

# The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

"Our Reformed Heritage", the text of an address delivered at last fall's Reformation Rally at the Grand Rapids Civic Auditorium is now available in an attractive pamphlet.

Copies may be obtained by writing to:

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## MEDITATION—

## Fearless Through The Valley

by Rev. J. Kortering

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Ps. 23:4*

A child left alone whimpers and cries.

A child left alone in the dark howls and screams.

Do you "my little children" (I John 2:1) cry or scream?

Your answer will tell you whether you are a child of God or a child of this world.

Let me explain. According to the words of our text our pilgrimage is described as a passing through the

"valley of the shadow of death." Because the light of God's countenance shines upon our pathway we pass through the *shadow* of death and even then know that He is with us. We often cry in the midst of our loneliness, but each time the lamp of His Word illuminates our darkness and we dry our tears and remain fearless. This is quite different for the unbeliever whose pilgrimage is a passing from death unto *death*. The



wicked can only weep and howl in their miseries both in this life and that which is to come. They lie in darkness.

How blessed it is to dwell in the light.

David was a shepherd. As he sat beside his sheep whether in the quiet of early morn or in the reflecting moments of twilight, he played upon his harp and sang the sweet melodies of praise. One of the songs David must have sung at such a time was this beloved Psalm. This is a pastoral Psalm, bearing the reflections of a shepherd dwelling with his sheep.

This fact gives us a clue to understanding the imagery of our text. If you take the time, you can transpose yourself mentally to the very scene. Night is beginning to fall. The prince of the heavens has ruled for another day. His descent is in royal splendor for he paints the heavens in purple and scarlet. What a contrast from the valley! We are wont to fix our eyes upon the hills, but our Psalmist bids us look into the valley. By now it is blanketed with night. Yonder jutting peak clasps in her glory the waning splendor of the day, under her shadow the valley sinks into darkness. How careful the shepherd must now be. In the darkness of the shadow of the mountain, danger lurks on every hand. The brittle silence is soon broken by the piercing cry of the predatory wolf. The sheep become uneasy and bleat in naked fear. The shepherd understands and lovingly takes in his hand the harp and begins to play and sing. As the notes flutter over the restless flock a marvelous change takes place, the sheep, even the lambs come close to the shepherd. There is calm, for fear is gone when the familiar voice of the shepherd is heard.

The Psalmist saw in this nightly occurrence a picture of our life as a pilgrimage through the valley of the shadow of death. This we must not forget. I know these words have special meaning to the aged saint whose "keepers of the house tremble, and whose golden bowl is about to be broken." To all who stand before that last enemy and descend into the bottom of this valley where the darkness is most intense and the way unknown, these words of faith are so precious, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me". Yet, these words are no less true for a new-born babe, for each one of us in our place in life. While we go to work each day, whether in the factory, in the home, in the school, or in the field, we go forth into the valley of the shadow of death. We eat, we sleep, we grow up, we suffer, we pine away and die—all in the valley of the shadow of death.

God is the light of the sun. He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. In the light of His countenance purity, truth, and righteousness shine forth in all their splendor. He dwells in the light and hates darkness.

The mountain has come between God and us. That mountain is sin. Long ago our first parents rebelled against the command of God and ever after have begotten children conceived and born in sin. God is not pleased in sin. He warned our first parents, "The day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die". Our sins rise up against us prevailing day by day. As the mountain peak blocks the full ray of sunlight,

so our sins come between God and us, blocking out the rays of His righteousness and grace. Literally we pine away and die in the shadow of death. Sin's shadow is death. Apart from the light of God's countenance we lie in the midst of death; we are spiritually depraved. God has no delight in our depravity; he hates our every sin. That's the terrible story of death. Our pilgrimage is through such a valley. Constantly we are going *down*, we fall into sin and the power of death encircles us, we are prone to halt and stumble, all of which finally ends with our dying gasp as we descend into the deepest and darkest portion of that valley.

It's a fearful place. Let's not be so superficial and claim that because we are children of God we are never afraid. It is because the Spirit knows that we are so terribly afraid that He sends us the soothing assurance of our text. With the Spirit of God in our hearts we too can say, "I will fear no evil".

No doubt, we are afraid of many things. Be sure to remember however, that this fear is peculiar to *sheep*. Our text isn't speaking of all kinds of natural fear, though they are real. We are afraid of depression, afraid of sickness, afraid of losing our job, war creates fear, death itself from a natural point of view instills fear. Yet, these things are not the "evils" of our text. They go much deeper. The fear mentioned here has to do with our safety as sheep in the fold of Christ. It centers mainly in that shadow of death. We ask, will we on account of our sins be taken away from the light of God? Will death overcome us?

That fear expresses itself in various ways. We know ourselves as creatures of the dust. Our old nature is still so active. There lurks within us greed, lust, envy, hatred and every evil work. In our sojourn through this valley of death, sin has a terrible appeal. We are troubled with fear that God will punish us for sin—will He forsake us when we sin? The world which remains in the power of death, comes to us as wolves. Sometimes the wicked identify themselves as wolves, unashamedly telling us they eat, drink, and are merry, for tomorrow they die. More often they come with a hypocritical cloak of a sheep, but within are ravening wolves. We're afraid of them. Will we yield to temptation? Are we going to be deceived by their pretense? Will we adopt their way of life, will we be deceived by the false prophet? What if we expose them for what they are? You know what happens then, don't you? Rip from a wolf his outward cloak of piety, expose his spiritual shame and he becomes ferocious in deadly hatred. History tells us many terrible stories of what happens to the sheep who do that. They make us afraid.

I will fear no evil!

It would almost seem too bold.

There is a very good reason why the sheep of Christ may say this. "Thou art with me". What a difference. Our shepherd is close by.

This becomes evident in the imagery of the text itself. A shadow assumes that light is present. If at night you turn out all the lights in your living room and close the drapes, you can't find a shadow. The shadow of death which results from sin is principally only a



*shadow*. Principally our whole life, the whole earth, all mankind are bathed in the light of God. God's face is as the light; remember Moses when he came down from Sinai having spoken with God? He bore the reflection of God. God's face is toward His people, he shines upon us so that we are the light of the world, even as we wander through this valley of the shadow of death.

God is light unto us through our Good Shepherd. Here is the heart of the Gospel. God so loved His sheep that He sent His only begotten Son into our darkness! God knew that we could never liberate ourselves from death! He sent His Son to do what we could not do. That was a terrible mission that Christ had to fulfill. His path was not a shadow of death; He had to descend into the valley of *death*! We tremble to think of it. It was to make this clear to us, that God also covered the cross in physical darkness. No one can stand before the cross and deny this fact. Jesus had prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The answer from Father was darkness. That was the way of forgiveness. It was stony silence while the Good Shepherd descended into the darkness of hell. While the waves and billows of wrath passed over Him, He cried out, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me". That was the lowest depth in the awful valley of death. That's hell.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, did that for you and me, His sheep. He did that, not to die in hell, but to conquer death for us. The cross reverberated with the triumphant cry, "It is finished". The sun began to shine, light had the victory over darkness. Jesus died, not defeated, but victorious. If we have any doubt, we need but gaze into the empty tomb and believe. Our death has been swallowed up in victory.

That Good Shepherd is now with us while we yet tread our pathway through the valley of the *shadow* of death. I know He went to heaven, but He is with us in a far more glorious way than He was with the disciples while He was on earth. Now He is crowned with power to direct all things for our deliverance, even from the shadow of death. Now He has received the Holy Spirit

in order that He may sit down beside us in Spirit and truth.

He is with us by His rod and staff. The shepherd's cane served a double purpose. As a staff, he leaned upon it as he watched the sheep and softly sang to them. As a rod, he used the crook to lift up the ensnared sheep, he nudged the sheep along the path, he beat the wolves who threatened.

That's a picture of the preaching of the Word, the voice of the Good Shepherd calling His sheep. It's a picture of Christ attending to His needy sheep, whether they should be corrected, encouraged, or exhorted. Christ as the Good Shepherd dwells in the midst of His church calling and calming His frightened sheep.

Are you afraid? As you wander through this valley of death's shadow? As you suffer on a sick bed, as you struggle with your flesh, as the inevitable power of death draws you deeper into the valley, are you afraid? Afraid of the wolves? Afraid that as a helpless sheep you may be lost somewhere in the dark valley? Afraid that God may forget you or that you may forget God?

Look now, this pilgrimage is *through* the valley. I know that takes faith, the faith of sheep that know the *Shepherd*! Now, as you tend to be afraid of the dark, listen. . . .the voice of the Shepherd calls, "It is I, be not afraid". My rod and my staff are with you. I will protect you, I will guide your feet. I, who have overcome death's darkness for you, will never leave nor forsake. My grace is sufficient for thee.

Fearless, let us pass through this valley. While we work, while we carry on the cause of Jesus Christ, while we suffer in body, or while we suffer for Christ's sake, let us press on.

Presently we shall reach the bottom of the valley, but even then it will not be absolute darkness, for there the light of victory shines. Our Shepherd will be with us till presently we shall arise beyond the mountain of sin, the shadow of death will be dissolved, and we shall behold our Shepherd face to face.

We shall ascend Zion's hill where the light never fades.

## EDITORIAL—

# Further Critique of Graham's Teachings

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The reader will remember that some months ago I criticized an essay by Dr. Billy Graham on "The New Birth." This essay was published by *Christianity Today* as one of a series of essays on "Fundamentals of Faith." But the essay itself was excerpted from Dr. Graham's recent book, "World Aflame."

Partly through some correspondence with a Calvinist friend in England who was also interested in this book of Graham, and partly, I suppose, out of a certain innate curiosity and desire "to see for myself", I purchased the book. I wanted to see whether the entire book was like the sample given in the essay on "The



New Birth."

Well, it is, — and worse. And I am more convinced than ever that for Reformed churches to follow and support Billy Graham's teaching and preaching is to commit ecclesiastical suicide.

But I will not stay with generalities.

I was particularly interested in discovering whether or not I had correctly judged Graham's doctrine of the natural man when I claimed that in his doctrine of the new birth Graham denied that the natural man is totally depraved. I wanted to discover whether or not Dr. Graham expressed himself very plainly on the subject.

And I discovered that he does so and that my evaluation was correct.

Here is a sample. On page 73 under the heading, "The Results of Sin," we read the following:

"The totality of this infection is reflected in every part of the Scriptures. It is reflected in every newspaper we read. It is reflected in every radio and television newscast. Thus man is described as being totally depraved. This does not mean that man is totally sinful, hopelessly and irreparably bad, without any goodness at all. It means that sin has infected the totality of man's life, darkening his intellect, enfeebling his will, and corrupting his emotions. He is alienated from God and in need of restoration. His natural, instinctive inclinations are away from God and toward sin."

Take note of what Graham does here.

First of all, he leaves the impression of holding to the doctrine of total depravity. We may overlook the fact that he does not come right out and say so, but expresses himself rather obliquely, "Thus man is described as being...." If the sentence stood all by itself, we would surely be inclined to say, "Here is a Reformed man speaking."

But wait a moment!

No sooner has he penned these words than he hastens to add, "This does not mean that man is totally sinful, hopelessly and irreparably bad, without any goodness at all."

