments, in keeping with the nature of the illustrations, is on man, man's troubles, man's happiness, and man's duties to his fellow man. The various evils in human society are viewed merely as problems for men, never as transgressions against God, nor as the judgments which God in the last days sends on the wicked world. The nature of the humanistic comments makes plain that the title, *Reach Out*, supposedly the very heart and center of the New Testament Scriptures, refers to man's reaching out for his fellow men. This is false doctrine, the false doctrine of making man the center of all things, in God's stead. *Reach Out* is guilty of perpetrating this outrage upon God's own Scriptures, the message of which is, in fact, what God has done, what God does, and what God will do, in Jesus Christ.

So far, we have criticized the comments in *Reach Out*. There are comments in *The Greatest is Love* that are, if anything, worse than those noted in *Reach Out*. At the very beginning of the book (page c), there appears what is intended to be an introduction to the entire New Testament. These remarks purport to provide the key to understanding the New Testament. We read the following:

- “1. We do not deserve God’s love.
2. God loves us so much that He gave His Son to die for us.
3. We must accept God’s love for us.
4. If we accept God’s love our life will be transformed and we will live forever.
5. We accept God’s love by acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Son of God and surrendering our lives to Him.”

These introductory comments proclaim a certain theology. Stated briefly, the theology teaches that God loves all men and sent Christ to die for all to make salvation possible for all. Whether a man actually is saved or not depends upon his acceptance of God’s love by believing in Jesus Christ through the power of his free will. This is the theology of Arminianism. It is the theology that the Reformed Churches condemned as heresy at the Synod of Dordt in 1618-1619. This theology is not the gospel, nor the key to the gospel, but a perversion of the gospel, for it denies the good news that salvation is of God’s grace alone and makes salvation, at the decisive point, dependent on man’s will and an accomplishment of man. The introductory comments of *The Greatest is Love*, therefore, lead away from the gospel of the New Testament, under the guise of leading into it.

Our fundamental criticism of these Bibles, however, concerns their text, or translation. Both *Reach Out* and *The Greatest is Love* have the same text of the New Testament Scriptures.

First, this text is not an accurate, reliable translation of the original Greek New Testament Scriptures. Apparently, it does not attempt to be. The result is that it does not faithfully give the words of God in the New Testament in English. For this reason alone, *Reach Out* and *The Greatest is Love* are incapable of serving as New Testament Bibles, whether in replacing other versions or in aiding one to understand other versions. What good is a “Bible” that fails, not just in a few passages, but throughout, to give the very words that the Holy Spirit inspired? As a consequence of this careless unfaithful rendering of the New Testament Scriptures, important doctrines are utterly obscured. I will now prove this charge by referring to passages in *The Greatest is Love* at random and comparing them with the correct translation of the King James Version.

1. John 1:1. *The Greatest is Love* reads: “Before anything else existed, there was Christ.” It substitutes “Christ” for the term that the Holy Spirit used, the

term, “Word.”

2. John 3:3. *The Greatest is Love* has Jesus saying to Nicodemus: “Unless you are born again, you can never get into the Kingdom of God.” In fact, as the King James Version translates, Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Without now pursuing the doctrinal implications, it is plain to everyone that there is a vast difference between not being able to get into the Kingdom and not even being able to see the Kingdom.

3. Ephesians 2:1 *The Greatest is Love* reads: “Once you were under God’s curse, doomed forever for your sins.” That which the Holy Spirit actually inspired is: “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The important doctrine that is obscured by the new translation is the doctrine of total depravity. This text teaches that man in himself is *dead* in sins, incapable of any good, also the good of accepting God’s love by believing in Jesus.

4. Romans 8:7. *The Greatest is Love* reads: “Because the old sinful nature within us is against God. It never did obey God’s laws and it never will.” The King James Version correctly translates: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The last phrase teaches the *inability* of the natural man to keep God’s law. He *cannot* do the good.

5. Romans 8:28. *The Greatest is Love* reads: “And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting into His plans.” The King James Version correctly reads: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” The new version gratuitously inserts the word, “if,” and completely alters the last phrase, so that it seems that it depends upon what we do, whether all things work for our good or not, rather than upon God’s calling us according to His purpose.

These are merely examples of the inaccuracies in *The Greatest is Love* and *Reach Out* that make them totally unreliable Bibles. This unfaithfulness to the true words of God occurs on every page. No one should try to minimize the seriousness of this unfaithfulness. These books claim to be the New Testament Bible, the New Testament Word of God. The fact that they play fast and loose with God’s Word is an evidence that the producers of these versions have no regard for the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture. If God inspired the very words of Scripture, no one may lightly substitute other words for God’s words or replace the exact words that God inspired with a phrase that is supposed to express the idea of the text in a general way. Such Bibles constitute an attack on the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture and, thus, an attack on the doctrine of Scripture itself. For if such books are accepted as good, usable versions of

Holy Scripture, the doctrine of inspiration, by virtue of that fact, falls away. The production of such Bibles as these, and their widespread use in the Churches, is a loud and terrifying testimony to the extent to which

the Churches have departed from the truth that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16).
(to be continued)

The Day of Shadows

God's Earthly Masterpiece

Rev. John A. Heys

God is a master builder, and every creature that He makes is a masterpiece.

An earthly, human, master craftsman has his mistakes as well as his masterpieces. The knife may slip in a moment of carelessness. The brush may not realize the desired effect; and the color may not be wisely mixed and chosen. The fingers may become numb, stiff or weak, and a substandard work results. But God's work is always perfect. All that which He does has the characteristics of the work of a master. One is not more perfect than the other, for all are absolutely perfect. And His last work of creating on this earth instead of showing weakness or weariness becomes His earthly masterpiece.

We may single out this one of His earthly creatures as His masterpiece because it stands at the top of an ever-ascending scale of master works, not as something more perfect, but as that which reveals to a greater degree His wisdom and skill. And the very way in which He brought it into being likewise sets upon it the seal of being His earthly masterpiece. We refer, of course, to man who was brought forth by God as the last work of creation.

First God brought forth the inanimate creation, the lifeless ground on which man would stand, where he would work, and which would sustain his earthly life through the plants about to be created. Then God brought forth the living creatures. The first of these were those that would be rooted in the ground, the plants which had life but no blood, and were not able to move about from place to place. Then came the living creatures which have the power of locomotion to swim, fly, crawl or walk and have blood, wherein is their life. Finally came this masterpiece of a rational, moral creature, a living soul that was created in the image of God.

In all this the evolutionist sees an ever-ascending scale of creatures that is the result of an evolving process whereby one species produced the next higher species. He sees a link between the plants and the animals in the sponge, which, though it is an animal, is rooted in the bottom of the sea as a plant. He finds a link between the water animals and the land animals in

a reptile that "adjusted" itself to living out of the water on the dry land. But he cannot find the "missing link" between the beasts of the field and man. The closest he comes is the gorilla. But he realizes that there is an important gap between the highest of primates and man.

