



BEACON LIGHTS

for

**PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH**

January 1966

"The Tremendous Trifle"

Get Understanding!

Who Kills Christ Now?



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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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- Karlene Oomkes News Editor
- Rev. H. Hanko From Dort to Today
- Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. G. Van Baren From the Pastor's Study

All material for publication should be addressed to MR. DARREL HUISKEN, 543 Norwood, S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan. Grand Rapids subscribers please forward subscription dues to PAT KAMPS, 2386 O'Brien Rd., S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. Subscribers outside of the Grand Rapids area please forward subscription dues to LOUISE LOOYENGA, 2604 Almont, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49507.

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STANDING IN 1966

You're not alone, no matter how your friends take leave of you, in tribulation sore;

Nor when you take a stand that alienates the mass, to leave you standing with aught else but firm conviction, and that as based upon God's Word.

Majorities can make you look a sorry sight . . . and, even though you're right, it's difficult for us, frail mortals that we be, to champion right in face of almost overwhelming opposition.

Young saint, the Lord has never promised you that your life's way would be without these thorns, and many more.

And thus it is, in your life and in mine.

It's *difficult*, we said, but stand for the right you shall!

And also, opposition to the right can only ever be an *almost* overwhelming force.

It never can be more than that!

It surely is sufficient for the saint to know that all the tribulation, all the scoffing, all the trials and the tears that you must suffer in this vale are but the loving chastening of His God, even when you stand, and by God's grace, uphold the right!

Indeed, you know it cannot be a curse! God, rather, purifies the ones He loves and to that process leads you in your way.

Majorities, you know, if measured by that number norm alone, are worthless.

Far better, youth, it is to seek uncompromisingly the humble paths of truth, and though it seems you stand alone, despised by all, know this:

The Lord has said, of that same way, that few there be that find it!

He held that way in very high esteem!

God's prophet, youthful saint, once thought he was alone.

But wondrously Jehovah showed him otherwise!

You stand in faith, and you commune with God to lead you in the right?

You fervently implore that all His glorious Word may be the guide for your life's day, as, week by week, it quickly flies away?

You seek forgiveness for your sins, as human frailty and a nature all depraved would, if possible, almost obliterate the thought of God?

Remember this: It is the only God of all the earth and heavens that has begun the work in you!

It's also He that made you stand and earnestly defend the truth and right, which work He surely finishes and vindicates His suffering saint!

You think that as you walk this straight and narrow way in 1966 your friends grow few and that the adversary mounts and mounts?

This may be true.

But when you walk with God, the vict'ry lies within your breast.

You're *NOT* alone!!

H.W.K.

"THE TREMENDOUS TRIFLE"

"This," my wife said, "is a typical illustration of what is known as a tremendous trifle."

It was Christmas Eve and up to now had been one of my most joyful. We had always been a poor family and seldom had too much to spend on presents for one another. Not that presents and gifts are the heart of Christmas — really we all knew that Christ is the heart of Christmas — but there is a warmth on Christmas Eve when all the family is together and the presents of each one is opened in the presence of all. Then we find we really do love one another as we all rejoice in the joy of the other. As I said before so far this Christmas Eve was one of the best, but now discontent and anger began to creep into the family circle. One could feel it grow and build up, and, as it increased, in inverse proportion, peace began to diminish. We had all been waiting for my oldest son to come home at 10 P.M. before we began to unwrap our gifts. My two younger children could hardly restrain themselves as they eyed the pile of unknown goodies under the tree. Oh, how they would like to know what was under each wrapping. When would their brother get home? Eagerly they would peek out the front window hoping each car that went by would turn in the driveway. Finally with a shout "Here he is!" they began to dance and laugh. Brother came in shaking the new-fallen snow off his jacket. His hands had a little grease on them and he looked as though he may have had trouble on the road. "I wonder if I may borrow your car Dad," he said, "I have to run back to Standale for a moment and then will be right back." You could see the faces of my two younger children drop. What? After all this waiting must they once again have their hopes postponed? Their loyalty to their brother would not allow them to complain and after all Standale was only a 5 minute drive from our home. What difference would 15 more minutes make? As he went back out the door we settled down to await the quarter hour delay. A half hour later we were still waiting. Slowly

resentment began to build up inside my heart. What in the world is the matter with that boy, he's 25 years old and certainly must know how a teenager and an 11-year-old child want to open their presents. Is he once again repairing that miserable wreck of a car of his? Couldn't that wait for some other day besides Christmas Eve? Has he no feelings for his family? Now $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour had passed and still he had not returned. The children were getting sleepy and depressed and I began to become angry. Should we exchange gifts without him? After all church services were to be held in the morning and we needed some sleep. My discontent became vocal as I spoke to my wife concerning these matters. Immediately this spirit of anger and discontent began to spread through the whole family. It was as though someone had put a match to dry leaves and the flames began to crackle. In my mind's eye I saw the whole Christmas day ruined by this spirit.

Then I remembered prayer — also this poem which I picked up somewhere.

"RESTRAINING PRAYER WE CEASE
TO FIGHT.

PRAYER MAKES THE CHRISTIAN'S
ARMOUR BRIGHT.

AND SATAN TREMBLES WHEN HE
SEES —

THE WEAKEST SAINT UPON HIS
KNEES."

No, I didn't get down on my knees, not physically, that is, but mentally I got lower than that. I prayed inwardly.

