

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

They should stand against the world; but see, they have brought the world into the church. They ought to serve God, not men; but see, mammon has gained an undisputed triumph in so many hearts. They should bring the flesh under the Spirit; and behold, they walk in the flesh again. Yea, Satan's work should lie defeated; but rather the soul walks with Satan in a cursedly unholy alliance. Thus spiritual power declines. Faith languishes. Love withers. Hope fades. And prayer, which ought to have been a power, loses ardor and animation and force. Poor church of God!

Dr. A. Kuyper

See "'Translated Treasures'" —page 224

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## MEDITATION

## The Rising of Another Generation

Rev. M. Schipper

*"And there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.*

*And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim.*

*And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.*

*And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."*

Judges 2:10b-13.

The immediate preceding context is marked especially by two notices.

In the first place, we are informed that the children of Israel served Jehovah all the days of

Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua. Now this cannot mean that all Israel, head for head, feared, obeyed, and served the Lord. We know, for example, of Achan, who at the time of



the destruction of Jericho perished with his family because of his disobedience. But it does mean that organically considered the nation as a whole served Jehovah. And that means, too, that under the good influence and leadership of Joshua and the elders the nation as a whole feared and served Jehovah their God.

In the second place, we are informed that the generation of Joshua and the elders who outlived him passed away. There is, of course, nothing new or shocking in this notice. It is simply a record of the normal turn of events in the history of God's covenant in the world. At the ripe old age of a hundred and ten years Joshua folded up his feet into the bed and gave up the ghost. And he was buried like his fathers in the place of his inheritance in the land of Ephraim. Nor is there anything unusual in the fact that the God-fearing elders were also gathered unto their fathers. However, when you read of this notice in the light of our text, then it becomes most significant. It means that a God-fearing generation was followed by another generation which did not serve the Lord. That is most significant.

And there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord...!

This must not be conceived of as if historically the one generation follows another. Such might be our conception if we read the text in the light of its context superficially. Then it might appear that there was a God-fearing generation that served the Lord, and that this one was followed by another that did not serve the Lord. But if that were our conclusion, we would be seriously mistaken. Such is never the case in history that one generation so follows another. Rather, the truth is that the one generation comes up out of the other that precedes it. The second generation has its historical roots in the first. The generations develop organically, the one out of the other. It is this truth that is basic in the text, and makes the Word of God here to be most significant for the church today. Bearing this in mind, we consider our text under the theme: The rising of another generation.

Notice, first of all, its frightful description as set forth in the text.

This generation is ignorant of the works which Jehovah had done for Israel. And that means that they were ignorant of Israel's history.

That history began with the calling of Abram from Ur of the Chaldees. It continues with Abraham's seed as it is brought to Egypt, where the one family of Jacob becomes a great host, where Israel as it were is cradled in God's favor in a fur-lined nest until it is time for the people as eaglets to fly (Deut. 32:11), when through the cruel bondage

they were pricked out of their nest to be brought into the howling wilderness and thence to the promised land. That history reveals God's dealings with that people for forty years in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses; how they were preserved in the desert; how they continuously rebelled; and how God showed them His unchangeable mercies. That history reveals their crossing of the Jordan and entrance into the promised land under the faithful leadership of Joshua and the elders, and it shows how each tribe came to their respective inheritances.

That history in its entirety was a revelation of the marvelous grace of Jehovah their God. One word could be stamped across every page of that history to describe it — MIRACLE! That history begins with the miracle of Abram become a great nation. Out of the deadness of Abram and Sarai God produced a great host. What seemed to Abram and Sarai an utter impossibility became by the grace of Jehovah reality. When his brothers sold Joseph as a slave into Egypt meaning to do evil, God meant it for good, to save much people alive in the days of famine. The wonder becomes even greater when the Lord delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt through ten great plagues which destroyed the power of Egypt and brought His people out with a high hand. Once more we see the miracle at the Red Sea where Israel walks through the sea on dry ground; and when the Egyptians assayed to do the same they came to their destruction. See also the miraculous provision for Israel in the desert: water from the rock, manna from heaven, no deterioration of their clothing. Think of the wonderful provision at Sinai in the dispensation of the law and the constitution of the Theocracy. And, finally, there is the crossing of the Jordan, and Israel's entrance into the promised land. Then they arrived at Gilgal, where the manna ceased and Israel ate of the abundance of the land; where the ceremony of circumcision took place which signified Israel's separation unto the Lord, and the cleansing which was by blood; where the Passover was commemorated for the first time after forty years. And forget not the miracle of the destruction of Jericho, the conquering of the invested nations, and the entrance of each tribe into their peculiar inheritances — all of this was a wonder of grace. That is the history.

But of all this the new generation is ignorant. O, that cannot mean that they had absolutely no knowledge of it. That would be quite inconceivable. They certainly had some head knowledge of history past, if through nothing else than mere tradition. But it means that this generation had not lived through that history. It was not a vital experience for them. All they knew was simply dead



tradition. This generation did not care about that in which the nation had its origin and vital roots. This generation failed to sense that in that history God was forming to Himself a people for His praise. It simply did not vibrate in the soul of this generation what Jehovah had done for Israel.

And it follows quite naturally that if they knew not what Jehovah had done for Israel, they also would not know Jehovah Who had done it.

To have known Jehovah would imply that they knew with a spiritual knowledge of faith that Jehovah is the only true and living God in distinction from the dead and false idols of the surrounding nations. It implies that He is known as the Holy One Who has pleasure in a people that walks holily before Him, and Who destroys all that which is contrary to His holiness. It implies that He is the eternal God Who in love had chosen this people in distinction from all the peoples of the world; and that He is the Almighty Jehovah before Whom no Pharaoh, no devil, can stand; that He alone is able to save.

But this generation is ignorant of Him. O, again, they knew about Him alright. Why even from their tradition it was quite impossible to be totally ignorant of Him. Even the heathen nations knew of Jehovah, and they feared Him. Witness the actions of Balak, king of Moab, and the fear of the king of Jericho, as the spies learned from the mouth of Rahab the harlot. But this new generation does not want to retain Jehovah in their knowledge. As later in their history they desired a king like all the nations about them, so it is now, they desire gods like all the nations round about whom they allowed to remain in the land.

And so it also naturally followed that this generation became apostate in their walk. No great surprise is this; for if they are ignorant of their history and ignorant of Jehovah, it follows that Jehovah will be ignored also in His service. This generation serves Baal and Ashtaroah — the prominent gods of the heathen that were left in the land. O, indeed, they had been forewarned, for Moses had predicted that this they would do (Deut. 28, 29). Moreover, also Joshua before he died called all Israel to him to forewarn them what would happen if they forsook Jehovah to serve idols (Joshua 23, 24). So stiff-necked was the new generation that they threw all warnings from them. The gods that appeal to carnal flesh, the gods of materialism and earthly prosperity and pleasure, that appeal to eyes that cannot see, to ears that cannot hear, and to hearts that cannot understand — these are the gods the new generation had chosen. Indeed, a frightful description of an evil generation!

Ever recurring and present reality!

Mark well, as we said at the beginning, the new generation was present in and had its roots in the generation of Joshua and the elders who survived him. We must not make the mistake of concluding that this generation comes up only after Joshua *et al* are dead. Never is it so in the history of God's covenant that there is a God-fearing generation which when it passes away is suddenly followed by another generation that knows not Jehovah. Nor is it so that all in the generation of Joshua and the elders served the Lord, as we already pointed out. Nor must we conclude that all in the new generation were wicked and perverse. Undoubtedly also in this generation could be found those who would be weeping at the door of the tabernacle because of Israel's sin. Always there are the seven thousand who do not bow the knee to Baal—the election of grace!

What we must see is the fact that the new generation has its roots in and is a further projection of the generation of Joshua and the elders. There is historical and organic development in the covenant. The spiritual and the carnal seed develop together. However, when Joshua and the elders are dead, they lose their influence. When they no longer speak and govern, then the carnal generation takes over, and does as it pleases. Then they wilfully ignore their historical origin and God's faithful dealings with His people. Then they wilfully turn their faces away from Jehovah, the God of their fathers. Then they, without the tutelage of Joshua and the elders, go a whoring after the gods of the heathen to their delight.

This is what is happening in the present generation today. If this were not so, there would be no point in calling this to your attention. Then, of course, our text would have no significance for us. Then our text would simply relate a bit of sacred history concerning Israel in the time of the Judges.

But the shocking truth is that our text points to a reality that constantly recurs in the history and development of God's covenant in the world. In reality the text is speaking of the truth that constantly reveals itself in the generations of God's people.

Always there is the God-fearing generation that fears and serves Jehovah; that knows the history of God's covenant, having a living experience of it; that therefore learns to know Jehovah in love; that serves Him with all their heart.

And always in the midst of that God-fearing generation is another that has the potential of going in the very opposite direction. The God-fearing generation brings forth not only Jacobs but also Esaus. Never does the God-fearing generation, head for head, and one hundred percent serve the



Lord. There is always an Israel that is called such but is not.

All that is necessary for that carnal element really to reveal itself is the death of the faithful. As soon as Joshua and the elders died, as soon as their word and counsel, their government and influence, are no longer in power, then the carnal generation begins to reveal itself as departing from Jehovah. It is that generation which does not live through the history, for whom history is not a vital experience, which does not know what Jehovah has done for Israel. Neither does it know Jehovah as the only true God, the God of their salvation in Christ. And consequently, this is the generation that turns to the gods of the nations.

That generation is among us!

Indeed, a sobering thought!

If the present generation spiritually predominates, the other generation cannot reveal itself. If we are constantly living in the consciousness of what the Lord has done for us, if we are serving the Lord with all our hearts, if we govern the present in such a way that all are continually, thoroughly indoctrinated in the sound principles of Reformed truth, then the other generation cannot and will not become a majority that goes astray.

