

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...Mark here the unsearchable wisdom and grace of God! Precisely through their rejection of the Son of God in the flesh, God fulfills His eternal purpose of redemption!...

The very stone which the builders disallowed, became the Headstone of the corner. Of the cross of Christ, God prepared an altar.

See "Cast Out By His Own" — page 290

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THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Wayne Bekkering, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Richard Flikkema, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hando, Rev. John A. Heys, Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, Rev. Herman Veldman.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek
1313 Wilson Ave. S.W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

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Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506
PH: (616) 243-2953

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer
c/o OPC Bookshop
P.O. Box 2289
Christchurch, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION

Cast Out By His Own

Rev. M. Schipper

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." John 1:11

In this season of the year, when we reflect on the passion of Christ, we observe that among all the sufferings He endured there is none that is so pronounced as His utter rejection.

Always, according to the Scriptures, He is described as the contradicted, the rejected One. Isaiah, in his monumental passage on the suffering Servant, speaks of Him as "the despised and reject-

ed of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). The psalmist David prophetically depicts the passion of Christ with these words: "I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to mine acquaintance; they that did see me without fled from me" (Psalm 31:11). And again, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my

mother's children" (Psalm 69:8). The aged Simeon, addressing the mother of Jesus at the time of His presentation in the temple, declared: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:34). The writer to the Hebrews even considers it salutary for his readers to "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:3).

And the apostle John, already in the first chapter of his gospel from which our text is taken, speaks of this frightful rejection of Christ. Fact of the matter is that the apostle describes the coming of the Son of God into the world in terms of penetrating two circles, placed as it were in concentric relation to each other, in both of which He is rejected and cast out. Into the first and larger circle He came when He entered into the world. The apostle described Him in the context not only as the true Light that penetrates the world which lieth in darkness; but also as the Word of God, the Logos, Who was God, by Whom the cosmos of created things was made. And when He entered into that circle, according to verse ten, "the world knew Him not." This cannot possibly mean that somehow the world did not recognize or understand Him. Rather, it means that the world deliberately refused to acknowledge Him. Mind you, He came into the world of created things, of which He was the proper Possessor, being the Creator; and they who were of the darkness refused to acknowledge Him. Verily, He was cast out of His own world.

But the apostle does not stop there. He further describes the Son of God as penetrating still farther—into that inner circle. In the words of our text, he writes: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

In contemplating the sufferings of Christ, we wish now to concentrate our thoughts on Christ's entrance into that second circle, and observe how utterly therein He was rejected, and cast out by His own.

It cannot be denied, of course, that our text, in the light of the preceding context, would give good sense if it were interpreted to mean that He came into the world, and the world received Him not.

Was He not the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost? Was He not the Logos, the Word, by Whom the world was made? Was He not the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all that they contain? And as such, was He not the sole Proprietor of all things? And, according to the Scriptures, was He not the Person of the Son in human flesh, in Whom it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should

all the fulness dwell, and through Whom it was the divine purpose that all things should be gathered in one in Him? Had not the poet written: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possessions" (Psalm 2:7, 8)? Did not the writer to the Hebrews say of Him, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:2)?

Surely, in the light of the context, our text would give good sense if it were to be understood as referring to the coming of Christ into the world of His created things, with the expressed purpose to lay claim to His possessions; but that the world, as it lay under the dominion of darkness, received Him not. It would seem on the very surface that this explanation would appear quite indisputable.

Yet, there is, indeed, a deeper, a far richer meaning. The apostle in our text is not merely repeating himself. He is no longer speaking of that larger circle of the world in which Christ was not acknowledged. Rather, he is speaking now of that smaller circle within the larger circle. It is his intention to show how the rejection of Christ became progressively magnified. He penetrated deeper into the inner circles, where also He was utterly rejected.

The original text makes this quite evident. Our translation, as cited above, simply states: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." But the original text clearly differentiates. "His own," in the first part of the text, may properly be translated, "His own things"; while "His own" in the second part of the text may be properly translated, "His own people," or, "His own countrymen." And when you put it all together, you have: "He came unto His own things, and His own people received Him not." But what does this imply?

It means, first of all, that in the fulness of time Christ came unto the things which properly belonged to Him and His people.

These were the things that pertained particularly to the land of Canaan, the promised land. They were the things that resided in the institutions of the old covenant, and the theocracy. He came to the house of God with all its rites and ceremonies. He came to His own synagogue and temple, to His own sacrifices and offerings, to His own Sabbaths and feast-days. He came to His own kingdom and throne. He came to His own promised land and people.

All of this was His by divine right. He it was Who founded the house of God and its service, while Moses was only His agent. He it was Who had delivered His people from Egypt, the house of bondage. He led them out through the Red Sea. He

led them through the dry and thirsty wilderness. He fed them with manna as the Bread of Life. He gave them water from the rock of which He was the antetype, the Water of Life. He was the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, that directed and protected them. He it was Who instituted the old covenant at Sinai. He led them after forty years into the promised land where He established the throne of David, whose Son He was. He spoke to the people through the prophets and signs, through the priests and their sacrifices, through the kings who followed in David's line.

Verily, in the fullness of time He came in His incarnation, born of a virgin, of the seed of David, of the tribe of Judah, from whose hands the sceptre would not depart until He came to lay claim to it. He was the Shiloh unto Whom the gathering of the people would be. He came in His preaching and wonderful works. And when He declared that He was the one of Whom the prophets spoke; when He cleansed the temple, and showed how He was the One Who realized all that the temple signified; when He pointed to Himself as the end of all the sacrifices; when He brought an end to the priesthood of Aaron, and set up an eternal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek; when all the shadows ceased because He was the reality to Whom they pointed—then He came unto His own things. They were His property by divine dispensation, to which He could indisputably lay claim. Being One with the Father, He could rightfully say as He did in Deuteronomy 32:9, "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

But when He came unto His own things, His own people, His fellow-countrymen received Him not.

Cast out was He by His own people in Israel!

Israel was indeed His own people. Not only because He was of their flesh and blood. O, that He was too; there could be no mistake about it. He was not born of the heathen, nor could He be; but He took on Him of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of David. Indeed, He was like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted.

But in a deeper sense they were the sheep of His own fold. They were the church of the old covenant, the people of God. They were Israelites to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the prophets, etc. (Romans 9:4, 5). Moreover, they were the people that were looking for Him, and of all the people would be expected to receive Him.

But they cast Him out of His own house!

This they had always done when He came to them through the prophets of old. But when He

came to them in the flesh, and they recognized Him, they said: "This is the heir, come, let us kill Him, and seize upon His inheritance" (Matt. 21:38). They cast Him out of His own synagogue, and would push Him off a cliff (Luke 4:16ff.). Often they took up stones to kill Him, but His hour had not yet come. But when His hour did come, they took Him to their court, where under oath He had declared that He was the Christ; and they cried out for His death. For what they considered blasphemy, they decided He was worthy to die. With the help of the world of darkness (Pilate), they led Him out of Jerusalem to the hill of the skull. They excommunicated Him, and put Him to death on the cross.

Why did they refuse to receive Him?

How could they possibly cast Him out?

Would it not be expected that He should be accepted by His fellow-citizens with open arms?

The answer to these questions is bound up, first of all, in the fact that "not all is Israel which is called Israel" (Romans 9:6). Always the line of election and reprobation cuts through the church, in accord with the counsel of God. Always the spiritual seed runs parallel with the carnal element. The former often are small and few in number; while the latter grows as the grass in power.

And, in the second place, the answer must be found in the fact that the carnal seed always desires a carnal, earthly messiah. They desired an earthly kingdom, with an earthly king, who would protect them from the heathen, and provide bread for their earthly stomachs. When, on the other hand, they realized that Christ would fulfill neither of these prerogatives, and in Christ's kingdom they would be exposed as naked and miserable, unrighteous citizens, they refused to receive Him.

They cast Him out of His own things, from His own house!

While they continued to be as He had always castigated them—a den of robbers and thieves!

But marvel of marvels, beloved!

Mark here the unsearchable wisdom and grace of God! Precisely through their rejection of the Son of God in the flesh, God fulfills His eternal purpose of redemption!

Of this mystery, the apostle Peter speaks on the Day of Pentecost with these words: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by

wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22, 23).

The very stone which the builders disallowed, became the Headstone of the corner. Of the cross of Christ, God prepared an altar. The blood they shed becomes the blood of atonement. Through their casting Him out, Christ actually comes unto His own—the great Redeemer of His people!

The apostle John was also aware of this wonder. For in the very next verse in our chapter he writes: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them

that believe on His name" (John 1:12).

Indeed, He is the Redeemer of all whom the Father had given unto Him, not only of Israel, but of all nations!

O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

Of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, be the glory!

World without end!

Amen!

EDITORIAL

A Fly in the Ointment?

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Thus far the *Standard Bearer* has not commented editorially on the movement—chiefly in Christian Reformed circles—to establish the Mid-America Reformed Seminary in northwest Iowa. From a formal, church political viewpoint this is largely an in-house affair for the Christian Reformed denomination; and if that denomination wants to tolerate a so-called alternative seminary, that is their affair. Personally, I do not believe that the establishment and operation of a seminary of any kind is the proper work of an association, no matter how homogeneous such an association may be. I have always believed that the work of a seminary is a phase and an extension of the work of the preaching of the Word, and that as such it is the work of the church institute, not of a society. Nor can appeal be properly made in this connection to the example of the Free University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. It is true, of course, that an arrangement was made between the Dutch churches (GKN) and the Free University whereby graduates of the latter could become candidates for the ministry; nevertheless, this was not and is not the primary purpose of the Theological Faculty of the Free. It is designed to teach Theology as a science and to grant degrees therein, just as are the various other faculties in the university, such as Law, Philosophy, or Medicine. Besides, of course, over the years—putting aside the issue of how effective they have been—there have always been supervising deputies of the General Synod of the GKN to exercise oversight over the Theological Faculty of the Free to the extent that it served as a source of

candidates. So that relationship is different. Nevertheless, the Christian Reformed Church in the past has always accepted graduates from other seminaries (Westminster, for example), provided they did their so-called year of penance at Calvin Seminary before they became candidates. From that point of view, the new Mid-America Reformed Seminary could, I suppose, be granted the same status.

