

The **STANDARD BEARER**

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

This Spirit was promised also to the church. God had said through the prophet Joel, as Peter points out in his sermon, that He would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh, even upon all nations. The line of God's covenant is no longer confined within the narrow limits of Israel as a nation, but becomes universal, since God now gathers His elect from all the nations of the world. Peter can say: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

See: **Meditation**, page 386

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This . . .

Our language fails us when we try to put into mere words the wonders of God, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which our human eye can-

not see, our ear cannot hear, and which exceed our fondest imagination!

The Day of Pentecost brought us one of those amazing wonders of the God of our salvation, who

in the riches of His abundant mercies has raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, exalted Him to the highest heavens, and through Him bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit upon us, His church!

Never forget that the Spirit is God! God makes His dwelling place in the heart of mere man, even sinful man! He makes us new creatures in Christ and brings us into intimate fellowship with Him, the living God, that we may behold His face in righteousness and glory in His endless perfections unto all eternity! He came to dwell with us for the very purpose of uniting all His elect saints in the blessed communion of the members of the Body of Christ as church of the eternal God!

God came in the Spirit on Pentecost! That Spirit is not a mere power, be it the power of the living God. He is God! Nor is He but a part of God, let us say, a third of God as Third Person of the Trinity. God is indeed three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but these three are inseparably one! The Spirit is holy, not only in the sense that God is holy, but in the very special sense that He is eternally devoted to God, searching out and revealing the depths of God's eternal virtues. He comes to us to bring us into an ever growing consciousness of the blessed riches of the fulness of our God! He does that both now and eternally, for we need all eternity to experience to the full the blessed intimacy of God's covenant life. He is Spirit in the sense that He permeates the entire Being of God, bringing Father and Son together in blessed fellowship of love and life, experiencing perfect harmony and unity in all their thoughts, plans and works. He comes to us to unite us with the heart of God, to the praise of the glory of His grace in the Beloved!

This is God's gift to the church of the new dispensation, bestowed upon us at Pentecost! Amazing gift!

In that respect the church of the old dispensation did not possess the Spirit. As Jesus says, "The Holy Ghost was not yet, because Christ was not yet glorified." John 7:39. The Holy Spirit also then was present in the hearts of God's elect, for they were saved exactly in the same manner as we. Even then the Holy Spirit worked regeneration, conversion, faith, and all the other gifts of salvation. The difference was that the Christ had not yet come. The church was still under the condemning testimony of the law, which drove them out to Christ in the hope of His coming. The Spirit proclaimed the promised salvation through the prophets, as well as through the types and shadows. The patriarchs had communion with God through the altar, the lamb,

and the smoking sacrifice. Later God dwelled typically in the midst of His people by taking up His abode in the most holy place of the tabernacle and of the temple. The heirs of salvation expressed their innermost joy by singing:

Zion, founded on the mountain, God, thy
Maker loves thee well;
He has chosen thee, most precious, He
delights in thee to dwell;
God's own city, who can all thy glory tell?

Yet this was all in anticipation of the better things to come. For they still awaited the promised Savior. God's people longed to see His day, and in that longing persevered in the midst of trials and sufferings!

The promised salvation was realized on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was shed forth, climaxing all the amazing events that had preceded it in the coming of the Savior! God had sent His Son into the world, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law. The Son of God in our flesh suffered torments of God's wrath, particularly during the three hours of darkness on Calvary. He died, was buried, and arose again as Victor over Satan, sin, hell, death and the grave. This Jesus has God raised up and exalted to the highest heavens. He was given the position of power and authority at the Father's right hand. He is now the exalted Lord over His Church, gathering, defending and preserving His saints unto the day of His coming with the clouds of the heavens. As Lord of His Church, reigning out of Zion, all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. He exercises God's authority over the whole universe. His Name stands above all names. All the angels of heaven, all the demons of hell, and all living creatures upon the earth are subject to Him. He carried out the sovereign counsel of God's will unto the renewal of all things and the establishing of His eternal kingdom when He returns as Judge of heaven and earth. Christ rules over all unto the salvation of His people. He is Lord, ruling in God's Name, and He alone!

Exalted by the right hand of the Father, that is, by the power and authority that raised Him from the dead, Christ receives the promise of the Holy Spirit.

This Spirit was promised to Christ from all eternity. Already when Jesus began His earthly ministry, the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove, to qualify Him in carrying out His calling here on earth. Now, as a reward upon that accomplished work, Christ is given the Holy Spirit to equip Him for His mediatorial work in heaven. Throughout His earthly ministry our Savior bore all His sufferings in the flesh with an eye on the glory

that was promised to Him. In His soul rang the glad refrain:

The Lord unto His Christ has said, Sit Thou
at My right hand
Until I make Thy enemies submit to Thy
command.
A scepter prospered by the Lord Thy mighty
hand shall wield;
From Zion Thou shalt rule the world, and all
Thy foes shall yield.

This Spirit was promised also to the church. God had said through the prophet Joel, as Peter points out in his sermon, that He would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh, even upon all nations. The line of God's covenant is no longer confined within the narrow limits of Israel as a nation, but becomes universal, since God now gathers His elect from all the nations of the world. Peter can say: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." This was also that which was promised by Christ Himself on the eve of His death, when He promised His disciples another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who would abide with them forever. Jesus said that it was necessary for Him to leave, in order that the Comforter might come. He would not leave them like forsaken orphans, but He would soon return to them in the Spirit, nevermore to be parted from them.

The exalted Christ "has shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

This, which no eye can see, no ear can hear, nor could ever enter into man's imagination, has God revealed through signs and wonders that can be seen and heard!

The Holy Spirit is shed forth into the church. The same Spirit who fills Christ in heaven as Head of the church now comes to fill the hearts of those who are members of Christ's body!

There was the sound as of a mighty, rushing wind. No, there was no wind; nothing stirred in the upper room. Yet the sound was like a mighty, irresistible wind of tornado proportions. The Spirit, who is God, made His presence known in that powerful sound. Was this what drew the thousands of Jews and proselytes to the scene to discover what happened? It is very well possible. There was also a

semblance of a large flame of fire that broke up into smaller flames, one hundred and twenty of them, settling on the heads of all those who were in the room praying for this to happen. The Holy Spirit of Christ came to fill them, to dwell in them, to sanctify and enlighten them, that they might understand the mighty works of God! A new day has dawned for the church. Now the enigma of the cross and resurrection is solved. Now they understood that the Christ had to suffer all these things, in order to enter into His glorious, heavenly kingdom. The Scriptures were opened to them by the Spirit of the risen Lord, so that the cross and the resurrection took on new meaning for them!

No, Jesus was no longer among them. But they now had the risen Savior in a far richer sense dwelling within them. They were united to Him by a bond of living faith, and thus were assured of the forgiveness of their sins, their eternal justification, their sanctification, preservation and ultimate glorification, as never before! All this took on a new, a richer meaning for all of them.

The disciples of Jesus went out into the crowd that had gathered and experienced another two-fold wonder. First of all, the Spirit of truth opened their understanding, so that they spoke with great enthusiasm of the mighty works of God. We need not speculate as to what those mighty works were. Obviously, these disciples spoke of Christ, of His earthly ministry, His death, His victory over the grave and His exaltation to the highest heavens, while rejoicing in their souls: "My Lord and my God!" The second wonder was as great as the first. Approaching the Jews and proselytes from other countries, they spoke to each in his or her native tongue. Beyond a shadow of doubt, the Church had now become universal; already the gospel was going out to the ends of the earth!

Filled with the Spirit these followers of Jesus rejoiced with an exuberant joy in all that God had wrought!

How about us, who at the end of the ages now have the full revelation of the Spirit in the Holy Scriptures? With the return of our Lord so close at hand, should we not show a like or even greater enthusiasm?

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

Editor's Notes

Publication News. Fresh from the presses in the week in which this is written is the RFPA's latest publication, *Calvin's Calvinism*. This is an attractive paperback reprint of two of Calvin's important treatises, that on Eternal Predestination and that on the Secret Providence of God. Price of the book is \$14.95. RFPA Book Club members will receive it for 30% less. Mail-orders should be sent to: RFPA Publications, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

* * * * *

We had hoped to present a summary of the agenda of our Protestant Reformed synod in this issue. But the Synodical Agenda reached me too late to allow for preparation of such a summary. We will try to present a report of the 1987 Synod's significant decisions in the July issue.

* * * * *

In this issue we present another installment of the Rev. David J. Engelsma's series on "Serious Call or Well-meant Offer?" Space limitations prevented its inclusion in the May 15 issue. HCH

EDITORIALS

Why Evolution? (7)

In our critique of Dr. Howard Van Till's *The Fourth Day* we are up to a consideration of Chapter 5, entitled, "He Made the Stars Also." This is the chapter in which the author's denial of the Biblical truth of creation and, in fact, his denial of the authority of Scripture come into sharp focus.

Before we enter into a critique of this chapter, however, I wish to remind the reader of two things.

