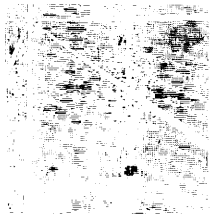
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOLUME XLV NUMBER 5

May '86

Part I: Christians in the Soviet Union: Marked for Extinction



BEACON LIGHTS

Contents

Editor's Comments - David Harbach 1
TRUTH VS. ERROR
Apostasy - 9. Apostate Dreamers Triple-Dyed Sinners - Rev. R.C. Harbach ... 1
FEATURE
The Sanctification of the New Man in Christ - Rev. G. Lubbers 5
FEATURE
The Truth of Gracious Justification - Rev. J. Heys 7
CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS
Doers of the Word - Dave Rau 10
CRITIQUE
Being Stewards Of Time - Bernie Kamps 12
Guido De Bres - Deb Kuiper 14
Christians in the Soviet Union: Marked for Extinction - Sarah Ondersma 17

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Mike Rau - Pres.; Dirk Westra - Vice-Pres.; Karen Dykstra - Sec.; Lisa Van Koevering - Vice-Sec.; Dave Ondersma - Treas.; Phil Van Baren - Vice-Treas.; Brenda Langerak - Librarian; Doug Kooienga - Youth Coordinator; Rev. Kamps, Rev. Haak - Spiritual Advisors

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF

David Harbach - Editor-in-Chief; John M. Faber, Ed Lotterman - Associate Editors; Doug Dykstra - Finance Manager; Brenda Holstege, Carol Kortering - Secretary; Mike Rau, Marcia Van Baren, Nancy Van Baren, Thelma Westra

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Mrs. H. Brands, Paula Faber, Ken Feenstra, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. R. Harbach, John Kalsbeek Jr., Bernie Kamps, Rev. D. Kuiper, Dave Rau, Deane Wassink, Ben Wigger

BEACON LIGHTS
c/o Roger King, 1651 Moelker Ave.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Second Class Postage paid at Jenison, MI (USPS 046-840)

EDITORIAL OFFICE: David Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Apt. B
Grandville, MI 49418

NEWS EDITOR: Paula Faber
4190 Burton S.E., G.R., MI 49506

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of **Beacon Lights** do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

If any material of **Beacon Lights** is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.

Contributions of general interest are very welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION DUES:

MICHIGAN: Marcia Van Buren
6066 Wilson S.W.,
Grandville, MI 49418

OURSIDE Michigan: Brenda Holstege
7663 Bliss Court
Grandville, MI 49418

COLLECTIONS: Doug Dykstra
7928 Parklane, Jenison, MI 49428

Subscription Price $5.00

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

by David Harbach

The staff of the Beacon Lights looks forward to publishing articles received from our young people. Covenant High School has always been fertile ground for producing worthwhile articles. In this issue you will find two articles, written over a year ago, one by Deb Kuiper on the life of Guido de Bres and the other, part I of "Christians in the Soviet Union: Marked for Extinction" by Sarah Ondersma. Because I have recently received another batch of articles from Covenant High School, in the future you can look forward to seeing other articles of this nature.

We asked Rev. Lubbers to write a series of articles on "faith perception" or as Rev. Lubbers puts it "spiritual sensitivity". The first article is an introduction to the series emphasizing who we are and that the weapons we use to fight the good battle of faith are the "members" of our body.

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Young Peoples' Societies in conjunction with the Beacon Lights staff plans to publish a series of articles written by Rev. R. Harbach in 1963 on "Christian Liberty" which he has already revised. Not only will this make for good reading, but also will be suitable for Bible study.

Our next issue will contain the outlines for the Young Peoples' Convention which will be held July 28 to August 1, and Part II of Christians in the Soviet Union: Marked for Extinction.

Indifference in religion, is the first step to apostasy from religion.
William Secker

Truth vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
9. Apostate Dreamers Triple-Dyed Sinners

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"Likewise also these [filthy] dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion and speak evil of dignities."

—Jude 8

Translation. Of four translations

checked, Lenski's, one of them, is certainly textually the most satisfactory. It reads, "Yet in similar manner these, too, dreaming, for one thing, defile flesh; for the other, set at nought lordship; for still another, blaspheme glories."

"These, too," are those of verse 4 who crept in unawares. They in a manner similar to those already cast out of the church, out of heaven and out of this world into hell, commit a similar set of crimes to those made warning examples of terrible judgments. Devising, dreaming, fantasizing they defile flesh, reject rulership and blaspheme glories. This is what not false prophets but false teachers (II Pet. 2:1) do. Note what they do in the public school system and in the modern humanistic educational institutions. They defile flesh with their "Planned Parenthood" and S.I.E.C.U.S.) type of sex-education programs; they teach pupils to reject the authority of Christ, of parents, even of government; and they blaspheme such glories as God, His church, the Gospel and the doctrines of Scripture. The King James Version is justified in adding its brand to mark them "**Filthy** dreamers." They rub shoulders with sodomites, claiming "equal rights" for all abominable life-styles.

These false teachers were originally Judaizers. They stirred up the Jewish people with hatred and lies against the apostles and the burgeoning Christian church, as we know from the Book of Acts. But these false teachers of Judaism still stand inimical to the church. Piously they defend their cause with cries of "Anti-semitism!" while they are as anti-Christian as they can be. In a tourist information book, "Jerusalem," by Leon Uris (Doubleday, 1981), we find this: "Jesus, whose Hebrew name was Joshua, was never anything but a pious Jew from birth to death. His conversion to Christianity was made by others long after his mortal departure. . .For decades after the death of Jesus the new religion depended solely on oral tradition. Christian literature was very slow. . .in establishing itself. When the written literature finally did emerge, it was long after the fact, highly suspect as to accuracy, and so unreliable (totally ignoring such literary documentation as Luke's Gospel, cp. 1:1-4; 60 A.D. rch) in parts it has confused and embarrassed Christian theologians in all ages. . . Much of the actual Christian religion was invented long after Jesus' lifetime. . .as Jews we believe him a genius, a great prophet and teacher, and one of the world's foremost humanitarians, but a mortal. Treating him as a man rather than a deity, we often get contrasting views, for the historical Jesus and the religious Jesus are often wholly different. . ." (pp. 127, 128). As Jude said they blaspheme glories, this quotation shows that they still do. Also the Jewish Encyclopedia (1905) probably still may be found in a college library where it may be noted that Balaam the false prophet is viewed as a type of Jesus, himself one of the worst of the false prophets; that his birth was illegitimate; that in Egypt he took to magic, witchcraft and idolatry. More in this vein presents Christianity as most base and vile. The Talmud upon examination soon strikes the reader with its propensity to anarchy. A vast work of 63 books, it defiles flesh, sets at nought the lordship of Jehovah and His law and blasphemes the glories (attributes) of the God of Israel. In character the Talmud is irreverent,

even irreligious, markedly apostate and self-declarative of ingrained anti-Mosaism.