Nor do I believe that the establishment of an alternative seminary is the proper and honorable way to follow. After all, the underlying motivation for this movement is dissatisfaction with the denomination's official seminary. Why, if there is such dissatisfaction and doubt concerning the orthodoxy of Calvin Seminary, do not these loyal Christian Reformed men make an issue of it and demand that there be an official investigation conducted, and, that if the outcome of said investigation reveals heretical teachings, there be a purge? An example might be that of the investigation which was instituted in 1920-'22 into the instruction of Dr. Ralph Janssen, which led to his deposition because of his erroneous views concerning the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. Merely to establish an alternative seminary will not prove to be a solution to the alleged problem; and I predict it will not even serve ultimately to preserve a kind of island, or enclave, of orthodoxy in the Christian Reformed denomination.

The *Standard Bearer*, therefore, cannot laud this movement.

But even worse, in our opinion there is already a fly in the ointment.

Recently there came to my attention a copy of the proposed Catalogue of the new Mid-America Reformed Seminary. And in it one of the professors-elect is Dr. David W. van Gelder, a graduate of Calvin Seminary and currently at Erskine Theological Seminary. Along with this Catalogue, I received a paper written by Dr. van Gelder, entitled "The Judgment On Women (an analysis of Genesis 3:16)." As the title suggests, the paper is concerned with the meaning of the judgment pronounced upon the woman in Genesis 3:16, "Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." The paper deals especially with the last part of the verse quoted, and especially with the expression, "and thy desire shall be to thy husband."

Now my concern in this editorial is not with Dr. van Gelder's interpretation of that expression as such, although I would not agree with it.

My concern is rather with his view of this entire passage. Vs. 16 is part of the entire passage in Genesis 3 which records the judgments pronounced by the Lord after the fall of Adam and Eve. Permit me to quote vss. 14-19: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Now what is Dr. van Gelder's view of this passage?

According to him it is a *poem*!

He writes as follows on page 3 of his paper:

The immediate context of verse 16 is the *poem* which covers verses 14-19. (*italics added*) Here God pronounces His judgment upon the serpent (14-15),

the woman (16), and the man (17-19). What is the judgment upon the serpent? It no longer will be able to occupy a place of esteem—it will be lowered to crawl on its belly and eat dust. The serpent, which is Satan (Revelation 20:2) is fallen and condemned to a losing *conflict* with the seed of the woman. It is *conflict* that will result in defeat for Satan only by the instrumentality of a Redeemer. The judgment of the serpent is, then, both a lowering of status and power and a resulting conflict in which loss is certain. It is a conflict with God (through Jesus Christ) in Whom the serpent originally found its being.

Dr. van Gelder then proceeds to deal at length with vs. 16 and its meaning, but all on the basis that this passage is a *poem*. And he enters into an elaborate treatment of the alleged *parallelism* in this passage, all on the basis, of course, that parallelism is the chief feature of Hebrew poetry.

Now my concern is not with Dr. van Gelder's exegesis of vs. 16 as such. Nor is my quarrel with his understanding of Hebrew poetry and its chief feature, parallelism. At this stage it is not even with his understanding of vss. 14-19 generally; he seems to have a fairly orthodox understanding of the passage.

My concern is about the idea that this is a *poem*, rather than a literal, historical account, or narrative.

Limiting ourselves to this immediate passage, vss. 14-19, for the time being, we may point out that there are only two possibilities here, neither of which is acceptable:

1) Either this is poetry in which the words of the Lord God are literally recorded, and then you obtain the absurd conclusion that the Lord God pronounced stern judgments in *poems*. I say that this is an *absurd* conclusion. What earthly judge actually pronounces judgments in poetry? How much less the Lord God!

2) Or this is poetry in which we do not have a literal account of real words of the real Lord God speaking in real speech which was "sensually perceptible" (to use the expression of Assen, 1926 in the Geelkerken Case) to the real serpent and real Eve and real Adam, who had real ears to hear these real words. Then there is only a poetic, literary, account here—something which opens the door to all kinds of possibilities of interpretation. Then Dr. van Gelder may have a fairly orthodox interpretation of Genesis 3, but the door is nevertheless opened to all kinds of unorthodox interpretations.

But there are other problems.

If vss. 14-19 are a poem, what objection is there to explaining vss. 1-13 (the account of the fall itself) as a poem? And what objection is there to interpreting the remainder of Genesis 3 as a poem. And if Genesis 3, why not Genesis 2 and Genesis 1? And

why not forward into Genesis 4 and following chapters?

And what becomes, then, of the whole position that in the first chapters of Genesis we have a literal historical narrative of real events and real persons?

To my mind, the Mid-America Reformed Seminary already has a fly in its ointment, a fly

which will "make the ointment of the apothecary to stink."

The ironic aspect of all this is that it is precisely this matter of the interpretation of the first part of Genesis which has been the occasion of criticism of and dissatisfaction with Calvin Seminary and in connection with the rejection of the candidacy of a Mr. Libolt.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

April 1, 1982

Dear Timothy,

In my last letter to you, I began a discussion of the work of the ministry and the central importance of preaching. More particularly, I discussed the relation between the work of the preaching on the Lord's Day and the pastoral labors of a minister, and suggested the possibility that it was possible for pastoral work to take so much of a minister's time that inadequate time was left for sermon preparation.

I do not want to be misunderstood at this point. There is no doubt about it that pastoral work is also a part of the preaching of the Word. Paul speaks of the fact that, while in Ephesus, he preached the Word from house to house; and that certainly includes what we today call the pastoral ministry of the Church. God's Word must be brought to the people of God in their many needs as the minister is shepherd of the sheep. But it remains a fact that central to his work is the preaching of the Word on the Lord's Day. That is first and foremost his calling. And to be a good preacher requires that he spend a great deal of time in his study working on his sermons.

This point was driven home to me this past week by a book I was reading entitled, *"Toward An Exegetical Theology"*. The book is written by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and is published by Baker Book House. I recommend the book to you. It is well worth reading. In it he speaks at great length of the calling of the minister to be a good preacher and argues in great detail for the need of sound exegetical work to make good sermons. He even states that a minister should figure on a minimum of about 20 hours of work for a sermon. I do not think that a minister in our Churches who has to prepare at least two sermons a week and who has much other work can

possibly spend 40 hours a week on sermon preparation; but it gives you some idea of the importance he gives to work in the study. In a very interesting quote he writes:

Facility with grammatical and syntactical structures requires more than rote memorization or even the ability to locate the discussions of these items in grammars and handbooks. Eduard Haller (another author to whom Kaiser refers in this section, H.H.) referred to the "faculty of discernment," the ability of lovingly staying with each sentence until we can discern the finer points of its style, structure, beauty, and the special nuance of meaning the author had in mind. Haste, superficiality, and an unreceptive heart and mind are dangerous enemies to sound exegesis, warns Haller. They can be even more detrimental to a sound exegesis than can a lack of linguistic facility—and that is bad enough!

Haller also urges the aspiring exegete to have a patient persistence, a disciplined mind and methodology, a confidence motivated by a personal faith and born of a hunger to experience firsthand the transforming impact of what is discovered in the text. Rewarding results will come only if the search is sustained by an enthusiastic joy of discovery through the long hours of hard and patient work. And in all, it must be tempered by the experience of prayer and suffering, cautions Haller. The exegetical route is not easy; it requires a lot of work, but in the end it is just as rewarding as it is awesome in its initial demands.

How does one get the necessary time to do that kind of work?

It is not easy. One must simply make that kind of time. It does not come of itself. With all the responsibilities which come upon a minister, the time available for sermon preparation gets smaller and smaller—unless a conscious and deliberate effort is made to change all this. Nor can a minister always do this himself; he needs the help and cooperation of his elders. Else it would be impossible.

But our immediate concern is the press of pastoral work. There are a few remarks that need to be made in this connection.

In the first place, the people in the congregation need to learn that their pastor cannot be troubled with problems which ought not really to be brought to him. I am reminded of what Jesus told a certain man who pressed Jesus to solve a problem he faced. You will recall that Jesus was preaching in Perea when His sermon was suddenly interrupted by a man who asked: "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." Jesus' answer to that man was: "Man who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:12, 13).

There are two aspects to this matter. On the one hand, there are certain problems which are brought to the minister's attention which are not of a kind with which he can deal. I suppose that one such example (admittedly rather farfetched) is people who ask their pastor for medical advice: what doctor to see; whether to go to Mayo Clinic; whether to take a prescribed medicine; whether to proceed with a certain operation. To such questions a minister ought to say: "Man, who made me a doctor over you?" On the other hand, there are problems which God's people ought to be able to solve on their own—if only they are sufficiently mature spiritually. And if they are not, then a minister ought to tell them to grow up and attain such a spiritual maturity that they can do these things. After all, all God's people are prophets, and they need not that any should teach them, saying, Know the Lord.

But there are also many problems in the congregation for which the people of God need the help of those whom Christ has put in the Church to bring the Word to them in their need. James specifically speaks of this in James 5:13-15: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

While some of this work ought surely to be done by the pastor, nevertheless it seems to me that part of the solution to our problem lies in the fact that much of it can and ought to be done by the elders in the Church. This is also the clear testimony of Scripture as is evident from the passage which we cited above; and this is, in fact, done when a congregation is without a pastor of its own. There are several obvious advantages to this, not the least of which is that this will free the minister for much needed time in his study. But it has also been my

experience that oftentimes elders in the Church can do this work as well as, and in some instances better than, the pastor. After all, the elders are usually members of a congregation much longer than the pastor. They know the congregation much more completely and intimately than a pastor ever can. They know the people, know their needs, know their problems, know and understand the congregation well. And the work which needs to be done can be done by them with greater knowledge of the problems than a pastor who works in a congregation for a few short years and then takes up his field of labor elsewhere.

