

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Today, popular "singers" as they are euphemistically called, and far too charitably, are an untalented, screaming mob not worth three minutes of time to audition any one of them. They never sing anything holy; only mockeries, blasphemies, and filthiness.

See "God's Holiness" — page 61

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Department Editors: Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman C. Hanko, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Mr. David Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slope-  
ma, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman.

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

Church News Editor: Mr. David Harbach  
4930 Ivanrest Ave., Apt. B  
Grandville, Michigan 49418

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**Business Office:** The Standard Bearer  
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953  
P.O. Box 6064  
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**New Zealand Business Office:** The Standard Bearer  
c/o Protestant Reformed Fellowship  
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

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## MEDITATION —

# Holy Baptism Divinely Instituted

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 69. How art thou admonished and assured by holy baptism that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee?*

*Ans. Thus: that Christ appointed this external washing with water, adding thereto this promise, that I am as certainly washed by His blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away.*

*Ques. 70. What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?*

*Ans. It is to receive of God the remission of sins, freely, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He shed for us by His sacrifice upon the cross; and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives.*



*Ques. 71. Where has Christ promised us, that He will as certainly wash us by His blood and Spirit, as we are washed with the water of baptism?*

*Ans. In the institution of Baptism, which is thus expressed: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." This promise is also repeated, where Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration, and the washing away of sins.*

Holy Baptism is instituted by God for the strengthening of our faith in His promise. It is a visible sign and seal of the promise of salvation which Christ proclaims to us through the preaching of the Word. Sitting in church on a Sunday morning, we hear the Form read by our pastor for the administration of baptism. Our thoughts are led back to God's promise to Abraham: "I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7). We are reminded of the Old Testament sign of this promise, the bloody sign of circumcision. God appointed that every male child in Abraham's house, and later in Israel, had to be circumcised. This pointed to the blood of atonement that was shed for the sins of God's people on the cross. Therefore when the sacrifice for sin had been accomplished, sealed by the resurrection from the dead, Christ instituted the sacrament of baptism to replace circumcision. The apostles were sent out into all the world to preach the gospel and to baptize those who believed, with the assurance that those who believe and are baptized are surely saved. These apostles went out confidently preaching Christ crucified and risen, laying the sign of baptism on those who believed and on their households. Through faith in Christ and His perfect sacrifice on the cross we assume our obligation to be baptized and to baptize our children, at the same time counting it a privilege to carry the sign of God's covenant on our foreheads as long as we live, assured of the washing away of our sins through the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The very fact that we speak of the washing away of our sins already suggests, to employ the language of our Baptism Form, that we "loathe and humble ourselves before God."

Loathe ourselves. We do not readily do that. Our nature is inclined to esteem ourselves quite highly, even better than others. Only when we realize the "depravity of our souls," when we see how sin wrestles and fights within us, pollutes and corrupts everything that we say and do, even such holy undertakings as our prayers, do we confess "O wretched man that I am." No external washing or cleansing with the strongest soaps can remove our guilty stain. For "we with our children are con-

ceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, in so much that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except we are born again. This the dipping in, or sprinkling with water teaches us, whereby the impurity of our souls is signified" (Baptism Form).

Thus we are compelled to seek for our salvation outside of ourselves. Salvation is solely and completely of the Lord! This is expressed most beautifully in our Baptism Form by referring us to the fact that we are baptized into the name of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and thus brought into the intimate life and covenant fellowship of God Himself. "The Father (Who is actually the triune God) establishes an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us as His children and heirs," as our Form for Holy Baptism expresses it. This reminds us at once of God's sovereign election. For the promise comes to Abraham and his seed. This seed, according to Galatians 3:16, is Christ. God eternally establishes His covenant with His Son, appointing Him to be the Christ, our Savior. This includes all the elect who are eternally in Christ, as we read in verse 29 of Galatians 3, "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." We were in Christ when He came into our flesh, when He grovelled in the dust of Gethsemane, when He was nailed to the cross and when He suffered torments of hell during the three hours of darkness, bearing the wrath of God against our sins. We were so completely in Him as if we in our own bodies had brought that sacrifice for sin.

Our Baptism Form expresses that when it states, "And when we are baptized in the name of the Son (whereby we evidently must understand the Son as the Christ), the Son sealeth unto us, that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God." Here again we are reminded of our union with Christ, being incorporated in the fellowship of His death and resurrection. Particularly two important benefits of the death of God's Son are mentioned: our justification and our sanctification. We are freed from the guilt of our sin and are accounted righteous before God, as if we never had had any sin. We are also assured



of the right to eternal life as sons and daughters in God's House. The second benefit is the washing away of our sins, the daily cleansing, as symbolized in the sprinkling with water. Just as we are externally washed with water, washing away the filthiness of the body, so we are certainly cleansed by the blood and Spirit of Christ.

Our Catechism mentions both, the blood and the Spirit. Concerning the benefit of the Spirit we read in our Baptism Form, "In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost (whereby we must certainly understand the Spirit of Christ as He dwells in our hearts), the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us, that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." The Holy Spirit as Spirit of Christ in us bestows, first of all, the washing of regeneration whereby we become new creatures in Christ. This is most beautifully expressed in Romans 6:4: "Therefore we are buried with Him (Christ) by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The figure is obvious. We are born in trespasses and sins, strangers of the covenant of promise, in the midst of this present evil world. But God draws us apart, separates us from the world by plunging us, as it were, into the death of Christ. There we die unto sin, die unto the world. Baptism is a picture of dying in Christ. But "by the glory of the Father," by the wonder of grace we are also raised again with Christ, raised from the dead with the heavenly life of Christ in our hearts, as new creatures in Christ. That places us in the covenant as members of the body of Christ, members of His church.

The second benefit of the Spirit is that He will continue to dwell in us, bestowing on us all that we have in Christ. In holy wonder the apostle Paul exclaims in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Our Advocate intercedes for us in the heavens. In response to His prayers God bestows on Christ blessings from His fulness. Christ, in turn, bestows them upon us by His Spirit. More specifically, we can mention the blessings of "the washing away of our sins and the daily renewal of our lives." Scripture speaks of the crucifying of the old man. Crucifying the old man is a painful process that carries on all our lives. Our sinful inclinations still try to govern our lives, and we are forced to tell them, "you have no right to tell me what to

do. I cannot, will not, serve you any more, but I'll suppress you every time you assert yourselves." This results in a putting on of the new man, a growing in grace, which is also sometimes called a daily conversion or growing in sanctification. We know ourselves to be debtors to the Spirit (Rom. 8:12-14), to live after the Spirit. For it is the Spirit Who daily cleanses and sanctifies us, preparing us for the time when we shall appear without spot or blemish among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

That still leaves the question, how about those who receive the outward sign of baptism without the assuring grace of the Spirit that applies all these benefits to our hearts? How can Christ declare over each of them through the sacrament, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"? The answer to that is that baptism is a general sign of a particular promise. Just as the preaching of the Word is a general proclamation of the particular promise, so also baptism is a general sign of the particular promise of God. All come under the preaching, all receive the sign which they carry on their foreheads all their lives, yet this promise is not sealed to their hearts by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. This was true even in the old dispensation. We read in I Corinthians 10:1-5 that "all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; . . . But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." There are many who are instructed in the way that they should walk, and know it, but do not walk in that way. They despise all that is holy, transgress God's covenant, and thereby seal their own condemnation.

What a glorious privilege it is to belong to that people whose God is Jehovah, who hear the Word, and by the power of the Spirit believe, embrace, and rejoice in that Word. To them the sign of baptism is a seal of God's promise in their hearts, "I will be your GOD!" Only eternity will unfold to us the riches of that promise. We now wear the uniform of Jesus Christ, carry the ensign and banner of the truth of God's covenant, so that we know ourselves to be "admonished and obliged to a new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life," as our Baptism Form expresses it.

Thank God for instituting this holy sacrament for the strengthening of our faith! Yea, thank Him for that unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus, in Whom is all our salvation!



## EDITORIAL —

## About Advertising and Fishing

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

**CANONS OF DORDT**  
**Future New Congregation**

A Canons Class, under the direction of Hudsonville Church (Consistory) and led by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema, will meet Sept. 29 and October 13 (and alternate Wednesdays thereafter) at 8 P.M. at Cutlerville Chr. School, 520 68th St. S.E. The purpose of the class is twofold; for the study of the Canons and to work toward organizing a new congregation in the Byron Center-Cutlerville area. We invite all those interested in the study of the Canons to meet with us. We will keep you informed as to the progress of a new congregation.

Last year the Protestant Reformed churches still seemed to conceive of evangelism as a fishing expedition among Reformed and Christian Reformed church members—witness their advertisement in the Kentwood (Mich.) Advance of September 1982.

However, as our minister of evangelism notes in the accompanying article, today there are signs that they are concerned to seek the lost.

Reproduced from *The Banner*,  
 Oct. 3, 1983, p. 12.

The reproduced advertisement and accompanying note were inserted in an article by the Rev. Dirk J. Hart, minister of evangelism for the Christian Reformed Church.

Sometimes one hardly knows whether to laugh or to cry about things that are said about our Protestant Reformed Churches and their activities. The problem is created by the fact that there seems to be something rather sillily desperate about an insert of this kind. And what does one do in a case like that — laugh at the silliness, or cry about the desperation?

For one thing, someone connected with *The Banner* must have made it his concern to save that Protestant Reformed ad, clipped from the Kentwood Advance, for a year.

For another, there is no reference in the ad to Reformed and Christian Reformed church members; but this is supposed to be evidence that "the Protestant Reformed churches still seemed to conceive of evangelism as a fishing expedition among Reformed and Christian Reformed church members" last year.

For another, there would appear to be a presumption in the accompanying note that somehow or other Reformed and Christian Reformed waters are off limits for Protestant Reformed evangelism, as well as that we have changed our mind about evangelism, so that now we "are concerned to seek the lost."

