

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... As a root out of the dry ground (Isaiah 53:2) shall He spring forth; for, though the house of Judah shall have no believing male left in it to perpetuate the covenant seed, and his generations end in a virgin, yet will the Lord fulfill His Word unto David that out of his generations One shall sit on His throne forever.

So there will be the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, and the glorification, the Lord coming to the throne of His power! Verily, nothing shall fail of all that the Lord hath spoken!

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MEDITATION

The Mother of My Lord

Rev. M. Schipper

"And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Luke 1:41-45.

Wonderful days they were in which the words of our text find their setting!

The night of the old dispensation was drawing to its end. All through those four thousand years there

were indications that the night would not last forever. And as the end of them drew near, the signs of the coming day became ever clearer.

The first streaks of the day of salvation were beginning to appear in the multiple appearances of heavenly messengers. These enlightened the believing church that the Son of Righteousness was presently to appear with healing in His wings. Already the angel Gabriel, that brilliant seraph, had appeared twice in rapid succession: once to Zacharias, an unsuspecting priest, as he was officiating in the temple ministration; and then to a virgin whose name was Mary, who was espoused to Joseph the carpenter in lowly Nazareth — singularly favored by the Lord.

Wonderful days, indeed, of special revelation!

Six months had passed since Gabriel had announced to Zacharias the coming birth of him who was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Elisabeth, his wife, had conceived in her old age, and was no doubt making every preparation for this singular event. Zacharias, we remember, had not believed, and was stricken dumb. But certainly even his dumbness did not hinder the process of normal birth. And she that was called barren was visited by the Lord, and was soon to bring forth a son who “in the spirit and power of Elias would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

In the sixth month of Elisabeth’s pregnancy the angel once more appeared to a youthful virgin in the meanest of Galilean towns, Nazareth by name, saying: “Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”

Sore troubled was she at this saying, wondering what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel explains: “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus.” Moreover, the angel explained to her how it would be possible for her a virgin to bring forth this Son of the Highest: for the Holy Ghost would come upon her and the power of the Highest would overshadow her; and that holy thing which would be born of her would be called the Son of God.

And if Mary still wondered at the possibility of all this, the Lord will give her a sign in her pregnant aged cousin, Elisabeth, whose barren womb is made alive by the power of God.

Mary believed, but her faith needed strengthening through the sign. So she decides to go immediately to Judea to see there also the wonder that is come to pass. And it was so that, when Elisabeth heard the

salutation of Mary, the babe within Elisabeth leaped in her womb and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with a loud voice:

“Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

Wonderful revelation!

Unmistakable sign!

Not merely a natural phenomenon, to be explained from natural causes. For though scientifically it might be shown how sudden experiences of joy or sorrow may affect an unborn embryo in the womb of its mother, it is very evident here that the leaping babe in Elisabeth must be explained from more than the mere sound of Mary’s salutation.

Here was a divine sign, produced by a wonder of grace. As the sovereign Creator was able to produce in the womb of Rebekah the struggle of two nations, and so interpret the experience to a troubled mother, so also here in the womb of Elisabeth He produced the joyful leaping of her unborn son, simultaneously with the greeting of Mary.

Elisabeth recognizes divine revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost wherewith she was filled. By this power of the Spirit of God she was able to recognize the wonder that had befallen her in the grace of God. No doubt her husband, who was dumb because of unbelief, had revealed to her how he was dumb, how the angel of the Lord had spoken to him in the sanctuary of her coming pregnancy, of the birth of a miracle son who would prepare the way for the coming Lord and a people for His coming. In faith she had conceived, and now in faith she joyfully looked forward to the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord.

By the power of that same Spirit she now interprets the sign of the leaping babe, as a leaping for joy at the sound of Mary’s voice. Not only was the Holy Spirit promised and given to the babe in his mother’s womb, which makes him leap for joy at the sound of the voice of his Master’s mother, but that Spirit reveals to the mother of the unborn babe the significance of his leaping. And so by the power of the Holy Spirit she speaks to her pregnant cousin, who had come for the expressed purpose to see the sign.

Wonderful revelation, indeed!

Accompanied with great joy!

Joy, registered in the heart of the unborn, leaping babe, who felt the presence of his Master in the voice of His virgin mother. Precursory to the joy he would express when, in the fulness of manhood and in the height of his mission as forerunner of the Christ, he

would say: "He must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30). Now being unborn and in his prenatal state, but being moved by the power of the Spirit, shall he not leap for joy when he is in the very presence of his Master? Entirely proper is the action of the unborn babe, as interpreted by his mother.

But joy also in the heart and now on the lips of the aged mother, Elisabeth.

Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Not only is that which is in the womb of the pregnant virgin the Lord of her unborn son, but significantly she acknowledges that Mary's unborn babe is her Lord. And therefore she exclaims with a loud voice: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"

Mary, the mother of my Lord! This is what Elisabeth is given to understand and to express, having heard only the salutation of Mary. Indeed, if Mary had told Elisabeth all that had transpired in Nazareth — how the angel had shown to her that she being a virgin was to have a Son Whose name was to be called Jesus, Who would be given the throne of father David, how that he had revealed to her that her aged and barren cousin had conceived and was to bare a son — and Elisabeth and the babe would have responded as they did, the experience recorded in the text would still be wonderful. But the experience was still more wonderful, for Mary had not said a word about all this. All that Elisabeth heard was Mary's greeting. Elisabeth therefore not only speaks a word of joy and encouragement, but she, by the power of the Holy Spirit, prophesies. And so does the leaping babe and the words of Elisabeth become a sign — a sign Mary came to behold.

O, indeed, Mary's Son shall be called the Son of God (verse 35), for such He is. He is, indeed, the Son of the Highest (verse 32). He is surely God of God, the Son of God in the Trinity of Divine Persons. He is God incarnate, the God of our salvation come in the flesh.

But Elisabeth rejoices in the fruit of Mary's womb as her Lord — the One unto whom the Lord God has given the throne of His father David; the Lord, Who in His human nature would assume our guilt and would battle with our enemy, sin and death, and overcome; the Lord, Who through the way of the cross and the grave would merit and attain unto the crown of glory and authority and power, and thus receive a Name which is above every name; before Whom every knee would bow and acknowledge that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So, Mary is the mother of my Lord! Not only the Lord of Elisabeth and her unborn son, but also my Lord, and the Lord of all whom the Father had given

unto Him.

Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? How can I but be moved with eternal joy when He condescends to come into my presence? into my nature? under my guilt?

Blessed, indeed, is the fruit of thy womb, Mary! For He is my mighty Lord Who purchased me with His own blood, and made me His eternal possession. Who, in His unchangeable love, loved me even unto death and gave Himself for me a propitiation for all my sins.

O, it is true, that Elisabeth could not at this point in time have understood all that she expressed. That understanding would come in the fulness of her salvation. But even now, and this is the wonder of revelation and the power of the Holy Ghost within her, she is moved by the Spirit to prophesy: He is my Lord!

And how blessed is she, the virgin mother, that believed!

Mary, though she had questioned how this would be possible, since she knew no man remaining in the covenant line through whom the Lord could fulfill His Word, nevertheless believed. Verily she believed that with the Lord nothing was impossible, and she believed that the Lord would fulfill His Word in her. For she said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy Word."

But signs are for the believers, for the strengthening of their faith. Consequently she had come for this hasty visit to her cousin Elisabeth.

And now she had witnessed the sign. All that remained was to hear the word of Elisabeth that would connect the sign to the reality. And Elisabeth being inspired by the Holy Spirit does not hesitate to oblige.

"Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of the things which were told her from the Lord."

Faith, also here, is not to be explained from the things which are seen, which even appeared to be contrary to reality; but it is the faith that clings to the Word of the Almighty, and sees the invisible, that is the substance of Mary's faith. It hoped on that Word, and would walk in the fulfillment of that Word.

That is blessed, indeed!

For that Word of the Lord has a performance, that is, it shall surely be fulfilled. Nothing that He has spoken shall fail to materialize.

Mary shall have her Son!

A Son of David shall come forth of her. As a root out of the dry ground (Isaiah 53:2) shall He spring

forth; for, though the house of Judah shall have no believing male left in it to perpetuate the covenant seed, and his generations end in a virgin, yet will the Lord fulfill His Word unto David that out of his generations One shall sit on His throne forever.

So there will be the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, and the glorification, the Lord coming to the throne of His power! Verily, nothing shall fail of all that the Lord hath spoken!

God's eternal kingdom shall be established!

Eternal salvation shall be the portion of all them who put their trust in Him!

Blessed is she that believed!

And so is blessed the faith of all God's saints!

World without end!

Amen!

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Harry Boer Is Right!

The various Christian Reformed attempts to deal with Dr. Harry Boer's Gravamen against Articles 6 and 15 of the First Head of the Canons of Dordrecht remind me of a pussycat confronted by a bowl of steaming hot milk. Such a pussy approaches the bowl of milk from this angle and that, only to find that, no matter what the angle, the milk is too hot to drink. Thus it seems to be with Boer's gravamen. Of all those whom I have heard or read on the subject thus far, no one has dealt head on with the substance of it. They approach it from this angle and that, but they never deal with the main point of the gravamen, namely, the exegetical one. That milk seems to be too hot!