However, it is also a sobering truth that history repeats itself.

There is an old Dutch saying that is pertinent here, "In 't verleden ligt het heden; in het nu wat worden zal." Literally translated, it is: "In the past lies the present, in the now what shall be." Applied to the case at hand, that means, what happened to Israel after the death of Joshua is potentially with us today. And what is potentially with us today, will also happen in the future.

This is, indeed, a factor which must be seriously considered by us today.

As we already pointed out, Moses and Joshua were thoroughly aware of this situation and warned against it. Let the church today give sober attention to those warnings. The church that no

longer seriously considers what Jehovah has done for her in and through Christ Jesus, is the church that perishes. The church that does not serve Jehovah with all her heart, is the church that must experience His wrath. The church that forsakes Jehovah and His service, and goes a whoring after idol gods, is the church that comes to nought.

What then is the sobering effect of the truth in our text?

The present generation which still fears Jehovah must come to revival. It must recount the covenant mercies Jehovah our God has shown unto us, must recall all that He has done for us—how He has chosen us in Christ Jesus from everlasting to be His peculiar people, how He delivered us from the bondage of sin and death through the blood of the cross, how He has given us the regenerating, resurrection life of the Spirit of Christ, how He has laid in our hearts the hope of glory. We must renew our vow to keep our part in His covenant, by serving Jehovah with our whole being. And if we have failed to be faithful, we must get on our knees and confess our neglect before His face. And if there is any inclination to serve the idol, then we must flee that idolatry and return to Jehovah our God. And if we have failed to instruct our children in the fear of Jehovah, we must repent of this sin, and reaffirm our covenant vows assumed at their baptism.

Finally, the present generation which still fears Jehovah must continue to predominate. It must assume the prerogative to maintain its influence, by teaching and living the truth, by showing in word and example Who He is Whom we serve, and why we serve Him, by maintaining Christian discipline that always insists that God's Word and will must control our lives.

The present generation must prove to be innocent of the blood of that generation that forsakes Jehovah. If the generation that forsakes Jehovah to serve other gods ignores all your instruction and admonition, it does so at its awful destruction. But you through your faithfulness have made yourselves innocent of their blood.

## EDITORIAL

# The GKN on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture (1)

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

In November of 1980 the Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland (the Reformed Churches of the

Netherlands, hereafter referred to as the GKN) at their General Synod reached what is, in my opin-



ion, the most significant decision of all the synodical decisions taken during the entire downgrade trend of the GKN in the last twenty or twenty-five years. Before the Synod was an 84-page report from its Commission on Church and Theology on "The Nature of the Authority of Scripture." This report had been some six or seven years in the making; actually its occasion lies even farther back in history, for we must remember that the Kuitert case (at the bottom of which lay the question of Scripture) is already some ten years old.

The General Synod considered this long report for a morning and an afternoon and then decided by a *unanimous* vote that it is "a clear and confessionally responsible explanation of the manner in which Scripture wants to be understood in order to be able to hear what the God of the Word has to say to us." (quoted from *Kerkinformatie* by *Waarheid en Eenheid*; translation mine) A version of the report will be distributed in the churches during the first part of 1981. The official report has already been distributed to the secular and the religious press, and in some quarters (*Waarheid en Eenheid*, *Evangelische Omroep*, and *De Reformatie* especially) is undergoing considerable criticism. It is claimed that the publicly distributed report will undergo no change in content. However, there has been a considerable hue-and-cry raised about the fact that in some quarters the content and claims of the report/decision are already being publicized and subjected to sharp criticism. I cannot understand this, unless there was some plan afoot to try to make the publicly distributed report more palatable (and deceptive?) to the general membership of the GKN, a plan now stymied to an extent by the fact that some have divulged and criticized the contents of the report/decision allegedly prematurely. After all, as *Waarheid en Eenheid* correctly pointed out in a recent issue, the report was publicly treated by the General Synod; besides, it is this report that constitutes the official decision of the Synod, not the later, edited report; and it is this report/decision which *belongs* to the churches and church membership, so that it is their right to know it and to criticize it; and besides, this report was made public to the press. What is secret about it? Why should the public not be made acquainted with it? Why can it not be criticized?

Partly, undoubtedly, to stymie this criticism, and partly to foil the plan to publish another version, and partly to show that its own criticism of the report/decision is entirely accurate and justified, *Waarheid en Eenheid* (the paper of the "concerned" in the GKN) recently published a special issue in which it reproduced the entire 84-page report. I am glad about this, for it shows that *Waarheid en Eenheid* is not about to be intimidated by any

powers that be in the Netherlands, as well as demonstrating that *Waarheid en Eenheid* was none too severe in its criticism.

But I am also glad because this made the official report available to the *Standard Bearer*, which receives *Waarheid en Eenheid* regularly by air mail. Now we do not have to wait for the coming English version of the report; nor are we dependent on secondhand information to learn about the report.

The report/decision itself is appalling! I already began to have suspicions of this when I read a brief but rather vague and colorless report about Synod's decision in *RES News Exchange* of December, 1980. My suspicions grew when I began to read criticisms in *Waarheid en Eenheid*. But when I finally had the opportunity to read the full report, I was simply appalled. This decision of the GKN is, in my opinion, nothing less than a complete denial of the Reformed, not to say Christian, doctrine of Holy Scripture. I do not hesitate to say that while it purports to set forth the nature of the authority of Scripture, it actually denies and cancels out that authority, so that anyone can make Scripture say what he wants it to say and make it teach any doctrine which he wants it to teach.

There has been considerable concern expressed from time to time about trends in the GKN and about some of its failures to exercise doctrinal discipline and discipline of the promoters of heresy when confronted by clear instances of heresy. And this concern, as we have made plain from time to time in these columns, was completely justified. There has been concern expressed, too, about decisions in the GKN with respect to life and practice. Just recently there has been the decision of the GKN concerning homosexuals in the church. At last summer's Reformed Ecumenical Synod in Nimes, France, that decision was discussed in connection with continued membership of the GKN in the RES. It was claimed by some that the decision did not mean that practicing homosexuals could have a place in the GKN and at their communion table. But last November the General Synod made it plain that these defenders of the GKN's decision were wrong: the decision does indeed mean that the GKN are open to *practicing* homosexuals. Also this concern about the GKN's attitude toward practical matters of life is completely justified.

But this decision about the authority of Scripture is in another category, you see. When you talk about Scripture and its authority, you are talking about that which is basic to, that which constitutes the *foundation* of all other doctrines and teachings about life and practice in the church. Scripture is the foundation of the confessions themselves, as well as of all the preaching and teaching and discipline of the church. And now it is true, of course,



that in the recent past there have been many incidents cited in the Dutch press of professors and ministers who in one way or another denied the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture. Names such as Kuitert, Baarda, Koole, and Boelens come to mind. Yes, and also the name of Dr. G. C. Berkouwer in his two volumes on Holy Scripture. It is also true that the General Synod, though often asked to do so, has failed to exercise doctrinal discipline. But the horrifying aspect of this recent decision on the Authority of Scripture is that it has now become the *official* position of the GKN. In effect, this means total doctrinal freedom has become the official position of the GKN. You can no longer appeal to Scripture for a basis of protest against any false doctrine. You can no longer appeal to Scripture for a basis in upholding the teachings of the confessions. All is lost!

I assure you that this is not exaggeration on my part. In coming articles I will make this abundantly plain.

All of this has far-reaching implications.

In the first place, it has implications for the members of the GKN. Anyone even slightly acquainted with the situation in the Northlands—and I make no pretensions of more than a slight acquaintance by means of the various Dutch papers I receive—knows that there has long been a group of "concerned" (*verontrusten*) in the GKN who have been the chief and most outspoken critics of the liberalism in the churches. From time to time, some of them have left the GKN for other denominations; they were unable to endure the conditions in the GKN any longer. Not a few have found their way eventually into the Liberated Churches. Others have followed the course of establishing "*noodgemeenten*," or emergency congregations, *within* the denomination—a rather lawless course of action, in my opinion, although thus far the several congregations of this kind have not been officially attacked by the GKN's General Synod. Still others have simply stayed wherever they were, tolerating and grieving and complaining over the corruption in the churches, especially if they belonged to a congregation with a rather conservative minister and consistory. Significantly, there has been a great reluctance—no, *resistance* is a better word—with respect to the idea of reformation-by-separation. This would, if my count is correct, result in the formation of an *eleventh* Reformed denomination in the Netherlands. Now I can understand and even have sympathy for this reluctance to separate, in the light of past history in the Netherlands. Besides, I have some doubts from time to time about the doctrinal strength even of the so-called concerned. For it often appears to me that the situation has deteriorated in the Nether-

lands so far that the issue is no longer one of Reformed-or-not-Reformed but one of fundamentalism vs. liberalism. But what now? If the foundations be destroyed, what will the righteous do? Personally, I cannot see how a Bible-believing Christian can in good conscience remain a member in the GKN, which has now become officially a Bible-denying denomination. Does it not now become *duty* to separate?

A second implication of this decision is the question with which it confronts those churches throughout the world, including the Christian Reformed denomination in this country, who have official ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN. There have long been those in various Reformed denominations who had grave doubts as to the advisability and ecclesiastical honesty of such fellowship. As mentioned above, the GKN decision on homosexuality has created even greater doubts in some circles. But what now? Can ecclesiastical fellowship with an officially Bible-denying denomination be maintained? Can it be justified? Will the denominations concerned have the courage to break off relationships? In the Christian Reformed Church in the past there was much concern about the denomination's decisions concerning the nature of Scripture-authority. There were, and perhaps still are, those with grave objections against Report 36/44. But I assure you that Report 36/44 is child's play in comparison with the GKN's decision. There is nothing veiled about the decision, nothing compromising. What will be done?