That he will never find this "missing link" is due to the fact that there is no missing link. The animal world did not produce man. The serpent in his original form was higher than all the beasts of the field. For Scripture declares that he was more subtle than all the beasts of the field. That means that he was more clever than any other creature. It does not mean subtle in an evil sense. The serpent could perform more of the actions peculiar to man than any other earthly creature. But were men to find a serpent in his original form (which, of course, is impossible), they would not have in their possession the "missing link." Man did not evolve from the serpent, or from any other creature. He came into being by a very special work of God. And the very way in which God brought man forth strikes the death blow to the theistic evolutionistic explanation of man's origin. For God *formed* him and, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and created him in His own image.

That God formed man speaks of special care, that is, of a special touch of God. He was very careful in all His works, and therefore all are masterpieces. But with man God used His hand instead of issuing a creative call, as He did with all the other earthly creatures. In fact, in God's own mind man is a special creature. For before creating man the triune God spoke to Himself and said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." No such speech preceded any other work of creating. And if we appreciate this truth, we will cry with the psalmist, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?" Psalm 8:4. Or again when the psalmist cries out in Psalm 139:14, "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Take a look at the human eye and ear, the marvelous brain and nervous system, the digestive system,

the heart and circulatory system, the properly placed muscles and perfectly designed skeleton to support that body! Even now under the curse these bodies are a wonderful piece of "engineering." They are masterpieces of construction and design. What camera can compare with the eye? Yea, the movie camera and TV camera depend upon the human eye to record or reveal any object to us. What piece of machinery can heal itself as the human body does? What work of man can do what the human brain is capable of performing? The computer was designed by human brain, must be fed its data by human brain, must be repaired by a human brain's direction. What mental powers are found in man — such as reading, adding a sum of numbers, inventing machines and labor-saving devices, to mention only a few, which are far beyond the powers of all the beasts of the field and forest!

And created in the image of God there was in man's nature — not in his physical appearance — a creaturely reflection of some of God's attributes. He was created in true knowledge (Colossians 3:10) and in righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24), in these to be like the holy, righteous all-knowing God. He was like God in these virtues with creaturely limits. An image is like but not the same as that after which it is fashioned. An image of a man may resemble his appearance. But the wax, or stone or wood is cold and not warm, like flesh. It is hard and not skin-soft. It is like in appearance from a distance, and as far as proportions of the features are concerned, but it also misses much of what the reality is. So, although man, the creature, was made in the image of God, the Creator, he resembled God only in a creaturely way and with creaturely limitations. He is not God's equal but His image bearer.

And this is possible because, while God formed him out of the dust of the ground, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And man became a *rational, moral* being, that is, a creature who could know God and could love Him, and therefore could consciously and willingly serve Him. It is into that rational, moral (or thinking, willing) nature that God pours this true knowledge, righteousness and holiness, which also, of course, imply love.

Of special interest is the reason why God created man, and the reason why He made man exactly that way as a rational, moral being. To begin with the latter, Genesis 1:26 declares further, "... and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Having dominion means that he was to be their king. In Genesis 2:15 we read that God placed man in the garden of Eden "to dress it and keep it." These two verses declare the truth elsewhere pointed out in Holy Writ that man was made to be God's royal priesthood, his priesthood of kings. His kingly priest, in order that through him the whole of

the earthly creation might in loving service, be dedicated to God.

A creature that knew God and loved God was brought forth so that through his mind and will all the rest of the earthly creation that is not able to know and love Him would yet glorify the Creator. The fish and fowl, the cattle and creeping things of Genesis 1:26 cannot speak to God and tell Him how glorious He is. The garden of Eden and its plants had no voice to sing God's praises or power to extol Him for His virtues. But God made man with these powers so that he could use that garden and all the fish, fowl, cattle and creeping things, the water and the soil, and then could with them and because of them come before God and say, "O God how great Thou art! O God how good Thou art!"

Therefore also, God, according to Genesis 1:28, blessed man and told him to multiply and replenish the earth and to subdue it. He must spread over the whole earth and subdue it. This does not mean that there was conflict between God and the irrational creation. It is not a case of putting it down, but a case of directing that which cannot itself consciously and willingly direct itself to God's glory. To subdue it then means to use it and direct it to the glory of God.

For that reason we today have that earth and the fulness wherewith it is stored as God's royal priesthood. Picture in your minds a pyramid like those that stand in Egypt. The base is broad and wide. The sides have a distinct, sharp, inward slant upward to the point at the top that is directed heavenward. That base represents the earthly creation. The point represents man as his life then was directed upward to God. All that earthly creation is under him as its king and priest, and at his disposal to use to the glory of the God to Whom his life pointed, whether it be fish or fowl, cattle or creeping thing, plants, water, or soil. Indeed, here is God's earthly masterpiece! What a glorious picture!

Everything in that pyramid from the base line to man at the top flowed in one direction, namely, toward that man as he exercised dominion over it, dressed and kept the garden. And he was directed to God. Physically and externally he faced that creation. Inwardly and spiritually He faced the Creator of it all. His fleshly eye saw that earthly creation, while his spiritual eye saw God in His glory in that creation. His earthly hand took hold of these creatures, and his spiritual hand directed them to God's service and praise. His fleshly feet stood on that warm soil — no shoes then and there — while spiritually his feet were walking in the paths of righteousness. All creatures through Him returned back to the God, Who made them and sustained them, in praise and deeds of love.

But we know that it did not remain that way. Man inverted the pyramid to press all that creation into the service of his flesh. Now that whole creation presses

down on him to crush him. Its beasts slay him. The food he eats to sustain his body kills him. The storms howl over his head, the floods destroy his home and crops. He fell from being that lofty royal priesthood of God to being a SLAVE OF HIS FLESH, dedicated to sin!

We must remember, however, that God is a master craftsman. All His works are masterpieces. That creation fell into ruin by man's rebellion is not because there was a flaw in God's work. No, all was very good. But God had, even when He brought forth this earthly master work of man, a more glorious pyramid with Christ at the apex and *under Him heaven and earth*

(Ephesians 1:10); and God purposed from eternity to come into our flesh to realize this. See also Hebrews 2:5-18. Man must be made in the image of God, a rational, moral being if His Son is to assume a human nature prepared in the Virgin Mary. We must look to Christ and His glorious kingdom when we examine the work of God in bringing forth this earthly masterpiece. It is a necessary stepping stone to the masterpiece of all masterpieces when God Himself in our human nature sits upon the throne of the united heaven and earth, and the angel world and the creatures of heaven as well as man and the earthly creatures are all "subdued" by Him and directed to the glory of God.

The Signs of the Times

"The Signs"

Rev. G. Van Baren

John was greatly troubled. Tears flowed from his eyes. Great sobs were wrenched from his chest. And he had reason for this misery. He had seen a scroll sealed with seven seals. That scroll must be opened — but none appeared worthy to take it and loose its seals. Finally, he receives the information from one of the elders that the Lion of Judah's tribe, the Root of David, had prevailed to open the book. That One was Jesus Christ. The Book He was about to open was the Book of God's counsel. What was found in that Book must take place, in order that, at its conclusion, Jesus might return on the clouds of glory. Therefore John had been greatly disturbed when none could open that Book (Rev. 5), for an unopened Book would simply mean that our Lord could not return. What John learned was that Jesus Himself will see to it that the things found in that Book will take place in proper order and time. He was the only One Who could so direct all these events in order that He might again return to gather His people to Himself. Jesus is, even now, in the process of opening those seals. What we see taking place about us is the unfolding of those seals. And since all this is under the control of Jesus, we ought not to be afraid — though troublous things are surely transpiring.

