

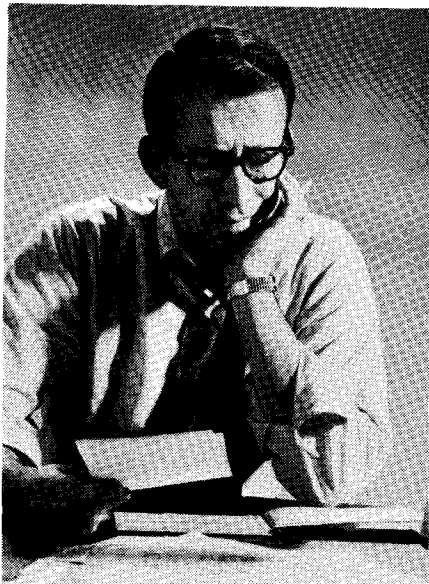
The Presbyterian Guardian



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Letters

"Stimulating"!

Today has been a surprisingly (and unusually) slow day, and I have had opportunity to do something that I have been intending to do. That is, I sat down and read the June issue of the *Guardian* from cover to cover.

I must say, there is only one word for it: "stimulating." No, I haven't agreed with everything included in it; yes, I was prompted to turn to the Word of God in several instances and found myself being educated and edified.

Congratulations on a superb issue. In more ways than one, the *Guardian* is in a class by itself.

Wayne C. Herring, pastor
Faith Presbyterian Church
Birmingham, Alabama

An appreciation

I am pleased to write, although I am afraid it will be poorly done. I am in a nursing home, but my dear cousin brought me the *Guardian* which I have read for many years. My dear husband went to be with the Lord in June 1976.

My reason for writing is to tell how much I appreciate an article like the one by Mrs. Kepple (in the June issue) I'm glad to have lived that long! The one on "A. A." is also worthy of the *Guardian*.

God bless the *Guardian*.

Sarah G. (Mrs. J. L.) Bryan
Trenton, New Jersey

Our system works

This is an open letter to the General Assembly just past, as well as to all the brothers and sisters, of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Although it was my first (and hopefully last) judicial involvement, and even though I failed to win in two church courts, I wish to acknowledge the following: (1) our system works well; and (2) members of my presbytery and the assembly could have scarcely done more to manifest a spirit of genuinely loving concern for me.

Concerning the first point: The entire matter covered some twenty-one months and throughout it my rights were scrup-

ulously cared for. I am proud to be (and remain) a Presbyterian. Concerning the second: After Elmer Dortzbach prayed at the assembly, I remarked to him that if Luther had been showered with such *agape* at Worms he might have recanted. This is to the praise of a Church before the watching world. (I hope everyone present at the assembly will not forget how I belabored the point that any similarities between Worms and Oostburg were basically formal ones!)

At the time this letter is being composed, my future presbyterial relationship is still unresolved. [Ed.-The effect of the assembly's decision was to uphold a presbytery judgment that would suspend Dr. Countess from the office of the ministry.] By the close of 1977 it will be clarified one way or another.

My views on Sabbath liberty are more strongly embraced now *vis a vis* the dialog at the assembly, because the more I listened to the interpretations of the fourth commandment, the more I realized that the Puritan position taken by the Westminster Confession is unscriptural and not literally held by members of the assembly (not even to mention the fact that it is not literally practiced). Disagreement as to what is allowable on the Sabbath is much greater among Orthodox Presbyterians than I had heretofore realized; e. g., I was amazed to learn of some of the activities of those I had regarded as strict keepers of a Puritan Sabbath.

Undoubtedly there are—and will be—great struggles in individual consciences of those who play chess, throw ball, take walks and drives, eat out, listen to Bach, *et. al., etc.*, who at the same time voted to deny my appeal. I well understand these struggles, for they are unavoidably engendered by attempts to *literally* apply the fourth commandment to believers of the New Covenant. Eventually the assembly is going to have to eradicate *all* recreations with an Index of some sort, OR adopt a position (*a la* Romans 14) that allows believers to practice in faith the activities mentioned above. (It is interesting to me that after returning from the assembly, I learned via conversation with a member of the church bringing charges against me that one of the signers of the charges admitted to throwing ball with his son on Sunday.)

In conclusion, the assembly must even-
(Continued on page 12.)

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Letters on HOMOSEXUALITY

A Bombshell?

In an otherwise good article (May and June 1977), Mr. Case dropped a bombshell on us: "The evangelical church should . . . support legislation that would give the homosexual equal rights in employment (non-pastoral), housing and public accomodation" (p. 8, June issue of the *Guardian*).

Mr. Case needs to explain his thinking much more carefully; perhaps he needs to change it. He has fallen into the trap of thinking that this is a question of "equal rights" by which he evidently means "equal opportunity."

But he betrays the inadequacy of his position by declaring that it is proper to discriminate against homosexuals wanting to enter the pastorate. Would he agree that a Christian school should have the choice of whether or not to hire a homosexual as a teacher? (Wouldn't it be proper for a business to discriminate in its hiring practices so as to avoid hiring known thieves?) Since Mr. Case believes that homosexuality is the result of reacting sinfully to a "perverse social experience," he should support the right of people to discriminate in order to avoid such detrimental experiences in contacts with homosexuals.

In counseling with a Christian who was a practicing homosexual, I urged him to avoid associations with homosexuals. Therefore, in hiring persons in his business, he has made it his policy to hire heterosexuals and not homosexuals. That decision will have positive effects in his life and the life of his family. But Mr. Case would deny him the right to make that decision!

Evangelicals in the Miami area recently spearheaded a successful movement to repeal an ordinance designed to guarantee what Mr. Case advocates in this sentence quoted above. They saw that the issue is not one of "equal rights," nor of oppressing homosexuals, but of the right of a person before God to avoid potentially sinful contacts. To discriminate on the basis of heredity or sickness could be wrong; but it's not wrong to discriminate on the basis of sinful actions.

A practicing homosexual who chooses

to remain in perverseness of his sin has tragically chosen to suffer the consequences before men and God.

Roger W. Schmurr, pastor
Sharon O. P. Church
Hialeah, Florida

Homosexuals — NOT privileged group

The June issue of the *Guardian* identified one of your writers, the Rev. Robert A. Case, II, as executive director of the Christian Action Council. Mr. Case left the Christian Action Council in March 1977. His views should not be seen as representing those of the council.

Although Mr. Case's discussion of homosexuality from a biblical perspective is very good, I cannot agree with his statement, "The evangelical church should . . . support legislation that would give the homosexual equal rights in employment (non-pastoral), housing, and public accomodation." To accept this proposal would be, in effect, to create a favored class of ostentatiously practicing homosexuals. There are for the most part no laws denying employment, housing and accomodation to homosexuals, nor would such employment, housing, and accomodation actually be denied except when the homosexual conduct is open and flagrant.

A parallel may exist with compulsive gambling. In many places gambling is not illegal, nor is there any legal sanction against the gambler who wagers to great excess or compulsively. Yet we also would imagine that one might scruple to engage a known compulsive gambler for certain types of employment—accounting, bank work, or teaching, for example. And an apartment owner might be reluctant to rent to one. To write laws protecting the compulsive gambler would in effect be to create a specially favored class, composed of people engaged in a socially undesirable and generally rejected activity.

It may not be morally necessary for biblical Christians to campaign for laws against homosexual behavior—as it is morally necessary for us to attempt to pass laws protecting developing life—but it cer-

tainly is not consistent with a biblical view of man and society to endorse legislation that would give the stamp of social approval, much less that of a favored class, to practicing homosexuals.

Harold O. J. Brown
Chairman, Christian Action Council
Deerfield, Illinois

Ed. note: At the time of publication we were not aware that Mr. Case was no longer with the Christian Action Council nor was mention of his (former) employment meant to indicate that his views were those of the Council.

The Christian Action Council has been active and effective especially in the pro-life, anti-abortion debate within the country. Dr. Brown, a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School has written and spoken frequently on the subject.

Criminal acts?

I find myself in a state of amazement upon finishing the Rev. Mr. Case's second essay on homosexuality. He tells us the civil magistrate should not punish homosexual acts between consenting adults, because not all sins are crimes.

