

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The sin of homosexuality is not one shameful sin among many; rather it is the sin that most fully works out and manifests sin's vile-ness—it is the nadir of the degradation of sin. ...in the sin of homosexuality, new depths of sin are plumbed; under the Divine giving up, society reaches the last stages of moral rot. See "The Vile Sin of Homosexuality"

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MEDITATION

Israel Sold to Chushanrishathaim

Rev. M. Schipper

"Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years.

And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war; and the Lord delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim.

And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died."

Judges 3:8-11

Concerning the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan there are two notices given in the context that ought to be observed.

In the first place, we are told that Israel had not driven them out completely as the Lord had commanded.

O, indeed, there was a large portion of the inhabitants which had been driven out. All of those dwelling on the east of the Jordan were vanquished before Israel crossed the Jordan. This portion had been occupied by such heathen powers as represented by Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. This portion of Canaan was to have been given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and a half-tribe of Manasseh. We also learn that through the conquests of Joshua many of those living on the west of the Jordan had been overcome, at least sufficiently for the tribes inheriting this portion to dwell in their inheritance. And in Judges 1 we learn that Judah with Simeon overcame the heathen dwelling in their portions, under the leadership of Caleb and his nephew Othniel. But for the rest, Israel allowed the heathen to remain in the land. The last part of Judges 1 makes plain that especially the northern tribes, such as Manasseh, Zebulun, Asher, Dan, Naphtali, and Ephraim, were guilty of this. For this reason the Lord had remonstrated with Israel at Bochim (Judges 2:1-4).

On the other hand, we are told that the Lord left these heathen in the land; and that for two reasons. In the first place, He did it in order that they might serve as thorns in the sides of Israel who would sin against Jehovah. And in the second place, the Lord would use these heathen to teach Israel to be a militant people—He would teach them to war (Judges 3:2).

As a consequence of the fact that the heathen were allowed to live in the land, we find Israel dwelling among them. Apparently the majority of Israel were content to be unequally yoked with the wicked. This is evident from the statement that the children of Israel "dwelt among them." This is still more evident when we read that they intermarried with the heathen.

As is always the case, because of this the majority of Israel served the gods of the heathen. Not all were given to idolatry. Also now there was a remnant, the seven thousand, who did not bow the knee to Baal, who served Jehovah in truth. But because they were a despised minority, and for fear of the majority, they kept silence, and thus made themselves guilty. They did not fight against the heathen, nor did they fight against their brethren according to the flesh. They evidently contented themselves with the evil thought that it would not do any good to protest.

But the majority were apostate. They forgot the Lord their God, and they served Baalim and the groves.

Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of Chushanrishathaim.

Awful truth!

Israel sold to the enemy!

But what does this mean?

It cannot mean that the Lord abandoned Israel, though the figure of the Lord selling His people into the hands of the enemy might appear on the surface to signify that He had utterly abandoned them. When you or I sell our house or our car, then we no longer dwell in the house or drive our car. The property rights are transferred to the party that purchased them; they are now the sole possessors of them. So when we read that the Lord sold Israel, it would seem to mean that He no longer possessed Israel. He allowed Israel to slip out of his possession and control. In one word, it appeared that He had abandoned Israel. Yet we know that this is utterly impossible. Jehovah cannot abandon Israel for His own Name's sake. His honor is tied up in that people. For His covenant's sake He cannot dispossess His people. The promise He made to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob is an unfailing promise. Should He fail to fulfill that promise, He would prove Himself to be unfaithful. And this can never happen.

But it does mean that He so wonderfully withdraws His help that that people could no longer stand before their enemies. This is what is literally said in Judges 2:14, 15. There you read that He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. And that means that He withdraws His help from that people—just as, when we for a time walk in sin, He withdraws His grace from us, so that we sense our helplessness and hopelessness. So here He withdraws His saving help from Israel who had forsaken Him, that Israel may feel its desolate state without Him. They no longer had the spiritual fortitude to oppose the enemy. In desperate fear they succumb to the power of the enemy.

The enemy in this case was Chushanrishathaim. Little or nothing is known of him except what is said in the text. In the original text you read: "Chushanrishathaim king of Aram of the two rivers." That the King James version has "king of Mesopotamia" is commentary. Aram represents the land which the Greeks called Mesopotamia, which lay between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers to the north and east of the land of Canaan. We probably remember it best from the Genesis narrative as the place where Abram came when the Lord called him from Ur of the Chaldees. When Abram was called the second time to go to the land God would show him, he left behind his father Terah and his brother Nahor who stayed in this land. It was to this place that Jacob later came when he fled from the wrath of his brother Esau, and

where Jacob labored for twenty years for his wives and substance.

Chushanrishathaim was a heathen king ruling over that land at the time of our text. Evidently he was not satisfied with the boundaries of his own kingdom, and therefore thought for expansion by including also the territory in which especially the northern tribes of Israel now dwelt. All this was under the providential direction of Jehovah. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). This king the Lord will use now to prove Israel. So this king with his ambition to increase his territory and power turns to conquer northern Palestine, to serve the divine purpose of proving Israel.

Because Israel had forsaken Jehovah their God, they did not have the spiritual or physical stamina to oppose this enemy. This is always the plight of those who forsake the Lord and choose the idol. Not only do they discover the vanity, the emptiness of idol worship, but they lose their spiritual and physical vitality. It also became evident that they would have nothing of war, deploring war on the grounds that it is proper to live at peace with their fellow men; but they also did not possess the heart to wage war.

Consequently the enemy exacted from them and brought them under oppressive servitude. For eight years Israel felt the power of the enemy which, with its police brutality, collected the tribute for their heathen king. His armies were there to haul away the crops made ready for harvest. The situation for Israel appeared utterly hopeless and desperate.

Under these oppressive circumstances Israel cried unto Jehovah, and He heard them.

It was a cry of the penitent that moved Him. Never does He hear the cry of the rebellious. O, indeed, the rebellious in Israel cried by reason of the oppression. It is inconceivable that they would be insensitive to the exacting powers of the enemy. It may even have been true that the rebellious realized that their oppression was because the Lord had withdrawn from Israel His help. But their cry is one of rebellion and cursing which the Lord does not hear. Rather, it was the cry of those who deplored Israel's rebellion. It was the remnant according to the election of grace who historically and organically belong to the nation that rebelled, the believing Israelites who sense that the oppression is brought about by Jehovah because of Israel's sin, who now deplore Israel's sin and plead for Jehovah's mercy.

Jehovah always hears their cry. Forget it not—it is He Who creates within them true sorrow after

God. Later the apostle Paul would write to the church at Corinth, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Cor. 7:10). So it always is that godly sorrow which worketh repentance is a sorrow which God realizes in His people and they sorrow because they have offended the living God.

In the way of repentance Jehovah responds with deliverance. This is always the divine order in the matter of our salvation. So it must also be understood that salvation is of the Lord. He does not save His people on condition that they repent, but He saves them always in the way of repentance which He Himself creates within them. Thus we read in the text that the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them. . . .

Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother!

Remarkable it is indeed that this deliverer is one who comes, not from Zebulun, Naphtali, or other of the northern tribes, who were to be delivered, but from the south country, from the land of Judah.

From Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, who prophetically is said to be he whom his brethren shall praise, the lion's whelp who coucheth for the prey; the one from whom the scepter would not depart until Shiloh come (Gen. 49:8-10). Out of this tribe the Lord raises up the deliverer, who stands in the line from whom the Saviour must come—Who is God's lion, His Strong One.

Remarkable too, is the name Othniel! Literally it means: lion of God, or my lion is God. Such was the faith of his father Kenaz when this son was born. Not Othniel is the lion, but the God of Kenaz, and now of Othniel. He is the Lion, the Strong One.

In chapter one of Judges we learn of his faith and courage when his uncle Caleb challenged him to fight against Kerjath-sepher, and rewarded him with a wife from one of his daughters. Remarkable it is that this man who stands in the loins of Judah is the one whom the Lord now raised up.

The first judge and captain over Israel!

