

THE **STANDARD BEARER**

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

Christ's church shall not have dominion in history. She has no hope of it. She does not aspire to it. Were the golden scepter of absolute dominion over all the world offered to her on a silver platter, she would reject it

See "The Church shall have Dominion?"

— p. 485

Vol. 69, No. 21
September 15, 1993

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In This Issue ...

Reconstructionism. Dominion theology. Theonomy.

Hardly household words, I suspect. However, one who has paid some attention to what's coming out of the religious press these days, can hardly help but have encountered the concepts, if not the terms themselves. He will have discovered too that there's something appealing about dominion theology. Some of its chief promoters are in fact brilliant, articulate men. Prof. Engelsma, nevertheless, in this issue's editorial, states bluntly that dominion theology is *false* theology. "The church," he says, "shall not have dominion. God does not will it. Scripture does not promise it." In his usual insightful manner, the editor makes the issues involved, which might appear to be complex, simple. That is, he reduces the matter to its basic elements. In two short pages. What *do* the Scriptures promise the church militant? For the answer to that question, and for a clear understanding of what Christian Reconstruction is all about, read "The Church shall have Dominion?" and, along with that, the editor's review, later on in this issue, of Bruce Barron's book, *Heaven on Earth?: The Social & Political Agendas of Dominion Theology*.

Rev. Lubbers, continuing his series on I Timothy, deals in this issue with the qualifications for office in the church. Rev. Kuiper in his biblical word studies looks this time at a substance which, he says, is made up of microscopic plants, and produces carbon dioxide when mixed with batter. (You've guessed the word?) "Letters," in this issue, contains a thoughtful response, from a reader in Vermont, to Rev. Gritters' series on drama. And Rev. Cammenga contributes the third in his series of four articles on homosexuality. In it he argues that this sexual perversion is a conscious, deliberate *choice*; that we are *all* fully capable of falling into this sin; and that, shameful as it is, there is *hope* in the gospel for those who have done so.

Though the annual Index seems to take up an inordinate amount of space in the September 15 issue, we think you'll find that the pages which remained were profitably filled by our writers.

And, in next issue? At long last, the outcome of our quest for a logo.
D.D.

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That Certain and Wonderful Gain

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Philippians 1:21

Although most of mankind cannot, and therefore by their actions do not, say with Paul that to live is Christ, some of them do believe and say that for them to die is gain. This they clearly manifest by committing suicide. And there are also those who break the sixth commandment by helping their friends commit suicide. They, and those whom they help, reveal that they believe that to die is gain, being convinced that death will end all their aches and pains.

That sin was clearly manifested by Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ and afterwards hanged himself, believing that death would be a benefit for him. He wanted to escape ridicule and opposition from those who loved Christ. He wanted to gain relief.

But in Matthew 25:46 we find Christ Jesus our Savior declaring that the death of the unbeliever is by no means a gain, but is a terrible loss! He taught the truth that death opens the door of hell for unbelievers, bringing them into everlasting punishment. Likewise, as we read in Matthew 8:12, those who cannot sincerely say that for them to live is Christ "shall be cast out into outer darkness" where for them there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

What we find in the text with which this meditation begins is the comforting truth that the moment that the child of God dies, he will by God's grace be brought where there is no sorrow, pain, or tears, and where he will have sweet communion with God. He will not, as Paul says, lose that which is truly good, but will gain the blessedness of sweet communion with God. For the elect child of God it is so very true that he will gain, that is, obtain more fully, the blessedness which Christ earned for His people. We will have there no temptations. We will there know and enjoy the blessed truth that for us to live is Christ. From the moment that we die, we will lose all of our old man of sin, and we will be in a realm where we will no longer be tempted to walk in sin. We will there with our souls gain a perfectly holy life.

We will through death reach a blessed life that is higher than that of the highest angels. In Hebrews 1:13, 14 we read that we will be at God's right hand, and be higher than the highest angels. For all the angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister, for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Now the important and comforting truth here in Philippians 1:21 is Paul's statement that for God's people "to live is Christ." For that living is enjoying that which Christ earned for God's elect. The idea is that we can and will live a better life after we die because of what Christ did for us and does in us. That comforts us, too, in the truth that by God's grace we gain blessed perfection for our souls the moment we die.

This also brings out the comforting truth that we, through the work of Christ, become Christians. The name Christian we find three times in Scripture. In Acts 11:26 we read that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. In Acts 26:28 we read that King Agrippa said that Paul had almost persuaded him to be a Christian. And in I Peter 4:16 we are told that if we suffer as Christians, we should not be ashamed, but should glorify God because of what He did in making us become Christians.

Likewise, for us "to live is Christ." And that means that we, as born again children of God, live in Christ. It means that we are the members of His body, the church, which is presented in Romans 12:5 as the body of Christ. There we read: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." We also find that truth very richly expressed in I Corinthians 12:12. There Paul writes: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." And then in verse 27 he states: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Note that truth! We, as the elect children of God, are members of the body of Christ, each in his own eternally and divinely designed place. Therefore for us to live is Christ; that is, we have a new spiritual life, being made to be members of Christ's body. The moment we die our souls gain perfection. For death cuts us off completely from our sinful flesh.

We must therefore hold on tightly to the truth that, basically, salvation is

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the gaining of the gift of love for God. The basic element of our salvation is not a release from the punishment and pain which by nature we deserve. That kind of salvation all the children of the devil want. Even their suicide is an attempt to get away from pain and suffering. Then their suicide indeed is seeking salvation. But basically salvation is that gift of God's grace whereby we gain freedom from sin! Thus in Genesis 3:15 God promises us that He will cause His elect to hate Satan and sin, and that He will work into His elect love toward Himself. Yes, in this life we will be attacked by Satan and have our heels bruised. But we are promised that we will love God, and will have in this life the beginning of a walk which will become perfect for our souls the moment we die.

In verse 20 Paul declares that Christ shall be magnified in his body, whether it be in this life or after death. Christ shall be magnified in Paul in this life by His using him as His apostle. And although the day comes when Paul will die, Christ will be magnified in Paul by the complete deliverance of his soul from his sinful flesh. Paul will begin that wonderful and blessed life when his soul is fully free from sin. We also, when we die, gain holiness for our souls. And when Christ returns, our bodies will be raised; and then we will in body and soul be saved fully. For then our bodies as well as our souls will be in a holy life which will everlastingly be ours.

Paul desires and looks forward to this blessedness. But he is in a strait, because, although he does desire and does eagerly look forward to that blessedness, he is also eager to serve God now by being His apostle. Besides, he realizes the need of the Philippians for further instruction. He points this out literally in Philippians 1:22-26, when he states that, though his desire is to be with Christ, which he calls "far better," he realizes that for him to abide in the flesh is now needful for the Philippians for their spiritual growth.

By all means we should not push

into the background the truth presented in Genesis 3:15. Basically, salvation is God's work of taking our sin away from us, not merely the punishment of sin. That part of salvation is wonderful and a great blessing. But our God in Genesis 3:15 presents salvation as the taking away from us of our enmity against Him, and causing us to love Him, and to walk in that love.