On this score, Dr. Boer is right. He is wrong, dead wrong, in his doctrine, as well as in many related claims which he makes. But he is altogether right in his claim that the substance of his gravamen is exegetical. Boer claims that the Scripture passages adduced by the Canons in support of the doctrine of reprobation do not prove what the Canons claim that they prove. Secondly, Boer claims that he has exegeted the Scripture passages in question, and that he has demonstrated exegetically that he is correct in his claim, so that it is indeed true that the Canons do not produce any "express testimony" of Scripture in support of the Reformed doctrine of reprobation.

In a lengthy reply in "Voices" (*The Banner*, Nov. 2, 1979) to two articles by the Rev. Lambertus Mulder, Boer makes this plain once more. After

criticizing Mulder's articles on more than one count, Boer writes as follows:

The third reason (why Boer will not enter further into Mulder's discussion of election, HCH) warrants a separate paragraph or two. The issue at stake is *the contents of the gravamen against reprobation*. The Canons of Dort teach "that decree of election and reprobation *revealed in the Word of God*" (I/6). Similarly, the Canons teach in I/15 that it is *the express testimony of sacred Scripture* that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree, whom God . . . has decreed to leave in the common misery . . . and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion. . . ." The gravamen denies that Scripture teaches a decree of reprobation as above described. It presents an exegesis of all Scripture passages cited by Dort in support of its teaching, and finds them wholly wanting. The issue is: *Is this finding correct or is it not correct?* The issue is an exegetical one pertaining to the nine or ten passages in the New Testament. If the synod should judge the exegesis of these verses to be invalid, then the gravamen will by that fact have lost its case. If the exegesis is judged to be valid, then the doctrine of reprobation should be declared to be no longer binding on the conscience of the church, in particular on the conscience of its office bearers.

This is a wholly accurate statement of the central issue of the Boer Gravamen. I do not think that Dr. Boer himself wholly sticks to this central issue even in his gravamen, probably because of his strong ani-

mosity against the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. And, certainly, Boer's critics have thus far failed to face up to this central issue. No one has dealt with Boer's exegesis of the texts cited by the Canons, and no one has produced a counter-exegesis of those passages.

Why not?

It would seem that eventually — unless the Christian Reformed Synod can still find a way to avoid treating the Boer Gravamen in 1980 — that central issue, so accurately stated by Boer, will have to be faced. It is certainly to be hoped that the Study Committee will face this exegetical issue in its coming report and that said committee will plainly state its agreement or disagreement with Boer on *exegetical* grounds. That should at least clear the air and should, to the degree that it does clear the air, prove salutary for all concerned.

And why should this exegetical issue not be faced?

It is, after all, not such a hot issue; and Boer's critics need not approach the matter like pussycats approaching a bowl of hot milk. On the one hand, it is not difficult to shoot holes in Dr. Boer's alleged exegesis of the Scripture passages concerned. And, on the other hand, it is not difficult to produce the plain and simple Scriptural meaning of the texts cited by the Canons, the same meaning that the theologians and delegates gathered at Dordrecht in 1618-19 discovered. I dare say that any capable senior seminarian should be able to refute Dr. Boer's exegesis and to produce the correct interpretation.

But someone in the Christian Reformed Church had better tackle the task. Otherwise Dr. Boer will win his case by default, and justly so.

It will indeed prove interesting to see what the Study Committee produces when its report is published.

Harry Boer Is Wrong!

My reference in the above title is not to the fact that Dr. Boer is wrong in his denial of reprobation. He is that, indeed. But this is not now my point.

Nor is my reference to the fact that Boer himself, though he insists that the issue in his gravamen is an exegetical one, does not always stick to that one issue. As I have already pointed out, even in his gravamen, Dr. Boer does not stick entirely to this issue, partly because he cannot refrain from venting his gall against the Reformed truth. But he also allows himself to be deterred by the writings of his opponents and thus to be tempted into discussing subjects apart from that central issue of exegesis.

And when he does so, he only succeeds in making plain to any discerning reader how wrong his position on reprobation is.

In the same article in "Voices" to which I have already referred Dr. Boer attempts to answer some of the non-exegetical arguments of the Rev. L. Mulder. In so doing, Boer again makes reference to the Heidelberg Catechism's alleged failure to make reference to the doctrine of reprobation. Writes he:

It may be demurred that holding to election

without reprobation is hardly Reformed. I would counsel such thought to be careful indeed. One can preach the whole round of Reformed doctrine according to the fifty-two Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism without a single reference to reprobation, and yet be wholly faithful to that most important and influential creed of the CRC. There is not the slightest reference either in the answer to Question 54, "That the Son of God . . . gathers . . . a Church chosen to everlasting life . . .", or in the rest of the Catechism to reprobation. In contemporary fact, that is virtually the only way that the doctrine of election is being preached and taught in the CRC. Rev. Mulder's ominous pronouncement, "In case the one supporting pillar of reprobation is knocked down the other pillar (election) goes with it," has hardly been validated by history. I fully believe that the doctrine of election is being muted in the CRC, but this I conceive to be caused by the theological and religious encumbrance with which it is burdened through its intimate association with reprobation.

At this time I am not so interested in the claim Boer makes in the latter part of the above paragraph. There is, of course, a different explanation of the fact that the doctrine of election is being muted in the CRC. That explanation is that in 1924 the CRC

principally denied the doctrine of reprobation in its First Point of Common Grace. Because it principally denied reprobation, it also principally denied sovereign election. And ever since 1924 the doctrine of election has been increasingly muted. This explanation is historically correct.

But I am especially interested in Boer's claim that it is possible faithfully to preach "the whole round of Reformed doctrine according to the fifty-two Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism without a single reference to reprobation, and yet be wholly faithful to that most important and influential creed of the CRC."

In this claim Dr. Boer is altogether wrong. He bases his claim, of course, on the fact that there is no *literal mention* nor any *definition* or *explanation* of reprobation in the Heidelberg Catechism. The *fact* is true. The inference drawn from that fact is *false*. And it is *fatal*: for it is exactly one of the purposes of Catechism preaching to insure that the *whole* body of Reformed doctrine be preached.

Why is Boer's inference false?

It is false, in the first place, because it is contrary to the Formula of Subscription. The Formula of Subscription conceives of our creeds as one and as belonging together. They are — and we commonly refer to them by this terminology — the *Three Forms of Unity*. Besides, according to the Formula of Subscription, the Canons are an "explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine, made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19." The "aforesaid doctrine" in this statement refers to the doctrine contained in the Confession and the Catechism. Still more, ministers who sign the Formula of Subscription vow that they "reject" and that they are "disposed to refute and contradict" not merely all errors which militate against the doctrine of the Catechism and Confession, but "*particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod.*" (italics added) In that light, I would like to know how in the world it is possible faithfully to preach the Heidelberg Catechism without a single reference to reprobation. Dr. Boer creates a false disjunction among our Reformed creeds. And I make bold to say that anyone who preaches on Question and Answer 54 of the Catechism without reference to sovereign reprobation is NOT faithfully preaching the Catechism, but deliberately muting the truth. I know, it is extremely difficult to deal ecclesiastically with a minister for what he doesn't say; but remember that this failure to say certain things is often deliberate and is frequently the forerunner of explicit heresy. We learned something of this by experience in the troubles our churches endured prior to 1953.

In the second place, Boer's inference is false in the

light of Ursinus's own explanation of the Heidelberg Catechism, Qu. 54. I shall not repeat what I wrote earlier about this subject. Let me remind the reader that Ursinus deals at length with the subject of reprobation in his commentary on Question and Answer 54. And what, pray tell, could be more Heidelbergian than the commentary by the chief author of the Catechism? And if Ursinus found it necessary and proper to refer to reprobation extensively in connection with Question and Answer 54, who is Harry Boer to say that one can be "wholly faithful" to the Catechism and yet not make a single reference to — let alone explanation of — reprobation?

In the third place, Dr. Boer's inference is false in the light of the Catechism itself. After all, when Ursinus (and others) speaks of reprobation in connection with Question and Answer 54, he does not pull this out of thin air. He does not say to himself, as it were, "Here I refer to election, and so I'd better speak of reprobation, too." No, there is a reason for this in the 54th Answer. Of course, you cannot see this reason when you quote the 54th Answer as Boer quotes it above, with those ellipses. Then it appears indeed as though there is no reference to reprobation. And I would imagine that Harry Boer must in his own mind have read the answer just as he printed it above when he preached on it without reference to reprobation. But read the 54th Answer in full: "That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof." Notice that phrase: "out of the whole human race." There is distinction made. Some are gathered, defended, and preserved *out of* the whole human race. Some are not gathered, defended, and preserved. Why are some gathered? They constitute "a church *chosen* to everlasting life." Why are some *not* gathered? The answer is plain: they are not chosen. Call them in typically infralapsarian language the "not chosen" or the "non-elect." But there you have the implication of the doctrine of reprobation. And there you have the reason why Ursinus and other commentators do not fail to speak of reprobation in this context. And there you have the reason why a Reformed man who faithfully preaches the Heidelberg Catechism will surely not by-pass the doctrine of reprobation.

Dr. Boer is wrong, dead wrong.

But I fear nevertheless that he is a faithful son of the Christian Reformed Church. What his church adopted implicitly in 1924 Boer is now pleading that it adopt explicitly fifty-five years later: the denial of sovereign reprobation!