In the first place, the fact that one does not agree with Van Till's billions of years of stellar evolution does not necessarily shut one up to the position of "scientific creationism," especially not if by this is meant the position of the men associated with the Creation Science movement, the movement connected with the name of Dr. Henry Morris. Although I have much respect for men like Dr. Morris, I am not in agreement with the approach of that movement, nor would I want to be bound by its scientific teachings.

In the second place, it is not my purpose to criticize Dr. Van Till's astronomical science, nor his scientific method, nor his scientific ability as such.

This is beyond my capabilities. Neither is it incumbent upon me, when I have destroyed his position from the point of view of Scripture, to reconstruct a science of astronomy that is based upon and in harmony with Scripture and its principles. My sole concern is to demonstrate that Van Till's position is contrary to Scripture and to show that while he claims that his "stellar evolution" is in harmony with Scripture, he in actual fact wrests the Scriptures and denies the Biblical truth of creation.

Having said this, I also want to emphasize that I do not believe for a moment that the whole question of "origins" belongs in the domain of scientific research. It is strictly a matter of faith. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Hebrews 11:3) Van Till may call my literal understanding of Genesis 1 naive. So be it. Then I will be naive. I think that he makes God out for a fool when he presents his God as laying a foundation of billions of years on which He builds a superstruc-

ture of a few thousand years — years which are fast rushing toward their end.

And now let us turn to Chapter 5.

In the first place, it ought to be noted that Dr. Van Till certainly does not approach the question of Scripture's teaching concerning creation — specifically, the creation of the heavenly bodies — objectively and unprepossessedly. This is plain from the entire introductory portion of this chapter. I will quote the opening paragraph, p. 75:

During the past decade I have taught more than two thousand students in an astronomy course called "Planets, Stars, and Galaxies." Toward the end of that course we study what astronomers have learned about the life history of stars, or, as the topic is more generally known, "stellar evolution." As we shall see in Chapter Eight, this topic necessarily leads to the consideration of a time scale involving billions of years. There is abundant evidence that stars have been forming during most of the multi-billion-year span of cosmic history. Some stars were formed more than ten billion years ago; others are forming at this very moment.

Bear in mind that the author is supposed to be writing here about the "Biblical View." But before he ever begins to discuss the Biblical view, he makes it plain that he is committed to the idea of a universe which is billions of years old. Notice: "As we shall see in Chapter Eight (Van Till is inserting his "Scientific View" here from Chapter 8. HCH), this topic necessarily leads to the consideration of a time scale involving billions of years." Notice: he writes "necessarily." And again, "There is abundant evidence that stars have been forming during most of the multi-billion-year span of cosmic history." It is plain, therefore, that Van Till is committed to an evolutionistic view *a priori*. He is now forced to *manipulate* Genesis 1 somehow in order to bring it into harmony with his evolutionistic billions of years.

Meanwhile, he calls the truth of six-day creation naive and employs the innuendo of referring to it as "a favorite tradition-laden interpretation" which must be relinquished "in order to increase one's understanding of the Bible." (p. 76)

In the second place, Dr. Van Till does lip-service to the principle that Scripture is its own interpreter. He writes, p. 77: "One of the important hermeneutical principles that was reemphasized in the Protestant Reformation is the principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture." This sounds good.

However, he immediately denies this principle when he adds in the same paragraph: "This does not mean, of course, that the Bible should ever be interpreted in isolation from the rest of God's revelation in Creation or in the words or deeds of

his creatures. Rather, it means that because of the unity and integrity of Scripture, the whole provides insights into the understanding of its parts." Interpreted, this means that Scripture must be interpreted in such a way as to harmonize with the conclusions of astronomers!

Significant in this connection, too, is the statement in the preceding paragraph: "In making this study, we will have occasion to apply a number of the principles that we sought to establish in earlier chapters. Whenever it seems appropriate (Notice how arbitrary this is, and how contrary to the sound principle that Scripture is its own interpreter. HCH), we will employ the vehicle-packaging-content model for scriptural interpretation."

I cannot refrain from remarking: how tremendously complicated it becomes to interpret the simple statement of Scripture which forms the title of this fifth chapter of Van Till's book, "He made the stars also."

With the above in mind, I wish to consider with you what Dr. Van Till teaches concerning Genesis 1. He also has something to say about the Genesis 1 to 11; and we shall consider this later. But he comes to the following conclusion concerning Genesis 1 (p. 84):

Thus, the proper question to bring to Genesis 1 is "Who is God and how are man and the world related to him?" The answer is given in the form of a story that illustrates the identity of God and his relationship to humanity and the cosmos. But the story so vividly portrays its action that we are irresistably (sic) led to wonder about the chronology of the narrative. In the story, God the Creator is clearly portrayed as performing his creative works within a six-day period and resting on the seventh. What must we make of that chronology? What does the seven-day structure signify?

Notice: Van Till decides what is the proper question. Notice, too: Genesis 1 is a *story*, not the record of facts.

And how does Van Till answer his own questions? As follows:

The first point we should note is that, compared with the principal message of Genesis 1, matters of chronology and timetable are decidedly secondary in importance. (By Van Till's say-so, of course. HCH) We may have an intellectual curiosity about these matters, and we may praise God the Creator that we live in a day when that intellectual curiosity can be at least partially satisfied, but we must recognize that questions of chronology are not pivotal. And we must recognize that questions of chronology beyond the limits of the human experience, whether past or future, whether "in the beginning" or at "the end of time," are not the subject of the biblical message. The beginning lies shrouded in mist beyond human

memory, and the end will come "as a thief in the night."

The seven-day chronology that we find in Genesis 1 has no connection with the actual chronology of the Creator's continuous dynamic action in the cosmos. The creation-week motif is a literary device, a framework in which a number of very important messages are held. The chronology of the narrative is not the chronology of creation but rather the packaging in which the message is wrapped. The particular acts depicted in the Story of the Creator are not the events of creative action reported with photographic realism but rather imaginative illustrations of the way in which God and the Creation are related.

The above is nothing but the so-called frame-

work hypothesis proposed by N.H. Ridderbos in his book which was translated and published in 1957, as the author also acknowledges in a footnote.

Thus it is that Van Till simply rids himself of the factual character of Genesis 1, so that it does not stand in the way of the billions of years of his astronomy. Genesis 1 is simply not fact; it is fiction! Perhaps this fiction has some meaning; but it is *fiction* nevertheless.

Where does this fiction originate? Certainly, not from Scripture! HCH

Evolution At Dordt College

Recently I received information from a pastor in the Reformed Church in the United States (German Reformed) to the effect that evolution is taught not only at Calvin College but also at Dordt College, which, I think, is generally thought to be more conservative than Calvin. The information which I received, however, shows that Dordt does not play second fiddle to Calvin when it comes to evolution.

Here is the story.

On April 10, 1987, at Hillsdale College, there was a debate between Dr. Duane T. Gish, from the Institute for Creation Research, and Professor Richard Hodgson, Professor of Astronomy at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa. The debate was on the creation model of origins versus the evolution model of origins, and it took place at Davis Middle School, Hillsdale, Michigan. Dr. Gish debates and lectures on creation science frequently and in many places. Anyone who receives the literature of the Institute for Creation Research will know of this.

From my German Reformed pastor-reader I received information about Professor Hodgson's position in this debate. Later I verified that information from students' tape recordings of the debate. And while the recordings were not as clear as one could wish, due to the distance of the recorders from the speakers, I believe the following transcribed remarks of Prof. Hodgson are accurate. The punctuation and the paragraphing are mine. Here are the concluding remarks of Prof. Hodgson's speech in that debate:

"I think we have to realize that as we look at this whole picture, we ask the question: do mammals, for example, have a common ancestry? Do all taxonomic phyla and kingdoms go back to a single ancestral line? They are good questions, and they are not easily answered. On the basis of presently available scientific evidence, I think we cannot be totally sure. The strains of curious mammals — and birds, too, for that matter — show strong reptilian skeletal structures, indicating a highly likely reptile ancestry. Again, a transition from fish to lung fish to amphibians does to some extent seem to be in evidence in the discovery of some species that have been found.

"Furthermore, as we look at the history of earth rocks — and some micro-fossils go back more than three billion years — we are confronted with the fact that the simpler kingdoms . . . occurred before the more complex forms of life. So there seems to be a gradual diversion over time into more and more complex life forms. The earliest life forms were exceedingly simple and did not even have nucleated cells. More recent life forms have been, of course, multi-celled, with some very complicated organs that are involved.

"So to summarize the point I would like to say the following. The case for evolution, I believe, is a good one on the basis of available scientific evidence. The possibility, however, of divine creation of some basic life forms, particularly at higher taxonomic levels, over widely spaced intervals of

time — not just a few thousand years now — is a possibility which cannot be ruled out on the basis of present scientific observational evidence. And so I think that that is about where we really have to leave it. I think that there are some things that strongly suggest evolution as an explanation for a lot of the varieties of life that we find. Whether it

will explain everything, of course, will remain somewhat for the future to discover."

There you have it.

Prof. Hodgson, of Dordt, is as much of an evolutionist as is Dr. Van Till, of Calvin. HCH

GUEST ARTICLE

David J. Engelsma

Serious Call or Well-Meant Offer?