Disobedience manifests hatred against God. And every sin does that! Paul reveals that — yes, God reveals it through Paul — in Ephesians 2:10. We are God's "workmanship, created in Christ unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Now, that we are created in Christ reveals how we get this blessed gift of walking in good works of love toward God. Thereby for us death is a gain. Then our souls will be one hundred percent free from the love of and acts of sin. And our souls will love God perfectly.

*We are in every sense
and in every detail
God's workmanship ...*

To die is gain, because then we receive the spiritual perfection of our souls. That truth assures us that when Christ returns we will also get bodies that our perfect souls will use for perfect works of love toward God. Then we will know that for us to live is Christ, and we will enjoy that life. We will be equipped with bodies that want only to do that which serves and glorifies God in love. The awesome question is whether we want that salvation, not merely relief and escape from the punishment of hell.

As surely as our God determined every heartbeat of our physical life, so He determined every heartbeat of our spiritual life, from the first one onward, to those that will everlastingly be given us. Even as we did not cause our fleshly heart to begin beating, we do not cause our spiritual hearts to

beat with the desire to serve God, and make us want to be in the Kingdom of Heaven, where we can and will want to serve Him with all our body and soul, and everlastingly in love toward Him. We do spiritually that which God enables us to do. We give Him nothing either physically or spiritually. We do what He enables us to do.

Let us cling to the truth which God gives us through Paul, as found in Ephesians 2:10. We are in every sense and in every detail God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. As Paul, used by God, presented to us, the truth is: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God in no way depends upon us. We depend upon Him for every breath of earthly life, but just as surely for every breath of spiritual life. For us to die is gain, because God caused Christ to earn for us, and give us through death, a spiritual life of perfect and everlasting love.

Since it pleased God to give us the gift of salvation, we can and will say with David what he wrote in Psalm 139:14. There we read: "I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works: and that my soul knoweth right well."

Let us then sing that truth from our hearts as well as from our lips. It is presented so beautifully in our Psalter, number 383:1, in this way:

All that I am I owe to Thee.
Thy wisdom, Lord, hath fashioned me;
I give my Maker thankful praise,
Whose wondrous works my soul amaze. □



The Church shall have Dominion?

Christ shall have dominion.

This was the sure promise of Psalm 72. That promise has now been fulfilled in the kingdom established by the gospel. Christ reigns in the confession of every true church. Since the church is established among all nations, the kingdom of Christ is a world-kingdom. Within the church, Christ reigns in the heart and life of every believer personally.

To this reign belongs Christ's subduing of His enemies, defeated by His cross. Satan is overcome in the salvation of every elect. Sin is crucified in the holy life of every believer. The reprobate world is judged, hardened, and rendered ready for punishment by the gospel that goes forth from the true church.

The dominion of Christ, a glorious, present reality, will be perfected shortly at His coming. Jesus Christ will destroy the Antichrist with the breath of His mouth (II Thess. 2:8). He will execute "terrible vengeance... on the wicked," banishing them from His presence into "everlasting fire" (Belgic Confession, Art. 37). Christ the judge will exalt the innumerable elect into the glory of reigning with Him in their resurrection bodies over the renewed creation.

Indeed, *Christ shall have dominion.*

Every Reformed Christian thrills to sing this dominion in the grand versification of Psalm 72:

Christ shall have dominion
Over land and sea,
Earth's remotest regions
Shall His empire be.

The dominion of Christ — the present dominion of Christ — is the fundamental confession of the Christian: Jesus Christ is Lord.

But, "the church shall have dominion"? In the sense that the church shall have dominion *in history* over the nations? A dominion in history that is earthly? A dominion that consists of exercising political, military, social, economic, cultural might? A dominion that brings about the Christianizing of the entire, present world? A dominion that is due to Christians' being the majority, whereas the enemies of Christ are the minority? A dominion that consists of the church's imposing her will on what wicked world is left? A dominion that is forced upon the ungodly by the threat of the sword — the physical, steel sword — or that seduces them by the prospect of money, health, social order, and international peace?

This is the message that is heard in evangelical and Reformed circles of late. Fittingly, it calls itself "dominion theology." The church shall have dominion.

In a recent book, *The New Charismatics* (Zondervan, 1992), Michael G. Moriarty informs us that dominion theology is being preached and pursued by such charismatics as the "Kingdom Now" movement. The church must establish the carnal kingdom of Christ in history, here and now.

In Reformed and Presbyterian circles, dominion theology is aggressively pushed by the movement known as "Christian Reconstruction." This name refers to the movement's

intention to rebuild American society and all the world according to the law of God. The movement also calls itself the "theonomic movement" ("theonomy" meaning simply "law of God") because it insists that the coming carnal kingdom must enforce upon Christians and unbelievers alike the civil laws of the Old Testament. Basic to this program is the hope of the church's temporal, earthly victory over the ungodly world in a millennium of earthly peace and prosperity that is supposed to precede the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The church shall have dominion. In fact, the Reformed church shall have dominion.

But not, apparently, without some strange assistance. Ignoring the important civil law of the Old Testament that Israel not look to Egypt for help in fighting Jehovah's battles, the Calvinist reconstructionists ally themselves with the Arminian charismatics. Men who scruple to permit their tailors and seamstresses to make clothing out of two kinds of cloth unite themselves, confessed Calvinists, with those who not only deny the sovereignty of God in salvation (and in all else), but also the Word of God itself, with the sacraments, as the only means of the coming of the kingdom. They unite with these mystical charismatics in order to bring about the coming of the kingdom of Christ. They are disobedient to the law in Deuteronomy 22:10: "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." Both Moriarty in *The New Charismatics* (pp. 160-189) and Bruce Barron in the just published *Heaven*

on Earth? *The Social & Political Agendas of Dominion Theology* (Zondervan, 1992, pp. 91ff.) document the alliances of the reconstructionists with the charismatics.

Dominion theology makes strange bedfellows. It always has in the history of the church.

Dominion theology is false theology.

The church of Christ shall not have dominion. God does not will it. Scripture does not promise it. The only church that will have dominion in history before the coming of Christ is the false church, the great whore that rides the beast in Revelation 17.

The church in history is a victorious church, but not a triumphalist church, that is, a church lording it over the nations with earthly power. She is the church of and under the cross, not the church wearing a crown. Genuine Protestantism learned this from Martin Luther. We will not forget it.

The message of the true church to her members and would-be members is not dominion, but taking up the cross in following Christ (Mark 8:34-38). It is the message of pain, shame, loss, labor, and death. Her summons is not a call to join in dominion, but the call to suffer with Christ, the call to die daily (Rom. 8:17, 36).

Such is the church by virtue of the presence of Christ in her through the gospel that she is despised and ridiculed by all whose standard is earthly size, power, status, and glory. It is with the church in the world just as it was with her great Head in the days of His earthly ministry: "If they have persecuted me, they will also perse-

cute you" (John 15:20). It is the privilege of the church "to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).

This is how the church has always appeared in history.

The church of the cross!