Dreaming. They speak of God revealing himself to them, not in Scripture, or in the preaching of the Word, but in dreams, voices, apparitions, angel (spirit) manifestations, in private miracles, in sensational conversion experiences. They say, "The Lord said to me this or that," or ". . .told me to do so and so," or "The Lord gave me this verse" (out of context, of course). All this is dreaming. So men tickle themselves with frothy delights, running from one bizarre religious experience to another, entertaining themselves continually with sweet dreams. In the place of Scripture, the only infallible rule (standard) of faith and life, they substitute the shifting sands of human experience. Men thus walk a while in the light of their own sparks, but eventually they will lie down in sorrow (Isa. 50:11). To hold the strange doctrines (opinions) of Jehovah's Witnesses or of the Mormons is dreaming. This they do for they have allowed themselves to be blinded. Some of them take up with "transcendental meditation." They let the mind go blank, attempting not to think anything. This opens the mind to the temptations of the devil. Take the dreaming of Christian Science—no such thing as "sin, sickness or death." The reasoning is, that must be true which is pleasing and which allows one to enjoy one's own interests. Their hope is to make an easy jump from Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom. But dreams and lies cannot compete with the canonical books of Holy Scripture.

For one thing, they defile flesh. With their cursing, swearing, swilling, boozing, smoking pot and dreaming on drugs, they defile flesh. The theater, movie house, singles' bar, discotheque, occult book store, the abortion clinic—these all defile flesh. The influence of error and false doctrine in the church pervert the heart, resulting in the taking of liberties the Lord never allowed. Christ's yoke is cast off, conscience is lulled to sleep and a course of disobedience follows. Therefore avoid error in **doctrine** if you would avoid error and filthiness in **life**. For when a church is corrupted and perverted from the right way, flesh is defiled.

For another thing, they reject lordship. (KJV: they despise dominion.) The unjust judge is a good example of this: he "feared neither God nor man" (Lk. 18). Man is by nature an antinomian, an anarchist, a libertine (lecher), a libertarian (free-willist), so much so that he will not be ruled even by the dictates of conscience. Nothing may stand in the way of his lust. Nothing may be permitted to discriminate against his life's style of sin. When God's law is no more the ground of civil law, no life is safe. When we can have abortion on demand, infanticide (especially female) will be next, then euthanasia. Already the young are being taught that they have the right to decide how long the old shall live. Next is a facist, communist dictatorship in which all life daily hangs in the balance. The thinking of the feminist movement is also a despising of lordship. Women are viewed as equal parties over against men, giving them the right to rule, not only in the church, but also in the state. This is to despise the lordship of Christ who ordained that men have the place and authority to

rule. The Old Testament church was controlled by priests (not priestesses), patriarchs (not matriarchs), elders, kings, prophets, judges; in the New Testament, men (not women) were chosen as apostles, pastors, teachers, evangelists and missionaries.

"Despise dominion" and an attack is made on the divine authority of Scripture. Apostates casi aside the Bible as the only authoritative rule of faith and life. Creeds and confessions based upon the sole authority of Holy Writ have either been put into the discard or so changed and modernized that they no longer confess the truth they once did. The threat to our nation at this hour comes not from the Fundamentalists, much less from the Reformed, the Calvinists, but from those who deny the lordship of Christ in His role of sole Head of the church and King of nations.

As to still another thing, they blaspheme glories. (Cp. the same word **glories** in v. 9 and in I Pet. 1:11). These glories refer to the glories of God, of Christ, of heaven, of the church and of the gospel. Among the glories of heaven were the angels (called thrones and dominions) which the Sadduccees rejected. The Sanhedrin rejected the apostles, glories in the church. The glories of the gospel are the doctrine of the Trinity, of the Deity, Sonship and Lordship of Christ, the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of Predestination (the heart of the gospel), and the doctrine of particular, efficacious grace, to name a few. Apostates also reject the teaching of a personal God, a personal devil, a six day creation-week, a literal and natural Adam, serpent, garden and flood. Also included among these glories of God's truth is the glory of Scripture itself in the doctrine of verbal and plenary inspiration and its final, infallible authority. Apostates blaspheme and speak evil of all these glories of the Faith. Their philosophy is expressed in the goodness of man's nature, the power of man's wisdom and the advancement of man's kingdom.

Apostates are triple-dyed sinners in that they persist to the end in these three evils of defiling flesh, denying authority and blaspheming glories. Since this goes on within the church let us labor all the more to keep out of the church those who belong outside, and to keep in it those who belong in it. Sometimes when we thought a church would be organized in a certain locality (where apostasy prevails! and where today does it not prevail?), yet, because of these evils, that never happened. Nevertheless, the cause of Christ, never lapsing, goes forward with two churches springing up elsewhere. So that the devil never makes a gain over the cause of the mighty God of Jacob. The ungodly apostate world laughs as it causes so much devastation and ruin. Yet every day the Lord reverses evil by the Word of His power and the enemy falls pierced by the sword of truth. A group of Presbyterian believers were once expelled from and locked out of their church. They lost the church property, including their hymn-books. They had to meet in a rented building. One day that old church edifice, formerly thiers suddenly collapsed and went tumbling like Jericho's walls right out into Philadelphia's Broad Street a heap of ruin. Then let the enemy rage and sneer, but let us release more arrows of God's word, pray more faithfully and vehemently, and labor more diligently for the cause of God's kingdom!

Feature

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE NEW MAN IN CHRIST

by Rev. G. Lubbers

Neither yield ye your members as instruments [weapons] of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments [weapons] of righteousness to God" Rom. 6:13

It was with pleasure that we accepted the invitation to write a short series of essays on the general subject of what might be called: **spiritual sensitiveness,** or **sensitivity.**

The matter to which we shall address ourselves is to the fine spiritual taste of every Christian, man, woman or child, to wit, every reborn, justified and sanctified child of God as he must fight the battle of faith against sin and Satan.

