

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The doctrine of election is most often viewed as some abstract, faraway doctrine having no practical implications for life. It belongs to the secret things of God, having no part of our every day experience. For that reason it need not be preached. In fact, it should not be preached, lest it bring fears and doubts to the soul.

But listen to this. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as He has chosen us in Christ. He has done all this that we might be holy and without blame before Him.

Understand what this means and you can not help but agree that election is one of the most practical doctrines of the Scriptures, giving meaning, direction, and unity to all of life.

See Meditation, p. 482

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THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman C. Hanko, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Benjamin Wigger.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave., S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 - 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

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Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed Church
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

MEDITATION

James D. Slopsema

Richly Blessed In Jesus Christ

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him. —Ephesians 1:3, 4

The doctrine of election is most often viewed as some abstract, faraway doctrine having no practical implications for life. It belongs to the secret things

of God, having no part of our every day experience. For that reason it need not be preached. In fact, it should not be preached, lest it bring fears and

doubts to the soul.

But listen to this. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as He has chosen us in Christ. He has done all this that we might be holy and without blame before Him.

Understand what this means and you can not help but agree that election is one of the most practical doctrines of the Scriptures, giving meaning, direction, and unity to all of life.

* * * * *

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

These spiritual blessings are all the blessings of salvation. By the blessings of salvation we mean all that is necessary to deliver us from the wrath to come and to bring us to the bliss of heavenly glory. These are the blessings that Christ has earned for us at the cross. Oh, how we need these blessings. We have all sinned and made ourselves worthy of the wrath to come. We are hopelessly lost in sin. To attain the bliss of heaven, we need all these blessings of salvation.

God has blessed us with *all* these spiritual blessings.

What a striking statement!

For the meaning is not that we have already been blessed with some of these spiritual blessings and more will come. The meaning is rather that God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing He has for us.

To understand how this can be true we must bear in mind that God has blessed us with these spiritual blessings *in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. This means that God has blessed Christ in heavenly places with all the blessings of salvation. And by blessing Christ, He has also blessed us.

The viewpoint of this Word of God is that Jesus Christ is our exalted Lord in heavenly places or regions.

This, by the way, is why God is called here the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father of Jesus exactly because He has taken Christ from the humiliation of death and the grave and raised Him to heavenly glory. This is evident from the apostle Paul's sermon to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled that same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my

Son, this day have I begotten thee,'" Acts 13:32, 33. In other words, when God exalted Jesus through the resurrection, He begat Jesus so that Jesus became His Son in a very special sense.

It was at this exaltation of Jesus into glory that God blessed Jesus with all the blessings of salvation. The glory that Christ has received at His exaltation is nothing less than the spiritual blessings which He had earned at the cross.

This is also why God is called here the God of Jesus. This is the language of the covenant. God promised to establish His covenant with Abraham and his seed for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto Abraham and to his seed. (Genesis 17:7) God is called Jesus' God exactly because God exalted Him as the Seed of the covenant and blessed Him with all the spiritual blessings of the covenant.

But now the point is that by blessing Jesus, God blessed us!

There is the closest possible relation between us and Jesus Christ. This union is expressed by various figures. Christ is the head; we are His body. Christ is the vine; we are the branches. Christ is the bridegroom; we are the bride. The reality expressed by these and other figures is that God has placed us in such a close relationship with Christ that we are one with Him and share all things with Him. Scriptures go so far as to say that we are in Christ and He is in us.

Consequently, when God blessed Christ in heavenly places with all the blessings of salvation, He blessed us. And through the inner working of the Holy Spirit we even now are enjoying the beginnings of these blessings. We find in Jesus the forgiveness of our sins. We have a new life in Christ. We have the hope of life eternal . . .

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

* * * * *

God has blessed us in Christ according as He has chosen us in Him.

Notice, God has blessed us in Christ. And now we find that God has chosen us in Christ. The meaning is very clear. God has chosen Christ and He has chosen us in Christ.

To what has God chosen Christ?

He has chosen Christ to be His Son.

Jesus is eternally the Son of God, the second person of the trinity, equal with the Father and the Spirit. Hence, God determined to send His Only Begotten into our flesh to be His Son in a very unique sense, inheriting all the blessings of salvation. And according to His wisdom, God also determined

that Christ should receive this inheritance only on the basis of the perfect righteousness and obedience of the cross.

And God has chosen us in Christ.

This means that He has chosen us to share in this glory of Christ. He has chosen us to share in the spiritual blessings He has determined to give to Christ.

To that end God has also appointed Christ to be our Mediator so that we will be one with Christ in all things.

God has so chosen us in Christ *before the foundation of the world*.

There are two possibilities. Either God chooses us in time, during the course of our earthly life, or He chooses us before the foundation of the world. Should God's election be in time, His election is based on us. God chooses us because of what we are. Should election be from eternity, however, our works and worth have nothing to do with the basis of election. Then election is strictly a matter of God's good pleasure.

God has chosen us from before the foundation of the world. We are no more worthy than any one else. Of ourselves we share equally with all mankind in the spiritual ruin of the fall. But God in His sovereign good pleasure has chosen us in Christ.

And according to this election God has blessed us.

This means that the basis of the blessings we have and enjoy is God's election. We have the blessings of salvation not because through our own works we have made ourselves worthy. Nor do we have these blessings because we decided to claim them in Christ. These spiritual blessings of salvation are ours only because God chose us in Christ to receive them.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

* * * * *

God has chosen us in Christ and blessed us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before Him.

To be holy before God means to live a life of consecration and devotion to God. Those who live in holiness before God are not concerned first of all with their desires, their convenience, their honor, their earthly advantage. Their concern is God's honor and glory. Their chief desire is the promotion of God's cause. To that end they are willing to sacrifice, if needs be, all things.

Being holy before God is further explained by be-

ing without blame before God. One who is without blame was pictured in the Old Testament by the sacrificial lamb that was without blemish. To be without blame is to be without the spiritual blemishes of sin and evil. And this is an essential part of holiness. One who defiles himself with sin is not consecrated to the service of God. One is devoted to the service of God in holiness only when He walks without blame before God in obedience to His commandments.

This is the purpose of God in choosing and blessing us in Christ.

God will glorify Himself through a people that is wholly consecrated to His service in holiness.

To that end He has chosen us in Christ to be His people. And according to that election He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ in heavenly places. For of ourselves we are no different from the world. We are profane and evil, devoted to self, defiled with sin. But with the blessing of God in Christ we are wonderfully transformed, able to be holy and without blame before God — principally now and perfectly in glory.

In this light election gives direction and meaning to the whole of life.

Have you received the blessings of God in Jesus Christ? Then you can not help but be overwhelmed with gratitude to God. As you seek to express your gratitude, you are confronted by the fact of your eternal election. God has chosen you to these blessings in Christ exactly so that you should be holy and without blame before Him. And so you are called by your very election to a life of holiness and purity before God. And in your election you find the very motive you need to live in holiness before God.

Let us live daily in the reality of our election in Christ that we may find meaning and direction for our life.

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Editor's Notes

Please! Send all announcements, obituaries, in memoriams, and anniversary notices to our Business Office (see masthead), not to me. The chances are good that if they are sent to me, they may be misplaced and/or delayed. Accompany such notices with proper payment.

This issue is the last of our current volume-year. You will find in it the annual index. To make room for the index some departments, including News From Our Churches, have been omitted. HCH

EDITORIALS

Why Evolution? (9)

In our previous editorial on this subject we were trying to discover what Dr. Howard Van Till means by "primeval history." You will recall that he classifies the first eleven chapters of Genesis, in distinction from the subsequent part of Genesis, as "primeval history." However, he fails to offer a succinct definition of primeval history. The reader, therefore, is left to his own devices to discover this meaning from the several paragraphs which Van Till devotes to this subject.

