

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Report of the Synod of 1967 (All Around Us)

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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CANDIDATE FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, having examined Seminarian Dale H. Kuiper, 1004 Temple Street, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, declares Mr. Kuiper to be a Candidate for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Protestant Reformed Churches and eligible to receive a call on or after July 7, 1967, one month after the completion of his praeparatoir examination.

Stated Clerk of the Synod of the
Protestant Reformed Churches
Rev. G. Vanden Berg

MEDITATION—

Abel's More Excellent Sacrifice

by Rev. J. Kortering

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Hebrews 11:4

Righteousness!

The key that unlocks the gates of heaven.

What blessedness to obtain witness that we are righteous.

Without this witness the pains of guilt bring us down to hopeless despair. It is a terrible thing for sinners to be in the hands of the living God. Our God is a consuming fire against the workers of iniquity. We have sinned and deserve the fire-brand of His wrath. So the

Almighty has plucked from your home a loved one, has cast you into a bed of affliction, has stripped you of your material wealth, are these evidences of wrath? Without the witness that we are righteous there can be only one answer, they are!

With the witness that we are righteous, things are so different. It is then that we gaze upon the thrice-holy God and beholding Him in our Lord Jesus Christ we cry by faith, "Our Father which art in heaven."

The billows of life may burst all around us, but we know that we are never alone in the storm. Being righteous we behold the smile of God reflected in the balmy sunshine, but no less in the brooding storm. We walk by faith through the valley of the shadow of death with our eye fixed upon the eternal city, where we shall abide with Father forever.

Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.

Well may we pray that our offering be such a sacrifice.

Cain was a hypocrite! Oh, to be sure, he was "religious." After all he had received the same covenant instruction that Abel had received. According to Gen. 4 he joined Abel in bringing an offering unto Jehovah. He believed there was a God; he couldn't be classified as an infidel, one who rejected the idea of a supreme being. On the contrary, he participated in one of the most intimate forms of worship, that of offering a sacrifice, the Old Testament counterpart for prayer.

Nevertheless we must not be deceived by outward appearance. Cain was brought up within the sphere of the covenant, but despised the very essence of the covenant. We read that he took of the fruit of the ground and brought it as an offering unto the Lord. By this he denied Jesus Christ. He trusted in the works of His hands.

Cain could not plead ignorance for this atrocious deed. Some would interpret this as if there was nothing wrong in Cain coming with the fruit of the ground as a sacrifice to the Lord. He was, after all, a tiller of the soil, and quite naturally he brought that which came to his hand. Abel was a keeper of sheep and therefore he brought a firstling of the flock. Following this line of reasoning, the sin of Cain was not in the sacrifice which he brought, but rather in the attitude of his heart.

This however, is not true. According to the words of Heb. 11:4, the respect which Jehovah had over against these two brothers rested in the sacrifice itself, "God testifying of his *gifts*, and by it he being dead yet speaketh." This refers to Abel's gift upon the altar. This made the difference.

Already in Paradise, God had given instruction concerning the only hope for redemption. Immediately after the fall, God came to Adam and Eve and promised Christ in the words spoken to the serpent, but in their hearing, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." He demonstrated the truth of this by taking an animal and killing it and using the hide as a garment. Before their eyes they saw blood shed for the first time and they were given to understand that through the shedding of blood their nakedness (guilt) would be covered.

It seems but natural that the idea of sacrifice and its importance was understood from this point on. In this tradition Abel came with a lamb as his parents must often have done. But Cain disdained the lamb. He needed not the covering of blood. He was about to take the fruits produced by his own care and offer them as

a sacrifice. He must have picked the nicest fruits and the best herbs. He reasoned that God would surely be pleased with such an offering.