The Spirit of Jehovah came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war. That he became the first judge meant that he taught Israel to put away their idols, and he moved Israel once more to seek Jehovah's face to worship Him. That he led Israel to war (3:2) meant that he first taught Israel how to fight—God's people must be a militant people; and then he went before them into battle with the enemy. All was the work of the Spirit of Jehovah which came upon him. Not of himself was he a deliverer; but Jehovah is the Strong One Who will deliver Israel through him.

Saved by the wonder of grace!

It is not sufficient to say that the Lord delivered Israel by the hand of Othniel, though this was the fact. For the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel. What we must see here, if we are to hear the Word of God in our text, is the truth that when He delivers it is a wonder of grace—just as truly as Israel's deliverance from Egypt was a wonder of grace; just as truly as the destruction of Jericho was a wonder of grace. So are the deliverances of Israel in the book of Judges, the manifestation of Jehovah's grace. That is the saving truth in our text. That is always the saving truth in all the work of Jehovah's salvation.

And the land had rest for forty years!

Joyous, but typical rest!

The hard thing that Israel had to learn was the fact that to forsake the service of Jehovah can only end in oppression, war, and unrest.

The joyous truth Israel must always learn is that when they serve the Lord from the heart, they will experience peace and rest. Such is the rest Israel now enjoyed. It was typical, not the final, perfect rest. It was temporary, for it lasted only so long as Israel served the Lord. It lasted for only forty years, not for ever; it was a long time in comparison with

the eight years of oppression.

Until Othniel, the son of Kenaz, died!

Until then, the spiritual remnant governs. This is the significance of the history of the Judges. So long as the judge lived, spiritual Israel is in control. Those who still served idols had to do so in secret. The predominate power of the judge and the spiritual remnant brought the service of Jehovah again to the fore. So long as the God-appointed authority was recognized and obeyed, Israel prospered. But always, at the death of the judge, Israel returns again to its evil ways. It is this fact that constantly recurs throughout the entire period of the Judges.

The lesson then is this: Israel, according to its sinful and corrupt nature always departs from Jehovah, and suffers the consequences. Israel, according to the election of grace, in principle serves Jehovah, deploring Israel's sin, repenting in sorrow after God, imploring His mercy. And Jehovah remembers His covenant. Always He provides redemption. He raises up The Deliverer. He graces that Deliverer with His Spirit. And He brings His people at last into the everlasting rest.

Thanks be unto Him, the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, for His everlasting salvation!

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

A Dangerous and Deceitful Euphemism

"We endorse quality education, whether it be public or private."

What do *you* think about this statement?

This was a statement which appeared in an "open letter" addressed to the members and constituents of two Christian schools. The letter was prepared and signed by the boards of those schools, and it was published in a weekly newspaper. The occasion was an upcoming millage vote in which the voters in a certain Public School District were being asked to approve a 3.0 millage to cover operating expenses. Representatives of the two Christian schools' boards had met with representatives of the public school board, "reviewed vital information and discussed areas of mutual concern," and then published an open letter to their constituents. In the letter they did not recommend either a Yes or a No vote on the proposal, but urged their constituents to study and "to seriously consider the

proposed millage increase." And then they added the endorsement quoted above and also urged their constituents to vote.

Purposely I have omitted names. It is my intention to focus on the issue, not on the persons and schools involved.

Neither is it my intention to argue the question whether it is wise and responsible for a Christian school supporter to approve tax millage increases for the state schools, in view of the fact that the Christian school supporter pays "double"—his taxes for the state schools and tuition and gifts for the Christian school.

Nor do I intend to argue the question whether it is the proper domain of any Christian school board to meddle in an affair of this kind and to publish open letters on such issues. Personally, I doubt the propriety of this very much.

But I will pass by these matters in order to concentrate on what I deem a more important matter—what I call a dangerous and deceitful euphemism.

Now what is a euphemism?

Webster tells us that it is "the substitution of an inoffensive or mild expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant."

And what, then, is euphemistic about the statement quoted at the beginning of this editorial?

The main elements of substitution are those two terms, *public* and *private*, and, along with them, that expression *quality education*. Taken in itself, of course, the expression "public education" denotes education which is sponsored, controlled, directed, and paid for by the public, and thus by the government and its elected officials. Thus viewed—apart now from the fact that education is not the affair of the state—that term *public education* is quite innocuous. In fact, it would in itself be possible that such public education could even be "quality education." And taken in itself, "private education" is education which is sponsored, controlled, directed, and paid for by private individuals and/or organizations and with private funds. Again, the expression itself is quite innocuous; and again, it is quite conceivable that such "private" education might also be "quality education."

And after all, who would be so foolhardy as not to endorse, i.e., "give one's name or support to, sanction," quality education. That would be like being opposed to motherhood and apple pie! Do we not certainly need more, rather than less, "quality education"?

However, as soon as one begins to give substance and content to these formal terms, and then begins to view them from the perspective of one who is committed to parental, Christian, covenantal, Reformed education and to evaluate their quality or lack of quality from the viewpoint of their spiritual dimension—then, I say, the dangerous and deceitful character of this euphemism becomes evident.

In the first place, that term *private* covers a

potential multitude of ills. Private education can be education that is owned and operated by some private individual or corporation for profit-making purposes; again, it can be education which does not even purport to be Christian. It may be humanistic; it may be consciously non-sectarian; it may even be committed to some other religion. It may be just a "private school" for the children of the wealthy. Private education may also be parochial, church-controlled education. And this, in turn, may be of various kinds: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Adventist, Baptist, Jewish. Or again, private education may be parental education and involve schools that are owned, operated, and controlled by associations of parents. These, in turn, may be of various kinds, including our own covenantal schools, devoted to educating our covenantal children in harmony with our Reformed principles.

But, you see, as soon as you view the multitude of private schools from the point of view of their spiritual dimension, their controlling spiritual principle, then there is but one answer to the question as to which private schools truly offer *quality* education, namely: our Christian, covenantal, Reformed schools!

In the second place, that term *public* is, after all, an inoffensive or mild expression substituted for one that may offend. Consider the fact that the public school is humanistic, pro-evolution, anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Scripture in its whole approach to education. Can any right-thinking Reformed Christian dare to call such public education "quality"—no matter what school or school district is in question?

Now go back to that quoted statement and in your own mind fill in for those terms "public" and "private" the truly descriptive terms which we as Reformed Christians would use, and then take note of the horrible contradiction which results. And then ask how a Christian school board—or any Christian parent, for that matter—could subscribe to such an endorsement, and that, too, "In His Service."

Kalamazoo's New Church Building

Last spring our news column reported the dedication of the new church building of our Kalamazoo (Michigan) Protestant Reformed Church. At the time, a goodly number of people from neighboring congregations joined the Kalamazoo congregation

in celebrating that happy occasion. The evening was undoubtedly a highlight in the life of the little flock of Kalamazoo, a congregation which for many years has had a rather checkered history and which often has struggled to maintain a distinctively Re-

formed witness in that community.

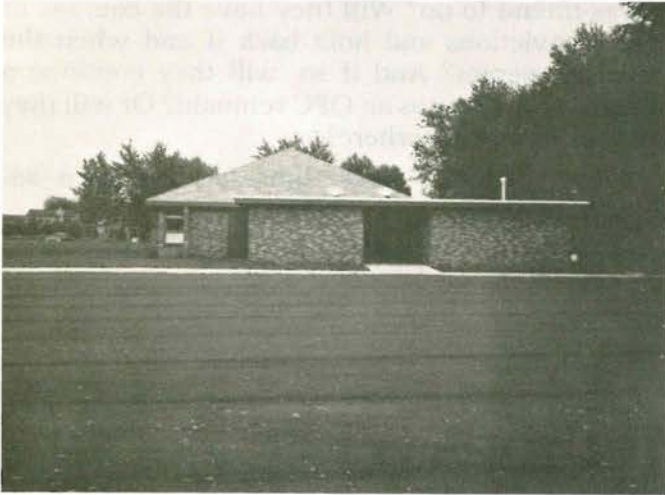
The church there now has a small, but very neat, pleasant, and useful building, located in a better area of the city than was their former meeting place.