Glorious church! Invincible church! Glorious and invincible exactly in her powerlessness, ignominy, suffering, and dying for Christ's sake.

But the church of the cross, not a church of a crown. Church of the cross during the 200 years of persecution by the Roman Empire. Church of the cross in the imprisoned Gottschalk. Church of the cross in the Reformed saints in the Netherlands and France slaughtered by the Roman Catholic Church. Church of the cross in the detested *Afscheiding* in Holland in the 19th century. Church of the cross in the expulsion of the faithful from the Presbyterian Church in the USA in the early 20th century. Church of the cross in the deposition of ministers and casting out of men and women by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924/1925. Church of the cross today wherever the little flock of those who confess the Word of God are hated, scorned, and evilly spoken of.

*The only church
that will have dominion
in history
before the coming of Christ
is the false church ...*

Christ's church shall not have dominion in history. She has no hope of it. She does not aspire to it. Were

the golden scepter of absolute dominion over all the world offered to her on a silver platter, she would reject it with the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The message of dominion is foreign to her. She knows only the message of the cross.

Church history proves her right. Dominion theology cannot explain the past 2,000 years of church history. Never has the true church possessed and exercised dominion. Has she failed all these years? Has she been a defeated and defeatist church? Has Christ her king been disappointed in her all these years? Has His kingship been frustrated in the failure of His church?

Dominion theology is being exposed as foolishness by the events that are taking place before our very eyes in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Scriptures. At the end the dragon will establish a world-kingdom of blasphemy and lawlessness that will fight against the saints and overcome them (Rev. 13:1-7). Dominion theology is foundering on the rocks of the gathering kingdom of the beast, as I write. What a disappointment to the theologians of dominion. What confession of sin is required of them for their contempt for and harsh condemnation of Christ's church under the cross.

For us, this temporal and temporary dominion of the beast and his whore is the clear sign of the soon coming of the Lord.

Then, dominion. Then, the crown.
After the cross. □

— DJE

Letters

Is Acting Sin?

I have really appreciated Barrett Gritters' series on "Drama, Television, and Movies" (April 1, May 1, May 15, and August, 1993 issues of the *Standard Bearer*). I had much anticipation for the article on why

drama in and of itself is not pleasing to God, and it finally appeared in the latest issue (Aug. 1993).

I thank God that there are people who are taking a stand for purity, even in the face of opposition from professing Christians. Drama, televi-

sion, and movies (and I would add novels) are prolific sources of wickedness. The following comments are regarding Gritters' latest article.

I agree that if someone acts out a sin, he is sinning by doing so. How can a Christian in good conscience act

like someone who jovially mocked Christ on the cross, or someone who seduced Samson, or someone who expresses hatred or greed or lust? In doing so, he is actually glorifying the sin that he claims to decry. I would go further to say that, in most cases, "Christian" novels that portray sin are also glorifying that sin if the author does not make a definitive judgment about the wickedness of the sin. How can a writer describe the lust a man has for a woman without glorifying it?

I disagree that acting is evil because it is always a form of deception. As long as the audience knows that the person is acting, no one is deceived. If my son wants to pretend he is a fireman, everyone knows he is pretending; this is no sin. However, if my son wants to pretend he is a burglar or pretends he is shooting with a gun, this is sin — not because it is deception, but because he is acting the part of wickedness. Acting becomes deception when one of two things occur: 1) the audience does not know that the person is acting and is fooled into thinking that the person is someone he really is not. This is obviously deception. 2) the actor is portraying a historical figure. There is no way that a person can exactly

replicate the words and actions of a historical figure; therefore, anything that the actor does or says that differs from what the historical figure actually did or said is bearing false witness. It follows that drama that includes biblical characters is deception.

The above paragraph also speaks to the article's contention that "acting out the holy life of another is dreadful" (p. 448). I would submit that just acting out the life of another (someone who is actually living or has lived) is dreadful. Acting the part of the holy life of a fictitious person is neither deceptive nor reprehensible. It is akin to a preacher illustrating a point by using fictitious persons. However, acting out such things as "loving" one's spouse can easily cross the border into lust and should be avoided.

In conclusion, you have made me think seriously about the subject and examine my own actions to see if they are pleasing to God. Oh that more Christians would be unafraid to challenge and admonish in these areas! I still have not come to a firm conclusion on all that is involved with media, but I realize that many things that Christians just accept unquestionably are not pleasing to a holy and right-

eous God. I would challenge everyone reading this seriously to consider what is being brought into your house and into the minds of you and your children, including seemingly harmless children's books (both Christian and secular), "Christian" novels, and even books "based on historical facts." Relevant examples of children's books and movies that may seem "okay" are stories like *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Little Mermaid* that portray women in whorish clothing and give a worldly view of "romance"; or the popular *Where's Waldo?* — a book that would disgust you if you took time to look at what is being portrayed in the pictures; or any of a number of cartoons that glorify male-female lust. Even the material you find in Christian bookstores is, for the most part, trash. Focus on the Family's teen magazines, *Brio* and *Breakaway*, are prime examples, and the "Christian" romance novels are introducing church youth to soft porn.

Thank you again for taking on the church's status quo and making people think about purging the leaven from their homes and lives. □

Marc D. Carpenter
Rutland, Vermont

Guest Article

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

The Shameful Sin of Homosexuality (3)

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.

The faithful church of Jesus Christ today is called to speak out on the subject of homosexuality. She is called to bring the light of the gospel to bear on this matter and be light in the darkness.

We are tempted not to speak out.

For one thing, this is an evil so shameful and so repulsive that we hesitate even to mention it. For another thing, to speak out against homosexuality is to invite being labeled as prejudiced and bigoted. There are consequences for those who oppose the homosexuals.

But speak out we must. And speak out we will.

We must speak out on homosexuality, first of all, in order to warn God's people from this sin, or from taking a wrong attitude toward this sin. We must speak out against homosexuality in order that, if it please God, He may use this testimony to bring to repentance those who have fallen into this sin or have entertained a wrong view of this sin. And, finally, we must speak out on the subject of homosexuality because God Himself speaks on this subject.

The most complete treatment of this evil in Holy Scripture is to be found in Romans 1. In Romans 1 we have a very full description of the sin of homosexuality, its cause, and its judgment by God. We do well to examine this passage carefully.

An Especially Shameful Sin

The sin spoken of in Romans 1 is the sin of homosexuality—the sexual desire of a person for a member of his own sex, whether of a woman for a woman or of a man for a man, and the carrying out of that desire in a sexual relationship. The apostle Paul speaks in verse 26 of "...women (who) did change the natural use into that which is against nature." And in verse 27, "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."

The sin of homosexuality is a sin that has to do with the fundamental physical differences between men and women, with the sexual nature of human beings, and with the sexual relationship and activity. For this reason the apostle does not use the ordinary words for "men" and "women" in Romans 1, but throughout actually uses words that could better be translated "males" and "females." "For even their *females* did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the *males*, leaving the natural use of the *females*, burned in their lust one

toward another; *males* with *males* working that which is unseemly..." (Rom. 1:26, 27).