No, we are not speaking here of and to some worldly and unbelieving moralists, who too have an ethic, a sense of right and wrong, the good and the bad. On the contrary we are speaking of Christian people, young and old, who have been baptized into Christ and into all His benefits merited on the Cross and sealed unto us in His resurrection. Yes, we are speaking of and to those who have received from the Lord the earnest of the Spirit of Christ.

Such is our point of departure in these essays.

We make it a point to state this at the very beginning.

We must clearly understand that we **are** Christians. The Bible never admonishes us to become Christians, to make such a zealous effort. Only a good tree brings forth good fruit, and an evil tree brings forth evil fruit. By the fruit ye shall know the tree, says Jesus. (Matt. 7:16-20; 12:33; Luke 6:43, 44). It must be manifested in our good works that these works are the fruit of the Spirit of Christ in us, the fruits of our efficacious calling and election.

Permit us to state it clearly that we are not called Christians because we perform good works. On the contrary we do good works of gratitude, which are acceptable to God, because we are Christians, the people, who have the anointing of the Holy One. Good works which are well-pleasing to God are only those which proceed from a true faith, and are done according to the commandments of God, and which are to the glory of God's grace. No, we are not Christians simply because we read our Bible, attend church twice on Sunday, go to catechism, and are enrolled in a Christian School. We must do all these works because we are Christians, who are partakers of Christ by faith and share in Christ's anointing of the Spirit.

That is the starting-point of all admonitions in the Bible to the members of the church, you and me. Just think that the Bible tells us that the Spirit of glory and of God rests

upon us. (I Peter 4:14) It is the Spirit of Pentecost, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, so that we are not reprobate, but we are those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. We are temples of the Holy Spirit both in body and in soul. Also our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 6:12-20) Yes, the church is the habitation of God in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19-22) And we are one of the many members of the body of Christ. (I Cor. 12:13 ff.)

In this church as Christians we are office-bearers. It is the office of all believers: **prophets, priests** and **kings!** Perhaps we might properly designate these as: **head, heart** and **hand**. This is not at all like the "4 H Club" designation only now a kind of "3 H Club". No, we are office-bearers in Christ, Who is the Chief Prophet, the only High Priest and the Eternal King. We should bear in mind that in this office we should be diligently and holily occupied as the angels are in heaven, who ever behold our Father's face!

Our precious Heidelberg Catechism in explaining the name "Christ" speaks of the threefold office of Christ. Corresponding to this office of Christ, and resting upon it, is what the Catechism designates as our office in Christ as Christians.

Let us take particular notice of this for just a moment.

First of all, our being a prophet in Christ's anointing makes us confessors of our personal, living relationship to Christ, the chief Prophet. As chief prophet, Christ reveals to us the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption. Now this word of the Gospel is within us by faith. We confess that Christ went into the depths of hell for us, and that He now sits as our prophet at the right hand of God. When we confess the truth in Jesus and our living relationship to Christ as branches in the true Vine, then we prophecy, we confess Christ before men. And we must do this in pure doctrine as well as in a godly walk which is based upon this doctrine and which is according to it. This is a solemn and awful and yet glorious reality. Hear Jesus teach: He that confesses with the mouth and believes with the heart, that God raised Jesus from the dead shall be saved. (Rom. 10:9) Did not Jesus, while on earth say, "Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32, 33)

Yes, it is either - or: false, Christ-denying prophet, or true prophet who confesses Christ before me with a good confession.

Secondly we are also priests in Christ, the great and only High Priest. He has given his body and soul on the accursed tree for us on the Altar of God. We could quote legions of texts to sustain this. We merely draw attention to Isaiah 53:5 ". . .he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed." (I Peter 2:24-25) Now we too are Christians in this high Priest; we are partakers of his sufferings, and so we in thankfulness in the Holy Spirit by faith present ourselves a living sacrifice of praise to God. Thus we are in the world, yet not of the world, who are all false priests, in the temple of idols with all its filth and debauchery and spiritual as well as physical fornication.

However, we are a royal priest-

hood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, called out of darkness into God's marvelous light to declare God's praises as Prophet-priests.

Finally, we are also kings. Christ has so had dominion of sin and death in His death and crucifixion and in His resurrection power, that He is Lord of lords and King of kings. In sharing in His anointing we too are kings. We thus fight against Satan and all sin with a free and good conscience in this life, and thus afterwards to reign with Christ over all things. Such is the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism. We read in Rom. 5:17, "for if, by the trespass of one, death reigned through one, much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through one, even Jesus Christ."

As Christians we are not interested merely to cleanse the outside of the cup, but we pray, wash me, make me pure "wfthin", cleanse oh cleanse me from my sin, do we not. When we take serious note of this, it means that we desire to be prophet-priests-kings of God, and thus stand **antithetically** over against the three-fold enemy, Satan, the world and our own flesh which do not cease to assault us, fight against us, a new man in Christ. So we stand with the antithesis within us. There is the battle-line in the Christian. He has a battle which is wholly different from the battle of the moralist; it is not a matter of improvement on the old, but it is transformation of the mind. All things have become new for us; also the battle is a different battle. It is a battle of the renewed, inward man against sin!

It is the battle of the spiritual man, who has the mind of Christ, as prophet, priest and king!

In this battle our weapons are the "members" of our body. Our eyes, ears, hands, feet, tongue, yea, all of our physical body. And these "members" must not be placed in the service of our sinful flesh. They must not be weapons to fight the devil's cause, but they must be weapons to fight the good fight of faith over against the cause of the devil.

We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling!

We shall do so in the same measure that we are deeply conscious that it is God Who is energizing in us to will and to do in this life and death struggle. We must bear in mind the words of Scripture: "and the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it." I Thess 5:23, 24.

Feature

THE TRUTH OF GRACIOUS JUSTIFICATION

by Rev. J. Heys

Several years ago I heard a man say over the radio that for him to say that he was justified means that he could say that God now deals with him just-as-if-he'd never sinned. There is truth in that statement. The result of

justification is that God deals with us as though we had never sinned. Is that not what Paul wrote in Romans 5:17? There he states, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Similarly, although he does not use the word justification in it, he in Romans 8:1 declares, "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Justification means that there is no condemnation for us.

