

## **ATTACK ON THE FAMILY**

The Book of Revelation tells us of the many trials facing the Church in the New Dispensation. In colourful language it depicts the punishments of God against the evils of the world and the attacks of Satan against the Seed of the woman, the Son of God and Son of Man. The history of the Church is the history of the fulfillments of these prophecies. Also in our day the eye of faith can see our heavenly Father at work in history. As in the days before the entrance into Canaan, the Church can see the world's measure of iniquity becoming full.

This time we wish to focus on Satan's efforts to destroy the family. God's work as it was established in the very beginning of time. After having created man and making from his rib woman, the Holy Spirit notes, "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24) In various places of the New Testament this early institution of marriage is confirmed; "Let marriage be held in honour among you" (Heb. 13:4). In Ephesians 5, Paul gives practical advice on the way marriage and family life should be conducted. Throughout this letter he warns the Church about tolerance of and assimilation with the world. He writes: "...you must no longer live as the Gentiles do...they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart..." (4:17, 18).

These instructions about marriage and family life are not foreign to our ears and eyes. They are the building blocks of a Christian society. This is the way God has created mankind and this is how mankind is to live. But Satan also knows this. He would like to destroy this basic work of God. The old lie that he used so successfully in the Garden of Eden is being used with a different disguise in our day. Back then he said, "God knows that when you eat of it (the fruit of the tree) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen.3:5). Today he also instills in man that he can know what is good and evil. Today's god is the state. In communist countries the state controlled by force all that happened within its borders. In socialist countries the state also is in full control of every aspect of the nation's activities. In democracies the civil service, the politicians, and the judges are all leading the nations away from the traditional (the way it has always been - because God made it that way) to the new and better way devised by man who believes he knows both good and evil.

It is remarkable that even in so-called free nations the direction of social mores and political ethics revert to those which communist and socialist regimes have sought and still seek to attain. In this we must remember that it is not a matter of our ideas versus their ideas, but that we are contending "against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12) Satan, the Beast, has control of all those who are his. He directs their actions and their thoughts. Today he directs them to overturn the whole social order ordained by the Creator. With the focus on the state as the dispenser of all good, even those who want to be "free" from the control of big brother follow his lead.

In the halls of learning, tolerance for all manner of religious belief and moral conduct is proclaimed. Only Scriptural direction and Christian morals are oppressive and unacceptable. Egalitarianism (that all should be equal) is rampant. Alternative sexual preferences are promoted. Divorce and remarriage are facilitated. Daycare centers are sprouting, everywhere and only fiscal restraint hampers government funding of state-run child-raisers. Abortion and euthanasia are prominent and considered to be each citizen's right.

Feminism heralds freedom for women from the age-old oppression by men. Abuse has taken on such a wide definition that almost everyone can find some example of it in the life of any woman or child.

In a recent article in B. C. Report entitled "Divorced From Happiness", Celeste McGovern related a story of a fifty year old "divorce mediator" (Judith) who divorced her husband. "Her husband was not a bad guy, Judith reports. He wasn't physically abusive and he had been faithful for years. 'But abuse takes many forms', she adds, inserting herself in the category of the 'emotionally abused'. The divorce mediator is uncertain if her husband knew he was abusing her, but catering to him and her increasingly independent teenagers 'just became suffocating.. . I used to equate it to a black hole I could never crawl out of.'" (B. C. Report Aug. 28, 1995, Pg.19)

The footnote in the Genevan Study Bible states that the second beast in Revelation 13 is also called the false prophet that functions as the propagandist for the first beast. He is able to bend the minds of many people causing them to worship the first beast. Departure from the norms God has given us leads to chaos and inevitable eternal death.

Having recently read William Gairdner's book *The War against the Family*, I recommend it highly as a means of obtaining a more detailed insight into the attempt of Satan to destroy God's creation of marriage and family. This book is not written from a purely Christian point of view, but when read with the knowledge of Scripture it will serve to open believing eyes to the unfolding of the prophecies of Revelation. This book, and his earlier work, *The Trouble with Canada*, are not available in many book stores. This in itself shows the control Satan has of the society in which we live.