At the time of the dedication there were no pictures available, and at the evening program it was too dark to get pictures.

Recently, on a preaching appointment, I had the opportunity to get a couple pictures, one an outdoor

view and one an interior view. And so our readers may get a glimpse of Kalamazoo's new facilities.

For those who may wish to visit our church there, here are the directions. Take the U.S. 131 expressway from Grand Rapids, getting off at the second M. 43 exit (W. Main Street). Follow West Main Street to Drake Road (the first traffic signal). Turn right on Drake Road and follow it to the first street on your left (Greenacre Drive). Follow Greenacre Drive approximately one block; it dead-ends in the church parking lot.



The Presbyterian "Join and Receive" Movement

Both the columns *All Around Us* and the editorial department have reported and commented from time to time on what has come to be called the "Join and Receive" movement in American Presbyterianism. To refresh your memory, let me remind you that this movement at present involves three Presbyterian denominations: the PCA, or Presbyterian Church in America, by far the largest of the three; the RPCES, or Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod; and the OPC, or Orthodox Presbyterian Church. These three, through actions of their respective General Assemblies, are now officially committed to what has been nicknamed the "JR" movement.

According to this plan, the two smaller denominations will simply join the larger PCA on its confessional and governmental basis, and the PCA will receive them. The purpose of this plan—and supposedly also its advantage—is to accomplish a

union of the three conservative Presbyterian denominations without a long process of discussion and negotiation concerning differences in doctrine and practice. There will, of course, still have to be arrangements made and decisions reached with respect to various physical assets and organizational aspects.

However, in all three denominations the first major step toward union was taken. The RPCES General Assembly approved the proposal by a much wider margin than the necessary two-thirds vote. The OPC General Assembly first rejected it by a very close vote, failing to give the necessary two-thirds vote of approval. However, reconsideration a day later led to a sufficient switching of votes to furnish the needed margin. And the PCA General Assembly approved the receiving of both denominations into its fold.

This is not the end of the process, however. In

both the OPC and the RPCES there are two more hurdles. First of all, in each denomination two-thirds of the presbyteries (a presbytery is equivalent to our classis) must give their approval. Then, in 1982 the General Assembly of each denomination (if the presbyteries have approved) must again provide approval by a two-thirds margin. Meanwhile, three-fourths of the presbyteries in the PCA must ratify the action of their General Assembly. Only then can the merger be accomplished and the Presbyterian "amalgam" be formed.

It is not my purpose at this time to comment again on the fact that, should the "JR" movement succeed, the result will indeed be a rather bland Presbyterian amalgam.

Two things I wish to point out, especially with regard to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In the first place, a negative vote by only four presbyteries can defeat the entire proposal. The result of that

could be that a large portion of the OPC could be locked into a continued separate existence which they do not desire. Or would some, perhaps, not tolerate that continuation of a separate existence, but attempt to join the PCA regardless? In the second place, in these proposals there is no provision made, apparently, for a possible minority who for reasons of principle (at least in their opinion) cannot approve the merger. Does the denomination to which they have been loyal simply intend to leave them ecclesiastically stranded? And what do these people and/or churches of the minority themselves intend to do? Will they have the courage of their convictions and hold back if and when the majority merges? And if so, will they continue a separate existence as an OPC remnant? Or will they seek affiliation elsewhere?

These matters I have, thus far, not seen addressed in print.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missionary Methods (7)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

It is our contention in this series that if the church is to be correct in its missionary methods these methods will have to be gleaned from the Bible. Scripture not only lays down the principles which must govern the church in its mission work, but Scripture also teaches the proper methods by which this work must be done. This applies to all ages and all cultures, for Scripture is not bound either by time or by culture. In previous issues we have been busy analyzing the Apostle Paul's preaching in Athens. There in the very center of heathen religion and culture the Apostle courageously pointed the Athenians (especially the Stoics and Epicureans) to the root of their error. They were very superstitious. In their superstition they erected an altar to the "Unknown God" (Acts 17:22, 23). What they worshipped in their spiritual ignorance, that the Apostle declared to them. They worshipped a conception of their own sin-darkened minds, and that is an idol.

The Apostle continues by pointing them to the one, true God and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent (Acts 17:24-34). God, thus Paul preaches, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Temples constructed by man cannot contain God. Temples can only contain the productions of men's hands,

and those are idols. God cannot be limited in any way by man. God is the Creator! (This, by the way, points out the seriousness and necessity of taking the Bible's creation account by faith as it stands! Those who tamper with and impose their scientific theories upon Genesis one and two must needs fall into idolatry! They concoct their own conceptions of the sovereign Creator of heaven and earth.) God made the world and all things therein, proclaimed the Apostle. This means that God is Lord, sovereign Lord, of heaven and earth. And this in turn means that it is utterly impossible that God should dwell in temples made with hands. Solomon declared that even the heaven of heavens cannot contain God (I Kings 8:27). Because God is the Creator of heaven and earth He is not worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything. God gives to all men life and breath and all things. God is not only self-sufficient; He is the source of all life. The moment the Lord withholds the breath of a man, that man dies and returns to the dust. Thus these Athenians and all men everywhere, if they are to know God and worship Him aright, must have the proper conception of God. That proper conception comes only from God through the Holy Spirit. Apart from that there is only idolatry in all its vanity and futility.

The Apostle continues by telling them that God made of one blood "all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (vs. 26). At this point the Apostle preaches the great truth of Scripture that all nations of men on the face of the earth came from one man. This is the truth of the organic unity of the human race. God did not create individuals or individual nations. God created a race, a race which fell in the first Adam and was saved in the last Adam. This truth was in direct opposition to the notion of the Greek and Roman philosophers who believed that each nation had its origin in its god. Polytheism had no conception at all of the unity of the human race. But there is more these Athenians had to learn. This Creator God Who made of one blood all nations of men also "hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations." The Creator God is also the God of providence. God determined the history of the race. God governed and upheld the nations. God determined where and when and for how long they should exist in time and history. God ruled them too so that they served His purpose in Christ. "This is borne out by what we read in Gen. 11:1-9: 'The whole earth was of one speech and of one language.' There were no separate nations prior to the confusion of tongues at Babel! God *made* the nations! It is stupid pride and horrible unbelief that would make each nation come from a national god or primordial. It is a denial of the judgment of God and of God's Christological purpose in all things, namely, that Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem. But here the record is set straight. Of this Moses sings in Deut. 32:7-9, where we read: 'Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: (generation and generation) ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance!' " (Rev. George C. Lubbers, *The Standard Bearer*, vol. 41, p. 467).

The Apostle proclaimed God's eternal purpose in Christ with all of this. God made the nations of one blood. God set the boundaries of their habitations. God determined the times of their existence. God in His providence ruled them. "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring" (vss. 27, 28). God's purpose was that men should serve Him, "find Him and feel after Him." In spite of the fact that through "glimmerings of natural light" even some of their

own poets recognized the unity of the human race, they refused to seek the Lord. In spite of the fact too that God is not far from every one of us and in Him we live and move and have our being they refused to seek Him. God is indeed near to man in His creation. Even His invisible things, His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen through the things that are made (cf. Romans 1:18ff.). In spite of all this, man changes the glory of God into an image made like unto corruptible man!

Having established the fact that God is the Creator of the human race, Paul instructed them not to think that God can be compared to gold or silver or stone, "graven by art and man's device" (vs. 29). That is impossible. This too points to the futility of Greek philosophy and religion. The gods of the Greeks were less than those who presumably worshipped them! They could be manipulated by their worshippers. What folly! What nonsense! Paul brooks no compromise. He proclaims the gospel of sovereign grace over against the background of their spiritual ignorance and terrible sin! This is what every missionary must have the courage to do.

