

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

That the tongue, by the grace of God, is also a great power for good is well known to every one who has been blessed by the preaching of the Gospel, helped by the witness, admonitions, and comforting words of fellow believers, and nurtured by covenant instruction in home and school. It is imperative, therefore, for the well-being of home, school, and church that God's children keep their tongues from evil and have their speech seasoned with the salt of God's grace (Ps. 34:13, Col. 4:6).

*See Taking Heed To The Doctrine, p. 342*

**CONTENTS**

Meditation —	
Our Approach To God In Prayer . . . . .	338
Editorial —	
Why Evolution? (6) . . . . .	341
Taking Heed To The Doctrine —	
God Is A God Of Truth (1) . . . . .	342
Guest Article —	
Jesus Protecting (1) . . . . .	344
Feature —	
Serious Call or Well-Meant Offer? . . . . .	346
All Around Us —	
More on "The Fourth Day" . . . . .	349
The Use of the Bible . . . . .	350
The PCA-OPC Union . . . . .	350
So He can only Hop . . . . .	350
In His Fear —	
Worldliness And Materialism . . . . .	351
Bible Study Guide —	
Numbers — The Wilderness Sojourn (2) . . . . .	353
The Strength of Youth —	
Confession Of Faith (5) . . . . .	356
Book Review . . . . .	358
News From Our Churches . . . . .	358

**THE STANDARD BEARER****ISSN 0362-4692**

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.  
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.*Editor-in-Chief:* Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema*Department Editors:* Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman C. Hanko, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Benjamin Wigger.*Editorial Office:* Prof. H.C. Hoeksema  
4975 Ivanrest Ave., S.W.  
Grandville, Michigan 49418*Church News Editor:* Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 - 40th Ave.  
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426*Editorial Policy:* Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.*Reprint Policy:* Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.*Business Office:* The Standard Bearer  
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953  
P.O. Box 6064  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516*New Zealand Business Office:* The Standard Bearer  
c/o Protestant Reformed Church  
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand*Subscription Policy:* Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.*Advertising Policy:* The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st and the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.*Bound Volumes:* The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.**MEDITATION***Cornelius Hanko***Our Approach To God In Prayer***Ques. 120. Why hath God commanded us to address God thus: "Our Father"?**Ans. That immediately, in the very beginning of our prayer, he might excite in us a childlike reverence for, and confidence in God, which are the foundation of our prayer; namely, that God is become our Father in Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of him in true faith, than our parents will refuse us earthly things.**Ques. 121. Why is here added, "Which art in heaven"?**Ans. Lest we should form any earthly conceptions of God's heavenly majesty, and that we may expect from his almighty power all things necessary for soul and body.**Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 46*

We pause at the portal of God's sanctuary.

As we bend our knees in prayer we do well to reflect on this deeply spiritual undertaking. We are about to enter into the presence of the Holy One of Israel, the Most High and living God, who dwells in the dazzling brightness of His own glorious perfection as God above all, blessed forever. We will stand before His face, pour out our souls in prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, worshipping in holy adoration the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. We want to experience that intimate communion of life which God establishes with us through a living bond of faith that unites us to Him. We seek His approval, which is more to us than life itself.

We realize, as Jesus teaches us, that we must not pray as do the hypocrites, standing on the street corners to be seen of men. Men see them; they have their reward. Nor must we pattern our prayers after the pagans, who attempt to impose their wishes upon their vain idols by shouting, crying, pouring out volumes of words. Our Father knows what we have need of even before we ask it of Him.

Our Lord gives us a "model prayer", brief, so that it can be spoken in a few minutes; simple, so that a small child can grasp it; yet at the same time so rich, so fully expressive of all our needs, that it takes us a life-time to learn it. Well may we ask that the Holy Spirit apply that Word of Christ to our hearts, teaching us also a proper approach to God in prayer!

Our Lord teaches us to say: "Our Father *which art in heaven*."

We are to address our God in the deep awareness of our own insignificance and His exalted majesty as God above all, blessed forever! He is so infinitely far beyond us! Heaven is His throne, yet even the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. He is Light, in whom is no darkness whatever. He is Life, the eternal fulness of light, in whose light alone we see the light. He is the only and perfect source of all light and life, the fulness of blessedness and infinite, eternal glory. With whom would we liken God? What is man? A mere speck of dust!

We are aware that almighty power belongs to Him. Apart from Him there is no might, no power, no creature that stirs. He is the sovereign Creator, who calls the things that are not as though they were. By His eternal providence He upholds and governs all things, so that in Him we live, and move, and have our being, carrying out the counsel of His will unto His glory, even according to His eternal purpose. What are we? Helpless, dependent creatures!

Holy is His Name. The angels hide their faces before Him in worship and adoration, as they declare: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of *thy* glory! The saints in heaven never cease to marvel in amazement and worship as they behold His infinite majesty, endless perfections, and eternal blessedness! The heavens declare His glory, the firmament shows His handiwork, all creation joins in singing its Maker's praise! And thou, my soul, bless thou Him above all!

God is the righteous Judge, Who judges according to strictest justice as sovereign Ruler over the angels, over the demons of hell, over every man, woman and child that ever lives upon the face of the earth. Whom He curses is indeed cursed; whom He blesses is richly blessed. Both His curse and His blessing are eternal in perfect righteousness, that every tongue may be stopped, and God be justified into all eternity.

Jehovah is His Name, for He is the almighty, unchangeable, ever faithful and gracious God, who lives His own glorious covenant life in intimate communion of the three divine Persons within His one Being, and who brings His chosen ones into His fellowship and life, to be blessed forever to the praise of His glory! Blessed is that people whose God is Jehovah!

Never would we know Him unless He reveals Himself unto us. No one has ever seen God or can see Him. No creature can discover Him. Canst thou by searching find out God? No one is worthy to stand in His presence; especially not we who are conceived and born in sin, and increase our guilt daily with our many transgressions. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His Holy Place?

In a mercy far beyond human comprehension, God has willed to reveal Himself to us as the God of our salvation in Christ Jesus. He has condescended to come to us, for we could never come to Him. He emptied Himself of His divine glory, was born like any one of us from the virgin Mary, the most blessed among women. He took upon Himself the form of a Servant, humbled Himself in complete self-surrender to the Father, bowed His mighty shoulders under the burden of divine wrath against our sins, even unto the accursed death of the cross, the horrible isolation and anguish of hell, until He had delivered us from the curse and merited for us eternal access to the Father. Even that was not sufficient to prepare for us a living way to the throne of grace. Our Lord conquered over death and the grave, ascended to heaven, where He now intercedes for us before the Father. We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous!

Well may we pause before we utter a single word of prayer to remind ourselves that our God is in the heavens, while we are on the earth. Well may we breathe the prayer of worship in fear and adoration:

O Lord Most High, with all my heart  
Thy wondrous works I will proclaim;  
I will be glad and give Thee thanks  
And sing the praises of Thy Name!

Only then can we sincerely say: "Our Father!"

True it is that there are many other names that God has given us whereby we may speak of Him and address Him. The saints of the old dispensation had many names whereby they spoke of God and to Him. We have evidence of that in Psalm 91:1, 2, where the sweet singer of Israel confesses: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." The circumstances in which we find ourselves often determine the Name of God which best fits our needs or naturally comes to mind. Yet among all those various names, and there are many, our Lord has taught us to address God by saying: Our Father!

It seems to me that it came as a surprise to His disciples that among all the possible names whereby they were accustomed to address God, among which stood out the name Jehovah, that Jesus should teach them to address God as Father. They likely had never done that before. In the old dispensation the Father-Name is rarely used. Christ had not yet come. The church was still under the law, tenaciously clinging to the promise of the coming Savior. Even while Jesus was among them they were not accustomed to hear or use that Name. But our Lord was reaching out into the future, beyond Pentecost, beyond the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when the richer Spirit would give them a richer revelation of the wonder of our salvation, a far more intimate communion of life with God. The Spirit of adoption would teach them, even as it teaches us to cry out: Abba, Father!

As we take that name of Father on our lips we are

reminded that of ourselves we have no right to that name; dare not, may not, and cannot utter it! We are by nature children of wrath, sold under sin. Our sins rise up against us, testifying how unfaithful we have been, even as those who are called the sons and daughters of God. But the Spirit of Jesus Christ in our hearts gives us confidence, testifying in us of the right to confess our sins, to seek forgiveness, assured that we will find mercy. Though our sins be as scarlet, our God is able to cleanse us and make us as white as snow in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Child-like humility prevents us from imposing our will upon Father, who certainly knows what is good for us. We do not dictate, but we pour out our souls, telling Him all our needs, our cares, our anxieties, our doubts and fears, and then asking for complete submission to Father's will.

In child-like trust we cast away all concern, for He who cares for the sparrow on the housetop cares much more for us. We only ask that we may be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and in whatever befalls us to rest in contentment!

We do not try to repay Father for His benefits; we know He does not expect that of us. What, indeed, shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits that He bestows on us? We take up the cup of salvation, thankfully mindful of all His gifts of mercy, and extend needy, dependent hands to heaven, always asking for more, alone from Father!

As we are about to pray, there is still one more lesson we must learn. We must say: OUR Father which art in heaven! That 'our' is very important.

Not as if we never approach God as individuals with our personal needs, but it is our privilege to pray through our Mediator Jesus Christ, so that our prayers mingle with the prayers of all the saints of all ages, and arise as a daily sacrifice before the face of God.

This people is our people, their God is our God, their needs are our needs! O the blessedness to belong to the family of God, now, eternally!

With them we ask: Teach us, Lord, to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven!"

*The Standard Bearer makes a  
thoughtful gift for the sick and shut-in.  
Give a gift of the Standard Bearer  
to a friend or loved one today!!*

## EDITORIAL

# Why Evolution? (6)

Chapter 4 of Dr. Howard Van Till's *The Fourth Day* is entitled "The Form and Content of Scriptural Talk about Creation."