The events of those seven seals, as also presented in other Scriptural passages, will be the concern of this article. I want to divide the various signs into five major parts. You are to take note about you how that many of these signs are even now seen. May this encourage you the more to watch for the soon-return of our Lord Jesus Christ on the clouds of glory.

Signs within creation

One reads repeatedly of earthquakes, tornadoes,

hurricanes, tidal waves, and the like. These have always taken place. Some have suggested that therefore this can hardly be a sign of Christ's return. Yet Matt. 24:7 identifies these specifically as signs of Christ's return: "... and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." (Strikingly and literally, verse 8 of this chapter terms these "birthpains" — birthpains which precede the "birth" of the new creation). This is Christ's answer to His disciples who had asked, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" (Vs. 3).

Another sign in creation is that of famine. This, too, is mentioned in Matt. 24:7. This is the prophecy of Rev. 6:5-6 where the black horse (black for famine) is presented running across the earth. The running of this horse reveals that there is a lack for the poor ("measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny"), but plenty for the rich ("see thou hurt not the oil and the wine"). It is difficult for us to imagine this in our land of plenty, yet reports indicate that thousands die daily in the world in fulfillment of this sign.

A third sign in creation is disease and pestilence. The fourth horse (Rev. 6:7-8) portrays this. He is pale green (color of death); Death rides him and the grave follows him. Though man seems to have brought under control many pestilences of the past, there is clear evidence not only of the continued existence of pestilence but also that new and diverse forms of this might be arising today.

Signs within the ungodly world

First, there are signs connected with man's scientific progress. He performs amazing feats — almost unbelievable ones. Most striking and widely known are his

walks on the moon. But other developments are as startling. Man works wonders in the world of electronics and communication. He does wonders in the world of medicine. He makes unbelievable discoveries in the world of the atom and the sub-atom. Today, we, the common people, simply take these things for granted — though we readily admit that we hardly understand it all. Some of this is suggested in Revelation 13 where are presented two beasts — given power by the dragon. The second beast especially performs great wonders and miracles. The climax of their wonders is the image of the beast which is made: an image that appears to live and to speak. This image requires all to worship it. So does man develop in an amazing degree — and uses this development in the service of sin.

Another obvious sign of the end is the lawlessness, the racial conflict, the revolutions, the open godlessness which abounds. This is a sign often mentioned in Scripture. It is also a sign seen throughout the ages. The third beast of Rev. 5 suggests the very real divisions between rich and poor (vs. 5-6). Lawlessness was evident in the days of the apostles (II Thess. 2:7). Antichrist is himself called the “lawless one” (“Wicked” — II Thess. 2:8).

A third sign in this class would be wars and rumors of wars. These, too, have been present during much of the history of this world. These are, however, identified as signs of the end of the age. That is done in Matt. 24:6, “And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” Or there is the second horse of Rev. 6:3-4. This horse is red (blood) and its rider has a great sword. The power is given the rider to take peace from the earth and that man should kill one another.

Signs within the church

First, and most significant, is the sign of the preaching of the Word. This must go forth to all nations. Jesus speaks of it in Matt. 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” The white horse of Rev. 6 suggests this same truth. That white horse is first and is doubtlessly served by the three which follow it.

Then there is the awful apostasy seen in the church. Such apostasy is seen within churches formerly orthodox; but it is also seen within the conservative churches of our day, when some forsake the truth and follow after the lie. Though such causes great grief within the church, it, too, is clearly foretold in Scripture. In I Tim. 4:1 we read, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” And again in II Tim. 3:1-2, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to

parents, unthankful, unholy. . . .” Paul writes again in II Thess. 2:3, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first. . . .”

And for the church there shall also be persecutions. Some of this has already fallen upon the church. Severe persecutions occurred in the past. According to some reports, persecutions are taking place in some countries today — persecutions for Jesus’ sake. Matt. 24 also mentions this in verse 9, “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” But even this shall be “shortened” for the elect’s sake (vs. 22).

The coming of the antichrist

The spirit of the antichrist is ever present in this world. We read in I John 4:3, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world.” Jesus stated in Matt. 24:23, 24, “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

But there shall also be one antichrist who sets himself up as Christ Himself. II Thess. 2:3, 4 makes that very clear, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come . . . except that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

This antichrist is presented also in Rev. 13 where the two beasts are mentioned. There, too, and in the preceding chapters, it is clearly presented that this will be the time of great adversity for the church. In that day none shall be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast.

Signs in the heavens

Closely connected with the end are the signs in the heavens. “The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” (Matt. 24:29) Those will be shocking times for the people of this world. We, however, shall be able to see these signs with joy — for it marks the fact that the return of Christ is at hand. In Matt. 24:30 there is also mentioned the “sign of the Son of man in heaven.” Whatever this sign will be, it will serve as reminder of the impending return of Christ.

And then shall the end be. He who knows and watches can also rejoice. These are not times for sorrow — but for gladness of heart. Just remember. . . .

“ . . . The Lord is at hand” (Phil. 4:5).

From Holy Writ

Exposition of Hebrews

Rev. G. Lubbers

ABRAHAM'S SOJOURN IN THE LAND OF PROMISE (Hebrews 11:9, 10)

Abraham walked by faith and not by sight. Each step of the way he walked more progressively in faith. He walked with earnest expectation of hope. It was the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen! Without this faith, which believes that God is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek him, it would have been impossible for Abraham to please God. He was to believe to the saving of the soul, and not fall back into unbelief and eternal destruction. For, as we have emphasized in an earlier essay, Abraham is not a mighty hero among men; he is a poor, weak, struggling saint, who out of weakness is made strong. The secret of his strength is the faith of God by which he is empowered. Faith is the victory which overcomes the world, and such was the faith of Abraham.

This example of what God wrought in Abraham is held before the eyes of the Hebrew Christians for their encouragement and admonition to persevere in the good walk of patience, which they need. We do well not to lose this practical aspect of this writing out of sight.

The writer here selects another aspect of the life of Abraham. In the former verses he had pointed to the obedience of Abraham in leaving the land of the Chaldees, underscoring that he "went out, not knowing whither he went!" Such was the deep trust of Abraham in the LORD. Now the writer selects an aspect of Abraham's life which he had in common with both Isaac and Jacob. They were fellow-heirs of the same promise to eventually inherit the land. The point here is that the patriarchs were pilgrims and strangers in the earth. This they *confessed* themselves to be.

We do well to take notice of this aspect of their life of faith and hope, the hope of Israel!