There are, I suppose, objections. But none of them seem to be insurmountable. Let us look at a few of them.

There is the objection that ministers are trained for this work while elders are not. While it is true that ministers receive some instruction in these matters from the Seminary, nevertheless the material is available to all. And, more importantly, the calling is always to bring the Word of God. This elders can do also.

There is the objection that oftentimes the people themselves prefer to have their pastor rather than an elder. I do not know if this is, in fact true; but it ought not really be that way. Elders are appointed by Christ as well as ministers are, and the Word of God which they bring must be the authoritative Word to the flock as much as the Word which ministers bring.

There is the objection that elders are too busy, for they must work all day and their evenings are limited. There is a certain validity to this objection; I cannot deny it. Especially in a larger congregation the elders are very busy and have little time home with their families. But I do know too that many of our congregations have had elders serving who are retired from their daily occupations and who have served almost full time in this sort of work. I would guess that many, if not most, congregations have elders available of such a kind, and Consistories ought to take this into account when nominations are made. It might even be well to consider keeping such men as elders, not only for one term, but for as long as the Lord gives them strength to do the work.

It has also been argued that not all elders are equally capable of doing this kind of work. Of that there can be no doubt. This is true of ministers too. But Consistories ought to consider these matters also when making nominations and when assigning work to various elders. It ought not be an embarrassment when a Consistory recognizes that some of their elders are more gifted for pastoral work than others.

The whole point is that also pastoral work begins on the pulpit. It is inconceivable that a minister who works hard at his sermons to bring the full counsel of God from the pulpit will not also do good pastoral work. Effective pastoral work in the flock begins with the pulpit. There is the heart of the preaching, the central means of grace. All the grace of the Word brought to God's people, even in pastoral calls, begins with a strong pulpit. If a minister, because of pastoral demands, neglects sermon making, his pastoral work will founder.

The strength of our Churches has always been the strength of our pulpits. Let us labor with might and with main to keep our pulpits strong. The Son of God is still pleased to gather, defend, and preserve His Church through the preaching of the Word. That begins in the study where the faithful minister of the Word wrestles with that Word to bring it in all its power to God's people.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

ALL AROUND US

Creation on Trial

Rev. G. Van Baren

Anyone who keeps up with the news, must have heard in the past months of a strange court trial which took place at Little Rock, Arkansas. It was a trial which pitted evolution against what was called "creation science." The legislature of Arkansas has passed a law requiring the teaching of "creation science" whenever evolution was presented. Concerning the law, *Discover*, a secular science magazine, Feb. 1982, states:

If evolution was taught in any school, the law decreed, "balanced treatment" had to be given to "creation science" as well. The law specifically prohibited "religious instruction or references to religious writings." That provision, however, seemed to mean little in the light of the law's nettlesome Section 4, which becomes the focus of the ACLU complaint and of the trial.

Section 4 rashly attempted to define "creation science" to include "Sudden creation of the universe, energy, and life from nothing; ...changes only within fixed limits of originally created kinds of plants and animals; separate ancestry for man and apes; explanation of the earth's geology by catastrophism, including the occurrence of a worldwide flood; and a relatively recent inception of the earth and living kinds." In passing, it took a swipe at evolutionary theory by criticizing "the insufficiency of mutation and natural selection in bringing about development of all living kinds from a single organism," a deficiency that evolutionists themselves have long since addressed. One candid state witness, theologian Norman Geisler, of the Dallas Theological Seminary, declared, "I think in all honesty that the people who devised this [law] got their model from the Book of Genesis."

In the trial, the attorney general, Steve Clark,

made use of six lawyers—but the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) had some 20 lawyers. So it turned out to be an interesting confrontation. The ACLU lawyers sought not so much to discuss scientific arguments for creation, but rather attempted to gain their point by discrediting the creationist witnesses. From *Discover*, we note:

Even before the teachers' testimony, the ACLU lawyers had mapped out their strategy of attack against state witnesses. Anthony Siano talked at one point of "short crosses"—quick cross-examinations to discredit the witnesses, without any long discussions of their scientific arguments. That was the strategy employed, and Siano was the first to use it.

The first witness for the state, theologian Norman Geisler, argued that the concept of a creator was not necessarily a religious one. It was commitment that characterized religion, said Geisler, and without that commitment a supernatural being was not necessarily a religious concept. Aristotle postulated a first cause, an unmoved mover, noted Geisler, "but Aristotle didn't worship this cause." Similarly, Geisler added, Satan believes that God exists but by no means worships Him.

Siano pounced on the Satan reference, pressing Geisler to recall any personal experience that confirmed his belief in the Devil. Geisler finally admitted that in his pre-trial deposition he had spoken of "dealing with demon-possessed people and the study of UFO phenomena." Pushed further, Geisler declared, "I believe UFOs exist." He explained that "they are a satanic manifestation in this world for the purposes of deception." Siano: "No further questions."

One notes too in this trial that many of the wit-

nesses on the side of the ACLU were of various churches—including George Marsden of Calvin College who is reported to have stated, as he likened the creationists' zeal with 19th century fundamentalists, "Literal defense of the Bible is the first defense against modern thought." From the article, one concludes that Marsden disagrees with the "literal defense of the Bible." It is a sad day when such kind of support is given by a man of the Reformed community: for it gives further occasion for the world to mock with the church and its confession concerning Scripture.

Marsden makes further comments on the trial in the *Reformed Journal*, Jan. 1982:

...One of the striking characteristics of fundamentalists is that while they may well attack real problems in our society, they typically reduce the choices involved to simply two. "Choose ye this day," they cry, whether we be on the Lord's side or Satan's. The Lord's side is often defined by a literal interpretation of Scripture; Satan's side is everything else. So, for instance, Henry Morris, founder of the Institute for Creation Research, says that the philosophy of evolution was "really the foundation of the very rebellion of Satan himself." Theistic evolution and other compromises are allowed no place in such thinking. While not mentioning God or Satan, the Arkansas law reflects such dichotomized thinking. Whenever naturalistic evolution is taught in public schools, it must be balanced by instruction, textbooks, and library resources teaching creation-science. Creation-science is defined to include "a relatively recent inception of the earth and living kinds" and an "explanation of the earth's geology by catastrophism, including the occurrence of a worldwide flood." Virtually the only views and publications fitting this definition are those of the Institute for Creation Research and related agencies which teach that creation occurred in six twenty-four hour days, that the earth is about 10,000 years old, and that the geological evidence is explained by the Genesis flood.

Marsden concludes that the solution to many problems "could be found in public support for alternative educational systems, such as Christian schools...."

It is sad to hear a man of Marsden's position and ability mocking the position of "fundamentalists" in stating that "the Lord's side is often defined by a literal interpretation of Scripture; Satan's side is everything else." He is combatting the Arkansas law for improper reasons—unreformed reasons.

Others report the decision of the Arkansas court with severe denunciations. The *Presbyterian Journal*, Feb. 17, 1982, quotes approvingly in an editorial from columnist William F. Willoughby:

"Judge Overton, let me ask you: Why is it that simply because creation-science proponents (real live scientists, some on major faculties) arrive at precisely

the same conclusions that the Bible does on the origin of the universe and of life, you have the right to accuse them of trying surreptitiously to slip the Bible and not science into the classroom?

"And Judge Overton, since when is atheism the official religion of this country? I thought no religion was to be favored over the other. Yet, by your own reasoning, it appears that if it's atheistic it's on the side of the gods.

"...There is mischief that is made of the Judge's interpretation of the Constitution. It isn't our religious freedom that is at question here, it's our academic freedom. Archbishop Iakovos is absolutely right that what it amounts to is a form of censorship—not about something that might be morally reprehensible and not good for society, but at the level of academia itself. Someone else is determining for us that we can't even discuss one hypothesis in a school classroom simply because the Bible isn't written in the jargon of the atheist or agnostic. Medievalism is back upon us...."

Far more than all the above, I appreciated the editor's comments in *Covenanter Witness*, Feb. 1982. The editor expressed hesitation about stating his opinion that the Arkansas law was wrong—though for reasons far different from those given by the judge in the case. His reasons are important:

...First of all, the law would have required teachers to teach a portion of God's Word in the context of the science curriculum. I do not believe that God intended for His Word to be dissected, divided into parts and analysed in order to "prove" that what He said to be true was indeed true. God's Word is a whole unit. And God's Word from beginning to end points to His Son, Jesus Christ, and shows the way of salvation through Jesus. The Genesis account of creation plays a fundamental role in pointing to Christ as Creator and eventual Redeemer of a yet-to-be-fallen creation. To strip away this glorious doctrine and teach the remaining skeleton in a junior high school science class is inconceivable.

...The law also places the Genesis account of creation on an equal footing in the classroom with the theory of evolution. Now, of course, Christians believe creation is true and evolution is false. But, even the Christian teacher has no freedom in his or her classroom to instruct the students as to the truth of the matter. Both God's Word and Darwin's Theory would be taught side-by-side. The individual student would be left to make up his own mind....

One could, of course, strongly deplore the ruling of the Arkansas judge who would so emphatically condemn what was called "creation-science" while insisting that evolution is "science." In upholding evolution as the sole "scientific" possibility, the judge continues in the footsteps of so many of the educated men. His "science" is based obviously and first on a "uniformitarian" principle—that is, that all things always remain constant. That itself can not be scientifically proven. It ignores too the

testimony of Scripture which speaks of the flood, the fall, and creation—all of which point to the error of "uniformitarianism."