Incidentally, unless otherwise indicated, when he speaks of Scripture and quotes from Scripture, he is referring to the Jerusalem Bible. I have not mentioned this previously; neither do I intend to discuss this. I only want to say that the use of the Jerusalem Bible ought to be repugnant to any right-thinking, Reformed Christian. But if one analyzes Van Till's book carefully, he will discover that there are reasons for his using this version. Its language suits his purpose.

If I were to characterize the thrust of this chapter, I would say that in it Dr. Van Till's purpose is becoming more and more obvious. Instead of carefully listening to Scripture and its clear and unmistakable testimony, he *uses* it to prepare eventual room for his particular brand of evolutionism and its billions of years.

How does he do this?

In the first place, he continues to pay attention to the many poetic references to God's mighty works of creation and providence, without paying any attention whatsoever to the historical account of creation as found in Genesis 1 or to other obviously historical references to creation, as, for example, in the Fourth Commandment. There is one exception to this in the chapter. One might say that the rabbit is about to come out of the hat. For on page 65 he writes: "As it is found in the Bible, artistic literature creatively and effectively employs such genres as poetry, parable, allegory, story of origins, and primal history . . . ." And in a footnote he writes: "The terms 'primal history' and 'primeval history' are commonly used to identify the genre of Genesis 1-11. We will discuss this term more thoroughly in Chapter Five."

In the second place, in discussing the "form" of Scripture's references to creation, he continues to

call attention to various poetic references from the Psalms and elsewhere to God's works of creation and providence in such a way as to attempt to destroy the specific testimony of such passages. I shall not go into detail on this score: for I discussed it in my previous editorial. The main point is that Van Till seems to think that somehow the fact that Scripture employs ". . . the form of poetry in which God's actions are presented in highly figurative and anthropomorphic language" eliminates the possibility that Scripture in doing so speaks very accurate and specific and factual language about our God and His mighty works. In this connection, by the way, he even classifies terms such as "wisdom," "discernment," "knowledge," and "power," when applied to God, as "figures of speech" (p. 59). It is in this way that Van Till tries to do away with the clear testimony of Scripture. I challenge anyone to make clear *exegetically and on Scriptural grounds* how the testimony, for example, of Psalm 33:6 and 9 can be understood by anyone — adult or child — in such a way that it leaves room for billions of years of evolutionary development of the universe. Does God speak? Or is that an empty figure? Does His speech have the immediate effect of producing what it says? Does He command? Or is that, too, a mere empty figure? Is His command effectual, so that it establishes what He commands? Were the heavens indeed made by His "Word" and all the host of the heavens actually produced by the Spirit of His mouth? Figurative and anthropomorphic language has meaning, specific meaning. Never forget this!

In the third place — and this is undoubtedly the main item in this chapter — Dr. Van Till expands the meaning of the divine work of creating and fails to maintain the distinction (a Biblical and confessional one) between God's work of creation and His work of providence. He professes to believe that creation is creation *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing"), but he wants to add to this. I quote from page 65:

Now let's put these four categories of God's creative activity together to form the complete picture. God is the Creator; as Creator, God is the Originator, Preserver, Governor, and Provider of the Creation. God's multidimensional activity as Creator, therefore, is not confined to some instant of "exnihilation" in either the recent or remote past. God's activity is just as necessary for our daily life in the present as it was at any time in the past. Each moment of each day, for example, we experience his action as our Preserver, Governor, and Provider. This experience provides a reservoir of illustrations of God's covenant faithfulness in the same way that the experiences of the biblical historians, prophets, and poets provided the occasions for their witness and testimony to God's faithful acts in history and in the lives of his people of centuries past.

Again, on page 66 he writes:

We have a tendency to summarize the biblical doctrine of creation by saying, "The cosmos *was created* by God." That is altogether correct, of course, but the past-tense verb indicates our inclination to think of creation solely in terms of the act of exnihilation. It strikes me that the statement "The cosmos *is* God's Creation" constitutes a better summary of biblical teaching about creation. It includes the idea of *ex nihilo* origination, but goes beyond that, lending itself

to a balanced consideration of the multiple categories of divine creativity. It has the form of a statement that clearly identifies the status of the material world — a status that in essence entails a relationship of dynamic dependency . . . .

Now I have no particular love for the phrase "ex nihilo." For it is not totally accurate to say that creation is to "make something out of nothing." It is more accurate to describe the work of creation as being that God calls those things which be not as though they were. But this is not the point now. The point is that Van Till wants to expand the definition of creation so as to include what is included in the doctrine of providence. In this way he can get away from the Biblical idea of instantaneous creation of all things in six days, limited by morning and evening, but still maintain that he believes in some kind of creative work of God, and thus at the same time prepare room for his billions of years and for the "big bang."

Dr. Van Till does not listen to Scripture. Neither does he adhere to the teaching of our Confessions.

He wants evolutionism, not the Biblical doctrine of creation. And he must not say that he believes the doctrine of creation. HCH

## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Ronald J. Hanko

# God Is A God Of Truth (1)

The ninth commandment is the second of the ten that deals with sins of the tongue. In distinction from the third commandment which forbids all evil-speaking against God, especially in the misuse of His Name, the ninth commandment censures all evil-speaking among men and in the every-day relationships of life. Nevertheless, the fact that there are two such closely related commandments shows clearly what a great power either for good or evil the tongue can be. "Therewith bless we God,

even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God," James says (3:9).

In that third chapter of his Epistle, James tells us why the tongue is such a great power for evil. It is, James reminds us first of all, a whole world of iniquity, that is, every sin that is in the world can be committed by the tongue. It is active in idolatry and all false teaching and worship, in blasphemy and sabbath desecration. Even in such heinous sins as murder, adultery, and robbery the tongue is no mean tool. It is able, therefore, to set on fire "the whole course of nature," that is, the whole of man's

Ronald J. Hanko is pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church, Houston, Texas.

life, as is evident in the tremendous influence exerted upon the life of man by godless philosophy and teaching promoted by the media, by the schools, and by the godless pulpits of apostate churches. But at the very heart of the matter, says James, is the fact that the tongue is in direct contact with hell, so that it is not just humanistic philosophy and morality that are promoted in every area of society by the influence of the tongue, but the doctrines of devils, and the gross immorality which pleases the Prince of Darkness.

That the tongue, by the grace of God, is also a great power for good is well known to every one who has been blessed by the preaching of the Gospel, helped by the witness, admonitions, and comforting words of fellow believers, and nurtured by covenant instruction in home and school. It is imperative, therefore, for the well-being of home, school, and church that God's children keep their tongues from evil and have their speech seasoned with the salt of God's grace (Ps. 34:13, Col. 4:6).

Nonetheless, the chief reason why we must tame our unruly tongues, even in our relationships with others, is the glory of God. It is true that the ninth commandment forbids all lying and deceit and requires that we speak the truth in our dealings with other men, but this too must be done toward God and for His sake. As far as the ninth commandment is concerned, this simply means that the ninth commandment, like all the others, is grounded in God's own perfection and glory, particularly in His glory as the God of truth. We must speak the truth because God is true, and hate the lie because we love God, Who is "a God of truth and without iniquity" (Deut. 32:4, cf. also Ps. 108:4, 117:2, Jn. 3:33, Rom. 3:4).

That God is a God of truth is part of His immutability. That He is true means especially that He is immutable or unchangeable in His Word, and that His Word is always in perfect harmony with His own holiness and purpose. In other words, His promises do not change from one age to another, as the dispensationalists teach, nor does He, to use another example, purpose only the salvation of His elect, and then "say" in the Gospel that He wants to save all men. That God is the same in His Word and revelation as He is in Himself has always been a fundamental principle of all Reformed, Biblical doctrine. It is also the basic principle of this ninth commandment, and therefore something very practical.

Because God's "truthfulness" is so important for our hope of salvation, we must be very much concerned about obedience to the ninth commandment. That He is true means for us that He cannot deny Himself, and thus abides faithful, keeping His Word and doing what He has promised (II Tim.

2:13). Because He does not change, even in His Word, we are not consumed (Mal. 3:6). If that truthfulness of God means anything at all to us, then it means that we will keep the ninth commandment to the best of our ability. In other words, our love for and hope in God's truthfulness is measured by our obedience to this commandment, which is a very practical application of the truthfulness of God to our daily lives. Only those, therefore, who are thankful to God for the immutability of His promises and the surety of His Word can ever really be obedient to this ninth commandment.

From another viewpoint, all this means that only in that way of being "of the truth" (Jn. 18:37) can there be any fellowship with God. In Psalm 15 David asks who will abide in God's tabernacle and mentions especially those who keep themselves from the sins of the tongue forbidden by this commandment: "He that . . . speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue . . . nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor . . . He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not" (vss. 2-4). It is also for this reason that the spiritual growth of the church and the mutual edification of the members are tied so closely to their "speaking the truth in love" to one another. Only in that way does the church live in the fellowship of God and only in the fellowship of God is there any blessing (cf. Eph. 4:15, 16).

By the same token the wicked reveal their apostasy from God especially in the way of these sins. In all their turning away from God they "turn the truth of God into a lie" (Rom. 1:25). The truth of God referred to here is not the truth as it comes from God, but the truth that is God. In all their rebellion, then, it is the glory of God Himself as a God of truth that is denied and corrupted by ungodly men. God, therefore, hates all deceit not merely because it is disobedient, but because it is always an act of rebellion against God Himself. Certainly Satan's speaking the lie to Adam and Eve in Paradise and their listening to his lie proves this. In fact Satan himself, as the great rebel against God and as the leader and Prince of all the rebellious powers of darkness is named "Liar" (Devil) and "Slanderer" (Satan). Likewise Paul, in describing the depravity of the world under sin and in revolt, speaks before anything else of the fact that "their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:13, 14).