The same, in the third place, holds for the RES. Again in the past year the perennial question of GKN membership in the RES was considered and, as usual, postponed. What will happen as a result of the latest decision of the GKN? Will the RES at last have the courage of its convictions when the issue comes up again? Or will it continue to evade and postpone?

These are some of the implications of the GKN decision.

Because of the importance of the decision, we plan to give considerable attention to this subject, beginning with our next regular issue (the March 1 issue will be a special Missions number).

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for a shut-in.*



## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

*Dr. A. Kuyper*

(In the last paragraph Kuyper has begun chapter 3 of this pamphlet which deals with the deformation of the church. Kuyper introduced this general subject with a discussion of various kinds of imperfect churches: mission churches, churches under persecution, and aggrieved churches.)

### 37. How the Deformation Of the Churches Is To Be Explained

The deformation of the church is always and under all circumstances a matter of guilt taking its course through the sin into which the church has fallen before her God. We may distinguish a three-fold cause: the sin of a few persons, the sin of the church, and the author of all sin, i.e., Satan. From the most distant cause, which is Satan, proceeds every outrage and every evil attack against the church of Christ. Immanuel celebrates His victory in His church, and Satan, who never suffers more deeply than under the victory of Christ, is moved most fiercely and in greatest fury against the church of Christ. For him that church of Christ is a thorn in the eye and he moves up from below the gates of hell to overcome that church of God. We ought not to think too slightly of that might of Satan. He who follows the progress of the church's history from the beginning of the world till now or, more particularly, from the renewal of the church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, or also from her restoration during the days of the Reformation, is continuously amazed at the striking fact that the church of God, during these sixty centuries, has known no apparent growth and victorious rest for even the space of three centuries. During far and away the greater part of these centuries the church of God is scarcely recognizable. At other times during these centuries it is scattered, tossed about, and barely able to be found. And in the small part of these centuries in which it did have rest, one finds a church with an internal life struggle, with the blood rushing through its veins in terrible fever and just risen from deep sickness. And see, presently again, it is threatened by new illness. This oppression and opposition is brought upon the church so completely by Satan that the church's most sensitive sons and daughters repeatedly ask a

fearful question: if they should fall prey to one unbelievably small mistake, they are already looked at as the church of Christ which has become the synagogue of Satan. (The source of the Donatist struggle is found in an effort to escape that stream of error and unrighteousness.) From this comes the desire to flee to the free city of God. And from this proceeds the effort to manifest a purer and holier church with no one but God's saints in it. This attempt to attain a pure church is often repeated, but it is just as frequently judged by the outcome: a falling into a deeper error than they tried to escape because what is basically pride has come under the terrible judgment of God.

Satan has manifested this bitter enmity against the church of God in two different ways, to wit, partly by external persecution, partly by internal poisoning. Always a murderer from the beginning, he is also a murderer of the church of the Lord. First then, he sets the magistrates and powers of the world on the church in order to test with brutal force the place where the hollow of the foot of the church of God is; to kill, to murder, and to root out the faithful witness which proclaims the death of Christ as the mighty sacrifice for redemption; to hurt the small sheepfold unmercifully through the fear of torture; to torment and to scatter until there is a moment when the church of God seems no longer to exist. But looked at in retrospect such a triumph of evil generally had the opposite effect, and the church of God produced a new seed from the blood of martyrs and repeatedly hindered Satan. Because of this, Satan moved the world to contract peace with the church; he prompted the magistrates to load the church with treasure, favor, and honor; and when the poor church, stunned by so much brilliance and glory, fell asleep in her triumph, then the evil enemy came in the still of the night and dropped his deadly poison into her veins, so that she felt, after not many days, her spiritual strength give way, and she had (again) to exchange her triumphal song for the bitter and sad complaints of her deadly exhaustion and spiritual decline.

Yet Satan could not bring this fearful evil on the



church of God in any other way than under the permission and control of Almighty God. If God had willed that His church on earth had celebrated her victory in quiet peace, it would have happened. But this was not His good pleasure. A church gathered from the wicked in the midst of a wicked world God had given over again and again into the hand of Satan as He did Job. This is partly because the triumph of the truth would shine through spiritual struggle, and partly because the power of the Lord of lords is the glorious result of the perseverance of the church which is always under fierce attack. He is thus not an author or operator of the evil that comes upon His church, but nevertheless this evil over the church must be brought about according to His eternal and unshakeable purpose, viz., the evil of suffering, so that it may be manifest what is the power of the faith which He has put in her; and likewise, the evil of sin so that it may be manifest what is the power of instruction from which He has delivered her. But however much we pay homage to the majesty of the counsel of the Lord without fear and with all resoluteness so that He is esteemed for not only tolerating but also willing this raging of Satan against the church of Christ, yet this does not take away from the children of God their deep, shocking, and irresponsible guilt. We surely confess from the heart that God's inscrutable order to permit the history of our race to go through sin and grace, in no respect exalts the damnable guilt of Adam. How much less can there be sought in that counsel of God an escape from guilt for God's regenerated children who have tasted the power of the coming age, who know the love of Christ, and who can lift up the shield of faith, but who have not yet quenched the fiery darts of Satan, and who have, with unholy lust, received these darts into their own breasts. And therefore we must not remain with the most distant cause of this deformation in the church, but must also enter into the nearer causes which lie in the sin of each person and in the sin of the church.

We mention first sins of individuals because this concerns the conscience most sharply. The sins of individuals began already while Jesus was still on earth. They began with that question: "Lord, who will be the greatest? Lord, when wilt thou establish the kingdom of Israel?" Or, in that saying: "Lord, this shall not happen to you!" Or, in the flight of the disciples when Jesus was captured; or in the denial of Jesus when He was examined; or in that saying: "If I do not see, I will never believe"; or, in that dissembling of Peter at Antioch, and in who knows how much more. And these were the holy apostles who would sit with Jesus on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. What must then happen to the church? Yea, what had not already happened

to her when she was just expanding and still showing the freshness of her first power of life? Is not an Ananias and Sapphira a shameful thing? Is not the word "shameful" too sparing for the abomination which Corinth experienced? And what shall we say of the abomination, risen in the church, when Jude had to write his letter and Peter his second epistle? and when the Lord Himself on Patmos proceeded to threaten His church? This evil has since proceeded under various forms, various sins, even the most appalling which men would not even mention, repeatedly creeping into the church of God among God's own people, rousing Him to anger, He Who has called and justified them into His most marvelous light. They should stand against the world; but see, they have brought the world into the church. They ought to serve God, not men; but see, mammon has gained an undisputed triumph in so many hearts. They should bring the flesh under the Spirit; and behold, they walk in the flesh again. Yea, Satan's work should lie defeated; but rather the soul walks with Satan in a cursedly unholy alliance. Thus spiritual power declines. Faith languishes. Love withers. Hope fades. And prayer, which ought to have been a power, loses ardor and animation and force. Poor church of God! What is worse, if sins overcome a person outside the church, then at least these sins come alone; but if they rise among the people of the Lord, then they drag along yet another terrible sin, namely, the sin of Phariseeism. Men cannot sin openly in the church and say: "I am godless." And so it is that in connection with sin in the church, piety must always be observed. And that exactly makes for doublemindedness, cultivates spiritual falsehood, and produces such spiritual evil that from the lips of Christ Who continuously prays for the elect of God, come the words, "Woe, woe, thou adder's brood." Satan knows that. He sets his heart on it. First he injects the poison of sin. Then he covers the boil of sin with bandages of piety. And in this way the heart that God the Lord has chosen for His temple can be entirely destroyed.

Finally, besides the sin of individuals, there is the sin of the church. As members of the church men do many things together. Together they form a sphere of life in which a certain atmosphere rules. They breathe from and in a certain atmosphere in which they all live together. They form common ideas. They shape a moral judgment. They create a common opinion which becomes a power in the church. And thus it is that corporate responsibility and also corporate guilt exist which work most perniciously on the few; and doing this they infect the whole of the body of Christ until at last even the holiest give in; and so sin becomes general in the church of God. This can go so far that finally also



for the church of the New Testament the word comes: "If you spread out your hands, then I hide My face and if you multiply prayer, then I do not hear."

But just as in the oak and in the hedgeoak there is still life after the fading of the leaves, so also the

holy seed shall then still be the support of the church of Christ. His mercies are unending, and His calling without repentance.

This is the sole mystery by which the church of God continues to stand.

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

# The Principles of Missions (A Summary)

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

From all that we have gleaned out of Scripture and our Reformed Confessions it ought to be obvious that the sole foundation of Missions has to be *God's eternal good pleasure in Christ*. It pleases God to save His elect Church in Jesus Christ. It pleases God to manifest His immeasurable glory in that Church in Christ in the New Creation. It pleases God to gather these elect out of every nation into that multitude which no man can number (Rev. 7:9ff.). It pleases God to do this gathering out of the nations by means of the preaching of the gospel by the Church through the office of the ministry (Eph. 4:11ff.). The Scripture declares: "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). This good pleasure of God, therefore, is the foundation of God's command to the Church as represented by the Apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16; cf. also Matt. 28:19, 20; Luke 24:46-48).

This, we must understand, is the *sole* foundation of the missionary task of the church. It is this to the exclusion of any other foundation. This needs emphasis in our day for two reasons. There are those who claim other foundations for missions. But, more importantly, this principle is determinative of the Church's method of labor and, specifically, of its approach on the mission field itself. This stands to reason, of course, for principle always determines practice. Hence, let it be clearly understood, the sole foundation of missions is the good pleasure of God.

