

The
Standard
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE:

Meditation: Unworthy of All God's Blessings

**Editorial: The Nature of the Atonement:
Limited or General? (2)**

Stephen's Apology Before the Sanhedrin

Arminianism

Vatican Council — Third Session

CONTENTS

Meditation -	
Unworthy Of All God's Blessings	98
Rev. M. Schipper	
Editorial -	
The Nature of the Atonement:	
Limited or General? (2)	100
Prof. H. C. Hoeksema	
From Holy Writ -	
Stephen's Apology Before The Sanhedrin ...	104
Rev. G. Lubbers	
In His Fear -	
The Beginning of Wisdom (4)	106
Rev. J. A. Heys	
Trying The Spirits -	
Arminianism	109
Rev. R. C. Harbach	
The Lord Gave The Word -	
Sovereign Election, Particular Atonement,	
and Missions	111
Rev. C. Hanko	
The Church at Worship -	
Thankfulness	113
Rev. G. Vanden Berg	
All Around Us -	
The New Morality	115
Rev. H. Hanko	
Examining Ecumenicalism -	
Vatican Council - Third Session (2)	
"The Constitution on the Church"	117
News From Our Churches -	
Mr. J. Faber	120

THE STANDARD BEARER

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Martin Luther once said: "I am much afraid the universities will prove to be the great gates to hell, unless they diligently labor to explain the Holy Scriptures and engrave them upon the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."

MEDITATION

Unworthy of All God's Blessings

by Rev. M. Schipper

"I am unworthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands."

Genesis 32:10

This text is part of a prayer!

A prayer uttered by Jacob near the Jabbok as he returned from his uncle Laban!

There he had fled some twenty years before for fear of his brother Esau who threatened to kill him. There he had labored hard for his wives and his substance. Now returning to his own country, he is again faced with the problem of Esau. Will his brother have

forgotten his old grudge? Will he attempt to carry out his old threat? Jacob is perplexed and afraid! How shall he meet his brother? What shall be done with all his possessions, his wives and his children?

Jacob flees to God in prayer!

A prayer most worthy of consideration!

In the latter part of the prayer he raises the actual petition for divine help. In the first part, however, is

the acknowledgment and recounting of Jehovah's blessings!

A prayer of thanksgiving!

Striking it is that the prayer should begin thus! Would we not expect that it would be an outcry for immediate aid? Lord, help me! Yet, he recounts Jehovah's mercies, and his own unworthiness!

Instructive is this prayer!

Wonderful example!

Not only is prayer the chief part of thankfulness, but thanksgiving is the pre-requisite of good prayer. And true thanksgiving is possible only when self is negated!

Thanksgiving is not a mere rejoicing in things! Nor is it only to recount all of Jehovah's mercies! True thanksgiving is to humble ourselves before Jehovah in the acknowledgment that we merited none of them!

Unworthy of all God's blessings!

* * * * *

O, the magnitude of those blessings!

Of all the mercies!

And of all the truth!

Wonderful combination! Closely related!

Note how they appear together in other Scriptures!

"And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his MERCY AND HIS TRUTH . . ." Genesis 24:27. "He hath remembered HIS MERCY AND HIS TRUTH toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." Psalm 98:3.

Mercy and truth belong together!

Mercy is that strong Divine desire to bless! So it is in God Himself. He seeks and desires to find in the blessed trinity perfect blessedness. And when it is directed to objects outside of Himself, it is always directed to the miserable! Then it is the strong desire to make them blessed as He is blessed!

Truth: literally, faithfulness!

When related to a given promise, it is the truth! When He gives His promise, He speaks the truth. When He keeps His promise, He is faithful!

Jehovah's truth or faithfulness is closely related to His mercy! In these two is bound up all the covenant blessings! In His mercy He bends down to the elect sinner to redeem him from misery unto eternal glory! This purpose of God is declared by promise to His covenant people! And faithfully He realizes that promise to them in Christ Jesus!

Apart from God's covenant there is no blessing, only curse!

And we should note first of all the evidences of this in the experience of Jacob! When he fled to his uncle Laban, he had only his staff. O, to be sure, he had also the promise of God at Bethel. His God would be with him, and make of him a great nation. The blessings of Abraham and Isaac would truly come to him. But for the rest, he was poor, helpless, miserable Jacob! With only a staff in his hand!

Now, however, he is become two bands, two companies! This does not refer to the sadness of his plight, as might be superficially concluded. When he exclaims that he is now become two bands, he is not lamenting his poor and helpless condition because of

his fear of Esau. Rather, he is pointing to his greatness! He is pointing to his cattle and sheep which he had gained while he labored for Laban. He is mindful of his wives and his children. The Lord had kept His word to Jacob! He had exceedingly blessed him! Where once he was alone and poor, having only his staff; now he is become rich indeed! He is become two companies! Once he was outside of Canaan, now he is back in his own land; not Esau's, but Jacob's by birthright and promise! Canaan with its milk and honey! And all this earthly in connection with its heavenly counterpart! Salvation, heaven, God's covenant fellowship!

Note, too, the evidences of this blessedness for us!

To be sure, earthly riches no longer are of typical value for us. They are no longer for us a special sign of God's favor. Just because we have had a big harvest is no sign of special blessing to us! Nor can America today boast that God has especially favored her because she had waving fields of grain and great abundance. It may very well be that God looks down in wrath and is setting her on slippery places. On the other hand, it may be a blessing if the Lord would deprive us, His children, of even our daily bread.

Earthly abundance given by God in His favor is a blessing! But the blessing lies not in the things themselves. Rather, it lies in the attitude of favor toward us! Then only is it true that abundance of wealth works for our good. We who are God's covenant people truly acknowledge Him as the Giver of great abundance, and we thank Him for it, while we look not on the things which do appear, but on the unseen!

We, therefore, behold the spiritual realities of God's covenant, and all things in the light of these! And these God, in Christ Jesus, has revealed to us in a far greater and higher sense than He did to Jacob. Jacob had to see them in the type, in the shadows. We see them in the antitype, in the fulfillment! Hence, we see first the spiritual, and then the natural in the light of the spiritual!

Then, also, like Jacob, we must exclaim: O God, how great are all Thy mercies and Thy faithfulness to us! Thou didst give us Thy only begotten Son! In Him Thou didst cleanse us from all our guilty stains! In Him Thou didst declare that we are righteous before Thee, so righteous that we appear before Thee as those who have never committed one sin! In Him and with Him we are heirs to a great and eternal inheritance! Besides, Thou dost cause all things to work for our salvation! Health and sickness, prosperity and adversity, peace and war, life and death, yea, Lord, all things are our servants! And we acknowledge all Thy gifts as good, because they come from Thee, the Father of Lights, with the purpose to bless us!

Indeed, Father, Thy blessings are very great!

* * * * *

Humble confession!

I am unworthy!

Literally, I am small! I am of little worth!

And this is not an over-pious statement of Jacob whereby he sought to gain more favor with God! Somewhat like we might say to our fellowman when he is about to give us something, or has already made us the

recipient of a gift. We say, "O, you ought not to do this;" or, "You shouldn't do this to me, I didn't deserve it." While all the while we did not want our benefactor to withdraw his gift, but we wanted him to feel that he has given it to the right party. Jacob was not trying to draw the Lord on to more giving by the ruse of piety or humility.

Rather, what we have here is a deep sense of guilt, and therefore of unworthiness! Jacob was deeply sensitive concerning and wholly aware of his sins! His past life flashes before him: the deceit whereby he sought to trick his brother and his father, the mistrust of Jehovah's continued guidance and care in the face of danger and the threat of death at the hand of his brother, the impatience he manifested respecting the fulfillment of the Lord's promises.

By grace, Jacob is truly humbled by the knowledge and consciousness of his awful corruption! He acknowledges that there is no merit in him! Hence, the confession: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant!

And what shall we say?

What shall we say when we behold the luxuries in which we bathe? When we take inventory of all the abundance with which we are surrounded? When we contemplate the richness of the spiritual gifts which flow to us as to no others?

And pray, let us be honest about it!

Shall we boast in what we have accomplished? Shall we gleefully run our fingers through the wheat and the corn we have harvested, like the miser who lifts the shiny silver pieces with his bony fingers and proudly rejoice in the fruit of our ingenuity and industrious labor? Shall we perhaps with a semblance of piety confess that with God's help we are what we are and have what we have?

Or, shall we admit what little and miserable microbes we are?

Shall we not rather cry out: O God, be merciful to us who are sinners?

By grace, that is exactly what we will say!

We will confess that we are worthy only to be cast out of God's sight! When we stand in the light of His holy presence, we will confess our sins before Him!

O God, how great and how numerous are my sins and my transgressions! How I transgressed all Thy good commandments! How I grumbled and fretted when things looked dark and it appeared that all was against me! How often I sought the things below, not the things which are above! How often I forgot that apart from Christ Jesus all things are curses, and that in Him only I am blessed! O God, be merciful, for I am unworthy of the least of all Thy benefits!

Such a confession will be pressed out of us when we behold the greatness of the blessings! When all that great mercy passes in review! How God has blessed us in Christ Jesus with spiritual and heavenly benefits! How daily He has laden us with His lovingkindnesses! How when all seemed to go wrong, He made it turn out to our good!

Then the child of God has nothing in self whereof to boast!

Then, indeed, he is swallowed up of mercy!

* * * * *

Thus we are prepared for the proper attitude of thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving!

That is to count Jehovah's mercies! To name them one by one! To read Jehovah's Name upon each of them! That is to give thanks!

Thanksgiving!

That is to praise Jehovah for His goodness! To enumerate His virtues as they manifest themselves in all His lovingkindnesses! To say that He is good!

How necessary that proper attitude is!

Divinely necessary, because God alone will be glorified!

Also necessary from our point of view, because there can be no real, true, spiritual satisfaction without it!

Then indeed, the grace of God is reflected and returns unto God Who gave it, in the form of praises that glorify His Holy Name!

EDITORIAL— by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The Nature of the Atonement- Limited or General?

-2-

We are now ready to enter into the discussion proper of the question: what is the nature of the atonement?

It has been a fundamental fallacy in the entire discussion of the so-called Dekker Case by Dr. Daane that he failed utterly to furnish his readers with a def-

inition of the atonement and to state in clear-cut language what elements belong to the *nature* of the atonement. The narrower question whether the atonement is in its very nature limited or general can be answered only in the light of the broader question as

to the entire nature of the atonement. This, therefore, is a very important question. What *is* the atonement? It has always been a fundamental question in Reformed theology, -- so fundamental that it was exactly at this point that the Reformed and the Arminians came to the parting of the ways as far as the death of Christ was concerned. The narrower question for whom Christ died had very deep roots in this broader question concerning the very idea, the essence, the structure of Christ's atoning death. And it soon became clear that when Reformed and Arminians spoke of the death of Christ and even both used the term *atonement*, they were speaking fundamentally different language. In fact, it became clear that the Arminians had no real right to speak of *atonement* at all. *They denied the atoning character of the death of Christ; and they had to do so in order to maintain their second article, namely, that Christ died for all men and every man.*

Hence, it must be emphasized in the strongest possible terms that we must have the entire picture and must take note of all the elements in that picture when we discuss the nature of the atonement.