In turning away from God, therefore, the wicked turn to and practice the lie in everything they do, so that their religion is the lie of idolatry, their philosophy a godless deception, and their life a liv-



ing, lying claim that they can have peace and hope without God. So much is this true that in the world the normal way of carrying on one's business, even of governing the nations is the way of boasting, propaganda, and falsehood.

It all comes down to this, that a man's spiritual character is most clearly revealed in his speech. As Jesus says in Matthew 12:33-37, it is "out of the abundance of the heart" that "the mouth speaketh" so that even on the judgment day a man will be justified or condemned by his speech. In the same way that the speech of the Ephraimites betrayed their family and origin (Judg. 12:1-7) the speech of the ungodly betrays their spiritual descent from their father the Devil, who was a liar from the beginning (Jn. 8:44). In the same way also, the speech of Christians must also "betray" their being born by regeneration and nurtured by the Spirit in the family and house of God.

Only by the grace of God is that possible. James says that though men at one time and another have tamed every creature of land and sea, no man has ever tamed his own tongue. God must do it. That we need the grace of God is powerfully brought home in the experience of raising children. They must be taught the truth, but not deceit and falsehood — that they know without any instruction, from the moment they begin to speak and even before. They are "of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself" (Belgic Confession, Article VII).

That grace which tames our tongues must be and is the grace of God in Christ. Christ teaches us the

truth, not only by speaking the things that are true, but by delivering us from the slavery of the lie. He is the truth (Jn. 14:6), not only because He reveals the truth, but because He reveals it *in us*, making us "of the truth" and causing us to hear His voice. He quenches the hellish fire that burns in our lips and tongues by fighting fire with fire, baptizing us with the fiery work of His Holy Spirit. He sets a guard to the door of our lips, sealing them to all but the Word of God. He changes our hearts by the regenerating work of His Spirit so that the abundance of the heart out of which our mouths speak is the abundant thanksgiving that redounds to the glory of God. By the gift of faith He binds us to Himself and cuts the connection between our tongues and hell. Even more, by speaking the truth in all His ministry, even when it brought upon Him the sentence of death and bitter hatred of His enemies, He substituted a perfect obedience for our disobedience and paid for the world of iniquity that is in our mouths. In His work, therefore, Christ is not only the truth, but also the way and the life, for in bringing us to the truth, He brings us to God, Whom to know is life eternal.

Keeping the ninth commandment, then, is our way of showing that we know and have received that grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and that we appreciate it. Obedience to the ninth commandment is the way in which we show that we have received the true testimony of Christ Himself and have set to our seal that God is true (Jn. 3:33). For that grace we pray when we ask; "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3).

---

## GUEST ARTICLE

Robert C. Harbach

# Jesus Protecting (1)

In the Gospel according to John, chapter 18, verses 8-9, we read, "Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I am (He). If, therefore, ye seek Me, let these go their way;' that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, 'Of them which Thou gavest Me, have I lost none.'" This 18th chapter begins a new section in John's Gospel. Chapter 1 is

introductory in character; 2-12 record Christ's ministry; 13 shows our only high priest approaching the laver where he washes the disciples' feet; 14-16 show our high priest passing on to the holy place; in 17 He spiritually enters the holy place; in 18 He moves on toward the mercy-seat, in the holy of holies; in 19 He enters in through the



vail (His flesh), and sprinkles the blood on the mercy-seat; 20-21 record the victory of the resurrection and the purpose of the book. Now let us look at the text from the point of view of *Jesus Protecting His Own*, considering, I. Who (the disciples), II. How (by a word), and III. Why (so that . . .).

"When Jesus had spoken these words . . ." His ministry as our Chief Prophet and Teacher extends from chapters 1-12. At chapter 13 He enters upon His priestly work, so that "these words" are those of chapters 13-17. "Then He went forth with His disciples over the (winter-) brook Cedron, where was a garden" — Gethsemane, although John does not mention the name. But John is the only one who does record this passage of verses 4-9! Into the garden Jesus entered with His disciples. We learn at this point that Judas has been excluded from the number of the disciples. Further, the Lord's appearing here was to show (1) that, not Judas, but He was in charge of all the following circumstances, and (2) that He would thus provide an easy escape for His disciples, while (3) *He identifies Himself* to the Judas-mob.

Now Judas, too, who was betraying Him, knew the place. This knowledge of Judas was part of his education in the school of Christ. What it earned him was the highest degree in hell! In contrast to what Judas knew, "*Jesus . . . knowing all things coming upon Him, went forth*" in perfect control of all those things. *He* had ordained that His chosen place for prayer should be the place of His agony and betrayal. There He would meet the enemy at the beginning of His last earthly battle on His own ground.

"Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons" (v. 3). This was a rather large force of men, Roman soldiers armed (the Jews were not permitted to have arms), followed by the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders (Lk. 22:52). There *they* approached with lanterns, torches, clubs and weapons; but the text says, "*Judas comes*" with all that! *He* was at the head of this sinister crew.

"Jesus, therefore, knowing all things coming upon Him" (v. 4) . . . "knowing that His hour was come" (13:1), and "knowing that the Father had given *all things* into His hands" (13:3), then took the initiative, and went forth to meet the enemy. For they His enemies, all their might and movements, were in His hands. Thus He "went out." (Compare this with "into which He went," v. 1). This positioned Him just outside the garden gate, where

Judas could make his signal of the betrayal kiss. The matter is taken out of Judas' hands; it is all in Jesus' control. For not Judas, but Jesus identifies Himself to His captors.

At every step taking the initiative, Jesus was the first to speak: "Whom seek ye?" He did not wait to be challenged. Why did He begin His own advance upon them with this question? The reason is given in the *therefore*. "*Jesus therefore* knowing all things coming upon Him, went out and said to them, 'Whom seek ye?'" He knew the evil intent of this mob. He knew the purpose of all these things happening to Him: in this way He would go to the Cross. He knew His own purpose, the ultimate realization of the joy that was set before Him in gaining the victory of sitting at the right hand of the throne of God. To this end He was willing to despise the shame and endure the cross. This made their lanterns, torches, and weapons ridiculous!

They answered Him, 'Jesus, the Nazarene.' Jesus saith unto them, 'I am He.' The reply was from the head of the Roman force, leading the club-carrying crowd of Jews. They all saw Him. Jesus had put Himself forward in view of all. Their torches and lanterns clearly revealed His well known face and figure. Lenski says that "two things help to explain the form" (of their reply) — "the unexpected challenge in the question of Jesus and the ringing note of authority demanding an answer."

And Judas, too, who was betraying Him, was standing with *them*. (He is no more numbered with the disciples.) John does not mention the betrayal sign of the Judas-kiss. His account is concerned with other, heretofore unsupplied details. But can we determine where in John's account this dastardly deed occurred? By comparing Luke's account, we may say it took place between what we read of in John 18:9, 10. Judas, at last, showed plainly what side he was on. There the wretched turncoat was betraying Jesus, also by standing, continuing to stand, with the enemy. Judas showed himself "anti-". He was not regarded as an "anti-semite" (although he deserves having the label applied to him, for he dishonored "the tents of Shem," where God was pleased to dwell), but he was a "semitic-anti." He was anti-Christ. He was "standing with them," with all those many antichrists.

"As soon, then, as He had said unto them, 'I am (He),' they (including Judas) went backward (stumbled away from Him), and (then) fell to the ground." It was His repeated reply, "I am He" which caused them to stagger backward away from Him and then to fall to the ground. Two facts are recorded: they went backward and they fell down. They actually shrank and retreated *from* Him. This is what John says happened to that mob of several hundred men — trained Roman soldiers facing

Jesus, followed by the non-military crowd of Jews. "I am" throws them all back and down onto the ground. Here we see two miracles at the Garden of Gethsemane: (1) this falling to the ground of Gentile soldiers and temple Jews at the powerful presence and voice of the Lord. His power was adjusted to jerk them backward, then to throw them all down to the ground. Nor were they able to rise again until He addressed them again. He had the power to split open the earth under their feet to swallow them *down* into the pit, as God did with Korah and his co-conspirators. So Jesus showed that He was in control, and that they could take Him only if He voluntarily gave Himself into their hands. (2) Jesus protected His disciples from all harm. The high priest's servant was hurt. But not a scratch came to the eleven, although they were surrounded by a huge posse, a small army. Jesus protected and preserved them. Peter especially was endangered, for he was the one who had struck with the sword. But the danger was removed in the restoring and healing of Malchus, and that by only a mere touch of Jesus' hand. Luke, the beloved physician, alone records this miracle. In every age, believers are small in number compared with the wicked world. But God's promise is, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32). Jesus is always in control. Even the stormy wind and the raging sea obey Him. For on one occasion He had appeared walking on the sea to still the terrified hearts of His disciples with, "I am! Fear not!" (John 6:20, Greek). But here His "I am" had the opposite effect. Christ's word (and He is *the* Word!) always has a two-fold effect. The same word is to some a "savor of life unto life," while to others it is "a savor of death unto death." Either way, God's Word never returns unto Him void, but always accomplishes

that which He doth please. It is also remarkable that to His elect His divine "I am" is accompanied by, "Don't be afraid!", a word of comfort that with respect to the reprobate is lacking. For their name is *Magor-missabib*, "Fear on every side" (Jer. 20:3). Divine judgment pursues them to the Day of Judgment when they will not be able to plead ignorance of the glory and majesty of His person, nor claim that they never had witnessed His mighty power, nor had opportunity to surrender to Him.