"Merciful God and Father have compassion upon this family. How prone to hate we are. How self centered we are. How quick we are to think the worst of one another. We are quick to judge and condemn. The tongue is a little thing but who can control it? Only Thee, Almighty God. Oh, Father deliver me from myself, banish the anger and hatred in my own heart and restore peace to this family. So many Christmases have been ruined by my terrible temper, I pray Thou wilt give me patience, re-

store love and Christian fellowship in this home!"

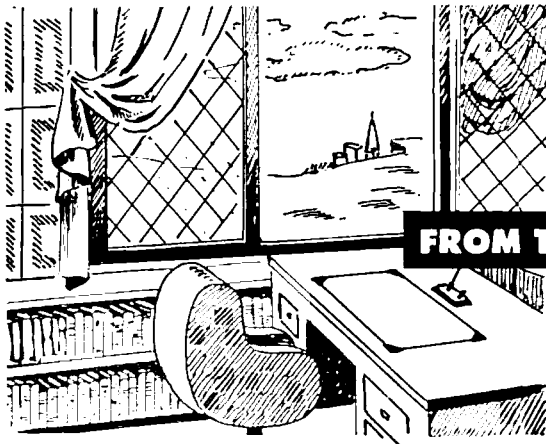
A knock at the door, we turned around, I walked my oldest son, more grease on his hands. "Oh, God," I pleaded inwardly, reverently, give me patience, control my temper." "Do you have a flashlight Dad?". he asked. "No, I answered, with all the self control I could command." "Oh, well, he said, a few matches will do. Come out into the garage please," he asked. Fighting myself all the way I obliged, my family close on my heels. He struck a match, held it down under the rear of the car. "I hope there is no gas on the floor, maybe he will blow us up too," I thought. I looked. As I got up from bending over looking, there

were tears in my eyes. I fought hard to hold them back. On each rear wheel was a brand new snow tire, a Christmas present to Dad. "I couldn't get them put on as quick as I thought," he said, "the garage man was so busy I had to wait an extra $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour."

We went into the house. A gasoline airplane for my 11-year-old boy, a fish aquarium for my 15-year-old son, a camera and film for my wife, a toaster for my 25-year-old son (to use at college). And for me a most blessed Christmas Eve. I tremble to think what would have happened if I had not prayed.

Do you pray? . . . try it.

Vernon Graeser



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. VAN BAREN

GET UNDERSTANDING!

"How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!"
Proverbs 16:16

Young people, how much do you earn? And why are you earning this? It is good to face the question. We live in a very materialistic age—an age in which man seeks the comforts and pleasures which this world has to offer. There is the real desire for gold and silver. Or possibly this could be stated in a more down-to-earth way. You are working, maybe, so that you can get another and better car. Or you are interested in obtaining a large wardrobe of beautiful clothes. And if you contemplate marriage soon, you are earning so that you

may equip a home. It seems that one of the essential items of "furniture" for every newly established home is a television set. After all, young couples must have this for their entertainment and relaxation in evenings.

But one thing which young people (and older too) forget is the need for good books within the home. This is possibly the last thing thought of in preparing to establish a new home. It is probably not even considered by young people who believe they have many years before them to do such

things. Yet the invention of the printing press (and the consequent multiplication of books) is one of the most wonderful inventions of the age. It has made available the Bible for personal use and study in every Christian home. It has made possible commentaries and meditations upon that Word of God. It has brought the thoughts of many saintly men of many ages to the library shelves of those interested. True: this same instrument has been used by evil men under the direction of the devil to advance the cause of sin and corruption. But that aspect of the misuse of this invention I do not wish to consider now. Good books are definitely available for the Christian home which can serve as tools in further study of the Word of God.

Young people ought to have definite plans to establish a well-rounded library to aid them in the study of God's Word. Money ought to be set aside for that end. Probably a monthly sum could be designated for that goal. Nor ought this to be too miserly a sum. Books cost money. And it involves a matter which is worthy of a good investment.

In building a home library, which books ought one to obtain? I will not give many definite recommendations in this article. I would suggest though, that the books of our own Rev. H. Hoeksema ought to be included. The Acts of our own Synods should be there. Ought not we, members of the church, be vitally concerned with the actions of our own denomination? And if we have not these Acts of past years, we ought to make every effort to obtain as many as are yet available (and at \$1.00 per copy, this is a real bargain). The stated clerk of our Synod, Rev. G. Vanden Berg, can supply these. But other books can be useful too. Bible encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries are helpful. Commentaries, particularly on Scriptural passages being discussed in church organizations, are useful. Church history books are profitable. Others could be mentioned, but this is sufficient for now.

But, how does one determine which books to choose? How does one judge between commentaries? The layman, who may not have had much contact with books, is hard-pressed to determine the best for his purpose. I would suggest that your minister could be contacted. I would like

to see, too, that our seminary professors could draw up a list of recommended books for the home. Our school teachers could together prepare a list of recommended books for children. Such lists could be sent to the local churches, and even distributed to the families and to you as young people. The lists could contain information as to where the books could be obtained. From these lists, regular selections could be made.

But books, standing unused and dusty upon the shelf, mean nothing. That reminds me of the recent mass meeting commemorating the Reformation which was held at the Civic in downtown Grand Rapids. Literature was distributed after the meeting. One man, plainly a "bum," collected a mass of material. Conjectures were made concerning him. Was he an educated man, fallen upon bad times? Was he deeply touched by the meeting and eager to discover more? Some, I heard later, followed the man as he wended his way behind the Civic Auditorium. Carefully he spread the material upon the ground . . . and then lay down to sleep. The underlying principles of Scripture, set forth in this literature, served this man only in a physical way. The material may have warmed his body—but hardly his soul. Unread books in our homes serve not a much better purpose. They may be decorative. These may leave a favorable impression upon the visitor. But they are of no benefit for us.