It is surely true that not all sins are crimes. But how are we to determine which are and which are not, except the Bible be our standard? Homosexuality is identified as a crime in Scripture, and the penalty is death. "If a man there is who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them" (Lev. 20:13). The New Testament corroborates this: "They know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such are worthy of death . . ." (Romans 1:32).

At the very least, these passages show that homosexuality is both sin and crime, even if someone wants to argue that the death penalty is too extreme for our day—an interesting argument I have never seen demonstrated from the Bible. Why is it that the latter-day Reformed churches ignore the reformation of the state? One hears much sounding brass about the cultural mandate, and one encounters helpful essays on the reformation of church, school, and family; but the state is ignored. It ill befits the heirs of John Knox blithely to ignore the need for a Christian (biblical) civil order.

James B. Jordan
Jackson, Mississippi

Ed. note: The *Guardian's* editor was well aware that Mr. Case's opinion about legal (Continued on page 13.)

SINNERS in the Hands of AN ANGRY GOD

Jonathan Edwards

The following sermon was preached at Enfield, Massachusetts, on July 8, 1741 during the time of the "Great Awakening." It has long been spoken of, usually as an example of the worst kind of "hell-fire and damnation" preaching. Perhaps it will help to read it and see the real heart of the preacher and the gospel message itself.

Their foot shall slide in due time (Deuteronomy 32:35).

In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God's visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, notwithstanding all God's wonderful works towards them, remained (as in verse 28) void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of Heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit; as in the two verses preceding the text.

The expression I have chosen for my text, *Their foot shall slide in due time*, seems to imply the following things, relating to the punishment and destruction to which these wicked Israelites were exposed:

1. They were always exposed to *destruction*; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall. This is implied in the manner of their destruction coming upon them, being represented by their foot sliding. The same is expressed in Psalm 73:18, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into de-

struction."

2. It implies that they were always exposed to *sudden unexpected* destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning. This is also expressed in Psalm 73:18, 19, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction: how are they brought into desolation as in a moment!"

3. Another thing implied is that they are liable to fall *of themselves*, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

4. That the reason why they are not fallen already, and do not fall now, is only that God's appointed time is not come. . . .

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this: "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God." By the *mere* pleasure of God, I mean his *sovereign* pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.

The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations:

1. *There is no want of power in God* to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong when God rises up; the strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands.

God is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it. . . . There is no fortress that is any defence from the power of God. . . . We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; . . . thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. *They deserve to be cast into hell*; so that divine justice never stands in the way, it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice

calls aloud for an infinite punishment on their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke 13:7). The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads, and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. *They are under a sentence of condemnation to hell*. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. "He that believeth not is condemned already" (John 3:18). . . .

4. *They are now the object of that very same anger and wrath of God*, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them, as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, [who] there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth; yea, doubtless with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. *The devil stands ready to fall upon them*, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods (Luke 11:12). The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the

present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. *There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell-fire, if it were not for God's restraints.* There is laid in the very nature of carnal men a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell-fire. . . .

The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea (Isaiah 57:20). For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." But if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. . . .

7. *It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand.* It is no security to a natural man that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger in any respect in his circumstances.

The manifold and continual experience of the world in all ages shows this is no evidence, that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought-of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. . . . God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world and sending them to hell that there is nothing to make it appear that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. . . .

8. *Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment.* To this, divine providence and universal experience does also bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death. . . . "How dieth the wise man? even as the fool" (Ecclesiastes 2:16).

9. *All wicked men's pains and contrivance which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment.* Almost every natural man that hears of hell flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. . . . He does not intend to come to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same merits of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell. And it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive; it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could speak with them, and inquire of them, . . . we doubtless should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here. . . . I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. *God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of hell one moment.* God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to

*The natural man has no refuge,
nothing to take hold of.
All that preserves him
is the arbitrary will,
the unobliged forbearance,
of an incensed God.*

natural man's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell. They have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it. And God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell. They have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment. The devil is waiting for them; hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up. They have no interest in any Mediator; there are no means within reach that can be any security to them.

In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of. All that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance, of an incensed God.

From Northampton, Massachusetts, together with such others as George Whitefield, the Rev. Mr. Edwards was used of God to stir many to a genuine concern for their souls. The "Great Awakening" prepared a whole generation for the struggles that followed as well as introduced many to eternal blessedness.

The material given above is just the introduction of Edwards' sermon. The "Application" is yet to follow, and we will publish it in a future issue. The sermon, as presented here with minor omissions, is taken from the Banner of Truth Trust's publication of The Works of Jonathan Edwards (vol. 2).

Another

Fish Story from CALVIN POND

Jean A. Shaw

Things were not going well in Calvin Pond. Some of the fry had disobeyed their parents and gone swimming in Arminian Stream, where they were promptly captured in a bait trap. Others were hanging around in the weeds with the COCU fish and picking up all kinds of bad habits. Parents reported that their offspring were learning strange things at school. One fry came home with the idea he was descended from a man!

The resfish got together to see what could be done. "What we need is our own school," declared one, "where we can teach our children the truth." A round of applause went up from all the fins. A committee was dispatched to secure a place and a faculty. The immediate need for a development director was filled by a goldfish who had been president of a scale company in Toledo.

Involved detachment

A pipe-smoking opfish swam by to see what was going on. He listened with interest to the plans for a new school. "You resfish going to run this institution all by yourselves?" he asked. The resfish answered that they were. The opfish didn't think much of this idea, favoring independency for things like schools—though not for foreign missions. Still, he promised to send his fry to the school. There weren't too many Reformed fish schools in Calvin Pond, and he didn't want his children to become Dutch or sing psalms all the time.

A site was selected in a sunken rowboat west of the water lilies. Conditions were a bit primitive at first, but school opened on schedule. Enthusiasm had to replace facilities, but many of the fish

felt the deprivations were a blessing that brought students and faculty together in a special way. The opfish did send a lot of fry—which kept the resfish from getting too ingrown. Outside of a few faculty changes, education went along swimmingly indeed.

The great drought

Until August, that is. That was the month of the great drought, when the pond sank to a new low. Fishermen could stand in places where they had had to use boats before. Some of the less cautious fish were literally scooped up in nets. Rumor had it that they were going to be put into "growth groups," whatever they were. Down at the bottom of Calvin Pond the resfish and the opfish commiserated together. They were wary of anything that emphasized growth.

Came September and autumn rains and the pond grew to its normal size. But the school for Reformed fry did not recover as it should have. The resfish didn't know what to do. Some suggested remodeling the rowboat. Others thought a move to another rowboat would be more practical. A bullhead in the lure department was replaced by a young sunfish who had just gotten his Ph.D. (Plugs-hooks Degree). A grouper was called in for consultation. The business office announced that there would be a cut-back in worms for the coming year.

Heah comes ol' catfish

The catfish, old Collard Greens himself, had been so busy organizing fish all over Calvin Pond that he hadn't kept in touch with his friends, the resfish and the opfish. In September he went to a big meeting of the catfish inside a tractor tire at the south end of the pond. There was such diving and churning that the entire ecology of Calvin Pond was threatened. A flotilla of pcus-fish vainly protested the commotion but to no avail. They were forced to regroup behind a rock. Nothing could stop the catfish, it seemed.

After the meeting, when the mud had settled, the catfish churned over to visit the resfish and the opfish. With his usual elan he swam at full speed, ascended four feet above the water, executed a perfect half-gainer, and then dove to the pond bottom where the two fish were conversing. "Hey, how y'all!" he exclaimed, swimming upside down in a circle before settling down. "Y'all still talkin' down here at the bottom? Water's sakes, you should be goin' and growin'!"

"We're in a period of stabilization," explained the resfish. "Consolidating our

gains, you might say."

"It's best to be cautious," added the opfish. "We have to guard against pollution. Only last week two beer cans were found in the weeds."

"Ah didn' know that bothered you fellas," teased the catfish.

"Anyway, we have a problem," the resfish said, hoping to avoid an argument. "Our Reformed fish school needs more students and more money."

"Well now, Ah'm sorry to heah that. Seems like you got a right fine school over in that rowboat. Did Ah tell you that we all's thinkin' about startin' a Reformed fish school of our own? We got our eye on the west bank under the live oaks."

"You always have your eye on a bank," retorted the opfish, still smarting from the beer can remark.