As it comes to the sinner, whether elect or reprobate, the preaching of the Gospel is a call to the sinner. Not only does the Bible name the saving summons to the elect "the call," but it also describes the preaching itself, unaccompanied by the secret operation of the Spirit in the heart of the hearer, as a "call." Jesus teaches that the preaching by God's servants is a call in Matthew 22:14: "For many are called, but few are chosen." Indeed, the entire parable of the marriage of the king's son, of which verse 14 is the conclusion, teaches this, for, throughout, the parable speaks of the king's call to men to "come unto the marriage." "Bid" and "bidden," in our translation, are 'call' and 'called.' Every man who comes under the Word of God, whether Jew under the old covenant (vss. 3-7) or Gentile under the new covenant (vss. 9-13), is called. Also those who refuse to come to the marriage, and perish for their folly, were called. Exactly this is the statement of verse 14: many more are called than are elect and saved.

All are called *unto salvation*: "come unto the marriage" (v. 4).

All are called *by God Himself*. The king represents God, even as the marriage feast for the son, with its bounties, is the salvation that God prepares in Jesus. It is the *king* who sends out his servants to call men; the servants announce that the *king* is saying to the hearers, "I have prepared my dinner . . .

come" (v. 4); the *king* punished those who were careless about the call, with a wrath that indicates that those fools have held *his* call, *his* dinner, and *his* son in contempt.

The call that consists of the preaching alone, unaccompanied by the secret drawing of the Holy Spirit within a man, can and must be sharply distinguished from the saving call, which, as was pointed out in the previous article, consists of both the preaching and the inner, converting work of the Spirit. Scripture sharply distinguishes between them. It does so in the very passage that insists that the preaching alone is a serious call of God to every hearer, never to be taken lightly — Matthew 22:1-14. The distinction is made by the contrast between the call of many, on the one hand, and the election of only a few, on the other hand:

1. Whereas the call that proceeds from election intends the salvation of every one called, the call by the preaching alone is not motivated by any purpose, intention, will, or desire of God for the salvation of the one who is called. For the man called only by the preaching is not chosen; and election is the will, or purpose, of God unto salvation.

2. Whereas the call that proceeds from election has its origin in, and breathes, the love of God for every one called, the call by the preaching alone is not extended by God to the man to whom it comes out of any love that God has for him. For the man is not chosen; and election is simply God's choosing love.

3. Whereas the call that proceeds from election is gracious, displaying Father's favorable attitude towards His children and conveying to the elect the power that delivers from sin and death, the call by the preaching alone is not grace to the one so called. Neither does it manifest God's favorable attitude towards him; nor does it carry to him the irresistible power that saves from sin; nor does it benefit him that he has been called. For the man is not chosen; and election is itself a decision God made in the favorable attitude He had towards a sinner (II Timothy 1:9) and the source of the power of salvation, as well as of all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3, 4).

4. Whereas the call that proceeds from election infallibly saves every one who is called, the call by the preaching alone saves no one who is so called, indeed is incapable of saving anyone. For the sinner, dead in his trespasses and sins, is not chosen; and it is election that effects the salvation of the sinner, by the calling. Election is not a dead plan that merely decrees that some sinners will be saved. Election is the living, mighty, effectual will of God that saves sinners, operating by means of the call. The clear implication of Matthew 22:14 is that the few, comparatively, who come to Christ, come because they are chosen by God.

What, then, is the call of the Gospel that consists only of the preaching to one who is not chosen, i.e., the reprobate? Jesus' teaching about this call, in the parable of Matthew 22:1ff., is clear:

1. It is God's setting before a man, in the Word preached, His Son in the fulness of His Person and saving work, as well as the fact and fulness of the finished work of salvation from sin, in the crucifixion and resurrection of this Son. The servant tells the man that the king has prepared his dinner and that all things are ready (v. 4).

2. It is God's making known to a man that the way in which sinners receive and enjoy this salvation is the way of coming to Jesus Christ in true faith, which faith clothes the guilty sinner with the wedding garment of the righteousness of Jesus (vss. 4, 11-13).

3. It is God's announcing to him the promise that everyone who comes will be received into the bliss and glory of participation at the divine marriage festival, as well as the warning that everyone who rejects the call will be damned, including the man who rejects the call by a false coming, i.e., a "coming" that despises the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, but goes about to establish its own righteousness. The man who refuses to come to Christ does so, not because he has any fear that one who comes might not be received, but because he "makes light" of the marriage and is not willing to

come (vss. 3, 5).

4. It is God's imperative to a man — the divine command — to come, i.e., believe in Jesus. The king says to the man, "come unto the marriage" (v. 4). God confronts him with his solemn duty. The man has no option to decline, as one has the option to decline an invitation to an earthly wedding. To decline, as many do, is to incur the wrath of God, for one has thus committed the enormous sin of not believing on the only begotten Son of God (vss. 7, 13; cf. John 3:18). The man himself is fully and solely to blame for refusing to come. He knows it to be his own fault, as is evident from the speechlessness of the man without a wedding garment (v. 12).

One thing that this important passage of Scripture does *not* teach is that those who are called have the ability to obey the command to come to the marriage, i.e., the ability to believe on Jesus. They actively will *not* to come (literally translated, verse 3 reads: "and they willed not to come"); but it is neither stated nor implied that they were able to will otherwise.

Nor does the parable teach that it is God's purpose (intention, desire, or wish) that those who reject the call come to Christ, and be saved. It is His *command* that they come. It by no means follows from this that it is also His *purpose* that they come. If this did follow, the call would be a frustrated effort by God to save men and women whom He loves and whose salvation He desires. But the parable explicitly denies this; indeed, if we take the conclusion of the parable as expressing the central truth of the parable, Jesus' main teaching here is a denial that the call goes out to all who hear as an expression of God's love for all and with the divine purpose of saving all. For, of the called, *many are not chosen!*

Positively stated, the heart of the parable is this: although many others hear the preaching and are confronted by the preaching's command to repent and believe, God's purpose with the preaching of the Gospel is the salvation only of a "few," namely, those whom He eternally elected in Christ; although many others hear of the love of God for sinners, in that He gave His only begotten Son for their redemption, the love of God that proclaims the Gospel is a love for only a "few," namely, the elect.

Summing up, the Protestant Reformed Churches find in Holy Scripture a doctrine of the call containing these elements:

1. The preaching of the gospel by the church is the living, authoritative Word of God, the very voice of the risen Jesus Christ (Romans 10:14ff.).

2. God will have His gospel preached in all the

world in order to gather His chosen church by the salvation of every elect person (John 6:37ff.).

3. The call to the elect is effectual unto their salvation by the inner, converting work of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, minds, and wills, in perfect fulfillment of God's purpose of love, in the decree of election.

4. The effectual, saving call, consisting of preaching accompanied by the inner work of the Spirit, must be sharply distinguished from the preaching alone, unaccompanied by any regenerating operation of the Spirit. This latter is also a call, a

call of God. But it is not directed to those to whom it comes out of divine love for them; nor does it express God's purpose that they be saved; nor does God give them His Spirit in their hearts, as the preaching comes to them. This call confronts men with their duty, exposes their depravity, renders them inexcusable, and hardens them in their awful rebellion against God.

Holding this Biblical doctrine of the call, the Protestant Reformed Churches are constrained to repudiate the "well-meant offer of the gospel."

(to be continued)

ALL AROUND US

Gise J. Van Baren

Gray Letter Edition Of The Bible Moratorium On Mission Work?

Gray Letter Edition of the Bible:

We've all seen the "red-letter" edition of the Bible where the words of Jesus are all printed in dark red type. Now a new edition is being proposed by "scholars" who have sought to determine if Jesus really said what the Bible says he said. These, through their "scholarly" studies have decided that much of the New Testament record of Christ's sayings, and of events there described, are not, in fact, authentic. It has been proposed that an edition of the Bible be printed to reflect this "fact". The words which the "scholars" determine are genuinely Christ's words, would still be printed in dark red. Those words of His which were possibly spoken by Him (though the "scholars" have reason to doubt this), would be printed in a light red. Those words attributed to Christ but, according to these "scholars", not truly spoken by Him, would be printed in a light gray. The following lengthy quotation from the *Christian News*, March 13, 1987, gives an idea of the extent of this horrible enterprise. It gives one, too, a clear idea of the direction

in which higher criticism goes. Then let none be deceived into thinking that a "scholar" can tamper with the first chapters of Genesis without ultimately doing the same thing this article recounts. I found the answer of one minister to the following quotation very interesting. I trust you will enjoy it too.

New York (RNS) — There was no Jewish trial of Jesus before his crucifixion, according to a group of Scripture scholars trying to determine the authenticity of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life.

That conclusion — just one of several that run counter to long-held beliefs — was arrived at by a vote of scholars attending the fifth session of the Jesus Seminar. The seminar is an organization of some 250 experts in religion and New Testament studies that has been meeting periodically since March 1985.