The Apostle continued: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (vs. 30). The translation "Winked at," of the Authorized Version, is both incorrect and unfortunate. It implies that God for a time condoned the idolatry of the heathen. This simply is not true. God is angry with the wicked every day. His wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men. The word literally means: to overlook, take no notice of, not attend to. The point is that in the Old Testament times, before Christ came, salvation was limited to Israel. To Israel was the promise, the type, the shadow, the law. Not all the Israelites were children of the promise but all the children of the promise were Israelites. In that sense God overlooked the heathen. God kept them with but very few exceptions (Rahab, Ruth, *et al.*) in ignorance. But now all of that is changed. Christ has come and through His cross and resurrection (vs. 31) He has brought redemption. Now God will gather His church out of all nations. Therefore God "...now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (vs. 30).

The Apostle also gives the reason for this universal command to repent: "Because He (God) hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (vs. 31). That day of judgment has already come. That day came with the incarnation of "that Man Whom He hath ordained," viz. our Lord Jesus

Christ. He Himself to Whom all judgment has been committed (John 5:22) said not long before He went to the cross: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die" (John 12:31-33). The cross of Jesus Christ as sealed in His blessed resurrection from the dead is most emphatically the judgment of the whole world. For this reason the command to repent must be preached to all universally. All men everywhere must be confronted with the command of the gospel. All must give answer. The elect will respond in faith (vs. 34) and the ungodly will respond in unbelief (vs. 32). All are rendered without excuse. That day of judgment, ordained of God, will culminate in the final judgment at the end of the ages. Then all shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil (II Cor. 5:10).

Consider now what Paul has done here in Athens. He has without compromise exposed these philosophers of Athens in all their superstition and idolatry. He has preached the God of creation and providence. He has instructed them concerning the proper worship of Jehovah. He has preached Christ crucified and raised. He has announced the judgment of the world by Jesus Christ. He has preached the universal command to repent. Once more, what

the Apostle did *not* do is preach an offer of the gospel. He preached the gospel of the sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ against the dark background of human depravity which renders all men everywhere incapable of any good. The overwhelming testimony not only of apostolic preaching but also of all of Scripture contradicts all notions of free will, offers of the gospel, and universal atonement. The only possibility of salvation for those who are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1ff.) is: "By grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

The fruit? Some mocked. Others said we will hear thee again of this matter. A few believed (vss. 32-34). But Athens was confronted with the sovereign God in Jesus Christ. They were commanded to repent. They gave their answer and the vast majority stood condemned under the just judgment of God. The elect believed and were saved. Thus it is always wherever the gospel is preached in truth according to the Scriptures. This must characterize all mission preaching. With the same boldness of faith must Christ's ambassadors open their mouths to make known the mystery of the gospel of sovereign grace to the glory of God (Eph. 6:19). Thus will the church be gathered out of the nations. The world will be brought into judgment. God will be praised.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

The Vile Sin of Homosexuality

David Engelsma

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

—Romans 1:26-28

There are some subjects, especially certain sins, which a preacher hesitates to treat in his public teaching. They are shameful evils. So much is this

so, that a preacher wonders whether it is not even a shame to speak of them. Such is the subject—the sin—dealt with in the last part of Romans 1, the sin of homosexuality. Perhaps, thinks the minister, we could better be silent about this.

But the world will not permit it. The world discusses homosexuality publicly. It is on the front page of the daily paper. It is part of the news on radio and television. The world accepts homosexuality and defends it. It is a "sexual preference" and an "alternative lifestyle." Casually, the television critic of the *Chicago Tribune* remarked in a recent column that a new program will involve a gay uncle caring for a family. Psychology, that most uncertain science, holding its finger in the wind of public opinion and judging what should be from

what is, has already exonerated as "normal" that which it formerly called an illness and an abnormality.

If we were able to hold our peace in the face of the world's approval of homosexuality, this becomes impossible when the churches chime in to give their sanction. This unbelievable thing is happening today. The churches, poor, pathetic institutions, desperate to appear "modern," craving the esteem of society, devoid of faith in Holy Scripture, fall in line. They have long since forgotten that the church is pillar and ground of the truth, God's bulwark of godliness in the abounding lawlessness of the end-time. Denying the commandment of God in the learned, hollow language of "cultural conditionedness" and "hermeneutical principles," they sanctify Sodom and pollute Zion, making the gate to eternal life broad and the way wide, so that many may find it (who are not even seeking it).

Reformed churches are included. Officially, some have decided that, although homosexual practice is to be condemned, homosexual nature is not sin. Other Reformed churches have already taken the next step and have officially approved practicing homosexuals as members in good standing in the churches. Other denominations have approved homosexual officebearers. Such is the impudence of the homosexuals themselves that they do not hesitate to identify themselves in the church papers and to call for acceptance of homosexual practice as part of the freedom of Jesus Christ.

The main reason, though, for speaking out is that Holy Scripture speaks on this subject. One need think only of the history of Sodom in the Old Testament (Gen. 19:1-11). That city practiced the sin of homosexuality, giving the name "sodomite" to those who afterward practice the same sin. Referring to this, the prophet Ezekiel says that Sodom "committed abomination" before Jehovah (Ezek. 16:50). Among the abominations of the heathen forbidden to the Israelites was this, that "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Lev. 18:22. Cf. also Lev. 20:13 and Deut. 23:17). I Kings 14:24 notes of Judah already in the days of Rehoboam that "there were sodomites in the land," viewing this as evidence of Judah's doing "according to all the abominations of the nations" and warning, "which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."

The New Testament expressly states its oneness with the Old Testament in the condemnation of homosexuality. It does this most fully in the passage quoted at the beginning of this article, Romans 1:26-28. The sin spoken of is homosexuality: the sexual desire of a person for a member of his

own sex, whether of a woman for a woman or of a man for a man, and the carrying out of that lust in a sexual relationship. It is an evil that has to do with the fundamental physical differences between men and women; with the sexual nature of humans; and with the sexual relationship and activity. For this reason, the apostle does not use the ordinary words for "men" and "women," but the words that mean 'males' and 'females.' We should understand the passage in this way, as treating of the basic physical division of humankind: "their females did change the natural use...likewise also the males, leaving the natural use of the female...males with males..." The same word that is here translated "men" occurs in I Corinthians 6:9, where we read of "abusers of themselves with mankind," and in I Timothy 1:10, where we read of "them that defile themselves with mankind." In both of these passages, the reference is to homosexuality.

The passage in Romans 1 sets forth this sin as an exceedingly shameful iniquity. There are different aspects of sin; one aspect is the shameful nature of sin. Whereas all sin is shameful, since it misses the mark of God's glory, certain sins show this shameful nature more than others. Such is homosexuality. It is "unseemly" (v. 27), i.e., indecent, ugly. The practice of it is a doing of "things which are not convenient" (v. 28) i.e., things not fitting for a human being. Verse 26 speaks of "vile affections," i.e., affections of dishonor, or disgraceful affections.

The sin of homosexuality is not one shameful sin among many; rather, it is the sin that most fully works out and manifests sin's vileness—it is the nadir of the degradation of sin. This is plainly the teaching of the passage. First, the apostle is describing the very end, the fullest development, of the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men apart from the gospel which he has spoken of in verse 18. Second, this is the force of the word "working" in verse 27, "males with males *working* that which is unseemly." It is not merely that they do the deed, but that they work out to its fullest possibility the unseemliness of sin. In this sin, they exhaust the ugliness of sin.

Third, the apostle writes that God gives men and women up to this sin. Men have appealed to these expressions in this passage in support of the theory of common grace, the theory that there is a gracious operation of the Spirit in the unregenerated restraining sin in them, so that there is still some good in them and so that they can do some good works in the sphere of society. The argument based on these expressions goes like this: If God at some point gives human beings up to these vile affections and gives them over to this reprobate mind, He must have been restraining sin in them before this point.

The passage is explained as teaching that there is a development in the wicked from good to bad. Abraham Kuyper gives this explanation in his work on common grace, *De Gemeene Gratie*. "Common grace was expanded after the Flood; now it shrinks again; and this shrinking again of common grace the apostle represents to us in these words, that God has given over our human race to a reprobate mind." "Thanks to common grace had God begun to take the guidance (*leiding*) of the nations into His own hand, after the Flood; but when once again, from the root of sin, a general apostasy came forth, God has given the nations over to another guidance, namely, to the guidance of their own perverse heart and thus really to the guidance of Satan." "...being given over in itself only means that the evil of sin is no longer so strongly restrained by God as previously" (Vol. 1, pp. 415, 416. Cf. also Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 442, and *De Drie Punten in Alle Deelen Gereformerd*, p. 44).