By this deed He rejected the need for the atonement and trusted in his own works. He tried to pray to God apart from the cross. This "prayer" God did not hear. God was not deceived. He had no respect unto such an offering and he communicated this to Cain. By this act, God literally ripped the mask of hypocrisy from Cain and exposed him for what he really was. This brought the true spiritual character of Cain to the light. When Abel came to speak with his brother concerning his spiritual weakness, Cain rose up and slew him. The blood of Abel cried unto the God of heaven. Proud rejection of the cross led to murder. Sin always bears a terrible fruit.

Cain represents the masses of nominal christianity throughout the history of the world. He does not stand at the front of the heathen masses; he represents those who pretend to be christians, but are not. The Cains of our day are not found in darkened heathendom far removed from the influence of the gospel; they are found in the midst of that which calls itself church. The modern Cain believes that man is basically good; he denies total depravity. According to them the very idea of the atonement of Christ is "butcher theology" not worthy of the name of christianity. If there is any punishment for sin, it is in this world as the price for sin is marked in broken homes, a war-torn country, or a ravished society. Man must grow up and learn that love of our fellowmen is the key to real living, not the love of God in Jesus Christ, only the love of man to man under a vague fatherhood of God. The way of salvation according to such is not a cross as a payment for sin, but rather human reformation.

When God comes to such in the preaching of the gospel and rips from them their mask of hypocrisy as He did to Cain, their reaction is the same today. The bitterest enemies of the truth are not the heathen; they are those who apostatize within the nominal church. After all, antichrist himself will not come out of heathendom; he will sit in the church usurping unto himself the authority of Christ, but denying Him. It is this modern Cain as he comes to his own that will bring about the great tribulation in the last days.

Present day denial of the atonement as the covering for the sins of the elect is in the "spirit" of Cain. Let us beware!

The more excellent sacrifice was quite different.

Abel slew a lamb. He laid it upon the altar and bowed as the fire consumed it. Gazing upon the burning lamb, his pride was crushed beneath the righteous demands of the sovereign God. His hope rested in the blood of the Lamb Who would one day come and expiate his sins before the face of the Almighty.

Abel had a proper understanding of who God is. He knew that it was not a matter of his trying his best to appease some supreme being and do what was commonly expected of him. God is holy and is jealous in His holiness. For this reason He is a consuming fire against the workers of iniquity. His fellowship is rooted in Himself, being the highest good. He expects

that all His creatures will recognize Him as the highest and only good. Hence the holy God is also righteous and lays a boundary within which His face smiles with holy approval and outside of which He burns in holy wrath. That boundary is His love, love for Him as God and love of the neighbor for His sake.

Abel understood that all he did or could or would ever do was out of bounds with God. He looked at his life and saw that there was nothing in his works that could possibly serve as grounds for winning God's approval. In this he was the opposite of Cain who came with his fruits. You see, the difference in their practical religion stemmed from a theological difference. Abel had a different concept of God than Cain did. And Cain's theological concept was not something to be respected as far as their dealings with each other was concerned; Abel's was right and Cain's was wrong and had to be condemned. Abel's concept of God was rooted in the revelation that God had given them; he bowed humbly before the God Who had spoken to his parents and given instruction concerning proper worship. Cain was proud and had exalted himself over and above this God. Basically, Cain hated God and Abel loved Him. This became so evident in the view that they had of themselves; Abel bowed in confession of sin before the righteous God, but Cain lifted up his head proudly and boasted in his fruits.

This quite naturally led them to a different "way of salvation." Abel now saw that God's way out was the only way out. God had in mercy and love promised the Christ upon whom He would lay his iniquities. Abel laid hold of the Christ; he took the lamb and slew it and beheld it consumed by the fire, a sure type of Christ enduring the wrath of God against the sins of His own. How humiliating it was to stand before Abel's altar. That lamb was a substitute for our being burned in the fire. How Abel looked to the future in hope for the perfect Lamb! How thankful he was to God for promising such redemption and establishing a sure foundation

for salvation; the satisfaction of His perfect righteousness! By it Abel was righteous in the righteousness of Christ.