Now, in the first place, if *The Banner* was looking for evidence of Protestant Reformed "fishing" in Christian Reformed waters, it might have found better evidence, I think. For during the past two years a similar Canons Class has been conducted right in the hallowed halls of the Calvin College Fine Arts Center, and the class was advertised on the Calvin campus. The college authorities kindly gave us the use of a fine classroom upon the request of one of our students at the college. We appreciated this provision very much.

In the second place, one wonders why this ad was considered fishing in Reformed and Christian Reformed waters. By the same token, I could consider an advertisement by a Christian Reformed church in the Kentwood Advance, or even in the Grand Rapids Press (as, for example, on the Saturday "church" page) as fishing in Protestant Reformed waters. After all, there are plenty of Protestant Reformed people who read such Christian Reformed ads.

Besides, in the third place, are Reformed and Christian Reformed waters off limits for Protestant Reformed evangelism? If so, by whose dictum? Let me assure *The Banner* that our Protestant Reformed Churches always have and still do consider it part of our mission calling (call it "evangelism" if you will) to call Christian Reformed people back to the pure Reformed faith and away from the errors which began in 1924 and which especially in recent years have borne fruit in such gross errors as the denial of particular atonement and the denial of predestination. Not by any means has our mission work been confined to Reformed and Christian Reformed people, but neither has it ignored and excluded them.

In that connection, in the fourth place, *The Banner* must not leave the impression that there has



been a change in that regard and as though the articles of Missionary Houck take a different position. The Rev. Houck may respond for himself, if he so desires. But permit me to point out by means of a brief quotation that the Rev. Houck includes Reformed people in the scope of evangelism. He is writing (Volume 59, pp. 89, 90) about "Presenting the Gospel to Strangers," and he says the following: "Sometimes the stranger is an unbeliever. Other times he is a Christian, in need of further instruction. *He may even be someone who thinks that he is a Reformed Christian.*" (italics added)

In the fifth place, *The Banner* in the Rev. Hart's article appears to be promoting "friendly evangelism." I ask: would it not be the height of *un-friendliness* deliberately to exclude any Christian Reformed members from our evangelism, especial-

ly when we believe that they err seriously with respect to the Reformed truth and that their own church is apparently no longer able and willing to instruct them in the Reformed faith? Is it not, besides, Biblical to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? In that connection, I would also point out that in the light of recent decisions, trends, and writings in the Christian Reformed Church, some sound instruction in the Canons of Dordt is not by any means the least need!

*Postscript.* The article by the Rev. Hart contains many errors about our Protestant Reformed Churches and evinces little acquaintance with our mission or evangelism labors. I suggest that the Rev. Hart could profitably do a little more homework before he breaks into print about the PRC.

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE —

# Our Order of Worship

Prof. H. Hanko

By the order of worship we mean two things: 1) Those elements which ought to be included in (or excluded from) the worship service; 2) In what order these elements ought to be arranged. Both of these we want to discuss in these articles.

But both these questions which arise in connection with the order of worship have to be answered on the basis of a more fundamental question: What is the nature of worship? What do the Scriptures call us to do when we are summoned to worship?

There are several ideas which we must consider in this connection, although we do so briefly.

First of all, worship must be on the first day of the week.

We do not want to enter into an argument here with Jews and Seventh Day Adventists. We shall assume that the church, which celebrated the Lord's Day from the beginning of the New Testament, did so on the first day of the week.

But this was not by choice. It was specifically commanded by the Lord Himself. And in this command there lies one of the central ideas of worship.

In the Old Testament, the law read: "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God...." It is clear from the exposition of the law given by God Himself that the idea behind this command-

ment was this: Israel must work six days in order to enjoy a day of rest. That is, Israel could not receive a day of rest until and unless she first labored for six days. The seventh day came at the end of six days and would be for the people a true rest only if first they had worked faithfully for six days. I say "faithfully," because not just work as such could bring them to a day of rest; it had to be faithful work which was performed in harmony with God's law and to His glory. If Israel worked in this way, then they could also enjoy the true rest of the Sabbath. But if they failed to work faithfully, then they could not receive the Sabbath either.

Their life in the land of Canaan was closely tied in with this idea of the law. Canaan was, after all, the land of rest. And only by faithful labor in that land, labor done according to the law of God and to God's glory, could they also continue to enjoy the blessings of the land of rest.

The difficulty was that they could not and did not do this. They corrupted and polluted the land by introducing into it the idolatry and idolatrous practices of the heathen. And because they did not labor in that land faithfully, famines and pestilences came upon the land, and the land was finally taken away from them. That is why we read in II Chronicles 36:20, 21: "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where



they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years."

This was true in all Israel's life. It was spiritually impossible for the people to work six days faithfully in order to enjoy the Sabbath. And the reason is simply that Israel was, by nature, wicked. No man can keep the law of God.

So also in this respect, the law pointed ahead to Christ and was the schoolmaster to lead Israel to Christ — to use Paul's expression in Galatians 3. Christ fulfilled the whole law for His people. He fulfilled it in such a way that the transgression of the law is forgiven and the keeping of the law is earned for His people. Christ, because of His sacrifice and by the power of His Spirit, writes the law upon the hearts of His people so that they can keep it.

This is beautifully expressed in the change of the Sabbath from the last day of the week to the first day. It is no longer necessary for God's people to work six days in order then only to enter into the rest — something forever impossible for them. But now Christ, by His cross and resurrection (on the first day of the week), gives them His rest which He earned for them at the very beginning of the week so that God's people can, by the power of this graciously-given rest, work in their calling according to God's law and to His glory for the six days that follow. All their life to God's glory is rooted in and is the fruit of grace.

This means that the Lord's Day in which we worship God is a day given to us by Christ in which He gives us the true rest of heaven by which we are able to walk as His people in the world. The Lord's Day must be looked at from that point of view and celebrated in that consciousness. Apart from this it is impossible to keep Sabbath.

In the second place, we have an important passage in Scripture which defines the character of all true worship. I refer to Christ's words to the Samaritan woman: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

In His conversation with the Samaritan woman the woman had turned the discussion to the proper place to worship God: Mount Gerazim, where the Samaritans worshiped God, or Mount Zion, where the Jews worshiped God. In answer to this question Jesus told her that the Jews were right: Jerusalem was the appointed place to worship God. Nevertheless, Jesus told her, this will soon be an irrelevant question. While it is still the Old Testament, the

question has importance; but "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father" (vs. 21). It is in this context that Jesus speaks as He does about the most basic principle of the worship of God.

There are several elements in this text which we ought to notice.

The word which is used here for "worship" means literally, "to bow the knee towards." There are other words in Scripture for worship, but this is one of the key ones. It is, of course, a figurative word which refers to the kneeling and bowing of a subject before his king. This symbolic act is indicative of the majesty and sovereignty of the king which the subject acknowledges. It is an excellent word, therefore, to use for our worship of God. It means that the character of our worship is such that in worshipping Him we acknowledge and confess His supreme and glorious majesty; that He Jehovah is all-glorious, alone worthy of all praise and adoration; that God is the supreme King, Lord of all, Who rules over all according to His good pleasure; and that we confess this when we "worship."

This, in turn, means two things. It means, first of all, that God alone determines how He ought to be worshiped. And, secondly, it means that the most fundamental purpose of worship is to praise God. This latter could bear a bit of emphasis. From a certain point of view, we have made worship man-centered. We have done this by going to church and leaving church with the question in our mouths: What benefit can I get out of going to church? We are concerned about ourselves and what is of value to us. We even ask each other this question sometimes: Did you get anything out of the sermon today? And elders sometimes set this question on the foreground when on family visitation they ask: Are you blessed through the preaching?

These questions may, of course, be asked. And there ought to be spiritual blessing in the worship of God. But it is not the most important thing. The chief question is: Have we gone to church to praise and bless our God, Who alone is worthy of all praise. Perhaps it is because we have become so man-centered that worship services also become man-centered. If we go to bless the Name of God, the blessing to us will come.

Another striking feature of the word of Christ to the Samaritan is the fact that Christ contrasts the worship of God in the Old Testament with that in the New. In the Old Testament, Israel had to go to Jerusalem to worship. This was because the temple was there and it was only in the temple that God dwelt. To go to God one had to go to the temple.



There was no other place on earth.

This temple was a picture of God dwelling in covenant fellowship with His people — they dwelt under one roof. But it was a very poor form of covenant fellowship because the people could not come very close to God. God was behind the veil between the wings of the cherubim on the cover of the ark. The people were in the outer court. And between God and His people was the veil, the altar of burnt offering, the stinking and burning carcass of thousands of sheep and oxen, and the Aaronitic priesthood. It was like a husband and wife living together in one house, but on opposite sides of the house in locked rooms, able to communicate together only through servants who carry messages. All this was because the blood of atonement was not yet shed.

But Christ is the true temple. He is such because in Christ the perfect sacrifice for sin is made. And through that sacrifice Christ becomes the temple of the living God. God dwells in Christ because Christ is very God of very God — to use one of the formu-

lations of the ancient church. Paul speaks in Colossians of the fact that in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. But God's people also dwell in Christ because they are the body of Christ, united to Him in the mystical union of faith. And so God and God's people come together in Christ in closest possible union. The doors and walls are broken down and God takes His wife into His own everlasting arms in Jesus Christ.

But all that means that worship now is worship in spirit and in truth — as Jesus expresses it.

The union of the elect with Christ by faith is worked by the Spirit. And so we enter into the temple to worship God by the Spirit of Christ in our hearts.

So we need not go to Mount Zion, to the old Jerusalem anymore. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name," Jesus says, "there I will be in the midst of them."

And so we must also worship God in "spirit and in truth."