But justification is more than God's dealing with us. That dealing is the result of justification, not the justification itself. The word justification literally means made to be just, or, if you will, made to be righteous. It comes from the Latin word which means just or righteous, and from the verb to make. It means that we are made to be just as we ought to be, just as God in the beginning, as far as our legal status is concerned, made us to be. It means then that we are without any guilt. And if you want to use the synonymn of just, namely, right, then to be justified means to be made right in God's sight as far as His holy law is concerned. It means that we are judged to be doing, and always have done what is right in God's holy eyes.

This justification is an important part of our salvation. It is the legal basis for the application to us of all the blessings of salvation. Behind our justification is eternal, sovereign, unchangeable and unconditional election. Only those eternally predestinated to be the members of the body of Christ, only those chosen eternally in Him can be justified. For Christ satisfied God's justice by His perfect obedience as our Head, and by His suffering and death in our place. That is why, as I pointed out above, Paul says that there is no condemnation to them that are **in** Christ Jesus. Because He blotted out all our sins, past, present, and future, and we belong to Him, God sees us in Him and says, as He Himself stated it in Numbers 23:21, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." Now we know, and God's Word is full of it, that Israel was a very rebellious nation. But those, who belong to Christ, have Christ's righteousness imputed to them, because He paid the fine, and did the work they failed to do. All that work had to be performed. To God had to be brought all the works of love we, as His enemies, failed to bring. Christ did that too. From birth to death He walked flawlessly in love to God. And because He is the eternal Son of God, His works have eternal value. What He did, in thirty three and one half years, has eternal value. Christ suffered the punishment, and performed the works of love required. Through this we became righteous in God's sight. We were made to be just as we ought to be according to the judgment of God's holy law.

This brings us back to what I said a moment ago. Behind justification is eternal, sovereign, unchangeable and unconditional election. To represent us in that suffering and in those works of the law, we had to belong to Christ. Paul presents that so clearly in Romans 8:29, 30 when he writes, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate them He also called; and whom He called them He also justified; whom He justified, them He also glorified." There you have it.

He justified only those whom He predestinated, that is, chose eternally in Christ, to be the members of His body, the Church.

What we ought to see then is that justification is a gift of God's grace. As fallen in Adam our works—every one of them—condemn us. By nature we cannot do one thing that is right in God's sight. Look up Psalm 14:1-4. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:7, 8, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Is that not clear enough? Our mind is not and **cannot** be subject to God's law. It is not simply extremely difficult for our fleshly mind to keep God's law. It just simply cannot. As far as our flesh is concerned, we cannot please God, and therefore we may conclude that we never do please Him before He saves us.

That being the case justification will have to be and is a gift of God's grace. We do not and cannot earn it or buy it. Also over the radio—I do not recall who said it—I heard it stated that you can take the five letters of the word grace as the five letters wherewith the words in this sentence begin and tell us that grace is: God's Riches At Christ's Expense. That is true, if you bear in mind that Christ by His obedience and death bought our justification. You may also have heard the definition of grace that states: God's grace is God giving everything for nothing to those who deserve nothing. That can be stated a bit more strongly thus: God's grace is God giving everything for nothing to the good-for-nothings. The idea certainly in God's grace is that He gives for nothing the blessings of salvation to those who deserve the opposite. By nature we do not merely not deserve what God gives in His grace. We are good-for-nothings. But let us never forget that we deserve the opposite of the blessings of salvation. We deserve the damnation and curse of depraved, rebellious enemies of God.

Truly then, justification is a work of God's grace. No man can justify himself before God. Paul states it beautifully in II Timothy 1:9 when he writes, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Did you note that eternal, unconditional predestination here? Not according to our works but according to God's purpose—His eternal counsel—and His grace which was given us in Christ Jesus **before** the world began. And that He saved us certainly means that He justified us. In the work of justification God saves us from our guilt, from our worthiness of being visited in His holy wrath with everlasting punishment.

In Ephesians 2:8-10 Paul states this gracious justification very powerfully. He writes, "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." It is not of our works, Paul declares. And then to state it more emphatically he speaks of us being created unto and not because of good works. Surely believing is a good work. And thus, since we were created in Christ Jesus UNTO good works, all that justifies us is a work of God's grace. We are not justified because we

believe. Because we are justified by the work of Christ, we are created unto believing.

The fruit of this justification is, first of all, that we now have the right to all the blessings of salvation. Justification is a God-given right for us to be born again, to be called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, to be engrafted into Christ by faith, and to be able to believe in Him, to be sanctified and to be glorified. That is why Paul says that we must preach Christ crucified. This is our justification. There is the ground for all the blessings we receive.

Then too, there is the fruit in our own lives. We have such rich and precious comforts while we live in this vale of tears and sorrows. Remember the text I quoted at the beginning of this article. In Romans 5:1 Paul says that being justified by faith we have peace with God. We know that He loves us. We have no fear of His holy wrath. And each child of God knows by faith that God deals with him just-as-if-he'd never sinned.

This also enables us to bear the ridicule, mockery and persecutions which the unbelievers inflict upon us. With the saints, shortly after the Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, we rejoice that we are "counted worthy to suffer shame for His (Christ's) name." Acts 5:41.

And finally we enjoy the blessedness of justification when we die and our souls enter into heavenly glory. And to a greater degree even than this, when we enjoy the resurrection of the body, and live with Christ in the new Jerusalem.

Therefore, Young People, give thanks to God for your justification. And fight with all your strength against the inroads of the heresy that we are saved if only we fulfill the condition of believing. Rather we say with Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord." Every bit of it is. And faith is His gift to us, and not our gift to Him. We are justified through faith, because God uses it, and not because of our act of believing.

Current Events and Comments
DOERS OF THE WORD

by Dave Rau

The world has this policy: if it feels good, do it! The results of this promiscuous lifestyle is headline news: AIDS, teenage pregnancy, herpes, alcoholism, and the list goes on and on. The world are doers of whatever appeals to their wicked natures. The Christian is also, by nature, sinful. Do we, or can we, do whatever we feel like doing? Do we feel an urge to try everything at least once, maybe more if we like it?

James 1:22 states, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." James is telling us that there is more to salvation than going to church twice every Sunday. Just because you are going to a Christian school doesn't mean you are automatically saved. James says you must follow the instruction that you receive in church (and in the school which is an extension of the home). You must show by your

walk, that wondrous gift of salvation that God has given you; otherwise, you are deceiving yourself.