Books must be used. There are books which ought to be used in preparing for our Sunday services. Others should be used in preparing for societies and catechism classes. Some can be read in the "quiet hour." But by all means, time must be set aside to read the volumes of valuable material available to us. Many claim, of course, that they are not "readers." I suppose that there are a few instances where this is true, but in most cases it is rather a matter of not developing proper habits. A time should be set aside every day, possibly to begin with, fifteen minutes, for the purpose of reading good material. In this way a good habit will develop and grow. Try it once.

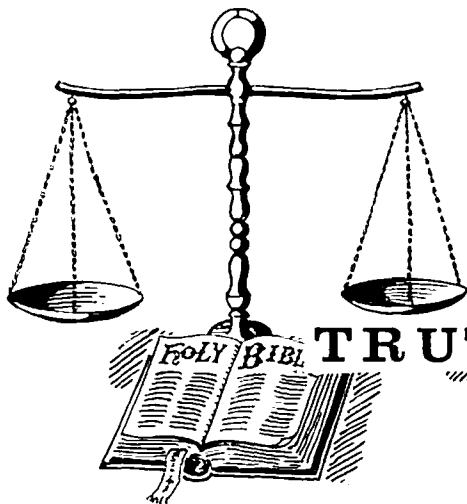
Reading, of itself, does not give one either wisdom or understanding. It is not to be obtained through the efforts of man.

These are gifts of God through the operation of His Spirit in our hearts. We are not born with these; we do not merit or earn them; these are gifts of pure grace. It is also true that knowledge obtained by study, of itself, puffeth up (1 Cor. 8:1). Knowledge, so very often, seems to lead to conceit and pride – but not to true wisdom. Therefore parents often fear when their children seek more and higher education.

But the fact remains that there is the calling to “get” wisdom and understanding. God provides means for our proper use. God determines that through the use of the means, as these are applied unto us by

the Spirit, spiritual understanding and wisdom will develop and grow. The means given do not provide these spiritual gifts, but they aid in their development and growth. As tools, books also must be used.

My advice to you, young people: begin now to obtain the tools. You are not too young; and it is not too soon. And use your tools. Proper study of the Word is your calling. Use your tools to get a better understanding of that revelation of God. To get wisdom and understanding is truly far better than the getting of gold and silver.



TRUTH vs. ERROR

by REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

10. THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

8. ITS SUPRALAPSARIAN CHARACTER (continued)

Election takes us back to the beginning of things, to the beginning of God's counsel. We have been dealing with the divine order of that counsel as that order is revealed in Scripture. This, of course means that we have been setting forth supralapsarianism, for that is the predestinarian view of Scripture. While still on the subject, it is highly recommended that you read the articles in the *Standard Bearer*, Vol. 26, on “Supralapsarianism and Infra-

lapsarianism.” For those interested, some limited copies of this volume are available through Mr. Tom Elzinga, 567 W. 19th St., Holland, Mich. Before we leave this aspect of the truth, let us take a brief look at the order of the decree of God as viewed by various systems.

First, there is Semi-Pelagianism, the motto of which is, “God can foreknow without foreordaining.” This view makes the decree of God one “to save individuals.” The order is: 1. Decree to create, including man as a free moral agent, fallible, with

his will contingent (unpredictable). 2. Foreseeing the Fall of man, God decreed through Christ to provide free salvation for all men. 3. Foreseeing that certain individuals would accept the provision of salvation, while others would continue to reject it to the last, God from eternity chose those He foresaw would accept it. 4. The individuals He foresaw would not believe He decreed to punish eternally.

Second, there is Arminianism, the motto of which is, "Ability is the measure of responsibility." This view makes the decree one "to save believers." The order is: 1. The decree to create. 2. The decree to permit the Fall. 3. The decree to send Christ to die for the sins of everyone in the world. 4. The decree to give grace and light to all men sufficient to enable them to obtain eternal life. 5. The decree to save those foreseen as using the light they have, and as persevering in faith and holy living. 6. The decree to condemn those foreseen as not accepting the provision of salvation.

Third, there is Amyraldianism, the motto of which is, "God has a general love to all men." This view supposes a decree "theoretically to save all." The order is: 1. The decree of possible universal salvation. 2. The decree to offer salvation to all men *if* they believe in Christ. 3. The decree to give all men a natural ability to repent and believe. 4. The decree to permit the moral inability (Fall) of all men. 5. The decree to give all men enabling grace to overcome their inability. 6. The decree to save those willing to believe. — Note: There is salvation for the heathen who never come to hear the Gospel, if they accept the general grace of providence.

Fourth, there is Infralapsarianism. Its motto is, "God cannot love a non-entity." Involved is a "decree to save sinners." The Infra-order has a decree: 1. to create in perfection for God's glory. (A decree in general). 2. to permit the Fall. 3. to elect from the mass of fallen men the "vessels of mercy." 4. to pass by the rest of mankind and ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin. 5. to send Christ for the redemption of the elect. 6. to leave the rest of mankind in their sins and to their just punishment.