At a Feb. 25-27 gathering at United Methodist-related Willamette University in Salem, Ore., about 40 of the group members — the average attendance of each session — concluded that "there was no Jewish trial of Jesus before his execution by Roman authority, and the Jewish crowd did not participate in his condemnation."

Other conclusions of participants in the Salem session:

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—It is unlikely that Jesus' conversations with this disciples at the Last Supper were those recorded in the Bible.

—Jesus' words on the cross, asking why God had forsaken him, probably were not spoken by him.

—Jesus, while on the cross, probably did not speak the words asking God to forgive his persecutors.

Dr. Marcus Borg, professor of religion at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Wash., one of the scholars at the Salem meeting, told RNS in a telephone interview that the group felt there was not enough historical evidence to back up the Gospel accounts of Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin.

He said the group's conclusion that the Jews did not have "any direct responsibility for the death of Jesus" was significant since the Gospel accounts have often been used to justify Christian Persecution of the Jews through the centuries.

Various Bible scholars have been urging Christians to eliminate what they consider to be "anti-semitism" in the New Testament. Dr. Norman Beck, an American Lutheran clergyman who teaches at the ALC's Texas Lutheran Collage in Seguin, Texas, and who has the support of top officials of the ALC, argues in his *Mature Christianity — the Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament* that the "anti-Jewish polemic" and "anti-semitism" in the New Testament should be removed. He is working on a translation of the Bible which will eliminate all sections of the Bible which he considers "anit-Jewish" and which Jews find offensive

A letter written in response to the above provides some interesting observations as well:

. . . Upon reading which of the words of Christ on the cross they excised from the record, I began to wish fervently that there were some place to find a record of their discussions. Why should "Father, forgive them . . ." fall by the way, while "It is finished" stays? Why axe "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" (I don't suppose the fact that the Gospels record the original Aramaic made any impression on the Seminarians) but not "I thirst"?

Might it have happened in this way? When the discussion turned to "I thirst," some of the scholars decided that it seems like a logical thing for a man on the cross to say, and so "red-lined" it as undoubtedly

authentic. Others gave it the gray, saying that the fact that the request was answered by a Gentile soldier giving Jesus wine vinegar smacked of late Pauline antinomianism and universalism. Other participants gave it a provisional approval, on the assumption that while it might be logical that Jesus would be assailed by thirst, they knew of no non-biblical ancient sources that actually connected requests for the assuaging of thirst with the latter stages of crucifixion. Then they held their vote, and after a deal was struck that one man would vote yes on "I thirst" if another would change his vote on "Father, forgive them," it made it into the "new New Testament canon."

It is devoutly to be hoped that these butchers of the sacred text will come to their senses before they destroy the faith of too many people. Otherwise they will have all eternity to discuss and vote on whether or not they *really* heard Him say, the last time they ever saw Him, "Depart from me, ye workers on iniquity. I never knew you."

The above gives some idea of the direction that is taken whenever the infallibility of the Bible is denied. When the Bible is regarded as an untrustworthy book, one which man must edit, then nothing can be considered true unless man declares it so. For this reason, also, the church must steadfastly condemn and reject every view of Scripture that questions the reliability of any part.

Moratorium On Mission Work?:

The *R.E.S. News Exchange*, March 10, 1987, points out that in heathen lands, there are specific reminders that mission work is not appreciated. Christians may do their "good works" provided these do not proselytize. The article states:

According to an EPS report, Indian President Zail Singh has urged Christian Missionaries to declare a "self-imposed moratorium" on efforts to convert Hindus. He made his appeal while attending a cornerstone laying for a church-sponsored "children's village" here. Singh said there is enough for church people to do "in terms of service to the country's poor and destitute. That is where God lives." Most Indians are Hindus; some Hindu groups have increasingly demanded a government ban on conversions.

*Take the time to read and study
the Standard Bearer!
You'll be happy you did!*

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Herman C. Hanko

Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (16)

In the last article in the *Standard Bearer* on this subject, we discussed what genetic engineering was all about. In this article we want to be a bit more specific and describe some of the things that are already being done through genetic engineering and some of the things which scientists contemplate doing in the future.

Many benefits have already been reaped from genetic engineering in the production of food, both fruits and vegetables and meat from animals, chickens, turkeys and fish. Genetic engineering in fruits and vegetables has produced larger crops of food, more nutritious foods, different kinds of foods and more appealing foods. It has been a factor in what has sometimes been called the "green revolution," by which scientists hope to eradicate starvation from the globe. Applied to various meat-producing creatures, genetic engineering has made it possible to grow animals, fish and poultry more rapidly, to produce better flavored and more nutritious meat products, and has therefore made meat more widely available to the consumer. But these are aspects of the matter which are not of a great deal of concern to us.

It is when genetic engineering is used on human beings that things get very sticky.

But here too, one must be aware of the fact that genetic engineering is used for different purposes. In order to understand this, one must make at this point a crucial distinction. Our readers will recall that in the last article we mentioned the fact that the genetic code which determine all the characteristics of a living creature and which is contained in the DNA, is found in every single cell of the body. Consider that the human body has around 100 trillion cells, and each one possesses this identical genetic code lodged in the DNA.

If we remember this, then it is also clear that scientists can take, e.g., a grown man, take one cell from his body, do something to the genetic code of that one cell so that the instructions which it gives are different; but such changes will effect only that one cell and the function it performs in the body as a whole. They can, so to speak, clip off a specific part of the DNA chain and replace this clipped off segment with a different gene. Quite obviously, this will alter the code and the commands which the genes give to the cells will be changed. These changed commands will alter the things the cell does — for good or for bad.

Up to this point, scientists face two major problems. One problem is that they do not know what every gene in this DNA does. In fact, they know only a small fraction of the DNA structure and what function each gene plays in a cell. They have only begun to "map out" the DNA and its genetic code. Before they can do all the things they want to do, they will have to know precisely what every gene does. There are, so scientists figure, about 5,000,000 genes in all, of which at least 100,000 define the human form. And all these are found in every single cell in the human body.

The other problem is that the human body contains about 100 trillion cells. To alter every single cell would obviously be an impossible task. The result is that any changes brought about by genetic engineering in an individual affect that individual only; they have no effects upon that individual's children. Now this is not so bad, of course, as long as one wants to make changes only in one individual. In fact, it is good that these changes die when the individual dies. But this is not the whole story. Especially in connection with hereditary diseases such as Downs Syndrome, e.g., scientists would like to get rid of the disease, not only in one individual, but in all the progeny of that individual.

You see, scientists have concluded (rightly or wrongly we cannot say) that Downs Syndrome is the result of a defective gene somewhere in the DNA. Now it would be impossible to cure the Downs Syndrome in a child already born because every single cell of the 100 trillion would have to be changed — or at least every single cell whose function contributes to this disease. And even if this were possible, that would mean that all the changes brought about would only be good for that individual. Any progeny which he or she might have would still come into the world with the defective gene.

Thus the cure of hereditary diseases seems to be an impossible goal.

But wait a moment. Scientists have hit upon another technique which holds out hope even for this. Everyone knows that every human being develops in the womb of its mother from *one single cell*, which cell is formed at the moment of conception when the sperm of the father unites with the ovum of the mother and when the DNA of both are fused into one chain and one genetic code. (Again, one can only stand in awe at the handiwork of God!) But you see, scientists, knowing this, have reasoned that if they can get their hands on that one cell before it begins to divide, and alter the genetic structure of that one cell so as to get rid of the defective gene, and to replace it with a good one, not only will they free the child from that genetic defect, but that disease brought about by such a genetic defect will no longer be present in that child or in any children which that child may subsequently produce.

But one realizes immediately that it is not so easy to get a hold of that one cell formed at the moment of conception. And this is why *in vitro* fertilization (which we discussed in an earlier article) is being considered not only for infertile couples, but also for couples who carry defective genes which may result in hereditary diseases. With *in vitro* fertilization, one has that first cell in his laboratory and can do with it what he wants.

Now the fact of the matter is that some hereditary diseases involve many different cells in many different organs, and some hereditary diseases involve only cells within one organ. If the latter is the case, an individual can be cured of a hereditary disease with relative ease — although again, he will not be able to pass on his cure of that disease to his offspring. It is in this latter area that work has already been done. Such diseases as ADA deficiency (which lessens or destroys the body's ability to fight disease through affecting the immune system — resulting in so-called "bubble children"), Tay-Sachs disease, diabetes (which involves only the

insulin-producing organ) and others can conceivably be cured in an individual through genetic engineering. And if the defective genes can be made whole at the moment of conception, the cure will be passed on to all one's posterity. One would think that this is a beneficial aspect of genetic engineering and that it belongs to the general area of disease prevention and control. Especially parents who have gone through the agony of seeing children with these dread diseases could long for the day when the techniques to eradicate them are perfected.

However, there are complications — not so much with respect to these diseases — but in other related areas. A great deal has been done, e.g., in this field in the treatment of dwarfism. It seems that already the techniques have been perfected which will enable people with dwarf-like characteristics to grow to natural sizes and proportions. While this would fall under disease control and cure, many people, aware of this, have begun bombarding doctors with requests to have this treatment performed on their sons who are below average height. Whether they do not like to have their boys called "twirps" or whether they envision a career for their boys in professional basketball, they would like to have their boys grow taller than the genes those boys possess make possible.