Are you a hearer, or are you a hearer **and** a doer? James continues on in verses 23 & 24 and compares one that only hears God's word to a person who looks in a mirror; that mirror being God's word. The mirror of God's word tells us what ugly, sinful creatures we are; but the hearer goes his way and forgets what an ugly sinner he saw.

A person that only hears the word and doesn't walk obedient to that word is deceiving himself. He goes to church because it is required of him; perhaps he'd as soon stay home in bed, but to keep peace in the house, he will go to church. The word of God affects him only superficially; he thinks to himself, "Yes, I'm sinful, but I'm saved. That's what I'm taught. My salvation is sure regardless of the sins I commit." Then he goes merrily on his sinful, unrepentant way. He continues to go to movies, parties, and, in general, does whatever he pleases. Do not deceive yourselves, young people. Do not forget what answer 64 of the Heidelberg Catechism says, "For it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness."

Do we bring forth fruits of thankfulness when we go to movies, or when we don't want to bother ourselves with preparing for catechism and societies? No! We are deceiving ourselves. We must look into the mirror of God's word and see what sinful creatures we are. We must ask God's forgiveness and strive to lead a new and holy life. Col. 1:10 states, "That ye walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

But the world is filled with temptations that appeal to our flesh. The devil fills our minds with evil thoughts. So often we say, "We don't have anything to do. We can't do anything." Sometimes, I think that we have this horrible misconception that we can't have fun unless we are doing something that is sinful. What a wicked, wretched, abominable sin that would be. Get rid of that idea and see what James 1:25 has to say about the law of God, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

First of all, notice that James calls the law, the perfect law of **liberty**. God's law doesn't put us in bondage so that we cannot do anything. No, it is the perfect law of liberty; it sets us free. Our sins are what put us in bondage. II Cor. 3:17 states, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Rom. 8:21, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Gal. 5:1 & 13 and many other passages teach us that sin is bondage; only in Christ are we set free. Remember that the next time you complain you have nothing to do and are using that as a justification for sinful deeds.

How can we be doers of the word and not hearers only? That is really the theme of the entire book of James: Doers of the Word. James 2:26 states, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." James 1:27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself

unspotted from the world." In and of ourselves we cannot do this; in fact, we have not the least desire to do this. It is only in and through God's grace that we receive the ability to fight the battle of faith.

We must depend on God, not our own strength. In our own strength we will surely fail. In God's strength we are assured of the victory. In and through God alone can we walk worthy of the Lord.

Critique
BEING STEWARDS OF TIME

by Bernie Kamps

God created time for this creation and for the creature, namely man. Because God created an orderly creation and governs it with time, we are bound to work within the framework of time. All that we do, have done, or project to accomplish, is measured by time. The Lord started the clock of the universe at creation. He subjects man to the divine timetable. We know through His Word when time began, and know that it will end with the Second Coming of Christ. After our Lord's return we will not need time, nor will we yield to the effects of it. Time, being a creature, will itself be "destroyed". But, on this side of glory we must use time in a sanctified manner.

God, being the creator of time, is also the exactor of it. Time is given us by the Lord to use to the glory of His holy name. We can liken it to the parables of the talents. The ruler in the parable giveth his servants talents for a period of time and travels. Upon his return he reckons with them, demanding to know if they were diligent with the use thereof. The Lord has given us an allotment of time at our birth and exacts it from us when we are laid in the grave. Job 7:1, "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?" Our days and months here below are numbered. Each must be accounted for to our Ruler. In our youth so often we feel as though there is no end of life; little reason to be concerned with stewardship of our time. We seem to have such an abundance of it.

Let us remember that all of our time is given by the Lord to magnify and extol His name. Now let us ask the question, "Why must we be so concerned with the use of time in our youth?" Romans 14:7, 8, answers this question: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Also, Lord's Day I of the Heidelberg Catechism explains that we are not our own, but belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

You are elected to serve. Oh, what an assuring thought in a troubled and anxious world. God has chosen you to serve Him now and forever in glory. Lord's Day I ends with this comforting thought, "He also assures me of

eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him." Your desire, then, is rooted in thankfulness to your creator, and not just a demand or obligation that you must begrudgingly fulfill. The Lord's command to deny one's self foolish pleasure and husband our time is welcomed by our soul, but challenged and ridiculed by our old man of sin.

We, by nature, are like the Athenians to whom Apostle Paul preached. They lived for themselves. There was no sacrifice of their time for our God; only squandering of it. We read in Acts 17:21, "(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)". We, too, must struggle with the temptation of using our time for ourselves, giving no regard or asking of ourselves, "am I busying myself with things earthly or things heavenly?"

We must be spiritually ambitious, using our time to learn of and to praise God for the great work of salvation. This means that we must set aside time to discuss, time to read, time to spiritually build on the foundation of faith given us. Busy yourself with spiritual matters. Question your use of time with regard to recreation.

To neglect your spiritual life is to be lazy concerning time. Proverbs 24:30, 31, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." Now, you may ask, "Isn't this too difficult? Aren't we being asked to sacrifice more than is necessary? Would Christ demand this? After all, my time is precious." All we need to do is to look to the rich young ruler. Christ demanded all his possessions in order that he be considered a follower of Jesus.

What, then, is God's reward to His elect as they struggle to serve Him with their time? As you busy yourself with the Word, the promise given in II Timothy 3 is that it will "make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." God blesses you with spiritual discernment. He anchors you firmly in the truth of His Word. You will not be ignorant in these days of great apostacy. No, you will know the proper pathway to follow in this day of heretical attacks against the infallibility of Scripture. In your personal life, the Holy Spirit bolsters you against doubt and despair. As the winds and waves of temptation buffet, you will not be moved. We enjoy the safe harbor of God's loving hand protecting us until the end of our time here on this earth.

Psalm 90:12
"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for future teachers/ministers for the 1986-87 school year. If you are interested, please contact Mike Rau, 4165 Jenison St., Grandville, MI 49418, for application forms. An essay of 300 words or more is also required on the topic "The Protestant Reformed minister/teacher's calling to set forth the antithesis in preaching and teaching." Deadline for applications to be received is June 1, 1986.

GUIDO DE BRES

by Deb Kuiper

In 1522 the family of John de Bres celebrated the birth of their son, Guido. Guido de Bres had three brothers and one sister.