In other words, the depravity is after all not total. Graham holds to a total depravity that is in reality only partial. He will grant that "the totality of man's life" (whatever that may be; does he mean man's nature?) is infected with sin. But this "totality of man's life" is not totally sinful. It is not hopelessly and irreparably bad. There is indeed some goodness in it.

Now apart from the fact that this has historically never been the meaning of the expression "total depravity," it certainly is not the Reformed doctrine of total depravity set forth in our confessions. Just compare this with the language of our Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 5:

"Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?

"In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor."

Or compare Graham's "total depravity" with that of Question and Answer 7:

"Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly in-

capable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?

"Indeed we are; except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God."

Or compare it with Canons III, IV, Article 1:

"....but revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections."

Or again, compare it with Article 3 of the same chapter of the Canons:

"Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation."

This, of course, is one element in Graham's doctrine and preaching which makes it possible for his message to be so popular with men: the sinner which Graham preaches, though he apparently paints him in very dark colors, is never so sinful that he is totally depraved, never so hopelessly sinful that the only exception to his depravity is the wonder of absolutely sovereign grace in regeneration.

Graham with all his supposed doctrine of total depravity must leave room for what he writes a bit later in his book, p. 76:

"The need for spiritual rebirth is evident to the most casual observer of human nature. Man has fallen. Man is lost. Man is alienated from God. Man's recovery must begin at the point of his fall. He chose self rather than God. If he is to be recovered, he must choose God over self. Man lives under the sentence of death. *This condemnation can be lifted only if man, by a free act of his own will, makes a complete reversal of his original choice.*" (emphasis supplied, H.C.H.)

I submit that this italicized statement is worse than Arminianism: it is rank modernism!

It is surely utterly contrary to the truth of the Word of God as it is set forth in Canons III, IV, B, 4, where the error is rejected of those:

"Who teach: That the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God. For these are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture. 'Ye were dead through trespasses and sins.' Eph. 2:1, 5; and, 'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually,' Gen. 6:5; 8:21.

"Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery, and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed. Psalm 51:10, 19; Matthew 5:6."

Now remember that I am not writing here about



something very incidental in Graham's preaching, but something fundamental. This is a key element in Graham's book and in all his preaching. Just put this to a test. Every time Graham writes or speaks of the sinner, of an evil world, of man's lostness, man's fallenness, man's alienation, supply in a mental note these words: "but not totally sinful," or, "but not hopelessly and irreparably bad," or, "but not without any goodness at all," or, "but not so sinful that he cannot, by a free act of his own will, make a complete reversal of his original choice."

All of the above adds up to this: Graham's gospel is not the gospel of free grace.

Incidentally, I would like my *Missionary Monthly* critic, Dr. Jerome De Jong, to state unequivocally whether he agrees with Dr. Graham on this matter or with our Reformed confessions. It is either...or. And if he cannot agree with Graham, — as I would hope, — then he is disagreeing with one of the most fundamental elements in Graham's preaching. And then he can hardly support him and defend him.

How about it?

## EDITORIAL—

# THE NATURE OF THE ATONEMENT: Limited or General?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

### THE ATONEMENT IS VICARIOUS

The above statement sets forth the second main element in the Reformed doctrine of the nature of the atonement.

Let me remind the reader that we are answering this question: is the atonement of Christ *in its very nature* limited, particular? We are considering this question, remember, in connection with Dr. James Daane's lengthy and at times rather ill-defined review and defense of Prof. Harold Dekker's position on the general love of God and the universal atonement of Christ. Dr. Daane denies that the atonement is in its very nature limited; and he maintains, on the contrary, that the atonement is in its very nature unlimited. Indeed, as far as the atonement is concerned, the entire discussion boils down to this crucial question. Hence, in this series of articles we are examining and setting forth the Reformed and Scriptural view of the nature of the atonement, — something which Dr. Daane neglected to do in any systematic way, at least in as far as I have been able to discern in his articles in the *Reformed Journal*. Indeed, it seems to me to be of absolute necessity in discussing this question to discuss that *nature* of the atonement, first of all, and to determine what belongs to that *nature*.

Thus far I have maintained, — and supported from Scripture and the Reformed Confessions, — that the key element in the nature of the atonement of Christ is *satisfaction*.

Now we are ready to prove and to discuss the second element, namely, that the atonement is vicarious, or substitutionary. This is the element that is better known and may even be said to have been popularized in the expression "vicarious atonement." Usually this *vicarious* aspect is the first to be mentioned and thought of when the doctrine of the atonement is

mentioned. Usually one hears the expression "vicarious atonement" more often, say, than the expression "satisfactory atonement." And to be sure, this is a very precious element in the truth of the atonement. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Vicar, our Substitute! While, therefore, the element of satisfaction is the key to the whole concept of the atonement, it is also true that the element of *substitution* is an indispensable link in the chain. Without it, satisfaction would be abstract, would have no real significance. For the truth is that we ourselves, as the confessions repeatedly emphasize, could not make the satisfaction of God's justice which constitutes the key element of atonement. Substitution, therefore, is absolutely necessary. It belongs to the very essence of the atonement.

The method of treatment followed will be the same. We shall turn, first, to the confessions as the adopted and established expression of the Reformed faith concerning the atonement, in order to note what they have to say on this element of substitution. Therefore we shall turn to Scripture itself, in order to observe the harmony of our confessions with the inspired Word. This we must do, not because the substitutionary character of the atonement has been directly called in question in the "Dekker Case" or by Dr. Daane, but because it must be demonstrated to be an integral part of the doctrine of the atonement, an element that is inevitably involved as soon as the atonement comes under consideration and as soon as the atonement comes under attack.

From a practical point of view, we should constantly keep that last remark in mind in this entire discussion. The doctrine of the atonement is, ultimately, one and indivisible. Attack it at any one point, and essentially you attack the whole precious doctrine of the atonement. Ultimately the entire truth of the atonement is at stake.



Our fathers discerned this clearly in the Arminian controversy, and we should imitate them in this. From that point of view, there has been far too much of a leisurely approach in the case at hand and far too little alarm, both at the official ecclesiastical level and among the people in general.

It is to be hoped that the committee that has been studying this case for almost two years not only furnishes the Christian Reformed Synod thorough work and sound leadership, but also has the courage to sound the alarm. For the issue is more than academic!

And now let us turn to the confessions.

### THE CONFESSIONS ON SUBSTITUTION

It is not surprising that the same passages of the confessions which speak of satisfaction also speak of the vicarious, or substitutionary, character of the atonement. For these two elements are intimately related, as I have already suggested in my introductory remarks.

We find this to be the case, first of all, in the Heidelberg Catechism. Already in the lengthy discussion of the necessity of satisfaction and the requirements of the Mediator, beginning with Lord's Day V, these two elements, satisfaction and substitution, are

interwoven. In Question and Answer 12, when the Catechism insists on the divine necessity of the satisfaction of justice, it introduces at least the alternative of a substitute when it says: "and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, *or by another.*" (emphasis mine, H.C.H.) Then, after ruling out the possibility of satisfaction by ourselves in Question and Answer 13, the Catechism turns to this possibility of a substitute, not to teach directly the idea of substitution, but in order to bring out what kind of mediator-substitute we need. But for our discussion at present we merely want to note the fact that throughout this discussion the idea of a substitute is current. Thus, in Question 14, the question is whether there can be found any mere creature "able to satisfy *for us.*" (emphasis mine) Moreover, the answer to this question, though it makes no direct mention of a substitute, must nevertheless be understood as referring to such satisfaction *by substitution* when it speaks of a mediator being such that he can "sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, *so as to deliver others from it.*" (emphasis mine) This "to deliver others from it" is by satisfying God's justice *for them*, i.e., as a substitute.

(To be continued)

## FROM HOLY WRIT—

# Our Brother's Burden and Our Own

by Rev. G. Lubbers

### *A Man Overtaken in a Trespass (Galatians 6:1)*

Paul states the matter here very carefully and succinctly. This was indeed necessary in the situation in Galatia. There was the sin of using liberty in Christ as an occasion for the flesh. (Galatians 5:13-15) They did not practice sufficiently the truth that the entire law is fulfilled in one word, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself! Hence, they were biting and devouring one another. And the danger was not imaginary that they would be consumed one of the other. In such an atmosphere it would be dangerous not to state a delicate matter carefully, and within its proper proportions and limitations.

The apostle employs a conditional sentence. If a man be overtaken in a fault. This is wholly possible in the church of Christ on earth. When this happens then the situation must be remedied not as would have done the sons of thunder, John and James, the sons of Zebedee. They would have had fire come down from heaven to consume the Samaritans who would not receive Jesus enroute to Jerusalem. The Lord chides

them by saying: ye know not of what manner of spirit ye are of! Jesus had set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem to die on the Cross. His calling is quite different from that of Elijah on Carmel. His is the still small voice heard at the holy mount of God. And it is the still small voice which alone can cope with a situation when a man is overtaken in a fault!

What does it mean to be "overtaken in a fault"? The Greek term is "trespass". Paul does not speak of a man who *walks* in sin. The term here means that a man sins, has overstepped the line. He may have sinned against any of the commandments. He did not walk in love as he ought to have. It seems that Paul is referring to a single instance, an incident, which was disturbing to the church. In this he was "overtaken". Some interpreters would hold that this being "overtaken" means that his sin and guilt are established beyond any shadow of a doubt. He is already convicted. Other, however, explain this to mean that a man was overtaken by a fault. He fell into temptation. He was



tempted somehow by the Devil, the world and his own flesh. He did not give strong resistance through the Holy Spirit. The result is that he was surprised, looking back, that he committed what he did. It was a rude awakening for him. Suddenly he sees the full implication of his trespass!

There is something very delicate in Paul's speaking of a "man" being overtaken in a fault. We all are sinners. We are but man! And sin so easily besets us. We all stumble in many. There is here a warning finger which none of the genus, called man, can fail to heed. Human sins, human faults in all of human relations—even in the church. This is true whether we be male or female, bond or free, Greek or Barbarian! And even though such faults cannot go unheeded, it must not surprise us too greatly when a "man" is overtaken in a fault! And this man might be you, or it might be I! Surely this is already food for sanctified thought.

#### **RESTORED IN THE SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS** (Galatians 6:1)

It is a very delicate task to restore a brother who has been overtaken in a fault. The term in the Greek is an exhortation in the present tense. Restore such a one and keep on doing so! The verb in the Greek is "katartizein," which is a verb which is used of fishermen who are mending the rend in their net. (Mathew 4:21) Evidently, the rend here is twofold in the case of a man overtaken in a fault. There is, first of all, the rend in the man's soul and conscience. He is embarrassed, humiliated; he feels the deep need of a merciful understanding of his sin and plight. The finger is pointed at him of his own conscience before the Lord. But that is not so bad. He knows that the Lord understands! But he must also know that the brethren understand and sympathize with him even as does our merciful High-Priest. This requires deep and pitying sympathy! However, this restoration is also such that he must be restored in the congregation. The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace has been disrupted. And the rend must be restored, the offense must be removed, depending upon the nature of the trespass! And sadness must be replaced with joy and gladness. There must be joy not only in the church, but even there must be rejoicing by the angels in heaven, who do always behold the face of our Father.