"As soon as He had said unto them, I am, they went backward, and fell to the ground." In the Psalms, and so in our indispensable Psalter, we hear the Messiah (Ps. 2:2), the Son (2:12), singing many of the psalms of praise to God. Psalter No. 71, stanza 2, is a messianic prophecy fulfilled then at the moment of John 18:6. Picture the Messiah singing,

When evil doers come  
To make My life their prey,  
They stumbled in their shame  
And fell in sore dismay;  
Tho' hosts make war on ev'ry side,  
Still fearless I in God confide.

Very likely Psalm 27 was in Jesus' mind on His way to, and later, out from the garden. The above stanza was His song Godward. Psalm 35:4 applies to this Judas-led mob manward. "Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after My soul; let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise My hurt." Psalm 40 is certainly messianic (v. 7, 8), and v. 14 was fulfilled there at the garden gate. "Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after My soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish Me evil." God always watches over His Word to perform it! — (To be continued, D.V.).

## FEATURE

David J. Engelsma

# Serious Call or Well-Meant Offer?

In an earlier article, in the March 15, 1987 issue of *The Standard Bearer*, I showed that the teaching (and practice) of a "well-meant offer of the Gospel" to all who hear the preaching is a lively issue in

Reformed, Presbyterian, and Calvinistic circles today, both in our country and abroad, and that adoption of this explanation of the Divine calling vitally affects fundamental doctrines of the historic Re-

formed Faith. In the course of their defense of the offer, some are now referring to the denial of the well-meant offer by the Protestant Reformed Churches, invariably rejecting this denial as rationalism and hyper-Calvinism. Despite this rejection of their theological position, the Protestant Reformed ought to welcome the current discussion of the offer, inasmuch as it affords them the opportunity, if it does not confront them with the duty, to give account of their understanding (and practice) of the call of the Gospel, particularly the serious call to all who come under the preaching.

\* \* \* \* \*

God brings His elect into saving union with Jesus Christ (faith) by His calling. This calling, or call, consists of the proclamation to them, in the preaching of the Gospel, of Jesus Christ crucified, the Savior from sin (Romans 10:14, 17), and of the work of the Holy Spirit of Christ, by the sermon, in their hearts, minds, and wills, drawing them to Christ (John 6:44; Acts 16:14). So, the Canons of Dordt describes the call, in II, IV/11:

But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man . . .

This saving call is directed by God to His elect alone; the Father speaks to His adopted children. Romans 9:30 teaches both that the saving call is strictly controlled by predestination, i.e., election unto eternal life, and that the humans who are called are those who have been elected, and none other: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called." Inasmuch as the call depends upon, and carries out, predestination, God calls the elect with the purpose, or intention, that they be saved, for predestination is God's will of purpose, from eternity, that certain men be saved ("be conformed to the image of His Son," v. 29). Inasmuch as the deepest source of predestination is the love of God's heart for certain humans, God's foreknowing them with love (v. 29), the call expresses God's love for all those whom He calls. Further, the saving call is efficacious. It infallibly accomplishes the union with Christ of every sinner to whom God extends the call; and it does so by its own almighty power. Not one sinner whom God calls, fails of salvation. This is impossible, indeed unthinkable — as impossible and unthinkable as the failure of light to come into existence, on the first day of creation, when God said, "Let there be light."

Romans 8:30 indicates the sovereignty and efficacy of the saving call in two ways. First, it is God Who calls. Although He uses the "earthen vessel" of a preacher and although He speaks through the foolishness of preaching, it is "He (Who) also called." The Word of this call is the living Word of God; and God's Word "calleteth those things which be not as though they were," quickening the dead (Romans 4:17). The Word that goes out of God's mouth "shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). The efficacy of the call is also pointed out in that Romans 8:30 teaches that all whom God calls are justified and glorified: ". . . and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Not a single person whom God calls fails to be justified. Because justification is by faith, no one who is called fails to be united to Christ by true faith. Not one of the called will be missing in heaven.

Only this view of the call gives to God alone the glory for the salvation of sinners — the glory of the divine grace and power that "pervades the inmost recesses of the man; . . . opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, (it) quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, (it) renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions" (Canons of Dordt, III, IV/11). Only this view of the call provides encouragement to the church as regards her one great task of preaching the Word — the encouragement that her preaching of the gospel is the very Voice of Christ and that all who are His will hear His Voice. Only this view of the call affords comfort to the man whose heartfelt response to the preaching of the Gospel is true faith in Jesus Christ — the comfort that his present enjoyment of salvation is the eternal purpose of a loving God and that his coming to the Savior is not his own work, but divine drawing with cords of love.

In order that this saving call may go out to all of God's elect, in all lands and among all races and classes of people, God has the gospel preached to all men, indiscriminately and without distinction. In fact, the gospel does not now, and never did, come to every individual. This is God's providential government of the course of preaching in the world, according to His counsel of predestination, which does not will the salvation of every individual. But the gospel is to be preached to any and all humans, as guilty, depraved sinners, without any distinction between hearers as unregenerated or regenerated, or as reprobate or

elect. The gospel will certainly make distinction between the hearers, converting some and hardening others; and it will do so, according to God's eternal discrimination between men in the counsel of predestination, as the Canons of Dordt teaches in I/6: "that some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree . . ." But the church may not discriminate in the preaching of the gospel, whether by attempting to limit her preaching (vain effort!) to those who are elect, or regenerated, or by tailoring her message to different kinds of persons, preaching good news to those who seem to be born again, but preaching wrath to the unconverted.

The Lord Jesus has commanded His church, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). In obedience, the church preaches to every man, to the one who responds by "believing not," as well as to the one who responds by "believing" (v. 16). She preaches "the gospel" to every man — "the most joyful tidings," as the Canons describes the gospel, of the manifestation of the love of God in this, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (I/2, 3). The creature who believes is saved by the gospel; the creature who does not believe is damned for the enormous wickedness of despising and rejecting the gospel, as well as for all his other sins.

God's purpose in sending the gospel into all the world, as regards the salvation of sinners (for God has other purposes in sending forth the gospel, e.g., rendering the reprobate world inexcusable, and glorifying His own Name), is the gathering of His elect church by the saving of those whom He predestinated unto eternal life. Although God has the gospel preached to all, His purpose, intention, will, and desire is the salvation, not of all without distinction, but of the elect in the audience. This is clearly implied by Romans 8:30 which limits the saving call, solely by the good-pleasure of God, to those predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. The same is deduced from John 6:44, 45, where Jesus denies that any man is able to come to Him in faith, except he is drawn by the Father, adding that God draws by His teaching of a man, i.e., by the secret operation of the Holy Spirit in a man's heart. As Jesus Himself is preaching the Gospel of Himself as the Bread of Life come down from heaven to an audience that includes many who are rejecting His Word, and a devil among His own disciples, as Jesus well knows (v. 70), He makes plain that His Father's purpose with this preaching is the salvation, not of all who hear, but of some only, those described by Jesus in verses 37 and 39 as "all that the Father giveth Me," i.e., the elect. Strik-

ing is the fact that Jesus tells His audience this, as part of His "evangelistic message!" This is the exact opposite of the message of almost all evangelism today, which assures the audience that God wants them all to be saved. Virtually every evangelistic association in the world would depose Jesus from the office of evangelist for preaching such a thing on the mission field, and for the theology that underlies such preaching. Sad to say, many Reformed and Presbyterian mission committees would do the same.

That God has the gospel preached to an entire city in order to save the elect in the city is expressly taught in Acts 18:10, where the Lord encourages Missionary Paul to carry on with the preaching in Corinth, "for I have much people in this city." Before Paul ever so much as set one foot in Corinth, in order to let loose the power of God unto salvation there, the Lord Jesus had "much people" in Corinth, by divine election; and their salvation was the Lord's purpose in sending the apostle to that city. Quite conscious of this divine purpose with his preaching, Paul the missionary freely confesses, in II Timothy 2:10, that he "endure(s) all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." He knew himself to be the instrument of the definite, divine purpose, intention, will, and desire for the salvation of the elect in his audiences; and he made this his own motive in his labors.

Both in the context of the entire book of Romans, with regard to preaching the gospel of God's righteousness to Jews and Gentiles (Romans 1:15-17), and in the context of the ninth chapter, with regard to the crucial question whether the Word of God failed in the perishing of many Israelites (vss. 1-5), the doctrine of predestination (election and reprobation) in Romans 9:6ff. establishes, and is emphatically and pointedly intended to establish, beyond all doubt and beyond any contradiction, that God's purpose, intention, will, and desire in the preaching of the blessed gospel is the salvation of the elect among men, and of the elect alone. The justification of guilty sinners by the preaching of the gospel of Christ crucified is grounded in gracious election. The Word of God does not fail when multitudes of Israelites perish in unbelief, for, although that Word came to them, the promise of that Word was not for them, but only for the elect among them: God has mercy upon whom He wills to have mercy. It was not the desire of God to save Esau, Pharaoh, or the Israelites who perished, although He had His Word preached to them. On the contrary, Esau's perishing, in contempt for and disobedience of, the Word happened in full accord with God's hatred of him (v. 13). The hardening of men, whether Jews or Gentiles, by the

gospel, is God's will, or purpose, for them; indeed, it is God Who hardens them by the gospel (v. 18).

If now, I respond with the indignant objection, "Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?" I show that man runs true to form, in 1987, in objecting to the gospel of grace, for this is ever his response by nature (cf. Romans 9:19). I

also show that I have heard and recognized the teaching of the truth of grace — free, sovereign grace, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth" (Romans 9:11).

(to be continued)

## ALL AROUND US

Gise J. Van Baren

### More on "The Fourth Day" The Use of the Bible The PCA-OPC Union So He can only Hop

#### More on "The Fourth Day":

The book, *The Fourth Day* by Dr. H. Van Till, continues to draw attention and strong condemnation from the "conservatives" in the Christian Reformed Church. Anyone reading the book can understand why. A recent issue of *Christian Renewal*, March 9, 1987, contained several articles again on the issues raised in the book. Editor John Hultink presents a strong condemnation, stating among other things:

Calvin College professor Howard Van Till does not think there is anything unbiblical about believing that the world and life came into being as a result of the process of evolution.