You see, if you have the wrong view of God you will have the wrong view of yourself, and this in turn will lead you to a wrong view of salvation. The practical outcome is a false religion. On the contrary, if we have the right view of God we will have the right view of ourselves and understand the only true way of salvation which God established. This, too, will lead to a proper form of religion, which brings us near to the heart of God.

Our theology makes all the difference for a more excellent sacrifice.

Abel was blessed, Cain was cursed.

God testified of Abel's sacrifice that it was pleasing in His sight. Notice, God testified not of *Abel*, but of "his gifts," that is, He took note of Christ on the altar and upon the basis of Christ's atonement informed Abel that He was pleased. What objective evidence God gave him we do not know, whether of the smoke, of fire, or even a direct communication by voice. It makes no difference. Abel understood it and Cain resented it.

Abel was slain. At the dawn of history the keynote was already sounded. Those who reject the atonement of Christ will not tolerate those who preach the true gospel. Through this enmity Abel was redeemed fully and taken into the heavenly glory.

Cain was cursed in the most horrible way. He even had to bear a mark that would extend his earthly life, in order that God's purpose for him might be accomplished and his own measure of iniquity filled. He was destined to be a fugitive and a vagabond to dwell outside of God's covenant and dwell in His curse, a foretaste of his eternal abode.

Abel yet speaks! Even though he is dead.

How clear that language is. May God give us ears to hear it.

Only the way of the cross leads home!

EDITORIAL—

Seminary Graduation

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

As reported elsewhere in these columns, our churches now have another candidate for the ministry, brother Dale H. Kuiper.

Ordinarily, I suppose, and for most denominations, this would hardly be the occasion for as much attention as the *Standard Bearer* gives to it. For us, however, it is worthy of special note, and that for several reasons. In the first place, graduation from our seminary

is a comparatively rare event. In recent years it has not even been an annual event. Moreover, when such graduation does occur, the graduating class more often than not consists of but one graduate, as it did also this year. In the second place, as already suggested above, this graduation is worthy of note because it means that our churches have available a candidate for the ministry. In view of the existing shortage of minis-

ters in our churches, this alone would be sufficient reason to pay special attention to this event. And not only is it reason for special attention, but it is reason for special rejoicing and thanksgiving because the Lord has provided our churches with another of the so sorely needed and so often prayed for laborers in His



Candidate Dale H. Kuiper

vineyard. In the third place, it is worthy of special note, and again, reason for special joy and thanksgiving, because this graduation, by the grace of God, represents achievement, — achievement for the graduate, for the faculty, for our School Committee and Synod, and

for all of our churches who jointly operate the Seminary. In the fourth place, I believe, as I intimated when I was privileged to present Mr. Kuiper his diploma, that this is worthy of special note because our new candidate for the ministry graduated from a rare seminary, — rare especially because it is a seminary where our Reformed heritage, according to Scripture and the confessions, is faithfully transmitted to the students, and where all the instruction has a specifically Reformed orientation. Let us never forget in this connection that our churches, — by sovereign grace alone, — occupy a rare position today and are the trustees of a rare and high and serious calling.

Moreover, as I also stressed in my remarks at the presentation of the diploma, Candidate Kuiper must be viewed as a gift of God to our churches. For our churches this means that we must receive him with thanksgiving. For him this means that he must never forget that his is, in the first place, a highly privileged position, attributable to grace only; and, in the second place, that his is a highly serious calling, in which he is answerable to Christ, the King of His church, and to God through Him.

May the Lord bless our new candidate, soon point out to him his particular place in our churches, and then cause him to be a blessing in the ministry which He gives him.

The rest of the editorial space in this issue we devote to the graduation address of my esteemed colleague, Prof. H. Hanko, and that of Candidate Kuiper.

GRADUATION ADDRESS—

The Importance Of Preaching

by Prof. H. Hanko

Candidate Kuiper, beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord, fathers of Synod:

I desire to speak to you tonight on the subject of the importance of the preaching of the gospel.