This pilgrimage was in the "land of promise." This was a promised land. The writer does not here give the geographical location of the land, situated on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. That is not his interest. Nor does he speak of it as being the "land of Canaan" who was a grandson of Noah, son of Ham. On the contrary he speaks of it as a land of promise. That the Greek Article is missing indicates that the writer does not mean to identify the land, but rather that he is qualifying the land as to its spiritual nature by virtue of the immutable promise and oath of God. It is a land which the heirs of the promise would receive by the lot of God. It was really a land where Abraham would dwell as a possessor as a "great nation." (Gen. 12:2)

At the time of Abraham we read "and into the land of Canaan they came . . . and the Canaanite was then in the land." (Gen. 12:5, 6) This meant that the Canaanites were the possessors of the land, they claimed it and builded cities in it, developed their culture and art here, and said this is our dwelling-place; here will we live. When the sin of the Amorite is full then will the Lord root the Canaanite out of the land, which came to pass initially in the days of Joshua, and was finally completely under David when Jerusalem became the city of the Lord in the land. Meanwhile for a period of some two hundred forty years the patriarchs are pilgrims in the land. It was God's dispensation of pilgrimage for the fathers. They merely *sojourned* in the land!

All that these fathers had was *God's promise* to give to them this land! Hence, it is called: land of promise. It was the promise of God in which God stated in so many words that he would give them this land. And faith here, therefore, is a clinging to the promise of God, believing His Word, His oath. God had spoken and they believed. Says the LORD "Unto thy seed will I give this land." And Abraham in response of faith "builded an altar unto the Lord," who appeared unto him. There had been a Theophany. In some form God, the God of glory, had appeared. (Acts 7:2) And thus Abraham took the first step in his earthly pilgrimage in the land. He kept the Sabbath in hope!

Those who would like to pursue this matter of God's promise concerning the land, His assurance that He would certainly give the land to the fathers, should read those passages in Scripture which speak of this specifically. We refer to such passages as Genesis 13:15 where we read God's repeated promise to Abraham "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth then shall thy seed also be numbered." Or, again, we refer to the beautiful promise of God in Genesis 17:8 "And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, a land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." This promise is repeated in such passages as Genesis 24:7, 26:4 to Isaac and Jacob, as well as to Moses in Deuteronomy 34:4, and it is sung of in joyful praises in Psalm 105:9, 11. Truly the Bible is replete with these great and precious promises. Thus did God work faith in the hearts of the pilgrim fathers by holding these promises before their eyes. And thus faith is wrought in our hearts when these

same promises are held before our wondering eyes as they have been made yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father. (II Corinthians 1:20)

Now truly the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were ones of *sojourning* in the land. They really felt that they were not permanent citizens of the land at all. They did not feel at home, did not act as those who were at home. They really had no "home" here on earth. To return to the land of Ur of the Chaldees was impossible. They had obeyed in faith to leave that land forever! To put up a house, build a city in the land was impossible. It did not belong to them. They were merely sojourners, nomads with their flocks. The various terms used to describe this dwelling in the land in hope of obtaining the promise are very significant as a mere word-study. The terms in the Hebrew are such that they either indicate that the patriarchs were strangers (fr. M. French *estrangier*, foreigner from *extraneus*, external, from *extra*- outside.) A stranger is an outsider, he is really outlandish, one who does not belong in the land. The only business that Abraham had in this land was the command of the Lord to live here in hope of receiving it. He was a *pilgrim* (*per anger*) one merely passing through the land. Hence, his entire life was different. It was a pilgrimage! That is emphasized in the text. And such these fathers were confessedly. They acknowledged before the people of the land that they were such pilgrims and strangers on the earth. They gave account of the hope which was in them and gave glory to God! (I Peter 3:15) Truly, they were a strange people who were never understood by the people of the land. These did not understand the Patriarchs because they did not know the God of glory!

THE EXPECTATION OF ABRAHAM AS A STRANGER IN THE LAND (Hebrews 11:10)

What was the secret of this strange conduct of these Patriarchs? They were men of like passions as we. They could have returned to their country. The Canaanites did not put them in bondage as did the Egyptians later with an entire nation. This the writer to the Hebrew also underscores in Hebrews 11:13-16. And we do well to take notice of this. This passage is a key-passage to understand the conduct of these strangers, and also clearly states how these fathers understood the promise of God! Fact is, that these strangers and pilgrims died in the land "not having received the promise" of possessing the land. How could these Patriarchs die in peace and not feel that the LORD had forgotten His promise? They understood that the real country was the *heavenly* country. That country was a "better country" wherein God would grant them all the things which he had promised already in the *Prottevangeli* of Genesis 3:15. Hence, they are not merely pilgrims and strangers in the land of Canaan, but they are such *in the earth*. They raised their eyes not from Ur of the Chaldees to the earthly land of Canaan, but they lifted

them up on high to heaven itself, where one day Jesus would enter in glory as the chief Captain and Author of their salvation. They saw clearly that it was not the earthly land of Canaan which they sought. Hence, they must not only live, but also *die* in the land, and "be gathered to their people."

Wherefore we read that Abraham looked for a city. Fact is that the text says that he looked for "*the* city." And this city must not be in the land of Canaan, such as men build. For an earthly city is earthly in every sense of the term. Earthly relationships, fellowships, laws and ordinances. It also has no permanency. All the cities of this earth disappear, disintegrate, and lie buried under the sands of time. Their place and name is known no more. Such was the plight of the city of Cain which went down in the Flood even though it stood for hundreds of years! And such was the plight of the city of Babel whose tower was never finished but "received the mortal wound." And thus it was and is with all the cities of the world, and thus it shall be one day, when "in one day" Babylon shall fall and be cast as a stone into the sea. (Rev. 18). But Abraham looked for *the* city. He looked for the city which has "*the* foundations." Because earthly cities have crumbling foundations they do not stand. But the foundations of the city of our God are righteousness and truth. They are righteousness and truth which have been established in the "Seed," which is Christ; the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. And this righteousness is the "chief corner-stone." And the foundations are the basic teaching of the Gospel, the word of promise fulfilled, preaching Christ's merits on the Cross, and justification in His blood.

The city which Abraham sought, with Isaac and Jacob, is beautifully portrayed to us in Biblical symbolism in Rev. 21, where John in the Spirit is shown the Bride of Christ, the numberless throng of Abraham's great nation under the picture of a "city," a holy city, the New Jerusalem. We cannot enter into an interpretation of that passage. We refer the interested reader to the beautiful exegesis given by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema in his "Behold He Cometh," pages 669-704. I cannot urge the reader too strongly to read these pages from Rev. Hoeksema. It will be a great spiritual feast and will be an incentive to lift up your weary eyes on high, so that we may gird up the loins of our mind and be sober and hope perfectly for the revelation of Jesus Christ. (I Peter 1:12)

This city is designated as being one of which "God is the Architect and Builder." The emphasis in the text falls on "God." God and no one else has thought out the beauty, the grandeur, the immovableness of this city in Jesus Christ His Son. That Abraham sought this city (and he had good reasons to do so) was because of the very wording of the promise, as well as the pedagogical way in which the LORD Himself led him step by step.