Guido went to school in Mons and then was apprenticed to a glass painter. While he worked, he heard snatches of Reformation truths and stories of Protestants being burned or beheaded in nearby villages. He was fourteen years old when William Tyndale was strangled and burned to death near Antwerp, Guido read the Bible and other Protestant writings privately. He was converted before he became twenty-five year old.

In 1548, Guido left home and went to England. There he studied under Thomas Cranmer, Pole John aLasco, and Martin Bucer until 1552.

In 1552 Guido sailed home. He wanted to help his own people. Back in the Lowlands he became a traveling preacher. Sometimes he went by the name of Augustine of Mons. The group of Christians in Lille, where Guido lived, met secretly in homes. They called themselves "The Church of the Rose." De Bres worked hard while studying and writing. His first book "The Staff of the Christian Faith", contained 16 chapters and was translated into several languages. The book discussed the principles of the Reformed faith and was written to fight the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. It was dedicated to the faithful people in The Church of Rose. On the title page was the text from Ephesians, 'Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day. . . .' "1

Soon evil days came to the Church of the Rose. Philip was on the throne beginning his fight against the Protestant heretics. Many people who had held secret meetings in their homes were dragged off to prison and later burned at the stake.

De Bres gathered his people and brought them to Frankfurt, Germany where three refugee churches were established: the Flemish Church, an English refugee church of which John Knox was its pastor, and also a French refugee Church to which John Calvin came from Geneva to settle their problems.

For two years de Bres was at the Protestant Academy in Lausanne studying Greek under Theodore Beza, who became Calvin's successor in Geneva. De Bres went with Beza to Geneva for one year to help Calvin.

After three years of study de Bres boarded a boat to Doornik. He was now thirty-seven years old. In 1559, Guido de Bres married Catherine Ramon, a young woman of Doornik's church. In 1560 they had their first son, Israel.

"During the first year of his marriage de Bres began to outline a Confession of Faith for which the Church of centuries to come would remember him and give thanks." 2

1 Thea B. Van Halsema, **Glorious Heretic** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1961), p. 105.

2 Thea B. Van Halsema, **Glorious Heretic** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1961), p. 108.

By now de Bres was a real leader of the Reformed people of many churches. "He usually disguised himself, changing from a long beard to a short one, or from a long cloak to a coat and hat. He went by the name of Jerome and most of the people in his congregation never knew their pastor by any other name."3 Although he lived in Doornik his family probably could not be with him.

Margaret, the king's regent, often would send her men to persecute the Protestants in Doornik. In 1544, Pierre Brully of Strassbourg came to Doornik as their preacher. After he was there for about three months Margaret's men cracked down on the city. Brully had to get out of the city secretly. As he was going over the wall a stone fell and crushed his leg. The guards heard this and captured and later burned him to death. The next year their second minister was captured and burned to death and four of his followers were beheaded. For years the church had to go along by itself until 1559 when de Bres came to help them. He became the minister of their Protestant church, The Church of the Palm.

De Bres started to reorganize the church again. "All the church gatherings were held in secret after dark, and no more than twelve people met in one place."4 They elected elders and deacons, observed the Lord's Supper, and baptized their children. It was a Flemish Custom to invite friends for supper. At supper de Bres would pray and give a meditation. This custom served well to spread the word and bring new converts into the Church of the Palm.

Taffin, a magistrate, and the lawyer de Lattre, were converted. De Bres began to hope that by slow, careful, secret work the whole city could be brought to the Reformed faith.

Robert du Four, a weaver, was a leader of a group of people that wanted to show that they were Christians and by making a public demonstration to show their strength. De Bres tried to hold them back but it was no use. On St. Michael's Day, September 29, 1561 in the evening many Protestants gathered and went up and down the streets singing. The second night they gathered again to sing and shouted in front of the bishop vicar's house.

The bishop, who was in Brussels, went to Margaret. She was very furious because she feared that trouble in the towns would lead to war, and also because the Doornik magistrates had not kept her informed. She had three royal commissioners bring a letter to the magistrates who had not done their duty to keep the Protestants out.

The commissioners dragged hundreds of people in and threatened them with torture and death. Everything was uncovered: the secret meetings, leaders of the singing, and Jerome. Du Four and du Mortier had escaped out of the city. In du Mortier's house were found the books of Calvin, letters, and a printed copy of the Confession of Faith which bore no author's name. No one knew where he was and no one was aware that Jerome was really the great, glorious heretic, de Bres.

As de Bres hid, he decided that it was time to present the Confession of Faith openly. No one could present the Confession in person so it had to be "thrown over the wall of the govorner's castle where the commissioners stayed."5 This was done on November 2, 1561.

3 **Ibid**, p. 110
4 **Ibid**., p. 111.

"The Confession was first printed in 1561 at Rouen, France. It was revised at the synod of Antwerp in 1566 and printed that same year in Geneva."6 In 1619 the Synod of Dort approved it. The first few pages contained an open letter to King Phillip, and then followed the Confession of Faith. Thirdly came an exhortation to the magistrates of the provinces. "You are ordained by God, says de Bres to them, and it is your duty to rule justly instead of condemning and killing the innocent as you have done until now."7

De Bres hoped to battle the errors of the Anabaptists and reinforce the faith of the believers. He wanted to tell the king and his helpers what the Christians believed so that maybe the king would be merciful to the elect.

The Confession was found on November 5, 1561 and Margaret ordered that anyone who owned or distributed copies of it would be arrested and punished.

In December, de Bres escaped from Doornik. On January 10, a fire broke out and his room was discovered. They found many articles that Margaret ordered burned.

"On January 21, by royal order, de Bres was burned in effigy in the market square in Doornik."8 He escaped again over the border into France.

Guido de Bres went into exile for the third and last time in France. He lived there for almost five years as a pastor in many congregations. During these years he was with his family. Israel and Sara were born and now in France three more children were born. They had five children in nine years.

There were still persecutions going on in France. In the town of Amiens he was put in prison and later was released.

In July, of 1566, de Bres preached in Antwerp and in August he went to Valenciennes and to Anzin, a suburb of Valenciennes.

In March of 1567 the church was destroyed in Valenciennes. De Bres and de la Grange, another minister, were not found. They had escaped to Rumegies, but here someone recognized them and they were arrested. For fourteen days he was a prisoner at Doornik. On his stay he wrote a letter to his wife, Catherine. Many people came to visit him and later he was transferred to St. Amand.