The catfish was not to be hurt. "We do have a way with currency, Ah'll admit. Well, this spot under the live oaks is real plush. Clear water. Plenty of shade. Hundreds of waterbugs. It would make for a fine school."

Baiting the catfish

"Yes, I'm sure you're right," agreed the resfish. "But we don't really need two Reformed fish schools here in Calvin Pond. There aren't that many fry to go around. If you're so interested in a school, why don't you send your fry to ours?"

"Yes, it takes a lot of time and experience to build a really Reformed fish school," added the opfish loyally.

"Well, Ah'm sure you're right. But we catfish want a catfish school. It's a matter of identity. We want our catfish to grow up knowin' they're catfish."

The resfish swam quietly for a moment, and then he said, "If you joined in with us we might let you help us run the school." He wasn't surprised when the eyes of the catfish lit up. He knew the catfish liked to run things.

"Hmm. That might be a possibility. We could add courses like 'Fishin' to the World' and Adfinistration."

"And don't forget 'Fished in Education,'" prompted the opfish. That was his favorite.

"Yeah, maybe we could do it. 'Course, Ah would have to join you on the board."

"That's all right," replied the resfish. "It fell off an old dock and there's plenty of room."

"Ah'll give it some thought. Right now Ah got so much to do Ah don' know where to put all my energy." to demonstrate, he swam thirty feet at full speed,

came to an abrupt stop and swam back tail first. It took a few minutes for the water to calm down, by which time the catfish was sufficiently recharged for his swim back to the south end of the pond.

"We'll keep in touch," he called out. "Meanwhile, don't take any wooden pickerels."

"He is the most unsettling creature in this whole pond," grumbled the opfish as he picked up his doctrine book that had fallen into the mud.

"I agree," said the resfish, "but you've got to admire his energy—and size. . . . And growth. You can't deny the fact that he's getting bigger all the time."

A Church in QUARANTINE?

John Fikkert

Back in the thirties when one had the measles, mumps or chicken pox, a sign was posted on the door. You were isolated from the outside world until the health department gave you a clean bill of health. That sign on the door was very effective in keeping everyone away.

When I first became acquainted with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I firmly believed I had finally found the Only Perfect Church—or at least, the most nearly perfect when compared to many others. I thanked the Lord for her faithfulness to the Word of God and the interpretation of that Word in the light of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. I saw a church that submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ and humbly acknowledged the sovereignty of God. I felt comfortable in a church whose government was based on the belief that the Word of God is the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

This is the church that I love. And by God's grace it is the church I will serve faithfully until I die.

But I also see a church that appears to be in quarantine. I believe it is time we took a good look at ourselves and asked what is really happening to our church.

But the opfish wasn't listening. He was busy reading his doctrine book. The resfish sighed. Like the old proverb said, The eel that squeaks the loudest gets the worms, or something like that.

Mrs. Shaw, a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, has the compleat angler's fine eye for the foibles of all the fish in Calvin Pond. The Synod of the RPCES has approved a proposal permitting joint board control over Covenant College with representatives from the Presbyterian Church in America.

Personally, I have two matters that are of great concern to me, one being the name "Orthodox" and the other an attitude of Independency.

"Orthodox" quarantine

Remember the sign, "Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox." As long as the sign was on the doorpost, people shunned your house. Is the name "Orthodox" having the same effect upon the people we are trying to reach?

I have found it to be so. It has been my experience in calling on homes that the name "Orthodox" needed repeated explanation—and even then it left many with suspicion and apprehension.

Unfortunately, the name "Orthodox"—whatever the value of its real meaning—is immediately associated in most people's minds with the Greek, Russian, or other Eastern Orthodox churches. Some associate it vaguely with some other Eastern religion.

I found several persons who commented, "We didn't bother to stop in because we thought you were some particular ethnic group when we saw the sign 'Orthodox.'" I wonder how many people have simply ignored us because we have that sign out front in bold letters signaling that we were some kind of separatist group of our own.

Now I am not proposing a change of names. But I am making a suggestion that our churches use better judgment in the use of the name. Why display it in bold letters in brochures, ads, and signs, frightening people away before we have an opportunity to minister to them. Once the people get into the church they will learn soon enough what "Orthodox" means when they hear the faithful preaching of the Word.

Let's face it. We are the true, historic Presbyterian Church. We have not aban-

doned our position or departed from our heritage, but others have. We have every right to call ourselves "The Presbyterian Church" with whatever local church name you wish to have.

We should not allow a confusing name to put us in quarantine and always on the defensive. To clearly identify ourselves, all we have to do is put at the bottom of our signs, "The Historic Presbyterian Church, not affiliated with the World or National Council of Churches." That would truly identify us.

Independent isolation

The other area of my concern is this matter of independency. And I believe too many of our congregations are acting as independents, "doing their own thing" in isolation. Have we forgotten our corporate responsibility? Have we come to the point that every local church is an end in itself? How can we sing, "Like a mighty army moves the church of God," when too many are moving in their own isolation?

I picture the church as a big wheel. Our three committees—Christian Education, Foreign Missions, and Home Missions—are the hub, with each local congregation tightly fitted into the hub as spokes with a rim of corporate responsibility holding us all firmly together.

It is time to recognize that "as the three committees go, so goes the OPC." Those spokes not firmly tied into the hub are going to be lost by the wayside as the wheel keeps rolling. But you can't lose too many spokes before the whole wheel collapses.

We have recently lost some spokes, but the Master Builder is putting new ones in their place. But can we be certain this will always be the case? Every church's business is every other church's business if we are true Presbyterians and members together of one another.

I believe that our three committees, the hub of our wheel, should be the answer to any tendency toward an independent isolation. When we take the work of these committees seriously and support them seriously, then they will be able to keep us informed about one another. And they will be informing the world about a church that is not in quarantine or isolation, but one that is true to the Scriptures and truly Presbyterian in its mutual care for all the members.

The Rev. Mr. Fikkert is serving as the denomination's evangelist-at-large under the Committee on Home Missions.

Dilemma over "USURY"

Dennis E. Johnson

Though written as a "letter to the editor," the following article is being given separate treatment because it effectively furthers the discussion about the subject of usury and the Bible's teaching about interest-bearing loans.

The ongoing "usury debate" in the *Guardian's* pages has been instructive because the participants on both sides take seriously the stewardship principles that too many of us have relegated to the stockpile of outmoded Old Testament legislation. Still, a few questions linger in my mind concerning the issue of interest-bearing loans, especially as it relates to construction loans to churches.

The place of Romans 13:8

The editor's argument assumes (and Dr. Bahnsen's apparently grants) that if interest is prohibited only on loans made to brothers "in dire need," construction loans to churches must be exempt from this prohibition. In the editor's judgment, the erection of a church building is like the purchase of a new car: a matter of convenience (or fiscal prudence), but not a necessity.

Now, Romans 13:8 issues a broad command: "Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another." While we may recognize that a case of genuine need is an exception to this general prohibition of indebtedness (as in Exodus 22:25), we must also see that Romans 13:8 "does condemn the looseness with which we contract debts and particularly the indifference so often displayed in the discharging of them" (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ii, p. 159).

In other words, Romans 13:8 severely restricts the causes for which Christians may incur debts. We infer from the passages already discussed at length that need is one legitimate cause. Perhaps Scripture makes other exceptions to this

general prohibition of indebtedness, but it is hard to see how loans of mere convenience can slip through the net of Romans 13:8 without some such explicit scriptural permission.

Hence, my dilemma: Either buildings for churches are convenient luxuries, like new cars, or they are necessities. If they are a matter of mere convenience, to borrow for them is suspect on the basis of Romans 13:8. If they are a matter of necessity, loans made for them fall under the regulation of Exodus 22:25 and interest on such loans would be prohibited. Thus, either churches should not borrow to build, or Christians who loan to them should do so without expecting interest.

At first glance, this application of Romans 13:8 may seem to threaten all construction by churches, since owning a place for worship, training, service and witness hardly seems to be our brothers' "dire need." After all, the early church grew quickly without building Christian meeting halls, and some believers today see such buildings as unnecessary or even detrimental to the church's mission.