In his book about the family, Gairdner notes that sociologists are seeking to introduce new definitions for the family. "They now speak not of family, but 'families', and the most delirious of them suggest that we simply define any circle of friends - or those who share the same work, economic needs, political views, or sexual preferences - as a "consciously chosen family," or an "intentional family". The antifamily forces have so broadened the definition of family that it now has hardly anything to do with marriage, blood, legal ties, or adoption. The Ontario Ministry of Education's definition for its "family studies" course (1987) is 'a social unit of interacting persons who make commitments, assume responsibilities, nurture each other, become socialized, transmit cultural and religious values, and share resources over time.'" (Page 133)

In Sweden, the only country where socialist ideology, taxation, and education are even more advanced than in Canada, antifamily activity has resulted in the amazing statistic that shows fully 60 percent of Swedish women who work full-time and 45 percent of those who work part-time, work for the State. In 1968 the Swedish Institute, a promoter of quasi-official Swedish views

published the following statement: “The Family Is Not Sacred: I should like to abolish the family as a means of earning a livelihood, let adults be economically independent of each other and give society a large share of responsibility for its children...In such a society we could very well do without marriage as a legal entity.”(Ibid, pg.139) In 1981, while Finnish authorities took 552 children from their parents for reported “child abuse”, Sweden, with a population only three times the size of Finland, removed 22,000 children from their parents. In order to further impress upon private families the role of the State, Sweden (with parallels in Canada - and for that matter, in the entire Western world) introduced “children’s rights” legislation in 1973, and in 1979 it enacted a law prohibiting parents from subjecting their own children to “physical punishment or other humiliating treatment.” This was combined with extremely liberal laws on pornography and state run “sex-education” classes that effectively by-passed parental authority. Education policy in Sweden (as in Canada) moved long ago to a “progressive” format, emphasizing student choice, permissiveness, a focus on social “adjustment”, banishment of religion from schools, and an as yet unsuccessful campaign to remove all grading.

William Gairdner depicts the beginnings of this moral decay in Canada with an interesting paragraph that is not very foreign to us. He says: “It began with the generation of the 1960’s, from which arose the counter-culture movement searching, with help of drugs, for some higher inner truth (having spurned the higher outer truths)... “Credit-card hippies”, I called them. Their social criticism and search for inner truth were subsidized by the wealthy of the very society - and families - that paid for their extremely expensive schooling. In their rejection of middle-class life and standard religious values, the flower children embraced moral relativity and the unrealities of LSD. They rejected what they saw as the repressive culture of their parents... They were into authority bashing through free love; drugs; communes; I’m O.K., you’re O.K.; share the wealth, the kids, love, peace, the world.”(Ibid, pg. 125)

In the end this all leads to the present day statements and declarations such as the “Social Responsibility Model” recently advocated by Canada’s best known radical sociologist, Margrit Eichler. It reads:

- 1) Every adult is considered responsible for his or her own economic well-being. Where this is impossible, the support obligation shifts to the State, not to a family member.
- 2) For an adult in need of care ... it is the responsibility of the State (not a family member) to pay for the cost of such care.
- 3) The cost of raising children is shared by the father, the mother, and the State, irrespective of the marital status of the parents.

*And Satan rejoices...* He is well on his way toward victory in his war on the family. He is becoming very successful in changing the world in which the Church has to live. But is the Church on guard? Has it put on the whole armour of faith? Are our loins girded with truth, do we have our breast-plate of righteousness on, are our feet shod with the equipment of the gospel

of peace, do we have the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? Or are we relaxing on the beach with hardly anything on at all? Are we so tolerant, so apathetic that we hardly see that beast with two horns like a lamb that speaks like a dragon? That beast exercises all the authority of the first beast that came out of the sea and had a blasphemous name upon its head. Do we recognize that second beast that makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast?