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## FEATURE ARTICLE —

# Contending for the Faith

Rev. C. Hanko

(Transcript of an address delivered at the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A., Sept. 22, 1983)

The *Standard Bearer*, besides being a defender of the truth, has always been a controversial paper. This is not strange, especially when we consider that it was born out of controversy. Although the Synod of 1924, which adopted the Three Points of Common Grace, had decided that this entire matter needed further study by the churches. The leaders, nevertheless, barred Rev. Herman Hoeksema and Rev. Henry Danhof from writing on this subject in the church papers, the *Banner* and the *Wachter*. Ironical as it may seem, the very persons who had studied the subject of common grace most thoroughly were prevented from proving their views from the Scriptures before the members of the Christian Reformed Church. It was exactly for that reason that the Reformed Free Publishing Association was formed and the *Standard Bearer* made its appearance.

Ever since that, from the very nature of the case, the *Standard Bearer* has been a controversial paper. This is even implied in the name that it bears. A

standard-bearer is "one who carries the standard of a military unit." This standard, or banner, distinguishes that particular unit from the others, also from the enemy. For us this has meant opposing the heresies and errors that appear round about us, as well as defending the truth that God has entrusted to us.

For this the *Standard Bearer* has often been severely criticized. We have been accused of thinking that we had a monopoly on the truth, or that we considered ourselves the only true church in the world. Even from our own circle objections have been raised that the paper is too doctrinal and fails to discuss the problems of our times.

The question arises whether we are wrong in maintaining a controversial, doctrinal periodical. Sound doctrine is at a premium, so that many in the churches are no longer interested in solid foods; many cannot understand a discussion of the Reformed truth and the five points of Calvinism. One sometimes wonders how many of our own people, especially our young people, actually read the *Standard Bearer*. Entertainments, sports occupy the



attention of many, so that no time is left for serious study or a diligent searching of the Scriptures. Does this mean that we should give up our efforts? Should we give up our distinctiveness, surrender ourselves to the compromising spirit of our times? That would certainly be contrary to our calling as Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as contrary to our calling as the church of Jesus Christ in the midst of this present evil world.

Therefore I wish to speak to you from the Book of Jude, the last part of verse 3, where we read: "It is needful for me to write you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the fathers."

### I. The Faith.

It may be well to mention that Jude, who wrote this epistle, was likely a brother of Jesus. He simply refers to himself, not as an apostle, but as a brother of James. This James must have been well known to the churches and was likely an elder in Jerusalem. Jude's letter is in many ways very similar to parts of the Second Epistle of Peter, so similar that some statements are almost alike. The reason for this seems to be that, while Peter warned the churches of evils that would arise in the churches, Jude points out that these evils were already evident. Therefore he found it needful to warn the churches and to spur them on to contend for the faith once delivered to the fathers. If ever such a warning and admonition is timely, it certainly is in our day.

The faith that is meant here, for which we must contend is not the subjective faith as believing, but the objective truth of the Scriptures. We often speak of faith in that way. We speak of the Christian faith, or the Protestant faith, or of the faith of our fathers that still lives on. It is the truth of the Scriptures, the revelation of the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the truth as it lives in the hearts of the true believers, as these have maintained and defended it, even at the cost of their lives, throughout the ages.

In Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism the question is asked: "What is necessary for the Christian to believe?" That refers, of course, to the content of our faith. The answer is given: "All that God has promised to us in His Word, and is summed up in our Apostolic Creed." Well may we stress a moment: All that God has *promised* in His Word. That emphasis on the promise is important. God's Word is His promise, and that promise comes to the heirs of salvation in Christ. That is what makes that Word very distinctive. It is not a general message, a source of information for all mankind. From Genesis to Revelation it is directed to God's people, proclaiming to them the sure, indubitable promise of

the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Although this promise is proclaimed to all who hear it, to all to whom God directs the gospel, it is always a general proclamation of the particular promise. Only he who receives ears to hear can hear what the Spirit proclaims to the churches. It is the believer in Christ who by grace hears the Word, embraces it, cherishes it, and clings to it as the most precious truth, the revelation of the God of our salvation addressed to His people. It is this faith that lives in the hearts of the believers.

It is the faith that was once delivered unto the saints. Jude had in mind particularly the Old Testament in which the promise was revealed. We have along with those Scriptures also the New Testament in which the promises are realized. For us the faith delivered unto the saints includes the entire Scriptures. It is the truth that lived in the hearts of those who were sanctified in Christ, saints in Him. It is the truth as it has been preserved in our Confessions. So many in our day speak disparagingly of the Confessions. They consider them outdated, fit only for the people of that time, but no good any more for our age of flux and change. Yet these Confessions are the expression of the truth of Scripture as it lives in the hearts of God's saints throughout the ages. They are timeless, even as Scripture is timeless.

On the basis of these Confessions our churches are privileged to maintain specifically three aspects of the truth over against the errors of our day. I have in mind the truth of God's sovereign grace, the truth of the antithesis, and, last, but certainly not least, the truth of God's covenant as the relationship of friendship between God and His people in Christ.

### II. Contending for the Faith.

Contending is no popular concept in our present-day church world. There is an almost universal clamor for peace at any cost. The entire trend is toward ecumenicity. Various denominations seek to unite, regardless of doctrinal differences. One tends to ask, Why not, since there is very little defence of the truth among them anyway? Even the Lutherans are putting forth efforts to take away the breach that has separated them from the Roman Catholics ever since Luther's strong stand against the Catholics in the days of the Reformation. We can plainly see the false church preparing to unite with the beast of Revelation 13. All this is done under the excuse that Christ pleads in the sacerdotal prayer that they may all be one.

Considering also the growing laxity and spiritual complacency, along with the growing ignorance concerning the truth of God's Word we can see that God's people perish because of lack of knowledge.



All of this is the more reason for us to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. The church is a militant church, the members are soldiers, who are called to fight the battle of faith against all the forces that attack the City of God. The believer must put on the whole armor of God to be able to stand in this evil day.

The word that Jude uses for "contending" means literally "to wrestle." This makes our contending very personal. It involves each and every one of us. No one can take the attitude that this is the responsibility of the leaders of the congregation, or that he or she is not capable of or inclined to fight. It involves every one.

Moreover, this personal involvement requires putting forth every effort and all our strength. In a wrestling match strength is pitted against strength, skill against skill. It requires complete concentration, our very best efforts. Since this is a spiritual contending we must rely on our God in prayer and supplication.

Finally, in this wrestling match our own salvation is at stake. True, we are fighting to maintain the truth that has been passed on to us from former generations, but it still remains a fact that this truth is of personal importance for each of us. We must fight the good fight, we must be faithful even unto death, in order to receive the crown. With the apostle Paul we must be able to say at the end of our lives, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7).

This must be a contending for the *faith*. The devil is cunning in his attack on the Scriptures. There are many today who speak the language of the Scriptures, even use the same terms that Scripture uses, but attach an entirely different meaning to them. Infallibility does not always mean verbal inspiration. There are those who speak of the Word of God "in the Scriptures," rather than the Scriptures being the Word of God. Some speak of God's kingdom, but they are looking for the kingdom to be established here on earth. The Arminian likes to speak of salvation by grace, but still refers to a salvation that is dependent upon man. Faith and regeneration from the lips of some have an entirely different connotation than they have in the Word of God. Far too often the glory of man is sought rather than the glory of God.

This contending for the faith is also often absent when people speak of "practical" preaching in distinction from "doctrinal" preaching. Many today seek a social gospel, world improvement, a better life without conversion and faith. The antithesis between church and world is no longer maintained, but the church joins with the world, expecting, it

seems, that a good apple in a peck of rotten ones will improve the bad ones. True, sound doctrine is also practical. It is the truth that makes us free. It is the solid food of the Scriptures whereby we grow spiritually unto perfection.

### III. The Necessity.

Jude writes, "It is needful to write and to exhort you!" His Word is preserved in the Scriptures, because it applies today as well as then.

The enemy against whom Jude warns is no different now from the enemy of his day. Jude could very well have written this in 1983.

He speaks, first, of the evil of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. Churches have become social centers. Many have their gymnasiums, which are more often used, and by larger numbers, than the church sanctuary. They have their pot-lucks, and other social events, often on Sunday. These are expected to keep up the zeal and interest in the church. In many churches the second service on Sunday is not even held, and in many other churches poorly attended. The argument is raised, where do we read in Scripture that we must have two Sunday worship services. But where is the true hunger and thirst for the Bread of Life, where the longing to be in God's courts in the communion of saints, of which David speaks in Psalm 42 and in Psalm 84?

Jude also speaks of denying the true Lord God and Jesus Christ. That is certainly true when in the Name of God topical preaching takes the place of exposition of the Scriptures. Often a text is used, yet not even interpreted, since the minister is not interested in declaring what God says, but what man says. Surely a God who is desirous, even eager, to save all men, but cannot without their co-operation, is not the sovereign God of the Scriptures. A Jesus who pleads and begs, who offers His wares, but is unable to save unless we are willing, is not the Jesus who is the only, complete Savior, according to the Scriptures.

It is needful that the Word of God remind us of our calling to resist the evil one, to fight the good fight, and to witness of the Name of our God with divinely inspired zeal and confidence. So readily we take the attitude of Israel of old, "The people of the Lord are we." We are baptized, we attend the public worship, we send our children to a Christian school, and thereby we rest content of having done our duty. In the meantime the church suffers because of lack of knowledge. Those who profess to be Christians are not able to resist the onslaughts of evil round about us.

The question is, what are we going to do about it? Shall we just sit back and let the leaders of the



church defend the truth? Shall we support this defence by making use of the *Standard Bearer*, or shall we leave it unread? Shall we take the attitude, the church doesn't need me, or shall we put forth every effort on our part to defend the truth according to our calling? Shall we allow ourselves to become spiritually undernourished, or shall we seek to

grow strong in the power of God's might to resist all evil? Shall we make the contending for the faith our personal struggle, our personal calling? Then we need zeal, determination, born out of prayer, devotion, and consecration to our God. May He grant it to us!