On the other hand, others are as firmly convinced that to accomplish what God has called them to do in their community, a building is not a luxury but a necessity. Certainly churches that incur heavy debt for the construction of a building should do so out of a deep conviction that the building is necessary for the faithful accomplishment of their mission.

This broader approach to "dire need," including means for service as well as means for survival, obviously goes beyond the editor's definition. Perhaps it is too subjective; but I would much prefer to see loans for buildings defended as supplying the brothers' needs in their Christian mission than to see them compared to the dubious practice of buying what we "want" on credit.

If then churches appeal for construction loans on the basis of their needs in serving Christ, doesn't their situation fall within even the narrow interpretation of Deuteronomy 23:19-20 defended by the editor?

Motivation in lending

My second question has to do with motivation. The Israelite's motive in loaning to a brother in need (at least) was to be the single motive of brotherly love alone, without the thought of even a modest increase of his own wealth. Offering a bankrupt neighbor a three percent loan, while the Canaanite down the street would demand nine percent, might seem to be a generous gesture; but

it falls far short of the love that the law requires.

The profit motive, though appropriate elsewhere, does not belong in this situation. In fact, if the nearness of the sabbatical year made it unlikely that the loan would be repaid in full before its automatic cancellation, brotherly love required a readiness to forego even the unpaid portion of the principal by the lender (Deut. 15:1-11; Luke 6:34-35).

We Reformed folk insist on this same principle of *singular motivation* in the support of the church and her mission. Carnivals, bake sales, raffles and bingo games are curiously absent from our stewardship programs. Why? In the words of one congregation's constitution:

"Since the Bible teaches that the Christian Church is to be financed only by free-will offerings, commercial methods of raising money are contrary to God's will and shall be rejected."

We believe that, where the gospel of God's grace is proclaimed and the response required by the Word explained, God's people will give to the church's needs in *gratitude* and *love*. We refuse to trivialize giving as an act of worship by offering people some tangible compensation (whether a plate of cookies or a "chance" at a new Buick) in return for a so-called "donation."

And yet, by encouraging God's people to expect interest in compensation for loans made to churches we seem to be falling short of the high principle of singular motivation—that is, of grateful love—that we uphold elsewhere. We seem to be saying, "Loan to the church; it will further God's glory, expand his kingdom, and (if you're not yet convinced) even increase your own prosperity (a little)."

The motive of making a profit is a strong and beneficial one in its place. But is it really appropriate to mix it in with the motive of grateful love to God in our appeals for support for the work of the church?

Church a business?

In response to that last question, some might answer that construction loans to churches are not donations but business investments. After all, in business investments profit is a proper and primary motive. But is the church really a business?

The editor's observations that churches should operate in a business-like way and that churches do enter business relations are true enough. But they miss the point of the objection to identifying the church as a commercial enterprise. The church does not offer some product or service for

sale, nor does it engage itself in some aspect of the cultural mandate in order to advance the prosperity of its investors.

Church growth cannot really be measured in terms of ability to repay (with interest) the "investors" in a building program, can it? I would hope that our primary goal in erecting buildings for churches is not the generation of income (through the addition of new wage-earners), but rather the expansion of our ministry and the kingdom (through the addition of new disciples, regardless of their ability to pay).

(Of course, those who need to have their money earn income for them are free to share the risks and gains of commercial, interest-bearing investments.)

NO INTEREST from a brother

Greg L. Bahnsen

The following remarks are a follow-up to earlier discussions in the Guardian. (See the December 1976 and February and April 1977 issues.)

Scripture clearly commands: "You shall not make your brother pay interest — interest of money, food, or anything off which one gives interest" (Deut. 23:19). The mention of items that are borrowed can hardly infer a restriction on the condition of this prohibition (e.g., limiting it to situations of economic distress), for the prohibition applies to *anything whatsoever*. Indeed, as common experience indicates, even food can be borrowed when there is no dire need, and certainly money can be borrowed for a wide variety of purposes.

Charging of interest and charging of rent are conspicuously different, then, for God's Word *treats them differently* in its moral code — even as the discipline of economics does not conflate them into

It is good to remember that those who have reservations about charging interest on loans to Christian brothers have not set out to bind consciences beyond Scripture. Rather, they are seeking to scrutinize our corporate life and practices by the light of Scripture. To depart from the biblical norm either toward strictness or toward laxness is perilous. That's precisely why we need the fellowship of discussion and correction that the *Guardian* often initiates.

Mr. Johnson is pastor of the Beverly Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles.

one category. The Scripture text plainly forbids exacting interest from a brother (while allowing one to rent his property or hire out his services). You are allowed to charge interest to "a foreigner" (apparently a commercial loan made to a traveling merchant *in virtue* of his anticipated profits, which could then be shared), but never on a loan made in virtue of the borrower being a fellow-believer, "your brother" (Deut. 23:19) — a loan not taken for the purpose of increasing business profits.

The Scripture command is stated *categorically*: "You shall not make your brother pay interest." In an attempt to support usury among brothers in the church, the *Guardian's* editor has maintained that, contrary to appearance, Deut. 23:19 forbids charging interest to a *poor* brother. His rationale for reducing the scope of this commandment is that he looks upon it as a *less detailed reiteration* of the earlier and more restricted statute in Exodus 22:25 (which forbids taking interest from a poor brother). Thus the general prohibition in Deut. 23:19 is restricted in scope by reading it in light of the earlier command of Exodus 22:25 and holding that the later injunction requires exactly the same thing and no more. Is this a sound interpretative principle by which we can "rightly handle the message of truth"? Can Mr. Mitchell's procedure be followed consistently as a rule?

Advance in revelation

It is obvious from a study of God's commandments that it is not warranted to impose the restricted situation of previous legislation on later legislation (thereby reducing its requirements). And this is what a commitment to progressive revelation would lead us to assume.

This principle can be illustrated from a telling analogy to the usury legislation in revelation concerning judicial fairness. In Exodus 23:6 we read, "You shall not pervert justice due to the poor." Later legislation in Deuteronomy 16:19 is worded more generally: "You shall not pervert justice."

To be consistent, Mr. Mitchell would have to see this as merely a less detailed reiteration of the earlier command with its restricted circumstance and requiring no more. That is, the case is parallel to that of usury, and on Mr. Mitchell's view what would be prohibited is *simply* distorting justice due to the poor (charging interest to the poor), and *not* more broadly any distortion of justice in *general* (not charging interest to any brother). But that would be incredible, not only here but in other cases as well (e.g., the release of slaves, Exodus 21:2 and Deut. 15:12, the worship of idols, Exodus 22:20 and Deut. 17:2-5; the return of lost cattle, Exodus 23:4-5 and Deut. 22:1,4).

Therefore, in the case of usury, Mr. Mitchell can follow his procedure of imposing restrictions from earlier legislation on later, more generalized commands (thereby limiting the application that appears required by a simple reading) only by arbitrary special pleading. His rationale has proven unsound because it cannot be consistently followed. In his opinion it is permissible to exact interest on (non-profit-envisioning) loans between brothers in the Christian church unless it is a poverty situation. But the direct, unmodified wording of Scripture (Deut. 23:19) is against him (cf. Psalm 15:4-5; Prov. 28:8; Ezek. 18:13).

Applying limited texts

Although we occasionally must interpret Scripture by taking limitations derived from specific or detailed statements and imposing them on more broadly worded texts, this is legitimate *only when necessary* to preserve the unity of God's Word.

That is, in cases of *apparent contradiction* we can supply the details and qualifications from more specific teaching clearly revealed elsewhere. For example: Matthew 19:9 says that, *with the exception* of fornication, divorce and remarriage is wrong; Luke 16:18 simply says divorce and remarriage is wrong, *without mentioning the exception*.

But it is illegitimate to do this when unnecessary (e.g., holding that the general prohibition of drunkenness in Romans 13:13 can be restricted to the more spe-

(Continued on next page.)

cific case of drunkenness at the Lord's table mentioned in 1 Cor. 11:20-21). If we do, we are guilty of taking away from God's Word—"All the things that I command you, you shall be careful to do" (Deut. 12:32).

There is *not even the appearance* of contradiction in the usury legislation under discussion. "You shall not make your brother pay interest" and "You shall not charge the poor brother interest" are perfectly consistent with each other. (So also, "Don't commit fornication" and "Don't commit fornication with a virgin.")