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians

by Rev. G. Lubbers

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH MANIFEST — continued (Gal. 5:19-21a)

The second list here given by Paul consists of sins against the sixth commandment in the Decalogue: Thou shalt not kill! And the first of these is, of course, the sin of hatred, or enmities of every sort. When we look at this list we see the following enumerated: variance, emulations (jealousies), and wrath. No doubt we have here a catalogue of vices which are all of "such kind" that those who *practice* (*oi ta toiauta prassontes*) them, shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5).

Let us now continue to analyze these vices which are fightings of our sinful flesh against the Holy Spirit of God, as that occurs within us as reborn saints. We must know our natural face in the mirror (James 1:23).

It ought to be obvious that the next vice, called "variance," is better translated "strife," as does the A.V. of the Bible. It then refers to the violent conflicts which erupt among the members of a congregation of Christ in this world; it is contention, which is motivated by the sin of pride and the desire for superiority. The *Staten Vertaling*, (translation) given in our Dutch Bible, translates it with "twisten," to dispute, to quarrel. It refers to the violent discord between brethren and sisters: contention and wrangling. It is the flesh lusting against the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). Paul, writing about this vice, in Romans 13:13 connects it with the sin of jealousy. There we read, "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in *strife* and *envying*." And James writes, "But if ye have bitter *envying* and *strife* in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth" (James 3:14,16). Paul also makes mention of this terrible contention and wrangling in I Corinthians 1:11: "For it hath

been declared unto me of you, brethren, that there are contentions (*erides*) among you." Where there are such contentions the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is broken (Eph. 4:3). Where meekness is, there is no striving of the flesh against the Spirit. Then we see the upholding of each other with lowliness and longsuffering, forbearing with one another (Eph. 4:2). Here we have the answer to the prayer of Psalm 122:8, "I will now say, peace be within thee." How pleasant and how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Ps. 133)

Furthermore, we should take notice of the "manifest" work of the flesh, called "emulations" in the KJV of the Bible. Emulation is an attempting to be someone's equal. It is closely connected with the sin of "strife." Perhaps we may say that it is the very motivation of strife in the church here on earth or, for that matter, in any place in the world of men and angels. Someone has aptly said that this vice is "the feeling of sorrow that it goes well with your neighbor, which prosperity you do not desire him to have." Now this is the very opposite of what Paul writes with poetic beauty concerning "love" in I Corinthians 13:4b. In that hymn of praise on true Christian love, we read, "Charity (love) envieth not." The Dutch translation is very expressive here: "De liefde is niet *afgunstig*." Love does not seek herself. Love is not sick with the neighbor's health. What a sorry spectacle in the church of Christ! It is unholy zeal. The term in the Greek text is *Zeelos*. There is a reading in the Greek which gives this vice in the plural. Paul would then have reference to the concrete and actual manifestations of this false zeal in God's churches in Galatia. This is a far cry from the "more excellent way" of I Corinthians 13. Perhaps there was much of this false zeal in the Galatian churches. In this false zeal they devour and utterly destroy one another (Gal. 5:15).

Here is really not the place for an in depth study of the term translated "emulations." However, permit me a few observations nonetheless. We should observe, when we study the Scriptures, that the term *Zeelos* is sometimes employed in a very good sense. There is such a thing as holy zeal. We read of this in John 2:17, where the disciples of Jesus apply Psalm 69:10 to Jesus' work of cleansing the temple, by driving out the money-changers, saying "make not (stop making) my Father's house a house of merchandise." Then the disciples remember what was written "the *zeal* of thine house hath consumed (eaten me) up" (Psalm 69:10). Many passages could be quoted concerning the "zeal of the LORD." We refer to such passages as Isaiah 9:7, 37:32, 59:17, Ezekiel 5:13. This zeal is God's holy jealousy for His people, whom He loves intensely. Jealousy is the feeling which proceeds from wounded love. It is, therefore, employed as an illustration of the hatred of God toward idolatry, the breaking of His covenant (See Hodge on I Cor. 10:22). On the contrary, there is also a false zeal for God's house. Paul writes concerning Israel, which believed not, in Romans 10:3: "for being ignorant of God's righteousness and being *zealous* to establish their own righteousness, they have not subjected themselves to the righteousness of God." Here is the zeal of God which is not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2). This is the very opposite of the true zeal for God's house which consumed Jesus in the temple; it is the zeal of the flesh for an earthly house, which they defile grievously and which will be made a desolation (Matt. 23:38). It is a zeal which declines to gather Jerusalem's children, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. It is, in a word, fleshly zeal which is unholy strife and emulation. But this zeal is manifestly a work of the flesh, a minding the things of man and not of God (James 3:14-16).

But I must press on!

Paul also speaks of the vice of "wraths" (*Thumoi*). These wraths refer to the concrete explosions, the emotions being violently stirred to a boiling point and overflowing. Such wraths are a sure earmark of a false and unholy zeal. It is an evidence of seeking what is one's own and not that which is of our neighbor (Phil 2:4). These are the "great and transcendent angers" (Luke 4:28; Dan. 3:19). (See Trench's *Synonyms of the New Testament*, Paragraph XXXVII, page 123, for a study of this word.) How well we know this wrathful explosion as the very opposite of the "love suffering long and is kind," that is useful in God's church (I Cor. 13:4). Here we groan with a Paul: not that we have already attained, either are already perfect (Phil 3:12). Well does Paul write in II Corinthians 12:20, "lest there be debates, envying, wraths."

The term wrath "*thumos*" is connected with the term "malice" in Scripture (Col. 3:8). The Dutch translation is "kwaadheid." The term "malice" is evil with the intent to hurt the brother, wound him. It is the evil to hurt a man's reputation, his honor and place in the midst of the brethren and sisters. It is the downright ill will, the contemplated desire to hurt. All of this expresses itself in the "great and transcendent anger." This wrath and evil is a very manifest and ever-recurring work of the flesh against the Spirit in the saints. Here we see a very grievous aspect of the "passions" of the flesh which we have crucified in Christ's death and resurrection. It is seen in the smaller children as well as in the adult Christian.

The next term that engages our attention is the term which in the Greek text is "*eritheia*." The AV translates this with the word "factions." This refers to a *party within a party*. It is an irregular association of partisans. Perhaps this sin comes out quite frequently among men of like station: ministers, teachers, and peers in every level of society. The KJV translates "emulations." It is the effort to equal or to surpass. It is a sinful vying for excellency, to have a place of prominence and influence among men, particularly in the church. Always there is the same vying of Diotrophes "who loveth to have the preeminence" (III John 9). The term in the Greek was used for those who electioneer for office, courting popular applause by trickery. It referred to a mean, sordid fellow! In the New Testament it refers to a courting of distinction, a desire to put one's self forward (See Thayer's Lexicon). In Romans 2:8 it refers to an active nonsubjection to God. Such factious souls obey not the truth but they obey unrighteousness. Well may we flee this sin, whether we be great or small in the church as to our position or influence. God is not mocked Who says: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Does not Jesus teach his disciples, "Herein shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"? (John 13:35)

The list grows! The sinfulness of sin is clearly set forth in its very ungodly nature in our sinful flesh, in which there dwells no good (Romans 7:18). For notice that Paul adds here also the sin of "sedition." The term in the Greek is "*dichstasiai*," which comes from a verb which means: to stand apart, to disagree. The KJV translates it: seditions, which is popular disorder, tendency toward insurrection. In aggravated form it is stirring up insurrection and revolution, sedition and plotting insubordination. Paul speaks of this sin in Romans 16:17, where those who practice this sin cause division by teaching what is contrary to the doctrine, which is apostolic in character.

In close connection with the sin of "sedition" is the sin of "heresies." In the AV this is translated "parties." Perhaps this was associated with the

bringing in of false teachings. However, the term also definitely refers to a "sect" or a party. This is the meaning in Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5; 26:5; 28:22, where reference is to the sects of the Sadducees and Pharisees. Those who stand apart in the church as insurrectionists must needs do so also in doctrine. They need heretical teaching to bolster their erroneous and sinful position. Jesus does not say for naught, "whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). Only those who believe the gospel preach the truth according to the rule, "I have believed, therefore have I spoken" (Psalm 116:10; II Cor. 4:13). Conversely it is true: I have not believed the truth, therefore I

preach and practice heresy! Here is the principle that a stream does not rise higher than its source. Sadducees denied the resurrection, because they did not know the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matt. 22:29-31). And thus here in Galatians 5:20 it is strongly suggested that heresies are a counterpart of divisions and of sinful vying to excel over our neighbor. At any rate, heresies and vying are very manifestly such that those who practice them are condemned of their own conscience (Titus 3:10,11). What a fountain of evil which keeps on vomiting forth its iniquity in the church. Those who practice "such things," shall not inherit the kingdom of God and of Christ!

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missions in the Book of Acts

Prof. Robert D. Decker

J. H. Bavinck, the late professor at Kampen, the Netherlands, calls the Book of Acts "A mission document par excellence" (*Introduction To The Science Of Missions*). This is so very true. Anyone wishing to formulate a theology of missions could ill afford to ignore the Book of Acts. The Book of Acts has much to say concerning both the principles of missions and the proper method of performing mission work. Acts records the history of the early expansion of the church. One might put it this way: Acts records the beginning of the history of missions under the leadership of the Apostles. The Book begins with the ascension of Christ and the pouring out of His Spirit upon "all flesh" and it ends with the Apostle Paul, the great missionary to the Gentiles, in prison in Rome.