There are various reasons why this subject is of particular interest to us. In the first place, the occasion for this gathering readily lends itself to a subject of this nature. It is, after all, the exclusive business of the Seminary to train men to be preachers of the gospel. And graduation means that one such student has attained this goal of graduation and is prepared to take his place in our churches as a preacher.

But, in the second place, this subject is of broader interest to our churches. To have been in a vacant congregation for any length of time is to have experienced personally the importance of preaching for the

life of the church of Christ here upon earth. That is, while we are sometimes inclined to take the preaching with which we have been blessed for granted, to be without it is an unbearable lack. And (and this is the point I wish to stress tonight) the strength of our churches is in the preaching — faithful preaching of the Word of God.

In the third place, there is yet a broader interest in this subject. The subject is of importance as far as the very meaning of preaching is concerned. The essential character of preaching is being systematically altered in our day. No doubt, the gradual demise of the spiritual life of the church can be traced directly to this alteration. The church is only as strong as her preaching. It is not therefore superfluous to re-emphasize the importance of preaching in the institu-

tional life of the church of Christ.

I call your attention therefore to the following three questions:

- I. What Is Preaching From a Formal Point of View?
- II. What is the Content Of Preaching?
- III. What Is Its Importance?

I. WHAT IS PREACHING FROM A FORMAL POINT OF VIEW?

The division which I have proposed for this speech suggests already that I intend to make a distinction between what we may call "the form or character of preaching" and "the content of preaching". I am well aware of the fact that this distinction is of only relative significance. The two tend to merge. In fact, they cannot possibly be separated from each other. We shall take more particular note of this presently; I want to say now only that the distinction is made for purposes of clarification.

Further, it is not my purpose tonight to engage in a dogmatic dissertation on the subject of preaching—even from a formal point of view. There is altogether insufficient time for this; and the material on this point is readily available in the writings of our own ministers to those who are interested.

Rather, first of all, I want to emphasize the point that when the gospel is preached in the midst of the church of Christ, a profound miracle takes place. This needs emphasis lest we fall into the error of making light of the preaching and considering it of only relative value to us.

At the very heart of this miracle of preaching lies the truth that through the preaching God comes to meet with His people in covenant fellowship.

This was typically true already in the Old Dispensation. The preaching came then to Israel through the types and ceremonies of the law which were concentrated in the service of the temple. It was there that Israel meet with her God. God was present in that temple in the shining cloud of the Shekinah, for God had chosen Mount Zion above all the nations of the earth to make His dwelling place. In the Most Holy Place, behind the veil, between the outstretched arms of the cherubim God came to His chosen people. And Israel met to worship in covenant fellowship with God.

But the New Dispensation is far richer. The essence is still present, while the outward trappings have been stripped away since they were fulfilled in Christ. And the essence of it all has become infinitely richer. God comes to His people in the preaching of the Word to dwell with them in covenant fellowship. He speaks to His people through Christ and by the Spirit of Christ within their hearts. And, in this speech of God to His people, there is the fulness of the unity of the covenant. God's people listen; and listening, they bow in worship and respond in praise and in prayer confessing their God as the God of their salvation. The covenant comes to realization in these worship services where God's Word is preached.

Nor ought it to be forgotten that this is a most wonderful reality. It is God Who speaks to His people and enters into covenant fellowship with them. God is the living God of heaven and earth; the adorable God before

Whom the angels cover their faces and cry all the day long, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts." His Word is the Word of power by which the heavens and the earth were called into being. His speech upholds and governs all things. His voice is heard throughout all the creation working all that God Himself has determined to do. In Christ, this same voice of God is heard in the preaching speaking peace to His people and addressing them in tenderest love and compassion. The voice of God which reverberates throughout heaven and earth is the voice of God which comes to us when the gospel is preached. And this voice of God is spoken to a people whom He has chosen—a people who are, in themselves, wholly unworthy of the blessings of God because of their sin. But this miracle of the preaching is not even here exhausted; for this Word of God comes through the instrumentality of men whom God appoints and calls to the high office of minister of the gospel. This fact that men are used by God does not alter the miracle and lessen its power; it makes the miracle all the greater. Through a man God speaks; and He speaks in such a way that through this preaching the covenant of God, someday to be realized in perfection in heaven, is actually brought into being. It is this tremendous wonder that should never escape our notice as we gather together in church on the Lord's Day in the company of God's people.