It became very plain last time that the "stories" of primeval history (Dr. Van Till repeatedly speaks of "stories") are not true. That is, they are not true in the sense of being *factual*. According to Van Till, these "stories" may illustrate and convey truths about various things. But as Van Till himself makes plain: the *events* mentioned in these "stories" may or may not have actually happened. Further, according to Van Till, one must not even be concerned whether or not the events happened. To be concerned is to follow a sidetrack which "sends us down a dead-end spur."

Now I submit that all history is concerned about *events* and *facts*. Without such facts and the record of such facts, it is impossible even to conceive of history (primeval history or any other kind of history). There is absolutely no difference between Eastern history or Western history in that respect. Without facts and the record of facts, there is no

history. Without events, there can be no interpretation of events and their significance.

It ought to be plain, therefore, that for Van Till Genesis 1-11 is simply not a historical record. And the use of the expression "primeval history" is a deceptive term which is employed to make the denial of the historicity of Genesis 1-11 somewhat more palatable to those who are gullible enough to swallow Dr. Van Till's poison.

Further, I challenge Dr. Van Till, or anyone else, to make it plain *on the basis of the Bible itself* (i.e. following the principle that Scripture is its own interpreter) that this entire notion of "primeval history" has any validity whatsoever. I assure you that this is impossible.

The rest of Dr. Van Till's explanation of so-called primeval history involves a comparison with parables. First of all, he writes:

"The truth of a concrete story in ancient Hebrew literature does not necessarily lie in its specific details but rather in the eternal verities it illustrates. When we modern Westerners read a story, we expect it to be written as an answer to the question "What happened?" [Incidentally, what do parables tell, except "What happened?" HCH] But the stories of primeval history are much more like parables than like journalistic reports of events. They illustrate the identity and character and status

of God, humanity, and nature. They were never intended to answer questions about precisely what happened; rather, they were designed to answer questions about the character of the chief participants in the human experience and the nature of their relationship. In typically Eastern fashion, primeval history answers these questions with illustrative stories that share many features with the parables we find elsewhere in Scripture." (p. 83)

But again I emphasize: history answers the question "What happened?" or it is not history, whether Eastern or Western. Van Till's "primeval history" is not history.

Next Van Till wants to do away with what he calls the "packaging." This necessarily leaves him with even less history.

"Primeval history and parable can both serve as vehicles of truth — important truth. In both cases, the concrete details of the story constitute the packaging in which that truth is conveyed. In both cases the content of truth is of infinitely greater value than the vehicle or packaging in which it is carried. In either case, if we attempt to consume both the content and the packaging, we may encounter significant difficulty in chewing, swallowing, and digesting the combination. Those who want to feed on the truths of Scripture must take care to differentiate between food and packaging." (p. 83)

Frankly, I have much more difficulty "chewing, swallowing, and digesting" what is left after Van Till has stripped the packaging away. It is difficult to chew on nothing!

His final paragraph on this subject makes it plain that Van Till has no history left. It tells us nothing

about the creation, about Adam and Eve, about Cain and Abel, about Enoch, about Lamech and his sons, about Noah and his sons, about the Flood. This so-called primeval history is noteworthy for what it lacks — history. Read the paragraph for yourself and ask the question: what is left of Genesis 1-11?

"Unlike parables, primeval history does refer to a historical past with a character essentially the same as that illustrated by the narrative. Though actual history and the primeval narratives may differ vastly in detail, they belong to the same genus. Primeval history is not simply early history or prehistory; it is a collection of narratives that provides the conceptual framework necessary to understand all of history. [But no facts and events. HCH] Primeval history sets the stage on which actual human history is played out; it provides the framework in which history is to be experienced. Its stories apply not merely to specific events or individuals but to all of history and all of humanity. Primeval history is as much our experience as it is anyone's. Primeval history tells us as much about our God, our selves, and our world as it tells about the God, the person, and the world of Abraham, or Moses, or David long ago. Though it is not to be taken literally, it is to be taken seriously." (p. 83)

From all that I have written on this subject, it is plain that there is but one way of making room for evolution and its billions of years: Get rid of the Bible and its plain testimony!

This is what Dr. Van Till does in his book, though he claims to harmonize creation and evolution. His God is too small! HCH

More About "Evolution At Dordt College"

At this time I will not comment at length on this matter. I prefer to wait until I have received the decision of the Dordt College Board of Trustees. My comments at this time are as follows:

1) The tape recording of the entire debate was of poor quality, having been made from the audience. Yet I went over the parts quoted very carefully and repeatedly (and with help and confirmation from others) and even with equipment by means of which I was able to slow down the playing of the cassette. I assure the reader that my transcription is accurate in every essential respect.

2) Dr. Hodgson's insertion of the word *micro* at one point in the quotations does not essentially

change matters.

3) Theoretically it may be true that one can adopt the "old earth creationist" (or "progressive creationist") position without adopting evolutionism. In Dr. Hodgson's case, however, it is plain to me, not only from the quotations made in my June 1 editorial but also from the rest of his remarks and from other sources, that he teaches evolution. The reader may review for himself the evidence cited in our June 1 issue. I do not see how anyone can deny the facts here.

But we will await the Board of Trustees' decision. HCH

FROM HOLY WRIT

George C. Lubbers

Believing All The Scriptures (8)

ADAM DRIVEN OUT OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN — UPON HOPE (Genesis 3:22, 23)

It is of the utmost importance that we read the sacred text carefully. It reads as follows:

"And the LORD God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. And, now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and live forever: therefore he drove out the man from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Gen. 3:22, 23).

Thus writes Moses in the Sacred Scripture. He records the act and verdict of God. It is the verdict, however, of JEHOVAH God, the covenant God of Israel. This places the expelling of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden in a certain Christological prophetic perspective.

Adam is driven from Paradise in the hope of the great PROMISE that the Seed of the woman will triumph over the seed of the serpent!

Let this perspective of the gospel-promise not be lost out of sight!

We repeat: we ought to notice that this is a quotation from the mouth of Jehovah God. And we may ask: how did Moses come to know this divine verdict and execution of His just judgment upon Adam? Although these terms are spoken as a certain divine soliloquy, a monologue, yet it was such that it was for the ears of Adam and Eve by God's revelation. Adam surely must have often had the necessity laid upon him to tell these awesome words to his children and children's children. The dreadful reality of working with an accursed earth from which they had been taken, and to which they were to return, called for the only answer given by God from heaven.

George C. Lubbers is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Hence, God so directed Moses that He infallibly writes the divine "must" of Adam's having been driven from the holy place of the garden of Eden as representative of the entire human race. By one man all men fell, and by one man all were driven from Eden's glory!

In Adam, the entire human race once lived in Eden. Small wonder that men write concerning "Paradise Lost". And lost that former blessedness of Eden's garden is forever. And this truth is a guidepost to and gives direction to all believing thinking.