And it is in this area that genetic engineering gets complicated and troublesome. This technique, which can make short boys taller, can also be used to enhance strength, alter intelligence, prevent aging (so it is claimed), alter the size of noses and ears, change the color of hair and eyes, and bring changes in all sorts of other characteristics which are part of the human form. In fact, if one can get one's hands on the first cell from which a human being develops or manipulate the fusion of sperm and egg, one can even determine the sex. This latter is becoming increasingly a matter of interest, for parents are often quite fixed in their own minds on whether they want a boy or a girl. And, in fact, some scientists speak of building new people "from the ground up" with a complete set of superior genes.

And, of course, finally, the hope is that through genetic engineering the quality of the whole human race can be improved. Scientists are quite certain that, given enough time, they will be able to change at will this genetic structure of man so that all disease can be eradicated, so that all aging processes can be stopped, so that all people will be healthy, strong, intelligent, beautiful, and attractive with characteristics appealing to all. Genetic engineering holds out the hope of eradicating the world's ills and creating utopia in the world.

IN HIS FEAR

Arie den Hartog

Immorality and Worldliness

One of the greatest dangers for worldliness in our modern world is in connection with the great evil of immorality. We live in a world that is filled with immorality. That has of course always been the case, beginning immediately after the fall, when Adam and Eve first knew that they were naked, and their hearts were filled with lust and shame. Over the ages the immorality of the world has grown worse and worse. Today it affects virtually every area of life. It is prevalent on every level of society, from the most honored and respected of the world to the lowest. We live in a world of debauchery and filth, a virtual Sodom and Gomorrah. God's holy ordinance of marriage is despised. Men are enflamed with lust one for another and abuse their own bodies and those of their neighbors. Never before in the history of the world has this been engaged in more openly and without shame. It is considered one of the greatest forms of excitement and entertainment. The most immoral and wicked are the most honored and glorified. It is glorified in the theatre. There are virtually no popular movies that do not have immorality and adultery as one of their major themes. The same immoral movies that are shown in the theatre can also be seen in the privacy of one's home on the television screen, and especially today, since the advent of the video tape industry. Book shelves in public book stores are filled with the grossest immorality and pornography. Magazines which openly portray nudity and the vilest immorality are sold by the hundreds and thousands. The modern media constantly bombards us with sexual innuendo. Everything from soup to nuts is sold through an appeal to man's sexual lust.

It is inevitable and inescapable that all of this is going to affect us. If we are not careful, it will enter

into our very homes and corrupt our souls and the souls of our children.

It is quite obvious that immorality is one of the chief instruments of the devil. By means of immorality he has enslaved the world. Through the evil of immorality most terrible diseases have become epidemics. So utterly enslaved is man to this great evil that he will spend millions of dollars and marshal great armies of the world's best scientists to find cures for these dreaded diseases. Meanwhile he ignores and hates the law of God which, if lived by, would be the simple cure. Through immorality millions of homes are broken up every year and the world has been filled with misery and wretchedness so terrible that it is a prelude to hell. The devil uses great stratagems to destroy even the Christian, his home, and his church through immorality. He uses the very prevalence of immorality to spread the philosophy; "everyone is doing it, it is not so bad." He can make us become accustomed to this great evil and lose our spiritual sensitivity to the evil of it in the sight of God. He works little by little, beginning with small compromises and leading on to more serious ones. Many of today's churches already tolerate and condone some of the grossest immorality. Even in our own circles signs of this great sin are on the increase.

How urgent that we by the grace of God maintain true holiness in this area of our life. Never before has the call of the Lord been more urgent. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues," Revelation 18:4. Yet how many who call themselves Christians are taking a less and less serious attitude in regard to this sin.

God first made sex a beautiful and holy thing. He created man male and female with all the beautiful distinctions of that difference. He also ordained the holy bond of marriage. He made sex exclusively for

that holy bond to be used for the expression of intimate, holy, and faithful love between husband and wife. He has commanded us in His law to live chastely within and without the bond of marriage for His glory. He has told us to keep our bodies holy and not to use our bodies as instruments of sin and unrighteousness to defraud our neighbor.

All the immorality of the world stands under the curse of God. It is an abomination to Him. He will judge it in terrible holy and just judgment. God is not mocked. His wrath is revealed from heaven against all the wickedness of men.

As Christians we have been spiritually transformed by the grace and Spirit of God. We have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Our bodies have been made temples of the Holy Spirit through His indwelling in our hearts. Therefore, out of love for God and in fear and reverence for Him, we must keep our bodies holy. In the age in which we live this will involve a constant spiritual battle. We will have to be very serious and very careful to avoid the temptations of the devil. We will have to be strong in His grace and keep our hearts and minds pure from all the corruption of the world. We must be radically different from the world and not be ashamed of this.

In our own personal lives we must live chastely and modestly before the Lord. We must not yield to the temptations of the world. At home and at work we must not join in the world's constant immoral joking and sexual innuendo. We must be vigilant to keep our hearts and minds pure and holy. We must maintain the old traditions of our godly ancestors which forbade joining in the world's dance, and going to the world's theatre, and singing the world's songs. I know that this is a pretty rare perspective on life today. Nevertheless it is obvious that the movies and books and songs of the world are becoming more and more wicked and immoral. There is something very seriously wrong with a Christian who can find enjoyment in the wicked entertainment of the world. No amount of high sounding philosophy of being an "enlightened and mature age," no amount of claims about it being "good art" is going to change the fact that all the world's immorality is an abomination to the Lord. A Christian who does not separate himself spiritually from all of this is going to do great damage to his soul. Even in our dress we must be different. I know that sounds terribly old fashioned and strict. But a serious Christian must pay attention to this. He or she cannot simply follow the fashion of the world. He or she does not have the right shamefully to expose the body to the lustful spectacle of sinful man. Neither does going to the beach give one the excuse for this. The Christian

must dress modestly so that by all means he may avoid immoral thoughts in his fellow man. We must recognize that following the world in its immoral dress is the grossest form of worldliness.

God's word has very strong warnings against the great evil of immorality. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them," Ephesians 5:1-7. May God give us the grace to be serious about these words and to take them to heart in all of their meaning and application.

We also must guard our homes and give instruction to our children. We must teach our children about the beauty and sanctity of sex and the great evil of immorality. The evil world desperately wants to teach our children about sex so that by means of this instruction it can corrupt our children and entice them into immorality. At a surprisingly young age our children will already be exposed to all kinds of immoral talk. As parents we will do our duty and teach our children about this area of life before they are corrupted by the world. We must be careful about the books that enter into our homes. A serious Christian parent will see the urgency of monitoring what his children read. It is a fact that television is becoming more and more common in our covenant homes. That may not all be condemned on the basis of the word of God. Yet it is also a sad fact that more and more immoral programs are being watched in our homes. There are very few today that are not immoral. Many Christian parents are losing their spiritual sensitivity to this and are slowly compromising and allowing programs that have "just a little" immoral language and suggestion of uncleanness. We have to be concerned about this. We have to be concerned about our young people as they are growing up in a world where most of their peers and classmates are "sexually active" and where being popular is dependent on a liberal and "uninhibited" perspective of life. We have to teach our children about boy/girl relationships. We have to urge them to keep themselves holy and pure while they are dating. We have to warn them not to place themselves in tempting circumstances and not to underestimate

the power of this sin or overestimate their own power of self control. We have to teach them what is honorable in the sight of God. We have to teach them about the reward and blessing of waiting until marriage.

As the world becomes more and more immoral the walk of the Christian becomes more and more difficult. The temptations of the world strongly appeal to our sinful flesh. The world presents the way of immorality as one that is filled with great excitement and pleasure. God's way of holiness is the opposite of the way of the world. To live in holiness is

often difficult, and involves a great spiritual struggle. Yet it has abundant reward and blessing. What is more blessed on earth than a home where husband and wife live faithfully with one another and by the grace of God avoid the sin of unfaithfulness and immorality? This is the sphere that is healthy and stable for the nurture of children in the way of the Lord. Above all, this is the place where the favor and blessing of the Lord are found. Here the glory of the Lord is revealed and here is the hope of eternal happiness and blessing.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Ronald H. Hanko

God Is A God Of Truth (2)

We have seen that the ninth commandment, though expressed negatively, requires positively that we love the truth, also that this love for the truth is nothing less than the love of God Himself, Who is a God of truth and without iniquity (Deut. 32:4). Every form of deceit and falsehood is, therefore, an act of violence against God and His glory.

The sin explicitly forbidden in the ninth commandment is the sin of "bearing false witness," what we today would call perjury. This is, however, only the grossest form of sin against God in the whole matter of loving, knowing, and speaking the truth. As with all the other commandments that are prohibitive, the ninth commandment means to forbid all forms of deception, lying, and evil speaking in forbidding the gross sin of lying under oath (perjury).