The imposition of specifications from elsewhere, then, is unnecessary regarding Scripture's usury legislation. Hence the restrictive reinterpretation of Deuteronomy 23:19 is illegitimate.

An expanded definition

One final note: Mr. Mitchell's approach to the usury legislation entailed viewing Deut. 23:19 as a *less detailed* reiteration of the more specific injunction in Exodus 22:25. A reexamination of the two verses will show that this is a mistaken conception.

The later law in Deut. 23:19 is, in fact, *fuller and more definitionally specific* with respect to (1) the items borrowed and (2) the national status of the borrower: Deut. 23:19 gives greater detail than Exodus 22:25.

This enlarged detail renders the *omission* of any mention or qualification of the economic status of the borrower in Deut. 23:19 as conspicuous and interpretatively significant. God's words speak unequivocally: "You shall not make your brother pay interest"—any brother whatsoever (cf. 1 Tim. 5:21).

If Jesus instructs his disciples to lend without being anxious over the return *even of the initial capital* (Luke 6:34), how much more is it improper for them to bargain to gain an *increase* (usury) on loans! Moreover, money borrowed by Christ's church is not for the purpose of increasing its capital profits (otherwise the tax officials would quickly step in!). Thus, whatever interest is exacted must be paid from the freewill offerings of God's children. But the widow's mite ought not to be used for the simple financial profit, by way of usury, of fellow Christians. The borrower is slave to the lender (Prov. 22:7).

Isn't it time that Christ's church be set free from the unlawful demands of usury?

Dr. Bahnsen is a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

Summing up: USURY

The Editor

That title may be wishful thinking. What began as a simple discussion—to me, anyway—has grown into a roundtable debate. That is good enough in itself. But it seems unlikely that the debaters will achieve unanimity this side of Christ's return.

Why continue the discussion? There are basic questions and practical ones also. These have to do with how we understand Scripture, how we apply God's command to our situation. As Professor Bahnsen said in a personal letter to the editor, it is not just a difference of opinion between two or three individuals.

The root question still is, *Shall a Christian charge interest on a loan made to a fellow Christian or group of Christians?* Everyone agrees that loans made to relieve some dire need of a fellow believer should be made without charging interest, without seeking to gain from his misfortune. The question is about loans among believers where urgent necessity is not the point.

It is difficult to go over the same ground again and not simply repeat what's already been said. Since not everyone is yet convinced, it would be nice to come up with some new approach—or admit being wrong. Since I still believe my understanding of Scripture is what God intended, and not having any new approach, I can only try to restate the case clearly and leave it to the reader.

The argument

Professor Bahnsen insists that Deuteronomy 23:19 clearly forbids all charging of interest on loans of anything to any fellow believer, regardless of need. The editor insists that Exodus 22:25, which forbids interest on loans to a brother in dire need, is the basic principle involved and that Deut. 23:19 should be interpreted in that light.

Among other things, Bahnsen points out the obvious truth that some later

revelation may be more fully inclusive than an earlier one. He points to Exodus 23:6 (which speaks of "perverting justice due to the poor") and Deut. 16:19 (which speaks of perverting justice in general, or more inclusively). The later one is obviously a broader statement than the earlier. But Bahnsen goes on to claim, "The case is parallel to that of usury" (comparing Exodus 22:25 to Deut. 23:19). Not at all! Perverting justice under any and all circumstances is sin; to mention one example (justice due the poor) does not excuse other situations. But usury, in and of itself, is not a sin, as Deut. 23:20 clearly indicates. What we want to know is under what circumstances does God hold it to be sinful.

Nor is it a proper principle of Scripture interpretation to insist that "the direct, unmodified wording" of a Scripture passage must be taken as the intended meaning unless we are confronted with an "apparent contradiction" elsewhere. Not at all! We are to interpret every passage of Scripture, not in isolation, but in the light of the whole of Scripture, in the total context of God's revelation.

For example, the second commandment in its plain wording seems to forbid the making of any graven images (and has been so understood by some Christians). But we rightly understand that the sin forbidden is the worshipping of images which, though included in the commandment, becomes clearer in the light of the whole of Scripture teaching on the matter.

Questioning an interpretation

Even Bahnsen himself does not adhere to "the direct, unmodified wording" of Deut. 23:19. He would make an exception from this "categorically stated" command for loans to fellow believers "for the purpose of increasing business profits." Now I readily agree that such loans may be made and interest charged. But "the direct, unmodified wording" of Deut. 23:19 gives no room for this, nor are there—so far as I can discover—any "apparent contradictions" elsewhere to force such an exception. At the very least, we have some question here about the all-inclusive force of Deut. 23:19 as Bahnsen insists on reading it.

We have another reason to question his all-inclusive interpretation when we consider that God did permit payment for the temporary use of other kinds of property. Rent for land was written into the law, and payment for the use of work animals. Now I readily agree that God's right to make differences in his laws is not bound by my limited and sin-clouded understanding of what is right and rea-

sonable. But if God allows me to rent out my land (to lend it for a fixed return), I at least have a right to ask whether he does not permit me also to lend out my money for a fixed return (apart from situations of dire need in a brother's case).

To raise such questions is not to engage in "special pleading" or to flout the "direct, unmodified wording" of God's command. It is simply to ask whether we are understanding God's intention rightly in this instance.

The broader context

So the question now is, does Scripture provide a broader context (not just some "apparent contradiction") for interpreting Deut. 23:19? Part of that broader context is that usury in and of itself is not a sin, since it was clearly permitted under certain circumstances (Deut. 23:20). That context also includes the clear teaching that we should lend to a brother in need without charging him interest, and so exercise the loving concern for the poor among us. And I would assume that no one would question the right of a believer to lend money at interest in a business venture, no matter to whom he lends it.

What is Scripture's broader context? Exodus 22:25 clearly speaks of loans to a brother in dire need. Leviticus 25:35-38 speaks of the identical situation. Deuteronomy 15:1-11 is again speaking of the very same situation. Everything said about lending to a brother up to this point has been in a context of relieving the urgent need of a brother. *In that context*, we come to Deuteronomy 23:19. We are fully justified, therefore, in interpreting that passage in the light of the context of all that has preceded it. We are justified in understanding it as a further exposition of the basic principle that we are to lend without interest to those of our brothers in need.

The even broader context here is the place of Deuteronomy in God's revelation to his people. The people of Israel are ready at last to enter the promised land. It is God's land they are entering and they enter as former slaves set free by God's gracious might. Throughout Deuteronomy there are constant reminders of this, repeated instructions to care for the poor and needy out of the abundance of the Lord's provision. To read Deut. 23:19 in the light of that constantly repeated emphasis is in accord with the principle that every Scripture passage is to be understood in the light of the whole.

Just recently I borrowed money from a savings account belonging to my mother

in order to purchase a car (hardly a dire need!) I fully intend to repay the loan and also the amount of interest it would have received if kept in the bank. My mother was under no obligation to let me use that money and my use of it certainly should not be at her expense.

So also with lending money to a church. If Bahnsen's view is accepted, it would mean that most Christians with modest savings would reasonably refuse to lend to any special church project. Why should they, when they can expect — *what Scripture allows* as permissible — a fair return on their money from the bank? They are under *no obligation* to lend their surplus to the church (Acts 5:4), or to any Christian brother *except* one in dire need.

That brings us to the question raised by Mr. Johnson. Is it right for a church to contract a debt in order to erect a building?

"Owe no man anything"

"Owe no one anything, except to love one another" (Romans 13:8). If we take these words in "the direct, unmodified wording," we seem to hear Paul saying it is sinful for Christians to contract debts of any kind — except the continuing "debt" we have to love one another.

Now Mr. Johnson saw at least one "apparent contradiction" or exception to this reading of Romans 13:8. We should keep in mind, as the phrase "apparent contradiction" actually suggests, that there can be no real contradiction, however apparent it looks to us. So again, we need to interpret the passage in the light of the whole of Scripture — and not just as modified by "apparent contradictions."

The one clear exception noted is that a poor man may well go into debt to relieve his difficulties. Debt in and of itself is not always a sin, therefore. So we have the right to ask what Paul meant to include in Romans 13:8. What is the broader context for understanding this statement?