Satan is the father of lies. More than anything else he would like to convince Christians that God did *not* create the world. That the world is a product of the sum total of millions of mutations. That satan wants us to believe this is understandable. And that those who are the children of satan and not the sons of God wish to believe this is also understandable. But how is it possible that Christian professors at Christian institutions of higher learning teach this blasphemous view of the origin of the universe to Christian students? And are defended for doing so in the pages of our denominational paper.

God's good creation did not come into being as a

result of millions of accidents and mutations. Evolution accounts for nothing except man's unwillingness to take God at His Word.

Is it not blasphemy to suggest that Holy and Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, directed that godless process known to us as evolution?

From the very beginning man was a creature capable of communicating with His God. Adam named the animals. He did not grunt and groan. Satan would have us believe otherwise.

As the first day passed into the second and the second into the third until God reached the sixth day, he said, "And behold it was very good."

Dear reader, can you imagine God saying of man in his so-called primitive state, as he grunted and groaned and heaved his club to smash in the skull of his fellow primitive (to steal his mate), "And behold God saw what he had made (evolved) and it was good?"

That is blasphemy. It is an assault on the sovereignty and the holiness of God to suggest that God is the great evolutionist. It contradicts both testaments, old and new.

There are two honest ways of confessing the origin of the universe. One is that God spoke the universe into being. The other that the universe is the result of a big bang and that human life is the result of millions of mutations. There is no third alternative. At least not for Christians who take God at His Word.

One can emphatically agree with the comments.

There is, however, a great problem for Hultink, one would think. He speaks of one within his own denomination, of one who could sit down at the same communion table with him, of one who has signed the formula of subscription, even as has Hultink. Yet Hultink has spoken of "blasphemy" in assaulting the sovereignty and holiness of God, of contradicting the old and new testaments, and of dishonesty in presentation.

Granted that the charges are all true, still one of two things must happen. Either Hultink retracts all such kind of charges, or he follows through on them. Then, either Van Till must be disciplined because of these sins of which he is accused, or otherwise Hultink surely can find no more place in the same church where such sins are condoned. To withhold financial support, while still sitting at the same communion table, is not the answer.

### ***The Use of the Bible:***

*Christianity Today*, Mar. 20, 1987, contains a report concerning the attitude of those in Sweden towards the Bible. The report indicates that within "Christian" lands, the Bible is no longer held in very high regard — nor is it often used even by those who claim to recognize its divine origin. But also, there is a reminder to each of us. We confess the Bible to be the infallible, inspired Word of God. Yet, how often is it being used by us? Do we regularly read and study it? Or are we content to hear it read in church on Sunday — but then read only a little from it through the week? May the following survey serve as warning also to us.

Research conducted by the Institute for Religious and Sociological Studies found that 10 percent of Sweden's population do not own a Bible and two-thirds of the Swedish people never read the Bible. Sweden's population is 97 percent Protestant.

The study indicates that only 8 percent of the Swedish people read the Bible regularly, compared with 12 percent who attend worship services and 25 percent who pray. A modern Swedish translation of the New Testament has sold 2.5 million copies in a country with a population of 8.3 million. The translation is more popular among youths than adults.

The report says about half of the Swedish population think the Bible is an important book. But one-third view the Bible as "more or less" inspired by God; one-third rank it on a par with other good books containing wisdom for life; and one-third hold a variety of other views of Scripture.

### ***The P.C.A.-O.P.C. Union:***

The Presbyterian Church in America, a few years ago, sent an invitation to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to join the former. That invitation was narrowly declined by the O.P.C. However, many within both denominations would still desire

a consummation of such a union. There was an attempt to present another invitation from the P.C.A. to the O.P.C. However, the *R.E.S. News Exchange*, Mar. 10, 1987, indicates that this invitation will not be forthcoming:

The *Presbyterian Journal*, reports that at least 11 presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) have voted to reject a proposal to send a second invitation to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) to become a part of the PCA. Last year a virtually identical invitation extended by an earlier PCA general assembly garnered a majority acceptance in the OPC but failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority. The first rejected offer will not be followed at this time by a second offer.

### ***So He can only Hop:***

One is ever amazed at what people will believe. The lie is prevalent throughout the land. Many even pay large sums of money to do what sound reason would say can not be done. And so many do these things in place of any obedience to God's Word. *Church and State*, Mar. 1987, reports:

A Philadelphia man has been awarded \$138,000 for psychological damages he claims to have suffered while practicing Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Robert Kropinski, 36, claimed his 11 years of participation in the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Hindu-based movement had left him with a range of mental problems. Contrary to TM promises, he said he did not learn to levitate, improve his memory, relieve stress or reverse the aging process. Instead, he asserted that TM caused "headaches, anxiety, impulses toward violence, hallucinations, confusion, loss of memory, screaming fits, lack of focus, paranoia, social withdrawal." He also claimed to have been induced to convert from Christianity to Hinduism.

Attorneys for TM's World Plan Executive Council produced witnesses — including a Roman Catholic priest — who vouched for the meditation technique's benefits. They also charged that Kropinski had brought similar claims of mental damages when he filed suit against Gimbel's department store after a fall there.

A physicist from Maharishi International University took the stand to assert that he believes levitation is a physical possibility. Kropinski claimed that TM devotees cannot fly at all, but only hop.

Although he had originally sought damages of \$9 million, Kropinski said he is "enormously happy" about the case's outcome.

*Read and study  
the Standard Bearer!*



## IN HIS FEAR

*Arie den Hartog*

# Worldliness And Materialism

There is a great danger of worldliness in the midst of our own churches. We want to consider several areas which pose the greatest threat. We need constantly to be warned against the great danger of materialism. The world in which we live is a dreadfully materialistic world. We must be careful that we do not become worldly in that we follow this materialism. We become worldly when we are spiritually conformed to this world, in its goals and purposes, in its conversation and life style. As Christians we must be spiritually different. This difference does not come out when we attempt to live in physical separation from the world. We are called to live in the midst of the world and yet not be of the world. We are called to bear a Christian testimony before the world of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. We are called to condemn the sin and evil of this world and to testify of the righteousness and truth of God. The real test of the genuineness of our Christianity comes in how we live and act in the midst of the world and before men. We must be spiritually different and separate from the world. We must be absolutely spiritually different in our attitude towards the material things of this world and in the manner in which we use these material things.

Materialism is a great evil. It is really a denial of God and of His sovereignty. It is the worship and service of mammon. It is the love of money which is the root of all evil. A man is materialistic when he makes earthly and material gain the end-all of his life. The materialistic man covets more and more material things, he has an insatiable lust for riches, luxury, for great abundance of worldly things. A materialistic man spends all or most of his time working and striving for material things. For these

things he uses all his energies, and to obtain them he employs all of his God-given talents and opportunities. The materialistic man vainly imagines that man's life consists in the abundance of things which he possesses. The materialistic man cares not for the higher and spiritual things of God. His life is consumed only to obtain the earthly and temporal. He cares not for the true and eternal riches of God. He is not concerned about laying up treasures in heaven. His greatest treasures are lands and houses and cars, the latest technology, expensive and exotic vacations to the ends of the world, fancy restaurants and lavish meals and on and on. The materialistic man does not think of God. He refuses to acknowledge that the Lord is the sovereign creator and Lord of the universe and all that it contains. He does not give God thanks. He imagines that he will obtain all of his material gain by his own wisdom and ingenuity and strength. Materialism is such a great evil because it is bound up and flows forth from so many other great sins in the life of the totally depraved natural man. The materialistic man imagines that the things which God has given him only as a trust really belong to him and that he is free to do with them as he pleases and according to his own lusts. A materialistic man is greedy. He is never satisfied, no matter how much he has. He is selfish and careless about the miserable and wretched condition of his neighbor. Our Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus brings that out very graphically. Materialism in its very nature chokes out all spiritual interest and concern. The Lord's Day is forgotten because all the days of the week must serve to satisfy the lust for material wealth of the world. The materialistic man is too busy to be involved in the life of the church. He does not care about his own spiritual welfare nor about the spiritual welfare of his neighbor. The cause of the Lord and of His kingdom does not interest him because they do not



promise any material gain. The materialistic man will finally resort to lying, cheating, and stealing only to get more of the material things he lusts after.

We live in the midst of extreme wealth and luxury. America is one of the richest countries in all the world. Even during times of economic hardship, Americans have more material things than almost anyone else in the world. In fact it is shocking how much even the common man in America has and how much this is all taken for granted. Meanwhile half of the rest of the world languishes in poverty, and even in our modern world millions starve to death. Though the modern mass media can bring this all very graphically before our eyes, there is really very little concern. Americans continue to live lavishly and to waste enough to feed half of those who are starving to death. It is a very good experience to live for a time in another part of the world as we did and witness the awful contrast between the great wealth of America and the comparative poverty of the greater part of the rest of the world.

The Christian has been taught of God a whole different perspective towards material things. We know that God is the sovereign creator and owner of all things. He it is that makes one wealthy and another poor. He has given us all that we have. He gave us the power to get wealth. He holds us solemnly responsible and will judge us for the way we use the material things of this world. As Christians, we know too that all the things of this world are temporal. Some day this world and all that is in it will be destroyed by fire. Furthermore, the material things of this world are for our use for only a short time, only for the short time of this present life. As Christians we are taught not to set our affections upon the things of this earth but upon the things which are above. God has prepared something better for us. God has in Christ prepared for us an eternal and glorious inheritance in heaven. The Lord has in Christ given us spiritual riches which shall never fade away, the riches of the knowledge of God and of His salvation and of the hope of eternal life in glory. By His grace and Holy Spirit the Lord has made us to differ from the world. We must therefore also live and act differently from the world. This must also be seen in the whole different perspective which we as Christians have in regard to the material things of this world. We must constantly reveal before the world that material things are very much secondary in our life. There is no value in simply multiplying to ourselves earthly riches and luxury. We must reveal before the world that we strive for far greater and more glorious treasures, the spiritual treasures of the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, the

treasures of knowledge of God and of fellowship with Him and His Son Jesus Christ.