In this passage the apostle describes this sin as a very *shameful* evil. In verse 26 he speaks of it as "vile," that is, shameful, disgraceful, dishonorable. In verse 27 he describes it as "unseemly," something indecent, ugly, and altogether filthy. In verse 28 he says that the homosexuals "do those things which are not *convenient*," that is, they practice those things which are not befitting a human being, not proper.

The sin of homosexuality is not one shameful sin among many; it is the sin that most fully reveals and most fully works out the shame of sin. This is the apostle's point in Romans 1. That is plain from the fact, first, that the apostle is here describing the very end, the fullest development of the unrighteousness and ungodliness of men apart from the gospel. That is

Homosexuality defies the very order and makeup of God's original creation.

what he is doing in Romans 1. And what is that fullest development of the depravity of sinful man? It is the sin of homosexuality. Second, this is the idea of the word "working" in verse 27: "Men with men *working* that which is unseemly." That word "working" means "to work out fully, to develop completely." That is what homosexuality is, the working out fully of the sinfulness of fallen man. And third, the apostle teaches the grossness of the sin of homosexuality when he speaks of God giving men and women up to this sin. Three times in Romans 1 (in verses 24, 26, and 28) the apostle says that God gives the homosexual up to his homosexuality. That indicates development in sin, and that homosexuality is the fullest development of man's sinfulness.

The reason why the sin of homo-

sexuality is an especially shameful sin is that it is a sin contrary to nature itself. Homosexuality is contrary to the revealed will of God in Holy Scripture, to be sure. But in addition, it is contrary to the fundamental order of God in creation. That is why Paul says in verse 26 that women change the "natural" use into that which is against "nature." And in verse 27 he speaks of men leaving the "natural" use of the woman. Homosexuality is against nature, is unnatural, defies the very order and makeup of God's original creation. Even the physical anatomy of men and women indicates that homosexuality is against nature.

One thing is plain. Homosexuality is not a normal lifestyle, a natural sexual preference. Homosexuality is unnatural, hideous, and a perversion.

But What About Homosexual Desire?

Granted that the apostle Paul in Romans 1 roundly condemns homosexual practice, must this condemnation be extended to homosexual desire? There are many today who are willing (albeit reluctantly) to admit that the Scriptures condemn homosexual practice, but they argue that this condemnation does not extend to the desire of one for another of the same sex. This was the conclusion of the report adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1973.

Supposedly, homosexual desire is something that an individual cannot help and for which he cannot be held responsible. The homosexual nature is something that an individual is born with. His being a homosexual is due to his being a victim of his makeup, his genes and chromosomes.

To understand Paul in Romans 1 to be condemning homosexual practice while permitting homosexual desire is either careless reading of Romans 1 or, more likely, deliberate distortion of the apostle's teaching.

Clearly, he condemns homosexual practice. As clearly he condemns homosexual desire.

The Bible throughout condemns not only sinful deeds, but the lusts out

of which those deeds arise. Think once of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Not only does He condemn murder, but He condemns also hatred of the brother; He forbids not only adultery, but also looking on a woman and lusting after her in the heart.

So it is with homosexuality. It is not just the practice, but the "vile affections" towards homosexuality that Paul condemns in Romans 1:26. In verse 27 he speaks of men burning "in their lust" one toward another. And in verse 28 the apostle speaks of the "reprobate mind" from which the sinful deeds of homosexuality proceed.

... the sin of the homosexual is deliberate disobedience.

For both the sin and the passion out of which it proceeds, the homosexual is responsible. He is not a helpless victim of his makeup. He is responsible. Strikingly, the apostle emphasizes that the sin of the homosexual is *deliberate* disobedience. In verse 26 he speaks of women who "change" the natural use, actively and deliberately "change" what they know is the natural use. In verse 27 he speaks of men who "leave," again, actively and deliberately "leave" the natural use of the woman. And in that same verse he says that they actively "work" that which is unseemly.

Even the "experts" indicate that it is a myth to suppose that one is simply born a homosexual, with the inclination to homosexuality. Dr. Charles Socarides, M.D., writing in the *Journal of American Medicine*, has said, "Homosexuality is not innate or inborn, but is rather a learned process." *Time* magazine, in a feature article on homosexuality, stated: "About the only thing that most experts (in the field of homosexual behavior) agree on is that homosexuality is not the result of some kinky gene or hormone predisposition. Biologically homosexuals do not constitute a third sex; they are full men and women." No scientist or genetic re-

searcher has been able to provide any convincing evidence that anybody is born a homosexual. Most homosexuals themselves admit that at some point in their life they consciously chose homosexuality. And even if it can be argued that there are those who have a homosexual nature, have we forgotten that God holds us responsible not just for our sins but also for our sinful natures?

What about Monogamous Homosexual Relationships?

There are some who argue that Paul is not condemning all homosexuality, homosexuality per se, in Romans 1. What the apostle is condemning, they contend, is *promiscuous* homosexuality. This was what characterized the heathen homosexuals of his day. And it was this that the apostle found offensive and incompatible with the faithfulness to which the gospel calls the Christian. The apostle's point, then, in Romans 1 is that regardless of whether you are homosexual or heterosexual, be faithful to your sexual partner.

What an absurdity! It is about as ridiculous to speak of a monogamous homosexual as it is to speak of a monogamous polygamist. For all practical purposes, there is no such creature. The statistics, as we saw in an earlier article, bear this out. The homosexual lifestyle is a promiscuous lifestyle. The average homosexual has hundreds of "lovers."

Even if a monogamous homosexual relationship were possible, that relationship, too, is condemned by the Word of God in Romans 1. For it is all homosexuality, monogamous, promiscuous, or otherwise, that is condemned. Condemned are those who leave the natural use and burn in their lust "one toward another." Everyone and anyone who burns in his lust for another of the same sex works that which is unseemly and receives from God the due recompense of his error.

Neither is Romans 1 to be understood as merely the Jewish tradition's regard for homosexuality, not necessarily Paul's or God's viewpoint. This is Dr. Hendrik Hart's suggestion

in "Romans Revisited: How I Came to See Paul's References to Homosexuality in a Radically New Light." The CRC scholar writes:

It occurred to me that this section (Romans 1:18-32) might present not Paul's own proclamation of God's condemnation of sin, but the Jewish tradition's understanding of the consequences of sin—the wrath of God. Paul, in contrast to the view expressed in 1:18-32, would see sin as needing a different approach, one based in the justice of God which is mercy.

Where is the proof for such a preposterous contention? Unbelievable! Paul is made to contradict Paul! And this is supposed to be "newlight"!

Romans 1 is not the Jewish tradition's condemnation of homosexuality, but the gospel's condemnation of homosexuality, verse 16. It is not Jewish prejudice that condemns the homosexual, but the righteous God who forbids this shameful sin. Paul's conclusion says it all: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (v. 32).

A Definite Cause

Behind this sin of homosexuality, both in the life of the individual and in the life of a society, stands a definite cause.

The cause is that God Himself gives men and women up to this sin. Three times in Romans 1 the apostle speaks of God "giving men up."