Against this stands the entire passage itself. Where is there so much as a hint of any good in fallen man—on the contrary, there is only wickedness. Where is there a gracious attitude of God to fallen man apart from the gospel—on the contrary, there is only the wrath of God revealed from heaven. Where is there any testimony of a restraint of sin—on the contrary, there is a positive act of giving over to sin. The interpretation of "giving up" that infers a previous restraint is a reading into the text of that which is not there.

God's giving up of men to sin certainly indicates development of sin, but a development from bad to worse. Both in the life of the individual and in the life of a particular society and in the life of the old

human race, depravity is worked out to its vilest end. The example is not that a man who is almost dead finally dies, but that the corpse rots and decays more and more. Exactly this is the teaching of the passage: in the sin of homosexuality, new depths of sin are plumbed; under the Divine giving up, society reaches the last stages of moral rot.

The reason for this is that homosexuality is a sin contrary to nature. It is a sin practiced with the body; and, therefore, the shamefulness of sin, which can be hidden somewhat in other sins, is displayed. But it is a sin which, in distinction from fornication and adultery, is contrary to nature: "...females did change *the natural use* into that which is *against nature*: And likewise also the males, *leaving the natural use* of the female, burned in their lust one toward another...." Homosexuality is contrary to the revealed law of God in Holy Scripture; in addition, it is contrary to the fundamental law of God in creation, or nature. God created two sexes; and by virtue of that creation it is laid down in nature itself that the female satisfies the sexual desire by the male and that the male has a natural use of the female. But in this sin, the female changes the natural use and practices something contrary to nature; and the male, likewise. This is still deeper degradation and fouler shame than fornication. The apostate race carries out its revolution against God its Creator to the final stage, disobeying the basic laws of creation.

If one thing is clear, it is that homosexuality is not a natural life-style, a normal expression of humankind's sexual nature. It is unnatural and monstrous. In the literal sense of the word, it is perverse.

(to be continued)

GUEST ARTICLE

Family Devotions (2)

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

About family devotions themselves we ought to notice a few things. In the first place, they are devotions. That implies that the source out of which family devotions arise is the love of God in our hearts. That's what the very word devotion implies. Someone for whom you have devotion is someone whom you love. Love can be the only possible source for family devotions. Moses makes that clear in Deuteronomy 6 to the children of Israel. In

the verses 6 and following he sets before them their calling to teach the Word of the Lord unto their children, to talk of it when they sit in their houses, when they walk by the way, when they lie down and rise up. How are they going to do that? What alone will insure that they carry out this calling? The answer is: the love of God. And so Moses exhorts the children of Israel in verse 5: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and

with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

If our family devotions are to succeed, there must be in our homes first of all the love of God. Where that love is revealed, family devotions will flourish. Where families love God, and reveal that love within the life of the family itself, family devotions will have no trouble being sustained. Where husbands love their wives, where parents love their children and receive them as gifts from God's own hand, where children reverence their father and mother and show love to each other, there family devotions will necessarily thrive. But where family relations are strained, where husband and wife do not get along, where children are disobedient to their parents, where there is constant fighting between brothers and sisters, there family devotions will wither away and die. We will succeed in our family devotions, only when we ground them in the love of God and love for one another for God's sake.

Secondly, that these are family *devotions* means also that they are part of our worship of God. That is also contained in the very idea of the word devotion. Devotion is not simply the deep emotion of love. It's not simply love in our hearts. But devotion is love in action. It is consecration and worship. That implies that we do not practice family devotions first of all in order that we might get something out of them for ourselves. To be sure, we do "get something" out of family devotions. There is benefit, great benefit to the faithful practice of family devotions. There is the assurance of salvation worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the reading of the Scriptures and prayer. And surely the benefit of family devotions for our children is that they are instructed by us in the truths of God's Word and in the practice of prayer. They learn the contents of the Scriptures, and also how to apply the Scriptures to their everyday life. They learn from us how to pray, what to pray for, and the reasons for prayer. But above all else, family devotions do not have as their primary, and certainly not their sole, purpose that we get something out of them for ourselves. Their purpose is devotional. They are intended to be an expression of our love to God. They are worship, bending the knee before God in humble adoration and thanksgiving. They are worship through especially the two means of prayer and the reading of the Word. Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. The reading and believing of God's Word is worship of God in which God takes no greater delight.

But we must not either forget that these are *family* devotions. The point that needs to be emphasized is that they are devotions carried on by the family as a whole. The family as family has needs to bring to God's throne of grace. The family has

reason to give thanks unto God for all His blessings. That's what makes meal time, from a practical point of view, the best time to have these family devotions. As the children grow older and become busier, the time when the entire family is at home in generally mealtime. That these are family devotions means that the whole family ought to participate in these devotions. Nevertheless, the leadership in these devotions ought to be assumed by the father and husband. He is the God-appointed head of the house. He is the one whom Moses is addressing in Deuteronomy 6 in particular. The word of the Lord in Ephesians 6:4 is: "And ye *fathers*, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That doesn't mean, of course, that the mother and wife has no place in conducting family devotions. In some instances it may be that she is best qualified to read and lead the family devotions. But a husband must not neglect or quickly relinquish his duty to his wife for any reason. Also in family worship he is the head and she is the help-meet.

Perhaps some practical suggestions for conducting family devotions might be in order. These are intended to be just that, suggestions. We ought not to lay down laws and precepts governing this practice by us. We mustn't start saying that this or that way is the best way to conduct family devotions, as if there is really only one proper way. Family situations differ. In one family one way is going to work out better than another. It does seem, however, that making the evening meal the special time of the day for family devotions works out about the best for most families.

But though we ought to avoid laying down laws, there are certainly some practical suggestions which we can make in regard to family devotions. The first is that father and mother insist on taking and setting aside the time for these family devotions every day. Obviously, all other suggestions will be of no value, if this is not done. Parents should discipline themselves to do this, and they should insist on it for the rest of the family. Children must not be allowed quickly to gobble their food down and be excused from the table because they have this meeting or that activity to which they must go. Parents must insist that mealtime and family devotions take precedent over everything else. Secondly, it's a good idea for parents to provide the members of the family with Bibles. That the younger children are able to follow along as father reads, or are even allowed to do some of the reading themselves, goes a long way in making them involved and interested in the family devotions. Besides, following along in the Bible means that two senses are at work in our devotions: we not only hear God's Word being read, but we

see it in the Bible before us. This will aid in remembering the passage which is read. Thirdly, after the reading of Scripture it would be profitable if there were some discussion of the passage. This will also promote remembering the Word that was read. Parents can start by having the smaller children recite the last few words that are read. Perhaps a few questions could be asked the older children. In this connection, it is helpful to have some study aids handy, especially a concordance and Bible dictionary. If we are going to profit from our Scripture reading, we must know and understand what we read. In the fourth place, parents ought to stick to the King James' Version of the Bible. They ought to do this because, to my mind, this is by far the best and most faithful translation available to us today. But they ought to do this also because the use of different and various translations for our family devotions is going to promote confusion among our children. The use of other versions is good for private study, but not for reading of the Scriptures as devotions in the family. As a father, I want my children to become familiar with the Scriptures, and this will not happen if I am continually reading to them out of different versions. In the fifth place, parents ought to use the opportunity of family de-

votions to teach their children how to pray. Prayer is something that is learned. Children are not born with an innate knowledge of and ability to pray. Children must be taught to pray. This is best done during family devotions by the father praying audibly. More and more it is becoming the custom in our homes that the fathers pray silently along with all the rest of the members of the family. This is not good. I fear it indicates that fathers themselves do not know how to pray as they ought. Fathers ought to pray aloud at family devotions. They ought to do that so that their children may learn by their father's example how and for what to pray. But the children themselves ought also to pray. They ought to be taught a short prayer which they pray before and after the meal. They ought to be taught to ask for the Lord's blessing and to give Him thanks.