First, read it in the immediate context. Romans 13 speaks of the Christian's attitude and obligations toward the civil authorities, God's ministers for good. Paul, in verses 6 and 7, insists that we must discharge every obligation to the authorities. We are to pay our taxes, do our jury duty, give respect to whom due.

In fact, Paul continues, "owe no one anything." At the very least, Paul is summing up the first seven verses and re-emphasizing our obligation to avoid any kind of delinquency as citizens. But, in a way, typical of Paul's writing, this leads to another thought: We do owe every man the duty to love and so fulfill the

law.

The whole of Romans 13 has to do with the Christian's life as a citizen in organized society. Neither the background of obligations to civil authorities, or the duty of showing love to our neighbors, or the summary thought of being clothed in Christ in the midst of this world (verse 14) — none of this requires us to understand verse 8 as forbidding the Christian to take out a mortgage or a car loan. Nothing in this context, or elsewhere in Scripture, suggests such a view.

It's not some part of good citizenship to avoid borrowing; neither is it part of our fulfilling the law of love. To be sure, if we take out such loans we are under obligation to make the proper repayments. My obligation to the mortgage company is to pay the monthly amount before the fifteenth of each month. So long as I do that I have obeyed Paul's injunction in Romans 13:8, so far as financial debt is concerned. After sending in my check, I owe no man anything — except to love.

Old and new economy

There is one other consideration to keep in mind. The Old Testament people of God entered into the promised land where every man had his own "vine and fig tree," his own basic capital asset of land. That was part of God's gracious provision, part of the base arrangements for the chosen people in order that the Christ might come; it was also a *visible reminder* of the eternal inheritance yet to come.

The Christian, however, has no reason to expect God to provide him forty acres and a mule. He does not live in a promised land, but is a stranger and a pilgrim in Satan's kingdom. Nor does he live by sight, but *by faith* understands the inheritance to come of which the Holy Spirit is the down payment.

The point of this is simply the obvious one that some Old Testament laws do not apply to us. What was appropriate for them may not be suited to our situation on the other side of Christ's coming in the flesh. Living in the age of the Spirit is bound to be different from living in the age of tangible symbols.

God promised his Old Testament people that, so long as they obeyed him and in particular cared for the poor, he would provide more than enough so they would never have to borrow from foreigners though they might lend to them (Deut. 15:6). We have no such promise of earthly wealth, though we are assured that God will supply all that we really need, and for the poor among us. But

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we don't have it provided through the use of the promised land as the Israelite did.

The Christian's duty now is to make the best use of whatever God makes available, for his family's livelihood, the enjoyment of God's good creation, and his service to God in extending the gospel and providing for those in need. And there's no reason why he may not use the available assets of the Egyptians among whom he lives to fulfill this obligation as a steward of God.

What is especially "spiritual" or good stewardship about paying rent while scrimping to save up to buy a house? Such a use of one's income deprives the believer and his family of many real benefits, reduces the income available to enjoy God's good gifts, and even cuts into what one might give to the Lord's work. To take out a mortgage (at least where rents are higher than mortgage costs) may be good stewardship.

Similarly, a congregation of God's people should act as responsible stewards of the Lord's money at their disposal. If a new building would advance the cause of the gospel and if they can reasonably expect to pay for it, let them get a mortgage and build; that would be good stewardship. Or better, let them seek loans at similar interest from their own savings or that of other believers. Better to pay for the use of the money to believers than to enrich the Egyptians!

Our duty in understanding any portion of God's Word is to read it in the light of the whole. And the duty of the Christian today is to use what God has made available through the best possible stewardship. There is nothing unbiblical about borrowing and paying interest for the benefits, either from a bank or from other believers, as long as doing so will serve to glorify God—and enable us to enjoy him.

— John J. Mitchell

Letters

(Continued from page 2.)

usually confront Paul Jewett's *The Lord's Day* (Eerdmans, 1973) and attempt to refute his solid demonstration that the Puritan Sabbath stems from Nicholas Bownd (pp.152f.) rather than from Scripture. Scriptural justification for this Sabbath view followed Bownd; prior to him a different outlook had dominated the church. The Puritan Sabbath, in my own

opinion, is similar to the Dispensationalist's "rapture"—both are eisegetical and are examples of the traditions of men having become the Word of God.

Whatever the future holds, I trust to maintain my close contacts with brethren in the OPC. And I shall never forget the loving concern and fruitful time spent on me during an important stage of my spiritual development.

Robert H. Countess (Chaplain)
Manassas, Virginia

Dooyeweerd "eulogy"?

I must comment on your eulogy of Herman Dooyeweerd (May issue of the *Guardian*). He is cited as a philosopher "in the Reformed tradition." The article then goes on to admit that "his own system contained weaknesses in its religious presuppositions."

Now, what's that supposed to mean? that he had a Reformed philosophy and an un-Reformed theology? Was he building on sand? Wouldn't his house fit on the traditional "rock"?

That Dooyeweerd's writings have generated an interest in philosophy among Reformed Christians seems true. I hope for the sake of those whose minds he has agitated that there will be someone to lead them on, with a sure step; someone to build on a solid foundation.

T. D. Titus
Newcastle, Pa.

Ed. note: By speaking of "weakness in religious presuppositions" we meant to say that Dooyeweerd's philosophy was suspect. Though he spoke out of the Reformed tradition, we do not believe the product was Reformed.

Editing marred "Purity"

I was pleased to see my article, "Coming to the Kingdom in Purity," in the May issue of the *Guardian*. Some friends who read it, however, said it did not sound like my work. When I read it myself, I discovered that several changes had been made which I had not authorized. Some of these distorted what I originally said and rendered the treatment of the Scripture passages faulty. In particular:

(1) I described Abner as "leader of the forces of Israel." This was changed to the inaccurate designation "Saul's general." Saul had been dead seven years by this time. (Historical accuracy is necessary to good exegesis of Scripture.)

(2) I wrote concerning our Lord: "He, too would come to the kingdom God's way, in the purity of his death, not as amended to read "purity of his life and

his death." Of course the Word of God as a whole teaches that, but the particular passage spoke only of his death, not his life. The question of Christ's death was what startled Peter and triggered his rebellious response. The alteration is not warranted by the text and it disrupts what I believe is the proper redemptive-historical connection of the two passages: David came in the purity of his life, Christ in the purity of his death.

(3) The application suffers needless alteration as well. I simply wrote that we must come to the kingdom in the purity of our life (of faith) and the purity of our death (to rebellious self-concerns, through repentance). This, I believe, is a legitimate and helpful application of the two passages. It mushroomed from my original 77 words to 122 in its published form, however. Thus diluted, it lost much of its impact.

I hope this clears up any confusion or disappointment felt by any readers in the treatment of these rich scriptural passages.

James R. Payton, pastor-elect
Community O. P. Church
Blue Bell, Penna.

Ed. note: We apologize for not having checked the changes with Mr. Payton before printing the article; part of this fault was due to his being on the move from his former location. We cannot, however, apologize for the changes. They were either to provide better identification, to avoid a serious misunderstanding of the truth, or to draw out implications from what was admittedly a very concise summary of a longer sermon. Suffice it to say we would not have printed the article without the alterations, at least in their main thrust.—J. J. M.

Binding the conscience?

In light of the current Sabbath controversy, I wonder if someone could shed some light upon the church's right to bind men's consciences with regard to the observance of the Lord's Day.

In "The Case for Quiet Sundays" it is said, "There is no statement in the New Testament by Jesus authorizing a change from the old Jewish Sabbath to the observance of the Lord's Day as the Christian's Sabbath, nor is there any such statement by the apostles."

If so, how can the church bind the conscience of a Christian to keep the Lord's Day? The Westminster Confession is quite clear that whatever is beside Scripture, in matters of faith or worship, is not to be required of anyone (XX, 2). We cannot, therefore, appeal to the early

church fathers in order to prove the case.

It is sometimes suggested that the meeting mentioned in Acts 20:7 provides a norm. But this seems to be far from the case. First, it would appear that Luke was using a Jewish timetable (Acts 2:15), strongly suggesting that the meeting was held on Saturday evening after the [Jewish] Sabbath was over. This would account for Eutychus and his falling asleep. In fact, it would imply that Paul was to make his journey on Sunday itself. One might deduce that they met the night before because Paul was leaving the next day. In any case, the evidence is far from conclusive that the church at Troas actually was meeting on Sunday or that this was normative.