It is necessary to remember this in order to understand the strong statement of the Belgic Confession, that "all men are liars and more vain than vanity itself" (Art. VII). We see this in the world and in our own lives only when we realize how ex-

ceedingly broad the commandment is in its condemnation of sin. But it is also broad in its implied positive requirements. Obviously, the positive calling to speak the truth is something that applies in every area of life and not just in our civic responsibilities. We must, as Scripture teaches, *be of* the truth (Jn. 18:37) and *walk in* it (II Jn., 4).

The commandment is important, then, first of all in our own personal relationships with God, particularly in prayer, repentance, and the study and reading of His Word. Prayer, for example, is essentially nothing more than truth-speaking. That means in the first place that it must be much more than just presenting our "want lists" to God. It must be before all else a confession of the truth concerning God Himself in His high glory. Thus and only thus does prayer become what Scripture teaches it ought to be, an act of worship. Christian prayer is often very weak at this point, being little more than a kind of information session held for God's benefit. Speaking God's truth in prayer means too, that we not only speak the truth about Him in our prayers, but the truth about all other things as He reveals it in His Word. This is crucial for our prayers. It means that even when we come

with our own needs, cares, griefs, and troubles, we speak of them to God in harmony with everything that He Himself tells us about them in His Word, not simply as we feel moved to speak of them. In His Word God tells us the truth concerning the importance of our various needs. There He tells us what we must seek first, when we must pray "Thy will be done," and how we may be certain in our praying that our prayers are truly heard and answered by Him.

Our repentance beautifully illustrates this point. Repentance is not a matter of informing God about our sins. He knows them better than we do. Rather it simply means that we speak God's truth about our selves and our sins by way of humbling ourselves and showing our contrition. Among other things this means, for example, that we not only confess the actual evil we have done, but include in our confession the truth that all our sins are the result of our depravity, as David does in Psalm 51:5. To say anything less is really finally a denial of our sinfulness, and as John says in I John 1:10, if we in any way deny our sin or sins, we not only deceive ourselves, but make God Himself a liar because *His truth* is not in us (vs. 8).

As far as prayer is concerned, then, the Scriptures which alone teach God's truth (Belgic Confession, Article VII) must be the foundation and source of all our praying and other acts of worship and devotion, especially those that involve our speech. As John Bunyan once said, "It is blasphemy, or at best vain babbling, when the petition is unrelated to the Book."

As important as this commandment is for our personal life of devotion to God, it is even more important for the fellowship of the church. Since that fellowship is "in the truth" it can be enjoyed by the members of the church only when they learn and practice the speaking of the truth to one another (Eph. 4:15, I Jn. 3:18). And it must be God's truth that is spoken, both as it concerns Him, and as it concerns the life and members of the Church. The truth must be the substance of our encouraging one another, admonishing one another, and even speaking about one another in the Church. Nothing else can comfort the brethren in their afflictions, whether those be the pains of the body, or the distresses of the soul. Nothing but the truth can restore an erring brother or sister, and only the truth can build up and edify the church.

One matter that needs attention here is that among the sins forbidden by Scripture under the ninth commandment is the sin of backbiting, also called the sin of whispering, tale-bearing, tattling and gossiping. There is perhaps no other sin that is so great a cause of strife, division, and trouble in

the life of the church. This sin, Solomon says, adds wood to the fire and coals to burning coals. The end of tale-bearing is the end of strife, therefore, for where there is no wood the fire goes out (Prov. 26:20, 21).

We have the idea that we may say anything at all about others as long as it is true, and forget that the Scriptures solemnly enjoin not only the speaking of the truth, but the speaking of it in love (Eph. 4:15). Without love all our speaking of the truth is only vain jangling, whether we speak it about God or about other persons. The difference between the sins of slander and back-biting lies here. Slander is a matter of telling deliberate falsehood about another to his hurt. The sin of backbiting is the sin of telling to the wrong persons rumors or even the truth about another to his hurt. The only way of love is the way mandated in Scripture in Matthew 18:15-20. These guidelines, laid down by Christ, show how we are to deal with a brother's faults and weaknesses by covering and hiding them as much as possible for the sake of preserving his place and character among the other members of the church. This is the love that covers a multitude of sins (I Pet. 4:8). It is very easy for us to convince ourselves that we are only interested in the welfare of the church or of a brother, or that we are deeply troubled by certain sins or weaknesses, and so engage in these sins, but the Word of God is very clear on this point. Going only to the brother is the way of love, and if we have not that love we are nothing (I Cor. 13:2). Gossip, rumor-mongering, and tale-bearing are as much sin against the ninth commandment as perjury and lying, because they are without love, always the love of God, even though they may say what is factually true.

This whole matter is also important in controversy. We must follow the rules of decency and good order in dealing with matters of controversy, and not "settle" these matters by whispering and gossip. For the church at large that way of decency and order is the way of protest and appeal and deliberation on the floor of the church assemblies. All too often such matters are decided before they ever come to the assemblies, and the result is harm and grief in the church.

We must remember what Augustine says in connection with such sins, that the tongue is a terrible instrument of murder, not of flesh and blood, but of reputations and brotherly love. It causes greater wounds, he says, than those of the sword, wounds which no physician can heal. In the same vein James tells us that the fires kindled by the tongue are the fires of hell itself.

Along with such sins as back-biting and gossip must be mentioned the sin of listening to tale-

bearers. It is no less an evil than the actual tale-bearing, and brings if possible even more wood to the fires of strife. As Solomon says, an angry countenance is the only proper answer to a back-biting tongue, because it drives such a tongue away (Prov. 25:23).

Speaking God's truth is important also in our relationship to the church and world around us. Speaking the truth is the heart of our witness to the world, but it must be the truth which we speak, else our confession is nothing but boasting. That truth must be spoken as a witness, not only in giving an answer for our hope (I Pet. 3:15), but in all the obligations and day-to-day business of life. This is difficult especially in our work because the world operates by lies and deceit, so that the Christian worker or businessman will be at a definite disadvantage in the world. But for God's sake he must speak and do truth, not only in buying and selling, but in seeking a job, in the problems and difficulties of his work, in the paying of taxes, and in all that belongs to making his daily living.

In the church it must needs be emphasized today that speaking the truth means speaking the whole truth. If it is a form of the lie, practiced first by Satan

(Gen. 3:1), to tell only part of the truth. Often on the mission field and in evangelism the church does this while priding herself in her faithfulness to the gospel and her commission. Without telling deliberate falsehood, the church can and does lie simply by failing to preach the whole counsel of God, or by covering up and hiding certain doctrines that it deems difficult or obstructive to the progress of the gospel. There are many excuses for this, but the Word of God is clear in the example of Paul (Acts 20:18-27).

These, of course, are only some examples of the positive and negative requirements of the ninth commandment, but they are sufficient to show that these sins infect the church and the people of God. Only the grace of God in the cross of Christ can heal, and for our healing Christ, our Lord, spoke truth even in the agony of His last sufferings. Thus He paid for our lying and deceitfulness, and now His obedience is our example, His Spirit our teacher, His grace our strength and guard against these sins. And so, speaking the truth in love, we not only enjoy the blessed fellowship of saints, make a good confession before the world, and find in prayer the way to God, but grow up in all things into Him Who is the Head (Eph. 4:15).

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

Turned In God's Mercy

There are times in our lives, as children of God, when we are not spiritually strong and sensitive. Such was the case with Naomi during the ten or more years that she sojourned in Moab. The confession that Ruth made when Naomi urged her to stay in Moab, when she, Naomi, was leaving to go back to Canaan, reveals that Naomi was a child of God and did have a spiritual life. For clearly she had shown her faith before her daughters-in-law, or otherwise the confession of Ruth could not have taken place. But even then Naomi's spiritual life had its weaknesses; and she needed, and in God's

grace got some strong messages from God. In her spiritual weakness she did not take heed at first, but God's grace did turn her and made her return to the promised land.

It may not have been her choice to leave that promised land for bread. It may not have been her flesh that wanted bread rather than the words that proceed from God's mouth. But it can also be said that she had no choice about going to Moab, when there was a sore famine in Canaan. Her husband Elimelech decided to take the family, and she was

obliged to go along. We do not read, however, that she strenuously objected and urged Elimelech to commit their way to God. And the fact that she stayed there for at least ten years, when she had a choice to return, does suggest that she was in full agreement when they left for Moab.

A striking and sad fact is not only that she stayed in Moab for ten years, but also that it took more than three hard blows to make her return to Canaan. Her husband died in Moab and was buried outside the promised land. Physically Naomi was touched, but not spiritually. Then came two more blows in God's mercy and grace. Her two sons were taken from her by death, and also were buried outside the promised land. And not until she hears that the famine is over and that there is abundant bread in Canaan, does she pack her things and begin to return.

We are not informed how long it was after the death of her sons that she heard of the end of the famine; nor for that matter how soon after Elimelech's death the two sons married Moabitish women. We do get the impression that Naomi was attracted to these daughters-in-law, and she probably did find it hard to leave them and go back to Canaan. Sins do get us deeper into trouble, and make us more interested in the material than the spiritual.