## ***TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE —***

# **Our Calling and Election (1)**

*Rev. H. Veldman*

The doctrine of election, it is claimed by those who despise and reject this truth, makes men careless, indifferent, and profane. This, of course, does not and should not surprise us. This charge against the truth of divine sovereign predestination is not new. The enemies of the truth have always opposed this doctrine. This charge has also been leveled against the truth of justification solely by grace. In our Heidelberg Catechism, in Lord's Day 24, Question 64, speaking of our righteousness before God, as solely by grace, reads: "But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?" And the answer reads: "By no means: for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness." It is not difficult to understand the rationale behind this accusation. If we are elect, sovereignly, not because of our works, then, it is claimed, it makes no difference how we walk. Of course, this reasoning is utterly fallacious. An elect must walk in good works. And this is true because, although we have not been elected because of good works, we have been elected *unto* good works. Election and good works are, therefore, inseparable. It is this truth which is also clearly emphasized in the Word of God, recorded in II Peter 1:10: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

The context of this Scripture is clear. "These things" refer to what we read in the verses 5-7. In these verses we are admonished to give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity, or love. Upon these things follows the fruitfulness of verse 8 in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. This knowledge is not merely an intellectual, head

knowledge, but a conscious, personal, and spiritual knowledge of living fellowship, personally to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His all-comprehensive, far-reaching, blessed significance for God's people, to increase spiritually, not being unfruitful, but fruitful, growing spiritually in the personal knowledge of that Christ. And, as is plain, this is practically the same as what we read in verse 10, in connection with the making sure of our election, with this distinction, that Peter in verse 10 directs our attention to this growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as further assuring us of our election.

However, between this tenth verse and the admonitions as recorded in the verses 5-8, lies one link which receives all the emphasis here. Peter admonishes the church of God of all ages: "Wherefore the rather...." This receives here all the emphasis. We must always give diligence to make sure our calling and election; but verse 9 gives us a reason why this must occur. The "rather" give diligence, exert yourselves, in ever increasing measure, much more than if this were not the case! Why? Fact is, according to verse 9, he that lacketh these things is blind, cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Having been purged from his old sins, but failing to put forth all diligence to walk in sanctification, he will forget it, fail to walk consciously in his glorious deliverance out of his sin and darkness, walk stumblingly in the midst of the world. Indeed, make your calling and election sure. Does the doctrine of election make men careless and profane? Does this charge, often made by those who hate the truth of God's sovereign predestination (election and reprobation), have any ground whatever? How this charge is refuted here by the apostle Peter! I believe it is pertinent to call attention to this particular Word of God in two or three articles.



We believe that the apostle Peter, in II Peter 1:10, refers to God's eternal decree of election. It is true that there are those who dispute this and who believe that the Word of God here refers to an election in time. The word election means literally: to choose out of, gather from among. According to this interpretation, this word, then, does not refer to the Lord's eternal decree (although it must be added that they also believe in God's eternal decree of predestination and have no intention of denying this truth), but to that act of God in time whereby He gathers His people, thereby chooses them out of the world, causing His people, the children of Zion, to stand apart in the midst of the world. They base their interpretation upon the word calling and its position in this text. This calling, they say (and in this they are certainly correct) is not to be viewed merely as God's command unto repentance through the preaching of the gospel, but as the efficacious, particular, saving calling of God. Hence, whereas we read: calling and election, and whereas this election, therefore, follows upon this calling, therefore this election must be understood as following upon this calling, and this must refer to God's actual selection of His people in time, gathering them from among the peoples of the world. It needs no elucidation, I am sure, to show that this interpretation, in itself, is not necessarily wrong.

However, it is our conviction that this is not the correct interpretation of this Word of God. First of all, it is surely Scriptural that God's eternal election and the efficacious calling unto salvation are inseparably connected. In Romans 8:28 we read of those who are the called according to His purpose. And in verses 29-30 of the same chapter we read: "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. Moreoever whom He did predestinate, them He also called...." That we read here, therefore, of calling and election need not surprise us. They surely belong together. That God's decree of election is meant here is also plain, we believe, from the text itself. It is said that because this calling is mentioned first, and precedes election in the text, we must therefore conceive of an election here that follows upon this calling. And, yet, this does not necessarily follow, and it is not the idea of this Word of God. Peter is not speaking here of calling and election as such, but that we must make them sure. And what the apostle is actually saying is that we must make them sure for ourselves. The apostle is speaking here of our knowledge, our sureness, our conscious assurance. He is not speaking of making them sure as such. How, incidentally, would that be possible? Shall we establish our calling, our election? Shall we confirm, make sure

that the Lord has elected us and called us? Is not this calling the almighty, efficacious, irresistible work of God, calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light? And we must establish that, make it sure? Besides, is not election an eternal decree of the alone living God? And we must establish that? O, yes, the Arminians at the time of the Synod of Dordt, 1618 to 1619, believed in an election upon foreseen works. According to them, man does establish, make sure his election. This, however, we know is not Scriptural. According to the apostle Paul, in Ephesians 1:4, we have been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, not because we were holy (as the Arminians believed), but that we should be holy. The apostle Peter is speaking here of making our calling and election sure *for ourselves*, in our consciousness. This explains why the word calling precedes the word election here. Whereas the calling follows from God's election, inasmuch as He calls those whom He has chosen, therefore we must know our calling if we are to know our election; and because our knowledge of our election is possible only through our knowledge of our calling, therefore the word calling appears here as preceding the word election. We therefore believe that Peter here is speaking of our eternal election. But then it must also be plain that calling and election are not coordinate here, as having the same significance. Our election is surely the central thought here, and our calling must be viewed as a means — we must make our calling sure, for ourselves, in order that we may make sure, for ourselves, our election. We must stand consciously in our election, in our sovereign election of God. Let no man lead us astray from Scripture's glorious doctrine of divine sovereign election.

What is the doctrine of election? The word election, as far as the word itself is concerned, is infralapsarian. The supralapsarian has the following order: election, fall, creation. The infralapsarian has this order: creation, permitting of the fall, election. We must bear in mind that we must understand this order as occurring within the counsel of God. According to the infralapsarian God has elected out of a fallen human race (reprobation is then presented as God's sovereign decree to leave the sinner in his sin); according to the supralapsarian God's decree of election precedes the fall, and the fall of man must serve the Lord's decree of predestination. Now it must certainly be conceded that the word election gives the preference to the infralapsarian view. Fact is, the word means literally: to choose out of. If, then, we bear in mind that the whole human race is fallen, and that the Lord has elected, chosen out from among the children of men, then we can understand that the word elec-



tion itself, is infralapsarian — God chose out of the human race, the human race as fallen.

Against this view of the infralapsarian one can surely lodge very serious objections. And we do not hesitate to say that the infralapsarian will concede this, and that Supralapsarianism was therefore never condemned. The infralapsarian has no explanation for the reality of sin. Of course, we always, when speaking of God's sovereignty and sin, are dealing with truths that transcend all human understanding. Nevertheless, the infralapsarian makes no attempt to come to any solution. He has no explanation for sin, makes no effort to solve the problem, simply begins with the reality of sin. We understand that he would avoid making God the Author of sin (the supralapsarian too, however, would avoid making God the Author of sin), and therefore he proceeds, in God's counsel, from the fact of sin. This, however, solves nothing. The Lord God is surely sovereign, also over sin and evil — sin is not an accident. God must remain God, also as far as sin and the reprobate are concerned. The

infralapsarian may contend that God has elected and reprobated out of a fallen human race, but the question will persist: from whence this fallen human race? It is surely Scriptural that the Lord, also in His counsel, created the wicked for the day of evil, and God's reprobation is not merely a permitting of sin and then a divine refusal to deliver out of sin, but it is surely as positive as is the divine decree of election. The Lord is sovereign. The Lord alone is God. The Lord has sovereignly willed to glorify Himself. This God has willed centrally in Christ Jesus. To reveal this glory the Lord has sovereignly chosen a people and He willed to save them in the way of sin and grace. However, to reveal this glory, antithetically, the Lord willed, sovereignly, the reprobate who must serve the elect, so that the world exists for the sake of the children of God. Hence, God's Election of His people is that sovereign decree of the Lord, whereby He willed a people who will serve Him in heavenly glory. This, we repeat, is God's sovereign decree.

## GUEST ARTICLE —

# God's Holiness

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

"Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of *His holiness*" (Ps. 30:4).

Today, popular "singers," as they are euphemistically called, and far too charitably, are an untalented, screaming mob not worth three minutes of time to audition any one of them. They never sing anything holy; only mockeries, blasphemies, and filthiness. God's Word, here, commands men, not the reprobate, but sanctified persons, saints, to sing in praise of God's holiness. Only saints are fit to sing the Psalms of holiness. Those who do not sing the Psalms, but other songs, necessarily those of much lesser quality, cannot know to any depth what this text means. We are to sing and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness. Holiness is not the theme of the modern hit-parade of song. This is not because worldly people are ignorant of this virtue entirely, but because they despise it and are terrified at the contemplation of it. Of their worship (still to Baal and Ashtaroth) and song, the Lord says, "I hate, I despise . . . I will not smell . . . I will not accept . . . neither will I regard . . . Take away from Me the noise of thy songs, for I will

not hear!" (Amos 5:21-23). But the true church is a congregation of "appointed singers unto the Lord who should praise the beauty of holiness" (II Chron. 20:21), and "it is a good sign that we are in some measure partakers of His holiness, if we can heartily rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it" (M. Henry).