Thus the Book of Acts records the spread of the Gospel beyond Jewry and among the Gentiles. Prior to this the Gospel, with only a few exceptions, was limited to the elect out of the Jews, the spiritual seed of Abraham. And even in the record of Acts, at the

first the Apostles (especially Peter and John) ministered among the Jews exclusively. The only exception to this was the work of Philip among the Samaritans. (Cf. Acts 8.) However true this may be, the eschatological and universal significance of the Gospel was certainly known even in the early part of the history of the church recorded in Acts. This was very much in evidence in the Apostle Peter's sermon upon the occasion of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Peter preached to that multitude that what they had seen and heard was in fulfillment of the Prophecy of Joel (chapter 2), the Day of the Lord has come. In that Day of the Lord the promise is unto you (the elect Jew) and to thy seed, and to all that are afar off even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:39). The arrival of the Day of the Lord means that the gospel is no longer limited to the Jews. God will call His elect out of the nations.

Decisive in this connection, and that which gave the impetus to the preaching of the gospel among all nations, were the visions God gave to Cornelius, the

centurion of the Italian band, and Peter, the Apostle. Cornelius is instructed to send for Peter who is in Joppa. Meanwhile Peter is given the vision of the unclean animals with the command to "rise, kill, and eat." Through the vision Peter learns that he must not call common or unclean what God calls clean. Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius and the latter together with his house believes and is baptized (Acts 10). Peter proceeded to Jerusalem and explained what had happened, to the Apostles and brethren there. The reaction was: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). The spread of the Gospel among the nations was greatly enhanced by the persecution which followed the death of Stephen and the resultant dispersion of the people of God (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21).

From this point on, the Book of Acts records the gathering of the church out of the nations by the preaching of the Apostles and Evangelists. Even the Jerusalem conference dealt not with the question of whether or not the Gentiles were to be admitted into the church (that was not a problem), but whether or not they had to be circumcised (Acts 15). The remaining chapters in Acts record the calling of the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road and his preaching throughout the Mediterranean world. Therefore Acts reveals the universality of the promise. That which had been promised to Abraham already, "... in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed," finds its principle fulfillment in Acts.

In all of this, Acts really teaches us one, fundamental principle of missions. That principle is: missions is exclusively the work of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ. This is evident already from the introduction to the book: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:1, 2). That former treatise is the Gospel account of Luke, in which the latter records that which Jesus *began* both to do and teach. By implication, therefore, what we have in the Book of Acts is that which Jesus *continued* both to do and to teach. From this point of view the book is not really the Acts of the Apostles but the Acts of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ through the Apostles.

That the work of preaching the Gospel to the nations is the work of Christ is made clear all through the Book of Acts. Christ sheds forth the Holy Spirit and, in the power of the Spirit of Christ, Peter preaches to the multitude in Jerusalem. The fruit of that sermon was immediately evident in the three thousand souls who "gladly received his word and

were baptized..." (Acts 2:41). Subsequently through the preaching of the Apostles, "the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Christ accomplishes His work through the Apostles. Peter commands the lame man at the temple to rise up and walk "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Acts 3:6). When a wondering crowd gathers, Peter preaches to them that it was through faith in the name of the risen Christ that the man was made strong (Acts 3:16). When they were arrested, and then on the next day questioned concerning the miracle, Peter witnesses of the same truth to the Jewish leaders, telling them: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Christ's leading is also apparent in the martyrdom of Stephen and the consequent persecution and dispersion of the Jewish Christians throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Of these scattered Christians we read: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the gospel" (Acts 8:4). Again we read of these Christians that they were scattered as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch. Some of these when they came to Antioch preached to the Grecians (Acts 11:19-20). It is Christ Who sends Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26, 29). Christ calls the Apostle Paul to preach to the Gentiles (9:4-6, 15). Christ sends Peter to the centurion, Cornelius (Acts 10 and 11). The fact that the Apostle Paul was led by Christ throughout his ministry is found repeatedly on the pages of Acts. (13:1-4; 16:6, 7, 9, 10; 18:9, 10)

The message of the Book of Acts as far as missions is concerned is: Jesus Christ Who was crucified is present with His church, in the Spirit. He has not left His beloved comfortless or without guidance or without strength. The risen, exalted Lord Christ Whose name is above every name and Who has all power in heaven and on earth has returned to be with the church in the Spirit.

The contrast between the pre-Pentecost church and the Spirit-filled church could not be greater. Apart from the Holy Spirit of Christ the church is a little group of poor, wondering, and even frightened believers in an upper room in Jerusalem, one hundred and twenty of them. They do not understand and they do not know what to expect. They are waiting and wondering and praying in obedience to the word of their ascended Lord. Suddenly the Spirit is poured out, accompanied by wonderful signs: the sound of a mighty rushing wind, cloven tongues like as of fire on each of them, and the speaking with other tongues the wonderful works of God! Peter preaches a powerful sermon, now he understands. The Day of the Lord has come! Repent and believe in the name

of Jesus Christ Who was crucified but Whom God raised up and Who has shed forth His Spirit. Three thousand are saved, later five thousand more, and daily the Lord adds to the church such as should be saved. In the power of the Spirit they become instruments of Christ, driven out into the world. They become a mighty host. (Cf. Acts 2:41, 47; 6:1; 8:4.) They had great boldness, these who had formerly been unlearned and ignorant men (Acts

4:13). They had boldness in the faith, confidence, courage to stand before kings and governors, strength to endure cheerfully all kinds of opposition and abuse and persecution.

All this was theirs in the power of the exalted Christ. That same Christ is with the Church today. His Word is ever the same: "Go ye, into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. . . ."

GUEST ARTICLE

Praying for Politicians

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Many are the complaints which issue forth, not only from the mouths of the ungodly citizens of this world but also from the mouths of children of God, concerning the leaders of our countries. We complain about the ever-rising costs of living. We readily criticize many of their policies, such as Salt II, the Soviets in Cuba, governmental regulation of prices. We become rather upset and irritated over what goes on in our courts of law — and sometimes rightfully so. We raise our eyebrows and justifiably question their attitude toward abortion or toward minority groups such as the homosexuals. The liberal tendencies of politicians today have gone to the extreme. They have reached the point where we hardly feel safe voting any more.

But did you realize that we as children of God who stand in the midst of this world are called to pray for our politicians? This brings all our complaints to a screeching halt. We sit back a little stunned. To pray for our government, for our president, and for the politicians who rule our country is rather foreign to us. Seldom, if ever, do we hear from our pulpits in our congregational prayers even a passing reference to our government and its politicians. To pray for our politicians seems strange and perhaps even repelling to us. And though we might hear it every so often from the pulpit in congregational prayer, to make mention of it in our own private prayers is considered unnecessary.

That, however, is incorrect reasoning. To pray for our politicians is an exhortation, a command to us as children of God who, although we are not of this world, nevertheless stand in the midst of this world. We too are governed by politicians. We too are members of the societies of this world. And as we stand in the world we receive the admonition of Christ to pray for our politicians.

Our Belgic Confession speaks of that calling in its article concerning the magistrates, Article 36. "It is the bounden duty of every one, of what state, quality, or condition soever he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates; to pay tribute, to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God; *to supplicate for them in their prayers*, that God may rule and guide them in all their ways and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." In whatever circumstance of life we find ourselves, under whatever government we are subjected, we must supplicate for our rulers, making mention of them in our prayers.

Likewise we find the same command in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XIII, Art. 4. "It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute and other due, to obey their lawful commands and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake."

These two confessions, as far as our praying for magistrates is concerned, are based upon that Word of God to us in I Timothy 2:1-4. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Another passage that is frequently overlooked but which is also pertinent to this topic is the Word of God in Jeremiah. In chapter 29 the words of a letter sent by this prophet to the captive saints in Babylon are infallibly recorded for us. In verses 4-7 he writes, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon . . . seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." Scripture can be no clearer. Lest we place ourselves in the camp of those who claim that the Scripture is culturally conditioned (that is, that it applies to the saints of one age and not to those of another) we must maintain that these passages speak to us also. We *must* pray for politicians.

Why don't we then? Perhaps our failure to do so is a reaction to those who believe that the Church must be subject to the State. Such a reaction would not be surprising in light of the past history of the churches in Holland and their struggle to free themselves from the State. Others feel that we do not have to pray for our rulers because there are plenty of other, more personal things, for which to pray. Still others feel rather uneasy praying for ungodly men seeing that we must remain separate from this wicked world. These excuses are, however, a far cry from being legitimate reasons to refrain from praying for the civil authorities. And overagainst them stands the Word of God.

Why must we pray for our politicians?

In the first place let us understand what is meant by the term politician. According to Webster a politician is "one actively engaged in conducting the business of a government." We are called to pray for the rulers of our countries whether that be a king, a dictator, or a president. It does not stop there either. We must pray for *all* those in authority, *all* those involved in the governing of a country.

The one fundamental reason that is determinative for us in praying for our leaders is that God Himself has given them their rule and authority. Romans 13:1 tells us, "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." We pray for them, therefore, because God is God and because, having

created all things, He now also controls and governs them absolutely unto His own good pleasure. He uses the politicians of this world as instruments to achieve His own eternal plan. Every action, every decision, every law which is legislated works toward the accomplishment of that plan.