All of this implies that the preaching of the gospel is powerful.

The scriptures use many figures to demonstrate this power. In some places the preaching of the gospel is described in terms of food and drink. The preached Word is called bread—the bread of life, meat, water of life or milk. And the point is that the preaching is food (spiritual food) to nourish the souls of God's people with that which alone can give eternal life. Not the life which is mere existence in the world; but heavenly life which shall endure forever. Then again, the preaching is described as a sword. It is a sword which cuts and divides in the souls of those who hear it. But it is also a sword with which the battle of faith is fought in the midst of the world. It is a sword able to defeat all the hosts of darkness and bring victory to God's elect church. Then again the preaching is described as a seed, planted in the hearts of God's people which grows and matures and brings forth fruit of righteousness pleasing in the sight of God. Or still more: the preaching is said to be a light which shines in this dark world and which is able to lead through the devious paths of sin on to the path of righteousness which goes to glory.

All these figures emphasize the tremendous power of the preaching.

In general, this unbelievable power of the preaching of the gospel is so great that it is able to accomplish all the purpose of God. Through it God accomplishes what He has determined to do in His eternal counsel. It is the power by which the kingdom of God is realized in the day of the coming of Christ. It is the power by which God is vindicated in the just judgment which He brings upon the ungodly. It is the power by which God is exalted as God in all the works of His hands.

Specifically, this means that the power of the preaching is two-fold. It is a positive power which accomplishes all the decree of eternal election. God from all eternity chose to Himself a people and wrote their names on the pages of the Book of Life. This people is redeemed in the blood of the cross where the decree of election was realized. But it is the gospel of the cross, the preaching of the blood of Christ which is the power by which these elect are saved. By the preaching election is realized in such a way that the people of God are called out of darkness into light, are called into conscious fellowship with God, are preserved in the midst of the world, and are brought to their final destination — their Father's house.

This same preaching though, has negative power as well. It is the power by which God accomplishes the eternal decree of reprobation. For it is the preaching by which the reprobate are hardened in their unbelief; and it is through the power of the preaching that judgment is brought upon the wicked for their wickedness.

All God's purpose is accomplished. We can only stand amazed at what takes place when the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.

II. WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THE PREACHING?

All of this brings us to the question of the content of the preaching.

It ought to be clear in our minds that there is the closest possible connection between the character of preaching from a formal point of view and the content of the preaching. The two go hand in hand. Where the content of the preaching is altered, so also is the character of the preaching changed in fundamental and important respects. And the opposite is equally true: where the character of the preaching is altered, the content is also substantially changed. In other words, to change the character of preaching is to bring into the preaching heresy instead of the truth. Faithfulness is required in both respects.

The evidence of this abounds.

The Christian Reformed Church is in the throes of a controversy at present concerning the content of the preaching. But this controversy has a long and sad history which began in 1924. Then the Christian Reformed Church spoke rather emphatically of the character of the preaching, and insisted that the preaching was (as far as its formal aspect was concerned) an offer. It was described as a general and well-meant offer to all who came under it. This is a key modification of the true essence of preaching; and it is not surprising that over the years the content has also been altered culminating in the controversy raging today. The content has become (completely in keeping with the idea of "offer") a statement on the part of God in which God expresses His desire to save all men. This is implied necessarily in an offer. And it ought not to surprise us a great deal that the swirling debate which goes on today in that church has its roots in 1924. The content of the preaching is an expression of God in which He speaks of His love for all men, a love which is revealed in a universal cross of Christ upon which

cross Christ died for all men.