Scripture warns severely against the evil of materialism. What does James say to the rich of this world? "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days . . . Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in the day of slaughter," James 5:1-3, 5. Our Lord Jesus warned that it is harder for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Think about this. Paul writes to Timothy: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, and godliness, faith, love and patience, meekness," I Timothy 6:9-11. What a mighty word of God this is in regard to materialism. These are real warnings! How many are there among us who desire to become rich and will even sacrifice spiritual things for the sake of gaining more and more wealth even after they already have such great abundance? Can it be said of us that we truly flee these things in our life? Or are we in great danger of being drowned in destruction and perdition and of erring from the faith because of the great evil of the love of money in our hearts?

We said that there is a great danger of materialism in our midst. Perhaps there are some who would say that this is a rash statement. Where are the evidences? Do we not give lots of money to church and school? Do we not have beautiful church buildings and modern school facilities? What more can be asked of us? Well, let each man judge his own heart and life. Along with our fellow Americans we, too, have become very wealthy. Consider some of the beautiful homes that we live in. Consider all the material abundance that surrounds us. Even the "poorest" of us really has so much more than we need and so much more than many others in the world. We ought to have a holy fear about all the wealth that we possess lest we use it all in a wrong way and become materialistic. Moses had to warn the people of Israel severely about this after they would come into the land of the Canaan, lest they would forget the Lord their God and begin to glory in their great wealth. It is

seldom true that when a people become more and more rich they also become more and more spiritual. History has proved that the reverse is almost always the case.

Are there very serious signs of materialism in our midst? There are! It is simply a fact that among some there is a grievous lack of spirituality. Let God be the judge of each one of us and of our hearts. Many can go on and on speaking of the glories of new houses, of vacations, and the latest fashions in dress, of the latest restaurants and on and on. But when it comes to speaking of spiritual things, they are almost absolutely silent. This is a grievous thing. The Bible says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Does our speech reveal that the abundance of our heart is the love of God, and the love of the things of God are those of His truth and of His church and kingdom? We see those in our midst who, though they come to church on the Lord's Day, are involved in little else in the life and ministry of the church. The chief reason in many cases is that they have made themselves so busy with the things of the world, with their careers and occupations, to get more and more wealth that they have little time for the church. This, too, is serious. The Christian's life and involvement in the church ought not to end merely with coming to the worship service on the Lord's Day. Increasingly in our own churches we find mothers following the way of the world, forsaking their covenant obligations in the home, and going after a career in the world. The chief reason for it all is that we are ashamed to live on a lower standard than the world and we desire to be as wealthy as our ungodly neighbors. This is a serious indication of worldliness, and the warnings of the above passage of Scripture ought to be seriously

taken into account. Are we truly a people that is noted for its liberality in giving to the poor? Do not say that there are no poor people. Our Lord said that we would have the poor always with us. We can make all kinds of justifications why we need not give to the poor but we better be sure that they stand the test of the Word of God. Generally there is a good amount of giving in our churches for the cause of the church and kingdom of God. There are those who make great sacrifices and those who have great difficulty, especially when it comes to paying Christian school tuition. On the other hand we as a people are extremely wealthy. To whom much is given much is required. The more wealthy among us are under solemn obligation to give more abundantly. It should never be the case that our Christian schools are in trouble because of lack of money. It should never be the case that projects of our churches have to be hindered or even stopped because of lack of money. It fills me with great shame when on a few occasions decisions had to be made at our church assemblies not to engage in some mission programs because of lack of money. We are so wealthy as people of God that money ought not be the major determining factor.

Worldliness in the church has a devastating effect upon the witness of the church. If the world sees that we too as people of God have become materialistic, it will surely use that as an occasion to blaspheme the name of our Lord. May God give to us a spiritual perspective on the proper use of material things and may the glory of His grace shine through us in that we are a people who are ready to forsake all the riches of this world for the true spiritual riches of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

---

## ***BIBLE STUDY GUIDE***

*Jason L. Kortering*

# **Numbers — The Wilderness Sojourn (2)**

We continue with our outline of the first main part of the book of Numbers, the preparation for Israel to depart from Mt. Sinai (1:1-10:10).

5. The law of the Nazarite is given (6:1-27). Details of the vow are enumerated: man or woman should separate from strong drink, eat nothing of

the vine, have no razor come upon his head, nor touch a dead body (6:1-8). In the event that the Nazarite is defiled, certain ways are prescribed to make atonement for such sin: e.g., to offer turtle doves, or in some instances a lamb and unleavened bread. His head is to be shaved and the hair burned, (6:8-21). The well known Aaronic blessing is now prescribed for pronouncement upon the people, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . ." (6:22-27).

6. The gifts of the princes of each of the tribes is enumerated (7:1-88). These are given in connection with the journey from Mt. Sinai to Canaan. These included six covered wagons and twelve oxen for transporting the tabernacle (7:1-11). Then we have a description of each tribe's donation, generally silver bowls, chargers, flour, incense, and animals for offerings. The total offerings amounted to 2400 shekels of silver, 120 of gold, and 240 animals (7:12-88). The voice from the mercy seat of the tabernacle was God's way of indicating His favor in this offering (7:89).

7. The Levites were to be cleansed as prescribed (8:1-26). Instruction is given for the lighting of the golden candlestick with its seven lamps (8:1-4). The Levites were to be sprinkled with water, shave off all hair from their bodies, and wash their clothes (8:5-7). This was to include a public ceremony, at which the meat offering was to be given in their behalf and the congregation was to place their hands upon the heads of the Levites while they in turn were to place their hands upon the bullocks (8:8-14). Specific mention is made of the fact that the Levites were to take the place of the firstborn of all Israel. As instructed, so the congregation did to the Levites to purify them (8:15-22). The specific age of service is now given. From 25 years to 50 years of age they were to serve in the temple (8:23-26).

8. Instruction for the observance of the Passover is given (8:1-14). On the fourteenth day of the first month at evening, the keeping of the Passover was to begin according to detailed instruction previously given (9:1-5). Exception was made for the man who touched a dead body or was traveling. He could observe it the next month (9:6-14).

9. Jehovah accompanies them in their journey by the presence of the cloud (9:15-23). When the tabernacle was finished being built, that very evening a fiery pillar appeared at night and a cloud appeared by day (9:15, 16). The presence of the cloud upon the tabernacle dictated whether they would journey or abide still. As long as the cloud stayed upon the tabernacle, they stayed at that place, even for months or years (9:17-23).

10. Trumpets were used to signal when to move (10:1-10). Two trumpets of silver were constructed (10:1, 2). If both were blown, the congregation was instructed to come to the door of the tabernacle, but if one was blown, only the princes were to come (10:3, 4). A system of alarm was also set up, as well as a call to holy convocation (10:3-10).

We now come to the second main division of this book, the events that cover the departure from Mt. Sinai to the time when they arrive at the Plains of Moab (10:11-21:35).

1. During the travels from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, Israel manifests over and over again their unbelief (10:1-14:45). Departure from Mt. Sinai takes place on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year. The cloud led the way (10:11-13). The order of march was as the Lord had instructed: Judah led the way (10:14-17), followed by Reuben (10:18-21), by Ephraim (10:22-24), and Dan (10:25-28). Special request is made of Hobab (son of Raquel, Moses' father-in-law) that he not return to Midian, but accompany them and serve as a scout who would go before them. He consents (10:29-36). When they arrived at Taberah 3 days later the complaining began (for what we are not told). God sent fire upon the people in the uttermost part of the camp, hence the name Taberah, "a burning" (11:1-3). The mixed multitude began to complain about the manna and to lust for the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic of Egypt (11:4-9). Moses expressed his complaint to the Lord: how could God expect him to meet the needs of so large a congregation (11:10-15)? God instructed him to appoint seventy elders who would receive the same Spirit that was in Moses. This he did and all 70 received the Spirit of prophecy while they stood before the tabernacle, even Eldad and Medad who were not present at the tabernacle (11:16-30). At the same time God promised to give flesh to the complaining people. Moses asked if they should kill the livestock. God said he would provide, and the wind blew in quails from the sea so they were three feet off the ground, within easy reach, surrounding the camp a day's journey on all sides. The people gorged themselves with the meat and God sent a plague and many died. Hence it was called Kibroth-hattaavah, that is, graves of lust (11:31-35). Added to the grief of Moses was the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron. They accused Moses of taking too much power upon himself by thinking God only spoke through him and not all the people. The Lord confirmed that Moses was His mouthpiece by speaking at the door of the tabernacle. Later He took the cloud from the tabernacle and smote Miriam with leprosy (12:1-10). Aaron repented of his sin and Moses entreated the Lord to remove the leprosy from Miriam. The Lord said she

should be put out the camp for seven days. The people waited during this period and afterward Miriam was brought back completely restored (12:11-16). From the wilderness of Paran, Kadesh Barnea, Moses sent out the twelve spies, one from each of the twelve tribes. Special note is made that Oshea's name is changed to Jehoshua. They are instructed to spy out the entire land, from the south and even to the populated part. While there, they discover the giants of Anak in the vicinity of Hebron. In Eshcol they cut down huge clusters of grapes, (13:1-25). Returning to Kadesh, they describe the land flowing with milk and honey, but discourage taking the land due to the walled cities and giants. Caleb, however, insisted that they were well able to take it (13:16-33). The people reacted by weeping and murmuring against Moses and Aaron: "Would to God we died in Egypt." They threatened to make new captains to help them return to Egypt. Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes and insisted before the people that with God's help they could take the land, warning them not to rebel. The people retorted by threatening to stone them with stones (14:1-10). Jehovah appeared before the tabernacle in the cloud. He threatened to slay the people. Moses acted as the mediator, pleading that God not kill the people and give occasion to the enemies to mock (14:11-19). The Lord answers that He has pardoned the people. They will, however, return to the wilderness; and since they tempted God these ten times, they will not see the land. Only Caleb, who has a different spirit, will be allowed to enter (14:20-25). God specifies the penalty for this rebellion: all twenty years and older will die in the wilderness; and only Joshua and Caleb will be allowed to enter the land. They will wander in the wilderness for forty years, one year for each day they searched out the land (40 days). All ten of the spies that brought an evil report will die before the Lord by the plague. Moses explained these things to the people and they mourned before the Lord (14:26-39). Some of the people insisted they were going to go to Canaan anyway and presumed to ascend a hill in that direction. The Lord warned them, to no avail. The Amalekites and Canaanites, however, attacked them and they were smitten (14:40-45).