In this judicial act God changed the *legal status* of the first Adam. Is not this first Adam a "figure" of the Adam to come (Romans 5:12-15)? Was not the creature subjected to vanity upon hope (Rom. 8:20)? This we have noticed in an earlier chapter. Thus too we must see the verdict upon Adam. In this verdict God gives a ground which expresses something profoundly horrible in Adam's transgression. He has become something dreadfully ungodly in the fall. Yes, Adam has become "as one of us". Notice the plural "us". The Triune God is here speaking. Here are three persons speaking. Yet, it is one God Who is speaking. And all things are naked and opened with Him with whom Adam has to do. The Triune, the covenant, living God speaks. This God is not the "god" of the Unitarian teaching at all. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Three in One and One in Three. Each has his own personal attribute (See Belgic Confession, Article VIII), yet all have the same determining power and authority as to what is good and evil. Not Satan is God, but God alone is GOD!

God is good.

God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all (1 John 1:5). His is the heavenly majesty of the holy place forever.

And, oh horror: man is become as one of us to know good and evil. Has Satan's lie uttered to the woman become true, as the Mormons and others like them affirm? There is a sense in which this has become true, but not as it was suggested by the serpent to Eve. He suggested to Eve that God was withholding something from them, some good and blessed privilege. God was short-changing them in forbidding them to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and of evil. What really happened was that Adam in listening to Satan's lie, in listening to the woman, had attempted to usurp the place of God; he attempted to determine contrary to God's expressly revealed will what was good and what was evil. He had attempted to play the role of God! In so doing he had been caught in the web of the liar from the beginning (John 8:44). And, what is worse, both he and his wife had been willing victims. It was wilful disobedience.

Yes, it was iniquity.

It has in it the seed the principle of the mystery of iniquity, which now works in the children of disobedience under the energizing of Satan and all his hellish host.

The "man" has become as one of us. As such he is not merely an individual, but he is the representative of the entire human race. Through the sin of one man all fell, as we read in Romans 5:12, "Through one man sin entered into the world." Sin did not enter into the world in the Pelagian manner of example, so that sin enters into the world through millions of individuals, men and women. God forbid! For thus also righteousness is ours by One Man, Jesus Christ. He is the "Seed of the woman". He represents the entire elect core of the human race: the church gathered by the Son of God out of the entire human race, elected unto eternal life!

Here is the sin of Adam: the root sin. It is the sin of pride, of the creature lifting himself up, vaunting himself to be the Creator; yea, the creature, who is under the Law of the Creator, vainly attempting to emancipate himself.

From this "lie" the Seed of the woman would come, has come to deliver us! He is "the Truth". He is the personal Truth, God in the flesh. Over against Satan who speaks "the lie," Christ has come as *the* Truth to bring those in the bondage of sin and the lie to liberty!

Yet, here in Genesis 3:22 we see the rays of light of the eternal morning on the eastern sky. Adam is driven from the gate eastward to till the ground from which he was taken. Yet he is not pushed into the eternal night of utter despair of outer darkness, but somewhere in the depth of his heart, he goes out in the hope of the morning star. Does he not

have the promise of God spoken to the serpent announcing the eternal doom and defeat of Satan and of his seed? Already there is the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Already it was written in the volume of the Scroll, "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God." Else God could not have clothed Adam and Eve. What wonderful gospel-tidings we read, "Unto Adam and unto Eve did the LORD God make coats of skin, and *he clothed* them." What tender kindness to take away the shame of their nakedness so very early in the history of the gathering of the church out of the entire human race. The trumpet sounds clearly: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins," (I John 4:10)!

Adam must have bowed the head when he left the garden of Eden.

Yes, he heard the verdict: Go out of this my earthly holy place. Through his tear-stained eyes he must have seen the Seed to be born from his wife. Her new name "Eve" spelled hope in their hearts. Yes, from a woman, *without the seed of a man*, shall the Word-Incarnate be born. Oh, I believe this was all very vague and distant for Adam. But he saw it as a ray of hope, which would one day be a brightness above the glory of the noonday sun. It will be the glad prophecy of the last Old Testament prophesy, spoken by Malachi, "but unto you who fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"

Adam had in his repentant and believing heart a hope: it was the hope of heaven and earth. The names of Adam and Eve are inscribed in the generations (*Toledoth* of the heavens and of the earth.

And the angels are looking down, stooping down to look into the things that are here spoken by Jehovah, and which would more clearly be set forth by prophets and bards, which they search out the time and the manner of the time of the sufferings which would come upon Christ and the glory of the heavenly to follow!

Yes, we had better believe all the Scriptures, lift up our hearts to heaven, and hope upon the living God!

* * * * *

Meanwhile the earthly life of mankind will be one of labor and toil. Adam and the human race from which the church is gathered by the Son of God, must work. Unless they work they shall not eat. Adam and Eve are sent out of Eden, the garden of God.

The reason is: lest they take *also* from the tree of life and live forever. Yes, the driving of Adam from Eden was a divine judgment and punishment for

sin. Yet, even here, mercy boasts against judgment. It is God's precaution, his preventing Adam from eating from the symbolical tree of life. The phrase "live forever" cannot mean: and have eternal life in the Christological, biblical sense of the term. The gift of God is eternal life (Rom. 6:23). Adam would not have had immortality had he eaten from this tree of life. We ought to notice that the test teaches that Adam had *not yet* eaten from this tree of life heretofore. For the adverb "also" implies that he had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but not yet from the tree of life in the midst of the garden.

But Adam never shall eat from that earthly tree of life!

God has something better in store for him, and for all the seed of the woman. They would eat of a better tree. Eating of that tree will be the reward of

victory through death. It will be the reward of those who say by grace, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". Do we not read the words of him who walks between the seven candlesticks say: "He that hath an ear to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the *tree of life*, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

Hope-giving words these are!

Yes, they are words which connect the earth paradise with the heavenly paradise.

We no longer live in earthly paradise. We toil and sweat, but we smile through our tears while we sing the songs of heaven on earth in hope.

Yes, the hope of heaven and earth!

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

True Faith Manifested By A Work Of Love

A truth we do well to hold on to and consider in the word of God is found in James 2:17. There we read: "Even so faith, if it have no works is dead, being alone." And having begun last time to look at Ruth's undeniable faith in God, which she confessed to Naomi, we do well now to consider more fully what she said to Naomi.

There are those who have faith, but in a moment of spiritual weakness show no faith by their works. Elimelech and Naomi certainly showed no faith in God by leaving the land of Canaan and by going to Moab for bread. This was not an act of trusting in God, assured that He would take care of them. Naomi's return to the promised land was a work that manifested faith in Jehovah. This was a work that said what her lips had been saying to Orpah and Ruth.

Orpah's words spoken with Ruth, namely, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people", were contradicted when she went back to Moab and her people. Her works revealed that she had no faith in God.

Now, as we saw, Naomi's words to Orpah and Ruth that moved Orpah to return were not spoken to discourage and wipe out faith. That we may never do. Our calling is to encourage and strengthen faith. Are we not in Romans 14:1 exhorted to receive "him that is weak in the faith"? Does Paul not say that we must not receive him "to doubtful disputation"? And Ruth's words, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn from following thee", do not mean that Naomi was trying to destroy her faith. By her singing of God's praises, by her prayers and the testimony of her mouth in instructing them, Naomi taught them the truth. Of that we can be sure. For Naomi would never have found faith in Ruth, if she had not taught her the

John A. Heys is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

truth in the idolatrous Moab that worshipped Chemosh.

Naomi even had reason to believe that her own actions spoke louder than her words. Leaving the promised land and staying away from God's house and altar for ten years could have spoken louder to these daughters-in-law than the words of her mouth. It could also have been a mere love of the flesh that did not want them to separate. And rather than to try to stifle a little glimmering of faith in these women, Naomi wants to be sure that their works of going with her are works of faith and not merely of natural love.