Fifth, there is Supralapsarianism. Its mot-

to is, "The last thing in execution is the first thing in purpose." Or, "What is first in design is the last in accomplishment." It views the decree as one "to save the elect." This is a decree of predestination. The Supra-order has a decree: 1. that God's glory be revealed in Christ and His Church. 2. the election of Christ as Head of the Church. 3. that from all creatable men (men to be created) a definite number be the elect church in Christ, and a definite number of men be "vessels of wrath." 4. of justification for the elect, and of damnation for the reprobate. 5. of the Fall of those elected and reprobated men. 6. to create these men.

Sixth, there is Supralapsarianism. Protestant Reformed point of view. Our motto is, "God is God." "God is always first." The decree is regarded as one "to reveal God's covenant." Our supralapsarianism is especially concerned with the question, "What in the decree is the main object? and what is subservient to that object?" What we believe to be the most Scriptural order of the decree is: 1. God's decree to reveal His own glory in the establishment of His covenant. 2. Decree to realize this purpose in the Son of God becoming Christ, the Image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature, the Beginning of the New Creation of God, which He became as the Firstbegotten of the dead, that in Him all the fulness of God might dwell. 3. Decree for Christ, and for the revelation of His fulness, the Church and all the elect. (a) In this decree, Christ is not ordained for the Church, but the Church for Christ. (b) The Church is His Body, and serves the purpose of revealing the fulness in Him. 4. To realize this Church, and thus the glory of Christ, the reprobate are predetermined as vessels of wrath. (a) Reprobation serves the purpose of election, as chaff serves the ripening and harvesting of the wheat. Isa. 43:3, 4. (b) All sin and evil are ordained of God as subservient to the good. Gen. 50:20. 5. In the Counsel of God, everything else in heaven and on earth are purposed as means to the realization of both election and reprobation, and therefore of the glory of God's mercy and justice in Christ. Therefore, all things must work together for the good of them that love God, to them who are the called according to His eternal purpose.

9. ITS PURPOSE

What did God plan and purpose for us in His decree of election? He purposed that we should be holy. "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4). We have already pointed out that this is not the imperfect inner holiness which we have by grace in this life, but the perfect holiness of glory ordained for us in the world to come. The Lord has indeed ordained both for us, but the latter is especially intended, because it is absolutely perfect. It is "without blame" before God. He finds not a flaw in it.

That holiness lies ahead of us. We do not have it yet. But personal, subjective holiness we do have, or we would not get to heaven. It is one "without which no man shall see the Lord." Though it is a gradual grace working in us, and one which constantly reminds us of our indwelling sin, yet it is a down payment on the perfect holiness coming in glory.

A purpose God had for us even prior to being chosen to holiness was that of adoption. Eph. 1:5. We owe our adoption as sons ultimately to God's decree of the end He purposed, not to the decree of means. Then we owe the foundation of our adoption to our relation to Christ's person, rather than to His atoning work. We were predestinated to the adoption of sons not on the basis of redemption, but on Christ's natural sonship. Our justification is owed to the decree of the means. "In whom we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (1:7). Our adoption is, however, through Christ as God's natural Son and we His brethren in relation to His Person. "Ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son" (1 Cor. 1:9).

Still, it must be understood that because of our fall in Adam, adoption can be bestowed on us only through His merits. So the Son became incarnate "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5). For sin had created an obstacle to the bestowal of adoption. But Christ's redemption was not realized to procure our adoption, but only "that we might receive" it. What procured it was the decree of the covenant.

God's purpose also was that we be saved, a design He had subservient to His main object to bring many sons to glory. This is expressed in II Tim. 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before eternal ages" (Gk.). This grace that God gave only His elect from all eternity was a pre-redemptive grace, a super-creation grace, before the foundation of the world! God by that eternal particular purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus did ordain us to a super-creation union with Himself, to our highest and ultimate destiny. Grace is the source and fountain of it all. Salvation ("hath saved us") is the end of it all, and effectual calling through the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel is the stream which flows from that source to that end. His exclusive purpose is the reason why the chosen rather than others were thus saved and called.

It was God's purpose according to election to have His people *for Himself*, i.e., for Christ. He is the ultimate end of the decree of predestination: "having predestinated us to the adoption of sons by Christ to Himself" (Eph. 1:5). These last two words are very well translated "for Him," i.e., for Jesus Christ. We have been chosen to holiness in Him, predestinated to adoption *through* Him, and were so ordained *for* Him, as the great end, aim, Alpha and Omega of all things. Then, since we were predestinated *for Him*, the predestination was not on the foresight of man's fall or man's conversion. We were predestinated on the foresight of Christ as Head of a glorified race. Christ was not set in the decree nor brought into the world chiefly on account of sin and for the work of redemption. Christ was not ultimately given for us; He was not subject to us. We were given to Him. Christ was not ordained for the Church. The Church was "for Him!" Christ is the grand end of all things (Eph. 1:10). Redemption itself is for His own glory before it is for our need (1:62, 12a).

(To be continued, D.V.)





FROM **Dort** TO **TODAY**

A History of the Reformed Faith The Protestant Reformed Churches

(23)

by PROF. HERMAN HANKO

The sole purpose of this series of articles has been to show that the truth maintained by our Churches today is the historic faith of the Church — particularly since the time of the Reformation. It is a truth which has been passed down from the fathers of the Reformation to our own forebears in the Netherlands; a truth which was defended and developed by the fathers of Dort; a truth maintained through the controversies of 1924; a truth to which we are committed today.