Some prefer to speak of a double foundation for missions. These teach that the foundation of missions is both God's good pleasure in Christ *and* what they term "the hidden thirst of the heathen for the gospel." This "hidden thirst" according to

them refers to a certain receptivity in the heathen for the gospel. Others speak of a "point of contact" in the heathen for the gospel or a desire on the part of the heathen for salvation. This is supposed to be what makes at least certain groups of heathen "winnable." (Cf. *Understanding Church Growth*, Donald A. McGavran.) This is, we might add, the prevailing view among Roman Catholic theologians. G. Warneck, the late nineteenth century German theologian also held this view. Warneck spoke of a "historical-ethnic" basis in addition to God's good pleasure. By "ethnic" he meant: "The capacity of men of all nations and cultural backgrounds for Christianity" (quoted from J.H. Bavinck, *Introduction To The Science Of Missions*, p. 63). Even Bavinck himself leans in this direction when he maintains that general revelation, while not the basis for missions, does provide the indispensable condition without which missionary work would hover in a hopeless void. Neither passage cited by Bavinck (Acts 14:17 and Romans 1:18ff.) supports this view.

The simple fact is that total depravity precludes any hidden thirst, receptivity, or point of contact on the part of the heathen. Scripture teaches, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:5-8). The carnal mind (mind of the flesh, R.D.) not only *is not* but *cannot be* (lacks the ability to be) subject to the law of God. That mind of the flesh is hatred against God and, therefore, is dead with respect to God. There cannot be any hidden thirst, point of contact, or receptivity in that carnal mind for the gospel. The mind of the flesh will not



desire God apart from God's own work of grace. It is precisely and only sovereign grace which creates receptivity in the heart of a man for the gospel. Consider what the Scripture says concerning the greatest missionary who ever lived: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:10-13). Not even "His own" manifested any receptivity for Jesus! Those who did receive Him, believed on His name. That is faith. And, that believing was a fruit of their new birth or regeneration. They were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. They were born of God and, therefore, believed on the name of Jesus and received power to become the sons of God. The great fact remains: "...except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3ff.). These are but a few of the many passages which could be cited. Scripture everywhere teaches (it belongs to the warp and woof of the gospel) that only sovereign grace can create receptivity in the heart of man for the gospel. Apart from grace man is dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1ff.).

In summary, therefore, the first principle of missions is that its foundation lies in the good pleasure of God in Jesus Christ. God wills to save a chosen people out of every nation, tribe, and tongue. God wills to do that by means of the preaching of the gospel by the church through the special office of the ministry of the Word. This after all is a fundamental principle of the entire truth of the Word of God. That about which we speak is the absolute sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of His grace in Christ. This is why too only the Reformed Church which by grace believes, maintains, and lives out of this principle can do mission work. And, we repeat, the Church which is truly Reformed can do this work joyfully and with optimism. God has His people in the world. God will gather them through the Spirit and Word of His Son. There will be fruit upon our labors. Let us then labor while it is day, ere the night comes in which no man can labor!

The second principle is this: the message of missions is always essentially the good news (the evangel), the glad tidings of salvation by the grace of God in Christ Jesus to "everyone that believeth." The gospel comes with joy to replace our sorrows, hope to replace our despair, courage to replace our fear, the peace of forgiveness to replace our guilt, life to conquer our death. That is true because the gospel always declares: "For by grace are ye saved

through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

This certainly does not mean that there is to be no judgment and wrath preached on the mission field. The prophets of the Old Testament did not hesitate to proclaim the judgments of God upon apostate Israel. John the Baptist preached judgment right in the context of announcing the coming of Jesus. Jesus Himself preached the woes of terrible judgment upon the Scribes and Pharisees whom He did not hesitate to call fools and blind, hypocrites and whitewashed graves (cf. Matthew 23). Apostolic preaching likewise proclaimed the righteous wrath of God against all unrighteousness and unbelief of men. The whole counsel of God must be preached and the missionary after the example of the Apostle Paul must never shun to do that! Indeed he must be able to say what the Apostle said to the elders of Ephesus: "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now behold I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:18-27). All the counsel of God certainly includes judgment. But essentially the message is "good news," and that in itself becomes judgment to all unbelief.

This proclamation is the *official proclamation*. It is the call of the herald of Jesus Christ who proclaims the gospel of the Great King. It is the Word of the King through His ambassadors, the missionary preachers. This proclamation is also the *witness* of the King. This carries with it the idea of legal testimony. This legal testimony is left chiefly by means of the preaching, and it is supported and supplemented by the witness of the godly, pious living of the members of the Body of Christ.

This is the doctrine of missions according to



Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. These are the principles which must be implemented by the church on the mission fields of the world. In summary, therefore, it may be said that the church of Jesus Christ exists for one purpose: the glory of God; to praise Him of Whom, through Whom and to Whom are all things! This purpose is served in the way of the church's caring for its members and

preserving the truth in the generations of believers by means of the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. This purpose is no less served by the church's gathering the elect out of every nation in obedience to Him who said, "Go ye into all the world...."

## GUEST ARTICLE

# Liberty of the Christian Conscience

*Rev. R.G. Moore*

I was asked to write an article on the topic of the liberty of the Christian conscience. I will attempt to do this, although I am not sure the following will quite be what the brother had in mind when he chose this topic for an article in this publication. In writing upon this topic we will stay very close to the Scripture's account of our topic. We will attempt to set forth the principles of the Scripture as they address our topic. Of course, this course of action is imperative, for these principles rule our hearts and lives as we consider any aspect of our Christian calling and life.

It seems to me that there is some real danger today of being so concerned with the life and walk of God's children, that in addressing ourselves to these things we end up setting forth various exhortations or admonitions without turning to the Scriptural foundations of these exhortations. This can easily result in such an emphasis on the outward walk of God's people, the walk of sanctification that meets the eye, that one can come near to the error of the Pharisees. When God's children are exhorted unto a certain Christian walk, they must needs know the ground for the exhortation, as well as the possibility of fulfilling it. That possibility is the wondrous grace of our God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Let us see if we can do this in treating the subject of this article. When we speak of the liberty of the Christian conscience, we consider the effect of the grace in Christ Jesus upon God's children. It is by this grace that, through the operation of the Spirit of our Lord, His Word is so applied unto our hearts that we are made free from sin to serve our God in the true liberty of the children of God's covenant.

But what is this liberty? By liberty do we mean that we can do anything at all, and still have a free

conscience? Does it mean that the law has no longer anything to say to us? Does it mean that we may sin that grace may abound? May we answer the above, not from reason, but by the Word of God!

We shall of necessity then look more closely to the fruit of grace given to the elect by Christ Jesus, our Lord.

In the first place we understand that our first parents were created by God in a covenant relationship to Himself as His children. They were made to partake of His covenant communion and fellowship. So created in the image of God were they that they had true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Hence they knew God and His will, and they were able to walk according to that knowledge in holiness. And they were judged righteous before God, as they walked before Him as His covenant servants.

Therefore their conscience was free. For willingly, in covenant love, they served God according to His will, were judged right, and tasted His blessed love, as God walked with them in the garden. Theirs was true liberty in the covenant service of the living God, and they were blessed at the tree of life.

But man by sin fell from this blessed place before God. Created able to fall, man sinned, walking in disobedience, and plunged himself and all his posterity into the darkness of sin and death. The fruit of the fall is that man lost the image of God. In sin he became unrighteous, a sinner, a liar! He corrupted his whole nature, became totally depraved, and was judged to be guilty, worthy only of death. So we are. And so is all of mankind—by nature dead in sins and trespasses (Eph. 2:1). The fruit of sin is corruption so great that man can do nothing but sin. The Scripture (Gen. 6:5) says thus



of man, "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

By nature we are bound to sin, and we have therefore come under the condemnation of the law. And thus, too, we are come under the curse of the law. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God..." (Gal. 3:10-11a). This means indeed that all men come into condemnation and death. And as this testimony of the Word is applied unto us by the Spirit of Christ, our conscience testifies against us that we are sinners and guilty. And indeed our conscience is bound by misery and sin.

But at this point you may ask the question, but what of the ungodly? They walk as though they are not affected at all by their sin. They seem as if they have a free conscience to do as they please. For of the wicked we read, "There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men,"—even when in their sin, "pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment" (see Psalm 73). It appeared to Asaph that the wicked have a free conscience; and in weakness of faith he was tempted to view their portion in this light as good. But is the wicked conscience good when it leads them to swifter destruction? For it leads them by the providence of God in the way of their sin to swifter destruction! And it is true of them who are of the flesh that they, "do mind the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5a). "For to be carnally minded is death" (Rom. 8:6a). The conscience of the natural man is a conscience that leads them from death to death. It is hardened by sin unto greater sin, and thus leads them unto destruction. And remember there is no escaping the testimony of God that the fruit of sin is death! Thus, too, we must conclude that the conscience of natural man is far from free. But it is thoroughly bound unto death!

But, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are delivered from the testimony of the law. That is, we have been delivered from the judgment of God—that we are guilty, worthy of death! Even as our God has chosen His elect in Christ from before the foundation of the world, so He has redeemed us from the curse of the law by the death of His Son, Whom He sent to deliver us from sin and its guilt. Christ Jesus has completely taken away the curse of our sin by bearing away God's wrath against us. And we who are in Him are delivered from judgment. We are justified in the obediently spilled blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for

our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

Further, our Lord, after having, "by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). From there Jesus sheds forth His Spirit upon us; and by the power of His Spirit and by His Word, Christ calls us out of darkness, into the light of God's fellowship and love. Our Lord applies unto our hearts that which He wrought upon the cross! He assures us that our sin is forgiven, and that we are heirs of righteousness.