My method in this discussion will be two-fold.

First of all, we shall turn to our Reformed confessions in order to discover what is the current teaching of all our confessions concerning the nature of Christ's atonement. Dr. Daane has not done this. True, he made an occasional reference to the confessions; but he never presented the *line*, the current teaching, of our confessions concerning Christ's atonement. But this is the tried and true Reformed method. Those who avow loyalty to the Reformed faith and who do so without any reservation, expressed or mental, should always turn first of all to the creeds. These creeds are the test. This test must be applied in order to determine whether any doctrine is Reformed or not.

Secondly, we shall turn to Scripture in order to show that the teaching of our Reformed confessions is authoritative and binding just exactly because it is indeed the teaching of Scripture itself. This also is the tried and true Reformed method. Reformed theologians do not by-pass the confessions in order to make a direct appeal to Scripture; but as those who have, according to the Formula of Subscription, a fundamental commitment to the confessions, they appeal to Scripture in support of those confessions. We must always "theologize" within the confines of that commitment. The only exception to this is the case of one who comes to the conviction that the confessions are in conflict with Scripture. Even then, however, one does not follow the course of either privately or publicly militating against the confessions; and he certainly does not follow the course of tongue-in-cheek signing of the Formula of Subscription; but he follows the course of filing a *gravamen* against the confession on the matter in question. This every Reformed officebearer must vow under the penalty of *de facto* suspension from office.

This, therefore, shall be the method followed in this discussion.

And now let us turn to the question: what is the nature of the atonement?

The Atonement Is Satisfaction of Divine Justice According to the Catechism

If there is a single term that is crucial in our understanding of the nature of the atonement, it is this term *satisfaction*. The fact that it is a dogmatical rather than a literally Scriptural term does not make it less crucial. All theologians speak of Christ's death. Many theologians will even speak of the atonement, the atoning character of Christ's death, whether rightly or wrongly. That term *atonement* has come to be used rather loosely. Some there are who lay great stress upon the term *vicarious*. *Vicarious atonement* is supposed to be one of the fundamentals of fundamentalism. And I would be the last to deny that this vicariousness of the death of Christ belongs to the very nature of the atonement. But the term *satisfaction* is even more crucial. It is the first and most fundamental element of the *nature* of the atonement. It is possible to speak of vicarious atonement very loosely. One must even ask of those who speak of vicarious atonement what they mean by that. And the Shibboleth at which all deniers of genuine vicarious atonement stammer is that element of *satisfaction*.

Permit me, first of all, to demonstrate at length how both the term and the idea of satisfaction permeate our Reformed creeds.

In the first place, we turn to the Heidelberg Catechism, which, I dare say, is famous for its emphasis on this idea. The Catechism almost becomes tedious on this subject, except that the subject is so crucial that it is well-nigh impossible to over-emphasize it.

The Catechism, without introducing the term as such, begins to lead up to the subject of satisfaction in Lord's Day IV. It makes plain that satisfaction is a matter of strictest divine justice, thereby emphasizing from the outset that atonement and redemption are matters of strict justice. The approach in this Lord's Day is that of God's justice in relation to man's sin. I have reference especially to Questions 10 and 11, which are as follows:

Q. 10. Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

A. By no means; but he is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in his just judgment temporally and eternally, as he hath declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Q. 11. Is not God then also merciful?

A. God is indeed merciful, but also just; therefore his justice requires, that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul.

Notice the view of the Catechism here. Sin is guilt. Guilt is liability to punishment. Punishment is necessary because of God's justice. This requirement of God's justice is so strict, so inexorable, that there is no other channel for divine mercy than the channel of perfect justice. God's mercy, God's love, God's grace (all closely related concepts in Scripture) can never

be in conflict with His justice. God's mercy is always a just mercy; and His justice is a merciful justice. But for that very reason the divine mercy that reaches us in the channel of divine justice is also a *sure* mercy! It effects a sure atonement and a sure redemption. Once the demand of God's justice is completely met, that demand, i.e., the punishment of sin, can never be imposed again: such would be in conflict with the divine justice. Bear this in mind with a view to our future discussion, please. This is a fundamental principle.

The Heidelberg Catechism next proceeds to introduce the term *satisfaction*. In Lord's Day V it emphasizes the necessity of that satisfaction, first of all. In this connection it again emphasizes that this necessity lies in God's justice with respect to sin. Then, after this necessity is established, the Catechism sets forth the creaturely impossibility of such satisfaction, in order, finally, to set forth the pattern of the mediator that we need in Question 15. I will quote only Questions 12 to 14 in this connection.

Q. 12. Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, is there no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favor?

A. God will have his justice satisfied; and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another.

Q. 13. Can we ourselves then make this satisfaction?

A. By no means; but on the contrary we daily increase our debt.

Q. 14. Can there be found anywhere, one, who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us.

A. None; for, first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed; and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it.

Notice, by the way, that especially Q. 14 of this Lord's Day and also Q. 11 of the preceding Lord's Day shed light on another element in the nature of Christ's atonement, namely, the element of the infinite value of Christ's sacrifice. We will return to this later.

Lord's Day VI continues in the same vein, elaborating on the requirements of the Mediator and on the reason for these requirements, in order to lead us to the identity of that Mediator according to the holy gospel. Pertinent are Questions 16 and 17. The former continues to speak literally of satisfaction. It emphasizes the requirement of God's justice that satisfaction be made by the same human nature that has sinned; and at the same time it teaches that satisfaction can only be made by one who is perfectly righteous; that is, without guilt and without corruption. Notice that we have already been led in this and in the previous Lord's Day to another element in the nature of the atonement, namely, its vicariousness. The Catechism speaks of one satisfying *for others*: hence, of a *substitute*. Question 17 does not speak literally of satisfaction; but in emphasizing the need of a Mediator who is very God, it points to the nature of such satisfaction: it is a sustaining, an active enduring, a bearing up under, (in the human nature), the burden of

God's wrath, so that by it righteousness and life are obtained for and restored to others. Read these two questions and answers, and see for yourself that these elements are taught:

Q. 16. Why must he be very man, and also perfectly righteous?

A. Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin; and one, who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others.

Q. 17. Why must he in one person be also very God?

A. That he might, by the power of his Godhead sustain in his human nature the burden of God's wrath; and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life.

It is this key element of the satisfaction of the justice of God with respect to our sin that occurs again and again throughout the Heidelberg Catechism. It is this element of satisfaction which makes the atonement and the redemption accomplished thereby an objectively real thing, something that was historically accomplished nineteen hundred years ago, something that is a real, objective accomplishment before the bar of God's own justice, a fact that can never be undone by anything that you or I or any man may do or fail to do, a fact which, reverently speaking, God Himself could not possibly ignore or deny. If the atonement is satisfaction, then it can never be undone. Then such satisfaction can never be demanded anew. If it was demanded and furnished by Christ, then it can never be required of anyone for whom Christ died. Satisfaction for sin cannot be twice required; such would be the height of injustice. It is this key element of satisfaction for sin in the nature of Christ's atonement that accounts for the language of the Heidelberg Catechism at many other points in its exposition of the only comfort, even when the atonement is not under discussion and even when the term *satisfaction* is not used. Let us run through the Catechism with this in mind.

Question and Answer 21 speaks of the elements of true faith, including the confidence "that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, *only for the sake of Christ's merits.*" (italics mine) Those "merits" of Christ are the same as Christ's satisfaction.

Question and Answer 30, in speaking of Jesus as a complete Savior, speaks of the fact that such as by a true faith receive this Savior "must find all things in him necessary to their salvation." Why? Because all things necessary to their salvation *are actually, objectively in Him*. He has obtained all things necessary to their salvation by His perfect satisfaction. These things are an objective reality in Christ.

Question and Answer 31, in speaking of the Christ as our only High Priest, speaks of the "one sacrifice of his body" by which He "has redeemed us." Notice: that redemption is an accomplished fact! He *has* redeemed us! How? By the one sacrifice of His body, that is, by His perfect satisfaction. The same language is found in Question and Answer 34:

Q. 34. Wherefore callest thou him our Lord?

A. *Because he hath redeemed us*, both soul and body, from all our sins, not with gold or silver, but with his precious blood, and hath delivered us from all the power of the devil; and thus *hath made us* his own property. (*italics mine*)

Question and Answer 36 speaks of the profit of Christ's holy conception and birth. This profit simply consists in the fact that He was able to make satisfaction for our sins: "and with His innocence and perfect holiness, covers in the sight of God, my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth." This satisfaction of atonement, or this atonement by way of satisfaction, means that my sins are covered, so that I do not have to cover them or so that I am not exposed to God's wrath.

As might be expected, Lord's Days XV and XVI speak more directly of this idea of satisfaction.

Notice, first of all, how the 37th Question and Answer lays the entire idea of satisfaction in Christ's suffering. It is very plain, by the way, that "all mankind" cannot mean every man in this connection: for this would simply mean that every man is freed from the wrath of God by Christ's suffering. But if the suffering of Christ has the meaning ascribed to it by the Catechism here, and it has, then it simply means that all those for whom He suffered are, as an accomplished fact according to God's justice, forever freed from that suffering ever since Christ suffered. Christ actually bore what those for whom He suffered were obligated to bear; and therefore they cannot be held responsible to bear it any more. This is the plain teaching of Lord's Day XV in its entirety:

Q. 37. What dost thou understand by the words, "He suffered"?

A. That he, all the time that he lived on earth, but especially at the end of his life, sustained in body and soul, the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind; that so by his passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice, he might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation, and obtain for us the favor of God, righteousness and eternal life.

Q. 38. Why did he suffer under Pontius Pilate, as judge?

A. That he, being innocent, and yet condemned by a temporal judge, might thereby free us from the severe judgment of God to which we were exposed.

Q. 39. Is there anything more in his being crucified, than if he had died some other death?

A. Yes (there is); for thereby I am assured, that he took on him the curse which lay upon me; for the death of the cross was accursed of God.

This same solid emphasis is found in Lord's Day XVI. Question and Answer 40, in speaking of the death of Christ, states: "Because with respect to the justice and truth of God, satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise, than by the death of the Son of God." Moreover, in the light of the fact that Christ by His death made satisfaction, the 40th Answer can state: "Our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage unto eternal life." Notice that the plain implication of this

answer is that once Christ has died for a man and made satisfaction, there is no more satisfaction for sins to be made! Question and Answer 43 speaks of the further benefit of Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross. Notice its factual and objective language: "That by virtue thereof, our old man is crucified, dead and buried with him. . . ." Finally, take note of the beautiful 44th Answer. It also speaks of an objective accomplishment, something that therefore never need be and never can be repeated and which God cannot justly require of anyone for whom Christ died:

That in my greatest temptations, I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself in this, that my Lord Jesus Christ, by his inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which he was plunged during all his sufferings, but especially on the cross, *hath delivered me* from the anguish and torments of hell. (*italics mine*)

Even when it speaks of the profit of Christ's resurrection, the Catechism does not miss the opportunity to inject this idea of an accomplished purchase. But remember that once a purchase is accomplished, it need never be accomplished again; nor can it be undone. And this purchase was accomplished for all for whom Christ died nineteen hundred years ago. I say again: God Himself must and does recognize this as a valid purchase. He cannot and He does not require the price of everlasting punishment of anyone for whom Christ died and paid that price. Notice this idea in the first part of the 45th Answer: "First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, that he might make us partakers of that righteousness which he had purchased for us by his death. . . ."