The Strength of Youth

The Mission of the Church

Rev. Robert D. Decker

It has become fashionable in our day to speak critically of the Church as an Institution of Christ. There is place for criticism. The instituted Church is not above criticism. But that criticism must be honest, Biblically based, motivated by love for the Church of Jesus Christ, and therefore CONSTRUCTIVE! We have no patience for those whose purpose is to tear down and destroy. We have no patience for those who simply rebel against the plain Biblical directives for the Church and clamor for change for the sake of change. We do recognize, however, that some of the criticism is warranted and legitimate. When our young people, for example, point to the lack of zeal which so often characterizes us we ought to listen, painful as it may be. When they point to some of the inconsistencies evident among their parents, we had better not dismiss them lightly and say: "O well, they're young." At the same time, however, much of the criticism leveled at the church today is unwarranted. It is not constructive, but destructive.

It is being said that the Church, with its fine buildings, its worship services, societies, catechism classes, and other functions is just not "with it." This criticism is most severely leveled at our own Protestant Reformed Churches. We are considered by outsiders, as we are wont to speak of those who are not members of our churches, as "old fashioned," much too conservative, negative, loveless, too much concerned with doctrine, etc. Perhaps you have heard some of this. Perhaps this type of thing has raised questions in your own soul about the mission of the church. Maybe you are beginning to wonder why your Protestant Reformed pastor preaches expository sermons every Sunday, which often last close to an hour. Perhaps you even chafe a bit under it all! Isn't there more to it than two church services a Sunday, consisting mainly of two rather lengthy sermons? Does Christianity consist in catechism classes which I must attend, young people's societies, and the dreaded annual family visiting? And, must the church be so terribly touchy about doctrine? There is a heavy emphasis on the doctrine of the Scriptures as stated in our confessions; the Heidelberg Catechism, Canons, and Belgic Confession of faith. Does there have to be? And, to get back to sermons, why does the preacher always emphasize our failures, short-comings, and sins? Maybe these are representative of the questions you have.

It is always dangerous and difficult to generalize. The danger lies in oversimplifying and the difficulty in

defining the issue fairly. The current criticism of the Church is this: The Church is not being faithful to its mission, which is to create a better world; a world of peace, love, justice, and happiness for all people. The world is full of racism and the church does nothing about it! One by one congregations will sell their property, move out of the inner city black ghettos, relocate in the comfortable suburbs and proceed to spend thousands of dollars for elaborate facilities. Meanwhile the ghettos continue to burn with hatred and sometimes with fire. Crime increases, frustrations deepen, but the Church is gone and does nothing about it. Instead the Church even encourages segregation by isolating herself in the suburb. The Church on this score, it is said, fails in its mission to bring about racial peace through integration. And not only does the church fail: it only solidifies itself the more against the blacks. This is one example.

Another is the pollution problem. When is the last time, the critic will ask, you heard a sermon on this? What is the church doing about the destruction of our lakes, streams, rivers, forests; or about the smog we are forced to breathe? Again the church says nothing and does nothing.

More and more it is being said that the Viet Nam war is unjust. (The writer happens to agree.) Has your pastor ever preached a sermon on the atrocity of Viet Nam? Once more the Church is silent! The world is an armed camp. Nation stands over against nation, race against race; there is war and rumour of war, but the church never addresses itself to the problem. Instead it warns its members about Arminianism. Or it is at great pains to maintain an infallibly inspired, and, therefore, inerrant Bible.

So we could go on. Cities are dying, people are starving, nations are warring, youth is rebelling, the economy is unstable, crime is increasing, prisoners are rioting and the church is still preaching sin and grace and gratitude following the outline of a 16th century creed! The Church fails in its mission!

Such talk ought to make every Bible-believing, Reformed Christian very angry! That criticism rises out of a rejection of the true mission of the Church of Jesus Christ as instituted in the world. The mission of the Church according to the Bible is simply this: "Preach the Word!" That's all, preach the Word. This is all Christ ever told His Church to do! Preach and baptize in all the world! (Matt. 28:19, 20) This was the inspired Apostle Paul's charge to his spiritual son

Timothy according to II Timothy 4:2. This is the teaching of Ephesians 4, I Corinthians 1, and indeed the whole Bible.

Along with the rejection of that Biblical teaching on the mission of the church goes the erroneous notion of the relation between the Church and the world. All the criticism against the church comes out of the idea that the church exists FOR the world! That is exactly not the way it is! The Church does not exist for the world; but the world exists for the church! Take your Bible and look up the first chapter of Colossians and meditate prayerfully on verses 12 through 20. There the Bible teaches that by Christ and for Christ all things were created. All things, notice, things in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers are by Christ and for Christ. And Christ is the head of the body, the church. That simply means then that all things were created for the Church! We find the same precious truth in the forty-third and forty-fifth chapters of the prophecy of Isaiah.

And what a wonderful truth that is! The counsel of God to glorify Himself by saving a church in Jesus Christ to be realized in the glory of the new heaven and earth is being realized NOW in time and history. Overagainst that Church of God there develops the Kingdom of this world, which under the rule of the devil opposes the Church and attempts to destroy the cause of Christ. With temptation, scorn, false prophets and teachers, the fire of persecution, the devil and the world of sin make war on the church. But in all their raging fury they are only imagining vain things and God holds them in derision; He laughs! (Psalm 2) Christ has the victory. His cross is the redemption of His Church and the destruction of His enemies. His blessed resurrection seals it! Sitting at the right hand of God He rules all things so that they must in spite of themselves serve the salvation of His Body, the Church. Indeed, the church sings with the Apostle Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of God? . . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that

loved us (cf. Romans 8).

All things therefore are for us and nothing can be against us as members of the body of Jesus Christ. When the Church, therefore, preaches Christ crucified it is faithful to its mission. When the Church calls its members to seek the Kingdom of Heaven as strangers in the earth who are born again to a living hope, it is faithful to its mission. The Church is obedient to Christ when it holds before its members the calling to live antithetically. When it calls its members to fight the good fight, to put off the old man of sin, and to put on the new man in Christ, to love not the world neither the things that are in the world, to strive for the Kingdom of Heaven by making their calling and election sure, etc. then the church is faithful to its calling.

Then the Church does not superficially deal with symptoms such as racism, poverty, murder, and crime and all the rest; but it deals with the REAL ISSUE, which is SIN against the most high majesty of God! And thus the Church comforts its members with the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith, the gift of God. God's people are turned heaven-ward where is their citizenship and whence they expect their Savior, Who shall change their vile bodies into glorious bodies!

That makes us as covenant young people radically different! We have a heavenly goal, a heavenly set of values, a heavenly life, and on earth we are, as father Abraham, sojourners in a strange and alien land!

Let us pray, then, that the Church, our churches, remain faithful to the mission of the Church, in order that we her members may by the power of the risen Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ is, and not set our affection on things below! Then we will not foolishly look for an earthly kingdom, but keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, being clothed with the armor of light, we will awake out of our sleep and look for the coming Savior and His Kingdom!