The fruit of this wonder work of God's grace in us by Christ's Spirit and Word is that for God's children "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1-2). This testimony of God's Word applied to my heart by the Spirit of Christ frees my conscience, so that my sins can no longer condemn me, but I have the conscious testimony that they are cleansed by the blood of Christ! In Christ I am saved and am freed from all condemnation. This gives us rich comfort and a truly liberated conscience—hear the words of the apostle, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:31-34). Also the very sin that we commit when it rises up to testify against us, cannot convict our conscience, for we are covered by Christ's blood and He stands as our Mediator at the right hand of God.

But then does this mean that I may in this liberty of my conscience do whatever I want, knowing that if I sin, my sin shall be forgiven? Jesus says through the apostle, "For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). And Paul answers the question, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid, How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1).

The fruit of the preaching of Christ crucified and raised is such that, ingrafted into the body of Christ, we by the working of the Spirit live out of Christ! Then, beloved, we flee sin and seek God according to His Word.

Be mindful that there is no liberty for the fish which jumps out of the boundaries of the lake unto



the shore. There only death awaits it! So also the child of God, quickened by the Spirit of Christ, called by His Word, and saved by the grace of God, lives in the complete liberty of conscience within the law of God, and according to His Word—outside of which there is only death. Thus the Word stands: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

Our God in Christ promises us that as He has in eternal love chosen us His covenant people, and as He has redeemed us from the curse of our sin, so He shall deliver us from sin and the ways of death. May we, therefore, by grace in the liberty of conscience of the saved in Christ walk in true thankfulness according to the Word of life in true liberty. "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

## QUESTION BOX

# Supporting the National Right To Work Committee

*Rev. C. Hanko*

A reader sent in the following question:

May we as Christians and as Protestant Reformed people support the National Right to Work Committee?

The questioner included some material about this committee. In the meantime, I have also written for information in regard to their various activities. From all that I have read it is evident that they are working hard to oppose the unions, which prevent many of our members from finding work, especially in certain areas. They speak of:

"Their defeat of the union bosses' so-called law 'reform' and situs picketing bills."

"The total defeat of over 250 pieces of union-backed compulsory unionism legislation in 45 state legislatures within the last 18 months."

"And the hard-hitting Right to Work offensives in several states, including passage of a new Right to Work law in Louisiana."

From all that I have read I see no wrong in supporting this movement, as long as one does not become compelled to become a member of it.

In instances of this sort, such as cancer societies,

tuberculosis organizations, and the like, one is inclined to give a certain amount of support, because they are able to extend help in areas that the diaconate cannot reach.

Yet the question arises, will an organization like the Right to Work Committee agree with the Scriptural principles that we maintain as Prot. Ref. Churches? We certainly must distinguish between "rights," for even though we as individuals have certain rights among our fellow men, we have no *rights* before the face of God! For example, a few years ago there was a very strong movement under way against ruthless abortions under the banner of "The Right to Live." This movement was by no means ready to adopt our Protestant Reformed principles. If an organization openly rejects, or refuses to accept the principles of Scripture, we want no part of it.

It may be that there are those among our readers who know more about the Right to Work Committee, and also have some comments to make either for or against it.

This Question Box is ready and eager to receive your opinions. May we hear from you?

*Know the standard and follow it.  
Read The Standard Bearer.*



## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

# Big Bang Paradox vs. Creation

On occasion our readers submit material to the *Standard Bearer* or its individual writers which they consider of interest and perhaps usable in a rubric. (We deeply appreciate this.) One such article I received some time ago from a reader in Randolph, Wisc. He presented a quotation from *Science Digest*, Jan./Feb. 1981. The quote indicates the degree of confusion on the part of men who maintain the evolutionary theory yet can not reconcile acknowledged difficulties. These men appear to admit that on the basis of their theories, there ought to be no universe at all! Yet because the universe is here, they are determined to explain its existence on the basis of these theories. Allow me to quote:

"The fact that the Universe exists at all is unusual," says Nobel physicist Arno Penzias. "But we are confronted with the fact that there is a Universe."

The puzzle, scientists say, is that symmetrical laws of physics do not account for the formation of the Universe. At the moment of Creation, equal amounts of matter and antimatter should have annihilated each other, leaving nothing to become galaxies, stars, planets, interstellar dust and us.

Astrophysicists have had to come up with explanations of the Big Bang that accept asymmetry as the heart of existence. They now say that a tiny excess of matter was produced at the very moment the Universe was born. Peering 13 billion years back in time, they are using "grand unification theories" (GUTs) to explain how this happened during the first nonillionth ( $10^{-30}$ ) or a second of the Big Bang....

Why did asymmetry prevail at the very moment of Creation, though most other phenomena seem to be governed by symmetrical physical laws? The GUTs do not explain why; they only show *how* it could have happened. Penzias says scientists have a hard time explaining why nature chooses certain characteristics over others. Ultimately, he says, the question may be unanswerable.

Our correspondent "hits the nail on the head" when he writes, "I imagine that if this Big Bang paradox becomes any more contradictory (perhaps I should say absurd), that rather than reconsider the Genesis account, they'll retract that first paragraph and announce to us that neither we nor the universe really exists after all!" (Thanks, Jim.)

## I.R.S. and the Christian Schools

Another reader of, and writer in, the *Standard Bearer*, Rev. R.C. Harbach, forwards the following article from *Spotlight*, Dec. 1, 1980:

More than 30 church-related schools in Mississippi have refused to answer Internal Revenue Service (IRS) questionnaires on the racial makeup of their schools.

Church opposition is so strong that it might spark the largest open confrontation between church and federal government this nation has seen since the days of the government's assault against the Mormon Church in the 1800s.

Basing their opposition on Constitutional grounds, the churches' boards refuse to cooperate with the IRS because they consider their schools to be ministries of their churches and thus protected by the First Amendment against federal meddling.

Though some IRS agents consider the church

schools to be separate entities from the church and others consider the church schools to be the same entity as the church, the IRS is united in its belief that each school's tax-exempt status is a "privilege," which may be revoked.

But the church officials believe their tax exemption is a "right" and not a privilege.

Hart further ordered the IRS to search out those schools that do discriminate and revoke their exemptions. This would make it impossible for the schools to give tax-deductibility to donors.

At least 30 schools in Mississippi, and some estimate as many as 50, claim the government is interfering with the internal affairs of the churches. They will not fill out the questionnaires.

The IRS, in response, has informed the dissenting churches that it will send an IRS agent to look into



each church's books and records.

Church officials say they will not allow the IRS to examine their books, and the IRS has threatened to revoke immediately the tax exemption of the church. (Some believe, however, that the IRS will not take such drastic steps but will get a court summons to obtain the church's books and records.)

These churches are not against the IRS non-discriminatory policies. What they fear is yielding to the government the authority to set the beliefs and practices of the church.

George Whitten, an elder of the dissenting Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, explained, "They are attempting to enforce a social policy on the church."

*Christianity Today*, Nov. 21, 1980, reports on the same difficulty under the title: "Religious Schools Rev Up for New Round with IRS":

Two years ago, the Internal Revenue Service thought it had a good idea: private schools desiring to keep their tax exempt status would prove they don't discriminate by enrolling a quota of minority students, vigorously recruiting minority teachers, and through other measures. Since most of the nation's 20,000 private schools have religious ties, church leaders across the country howled at this government intrusion. The IRS was buried in nasty letters, and Congress passed a law prohibiting the IRS from spending any money to activate the plan. It was shelved.

Now the IRS has begun—but only in Mississippi—to do almost exactly the same thing. This time, however, the IRS is armed with something with more force than its own regulation. It has a District of

Columbia federal court order. The order requiring the IRS to act resulted from a Mississippi discrimination suit, *Green v. Connally*, filed in the early seventies and finally settled by the June court order. The IRS intends to obey the order rather than appeal it, Congress and public opinion notwithstanding.

The problem, as I see this, is not so much whether or not the government allows donations to Christian Schools to be tax-exempt. To lose tax-exemption would not be all that serious. Some schools might have to close their doors as a result—but those established on the basis of principle would surely continue. However, the *ground* for loss of tax-exemption is a serious matter: the claim that there is discrimination. Perhaps some schools began and continue today solely on the ground that they wish to discriminate. The vast majority of Christian Schools surely do not. If tax-exemption can be lost on the "ground" of discrimination, and if discrimination is determined simply on the basis that there are no black students or teachers, then on the same "ground" the entire school could ultimately be closed. Fact is, the time might soon come then when churches are closed for the same reason. Then schools and churches could exist not on the basis of religious conviction, but only on the basis of a willingness to admit a percentage of each race and each belief. That is the road to the establishment of the antichristian kingdom where there is religious freedom only for those who bow before the antichrist. I would predict, on the basis of the testimony of Scripture, that the time for all of this may well be at hand.

## "Dutch Churches on Homosexuals"

The above title comes from an editorial in the *Banner*, Dec. 29, 1980 in which the editor, now Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, writes:

Last year the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) made a statement on homosexuality that caused concern and criticism in the worldwide family of Reformed churches. The Dutch synod said that we may not judge "fellow human beings in their homosexual nature and practice," since the word of judgment belongs to the Lord. Rather than judging one another, homosexual and heterosexual Christians ought to express their common faith in worship and joint participation in the Lord's supper. That was the pastoral admonition in 1979.

The CRC reacted more cautiously than some other Reformed churches. Our synod observed that the Dutch had "seemingly" spoken of homosexual

behavior within the church, and we asked for "clarification of the language and implication of the decision."

Now the Dutch synod has rendered its clarification. Yes, the GKN said, when we encourage a pastoral approach to this problem, we mean that practicing homosexuals must be accepted within the fellowship of the Christian church. Let us respect the way homosexuals express their sexuality. We must leave the judgment to God.

The statement containing this thought was accepted by the synod of the GKN in November, 1980. The main motion passed with thirty-seven against thirty-three votes.