In the past, men have appealed to this expression in support of the teaching of common grace, the teaching that there is a gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in the unregenerate restraining sin, so that there is still some good in them and so that they can do some good works. The argument is that if God gives men over to sin, before He gives them over He must be restraining them, keeping them from being as sinful as they would otherwise be and enabling them to do good.

Against this interpretation stands

the clear teaching of the entire passage. This is one of the most outstanding passages in all of Scripture teaching the total depravity of the human race. The chapter speaks not of God's love for sinners, but of His hatred and judgment of sinners. There is no mention of God restraining sinners, but of His giving over of sinners.

God's giving up of men to sin certainly indicates development, but it is development *in sin*. It is not development from good to bad, but development from bad to worse. The example is not of someone who is very sick, but still alive, who is given over to death. But the example is of someone who has just recently died, in contrast to a corpse of several months. Both are equally dead. But there is development, degeneration. The corpse of several months stinks more, is more rotten, and much more repulsive. That is the development in sin that the apostle has in mind in Romans 1.

That God gives men and women up to homosexuality indicates that homosexuality is punishment. It is not only itself terrible sin. But it is the punishment of sin. God punishes sin with sin. This is exactly what God is doing when He gives men and women up to homosexuality.

The sin for which homosexuality is punishment is man's refusal to glorify and worship God. "For this cause," verse 26 begins. For what cause? For man's rejection of the truth about God. Although man knows God, knows that there is a God and that this God ought to be served, he willfully rejects God and refuses to worship Him. That comes out also in verse 28: "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 is God's

Acknowledgment: The expression of many of the concepts set forth in this installment of my series on homosexuality is heavily dependent on an earlier series on the same subject, written by Rev. David Engelsma, in *SB* volumes 57 and 58. [RC]

just punishment of those who reject and dishonor Him. God gives them up to dishonor themselves!

Why is our society threatened by homosexuals? Because our society has rejected God, refuses to honor God, will not obey even the most fundamental commandments of the law of God. Does anyone seriously doubt this about modern American society? Why are churches threatened by homosexuals? Because what is true of our society is true as well of the vast number of churches.

God's Judgment on the Homosexual

Those who commit the sin of homosexuality and go on impenitent in this sin fall under divine judgment. The God who gives them over to this sin also punishes them for the sin.

That judgment is expressed in verse 27: "...receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." That refers to God's judgment in their own body, the venereal diseases, the AIDS, the hepatitis, and more. That includes God's recompense in their whole life, including the ruin of their family life and their psychological life.

The message of the church does not exclude the possibility of the salvation of the homosexual.

Ultimately the judgment of God is death. That is verse 32, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death...." Death now and death eternal hereafter. That judgment of God was vividly pictured in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. They died under the fire and the brimstone.

The church must reflect this divine judgment. The condemnation of this sin and God's judgment over those who are guilty of this sin must be expressed in the public preaching. This judgment of God must also be expressed in the exercise of Christian

discipline. The church will discipline the homosexual, then, out of a concern for the glory of God, as well as out of love for the homosexual who is in bondage to this awful sin.

There is only one hope of escape from this divine judgment, and that one hope is the gospel. That is the message of Romans 1. The church that preaches the gospel is not motivated by pride. We must never suppose that we could never fall into this sin. People of God, this is what we are and what we are capable of apart from God's grace.

Nor does the message of the church exclude the possibility of the salvation of the homosexual. Not at all! I Corinthians 6:9-11 makes plain that there were saints in the church of Corinth who had been "effeminate" and "abusers of themselves with mankind." But they were now washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Spirit of God. Because of this cleansing, they were no longer homosexuals: "such *were* some of you," Paul writes in I Corinthians 6:11.

The gospel gives hope of deliverance to the homosexual sinner, in the way of repentance. Only the gospel gives this hope, for only the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. What a power, then, the gospel is to deliver even from a sin like this!

— to be concluded. □

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Leaven

Leaven is yeast, a substance made of one-celled, microscopic plants which multiply rapidly in the presence of heat and moisture. When yeast reacts with flour it produces a gas (CO₂) which causes the dough to rise; when the dough is kneaded, the bubbles of gas are broken down so that the resulting bread is of uniform texture and lightness. Leaven, given time, works through the entire mass of dough so that no part is left untouched. "Leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (I Cor. 5:6). In Scripture, with one exception, leaven is given a negative, sinful connotation; we are warned against this leaven sharply.

The one exception is the parable of Jesus (Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:21) in which He likens the kingdom of heaven to leaven which a woman places in three measures of flour. The invisible power of the kingdom is the Holy Spirit working with the preached Word. As leaven, the preaching takes time to do its work. As leaven, the preaching penetrates into every part of the church and her membership, bringing even their thoughts into captivity to Christ. We are called to be patient in this regard. As you cannot see leaven doing its work throughout the lump, so we do not always see fruit upon the preaching, at least not as much or as quickly as we would like. But the work is sure and the kingdom is safe.

For the rest, the biblical teaching regarding leaven is of a warning nature. Jesus rages against the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1), against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees which is false doctrine (Matt. 16:6), and against the leaven of the Herodians which is worldly compromise (Mark 8:15). Add to this Paul's warning, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9) and we see that false doctrine, be it ever so small and innocent seeming, will work its way through the whole body of doctrine until it is all thoroughly corrupted. If justification is by circumcision or any human work, Christ shall profit you nothing. Our works are not the whole, or the smallest part, of our righteousness before God.

Not only does false doctrine work as leaven, but this is true of sin as well. The burden of Paul in I Corinthians 5 is to show that a lack of discipline in the church will have two perilous results: 1) Sin unconfessed and unforsaken (here fornication) will work its way through the impenitent's life so that in time all sins are practiced and no sin is abhorred or confessed, and 2) Sin not rooted out by discipline will spread as leaven throughout the congregation, so that the entire congregation comes under the wrath of God. Specifically, Paul calls leaven malice and wickedness, while being unleavened spiritually is sincerity and truth (v. 8).

The New Testament teaching on leaven is based squarely on the Feast of Unleavened Bread that was instituted when Israel was delivered out of Egypt (Ex. 12:15-20). During the seven days following the Passover Feast the Israelites might not eat leavened bread or have any leaven in their houses. One reason for this was the haste required (v. 11), and the fact that they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry (v. 39). But the reason goes deeper. Unleavened bread pointed to holiness of heart and conduct which becomes the ransomed people of God. Sincerity and truth ought to characterize all their behavior. Symbolically, this taught what is clearly revealed in the New Testament, that Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed to redeem unto Himself a people who put off the old man and his sins and are made new creatures in Christ (I Cor. 5:7). □

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Lesson 8

Officebearers in the Church

I Timothy 3:1-7

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless...."

A few introductory remarks are in order.

We are considering now what the sacred Scriptures say concerning the office of a bishop. In the first place, we notice that this office, that of a bishop, is limited to men only. We need not repeat. See our former lessons: Christian women are excluded. See I Timothy 2:2-15.

In the second place, we should notice that this office in its very nature is instituted for the New Testament church; it would never befit the church of God in the time of the Old Testament shadows. The Old Testament offices were also limited to men. The offices in the Temple were limited to the priests from the tribe of Levi.