In Question and Answer 52 a connection is established between our looking for Christ's coming as Judge and His death for us on the cross. Wherein lies that connection? Again, in Christ's accomplished satisfaction: "That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person, who before offered himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven. . . ." And here is a good question; if Christ died for all men, and therefore made satisfaction for all, how is the distinction made, and attributed to Christ as Judge, (Note well: the same person who supposedly died for them!)—how is that distinction in the last part of this answer possible: "who shall cast all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation (even though He died for them, H.C.H.), but shall translate me with all his chosen ones to himself, into heavenly joys and glory."

The note of Christ's satisfaction as an accomplished fact forms the very basis of our faith concerning the forgiveness of sins in Question and Answer 56:

Q. 56. What believest thou concerning "the forgiveness of sins"?

A. That God, for the sake of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins, neither my corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle all my life long; but will graciously impute to me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never be condemned before the tribunal of God.

The very foundation of the beautiful description of justification by faith, as distinct from all work-righteousness, is that objective accomplishment of the death of Christ. Notice that in this description the Catechism does not refer to Christ's death as a possibility of righteousness, but as a *fact*. And, according to Question and Answer 60, this fact that was accomplished by Christ is just as though I myself had accomplished it. It was accomplished long ago on the cross; but I become *assured* of this accomplishment in my own consciousness through faith. Consider this language of Lord's Day XXIII:

Q. 60. How art thou righteous before God?

A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.

Q. 61. Why sayest thou, that thou art righteous by faith only?

A. Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith; but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my

righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.

It is well known that the Catechism emphasizes this same objective accomplishment of Christ's death in connection with the sacraments. The sacraments more fully declare and seal to us "that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross." (Q. and A. 66) And through the sacraments the Holy Ghost assures us "that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which he offered for us on the cross." (Q. and A. 67) And this same note is sounded throughout the Catechism's treatment of the sacraments.

This same element occurs again in Question and Answer 86, which speaks of "Christ having redeemed and delivered us by his blood,"—an objective accomplishment. It is hinted at in Question and Answer 115, which speaks of becoming more earnest in "seeking the remission of sin and righteousness *in Christ*." It is briefly referred to in connection with the Fifth Petition in Lord's Day LI: ". . . be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute. . . ."

From all of the above evidence it is abundantly clear that the key to the understanding of the nature of the atonement, according to our Heidelberg Catechism, is this element of satisfaction.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

Stephen's Apology

Before the Sanhedrin

by Rev. G. Lubbers

The Starting Point in Stephen's Address Acts 7:2,3

That the calling to the ministry is not one of weakness but that it is most emphatically one of power and of sobriety is evident in every sentence of Stephen's address. What sober self-control is exhibited here! What a viewpoint here to address the Sanhedrin as "men, brethren and fathers". Do they not sit upon the "Cathedra" of Moses? The fact that they "say", but "do not" does not change their position in Israel. To them were the oracles of God entrusted. (Matthew 23:2,3; Romans 3:2) Even though they "say, but do not" does not change their position in the nation of Israel. They are here fully recognized as those to whom much had been entrusted and of whom much would be required. Are they not the evil servants, who, when their Lord cometh, are found beating His

servants? (Matthew 24:49) These are not some women grinding at the mill. They are the "fathers" in Israel; they are the "brethren" as were the jealous brethren of Joseph in the latter's day; they are men who should quit themselves like men and be strong, and who should have done all things in the love of Christ!

To them is rehearsed the history of Israel from the time of Abraham till the moment of the close of Israel's national existence. It is their history, its proper starting-point, the gradual unfolding of the promise, the purpose of the law-giving, and meaning of Israel's history for the world. To them Stephen says "Give heed." This will be no mere theological treatise, no mere arguing about genealogies, no Jewish, legalistic casuistry in the fine, hair-splitting matters of what is permissible and what is taboo. It will be

the salvation and the judgments in Israel of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth; the God of Glory.

Stephen's starting-point here is the last and only ground: the author of all things as given in Paul's summation in Romans 11:36 "Because out of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things; to Him be the glory forever, Amen!" Truly this is the theme here in Stephen's defense. Hence, his real starting-point is "the God of glory". He is the God who is characterized by glory, that is, the outshining of all his glorious virtues and majesty. He is the sovereign Lord; He is exalted above all the history of the world in general and of Israel in particular. None can say to him, the sovereign Lord: what doest Thou? His is the power, the kingdom and the glory forever. Of him sings the Psalmist in Psalm 29:3, 9. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the *God of glory* thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters." And "the voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of *his glory*." This is the glory of God as revealed in all creation: his power and majesty. But Scripture often speaks most emphatically of this glory as it is manifested in the Word made flesh, the Christ of God in his death, resurrection and in his ascension and final return with the clouds of heaven. Immediately after Christ's birth, we read of this "glory of the Lord" which shines about the shepherds; for in the manger lies the "Lord of glory"! (1 Corinthians 2:8). In him is revealed the "glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He is God in the flesh! He is Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. (James 2:1) Wherefore we read in Ephesians 1:17 "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father of glory*, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

What a grand starting-point for a man who stands accused as a blasphemer and a desecrater of temples. No doubt, Saul of Tarsus must have later remembered these words of Stephen when he uttered such grand truths as "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever, Amen."

This God "appeared" to Abraham in Mesopotamia!

Abraham must have seen a Theophany. Possibly it was some glorious manifestation of the invisible God in a visible form. Thus did the Lord "appear" to Moses at the burning bush at the Mount of God, in the fire and in the form of an angel. (Acts 7:30,35) Abraham did not simply decide to leave his country; God came to him, "appeared" to him and spoke to him as to His friend, and Abraham believed and obeyed, and "went out not knowing whither he went".

That Stephen emphasized this "appearance" of the God of glory to Abraham is indeed significant for his argument. From here on he will show the great design in Israel's history of a God of glory who cannot dwell in a mere tabernacle and temple, nor is He limited in His gracious dealings to one nation: the Jewish nation!

The Argument From The Abrahamic Promise
Acts 7:3-16

Stephen stands here on trial. His is a mighty "apology" for the Gospel and for the Gospel of the Promise made to the fathers and fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What Stephen significantly underscores here is that the promise of the land of Canaan cannot possibly have meant for Abraham and for his seed that they would merely have the earthly land of Canaan. Chiliasts can find no comfort in this apology. The evidence here adduced by Stephen to the Sanhedrin is so conclusive that there is not a member of the Sanhedrin who can gainsay it. Stephen argues from two basic premises. The first premise is: the *promise* of God. And the second is: the *facts* of history! If this place, this land is so important, pray why did God in all of the life time of the patriarchs, from Abraham even through the twelve patriarchs never give them so much as a piece of ground upon which to set their foot? This was during a period of some 550 years, from about 2000 B.C. till 1450 B.C. It was at the latter date that Israel took possession of the land under Joshua.

On the contrary, the Lord came to Abraham about eight years after he had come to the land of promise, and tells him in a vision that his people shall be afflicted for four hundred years in the land of Egypt. If the land of Canaan, the earthly country, were so important, why could there be such a long time by the Lord's direction, before Israel would actually possess the land? To this question the Sanhedrists had no more a solution than do the modern-day Chiliasts. *Israeli* certainly is not the fulfilment of the promise! What blind zeal to make ado over the land as such whereas the clear direction and intent and design of God in all of Israel's history was to give Abraham the heavenly land of Canaan, to wit, a new heaven and a new earth. The writer to the Hebrews makes much of this when he says, "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city". (Hebrews 11:14-16)

For the Abrahamic promise is not carnal, national and earthly. On the contrary it is very spiritual, encompassing the church universal, and is heavenly as is evident from the *covenant of circumcision*. This shows that not the carnal seed is counted as inheriting the promises, but rather the spiritual seed who are justified by faith. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but rather he is a Jew who is one inwardly, whose circumcision is a matter of the heart. (Romans 2:28,29) The children who are born to Abraham: Isaac, Jacob, the twelve patriarchs are in this covenant of circumcision. And with this covenant of circumcision does not belong the earthly land, except as a type and shadow of the heavenly. The element therefore of the "covenant of circumcision" is introduced by God to reveal the *redemptive nature* of the Promise: it meant to save His people from their sins, to justify the godless, to sanctify a people unto the Lord!

Thus, and thus only, is it evident that Israel must go into Egypt through the providence of the Lord: to keep a great people alive.

Stephen makes the point convincingly that there was a promise of God and the Covenant of God long before there was such a thing as "this place" at Jerusalem, the temple made with hands, and that the place of Moses will needs have to be subservient to the Covenant of circumcision. He who understands and honors the promise of Abraham concerning the land, the covenant of circumcision, and all that this implied, he and he only honors Moses and this place, and will be in a position to see that Moses and this place have a great value, but then a *passing* value, to make room for the things which abide forever.

The law which came 430 years after the promise cannot disannul it! (Galatians 3:17)

The Promise to Abraham is the pattern set by God! It is the eternal reality of the things of salvation!

The Argument From God's Word To and Concerning Moses Acts 7:17-38

In every court the historicity and factualness of the evidence is of paramount importance. The evidence must be fact and not fiction. So too here in this court before the Sanhedrists. Stephen is accused of speaking against Moses and the temple, saying that the temple ordinances had been changed.

Stephen meets the charge head-on. He first of all gives the history of Moses from birth till the time when

he stands on the Mount of God receiving the lively oracles of God. He is speaking of the historical Moses spoken of in the book of Exodus. And after he has made it abundantly clear in the record that he is speaking of the very Moses concerning whom he is accused of gainsaying, he goes on to show that he is in perfect accord with the word of God to Moses.

He most emphatically speaks of Moses as "*this* is that Moses". See verses 35-38 where no less than five times Stephen in rapid succession speaks of "this Moses", "this one", etc. Well, this Moses whom God raised up to deliver Israel stated clearly and explicitly that he, Moses, was not the end. The law-giving was not the final and gracious form in which God would speak to Israel. That form at Sinai was so awesome and terrifying that Moses said "I exceedingly fear and tremble". Nay, there would be a better covenant based upon better promises. This very Moses said to Israel "a prophet shall the Lord raise up from the brethren like unto me". That referred to the Christ to come. Then would the promise of God to Abraham be for all the heirs, also from among the Gentiles. And well may the Sanhedrists give heed. For this is the very Moses who stood before God in the holy mount.