Naomi found clearly that the work of Orpah revealed that her desire to go with her to Canaan was not a work of faith in God. But Ruth's work of insisting on going with her was a manifestation of undeniable faith in God. Orpah's kiss given to Naomi revealed a natural love and nothing more. Ruth's refusal to kiss Naomi good-bye was rooted in a very true and real faith in God. For Ruth's work of going with Naomi spoke loudly of her faith. And all that Ruth said would have meant nothing, and would have been hypocrisy, if Ruth had not insisted upon going with Naomi.

Our unmarried young people do well to bear in mind that love of the flesh is not what counts. Never should they even think of marrying one — no matter how emotional and loveable in a fleshly sense that person is — who will not go with them to worship and serve in sincerity the one and only God of our salvation. What counts is not physical beauty and friendliness in the woman, and physical prowess, popularity, and earthly possessions of the man. What counts is whether he or she will go with him or her to worship God as He must be worshipped. It must not be simply that one agrees to do this, but that one sincerely wants to do so as expressed by Ruth to Naomi. It must be a sincere desire to walk in love toward God.

What a beautiful picture we have here of Ruth's faith. She tells her mother-in-law not to stand in her way and not to question her faith in God. She tells Naomi not to take her words lightly or to question them. She tells Naomi not to be her enemy but her covenant friend who will help her walk more fully in faith toward the one true God. It means that she wanted to be more fully and closely united with Christ Who was typically present in Canaan in the tabernacle where His blood was typically shed for the sins of His people. Although she did not understand all this as much as Naomi did, she insisted on going to the promised land to know and enjoy it more fully.

But notice that she does not say to Naomi, "I am going with you". Rather she says, "Whither thou

goest, I will go". It will be going with Naomi but because of where Naomi is going. She wants Naomi's companionship because she sees her as a fellow believer who can help her enjoy a richer spiritual life of faith in God. She will go to Canaan because she knows that God is there, not merely because Naomi will be there. *Where* Naomi goes counts. "*Whither* thou goest I will go." And do not overlook the *I will go*.

Ruth also states that she will lodge where Naomi lodges. This means far more than lodging with Naomi. It is not going to be a short visit. It is God's covenant fellowship that she seeks, not Naomi's fleshly companionship. In effect she tells Naomi that she will not do what she and Elimelech did. They left the place where God was in Christ, to go and lodge in Moab. She, Ruth, is coming out of Moab and will never return. The spiritual blessedness of the promised land is so much more wonderful than the fleshly joys of Moab and of living with her relatives in that heathen land. And even if it pleases God to send another famine, Ruth will not imitate Naomi and Elimelech, but continue to lodge in that promised land.

What an act of faith! What an act that speaks louder than her words! Try to appreciate how fully Ruth cut herself off from her fleshly friends and relatives to have covenant fellowship with God in Christ. In that day she would not be able to call her mother and father by phone, never send or receive a telegram, get a letter, or send one. The tie was severely cut because the spiritual importance was so great and required lodging, that is, dwelling in the land where God dwelt and revealed Himself in His Son.

The next two statements of Ruth, in our King James Version, have, "Thy people shall be my people, Thy God my God." Notice, however, that the word "shall" is in italics which means that it does not appear in the original. And we ought to leave it out, or instead quote her as saying that thy people *are* my people. That is what she said. She does not go to Canaan in order that the believers there will become her people. But because she is already a believer, these believers in Canaan are her people. As far as her flesh is concerned she is a foreigner, a citizen of a nation that served an idol. But because Ruth believes in Jehovah, all the people who worship and serve Him are her people. According to Deuteronomy 23:3 "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever." But Ruth is a believer, a child of God, and spiritually belongs to the people of God in Canaan.

She could go back with Orpah, get a husband and

have children to love, and enjoy in their fellowship. But she will go to Canaan where she will enjoy God's fellowship as one of His people. And since the believers are her people, there is no alternative. She must go where Naomi is going.

The climax of her whole confession is "Thy God my God". And what she says is not that Naomi's God will become her God, but *is* her God. That is why Naomi and all the believing people are her people, why she will live in the land where God dwells in love for His church, and why she will go where Naomi the believer is going. He is the God Whom she trusts and is committed to serve in love. He is not the God Whom she will accept and make her God. He is the God Who made her, engrafted her into Christ His Son, and gave her this unexpected and strong faith. Ruth is confident that He will bless her in Canaan. She does not go to see whether it will be better for her than returning with Orpah. And she wants to walk in love to God and His people.

That is also why she continues and states that she will die and be buried where Naomi is going to live. In no way and to no degree will she cut herself off from God, from His people and from His promises. In fact she states unequivocally that she will not take one step back unto Moab and the idolatry and sins that go with it.

This reminds us of Jacob and Joseph who are listed in Hebrews 11, not as heroes, but as giants of faith. They died in Egypt, God having sent them there. But they insisted on having their bodies buried in the promised land, and thus in the promise. It means that they took hold of God's promises, believed in Him and expected a resurrection wherein they would enjoy all the covenant blessings which God promises His people.

Truly, then, by stating that she would die and be buried in Canaan, Ruth reveals a strong faith in God. Her actions not only underscore her words, but manifest a true faith in God. She was walking in faith and not simply speaking words that an unbeliever can also utter with his mouth.

Going with and insisting on going with Naomi reveals Ruth as having the spiritual life of one who truly is a reborn child of God. That life dares to say, "The Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." In other words Ruth says to Naomi, "Physical death will some day separate us, but as far as our spiritual life is concerned, and since thy God is my God and thy people are my people, I live in the consciousness and awesomeness of the fact that if I do not go with you to serve Jehovah, I deserve to be punished severely by Him. And I assure you, Naomi, my legal mother-in-law, but spiritually a member of the same body of Christ to which I know that I belong, that I realize the significance and importance of seeking and serving God and of making a clean, complete and everlasting break from Chemosh and all the sins of unbelief." Her insistence on going with Naomi is the work of a strong and vibrant faith.

Let us take hold of this truth. What we say does not count unless our works say the same thing. It is easy to sing God's praises in church with others, and recite a creed with them. But do we fight sin and flee from it? Do we by our works say that Jehovah is our God? Do we say that with our lips on the sabbath, and then during the week go where Satan and his people live, and walk in rebellion against God?

What we say has no value when what we do militates against those words. As James says, if faith has no works, it is dead and alone. In fact it means that we are spiritually dead. What value is there in an empty bottle? The bottle is alone and has not in it what you desire. It cannot nourish or refresh you. Whether you want milk or wine, a medication or a refreshing drink, will you buy that empty bottle and expect satisfaction?

So faith without works is dead. An empty life, one that has no faith in God, has no love for God and is worthless, no matter how sweetly we may speak. Ruth's true faith was clearly manifested by a work of love to God. Faith is never alone. Faith always has works of love to God with all the works of that love.

*Take the time to read and study
the Standard Bearer!
It's an excellent magazine for personal devotions.*

ALL AROUND US

Gise J. Van Baren

Women in Office And Then: There's the Dance Schuller's "Cathedral"

Women in Office:

Our readers are doubtlessly aware of the debate that has gone on in the Christian Reformed Church on the subject of women in office. In 1984, the Synod of that denomination ruled that women could serve in the office of deacon. However, the Synod clearly declared that women could not serve in the offices of elder or minister of the Word. That, of course, disappointed many in the C.R.C. Agitation continues unabated to change this latter decision, too, in order that women may function in all church offices. Despite the decisions of the Synod, some of the C.R.C. deliberately flaunt their opposition to the Synodical decision. Not only that, but the *Banner*, May 18, 1987, publicly presented a summary of the number of women serving in offices in the C.R.C.:

"More than 180 Women Hold Office in CRC"

Editor's note: Almost three years ago, the annual synod of the Christian Reformed Church decided that women may hold the office of deacon in the church. In January *The Banner* asked members of the CRC Publications Board to find out how many women are serving in church office. Here are the results, by classis.