Thirdly, the common offices in the New Testament were instituted by Paul in the churches everywhere (Tit. 1:5; I Tim. 5:17; Acts 14:23).

The Office of an Overseer-Bishop (v. 1)

We must not think here that Paul refers to the Romish perversion of the office of bishop which erroneously is held to be the continuation of the

apostolic office of Peter. According to the teaching of the Romish church, Peter, above all the other apostles, was vested with the keys of the kingdom of heaven. However, this key-power was in reality vested in the words which the apostles would *one and all* speak (John 20:19-23). As we will presently notice, this office of a "bishop" is given to the teaching and ruling elders, as well as to the appointed deacon and his helper. It is, therefore, far better to understand this in the sense of the Greek word *episcopus*.

When the Holy Spirit writes in verse 2 that "a bishop then must be blameless," this refers to all the common New Testament offices as we recognize them in the Reformed churches: ministers of the Gospel and ruling elders. Of these Paul speaks, and of none other, when he congratulates a man who desires this office. This office of "overseer" is a good work. In these offices the full and entire spiritual needs of the church of the living God are supplied.

Why are these denominated "good"?

These offices are good (*kalos*) because they accomplished the wise and good design and wisdom of God. These are no mere inventions of men. They are gifts of God to the church. They are gifts from the exalted Christ (see Psalm 68:18; Eph. 4:7-16).

A matter can be ethically good (Matt. 19:16, 17). God is good, not merely because He is useful to a worthy end. He is good also in the impli-

cations of all ethical perfections. A tree can be good in that it serves the needs of the hungry; but that tree can also be good in that it is all it ought to be. There is a very beautiful nuance of Scripture in God's account of the creation which He made. The great God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. But He also created in it a beautiful design. On each creation day the Creator made a different part of the earthly creation. Read Genesis 1:1-31. Notice how often we read: "and God saw that it was good." The last occurrence of that expression is in fact this: "and God saw everything that he had made and behold it was *very good*." The adjective here in the Hebrew is *thob*. Hebrew dictionaries give the meaning of *thob* to be: good, serving the Divine purpose.

Now, what is worth noticing? It is that the Septuagint translators write here, not *agathos* (ethically good, although men and angels were that) but *kalos*. Each part of the six-day creation fits in perfectly with the enhancement of the whole. All perfectly accord with the beautiful world-cosmos of God. It did so not only *then*, but also ever afterwards in the ages to come: a new heaven and a new earth.

Yes, the offices of minister, elder, and deacon too fit perfectly. They accord perfectly with the image of God in man: prophet, king, and priest.

The Good Office Requires a Blameless Man

We would aim far from the mark if we would confuse the spiritual re-

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ality and seek a *sinless* man. We say it reverently: Christ would defeat His own wise purpose were that the implication of "blameless." The most holy of all the saints has but a "small beginning" of the new obedience. The truth of the matter is that to be blameless, as intended by the Holy Spirit in I Timothy 3:2, refers to our sins and faults as men and women judge of us. It is not as God judges our hearts. To this we will come in our next lesson.

We might at this point entertain the question why the great and glorious God calls weak humans, men with many faults and imperfections, to lofty tasks as He assigns them to this office of overseers. Calvin raises this heart-searching question in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. It is a great and worthy token of God's wisdom. It requires a very humble heart to receive the word from men who are not without sin. God does not come to us to speak to us as He did at Sinai, does He? (See Ex. 20:18-20; Deut. 5:27; 18:15-17.) And does Paul not write in II Corinthians 4:1-7 that God uses weak vessels in order that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us?

Yet, preachers, elders, and deacons "must" be blameless. All officebearers must walk as becometh the Gospel. They must not walk in the oldness of the letter; but in the newness of the spirit they are to serve in God's church (Rom. 7:5, 6).

a. Ministers, elders, and deacons must be the "husband of one wife" (I Tim. 3:2). See also Titus 1:6-8. Thus was God's marriage ordinance from the beginning (Matt. 19:3-9).

b. Only as the husband of one wife can he be a solid father, a good example to his children. All polygamy is forbidden. He must reflect the mystery of marriage, the eternal picture of Christ and His church (Eph. 5:31-33).

c. A bishop, minister, elder, and deacon must have faithful children. They must not be riotous or unruly. The father must command respect as a sober man does.

d. Vigilant is sober, temperate. Compare Titus 2:1, 2. Hence, he must

ever give heed to sound doctrine. He must ever be alert in the battle with Satan and all his hosts (I Pet. 5:8).

e. Hence, of *good behavior*. He must be adorned with godliness as becometh a saint.

f. "Given to hospitality." He must take care of the wayfaring stranger. (Compare Hebrews 13:2.) It might be that he would be entertaining even angels unawares (Gen. 18:3; 19:2). Surely a minister must ever keep in mind that he too was once a stranger from the covenants and promises, without hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:19-22).

g. "Apt to teach." A bishop must not argue in word-strife, but he must ever teach all things which Christ has revealed. He must not hold back to preach the full counsel of God. Only thus will he be free from the blood of his hearers. He is not a lawyer, but he must have the heart of a preacher as one sent by the King of the church (Rom. 10:15; II Tim. 2:19-26). Thus he follows in the footsteps of Jesus (see Matt. 4:23-25).

h. A preacher must not be a stubborn, *self-willed* man (Tit. 1:7). He must ever remember that in God's church he is as a preacher, a "steward of God." The church is not the property of the officebearers; the church, the body of Christ, is the living temple of the living God. Stewards must know their place. Mere under-rowers they are. Under Christ they toil and labor in the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God. What happens to unfaithful stewards Jesus teaches us in Luke 16:2. The conduct of stewards is within the house of God. Yet, notwithstanding, he can do this because he has received not the spirit of cowardliness but of power and of love and of a sober mind (II Tim. 1:7).

i. Every preacher, elder, and deacon must know how to rule his own house well. The verb "to rule" in the Greek means "to be set over, to be set before" (see Rom. 12:8; I Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17). The minister must have a model home in the midst of the congregation. It must be evident that, as he is faithful in leading, guiding, loving, and protecting his wife and chil-

dren, God deems him also able to be a model servant in His church.

Finally, Paul writes very definitely, with apostolic authority, that the above list is not applicable to a "novice." A novice is one who was recently gathered into the church — quite likely from heathendom. He is not spiritually matured, nor is he yet deeply rooted in the truth of the Gospel. He is unfit for the office, or at least not yet fit.

Paul writes, very soberly about this matter. The devil has not hoodwinked him. He knows the sins and weaknesses of young preachers. Satan knows his times and opportunities. He would bring into the church false and unsound doctrine, through the pulpit. He plays on the vanity of a young novice. A little learning is a dangerous thing. If even a Timothy needed the admonition not to depart from sound doctrine (I Tim. 1:18; 6:20, 21; 4:13-16; II Tim. 1:5-14, etc.), how much more do all "matured" men not need to be reminded of being fearless in the battle. We all need to be able, at the end of our ministry, to confess with Paul what he writes in II Timothy 4:6, 7, 7!