May we cherish the practice of family devotions. May our homes be homes where God's Word is read and studied, and prayer is offered to God. May we not succumb to the temptation to slight family devotions, or even lay them aside altogether. In this way our family devotions shall be glorifying to the name of our God and serve our own and our children's spiritual edification.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Signs in the Church

Rev. K. Koole

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways;" II Peter 2:1,2

When one writes about signs of coming judgment as manifested by the church, one writes about serious things, things which involve the name of our God and the truth. From many points of view these are grievous matters, matters which have eternal consequences in the lives of those who may be close to us. Therefore, though these are things that must occur before the end, seeing them occur gives one no delight.

The Christian church of our day is in a dreadful

state. This is true with respect to its preaching and with respect to the hearing regarding the doctrine (dogma), and regarding the walk of its members. There are signs which speak of imminent judgment. These signs can be listed under the general heading of Apostasy, departure from the truth. Apostasy can be looked at both from the point of view of the pulpit and of the pew. Christ speaks of both in Matthew 24:11, 12. "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many." That is the pulpit. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." That is the pew. In the quotation at the heading of the article Peter speaks of both as well. He mentions false prophets "who shall bring in damnable heresies," but he also speaks of the pew when he says that "many shall follow their pernicious ways." Paul also speaks of both in II Timothy 4:3, 4. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doc-

trine." That's the pew. "But after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers." That is again a reference to the pulpit. For there to be apostasy, the two must work in conjunction. The pew must be ripe for the false doctrine coming over the pulpit, and the pulpit must be willing to cater to the pew.

We begin by examining the pulpit, the preaching, because that is where heresy and apostasy start, with wolves in sheep's clothing who seek to scatter the flock.

The question is, where does one start? The pulpits of our day are rife with false doctrines. Heresies come so thick and fast, two by two as it were, that one can not stay current. If we were to try to deal with every species of heresy, we would soon have enough material to fill Noah's ark. The church is being drowned with a deluge, a flood of false doctrine. As Christ states in Matthew 24:11, "*many* false prophets shall rise." Indeed they have. Their name is Legion, though they claim that their name is Reformed, and Christian, and Protestant. In the name of Christ they call into question everything from the creation to the resurrection, and deny everything from total depravity to the Virgin Birth. They are horrified if you call them false prophets, and declare that they teach "damnable heresies." They assure you that it is done in the service of their Lord, Christ, and in the best interests of the church. Such is their false claim.

The great evil that besets the church in our day is that Protestant pulpits are filled with Pontius Pilates. As preachers assent to the murder of the truth, the Word of God, they piously wash their hands. They have simply given the people what the people have been clamoring for. The re-occurring question raised on Protestant pulpits is the same as Pilate's cynical response to Christ on trial, namely, "What is *truth*?" They ask this question while looking directly at the Word of God! Men ordained to preach the gospel, who are called to point to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life, who are called to declare "Thy word is truth," and that the *truth* shall set men free, ask "What is Truth?"!

Protestant theologians, at least, used to hold up the Bible in response to that question and say, "Here is THE TRUTH. It is that from cover to cover. It is the word of the only true and living God. It is infallible, inerrant, inspired, and perspicuous. It is the absolute standard of all spiritual reality, the compendium of our faith, and the only standard by which we must live." Such Protestant theologians once declared. No more! Now the Bible is simply one perspective of the truth as seen through the opaque eyes of ancient men. It is, therefore, historically inaccurate, scientifically primitive, and morally out of date. Protestant preach-

ers, mind you, say that of the Holy Scriptures! Sons of the very churches which were unshackled from Rome by an insistence upon Scripture's ultimate authority over every tradition of mere men, now despise that very Scripture. And they work the hardest to undermine its veracity.

The upshot of the matter is that the Christian church is not to imagine that it has an absolute standard of truth in its hands. We are to approach it not with childlike faith, but with the scepticism of the scholar. All the Scriptures give us are perspectives of holy men of old as they were confronted by the TRUTH. And we are confronted with other perspectives of the Truth in the "Koran" of the Mohammedans, the sayings of Confucius, and the dialogues of Plato. The confession "Sola Scriptura" is heard no more from many Protestant pulpits. Such a confession, it is said, is not compatible with the spirit of Christian love, but smacks of religious bigotry. No wonder thousands upon thousands turn to the sects and cults. They at least *claim* to have an absolute standard of truth. People feel more secure in these states of pretended certainty.

Things are bad on Protestant pulpits. How bad? Things are so bad that we find that, on such vital truths as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the fact of the resurrection, and on such practical issues as divorce and remarriage, and abortion, we have more in common with Rome than with many so-called Protestant churches. So far things have slipped. Protestants make Rome look almost orthodox at times. We say this not out of any admiration for Rome, who remains as idolatrous and man-centered as ever, but to show how bad things are. Protestant men have gone even further in the way of heretical teachings than Rome.

The Reformation sufficed to cause a reformation of the church in the sixteenth century, a cleansing and a rededication to the truth. I will be so bold as to say that there is no reformation that can revitalize the Protestant churches which have apostatized in our century. Members of the Roman Catholic Church could be revitalized because they lived in dark ignorance of the Scriptures. The Word was deliberately kept from them. But once the Word of God was preached to them, they saw the light. Such is not the case today. Protestants are not afflicted with an unschooled ignorance, but with a willing ignorance. Having heard about the truth they despise it. The words of Isaiah and Christ apply. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed" (Matt. 13:15). There is only one cleansing that remains for the Protestant church world that has become apostate in our day, a being rooted up, cast out, and burned.

Such is the bitter fruit where the teachings of false prophets have been allowed to take root. They have brought in "damnable heresies," devil-contrived doctrine. So as the apostle Peter states, "They bring on themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; ...whose... damnation slumbereth not" (II Peter 2:1,2).

Admittedly, we pass serious judgments, though we say no more than the Scripture itself says. When dealing with the cynical attitude of Protestant men towards God's Word we deal with serious matters. To deny Scripture as the infallible, authoritative, and perspicuous Word of God is the same as denying Jesus as the Christ, the Word of God made flesh. It is simply unbelief. Such has eternal consequences, as the Christ Himself points out. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). To teach that God's Word is obscure, murky, or even in some place mistaken is to call the light darkness, and so to bring condemnation upon one's self and upon all whom one misleads as well. God keep us from such self-deception and unbelief.

We make one observation in conclusion. In our day and age the Devil has added to his deceitful mischief not by keeping the Scriptures from men, but by printing such a bewildering variety of so-

called translations that men become confused as to what God's Word really does say. The very translations (if one dares to call a "paraphrase" a translation) contradict one another, or at least fail to support each other at crucial points. By means of these unfaithful translations false prophets can deny every fundamental doctrine and support every false one, and seeds of doubt concerning Scripture's absolute trustworthiness are sown in congregations' minds. For my part I can not recommend the King James Version strongly enough. It is an excellent translation. It omits no true doctrine, it supports no false one. Personally I have become convinced that it is based even on the best available manuscripts, manuscripts providentially preserved. However that may be, one thing is certain, it is the best available English translation by a long shot. Perhaps it can be improved upon in some minor linguistic way, but such an improvement has yet to see the light of day. The charge is often made that the K.J.V. uses archaic language, and is, therefore, unclear. Such is a smoke screen. It is clear enough if one but takes the time to read it, study it, and become familiar with it. The Bible becomes clear to us through constant use. Let us make God's Holy Word our constant companion. It is our best defense against every subtle teaching of false prophets.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Acts — Christ Gathers His Church (2)

Rev. J. Kortering

We now must see how the Holy Spirit led Luke to write in detail concerning the work of Christ in the gathering of the church. In a relatively short time (A.D. 29 - A.D. 60), the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Rome and encompassed both Jews and Gentiles. The key verse to the book can be found in chapter 1:8, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

1. The introduction to the book (1:1-8). He identified Theophilus as the intended recipient (1:1), and reviewed the activity of Christ after His resurrection, including His teaching and appearances (1:2-8).