Moses himself spake of the change which would come by God Himself. Stephen does not speak against Moses. He honors Moses and rightly interprets the Scriptures.

Thus the law serves only till the Seed should come.

And then the temple will be indeed be destroyed but will be built without hands in three days.

IN HIS FEAR—

The Beginning of Wisdom -4-

by Rev. J. A. Heys

The beginning of wisdom we receive from God.

Even as the rays of the sun are the rays that proceed from the sun, so the fear of the Lord is the fear that proceeds from the Lord and is instilled in our souls by His Spirit and grace.

Even that which we call natural wisdom, or if you will, wisdom in the sphere of things natural, comes from God. There are talented men and women in the world. There are those who have brilliant minds, even though they are under the power of sin. They know how to get that which they seek. They desire earthly carnal objects and know what means to employ and how to employ them to get their goal.

There are men who understand the laws according to which God has created this world. Surgeons and

physicians know so much about the body and the function and structure of its members and organs. Scientists know the elements from which the objects round about us are made; the course of the stars in the sky; the conditions of our weather and the line where tornadoes and hail are apt to strike; the strength of metals; the nourishment of foods; and a host of other items of truth and how to use them for the physical good of man.

There are brilliant statesmen. There are men who are mathematical giants. Men there are that can delve with their minds into deep and abstract problems and matters. There are legal minds and judges who have great ability to ferret out the truth and to get from the criminal that which he has been trying to hide. Here and there men are found who stand head and shoulders

above the common man in his mental ability and so-called natural wisdom.

From whence comes all this ability and these talents? Surely we do foolishly if we attribute this to man. And such fools there are in goodly number in the world today. How wrong and how foolish it would be for the moon to boast of its light. It is full of light such a small part of the year. The rest of the time it has, even from our point of view only part of its light and in varying degrees. And always it is half dark because the light of the sun never strikes what is its back side, from our point of view. The moon is a creature that receives light and has no light in itself. No different is it with man either as far as natural light or spiritual light is concerned. Man has no light in himself and can never boast of producing light. Of The Word Which became flesh John says in John 1:9, "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And John is quick to inform us that he himself is not that Light but was sent to "bear witness of the Light." John 1:6-8.

The Apostle Paul asks a pointed question of those who were puffed up with conceit and pride, as though they were suns which did not depend upon anything or anyone outside themselves and as though they did shine with their own wisdom, knowledge and talents. Paul asks them in I Corinthians 4:7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" Conceit and pride are folly. We sing from the Psalms so beautifully and correctly:

All that I am I owe to Thee,
Thy wisdom, Lord, has fashioned me;
I give my Maker thankful praise,
Whose wondrous works my soul amaze.
Ere into being I was bro't,
Thy eye did see and in Thy tho't
My life in all its perfect plan
Was ordered ere my days began. Psalm 139.

The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, never puffs a man up, as though he or his children have anything in themselves or are anything by themselves, but stands instead in awe of the great and majestic God of our salvation. The lie is always folly. False doctrines are characterized exactly by the fact that they belittle God, ascribe His power and glory to the creature, are bold to place the creature before God and to change the Lord of all into a servant of the creature. And even though Scripture clearly states that we are saved by grace and not by works, insomuch that faith, which is the means whereby we are saved, is the gift of God — so that we are but the moon that receives it from Christ the light of the world — there are those who foolishly speak of that frail, dependent creature of dust, dead in sins and trespasses, as having some light in himself so that he can see the wisdom of the salvation in Christ and can either frustrate the living God in His desire to save or give Him the permission to do so. THAT we state unequivocally is not the fear of the Lord and is utter folly as well as blasphemy! O that men would have that fear of the Lord according to

which they would stand in awe before Him and not dare to ascribe any of His power and prerogatives to the creature! O that men would cease to elevate the creature above the Creator in the matter of salvation.

That is one of the follies of false doctrines. Many are ready to ascribe to the Almighty God every breath of our earthly life. The church-world on the whole is ready to agree that physically in God we live and move and have all of our being. But when you come to the matter of living spiritually before Him as children of His Kingdom, they insist that man has something that he can give to God. In Him we do not live and move and have all of our spiritual being, according to their stand, whether they want to admit this or not. Their ALL is not in Christ. The will to be saved they have apart from Christ. And the folly of this is apparent in that it disagrees with Christ, the light of the world and second person of the all-wise and triune God. Jesus says in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for apart from me (that is the original) ye can do nothing." Nothing is exactly NOTHING! The branch always comes out of the vine, owes its life to the vine and has nothing — not one piece of its fruit — to give to the vine that the vine did not supply it with the power to produce. And we would be bigger and mightier than The True Vine? Nay, all that we are spiritually, *all our desire to be saved*, our knowledge of our guilt and sin, of the way of salvation *we receive*, and for it we owe God everlasting thanks.

Let us, for the sake of argument, say that we do not deny that the sinner receives from God the power to desire salvation. Let us say that we concede that man receives every spiritual breath from God as well as every physical breath of life. When, then, we say that man must first will salvation and pray for it before God does anything, we are not denying that this comes from God. We simply do not believe that man lost every spark of spiritual life. He retained some glimmerings of natural light, as the Canons of Dordrecht state it in III, IV article 4. O, but read the whole article! Let us quote the part that is usually left off but explains the first part: "But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him (man, since the fall) to a *saving knowledge* of God, and to *true conversion*, that he is incapable of using it aright *even in things natural and civil*. Nay, further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways *renders wholly polluted*, and *holds it in unrighteousness*, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God." The underscoring is ours. One can have his own opinion as to why this was left unquoted in 1924 in the "common grace" controversy, while the first part of the article was quoted to try to prove a certain "civic righteousness" on the part of the unregenerated.

Even then, apart from this Confession, with which many do not agree, is it the fear of the Lord, is it awe and reverence before Him to call Him a liar? He told Adam that *in the day* that he ate, he would DIE! Adam did not become spiritually sick and weak and even paralyzed. He DIED! He became utterly incapable of desiring anything spiritually good anymore. He could

not will to be saved. He became a fool. The corrupt, impossible goal of becoming like God he continues foolishly to seek. He thinks that with the creatures God has made for His own glory, he (man) can succeed in robbing God of that glory and obtain it for himself. And in spite of inevitable death he views his works and achievements here below and deceives himself into thinking that he has succeeded to a degree, until he opens his eyes in hell!

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wise is the man who knows Him as GOD and stands in awe and reverence before Him.

But that fear of the Lord is the fear that we receive from the Lord. As we pointed out at the outset, by implication, the rays of the sun are the rays of light that come from the sun. Thus the fear of the Lord is the fear that proceeds from the Lord and lights us up as the moon is enlightened by the natural light of the sun. Our only hope of having the fear of the Lord is that it pleases God to shine down upon us. As the psalmist puts it so beautifully -- for he had the fear of the Lord and was not tainted with Arminianism and its lie -- "Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." Psalm 80:19. The beginning of wisdom begins with God and not with man.

Whether, therefore, our children will receive that beginning of wisdom depends entirely on Him of Whom James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God Who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." James 1:5. Here is the fountain of all wisdom. If we have it, we will have to receive it out of God. And we will receive it from Him through Christ, for "In Whom (Christ) are hid all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3. Again, of Christ it is said in I Corinthians 1:24 that Christ is "the power of God, and wisdom of God." It all depends, then, on whether God has chosen us in Christ and whether He sent Christ to die for our sins. Otherwise we do not deserve it, have not right to it and will not receive it. Therefore James tells us to pray or "ask in faith". And that means in the name of Christ and in faith of what He has done.

Nevertheless, we have a calling. It all depends upon the Overflowing Fountain of all good. But He does not treat us like stocks and blocks. He speaks to us. He exhorts and admonishes us. He calls us to sow the seed. The seed -- which is the Word -- we re-

ceive from Him. The life in that seed is put there by Him. The warmth and the moisture come from Him and must be sent at the right time and in the right amounts. Yet He calls us to sow and uses us to instruct our covenant seed. Whether the seed shall sprout in the hearts of our children, whether they will believe, whether there shall be a harvest all depends upon God. He must give that fear to our children, or they will never have it. It is the fear of the Lord in every sense of the word.

And wisdom depends upon knowledge. Facts and the truth are the tools that wisdom must use. Even as the gifted artist can do nothing without his brushes, paints and canvass, so a man born with -- or rather more properly *reborn* with -- the fear of God must know the Scripture. He must know God as He is revealed in Scripture in order to stand in that awe and reverence before Him that produces obedience and child-like trust in Him.

These facts of truth, this revelation of God as our Creator -- and as the psalmist declares it in Psalm 19:14, our "strength (or rock) and redeemer" -- we must teach to the child with the power which God has given us. No unbeliever can do that, and no unbeliever ever desires to do that. He does not want your children to have the fear of the Lord. He does not, therefore desire, nor is he able, to see your children have the beginning of wisdom. He wants -- as a tool of Satan -- to end all such wisdom.

You see him at his satanic work in banishing all prayer from the class room. You see him operate behind the scenes when he strives to put another burden on the churches by taking away their tax exemption and tax-free holding of properties used for religious purposes. You see him do that in Evolutionism and Atheism. You see him do that in barring the believer from jobs and work unless he reveals fear of the godless organizations that trample God's laws under feet and practice the evil that might makes right, and that revolt and rebellion are wise and good.

And you still send your child(ren) to men who have not the beginning of wisdom? That certainly is not a wise move to make. In His fear means in true wisdom. Let that fear be the principle that guides you in your own behaviour, and certainly in seeking instruction and a training for your children by seeking an educational system that has at least the beginning of wisdom. It will reveal that you have the beginning of wisdom.

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TRYING THE SPIRITS—

ARMINIANISM

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

The system of religion known as Arminianism originally came from Rome. It was also meant to, and does, lead to Rome. Indeed, Arminianism is the point at which Romanism and Pelagianism meet. But then Arminianism is also the back alley to Atheism. It received its notorious sobriquet from its namesake Jacob Arminius, pastor of the Reformed church in Amsterdam, and later professor of theology at Leyden. He had been educated in the Reformation doctrine of Calvin, but regarded Calvin's teaching especially with reference to free will, predestination, election, reprobation, grace and perseverance, as being too severe. A man bold and enterprising, he soon began to let it be known that he was not in sympathy with the received doctrine of the Reformed churches. He began publicly and privately to vehemently attack the reputation and authority of the renowned theologians of the Reformed church, including Calvin, Zanchius, Beza, Ursinus and Martyr. He especially put forth the opinions that the love of God is extended to all men and that Christ died for every soul of humankind.

Where did Arminius get this philosophy, out of his own head? Not at all: he picked up some of it from Rome while conferring with the Loyolans, then imbibed more from the Socinians while in Poland. One of his main reasons for discarding predestination and propagating his principles was to lay down a basis for brotherly relations with and eventual return to the Romish church.