Paul does not write for nought the admonition which we find in I Timothy 5:22! O the torment of the "novice" who comes under the same judgment from God that befell the devil when in pride he fell from his "first estate" (Jude 6).

Moreover, a novice must have a good report. Even if he preaches and teaches good, sound doctrine, a novice must have a good report before unbelievers in the world. A novice must not become subjected to the reproach and ridicule of the unbelieving world. Then the preaching of the Gospel is evilly spoken of. Yes, the very name of God and his doctrine is blasphemed (I Tim. 6:1). Notice the jealousy of God for His Name, as this is to be honored by His people, and how the mouth of those who speak against the Gospel must be stopped (Tit. 1:6-11). See also Isaiah 52:5, 6; Romans 2:2, 22-29. □

Heaven on Earth?: The Social & Political Agendas of Dominion Theology, by Bruce Barron. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. 238 pages, \$12.99 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

Pat Robertson's try for the United States presidency in 1988 made many aware of a determination in American evangelicalism to Christianize this nation. In this fittingly titled book, the author examines several distinct movements that have this goal. In at least one instance, the purpose is to Christianize the entire world.

These movements are "Christian Reconstruction," associated with R.J. Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, and others; the "Kingdom Now" movement of charismatic Earl Paulk; and the movement to return America to its supposedly Christian foundations centered in Pat Robertson's Regent University.

That which unites these otherwise dissimilar men and movements is their belief that God wills the Christianizing of the United States. By this is meant that the nation will be governed by the law of God. The key word is "dominion." Christians must and will exercise earthly power that controls the nation, its entire life, and all its citizens. Christian Reconstruction expects the Christianizing of all the nations. The church will have dominion over the whole world prior to the coming of Christ.

Barron has researched his subject well. He is helpful in pointing out the theological principles of each of the groups, as well as their practical tactics for achieving dominion.

All dominion theology bases itself on the creation mandate of Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion...." Christian Reconstruction adds the argument from its postmillennialism. The charismatics get revelations from the

Holy Spirit about the mission to make America Christian. Herb Titus at Regent is convinced that the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution were written to be Christian documents. The effort to Christianize the United States, therefore, has legal basis in the foundation of the nation and is only a returning of the country to what it was originally.

Intriguing is the alliance between the free-willist, charismatic Paulk and his crowd and the Calvinistic Christian reconstructionists. A leading charismatic hosted a seminar in 1984

at which leading Reconstructionists spoke. An estimated one thousand charismatic pastors attended and responded positively, furthering North's hope that the charismatics would expand their faith in God's miracle-working power to include the healing of society as well as of individuals.... The interactions expanded as Peacocke arranged conferences in 1986 and 1987 and channeled members of both groups into his Anatole Fellowship and the CPPC. North, DeMar, and Joe Morecraft addressed conferences held by Paulk's church and by Maranatha Ministries... (p. 94).

Reconstructionist Joe Morecraft looks forward to a marriage between charismatic Paulk's Kingdom Now and Christian Reconstruction (pp. 92, 93). In the interests of the alliance, reconstructionist Gary North now concedes the basic charismatic contention that genuine charismatic gifts are still being worked by the Spirit in the church (p. 95).

As it has always done, the dream of an earthly kingdom of God makes strange bedfellows. Earl Paulk of Kingdom Now, in addition to embracing all the foolishness of the charismatic movement and all the heresies of dispensationalism, teaches the restoration of New Testament apostles (as part of his "five-fold ministry"). He also teaches that people are "little gods."

The book notes the opposition to dominion theology in evangelical circles on the part of the pluralists. These people, including Os Guinness and James Skillen, argue for the freedom of all religions. Their view was expressed in the Williamsburg Charter of 1988.

Correctly, Barron observes that the fundamental issue in all of this is the relationship of evangelical Christians to secular society. Some evangelicals are appealing to Abraham Kuyper's theory of common grace to show the way.

Has anyone in evangelicalism ever noticed the biblical doctrine of the antithesis? ■

Saying Yes and Saying No: On Rendering to God and Caesar, by Robert McAfee Brown, The Westminster Press, 1986. 143pp., \$8.99 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. Herman Hanko.]

When I first picked up this book I was attracted to the subtitle: "On Rendering to God and Caesar," and I hoped that, though Robert McAfee Brown was a well-known liberal theologian, he might have some useful things to say about the relation between church and state. The book had nothing to do with this question, and was, from every point of view, a disappointment.

The problem which Brown tackles in the book is that we want to render to Caesar what is God's, and Caesar always tries to be God. Caesar is synonymous with gas chambers, apartheid, neutron bombs, Reagan economics, the Moral Majority, anti-feminists, the manufacture of napalm, buying stocks in Honeywell, discrimination against any minority including gays and lesbians. To all this we must say, No; for only in saying "No" to Caesar are we able to say "Yes" to God.

So, to say "Yes" to God means

that we are supporters of flag burners, feminists, Sandanistas in Nicaragua, those who provide sanctuary in their churches for illegal aliens, those who engage in civil disobedience, and those who support every single cause invented by the fuzzy-thinking liberals in our land and abroad who are intent on pushing their own anti-biblical agenda.

The book is packed with heresy. Brown explains Scripture to fit his own assumptions and contemptuously waves aside any Scripture which contradicts his viewpoint — as, e.g., the imprecatory Psalms. Abraham Joshua Heschel (noted Jewish liberal) is a prophet on a par with Isaiah. Brown freely uses such expressions as: "God takes form within us" (47), "God needs us," "God has placed us in the midst of an unfinished creation and given us the task of helping bring it to fulfillment" (49).

The book made for fascinating reading, if for no other reason than that one gets a clear and frightening

look into what liberal theologians are doing in our country today. ■

Warnings to the Churches, by J.C. Ryle. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967; reprint 1992. 171 pp, \$4.95 (paper). [Reviewed by the Editor.]

The eight sermons and articles that make up the book have this in common that they are warnings against evils that always threaten the true church. Although John Charles Ryle, bishop of Liverpool (d. 1900), addressed these warnings originally to his beloved church of England, they are applicable to the church in every age. The chapter headings are: "The True Church"; "Not Corrupting the Word"; "Give Thyself Wholly to Them" (a charge to preachers); "Pharisees and Sadducees"; "Divers and Strange Doctrines"; "The Fallibility of Ministers"; "Apostolic Fears"; and "Idolatry."

The urgency of these warnings

for the church in our day appears in Ryle's condemnation of the notion that false doctrine should be tolerated in the church for the sake of peace.

I believe this is all wrong. We have no right to expect anything but the pure Gospel of Christ, unmixed and unadulterated, — the same Gospel that was taught by the Apostles, — to do good to the souls of men. I believe that to maintain this pure truth in the Church men should be ready to make any sacrifice, to hazard peace, to risk dissension, and run the chance of division. *They should no more tolerate false doctrine than they would tolerate sin* (p. 105).

Peculiar emphasis is lent to these warnings by the fact that the Church of England, disregarding them, is now perilously close to becoming a false church.