2. A record of the ascension is given (1:9-11). This includes the fact that Christ was taken up while the disciples were present and a cloud received Him (1:9), and two angels explained that He was taken to heaven and would come again in like manner (1:10, 11).

3. The activity of the eleven disciples during the ten days in which they waited for the Holy Spirit is recorded (1:12-26). They stayed in the upper room and filled their time with prayer (1:13, 14); the chief priests purchased the field of blood with the money Judas returned (1:15-20); and the disciples chose by lot Matthias as a replacement for Judas (1:21-26).

4. The Holy Spirit was given to the church (2:1-47). The three signs signaled His presence and there was a twofold reaction among the people (2:1-13); Peter preached a sermon in which he emphasized

that the event was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel and David and that God has raised Christ Who sent forth His Spirit (2:14-36). The result of this sermon was that 3,000 were added to the church and the disciples expressed their unity by sharing their possessions (2:37-47).

5. The healing of the lame man by Peter and its results (3:1-4:37). This man was lame from birth and he sat in the Gate Beautiful of the temple while begging alms. Peter commanded him to rise up and walk (3:1-10). When the multitude gathered, Peter preached Christ crucified and risen (3:11-26). The Jews were disturbed that 5,000 were added to the church, so they placed Peter and John in prison (4:1-4). The Jewish council was struck by the boldness of Peter, so they warned the disciples to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (4:5-22). The gathering of the faithful turned to God for spiritual strength and shared their worldly goods more fervently (4:13-17).

6. The church was tested by sin from within and persecution from without (5:1-7:60). God's judgment fell upon Ananias and Sapphira who lied about giving to the apostles all the money from the sale of land while they kept back part of it (5:1-11); Peter's shadow had healing power over the sick (5:12-16); the apostles were imprisoned, but an angel came by night and released them; they preached in the temple and were taken before the Sanhedrin; Gamaliel gave his advice that they should not harm the apostles, for, "if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it." They beat the apostles and let them go (5:17-42). The Grecian widows complained of being neglected and seven deacons were chosen to assist (7:1-7). Stephen, one of the deacons, defended the ministry of Christ; he was taken to the council and falsely accused; he preached a word of defense, pointing out that all during the Old Testament there were unbelievers who resisted the Christ, and that these Jews were guilty of murdering Christ (7:8-53). The Jews stoned him to death while Saul held their garments (7:54-60).

7. The gospel spread in Samaria (8:1-40). Saul persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem and they were scattered (8:1-40); Philip went to Samaria and Simon the Sorcerer believed (8:5-13); Peter and John labored in Samaria (8:14-25); the Ethiopian Eunuch was converted (8:26-40).

8. Saul's conversion (9:1-30). Christ appeared to him on the way to Damascus (9:1-9); Ananias was sent to him (9:10-18); Paul was baptized and he preached to the saints in Damascus (9:19-22); a plot against Saul's life failed and he went to Jerusalem (9:23-30).

9. Peter's missionary labors (9:31-11:18). The

church had rest (9:31); at Lydda, Aeneas, sick of palsy for eight years, was healed (9:32-35); Dorcas of Joppa was also raised from the dead (9:36-43); Cornelius received a vision and he sent for Peter to come and preach (10:1-8); Peter also received a vision of animals in a sheet which represented Gentiles to whom Peter was called to preach, especially Cornelius. He went there and the Holy Ghost fell upon them and Cornelius believed and was baptized (10:26-48); Peter had to give account to the church at Jerusalem for preaching to a Gentile; after he explained the vision and the application, they rejoiced that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well (11:1-18).

10. The gospel spread to Antioch which became the missionary center (11:19-12:25). The persecuted Christians fled from Jerusalem to Antioch and took with them the message of the gospel (11:19-21). Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch who in turn sought the help of Saul of Tarsus (11:22-26); Agabus prophesied a drought in Jerusalem which gave rise to the need for help (11:27-30); Herod killed James and put Peter in prison, from which the angel delivered him (12:1-11); Peter went to the home of Mary, mother of John Mark (12:12-18); Herod was angry and ordered the guards killed; he in turn died, being eaten by worms (12:19-25).

11. Paul's first missionary journey (13:1-14:28). The church of Antioch ordained Paul and Barnabas as missionaries (13:1-3); at Cyprus, the deputy of the island believed and was opposed by one Barjesus, who was struck blind (13:4-12); John Mark forsook them at Perga (13:13); Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue at Antioch and many Gentiles expressed interest, but unbelieving Jews drove him out of the city (14:1-7); at Lystra they healed the crippled man and the people tried to worship them as gods (14:8-18); the Jews from Antioch came to stone Paul and left him for dead, but he rose up and travelled to Antioch, following the same route, and ordained elders in the newly formed churches (14:19-28).

12. The council at Jerusalem (15:1-35). The question arose at Antioch concerning the circumcision of the Gentile converts, and a meeting was called at Jerusalem to deal with this (15:1-6); Peter addressed the group, calling such circumcision a yoke (15:7-11); Paul and Barnabas spoke (15:12); James spoke (15:13-21); all agreed that Gentiles need not be circumcised. So letters were written to the churches explaining this decision (15:22-30); the decision was well received (15:31-35).

13. Paul's second missionary journey (15:36-18:22). A dispute arose over taking John Mark, and Paul took Silas instead (15:36-41); at Lystra, Timothy joined them (16:1-3); they delivered the

decrees of the council to the churches (16:4); the Holy Ghost directed them by suffering them not to go into Asia, but through the vision of the Macedonian man, guided them into Greece (16:5-10); at Philippi, Lydia and the jailor were converted (16:11-40); a church was established at Thessalonica even though the Jews assaulted the house of Jason in an attempt to capture Paul (17:1-9); the Bereans searched the Scripture daily, and Paul fled when the Jews once again attacked him (17:10-15); in Athens, Paul preached on Mars' Hill concerning the "unknown god" (17:16-34); at Corinth Paul labored 18 months; he lived in with Aquila and Priscilla since they shared the same craft of tent-making. Paul also preached, and Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, was led to the faith; most Jews opposed him, however, and he turned to the Gentiles (18:1-17); Paul stopped at Ephesus briefly on his return trip and also went to Jerusalem to keep the feast (18:18-22).

14. Paul's third missionary journey (18:23-21:16). As Paul travelled to Ephesus, he stopped at the churches of Galatia and Phrygia (18:23); Apollos was led to faith by Aquila and Priscilla (18:24-28); when Paul arrived he concentrated his labors in Ephesus, making it the center of his work for two years. During this time the disciples of John the Baptist were baptized (19:1-7); Paul began with the Jews, then preached in the school of Tyrannus, even performing miracles (19:8-12); the seven sons of Sceva tried to exorcise devils out of a man in the name of Jesus, but fled naked (19:13-16); many believed and showed their faith by burning their heathen books (19:17-20); the uprising by Demetrius the silversmith took place (19:21-41); Paul left for Macedonia and spent three months there; he visited Troas where Eutychus fell from the window and was raised from the dead (20:1-12);

at Miletus he bade farewell to the elders of the church of Ephesus (20:13-38); he spent seven days at Tyre; at Caesarea he was warned by Agabus that he would suffer in Jerusalem; he continued his journey just the same (21:1-16).

15. Paul was taken captive in Jerusalem and held captive in Caesarea (21:17-26:32). He was rescued from the mob of Jews (21:17-39); he addressed the multitude (21:40-22:21); they in turn raged against Paul; the chief captain threatened to turn him over to the Jews; Paul claimed Roman citizenship and was protected in the castle (22:22-29); under Roman protection Paul addressed the Jewish Sanhedrin; there was much division and the soldiers returned Paul to the castle (22:30-23:10); forty Jews vowed not to eat or drink until they killed Paul; he was secretly taken to Caesarea, bearing a letter addressed to Felix (23:11-35); Paul was tried before Felix (24:1-21); a second hearing was held (24:22-26); Paul was confined to prison for two years and when Festus became the new governor, he had another hearing; during this trial Paul appealed to Caesar (24:27-25:12); King Agrippa also had a hearing (25:13-26:32).