What is meant by *holiness*? The Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary defines it as, "completeness of moral and spiritual purity, perfection and integrity; absolute moral purity; perfect sanctity: said of God. '*Holiness* in the Creator is the total perfection of an infinitely righteous intelligence. *Holiness* in the creature is not mere moral perfection, but perfection of the created nature of moral agents in spiritual union and fellowship with the infinite Creator.' — Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*. Transcendentally august and venerable majesty; moral and spiritual glory: said of God; '*glorious in holiness*' (Ex. 15:11). '*Holiness* in God cannot be defined in the same terms in which *holiness* in man or angel is defined, namely, as conformity to the moral law.' Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, I, 362, 1889."

In the Reformed Dogmatics of L. Berkhof *holi-*



ness is said to come from a root meaning *to separate*. It points to separation from sin. "In its original sense" it "denotes that He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and is exalted above them in infinite majesty. So understood the holiness of God is one of His transcendental attributes, and is sometimes spoken of as His central and supreme attribute . . . if we may speak of one attribute of God as being more central and fundamental than another, then the Scriptural emphasis on the holiness of God would seem to justify the selection."

With the *Reformed Dogmatics* of H. Hoeksema, p. 100, "we conclude that the holiness of God is that wonder of the divine nature according to which God is absolute, infinite, eternal and ultimate ethical perfection, Himself being the standard, motive and purpose of all the activity of His personal nature, so that He is eternally consecrated to Himself alone as the only Good."

The wicked world diverts its mind from its miseries with raving gutter-songs, so expressing their hatred for a holy God. Their god is an idol. They have a god who is love and nothing but love. Like a woman who makes her own dress pattern, their god is patterned after their own designs. Take the gods of Greek mythology. They are the very opposite of the perfect purity of the true God. None were known for the virtue of holiness. Purity was something deemed unworthy of the consideration of a deity. But these idols of men succeed not in obliterating from their minds what conscience tells them, that the God of gods is pure and holy. So they say in their hearts, There is no God! — so claiming to be absolute atheists, owning no god at all. The holy God Who hates sin is not the god of abortion-murderers (and murderesses), of homosexual and lesbian deviates, nor of feminists. These all hate the God of Scripture, the church, Christians, and God's holy commandments, the only standard of holiness for doctrine and life. The God Who "is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11), and Who "hates all workers of iniquity" (5:5) they refuse to believe and gnash their teeth at Him. Their incessant, careless, profane, and censurable use of "hell" and "damn" reveals their utter contempt for the doctrine of the everlasting punishment of impenitent sinners in the Lake of Fire. God's detestation for the vile inhabitants of Sodom was such that He destroyed not only those male sons of Belial, but also the females and infants there (the latter at that life-stage certainly incapable of Sodom's brand of wickedness), their cattle, homes, and all their possessions with fire from heaven. So that the place where their civic and social center once stood as "the garden of the Lord" is today a desert salt-flat and poisonous lake which kills all life flowing into it.

Man has fallen so far from God that he cannot imagine the meaning of the prayer, Hallowed be Thy name. For he continually dishonors the name of God. View man over against God's holiness and you see a person created in the divine image degenerated into the image of the devil. The devil himself is not more fallen from likeness to God than we are. That we are not fallen into the same pit with apostate spirits is because our faithful Savior intervened and we fell on Him crucified for our sins. Man lost the glory of his nature, namely, resemblance to God's holiness, and so lost the only means of glorifying God as Creator and of sanctifying Him in his heart as Redeemer.

Holiness is a glorious perfection of God's nature. Hence, Scripture often styles Him the Holy One, the Holy One of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel, and more often entitles Him *Holy* than *Almighty*. God is more set forth by this part of His dignity than by any other. It is more affixed to His name than any other. "You never find . . . 'His mighty name,' or 'His wise name,' but His great name, and most of all, His holy name. This is His greatest title of honor" (Charnock). Sin is committed not against "Almighty God," but against "the Holy One of Israel." Holiness "is the glory of the Godhead and the glory of every attribute in the Godhead. His power is the strength of His attributes and holiness is the beauty of them. His justice is a holy justice; His wisdom a holy wisdom; His arm of power a holy arm (Ps. 98:1); His promise a holy promise (105:42) . . . His name is holy (103:1)" (Charnock).

Then what, in effect, is an affront to this doctrine of God's holiness is the human invention of "common grace." This philosophy is an insult to the very nature of God, especially in the property of His holiness, since that virtue is the glory of every perfection of His being. God in His holy nature has an infinite and transcendent separation from the creature, but especially from the fallen creature, while at the same time He enjoys an exclusive separation (dedication) unto Himself. His own absolute (incommunicable) holiness is the innate property of His being and the rule of all His actions, but "common grace" makes God by nature common. It makes Him something other than God. It blunts and blurs the sharp, clear, beautiful facets of His holiness we see in His transcendental separateness, inaccessibility (I Tim. 6:16), and inapproachability. Also one of the root meanings of the Hebrew word for holiness means "to shine" from which we get the adjective "new." God's glory (holiness) always has a new shine, a blazing splendor. So there cannot possibly be anything common about God's grace (or any of His virtues). Still, "common grace" would, in effect, put God not in separation from but in connection with the wicked world, so that



those who are in God then have a nice bridge over into the kingdom of this world and all it affords, its mad pleasures and ungodly, unbiblical science. "Common grace" is the very opposite of and oblitative of sanctification and holiness of life — of both God's and the life of the saints. "Common grace" also stands in opposition to God's holy law, which is a transcript of His nature, and therefore of His immutable detestation of sin.

Holiness is revealed in all its beauty and glory in the Cross of Christ. God's wrath against sin is demonstrated there far more than in the seven bowls of wrath poured out in judgment on the wicked world, or in the judgments on the fallen angels reserved in chains of darkness, or in the present and future torments of the damned. Could infinite holiness appear elsewhere lovelier than in the vicarious sufferings of the Cross? On the Cross God turned His back on His Son (thus casting our sins behind His back into the land of God's forgetfulness!), which caused Him to cry out of the impenetrable, dark depths of divine desertion, "My

God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Ps. 22:1). But on utterance of that infinite grief He answered His own question, "But Thou art holy" (v. 3). God's holiness was the cause of Christ's hellish agonies. The Cross reveals in inexorable justice that all who commit sin are worthy of death. So the Cross is gloriously illumined with the eternally new shine of perfect purity.

"Sing praises to God! Sing praises! Sing praises unto our King! Sing praises!" (Ps. 47:6). Why? Because "God reigneth over the heathen," sitting "upon the throne of His holiness" (v. 8), and because this will outfit us, armed against sin and temptation. The heathen with their vile songs and loose morals are in praise of idol-gods like to themselves, full of lusts and adulteries. Even Plato would have the wicked songs of his day eradicated from the state because they incited wickedness and riot in the people. Singing holy songs, those of Scripture, we show that we entirely hate sin, with not a speck of love for it. So may we consecrate ourselves to the Holy One as the only good.

## GUIDED INTO ALL THE TRUTH —

# The Heritage of the Truth

*Rev. Thomas Miersma*

With the penning of the last book of Holy Scriptures, the written record of the revelation of God was finished. The work of the Spirit of Christ by which "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" was brought to a close. God had given His church a complete and infallible Word to be the rule of faith and life. The Scriptures in all their beauty and power, as the revelation of God in Jesus Christ were given unto the church as her most precious heritage.

Our Lord in the Upper Room had promised His disciples that He would send unto them the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who would reveal unto them all things concerning Christ, and the wonder of God's grace and salvation in Him. In John 16:13-15 we read,

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you.

That promise He had fulfilled. He had declared unto them in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." By the power of the Spirit poured out upon the church, Christ had directed the writing of the gospels, the letters and epistles of the apostles and had revealed unto the apostle John "things which must shortly come to pass."

That Word of Christ, given by the Spirit of Christ unto the prophets in the old dispensation and unto the apostles in the new, forms one complete revelation of the living God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is the church's richest treasure, the Word of God, her heritage of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. It is an inexhaustible treasure of the gospel of our salvation, and the church shall never fully comprehend the height and depth of that revelation. For it is the revelation of the triune God, Who transcends all our thought, Whose greatness and glory are immeasurable.

That truth the church has always possessed,



from the day when God revealed unto Adam the coming of One Who would crush the head of the serpent, even until now. Always the church has beheld the center of that truth and understood it in its essence as the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. But age by age God added to that Word, shed new light upon the promise until its fulfillment in Christ and the closing of the New Testament Scriptures. Always the believing heart and mind of the child of God has reflected upon that Word of God and sought to appropriate its riches and to bring forth out of that Word things old and new.

With the close of the canon of the Scriptures, the history of doctrine properly begins. Until the completion of the Scriptures the development of doctrine was not fully possible, for God had yet more light to shed upon the promise. The whole of the truth recorded in Scripture was not yet given. Furthermore, in the old dispensation the Spirit had not yet been poured out upon the church, and God's revelation was given in types and in shadows of the reality which was to come. That history of doctrine which is the subject matter of this department of the *Standard Bearer* is the history of the church's struggle to appropriate the rich heritage of the Word of God.

The church has ever reflected upon that Word of God. She has sought to systematize the truth of that Word and to set forth in clarity its truths. This labor has given rise to the creeds and confessions of the church, in which the church gives authoritative expression to what she believes to be the truth of that Word. In that struggle to develop and give clear expression to the truth which is her heritage, she has been led by the Spirit of Christ which is the Spirit of truth. The promise of the Spirit of truth did not cease with the close of the Scriptures, for that Spirit abides in the church. He is the inward principle by which the church lays hold of the objective Word of God in the Scriptures, understands that Word and confesses it. For the Word of God is spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. The promise which Christ gave to His apostles, that the Spirit of truth would guide them into all the truth, is a promise unto the church of all ages.