The Arminians, cohorts and supporters of this heretic, were also known as Remonstrants. They rallied in large numbers like an underground movement to the ensign of Arminius and entering into a conspiracy, formed what they called a *body* separate from the rest of the Reformed ministers, and perpetrated a schism in the Reformed churches. They became known as Remonstrants when they presented to the states-general a libellous document which they called a remonstrance, in which they stated their grievances and sought relief. Along with their slanderous protest, the Arminians also presented their so-called articles of the Remonstrants. These articles contain the heterodox tenets of Arminianism. He who preaches in harmony with them is a false prophet. It should also be noted in regard to them that B. B. Warfield in his *The Plan of Salvation* places Wesleyan (Evangelical) Arminianism under the general heading, "Supernaturalistic," but that Remonstrantism he categorizes "Naturalistic." A cursory perusal of the following Remonstrant articles will reveal that this judgment is correct.

"That God, from all eternity, determined to bestow salvation on those He foresaw would persevere unto the end; and to inflict everlasting punishments on those who should continue in their unbelief, and resist His divine succours, so that election was conditional, and reprobation in like manner the result of foreseen infidelity and persevering wickedness.

"That Jesus Christ, by His sufferings and death, made an atonement for the sins of all mankind in general, and of every individual in particular; that however, none but those who believe in him can be partakers of divine benefits." In other words, God's intention was universal, but the efficacy of His purpose may be restricted by man's refusal to believe.

"That this grace is offered to all, and does not force men to act against their inclinations, but may be resisted and rendered ineffectual by the perverse will of the impenitent sinner.

"That the regenerate may lose true justifying faith, fall from a state of grace, and die in their sins."

The above articles of Arminianism are today readily swallowed as the gospel truth, and the majority of professing Christians could not for the life of them see anything wrong in them. Many who claim to be Calvinistic are thoroughly blinded to the dangers of Arminianism, are completely sold on its popular conceptions, and give plain evidence of this by their Arminianistic vernacular, their preference for Arminian evangelists and preachers, as well as their support of Arminian organizations and enterprises. They would not only agree with the Remonstrants, but they would also agree with the following expressions of a former "Presbyterian" minister. "The Rev. Albert Barnes in his sermon entitled 'The Way of Salvation' expresses himself thus: 'This atonement was for all men. It was an offering made for the race. We judge that He died for all. He tasted death for every man. He is the propitiation for the sins of the world. He came that whosoever would believe on Him should not perish, but have eternal life. The full benefit of the atonement is offered to all men. In perfect sincerity God makes the offer. He has commissioned His servants to go and preach the gospel—that is, the good news that salvation is provided for them—to every creature. He that does not this—that goes to offer the gospel to a part only, to elect persons only, or that supposes that God offers the gospel only to a portion of mankind—violates his commission, practically charges God with insincerity, makes himself wise above what is written, and brings great reproach on the holy cause of redemption. The offer of salvation is not made by

man, but by God. It is His commission, and it is His solemn charge that the sincere offer of heaven should be made to every creature. I stand as the messenger of God. . .that, if any perish, it will be because they choose to die, and not because they are straitened in God. I have no feeling for any other gospel. I have no right hand of fellowship to extend for any scheme that does not say that God sincerely offers all the bliss of heaven to every guilty, wandering child of Adam.'

"From this abstract, who would suppose that its author was not an Arminian of the boldest type? Here is exhibited a general, a *universal* atonement for every child of Adam--a provision to be sincerely tendered to *all* mankind. Is not this real Wesleyan Arminianism!" (T. N. Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 249-50). It is, indeed. It took an Arminian to spot that this is not Presbyterian language; that it is not Calvinistic, but very un-Reformed. It is the sophistical line of John Wesley, not the biblical line of John Calvin. It was the former who taught that God is a God of love, not to some, but to all men; that as the Father and Creator of all, He stands in the same relation to all, loves them all; that He not only loves all men without distinction, but all men without exception. He claimed that a particular love of God to the elect was not in harmony with man's innate knowledge of God. He believed that Christ died for absolutely all men; that he is to be offered to all; that all are to be invited to come to Him. He preached a sufficient grace given to all men to influence the human mind in favor of God's salvation (Buck's *Theol. Dic.*). Thus Wesley furthered the semi-Pelagianism of Arminius and the Remonstrants. So true is this that we agree with A.M. Toplady when he said, "Was I a believer of the Pythagorean metempsychosis, I should certainly conceive that the soul of Arminius was transmigrated into that particular system of flesh and blood known by the name of John Wesley." For his Arminianism he was, as today Billy Graham is, deservedly extolled by some of the Romish church.

The doctrinal position of Billy Graham* is principally that of the above articles of the Remonstrants, and exactly that of the above Wesleyan Arminianism. He holds to free will, resistible grace, universal redemption, conversion before faith and faith before regeneration. He believes man to be merely very far gone from original righteousness, but not wholly gone. He preaches that man is a sinner, but he omits the total depravity of man. His Arminian free will is evi-

dent in his *Peace With God*, p. 49, where he states that man has a "gift of free choice." Now anyone who believes the faith of the Reformers will "reject all that is repugnant to this, concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave!" (Belgic Conf., XIV). What does Graham mean by "free choice"? This, that it "is meaningless if there is only one possible path to follow" (ibid., p. 44). This is nothing more than that Remonstrant doctrine that man "is able to will and to choose, or not to will and not to choose, all manner of good presented to" him. "This is an innovation and an error." (Canons, III-IV, R. III). For "all men are conceived in sin. . .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" (ibid., III). This being the very truth of the pure gospel, then the mere natural man has absolutely "only one possible path to follow," and that is not to return to God, but to go farther down the road of death and bondage.

But Graham, like Erasmus, is enamored with the Pelagian conception of man's will. "We have a chance to choose between the Devil's clever promises and God's sure Word" (PWG, p. 48). Not so, but "that others who are called by the gospel obey the call, and are converted, is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others, equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion, as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but it must be wholly ascribed to God" (Canons, III-IV, 10). More modern Remonstrantism follows. "The same two paths that God set before Adam still lie before us" (PWG, 49), i.e., we have "freedom to choose or reject, freedom to obey God's commands or to go contrary to them" (p.44). . . We are still free to choose (p.49). . .Never is there a moment when you cannot deliberately choose to go with one or the other," i.e., with God or the Devil (p.60). Here is positive proof that Billy Graham is Pelagian, a thorough-going Arminian, and far from the biblical, and therefore the Calvinistic position. The most popular and the most dazzling representative of false ecumenicism and Arminianism today is Evangelist Billy Graham.

*See the series on Billy Graham in *Beacon Lights*, Jan. to June, 1964.

IN MEMORIAM

We wish to express our Christian sympathy with our fellow-elder, Kenneth Lanning in the loss of his brother

JOHN LANNING

But glorious is the hope of the Christian.
We know that our death is life eternal.
Jehovah bless the bereaved family.

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Consistory
Rev. Gerrit Vos, Pres.
Donald Dykstra, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Board of the Society for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education expresses herewith its deepest sympathy to Wayne Lanning, one of its members, in the loss of his Father

JOHN L. LANNING

May he and his family find comfort in the Word of God which assures us that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints". Psalm 116:15.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD—

(Psalm 68:11)

Sovereign Election, Particular Atonement, And Missions

by Rev. C. Hanko

Blessed be God!

In his epistle to the Ephesians, the great missionary, the apostle Paul, approaches the church with the beautiful doxology, Blessed be *God!*

One cannot help but wonder how many sermons begin on that plane today. This is especially true because the present day preaching has long departed from a God-centered gospel, and even from a Christ-centered gospel to a man-centered gospel. It is said that the preaching must be timely in the sense that it discusses all the social and political problems of the day; it must have as its purpose to improve social conditions, and to "win souls for Christ", or to bring people to a "decision" for Christ. And the complaint is often raised that this can never be accomplished by an emphasis on the exalted theme of the apostle Paul that finds its keynote in the joyful praise: Blessed be God.

As a result, the doctrine of election is hardly mentioned, even though our fathers spoke of it as the cornerstone, the heart of the church. Too often predestination is referred to as belonging to the hidden things of God, and therefore should not be a part of the contents of a sermon. Or again, sovereign election is said to be in conflict with the preaching of the general, well-meant gospel-offer to all nations and individuals. And it is even repeatedly stated that this is a cold, meaningless doctrine that contradicts the responsibility of man, causes the listeners to become careless and profane, and actually hinders all sincere mission endeavors. This objection is raised so often, that by this time it is simply accepted as an established fact even in Reformed circles, that sovereign predestination and missionary preaching are mutually exclusive. You cannot maintain the one and also the other. You must preach a universal love of God or you fail to preach the gospel.

And it follows that everyone who slights the doctrine of election must also deny particular atonement. No one will question the fact that sovereign election and particular atonement go hand in hand. If you deny the one, you must also deny the other. If, for example, you were to try to maintain that God elects a certain number of people to eternal salvation, but that Christ died for all, you would be forced to the conclusion that some might possibly enter heaven who were not even

elect. And that is an absurdity. But if you adopt the statement, "God loves all men," you must also accept as its corollary, "Christ died for all men." This is also implied in a general, well-meant offer of salvation. And that also leads to absurdity. For if Christ died for all, then in many instances the precious blood of God's only begotten Son was shed in vain! God puts forth every possible effort to save, even wants to save, and makes salvation possible for all men, but is frustrated in His purpose by mere man. God strives for what He cannot attain. But a helpless, disappointed God is the worst of blasphemy!

Scripture teaches the most perfect harmony between God's sovereign election and His particular atonement. Allow me to quote only the triumphant conviction of Paul himself in Romans 8:29,30: "For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

And therefore we can also say with the apostle, "Blessed be God!"

Because He Is The God Of Sovereign Predestination.

This is exactly the gospel that the apostle proclaims to the church in the passage from Ephesians 1 that I referred to before. Let me quote the entire passage: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

No one can fail to notice that the apostle extols our God as blessed forever, because He has blessed us in Jesus Christ. Immediately two things are brought to our attention: First, that God is called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", emphasizing that

all our salvation is from God in Christ from eternity to eternity. Second, that God blesses us in Christ, "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Eternal election is the source and fountain head of all our salvation. This was also the conviction of the fathers of the Reformation. See Canons I, articles 6 and 7.

But then Paul also calls attention to the fact, that our eternal election is rooted in God's predestination. And this predestination finds its deepest cause in the very heart of God, in His distinctive love for His people. The apostle writes, (as the Revised Version correctly translates the text) "He destined us *in love* to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." Who can fail to see that:

God's predestination is rooted in His eternal, peculiar love for His people in Christ.

God's predestination is unto the adoption of sons. Our adoption, our right to be sons, as well as our right to share the blessing of sons, follows solely from eternal good pleasure. Before God we always are sons, always are His peculiar possession, always are the heirs of all His riches in Christ Jesus.