Then follows a list of the Classes in which women hold office. The total presented is this: 178 women serve in the office of deacon. Four serve as elders. Seven serve as "associate" or "adjunct" elders. By Synodical decision, women can not serve either as elders or adjunct elders. Yet some of the churches deliberately challenge Synod — dare it to do something about this. One wonders about the lawlessness of this all — and that this should be so publicly portrayed in *The Banner*. What will the Synod do? Close its eyes to this obvious and open rebellion?

And Then: There's the Dance:

The same issue of *The Banner* describes in detail the growing popularity of the dance within the churches.

Readers of bulletins in California Christian Reformed churches these days are finding, along with the usual notices of submarine-sandwich sales, congregational prayer requests, slave auctions, and soup suppers, invitations to do something that until five years ago was forbidden in the Christian Reformed Church. They're being invited to dance — specifically, to square dance.

In parts of the Midwest, where Christian Reformed folk have done this form of dance for dozens of years already, and in light of synod's pronouncement in 1982 that dance is permissible for Christians, this trend in the West may seem humdrum.

But in many California churches *dance* has been at best a naughty word, and for some people it has been associated, historically, with night clubs and debauchery. That is not to say Christian Reformed people in California have not danced at all; the practice simply seems to have become more public of late . . .

Dancers interviewed for this article all said that they believe the square dance is an innocuous social event that does not lead to immoral forms of dancing . . .

But the young people are not content with the square dance. An additional article points this out:

Are California's young as content with the square dance as their parents seem to be? Some are, but many prefer the persistent, heavily accented beat of electronically amplified instruments rather than the jazzy foot-tapping music of a fiddler, and they like more action — like the rock 'n' roll dancing that is popular today.

A far cry from the close body contact of the ballroom dance, the rock dance is done independently of a partner in many cases, and body gyrations as well as arm and leg motions are always in sync with the heavy beat. It's the beat that counts.

Ontario Christian High School holds three school-sponsored dances a year, and parents sponsor the school's graduation dance. All are carefully supervised.

But school functions are not the only opportunities Christian Reformed young persons have for dancing, and what happens at wedding receptions is usually something else. No one interviewed for this article wanted to be quoted, but they used words like *wild*, *exciting*, *groovy*, and *fun* to describe wedding-reception dances.

The many receptions that are held in church social rooms include only sit-down dinners or buffets. Wedding receptions held in rented community buildings or restaurants, on the other hand, often feature bands hired by parents or — if they refuse — by the bridal couple.

In some cases, dancing starts after the "older people" have left; in other receptions, there are two rooms: one for the traditional Christian Reformed reception of eating and chatting and one full of young people dancing.

In still others, parents and guests as well as young people all seem to enjoy some form of dancing. Some parents don't want to talk about the dancing their children do; other pretend it doesn't happen at all. Approval among young and old varies from church to church.

It's not because they can't dance that Christian Reformed people don't: they apparently have as much rhythm in their bones as anyone else. Maybe they haven't figured out yet how to instill that rhythm into the framework of church and family tradition.

This is spiritual development and maturity? This is development in the faith? A church which for over a hundred years had condemned the dance, now approves — and again publicly presents the extent to which all of this has gone.

Let us be warned. Some of our young people have also been tempted to dance. If Christian Reformed Christians can do this, why can't Protestant Reformed Christians?

It is not, of course, a question of spiritual maturity; it is a question of the antithesis. If there is truly a distinction between light and darkness, ought this not to be seen in one's lifestyle too? Can one copy

all of the corruptions of this world, while wearing a pious expression? Let us not kid ourselves. One can not serve two masters.

Schuller's "Cathedral"

We have read much about the t.v. "evangelists" in recent months. One of these is Rev. Robert Schuller on the "Hour of Power". He is minister in the Reformed Church in America. *Christian Renewal*, July 20, 1987, reports some strange, we would say unreformed, activities with respect to their properties:

Rev. Robert Schuller, host of T.V.'s "Hour of Power," received permission late last year to transfer ownership of the \$32 million Crystal Cathedral property from the church congregation to his independent ministry.

The Orange County *Register* has reported that Robert Schuller Ministries is taking ownership of the property and leasing the facilities back to the congregation for 99 years at \$1 a year.

The 10,000-member congregation, part of the Reformed Church in America, was not told of the decision. And the RCA's New York headquarters did not learn of the decision until recent weeks.

One report said Schuller wants to use the property as collateral to build a \$20 million international training center for ministers. Rev. Herman Ridder, head of the church board and a staff minister at the church, said the congregation was not told of the decision because board members didn't think it warranted an official announcement.

Wayne Antworth, communications director for the denomination said he thinks the transfer of church property to an organization that is not a part of the Reformed Churches in America "sets a dangerous precedent."

One can only wonder at such strange antics. How can such be done without even the knowledge of the congregation? Was the action taken in order to remove control of the properties from the congregation and denomination? It appears that this action was taken without any regard to traditional Reformed church polity — to which presumably Schuller is also bound.

The Standard Bearer makes a thoughtful gift for the sick & shut-in.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Herman C. Hanko

Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (18)

As we continue our discussion of the moral considerations which enter into genetic engineering, I think it fruitful to hear what others have to say on this matter. In our last article we quoted from Joseph Fletcher, a new moralist, who wants not only a blanket approval of this (if done for the common good) but also wants this to be enforced by law.

In the February 7, 1986 issue of *Christianity Today* various ethicists gave their opinions on the matter, and we quote excerpts from some of them.

Lewis Smedes, in characteristic fashion, asks some questions.

Rather than apply moral standards to genetic engineering in general, we must examine the moral implications of each discrete stage in the specific applications of biotechnology to human beings. We will need to give careful thought to such questions as these:

1. Is it permissible to alter humanness at its core, to tamper with our essential humanity? Many people agree that it is right to tamper with some aspects of our humanness, as we do in giving people mechanical hearts. But is there a core of humanity that makes us the special godlike creatures we are — a core that should not be monkeyed with? If so, moralists and theologians must try to specify more exactly what is uniquely human about us.

2. Is it permissible for some people to alter other people's humanity? It is misleading to talk about *humanity* re-creating itself. Some persons are recreating other persons. The questions are these: Who sets the norms for what other people ought to be? And who has the wisdom and the right to use such power over the destiny of other people?

3. Is it socially responsible to give almost free rein

to a biotech industry whose bottom line is profit? While some see the National Institute of Health's relaxation as a signal that the dangers are small, NIH's relaxation may actually be a sign that public guardians are easily seduced by scientific authorities. *Laissez-faire* human technology needs to be watched carefully.

We need to remember that every good gift from above, including biotechnology, is likely to be turned against us by arrogant people who believe in the irresistible goodness of what they are doing.

Allen Verhey, in the same issue writes:

Some people think of technology including genetic technology, as society's toolbox. A new technology is just a new tool, an option for society to use or not as it sees fit. We will make what we want with it. Indeed, if we master enough tools, we may yet construct utopia. When technology fails, we will search for yet another tool to fix it.

That view of technology is naive and, when applied to genetic engineering, dangerous.