It is the purpose of these concluding articles to show, in brief, that this is indeed the case.

Perhaps the key truth of the entire Protestant Reformation was the truth concerning the Holy Scriptures. Rome had, through the dark ages of the centuries preceding the Reformation, succeeded in robbing the Church of God's Word. It had done this in many different ways. It had piled on the top of Scripture the dusty and crusted traditions of the Church, insisting all the while that tradition was of equal authority with the Bible. This insistence on the authority of tradition had made it possible for the Church of Rome to introduce into the theology of the faithful all kinds of false doctrines such as transubstantiation, worship of images, penance, meritorious value of good works, mariolatry, etc. Rome had robbed the saints of the Bible by putting the Scriptures into the hands of the clergy as their sole possession. Rome insisted that the lay people could not and should not attempt to interpret the Scriptures — they were wholly unable to do this

anyway. Besides, they did not have to do this for they had an infallible pope who stood in apostolic connection with Peter, who spoke with an infallible voice on all matters of doctrine, and who could therefore do all the interpreting that had to be done. All the people of the Church had to do was bend an ear to the pope, accept what he said, and do what he commanded. All would then be well, and they would be assured of a place in heaven, even though it might not come until after a time spent in the cleansing fires of purgatory.

The Reformers protested vehemently against this entire view of Scripture. To them belongs the blessed distinction of tearing the Bible out of the hands of the pope and his hierarchy and restoring it to the people of God.

But in doing so, they also insisted on the *authority* of Scripture and maintained that the Bible alone was the rule of faith and life. In doing so, they tossed aside as worthless the arrogant claims of papal infallibility; they put tradition where it belonged — as worthy of our study and concern, but not as infallible truth; they gave back to believers their noble office — the office of prophet, priest and king under Christ; and pointed out that, by the Spirit of Christ which filled believers, the saints needed not that any should teach them.

In insisting that the Scriptures alone form the authoritative rule of faith and life, the Reformers saw very clearly that this could be done only when the Scriptures were maintained as the Word of God. If the Scriptures are not God's Word, it

matters not whether people pay attention to them or not. But if these same Scriptures come with the force of divine authority imposing itself upon our life, insisting that we believe the truths within the covers of this sacred book, demanding of us that we walk according to the precepts of God's law, this can only be when the Scriptures are God's Word and come with the authority of God Himself. Hence (and this is the point) the Reformers saw so clearly that the authority of the Scriptures was inseparably connected with the truth of their infallibility. Not the pope was infallible; Scripture was. And Scripture was (and is) because God's Word comes to us in it.

So deeply convinced of this absolute authority of Scripture were the Reformers that they bowed in absolute obedience to that Word. They poured over its contents, searched without weariness its eternal truths, spent day and night in plunging into its depths, and bound their lives to this one sacred calling—the calling of faithfulness to God through His Word. On behalf of this calling they were ready to surrender all they possessed and life itself should that be demanded of them. No power on earth could swerve them from their allegiance to that Word. In humility and reverence they bowed before it, submitting to its voice, being bound in their consciences and lives by its chains—which alone could (they knew) bring liberty. Neither the armies of the Holy Roman Empire nor the bellowing threats of papal bulls could make them cower in fright when they stood upon the rock of that Word. Nothing could shake their resolve. Nothing could daunt them in their purpose. God's Word was the breath they breathed, their strength in the battle, their comfort in distress, their hope for eternity.

This intense dedication (arising out of conviction as to its supreme authority) to Scripture continued in the Church in the years following the Reformation. There is no other explanation than complete subjection to God's Word which can explain the courage of believers when Rome bared her fangs and sent thousands to a martyr's death. And whenever the defense of the truth became "the marching orders" of the armies of God's people, it was with the

authority of Scripture that these noble warriors armed themselves. This was true at Dort where the sole question was: Is the doctrine of Arminianism in harmony with the truth of God's Word? This was true so many years later in the days of the Separation of 1834 when again the question was: Shall we be loyal to the State Church or to the Holy Scriptures? for both is impossible. This was the state of affairs when our fathers came into this country, for they carried the Bible in their pockets and in their hearts. And when the threat of modernism and worldliness was about to engulf them in the Reformed Church of America where they had found a haven, they did not hesitate to establish the Church where the truth of Scripture could be maintained. And, when in 1924 doctrinal controversy swirled through the Church, the sole question that faced those who are the spiritual fathers of our own denomination was: Is common grace the truth of Scripture or is it not?

And so we come to today.

Only a quick glance about us will produce some startling conclusions with regard to this fundamental principle of the Reformation and its position in today's Church.

The fact is, (and who can deny it?) that this truth is being callously ignored and denied. It is striking and worthy of our note that within the last half decade all the major denominations of this country have faced the question of the infallibility of Scripture—and its corollary: the authority of God's Word. The list includes The Presbyterian Church US (Southern), The United Presbyterian Church, the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod), several important Baptist Churches including the huge Southern Baptist Church, the Reformed Church of America and the Christian Reformed Church. The question has come up because there have been men (most often in influential positions in the seminaries) who have denied this truth. Errors have suddenly been found in the Bible by these men; errors which make Scripture untrustworthy and of dubious value in some measure. The Scriptures are not maintained as infallible any longer, but rather as being only partially correct and therefore of limited authority. And the Church is left to decide in what respect and to what extent this authority remains.