God's predestination is, finally, according to the good pleasure of His will. Every single elect has his own place in that one harmonious unity of the Body of Christ. Every elect, to change the figure, is a stone in God's temple, each one fitting exactly in his divinely appointed place. Out of the stone heap of a fallen human race, where we lay as so many ugly, misshapen, filthy stones, God removes us by His sovereign grace to give us each our own place in His temple to show forth the glory of His Name. When every stone has been fitted in, and the temple is complete, there will be no stones left that were intended to be placed in the edifice, nor will there be any ugly gaps that would eternally deface the unity and harmony of God's Church.

According to the second chapter of this same epistle (verses 17-22) the preaching of the Word serves exactly that purpose throughout history, that the Son of God may gather His Church, erect the temple of the living God to the praise of His glorious grace in the Beloved.

Let anyone dare to say after carefully reading the epistle to the Ephesians that election is a cold, colorless doctrine, that causes its hearers to become careless and profane instead of filling them with holy and prayerful adoration to repeat after the apostle: "Blessed be God!"

BECAUSE PREDESTINATION IS THE BASIS FOR OUR REDEMPTION.

In the same sentence in which the apostle extols the sovereign electing love of God, he also speaks of our redemption. For in verse 7 we are told, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." That "in whom" refers back to Christ, Whose God and Father has chosen us in Him, in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. God paid

the price of our redemption in His Son on Golgotha. God sealed our adoption papers with the blood of the cross. There can be no doubt about that. But that means that God redeems us, because He loves us, and because in love He has predestinated us unto eternal life in Christ. Sovereign election and particular atonement can never be separated, because our election is the basis for the atonement of the cross. In this the apostle glories, and we glory with Him. For blessed be that God, of Whom, through Whom, and unto Whom are all things!

THIS GOSPEL OF THE LOVE OF GOD COMPELS THE PREACHER.

Paul himself was compelled to preach that gospel, according to his own testimony. He writes in I Cor. 9:16, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." This was not an arbitrary whim on his part, nor a mere outward compulsion. But as is evident from all his epistles, Paul experienced in his own heart and life the glorious wonder of the love of God revealed to him in Christ Jesus. Even that was sufficient to cause him to glory, as he writes to the churches of Galatia, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Yet when he writes of the necessity that is laid upon him, he refers to his calling as an apostle of Christ to proclaim the whole counsel of God. In his office he experienced the same compelling power that moved the prophets of the old dispensation, who were so filled with the Spirit of Christ that they eagerly testified to those to whom they were sent: "So saith the Lord." Paul also was under that divine constraint so that he could not escape it. It was the "must" that he had to fulfill, lest God's woe or condemnation come upon him. And yet it was not a burden that he bore reluctantly; it was a calling that he was privileged to carry out, for he counted it a privilege to be "a servant (slave) of Jesus Christ", Whose brandmark of ownership he carried about with him in the many bodily scars he had received for the sake of the gospel.

Even the contents of his message, no less than his calling, was such an impelling power in his life, that he travelled untiringly through the then known world, declaring that gospel wherever he could. He even spoke of a strong desire to go as far as Spain. Romans 15:24, 28.

Peter expressed that same necessity already when he stood before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and defiantly told them, "We cannot but speak of the things which we saw and heard." (Acts 4:20)

And our Lord Himself spoke repeatedly of His "must" to carry out the mandate laid upon Him by the Father. He did not hesitate to say that He laid down His life for His sheep. He added, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. *My Father, which gave them me* (election), is

greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." But to the unbelieving Jews that opposed Him He said, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." (See John 10:26-29).

This same "must" impels any sincere preacher of the gospel, just because the gospel never loses its dynamic power. The Word of God is never dependent upon mere man, but is God's own power unto salvation. Therefore Paul also confidently declares to the church at Rome, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to

the Greek." (1:16). And after he has made his powerful exposition of the sovereign good pleasure of God in showing mercy to some and hardening others through the gospel, he adds, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 9, 10)

All of which he concludes with a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things?"

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

("O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Ps. 96:9a)

THANKFULNESS

CONCLUDED

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

Our communion form delineates the walk of gratitude of the christian as the laying aside unfeignedly of all enmity, hatred, and envy and a firm resolution to walk in true love and peace with the neighbor. Such conduct evidences true thankfulness to God because it is only the regenerated child of God who can and will do these things and in the practice of them he is deeply conscious that "by the grace of God I am what I am and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain".(1) Human nature cannot and will not submit to God's ordinance of love for "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."(2) All the works of the flesh are characterized by "enmity, hatred and envy", the very things which the child of God strives by grace to put off. Thankfulness, which is the fruit of regeneration, springs to manifestation in a life of uprightness before God.

The essence of that life is love and in the concrete manifestation of the love of God in our walk therefore lies the proof that we are born of God and are made partakers of His communion and that of His saints. In the living experience of that love lies the conscious enjoyment of all the blessings of salvation while the absence of that love creates total spiritual vacuum in the consciousness of man.

It is not particularly striking then that the Word of God in countless places emphasizes the importance of *love* in the conversation of the saints. Jesus tells us that it constitutes the core of the entire law of God in that well known summary: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first

and the great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."(3)

The elect of God are enjoined in Colossians 3:12-14 to "put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." But this is not enough for to this large order is added "*And above all these things* put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." Love supersedes all the rest. There can be no kindness, forbearance, forgiveness or any spiritual practice without love.

In this light we would also consider that classic passage on love that is found in first Corinthians 13. Though we speak with the tongue of men and of angels, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, have all knowledge and faith, give our goods to the poor and our bodies to be burned; if we lack LOVE we are nothing and all these things profit us nothing.

This is basically because without love we do not have God. GOD IS LOVE.(4) We note this text because in the present connection it is especially significant for there is added: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." And although this is certainly true as applied to our entire life in the midst of the present world, it is especially true in application to the Lord's Supper. God communes at His table with His people in love and there He bestows upon them the riches of His grace as they dwell in Him and He in them. That is exactly why it is so important that in our self-examination we discover within ourselves

that spiritual desire and determination to walk in love with our neighbor. This love is the proper expression of our thankfulness to God for the apostle John also writes: "Beloved, if God so loved us, (so as to send His Son to be the propitiation for our sins) we ought also to love one another. . . . If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is made perfect in us."(4)

We cannot walk in enmity and hate of the brother, refuse to seek reconciliation with the brother, bear a grudge in our soul against the brother and refuse to see him about it and expect to have fellowship with God. Love, which is the emulation of the virtue of God Himself, demands another way. Love is "kind, it envieth not, it vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."(6) Love admonishes and seeks to save always. It is reflected practically in the attitude of which James speaks: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."(7).

Do we so love?

That is the criterion by which the genuineness of our professed gratitude is to be gauged. Without love our gratitude is carnality. Verbal expressions of thanksgiving without love are but so many empty sounds. That is love that responds to the commandments of God in the whole of life and out of the doing of His Word comes forth a true expression of thanksgiving.

The Application Of The Keys Of The Kingdom

"All those, then, who are thus disposed, God will certainly receive in mercy, and count them worthy partakers of the table of His Son Jesus Christ." With this statement the communion form continues to explain how the keys of the Kingdom of God are applied to the participants at the communion table. The statement itself is positive and assures the true believers that God will certainly dwell with them in the communion of His Son Jesus Christ. They will receive the benefits of this holy institution and they may eat and drink by faith in the assurance that God has given unto them eternal life. The phrase, "who are thus disposed", does not refer alone to the part of the self-examination that deals with the matter of gratitude but it includes all of the foregoing. Those who know their sin and misery, are conscious of their own worthlessness; those who believe that Christ Jesus has unconditionally merited perfect righteousness for them and who, therefore, in the experience of that salvation are truly thankful unto God, God will receive in mercy at His table. Of course He will, for it is God himself Who draws such in the way of that salvation unto His table where He feeds and nourishes them unto eternal life.

But there is more. There is an opposite side to this picture. "On the contrary", states our Form, "those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts, eat and drink judgment to themselves." The sacra-

ments are subsidiaries of the preaching of the Word and the effect of both is the same. Even as in the preaching of the Word there is always a two-fold effect upon the hearers, so is there a two-fold working of God through the sacraments. The Word is a saviour of life unto life or of death unto death. At the table of the Lord we either eat and drink by faith unto the enjoyment of our salvation in Christ, or we eat and drink judgment unto ourselves. The sacrament never leaves us totally unaffected. It is not so that we can come away from the Lord's table as though we had not been there. The Word of God speaks to us through the holy sacrament and it says one of two things: it proclaims either the truth of justification by faith which affords us conscious peace with God, or it declares to us that we are the objects of God's holy wrath and disfavor. Such is the implication of the term "judgment" here. It contains the idea of "condemnation" and, consequently, it is a judgment of God in which He finds and declares us to be guilty according to His law of love.

Therefore it is necessary to warn and admonish those who are defiled with sin "to keep themselves from the table of the Lord, and declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ."

Concerning this paragraph of the Communion Form we wish to make the following observations:

First, the admonition to abstain from the Lord's Supper is not directed to all who at some time or another have defiled themselves with the sins here enumerated. Rather, it speaks of those who live in these sins, refuse to part with them and in whom therefore there are no marks of conversion. Those who have sinned and repented of their sins are spoken of a bit later.

Secondly, the list of sins given here is not intended as a complete list of censurable sins or sins for which one will be excommunicated from the fellowship of the church. Neither is it simply a catalog of sins that happened to be common in the days when this communion form was written. One would miss the point altogether who would attempt to clear himself for admission to the table of the Lord by attempting to show that he is not guilty of the *specific* sins mentioned. We do well to observe that in general this list of sins follows the order of and covers the ten commandments of the law of God and in that light we may conclude that the thrust of the admonition here is that all those who walk in defiance of God's Word are warned to abstain from the holy supper. This is further indicated by the last thing mentioned in this series, namely, "and all who lead offensive lives". This cannot be taken in general as though the meaning is that all offense is sin. It is unavoidable that the walk of the christian in the midst of the world will and does give offense to those who love iniquity but this is not meant. The offense is that which results from violating God's Word. God is the offended One. The life of the sinner is offensive to Him. He never looks upon such lives with a "little favor" but He abhors it utterly. And, thus, also all the sins previously enumerated are those that cause such offense. The list could without difficulty be greatly enlarged but this is not necessary. It is

sufficient to show from these examples that those who in their walk of life act contrary to the commands of God, thereby demonstrate that they have no part in the Kingdom of Christ and therefore cannot be received at His table. To allow this is to desecrate the Lord's Table and thereby bring the wrath of God upon the entire congregation.(8)

In the fourth place, the Form explicitly states that they shall abstain from the Lord's Table "while they continue in such sins". The way is open for repentance and a turning from sin but as long as one walks wilfully in sin and then seeks place at the table of the Lord, he can do so only to the aggravation of his own judgment. His condemnation becomes heavier.