"In Valenciennes de Bres was put in an obscure prison called Brunain. It was a foul place, so dark and filthy that it was called the Black Hole."9 In his seven weeks there he wrote an essay on the Lord's Supper and the mass. He also wrote a letter to his mother, wife and congregation.

On May 31, 1567 de Bres was wakened at 3:00 A.M. and told he would be hung at 6:00 o'clock with one other preacher. Three others were to be beheaded. His family was spared the sight of their father and husband's death. De la Grange was executed before de Bres. De Bres prayed and spoke to the crowd before he died.

Before evening they were finally buried "in a field in Mt. Anzin, the

5 Thea B. Van Halsema, **Glorious Heretic** (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1961), pp. 114 and 115.

6 "Belgic Confession", **Encyclopedia Britannica** (1974), I.

7 Thea B. Van Halsema, **Glorious Heretic** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1961), p. 115

8 Ibid., p. 117.

9 Ibid., p. 130.

suburb where de Bres had done his first field preaching."10

The Belgic Confession became one of the three creeds or "doctrinal standards of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and America."11

10 Thea B. Van Halsema, **Glorious Heretic** (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), p. 134.
11 B.K. Kuiper, **The Church in History** (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 268.

CHRISTIANS IN THE SOVIET UNION: MARKED FOR EXTINCTION

by Sarah Ondersma

If someone came up to you and said "persecution", what would you think of? You would probably think of certain times in history. Maybe Nero and Hitler would come to your mind. Perhaps you would not consider the times of today because of all the freedom you have: freedom to go to the school of your choice, freedom to go to church, and the freedom to work at the place of your choice. Today, persecution sounds like a thing of the past. But it is not! Right now hundreds of people are suffering for their beliefs. These people are (as Hebrews 11:25 states) "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Who are these people? Some of these persecuted people are the Christians in the Soviet Union. They are being strongly suppressed through cruel measures by the government, even though Article 52 of the 1977 Soviet constitution assures the people of the right "to profess and not to profess any religion and to conduct religious worship." Persecution, prison, and exile for their faith have become a way of life for the Christians of Russia.

In Russia, the believers are divided into two main groups, the registered church and the unregistered church. According to law, believers must form groups and register with the government's Council on Religious Affairs. Of these registered churches, the most famous is the Russian Orthodox Church with a membership of over 40 million. Because it is registered with the government, it is placed under government restrictions. Here is a list of some of the rules for a registered church:

1. Believers shall form groups and register with the government's Council on Religious Affairs.
2. The Council may object to any church leader.

(On some smuggled documents it shows that the council rates the leaders on political trustworthiness. Church leaders can be reprimanded for failing to urge parishioners to love the Socialist motherland.)

3. Churches may not proselytize or offer instruction to persons under 18 years of age.
4. Sermons may not raise challenges to the state or to the Communist Party policies.

These restrictions make it **impossible** for these churches to preach the true

Word of God.

So the differences between a registered church and an unregistered church is that one is accepted by the government of the Soviet Union, the other is not. The basic difference is that the unregistered church "rests entirely and completely upon the gospel preaching, fundamental teaching of the gospel. . .mainly absolute freedom of conscience, full separation of church and state."1 The unregistered church believes that the Lord Jesus is the head of the church and the state has no right to dictate or interfere with the function of the church.

The members of the unregistered churches are the true Christians to whom the persecution is directed. Only the officially sanctioned Russian Orthodox Church exists in relative peace. Our concern as fellow Christians is for the children of God in the unregistered church who suffer persecution and cruelty.

The main reason for persecution is the Christian's hunger for biblical preaching which is causing the congregation to grow. The government is trying to stop this growth. The churches are a threat to those in authority because they know "if a man believed in Christ he would never be a mindless, willing creature. The authorities know they can imprison men, but they can not imprison faith in God."2

The authorities consider this belief a real threat and are scared of the rise in membership. Communists are given the idea that giving a Bible to someone is the equivalent of giving liquor to a drunkard. One patient was put in a hospital for witnessing to other people about God and was told as long as he talked about God, he would be considered a schizophrenic (a person with a mental disorder characterized by loss of contact with environment and by disintegration of personality).3

Instead of trying to stamp out the church, Communist authorities are trying to restrict and manipulate the church. These Soviets can easily control the registered churches but this is not so with the unregistered Christians. Thus the emphasis is placed on the persecution of the members of unregistered groups.

In June '83, the Central Committee Plenum of the Communist Party voted to redouble the government's atheistic propaganda efforts. This includes the heavy censoring of the newsletters of registered churches. The Communist Party wants to replace the religious rituals with pagents and ceremonies that have no religious content.4 There are no religious radio broadcasts except one which features such topics as the health dangers involved in baptism, the anti-Soviet nature of the Christian Church, and the pollution of children's minds by Christian superstitions.5 The devil works through such kinds of propaganda to pervert the minds of the Soviet people.

The tactic used to strangle Christ-

1 "The Word of God is Not Bound," **Eternity**, 1979, p. 23.

2 Richard Wurmbrand, **Tortured For Christ** (Glendale: Diane Books, 1967) p. 32.

3 Michael Wurmbrand, "Lutheran World Federation Headed by a Communist," **The Voice of the Martyrs**, 1984.

4 "The Soviet Union Calls for more Atheistic Propaganda," **Christianity Today**, vol. 28, 1984, p. 68.

5 Thomas W. Klewin, "Communism Just Can't Win This Battle." **Good News Broadcaster**, 1979, p. 20.

ianity is simply to seal off the new generation from God's Word. . .and let Christianity die off on its own accord. The government doesn't want children or young people to come to church. This is the reason for the law that says, "Churches may not proselytize or offer instruction to persons under 18 years of age." Christian parents are deprived the right to bring up their children according to their own beliefs. The parents are threatened not to do this and are told if they don't obey, the government has the right to do anything to safeguard children's minds against "religious poison". Children are forcefully taken away from their parents and sent to boarding schools to be educated. These actions contradict the truths taught in the Bible. Yet they continue every day.

The KGB (Russian secret police, like our FBI) does the dirty work for the government. The KGB tries to make all pastors agents. Those who refuse to cooperate are put in prison. It is the KGB that carries on eavesdropping, spying, and systematic following to find out where the believers are secretly meeting.