Studies in Election

Its Justice

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

7. Its Justice

The enemies of unconditional election contend that for God to sovereignly choose a people to Himself and to deny the rest of mankind the same blessing as the elect is to become so partial as to treat the rest of mankind with the greatest inequality. They must realize, however, that the God of election is also the God

of creation and providence, who in both spheres distributes His gifts very unevenly. Equality does not appear in God's distribution of physical, mental, social and material bestowments. Equality will not appear, either, in the perfection of the New Heaven and New Earth. There will be found in perfection the communion saints, but not the equality of saints. Nor is the sover-

eign God bound to make an even distribution of that which is alone in His hands. Then how could it be wrong for Him to give His spiritual blessings as it pleases Him, evenly or unevenly?

Imagine conversing with a man of the world on the subject of justice. He has some regard for honesty, and may therefore exclaim, although somewhat as Pilate, What is justice? For he honestly does not know what he is talking about when he discusses the subject, and is rather tolerantly and amusedly suspicious of anyone who thinks he does know. To illustrate his point, he may ask, What is profitable, to get well when sick, or to die? Or is it to keep healthy when well, or to become sick? For some have gained by being sick. But who is to say what is good, or best? What standard is there by which to judge? So the man is lost who does not begin with the Word of God. For justice is that which is in harmony with the revealed will of God. Justice is the weighing out of what is right. With all men the sons of fallen Adam, rebels against God, what is right for them is destruction under the wrath of God. God's justice is inexorable, and is either meted out against the sinner, or against the Divine Substitute who bears the Stroke of justice they deserve.

In connection with the justice of God's predestination, He, in the matter, simply does that which is right. It is all a question of what is right. It is not a question of what God ought to do. It is one of the basic presuppositions of our Calvinistic and Reformed world-and-life view that God is God, and that He is the absolute sovereign who hides His eternal counsel from the "wise" and reveals it unto "babes," so that then in this connection we do not speak of what God ought to do. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The sovereign is not obligated to his subjects. It is not man who makes the "decision" here, but God. He decides whether there shall be a creation, whether the creature shall exist at all, whether He shall love or hate the sinner. It is His decision whether a man shall be a vessel of mercy, enjoying covenant fellowship with Him, or a vessel of wrath, and so a castaway forever.

If God's justice be called into question with election and reprobation, the very foundation of the most fundamental principle of Calvinism, the absolute sovereignty of God, upon which predestination stands, is attacked. God's dominion and right of disposal is indisputable. To call God or His predestination into question is not only the height of audacity, and absurdity, but it is futile!

Today, men are charged with injustice because they choose their own friends to the exclusion of others, because they have their favorites, because they would enjoy the seclusion of their own private property, because they would operate their own private enterprises in their own way, because they would in their businesses serve a clientele of their own selection. Such a charge is really an attack on the Almighty God, for He

does similarly in the heavenly sphere. He has mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardens. He has His favorites, the sons of Jacob. He excludes all others, the people against whom He has indignation forever. He will enjoy with His own the seclusion and security of His heaven of heavens, free of intruders, and free of the threat of expulsion from His own domain. He will conduct the operations of His, the King's, business as He pleases, bestowing five talents on some, or none on others. He will not be corrupted or coerced into merging His own elect institute with the institutions of the world. He will have a true church, keep it pure and true to Scripture and the Reformed confessions, and bring it into His eternal kingdom quite separate from the society of Satan.

In this country, men are still, to a great degree, free. But if God is to be charged with injustice because He is the God of election and reprobation, then man will soon be charged with injustice merely because he is free. For God is eternally and sovereignly free. He alone, strictly, has free will. But man is still free, in this land, to select the woman he desires to marry. Not yet does the government require a man to marry according to the will of the state. If a man is and may be so free to choose, is there injustice in God's choosing whom He will to dwell with Him in His heavenly home? If a man in choosing a wife does not wrong to the other women he of necessity must reject, then certainly God is not only free to select and separate His own from all others, but also in so doing He wrongs none of the rejected element of humanity. If a man has a perverted idea of justice, he will have no proper conception of freedom.

When we think of the justice of God, we want to remember that the attribute of His justice is an expression of His being, of what He is, and then to remember that justice in man is a creaturely reflection of God's attribute of being. Then divine justice and human justice are not on the same level. The sun and its reflection are not on the same level. As Christians, we really hold a two-level view of reality (though not a double-track philosophy) — God's level and man's. Human justice is the giving to each his due. But in divine justice, nothing is due from God, not one thing He ever gives. Man is responsible to be just. God is not responsible. He gives not account of any of His matters. God is God. All answer to Him. He answers to none.

The churches of the land are, increasingly, having trouble with the doctrine of predestination. Some go so far as to re-write the historical Reformed creeds, omitting this great truth. They have strong allies in those who have not yet gone this far, but who nevertheless omit the truth of double predestination from their preaching, and who mention it only to put it in the shade. So many pulpits have no more than a Ladies-Home-Journal type of "theology," a kind of Ann-Landers morality, or a Miss America philosophy.

It used to be almost universally agreed that a man acts unjustly if he allows another to break the law when it is in his power to prevent him from doing so. Now today, almost no one thinks this way. Then no longer can "the average man" criticize God as unjust for being a predestinating and reprobating God. For in this day of "new morality," which means no morality, man is so patently without a shred of justice.

But let not the critic conclude from this that when God sees a sinner committing a crime that He, when He does not prevent it, becomes a party to it. God certainly has the power to prevent it, and to do so without infringing upon human liberty in any way. But the inherent justice of God cannot be judged according to the creaturely reflection of His justice in man. The measure cannot be judged by the measured. What is the measure of justice? Nothing less than the free will of God; nothing else is just. The just is not just because it is just, but because God wills it to be just, and wills that which is in harmony with His own nature.

Predestination makes God guilty of injustice? So the Arminian has always contended. Yet except for God's predestination and election, all moral creatures would have died eternally. Then there would be no angels, only demons; no redeemed, only the damned. This is no theological invention, but the plain expression of infallible inspiration: "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom" (Rom. 9:29). Not an earthly nor a heavenly being would be saved were it not for God's election. There would be no atonement if there were no election; creation, perhaps, but no salvation. For man was created in moral perfection, but was made a mutable creature. He could change, fall. He could not abide in perfection, he could not escape falling without election unto faith, holiness, salvation and every saving good.

They who will not have election and reprobation are guilty of folly. So the Lord regards them. "He put no trust in His servants, and His angels He charged with folly" (Job 4:18). The elect angels were made in perfect holiness, yet as to their creaturehood, no reliance could be placed in them, nor in their standing. The folly which God ascribes to them is their imperfection and weakness in comparison to Himself. Angels are the highest creaturely intelligences, but by nature, and of necessity, finite. Their original perfection was mutable and insufficient as to their innate endowments to maintain them in unchangeable holiness to eternity. For that, they needed supernatural power; they needed election-grace to confirm them. Then what greater folly it is to attempt the subversion of electing grace which alone establishes in immutable perfection. There is no hope even for a holy angel apart from electing grace. Much less hope is there for a totally depraved son of Adam unless sovereign mercy distinguish him!