But after these severe blows, and God's merciful act of bringing her word that He was taking care of His people in Canaan, she does set out to go back to where she belonged and from where she should never have gone. Deep inside her, as an elect, born-again child of God, Naomi did want the words that proceed from the mouth of God. She did want to go where Christ was foreshadowed, typified, and was before the eyes of God's people. There in Canaan was the Bread of Life, while in Moab was only the bread of death.

Man's body does need bread in order to live. But that bread spoils, and can benefit the beasts of the field. The Bread of Life is everlasting and feeds an everlasting spiritual life. And though we may seek bread for our bodies, we must be ready to give it up if it interferes with getting the Bread of Life. To choose bread for the flesh at the expense of losing the Bread of Life is not only the height of folly but also a gross sin.

One thing we ought to see clearly in this book of Ruth is God's covenant faithfulness as it is shown to unfaithful members of the body of Christ. God's people are so often unfaithful. They can, as Abraham did, not only seek bread in a wrong way

but also lie to have his life for which he sought bread, spared. One sin leads to another sin. But God returned Sarah to him and brought both of them back to Canaan. Peter also cut himself off completely from Jesus, denying Him three times and saying that he did not know Him at all. But God turned him in His mercy by causing the cock to crow right then and there, and causing Peter to weep bitterly because of his sin.

So it was with Naomi. She was an elect child of God whose faith never left her, though it was covered up by fleshly desires. God did not withdraw His grace from her. He even gave her the grace to reveal her faith before her daughters-in-law and used her to instruct Ruth in the things of Christ, the Bread of Life. She did move away from Christ as He was typified in the tabernacle and the priesthood in Canaan; but she could not move away from God's mercy and grace. And so in God's time and way she was moved to go back to Canaan.

Now Moab was in two ways connected with that promised land. Physically and geographically it bordered on that part of the land which God gave to the twelve sons of Jacob, being just south of the land east of the Jordan river that was given to Reuben and his seed. It was even through this land that Israel came when travelling from Egypt to the land west of the Jordan river, the heart of the promised land. So Elimelech and his family did not make a big step, but only went next door. But are temptations not always that way? Little by little Satan tries to lure us until we are far away.

What is more, the Moabites were related to the Israelites. They were descendants of Lot. There was a blood tie between Abraham and Lot. And it is interesting to read in Deuteronomy 2:9: "And the Lord said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession." All this must not lead us to conclude that what Elimelech and Naomi did was not such a grievous sin. Lot was a believer whom God spared from the destruction of Sodom and also separated him from his godless wife. The possibility does exist that there were a few believers in Moab, even so many years after Lot. But since they did not have God's tabernacle and the cross of Christ typically before them, this is doubtful. Orpah did not show any faith, but only natural love for Naomi.

Now Naomi's decision to return to Canaan revealed a kindling of a smoldering spiritual fire in her. In His grace God blew upon the spiritual fire He had implanted in Naomi, and that had to a great but not complete degree gone out, and only in a few ways still glowed and revealed its presence.

Although Naomi did not look to God for all her needs, He never looked away from her, and kept the sparks of faith burning in her; and she did separate herself from Lot's descendants to join once again with Abraham's seed who were set apart by God as His church in that day.

Staying ten years or more in Moab, Naomi did sin grievously. That God spoke three times by the death of her loved ones indicates that this was no little thing in His eyes. And that Naomi could not get any grandchildren, and that she and Elimelech had no covenant seed to carry on and live in the promised land, was no little thing either. But once again we had better hold it clearly before our eyes that only one sin has everlasting anger and wrath in the holy God Who made man in His own image, so that he was able to serve Him in the law in which he was created. He warned Adam of committing only one sin. He made His own Son suffer an everlasting punishment, which He could and did bring to an end, because as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity He could give everlasting value to what He did in a moment of time.

We may all hang our heads in shame, therefore, and not compare our lives with Naomi's in order to excuse one of our sins, or to boast of not being as evil as she was. Even if we do not commit her sin, and could count all of our sins and all of hers and find we transgressed God's law a fewer number of times, that is because of God's grace and not because we of ourselves have more spiritual power and wisdom.

It might not have been, and most likely was not, earthly bread that kept us from meeting Christ in the preaching of the word this past Sabbath day. But so often it is our flesh, the same flesh that wants bread. That flesh is not in the best of health; but though tomorrow there is no improvement, and it may even suffer more physical misery, we must and do go to the shop or office to work. There are many times when Moab looks mighty good to us. After stress and strain and growing tension, a vacation is good for the body; and the craving is there to

go away from the preaching of the word and from meeting Christ in God's house, or arrange to be where poisonous meat is served instead of the truth as it is in Christ.

It is because of God's faithfulness to His promises that we are kept faithful. We have our faults, but God has none. And all this must not encourage us to follow Abraham's or Naomi's sinful ways. Instead we ought to be more careful and find comfort in this truth of God's faithfulness.

These three blows which God made Naomi suffer were not acts of cruelty. His mercy caused all this to happen, so that she would turn back to Christ and the blessings in Him in Canaan. Always we have to look at God's purpose and not simply at what our eye can see and our ear can hear. The surgeon makes some severe cuts into the flesh, even at times removing organs or large sections of them. And it is going to hurt for a time. But we err if we say that this was cruel of him. Far less is it cruel when God afflicts us, bereaves us, makes life hard for our flesh; and when we do not listen makes it even harder. He is seeking our good. A surgeon may be cruel and careless; but God is kind and does only that which is absolutely necessary for our wellbeing.

Do we not read in Romans 8:28 that ALL things work together for good to them that love God? And does Paul not add a few verses later that nothing, including death, can separate us from His love?

What we must see when we get to the last portion of this book of Ruth is that God is working all things together for good for Naomi, Ruth *and us*. In all this God is preparing the way for the birth of His Son, who will bring us to heavenly glory in His kingdom, where there is no sin and no curse. He used Naomi's sin, even as He used the sins of the scribes, chief priest, and elders, to get that Son on His cross. His purpose is our salvation, and through it the glory of His own name.

Always, in all things that God does, keep that cross in mind.

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GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

Thomas C. Miersma

Descartes and the Philosophy of Doubt

In our consideration of the modern assault upon the Reformed doctrine of Scripture we turn again to a discussion of modern philosophy out of which that assault arises after the Reformation. The rise of modern scientific study issuing from the Renaissance called into question the existing understanding of man and the world. It did so on the basis of human reason and an investigation of creation. Principally this approach had from the very outset no room for divine revelation concerning the creation. The underpinnings of modern science, that creation can be explained from itself by the mind of man, were already present. This philosophy which underlay the spirit of the Renaissance had yet to receive, however, a full systematic treatment. Just as the early New Testament church began with faith in God and His Word and developed in its doctrinal understanding, so also unbelief begins in unbelief and not with a full-blown system of philosophy formally spelled out. Modern science was no different.

Study and investigation however, soon led to questions concerning the principles, basis and proper methods of study which are to be followed to arrive at accurate conclusions. The result is the development of philosophy. In the period arising out of the Renaissance it was particularly to the science of mathematics that man turned as a tool for the study of the creation. By it he sought to develop the principles and formulas which would explain the phenomena he observed in the creation, so-called natural laws, which are more properly termed the regular workings of God's providence in the creation.

It is with a view to this mathematical model that the first principles of modern scientific investiga-

tion were put forth. It was out of it that the method of inductive reasoning and scientific experimentation also arose as it was set forth by Francis Bacon in England (1561-1626). Such an approach is by its very nature suited only to that which can be touched, seen, measured, and handled. If the idea, however, is applied to the whole of the creation and every thing in it, also to the life of man, his thinking and willing, the necessary result is that one must regard man and all that belongs to him as the mere result of the operation of certain natural laws. That is, that our thinking, willing, and actions are merely processes of the creation not different essentially from the laws of motion or gravity.

Following this theory everything can be understood in terms of mathematical principles and formulas, or be reduced to mere cause and effect relationships. These relationships themselves can be discerned and developed by means of logical and systematic reasoning and analysis. Man by his reason can then explain everything, because everything is merely the result of some natural process. Good and evil have no real meaning but are reduced to that which in its effect is either pleasant or unpleasant. This theory was put forward by the English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1650). While it was radical in its day it is one which continues with us in one form or another and underlies much of modern unbelieving thought. It basically regards man as a mere machine in the creation which itself runs as a machine. Man is simply the product of his biology, his environment, or the interaction of things round about him and within him.

It is not surprising therefore that Hobbes also had no use for religion. He treats the origin of religion as a natural response of man, primitive and unscientific man, caused by his fear of that which he cannot explain, and he lays the origin of

miracles also at the same doorstep. Hobbes' philosophy rules out the existence of God, of revelation, and of miracles or anything outside the creature from the very outset. It is the philosophy of the atheistic fool who says outright that which he says in his heart, that there is no God. It stands in direct and open opposition to the Christian faith. Exactly because it does so, however, and rules out God's existence as a first principle, it does not constitute the same kind of threat to the Christian faith that a Jehovah-Baal hybrid does.