The editor goes on to deplore the decision and to emphasize that it complicates the relationship



between GKN and the CRC. However, a later *Banner* reveals in letters to the editor, that the CRC has its own unresolved problems on this score. Not only does the CRC itself have its practicing homosexuals according to these letters, but these openly advocate their position. The situation is deplorable—and one wonders if anything is done about it. In the *Banner* of Jan. 26, 1981, one writes, "As a gay Christian and member of the CRC, I was hurt and angered by your editorial. I applaud the decision of the GKN to lovingly accept homosexuals into the full fellowship of God's church. As a member of Christ's body for whom He suffered and died, do I deserve anything less?...." Another individual writes, "I was sorry to read that the openmindedness and insight that has characterized the "new"

*Banner* does not apply to homosexuality. To accept the condition without accepting the practice is ridiculous. When does a homosexual become a practicing homosexual?... The ignorance and closed-mindedness surrounding this issue in the CRC is appalling. There *are* practicing Christian homosexuals taking communion in our churches and teaching in our schools. They do not want our pity or our compassion; they want to be treated like human beings. Scripture is *not* clear on this very complex issue...."

One can but deplore the state of affairs when this sin, so obviously condemned in Scripture (see Romans 1), is now so openly approved within the churches—and Reformed churches as well.

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Mark—The Gospel of Jehovah's Servant (concluded)

Rev. J. Kortering

One cannot help but be amazed at all the work which Jesus did while upon earth. Some details of these three years are compressed in the sixteen chapters of Mark. As the Servant of Jehovah He worked day and night. How humanly touching are the words of chapter 6:31, "Come ye yourselves apart in the desert place and rest awhile." The disciples could hardly keep up.

### BRIEF OUTLINE OF MARK'S GOSPEL

1. The preparation for Jesus' work (1:1-13). The ministry of John the Baptist is recorded (1:1-8), Jesus' baptism by John (1:9-11), and His temptation by Satan (1:12, 13). Emphasis here is not upon detail, but rather these things are mentioned to demonstrate the qualifications of Jehovah's Servant to take upon Himself His work. Through these events, we learn that Jesus is designated to be God's Servant (the one prophesied). He is qualified by the Holy Spirit; He is victor over Satan.

2. The great Galilean ministry (1:14-7:23). During this period of time, the following events are recorded. He called His disciples (1:16-20, 2:13, 14, and 3:13-19), He healed the demoniac in the synagogue in Nazareth (1:23-28), He healed Peter's mother-in-law and many other sick, (1:29-34), He toured Galilee (1:35-39), healed the leper and instructed him to tell no man (1:40-45), healed the

palsied man let down through the roof (2:1-12, 18-22), the disciples plucked corn and Christ answered the charge by the Pharisees that they thereby broke the Sabbath day (2:23-28), the same was true after He healed on the Sabbath day the man with the withered hand (3:1-12). Christ was slandered by the Scribes and He taught concerning the unpardonable sin (3:22-35). He taught a group of parables; the sower (4:1-20), candle light (4:21-25), growing seed (4:26-29), and mustard seed (4:30-34). He stilled the storm (4:35-41), healed the demoniac in the land of the Gadarenes (5:21-24, 35-43), healed the woman with an issue of blood (5:25-34), and was rejected at Nazareth (6:1-6). He sent forth His twelve disciples (6:7-13), learned of the death of John the Baptist (6:14-29), rested in the desert and fed the 5000 (6:30-44), walked on the water and stilled the storm and subsequently healed in Genesaret (6:45-56). Finally He disputed with the Pharisees and Scribes regarding washing of hands and other ceremonies, (7:1-23).

Even though Mark by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit records this series of events in such a way that it might leave the impression that Jesus performed His ministry in reaction to circumstances that surrounded Him, yet we would fall short unless we recognize that all the details of His ministry



were carefully planned and arranged by our Heavenly Father. To be sure the cross stands in the center of His ministry. The Servant of Jehovah came to die! Prior to that event, however, all else served to make it happen. As Jehovah's Servant, Christ established His authority and power by the miracles He performed and the work He did. He has such power that He can forgive sin (2:1-12), He is *Lord* of the Sabbath, (3:1-6), He has power over devils, creation, and even death. He controlled the events that not too much publicity would be given to Him too early, thereby provoking the Jews to take action against Him. For this reason He told the healed people not to tell anyone and He went away when the crowds were becoming too vocal (1:44, 5:43).

3. Jesus withdraws from the mainstream and journeys, among other places, to Tyre and Sidon and Perea (7:24-10:52). He healed the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30), healed the deaf and dumb mute with the charge he tell no man (7:31-37), fed the 4000 (8:1-9), discussed the leaven of the Pharisees and the need to flee from it (8:10-21), healed the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26). At Caesarea Philippi He asked the disciples concerning His own identity and used the occasion to teach them concerning the cross and the meaning of true discipleship (8:27-38), He was transfigured (9:1-13), He healed the demoniac boy whom the disciples could not heal (9:14-29). He took a child and taught the disciples humility and the need to remove offense if they would be His disciples (9:30-50), taught the truth regarding marriage and divorce (10:1-12), emphasized the importance of children in the covenant (10:13-16). He pointed out the human impossibility of rich people being saved, after He told the rich young ruler to go sell all he had and give the money to the poor and come and follow Him (10:17-27). As time went by Jesus became more and more explicit upon the subject of His coming suffering and death on the cross, He told His disciples He would be mocked, scourged, crucified, and would rise again from the dead. He applied it in such a way that if they would follow Him they should not seek to be first in the kingdom, but servants (10:28-45). He also healed blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52).

The emphasis during this period of Jesus' ministry was that He sought to teach His disciples the true nature of His work as Jehovah's Servant. They had to learn to discern the truth over against the leaven of the Pharisees. They had to know that the cross was *necessary* in order that He might finish His work. He emphasized that only those would be saved who are childlike in faith, and He applied it personally for His disciples by asking "Whom say ye that I am"?

4. The Servant of Jehovah finishes His work at the cross, and through the resurrection and ascension returns to the Father (11:1-16:20). It began with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (11:1-11). He cursed the barren fig tree and observed the results (11:12-14, 20-26). He cleansed the temple and was challenged by the leaders by what authority He could do that (11:15-33). He told the parable of the wicked husbandmen, and the Jews took it personally and began to plot His death after the feast days (12:1-12). Many attack Him, the Pharisees (pay tax to Caesar), Sadducees (marriage in heaven), and Scribes (greatest commandment) (12:13-40). Jesus takes note of the widow's mite (12:41, 44), predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world (13:1-37). The woman anointed His feet with oil for His burial (14:1-9), Judas agrees to betray Jesus (14:10, 11), He holds the last passover with His disciples and institutes the Lord's Supper (14:12-25). Mark records the events in Gethsemane: Jesus predicted the denial by Peter, He prays, He is betrayed with a kiss, Peter slashes with his sword, Jesus is led away and all the disciples fled away, including Mark (14:26-52). Jesus is tried before the Sanhedrin (14:53-65), denied by Peter (14:66-72), tried by Pilate (15:1-15), mocked by the soldiers (15:16-20), crucified (15:21-41), buried (15:42-47), arose from the dead (16:1-13), and ascended into heaven (16:11-20).

How glorious is this Servant of Jehovah. Anyone who reads this gospel account carefully cannot help but conclude that Jesus is not the Victim of the cross, but the Victor. He must needs go home by the way of the cross. This is seen in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His willingness to die like a Lamb, His miraculous death (He cried with a loud voice). The Father approved the work of His Servant and raised Him from the dead and took Him home to glory. The success of the gospel is accompanied by heavenly signs to prove that the gospel is victorious.

#### DISTINCT FEATURES IN MARK'S GOSPEL

1. If we keep in mind that Mark listened to Peter's preaching (at Pentecost and throughout Judea) and took note of the message and subsequently wrote this gospel in summary, we can understand the emphasis he placed upon the gospel and the preaching of that gospel. The first verse emphasizes it: "The beginning of the *gospel* of Jesus Christ." He tells us Jesus preached (1:14) and commissioned the church to do likewise (16:15). We do well to heed this word today: the gospel must go forth by preaching.

2. It is interesting to take note of the fact that we have in this gospel, details of the emotional involvement of Jesus and the people. Concerning Jesus, Mark tells us He had compassion (1:41, 6:34, 8:2),



He was indignant (3:5, 8:2, 10:4), He expressed sorrow and distress (14:33, 34), He sighed (7:34, 8:12). Also Mark tells us of the response of the people that they were amazed (1:27), critical (2:7), afraid (4:41), puzzled (6:14), astonished (7:37), hostile (14:1). This detail fits the general theme that Jesus is the Servant of Jehovah and He is God-man, fully involved in His mediatorial work, bringing the gospel by word and deed. To this the people respond, some in faith, others in unbelief.

3. The gospel of Mark stresses the *work* of Christ as Jehovah's Servant. For example, Mark mentions the *fact* that Jesus preached, yet he does not provide much detail as to what He said. To illustrate this point, of a possible 70 parables referred to in all the gospels combined, Mark mentions only 18. On the other hand, of a possible 35 miracles recorded in all the gospels, Mark mentions 18. The emphasis is on the work which the Servant did, and Mark recorded it all in rapid, snap-shot fashion.

#### SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. How do we come to conclude that the main message in Mark's gospel is that Jesus is Jehovah's Servant?

2. How can we explain why Jesus told some to

tell no man after they had been healed by Jesus (1:44)? Didn't Jesus want all to hear the gospel and see the miracles?

3. Show from these passages (5:31, 9:10, 10:13, 14), that Jesus prepared His disciples for their future ministry by provoking them to ask questions. What do we learn from this?

4. When Jesus suggested to His disciples that they come apart and rest awhile (6:31), do you think Jesus needed that rest too? Explain.