When God is charged with injustice because He has made a sovereign election, vain man laying the charge

must suppose that he has some merit before God. In his day, Spurgeon well refuted the charge. "Is there one man in the world who could have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits; and his reward will be the flames of hell forever, for *that* is the utmost that any man ever *merited* of God. God is in no debt to man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love, as much pity, and as much goodness as he deserves. Even the lost in hell shall have all they deserve; ay, and woe worth the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is He therefore to be accused of injustice because He gives to some infinitely more than they merit?"

The unfriendly critic will also claim that God cannot possibly make a sovereign election of some and a sovereign reprobation of others, since He is "no respecter of persons." Hear Calvin answer this charge. "The Scripture denies that God is a respecter of persons, in a different sense from that in which *they* understand it; for by the word *person* it signifies not a man, but those things in a man which, being conspicuous to the eyes, usually conciliate favor, honor and dignity, or attract hatred, contempt and disgrace. Such are riches, power, nobility, magistracy, country, elegance in form, on the one hand; and on the other, poverty, necessity, ignoble birth, slovenliness, contempt and the like. Thus Peter and Paul declare that God is not a respecter of persons because He makes no difference between Jew and Greek, to reject one and receive the other, merely on account of his nation (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11). So James uses the same language when he asserts that God in His judgment pays no regard to riches (2:5) . . . There will, therefore, be no contradiction in our affirming, that according to the good pleasure of His will, God chooses whom He will as His children, irrespective of all merit, while He rejects and reprobates others. Yet, for the sake of further satisfaction, the matter may be explained in the following manner. They ask how it happens, that of two persons distinguished from each other by no merit, God, in His election, leaves one and takes another. I, on the other hand, ask them, whether they suppose him that is taken to possess any thing that can *attract* the favor of God? If they confess that he has not, as indeed they must, it will follow, that God looks not at man, but derives His motive to favor him from His own goodness. God's election of one man, therefore, while He rejects another, proceeds not from any respect of man, but solely from His own mercy; which may freely display and exert itself wherever and whenever it pleases. . ." (*Inst.*, III, XXIII, X).

Election and reprobation do not make God a "respecter of persons." When the angels that sinned fell, God provided no Savior for them. He was no respecter

of their persons. All those fallen angels were worthy of damnation, and all were damned. But when man fell, God provided a Savior for some of the human race. Does this, then, make Him a respecter of persons? If He were such, would He not rather have saved the *angels* and reprobated *man*? Then there is the Jewish nation. God chose it to be the repository for the oracles of God. Why, since they were a people stiff-necked, murmuring, complaining, rebellious, impenitent and stubborn? A respecter of persons never would have settled on the Jews for such an honor. Election makes God a respecter of persons? Then why did He choose "the poor of this world" (Jas. 2:5)? Had He respect to the rich, how many of us would be saved? Not many magnates, not many millionaires, not many of royalty, not many of the gifted, the influential are chosen. But God has chosen the weak, the base, the despised, the nothings, the no-bodies of the world. He rejects publicans and chooses harlots. Why? That "no flesh should glory in His presence." If He were a respecter of persons He never would have chosen any such off-scourings of humanity.

But not by force of argument does one come to believe the doctrine of election. "The reason why any one believes in election is that he finds it in the Bible. No man could ever imagine such a doctrine — for it is in itself, contrary to the thinkings and wishes of the human heart. Every one, at first, opposes the doctrine, and it is only after many struggles, under the working of the Spirit of God, that we are made to receive it. A perfect acquiescence in this doctrine — an absolute

lying still, in adoring wonder, at the footstool of God's sovereignty, is the last attainment of the sanctified soul in this life — as it is the beginning of heaven.

"The reason why anyone believes in election is just this, and *only* this — that God has made it known. Had the Bible been a counterfeit it never could have contained the doctrine of election, for men are too averse to such a thought to give it expression, much more, to give it prominence.

"The Bible not only teaches the doctrine, but makes it prominent — so prominent that you can only get rid of election by getting rid of the Bible." (Dr. Geo. S. Bishop, *The Doctrines of Grace*, Chap. 11, "The Doctrine of Election True," p. 167).

Election is solely an act of God. He made His decree of election back in the ages of eternity (Acts 15:18). God is the chooser. His people are the chosen. Sometimes you hear a bit of "city mission" theology when it is said that God votes for you, the devil votes against you, now you must cast the deciding vote. But Scripture knows nothing of this idea. Rather Scripture says, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you. . ." (Jn. 15:16). The truth is that "God hath from the beginning chosen you" (2 Thess. 2:13). Therefore it is called "election of God" (1 Thess. 1:4), and the persons chosen are called "God's own elect" (Lk. 18:7). The elect man does become a chooser, but only because God has chosen him. We choose Him because He first chose us. "Mary hath chosen that good part."

(To be continued)

Come Ye Apart . . . And Rest A While

Pollution

Rev. C. Hanko

Pollution is one of the most widely discussed problems of our day.

Air pollution has become a menace to all our larger cities and their suburbs. You recognize these areas already from a distance by their yellow, murky haze that hangs over them. Soon you feel its sting in your eyes, its irritation in your nostrils, even before the obnoxious stench penetrates into your consciousness. Imagine what that must mean to breathe that air day after day and even year after year. Newspapers report the intensity of the smog from day to day, and some communities have smog alerts to warn its citizens not to engage in any strenuous exercises during the crucial periods. Reports have it that other countries have the same problem, and that Tokyo has special oxygen booths on the street corners where people can find relief. Various remedies are sought out, but the problem only increases.

And then there is the soil pollution. Farmers are best acquainted with this problem, and are also the most concerned about it. Modern weed and pest killers have done their work well, but have also left their poison in the soil. As a result, certain crops cannot be grown on that soil. And the poison runs off into the streams. Many localities are prohibiting the use of many of these poisons, but the solution to the problem has not been found.

Fully as bad is the water pollution. At this writing a large oil slick is once more moving along the Pacific seaboard. This becomes a rather common experience, but every time it happens marine life is threatened, as well as many miles of beach polluted. In the western States the wild life that threatens the sheep is being poisoned, so that the poison from the decaying carcasses runs into the streams and does its damage there. All over the country there are reports of fish and fowl

dying, some species even being threatened with extinction, just because of the pollution of the soil and the waters.

We could even speak of land and sky pollution. In spite of warnings against littering, defiant man strews his beer cans all along the roads and highways. Junk yards are heaped with wrecked autos and trucks. Even the skies and the moon are being littered with trash. Wherever man comes he leaves his stamp of pollution.

And thus mankind is bringing havoc on itself. This is not a mere coincidence, but is the righteous judgment of God against sin. God is not mocked. As man denies God, defies God's law, and sets himself up on the throne as if he were God, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth avenges His own Name by giving the sinner over to his vanity. God, not man, has the universe in His power and carries out His own counsel according to His purpose. Therefore He sends man out on a dead-end road. And in the distance we can hear ever more plainly the approaching footsteps of our Lord.

But even so, the worst pollution is being ignored.