Such restoration must and can only be brought about "in the spirit of meekness." Scripture often speaks of meekness as a christian virtue of great price and which is of great value before God. And Paul knows how to admonish to walk in this spirit. Such meekness is the very opposite of coming in a harsh, censorious, sharp and castigating manner. It is the tender concern of a shepherd for his sheep which has gone astray. It is as tender as a nurse, full of bowels of compassion, and which prays for our own enemies. Does not Paul himself write how he is deeply concerned about the Galatians that he can say, "of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"? (Galatians 4:19) For is this Christ not meek and lowly of heart? (Matthew 11:29) Is he not the King who is meek and lowly, riding upon the foal of an ass?

What is meekness? Is it not the deep confidence that God alone is the Judge, and that he will reward the righteous and punish evil-doers? Meekness is spiritual strength. Wherefore Paul would rather come with meekness, the spirit of meekness, than to come with the rod.

Remember that a man must restore another man! Well, then, let it be done in the spirit of meekness!

#### **YE WHO ARE SPIRITUAL.** (Galatians 6:1)

It is the duty of the church to restore a brother overtaken in a fault. But not all in the church are able to restore a brother. Only those who are spiritual. This does not mean that those who are not able to restore are carnal. But Paul speaks to those who are and claim to be spiritual. "Ye who are spiritual" says Paul. This means that such are not only living by the Spirit but are also walking in the Spirit. They are not challenging each other and vying with each other for position and for prestige and vain-glory! They walk according to the rule: love is the fulfillment of the law of God!

The Devil cannot cast out the Devil. He is not divided in his kingdom against himself. Well, then, the flesh cannot cast out flesh, the evil in the church and restore a brother overtaken in a fault! It is for this reason that Paul says: ye who are spiritual!

But, then, a warning is uttered!

#### **THE GREAT PIT-FALL IN RESTORING AN ERRING BROTHER.** (Galatians 5:1b)

The great pit-fall in restoring an erring brother is that in the act and process of so doing we are tempted to sin. Doctors and nurses must be very careful about becoming contaminated with the very disease they are combatting. Many a scientist has died from the results of his own scientific endeavors and explorations. Many a man who has attempted to rescue a drowning man himself became a drowning victim in the attempt, and sad to say, two men drowned instead of one being saved! The rescuers in a burning building must, while they are going about their business, give heed to themselves!

Writes Paul, crisp and clear: taking heed to thyself!

There are two things which we ought to notice here. The first is that Paul changes from the "ye restore" to "take heed to thyself". He enjoins this in the singular number. Secondly, we ought to notice that this taking heed must ever be simultaneous with the restoring of the brother. Satan enjoys a shining target. He delights in nothing more than that the operation of the restoring of the brother be defeated and that he can add another man to his list of tempted ones! You sally forth to restore the brother, to be a mender of souls? Watch out for the Tempter! This is a delicate business, to be a restorer of souls! Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

#### **FULFILLING THE LAW OF CHRIST** (Galatians 6:2)

There are burdens in life which must be borne.



Cain said: am I my brother's keeper? The Christian says: let us bear one another's burdens. We are members of each other in Christ. He is the Head and we are members of His body. Each has his own place in life. Each has brethren placed about him in this valley of tears.

This is the predominant motif in restoring the brother who is overtaken in a fault. That makes for a spirit of meekness. In this bearing of one another's burden we see a *law*. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It is a rule of faith which works by love. It is called here "the law of Christ". It is that which was exhibited by Christ in the washing of the feet by Jesus in the upper room in the night in which Jesus was betrayed. Pure and undefiled religion before God is to visit widows and orphans in their affliction and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. That is fulfilling the law of Christ. It is the very opposite of biting and devouring one another.

Writes the Rev. G.G. Findlay "This law (of Christ G.L.) makes the Church one body, with a solidarity of

interests and obligations. It finds employment and discipline for the energy of Christian freedom, in yoking it to the service of the overburdened. It reveals the dignity and privilege of moral strength, which consists not in enjoyment of its own superiority, but in its power to bear 'the infirmities of the weak'. This was the glory of Christ 'who pleased not himself'. (Rom. 15:1-4) The Giver of the law is its great Example. 'Being in the form of God' He 'took the form of a servant' . . . . .; He became obedient unto death of the Cross. (Phil. 2:1-8). . . . There is no limit to the service which the redeemed brotherhood of Christ may expect from its members" Let us not forget that when I could have helped my brother in aiding him in bearing his crushing load, and did not, I have failed in fulfilling the law of Christ; I have not done so unto the least of Christ's brethren.

Says Jesus: Amen, Amen I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them! (John 13:16,17)

## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

# No Smith In Israel

*Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Let the Hebrews make them swords or spears.*

*I Samuel 13:19*

*by Rev. B. Woudenberg*

After the victory at Jabesh-Gilead, Saul was at last established as king in Israel. Now, he was recognized as king by all of the people; and now he began in the capacity of a leader as was expected of a king. Samuel had taken advantage of the enthusiasm of the people to call them again to Gilgal and to remind them there of the responsibility which was theirs as a peculiar people before Jehovah; and, when his words were punctuated by a miraculous storm in the heavens, the people were ready to acknowledge the correctness of what he said. Moreover, Saul, still struck with awe by the wonderful way in which God had given him a great victory, forgot for a time his personal ambitions and allowed wisdom to guide him. Not only did he forgive those who had hesitated in supporting him, but he began to work toward the establishing of an army, as he should have at the very beginning.

It was part of the wisdom of Saul that also in this latter move he kept his ambitions within reasonable bounds. He sent forth a call throughout Israel for men to come and form a force behind him. Many came, even

thousands, but he was satisfied to select only three thousand of the most capable and to send the rest back to their homes. This was a force small enough for him to control while he himself was still learning the principles of battle. Besides, although he was not perhaps so conscious of it himself, this was quite in accord with the assurances of God from the day of Moses that Israel need not rely upon the strength of numbers; He would be their defense.

Still, the army which Saul gathered behind him could only have been at best a motley force, for there was no smith in Israel. It was the Philistines' doings. From the early days of Samson on, they had dominated the land of Israel, and they had been quite clever in the way that they did it. Rather than ravaging the land and laying it waste with unnecessary tyranny, they had been satisfied to bleed it slowly. In fact, for a time they had even convinced most of the people that they were really the friends of Israel and not their enemies—that is, until Samson succeeded in demonstrating to the children of Israel how wicked and



unjust the Philistines really were. And now the people knew. Time and again the Philistines had swept through the land, taking the best of their products for themselves and leaving the children of Israel only enough for them to subsist, but nothing more. At the same time they had taken good care to prevent the children of Israel from doing anything about it. From them they had taken every sword and spear and weapon of every kind that could be used for war. Even more, they had carried away or murdered every man who was practiced in the smith's trade and who might be able to fashion new weapons to replace the old. All that was left the children of Israel was the tools which they needed in house and field if they were to raise more goods that the Philistines could come again and take. The result was that when Saul gathered his first three thousand men together they may well have been a fine looking group of men, but their weapons were at best scythes, kitchen knives, sticks and staves, and the like of that. In all the land of Israel spears and swords were found only for Saul and Jonathan his son, no more. The rest could only carry the tools they had.

Surprisingly, this had been sufficient at the battle of Jabesh. Saul and his men had attacked the Ammonites in the morning's dusk and had routed them before they had been able to see how poorly armed the Israelites were. But now Saul knew as did all of the Israelites that if they were going to proceed with the establishing of a real kingdom, they would have to meet the Philistines next, and no such surprise tactics were going to work on them. In fact, the more they thought about it the more hopeless the whole situation seemed to become. Slowly and patiently Saul began to train his army. He placed one thousand men under his young son Jonathan, and two thousand he kept under himself. They trained, but morale was not high, and as time went on it fell lower. Saul just did not see how they could do anything against the Philistines, and his men knew it.

It was Jonathan who disrupted the situation. As yet he was still a very young man, hardly more than a boy; but he was basically different than his father. Saul had never been a religious man; Jonathan was. Somehow, in spite of the indifference of his father, Jonathan had learned about the great victories won by Israel in the past under Moses and Joshua and men like Gideon. He understood, moreover, that those victories had not been due to the greatness of Israel's armies but to the power of Israel's God. Thus he was not dismayed as the rest were by the fewness of their present numbers nor by the paucity of their weaponry. He was quite convinced that they had more than enough to overcome the forces of the Philistines if only the blessing of God would go with them. Thus on a certain occasion, while he was alone with his thousand men at Gibeah, he took them and marched directly against a whole garrison of the Philistines meeting them in battle at Geba. It surely must have appeared a rash and foolish move, one before which many older and more experienced men shudder, but Jonathan went in faith and in the strength of Jehovah he received a great victory.

For Saul, this was at last the opportunity he needed.

Although his victory at Jabesh had been great, this one was much more significant, for the Philistines, much more than the Ammonites, were the real enemy of Israel. Now it had been proved that even against them the army of Israel could be effective. Quickly messengers were sent throughout the land to tell everyone what had happened. Honesty should have compelled Saul to give to Jonathan the credit for the battle; but he felt that he needed bolstering in his position as king, and so the message as it went out was, "That Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines." Already again the inner pride and ambition of Saul was beginning to speak.

Neither, however, was this the end of the matter. Before this time, the Philistines had refused to take Saul seriously. They had not particularly cared when Israel had made themselves a king, nor even when Saul had gathered a force of men behind him. They were quite sure that he would be pretty much helpless before their overwhelming strength. But now suddenly the situation had become quite different. They had lost a whole garrison of men at Geba, and that was not something which they could ignore. They saw Saul to be an enemy, an abomination which had to be taken care of immediately. Quickly they gathered their forces, 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and a multitude of foot-soldiers without number. So they moved into the land.

Saul, too, felt the seriousness of the situation. He had taken the credit for Jonathan's victory, but now there remained also the responsibility of the consequences. Once again the call went out to all Israel, for it was evident that now a mere three thousand men would never suffice. From all corners of the land the people came to join the forces of Saul. The time had come when they would have to do battle or the kingdom would be lost.

But to actually go out to battle was another thing. The fact remained that the forces of Israel, no matter how great, were nothing compared to the army of the Philistines. Besides, the Philistines were seasoned fighters and their weapons were of the best, while the children of Israel had not fought for years and their weapons were only the tools of the field. But what troubled them more than anything else was the fact that Saul was still no real leader. Once the people had come, he hardly knew what to do with them. He was not even a true Israelite at heart and could not as much as encourage them to trust in the Lord. He could only walk among them and say that something had to be done but never coming to the point of telling them what. It brought them to the point of despair, and without anyone to encourage them and guide them aright, the people began to fear for their own lives. Gradually the numbers began to disappear as one by one the people searched out for themselves hiding places in caves and thickets, among rocks and bushes, in pits and on mountain tops, anywhere where they could be safe from the Philistines. By waves of fear the army of Israel was washed aside.

No one knew this better than Saul. It was a situation with which he could not cope. Oh, somehow he knew



that the only answer to it lay with Jehovah, Israel's God. He had even searched out Samuel and talked to him. Samuel's directions were very explicit. Saul should wait seven days, and then he would come and sacrifice to God for him; after that they could go on to battle. At first for Saul, this was a relief. It meant that he had a whole week in which he would not have to act. But the interim he only wasted. Instead of using it to assure the people that Samuel was coming to sacrifice for them and so insure their victory, he only walked about silently, moodily waiting, and the people continued to disappear. When at last the week drew toward its close, he was at his wits end. He could wait no longer. Something had to be done, and quickly.