5. What do we learn from Jesus' *method* of answering the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes? (Consider 8:10-21, 2:23-28, 3:1-12, and 3:22-35.) How can we follow this example when we deal with opponents to the truth in our day?

6. How do we explain the signs that were to accompany the preaching of the gospel by the apostles, see 16:17, 18?

7. If you sit down and go over the sequence of events in Jesus' life as recorded by Mark, what over-all plan do you see when you consider that Jesus began His ministry in Galilee, took time to be alone with His disciples in isolated areas, and finally came to Jerusalem publicly? Is there a reason for this? Why didn't He begin at Jerusalem?

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

# Out of War Arises Peace

Rev. W. Bruinsma

In Matthew 24, the classic chapter concerning Christ's return and the signs which forewarn the child of God concerning that return, Jesus explained to His disciples the sign of wars and rumors of wars. In verses 6-8 we read the following, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. . . . All these are the beginning of sorrows." To the watchful child of God the wars which abound in our day serve to remind him concerning Christ's imminent return.

We must understand, of course, that the way these wars work toward Christ's coming is by impeding or hindering the rise of the antichristian kingdom of peace. Before Christ returns upon the clouds of glory the gospel of salvation must be proclaimed to every nation, tongue, and tribe of the

earth. The reason for this is twofold. First, all of God's people must be called by the gospel unto repentance and faith before the return of Christ; secondly, the entire world must be left without the excuse that they had never received the gospel. In order that the gospel might freely run its course through this world however, any premature development of Antichrist must be thwarted. This God does by means of wars. Nation *must* rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. As long as one nation rises against another the reign of peace toward which the Antichrist strives cannot take place. The world powers through which Satan attempts to unite the world only serve to destroy one another. Such is God's purpose behind wars.

That this is true is clearly indicated already in the old dispensation. There was then, even as there is today, two or more powers striving over against one another for control of the world. Daniel was a



witness of that struggle. He witnessed the development of the great Assyrian empire. He also witnessed its downfall by the hands of the Babylonians. He witnessed the rise of that empire but also its fall by the hands of the Persians. Each of these kingdoms if not destroyed by war would have resulted in a premature development of the antichristian kingdom. That is why God sent wars. The gospel had not been preached throughout the entire world. Moreover, Christ had not yet come to die upon the cross. Thus, according to God's decree, the Antichrist could not as yet develop.

The same is true of the wars which abound in our day. They serve to impede the development of that final antichristian kingdom. As long as we hear of wars and rumors of wars the end cannot come. Jesus will not return. The peaceful reign of Antichrist wherein God's people will be persecuted must first of all develop. Only then will Christ come again.

Because of this explanation of this sign of Christ's coming there arises a common misconception—a misconception which, if maintained, renders us unprepared for the rise of Antichrist. That is this: as long as there are wars we need not worry about the development of the antichristian kingdom! Jesus tells us that these wars are only "the *beginning* of sorrows" and that "the end is not yet," so why worry about Antichrist as of yet? The final development of his kingdom cannot be that near at hand! In fact, today there is an increase of wars. Nations all over the world are threatened by it. Not only is our nation in a constant tug-of-war with the Russian world power but we find that even the smaller nations of this world want a piece of the action. That is evident to us with the recent hostage crisis with Iran, with the Cuban refugee crisis, and with the murdering of a number of our citizens in San Salvador. Russia too finds this to be the case. She enters into the war in Afghanistan, and receives threats from Poland. There are wars and rumors of wars between other nations as well. We read of skirmishes between Protestant and Catholic factions in Ireland. We read of the civil war which claims the lives of many in San Salvador, or of the political violence in Guatemala. Then too there is the war between Iran and Iraq. Clearly the world in which we live is at this very moment in an extreme state of unrest. Is it not impossible, therefore, that the Antichrist would arise out of this terrible mess? Perhaps more so today than at any other time in history is the world so divided and uneasy. How is it possible for Antichrist to come and establish a kingdom of peace? So, as a result of this reasoning we are no longer alerted to the rise of Antichrist.

We must realize, however, that it is exactly out of

this chaos of wars that peace will emerge and the antichristian kingdom will be established. In Revelation 13 the apostle John writes concerning a vision he had received describing the Antichrist. In that chapter we read of two beasts which represent the political and the spiritual powers of the Antichrist. Concerning the first of those two beasts we read that he arises out of the turbulent and wind-swept sea. The waters of the sea signify the peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues of this world. The fact that they together make up this turbulent and wind-tossed sea means that these nations and tongues and peoples of the world are in a constant state of unrest. Part of the reason for this unrest is, as we have noticed, the wars which keep this world in a state of constant turmoil. Out of that world which is tossed about by wars and rumors of wars arises the Antichrist. We must understand that and look for that. Wars will increase in their intensity just prior to the development of the antichristian reign of peace.

In the midst of all this unrest the Antichrist will rear his ugly head and offer a solution to all the world's problems. Not only will he present a solution to the present economic and social ills but also a solution to all the differences which cause war. This Antichrist will not only be so powerful that all will say, "who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him," but he will also do great wonders with God's creation, and in so doing shall deceive all that dwell upon the face of the earth. Everyone in this war-torn world will think that Antichrist is able to solve all the differences. Thus, peace will arise out of war. Antichrist will be established. Because the world is so entangled in the web of war they will readily accept the solutions which Antichrist will offer. The world will then join hands under him and peace will prevail.

We must look for that as we watch the continued development of wars in this world. They will not cease nor will they diminish. You and I must not expect a world of peace and *then* the establishment of Antichrist. Such will never be the case. But as wars increase we must watch all the more closely for the beast out of the sea. His solutions will seem so practical and rewarding for those who adhere to them. But they will be filled with lying and deceit. They will stand contrary to the establishment of the heavenly kingdom of Christ. We will have to see through his guise and stand fast in Christ. It is exactly for this reason that Paul exhorts the Thessalonians, and us with them, in II Thessalonians 2:15, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." Only in this way can we watch for Christ and understand the signs of His coming.



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### Hated Without a Cause

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Of our Saviour it is prophetically stated in Psalm 69:4, "They that hated me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty." These are the words of David, and they do describe correctly the situation in his life. In the day of shadows, and long before Christ appeared in our flesh, what He would endure was typically endured by those of His children who in special measures represented Him. David did in his office of being king over Israel, even as Christ is King of His Church.

But we can go back further in the day of shadows and see this same truth, as to its principle, experienced by Joseph among his brothers in that one family of Jacob, whose life we have been treating. Joseph did not have as many brethren as the hairs of his head to hate him; but they were mighty enemies and hated him wrongfully. And even the first three verses describe so clearly his ordeal, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come into my soul. I sink in deep mire: I am come into deep waters, where floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God."

Now it is true that we read in Genesis 39:24, "And they took him (Joseph) and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it." But note that David in Psalm 69 is speaking of his *soul*, not his body, having waters come into it, of his soul sinking in deep mire, and waters which overflow his soul. Joseph was literally cast into a pit by the hatred of his brethren. And that did cause his soul to sink into mire and waters of grief and anguish. We may believe that he cried until weariness overtook him; and his throat was dry of the crying, while he waited for his God.

And what added to all his grief was the fact that he was hated without a cause, and wrongfully for that reason. Note the fact that Christ, speaking through David in Psalm 69:4 declares that they hated him wrongfully. This ought to alert us to the fact that there was a cause for the hatred of Christ's enemies, and for the hatred of Joseph's brothers. As far as Joseph is concerned we can list four main

reasons for the hatred of his brothers. His father, Jacob, foolishly and wrongfully showed favoritism to this oldest son of his beloved and now departed wife. Reuben was his firstborn; but he disqualified himself, in showing that he was "unstable as water," to follow Jacob as head of the covenant family and to receive the birthright, that is, the right to be the spiritual head of the family and tribe, of the descendants in that family. Jacob, following his flesh, does not confer this right upon the son born to him just after Reuben, namely, Simeon, but passes by all the sons of Leah and of her handmaid and confers the right to Joseph, justifying himself with the thought that this is his firstborn, his firstborn of Rachel whom he loved so deeply. It may be pointed out that Simeon and Levi also disqualified themselves by their murder of the Shechemites. But that left Judah as next in line (of whom Christ was born and is The Possessor of the Birthright).

Jacob did choose Joseph and showed it by that "coat of many colours" which he gave him. A more literal translation would be a coat of many pieces; and this causing of Joseph to appear before the eyes of his brothers as set apart from them, as preferred before them and elevated above them, leads one to translate a princely coat, a coat that designated him as prince, as the one appointed to receive the birthright. This irritated the other brothers, the sons of Leah and of her handmaid. We read in Genesis 37:4, "And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him." And again in verse 5, after he had received dreams from God, "and they hated him yet the more." There is a growing hatred which is becoming fiercer and fiercer as time passes.

These dreams were the second cause for this hatred. His brothers did not mind that he dreamed, nor even that he told them his dreams. But the fact that in his dreams God revealed that they would all serve him and bow down before him infuriated them to no end. Even his father, though he loved Joseph, became angry at this thought and "rebuked him and said, ...shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down our-



selves to thee to the earth?" We read then in verse 11, "And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying."

A third cause for this hatred, which chronologically arose before he received these dreams, was that Joseph brought to his father the evil report of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, the maids of Rachel and of Leah. He did not simply bring an evil report, that is, a report that these sons had sinned grossly, but he told his father what an evil reputation these sons had acquired, what a name of evil they had attached to them, and of which Jacob had as yet no knowledge back home in his tent. What they did is not stated, but adultery and fornication suggest themselves in a situation such as this.

The fourth cause for their hatred is theological. God in His sovereign grace is behind all this history, as Joseph himself points out fourteen years later—or at least toward the end of the seven years of famine—"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." For the salvation of the church and the fulfillment of all His covenant promises God planned this whole history and executed it in His sovereign grace.