Ryle, Calvinistic in his theology, has a lively style and practical concerns. The book is profitable reading. □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

The readers of the "News" will have to forgive me if I become a little personal with regard to commenting about this year's Young People's Convention held on the campus of Dordt College and sponsored by the young people of the PR congregations of Doon and Hull, IA and the First PRC of Edgerton, MN. This year marked the first year that our sons were old enough to attend. So attend they did, and by all accounts they had a really worthwhile and memorable stay in Iowa.

From all indications (and we have heard from parents and young people alike), this year's convention, the 53rd

annual, was a success. Monday, August 2, the young people started the convention with a variety of games, followed by Rev. Spriensma's speech in the evening. There was a hayride and a bonfire to end the day. Tuesday marked the first discussion groups, based on the theme, "Lessons From our Beginning." This was followed by a trip to Wild Water West in Sioux Falls for the Juniors, and a trip to Lake Okoboji for the Seniors. Wednesday started with more discussion groups based on "Presenting the PR Faith to Friends." In the afternoon there was an Old-Fashioned Picnic, and that evening Rev. Koole gave his speech. Thursday, the last full day of the convention, started with a debate, which was followed by water fights in the afternoon. The Banquet was that evening, followed by a speech given by Rev. VanOverloop. The young people then went skating, after which there was a lock-in on campus. Fri-

day saw the day start with a late breakfast, some closing comments, and the trip back home.

A special word of thanks should also go to the three congregations involved — especially for opening their homes to many of the conventioners that first weekend in Iowa before the actual start of the convention. Your hospitality not only set the tone for that week, but it doubtless also added to the spiritual benefit as well.

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On August 6-8, the Sovereign Grace Church of Spokane, WA, along with their pastor, Rev. Robert Hargrove, sponsored a conference on the topic, "The Defense of Calvinism as the Gospel." Three of the speakers at this conference were from our own PR churches: Revs. Tom Miersma, Arie den Hartog, and Carl Haak. Five sessions were planned; "Calvinism as the Gospel," "The Call of the Gos-

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pel," "Conditionality vs. Unconditionality," "Calvinistic World and Life View," and "The Hope and Duty of Missions."

Congregational Highlights

At its August meeting, the Council of the Hudsonville, MI PRC passed a resolution submitted by the "Georgetown area" PR church steering committee to begin holding worship services the first Sunday in September at the Bauer Elementary School on 48th Ave., just south of Bauer Road in Bauer, MI. The following week an informational meeting was held at Hudsonville for all interested families. At that meeting, 23 families expressed their interest and intent to be part of this new daughter church from Hudsonville. Many decisions were made that night and many have yet to be made, but the process has begun and, the Lord willing, with a lot of work and much

prayer, there soon will be one more congregation in West Michigan.

The Council of the Peace PRC of Lynwood, IL announced to their congregation recently that they had exceeded by some \$7,000.00 the goal which had been set as a balance required in order to begin building. The Building Committee continues to work on the blueprints, which are almost completed. Peace is also moving toward the finalization of annexation to the city of Lansing. Peace will not be able to begin building until these two matters have been concluded.

School News

The PR School Society of Randolph, WI met recently and adopted their Board's proposal to "Proceed with the remodeling of the VanBaren building at a total cost not to exceed \$20,000, with a view to starting school operations in August,

1994." This decision paves the way for much planning and work that has yet to be done in the coming months. Let us all remember this cause with our prayers and, if possible, generous financial support.

In what seems like a contradiction in terms, there was a plea issued to the supporters of Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA to join together for a workout. Do you like to pull weeds, hammer, scrape, etc...? You name it. Come with rakes, shovels, hammers, hands, and legs, and meet at the school for its annual cleanup. They even tried to entice the supporters by calling it fun-work.

Food for Thought

"Learning may be usefully employed; but if learning ever forgets that it must sit at the feet of Jesus it will be a curse instead of a blessing."

— Robert Haldane □

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Study Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of one of our members,

SIDNEY VANDER WAL

May his wife, Irene, and family find comfort in the words of Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President
Mrs. Christine Batts, Secretary

THE STANDARD BEARER

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We rejoiced with our parents,
**HENRY and LORNA VANDER
VENNEN,**

as they observed their 40th wedding anniversary on September 4, 1993.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for providing us a covenant home where we were taught to walk in the light.

"I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

- * John and Linda VanUffelen
Daniel, Lora, Jeffrey, Sarah
- * Daryl and Sharon Kuiper
Kristin, Katie, Jonathan, Kerrie,
Karissa
- * Todd and Cynthia Miedema
Melissa, Leanne, Danae
- * Jeffrey and Kathy Terpstra
Lindsey, Kelsey

Grand Rapids, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society, Ruth of Hope (Walker, MI) mourns the loss of a faithful member:

MISS SYBIL ENGELSMA,

who entered into eternal glory on August 20, 1993. We express sincere Christian sympathy to her sisters and sisters-in-law, Mrs. J. Bomers, Mrs. G. Terpstra, Mrs. D. Engelsma, and Mrs. G. Engelsma. We also express our sympathy to them in the death of their brother and brother-in-law,

MR. TED ENGELSMA.

May the bereaved family be comforted by II Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Mr. Tom DeVries, President
Evelyn Langerak, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 27, 1993, our dear parents,

RAYMOND and JEAN EZINGA,
celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

We rejoice with them and are thankful to our covenant God for the godly upbringing, love, and care they have given us these many years. May God continue to bless and keep them in the years that He may give them.

"The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Psalm 128:5, 6).

- * Steven and Jody Ezinga
Richard, Matthew, Andrew
- * Larry and Pam Kooienga
Jack, Mark, Kelly, Lee, Paula,
Dale
- * Robert and Tammy VanUffelen
Stephanie, Derek, Ashley

Loveland, Colorado

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary/Martha Society of the Redlands congregation would like to express its sincerest sympathy to Mary Gail Gaastra and her family, in the death of her mother,

MRS. SUE MOUW.

May they find comfort in the words of I Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Pastor denHartog, President
Tammy VanUffelen, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of Faith Protestant Reformed Church express Christian sympathy to our fellow officebearer, Elder Arie Griffioen and his family in the death of his mother,

MRS. HARRIET GRIFFIOEN.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Rev. K. Koole, President
A. Brummel, Assistant Clerk

NOTICE!!!

Annual RFP Meeting
September 30, 1993, 8 p.m.
Hudsonville PR Church

Men, women, young people, families — the organization responsible for the publication of the *Standard Bearer* (Reformed Free Publishing Association) encourages you to attend its annual meeting. The focal point of the evening will be a speech by Rev. VanBaren on the subject: "Evangelism and the *Standard Bearer*." In addition, new members will be received, reports concerning the finances and activities of the RFP Board during the past year will be read, and new board members will be elected from a nomination consisting of Michael Bosveld, John Kalsbeek, Sr., Henry Kamps, Cornie Kamps, Harry Langerak, and Mark Vanden Berg. This meeting marks the beginning of the 70th year of the publication of the *Standard Bearer*. You will not want to miss the historic event.