For the worst pollution lies in the depravity of man's own nature. Paul describes the fallen human race as "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." (Titus 3:3).

In Romans 3:9-18 the apostle quotes various passages from the Old Testament to prove this very thing. He writes, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Whether we like it or not, this God's own description of you and me as we are by nature, and of every man, woman and child that comes, into this world, conceived and born in sin.

Jesus raises a finger of warning in Matthew 15:18-20, saying, Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man." Take another look at the warning of our Lord, for He does not merely say that the things that proceed from the heart and come over the lips *prove* that a man is defiled, polluted. That is true enough, for the tree is known by its fruits. But Jesus warns us that this stream of corruption that wells up out of the cesspool of our hearts actually defiles us. It leaves its filthy stain and

wicked influence behind. Sin breeds sin in ourselves and in others.

Therefore Solomon gives us that vivid description of the seductive power of sin. He tells us that the man who listens to the fair speeches and flattering words of a deceitful woman is so captivated by them, that he goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, (can you not just see him go?), or as a fool to the correction of the stocks. Proverbs 7:22,23. "Till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for life."

The devil is working overtime these days, because he realizes that his time is short and he must still do his worst.

His strongest weapon is the modern pulpit. Who could ever have imagined that the Name of God would be so defiantly opposed and His truth so brazenly trampled under foot? That Book that like an anvil has withstood the hammer blows of opposition for so many centuries is now being struck with blow upon blow as never before. God's own infallible Word, divinely inspired and given through holy writers, the only real authority and court of appeal, has been degraded into a collection of myths and old wives' tales. And that even among those who profess to maintain the faith of our fathers, so valiantly maintained in the days of the Reformation! Thousands, even in the church, seek their advice and peace of mind from the worldly-wise Ann Landers, rather than from the Word of God. There is a form of godliness while the power of God and of His Christ is denied. God's Law is filed away in the attic to collect dust. The word *sin* is contraband. Who cares to speak of sin, anyway? Man's frustrations and problems arise from his environment. Someone else is to blame. Maybe the trouble lies in his bringing up. The parents may have been too strict or the church too narrow-minded. Whatever the cause may be, one can rest assured that his pangs of guilt are unfounded, foolish, and can do him more harm than good. Let every one do as he will, as long as he seeks the good of himself and his companions. Let man set up his own standard of right and wrong, but allow him ample room for the lusts and pleasures of the flesh.

And along with this the cross of our Lord and His atoning death are denied. The sole ambition of man is to escape the serious consequences of his adulterous life, of his indulgence in liquor and his drug habit. Poverty, racial strife, warfare and social inequality must be wiped out. Freedom from want, freedom from war is man's goal, but then above all, freedom to sin.

Pollution, spiritual pollution, downright wicked depravity is excused and condoned. But let the sinner who is burdened with his own guilt and depravity seek his refuge in that despised cross of Calvary. Repentance, rooted in regeneration and manifesting itself in godly sorrow that seeks after God, is still the only solution for every single one of our problems.

News From Our Churches

Several items concerning various of our ministers have come to our attention through bulletins, which, incidentally, arrive regularly. We notice, for example, that Rev. G. Van Baren has declined the calls he had received recently from our Randolph and Hope (Grand Rapids) congregations.

We learn, further, that Hudsonville held a welcome program for Rev. Hanco and his family on Friday, October 29.

Rev. Veldman, pastor of our Southwest congregation, was scheduled for surgery (described by the pastor as "not serious") on November 5.

Then there's this very interesting item concerning the pastor of our church in Holland: "Holland's Congregation commemorated the anniversary of the Rev. J. A. Heys' 30th year in the ministry." That was on Friday, October 22. The Consistory made arrangements for a program, which was followed by a social hour for the congregation. The program consisted of a couple of numbers from each of the societies and a speech (based on I Thess. 5:12 & 13) by Rev. M. Schipper who is, by the way, a son of that congregation. Rev. Heys was presented with a gift of appreciation for his labors during those thirty years. Concerning that time element, there's this from Southeast's bulletin: "How swiftly the years go by! Seems like yesterday that he was declared candidate for the ministry."

From the September 31 bulletin of First Church (Grand Rapids) comes the following: "We welcome to our pulpit and fellowship a son of our congregation, Rev. R. Decker of our South Holland congregation. The pastor is exchanging pulpits with him today."

That pulpit exchange was, no doubt, occasioned by the fact that Rev. Decker, of South Holland, was in Grand Rapids to present a Reformation Day Lecture on October 28, and Rev. Van Baren, of Grand Rapids, was in South Holland to present a Reformation Day speech on October 29.

The lecture of Rev. Decker was one of a series sponsored by the Lecture Committee in Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It was held in the Christian School gymnasium of Allendale, a small community just outside Grand Rapids. The size of the audience was gratifying. In fact, the size of the audience was such that seating very quickly became something of a problem. Either there were more people than anticipated, or less folding-chairs, so that those who arrived after 7:45 found themselves being directed to bleachers, which must have rivaled the benches of our Jamaican churches for good, solid discomfort. And

packed liked the proverbial sardine! But one very easily forgets all that, with a lecture like that of Rev. Decker. His subject was "The Foolishness of Preaching." He pointed out that the power that will lead the church today in an on-going reformation is the preaching of the Word. It may be true that preaching today is considered by many to be outdated in our modern technological world. It may be that preaching does not fit in the scheme of those whose emphasis is on applying Christianity to the social ills of the world. The fact is that grace is communicated in no other way than through the preaching of the Word. When the pastor stands in front of us on the Sabbath, we are confronted with Christ, the King of the Church. *Let* the world scoff at preaching — it pleases God to *save* us by it.

Those were just a few of the points of that speech. The whole thing will, no doubt, appear in the Standard Bearer; but we couldn't resist saying a few words about it. To the mind of this writer, the high point was reached with these words that still ring in my ears: "May I say it? May I say it? *I'm going to say it!*" And then he went on to express his conviction that, by the grace of God, the Protestant Reformed Churches manifest *the* mark of the church — that foolishness of the pure preaching of the gospel of Christ.

According to the closing remarks of Rev. Van Baren, the chairman of the meeting, tapes of the lecture are available to interested persons by contacting either a member of the committee or Rev. Van Baren.

The title of Rev. Van Baren's Reformation Day speech was "Shall There Be Reformation No More?" It was given, as we mentioned, in South Holland. The Church Extension Committee of Rev. Van Baren's congregation, however, felt that it should be heard in the Grand Rapids area as well. Arrangements were made, therefore, to have the speech broadcast over WFUR-FM, at 3 P.M. on Sunday, October 31. Bulletin announcements in the Protestant Reformed Churches in the area encouraged members to "inform your friends and relatives of this special broadcast — and urge them to listen." In addition, advance notice of the broadcast was given over the radio station and in the local newspaper, so that as large an audience as possible would be reached by Rev. Van Baren's timely message.

A third Reformation Day Lecture was held on October 28 in Loveland. The speaker was Rev. D. Engelsma, of course, and the topic was "Apology for Calvinism."

D.D.