It is of interest in this connection to observe that the evolutionist himself is having trouble with some elements of the theory (it is *not* an established scientific *fact*): "...Mutation and natural selection are insufficient to account for evolution—is hardly at issue. Evolutionists already admit that objection, since other processes, like recombination of genetic material, are also necessary."

One also could object that man should arbitrarily rule out of public school education all Scriptural truth. The judge wants to rule out religion based on Scripture—but allows religion based on humanism and atheism. Such is the mark of the rebellious sinner.

Yet, if I properly understand the law in Arkansas, we too must object to it. First, it places light and darkness side by side. It is nothing less than compromise, so strongly condemned by Scripture, when evolution and creation are presented as alternative possibilities for the origin of the universe. The Christian must rather insist that there is but one possibility with respect to origins: that is creationism. One can not, while maintaining Scripture, allow even for the possibility of evolution.

Secondly, as the editor of the *Covenanter Witness* pointed out, to isolate the idea of creation from the rest of Scripture is to separate it from the cross. No Christian can possibly condone that sort of thing. Scripture is a whole and, says Jesus, can not be broken.

Thirdly, the Arkansas law evidently ignores the Scriptural truth that creation itself can be understood and confessed only by faith (Heb. 11:3). Though there might indeed be evidences which could be pointed out showing a young earth and universal flood, basically only faith holds to the

Scriptural creation account.

Fourthly, the law implies that school children can make a choice between alternative views. Scripture does not allow for that either. Children are to be taught the correct view and reminded that only to this can they hold.

Fifthly, the law required that teachers are to present impartially the two contradictory views. That is surely impossible. An evolutionist will assuredly present creationism in an absurd way and will indicate in his very presentation his scorn for the view. An impartial presentation is hypocritical and ultimately impossible. I surely would not want my children taught a view of creation by an evolutionist.

Finally, it seems to me that this law would place the Christian schools in great jeopardy. If the law demanded equal time for both views in public schools, it must inevitably demand that also within Christian schools. The law must then insist not simply that Christian school children be taught the idea and error of evolution (as they already are), but that the view be presented fairly, without prejudice, without condemnation. There too, the children would be the ones called upon to choose for themselves which view they would prefer. And that, we could never approve.

The Christian must face reality. There is no way in which Scripture can be imposed by law upon the world. They will not have it. Nor will they teach according to its principles. The wicked reject the word of God and teach rather the philosophies of man. For that very reason the Christian can not have his children instructed in such schools. The only alternative open to us is that we, parents, see to the instruction of our own children. Christian schools alone can present the truth concerning origins—and the reason for the existence of all things: the glory of God in Christ. We must work hard and sacrifice much in seeking that goal!

FROM HOLY WRIT

The So-called Proof-texts of Postmillennialism

Rev. G. Lubbers

Chapter XIII

Perfect Peach Among The Nations

In this our final chapter in this series of articles on Postmillennialism, we call attention once more

to the word of prophecy found in Isaiah 2:1-5 and Micah 4:1-5. In these verses the Holy Spirit teaches us the mystery of the Kingdom through the prophets of old (Heb. 1:1, 2).

It is our settled conviction that Postmillennialism reads its own interpretation into these prophets and does violence to the clear teaching of the Bible in many, many passages of Scripture. They interpret these passages as referring to the "golden" age of the "Messianic Kingdom" which will be attained under the preaching of the Word, as they conceive of it as being the "Gospel." When we read that "war shall have ceased" in the earth, this means that the total fulfillment of this shall be in the "golden era" of the Postmillennial Kingdom. All will be Christ's kingdom, conquered by the Gospel under "Law." As one Postmillennialist writer states it, and we quote,

"Postmillennialism believes that man must be saved, and that his regeneration is the starting-point for a mandate to exercise dominion in Christ's name over every area of life and thought. Postmillennialism ... does not neglect to work for a Christian State and school, for sovereignty and the crown rights of the King over individuals, family, institutions, arts, sciences and all things else. It holds that God has provided the way of conquest in His law. Every word that God speaks in His law; it is binding on man. Grace, love, law are really contraries in the pagan view; in God they serve a common purpose, to further His kingdom and His glory." (Pages 122-127 of Vol. III, No. 2 of the *Journal Of Reconstruction*. Here Dr. R.J. Rushdoony writes under the caption of "Postmillennialism versus Impotent Religion.")

The basic thesis of Rushdoony is that both A-Millennialism and Pre-Millennialism foster an impotent religion, which is not able to lay the entire world at Jesus' feet. A-millennialism really is a position which does not allow the man, the rider on the white horse, to conquer and to conquer, until there is a perfect world. Now the fact is that this is an untrue allegation. It is only the judgment of one who sees all things through the spectacles of Postmillennialistic prejudice, and assumes that only the view of their Millennialism squares with the teaching of the prophetic word, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. The A-Millennialist does not help to work for the "golden" era of the realization of the Messianic Kingdom, which shall be prior to the final return of Christ.

The question is not determinative whether Rushdoony's analysis is correct on the basis of his pre-suppositions and teaching, but rather whether his entire view of world-history agrees with the teaching of all the Scriptures: Moses, Psalms, and all the Prophets. We might be tempted to take rather elaborate issue with the bold statement that "every

word that God speaks is law: it is binding on man." We shall not go far afield to refute this thesis. We only desire to have the reader notice that the Bible ever clearly distinguishes between the concepts "law" and "gospel" and such concepts as "law" and "grace." In the former we are then dealing with a "law-principle" and in the latter with a "grace-principle." It is true: faith and grace do not set the law aside, but they most emphatically *establish the law*! (Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17; Rom. 6:14.) If there had been a law given which could make alive a dead sinner, then righteousness could be out of law (Gal. 3:21). When God saves His own elect out of every tongue, tribe, people, and nation, He writes His law in their hearts as His Covenant Words. Such is the New Covenant which He will make in the latter days according to Jeremiah 31:31-34, and Hebrews 8:8-12.

This grace-principle is a far-cry from the "law" concept set forth as the principle of Postmillennialism by Rushdoony. Here the matter is not simply a "law" in the Constitution, the ordinances of human institution and civic by-laws, but it refers to the divine and gracious and omnipotent putting of the law in the hearts of the elect children of God, whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life (II Cor. 3:3). And the glory of this writing of the law is that it is not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. What a glory of grace this is! It is a glory which outshines the glory of all the law-giving of Moses; it is as when the moon fades and pales in the heavens before the rising sun. Of this is what the prophets speak in both Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 when they say "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." Gazing by faith into this mirror we are changed from glory unto glory as by the Spirit of the LORD Jesus (I Cor. 3:17, 18).

Such is the grace-principle in the elect children of God, who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, even as they were elected in him and foreordained unto the adoption of sons. Now this is not an "impotent religion" at all! It is that which is ours by means of the exceeding great power of God, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand far above all principality and powers and might, and every name in this world and in the world to come (Eph. 1:20-23).

Now if one will put off his Postmillennial glasses, and put aside his philosophical jargon and abstractions, will become willing to interpret the Scriptures according to sound rules of exegesis and Biblical Hermeneutics, he will see the glory road of grace, as this was seen by all the prophets of God in the Old Testament. Did these not inquire after and search out diligently the sufferings to come upon

Christ and the glory to follow? And this glory "to follow" refers, according to the entire context in I Peter 1, to the great event in the last day, to the revelation of Jesus Christ in the last day (I Peter 1:5, 13). And such a blessed, living hope is the religion not of weakness, but of power; a religion which keeps its sights straight and keeps the course.

A careful study of Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3 will prove that the text speaks prophetically of what the risen and glorified Christ will do from out of Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. And the word which goes forth from Jerusalem is not the same as the law going forth from Mt. Sinai with its terrifying glory. Rather this is the power of the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation with its justifying power and message, as well as its message of the calling for sanctification in those created in Christ Jesus unto good works, before prepared that they might walk in them (Rom. 1:16, 17). Of such a Gospel no preacher need be ashamed; it will perform all that unto which it was sent (Isaiah 55:9-11).

We must not be deceived into thinking that a law-principle "gospel" is gospel at all. Such a gospel could never "rebuke" the nations *into* the new obedience of faith, where the law becomes the rule of life of faith in Christ Jesus. For the law is the "strength of sin." It only genders to bondage. Such are the principles of all "impotent religions" built upon weak and beggarly principles of law (Gal. 4:9; Col. 2:20). But in Isaiah 2:4 we are dealing with a word which is so strong and saving that it brings to radical repentance and conversion, and to newness of life. It causes men and women to "unlearn war," that is, all enmity and hatred, jealousy and envy, and to learn the truth in Christ, to put off the old man of sin with its lusts, and to put on the new man, created after the image of God in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Eph. 4:17-24). Hence, they walk in newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6).

What is pictorially stated in the text, in figures of speech derived from the pastoral scenes? In beautiful idyllic language the texts speak of a people who are so peace-loving, that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks." And thus it shall be *universally* on the earth. For the text adds "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Beautiful prospect indeed as portrayed by the prophetic seer.

In all the world of the nations this has not yet been seen anywhere at any time in the history of the New Testament Dispensation. And this "peace on earth" is not practiced by the nations at all. It is not practiced in their personal, family, community and state and national life. There is no fear of God be-

fore their eyes. There is none that seeketh out God. If the condition among the nations were thus, outside of the church of God, we would not have news for our newspapers, magazines, radio, and television; there would be no headlines in the paper. Think what a different world it would be if the "mandate" of God to subdue the world in the fear of God would succeed here in this present age as preached from the housetops by the Postmillennial dreams!