To the mind of Saul, this whole matter of God and sacrifice and prayer had begun to seem like some sort of magic. In his earlier days he would have dismissed the whole thing as foolishness; but now he was really beginning to think there must be something to it. He was quite sure that at the moment the sacrifice was offered some sort of miracle was sure to happen, dissolving the power of the Philistines and driving them all away. Early on the seventh day he was up looking for Samuel, waiting for the miracle to take place. Minute by minute, he waited until morning stretched on till noon and then into mid-afternoon. But by then his patience was exhausted. If all that it would take was a sacrifice, why couldn't he offer it himself? Why should he have to wait for that old prophet who maybe wouldn't show up anyway? He was sure that there was nothing so complicated about this matter of offering a sacrifice,

although he had never done it before. Besides, if he did it, then there would be no doubt that the victory was completely his; he wouldn't have to share the glory. Quickly the orders were given, and Saul the unbelieving king was found sacrificing to God.

No sooner was this finished than Samuel was there. Boldly Saul went to meet him. Underneath he knew that what he had done was not going to set well; but no matter, his words would make amends. To Samuel he said, "Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering."

But Samuel was not one to waste his time with shallow excuses. The words fell from his lips like a knell of death, "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee." Those were words that Saul would never be able to forget, his fondest dream, so long cherished and so very close to realization, would never be fulfilled. He would never be Israel's real and enduring king.

## IN HIS FEAR—

# On Guard!

by Rev. J. A. Heys

Very seldom will you find a soldier who chooses guard duty.

It is a responsible position and an extremely important one. But that will not entice a man to seek it and to prefer it. Without a guard the enemy catches us unawares. In the stillness of the night he would come to infiltrate for later advantage or to kill and destroy weapons and installations. The enemy never comes to do you any good. And when he cannot deceive by a sweet smile, he will try to attack when he can catch you unawares.

Guard duty is important!

The lives of all in camp, the victory in the coming battle and even the outcome of the war itself require a secure guard and demand a vigilant and ever alert guard. The guard sleeping at his post will be court-

martialed. He will be held responsible for any damage occurring during his moments wherein he was remiss in his duty. While on guard duty there is no time for tomfoolery and levity. It is a deadly serious business. Even in the training camp with a view to the deadly seriousness on the battlefield and in time of war, it will go hard with that trainee who is negligent while on guard duty. Let him admit one without the password, and it will go hard with him upon discovery of such failure to take his position with the seriousness that it demands. Even the soldiers who guarded so foolishly the tomb of Jesus were in terror, not only because of what they had seen when the angel appeared in heavenly glory but also because the tomb was empty. They knew that they stood in danger of the death penalty. And the silly lie had to be spread to protect them that the



disciples stole His body while they slept. And if they were sleeping, how did they know that it was the disciples? But they and the wicked Jews were desperate, and this was the only lie that they could manufacture at the moment. Their fear does underscore the seriousness of being on guard and of not protecting as is required.

But there is danger in guard duty!

Night is the time for sleep. The darkness is conducive to sleep and extra measures of vigilance are necessary for one in good health to remain awake. Sleep is natural at night for the healthy. Watchfulness requires efforts not called for to that measure in the daylight. Guard duty then at night is more difficult than in the daytime and is very, very seldom chosen by the soldier. Then too, there is the matter of the difficulty of seeing the enemy in the dark. He hides in the shadows. You cannot see him, but he sees you. You cannot aim your rifle at him, but he can draw a bead on you. You do not know that he is there, but he knows where you are. You are ever watchful for his approach but do not see the approach. He is ever watchful of you waiting for your unguarded moment or laxity. Who would deliberately choose to be on guard in the midst of the battle and in the darkness of the night?

The same thing holds true even in peace and in our civilian life. Business establishments, factories, schools, financial institutions and the like have their night watchmen who are on guard in the darkness of the night. And all of the above applies to them as well. They are exposed while the thief is hidden. They often make a clear target for the intruder who cannot be seen.

Because of the fall of man we need such night watchmen and guards. We are in the night of sin and death, and that does not help. What a commentary on man's spiritual condition that we need watchmen, guards, policemen to walk their beat and private detectives. The need is becoming greater rather than diminishing. There was no need in paradise. There will be no need in the new Jerusalem. Did you not note in Revelation 21 that there is no night there? And that the gates of the city are not shut at all: for there is no night there? There will be no evildoer left on the earth. They will all be in the lake of fire out of which they can never climb. But in between paradise and the new Jerusalem guards and watchmen—even upon the walls of Zion, see Ezekiel 33—are not only necessary but increasingly necessary. As the population of the earth increases, as man develops in sin, as the earth becomes smaller, we find that men would rather speak of police duty on foreign soil than to call it war. Man wants to get away from the prediction of God that there will be wars and rumors of wars; and it does not sound so bad—except to the loved ones whose beloved are slain—to call it police duty. But it shows the curse and the development of sin. It also shows that guarding has spread far beyond the mere watching of one man for the safety of his own family and preservation of his own possessions.

And you, who also must be on guard duty?

We live in the night of sin and death which complicates matters and in fact makes it necessary for us to be on guard. As regenerated children of God with the life which is from above within us and surrounded by the enemy that can only seek to destroy us and get the victory over us, are we on guard? We have guard duty that is extremely important. We have a tremendously responsible position in this world. We have something extremely precious to preserve. And as soldiers of the cross of Christ we are also admonished in Scripture to be sober and to watch unto prayer. We are exhorted to be vigilant and not to be drunken with the pleasures and treasures of this world. We are counseled to put on the whole armour of God and to STAND!

But are we as parents on guard? Are our children an easy mark for the heretic and for Satan's barbs because we are remiss in our guard duty? Are we asleep and doing that which is natural, sleeping when we should be vigilant? Is the enemy watching us while we are dulled in our senses by gold and silver, houses and land, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, too busy making our hoard of gold and silver, too concerned with social and financial position and standing for ourselves and our children that we have forgotten the battle and that we are on guard duty by a solemn and inescapable call from God Himself?

You read all too often in your newspapers that the children get into the medicine cabinet and swallow a handful of aspirin tablets or some sleeping pills. The child must be rushed to the hospital. All of a sudden the parent realizes that he was not on guard and was not watchful of his child's physical wellbeing. Anxiety grips the heart as the ambulance screams its way through the slow traffic and the child's color changes and his condition plainly is changing for the worse. Vows upon vows are made to be more careful from now on, if only the child does not die! Fear and self-reproach seem to dictate more caution in the future.

O that parents today in the Church of Jesus Christ would be as interested in the spiritual health and safety of their children as they are in their physical wellbeing! Usually they are too busy to try to find out what their children are being taught, where they go and what they do. Or being aware that all is not well, that their children are not only exposed to heresies and open advocating of practices which are far from Christian, they do nothing about it in the hope that their children will not contract the disease.

After all, guard duty is not pleasant, and here one exposes himself to attack! You will lose friends(?) by seeking to shield your children from the lie and evil. Jesus said it. He said that you may lose your closest relatives and be alienated from them. He did not—as the Prince of Peace—promise the peace of which men speak today. He spoke of war and of total war and of guard duty of the most serious sort. Remember the admonition to be sober and to watch (Mark 13:37; I Peter 4:7; I Peter 5:8 etc.), and be not drunk with the pleasures and treasures of this world and with the idea of peace on this earth that cannot be achieved and



is only a pipe dream of man. Sober up in the consideration of Jesus' words in Matthew 10:34 ff., "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I come not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." No, you do not like to hurt the feelings of the one who is misleading and teaching your children the lie and advocating evil practices. You would rather look the other way and enjoy peace. But is that love to God? And is it even love to your children?

Did God not declare at the very dawn of history that He would divide the whole human race into two distinct classes from a spiritual point of view by the work of regeneration? Did he not predict to the devil who was still inside the serpent that His Church would have the victory because He would send The Seed of the Woman to instill hatred of sin in the hearts of His people (the seed of the woman) and that there would be a constant battle through all the ages?

Where is that battle?

Where are the guards in each quarter of this universal battle field? O, they are out looking for peace? Peace with the enemy?! They have sent their children over to the enemy to be indoctrinated. Do you think that your children are going to become immune by association with the lie? They will not! They will learn to look for peace between the Church and the world. They will absorb the lie. And remember that the lie is most dangerous in its finest points. Satan cannot attack the child of God who is clad with the whole armour of God by using a crow bar. A blunt-edged tool will not work and will put the child of God on guard. But a very thin-edged screw driver that is tapered to razor-edge thickness will be used to pry up the plates of this armour to make it possible presently to come with the blunt and bold form of the lie. Beware! Be on guard. Be sober and WATCH! If

you love your children you will be doubly on guard in this day. If you love God more than your children, you will, no matter how dark the night and no matter how many friends(?) are going to take a shot at you for your watchfulness while on this guard duty, you will resist, fight, and reveal the enmity of a life of regeneration against the lie and evil practices.

The same holds true for the churches and their officebearers. The guards have been withdrawn, even though it is yet the night of sin and death, in so many churches. An attitude of friendship is sought against defenders of the lie and the services of men with evil practices are sought for lectures, chapel speeches, "moral" pep talks and the like. The churches either advocate seeking the amusements they in their wickedness produce or look the other way and "see no harm in them" instead of investigating and condemning them in the light of the Word.

Churches are too busy with building projects, with social prestige, with politics (in which they should not meddle) to be on guard for the truth and a righteous walk. To make a name in this life and in this world occupies the time and effort of many a church so that guard duty is out of order and abandoned. Yet God has not changed and His word in Ezekiel 33 is still in force, "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me."

The enemy is still there. And he is still the enemy as bitter and evil as Satan in paradise. He is watching you, even though you have deigned not to watch him. Physically, as far as our standing in this world and even our life is concerned it is dangerous to be on this spiritual guard duty. You *will* suffer and will be an easy target for the hateful barbs of men and even relatives. But it is far more dangerous to let down your guard. For our God is a consuming fire, and He is not mocked. And your children ARE in danger. They are in more danger today than ever before.

Heed Mark 13:37! "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church expresses heartfelt sympathy to our fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. James Koning, in the sudden death of her Father.

SAMUEL REITSMA

"Blessed are they that die in the Lord". Rev. 14:13.  
Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.  
Mrs. K. Schipper, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its heartfelt sympathy to Mr. Arnold Haveman in the death of his Mother,

MRS. CARL HAVEMAN

"In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God".

Hip Kuiper, Vice Pres.  
Gordon Van Overloop, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Hope Mens Society expresses its sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Reitsma and family, in the death of his Father

MR. SAMUEL REITSMA

May they find comfort through the words of Paul in Romans 14:8 "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's".

Rev. H. Veldman, Pres.  
Mr. J. Dykstra, Sec'y.



## TRYING THE SPIRITS—

# The Russian Orthodox Church

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

**I. AS TO DOCTRINE.** The most important branch of the Eastern church is unquestionably the Russian Orthodox Church. It came into being in the tenth century when Christendom was introduced to the Russian barbarians by way of an ikon and the rite of immersion. Denominational headquarters became centered in Constantinople until 1461, when the Metropolitan of Moscow was advanced to Patriarch, making Moscow the Rome of Russia.