Praise to God that Revelations also gives the conclusion of the whole matter. For John saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and wonderful are Thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are Thy ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify Thy name, O Lord? For Thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship Thee, for the judgments have been revealed'. (Rev 15: 2-4).

Then it will indeed be time to stand beside the sea, but now we must be at work in our Father's world. He has given us His armour. Let us remain vigilant. Let us be aware of the beast that lurks all around us. "To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints ..." (Eph.6:18) PdB

## **CHURCH VISITATION**

By Rev. C. Bouwman (taken from Una Sancta, August 5, 1995)

It's at this time of year that customarily an announcement is made from the pulpit to the effect that church visitation is scheduled for such and such a night. In this article I'd like to explain why the congregation is informed of the upcoming visitation. To do that successfully, we need to consider why church visitation is carried out in the first place.

As to the reasons why church visitation is carried out in Reformed churches around the world, I refer to a couple of passages from Scripture. Some time after their first missionary journey was completed, the apostle Paul said to Barnabas: "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." (Acts 15:36)

This matter of "seeing how they are doing" refers to an effort to find out how things are with them regarding the faith. Here the apostle was not minding somebody else's personal affairs; he rather knew that he had an obligation here to be his brothers' keeper. Here Paul puts into practice the principle of I Cor. 12. According to that chapter, each member of Christ has something to offer to the body. Indeed, each member needs the body. Hence the confession of Art 28 of the Belgic Confession: "...all and everyone are obliged to join [the church] and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the Church. ., and serve the edification of the brothers and sisters..."

This principle, true as it is regarding individual believers, is equally true of churches; none may be “content to be by him-self. So Paul took it upon himself to visit the churches to see how they were doing. Over the centuries the churches have sought to apply this same principle by an annual church visitation. Nearly four centuries ago, the Synod of Dort (1618/19) laid it out in Art. 44 of the Church Order: “The synod shall appoint some of the most experienced and capable ministers to visit the churches... It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfill the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the Church Order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in any thing, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ’s church. They shall submit written reports of their visits to synod ...”

We can, then, describe the purpose of church visitation as follows: in church visitation, the appointed visitors seek to find out how Christ’s various congregations are doing.

The question that next comes to mind is this: how should the church visitors find out how a particular church is doing? In times past, it has happened that the church visitors met with the entire congregation to discuss the weal and woe of the congregation. When it came to questions about the work of the officebearers, the church visitors dismissed the office-bearers in order to give the congregation unhindered opportunity to say what they would about the way in which the brothers were carrying out their office. This particular method of carrying out church visitation, however, did not meet with favour in the churches. This was not due to unwillingness on the part of officebearers to have the congregation say what they would about them (officebearers, being sinful men that they are, need feedback from the sheep over which the Lord has set them); the reason for the disfavour regarding this method was rather due to the recognition that Jesus Christ has given authority in the church, not to church visitors nor to the congregation, but only to the consistory. So it will never do for church visitors to set themselves as judges over the consistory. When church visitors come they meet with the consistory, and in the consistory they meet with the congregation. In the fact that church visitors met with the congregation itself, there is, however, a good element which may not be lost. It has pleased the Lord to place all congregation members in the office of all believers (L.D. 12). As such, congregation members have the duty to see to it that their officebearers carry out their office as Christ commands. Here is the reason why the church visitation is announced to the congregation before the church visitors come: the congregation is given the opportunity to speak with the visitors about the failures and sins of the officebearers in carrying out their office.<sup>1</sup> So it is that when the church visitors meet with the consistory, one of the first questions they ask is this: “Were the purpose, place and time of the meeting announced to the congregation?” And “Has any member of the congregation brought any complaint to the Consistory regarding Church life in general since the previous visitation; if so, could they be solved?”

What it all comes down to is this: the church visitation involves the congregation. But that’s no surprise, if only because all of church life revolves around, and hence involves, the congregation itself.

<sup>1</sup> Its understood, of course, that before a congregation member will want to speak with church visitors about how (a) brother(s) of the consistory carry(s) out his/their office, that member will first have spoken to the brother(s) concerned in order to encourage better performance, and, if that failed, has brought the matter also to the consistory. This is the principle of Matt. 18. It may also be expected that, in the church of the Lord, such complaints will normally be rectified.