What the prophets here foretell began principally in Pentecost when the Spirit was shed forth in the church, and the promise came to "you and to your children, and all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:37-38). And thus these became a peaceful people by the Spirit of the God of all peace in Christ. And so the church receives grace and peace from God, and she receives Christ's peace in a far different way than the world can give (John 14:27). It is to be placed in a new legal and spiritual relation to God (Rom. 5:1). And when we are admonished to peace and walk therein, we are walking in the Son to Whom all things are subjected. And thus the kingdom of heaven is ours; we are then the blessed peacemakers, who will be called publicly before men and angels, to be the children of God (Matt. 5:9).

But in this world there will ever be war. No amount of preaching the kingdom and its righteousness will change the wicked world. But the idyllic scenes of the prophets shall be fulfilled when the "house of Jacob" shall "walk in the light of the Lord." Perfectly walking as children of light in distinction from the children of darkness, the church shall walk in the perfection of heaven. That will be in the heavenly Jerusalem and Zion, which is exalted above the mountains. Here the church shall dwell safely in perfect peace. No more war in that future glory shall ever be experienced. Jerusalem shall perfectly have risen, and shall never more be a lodge in a cucumber patch, a small hut in a vineyard in shame of sin and guilt. There shall be the city of God's love of whom God in His great love and compassion says, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. *And all thy people shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy people*" (Isaiah 54:11-13).

*Take time to read
The Standard Bearer*

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

The Vile Sin of Homosexuality (3)

Rev. David Engelsma

The sin of homosexuality is vile. The punishment of it is severe. The cause is dreadful: God's giving up of men and women to the sin. Three times does the apostle speak of this "giving up" in Romans 1:18-32 as the cause of homosexual sin in the society of ungodly and unrighteous men who are holding the truth in unrighteousness. He writes in verse 24: "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." In verse 26, we have: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections...." And we read in verse 28: "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." Homosexuality in society is not simply the natural development in wickedness by men estranged from God. This would be bad enough. But it is a depth of evil that is reached under the active power of a vengeful God. This is worse.

The Divine giving up is more than God's permitting wicked men and women to debase themselves so. There is a definite decision of God with respect to them that they will become thus vile; and there is a definite operation of God's power within them and upon them, effecting their practising this iniquity. It is not the case that God makes good men bad. It is not the case either that God puts into the hearts and lives of bad men a particular corruption that was otherwise foreign to them. The uncleanness, the vile affections, and the reprobate mind to which God gives them up are their own. The lusts that now are inflamed are those of their own hearts. But this extreme manifestation of the extent of their depravity is due to the awful action of God's giving up. Men and women would otherwise not behave themselves this way. This is not because the tendency is not present in sinful human nature, but because the sin is unnatural—"against nature" (v. 26). Also, the sinner's selfish self-respect would restrain him from shaming himself with this vileness. Besides, society's self-interests demand that homosexuality be pitilessly opposed, which our nation has been learning by horrible experience, since it will not learn from the Word.

This was the reason for homosexuality in the inglorious cultures of Greece and Rome, where it

abounded. As Paul was writing Romans 1, he had Greece and Rome specifically in mind.

This is the reason for the astonishing prevalence of the sin in Western society today. God is giving apostate Europeans and Americans up to this sin. Included in this Divine work is all the promotion of the evil by the media; the defense of it by the wise of this world; and the acceptance of it by the public. A special agent of the Divine giving up is the apostate Christian Church which approves homosexuality in the Name of God. As once the Lord sent a lying spirit into the mouth of the false prophets in Israel, in order to persuade Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead (I Kings 22:19-23), so today does God put a lying spirit in the mouth of preachers and synods, in order that ungodly men and women may dishonor their own bodies between themselves.

Homosexuality is punishment. It is not only itself sin; but it is also punishment for sin. God punishes sin with sin. The sin for which homosexuality is punishment is men's refusal to glorify God, which refusal is expressed in their rejection of the truth. A sin of the spirit in man is punished by God with a gross sin of the flesh.

God gave men and women up to these vile affections, according to verse 26, "for this cause." What cause? This, that "they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever" (v. 25); they "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (v. 23); and "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (v. 28).

Heathen society is confronted with the truth that God is and that He must be worshipped. God Himself shows them His eternal power and Godhead through the creation in which they live and of which they themselves are part (vss. 19, 20). The result is that they "knew God" (v. 21). But they do not like to retain God in their knowledge (v. 28). Literally, the apostle writes: "they did not approve God, to have Him in their knowledge." Looking Him over, they judge God unworthy of their worship. They reject Him. They do worse. They invariably make an idol and worship it instead of the

blessed Creator. This is robbery of the glory of God—a creature receives the worship that is due to the Creator. At the same time, they dishonor God by presenting the Deity, in their idols, as a man, an eagle, a lion, or a crocodile.

Therefore, God gives them up to homosexuality. This is God's just retribution for their rejection of Him. Do they dishonor Him? He will abase them, "to dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (v. 24). Do they disapprove God? God will give them over to an "unapproved mind" (v. 28). Do they decide that God is not to be glorified by man; and do they even defile the glory in idolatry? God will show in them how vile is man.

Homosexuality in society is an expression of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (v. 18). It is, according to verse 28, itself the recompense of the error of rejecting the truth, and a fitting one.

If the Divine giving over to this abomination was the judgment upon pagan Greece and Rome, who had only the knowledge of God as Creator from creation, how much more is not this to be expected as the judgment upon those nations which have known God from His Holy Word, but reject Him—the nominally Christian nations of the 20th century?

In the light of Holy Scripture, especially Romans 1, the stand to be taken by Christ's Church is plain: she condemns homosexuality in root and branch. Homosexual nature (lusts) and homosexual deeds (practice) are vile sin. The practice of it is forbidden. The impenitent practice of it shuts one out of the congregation and out of the Kingdom of God everlasting, by the discipline of the Church. "Be not deceived...effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9, 10).

But the churches cannot see this! Reformed and Presbyterian and Evangelical churches cannot see this! Can it be? Can they not see it in the history of Sodom? Can they not see it in Romans 1? Can they not see it in I Timothy 1:9, 10: "...the law is...for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane...for them that defile themselves with mankind...and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine"? Can they not see it in the warning of Jude 7: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"? Can they not see it in I Corinthians 6:9, 10?

How advanced, then, is their blindness! And, since they darken the clear light of Scripture, how

deep is their darkness! But these are the guides of the saints and their children in the ways that please God and lead to heaven. Such churches are "blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). All who desire to see, and walk, in the light will "let them alone." As the men of Ninevah will rise up in the judgment, to condemn Israel, so will a heathen such as Juvenal rise up to condemn the Christian churches of our day, who, in his *Satires*, railed on Rome for its homosexuality, appealing to his gods:

O Romulus, where did such wickedness
come from to assail

Your shepherds? How, O Mars, did
this itch spread to your sons?

Just look—a rich man of high birth
wed to a man... (*The Satires of Juvenal*, Translated by Hubert Creekmore, Chapter II).

But, of course, the churches can see well enough the doctrine of Scripture. Their trouble is their rejection of Scripture ("...who hold the truth in unrighteousness"). They have disarmed its inspiration, obscured its clarity, denied its authority, and questioned its reliability. Now, all things are possible to them, including the contradiction of the Bible's condemnation of homosexuality. That this rejection of Scripture is the hinge on which all turns is plain in the books of Helmut Thielicke and of Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott referred to in a former article (Thielicke's *The Ethics of Sex* and Scanzoni and Mollenkott's *Is The Homosexual My Neighbor? Another Christian View*).

Thielicke begins his examination of the teaching of Scripture by asserting, ominously, that it is not enough to cite Scripture; one must also interpret the quotations "in accord with the kerygmatic purpose" (p. 277). (The "kerygma" of Scripture is its central, gospel-message. Theologians use this concept to set aside any teaching in the Bible that offends them and to twist the nose of every passage of the Bible to the shape that suits them. It is, by this time, a rule of thumb that, when a believer hears the words, "This passage should be interpreted kerygmatically," he must brace himself for a contradiction of a plain teaching of the Bible; just as the heading on an ecclesiastical document, "Pastoral Advice to the Churches," will almost always herald the trampling on one or another of the commandments of God's Law.) Thielicke does not consider Romans 1:26ff. to be decisive on homosexuality. For we must discover what in the passage is "kerygmatically 'binding'" (p. 279). Fact is, Paul's reference to sexual perversion comes "from the stock of the tradition with which Paul was surrounded, above all the Stoic catalogues of vices...we must reckon with the fact that Paul's conception of homosexuality was one which was affec-

ted by the intellectual atmosphere surrounding the struggle with Greek paganism..." (p. 280). Therefore, Christians today have a "certain freedom to rethink the subject" (p. 281). This freedom extends to consideration of the question, whether a constituted homosexual may practise homosexuality (we have seen that Thielicke answers, "Yes"). For "even the New Testament does not provide us with an evident, normative dictum with regard to this question" (p. 294). Thielicke has a freedom to stand in judgment on Holy Scripture; a freedom to rethink God's thoughts on sin; and a freedom to interpret Scripture according to the mind of scientists, ethicists, modern man, and his own notions. The Reformation renounced this "freedom" once and for all as the worst bondage. We will not go back to this "Babylonian Captivity" of the Church and the Christian man. *Sola Scriptura!*, which includes that Scripture alone interprets Scripture.

Scanzoni and Mollenkott, also, are able to defend and advocate homosexuality as a Christian condition and life-style, because they set aside the authority of Scripture. This is done, not by a forthright denial of Scripture as the rule of Christian life, but by a new, private, wilful interpretation of Scripture. In the chapter, "What Does the Bible Say?," having considered the account of Sodom's behavior towards Lot's visitors in Genesis 19, these authors conclude "that the Sodom story says nothing at all about the homosexual condition. The only real application to homosexuals would have to be a general one: homosexuals, like everybody else, should show hospitality to strangers..." (p. 59). To fix on inhospitality as the main sin of the Sodomites in Genesis 19 is akin to faulting Nero for inept musicianship.