First, although technologies are introduced as options, they can quickly become socially enforced. The automobile was introduced as an option — but try to ride a horse home on the interstate

Second, although technologies are introduced to make things we want, they seldom satisfy our wants. If we can travel faster by car than horse, we now want faster cars. If we can have a child when we could not have one before, we now want a particular kind of child, say a bright, blond boy

Third, although technology has brought real benefits, the confidence that it will always bring well-being . . . is folly. The fundamental problems in coping with human existence do not permit technological solutions; greed, pride, envy, and ennui are not technical problems awaiting a quick technological fix As C. S. Lewis wrote: "What we call Man's power over nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over others with Nature as its instrument."

Dennis Cunningham, in the same issue, speaks of deeply troubling questions which genetic engineering brings up. He mentions several. "Already, in its first years of existence, genetic screening has been used by a multinational corporation in what amounts to high-tech racism." As used to screen out blacks (who are prone to sickle cell anemia) it becomes "the ultimate invasion of privacy."

On the visible horizon, genetic engineering could be used in conjunction with gametic engineering, the laboratory manipulation of human germ cells, to create a human being in any desired image. In this seriously discussed (but not yet possible) procedure, a human's genes would be altered to order. The new genetic information would be passed to a human egg cell *in vitro*, where a new human would be nourished through the gestation period under theoretically perfect conditions. This procedure could make one hypothetically immune to physical disease, and endowed in advance with superior intelligence.

Part of this procedure is now possible. The more difficult procedures will probably be in reach within our lifetimes.

Dr. Landrum Shettles, a reproductive biologist, has reported nourishing a normally developed, cloned human egg cell to the stage of intrauterine impregnation. Said Shettles, the remaining obstacles to the cloning of human beings are social, not scientific.

A number of important considerations enter into our discussion of the morality of genetic engineering. To these we now turn.

In the first place, we must understand as people of God that not every advance of science is necessarily good. There is this notion afloat today: if science can do it, it has got to be good. This is especially true in the field of medical ethics. Whatever advances are made in this field which hold out the prospect of escape from disease or human defect is, in its very nature good. I consider this whole question well put by the Roman Catholic moralist, Charles E. Curran (See the book edited by Lammers and Verhey, p. 380). He writes:

A second danger found in the writings of some scientists is the identification of the scientific with the human, but the human — and *a fortiori* the Christian — includes much more than just science and technology. The scientific and the human do not necessarily coincide; there exists a potential source of conflict The very fact that man is scientifically capable of doing something does not mean that it should be done, for man must control the evolution and development of science. Too often one has the impression that it is science and technology that are going to control man. Men today are somewhat more aware of the need to give human direction and guidance to technology. Just because our nation has the ability and knowledge to send a man to the moon

does not mean that such projects should have priority over more pressing human needs. Just because science can keep a dying man alive for a few more hours, does not mean that such means should be employed. At times there are important human values involved which should not be sacrificed for the good of any science.

In the second place, as I have pointed out before in other connections in these articles, the worldly viewpoint of science is evolutionistic and humanistic. This means two things.

It means, first of all, that the science of genetic engineering has as its ultimate goal to produce the super-man, i.e., to lift man to the throne of God Himself. Before the perfection of the techniques of genetic engineering, evolution was, so it is claimed, random, uncontrolled, determined by principles of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. But now that man can put his grubby hands on the very basic structures of life, the genetic code itself, man can control his evolutionary development in such a way that the randomness, the uncertainty, the chanciness of the process is overcome; and he can direct the evolutionary processes according to his own will. He has his destiny in his own hands at last.

It means, secondly, that what is good for man is defined in purely earthly, carnal, social, atheistic terms. When the Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with the question and answer: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever," it puts an entirely different light on what is good for man. Humanistic philosophy defines good in terms of mere earthly pleasure and happiness at best, with man at the center of life, enjoying all life's treasures; and, at worst, giving man the "freedom" to do as he pleases in all manner of sin without having to suffer the consequences of his sin. He may fornicate, live in drunkenness and gluttony, drink deeply at the cup of pleasure, and no troubles will befall him and no evil come to him. If serious consequences result from his evil deeds, technology will have the answer and the cure. We must never forget that God still reigns in the heavens, that He rewards man according to his deeds, and that sin is punished in His most holy and just wrath in this life and in the pit of hell.

Thirdly, although Lewis Smedes (in a quotation made in the last article) speaks of what is the deepest humanness of man, and we are hard-pressed to define what can possibly be meant by such a vague term, he nevertheless, touches upon a true and important point. Man is not only a material and physical organism — as the evolutionists want us to believe. Man is created by God as body and soul. That which makes man truly human, in distinction from the animals, is that he

possesses a rational and moral soul, a soul which is a spiritual substance. All the experimenting that goes on is added proof that the soul is not some mysterious substance that is locked up in the cage of a body like a bird locked in a wire cage; it is a substance that permeates the body at every point and is inescapably related to the body. How that relation of the soul to the body must be explicitly defined is a mysterious question which only enhances the wonder of our creation. But there is

no question about it that the soul lies at the very foundation of man's unique nature as man. When one begins to tamper with the basic processes of life — as he does when he begins to tamper with the genetic code found in DNA and at the center of every cell's nucleus in the body, he begins to tamper with these life processes. This can only result in grave harm to man as man, and can only ultimately destroy him.

IN HIS FEAR

Arie den Hartog

Worldliness and Entertainment

One of the greatest dangers for worldliness in our lives is in the whole area of amusement and entertainment. The Christian must be careful in this area of his life. The true church of Jesus Christ has through the ages often given warning concerning this. Many of these warnings are scoffed at today. It is imagined by many who call themselves Christians that we are living in an "enlightened age." To speak of worldly amusement is something quite archaic and irrelevant. Sad to say, even in our own churches warnings against worldly amusements are less and less heeded. Yet it remains a fact that the world is growing increasingly wicked in its forms of entertainment. It is especially in this area that all restraint is being cast off, and we witness some of the grossest immorality and wickedness. Witness the great evil that is being portrayed in most of the popular movies today in the theatre, on the television, and by means of the video. One need not have the television on today for very long, and virtually every one of God's holy laws will have been violated before him, and this transgression glorified. The Lord has not taken a less serious view of the gross immorality, violence, and wickedness of the world over the ages. It is all an abomination in His sight. The world is more and more becoming ripe for judgment in all of this. When the Christian

watches all of this for pleasure and enjoyment, he must realize that there is something very grievously wrong with him. He must realize that he is greatly offending the holy God of heaven and earth, the Lord and Savior he confesses. He is doing great spiritual harm to his soul.

When one warns about worldliness in connection with entertainment, he runs the risk of being judged a kill-joy who is against all forms of entertainment and fun. Perhaps there have been those in the church who have taught that the Christian life must always be somber, and there is no place for gaiety and laughter and sport. Man is created only to work and never to play. Anything that is pleasurable and enjoyable must necessarily be unholy. Such a position would, of course, be absurd and find no support in Scripture. On the other hand, the Christian must be serious about how he spends his leisure time. Today in many cases there is more and more of such leisure. The world is demanding this. The time of leisure is no excuse for casting off all restraint. The Christian may not reason with the world: I have worked hard enough, I have been serious long enough; now it is time for some entertainment which satisfies the flesh.