In the place of the authority of Scripture has come especially the authority of science. Science teaches (so it is maintained) that the earth is very, very old; that man ascended (or descended) from lower forms of life to his present status; that the miracles could not possibly have happened, but must be explained as natural phenomena wrongly interpreted, or as a collection of myths which ancient people believed but which are no longer credible to modern man living in a scientific era.

And the authority of science is nothing else, of course, that the authority of man's own mind which is set up above Scripture as possessing greater power and as being more trustworthy in explaining truth.

There is scarcely any denomination left today which has not, in greater or lesser degree accepted these errors. And in doing so they have denied the genius of the Reformation and lost their right to be called Reformation Churches.

It is here then first of all that we, as Protestant Reformed Churches make claim to maintaining the heritage of our fathers. Trace the history of this doctrine back to Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin; and you will find that this precious truth of the authority of Scripture has always been the confession of the Church.

Let its words ring down the centuries of time. . . .

"We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.

"We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God. . . . It is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures. . . . For, since it is forbidden, to add unto or take away anything from the word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. . ." Belgic Confession, Arts. V & VII.

We do not exaggerate when we insist that our Churches preserve this precious Reformation truth.

It remains for us to defend it with might and zeal in this time of apostasy.



CRITIQUE

Hilda Grace Meelker

WHO KILLS CHRIST NOW?

On Nov. 20, 1964, the last day of the third session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in Rome, the highest legislative and representative body of the Ro-

man Catholic Church, by the overwhelming vote of 1893 to 99, approved of a document condemning "hatred and persecutions of Jews." The controversial declaration, which

absolved Jews of responsibility for the death of Christ, held that "Christ underwent His Passion and death freely, because of the sins of all men and out of infinite love."

The declaration, approved by the Council Fathers stood in the most dramatic contrast to a theological tradition which has dominated Catholic thinking about Jews for 1900 years. According to that Catholic tradition, God chose the Jewish people in the time of Abraham to serve as a preparatory stage for the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, His Son, and the establishment of the Catholic Church. Once Christ came, all that was valuable and effective for human salvation was transferred from Judaism to the new Church. The ancient alliance between God and Israel was voided and replaced by the new alliance between the Church and God. The Jews, as the original Chosen People, should have been the first Christians, but they elected instead to repudiate Christ. They did not accept his doctrine; they opposed him during his lifetime; they instigated his arrest; they clamored for his execution; they acquiesced in his crucifixion. For these sins they were punished in three ways by God: they ceased to be the chosen people; they were blinded so that they could not see the truth of Christianity; they were dispersed among the nations, never to be reunited until the end of time when Christ will return to this world to judge the living and the dead. At the end of time, they will be converted as a group, but until that day they will remain blinded, dispersed, and persecuted as a sign that God has entrusted salvation to the Church (Roman Catholic) alone, and that He punishes obduracy.

Roman Catholic believers drew a whole range of practical conclusions from these premises. The Jews as a people — not only the Jews of Christ's time — were guilty of having killed Christ, the God-man; theologically speaking, they were deicides. Second, because they were cursed by God to remain dispersed among the nations until the end of time, the very existence of a Jewish State must be against God's will, and Israel must, therefore, be doomed to extinction after a short while. Third, the sufferings of the Jews were to be understood as part of their punishment for the crime

of having rejected Christ and their original destiny. Fourth, Judaism was a useless thing, an invalid method of worship, which had been rendered pointless by the advent of Christ. And in the long history of Jewish-Christian relations more conclusions were frequently drawn. The Jews were allied with the devil, they were always entering into conspiracies with freemasons, with communists, with atheists, with secularists, for the sole purpose of destroying the Church and wiping Christianity off the face of the earth.

The adoption by the council and the final signature of the Pope this fall signified the culmination of a bitterly intense struggle which started shortly after the accession of John XXIII to the Papal throne. The Pope and Catholic Church now announce to the world that they have exonerated the Jews of deicide.

The Catholic world now claims it is not the Jew who is now on trial for the crucifixion of Christ but Christians who in vicious bigotry slay the spirit of Christ in their cruel hounding of innocent Jews. Some people have claimed that the Church has officially, by signing the declaration of absolution, begged forgiveness from God and from Christians and from Jews.

And from the declaration signed in the fall it seems as though, by words, the Catholic Church has freed the Jews of guilt for Christ's death.

Who then kills Christ now? Who stands in judgment for the crucifixion of the Lord? Who is to be condemned? According to the Catholics if the Jewish nation is no longer responsible then surely the Gentile nation cannot be. And if the Gentile nation is free of guilt then we are certainly excluded. And if we are excluded then the only ones left to blame is a handful of wicked people at the time of the crucifixion who were there at the cross and who condoned the crucifying of the Lord.

It is of course not difficult to see the error of the Catholic Church. Their error lies not so much in the fact of freeing the Jewish nation from guilt but it lies more in the way of failure to condemn their own wicked selves. And this is the error so prevalent in the even so-called Reformed Churches of today.

Who kills Christ now? The whole world was represented at Christ's crucifixion. The apostate Church was at the time of Jesus, represented by the leaders of the Jews, particularly the Jewish council, whose president was the high priest. "And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified." Matt. 27:23. The world-power was represented as it was represented by Pilate, the Roman governor. "And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they desired," . . . and "he delivered Jesus to their will." Luke 23:24, 25. There was the multitude gathered before the Praetorium. They were the acquaintances of Jesus and the men who had witnessed his mighty works. "Then cried they again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." John 18:40.