16. Paul's journey to Rome and his imprisonment there (27:1-28:31). Paul was placed in the trust of Julius, a centurion; they sailed to Rome by ship; at Fair Haven Paul warned them to wait for better weather, but they sailed anyway and suffered shipwreck at Melita; all 276 souls on board were saved (27:1-44); they spent three months on the island; a viper bit Paul who suffered no ill effect; he healed many sick including the father of Publius, a chief man of the island (28:1-10); they sailed for Rome and Paul was greeted by the brethren there. He explained the past happenings to the Jews and for two years was confined to a prison house where many came to hear him preach (28:11-31).

Book Reviews

OUR SAVIOR GOD, Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement; James M. Boice, Editor; Baker Book House, 1980; 189 pp., \$6.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book is comprised of a collection of addresses delivered at the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology during the years 1977-1979. They were given by such men as John H. Gerstner, R.C. Sproul, James M. Boice, Edmund P. Clowney, Roger R. Nicole, and J.I. Packer. The book is divided into four sections: Man the Sinner, Christ

the Savior, The Word of Christ, and Electing Love.

The book is, on the whole, an excellent defense of the five points of Calvinism. Some of the addresses are good, some are of exceptional value. The defense of the five points is, throughout, pointed, uncompromising, interestingly presented, and above all Biblical. There are excellent sections dealing with the Scriptural doctrines of the place of women in the Church (by Elizabeth Elliott), the total depravity of man (even in connection with the so-called good that sinners do), the bondage of the

will, particular redemption, and sovereign election. There is also an interesting section on the Puritan concept of "seeking" as a tool of evangelism—a concept with which I cannot agree, however. And there are passing references to the free offer of the gospel and God's intent to save all—although these latter are very few and far between and not developed.

I recommend the book strongly to all those who are interested in the Reformed faith. I was personally extremely pleased to see such a strong defense of these doctrines in this age of doctrinal indifference and apostasy. A book such as this can go a long way towards a return to historic Calvinism. We hope and pray that this may be so.

SERMONS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, by John Calvin; Edited and translated by Benjamin W. Farley; Baker Book House, 1980; 326 pp., \$12.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

A major effort is being put forth in the past few years to publish (often after decades and even centuries) Calvin's sermons which he preached while pastor in the Church of Geneva. We commend this effort wholeheartedly and urge all our readers to purchase and read these books of Calvin's sermons. They make some of the finest reading available.

The sermons on the ten commandments, a part

of a rather lengthy series on Deuteronomy, were preached in June and July of 1555. During that year Calvin saw the final downfall of the Libertines in Geneva, after a long and bitter struggle which lasted for the better part of a decade, and Calvin fought a battle in defense of the truth of sovereign predestination against heretics from Berne who attacked his doctrine. These issues which the Genevan Reformer faced are reflected in these sermons.

The sermons are a practical and homiletical development of the basic thoughts on the ten commandments which are set forth in Calvin's *Institutes*. They give flavor and spice to Calvin's treatment of the law in the *Institutes* and they show (along with Calvin's other sermons) that the great Reformer was, above all, a preacher of the Word of God. They give a dimension to Calvin which is not often known and they shew the peerless character of Calvin's ability as Geneva's pastor.

It would be well worth while for every minister to read these sermons in connection with his own preaching on the Decalogue, and it would be equally well for all who hear the preaching of the law to read these sermons as part of their spiritual preparation.

The price of the book is a real bargain in these days of high cost books.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING!!!

The annual meeting of the R.F.P.A. will be held on Thursday evening, at 8 P.M., September 17, 1981, at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Nominees for the board, (three to be chosen) are A. Dykstra, C. Kamps, W. Corson, G.E. Bylsma, C. Schimmel and H. Velthouse.

Our speaker for the evening will be Rev. William Bruinsma.

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND!!!

The Board of the R.F.P.A.
P. Koole, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

Rev. Joostens has declined the calls extended to him from Redlands, California and Lynden, Washington. You may remember that Lynden's call was for a missionary to the Monroe - Mt. Vernon area of Washington state. From a Loveland bulletin we have learned that Isabel, South Dakota has extended a call to the pastor of our Edmonton, Alberta, Canada congregation, Rev. Moore.

By the time our readers receive this issue of the *Standard Bearer*, all twelve (see if you can name them all) of our schools will again be in operation.

Since school is now fresh in our minds, maybe this would be a good time to relay some information concerning school-related activities that have come into my possession via bulletins, newsletters, and personal contact. The building projects of Hope School in Grand Rapids, Michigan and the South Holland, Illinois school are still in the planning stages. A South Holland newsletter expresses the hope that their planned addition can begin following a fall financial drive. The Hope School building project involves the building of a whole

new plant of ten classrooms in the Hudsonville, Michigan area. The actual erection of this facility, however, is to be done in three phases. At this time, Hope is looking for a September, 1982 opening for the first phase. A different kind of expansion project has taken place in Lynden, Washington: they have added a grade, the eleventh, to their educational program.

Often, school-related activities involve volunteer help from their constituents. Way back in January our Hope Christian School of Redlands requested "...all available men to come to school Saturday, January 31, at 9 A.M. for general maintenance work. The work includes planting of oleander bushes and painting." Adams Street Christian in Grand Rapids held an August 15 "fence painting day." And Hope Christian in Grand Rapids solicited volunteer help to work on a new ball diamond.

In the school recreational sphere we are informed by a Hull bulletin that, "The annual 4th of July picnic will be held this year in Edgerton at the Free Christian School. There will be games and activities for all ages. A canteen service will be provided. Proceeds from the canteen as well as a special offering will be divided equally among the Hull, Doon, and Edgerton schools."

The teachers of our Grand Rapids area schools had the opportunity to attend a summer seminar sponsored by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies. Under the able leadership of Prof. H. Hanko the teachers received instruction at eight evening sessions on the general topic of "Biblical Psychology."

Last but certainly not least concerning our schools: Prof. H. Hanko gave the address at the Convocation Services for our Seminary on September 2 at Southeast Church in Grand Rapids.

From across the Atlantic we have some additional school news of interest. Back in April we wrote about the Association for Christian Education in Ireland and asked for more information concerning that organization. In response to our request Rev. Tom Reid, treasurer of A.C.E.T. writes, in part: "The Association for Christian Education in Ireland grew out of the concern of several members of the

Reformed Presbyterian (Covenanter) Church of Ireland for reformed, parent-controlled education for their covenant children. The *Testimony* of that Church commits the denomination to the idea of such schools, but none exist at the present time. At the request of some members, the 1978 Synod of the Church set up a Sub-Committee on Christian Education to investigate the matter. After discussions lasting one year, the Sub-Committee recommended that the church itself not set up schools, but provide a framework in which such schools would become reality. After another year of work by a reconstituted Sub-Committee, the Association for Christian Education in Ireland was formed in Belfast in April, 1980, with eight charter members. It has since grown to 32 members, most of them found in the greater Belfast area, but others in northern County Antrim, Londonderry, and the Irish Republic. The Association holds public meetings throughout the north of the island, and finds gradually increasing interest stretching across denominational divides but generally involving people of evangelical and reformed theology." (Subscribers to *Perspectives in Covenant Education* are asked to excuse the above duplication of effort. Non-subscribers to that periodical might want to subscribe in order to find out what of Rev. Reid's letter was not included in this column. To subscribe send to: *Perspectives*, Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute, c/o Covenant Christian High School, 1401 Ferndale Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504.) We extend our thanks to Rev. Reid for sending us this information. Whether our schools are *realized* educational institutions or those only of anticipation, the words of Rev. Reid's final paragraph can be appreciated, I believe, by everyone concerned with Christian education: "The members of the Association have had to bear the reproach of many who believe they are fundamentalistic or impractical or both. Yet their hope is not in men but in the Lord of the covenant, who has entrusted them with the precious children of that covenant to nurture and instruct. Can they do anything less than provide a school where the instruction of church and family will be reinforced, and indeed, developed?" With what better commitment could we begin another school year?