That truth the apostles and the early New Testament church did not understand in all its fulness. As the prophets before them, the church of the new dispensation searched their own writings to understand the mind of the Spirit of Christ which spake by them. We must not so conceive of it, as if in the days of the apostles the whole of doctrine contained in the Scriptures was clearly understood in all its parts but then fell into darkness and ignorance. Such was not the case. The church indeed possessed the truth concerning Christ in its deepest essence, believed and appropriated it. By the

apostles the foundation of the church was laid upon the cornerstone which is Jesus Christ. But that truth, under the leading and guiding impulse of the Spirit of Christ, had to be developed. Every age of the church has stood upon the shoulders of those who have gone before. Every generation builds upon the heritage of the truth which its forefathers were led to find in that Word of God. The early church set forth the great truths of the Trinity and of the person and natures of Christ. Upon that foundation was built the truth of sin and grace, and of God's sovereign predestinating purpose by such church fathers as Augustine. In the Middle Ages the truth of the atonement was clearly developed by Anselm, the doctrine of the church by Wycliffe? Luther developed the truth of justification by faith. Calvin, the greatest of the reformers, systematized and enriched the truth in the light of the principle of the sovereignty of God. Upon the foundation of Calvin our forefathers at Dordt laid the foundations of Reformed doctrine and church government. We as Protestant Reformed people have built upon that heritage of the truth.

Behind all the history of doctrine and its development stands the providence of God, leading and guiding His church into all the truth, ever and again driving His people to His Word to discover its riches and to discern ever more clearly the wonder of grace in Jesus Christ and the glory of our God.

That history has not always followed a straight path; there are twists and turns in it. The history of doctrine is the history of a sinful people whose sins and weaknesses have also marred their understanding of the Word of God. The church has often taken wrong turnings. The wisdom of men and the philosophy of the world has always stood alongside that development, tempting the church to depart from the straight path into error and heresy. In the providence of God wicked men have also arisen in the church, carnal men and false prophets who have sought to subvert the church and to mar the purity of her doctrine. This too was under the Lord's hand, that by these means the church might be driven to defend the truth, to develop it over against the lie. The calling of the church in every age is to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

That calling is also our calling as the church of Jesus Christ. God has given us a rich heritage of the truth of His Word. That truth we are called to know and defend. We must teach it to our children, instructing them in that heritage that it might be committed unto the generations that follow us. If we are to be faithful to fulfil that calling, we must know our Reformed heritage, not only its doctrine, but also its history and development. That history is rich and varied, intimately bound to the struggle to



maintain the truth over against the lie. That struggle we are called to carry on. That truth we also are called to develop and enrich as His people. We have not arrived. Our knowledge and understanding of the truth is greater than that of our fathers, but we have not yet attained unto perfect knowledge. We are confronted by new errors which arise in the church with which we must battle, errors which are not always new in themselves but are often old heresies, warmed over for a new age and presented in a new guise.

If we are to fulfil our calling, therefore, we must know and understand our heritage of the truth in its historical development. We must know also the history of the lie and the attacks upon that truth, the errors which the church in the past has made, that by so doing, we may discern the truth from the lie in the times in which God has placed us. To that end the study of the history of doctrine is a necessity for the church of the present. We are to see the leading of the Spirit of Christ in His church of the past, to know the men which He has used to develop that truth which is our heritage, that we might

give thanks unto God also for His work in the church of the past. We must also take warning from the errors of the church in the past and her struggle for the truth, that we do not become complacent or indifferent. Rather we labor with the Word in the consciousness that the Spirit of Christ yet leads us into all truth.

Such a purpose and calling transcends the limits of one column in the *Standard Bearer*. It is the calling of the church, as a living organism in the midst of the world, to maintain, defend, and develop the truth in the life of the body of Christ. It is the purpose of this department, however, to sketch the history and development of doctrine in the church of the past, to trace the doctrines which we have received from our forefathers in their development. These sketches will not be exhaustive, for the history of the church is itself the history of the struggle for the truth of the Word of God. It is hoped that they will enrich our appreciation of the heritage of the truth which God has given us.

## ALL AROUND US —

Rev. G. Van Baren

# The Reformation Reviewed

There are ongoing discussions between Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Greek Orthodox, and Lutherans. One gathers from reports that the men involved in discussions find fewer and fewer reasons for remaining separate. Recently, reports have appeared in newspapers and magazines describing basic accord between Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians on the issue of "justification by faith." *Time*, Oct. 3, 1983, reports:

In the distant past, theological disputes between Protestants and Roman Catholics were, quite literally, matters of life and death. Tens of thousands of people died during the devastating religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. Sharp differences remain on some basic points of doctrine, but in recent years the churches have been working quietly to resolve these old dogmatic quarrels. Last week a panel of 20 Lutheran and Catholic theologians, meeting in Milwaukee, announced that they had reached essential agreement on the meaning of "justification," one of the key issues of the Protestant Reformation. The theologians said the remaining points of difference about this doctrine were no longer reason to keep their churches apart . . .

Summarizing the new agreement, the theologians said, "We can and do confess together that our hope for salvation rests entirely on God's merciful action in Christ." The remaining differences, as well as the agreements, will be spelled out in a 21,000-word joint statement to be issued this week . . .

. . . For Lutherans justification remains "the template, the pattern of how God and man relate. For Catholics, it is one doctrine among many." More basic, the Catholics on the panel assured the Lutherans that they believed that good works alone could not bring salvation, while the Lutherans declared that their emphasis upon faith and God's grace did not mean they rejected the importance of good works in the life of a Christian.

The *Christian News*, Oct. 3, 1983, presents an editorial comment on the above accord. In it, the editor points out that the Roman Catholic Church did not change its view of justification at all — and the agreement worked out was with the aid of Lutheran theologians known for their liberalism. Among other things, the editorial stated:

. . . Note from the report that the Roman Catholic



Church has never retracted the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent condemned the Scriptural doctrine of justification. Vatican II reaffirmed everything Trent said about justification. The National Catholic Register article shows that when Rome says it accepts the doctrine of justification by faith, it includes charity (or works) in faith.

Actually Luther and the Church which excommunicated him were in far greater accord than true Lutherans today are with the present Roman Catholic Church . . . .

. . . Protestant and Roman Catholic universalists do not accept the Scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone regardless of all the orthodox sounding terminology they use.

CN has for many years shown that Dr. John Reumann, who appears to be the leading Lutheran spokesman on the Roman Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue Commission, is one of the most liberal Lutheran theologians in the U.S. What he means by justification is not at all what Lutherans confess in the Augsburg

Confession.

Reumann does not accept the Bible as God's inspired and inerrant Word. He argued in the November, 1969 Concordia Theological Monthly that the New Testament is some sort of fallible patchwork put together by fallible men who even fabricated some of the things now included in the New Testament. He rejects the Christian doctrine of Hell and the immortality of the soul . . . .

It appears, then, that an agreement has been worked out between *liberal* Lutherans and Roman Catholics which is supposed to be a basic resolution of the old differences concerning justification by faith. But the conservative Lutheran still insists that the differences remain — and in fact are greater today than at the time of the Reformation. Yet the majority of churches seem almost eager to show that they understand each other — and can even perhaps unite together at some future date. Can you imagine what Martin Luther would say?

## Tuition Tax Credit

The *Presbyterian Journal*, Oct. 5, 1983, reports that President Reagan is being criticized for his lukewarm support to tuition tax credits for students in non-public schools. Pressure is being applied that this support become stronger. The report states:

According to Dr. James Skillen, executive director of the Association for Public Justice (APJ) and a member of the group which met at the White House, President Reagan told them he now has a commitment from two senators, Robert Dole (R-Kan.) and Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) to bring Senate Bill 528 to a vote in the full Senate this fall. The corresponding measure in the house is HR-1730.

Supporters of the bills say their effect will be to reduce tax revenues by about \$800 million by 1985. They claim that is less than one percent of the current public school budget of \$108 billion, while private schools educate 12 percent of all elementary and secondary children in the U.S.

The President, who has supported such tax relief for families using non-public schools since before his 1980 election, claimed his staff has had a difficult time developing an adequate strategy for working with Congress on the matter.

But critics have said the real problem was that the issue was too low on the White House priority list . . . .

A letter to the *Banner*, Oct. 10, 1983, expresses the thought, seldom heard in Reformed circles anymore, that there might be real danger of receiving

any sort of new government assistance:

The very fact that Bob Jones University is being refused tax exempt status on the basis of its own policy of discrimination shows that the government has no intention of acting as the Christian schools' benevolent friend. What awaits us in the future? Race quotas, women in the right places, or, worse yet, maybe we might end up turning our schools into a free-for-all as far as keeping non-Christians out. After all, a voucher or tax credit can be spent anywhere, and where government money follows, so also closely comes government regulation.

Again, one is reminded of the dangers involved in any kind of governmental support. The temptations are real: we pay taxes and have the right to expect to get our "money's worth" also in the education of our children. But the Bob Jones University case ought to cause us to beware. If the government provides support and tax-relief, if we become increasingly dependent upon it, if we finally believe we can not do without it — then too the government is in a position to deny such support because we do not recognize the "rights" of homosexuals, or women-in-office, or the "rights" of those of other religious beliefs.

**Take time to read  
*The Standard Bearer***



## “Reformed” Thinking?

From the man who labelled “predestination” as “blasphemy” in the *Reformed Journal*, a man who is a member in the C.R.C., Thomas B. Talbott, professor of philosophy at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, come two other articles in the *Reformed Journal*, in part, a response to a certain John Piper who sought to refute Talbott’s original article. In June, 1983 issue, he writes:

There are really two parts to Piper’s argument. He argues, first, that the proposition

(P) *God loves all men*

is true only if

(Q) *The final judgment is remedial or temporary*

is also true; and he argues, second, that there is no biblical warrant for believing (Q) and therefore no biblical warrant for believing (P) either. Now I am prepared to accept the first part of this argument, though it too is controversial and often challenged. I am prepared to concede, in other words, that (P) entails (Q) . . . . Accordingly, all those universalistic passages — call them prooftexts if you will — that people like Piper struggle so hard to explain away are in fact, given Piper’s own assumption that (P) entails (Q), a powerful reason for thinking that the final judgment is either remedial or temporary or both . . . .