It is not, as some would say, that God created all things and is now transcendent above His creation, having nothing much to do with it, allowing the affairs of this world to run their own course. These would contend that God left the world with certain laws of nature which, if heeded, would promote an easy way of life. Man, having learned these laws, rules himself in an orderly way. According to this view the politicians of this world are those who merely are able to convince the people of this world that they can maneuver these laws of nature in the best way for the good of man. And that leaves God completely out of the picture. If we were to follow this line of reasoning, then there would be no need to pray for our government officials, for we would then pray that the will of man be done.

On the contrary, we pray for them because we know that God according to His sovereign power and providence controls the affairs of history. The Heidelberg Catechism instructs us in Question and Answer 27 thus: "What do you mean by the providence of God? The almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by his hand, he still upholds heaven, earth, and creatures (including politicians too, WB) and so governs them, that . . . all things come not by chance but by his Fatherly hand." Surely this harmonizes with the Word of God to us in Proverbs 21:1 which says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." Just think of what that means! Every move that President Carter and government officials make is guided by the almighty hand of God! Every event that takes place, whether that be in the local city governments, in the state legislatures, in the federal government, in the United Nations, or in any government of this world does so in order that God's purpose might be accomplished. He is God; all things work unto the achievement of His glory! That is why we pray for the magistrates of this world! We pray that God's will may be done, that He might glorify His name in every decision which politicians make. Whatever state or condition in which we find ourselves on account of the government, whether that be in peace and prosperity or in persecution and poverty, whether our politicians promote our faith or attempt to suppress it, we are called of God to pray for them. And we do, too, because we know that in all of these things God is glorifying His name. And as children of God that is what we want. So we pray fervently that God

accomplish His will through the politicians of this land.

Another reason we pray for our politicians, which is closely related to this, is that it is our desire too that their decisions will work together for our advantage (specifically, the accomplishment of our salvation and our final redemption). Again, the Catechism instructs us concerning this. In Question and Answer 28 we learn the following. "What advantage is it *to us* to know that God has created, and by his providence doth still uphold things? That we may be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity; and that in all things which may hereafter befall us, (that includes the policies of our governments, WB) we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from his love; since all creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move." No complaints, no shaking of the head, no grumbling at our politicians should escape from our lips. Just a prayer. Placing our firm trust in our faithful Father we pray that their decisions work together for our

good. At the same time we are comforted because, although it might not always seem *to us* as if God controls those powers which He has ordained to work together for our good, yet we are assured that He does. So we pray, knowing that God hears our prayers through Christ and that He will use all the actions of politicians, no matter how corrupt, to accomplish our final redemption.

No, this does not mean we ask God to prosper them in their efforts, which already are, and will be increasingly more, directed against the Church. But we pray that they will be made to see the justice of God in order that they might be honest and godly in their endeavors in order that the gospel might go forth and we might pray uninhibited and unharassed by the ungodly. And when we observe that our politicians become more and more antagonistic towards us as children of God we pray that the Lord's will might be performed by them, trusting, firmly trusting, that if God is for us nothing can be against us.

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

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MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

December 1, 1979

Dear Timothy,

We were talking in our last few letters about the unity which is man, how God created man with body, soul, and spirit, and yet in such a way that man constitutes a marvelous whole, the parts of which cannot be separated from each other, and with each part functioning together. We pointed out ways in which the life of the body affects man in his soul and how the soul of man affects his body. We talked also about how the fundamental relationship in which man stands is his relationship to God, for man possesses a spirit and by this spirit he stands in an inescapable relation to his Creator.

We have to discuss this somewhat more in detail in this and the following letters. It may seem as if all this takes us somewhat far away from the practical aspects of pastoral work, but it is well that we lay a good foundation first; for only in the laying of a solid foundation will it be possible to erect a sturdy structure which will be of value to you in your labors as pastor among those who have pastoral problems.

We must say, first of all, a few words about the body more specifically than we have up to this point.

It is not of interest to us for the moment to enter into a detailed discussion of the physiology of the body or even of the nervous system which is our main concern here. There are others who are more qualified to discuss this from a technical point of view than I am; but it is not immediately important as far as our discussion is concerned. We must keep before us our interest in the relation between the body and the soul.

I mentioned in a previous letter that the soul of man is the seat of all man's thinking and willing. It is in the soul that God has set the mind and the will.

But this mind and will cannot function apart from the body. The soul has the *potential* for thinking and willing, but unless it has "material" with which to work, it will not be capable of acting. In some respects there is an analogy here between the soul and the eye, e.g. The eye may have the potential for seeing, but unless there is something to see, the eye cannot function. Put a person in a totally dark place and the eye cannot function at all. So it is with the soul.

And so God has created the body and soul in such close relationship that there are "doorways" to the soul which are present in the body. These doorways are the five senses of the body: the eye, the ear, the sense of taste, of touch, of smell. These doorways of the body are the means through which the things of the outside world pass into the soul.

There are a couple of truths here which we ought to stop to notice. In the first place, each sense shows us only a certain part of a particular creature in God's creation. If, e.g., we are examining a rose, the sense of smell would give us only the odor of the rose; the sense of touch would give us only the feeling of velvet texture of the petals and the general shape of the flower; the sense of taste, if we would put part of it into our mouths, would give us only what the petals tasted like; the sense of sound, in this case, would be very little because the rose itself gives forth no noise; the sense of sight would tell us the color, shape, size, etc. of the rose. But, although each sense gives us only a certain aspect of the whole rose, our minds are able to put all these different things together and give us a complete picture of what that rose is which God created.

Now there are two problems which arise in this connection which have long been disputed by philosophy. These problems are: 1) How can we be sure that our senses give us an accurate idea of what

that rose really is? and, 2) Is there perhaps something about that rose which we can never know because our senses are not adapted to learning it? This latter question especially is an important one in our day, although from a slightly different viewpoint. You know that there is a lot of talk going around nowadays about extrasensory perception, a certain "sixth sense," certain powers which people have which are not explainable in terms of the knowledge which we receive from the senses. These people are supposed to have a certain sense perception which goes beyond the powers of our five senses and which gives to people power to know what is happening far away from them, what will happen in the future, what certain cards of a deck are before they can actually see them, etc.

Although these two problems may have troubled philosophers over the centuries, they really ought not to trouble the child of God. We believe, and must believe, that the whole of God's creation is available to us through the five senses, that there is no other way to know the things of the creation except through the five senses, and that our senses give to us an accurate and complete knowledge of all that God has revealed in His creation.

The key word here is, "revealed." We believe, on the basis of Scripture, that God reveals Himself to man. We believe that the Christian is able to know God both through the creation which His hands have made and through the Scriptures which He caused to be written by the Holy Spirit. And because God reveals Himself through all these things, we may also believe that man is created in such a way that He can indeed know the creation and the Scriptures with the senses which God gave Him. It would be foolish for God to create things in this world which reveal Him to man but which are unavailable to man because man's senses cannot "reach" them. That would defeat the whole purpose of the creation as the revelation of God to man. Supposing, e.g., that I wanted to tell my dog something about a new baby which was born into our family. Supposing also that I knew that the dog could not distinguish between different colors. I do not know whether a dog can tell the difference between colors, but supposing for the sake of the illustration that it could not. I wanted to give that dog some information about the new baby by means of a photograph. It would be foolish of me to be careful that the photograph contained the right colors of the baby's hair and eyes if the dog could not distinguish between them anyway. A simple black and white photograph would be sufficient. So it would be foolish for God to put into the creation certain things which we could not even perceive with our senses.

We must, therefore, on the basis of the truth of

revelation, conclude that we can, with our senses, gain an accurate and complete idea of what God's creation is like. And we must not believe all this nonsense that there is a certain aspect to the creation, a certain "sixth side," a certain other facet which can be known only by people who have a sixth sense or some extrasensory perception of one sort or another. It is not impossible, of course, when people give themselves over to the power of Satan, that Satan can give to people certain powers which seem to us extraordinary. But this is something else, something which lies beyond our discussion.

Now the reason why this needs to be emphasized is that all our knowledge of God comes through revelation. God does not put some knowledge into the hearts of His people automatically, directly, immediately, from within. He never works that way. There are certain mystics in the Church (and they always have been present in the Church) who believe this. They speak of direct revelation, inner light, a subjective knowledge of God which comes to man directly and from within and is completely apart from objective revelation. But we must not believe any of that stuff. All the knowledge of God that we have comes to us through the things which He has created.

This is, of course, true also of the Scriptures which are the central way in which we know God. Scripture is a book, a part of this creation, a creature also which we see with our eyes and handle with our hands. In fact that is just the point which the apostle John makes concerning Christ Himself: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you . . ." (I John 1:1-3).

All of the knowledge of God which we have, therefore, comes to us through the revelation of God. And this revelation comes to us through our five senses. This is why we often speak of the preaching as the gospel for our ears, and the sacraments as the gospel for our eyes.

This is, however, a marvelous thing. The senses in our bodies are connected with the brain by means of the sensory nervous system. The brain and the nervous system have often been compared with an elaborate and intricate communications system. The central "switchboard" is the brain, and all the sensory nerves bring to the brain the messages of the senses.