2. During the desert wanderings, God chastened

His people (15:1-19:22). Even though the people were turned back from the land of promise, God gave them instruction as to how they were to offer their sacrifices to Him, once they arrive (15:1-31). Reference is made to the man who deliberately broke the Sabbath law by gathering sticks and instruction is given to stone him without the camp (15:32-36). God also instructed them to put blue fringes in the border of their garments as a sign of their obedience to the law (15:37-41). Then we have the account of the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On, how they gathered 250 princes against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of taking too much power. They questioned the authority of God's servants and claimed the priestly office for everyone by offering incense before the tabernacle (16:1-19). In answer to this God ordered the people to separate themselves from them and the earth swallowed up the offenders while fire from heaven devoured the 250 men who offered incense (16:20-35). The brazen censers of these offenders is melted and a covering is made for the altar (16:36-40). The people gather in complaint about the death of so many "good" men, the Lord threatens to destroy them immediately, and a plague moves through the congregation. Moses and Aaron take a censer full of incense and draw a line of separation, and the plague stops at that line. 14,700 died in the plague (16:41-50). The Lord sets out to establish Moses and Aaron in their office. Each tribe is instructed to bring an almond rod with the name of the tribe written on it. The tribe of Levi is to have Aaron's name on it. The rod that sprouts buds will indicate God's choice (17:1-5). The next day Moses went into the tabernacle and Aaron's rod had budded and blossomed. This rod was placed in the tabernacle as a testimony that Aaron's priesthood (Christ) was appointed of God and all rebellion will be punished (17:6-13). The importance of the Levitical priesthood is affirmed. Aaron and his sons are to be busy in the tabernacle and bear the iniquity of the people (18:1-7). As a result of this, they were to live from the offerings of the people, since they possessed no land. This included the meal offering, trespass offerings, gifts of the firstfruits, consecrated things, money given as redemption of the firstborn, the tithes of the people. From this they were in turn to give a proper offering to the Lord (18:8-32).

*Take the time to read and study  
the Standard Bearer!*

## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

### Confession Of Faith (5)

Last time we began our discussion of the second question asked of those who make public confession of faith: "Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?" We considered the antithetical nature of confession of faith, that confession of faith is not only acknowledging positively the truth of God's Word, but also "rejecting all heresies repugnant thereto." We also considered the "new, godly life" to which those who make confession of faith are called.

In this article we want to focus especially on the fact that those who make confession of faith resolve "by the grace of God" to maintain the true doctrine and to lead a new, godly life.

#### BY THE GRACE OF GOD

The grace of God is necessary for anyone to confess his faith. As faith itself is a gift of the grace of God, so is the ability to confess this faith. The Apostle brings this out in I Corinthians 12:3 when he says that "... no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

The grace of God opens our mouths and loosens our tongues so that we are able to give a testimony concerning our faith in Jesus Christ. The grace of God gives us the courage to do this when such a testimony entails reproach, rejection, and even bodily persecution. It was the grace of God that enabled the three friends of Daniel to confess their faith, even when such a confession meant the burning, fiery furnace. It was the grace of God that enabled Paul to give a good confession before the mighty of this earth, the Agrippas and the Caesars, even when that confession meant for him in the end martyrdom. It was the grace of God that enabled the early Christians steadfastly to confess their faith even when that confession meant death by burning.

That we resolve to remain faithful to the confes-

sion we make, by the grace of God, teaches us our weakness. It is important that the Christian recognizes his weakness, for only when we are weak can we be strong. It is only by the grace of God that we will ever "adhere to this doctrine." It is only by the grace of God that we will be able "to reject all heresies repugnant" to the true doctrine. It is only by the grace of God that we will be able "to lead a new, godly life." The grace of God underlies the entire Christian life.

That means that the Christian life is one of conscious dependence upon God. Do we know this? Really know this? Does it live in our consciousness that the only possibility of our living the life of one who is a disciple of Jesus Christ is the grace of God? Do we think about this very often?

We can be sure that if we forget our need of the grace of God there are going to be serious problems in our Christian life. Our Christian life is going to degenerate drastically. At best we are going to become apathetic in our Christian life, with the resultant loss of joy in the Christian life. At worst, we are going to fall into serious sin.

Those who make confession of faith must be asked whether they are consciously depending upon the grace of God to live the life to which they are called. Are they living in daily dependence upon God for the strength to live this life? Do they recognize their own weakness and inability in this regard?

#### THE MEANS OF GRACE

Our dependence on the grace of God to live the Christian life brings up the subject of the means of grace. We depend on the grace of God. But God gives us His grace through means, the means of grace. One who is living in dependence on the grace of God is one who is making use of the means of that grace.

Of importance here are, first of all, what we might call the "private means of grace." I refer here especially to prayer and Bible reading. Personal prayer and reading of the Scriptures are absolutely

indispensable in the Christian life. There simply can be no Christian life apart from them.

Does the young person making confession of faith have a place in his daily life for prayer and Bible reading? Does he make a point every day of engaging in these necessary activities? It cannot be questioned that God blesses these activities. It cannot be questioned that God uses these activities to strengthen the faith of His child. It cannot be questioned that through these activities God gives grace to His child to live a godly life in the midst of this world.

A young person who has no time for daily, private prayer is in no condition to make public confession of faith. A young person who cannot take the time to read the Scriptures cannot be resolved by the grace of God to adhere to the true doctrine and lead a new, godly life.

Besides the private reading of God's Word and prayer, the second question for public confession of faith implies the importance of the use of the public means of grace. By the public means of grace we refer to the official means of grace established by Christ in His church, the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.

It is especially through the preaching of the Word and the sacraments that God bestows on us the grace to live the life which we resolve to live at the time we make confession of faith. Apart from the official means of grace, the Christian life is impossible.

The Christian life is not "een hoekje met een boekje," that is, going off into some little corner by ourselves with our own little book and privately cultivating Christianity. The Christian life is not some individual endeavor, altogether divorced from the rest of the people of God and from the church institute. The vitality and very existence of the Christian life depends on the official means of grace in the church.

A resolution, therefore, to live a new, godly life "by the grace of God," is a resolution to be diligent in our use of the means of grace. Has the young person making confession of faith been diligent in using the means of grace in the past, including attending catechism classes? Is he resolved to be diligent in the future? Is it important to him to attend both Sunday worship services? Is his attendance more than merely habit?

This is a serious matter, a terribly serious matter. Let no young person take this matter lightly! Before God and His church you resolve, promise faithfully to make use of the means of grace. That is involved in your confession of faith.

To resolve to lead a new, holy life by God's

grace, and then to neglect the means of grace is to give the lie to your confession. To promise to live a life under the grace of God, and then to be unfaithful in attending the worship services of the church is to go back on the promise that is involved in your confession of faith.

It is also for this reason that young people who confess their faith and declare publicly their agreement with and commitment to the doctrine of the Scriptures as "taught here in this Christian Church," and then who leave that Christian church commit serious sin. How is it possible to "adhere to this doctrine and reject all heresies repugnant thereto" in a church that does not faithfully preach that doctrine? How is it possible to lead a "new, godly life" in a church where the sacraments are corrupted and the Word of God is distorted? In the end, it is not possible.

### **THE PREACHING AND OUR GODLY WALK**

The diligent use of the means of grace is crucial with respect to the godly walk the confessing member of Christ's church is called to live. The importance of our attendance at the worship services of the church is certainly, first of all, the glory of God. God is glorified by the worship of His church. But there is also practical benefit here for ourselves. In the second question for public confession of faith a promise is made to make good use of the means of grace. The carrying out of this promise is absolutely necessary if we are going to carry out the additional promise to lead a holy life.

The Scriptures emphasize the importance of the Word of God and the preaching of that Word for the holiness of the Christian. In John 17:17 Jesus prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." In Acts 26:18 the Apostle Paul gives as the purpose of his ministry that he might turn men "... from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

One outstanding purpose of the preaching of the gospel is to equip God's people to live a holy Christian life. The gospel does this, first of all, by giving us the proper motive — thanksgiving for gracious salvation in the cross of Jesus Christ, according to the electing grace of God, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. And the gospel does this, in the second place, by setting before us the standard of such a holy life — the law and will of God contained in Holy Scripture.

May our young people take seriously their vow of confession of faith. May they be diligent in their use of the means of grace, privately and publicly. Just in this way may they receive God's grace to live a new, holy life.