The true church of Jesus Christ and many great leaders in her midst have always warned against the world's theatre and the world's dance. The Christian does wrong when he participates in these. No amount of modern day reasoning can

change this. The common grace philosophy that the world produces much "good art" that the Christian can enjoy in the theatre and dance is seriously in error. This is especially the case when the world uses this "good art" to portray wickedness and glory in immorality; and it definitely does this in most of modern day movies. When art is used by the world for evil purposes, it ceases to be good art. As Christians we must be very careful about what is watched on television in our homes and perhaps even more so about what is watched on video. As time goes on, there is not less but more urgent need for this caution. Though one could not on the basis of Scripture condemn all television viewing, it is still often the wisest course of action not even to own one. This course of action has many great advantages. Some may say that unless one watches television regularly he will not be an educated man in today's world. To that we would answer that there are many better places to get a truly good education.

There are other areas of entertainment where the Christian must be careful of worldliness. One stands astounded at the thousands and thousands of dollars that are spent on the entertainment industry today. Think of all the money that is spent on summer cottages, boats, and campers. For the world the only thing that limits the amount of money spent on all these things is the amount that one has. The worldly man considers that the very possession of wealth is the right to spend it on whatever he pleases. This may not be the philosophy of the Christian. It is dangerous, of course, for us to begin to judge one another for the way we spend our money. Great offense can be caused by this. On the other hand as Christians we must again and again be reminded of the fact that we are but stewards of our material possessions. They all belong to the Lord our God. He holds us all accountable for the way we use our wealth. We must give very serious thought to whether it is justifiable to spend whatever amount we spend on entertainment. We may not be governed only by desire and lust. We may not be governed by the pressure of what our neighbors do and possess. As Christians we must always have in our minds and hearts the needs of the church, of the poor, of the Christian schools and of the work of missions. We must ask whether it is justifiable to spend large sums of money on vacations and on eating in expensive restaurants. Among the greatest spenders on entertainment and leisure in America are some of the elderly and retired. As Christians we must judge whether retirement gives man the right to spend almost without limit on self indulgence and pleasure. The Lord must be and will be our judge. If we follow the standard and practice of the world

around us, then we have become worldly.

There is another area that must be considered in connection with this subject. That is the whole area of sports. There is, of course, nothing wrong with sports in themselves. They can be a good form of exercise and relaxation. They can also serve as a means of Christian fellowship. There is great physical beauty in the skillful and disciplined sportsman. There is thrill and excitement in the competition and exertion of the game. All of these can be good and healthy entertainment for the Christian. At the same time, we must be on our guard for worldliness in sports. The world places a great deal of emphasis on sports. The sportsman who excels is the great hero of America. He may not be the most moral man in the world, but the very fact that he is good at sports makes him great. This covers a multitude of sins. In some circles the sports hero is so great, that if he can only be made to make a statement about the Christian faith, everyone will fall over with awe and amazement. Just because this statement comes from the mouth of a great quarterback, it is of infinite more value than if the same or a better statement would come from an ordinary Christian, though that Christian is manifestly more godly.

Hours and hours of time are spent watching professional sports. Thousands of dollars are spent. Professional sportsmen are some of the best paid people in the world. Great enthusiasm and excitement is generated by Rose Bowls and World Series. It is doubtful whether any subject is talked about more in America than sports. For many, one of the chief concerns in life is to see their favorite team win. From childhood on, children are told how tremendously important it is to excel in sports. Those most emphatic about this are often the parents. There are few things as important to many parents as to see their children excel in sports. For others it is of utmost importance to play their regular weekly game of golf or tennis. Our schools often occupy our children for at least one or more evenings a week with sports activities.

Again let us repeat that there is nothing wrong with interest in and participation in sports. To suggest that this in itself is an indication of worldliness would be foolishness. But the Christian must evaluate and judge whether the time and emphasis given to sports is justifiable. Often this can be judged by way of comparison. Do we spend as much time in church activities every week as we do in sporting events? Do we have greater zeal and enthusiasm for spiritual things, the things of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, than we have for worldly sporting events? What is more often the subject of our conversation, the latest sports

statistics or the glorious and blessed truths of God's word? Which are we more acquainted with? As parents, are we as concerned about our children excelling in godliness as we are about them excelling in sports? As fathers do we spend as much time with our family and in teaching our children the things of the Lord as we do in our regular weekly sports engagements? These questions ought to be answered seriously and honestly. For some, if actual tabulation were made of these comparisons, the evidence for worldliness would be tragic.

The Christian's chief interest is the Lord and the things of the Lord; His truth, His church, His service, His kingdom. These things he loves above all. Concerning these things he speaks with great enthusiasm. In his life he is busy with these things. He spends much of his time and energy engaged with these things. He makes great sacrifices for these things. He finds great joy and pleasure in these things. It is a sign of worldliness in the church

when this is not generally true among the people of God. When there is a paucity of enthusiasm and excitement about spiritual things in the fellowship of God's people together, this is often because of worldliness.

The Christian is not one who has no interest at all in the things of this earth. He takes an interest in his earthly occupation and does it heartily as unto the Lord. He can rightly enjoy with thanksgiving to the Lord all the things which God has created. He may take an interest in science or in politics or in art or in gardening. He may therefore also take an interest in sports. He may legitimately take time out for relaxation and physical refreshment. There is a time for laughter and for play. But also in his entertainment the Christian seeks above all the kingdom of the Lord and the glory of His name. May the Lord help us to be distinctively Christian also in this area of our life.

Book Reviews

INTERPRETING ACTS: THE EXPANDING CHURCH, Everett F. Harrison. Zondervan Publishing House, 1986. 482 pp. (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

In many respects this is a good commentary on the book of Acts, and anyone who is studying this important book will find it useful and helpful.

There is one problem, however, which I have with the book — a problem which one finds increasingly characteristic of Bible studies and commentaries. I refer to the fact that the approach to the study of the book is that of literary and historical criticism.

In a review it is hardly proper to enter into a detailed analysis of this increasingly popular approach to Scripture (one can hardly find a Bible scholar who no longer uses it), but a few remarks concerning this method of Biblical study will perhaps alert the reader to be careful in his use of such material.

I am aware of the fact that literary and historical criticism is a broad term which extends from a liberal end of a spectrum (in which the Bible is treated as any other document among secular writings, and countless errors are found in it) to a

more conservative end of this spectrum in which most if not all of what the Bible says is accepted as true.

On the conservative end of the spectrum the use of literary and historical criticism differs very little from what has been called, since the days of the early church, grammatico-historical exegesis. The student of Scripture inquires into the style, vocabulary, and grammar of the text to learn more carefully the meaning of the "secondary author;" but he also inquires into the reason for writing a particular book, the ones to whom the book was addressed, the cultural milieu out of which the book was written, the purpose for writing, etc. All this can, of course, help in an understanding of the text.

What is lacking in such an approach is one other element — of crucial and ultimately fundamental importance. When we teach hermeneutics (the science of Biblical interpretation) in seminary, we make use of the grammatico-historical method. But we add to this term one important element: the term, "spiritual." That is, we teach the grammatico-historical-spiritual method of exegesis. What does this term "spiritual" imply? It implies that the Scriptures are most fundamentally the infallibly inspired word of God given through the in-

spiration of the Spirit. It is this which is so crucial and which is so sorely lacking in the literary-historical method of interpretation.

What does the spiritual approach mean?

It means, first of all, that in the study of the sacred Scriptures one is not primarily interested in the meaning of John or Peter or Paul; one is primarily interested in *the meaning of the Holy Spirit*. Insofar as the Spirit used men as instruments to write the Scriptures, all these other things are important, but they have a secondary importance which makes such elements subordinate to the meaning of the Holy Spirit. It is this element which is lacking — also in this commentary.