Again, Talbott argues thus in the issue of September, 1983:

. . . And Scripture does leave open the possibility, at least, that a person may shut out the Spirit entirely. Then, perhaps, a person must simply bear that punishment which is the inevitable consequence of his sin: “For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment,

and a fury of fire, which will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26-27). Nor should one, I think, tone down the language here or try to soften this terrible image of “a fury of fire.” Our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), as George MacDonald never tired of reminding us, and the fires of hell are but the most terrible expression of the love of God. As a symbol of that which consumes all that is false within us (see Cor. 3:15 [sec]), the image of fire is one that permeates all of Scripture and cannot be dispensed with. It represents not only the most terrible, but also the most irresistible form that God’s purifying love can take. One way or another, Christ *shall* defeat his enemies, and his enemies *shall* in time gladly be defeated, and death itself *shall* be consumed in the lake of fire.

One must simply note, (1) that denial of predestination inevitably leads to “unlimited” or universal atonement, denial of eternal hell, and universal salvation — for that is what Talbott is teaching.

(2) That Talbott and his opponent, Piper, though both within the same denomination, do not argue on the basis of the Reformed Confessions. The Confessions represent the acknowledged confession of a church of what Scripture truly teaches. It is the touchstone to determine whether one belongs within one denomination. To argue only from Scripture is to deny the confessional basis of a denomination.

(3) How can a denomination or a magazine, both presumably with the confessional basis of our Three Forms of Unity, allow for such writings or teachings in their midst? That is not a question of “freedom,” but is direct violation of one’s confessional basis.

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE —

### Hebrews — Christ, the Author of a Better Covenant

Rev. J. Kortering

In this letter, the author to the Hebrews (Jewish Christians) sets forth Jesus as the true fulfillment of the law and the old covenant. Though there was a temptation to abandon faith in Him, this letter was written to encourage all, especially Jews, to consider the true ministry of Jesus and what it means to their faith and future.

#### THE AUTHOR

It is interesting to observe that the Pauline authorship of the Hebrews is carefully disputed, and for lack of any convincing alternative is either accepted as tradition or left as an open question. Our *Netherlands Confession*, Article IV boldly asserts, “We believe the Holy Scriptures are con-



tained in two books, namely the Old and New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. These are thus named in the Church of God. The books of the Old Testament are the five books of Moses . . . Those of the New Testament are the four evangelists, . . . and the fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul, viz. the one to the Romans . . . and one to the Hebrews."

Looking back to the early years, subsequent to the close of the apostolic age, the church fathers are divided as to their estimation of the authorship of the Hebrews, see *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Generally, the eastern churches, especially in Alexandria, considered Paul to be the author. Among them was Clement, the most outspoken. Origin agreed, though he qualified it by suggesting, "God alone knows." In the western churches, the epistle remained anonymous until the fifth century when the Pauline authorship was gradually accepted. Another tradition arose in Africa, suggesting that Barnabas was the author. The Council of Hippo, A.D. 393, included in the books of the Bible, "thirteen epistles of the apostle Paul and one by the same to the Hebrews." The Council of Carthage, A.D. 419, mentioned, "The fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul." The historian Eusebius suggested that it was written by Paul in Hebrew and translated by Clement into Greek. The Reformers rejected Pauline authorship; Luther suggested Apollos and Calvin thought it might be Luke. Actually, theologians and scholars have made many suggestions, even until the present time.

From the evidence of the epistle itself, we conclude the following about the author. He was a Greek-speaking Jew. He was thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament Scripture, though he quoted from the Septuagint Bible (a Greek translation from Hebrew) and not from the Hebrew Bible itself. He knew the doctrinal teaching and worship of the Jews so thoroughly, it would seem he was not a heathen convert to Christianity but brought up as a Jew and followed Christ. His style of writing Greek gives evidence of an excellent command of the language both in vocabulary and diction. His doctrinal emphasis reflects the centrality of the ministry of Christ and its significance for salvation and life, much as Paul would do.

Hendriksen in his *New Testament Survey* and Harrison in his *Introduction to the New Testament* list the reasons why we cannot accept the apostle Paul as the author to the Hebrews. Here follows a summary.

1. The epistle does not contain an address with designation of authorship which Paul does in all his writings. A twofold reason is suggested: either Paul chose to be anonymous because he was the apostle

to the Gentiles and thought it wise to remain in the background when he wrote to the Jews, or that he was a *persona non grata* with the Jews and he thought his message would be better received if his identity were not known. Both of these suggestions are contradicted by Paul's method in his other writings.

2. How could Hebrews 2:3 be applied to Paul, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?" In all his other writings he insists that he received his gospel directly from Christ (c.f. Gal. 1:11ff, I Cor. 9:1ff, 15:8ff).

3. The calm, balanced style of Greek is different from Paul's writings. Godet writes, "It is strange indeed that he should have written in polished Greek to the Hebrews (who spoke Hebrew) while all his life he had written to the Hellenes (who spoke Greek) in a style abounding with rugged and barbarous Hebraisms." The difference is between the literary KOINE Greek and the vernacular KOINE Greek. One is not better than the other, only a different kind.

4. Paul uses the title, "the Lord Jesus Christ" with great frequency. The author to the Hebrews, on the contrary, prefers the simple, Jesus, or at times, Jesus Christ.

5. There is a different usage of antitype and type, contrast Hebrews 9:24 and I Peter 3:21, earthly vs. heavenly, shadow vs. reality. In Paul's writing the antithesis is between faith and works, spirit and flesh, sin and grace.

6. The author of the Hebrews quotes all the Old Testament writings from the Septuagint version. Paul shows no such preference in his writings.

7. In Hebrews, a larger place is given to Christ's earthly ministry than in all Paul's writings put together.

8. The characteristically Pauline phrase, "in Christ," does not occur in Hebrews.

9. There is a decidedly deficient amount of ethical demands that are prominent in Paul's writings.

10. Nowhere in Hebrews do we come into contact with the personality or experiences of Paul. The few references in the last chapter are too vague to assist in this respect. Paul generally included such references.

It cannot be established who the author really is.

## THE OCCASION

The Jewish converts remained a constant concern to the early New Testament church. The Jews outside the church constantly assailed the Christian church, especially the Hebrew Christians following



Christ. Some of them within the church clung to the obsession that they had to keep the law and be loyal to their fellow countrymen. They tried to harmonize faith in Christ and the observance of the law. This separated them from their fellow Gentile Christians. They were usually best educated in the Old Testament Scriptures, more so than many Gentile converts. They were needed in the church. Christ had predicted the destruction of Jerusalem. It would be a mortal blow to the Jews, it would end their national distinction and their common bond in temple worship. Persecution from Rome was increasing against all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles. The converted Jews had to see their future life in Jesus Christ, without the law. There was a better covenant than that of Abraham or Moses; it was now written in the blood of Christ, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. For their salvation and the welfare of the church they needed instruction in these great truths. The letter was written to fill that need.

#### TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN

Having said it was written to Jewish converts, we have to be more specific. A dispute follows as to which group of Jews: were they in Jerusalem, in Rome, in Alexandria, or some other place?

In favor of the Jerusalem Hebrew Christians we find the following:

1. Jerusalem was the center of Jewish worship and influence. The Hebrew Christians there needed this message more than any others.
2. The reference to the Old Testament types and temple worship would fit the Jerusalem church better than any other.
3. There were proportionally more Jewish Christians in Jerusalem than anywhere else.
4. They were able to grasp the message and warning about temple worship more than others, since it was present in their midst.

Arguments in favor of Roman Hebrew Christians are the following (Taken from Hendriksen, *New Testament Survey*).

1. This would be the most natural interpretation of Hebrews 13:24: "Those who came from Italy wish to be remembered to you." The original Greek uses "from Italy," hence the idea is that they left Italy and were with the author and now wish to return greetings to their former members in Rome.
2. According to Hebrews 2:3 the readers seem not to have heard the Lord Himself preach. The Jerusalem church surely did, the Romans possibly not.
3. Before A.D. 70 the temple still stood. If the

epistle was written for Jerusalem Jews, why not refer to the present temple and worship?

4. The use of the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) would distract the Jerusalem Hebrews who knew Hebrew better than Greek. The Septuagint would fit better the Hebrews in Rome.

5. According to this letter, the Jews distinguished themselves by their almsgiving (6:10; 10:34). The Jews in Jerusalem received alms because of poverty, they did not give them.

6. Hebrews 5:12 informs us that these Jews did not produce any teachers; the Jerusalem church had done that.

7. The first to recognize this epistle were the Roman Christians; hence we conclude they were the first to receive it.

8. Timothy was well known in Rome, see Hebrews 13:23 and Philippians 1:1, and Colossians 1:1.

9. The Jews in Rome were called Hebrews just as much as the Jerusalem Jews. Paul was from Tarsus, and he still called himself a Hebrew, II Corinthians 11:22.

The arguments seem to favor the Roman Hebrew Christians as the recipients of this letter.

#### THE DATE

Since no reference is made in the letter to the Hebrews to the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, an argument that would have been cogent whether it was sent to the Jews at Jerusalem or Rome, it is assumed that it was written prior to the destruction of the city in A.D. 70. How must we understand the reference in Hebrews 13:23 to Timothy's imprisonment? "Know ye not that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom if he come shortly, I will see you." As best we know, Timothy was imprisoned after Paul's death, during the reign of Nero. Paul died in A.D. 67, hence an educated guess would place the date of authorship around A.D. 67-70.

#### THE MESSAGE

The author is led by the Holy Spirit to set forth Christ Jesus as the Mediator of the better covenant. When one reads this epistle, he cannot help but conclude, how great is the Lord Jesus in His suffering and death, but now much more in His resurrection and ascension into heaven. To cling to the law of the old covenant brings one to defeat, it sets forth a priesthood that has passed away. Now we believe in Christ, God's priest-king whose covenant abideth forever.