The state has found that by confiscating or destroying homes used for meetings, active congregations can be restricted. What follows is an excerpt from a Russian magazine reporting the destruction of one of thousands of homes of those that worship in hiding:

> . . .the personal home of Eduard Hauf (22 Strelochnomu), in which regular worship services were held, was completely destroyed. While Eduard Hauf was at work, agents of the militia and a group of security police came to his house. They knocked in the doors and windows with iron bars and took the crying children and the grandmother in a car to another lodging. When Hauf came home, the house was completely destroyed. Wrecking equipment and bulldozers stood upon the ruins of his house.6

These actions are clearly illegal but the people can do nothing to stop them.

When one congregation refused to accept a government-appointed pastor, the authorities padlocked the door to the church. The believers met secretly in homes where the police often disrupted the meetings, even assaulting believers physically. The police also searched the homes of church members, taking all church literature and bugging the homes to find out church plans.7 School children are often approached by secret police to investigate the parents' beliefs and activities.

The Soviets use many forms of degradation: slander, beatings, fines, and deprivation of work and education. It is very hard to be a believer in Russia because of the suffering that a believer and his children go through. By going to church, he runs the risk of losing his job, his security, and the opportunity to obtain automobiles, homes, and other scarce items. He receives no promotions at work, and he is placed on the bottom of the long waiting list for an apartment or car. Also the children find themselves barred from any further education such as colleges, universities, or technical schools.8 The believer does not live in the comfort you and I

6 Mark A. Noll, translator, **Christians Under the Hammer and Sickle** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972).

7 "A Salvation of Suffering: The Church in the Soviet Union," **Christianity Today**, vol. 26, 1982, p. 19.

have, instead he/she fights a hard battle just to be a Christian.

The government does not dare to act openly. Through false witnesses and false accusations, men are brought to trial, found guilty, and sent to prisons and concentration camps. A variety of excuses are used to arrest people who believe. Some members of a Christian Seminar, a group of men and women converted to Christianity, were arrested for "psychological disorders" and were forced to take damaging drug treatments.9 Many arrests were made on charges of slandering the state. Believers are arrested at prayer meetings, at work and home, and also are being seized on highways, even without a warrant of arrest.

True believers have been suffering and continue to suffer in the prisons, in exile, and in banishment. The government does try to use persuasion whenever possible but it doesn't hesitate to use force. Interrogators will use force through beatings to make prisoners say false things to have something to charge against them. These Communists practice a modern age "stoning to death". Prisoners are beaten until the information wanted is given or until they lose consciousness. Often the result of these beatings is damage to their inner organs. Many prisoners are beaten a few hours each day until death subsequently occurs. What a prolonged and horrible suffering some of these Christians have!

One pastor, after being tortured very badly with red-hot pokers and knives, was thrown in a cell where starving rats were driven in through a large pipe. If he rested a moment, the rats would attack him. After two weeks of being forced to stand day and night, the police compelled him to betray his brethren. He refused so the furious communists took the pastor's son and beat him to death in front of his eyes.10 Thousands of prisoners are tortured to death, some having their tongues cut off.

Many Christians are thrown into "refrigerator cells" until they show symptoms of freezing to death. Then doctors would rush in to take them out and make them warm. After being warmed, they were immediately thrown back into the ice-box cells to freeze. This continued endlessly and the chances of survival were very slim.11

Here is a description from a Christian who was thrown with 20 other prisoners into a tightly shut cell:

> There was no fresh air. A half hour passed, then an hour. The perspiration ran down our bodies, but there was no air to breathe. Men banged on the door asking for air. The guards opened the door and released tear gas. I pressed my head on the floor for a bit of air, prayed, and was ready to die, as the gas stopped my breathing. The cell door was opened when some men fainted.12

The tragic part of this is that these inhuman acts continue and nobody is stopping them.

8 Thomas W. Klewin, "Communism Just Can't Win This Battle," **Good News Broadcaster**, 1979, p. 19.

9 J. Garvey, "The Trial of V. Poresh," **Commonweal**, vol. 110, 1983, p. 137.

10 Richard Wurmbrand, **Tortured For Christ** (Glendale: Diane Books, 1967), p. 36.

11 **Ibid.**, p. 36.

12 Michael Wurmbrand, "Lutheran World Federation Headed by a Communist," **The Voice of the Martyrs** (1984).

People in camps are punished for praying to God and put in solitary confinement where they become severely emaciated and then die because of terrible health. After serving their terms, many prisoners are given repeated terms of imprisonment. At home, all of their possessions are confiscated so their wives and family have no means to exist. Those who are free are fined continuously and lose their jobs.

Another method of persecution in the camps is brainwashing. For years, 17 hours a day, some Christians are told repeatedly,

Communism is good!
Communism is good!

and

Christianity is stupid!
Christianity is stupid!

13

Many of them after awhile will crack down and will think that what is told them is true.

13 R. Wurmbrand, **op. cit.**

Sudden deaths of certain pastors are a result of the work of the Soviet authorities through the KGB. Leaders die under mysterious circumstances. For example: Leonid Timoshchuk was tortured and killed and his body dumped in a gasoline storage tank. Rev. Bronius Laurinavicius died in a specially engineered road accident.14

Nobody really knows exactly how many Christians are jailed. One trustworthy source identifies about 56 concentration camps. The total number of prisoners is estimated at 1,150,000! But how many of these prisoners suffer for their belief in God? We can get an idea from this instance: In the town of Angren, 23 men were sentenced for their faith in ONE month! There may have been many more men whom we don't know about. In Russia, there are 5,092 towns. Multiply this and you get an enormous figure representing suffering Christians.

14 "Religion's Fight for Survival in Russia," **U.S. News and World Report**, vol. 93, 1982, p. 40.

There is no name so sweet on earth, No name so sweet in heaven,
The Name before His wondrous birth To Christ the Saviour given.
And when He hung upon the tree, They wrote His Name above Him;
That all might see the reason we For evermore must love Him.
So now, upon His Father's throne, Almighty to release us
From sin and pains, He gladly reigns, The Prince and Saviour, Jesus.
Today as yesterday, the same Thou art the same for ever.

Wm. Bradbury

1986 YOUNG PEOPLES' CONVENTION

Theme:

"Being Reformed in 1986:
Heritage & Calling"

Text:

II Thessalonians 2:15

I In Truth - Rev. Kamps
II In Godliness - Rev. Gritters
III In Comfort - Rev. Slopsema

July 28 — August 1

Valparaiso University

---

* **SPECIAL NOTE:**
We are planning on something new this year!
We are now having special activities and discussions for our older and resigned young people, so plan to attend!