When Peter the Great came to power, he founded St. Petersburg (1703), and made it the religious capital with the Czar as emperor-pope of Russia. When a later Czar caught in the Russian revolution of 1917 was assassinated, religious liberty also died. Priests were jailed or executed and a tidal-wave of atheism whelmed the land. In such times the patriarchate was reestablished in the face of constant opposition from the Soviet state. A few years later the church adopted the position that hierarchical authority inhered not in a papal head, but in the broadest ecclesiastical body. Priests with anti-Soviet policies were banished or jailed. It was "be kind to the Soviets — or else!"

In 1930 the Communists legislated against religion, forbidding religious instruction to any under 18, banning meetings of women and children for prayer or Bible study, prohibiting church-sponsored libraries and reading rooms, removing all religion from the schools. Church buildings were confiscated by the state, some being used as museums. Ikon worship was destroyed as well as reverence of relics and of dead bodies of saints. The only dead to be honored were deceased Communists. This aroused the resentment of other hierarchical, saint-worshipping churches in the world. Therefore the pope and the archbishop of Canterbury sent expressions of sympathy to the Russian clergy and sent resolutions to the Soviet government protesting the oppression, Canterbury, which always persecuted the true church, and Rome, always seeking recognition as the only real and rightful church in the world!

The Russian Orthodox Church was indeed orthodox in rejecting the Apocrypha, but not so in requiring proselytes to read it in preparation for admission to the church. It was so in receiving Scripture as the Word of God, but not so in placing tradition on a level with the authority of Scripture, nor in discouraging the reading of Scripture. It was so in appealing to the Nicene Creed, but not so in rejecting the *Filioque* clause (re: the Holy Spirit "who proceedeth from the

Father and the Son"). It was so in regarding the church universal as including the churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople, but not so in ignoring the churches of Germany, Switzerland and England. It was so in teaching the Lord's Prayer, but not so in including the *Ave Maria*. It teaches the Decalogue, but abridges the second and fourth commandments. Examination of candidates for the ministry is mainly disciplinary and pastoral, doctrine being touched only incidentally. Transubstantiation is held in the strongest language. It teaches the Arminian philosophy that election is based on God's foreknowledge of those who make good use of their free will to accept salvation, and that reprobation is based on foreknowledge of those who reject it. "The Calvinistic doctrine of unconditional predestination is condemned as abominable, impious and blasphemous." On divine providence, God foresees and permits evil: He does not foreordain it. A common grace is also taught which "God has predestinated to give to all men and has actually given them" for the "attainment of happiness." The ascension of Christ is not physical, but spiritual. The penitent dead are in purgatory until delivered by prayers, alms and masses. Other doctrinal peculiarities are: The true church cannot be conceived of apart from the hierarchy, nor apart from an ecumenical council. Grace may be manufactured by making the sign of the cross on the forehead, on the breast, on the food and the cups at table, and is a practice to be encouraged upon going to bed at night, on arising in the morning, on going out for the day, on the daily rounds and on returning homeward. The sign of the cross makes one a holy terror to the devil.

**II. AS TO CORRESPONDENCE.** Intercommunion and cooperation with other church organizations was at first non-existent. The Reformation did not affect the Eastern church. It had no part in the Reformation movement, nor paid any particular attention to it. The Lutherans did make some approach to the Eastern branch of Christendom. Melancthon, an ecumenicist of the day, made overtures to the church at Constantinople, but failed. The Greek Orthodox Church condemned the Lutheran Augsburg Confession, and the Synod of Jerusalem (1672) rejected both Lutheranism and Calvinism as dangerous heresies, pronouncing in Romish fashion anathemas against Protestantism. Some Anglicans in the early 1700s attempted correspondence with the Russian church. The Russians were polite; certainly not as harsh as the Greek church. They re-



quested that the British brethren visit Russia "to hold a friendly conference, in the name and spirit of Christ. . . (to) ascertain what may be yielded and given up by one to the other, what, on the other hand, may and ought for conscience' sake be absolutely denied." The proposal was never realized. Negotiations ended with the death of Peter the Great, and Russian charges flew that the Anglicans were infected with "German heresy" (Lutheranism) and Calvinism.

The mid-nineteenth century saw a de-protestantizing movement in the Anglican church with hundreds returning to Rome. This occasioned renewed correspondence, including the American Protestant Episcopal Church, with the Russian churches. They were visited, fraternal letters written and social amenities exchanged, followed by conferences between Anglican and Russian ecclesiastical dignitaries. However, the Russian church only went far enough to admit that the Episcopal churches alone were anchored to the true church. Other Protestants were cut off and set adrift. They also reaffirmed the infallibility of the church, and rejected all Protestant baptism because it was not trine immersion.

More notable were gatherings in 1925 at Westminster Abbey with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Eastern churches and Russian Metropolitans represented. Basis of unity did not put first Scripture as the infallible Word of God, but the authority of the hierarchical church, then Scripture as interpreted by the hierarchical church, then the Nicene Creed similarly interpreted, and finally the decrees of the ecumenical councils. The first formal contact in nine centuries between the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church was when two Russian delegates attended the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in Rome. Thus the Orthodox church remains in its historical and present heterodox and unreformed state.

**III. AS TO ECUMENICITY.** An important representative in this church is Georgi G. Karpov, chairman of the Council of Affairs, also major general of the Soviet secret police, appointed by Stalin to be in charge of all religious affairs and a minister in the Soviet cabinet. The Metropolitan Nicolai was an identified agent of the Soviet secret police, and had been in charge of the foreign affairs of the church. He had also toured the U.S. In 1950 Nicolai had written, "The greedy tentacles of the octopus across the ocean are trying to engulf the entire universe. Capitalist America, this fanatic prostitute of the New Babylon. . . is trying to seduce the peoples by pushing them into war." Archbishop Nikodim, replacing Nicolai, after the latter's death, became foreign policy spokesman for the ROC and visited the U.S. with a Russian delegation in February, 1963. He has dictated to the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches and the UN, that it is their duty to press the U.S. government to abandon its blockade policy on Cuba. Soviet churchmen dictated U.S. foreign policy thus, "It is the duty of American church leaders to use all opportunities in pressing the U.S. government to abandon its crazy policy." Our government does seem to agree that it is crazy to

defend our borders against Soviet aggression only 90 miles from our shores! Patriarch Alexei, head of the ROC, endorsed Khrushchev's proposal for total disarmament (which did not include UN inspection as to whether Russia was disarming!) made at the UN, then sent a message to the WCC the day after the ROC was received into membership in the WCC asking that council to endorse complete disarmament. This reveals that the ROC entered the WCC to promote the cause of Khrushchev. Alexei, awarded a high Soviet government decoration, the Order of the Red Banner of Labor, on his 85th birthday, referred to Stalin as "a wise, God-appointed leader." Then he swore allegiance to Stalin as the "deeply honored and dear Joseph Vissarionovich," head of the Soviet Fatherland. The Russian Orthodox Church is therefore an arm of the Soviet government, an agent of the Kremlin and part of the Red propaganda "peace" machine that is Communist-controlled. The 1962 synod of the Reformed Church of America thought this was saying too much, and rejected the charge that the ROC is completely controlled by the Soviet government. This would mean also a rejection of the sworn testimony given before the U.S. Senate Internal Security Subcommittee and the House Committee on Un-American Activities by Peter Deriabian and Yuri Rastvorov that the Soviet government has total control over the ROC and all churches permitted to exist behind the Iron Curtain. The NCC itself, in which the Reformed Church of America has membership, made a statement in September, 1962, that the Russian churches "made it perfectly clear. . . that Christians in the Soviet Union are a loyal segment of the 'new socialist society' which is being built." Then there is Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the Greek Orthodox Church, N. & S.A., who was suspicious about admitting the ROC to the WCC. He said, "They cannot, of course, go any place without first getting instructions from the Kremlin foreign office. They are not a free church."

In 1956 certain clergymen of Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and the Ukraine issued a declaration and protest against a trip of delegates from the NCC to Moscow. In part they said, ". . . We know the plight of the churchmen under the control of the Soviet regime. It compels them to lie, to distort their functions, and to become obedient instruments in the furtherance of Soviet expansion. This is something so horrible that we, when given even the remotest opportunity, have risked all in order to flee this role. . . Christians behind the Iron Curtain. . . are not invested with the role of spokesmen; they are suffering in prisons, being tortured in slave-labor camps and resting in mass graves. . ." The Russian author, T. Andreev, writing on the history of the ROC said, "Orthodoxy, having surrendered to the Soviets, and having become a tool of the world embracing anti-Christian deception, is not Orthodoxy any longer, but the misleading heresy of Anti-Christendom, dressed up with the rent clothes of Orthodoxy." But long before, Orthodoxy surrendered to Hierarchy, and the supremacy of Holy Writ was denied in favor of "Tradition."



## ALL AROUND US—

## ECUMENISM

by Prof. H. Hanko

The news is ecumenical this month. Some items follow.

While denominations move speedily towards greater and broader ecclesiastical union, there are various local congregations who nevertheless consider the pace sluggish. Ignoring their own denominations' efforts to unite in broader ecclesiastical fellowships, they pursue the path of ecumenism alone.

Such was the case recently in the Seattle suburb of Newport. There Rev. Bertram Apman (as reported in *Time*), pastor of the Holy Cross Lutheran Church (affiliated with the American Lutheran Church), proposed union with the local Episcopal Church. He was of the opinion that he was too busy with counseling, fund raising, youth work and administration to spend adequate time on sermon preparation. His solution to the problem was to merge his "weak" church with a larger and stronger church; divide the labors with the pastor of that church, and hopefully, have a more effective ministry besides being able to raise more money.

After discussing the idea with Rev. Paul Christensen, the minister of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, they decided that the best solution to the problem was for the Lutherans to become Episcopalians.

Lutheran officials were furious and are trying to put a stop to it. But the majority of the members of Holy Cross Lutheran Church evidently favor the plan. Rev. Apman is of the opinion that his parishioners are pretty much like millions of other U.S. Protestants in being generally indifferent to the old theological quarrels of their churches. He pointed out that any number of Lutherans already attend any denomination when they are unable to attend their own. And this, to him is evidence that the people are not really concerned about where they go to church.

The plan looks so good to him that he is also talking to other churches in the area in the hopes that all the churches will eventually unite into three or four large congregations, each with a team of four ministers so that ministers can specialize in youth work, counseling, fund raising or preaching and thus share each other's work load.

His evaluation of indifferent protestants is most probably correct in the main. And indeed, when there is no longer interest in, much less love for, the truth, really, what difference does it make? Churches might just as well accept his ideas and be done with it.

\* \* \* \*

Merger plans between the Presbyterian Church US (Southern) and the Reformed Church of America are proceeding apace. Recently 130 representatives met in Louisville with the committee of 24 (instructed to draw up merger plans to be presented to both denominations by 1968) to discuss the problems involved.

The difficulties are present, however.

The first is the confessional basis for the proposed new denomination. Some wanted the adoption of confessions now in use in both denominations. (These would include the confessions of the Reformed Church: The Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the positive part of the Canons of Dort; and the Westminster Confessions which form the confessional basis of the Southern Presbyterians.) Evidently these were in the majority. Others wanted to wait with composing this doctrinal and church political basis till after the merger -- which seems a bit like putting the cart before the horse. Still others wanted a new confession drawn up. It was with these latter that another difficulty arose.