And yet this is not by any means the whole of man's wonderful creation. For the messages which

the brain receives are also somehow transmitted to the soul. There is here a very great mystery. Even though we ourselves are involved in this great mystery, we cannot understand it. The body is, after all, earthly, material, made of the stuff of this creation. The soul is a spiritual substance which is not fashioned of material which you can weigh in a scale, dissect with a sharp knife, and examine under a microscope. It is a substance which no examination with the tools of medicine and science will ever uncover. The proof for the existence of the soul lies not in the laboratory of the scientist but in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, even though the body and the brain and the nervous system as a part of the body are material, and the soul a spiritual substance, there is some kind of bridge between the two. What exactly it is we cannot tell, and, though philosophy over the years has attempted to describe this mystery in one way or another, the attempts have always been

unsuccessful. Nevertheless, that such a bridge exists is beyond doubt. The messages which come through the doors of the senses, travel along the sensory nerve, and enter the brain are messages which find their way into the soul. For they become the "material" with which the soul functions in all its thinking and willing. How the brain and the soul are united we cannot tell. We cannot even tell very well exactly the point where the dividing line (if there is one) between the soul and brain is. We cannot tell with precision what of thinking belongs to the soul and what belongs to the brain. All is a mystery. But that it is true we know. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

And the wonderful part of it is that, because of all this, we are able to know God through Jesus Christ His Son, and knowing Him have life eternal.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

ALL AROUND US

Two Magazines Unite

Rev. G. Van Baren

The R.E.S. News Exchange of Oct. 9, 1979 reports on the merger of two well-known conservative magazines:

In March 1935 the well-known J. Gresham Machen founded the *Presbyterian Guardian*. In its history this paper has primarily functioned as the 'house organ' of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It has been, however, an independent monthly and representation on its board has come from several denominations. At the present time six *Guardian* board members are from the Presbyterian Church in America.

Now this magazine, probably after the October issue, will become part of the *Presbyterian Journal*, an independent weekly of Asheville, North Carolina. As part of the plan worked out by the boards of both

magazines, five members of the *Guardian* board will join the present twenty-five members of the *Journal*, and the *Guardian* assets will become part of the new enlarged *Journal* ministry.

The merger will not leave the Orthodox Presbyterian Church without its "own" paper, however. That denomination has undertaken to launch a specifically denominational paper, developed along the lines of the monthly *Messenger* of the Presbyterian Church in America.

The *Presbyterian Journal* has served the conservatives in the Southern Presbyterian Church as well as the new Presbyterian Church in America. It has also sought to gain acceptance within several of the other Presbyterian denominations.

A "Conservative's" Answer for Discipline

Dr. L. De Koster, in the *Banner* of August 17, 1979, has a few words to say to and for the conservative. In an editorial, he rejoices that the

Synod of 1979 shows that the conservative is still able to turn the course of the church from paths of liberalism. His proof of that is the decision of the

Synod to study again the issue of women serving in the office of deacon — and hold in abeyance further elections and installations of women into this office. Two interesting facts come forth from the editorial. First, De Koster is a “conservative”; he says so. I quote:

I think that the mind that came alive in all these manifestations (at Synod — G.V.B.) is the conservative mind, a mind of which I count myself a supporter. . . .

I count myself, I say, a conservative. Say, if you prefer, a Calvinist. That implies a certain sober security of mind. Conservatism stands where it has stood across the centuries — from long before Calvin, of course. And being secure in its roots, conservatism can let the winds blow, the voices cry, the criticisms come and go, without worrying too much.

However, De Koster is careful to point out that he is not to be included with certain “reactionary” conservatives:

And then, alas, some few conservatives compensate for their supposed irrelevance by going reactionary and lashing out at random *against* persons and trends and minds among us — just to show that they are alert after all. This kind of poor, irrelevant, pointless thrashing about is frequently illustrated among us by the “News Bulletin” of the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen.

As a “conservative,” however, Dr. De Koster would allow rather free rein to those of differing views. It is his opinion that the *Banner* rightly allows people of many divergent viewpoints to write. He is also very much opposed to any sort of discipline of the “liberal” in the church. It is his opinion that the erroneous views of mistaken men will “crumple of its own inner hollowness.” He would not have Verhey or Boer to be put out of the church. He writes:

Well, in a word then: there’s naturally room, in a “conservative” *Banner*, for other points of view. A room which the other points of view do not, commonly, (and significantly) give to each other. And you can learn something from that, about the real strength of conservatism. . . .

Do you think, for example, that the purposes of the Church are best served by pursuing constructive programs in obedience to the Word? Or by lopping off the head of a Verhey or a Boer, mistaken as they both seem to me to be?

Rather, put your energies into *affirmation* of the Truth, of the Word and the Confessions — and error will crumple of its own inner hollowness.

Just a few remarks on the above. I’ve said it before: the church is not well-served when in its church paper all sorts of writers of differing views — views conflicting with the confessions of the church — freely write. De Koster may suggest that the “error

will crumple of its own inner hollowness.” Ultimately, of course, it does. But in many cases, that error “crumples of its own inner hollowness” only at the time when Jesus returns on the clouds of glory. In the meantime, it would appear that the church, in its denominational magazine, gives its stamp of approval upon divergent views. Need it be pointed out that the error always appears to be more popular, and the youth particularly susceptible to the error, so that De Koster’s proposition is nothing short of playing with fire? Eve listened to the lie of the devil in Paradise. Her children have done the same since. People of God must be alerted to and warned against the lie. But surely the lie must not be presented by members of the church as though it is the truth. Rather than “crumpling,” the error festers as a sore, working to the destruction of the body. Rev. Peter De Jong, in the *Outlook* of October, 1979, nicely refutes from Scripture this mistaken argument:

That Word throughout commands us to oppose those who in faith or life turn from or lead away from the gospel and forbids us to tolerate them. Recall Paul’s warnings to “turn away from” those who “are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine” of the apostles (Rm. 16:17, cf. Tit. 3:10). Recall how he had to order the easy-going, tolerant, Corinthian church to “Put away the wicked man from among yourselves” (I Cor. 5:13). Remember that the Lord Himself in the letters to the seven churches commended the Ephesian church because it would “not bear evil men” and tried “them that call themselves apostles, and they are not and didst find them false” and because it hated “the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (Rev. 2:2 and 6). On the other hand, the Lord sternly rebuked the Pergamum church for tolerating “some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication” and also “some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans” (2:14,15). In the same way He rebuked the Thyatira church for tolerating “the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols,” threatening to bring His own judgments on the unfaithful (2:20ff.). Consider in this connection too His concluding warnings to those who venture to tamper with His Word (22:18,19) that they would receive His judgments and forfeit a place in His city.

De Jong continues by pointing out that these passages of Scripture clearly require proper church discipline — one of the three marks of the true church of Christ. De Koster, however, sets forth neither a Scriptural nor Reformed position of discipline. He speaks of discipline as “lopping off the head of a Verhey or a Boer, mistaken as they both seem to me to be.” Now Verhey denies certain obviously literal

passages of Scripture. Boer has denied the doctrine of reprobation, and then necessarily the Reformed view of election as well. These are not little matters. They strike at the very core of the truths of God's Word — and the confessions of the Reformed churches. Surely, if anything requires discipline, this should. Yet De Koster believes that the errors will crumble of their own inner hollowness. And he has a terribly sad view of discipline: "lopping off the head." Even excommunication, according to the form for this, is called a "last remedy." It may never be viewed as "lopping off the head." Discipline and even excommunication is used to bring sinners to repentance. If this is not thus used, two evil results follow: the love of Christ is not manifested by the church toward the sinners — and they continue steadfastly in their sins. And, secondly, the errors

which are unrebuked, multiply within the church as does the leaven within the bread. De Jong also points this out when he writes of De Koster's view of discipline as a "caricature and totally misrepresents the motive and purpose of the discipline which the Bible commands. We notice in Matthew 18:5,6, that it was the Lord's love for His 'little ones' that explained some of the sternest warnings he ever uttered concerning the seriousness of causing them 'to stumble.' And He went on in the following verses to give instructions about how discipline must be exercised in order to prevent or remove such offenses."

With such sort of "conservatives" and "conservatism" within the church, the foundations of the church will doubtlessly soon be destroyed.

Ordination of Homosexuals

Christianity Today, Oct. 19, 1979, reports on the debate in the Episcopal Church on the ordination of practicing homosexuals within its midst. For the time being, this church has rejected the proposition — though there was much agitation for such action.

The homosexuality issue surged out of the closet and onto the floor of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church last month.

The debate was for and against the ordination of avowed, practicing homosexuals. Perhaps not since the United Presbyterians debated, and then rejected, ordination of practicing homosexuals in the summer of 1978 has a major Protestant denomination studied the issue so seriously.

In the end, the church's two-chamber legislature

rejected homosexual ordination. Its House of Bishops and House of Deputies (clergy and lay delegates) approved a resolution stating, in part, "it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual." The resolution was in the form of a recommendation, not mandatory legislation; but many were pleased that now, at least, the church is on record against such ordination.

The above decision is hardly reason to cheer. The "gay movement" claims a rather large number of priests in the Episcopal Church are practicing homosexuals. There is, apparently, no discipline of these. And the decision was in the form of a "recommendation," not a requirement or rule. Surely apostasy is rampant in this day and age!