The other passage often cited is I Corinthians 16:2. Yet we do not even have any mention of a gathering together in this text. The nature of the first-day "setting aside" appears to be pragmatic, in order that no collection need be made when Paul arrives. Since Paul is no longer making such collections, one wonders how this verse can be seen as having any weight in establishing a normative method of collections, let alone a normative time for assembly.

As Dr. Richard B. Gaffin once said, "It ought to be recognized that the change of day does present a problem and cannot be established unequivocally on exegetical grounds" ("The Sabbath—a Creation Ordinance and Sign of the Christian Hope," *Guardian*, March 1971, p. 42).

If Scripture has not spoken unequivocally, in what sense may the church do so and still remain faithful to the authority of the Scripture?

Glenn N. Davies
Westminster Seminary
Philadelphia, Penna.

Ed. note: It should be apparent that the same Westminster Confession that warns against binding the conscience also emphatically teaches the continuing obligation of the Sabbath on the Lord's Day. "Exegetical grounds" do not exhaust the Scripture's authority, but what the Confession calls "good and necessary consequence" is also involved. We baptize females, not by any express statement in Scripture, but by "good and necessary consequence." The case for the Christian Sabbath is similarly based on such an understanding of Scripture's teaching.

Homosexuality

(Continued from page 3.)

rights for homosexuals would meet strong reaction; in fact, the editor agrees wholeheartedly with those reactions. We published it anyway because the rest of the article contained so much of real value. If Anita Bryant had been speaking out a month or two earlier, probably we would have done something to clarify that sentence and its implications. It should be noted that Mr. Case himself, perhaps inconsistently, would discriminate against homosexuals at least in pastoral positions.

Mr. Jordan, however, raises quite a different question, the duty of the civil state to enforce provisions of God's law. The Puritans certainly had a consistent approach: Whatever the Bible condemned as a sin worthy of punishment (a crime), the state should punish. Modern societies, at least in the Western world, have drifted into theory of defining crime in terms of its harmful effects in society and increasingly formerly "criminal" acts hurting no one but the individuals willingly involved are being ignored legally

or in practice. The practice of homosexuality between consenting adults in private is seen by many as being none of the state's business.

It is high time that Reformed thinkers reexamined the whole of biblical teaching on the relation of the state to the law of God. What should a modern state consider a crime subject to punishment? The Bible attaches the penalty of death to a child who curses his parents. Is the death penalty still a proper one this side of Christ's incarnation, or should we leave the punishment of death to God alone?

The editor does not claim to have the answers to such difficult questions. He agrees with Mr. Jordan that they are most important, especially in a society that is rapidly losing any sense of moral imperatives either in law or otherwise. Shouldn't our best minds, theological and sociological, be making serious studies in these areas?

—J. J. M.

Anita Bryant's witness

I am writing [also] in regard to the sentence, "The evangelical church should support legislation that would give the homosexual equal rights in employment (non-pastoral), housing, and public

Contacts in Springfield, Mo.

Readers knowing of friends or relatives in the Springfield, Missouri, area who would welcome a Reformed fellowship should contact: B. R. Robinson, Jr., 3560 S. Parkhill Ave., Springfield, MO 65807. (Mr. Robinson is a ruling elder of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and has recently been transferred to the area.)

Contacts in Phoenix

Hope Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPCES) is seeking to establish itself as a strong Presbyterian and Reformed witness in the southeast area of greater Phoenix, and desires contacts in Phoenix, Mesa, and Tempe, Ariz. If you know of persons who would welcome this ministry, please call the Rev. Tom Troxell at 602-967-4242 or write the church at Box 27282, Tempe, AZ 85282.

Contacts in Illinois, Michigan

The Church Extension Committee of the Presbytery of the Midwest (OPC) is seeking to contact individuals who might be interested in helping establish Orthodox Presbyterian churches in Decatur, Illinois; Jackson, Michigan; and the Detroit metropolitan area. If you know of any prospects, contact the Rev. Don Stanton, Oostburg, WI 53070, or call 414-564-2581 (home) or 414-564-2300 (office).

accommodation."

How can the Rev. Mr. Case expect us to accept that just as he has written it?

I quote from *World Wide Challenge* (Campus Crusade for Christ). July 1977, page 44, in an article about "Anita Bryant Standing on a Moral Issue": "The issue flared most hotly around the right of teachers to announce their homosexuality in classrooms."

Anita Bryant said, "Teachers become role models to children. If a teacher has the right to say 'I'm a homosexual and proud of it' he becomes a role model presenting to my children an alternative lifestyle that is an abomination to God."

Certainly Christians are not going to stand for the right of homosexuals to teach in our schools and have the right to brazenly boast of their perversion.

I surely hope that the *Guardian* will make a correction here in regard to this article. Anita Bryant has already had threats on her life and her family; but she is not going to compromise. Right is right and God's Word is God's Word.

The articles by Mr. Case brought out much valuable information. But this one error is fatal and must be corrected.

Thomas M. Cooper
Tuscon, Arizona

Genesis 2:22

Letter to "SARAH"

It was certainly distressing to me to see how the Setchells were blasted, however gently, for expressing their opinion of *The Total Woman* in one of your recent columns (in the May issue of the *Guardian*).

I regret that the Setchells didn't cite chapter and verse to show why their comments were justified. And I think they were. Marabel Morgans's low view of men and how women can manipulate them so easily reminds me of Eve, who manipulated Adam. We haven't changed much over the years, I guess. The Lord must find it hard to be patient with us . . .

Anyway, the Setchells' neglect to cite specifics in the book left them wide open for attack. I know I tend to do that myself in book reviews and letters to the editors, so I sympathize with them. I know the feeling.

Word of encouragement

I hope you will give me space to say a few words of encouragement to them and to others who may be discouraged because their position seems to be frowned upon by the brethren as being "too liberal"—not theologically, understand, but rather it's the way some of us apply the truth of the gospel to economics, politics, social justice—or injustice—and other problems of our day. If I recall it right, Jesus got into a lot of trouble for his views on some of these problems, too.

One of the things I have always appreciated in the more than twenty years I have been in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is the freedom within the structure of the church to develop one's ideas and applications of the gospel. But, depending on where you live and in which presbytery you function, I think there may be more or less freedom to do so.

I am thanking God that the OPC has, so far, had the good sense not to make rules, other than those clearly delineated in Scripture, which would bind the hearts and minds of its members.

So, don't be discouraged, my friends. Our denomination contains believers on both ends of the spectrum as far as applying the gospel to today, and thank God it does. I was reminded that this is true of the church in general, as well as the OPC in particular, when I recently attended the Christian Booksellers' Convention and saw the varieties of belief and practice as evidenced by the books on sale. Applying the gospel, in any age, has been different for different men. There are varieties in the expression of believers but it is the same Lord Jesus.

Don't mind if you are criticized by believers who don't agree with you. Moses didn't mind. David didn't mind. Jesus didn't mind. Paul and Peter went through it, too. So can you. So hang in

there, and let's try to reform the reformers, if and wherever they need it. And by the way, from what I have read of his efforts to apply the gospel to his day, Dr. Machen would appreciate our efforts—not to mention the Lord's appreciation. You can figure that one out.

Sarah, this is a long letter, and perhaps a little vague. It may be of value to only a minority of your readers. But for their sake, let me let them know that they're not alone out there, and they should stay with OPC—if that's where they—are and help us build. Build what? Well, I'm hoping it won't be another Tower of Babel, but rather a church the Lord Jesus will be proud to own.

Mrs. Lois Sibley
Warrensville Hgts, Ohio

Only MEDIocre

Rosemarie Malroy.

It is rather discouraging being mediocre. In one's struggle for excellence, to come up second best all the time leaves one feeling deflated. I remember in particular one instance where my best girl friend received the art scholarship I so earnestly desired—and she didn't even want it!

Yet in God's purpose all things work together for good—even being mediocre. That's hard to keep in mind! As I quickly edge in my lopsided cake with goopy frosting among all the other delectable and impeccable desserts at the church dinner, it's really hard not to feel a bit discouraged and wonder about that purpose.