Fifthly, this warning and admonition is not designed to instill fear or terror into the hearts of those that would seek admission to the table of the Lord. Among some people you find the notion quite prevalent that the table of the Lord is only for people

of God who are virtually perfect. This is a serious mistake and, if the self-examination were then properly conducted, it would lead to the practical conclusion that no one could ever come to the table of the Lord. It is well to be cautious, and in our preparation for the celebration of the Lord's Supper we cannot be too careful that there remains wilful sin in us; but the fact that sin is still present in us may not deject our hearts. We exactly come to the Supper as sinners, as redeemed sinners, as thankful sinners and concerning this we hope, D.V. to write a little more next time.

(1) I Corinthians 15:10

(2) Romans 8:7

(3) Matthew 22:37-40

(4) I John 4:16

(5) I John 4:11, 12

(6) I Corinthians 13:4-6

(7) James 5:19, 20

(8) Lord's Day XXX, Heidelberg Catechism

ALL AROUND US—

The New Morality

by Rev. H. Hanko

THE NEW MORALITY

It is apparent to everyone that our generation is characterized by a serious and frightening decline in morality and a consequent increase in crime, lawlessness, immorality and dishonesty. While no doubt many reasons for this can be mentioned, one major factor that must be considered is the increased emphasis on "the new morality".

This new morality is a complete about face on the question of Christian ethics. What has been taught for generations is now abandoned; something new has been substituted in its place. This new theory of ethics has come not from the world, but sadly enough, from the Church.

What is this "new morality"?

There are several aspects to the answer.

First of all, the new morality advocates that the entire law of God is of little or no value to us in this modern 20th century. The entire law as given in Scripture (including especially the ten commandments) is to be abandoned as hopelessly out of date. It cannot possibly serve as a rule of life and conduct. This is not to say that the law of God can be burned. We ought to keep some record of it. But its importance is something quite different from the rule of our life which Scripture insists that it is. This law is really only an opinion of what some ancient people once thought was good and proper to do. Many years ago the Hebrews were

convinced that acceptable conduct could be defined in this law contained in the Scriptures. But this was merely their opinion—one opinion among many. And, while perhaps it was adequate for those days, we err seriously if we think that this law is equally binding upon us in our day. We can perhaps profitably study this ancient body of legislation; but not in order to find in it regulations for our life. It is merely a historical curiosity which aids us in discovering what ancient people believed; it is an old bit of lore from bygone years which has approximately the same value as an Egyptian mummy exhumed from some dusty tomb.

It is apparent that such a view of the law stems from a particular view of Scripture. Scripture is not, according to this view, the infallibly inspired record of God's revelation. It is only a very ancient book filled with myths, superstitions, stories, teachings and lore of a people who lived in the misty past and who recorded their religious experiences, their beliefs and opinions in a collection of books preserved till today. The Bible has about the same value as Homer's "Iliad".

And this view of Scripture comes in turn from a particular view of God Himself. We have more than once mentioned in these columns that modern theological liberalism denies the very basic doctrines of the truth. It denies the trinity, the divinity of Christ, the blood of atonement, the existence of heaven and hell,

the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven. This new morality comes to us hand in hand with this kind of heretical theological thinking. Those who maintain that this new morality is the only kind of ethics which can speak to our modern age are the same ones who deny all that the Church has ever confessed.

Hence we find a man like Bishop Robinson who shook the ecclesiastical world with his book "Honest To God" promoting this new morality. He insists, for example, that "there is not a whole list of things which are 'sins' *per se*"; that any conceivable act is right if only the situation is right; that there are "no unbreakable rules" in all the world. And he is also the one who so openly denied every truth of Scripture.

But to return to this new morality and its views; what does this theory put in the place of the law of God as a norm of conduct? The answer to this question is, negatively, that no single act of which man is capable is, *of itself*, right or wrong. Any given act can be, under the right circumstances, perfectly proper and good. Stealing can be right; murder can be right; lying can be right; civil disobedience can be right; idolatry can be right; even prostitution, fornication, adultery, incest can be right. What counts is not the act, but the circumstances under which it is done. The situation must determine the rightness or wrongness of what man does. The question must be asked: Why does a man steal? Under what circumstances does a man murder? What is the reason for his civil disobedience? What is the occasion for his fornication? In what situation did he commit adultery? And the answer to this question will determine whether what he did is right or wrong, a sin or a very good thing.

Thirdly, this brings us to the question: What determines the right circumstances? What proper occasion is there to commit murder or to steal or to fornicate? The answer to this question is very simple: one must *love*. That is all. If one loves enough, anything he does is good. Love determines whether his deed is sin or a good work. If one love, no matter what he does, it is well. If on the contrary, he hates, then he does bad. Love enough and prostitution, murder, gross immorality, crime becomes legitimate and acceptable conduct. We must not condemn stealing and lying as sins in themselves before a man ever does these things; we must wait until he does them and then ask whether the man loved. We must not condemn fornication among young people before the thing is done; we must ask only if they love. Under the right circumstances all these acts are in perfect keeping with the genius of Christianity.

Presumably this also means that the worst crimes of history can pass muster by the Church if only they were done for the right reasons. The terrible persecutions of the Church which history was written in the blood of countless martyrs is evidently good conduct on the part of those who did the butchering. The slaying of thousands by the Nazi regime in Germany is acceptable provided it was done out of love. The godless atheism of Russian communism is not to be condemned *per se*; the question that needs asking is: Do the

Russians love? Idolatry and worship of images, Sabbath desecration and cursing are perfectly proper if the occasion is proper and the circumstances are right.

It is almost inconceivable that such a view can gain any kind of a hearing. But the hard facts are that it does. Leading theologians, prominent ministers in the churches, important professors and teachers in the schools have adopted this view in one form or another. It is gaining ground rapidly and becoming more and more the accepted teaching in the field of ethics.

Nor is it difficult to imagine what consequences these teachings have in the morals of the country. When a totally depraved man hears all this, it is like music to his ears. He loves sin and cherishes evil with all his heart. He is only restrained from a full breaking out of the vile corruption of his nature by the laws of the land and by the opinion of his fellow man who frowns upon such disorderly and vicious conduct. But if now suddenly the laws are changed and one's fellows begin to talk this way; if such a view is taught him in the school and is preached from the pulpit where he goes to church, what this man is going to do is rather obvious. If he is only told once that he can do as he pleases if only he loves enough, he will do what he pleases -- and what he pleases is beyond mention. He then has his excuse to sin handed to him by his leaders. He is given a passport to lawlessness which he will not hesitate to use.

There are many objections against this view.

Principally this view is a rejection of God and Christ. This is evident from the fact that this new morality goes hand in hand with a denial of the truth. And, in keeping with all this, it is also a rejection of the Scriptures as God's revelation to His people. It is a rejection of an objective moral standard of right and wrong given in God's law. And when this objective moral standard of God's law is forsaken, anarchy and chaos are the results. Then it will be said of this generation as it was said of Israel so long ago: "And there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Further, it can be pointed out that this view has very serious consequences. As a recent editorial in *Christianity Today* put it:

...an ethic in which love is not authoritatively defined but is left to be defined by each person within the situations of life is only one step from tyranny. . . . When the individual is left wholly to himself to decide what legitimate forms his love for another may take, he soon and often becomes a tyrant and his neighbor the victim. . . .

If the new morality were widely adopted, civil law would lose its moral basis and its moral right to bring any man to trial for his deeds. If no conceivable human action is *per se* sinful, if there is no prescriptive ethics, if no one but the person himself can decide in his own situation whether any act is right or wrong, there is no moral basis for prosecuting any man at law for any act he might commit.

But while all this is true, there is a more fundamental fault with this view. That has to do with this matter of "love". It is deceitful when the new morality speaks

of "love" as the determining factor; deceitful because, taken by itself, this is true. Scripture emphasizes again and again that the very essence of the law is love. Where no love is there is no keeping of the law -- no matter how one's external conduct may conform to the outward prescriptions of the law. Love is the perfect fulfillment of the law. Only by way of love does one walk in the path of God's precepts. This is Scripture's emphatic teaching. And, superficially, this sounds exactly like the "new morality".

But is it?

And here we come to the heart of the matter.

Indeed, love is the perfect fulfillment of the whole law of God -- and therefore of all moral conduct. But it must never be forgotten that love is always first of all *love of God*. It is this point which is so deliberately and maliciously overlooked by the new moralists. There is no love at all in "the existential situation", no love towards anyone else in any given circumstances of life divorced from the love of God. All love must be for Him first of all if it is to be love at all. Only loving God can one love his neighbor -- whether that be his children, wife, employer or fellow man. Only out of the wellspring of overflowing love for Him Who is the only adorable Jehovah can there be any kind of love in any relationship of life. Apart from the love of God there just isn't any love at all. Anything else is hate.

And if this is right, then the next step must be that love always demands obedience. This is the keystone of love. If a child loves his parents, he obeys them. Any disobedience must be interpreted as lack of love. If a citizen loves his magistrate (with the love of God in his heart) he obeys. If a man loves God, he obeys God. Divorce love from God and obedience is indeed

destroyed. But love, as it is so clearly defined in Scripture, means, in its very nature, obedience.

Thus if we truly love, we love God first of all. And then we do not question God; we do not cynically destroy God's law; we do not destroy what God has demanded of us; we do not even ask for the *why* of His commandments. We simply obey, nothing else. Love obligates us to bow in humility before God and ask: "What wilt thou have me do?" Love of God is therefore love for God's law. Love which is truly love is manifested in walking the way of God's precepts. Love is to sing: "Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." To speak of love therefore only in an immediate situation in which we find ourselves divorced from the love of God is absurd and insane. It is (all the pious prating of love notwithstanding) very terrible hate. To ignore God's law and divorce love from obedience to that law is to hate -- to hate God; and consequently to hate one's wife, one's children, one's neighbor.

To be a proponent of the new morality is to be an apostle of hate. To preach this kind of love is to sow the seeds of hate, to cherish hate; to fill the world with hate; to make life something horrible and terrifying. And all the talk of love will never alter this in any respect.

Here is where the new moralists tread the path of evil.

A warning is in order. The view is dangerous. It is dangerous just because it is so immensely appealing to man's baser longings and sinful desires. It so easily becomes the justification (as it has already) for grosser sin. But let it be sounded from the housetops: this is the gospel of hate in every relationship of life.

And it is the prelude to anarchy and moral chaos.

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM--

Vatican Council - Third Session

-2-

"The Constitution on the Church"

by Rev. G. Van Baren

From the current Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church has come forth a series of "decrees" and "constitutions". Though both are binding upon that church, the latter is evidently a stronger declaration than the former. Both began with what are called "schemata", prepared by committees for treatment at this present Council. After lengthy discussions, the "schemata" are revised to harmonize with the expressed wishes of the majority of the church "fathers." The individual parts or chapters of each "schema"

are first approved, then the entire document is voted upon, and finally the pope "promulgates" the decree or constitution with the approval of the entire Council. In one instance at the third session of the Council, the pope made some nineteen changes which the Council was forced to approve as its own without argument or discussion -- or vote out the entire decree.