This group was really interested in union with the United Presbyterian Church. So they wanted a confession which would make it easier to unite presently with the United Presbyterians. And here is the real rub. Two overtures are already being prepared for consideration by the next Southern Presbyterian General Assembly asking for such a union with United Presbyterians. They point out that already in some areas the two denominations are cooperating in various aspects of church work. There is a great deal of opposition to union with United Presbyterians, however; some of it comes from the Southern Presbyterians, but most of it comes from the Reformed Church. Several Reformed Church Classes have overtured their General Synod to withdraw immediately from merger negotiations because they are convinced that the present proposed merger is intended only as a first step towards union with the United Presbyterian Church.

But this isn't the whole story. Another group wants to discontinue the present merger discussions because they are of the opinion that the present discussions are an obstacle to union with the United Presbyterians.

So it all gets rather involved and complicated.

Another problem is to draw up a plan which will be mutually acceptable to both denominations since before the merger can be realized, three-fourths of the Southern Presbyterian presbyteries and two-thirds of the Reformed Church Classes must approve the plan.



All this leads to the conclusion that the merger is, as yet, by no means certain. Surely the intentions of both denominations regarding the United Presbyterians will have to be settled once for all before progress can bear its fruit.

\* \* \* \*

Forty-five church leaders formed recently an Inter-Religious Committee Against Poverty (IRCAP) to aid the government in its own "war on poverty". The significant point of all this is that these forty-five church leaders were from Protestant, Catholic and Jewish congregations. They are of the opinion that the support of the churches aided immeasurably in passing civil rights legislation; they are now prepared to lend their assistance in making the war on poverty a success.

So now the ecumenical movement embraces the three major religious groups in this country (going even beyond the National Council of Churches) and unites in turning to affairs of government. The vast differences between Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Judaism are to be pushed aside while these church men stand together in the cause of social justice.

Once again the name of Eugene Carson Blake turns up—this time as the chief spokesman for this committee. He is the Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church and recently elected head of the World Council of Churches. He seems to have his finger in almost every ecumenical pie.

It is not difficult to see how all this is related. In the grand push towards church cooperation (and union), the church's real calling must necessarily be ignored. The result is (for the church has to find something to do) that, forsaking her calling, she turns to affairs of state and involves herself in social action, which is none of her business. And an alliance of considerable significance is formed between the secular world authorities and the apostate church. How clearly these things remind us of the seriousness of our times and

the nearness of the end of the ages.

\* \* \* \*

A recent poll conducted in England shows why the church can go so far astray. The reason is that there is no spiritual life any more among the "laity" of the Church. The strength of the Church is the strength of her "lay" members. When these lose their concern for the cause of God, their interest in sound doctrine, their zeal for the righteousness of the cross, what is to be expected but that the leaders run away with the denominations and manipulate them to serve their own purposes?

The poll, reported by *Christianity Today* tells the following sad story of decay and confusion.

—Most people consider religion irrelevant to daily life. Yet they think churches achieve much in social welfare and should continue.

—They consider religion old hat. Yet nearly all demand religious instruction for their children.

—The percentage who hear sermons drops yearly. Yet the men who preach are generally respected, thought to be doing good work for good motives with little reward.

—Some 78% see no connection between churchgoing and leading better lives. At the same time, 60% believe one must be dishonest to get ahead, and two-thirds are either apathetic about or in favor of cheating on tax returns.

—Two-thirds of the English believe the influence of religion is decreasing. Two-thirds would like religion to have more influence.

—Even though 94% identify themselves with a denomination, church involvement lags. Church attendance is now estimated at 10%, and only 12% say they read the Bible regularly.

How urgent is the calling to the faithful laity in God's Church that they retain and increase their interest in the cause of God's truth!

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On February 14, 1966 the Lord suddenly removed from His militant church a faithful member

MR. SAMUEL REITSMA

The Men's Society of the Southeast Prot. Ref. Church takes notice of this loss in our ranks, and extends to the family of our departed brother its sincerest sympathy, and lifts up the prayer that the Lord will continue to sustain them with His grace, while He teaches us all to labor while it is day.

Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.  
S. Vander Wal, V. Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church expresses its sympathy to its brother elder Arnold Haveman, in the loss of his mother,

MRS. CARL HAVEMAN

who passed away March 2, 1966 at the age of 76 years. May the God of grace comfort the hearts of the bereaved families.

Ken Lanning, Vice Pres.  
Harry Zwak, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of The Southeast Protestant Reformed Church extends its heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. S. Reitsma and family in the recent passing of their husband and father, and elder of this Consistory,

MR. SAMUEL REITSMA

May the bereaved be comforted in the Word of God found in Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints".

Rev. M. Schipper, President  
Richard Teitsma, Clerk



## HEEDING THE DOCTRINE—

## Barth's Doctrine of Scripture

## -6-

by Rev. D. J. Engelsma

Stigmatizing the doctrine of verbal inspiration as a "mechanical" view of inspiration does not originate with Barth. This tactic is hoary with age and worn with use. But Barth joins the ranks of those who attack, in this way, the doctrine of God's having infallibly inspired the very words of Scripture. This attack consists of the claim that verbal inspiration necessarily implies mechanical inspiration. And since it is obvious to everyone that God did not use the prophets and apostles to write His Word in a mechanical way, as a typist uses a typewriter, verbal inspiration must be repudiated. Barth speaks, e.g., of "the mechanical doctrine of verbal inspiration" (CD, I, 1, p.126) and characterizes verbal inspiration as "a mantically (i.e., heathenistically magical—DE) — mechanical operation" (CD, I, 2, p.518).

Such an argument, if argument it may be called, is unworthy of the masterful theologian and logician. For, in the first place, it poses a false dilemma. Barth claims that we are shut up to one of two alternatives, either to accept his view of inspiration, which posits errors in Scripture, or to maintain a mechanical inspiration. Neither of these two alternatives is to our liking, which is not so important, but what is important is the fact that there is a third alternative, namely, that God infallibly inspired the Bible in an un-mechanical way. Secondly, to equate verbal inspiration with mechanical inspiration and, what is worse, to do that in blatant disregard for the anguished protests of men who deny that the equation is valid is nothing less than an attempt to render a doctrine odious, not by disproving it from Scripture but by loading it with depreciatory adjectives. The technique of disparaging the doctrine of verbal inspiration by calling it "mechanical" approximates the mode of procedure of those who increasingly attack the doctrine of predestination by calling it "fatalism." Just as little as we are inclined to surrender the doctrine of predestination because some have the audacity to blacken the doctrine with the charge of "fatalism," are we inclined to give up the doctrine of verbal inspiration because some smear it with the (unwarranted) charge of "mechanical."

What they are duty-bound to do, who sling the charge "mechanical" about, is, first of all, to make clear that defenders of verbal inspiration repudiate any notion of mechanical inspiration and, even if mistakenly, believe that verbal inspiration does not necessarily imply mechanical inspiration. Secondly, they ought to *prove* that the doctrine of verbal inspiration

necessarily commits one to a mechanical view of inspiration. Cannot God have inspired all the words of Scripture without having had recourse to making machines of the men He used? But we may not idly speculate as to what God could and could not do, according to the judgment of human reason. This is precisely the trouble with those who lodge the complaint, "mechanical," against the doctrine of verbal inspiration. They find it impossible to comprehend that God could breathe out all the words of Scripture in such a way that the men He used to write those words wrote, using all their human faculties. This *is* incomprehensible. For the inspiration of Scripture is a wonder, a miracle, which the mind of man can as little comprehend as it can the wonder of creation or the wonder of the incarnation. But the inability of man's mind to comprehend how inspiration occurred does not negate the fact that Scripture presents as truths to be *believed* both that God inspired the words of Scripture and that the men He used to write those words of Scripture wrote as those writing what they believed, that is, from the soul and with the full play of their faculties and personal characteristics.

Admittedly, the Bible does not state, in so many words, "Scripture is verbally inspired." The doctrine of verbal inspiration is one that the Church has had to develop over against those who supposed that the less specific statements, "inspiration of Scripture" and, even, "plenary (full) inspiration," allowed for errors in the "mere" words of the Bible. But the Church has inferred the doctrine of verbal inspiration from Scripture's statements about itself, especially, from the phrase in II Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Besides, the Church had her eye on such passages as Galatians 3:16, where the apostle lays great emphasis upon the individual word of the Bible ("seed," not "seeds"). Even the most virulent opponent of the doctrine of verbal inspiration would scarcely dare to deny the Church the right to confess a doctrine *inferred* from Scripture. As the Westminster Confession has it, "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture. . ." (Chapter I, VI).

If, now, the opponents of verbal inspiration do not attempt a proof that verbal inspiration is an illegitimate deduction from Scripture's claims about itself



or that God Himself could not inspire the words, except in a mechanical way, but simply go on equating verbal inspiration with mechanical inspiration, we must refuse to take the charge at all seriously.

\* \* \* \* \*

Properly, the entire matter of "verbal inspiration" and "mechanical inspiration" is not loosely to be bandied about but ought to be treated in connection with those passages of Scripture which teach Scripture's inspiration by God, e.g., II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:20, 21. From these passages, it must be determined whether or not the Bible is verbally inspired and whether or not the charge of "mechanical inspiration" can validly be made against the doctrine of verbal inspiration.

Although Barth claims that the doctrine of verbal inspiration was and remains a falling away from the position of Calvin, there are indications in Calvin that this is not the case. One could cite many passages from Calvin's writings in support of the contention that, although the doctrine of verbal inspiration was not developed fully until after Calvin's death, Calvin held the strictest view of verbal inspiration. What he writes in his commentary on Matthew 2:1 is not only characteristic of Calvin but also to the point of the present discussion.

"The Spirit of God, who had appointed the Evangelists to be his clerks (concerning this word, "clerks," the editor of the commentary writes: "not authors in the ordinary meaning of that term, but persons who wrote to the dictation of another."—DE), appears purposely to have regulated their style in such a manner, that they all wrote one and the same history, with the most perfect agreement, but in different ways. It was intended, that the truth of God should more clearly and strikingly appear, when it was manifest that his witnesses did not speak by a preconcerted plan, but that each of them separately, without paying any attention to another, wrote freely and honestly what the Holy Spirit dictated" (Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, Vol. I, p. 127).

This quotation is striking because in it Calvin, without the slightest uncomfortableness or the least trace of embarrassment, combines the strictest view of divine control over the writing of Scripture (verbal inspiration) with the view of the freedom and spontaneity of the human writers (non-mechanical inspiration). On the one hand, the evangelists were "clerks," the Spirit of God "regulated their style," and they "wrote... what the Holy Spirit dictated." On the other hand and in most intimate, if inexplicable, relationship with this divine control, they "did not speak by a preconcerted plan" and "wrote freely and honestly." Calvin speaks repeatedly of the Holy Spirit "dictating" the Bible to the writers. We would not use such a term, today, simply to avoid leaving any impression of a mechanical inspiration. But Calvin did not mean to advance, by that term, that the manner of inspiration was mechanical. By "dictation" he only wanted to stress the complete and strict control of God in the matter of the

writing of the Bible, such a control that the entire Bible is *God's Word*.