Still, I have found my mediocre place—and it has been very exciting. The most important thing is not to give up trying. In fact, I can be rather daring in my

attempts because I realize I am only mediocre. There won't be any great sense of failure. When I really feel something needs to be done, I can just pick up and go on my mediocre way and do it.

The fun thing about it is to see how other people react!

So often that reaction is, "Why, I can do that better!" Usually they can. And when one is only mediocre, it is really good to see something done excellently. It is amazing what a hubbub one can create. In fact, God can really use mediocre people. They are just the ones to goad on the more talented ones who sometimes lack of imagination or zeal to do anything because they are hampered by their fear of falling short of their usual standard of perfection.

Sometimes because they are excellent, they are more in demand by the world and are lured from serving God as much as they should. It is really a delight to "inspire" them on to serve the Lord.

So, if you are just mediocre, don't give up. Keep a-trying! And smile that secret smile as you see another one of God's "excellent" children serving him because of your lack of excellence. To God be the glory.

Mrs. Malroy played a major role in starting the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Ronan, Montana, and in encouraging the formation of two other fellowships nearby.

Letter to a session

Let's Have a MISSIONS BOARD!

Juliet W. Griffin

Ages ago, when I was a child, my concept of the Women's Missionary Society of the church I attended was that it was a "bunch of old ladies wearing funny hats." Now that I'm a long way down the pike, my ideas as to what constitutes old age have radically changed, and I'm one of the few old ladies left who wears funny hats.

But the same principle, unfortunately, is still operative now as then—and in this church as well as that one: The concern for missions is, by and large, considered to be the peculiar province of women, and the older ones at that.

Where went the zeal?

If the sense of mission concern is viewed in the church and by individual families as being "Mother's pet project," it is hardly any wonder that the heads of families have scant knowledge of our denominational missions or of the need for funds to maintain the present commitments to outreach, let alone to advance the work throughout the world. Nor is it surprising that children are not confronted with the viable option of choosing a career in foreign or home missions, should God call them specifically.

Although we lament the evidences of declining support and flagging interest, we have not faced the possibility that we women, as a missionary society, may be fostering our own problems. Despite efforts to make the society's monthly program interesting—and they have been—we have not brought in new members,

increased contributions, nor seen candidates come forth from among our youth.

Moreover, much of our activity has little to do with missions. We have hospitality, flowers, kitchen, and helping-hands committees. It seems that the time has come to reevaluate our efforts and to consider suggestions for reorganizational changes.

What might we do?

A workable alternative to a Women's Missionary Society is the establishment of a church Missions Council. It could be similar to the kind of committee that already has the oversight of Christian education in the local church. Better still would be an elected board, thus giving missionary outreach an important place in the church organization. This is the plan adopted by one of the churches in our presbytery, lauded by some of our foreign missionaries, and proved to be successful in several other churches with a marked enthusiasm for outreach.

In one such instance, a nine-member board, comprised of five men and four women, is elected at the congregation's annual meeting, each member elected for a three-year term. The board meets once a month to consider long-range commitments, to set financial goals, to plan missionary conferences, to interview furloughing missionaries, to determine ways of introducing missionary concepts and concerns in the Sunday School, and to assess various means of fulfilling the missionary mandate.

Such a board oversees and coordinates all the church's outreach efforts in order to avoid duplication and to further the work of Christ at home and abroad.

This same board selects five couples from the congregation to serve as liaisons between missionary families and the local church through correspondence. The information, gleaned from whatever sources, is disseminated at the regular monthly missionary prayer meeting, at which time requests for prayer and praise for each mission effort are honored. Each of the five couples is specifically responsible for missionaries in a particular field and each couple leads a small prayer group that concentrates on concerns in that field of outreach effort.

The Missions Council could also have

oversight of the Women's Missionary Fellowship and could appoint its chair-lady who in turn would select her own executive committee. This fellowship would be essentially a service organization. It might meet once a month for a work-day, with luncheon and an afternoon speaker. Funds would be allocated by the council to cover the cost of materials for such projects as making clothing or quilts for furloughing families, for refurbishing the "Missionary Closet," for preparing flannelgraph materials for mission schools and vacation Bible schools, and for making supplies needed by hospitals and mission stations at home and abroad.

In addition to a monthly meeting, the women's fellowship could hold weekly daytime prayer times to pray specifically for the missionary families and their individual needs. This consistent remembrance of each missionary is considered to be the strongest factor in maintaining a strong witness both in the local church and in the places where its representatives have gone to serve.

In view of the present crisis in our Women's Missionary Society, the time seems ripe for a major organizational change. I am proposing that a Missions Council, including men, women, and young people, be appointed now so that strong leadership for a total church missionary program may be formulated immediately and implemented by early fall. Thereafter, the posts on the council should be made elective, with careful consideration given to the nomination and election of candidates.

If positive action is not taken, or if it is merely relegated to a committee for future study, the cause of missions in our church could well be taking a giant step backward.

Mrs. Griffin is a member of Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Westfield New Jersey, and has long been active in mission projects and concerns.

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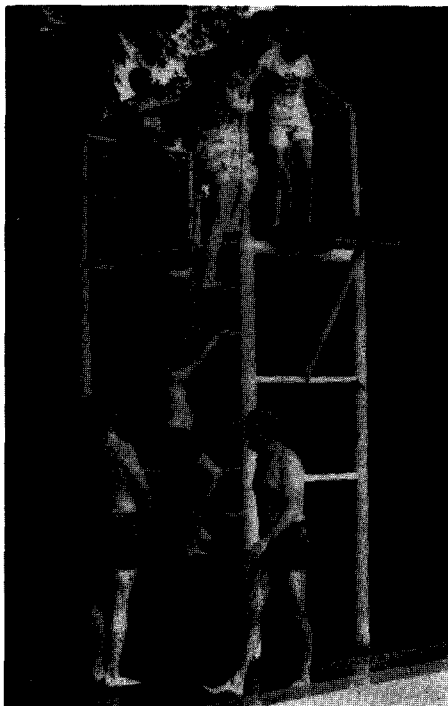
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News and Views



Sub-“presbytery” of Texas

The Presbytery of the Dakotas of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church may not include many people, but it surely has the square miles! The diagonal, straight-line distance from corner to corner is nearly 1700 miles from southeast to northwest. Such distances do not encourage close fellowship!

To encourage fellowship and provide spiritual blessings in the southern-most part of the presbytery, a young people's-family camp was held at Buffalo Gap, Texas (near Abilene) on June 22-25. Wednesday and Thursday were especially for young people; on Friday and Saturday full family participation was encouraged. Some who were unable to attend full time came out from Abilene for the evening meetings.

Those attending were not only from the Abilene Church, but also from the daughter-churches (chapels) in Lubbock, Texas, and Roswell, New Mexico. The Shannon family came from Alpine, Texas.

Wednesday evening's speaker was Herb Swanson who is supplying the pulpit of Knox Church in Oklahoma City. On Thursday and Friday, the Rev. Young J. Son spoke (the Sons being en route from Philadelphia to Korea for missionary service).

The most popular spot, as far as the young people were concerned, was the 60 x 100-foot swimming pool. Mrs. Ernest

Fincher, with the assistance of her husband (a U. S. Air Force pilot) and other helpers kept starvation well at bay.

By all standards, the first “Texas Presbytery” youth-family camp was a success. Over fifty attended and plans are being made for another one next year.

This report and pictures were supplied by the Rev. Glenn T. Black, missionary-pastor in Lubbock.

ITEMS

Chula Vista, Calif.—The Bayview Orthodox Presbyterian Church has called the Rev. Lewis A. Ruff, Jr. to be its new pastor. Mr. Ruff, presently pastor of the Bethel O. P. Church in Houlton, Maine, has indicated his desire to accept the call. The Rev. Larry D. Conard, former pastor of the Bayview Church, is now serving as a missionary-at-large for the Presbytery of Southern California.

Pt. Loma, Calif.—The Rev. Edward L. Kellogg has announced his intention to retire from his post as pastor of the Point Loma O. P. Church in San Diego at the end of the year. He plans to move to Leesburg, Virginia, and to work with his son-in-law, the Rev. Edwin C. Urban, pastor of the Bethel O. P. Church there. The Point Loma Church has already begun to hear candidates and hopes to call a new pastor soon.