Who kills Christ now? He was rejected and killed by all kinds of men. Even one of his disciples betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Another swore and cursed rather than be accounted as one of his followers. They all forsook Him. Oh, how men hated Him!

But understand that we cannot view God's word and God's history as outsiders or spectators. What was true in history is also true today. This situation always arises wherever and whenever men come into contact with this same Jesus. Whether it is Israel of old, the modern church of today, kings or common people, upright citizens or criminals, as mere men they surely have rejected Him.

Oh yes, the so-called church people and Christians of today will tell you they believe in the Christ and want others to believe on Him too. But just as the Jews of old were looking not for the Christ that came, but for a Christ who would feed them earthly bread so today the modern man and so-called Reformed churches look for a Christ after their own imagination — not the Christ of the scripture. They want a Christ who loves everybody, or a Christ who would like you to come and accept His free offer, or a Christ who asks for your little part to do something.

You and I, as mere men, also reject Him. By nature we also want to do something toward our salvation. By nature we too

reject the Son of God, and crucify Him afresh. Our nature loves darkness rather than light. We want to seek our own righteousness.

Why do we all by nature reject Christ? Why have we all by nature killed Christ? Simply because Christ is the Man of sorrows. He came into the world to suffer for those whom the Father had given Him. He came for our sin. He came to bear our reproaches. He laid himself humbled in dust in order to exalt the righteousness of God as the sole way of salvation. This is why mere man rejects the Christ. For, mere man hates God and His righteousness. They seek salvation through their own power and hate Christ because He gives all the glory of salvation to the God whom they hate.

Then if all men by nature killed the Christ, how can there be any hope of our salvation? Grace. This wonder word changes mere man. Carnal men are changed into spiritual children of God that have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to seek after the living God. With their ears they hear His voice. With their hearts they seek after Him, hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness. With their hearts they feel shame and humiliation because of their sins. But they by Grace turn to the cross with their spiritual eyes to find the way out of sin and death into the glorious fellowship of His resurrection.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10.

Then we too will bear reproach from the world. For by confessing His name in the midst of the world and proclaiming His word, and walking as children of the light we can expect to be rejected by the world as He was rejected. But we can in everything look forward to our final victory when we will glorify God's name forever for so rich a salvation. We will join all those saints gone before us in the many mansions which are in His Father's house, for if it were not so He would have told us.

by DAVID ENGELSMA

Genesis 43 and 44**The Second Meeting of Joseph
and His Brothers**

1. The trip to Egypt of the brothers, including Benjamin (Gen. 43)

A. Jacob permits Benjamin to accompany the brothers to Egypt (vss. 1-14)

1. It is Judah who takes the lead in persuading Jacob to let Benjamin go (vs. 3).

a. Evidently, Judah has the pre-eminence over his brothers (cf. also Gen. 44:14, 16, 18ff.). How is this to be explained?

1) Had God determined, eternally, to favor Judah above all his brothers? in what way? Confer Gen. 49:8-10.

2) Ordinarily, the oldest boy in the family held the position of superiority. Now, Reuben, Simeon and Levi were older than Judah. How did these three disqualify themselves?

a) Regarding Reuben, confer Gen. 35:22 and 49:3, 4.

b) Regarding Simeon and Levi, confer Gen. 34, especially vss. 25, 30 and Gen. 49:5-7.

b. Judah finally overcomes Jacob's reluctance to let Benjamin go, by promising to "be surety for him" (vs. 9).

1) In other words, what does Judah promise, here?

2) Is Judah serious when he makes this promise? Confer Gen. 44:32-34.

2. Jacob's attitude as he sends Benjamin away (vss. 11-14).

a. What is Jacob's spiritual condition, as revealed by his attitude, in the grievous trial of having to bid farewell to the beloved Benjamin?

b. Does his remark in verse 14, "If I be bereaved, I am bereaved," which reminds one of Esther's "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16), show Jacob to be a pessimist, at this time? This would mean spiritual doubt, weakness of faith.

c. Does the fact that Jacob both appeals to "God Almighty" (vs. 14) and sends a present (vs. 11) manifest an attitude similar to that expressed in the phrase, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition?"

1) This would mean that Jacob supposes that his welfare depends partially on God and partially on himself.

2) Perhaps, Jacob's old trait reappears, that, namely, of attempting to help God along.

d. Or, are we to conclude from Jacob's mention of God's mercy in verse 14 that he serenely trusted in God with the confidence of faith?

1) Verse 11 calls the patriarch, "Israel," his name of *victory-through-faith*.

2) That Jacob advises the boys to carry a present to Joseph does not necessarily show a weak faith since faith does not produce carelessness but a diligent use of the best means.

B. The brothers' second appearance before Joseph (vss. 15-34).

1. Why did Joseph's invitation of the brothers to dinner trouble them?
2. Does the speech of Joseph's steward in verse 23 indicate that Joseph had instructed the steward and, perhaps, his entire household in the truth of the one God and His salvation?
3. Why did the Egyptians consider it an "abomination" to eat bread with the Hebrews (vs. 32)? Confer, also, Gen. 46:34. What good purpose will this serve, when the Hebrews come to Egypt to live?
4. Is Joseph's special regard for Benjamin (vs. 34) merely an expression of his special love for his full brother or is it also part of Joseph's deliberate testing of the other boys?
 - a. Remember that Joseph's main purpose in having Benjamin brought to Egypt was to test the brothers.
 - b. Once, the brothers reacted with hatred when they saw that Joseph was favored above themselves (cf. Gen. 37:3, 4).

tions of future events . . ." (Keil, *Commentary of the Pentateuch*, Vol. 1)

- 2) Calvin accuses Joseph of the sin of catering to the notions of pagan Egypt, by pretending that he could foretell the future by means of this magical bowl.