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Ladder of Grace

Rev. John A. Heys

"It is appointed unto men once to die," the author of the epistle to the Hebrews rightly declares. And

this truth was known by the saints in the Old Testament dispensation as well as in the days when the

epistle to the Hebrews was written. Isaac knew this and said to Esau, "Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death." And these were introductory words to his command that Esau get vension for a delicious meal that would precede giving him the blessing of God's covenant. He wanted to be sure that Esau got it, and his appointment with death must not prevent him from doing what his heart had planned.

No, Isaac was not a hypochondriac. He was not a man who loved to think he had all the diseases of that day and would soon be overtaken by one of them. He was already blind. Sight had died in him. He had become a senior citizen and was considered by his peers to have reached the golden age when, one by one, men are mown down by the "grim reaper."

But even though it is appointed unto men once to die, it pleases God often to have one linger on beyond the time of others. And the day of that appointment with death we do not often know very far in advance. Isaac lived to be one hundred and eighty years, and lived long enough to be there when Jacob with a family of grandchildren came back to the land of Canaan after serving Laban for twenty years. Truly with the psalmist we can say, whether we be cut short, as men sometimes say, or live beyond the expectations of men, "My times are in Thy hand," Psalm 31:15.

And Rebekah also expected her husband to die soon. What is more she knew of Esau's plot to kill Jacob as soon as the days of mourning for his father were past. Yes, Rebekah expected Isaac's death in the near future and feared a double bereavement. Jacob was therefore sent to her brother Laban. As far as Rebekah was concerned Jacob was being sent for safety from the hatred of Esau. As far as Isaac was concerned, for he knew nothing of this plot, Jacob was being sent to get a God-fearing wife from among Rebekah's brethren. Esau had already taken to himself three wives. But Jacob apparently had somewhat the same nature as his father and showed no interest in women and was not ready to settle down and take a wife to himself. The hand of God — Who gives all of us our natures — was behind this so that Jacob would not take to himself a heathen wife. Would to God that some of our young people would not be so interested in getting married and would be willing to wait until they find one who will indeed be an help and not an hindrance in their spiritual lives, an help meet or suitable for them as children of God.

But before Jacob is sent away Isaac pronounces the blessing upon him again. This time, however, there is a tremendously significant addition. Thinking that he was blessing Esau, Isaac had before spoken of all the blessings of the field and of the dew of heaven, of people serving him and of the fatness of the earth. Genesis 27:27-29. But turn now to Genesis 28:3 and

4. Significantly, Isaac now being fully aware of God's prophecy that the elder shall serve the younger, and that God loved Jacob but hated Esau adds, "God Almighty bless thee," and, what is more, "give thee the blessing of Abraham." That element Isaac did not intend to pronounce upon Esau. After trembling "very exceedingly" he is fully aware now that God purposes to establish His covenant in the line of Jacob's and not Esau's children. Was he, when he blessed Jacob, under the impression that he was blessing Esau — for he did have doubts which he also expressed in Genesis 27:20-22 — and therefore did not dare speak of the blessing as handed down from Abraham? At any rate, now, in a moment of stronger faith, he adds what should have been said the first time, "God Almighty bless thee . . . and give thee the blessing of Abraham."

With what mixed emotions Jacob must have left his home to travel to Padan-aram, about which he knew nothing except that his mother's relation dwelt there. He knew that his brother hated him enough to kill him. He knew that his mother and father did not see eye to eye, and his father expected to die in the near future. He knew that, having received this full covenant blessing, he had to, was obliged to, get a God-fearing wife for the Covenant's sake. He knew that he was to carry on after his father's death as God's prophet and as spiritual head of the covenant people. But he also knew that he, by God proclaimed to be the supplanter, was now being driven way from the land which had been promised to him. Well could he with a troubled soul ask, "My father blessed me and prayed that God Almighty would also bless me. But will He? I am being banished, driven from the land promised to me. Will I come back? Will I find a wife who with me will raise up covenant seed?" A host of questions must have risen in his mind. And the least of them certainly was not, "Do I deserve to be the spiritual head of the covenant people? Do I deserve to be brought back alive to this land and actually inherit it? Am I really so different and better than my brother Esau? He has those heathen wives, but have I not walked as a heathen who is interested only in earthly things?"

With a mind in turmoil like that, one finds it hard to sleep, especially if one's bed is the hard ground and one's pillow is a stone. Yet Jacob sleeps soundly enough to dream. God gave that to him. Do not overlook the grace of God in this historical event. Jacob made that mistake, but we have no reason to do so in light of what is recorded for us in this incident. We read in Genesis 28:16 that when Jacob awoke after his sound sleep and dream he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Whether he prayed to God before he fell on the ground to try to sleep we are not told. And this could

very well mean that he did not. How great then the grace of God to appear to him and to confirm what his father had prayed for and in God's name declared: "God Almighty bless thee." In the dream, that is what God promised Jacob. Note verse 13: "And behold the Lord stood above it (that ladder reaching from earth to heaven), and said I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." And then in verse 15, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken of to thee." All this was a surprise to Jacob; and well might he be surprised; and well may we when we realize that we deserve the very opposite of what God in His grace gives us. That exactly is His grace and gracious dealing with us.

It has been said that "grace is God giving everything for nothing to those who deserve nothing." Yes, but it is richer than that. God's grace is God giving everything for nothing to the good-for-nothings. Or, if you will, "God's grace is God giving everything for nothing to those who deserve the very opposite." God's grace is not God giving good things to good people who have earned some wages but receive a bonus on top of those wages. God's grace is God giving good gifts to bad people, to sinners, to those walking in rebellion against Him.

And the explanation of all this is in that ladder which Jacob saw in his dream, or rather, in the ladder which God showed him in the dream. The ladder reached from the earth to heaven, and thus from the point where Jacob was — that ladder stood at his feet as he lay there on the ground sound asleep — and reached up to God Himself, for we read that God stood above it. Now a ladder is a device which enables one to go from a lower point to an higher one. A ladder is therefore a way of ascent, a way of climbing higher. And at once this reminds us of Jesus' words, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man can come unto the Father but by Me." John 14:6. He is the way out of the depths of sin into which we have fallen and the way up and into the covenant fellowship with God which is life everlasting. God showed Jacob the Christ there before he left the promised land. And He showed Christ as the reason why Jacob will be protected and brought safely back to inherit the land. All of God's grace is in Him; and He sends the angels down from God with messages of peace and of great joy to us poor sinners. And He sends angels down to us to assist us in climbing up that way to the Father's right hand. Angels descending encourage us with the gospel of peace, bring us God's Word of truth and His rich promises. For the word angel means messenger. But these angels, according to Hebrews 1:14, are "ministering spirits,

sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Christ The Way, sends His angels, to assist us in our struggle on the way to glory. They come down from heaven, but they also return. They bring down blessings to us, but they also bring our souls on that ladder, which is Christ, and in the moment of death to the Father in His heavenly glory.

We call it therefore the ladder of grace. And was it not so for Jacob? What did he do to deserve so beautiful a picture and such reassuring words? The idea of getting a God-fearing wife and to walk in the way of God's covenant to raise up seed of the covenant did not arise in his soul. We may believe that he would not have hesitated to take a wife of Canaan, if it would enable him to get more sheep and cattle and the earth and its wealth. No, at this stage Jacob does not appear and show himself forth as a God-fearing man himself. Why should there be guarding angels sent from heaven for him? Let him prove himself first. Let him show first some serious intention of throwing himself upon God. Let him fall on his knees and confess his wickedness and go to Esau and plead for forgiveness, and to his father for his despicable deceit! Surely he deserved the opposite of what God promised him here at Bethel. But the house of God — for such is the meaning of the word Bethel — is ours by grace, and that house of God is built in God's grace.

Once again, it has been said that "God's Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense." (You may note the word grace spelled out in those capitalized letters.) But therein is the answer. Not because of Jacob's works. He had no expense account out of which to buy God's riches. It was at the expense of the precious blood of Christ; it was at a tremendously expensive price that a ladder from this sin-cursed earth to the Father is realized for God's people. You see, Jacob saw a ladder set up on the earth. He did not find a ladder. He did not make it. He lay there sound asleep doing no work at all. But God set up that ladder when He came in our flesh and when the cross upon which His Son was nailed, as it lay on the ground, was set up and with a sudden jar dropped into the hole dug for it on Calvary. We have salvation because of a ladder, a way of grace. We are saved by grace, not by works, lest any man should boast.

And in that grace it is that Jacob now commits his way to God and confesses Him, so that we come across the first words of faith recorded in Scripture concerning Jacob. Before this he did not look like a child of God. Now by God's grace he speaks like one and calls the name of that place after God. Indeed Jacob will return to his trickery, and we will to our works of unbelief. But God's grace is unchangeable, and the angels are in that grace making an uninterrupted descent and ascent for our salvation.

Book Review

NURTURING CHILDREN IN THE LORD, by Jack Fennema; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1979; 162 pp., paper, \$4.95. (Reviewed by Gertrude Hoeksema)

In five chapters plus a foreword and an afterword, the author gleans from Scripture the principles of the nurture of children, and explains them from a Biblical perspective. In the first chapter, which is also the longest, the author establishes "A Biblical View of the Child," and treats the pertinent subjects of the child as created by God, the child as image-bearer, the child as a sinner, and the child as a new creature in Christ. The chapter ends with two subtitles on the child and motivation, and the child and learning.