As for Romans 1, its censure "does not seem to fit the case of a sincere homosexual Christian" (p. 62). "The passage in Romans says nothing about homosexual love" (p. 63). "No reference," in Romans 1, "is made to persons whose own 'nature,' or primary orientation, is homosexual, as that term is understood by behavioral scientists" (p. 65). By means of a sleight-of-hand word-study, doubt is cast on I Corinthians 6:9, 10 and I Timothy 1:9, 10, whether they refer to homosexuality at all. Thus, Scanzoni and Mollenkott, "two outstanding evangelical authors," arrive at the conclusion which they were determined to reach from the outset:

Since the Bible is silent about the homosexual condition, those who want to understand it must rely on the findings of modern behavioral science research and on the testimony of those persons who are themselves homosexual.

The Bible furthermore, does not mention the possibility of a permanent, committed relationship

of love between homosexuals analogous to heterosexual marriage (pp. 71, 72).

For them to add, "But would such a relationship be permissible according to Biblical standards?" (p. 72) is hypocrisy. The doctrine of Scripture which they espouse recognizes no Biblical standards.

Evangelical and Reformed churches that permit the "new hermeneutic," i.e., the new overthrow of Holy Scriptures, do so with their eyes open to the practical consequences for the life of the congregation and the life of the church-member.

The Church that contends for the Faith once delivered to the saints proclaims this Faith's condemnation of homosexuality. No more than she does in the case of other sins does she do this in a spirit of self-righteous pride. On the contrary! She sees in this vile sin the deep depths of the depravity of fallen human nature and the shame of man in revolt against God. This nature is not foreign to us; it is ours. Who says, "This sin, at any rate, I could never commit; it, at least, is alien to me," speaks foolishly; he does not know the greatness of his sin and misery, under the judgment of the gospel. It is grace, free grace abounding, that has called us out of the ungodliness and unrighteousness that holds the truth under in unrighteousness, thus bringing down on us the wrath of God that gives over to the vile affections. It is grace that reveals the truth in our hearts, so that we worship and serve the blessed Redeemer and Creator. It is grace that orders our steps aright, in conformity with the Law of God revealed in Scripture and in nature. It is grace that moves us daily to pray, not without trembling, "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Psalm 19:13). And it is grace that answers the prayer with the mighty, sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit of Christ.

No, the Church is not motivated by pride. But her motivation is zeal for the holiness of her God and love for God's people, whose welfare is threatened by the spread of abomination among them. Her clear, unequivocal "No!" to homosexuality is the javelin of Phinehas that stays the plague from the children of Israel. This "Phinehas-seal" carries away the praise of Jehovah: "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for My sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in My jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace" (Numbers 25:11, 12).

Nor does this condemnation exclude the penitent homosexual from salvation, or the child of God who fights against homosexual lusts from the comfort of the gospel of God. Homosexuality is not the

unforgivable sin. I Corinthians 6:9-11 teaches that there were saints in the Church of Corinth who had been "effeminate" and "abusers of themselves with mankind." But they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. The blood of Jesus, applied by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, cleansed them from this sin. It broke the ruling power of this sin in their lives. It forgave them of all the former deeds and of all the lusts that still remained against their will in them. Because of this cleansing, they are no longer homosexuals, just as a converted adulterer is no longer an adulterer, or a converted drunkard, a drunkard. "Such *were* some of you," Paul writes in verse 11, implying, "But such *are* you no longer." Now, they are saints. Such they are in the estimation of the Church; such they are in their own estimation; such they are, most importantly, in the estimation of God. They no longer practice homosexuality, fleeing temptation; and they daily crucify the lusts of the flesh that remain, hoping for the Day of Christ, when sin shall be abolished.

The gospel gives hope to homosexual sinners, in the way of repentance. It is not a sin that is stronger than the Spirit of the crucified Christ and from which there is no possibility of deliverance. No one may respond to the call to come to Jesus Christ by saying, "But there is no pardon for this sin; and there is no power in Christ to purify from the pollu-

tion of this sin." There is abundant pardon in the cross of Jesus Christ for every homosexual sinner who repents; and there is power in Christ's Spirit to sanctify him to walk on the narrow way and through the strait gate which leadeth to life. The Church may confidently ignore the psychologists, sociologists, and theological statisticians who challenge this power of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord, and continue to proclaim the good news: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

This, in the end, is the purpose of Scripture's exposure of homosexuality in Romans 1. Seeing the abomination all about her in the world, the Church resolves never to be ashamed of the gospel, but to be ready to preach it everywhere and always. Apart from the gospel in which the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, this is all that there is in the world: the wrath of God burning against ungodly men, giving them over to enormities. With Paul, the apostolic Church exclaims: "I am ready to preach the gospel...For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Creation Destroyed

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

When Noah, by faith, witnessed to the ungodly of the first world that God would soon send a deluge of water that would destroy the world he became the object of scorn and ridicule. These scoffers who followed after their own lusts derided Noah with these words: "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation (II Peter 3:4)." The fact that God would utterly destroy the earth with a flood was far beyond their sin-darkened imaginations. Nevertheless, it came to pass while they ate and drank and made merry, and while they married and were given in marriage, "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished."

Today too, when we confess before men that in

that great day of the Lord this creation will be utterly destroyed, we meet with criticism and scorn. According to evolutionists man is developing in such a way that soon he will be intelligent enough to control his own destiny. He will be able to produce the master race which by means of medicine and technology will usher in a perfect earthly utopia which will last forever. What makes the situation more pathetic is that there are theologians who support, with only minor changes, this corrupt humanism. These claim, that, prior to Christ's return, this world will have developed into its perfect state. When man has achieved that state then Christ will come and take His place upon His throne and rule over a perfect earthly kingdom. God will not need to destroy this earth, but things

will continue to exist as they have been. One need not look far to find the parallel between modern thought and the thought of wicked men prior to the Flood. For sure, sudden destruction will come upon this modern world just as it did with the Flood.

The clear testimony of Scripture is, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Such are the words of Peter in II Peter 3:7. Later in this same chapter (verses 10-13) Peter describes that destruction of this present creation: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved...." There must be no doubt in the mind of a child of God that this present creation will be destroyed to be replaced by a new earth. In contrast to the fleeting dreams of worldly men stands the sure promise of God to His people: "For, behold I create a new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17).

The child of God who maintains this promise of God must himself be careful, however. Never must he find himself swinging to another extreme by claiming that this present creation will be totally annihilated. He must not believe that the destruction of this creation will leave nothing left of it, so, as a result, God will have to create a new earth out of nothing, as He did in the beginning. It is easy to do this, especially when superficially considering the language of certain passages. When we picture to ourselves that the sun, moon, and stars will fall from their places, that this earth will be dissolved with a fervent heat, that God will create a *new* heavens and a *new* earth then it is easy enough to imagine that nothing will be left of creation and God will begin anew. This, once again, must not be our conception of the destruction of this creation. It will not be annihilated but it will be qualitatively changed from old to new.

It is true, that the elements of creation will be dissolved and this earth shall pass away, but it will be in such a way that through this destruction God will miraculously transform this old creation into a new. Perhaps a passage such as Psalm 102:25-26 best explains it for us; "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed." This passage speaks of the "perishing" of this old earth and heaven in terms of "changing." That "changing" comes about by

means of the destruction of this present creation and then by means of its renewal. Whenever Scripture speaks of a *new* heavens and earth it does not mean that God begins again by calling into existence something new, but it means that this old, worn-out, destroyed world will be made new.

Of this whole idea the Flood is a type. At that time the entire earth being covered with water perished. It was destroyed! That did not mean that the entire earth had been annihilated so that there was nothing left of it. Not at all! Obviously, God by means of this destruction renewed the earth, cleansed it from ungodly men and delivered His church. It must be remembered, however, that this Flood was merely a *type* of the destruction of the last day. There are some essential differences between the two. In the Flood the earth was destroyed; in the last day the entire creation will be destroyed. In the Flood the earth was destroyed by water; in the last day it will be shaken and destroyed by fire. In the Flood the earth was renewed only in a temporal way; in the last day the earth and heaven will undergo a spiritual transformation.

In order to understand this spiritual transformation (concerning which our understanding is very limited) we must first of all consider the relationship of this creation to man. When we do, then we will also understand *why* this present creation is changed and not abolished. The very act of Adam's creation witnesses to his relationship to this earth. Man was formed out of the dust of the ground and received the breath of life, thus becoming a living soul. After the fall we were told that our body will return to the dust from whence it came. It is evident, therefore, that man and the creation are intimately related. This earth and all it contains was created by God for the purpose of sustaining man's earthly life. In Genesis 1:28 and 29 we find that God supplied man with every herb bearing seed and every tree bearing fruit in order to feed man. To man himself God gave the command to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it. Such was man's relationship to creation. In fact, so close was that union between man and the rest of creation that when Adam sinned the earth was cursed for his sake and the creature was made subject to vanity. Now creation, along with God's children, awaits the final redemption of man. That is the point of Paul in Romans 8:19-23 where he writes, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestations of the sons of God.... Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit,

even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." God's children long earnestly for the resurrection from the dead, for it is then that this corruption will put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality. "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (II Cor. 5:2). In that resurrection from the dead our present bodies will be changed. We will not be given an entirely different body, but we will be given a renewed spiritual body.

The destruction of this present creation is intimately related to our resurrection. Even as God purposed this earth and all it contains to support our earthly, physical life so also has He purposed it to support our heavenly, spiritual life. But in order for this to take place this creation must go through a transformation. Even as our mortal and corruptible

bodies are by means of the resurrection changed into immortal and incorruptible bodies, so also will God miraculously transform this temporal, finite, sin-corrupted creation into an everlasting, spiritual, perfected realm. He will do that by means of the destruction and renewal of this present creation. How that transformation will take place is beyond all human comprehension. This too is a wonder of grace, somewhat on the same order as the resurrection from the dead.