## Book Review

**THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM**, Lowell Hagan, Jack Westerhof (Illustrations by Paul Stoub); Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; 326 pp., \$16.95 (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema)

From a technical point of view this is a beautiful book. The format is lovely. From cover to cover the book is tastefully done. It is characterized by easy readability, gives evidence of much planning and hard work, and its language is geared to children of almost any age.

Yet I cannot recommend this work. My reasons are as follows:

1) The authors have taken very much liberty to add details not found in Scripture, details which are purely fictional. An example is the story of Joseph and Mary, pp. 11-13. Another is the fictional conversation with the innkeeper in Bethlehem, pp. 14-16. It seems to me a child is going to be very surprised when he begins to read the Bible on his own and finds the Biblical account very different.

2) The application at the end of the story concerning the changing of water to wine at Cana sounds humanistic, p. 50: "With this miracle Jesus showed that he had come to bring joy back into human lives."

3) The impression is left that the beatitudes deal with social justice. An example: "Was this what the kingdom meant, that everything would be set right, that justice would be done at last?" (p. 62)

4) The story of the crucifixion is told horizontally, from the viewpoint of the passersby. There seems to be little sense of the wonder.

These are a few examples of negative criticisms. More could be added. I would not like to have my grandchildren nurtured on this kind of Bible story book.

The artwork, while in a way well done, goes beyond what I would deem proper limits.

## News From Our Churches

*Ben Wigger*

May 1, 1987

Now that Rev. Rodney Miersma has accepted the call extended to him from our sister congregation in Wellington, New Zealand, it seems like a good time to continue the profiles of our churches with a profile of our Holland Church, Rev. Miersma's present charge.

On July 3, 1929 the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan was born. Those who met there that night had been led to believe that as many as seventy-five families would be joining with them. But, as so often in our history as churches, when it comes to actually breaking with the church and being willing to do through the process of reformation, there were so few who actually dared to show their colors. Consequently only eleven families became part of that first group.

For the better part of the first five years the congregation gathered in a little bakery shop.

In September 1932, the congregation felt com-

pelled to call their first pastor. This was done only after Classis decided to grant Holland a subsidy of \$300.00. Candidate Martin Gritters became their first pastor.

Continued growth led the group to purchase two lots in 1936 for \$750.00 on the corner of Twentieth and Maple. Plans were approved and Holland's first church building became a reality in 1938. Meanwhile Rev. Gritters accepted a call from Sioux Center, Iowa. Soon after this the Rev. Peter DeBoer became the second pastor of Holland. He remained until 1943 when he accepted a call from Redlands, California.

Candidate Walter Hoffman became their next pastor until 1947 when he accepted a call to become Home Missionary.

The call then went out to the Rev. Bernard Kok who became the church's fourth pastor.

It was during his pastorate that the congregation,



along with the entire denomination, was caught up in the controversy relative to a "conditional covenant". Under the leadership of Rev. Kok the majority of Holland left the denomination also taking with them the property.

Sixteen male confessing members with their families remained. A temporary meeting place was found and in June 1954 Candidate James McCollam became their fifth pastor. Troubles continued in Holland and the congregation experienced some difficult years. In 1959 Rev. McCollam left the church to join with the United Presbyterians.

Rev. George Lanting, then pastor in Grand Haven, accepted the call to come over and help. During this time lots were purchased, plans approved and on February 18, 1965 the new church building was dedicated.

In 1966 Rev. Lanting departed and Rev. John Heys arrived to become the seventh pastor. More than once Rev. Heys was granted permission to visit Jamaica to conduct our mission there. And he was also sent to New Zealand to labor in the interest of our churches.

Rev. Heys retired in 1980 and Rev. R. Miersma became their next pastor. In March 1987 he accepted the call from New Zealand.

The present congregation is diversified and somewhat scattered. They have a couple of farmers, some businessmen, factory workers and office people. They have retired families as well as young with four, five and six children.

One society of interest is their Society for Providing Protestant Reformed Christian Education. This society was organized after the split of 1953 when the "other" group confiscated and later sold the lots the Holland Church had purchased for the purpose of building their own school. In 1956-57 they started transporting their children to Hope School via station wagon and later purchased a 24 passenger bus and later a 48 passenger and eventually a 66 passenger bus.

As the congregation spread it became more and more difficult to have only one bus route, some children had to leave before 7 A.M. and would not return until after 5 P.M. They then purchased two vans and had a North and South run.

Holland has an Evangelism Committee to distribute literature, Standard Bearers and sponsor lectures and assist the consistory in "Church Extension" activity in their area.

In a news letter to their congregation of Southeast, the Evangelism Society reports on several

items. One was a thank you to Mr. Ken Rietema, Sr. and Mr. Ken Rietema, Jr. Over the last couple of years they have taken care of recording each issue of the Standard Bearer onto cassette tape, making several copies and mailing them out to a list of blind and infirm individuals who have requested the tapes.

Our church in Grandville held a congregational meeting recently and approved the hiring of an architectural firm to prepare a preliminary design for a new church building.

Since only a few reservations were received, this year's Young People's Spring Banquet was cancelled. What a shame! The Spring Banquet used to be a very important occasion. Maybe some young person can tell me why this no longer seems to be true.

How fast the school year flies by! No sooner has it begun in September than it's May and almost over, and many of our bulletins contain announcements about Kindergarten Round-ups. For some of our covenant youth school is almost over, for some it is just beginning.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Holstege and family in the death of their father, MR. HENRY HOLSTEGE. May the Lord comfort them through His Word and spirit.

"Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

Rev. W. Bekkering, Pres.

Mrs. H. Veldman, Sec'y.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

April 15, 1987, commemorated the 30th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN VANDER WOUDE. We, their children and grandchildren, rejoice with them and are grateful to our Heavenly Father for God-fearing parents and the covenant instruction we have received from them. We pray that the Lord may continue to bless them in the years ahead.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:17)

Rod and Sandy Kooiman  
Billy, Lynne, Jonathan  
Jim Vander Woude

Tom Vander Woude  
Bill and Joan Hofman

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of The South Holland Protestant Reformed Church wish to express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Bea Poortenga in the death of her mother, MRS. KATIE TERPSTRA, at the age of 90 years.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Rev. George Lanting, Pres.  
Elaine Van Der Noord, Sec'y.

*Ben Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Men's Society of The SouthWest Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses sympathy to Mr. Clare Kuiper and his family in the death of his mother-in-law, MRS. HENRY KOK.

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to Glory." (Psalm 73:24)

Phillip Lotterman, Pres.  
Bill De Kraker, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of The South Holland Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Sadie Buitter in the death of her husband, MR. EVERETT BUITER.

"And this is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

Rev. George Lanting, Pres.  
Elaine Van Der Noord, Sec'y.

### TAPES AVAILABLE OF PROF. H. HANKO'S CLASS ON THE OFFICE OF DEACON

The seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches is making available to the public tapes of a course taught recently by Prof. H. Hanko on the office of deacon.

Prof. Hanko recently (April 2) finished the evening course given to deacons in the Grand Rapids area. During the eight week course Prof. Hanko first lectured on the principles of the office, then questions submitted earlier by the area deacons on special problems in the administration of mercy, were discussed. A real profit to the course were the questions submitted by experienced deacons.

Mr. Claire Haveman of our Holland, MI, congregation taped the course on both video and audio cassette. As some may already know, Claire does quality work in both video and audio.

The package of 8 (90 minute) **audio** cassettes is available for purchase at the low price of \$25.00 (postage included).

The 8 video tapes (VHS) are available for **rent** for only \$25.00 (postage included). Men's societies, consistories or individuals will be interested in renting these tapes at this low price. (Videa recorders are available for rent in many locations.)

With the office of deacon being eroded by many things today, instruction in its principles and practice is more necessary than ever. We pray that these tapes will make our seminary and its instruction beneficial to many outside of the seminary's local reach.

Send your order for the cassettes with a check or money order and your name and address, to:

Protestant Reformed Seminary Bookstore  
4949 Ivanrest Ave., SW  
Grandville, MI 49418

When asking for the video rental, **please ask in advance** for the dates needed.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of The Faith Protestant Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan extends its Christian sympathy to our fellow officebearer, Elder Harv Holstege and his family, in the death of his father, MR. HENRY HOLSTEGE on April 11, 1987.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them." (Revelation 14:13)

Irv Velthouse, Vice Clerk

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the Byron Center (MI) Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Leonard and Jay Holstege and families in the death of their father and grandfather, HENRY HOLSTEGE on April 11, 1987.

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

Rev. B. Gritters, Pres.  
Donna Miedema, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses sympathy to Gerrit Holstege and Arnold Haveman in the death of their brother and brother-in-law, MR. HENRY HOLSTEGE.

"The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace." (Psalm 29:11)

Henry Boer, Pres.  
Dave Pohler, Sec'y.

### NOTICE!!!

According to the decision of Synod 1986, the Consistory of the Faith Protestant Reformed Church of Jenison, Michigan was appointed the calling church for the 1987 Synod. The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1987 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 9, 1987 at 9:00 AM in the **Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church**, 5105 Beech Tree Ave., Hudsonville, Michigan. The Pre-Synodical Service will be held Monday evening, June 8, 1987 at 7:30 PM at **Faith Protestant Reformed Church**, 7194 20th Ave., Jenison, Michigan. Rev. David Engelsma, President of the 1986 Synod will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service. Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Harv Holstege, 7093 N. Bliss Ct., Grandville, MI 49418, Phone 616-457-5595. Or Mr. Irv Velthouse, 1701 Newcastle, Jenison, MI 49428, Phone 616-457-2468.

Irv Velthouse, Vice-Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of two teachers for the 1987-88 school year. One of these positions is 3, 4, & 5, and the other is kindergarten. Please contact Mr. Hunter, Box 67, Doon, Iowa 51235, phone 726-3381 (home) or 726-3200 (school) or Mr. A. Bleyenbergh, Box 151, Doon, Ia. 51235.