## NEWS IN REVIEW

### *GKN representative at CRC Synod - Deformation !*

At a recent Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, the president of the Synod of the GKN (de Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland), Rev. Richard Vissinga, addressed the delegates. In his speech he said, "When they (homosexuals) live with a partner under one roof, they are faithful to each other in love. In faith we accept one another as a gift of God.

It sounds like biblical terminology "Faithful to each other in love," "Accepting one another as a gift of God." But to apply such language to describe a homosexual relationship and then to thank the Lord for the "gift" of tolerance in a church willing enough to accept such relationships is to turn the Word of God upside down.

Vissinga's Scripture twisting is evident from his use of Galatians 3:28, a favourite verse of those who use the equality of the sexes as a means to promote the idea of women in office - a thought altogether foreign to the text. Says Vissinga: "Where believers are true to each other in love, and are committed to the edification of Christ's church, the apostle's words become true that in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave nor freeman, Jew nor Greek - and, I might add, neither hetero nor homo." ...

In 1992 the GKN served notice to the REC (Reformed Ecumenical Council) that it had no intention of defending its position on homosexuality before (them). The first reason for this stance was considered pastoral: "Homosexual brothers and sisters have been frequently hurt through debates in the REC and we do not want to create any uncertainty about our acceptance of them." A second reason contends:

"Further discussion of homosexuality in love and faithfulness is pointless unless we take up the issue of hermeneutics. Questions with respect to the nature of Scriptural authority and hermeneutics have been central in our churches for more than 20 years. Several issues have stimulated this discussion, e.g. the exegesis of Gen. 1-11, historical criticism, the position of men and women in church and society, and homosexuality." ..

The handwriting is on the wall, and for those who live in Hamilton, the wall is clearly visible. The Institute for Christian Studies held its annual family conference this year in Hamilton on the theme: "Vive la Difference! Gender Issues for Contemporary Christians." The offering of work-shops was an "in your face" feminist agenda: "Survivors of Abuse"; "Same Sex Gender Parenting"; "Male Spirituality"; "Responding to Homosexuality"; "Domination and Desire"; "Between Egypt and the

Promised Land: A Glimpse of the Christian Roots of Feminism in Canada”; “Re-imagining Church History as Good News for Women”; etc...

The ICS, formerly the AACS, was one of the principal movers and shakers that pushed the first phase of the feminist agenda upon its supporting church community. That phase - opening the church offices to women, a topic that was ceaselessly promoted by the ICS people for the past 25 years - met with success at the latest CRC Synod 1995.

The agenda for the Family Conference leaves no doubt that the next phase of the agenda is to foist radical feminism on the Reformed Church community...But who see the hand-writing on the wall? And who can read it?

(Excerpts from an article by Raymond J. Sikkema in Christian Renewal of Sept. 25, 1995)

### ***A Politically Correct Bible!***

The New Testament gets a major facelift next month when a new English translation eliminates references to God the Father, turning the Son of Man into “the human one” and removing accusations that Jews killed Christ.

The new translation says children should not “obey” their parents, but heed them. Wives are no longer “subject” to their husbands, but committed to them. Because of racist overtones, “darkness” is no longer equated with evil. And the Lord’s Prayer now begins “Our Father - Mother in heaven.”

References to the right hand of God are also deleted, eliminating possible embarrassment to left handed people. It now becomes God’s mighty hand.

The editors of The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version deny they have spent the past five years producing a “politically correct” Bible but concede that a legion of traditionalists is waiting in the wings to “cast the first stone” and begin one of the biggest Bible debates in years.

Some critics have already charged that the editors have censored the Bible in order to make it fit the political trends of the day.

The book will be published September 11 by Oxford University Press, a major publisher of Biblical translations...

The translation also makes a great effort to reduce the number of times God is referred to as Lord because lords as a ruling group are passé ....

(The Washington Times, September 21, 1995)