Through the end of the third session of the Council, five decrees or constitutions have been adopted and promulgated. There were two at the end of the second

session: the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" and the "Decree on the Media of Social Communication." Three more were issued at the close of the third session: "Constitution on the Church," the "Decree on Ecumenism," and the "Decree on the Eastern Churches."

To these last three I desire to call to your attention in this and following articles. I intend to point to the various chapters of the different decrees in order that you may have a general knowledge of that which they contain. My hope is that these articles do not become overly burdened with minor details, and hence boring -- but that your interest may be aroused in what is taking place in the church-world of this day. For all these things are also signs that the return of our Lord is at hand.

THE CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH

This "constitution" is the most lengthy of the three which were promulgated at the third session of the Vatican Council. It consists of eight chapters of which at least two were highly controversial: the chapter concerning the place of the bishop and his relationship to the pope in the Romish Church; and the chapter treating of Mary. I wish to consider the various chapters of this "constitution", with special emphasis upon those two chapters which have provoked the most discussion.

A reading of this "constitution" reveals that there is, to a very large degree, a rehashing of the old errors of Romanism which had proved so abhorrent to the old reformers. Probably that was intentional too. There is the "conservative element" in the Romish Church which resists any change. At the same time the changes or "reinterpretations" which are apparent are enough to make one shudder as we draw nearer to the end. The "fresh air" now blowing through Romanism seems very similar to that present within modern apostatizing protestantism of today. Though seemingly yet very remote, there appears to be ever greater possibility of getting the two together. Rome has not improved, but has grown worse.

Chapter One: THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

The first of the eight chapters is meant to be an explanation of what the church is. There are in the chapter many expressions which are strikingly similar to those we too use to define the church of God. The chapter points out the various terms used in Scripture to describe the church (the Tillage of God; the Building of God; the Temple of God; etc.). One statement (taken out of context, of course) states, "All the elect, before time began, the Father 'foreknew and predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren'" (Rom. 8:29)."¹

But the old errors remain. The Church of Christ is identified with and identical to the Romish Church:

This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd (John 21:17), and him and the other

apostles to extend and direct with authority (cf. Matt. 28:18, etc.), which He erected for all ages as "the pillar and mainstay of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside of its visible structure.¹

Thus the references throughout the chapter to the Church evidently mean the Roman Catholic Church.

There are the old strains of semi-pelagianism, not so dissimilar from arminianism, running through the entire chapter -- and the next one too. One finds statements as: "God the Father did not leave men, fallen in Adam, to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ. . . ."¹ The term "elect" is not at all used in the sense that we know it, but is explained thus: "He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ."¹

And, of course, there is the usual denial of the one complete sacrifice of Christ on the cross: "As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Pass-over was sacrificed (I Cor. 5:7) is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ. . . is both expressed and brought about."¹

Chapter Two: ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Using many Scriptural quotations, this chapter describes the members of the Church. It is pointed out how that God historically gathered the church from the very beginning. This church has as its head Jesus Christ. That church is the Roman Catholic Church. "Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation."¹ And "Whosoever . . . knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter it or to remain in it, could not be saved."¹ This appears to be a modification of the first statement quoted. It would appear, according to this teaching, that it is possible for those not knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ to yet be saved -- even though they remain outside of the Romish Church.

This idea is further confirmed in a paragraph describing those outside of Rome:

The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter. For there are many who honor Sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and a pattern of life, and who show a sincere zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and Saviour. They are consecrated by baptism, in which they are united with Christ. They also recognize and accept other sacraments within their own Churches or ecclesiastical communities. Many of them rejoice in the episcopate, celebrate the Holy Eucharist and cultivate devotion toward the Virgin Mother of God. They also share with us in prayer and other spiritual benefits. Like-

wise we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them too He gives His gifts and graces whereby He is operative among them with His sanctifying power. Some indeed He has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood. In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd, and He prompts them to pursue this end. Mother Church never ceases to pray, hope and work that this may come about. She exhorts her children to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the earth.¹

So you now know what are Rome's aims for you. The following paragraph of this same chapter is also rather interesting. It appears to me to teach the possibility of salvation among those who have not come in contact with Christianity: a salvation purely by works.

Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God. In the first place we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh. . . . On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues. . . . But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place

amongst these there are the Mohammedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things (cf. Acts 17:25-28), and as Saviour wills that all men be saved (cf. I Tim. 2:4). Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life.¹

From the above you can draw your own conclusions. What significance any more does the cross of Christ have? Rome seeks to make itself pleasing in the eyes of all men. Its aim and desire is "that the entire world may become the People of God,"¹ that is, that all men be members of the Roman Catholic Church.

1. The above quotations were taken from the *Council Daybook*, Session 3, published by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, pages 309-316.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

We, the Protestant Reformed High School Circle, wish to express to one of our members, Mrs. John Lanning, our sincere sympathy in the loss of her husband who was taken from her side on November 7. May God comfort her in the knowledge that He does all things well. Romans 8:10 "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness".

Miss A. Lubbers, Pres.
Mrs. R. H. Meyer, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Oak Lawn Ladies' Society expresses its sympathy with one of its members Mrs. R. Rooda, whose husband

MR. RENSE ROODA

was called to his eternal home on November 15, 1965, the day of their 53rd wedding anniversary. Our comfort and joy is rooted in the assurance that he now serves the Lord in heavenly perfection, the fulfillment of his oft expressed desire.

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

Rev. G. Vanden Berg, Pres.
Miss H. Kuiper, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Prot. Ref. Church of Hudsonville expresses its Christian sympathy to Rev. G. Vos in the loss of his Sister

MRS. RENA LUYK

and to Mr. K. Lanning in the loss of his Brother

MR. JOHN LANNING

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints". Psalm 116:15.

H. Kuiper, Vice Pres.
G. Van Overloop, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

On Oct. 14, 1965 the Lord took home after a long illness to be with Him in Eternal Glory our beloved husband, father, grandfather, and brother

EGBERT KETT

at the age of 76.

We believe and are comforted that our loss is his gain to be with his Lord whom he loved and served.

Psalm 27:13,14.

Mrs. E. Kett
Mr. and Mrs. J. Talsma (Jean)
3 grandchildren
Mr. Adrian Kett

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

("All the saints salute thee . . ." Phil. 4:21)

Nov. 15, 1965

Rev. J. Kortering, of Hull, declined the call to Randolph, Wis.

Hudsonville has made the following trio: Revs. D. Englesma, J. Kortering and M. Schipper.

Edgerton has made the following trio: Revs. D. Englesma, J. Kortering and G. Lanting.

First Church has announced the following trio for Missionary: Revs. R.C. Harbach, J. Kortering and M. Schipper.

* * *

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

October 6, 1965

At Hope Church.

Rev. M. Schipper, who presided over the July Classis, led in the opening devotions, and after the credentials were accepted declared the Classis properly constituted. All the churches were represented by two delegates each. Rev. G. Van Baren, who appeared on Classis for the first time, was welcomed by the chair. Alphabetically it was his turn to preside over this meeting. However, he asked to be excused, and Classis granted his request, with the understanding that he would take his turn at the January meeting.

Rev. H. Veldman then took the chair, while the Rev. M. Schipper recorded the minutes.

Opportunity was given to those present for the first time to sign the Formula of Subscription. Rev. Van Baren signed.

The minutes of the July Classis were read and the transcription was approved. The Stated Clerk gave his report re correspondence, and the Classical Committee report was approved.

The brethren T. Miedema and J.B. Lubbers were appointed to the finance committee for this session of Classis.

The committee, appointed on the July Classis re the overture of Holland, gave its report. Classis adopted the advice of the committee, namely, to continue our classical meetings without change as to time of meeting.

Classis West requested supply of their vacant churches. Classis decided to heed this request, and a committee, consisting of the Revs. Lubbers, Harbach, and Elder A. Rau, prepared a schedule which was adopted as follows:

Lynden: Oct. 10,17,24 — H. Veldman.

Isabel-Forbes: Oct. 17,24,31 — G. Lubbers; Nov. 7,14,21 — R.C. Harbach; Jan. 9,16,23 — M. Schipper; Jan. 30, Feb. 6,13 — G. Van Baren.

Randolph: Oct. 10 — G. Lubbers; Oct. 24 — G. Lanting; Oct. 31 — M. Schipper; Nov. 7 — G. Van Baren; Nov. 14 — G. Lanting; Nov. 21 — G. Vos (or alternate); Dec. 5 — G. Lanting; Dec. 12 — G. Vos (or alternate); Dec. 19 — H. Veldman; Jan. 9 — R.C. Harbach; Jan. 16 — G. Van Baren; Jan. 23 — G. Lanting; Feb. 6 — G. Vos (or alternate); Feb. 13 — H. Veldman; Feb. 20 — G. Lanting; Mar. 6 — G. Vos (or alternate).

A member of First Church presented an appeal to Classis which was treated in executive session. Classis decided to place this material in the hands of a study

committee, to adjourn until November 3, when the committee would give its advice. The committee appointed was: the Revs. G. Lanting, R.C. Harbach, the Elders B. Windemuller and G. Pipe, with the Rev. G. Vos as advisor.

Mr. A. Talsma was appointed to thank the ladies of Hope Church for their excellent catering.

Elder J.M. Faber thanked the Classis for the classical supply given First Church during their vacancy.

Classis decided to hold its next regular meeting on Wednesday, January 5, 1966 in Southeast Church.

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

Classis then adjourned until Wednesday, November 3rd, with Rev. G. Van Baren offering the closing prayer.

The continued meeting was opened by the Classis singing Psalter #126 and the Rev. H. Veldman reading Psalm 46 and offering prayer.

The only change in constituency was the Rev. G. Vos taking the place of Elder J.B. Lubbers of Hudsonville.

The committee appointed in October to serve Classis with advice in the First Church case, gave its report. Classis virtually adopted the advice of the committee which sustained the appeal of the member of First Church.

The Consistory of Hudsonville requested the approval of Classis in their decision to emeritate Rev. G. Vos. Classis granted this request, and instructed the Stated Clerk to send the decision to the Stated Clerk of Synod for Synod's approval. Rev. G. Vos was appointed moderator of the church of Hudsonville. The chairman spoke to the Rev. Vos in the name of Classis a word of appreciation for his many years of service, a word of encouragement, and the best wishes of the Classis in his remaining days.

After the adoption of the minutes, Classis adjourned, with the Rev. G. Vos offering the closing prayer.

M. Schipper, Stated Clerk.

* * *

Hull's congregation is planning a celebration to be held Friday, Dec. 10. The occasion is the Fortieth Anniversary of their existence as a congregation. "The saints salute thee", congregation of Hull, and join you in thanksgiving to our God Who has blessed you so wonderfully.

* * *

Loveland's Oct. 3rd bulletin carried an announcement of the consistory's recognition of, and gratitude for, the privilege of having enjoyed the shepherdizing of Rev. Englesma for two years. And indeed, what a privilege for their young minister to have been able to preach some 200 sermons, teach some 300 to 400 catechism classes and conduct many society meetings! Our churches may well join them in singing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."

* * *

. . . see you in church

J.M.F.