There is no substantial difference between this presentation of the preaching and the view held by Arminian (sometimes called "evangelical") churches. The character of the preaching is defined in terms of an invitation to all men to accept the gospel. It contains indeed some statements of warning to those who refuse to accept the gospel. But its essential character, from a formal point of view, is this idea of an invitation. The content necessarily must fit this. And so the gospel contains an announcement of God's willingness to save every man — indeed, His earnest desire to save every man. And it contains the additional announcement that man must exercise his own free will in accepting this invitation to be saved.

Yet all of this is but the first step towards what has become known as the "social gospel". Evangelicalism is usually defined today as being theological conservatism; and is therefore supposedly the answer of the church to the liberalism of the modernists. But we must not be misled at this point. There is no principle difference between the two; no antithetical difference which sharply defines the two camps. It is merely a matter of degree of modernism. Arminianism is but a step (and a large one at that) in the direction of modernism.

But modernism has its own interpretation of the gospel. As far as the formal character of the preaching is concerned, it is difficult to call it preaching at all. The preaching has become a matter of lectures, discourses, discussions, consultations, dialogues. For the content of the preaching deals with social issues of the day. The subjects of the preaching are subjects of social concern, political interest, international and national problems; all justified by the battle-cry: "We must be relevant to our age." Hence, the avowed aim of the preaching is the righting of social wrong and the correction of political foolishness. Hence the ministers move from the pulpits of the churches into the streets, the marketplaces, the dives, the cabarets — places where the action is. And the goal is the realization of the kingdom of heaven here upon earth.

It is essential therefore that we take a sharp and uncompromising stand against all this to preserve our heritage.

Indeed the character of the preaching determines the content. In the preaching God comes to His elect people through Christ and by the operation of the Spirit. He comes to work salvation through the preaching — a salvation which He has determined for them from all eternity and which is accomplished on the cross. Sovereignly He works accomplishing His purpose so that He faithfully gathers, defends and preserves His church unto the end of time.

The content is in keeping with this. Fundamentally, the content of the preaching is God's own Word. Even as He is the One speaking to His people, so He speaks His Word. This Word is given to us in the Holy Scriptures. These Scriptures are the infallibly inspired record of the Word of God fulfilled in Christ. So the Word of God is the revelation of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is the Word of God which He speaks

through Christ by which God saves His elect. It is the gospel of the cross. And even as the cross has efficacious power to save, so also does the preaching of the cross convey that efficacious power to save to the hearts of the elect. Thus the preaching is always characterized by exegesis—exegesis of God's Word. It is not preaching unless it is exposition, explanation of Scripture. Only then does God speak through the preaching. The full revelation of God in Holy Writ is the contents of the preaching. Nothing else may ever be substituted.

III. WHAT IS ITS IMPORTANCE?

It ought to be evident from all this how important it is for us to preserve our heritage. The strength of our churches is the preaching; and the strength of the preaching is in exegesis. Nothing must ever be substituted for this. To lose the preaching is to lose our strength and our heritage in the church of all ages. To maintain steadfastly this preaching is to keep our God-

given place in these times of ecclesiastical turmoil and theological hysteria.

I say then to our ministers who are gathered here: Continue to stand in reverence before your exalted calling. Be touched with awe at the sacredness of your noble task.

To our graduate I say: When the Lord gives you a place in the church by which you have been instructed, remember these words. Never be swerved from your calling to preach. Never be tempted to forsake it and to trade it for another calling. Endure steadfastly in this task set upon you.

And finally, to our people: Never ask for anything else from your pulpits but this preaching. Do not be impatient with it as if it does not work swiftly enough to satisfy you. Never be inclined to criticize it as if it should be doing greater things in the world than you think it is doing. Be content that it shall accomplish all the purpose of God.