That is why this world must be destroyed, *and* that is why this world is not annihilated. The wicked of this world may continue to dream concerning the bright future of this sinful world, but their dreams will be shattered. Sin will develop into perfection. The child of God continues to watch for Christ's return when he and this present creation will be made new and the tabernacle of God will be with men.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(Kuyper has begun his discussion of how a church which has deteriorated must be reformed. In the last paragraph which appeared he strongly emphasized that all reformation must be the work of God alone.)

53. Concerning Reformation By Means Of Spiritual Awakening.

"Spiritual awakening," *reveil*, or *revival* is a word that came into general usage for that which our fathers preferred to call "renewal of the covenant." The church of God possesses, in the seven letters which Christ sent through His holy Apostle John to the seven churches of Asia Minor, the beautiful pattern which inspires such spiritual awakening. These letters, as they are found in Revelation 2 and 3, still speak to us.

These letters are not directed to heathen people or to unconverted. With the exception of the church of Laodicea (brevity prevents us from discussing this letter in detail), there is presupposed in all these letters the truth that the churches to which the letters were directed stood firmly in their confession, and the powerful seal of faith shone brightly for far and away the majority of their members. Wrong elements had crept in. In part, sinful teaching sought and found an entrance. Their

works were not perfect. The Lord has a few small things against them. The ideal was lacking. Nevertheless the churches as such were not yet apostate, nor corrupted, nor worldly in the sense in which we complain about our churches. They were still confessing and believing churches. Yet for all that, Christ takes hold of these churches powerfully and sharply for these small imperfections (as we would call them), so that they are warned to "conversion," to "the strengthening of what remains, of what would otherwise die," to a pondering of the state from which they have fallen. He calls them to perform the first work; and He does this under the stern threat that if they do not obey, "the candlestick will be removed from its place."

The Lord would not have sent these letters to the churches of that time nor kept them for the churches of all ages if this false security in Zion did not again and again appear in the church, and if the words of Scripture, "Awake thou that sleepest and Christ shall give you light," were not continuously applicable for the chosen church and in her for the people of God.

To call to repentance and conversion, to admonish to confession of sin and a holy walk, is also the

calling of the minister of the Word in all the churches of God. It is a calling which must never be neglected because the Word, which is the God-ordained means, is given for crucifying and burying the indwelling sins of believers. The sound of that trumpet call to repentance must grow in urgency as frequently as the judgments of the Lord are heard from afar, or come closer, or as a plague breaking out in the places themselves where the church of God exists.

That calling to spiritual awakening ought to take on a particular character if, by the permission of God, an unholy world-mindedness or some specific sin clearly raises its head and painfully affects the tender consciences which are concerned for the honor of God.

But in the fullest sense of the word these preachers of repentance arise only when it pleases God to bind overwhelmingly on the souls of His children, i.e., a few of His elect, the spiritual decline of the life of the congregation, so that they must call and cannot hold back because they, as Amos expressed it, have heard the roar of the lion.

Then it is the acceptable time that God visits His people. He visits them with the revelation, influences, and inworking of His Holy Spirit Who penetrates the souls of His people more powerfully than has happened for a long time. Because of this a dissatisfaction with the spiritual condition of the church is born in each heart and gradually is born in larger circles. Souls again cry out from the depths. What appeared frozen, melts. Tongues are loosened. A desire for renunciation comes and the Word and prayer and Psalm singing have an inner sweetness which is thought heavenly compared to the drought concerning which complaints were made for so long.

Such a watering of the garden of the Lord by dew from on high, such an anointing of the oppressed with fresh oil, such a glittering of the garment of praise for an oppressed spirit, is contagious. It spreads as a fire which carries itself from spark to spark. It jumps from soul to soul, from house to house, from church to church, always under the flowing of the winds of the Spirit. And the result is that again in a wider circle, much deeper than it was for a long time, the damnableness of our nature is plumbed, our impotence is confessed without reservation, the cross is seized more fully, the kingdom of Christ is enjoyed with greater blessings, and the fruits of the Spirit are multiplied more abundantly in meekness and longsuffering.

This stream of life flows in three different riverbeds.

It flows first of all in an enrichment of the hidden life of the heart before God. It is the mystical work-

ing of the Bible. It is the renewed discovery of the lost Comforter in our heart. The secret of the Lord is once again revealed to those who fear Him and keep His covenant. Above all, it is a blessed experience. It is a present tasting of the manna which comes from heaven.

Distinct from this is the stream which refers to the holiness of walk. This is not (lest it become sectarian) to be thought as something unique, something higher than others can attain, but simply as a renewal of conversion; it is thus marked by a mortification of the old man. It is more and more to hate and flee from sin. It is characterized by a quickening of the new man in a hearty desire and love to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God.

To this is still added the holy passion to reveal to others the greatness of the love of Christ. Or, if one so wishes, the work of missions. The Lord Jesus wrote to Philadelphia, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door. . . . Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet." And in a similar sense, the Lord grants to each church, which awakens spiritually from her sleep of death, power to win others for His kingdom. This is done not only by missions among the heathen, but more gloriously by the winning of those who live near the church.

The secret of whether such a spiritual awakening shall remain pure lies in the question whether these three streams remain in proper relation to each other. If this does not happen, then the danger of sectarian deterioration arises, which results in a polite holiness in people of will power or in a superficial bustle of busyness with externals in the life of the members.

On the other hand, if these three streams stay in proper relation, so that in the one church of God the members who live by feeling, by strong determination, or by busyness, hold each other in balance, then sectarianism is avoided, the discipline of the church is mutually sought, and the rich life of grace which blossoms in such a church is very glorious.

All artificially motivated revivals are therefore to be condemned. They bring forth nothing but wind. And if it may please the Lord God sometimes to broadcast on the wings of this wind a seed of life, then this never happens in any other way than in spite of such an unnatural movement and it is never a natural fruit. It must, however, never be forgotten that the right to condemn such false revivals can never be made by one who does nothing; but it can be condemned only by those from whom

(whether a church or its individual members) proceeds a genuine awakening which is willed by God.

In circumstances where things have sunk too deeply, the members of the church receive the stimulus for such a covenant renewing from the shepherd, not the other way around—the shepherds from the members. The Lord does not so readily forsake His church that He does not set in office at least a few sensitive children of God, endowed with the ability to shine as light-giving stars in the middle of the darkness which has fallen upon the church. Shepherds are called to a closer fellowship with their Sender, to let their light shine in a holy walk and to bear in their priestly heart the honor of God and the salvation of souls. They are, more than others, the appointed watchers, the faithful dogs who must bark for their Lord. They must see the wolf before the sheep sense it, and woe to the shepherds who do not seize the wolf and lay down their own life for the sheep. Joshua and Josiah, Ezra and Nehemiah, are the shining examples who spur on each shepherd of God to faithful labor in his calling. And the history of Jesus' church in the days of the New Covenant is rich with inspiring images of this sensitive life of the shepherds in the church who labor before the face of the Lord. Their cries for repentance still speak through their writings. Yet there is more. Also in our land history testifies of more than one classical gathering at which the ministers of the Word together confessed their own guilt and unfaithfulness, and together before His face promised revival in their own ministry and life. It is known that all the preachers in all the churches in London, in the year 1660, in connection with the threat of a fearful danger, announced in this large city their sins and admonished the city to covenant renewal. Even in more recent church history examples are not lacking of churches who sealed anew their covenant faithfulness. After having fallen into guilt before God, such revival was sealed by the Lord at the preaching of repentance by her shepherds, in the house of prayer, with fastings and prayers.

Yet there are worse conditions imaginable in which the Lord God either has deprived His church almost entirely of faithful watchmen, or has withheld from these faithful watchmen whom He still allows to work, the grace to be zealous for His holiness. In such a miserable condition, the lack of zeal of the faithful or also the faithlessness of the remaining shepherds does not free any of them from the obligation of arousing God's people to godliness. This has no other result than that the duty of taking the initiative, which the members before had left to the shepherds, is now transferred to the members themselves. Yet the regulation of the Lord is to be honored also in this that the members

never stain their zeal for God's honor by a contempt for the office instituted by God. Thus frequently, by the Holy Spirit (for without His work all work is only a sham), children of God are seized outside the office by the conviction of communal guilt, and a fire of jealousy for the honor of God is ignited in their bosom so that they are angry with the sin of the people. However, the evidence of their zeal ought to proceed from love for the leaders.

The first impulse for renewal ought to be directed towards the leaders. There must be no desire to do it themselves apart from the leaders, but a quiet desire and prayer, "Oh, if only they would be aroused to reformation!" And only when pressure and entreaty appear useless and the shepherds either harden themselves in their faithlessness or the faithful shepherds continue in the half-hearted lack of zeal, then the moment has come for the members of the church themselves to call the church to repentance and conversion.

Let no one trifle with honoring God's ordinances, nor must anyone ignore these ordinances with an attitude of self-sufficiency. One must bear in mind that all our calling to repentance and conversion can produce nothing but death unless God the Lord seizes the heart; that all called to repentance are only instruments and the glory of God alone is the One Who shakes awake; and that the invoked blessing of His Fatherhand is only forfeited and virtually banished as long as we carry on in a self-willed way and do not follow His path.

If one tests what has happened to us with these main principles, then the following must be stated:

1) That in the preaching of our day the call to repentance and conversion is heard much too weakly from the people of the Lord, while most of the noise comes from the wild crowds.

2) That among the ministers of the Word both in their mutual contact and in their concern for the church of God, one can weep because of a sad lack of that spiritual awakening which does not rest until the shame of the decline of the Lord's inheritance is turned away.