It only remains to be said, in this connection, that we cannot be satisfied with the use of the concept "accommodation" to explain the relationship between the inspiring God and the human writers of Scripture. When men accuse defenders of verbal inspiration of holding a "mechanical" or "typewriter" theory of inspiration, these defenders often respond by asserting that God, in inspiring the Bible, accommodated Himself to the writers. J. I. Packer, e.g., in his book, "Fundamentalism and the Word of God, states that "God completely adapted His inspiring activity to the cast of mind, outlook, temperament, interests, literary habits and stylistic idiosyncrasies of each writer" (p. 79). Although it is true that he goes on to say, on p. 80, that God "was well able to prepare, equip and over-rule sinful human writers so that they wrote nothing but what He intended, he still speaks of a "concurrent" operation of the Spirit with the activity of the human writers. The terms "accommodation" and "concurrent" do not do justice to God's primacy in the activity of inspiration. They present the matter as if the human writers, with their personalities, were first so that God had to adapt Himself to them or as if God and the human writers ran along together in the production of Holy Scripture. The fact is, however, that God eternally appointed each writer with his peculiar disposition and, in time, prepared each writer in every respect to be exactly the instrument of the writing of Scripture which God wanted. And when the writing of the Scripture takes place, by any of the individual writers, that event is not to be conceived of as a co-operative endeavor by the Holy Spirit and the human writer but as an activity in which the Holy Spirit is moving the writer and the writer is *being* moved, yet — and this is the mystery — not in the manner of compulsion but in such a way that the writer himself writes freely and spontaneously.

#### NOTICE

The students of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School will render an all school program on Thursday, April 7, 1966 at 8:00 P.M., in the First Protestant Reformed Church. The theme of the program, "God's Unbreakable Chain", is based on Romans 8:28-30.

#### ATTENTION OFFICE BEARERS

There will be an Office Bearers Conference, D.V., April 5, at 8:00 p.m. to be held at Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. All present and former office bearers are invited to attend.

Our speaker, Rev. G. Van Baren, will answer the question "In how far may a deacon officiate as an elder in a small congregation?"



## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD— ...*Psalm 68:11*

# Denying The Lord That Bought Them

by Rev. C. Hanko

In this series of articles on "Calvinism and Mission Preaching," I have devoted considerable space to the subject of particular atonement. Anyone will understand that this is actually the very heart of the matter, because preaching is the proclamation of the cross of Jesus Christ. Moreover, it is exactly at this point where the objection is raised that it is impossible to preach Calvinism with its limited atonement on the mission field. And it is in connection with the insistence on a universal love of God for mankind that we are told that mission preaching must include telling all men and every man, "Christ died for you."

The particular passage I wish to discuss in this present article is found in II Peter 2:1, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

The chief point of interest at the moment is the clause, "denying the Lord that bought them." A cursory reading of the text would leave us with the impression that Christ actually bought some who deny Him, of whom Peter writes that they bring upon themselves a swift destruction. It would appear as if Christ bought some with His blood who, nevertheless, perish in their sins. And from this we would readily conclude that Christ died for all men.

This is in essence what Lenski writes in his commentary on II Peter:

"Christ bought them to be his own for ever at the tremendous price of his own blood. Despite his absolute might and this act of purchase and ransoming these are men who 'deny,' disown, repudiate 'even' him. They challenge his absolute power; ungratefully they scorn his buying them. Ingrate rebels! Here we have an adequate answer to Calvin's limited atonement: the Sovereign, Christ, bought with his blood not only the elect, but also those who go to perdition. Calvin does not accept this epistle as canonical; in his extensive commentary on the New Testament it is not treated. May this clause, perhaps, have been a reason for this omission?"

Lenski can see no other interpretation in this passage than the error of universal atonement. That does not surprise us, because Lenski is opposed to Calvinism, especially because he defends a universal offer of salvation and man's ability to accept the offer. Here again Lenski sees a strong argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement. He also points out that limited atonement was one of the doctrines staunchly defended by Calvin himself. In fact, he goes so far as to assume that because of this text Calvin rejected the entire second epistle of Peter. Now it may be well to add in passing that this is not true. There is an exposi-

tion of II Peter included in Calvin's Commentaries. Calvin also prefaces this with his remarks that show that he is by no means ready to reject this epistle as not being canonical. True, Calvin does express some doubt about it, based particularly on the argument of Jerome that this second epistle seems to have an entirely different style from the first. But Calvin explains this by reminding us of Peter's extreme age, so that some one else may have set forth in writing what Peter wanted to tell the churches. And then he concludes, "Doubtless, as in every part of the epistle the majesty of the Spirit of Christ appears, to repudiate it is what I dread, though I do not recognize the language of Peter."

All those who wish to maintain a universal atonement will also appeal with Lenski to this passage.

Yet a universal atonement is contrary to Scripture, and also to our confessions. And to interpret this passage as teaching a universal atonement is impossible in the light of the rest of Scripture.

The error of a universal atonement actually creates more problems than it can ever solve.

The text speaks of "the *Lord* that bought them." The word 'despot' is used, which emphasizes the idea of sovereign power and absolute authority, without any of the evil connotation that is attached to the word today. Christ is called the sole Possessor, the Absolute Master. This can only mean that God gave to Christ a people as His sole possession. They are His possession, His sheep, because they belong to God. For them Christ died on the cross, for them He arose from the dead, for them He now lives and reigns in heaven. Anyone who preaches the Gospel according to the Scriptures must certainly preach that.

Now Christ has *purchased* His people unto Himself. He redeemed them from the curse of sin, so that they have the right to forgiveness of sins and the right to be called sons of God and heirs of salvation. From a legal aspect He bought them. But He also bought them from a spiritual, ethical aspect. He delivered them from the power of Satan and the bondage of sin. He has purchased them unto God as God's peculiar possession in Christ. Therefore, as fruit of that accomplished work of Golgotha, they are made new creatures, united to Christ by a bond of faith. They love Him, confess Him as Lord and walk in daily repentance and sanctification. They confess in word and deed that they are not their own, but *belong* to their faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. And that is also the contents of the preaching of the cross.

Now no one can deny that this is the Scriptural interpretation of the expression, "The Lord Who bought them."

But here is where the defenders of a universal



atonement must certainly meet their difficulty.

First of all, if the debt is paid for all men, why are not all men saved? How can God reckon to any man a debt that actually no longer exists? Still more, if Christ has purchased all men unto Himself to be His personal possession, why does He not claim them as His own? If they are His sheep, why does He not gather them? But here the Lord Himself answers, I do claim My own. For "all that the Father giveth unto me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

Secondly, if we assume that Christ died for all, but that now it depends upon man to accept that proffered salvation, then we also have our problems. Does it depend upon man to make the cross efficacious? Did Christ actually only attempt to make salvation possible? Did He merely open the way for a cancellation of our debts? Do we become the real objects of God's love and His prized possession only when we reciprocate by loving Him? Is the confession, "I belong to Jesus Christ," contingent on man's free will? But then we deny the power of the cross, and Christ becomes an impotent beggar. Then faith is the work of man and not the gift of God. Both of which are contrary to all of Scripture as well as our Confessions. I refer you particularly to the Canons of Dordt, second head of Doctrine, article 8, and the third and fourth head of Doctrine, article 10.

Finally, there is still another alternative. You realize, I am only trying to find a solution to the very knotty problem that must be confronted by any minister who wants to say to all men head for head, "Christ died for you." Does Peter mean that these false teachers actually did accept that truth of Scripture that Christ died for them? Did they believe, at least for a time, that Christ's death was efficacious for them, but later rejected it? Must we assume that the words, "Christ died for you," did not have the same meaning for them as it did for those who are saved? Were they deceived? Or did they believe and fall away? If the first is true, the Word of God is not honest. If the latter is true, there is a falling away of saints. And this is contrary to our Canons. See particularly the fifth head of Doctrine, art. 8.

These questions, avoid them as much as you will, are bound to come up in the minds of a discerning audience that must listen to the preaching of a universal atonement. And such preaching does not stimulate the assurance that Paul confesses when he says, "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? . . . For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But let us look at the text and see just what the apostle says.

1. You will notice that he speaks of false prophets among Israel in the old dispensation. The true prophets of God were characterized by the fact that their proph-

ecy came not "by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (1:21) These false prophets professed to be holy men that were moved by the Holy Spirit. They wore camel's hair garments to give the impression of having been sent of God. (Zech. 13:4). When they spoke they deliberately invented their own messages to deceive the people. And this became evident when their prophecy was contradicted by God; it never saw its fulfillment. There are many examples of that in the old testament, but the one that comes readily to mind is the example of the four hundred prophets who persuaded Ahab to go into battle, where he was also killed.

2. Peter warns the church against false teachers who will arise again, even in the church of the new dispensation. They will be members of the church institute, for they will arise "among you." They will be considered to be sincere believers, who belong to the Body of Christ. They will worship with the church, have their children baptized, partake of communion, and in every way profess that "they belong to their faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has purchased them with His blood."

3. But they will secretly bring in damnable heresies. Alongside the truth they will surreptitiously introduce false teachings, which are made as appealing as possible. These false teachings are, nevertheless "damnable" heresies. They not only have their origin in hell, but the idea seems to be that they are invented for the very purpose of leading the unwary astray, so that they bring damnation upon those who follow such heresies as well as upon those who present them.

4. Now among the damnable heresies that these deceivers bring is also the denial of the atonement of the cross. As the original expresses it, "they deny the having bought them Lord." Although they may still profess to be believers who are saved by the blood of the cross, they actually deny that cross and all its power. Although theoretically they profess that Christ is their only Lord, they are not subject to Him, but walk in their own willful, wicked way.

5. We must bear in mind that Peter is speaking of false teachers that arise within the church from time to time. Therefore these teachers may deny Christ and His atonement in various ways. Some may deny the doctrine of vicarious atonement, even though they still profess to believe in Christ, just as the modernist does. Some may live in sin, so that Christ is not their Lord and Master, but Satan. According to the context, especially the latter are on the foreground. These teachers lead others to lasciviousness. They are seeking themselves and their personal gain. They walk "after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government." (Verse 10).

6. The church should be on its guard against them. These teachers, in spite of all appearances, bring damnable heresies. Let the ministers beware of any and every tendency toward such a sinister error. Let the believers try the spirits whether they are of God and always hold tenaciously to the Word of truth. It is our only salvation, for the Word at the cross is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.



## EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

# Vatican Council - Third Session

## -6-

### “The Decree on the Eastern Churches”

by Rev. G. Van Baren

The final of the three decrees approved by the Vatican Council at Rome at its third session is this one treating the “Eastern Churches.” It is brief compared to the others which were approved, but it deals with one of the “sore spots” within the Romish church and in its relationship with the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

In the first place there are within the Roman church various “rites” or forms of liturgy through which the members express, what they consider to be, their worship to God. Secondly, the question of the relationship between Rome and the closely related Eastern Orthodox Churches has troubled both groups for some time.