Well may we read this letter to be strengthened in our faith in our Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ.



## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD —

### Missionary Methods (18)

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

The Word of God lays down the principle that the ministers of the Gospel must be supported by the churches which they serve. This principle was established already in the Old Testament era. When God gave to Israel the land of Canaan as a type of the heavenly Canaan each tribe and each family of each tribe was given an inheritance or allotted portion of the land. This portion was typical of each family's eternal inheritance in glory. The tribe of Levi which served Israel as the priests had no inheritance in the land, "for the Lord was their inheritance" (Deut. 10:9). For this reason the rest of Israel was admonished "not to forsake the Levite," but to support him (Deut. 14:27). The food of the Levite was supplied by the sacrifices of Israel. He depended upon his brothers for shelter and the rest of his earthly needs. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us the same when He sent the twelve to preach to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Among His instructions to them Jesus said, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor script for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matthew 10:9, 10). This principle is taught repeatedly in the Epistles. The apostle Paul speaks of it at length in I Corinthians 9:1-23. In verse fourteen of this chapter the apostle writes: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (cf. also: Phil. 4:14-18; I Tim. 5:18).

What this means is that the congregation to which the pastor ministers the Word of God is bound by God to provide adequate support of the pastor. The pastor must be free from "worldly cares and avocations" in order to be able to devote all of his time and effort to the work of the ministry. With this principle few, if any of us, would disagree. In the Reformed tradition, churches have always and do today provide for the material needs of their ministers and families. It is our contention that this principle of Scripture must be universally applied. It must be implemented also on the mission fields. Missionaries are supported by the sending churches. This is proper and no one would disagree. When churches are established as the fruit of missionary preaching, these churches must be indigenous to their native land. Elders and deacons

and ministers must be ordained out of these churches to serve these churches. These churches must be: "self-supporting, self-extending, self-governing" (*The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, Roland Allen, pp. 26ff). Native pastors are needed for the newly organized churches. And these native pastors must be supported by the churches which they serve. Again, few would disagree. This very plainly is the biblical principle. What applies to the "home church" also applies to the mission church.

But in the mission context the church is often faced with a vexing problem. What if the situation is such that the new church is so poor that it is unable to provide for the support of its pastor? This is often the case. Many mission churches, at least by our Western standards, are extremely primitive and poor. Must these be expected to support ministers? They barely are able to support themselves. Perhaps the most common answer to these questions is: let the sending denomination support the native pastors and missionaries. In this way the work of the church can continue and grow. The native churches are unable to support their own pastors, hence, the home church must assume that responsibility. All of this seems sensible. After all, the church needs preachers and the preachers need to be supported.

This is, however, the wrong answer. It is certainly not the biblical answer, and for this very reason it is neither desirable nor practical. In fact, this practice has caused considerable harm to the cause of Christ in the world. We do well to listen to a seasoned missionary and professor (Presbyterian) of a century ago, Dr. Kellogg, quoted by John L. Nevius: "This plan [that of organizing churches without pastors in the modern sense of that term] would also meet the vexations, and — as it has proved in some missions that we could name — the hitherto insoluble problem of the support of a native pastor. The pecuniary question has been one of the main difficulties, thus far, in the establishment of independent churches in our foreign mission fields. It is plain that if a man be set apart to give his whole time to the pastoral care of a church, he is rightfully entitled to a full support. But where is this to be raised? Most of these young churches



(this is 1879, R.D.D.) in India, China, and Africa are very poor. Fix the stipend as low as we will, they are not able to pay it. Shall the church in America or Europe supplement their contributions? This is often done, and to the inexperienced might seem a very simple and excellent solution of the difficulty; *but in fact, with this arrangement, difficulties multiply.* (emphasis mine, R.D.D.) For example, what shall be the salary? If, as has often been done, it is fixed at a point much higher than the average income of the people, this works great mischief. It elevates the pastor unduly above the average condition of the people of his church. It degrades the ministry by making the pastorate an object of ambition to covetous and unworthy men. It makes the church, in many cases, despair, from the first, of reaching the position of self-support. A moderate salary they might in time hope to be able to pay of themselves; a high salary they, with good reason, look upon as unattainable. We affirm, without fear of contradiction, that no one thing has more effectively hindered the development of independent, self-sustaining native churches in many foreign fields, than the high salaries which, with mistaken wisdom, are paid to many of the native pastors and helpers from the treasuries of the home churches. Shall we give them a low salary? We shall not thereby escape serious difficulty. Men educated even as pastors commonly are in heathen fields feel that they are justly entitled to more; and when they hear of the hundreds of thousands which the church at home contributes for the support of the Gospel and which are supposed to be at the disposal of the missionary, they will not and generally do not take kindly to the refusal to pay at a high figure. In this way alienations often occur between the foreign missionary and his native helpers" (Dr. John L. Nevius, *The Planting And Development Of Missionary Churches*, pp. 66, 67). This quotation needs no further comment.

Biblical principles are always the foundation of biblical practice. When the church functions according to the sound principles of the Word of God it may expect the Lord's blessing. When the church fails to implement sound biblical principles it brings upon itself misery. Nevius makes a point which illustrates this truth when he writes: "Here we meet with the important Scriptural principle that teachers in the Church should look for help in temporal matters to those whom they teach. Many advantages spring from this relation of mutual dependence. As the pastor gives his time and energies to his people and watches for their souls as one who shall give account, his people naturally accept from him not only instruction but admonition and reproof. The fact that he depends upon them wholly or in part for his support gives to them a reasonable

claim upon his services, and to him a strong motive for the diligent and conscientious performance of his duties. When the native pastor is supported by the Foreign Board the advantages growing out of this mutual dependence between pastor and people are lost, and a onesided and unnatural relation is introduced of people and pastor depending on foreign aid, which works evil rather than good" (Nevius, p. 64).

If, as had been shown, it is wrong from the point of view of both principle and practice for the sending churches to support native pastors, how must the church labor in foreign fields where the believers are very poor? Let it be said first that the goal of an indigenous church ought never be abandoned. The converts need to be organized into a manifestation of the church of Christ in their own land and culture. They need elders and deacons according to the requirements of Holy Scripture. They need pastors too, preachers of their own nationality and culture. Toward this goal the missionaries must labor. Converts must be taught the whole counsel of God, And, that whole counsel of God includes their responsibility to support those who minister to them in the name of Christ. They must be taught that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," even if all they have to give is a widow's mite. Those converts who give evidence of possessing gifts suitable for office in the church must be trained so that in time they can be called and ordained as elders, deacons, and ministers. Until such time as the group is prepared in every respect, prepared also to support its own minister at least in part, it cannot be organized. The work of the missionary would then continue. It may be possible to organize a group which cannot afford to support the minister completely. The apostle Paul, after all, was a tentmaker so as not to be a burden to the churches. There is precedent in church history for this as well. But this is not ideal. The biblical principle is that congregations are bound to support their own pastors. In no case ought this support come from the Foreign Mission Committee of the churches.

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## Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on September 14, 1983 at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. With the exception of Kalamazoo, each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. G. Van Baren presided over this session.

Two matters, other than routine business, occupied the attention of the Classis. In the first place; Classis gave approval for the organization of a new congregation in the Byron Center-Cutlerville area. This was in response to a renewed request by those brethren who had petitioned the May Classis to organize them. Hudsonville consistory was appointed as committee of Classis to implement this decision. Classical appointments were granted this group and are as follows: October 9: Joostens; October 16: Flikkema; October 23: Haak; November 6: Van Baren; November 13: Miersma; November 20: Woudenberg; December 4: Bruinsma; December 11: De Vries; December 18: Joostens; January 8:

Haak; January 15: Van Baren.

The second item of business not routine was the consideration and subsequent approval of a request by a consistory for the erasure of a baptized member.

In concluding remarks, Rev. R. Van Overloop gave a brief report of the proceedings of Classis West held the week prior as well as a report of his work in Birmingham and of his most recent work in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. Rev. G. Lubbers also reminded Classis of the need to remember Rev. Miersma in prayer as he considers the call to work as missionary to Jamaica.

Expenses amounted to \$343.00. Classis will meet next on January 11, 1984 at First Church.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

## News From Our Churches

October 14, 1983

The organizational meeting of the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church took place Thursday, October 20, in the Byron Center Christian Junior High School. Prof. Hoeksema was the speaker. May God bless this new church.

The consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church held a meeting on August 18 for all those who were interested in the organization of a church in the Grandville area. Since then a group of families has met for Sunday worship services in the Grandville High School. It is the desire of these families to organize in the near future.

God has put a profound love for the Reformed truth in our hearts. That is evident when we consider the many Reformation Day lectures that took place in October. South Holland Protestant Reformed Church held two lectures. Rev. Engelsma spoke October 13, on "The Reformation and Love of the Truth." Rev. Van Overloop spoke October 27, on "The Reformation and Prayer." Remember the Reformation Day Lecture to be held November 4, 8 P.M. at Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. Bekkering will be the speaker.

Rev. Houck's address is 1109 W. Rumble Road, Modesto, CA 95350.

First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids had this announcement in their September 18 bulletin: "Our missionary, Rev. Van Overloop . . . reported to Classis that his work in Birmingham was slowly moving forward. Also, that while he was in South Holland, he was made aware of an interested group in the Elk Grove area of Chicago."

The October 9 bulletin of First Church also read, "Candidate K. Hanko, his wife and family have left to labor in Blue Bell, Pa. for about two and one-half months. He is being sent by our Hope consistory at the request of the Mission Committee."

The Church Extension Committee of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church is working on the idea of "submitting informative items regarding our services in the 'church calendar' of the Saturday *Grand Rapids Press*, periodically placing brief doctrinal statements along with information regarding our church in the *Advance Newspapers*, and distributing *Standard Bearers* in some of the area homes for the elderly."

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