Mr. Fennema devotes the rest of his book to the practical applications of these Biblical principles. In chapter two he defines discipline as *nurture*; and he divides the nurture of the child into three parts: Biblical instruction, Biblical chastening, and Biblical counseling or admonition. These three parts are also the titles of his last three chapters.

Many of the author's concepts are lucid, Biblically grounded — he uses Scripture's words very often as the basis for his statements — and they have appealing common sense. Especially in his concept of discipline of the child, he captures the Biblical idea of discipline in the sense of the training of the whole child. Also many of his practical suggestions for preventive and corrective discipline would be helpful for parents or teachers.

However, there are serious flaws in the book. Although the author sometimes arrives at correct and even helpful solutions to discipline problems, he does so despite his incorrect basis and his faulty view of the child. For his basic principles are not truly Biblical, nor are many of his conclusions about the nurture of the child Scripturally grounded.

In his "Biblical View of the Child," for example, he states that man was created in the image of God, and explores the meaning of that statement. Following that, he says, "Although the Fall distorted man's perception of beauty, he can develop his innate ability to appreciate and create products of beauty. . . . He is called as an image-bearing creation to give expression to the beauty of God's holiness and holy array evident within himself and in the world," p. 17. In this passage and many others, the author denies that man lost God's image and became the image of the devil, remaining a creature capable of bearing God's image only through regeneration. The author's logical conclusions then are: "The image

may have become distorted, blurred, and misdirected because of the Fall, but children continue to bear a semblance of the image of God. This fact has important significance for how one treats children. They are to be viewed and treated as persons who have both dignity and worth," p. 19. That leads to his differentiation between "total" and "absolute" depravity, so that for him "total depravity means that each thought, word, and action of man has within it the taint of sin. Absolute depravity, however, means that each thought, word, and action of man is so absolutely corrupted that there is no redeeming feature whatsoever," p. 20. He chooses the former, and embraces the idea that "God has chosen to restrain evil within this world so that his divine purposes can be carried out," by means of the various kinds of good man can do. He concludes by stating, "But these types of good actions are conducted only on a horizontal, man-to-man, human level," p. 20. His summary, then is that "all schools can be places of mutual respect and order," p. 21. All of this is based on the theory of common grace, which we as denomination officially rejected as unscriptural in 1924.

One more example from the first chapter will suffice to illustrate the author's lack of clarity in stating the relationship of the child to God. On the one hand, he says, "Children are totally religious beings!" p. 3. And in a certain sense that is true, for all our children's thoughts and actions are or should be motivated by the knowledge and love of God. On the other hand, however, he says that the child's sense of value and dignity must be received from the important people in his life — which, too, in a certain sense, is true. The confusion arises because the author talks about "man" and "children" in general, and fails to draw the sharp lines of distinction between the godly and the ungodly, between the covenant child and the child of Satan, and between the church and the world. That is not to say he does not mention sin and grace, and Christ's sacrifice. He does. But his lines of distinction between Christ's seed and Satan's seed are fuzzy, at best. Mr. Fennema does not use sound Scriptural, Reformed language.

His lack of sharp lines between sin and grace, the righteous and the wicked, carries over into his practical applications. He says in his chapter on preventive discipline, "Children are made in the very *image of God*," p. 61. Which children? Again, "Children are loved by God," p. 61. Again, which children? Or, "Children already possess dignity and worth," p. 62. Children of Satan? Or of God? On

page 66, when the author tells us, as parents or teachers, to love all children, not just certain ones, he bases it on the fallacy that "He (Jesus) comes to people in their unlovable condition and loves them exactly as they are," forgetting that the "wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth," Ps. 11:5, and that He loves His own "unlovables" only through Christ's atoning blood, by grace.

As he discusses how Biblical discipline is taught, the author posits several propositions, two of which are: "— Man is a religious being meant for eternal life. — God is creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of the world," p. 82. Is this some sort of universalism? I do not know. But it is not Biblical and it has hazardous results, if brought into the classroom. The following is one of the dangers: from a Statement of Purpose (from Covenant College, Tennessee), one purpose is "to reclaim the creation for God," p. 87. I do not really know what that means, but it smacks of postmillennialism. Several dangers come under the heading of *authority*. "God has a divine purpose for mankind and the world," p. 98. In a certain way, that is true, but the author does not explain that His purpose is not the same for all men. In connection with God's purpose of freedom for man, these startling words appear: "God gives laws to obey and

directions to follow, but he does not coerce or manipulate man into obedience. He allows man the choice to obey or to disobey," p. 99. Scripture teaches that God always calls to obedience and repentance (see Deut. 11:19-22). Again, in connection with freedom, the author says, "Although pure democracy is not a biblical concept, in reality, the life within the classroom should be more democratic than autocratic," p. 103. Does he mean that "Scripture forbids, but do it anyway?"

In the section on corrective discipline, the author advocates that discipline problems between teachers and students be treated as conflicts to be resolved according to Matthew 18; and he doubts that Proverbs' references to the rod of correction are "commands to physically correct a child," p. 121, again conflicting with Scripture's clear teachings on authority. These fallacies must not enter our covenant homes or classrooms.

Because of its distortion of Biblical principles in many areas, because of the lack of the antithesis and the whole idea of the covenant in the book, and because of the resultant misapplication of many practical guidelines, I would not strongly recommend this book for the Reformed Christian.

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CORRECTION

Lines 15 and 16 of the right hand column on page 44 of the October 15th issue should read, "We who by nature are sinners bring forth sinners," not "We who by nature are sinners bring forth winners."

New Address:

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News From Our Churches

Our congregation in Redlands, California, has extended a call to Rev. Wayne Bekkering. Their trio also included Rev. John Heys and Rev. Dale Kuiper. Rev. David Engelsma declined his call from Redlands.

Rev. Bekkering recently declined a call from Hope, Walker, Michigan. Hope's new trio includes Rev. David Engelsma, Rev. Kuiper, and Rev. Bernard Woudenberg. At the annual congregational meeting held on November 14, the Hope congregation extended a call to Rev. Kuiper. The Hope Church consistory has asked for and received the services of Rev. Herman Veltman to preach for them for Sunday morning services until they receive a pastor. In this way the congregation will be able to maintain continuity in preaching from the Catechism.

Rev. Woudenberg has declined the call extended to him by our church in Lynden, Washington, to serve as home missionary in the Northwest Washington area. Lynden's new trio includes Rev. Bekkering, Rev. Heys, and Rev. James Slopsema.

Rev. Arie den Hartog preached his farewell sermon to his congregation in New Jersey on November 4. The den Hartogs have sold most of their household furniture in preparation for their move to Singapore. Rev. den Hartog will serve as missionary there. The den Hartog family will live with Rev. den Hartog's parents in Lynden, Washington, until the necessary visa and work permit are received from the government in Singapore. Candidate Ronald Hanco has accepted the call our congregation in Wyckoff, New Jersey, and will take up his labors as their new pastor.

Our congregation in Pella, Iowa, sponsored a Reformation Day Lecture on October 30. Rev. C. Hanco lectured on the theme: "The Reformation in Luther's Soul." A lunch was served by the ladies of the church after the lecture.

Also on October 30, Rev. Engelsma, pastor of our church in South Holland, Illinois, lectured in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on the theme: "Evangelism and the Reformed Faith." The lecture in the Calvin College Fine Arts Center was well attended. A cassette tape of this lecture is available. Enclose \$2 with your request to cover the cost of reproduction and mail to the Business Office (address inside front cover). Forty-nine copies of this cassette were ordered by those in attendance at the lecture.

The Young People's Society sponsored a Reformation Day Singspiration Sunday, November 4, at 7:30

in our church in Hull, Iowa.

Rev. Steven Houck is laboring as home missionary in the Lansing, Michigan area under the supervision of the consistory of our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan. Rev. Houck was the speaker at a public lecture held in East Lansing on Wednesday, October 24. The Hope consistory has decided to visit the worship services in Lansing not less than once a month in order that they may better supervise and encourage the work there.

Rev. C. Hanco spoke for the Mr. and Mrs. Society League Meeting in Grand Rapids on October 23. His topic was, "Family Visitation: How it should be conducted and how to prepare our families for it."

Our church in Holland, Michigan, scheduled a special program on Friday evening, November 16. Holland's pastor, Rev. John Heys, was to give a report on the work in Christchurch, New Zealand. Rev. Heys illustrated his report with two hundred colored slides, including many of Singapore. Rev. Heys spent several months in Christchurch serving as minister-on-loan. Church society program chairmen might take note that Rev. Heys' program is available for presentation in your church.

A combined chapel of our Christian Schools in Doon and Hull, Iowa, was held on Thursday morning, October 25. The new pastor of our church in Hull, Rev. Cammenga, was the speaker.

The congregation of our church in Loveland, Colorado, held a welcome program for their new pastor, Rev. Kortering and his family on Friday, October 26.

Due to the rapid growth of the congregation, the consistory of our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan has had to revamp their catechism schedule. Formerly, classes were held on Monday evening. Now, the younger children meet in three classes on Saturday morning. Four classes for the older children and young people meet on Monday evenings.

A Thought for Contemplation from the pen of John Calvin carried in the South Holland bulletin: "Do we seek the true church of Christ? . . . wherever the pure voice of the Gospel sounds forth, where men continue in the profession thereof, where they apply themselves to the regular hearing of it that they may profit thereby, there beyond all doubt is the church."

K. G. V.