It is with Rene' Descartes (1596-1650) that we find the first real form of modern synthesis between philosophy and religion. Descartes was considered one of the leading intellectuals of his day. A son of the lesser French nobility, a Roman Catholic by profession, he was a widely traveled man, who followed in the train of the numerous armies of Europe until he tired of military camp life and settled in Paris. In 1628 he left Paris for Holland where there was room for greater intellectual freedom. He was in appearance slight but well-built, though tending to have a weak constitution. He had a large head, a pale complexion, a large nose and a wart on his cheek. He was bald and usually wore a wig, being somewhat particular about his dress. He was a studious person, well-versed in the emerging science of his age, with a gifted mind, a cultured unbeliever moving in the intellectual circles of Holland. His influence was felt not only in Holland but across Europe.

Descartes in some respects went beyond Hobbes in his application of the new scientific principles and in an attempt to develop a systematic approach to the new learning. As the new science called into doubt the accepted understanding of the world and re-examined it, so Descartes lifts up that principle of doubt or unbelief to a first principle in his thinking. He begins by doubting the existence and certainty of everything, not only of God but of the creation also. The experience of the material world of time and space may itself be a dream or an illusion. It also is therefore to be doubted. This is unbelief in its purest form carried to the point of the absurd. Upon that principle of absolute doubt, doubt concerning everything that can be doubted he wanted so to build as to arrive at certainty and truth. He begins with the idea that whether his experience is a dream or an illusion it nevertheless is there, he experiences it. Whether dream or illusion his experience is real and therefore he is real and exists. This principle he sets forth as a conclusion "I think therefore I am" (cogito ergo sum). In so doing Descartes starts with himself, *his* thinking, *his* experience as the standard by which to judge the reality and certainty of anything else. In effect Descartes makes himself his own god in his under-

standing. It is on this principle that he builds his philosophy. That does not mean, however, that Descartes denies the existence of a divine being. Taking up his principle, "I think therefore I am," he finds in his experience that there are certain things which are given, which belong to the order and structure of his experience of that which is around him of which he himself is not the author. He concludes from it that another thinking or thinker greater than he must exist even as his own thinking exists and he exists. "I think therefore I am" leads therefore to the idea there is thinking outside of me. Therefore the thinker (god) exists as the first cause. Starting with himself he frames in his philosophy a divine being. This being is not known by revelation but by thought. He is thought as a self-existent entity.

Now there are a great number of things which could be said about this philosophy, but certain elements are of primary importance. The basic starting point is not God and His self-revelation but man and his thought. The god of Descartes is really an image made in the likeness of man's thought and experience. It has nothing to do with the God of the Scriptures. Descartes is engaged in a sophisticated form of idolatry and of making a graven image in his own imagination. That which starts in unbelieving doubt can never rise to truth and certainty because it denies from the outset the only basis of the knowledge of God, God's revelation of Himself to us. That which begins with the lie ends with the lie. Descartes' god is really nothing more than an idealized form of human reason, dependent upon man's mind and experience for existence, being and content. The danger of this philosophical god who is not God is that like Baal it stands over against Jehovah. And the idolater may now speak with the appearance of Christian terminology of God's existence when he means god's existence to the subversion of the church, God's Word, and sound doctrine. The real danger exists of a Jehovah-Baal hybrid entering the church. This in reality is what has happened and is happening also in our day, though in more sophisticated forms than Descartes.

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Book Review

A CONCISE EXEGETICAL GRAMMAR OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK, by J. Harold Greenlee; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986. 79pp., (no price included, paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The fact that this is the fifth edition of a book originally published in 1953 demonstrates that many students of Greek have found it helpful. While it is not, in my judgment, suited for a textbook to be used in beginners' Greek classes, it does have two excellent purposes: 1) It can well serve as a compendium for a more comprehensive text in the study of beginning Greek; 2) It is a handy

reference guide for ministers in their exegetical studies. The title itself suggests this latter as its main purpose, and it is ideally suited to that end. While working with the Greek New Testament, the minister can make good use of a handy, concise and well-organized summary of various points of Greek grammar; and this book fills that need very well. It has detailed descriptions of case uses of Greek nouns, of tense and mood uses of Greek verbs, as well as various other important points of grammar. We highly recommend the book to all ministers who work with the Greek in sermon preparation.

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

June 1, 1987

A couple weeks ago I received a pamphlet entitled, *God's Sovereignty in Salvation*, written by Rev. Steven Houck, our missionary in Modesto, California, and published by the Evangelism Committee of our congregation in South Holland, Illinois.

Having now had a chance to sit down and read this pamphlet, I can heartily recommend it to all the readers of *The Standard Bearer*.

This pamphlet is only twenty seven pages long, so it can be read and re-read many times. But don't let its shortness fool you. Rev. Houck covers every aspect of God's work in our salvation. As he states in the preface, "It is our prayer that the Lord God will be pleased to use this pamphlet as a testimony of His sovereign grace, for the advancement of the cause of His Truth, and to the glory of His great name".

I especially liked the Scripture references at the end of the pamphlet. Each chapter is listed and then follows an extensive list of Scripture refer-

ences for that particular aspect of God's salvation.

If you would like a copy of this worthwhile work by Rev. Houck, simply send a note to:

The South Holland Evangelism Committee
16511 South Park Ave.
South Holland, Illinois 60473

The cost, you ask? Absolutely free. A worthwhile pamphlet to add to your library and you cannot beat the price. Who says you cannot get something for nothing anymore!

On April 10, the PTA of the Free Christian School in Edgerton, Minnesota, met and for the program Mr. Lim showed a video presentation of slides on Singapore. He also moderated the presentation and answered a lot of questions.

On April 13 the Spring Social was also held in Edgerton and the video tape on Jamaica was shown. Lunch that evening was prepared with the assistance of Mr. Lim and included spring rolls and won tons, both Chinese items. They had a truly international weekend and they were made aware of the universality of the church.

Three lectures were held in Norristown, Pennsylvania, on Friday and Saturday, May 8 and 9. The general theme of these lectures were "Un-

derstanding the Old Testament". Prof. H.C. Hoeksema spoke on Friday evening on "The Origin and Development of the Promise." Prof. H. Hanko spoke Saturday morning on "The Typology of the Old Testament," and Rev. K. Hanko spoke Saturday afternoon on "The Law and the Promise".

From our congregation in Wyckoff, New Jersey, we find that during the month of April work began on the parsonage to waterproof the basement, with a view to building a study down there. Work was also begun on the building of a garage.

This news column will now have one more church from which to draw its news items. On May 13 the families in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, were organized as the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church. We are always happy and rejoice when another congregation is added to our numbers. And it is our prayer that in all your ways you will acknowledge God, and that He will direct your paths.

On May 14 a special community program was held in the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church. The friends and neighbors of our congregation there were invited to come and see what the Lord has done by establishing an exciting new church in Singapore. Pastor den Hartog showed slides and gave a talk on his past seven years as missionary in Singapore. The main objective of this program was to invite members of the community and have them share with Randolph something of the blessings of the Lord on the mission work of our churches in Singapore.

Have you ever asked yourself the question: Why do I find it so difficult to live the way I know a Christian should? This is a crucial question and those who attended the Spring Motivation Seminar at Kalamazoo last month attempted to find an answer.

Saturday, May 2, the Covenant Christian High School Band gave a concert which featured the many familiar marches of John Phillip Sousa. They were preceded by a combined band concert of Adams, Hope, and Heritage School bands.

The P.T.F.A. of Covenant High met on May 1 to hear Kent County Probate Judge Randall Hekman

speak on "Society in Ambivalence Toward Children".

Loveland congregation recently had an All Request Singspiration after the evening service. The offering taken, as you might imagine, being in Loveland, was for the 1987 PRYP'S Convention.

On May 2 there was a Pancake Breakfast and simultaneous car wash, sponsored by the Young People of First Church, at Adams St. School, with the proceeds also going to the 1987 convention.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 19, 1987, our parents, MR. & MRS. CLARENCE PRINCE will observe their 45th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, are grateful to our covenant God for the years He has given them and the faithful Christian instruction they have given us. We pray God's blessings continue with them in the years ahead.

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him." (Deut. 7:9)

Chet and Sharon Haveman
Janna and Michael

Doug and Mary Jane Prince
Hilary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 11, 1987, REV. AND MRS. JASON KORTERING will, the Lord willing, celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary.

The Lord has blessed us with Godly parents and we are thankful that His love has been evident in our home. It is our heartfelt prayer that He will continue to be their strength and guide in the years to come.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." (Psalm 34:8)

their loving children and grandchildren

Barry and Lori Gritters
Curt, Kevin, Eric, Danny
Dennis and Sharon Griess
Cory, Tara, Justin, Seth

Bruce and Joan Klamer
Leon and Ellen Kamps
Nicholas
Carol Kortering

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 20, 1987 our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. WM. SWART will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We are grateful to God for the covenant training and example they have given us. We are also grateful that God has preserved them for themselves and for us. May He continue His blessing upon them.

"The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children."

Ronald and Susan Van Overloop
Calvin and Linda Kalsbeek
Judy Swart
and fourteen grandchildren