Examine these causes for the hatred against Joseph, and you will find that it was without a righteous cause, that he was hated wrongfully, even as Jesus was, of Whom Joseph in this instance was a picture. The shadow of the cross is here in this day of shadows when Joseph's enemies are mighty to have power to sell him into Egypt.

Was Joseph to blame for the fact that his father favoured him and foolishly and wrongfully set him above his brethren? Had they disagreed with their father and complained to him, it would have been a different matter. But so the sinner works, and so hatred develops. Genesis 37:4 points out that they saw clearly that Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved them, and, because of the hatred that this produced, could not speak peaceably unto him. They did speak. They snarled. They ridiculed. They called him names and sneered at him. But they could not speak peaceably. Not a word is said about them speaking about this to their father, nor even of asking for an explanation. Scripture gives an explanation: "Because he was the son of his old age." Could Joseph help that? Must they take it out on Joseph?

Reporting the evil name they had made for themselves infuriated the sons of the two concubines. But was it because Joseph was a tattletale? Or was it because the report that he gave was true, and they did not want their father to know of their wickedness? There is nothing to indicate that Joseph was concerned with anything less than to

seek to have their evil brought to an end, and to have them saved from this great wickedness. What is there to prevent believing—because they could not speak peaceably to him—that they sent him home, and he had to explain to his father why he could not work with these brothers any longer? And is it a reason to hate one when that one seeks to turn you away from sin? Individuals, families, and churches do not like to have their sins exposed, because they do not want to be separated from them; and then they hate those who expose. And let it be stated that Joseph was not backbiting, very surely not slandering. For he went to the authorities with his report; and he is his brother's keeper.

And those dreams were God-given prophetic dreams which had to be related to the church of that day. Here Scripture speaks of envy, which is a blood brother of murder, and a frequent motive for murder. They sinned, not Joseph. They resisted God's word. Even Jacob after rebuking Joseph, relented and, we read, "observed the saying." It began to dawn on him that these were no mere dreams but messages from God, prophetic dreams that had meaning for God's Church. And should we get angry or be jealous and filled with envy at what God does and says to us? Was this not certainly hating Joseph wrongfully, yea sinfully? One can hate wrongfully because one has been given the wrong information. Joseph's brothers hated him sinfully. Being due to envy, which the Heidelberg Catechism correctly calls a cause of murder, this hatred is sinful. It is not the hatred of which the psalmist speaks when in Psalm 139:21 he writes, "Do not I hate them O Lord, that hate Thee, and am I not grieved with those that rise up against Thee?" This hatred of Joseph's brothers was a hatred of God rather than a hatred of God's enemies. They hated God's prophet. They hated God for being ready to exalt Joseph above them.

But we miss the whole import of the incident unless we see Christ and His cross in this bit of history out of the day of shadows. He is the One Who was hated without a good cause, was hated wrongfully. He was hated because God loved Him, and exalted Him above all His brethren. In fact He was more vehemently hated by blood brothers than by the Gentiles whom these blood brothers moved to give them the right to crucify Him. And it is because we, His friends and disciples, are loved by God and by Him that we are wrongfully hated by the world. It is not because we have actually harmed and molested the world. It is because God has set us aside as the members of the body of Christ, and because of His wonderful promises to us that we are hated by the world. It is because He has clothed us with the robes of righteousness of Christ and set us apart as the heirs of the new creation that we are hated.



No, they do not want such robes themselves, and they do not want to enter into that kingdom of righteousness and of heavenly virtues. But they hate us because the love of God upon us is manifest in that He has made us spiritually like unto His Son. THAT is the evidence of God's love upon us—not that we have beautiful clothes, homes, good health and can sing in the night. The things of this world are not the church's in such abundance as to cause the world to envy and hate us. The spiritual treasures of God's love; the fact that "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself" (Psalm 4:3) makes the ungodly hate us. Basically it is hatred of God that makes them hate those that God chose to be like Himself, even as Joseph's brothers hated him because of what his father did in giving that princely coat. As we pointed out it was Jacob's deed that made them hate Joseph.

Because Christ spoke of their evil report, they gnashed on Him with their teeth. Because He ex-

posed their evil hearts, they exposed the evil of hatred against God in their hearts and sought to silence His damning testimony concerning themselves. It made them cry, "Away with Him!"

It was because He brought them God's word and in it presented Himself as the Prince of peace Whose name is also the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Wonderful Saviour before Whose feet all knees shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of the Father.

But those that hate Him without a cause are more than the hairs of His head because in the ultimate sense God sovereignly decreed that they would bring Him to His cross that we might know His love so richly and fully. He must go into the pit, the miry clay, with floods of waters over His soul in hell; and there He cried out of being forsaken of the Father Whom He loved. But it was all that we might know His love.

### NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Loveland, Colorado on Wednesday, March 4, 1981 at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Delegates who fly into Denver and delegates in need of lodging should made arrangements with the clerk of the Loveland Consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma  
Stated Clerk  
Classis West

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of The Reformed Witness Hour express their Christian sympathy to the bereaved family of MR. LARRY DE MEESTER, who was our faithful president and friend for many years.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21).

The Radio Committee of  
The Reformed Witness Hour  
Mrs. Jerry Schipper, Sec'y.

### IN MEMORIAM

It has been eight months since Mrs. Tom Elzinga passed away.

Now on Jan. 19, 1981 our Lord in His mercy has taken Mr. Tom Elzinga to be with Him in glory.

We, the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren find comfort and joy in Ps. 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

11 children  
45 grandchildren  
45 great grandchildren

## News From Our Churches

Of the calls Rev. Flikkema has received as reported in our last issue, he has accepted the call of our Hope congregation of Walker, Michigan. As a result there will be no need for many of the classical appointments listed in the accompanying Report of Classis East.

From a Kalamazoo bulletin we learn that Rev. Woudenberg, Rev. Van Overloop, and Rev. Bekkering gathered in Houston, Texas during the week of January 25 for a "study session on proper Reformed methods of doing church extension work."

From the January 18 bulletin of First Church in Grand Rapids we glean the following announcement: "The Synod of our Churches has designated First Church as administrator of the Jamaican Mission Field. Since we have no missionary on the Jamaican field at this time, one of the responsibilities of our church is to maintain contact with the field. In fulfillment of that responsibility, the consistory has asked elder Prince and Mr. Stuart Looyenga, members of our Jamaica Missions Committee, accompanied by their wives, to serve as emissaries to Jamaica. They plan to leave from the



Kent County Airport this Friday at 6:50 A.M. The emissaries plan to spend three Sundays on the island and also attend the Jamaican Churches' Classis meeting scheduled to convene in Belmont, Jamaica, on Monday, January 26. We wish them

the Lord's blessing as they labor in the cause of His kingdom with our Jamaican brethren and sisters. The emissaries covet your prayers."

C.K.

## Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on January 14th and 15th at the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church. Each church was represented by two delegates, except on the second day when Kalamazoo had but one delegate. A special welcome was given to Rev. R. Miersma who, as pastor of Holland, attended Classis as a delegate for the first time.

The January meeting of Classis usually has a full agenda and it certainly proved to be the case at this meeting as the business of Classis filled two full days. That certainly has not been the rule for Classis East for some time.

Classis devoted considerable time and attention to four protests and one overture to Synod concerning the action of the Synod of 1980 with regard to baptism on the mission field (cf. Article 9, *Acts of Synod 1980*). The four protests were essentially the same in that they requested Synod to revoke the decision taken in Article 9 to adopt the Study Committee Report of 1975 re: Baptism on the Mission Field on the grounds 1) that the Study Committee Report of 1980 had not been treated by the Synod; 2) that Synod violated its own rule in Article 5, B.1; and 3) that Synod violated its own rule in Article 5, B.2. One protest dealt in depth with the issue of baptism but Classis sent the protests to Synod with its approval of the church political aspects only. The overture requested that Synod treat the Study Committee Report of 1980 re: Baptism on the Mission Field. The overture was sent to Synod with the approval of Classis.

Classis also spent a good deal of time hearing an appeal re censure. This matter was treated in closed session.

In other business, Hope Church requested classical appointments. The following schedule was adopted: Jan. 25 - Haak, Feb. 1 - Joostens, Feb. 8 - Miersma, Feb. 15 - Woudenberg, Feb. 22 - Houck, March 1 - Van Baren, March 8 - Bruinsma, March 15 - De Vries, March 22 - Haak, March 29 - Houck, April 5 - Joostens, April 12 - Miersma, April 19 - Woudenberg, April 26 - Van Baren, May 3 - Bruinsma, May 10 - Hanko, May 17 - De Vries.

Further, Classis spent considerable time voting. Rev. Bruinsma was elected to a three-year term on the Classical Committee. Rev. Woudenberg was elected to a three-year *primus* term and Rev. Miersma to a three-year *secundus* term as delegates *ad examina*. The following were elected as delegates to synod: MINISTERS: *Primi* - W. Bruinsma, M. Joostens, R. Miersma, G. Van Baren; *Secundi* - M. De Vries, C. Haak, C. Hanko, J.A. Heys. ELDERS: *Primi* - J. Buiter, Homer Kuiper, H. Ophoff, R. Teitsma; *Secundi* - J. De Vries, C. Kuiper, Hilbert Kuiper, J. Veldman. Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. J.A. Heys were elected as church visitors.

Subsidy requests for the fiscal year 1982 from Kalamazoo for \$12,450 and from Covenant for \$11,000 were approved and forwarded to Synod. Both churches were instructed to review their pastor's salaries with a view to increasing them.

Expenses for classis amounted to \$988.50.

After fitting remarks by the chairman, Classis adjourned and will meet next in Kalamazoo on May 13, 1981.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon Huisken  
Stated Clerk