3) That spiritual awakening which came from here and there among the members was made powerless by various weaknesses, weaknesses of which these four are the most important. First, that people bypass the office, sometimes even disdaining it. Second, that men urge toward sanctification without the conviction of guilt. Third, that men pursue either the mystical in a one-sided way, or emphasize life improvement, or are overflowing in works, and by this one-sidedness become sectarian. Fourth, that men hunt the extraordinary in place of scrubbing clean the ordinary house furnishings.

4) That it must be said especially of Moody's work that this has nothing to do with spiritual awakening when it aims only at the preaching of the gospel to the wild masses. We need no awakening out of indolence; but conversion out of spiritual death is necessary. In how far the lack and the neglect of duty of the church in England and America compel such a work of Moody, remains outside our judgment.¹

5) That the spiritual awakening to which Piersall Smith called people, went in the right direction when it was applied, not to the wild masses, but to those who were already brought into the church. But, on the other hand, it went in the wrong direction, when it evaded the ecclesiastical channels, corrupted doctrine, and sought its power in overstimulating gimmicks.

6) That the Salvation Army, even as Moody's work, intended no spiritual awakening, but the in-

gathering of the unconverted. It is, however, entirely off the track in so far as this movement moves outside the channels of the church, throws pearls before swine, and with respect to the exercise of influence, has recourse to means which run counter to the spirit of the Word.

7) That among the people of God in our own land this spiritual awakening and covenant renewal demanded by God shall arise only if each person lays the axe at the root of his own ego; proceeds from the conversion of his own heart to the betterment of his own household; and without asking what another does, descends before his own house and family into that humility which has the unchangeable promise of grace.

¹. Moody was a well-known evangelist in the earlier part of our twentieth century who did his work here in America and who established the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

Book Reviews

PROMISE AND DELIVERANCE, vol. IV, Christ And The Nations, S. G. De Graaf; Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada; 294 pages, \$12.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. R. D. Decker)

This is the fourth and last volume of a series originally published in the Netherlands under the title: *Verbondsgeschiedenis*, (History of the Covenant). The author, the late S. G. DeGraaf, was a minister in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The translators, H. Evan and Elisabeth Wichers Runner, have provided a very readable English translation and are to be commended for that.

These volumes sketch the history of God's Covenant from Genesis to Revelation. Volume Four, Christ and the Nations, covers the history of the incarnation, the ministry, the cross, and resurrection of Christ from the viewpoint of the Gospel According to John. The history of Acts is covered. The realization of all things, "Christ's World Wide Reign," is treated from the viewpoint of Matthew 24, 25 and selected passages from Revelation. All of this is done in 294 pages. Obviously this is no more than a sketch.

There are some helpful insights. There is some questionable exegesis. If used with discretion the book could prove helpful for students and teachers as well as the layman.

LESSER PARABLES OF OUR LORD, William Arnot; Kregel Publications, 1981; 464 pages, \$10.95. (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

GOSPEL IN LEVITICUS, Joseph A. Seiss; Kregel Publications, 1981; 399 pages, \$10.95. (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

GOSPEL OF LUKE, W.H. Van Doren; Kregel Publications, 1981; 1078 pages, \$22.95. (Reviewed by R.D. Decker)

All three of these books are part of Kregel's "Bible Study Classics." These are reprints of works by preachers and theologians of the 18th and 19th centuries. The book entitled, **LESSER PARABLES OF OUR LORD**, contains what must have been the author's sermons on various passages of Scripture. There are four divisions: Lesser Parables Of Our Lord, Lessons Of Grace, Lessons In I Peter, Life In Christ. Why the book has this title is a mystery. Even in the first section many of the passages expounded are not even parables. For the most part the expositions are sound. The author's treatment of I Peter 2:6-8 is not merely less than satisfactory, it is simply erroneous. If used with discretion the book would make edifying devotional reading.

GOSPEL IN LEVITICUS is a good book. As the title itself would indicate, the typology is sound. The author proceeds exegetically and allows Scrip-

ture to interpret itself. The exposition of chapter 23, the feasts and holy convocations, is particularly good. The book would be useful for ministers and teachers, but also for any others in the church.

GOSPEL OF LUKE is the strangest commentary I have ever seen. It is a good book and worth having even at the cost of \$22.95. The more than one thousand pages are filled with exposition and homiletical aids, all in very small print. It is almost a word by word exposition. There are numerous references to other good commentaries (Calvin, e.g.) as well as numerous cross references to other passages of Scripture. Much of the exposition, and this is what I mean by "strange," is not even given in full sentences or paragraphs. The exegesis is just in terse phrases. But it will set the reader to thinking and aid him in seeing "things new and old" in the Gospel According To Luke. Ministers and students would no doubt benefit most from this book.

THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES, Gerald F. De Jong; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 279 pp. (paper), \$6.94 (Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema)

This volume is Number 5 in "The Historical Series Of The Reformed Church In America." It covers in great detail the history of the Reformed Church in America from the time of its founding in 1628 until 1772, shortly before the Revolutionary War. Incidentally, there is a discrepancy between the Foreword and the Preface with respect to the terminal date of this history. The former makes it 1792, while the latter — correctly — makes it 1772.

It is impossible in a review to give any kind of detailed account of the contents of a book like this. Suffice it to say that it is evident that there is a tremendous amount of research behind the writing of this book. It goes into great detail concerning the early beginnings of the RCA. The book appears to be well documented at every point. Yet the author has succeeded in writing this history in an interesting manner. There is a sufficient number of anecdotes to spice the book with a bit of humor here and there.

For anyone interested in this particular aspect of church history, this book is a worthwhile purchase. The copy sent me for review is a paperback, and I do not know whether there is also a hard-cover edition. To my mind, there should be.

One personal note. I was interested in the history of the translation of the confessions, particularly in the translation of the Canons of Dordrecht and the question why the RCA did not include the Rejection of Errors. While there is considerable information in this book about the transition to the use of English during the early history of the RCA, I looked in vain for any information about this particular subject.

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on May 12, 1982 at our Holland Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least 3 weeks prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huisken
Stated Clerk, Classis East

YOU ARE INVITED!!!

To the Annual Spring Lecture
to be held, the Lord willing, at
The South Christian Auditorium, Cutlerville, Michigan.

The Speaker — Prof. R. Decker.

The Theme — The believer and his Bible.

Thursday, May 6, 1982 — 8:00 P.M.

—Plan now to attend — and bring your Friends—

The Lecture Committee

Report of Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Randolph, Wisconsin on March 3. The churches of the West were represented by nine ministers and fifteen elders. Rev. R. Van Overloop was also present. Classis gave him the right of the floor on all matters before Classis and asked him to address the Classis on his work as missionary in Birmingham, Alabama.

Rev. K. Koole led Classis in opening devotions. He read Isaiah 62 and spoke to the Classis from the chapter. Rev. G. Lanting presided over this Classis. Elders J. Hoksbergen (Hull), H. Meulenberg (Houston), and J. Soodsma (Randolph)—elder delegates to Classis for the first time—signed the Formula of Subscription.

Classis approved the "Ministerial Certificate of Dismissal and Testimonial" of Edmonton concerning Rev. R. Moore, who has accepted the call from Isabel.

Among the various reports given to the Classis was that of the Reading Sermon Committee (Edgerton Consistory), which informed Classis that "we still need more sermons. The committee would remind the ministers of the decision of Classis that each minister submit one sermon per year due at the Fall Classis." The Taped Sermon Committee (South Holland Council) informed Classis that a catalogue of available cassettes has been prepared. "This catalogue can be used by those requesting tapes to request specific tapes."

The Church Visitors reported that, in the course of their work, they treated at some length the subject of the evaluation of the preaching with each consistory. They stated also that "from all indications the preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and exercise of Christian discipline is being faithfully performed according to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions."

In executive session, Classis dealt with the appeal of a member against the decision of his consistory to suspend him from the Lord's Table.

Edgerton, Edmonton, Houston, Isabel, and Pella requested subsidy for 1983 in the amount of \$68,954.00; and Classis granted these requests, for-

warding them to Synod. Edgerton and Isabel requested additional subsidy for 1982 in the amount of \$5,000.00, which was granted. Edmonton requested \$12,000 for 1982, a smaller subsidy than had previously been granted, in view of her vacancy. Classis granted the request of Isabel for help in the moving expenses of her pastor.

A Classical Appointment Schedule was adopted. *Edmonton*: March 28, April 4, 18 - Kuiper; April 25, May 2, 9 - Cammenga; May 16, 23, 30 - Engelsma; June 13, 20, 27 - Lanting; July 11, 18, 25 - Kortering; August 15, 22, 29 - Koole. *Redlands*: April 25, May 2, 9 - Kamps; May 16, 23, 30 - Bekkering; June 13, 20, 27 - Moore; July 11, 18, 25 - Slopsema; August 8, 15, 22 - Van Overloop. It was recommended to Redlands that she seek pulpit supply for the summer from the Seminary or from an emeritus minister.

Classis appointed Rev. D. Kuiper moderator of Edmonton during her vacancy.

Results of the necessary voting were the following:

- Classical Committee: Rev. J. Slopsema.
- Delegates ad examina: Primus - Rev. D. Engelsma; Secundus - Rev. J. Slopsema.
- Church Visitors: Rev. J. Kortering and Rev. G. Lanting.
- Primi minister delegates to Synod: Rev. D. Engelsma, Rev. M. Kamps, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. D. Kuiper.
- Secundi minister delegates to Synod: Rev. R. Cammenga, Rev. K. Koole, Rev. G. Lanting, Rev. J. Slopsema.
- Primi elder delegates to Synod: Mr. G. Griess, Mr. B. Haak, Mr. J. Regnerus, Mr. C. Van Meet-eren.
- Secundi elder delegates to Synod: Mr. E. Bruin-sma, Mr. A. Brummel, Mr. H. Meulenberg, Mr. E. Stouwie.

Expenses of the Classis were \$4,375.23.

Classis will meet next in Doon, Iowa on September 1, 1982, the Lord willing.

-Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West