In the second place, only this approach can make the Scriptures a book which really speaks to the people of God. God speaks to His people through the Scriptures. It is God's Word which God's people have to hear. And only when the study of a book is approached in humble child-like willingness to ascertain the meaning of the Holy Spirit can one hear this Word of God. We are not primarily interested in the fact, e.g., that the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians because of internal turmoil and division over the question of circumcision in that congregation; we are primarily interested in hearing what God says to us in our life and calling now in the twentieth century. And the other question is only important insofar as it helps us to understand God's Word to us in our own calling to be obedient to the will of God.

In the third place, such a literary and historical approach to Scripture, when pressed to its extremes, takes the Word of God out of the hands of God's people. They, without an extensive education, cannot possibly know all the details of the cultural milieu in which the books were written; and if this is crucial to an understanding of the text, the Bible is a closed book to them — and we are back in the Middle Ages when a priesthood of "authorities" alone could interpret Scripture. One wonders sometimes whether the decrease in Bible studies by God's people is not due to the insidious influence of this approach.

And so, once again, we are back to where we always start. God's people must study the Scriptures; and they must do so making the Scriptures alone the object of their study. They must do so in prayer with the confidence that God will speak to them. If they use commentaries or other Bible study helps, they must make them helps only and not neglect their own responsibilities to hear what the Spirit says to the church.

Read and Study the Standard Bearer

THE PREACHER AND PREACHING, by Samuel Logan, ed.; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1986; 463 pages, (cloth) \$16.95. (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

This book consists of some seventeen chapters each by a different author plus an introductory chapter written by James I. Packer. There are three main sections: I. The Man, II. The Message (subdivided into Message Content and Message Form), and III. The Manner. The contributors are familiar names and are among the leading pastors and homiletics in the contemporary Reformed tradition. Among them are Sinclair Furgeson, Edmund P. Clowney, Lester De Koster, James Montgomery Boice, *et. al.*

In the introduction Packer defends preaching: "... because preaching is of the very essence of the corporate phenomenon called Christianity . . . the preaching of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit is the activity that . . . brings the Father and the Son down from heaven to dwell with men . . ." For Packer there is no substitute for preaching. In his opinion, renewal of the church without preaching would prove "shallow and barren." (Cf. pp. 2, 3.) Some of the more valuable chapters are: Clowney's "Preaching Christ From All The Scriptures;" Hendrik Krabbendam's "Hermeneutics and Preaching;" Glen C. Knecht's "Sermon Structure and Flow;" and Geoffrey Thomas' "Powerful Preaching." Anyone aspiring to the gospel ministry ought to read what Joel Nederhood has to say about "The Minister's Call," (chapter one).

In summary we think this book is a worthwhile contribution to Reformed homiletics. It does not offer any new, profound insights, nor does it say what has not been said before. It does, however, present us with a comprehensive, summary statement on what constitutes good, effective, biblical preaching. It deserves to be read widely and we hope it will provoke renewed interest in and concern for preaching, by means of which God saves His church to His own glory. Lay people as well as ministers can profit from it.

For those who may be interested, a detailed review of this book will appear, D.V., in the November 1987 issue of *The Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*.

IN WORD AND DEED: Evangelism and Social Responsibility, Bruce Nicholls, ed.; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986; 238 pages, (paper) \$10.95. (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

This book consists of some nine chapters, each by a different author. To each chapter is appended a response. The chapters are the essays presented to a "Consultation on the Relationship between

Evangelism and Social Responsibility," co-sponsored by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism and the World Evangelical Fellowship. The conference was held June 16-23, 1982, at the Reformed Bible College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The more than fifty delegates comprised theologians, pastors, evangelists, missiologists, and social service and development workers. Interestingly enough, more than half the delegates were from Third World countries.

In the last two decades or so the question of the social responsibility of the church and its members has loomed large on the agenda of the evangelical churches. Just what is the relationship between the "social duty" of the church and the church's calling in evangelism and missions? Some of the following questions are dealt with in the book: How do we define terms such as "evangelism," "mission," "the Kingdom of God," "salvation," and "the gospel?" How do we interpret passages such as "Blessed are the Poor" (Luke 6:20), and "He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 6:20)? Should a Christian participate in street

demonstrations for social justice in repressive societies? What is the extent and nature of Christian social responsibility for changing social structures? How can we reach millions of unreached Chinese in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the West with the gospel? How can we address the problem of starvation around the world? Is there a limit to Christian social action as Christians try to intervene in politics, economics, society, religion, and culture? These are tough questions. One will not agree with all of the answers given in the book.

The conference concluded: "... that Christian social concern is a *consequence* of evangelism, can be a *bridge* to evangelism, and should be a *partner* of evangelism" (p. 8). Having reached a consensus on the question of the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility, the conference concluded that evangelism is the primary task of the church.

Whatever may be said about all this, one truth remains, *viz.*, the church as institute has but one, essential task; to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and care for the poor.

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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church extends their Christian Sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. Kortering and family in the passing away of his father, JUSTIN KORTERING on August 13, 1987.

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

John VanderWoude, Vice-Pres.
Jon Engelsma, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 9, 1987, our beloved parents and grandparents, REV. AND MRS. HERMAN VELDMAN celebrated the 55th anniversary of their wedding. We thank God for His preservation of them these years for us and for His church. We pray for God's continued blessing and care upon them in the years ahead.

Cornie and Evelyn Den Ouden, Edgerton, Minnesota
Jack and Elaine Van Dyke, Wyoming, Michigan
Jon and Joanne Huiskens, Grandville, Michigan
11 grandchildren
8 great-grandchildren

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 4, 1987, our parents, MR. AND MRS. BERT VAN MAANEN celebrated their 40th 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 that God's blessings continue with them in the years ahead.

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

Gary and Florence Horstman	Marlyn and Alvina Hofman
Curtis, Candace, Carmen, Cody	Amanda, Todd, Lori, Jeff
Rog and Marjean Buys	Marv and Carol Anema
Jennifer, Mindy, Emily, Ryan,	Mike, Chad, Evan, Christy
Pam, Nathan, Daniel	Evert Van Maanen
Alvin and Brenda Bylsma	Brent, Eric
Belinda, Allison, Alex, Brittany	Wayne and Jan Vander Maten
	Wade

IN MEMORIAM

It pleased our Covenant God to take unto Himself on August 13, 1987, our beloved father and grandfather, JUSTIN HENRY KORTERING.

We thank God for the grace given to him to be diligent in the church, home, and cause of Christian instruction amongst us. Surely it can be said of our father, that he, "showed to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." (Psalm 78:4)

Lafern Kortering	Grandchildren and
Jay and Jean Kortering	Great-grandchildren
Erv and Esther Kortering	

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 19, 1987, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN WIGGER will commemorate their 40th wedding anniversary. We give thanks to our covenant God for sparing them for each other and for us these many years. Our earnest prayer is that they may continue to experience God's loving kindness in their remaining years.

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." (Isaiah 26:4)

their children	
Bern and Kaye Wigger	Dave and Linda Wigger
Ben and Judy Wigger	and 12 grandchildren
Chuck and Barb Ensink	

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses sympathy to Mr. Clarence Kuiper and his family in the death of his brother-in-law, MR. HENRY KOK.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever." (Psalm 37:18)

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses sympathy to Mr. Gerald Feenstra and his family in the death of his brother-in-law, MR. WACY ARMSTRONG.

"It is God that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect." (Psalm 18:32)

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

NOTICE!!!

The Eastern League of the Men's and Ladies' Societies will meet at 8:00 P.M. on September 29, at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

Rev. M. Kamps will speak on "Society Life". Everyone is welcome. Refreshments after the meeting.