3) However:

a) Joseph does not say that he does this. He only asks the brothers a question that impresses on them that this cup is valuable, a question which is in keeping with their idea of him as an Egyptian (vss. 4, 5 and 15).

b) This would be the only instance in the entire account of Joseph, in which Scripture portrays Joseph as committing sin.

c) When he explained to Pharaoh his ability to interpret dreams and predict the future, Joseph did not speak of inherent powers or magic but gave the glory to God (cf. Gen. 41:16ff.).

c. The steward, then, accuses the brothers of theft, which is all the more heinous because it is ingratitude for Joseph's kindness.

2. Joseph's intention with this trial.

a. The brothers will have an opportunity to abandon Benjamin in Egypt.

1) Joseph demands only the punishment of the one in whose sack the cup is; the rest may return to Canaan.

2) As once they sold Joseph into Egypt as a slave and, thus, got rid of the one beloved of their father, so, now, the brothers can rid

II. The final trial of the brothers (Gen. 44).

A. The trial.

1. Joseph has a precious cup hidden in Benjamin's sack.

a. Not only valuable because of its material worth but because like a crystal-ball, it is (supposedly) used for "divining," that is, magically foretelling future events.

b. Are we to conclude from Joseph's command to the steward (vs. 5) that Joseph *actually* practised such nonsense or even that he deceived the Egyptians into thinking that he did?

1) That superstition was common among the Egyptians "which consisted in pouring clean water into a goblet, and then looking into the water for representa-

themselves of Benjamin, whom Jacob loves.

3) The question as to their spiritual condition will be conclusively answered in this way.

b. Undoubtedly, Joseph is not indifferent but hopes that they will reveal themselves as changed and, in fact, desires to lead them, by this severe trial, to a purer godliness.

B. The outcome of the trial.

1. The brothers pass the test.

a. They reject the opportunity of leaving Benjamin with the steward and going on themselves, and, instead, return to Joseph.

b. Through Judah, their spokesman, they acknowledge their worthiness of this affliction, even though they are innocent of this alleged crime, because of their "iniquity" (vs. 16).

1) They trace in all of this misery the chastising hand of God.

2) Judah has in mind their iniquity in the matter of Joseph (cf. Gen. 42:21).

c. They refuse Joseph's offer to let them all go safely except Benjamin (vs. 17).

2. Judah's intercession for Jacob and Benjamin.

a. Judah stands out, again, but not as if the others felt differently — all have changed.

b. Judah is motivated by love for his father and brother,

even though the same occasion for jealous hatred of Benjamin exists that once did in regard to Joseph (cf. vs. 20, 27-31).

c. So far is Judah, reflecting the attitude of the others also, from desiring Benjamin's harm that, on the contrary, he is willing to take Benjamin's place as a slave in Egypt.

1) It was this same Judah who once took the lead in selling Joseph into Egypt (cf. Gen. 37:26, 27).

2) May we find in Judah's stirring offer to take Benjamin's place and punishment, a type of the Suretyship of Judah's great Son, Jesus Christ?

d. At this conclusive evidence of the brothers' godliness, that is, the love of the brother for God's sake which is willing to lay down one's own life for the brother, Joseph cannot hold back any longer.

1) He has not been watching the brothers' plight with unholy glee.

2) He can hardly wait — and now he need not any longer — to soothe their souls, pour on them his love, and fellowship with them.



BOOK REVIEW

The Place of the Lion

by CHARLES WILLIAMS. Published by William B. Eerdmans Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1965. 206 pages. Price, \$1.95.

Charles Williams was born in England in 1886. He died in 1945. He was a man

of unique genius in the fields of poetry, drama, literary criticism, theology, and fiction. Many distinguished writers, including T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, C. S. Lewis, and Dorothy Sayers, have been inspired by Williams. That by way of a brief biography.

The story can be told briefly. The orig-

inal forces in creation are let loose on a small English town. Creatures out of their natural habitat appear. A lion roams the English countryside, and is seen by Anthony Durrant and Quentin Sabot. From the excitement that accompanies a lion hunt, we progress to things more supernatural. Anthony struggles for his life against Miss Wilmot and Mr. Foster, two bestially possessed by the powers of evil, the house of the archenemy of all that is good and right, Mr. Berringer, burns with fire unquench-

able; and a huge eagle appears at opportune times to protect the good.

Little can be said in favor of the contents of this book. True it is that there is a struggle, even a life and death struggle, between the forces of good and evil, but the only power the good (God's elect) have is the spiritual power of the Word of God. Anything else is hocus-pocus or sheer occultism. Because the contents are poor, the book is for you, young reader, a poor investment. D.H.



SPECIAL THANKS

The Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young Peoples Societies and the staff of Beacon Lights wish to express our thanks and appreciation to Miss Karlene Oomkes for her arduous and diligent labor as News Editor of Beacon Lights. Since she has resigned, and no one has been named to replace her no news will appear in Beacon Lights.



BY JOHN ZAM
AND D-LANSIE
ILLINOIS 645