#### THE BACKGROUND HISTORY

Though Protestants, and likely many Roman Catholics too, are not so aware of it; there are within the Romish church different rites used in their worship services. A “rite” is “in modern religious use any external sign or action employed as an expression of reverence or devotion, or as a means of exciting religious sentiments.” (Encyclopedia Americana). The same encyclopedia points out that “it is generally accepted that the fairly uniform type of liturgy previously used everywhere developed into four great parent-rites, from which all others now in use in Christendom are derived. These four are the liturgies of Antioch, Alexandria, Gaul, and Rome.” I have no intent (and I presume you have no interest in such) to analyze the differences between these four liturgies and that which has developed from them. I would point out, though, that the various “rites” differ both in language and in form one from the other. The Roman church almost exclusively uses the “Roman” or “Latin” rite throughout the world. But there are segments of the Roman church that do use other rites than the “Latin.” Latin has never been the exclusive official language of the whole Romish church nor does it use exclusively one form of liturgy throughout the whole church. But those using the other rites are a small minority, and often feel themselves to be “step-children” of Rome.

Related to the above, there is the relationship between the “Orthodox” and the “Roman” churches. The Orthodox Church has an estimated 150 million members with over two million of these on the American continent. The Orthodox churches are not one

large denomination, but consist of independent groups, each under its own “patriarch.” At the present time there are some sixteen of these independent groups of churches. The churches are largely located in Eastern Europe and in Asia.

These churches broke relationships with the Western or Roman segment of the church in the year 1054. There were various causes for the break including differences in custom and traditions and disagreements on the authority of the Roman bishop. There were other doctrinal disagreements including the “filioque” dispute (whether the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father, or also from the Son).

The similarities between the two groups of churches are great. Their form of worship and their doctrinal emphasis are similar. Though the “Orthodox” groups appear to place less emphasis on “Mariology” than does Rome, yet also here the differences are not very great. Presently, one of the biggest obstacles to union between the two groups would be the Roman doctrine of papal infallibility in doctrinal matters, and papal supremacy.

Through this decree, and other recent actions, Rome appears to be making a very deliberate attempt to seek to open the way for reunion with this large segment of “Christianity.”

#### THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTED

From the “Council Daybook, Third Session” (quoted in former articles) I want to point out the various problems as they exist in the minds of members of the Romish church.

First, there must be obviously friction between the “Latin-rite” majority of the Romish church and the minority which use other “rites.” The minority feel left out and merely tolerated in the church. These are groups that did not go along with the “Orthodox” but remained allied to Rome—yet retained their old forms of worship. There appears to be disagreement on the place of a patriarch also in the Roman hierarchical system.

The patriarch objected also to the opening words of the proposition’s introduction which expresses the great esteem of the Catholic Church for Eastern rites. In this he said he saw the implication that the Eastern rites are something other than Catholic.



He called for the restoration of ancient dignity and prerogatives of the patriarchate and asked that the honorary patriarchates in the West be abolished, since they demean the dignity of the office.

"Let us not close the circle of Catholicity in the West — retaining only small appendages from the East," he said.

Coptic-rite Patriarch Stephanos I Sidarouss of Alexandria (I wonder how that man signs his checks?) also asked for the restoration of patriarchal dignity. He said he preferred the whole treatment on the Eastern churches to be included in the Constitution on the Nature of the Church since, although they have different rites, they are not, strictly speaking, particular churches. (page 138).

The relationship between Rome and the Orthodox churches raised much discussion and also disagreement.

The text caused difficulty for the commission particularly in three areas, Cardinal Cicognani said, and the majority reached on these points was far from unanimous. The points included these:

1. Eastern Christians converted to Catholicism should be received into the Catholic rite corresponding to the Orthodox one they leave, with provision made for recourse to the Holy See to change;
2. A Catholic priest's presence at a mixed marriage between Eastern Christians is required for a marriage within the law unless a dispensation is granted, but not for a valid marriage.
3. Permission for Eastern-rite Catholics to make use of Orthodox sacraments provided no Catholic priest is available.

#### THE CONTENTS OF THE DECREE

The decree approved by the Vatican Council on the "Eastern Churches" consists basically of two parts. In the first part the Romish church condones and approves the existence of rites other than Latin within the church. And it urges that these "rites" be developed.

These individual Churches, whether of the East or the West, although they differ somewhat among themselves in rite (to use the current phrase), that is, in liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and spiritual heritage, are, nevertheless, each as much as the others, entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman Pontiff, the divinely appointed successor of St. Peter in primacy over the universal Church. They are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others as regards rite and they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, also in respect of preaching the Gospel to the whole world under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff. (p.351).

All members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement. (p. 352).

With respect to the "Orthodox" churches, Rome expressed its consciousness of closeness between the two groups. Rome recognizes as proper the administration of sacraments in the "Orthodox" churches and is ready to receive both members and its priests into communion with Rome.

If any separated Eastern Christian should, under the guidance of the grace of the Holy Spirit, join himself to the unity of Catholics, no more should be required of him than what a bare profession of the Catholic faith demands. Eastern clerics, seeing that a valid priesthood is preserved among them, are permitted to exercise the Orders they possess on joining the unity of the Catholic Church, in accordance with the regulations established by the competent authority. (p. 354).

Rome recognizes the validity of the sacraments in the Orthodox churches, and under certain circumstances allows its members to participate in the worship services in the Orthodox group.

Without prejudice to the principles noted earlier, Eastern Christians who are in fact separated in good faith from the Catholic Church, if they ask of their own accord and have the right dispositions, may be admitted to the sacraments of Penance, the Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick. Further, Catholics may ask for these same sacraments from those non-Catholic ministers whose churches possess valid sacraments, as often as necessary or a genuine spiritual benefit recommends such a course and access to a Catholic priest is physically or morally impossible. (p. 354).

The ultimate aim of the Romish church is reunion with the Orthodox group.

The sacred council feels great joy in the fruitful zealous collaboration of the Eastern and the Western Catholic Churches and at the same time declares: All these directives of law are laid down in view of the present situation till such time as the Catholic Church and the separated Eastern Churches come together into complete unity.

In this age of ecumenism, I can well conceive that the above could take place. I would regard a union between these two bodies as more than remotely possible — and a first step of Rome towards union with Protestant groups as well. Already Pope Paul has met in Jerusalem with one patriarch of the Orthodox churches. And at the conclusion of the last session of the Vatican Council Pope Paul VI and Athenagoras I mutually lifted the "excommunications" which the churches has uttered against each other when the schism began. Differences remain. But the way to union has at least been opened up.

Again, all this must be a reminder to us of the last days in which we live. More and more one can detect the trends towards the establishment of one large "Christian" church which can serve as the seat of the anti-christ. God grant the faithful members of the body of Christ grace to stand firm even until the end of time.

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School will have openings for teachers in the Kindergarten, 1st, and 3rd grades, and for a part-time teachers (4 hours per day). For further information, contact the undersigned:

Don Lotterman  
1926 Porter St., S.W.  
Wyoming, Michigan 49509



## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

### REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

January 5 and February 23, 1966 Sessions

Rev. H. Veldman, chairman of the October Classis presided over the opening devotions, and after the credentials were accepted, declared the classis properly constituted.

Rev. G. J. Van Baren then presided, while Rev. Veldman recorded the minutes. All the churches were represented in this opening session by two delegates each.

The routine matters of the approval of minutes of October-November sessions of classis, the reports of the Stated Clerk and Classical Committee were taken care of in that order.

The brethren G. Bouwkamp and M. Klop were appointed to the finance committee for this session of classis.

The Consistory of Hudsonville requested classical appointments and the Mission Board requested that Rev. M. Schipper be relieved of his appointment to Isabel-Forbes. Both requests were granted. Classis later adopted the following schedule for Hudsonville, Randolph, and Isabel-Forbes: Hudsonville: Jan. 23 - H. Veldman, Jan. 30 - G. Lanting, Feb. 13 - H. Veldman, Feb. 20 - M. Schipper, Feb. 27 - G. Van Baren, Mar. 6 - R. Harbach, Mar. 13 - G. Lubbers, Mar. 20 - G. Lanting, April 3 - M. Schipper. Randolph: Jan. 16 - G. Van Baren, Jan. 23 - M. Schipper, Feb. 6 - R. Harbach, Feb. 20 - G. Lanting, Mar. 6 - H. Veldman, Mar. 20 - M. Schipper, April 3 - R. Harbach. Isabel-Forbes: Jan. 16, 23, 30 - G. Lubbers, Feb. 6, 13 - G. Van Baren.

Classis next treated the matter of subsidy requests which came from the consistories of Holland and Kalamazoo. Both requests were to be sent to synod with classis' approval.

Two protests against the classical decisions of the October classis were given into the hands of a study committee which was to report on an extended meeting of classis on February 23. The committee: Rev. G. Lanting, Rev. G. Lubbers, and the elders R. Teitsma, D. Kooienga, and K. Lanning. This matter was treated in executive session, and the Rev. R. Harbach presided while the matter was treated.

Classis, once more out of executive session, proceeded to vote for synodical delegates and delegates ad examina.

The synodical delegates chosen are listed in alphabetical order by decision of classis as follows: Ministers Primi: R. Harbach, M. Schipper, G. Van Baren, H. Veldman. Ministers Secundi: G. Lanting, G. Lubbers. Elders Primi: T. Englesma, D. Lange-land, H. Meulenberg, H. Zwak. Elders Secundi: J. M. Faber, K. Lanning, A. Talsma, B. Windemuller.

Delegates ad examina chosen: Primus R. Harbach for three years. Secundi G. Lanting for three years, G. Lubbers for 2 years, G. Van Baren for 1 year.

Brother A. Haveman was appointed to thank the ladies of Southeast Church for their excellent catering.

Classis decided to hold its April session in Southwest Church on April 6, D.V.

Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

Classis adjourned then until February 23.

On this reconvened session Kalamazoo's elder delegate was absent and elder S. De Vries took the place of Rev. G. Lanting, who was absent.

The chair appointed elder K. Lanning to take the place of elder M. Klop on the finance committee.

Classis decided to give an advisory vote to Rev. G. Vos and the elders of First Church who were present.

Rev. Harbach again presided when the committee appointed at the last session gave its report which was treated in executive session.

Classis decided to thank the study committee for its work.

After the closing devotions, Rev. M. Schipper closed the meeting with thanks to God.

M. Schipper, S.C.

March 1, 1966

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Rev. J. Kortering, of Hull, Iowa, has declined the call from our Isabel, South Dakota church. Rev. D. Engelsma received the call from Randolph, Wis.; he declined Edgerton's call.

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The 1966 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention will be held in Southeast Church in Grand Rapids, Aug. 19-22, D.V. The theme of the convention is based on the truth as found in II Peter 1:5-8, under the title, "Faith". This theme will be developed under three sub-titles, "The Seed of Faith", "The Growth of Faith", and "The Fruit of Faith". Young People, plan your vacation so that you can attend this year's convention so that you may share in the instruction in this profound truth so sadly mis-interpreted in the modern church world. Southeast's Feb. 27th bulletin asked for housing facilities for the out-of-town conventioners.

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Hudsonville's new clerk is Mr. Harry Zwak, 2791 Quincy, Hudsonville, Mich.

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The consistory of Doon, Iowa, has inaugurated a new Order of Worship. The new order includes such changes as, silent prayer in unison; a doxology before and after the service; an organ offertory while the offering is being received, and congregational singing while *standing*. This new order was scheduled to begin Feb. 20.

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At their last congregational meeting, Hudsonville's congregation adopted the consistory's proposal to remodel and redecorate the parsonage. This project is quite an extensive one, with a \$3,000. price tag.

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Advance notice: Hope's Choral Society is announcing an Easter Cantata to be rendered the evening of Easter Sunday in their church.

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.