GRADUATION ADDRESS—

The Present Day Relevancy of Our Creeds

by Candidate Dale H. Kuiper

If anyone should wonder why we busy ourselves with such matters as our creeds and their relevancy, we would begin by calling several items to your attention. First, two quotes from a well known theological journal: "What our modern world needs is not theology or doctrine, which have failed and proven divisive, but a demonstration of the power of Christ", and, "We have to let the Spirit lead us, and have to dare to set aside our traditions and man made theologies, and listen to the Spirit, Who will lead us to Christ in true unity." You will recognize this as the old Fundamentalist cry, "No creed but Christ", in a new suit of clothes; that new suit has been occasioned by the mad clamor for unity at any price!

Also, if you have been doing any reading in church literature, you will have noticed that the United Presbyterian Church has put her old, time-tested creeds on the shelf, and has written and adopted a new creed, the Creed of 1967; a document so toothless and bland that the widest assortment of ministers can sign it without reservations. Finally, you will recall discussions in various church circles concerning the Formula of Subscription. The question that always comes up it seems is: should office-bearers be required to sign the Formula or not? From all this, we can see that the signs are unmistakable; we live in an age that *hates* and *ignores* the creeds! And the deepest reason for this is always hatred for the Word of God itself. So my assigned topic is vital and timely, indeed.

To young and old alike, it is undoubtedly clear that we speak here of our Three Forms of Unity. There is, first of all, the Belgic Confession of 1561, written by Guido de Bres during the fierce persecution of the faithful in the low countries by Philip II and his instrument of cruelty, the Spanish Inquisition. Secondly, the Heidelberg Catechism, written by Ursinus and Olevianus in 1563 at the request of Frederick III, who saw the need among his subjects for a book of instruction in the Reformed faith. And thirdly, the Canons of Dordt, 1618-19, the product of the Great Synod that struggled against the Arminianism then rampant in the Netherlands. With these three you are all well acquainted, I am sure.

But what we would have you notice now is that they are *our* creeds. They are not just some old documents that have been handed down to us through several centuries of history. Oh, no! Ever since the Synod of Dordt, these three were the confessions of the Reformed Churches, the churches from which we descended. These creeds belong to our *heritage*, and they are part of our heritage exactly because they grew out of the life of the church, out of her struggles and battles. Further, to understand that these are *our* creeds, we must remember that we stand in close, organic relationship to that early church. We are members together of the same Body; we share together the same Spirit of Truth, that Spirit which led our

fathers into the truth, and which preserved that truth even until now.

These confessions have also become known as *standards*! They are a flag under which and about which those who are truly Reformed may gather. If this idea of standard makes the church appear to be an army, it certainly is not a coincidence. The Church of Christ is indeed a battling host! She must do battle against the world and against that part of the church world which has apostatized and which masquerades as Church. That triple standard has functioned admirably for 350 years! It has called into fellowship others of the same faith, and it has been a warning sign, a repulsive warning sign, to those who are enemies of the truth. Moreover, if there were those in the fellowship of the church who did not belong there, the creeds, taught and preached, made it impossible for them to remain.

As was suggested in the introduction, the present day, the day in which the church finds herself in possession of her creeds, may be and must be briefly characterized. First, it must be remembered that we stand very near the end. It will not be so very long anymore, and the Antichrist, the son of perdition, shall be revealed. Very important it is for our consideration of the present day to remember that this Antichrist shall not arise out of Russia or Red China or some such nation, but undoubtedly it shall arise out of the sphere of the nominal church. With that in mind, we can understand how that increasingly the basic truths of Scripture are called into question and denied. The first doctrine to go, of course, is the infallibility of the Word. Once this truth is questioned, disparaged, denied, the authority of the Word is destroyed. When that is accomplished (or thought to have been accomplished) there is no end to the destructive process. Everything goes! For creation as Genesis presents it to us there is substituted the period theory and evolution. That miracle of miracles, the virgin birth, is explained away naturally. The necessity of the atonement and its actual atoning power are denied. Man gags when he hears of a sovereign, unconditional election and reprobation. It was even reported in *Time* a few weeks ago that many U.S. seminaries were denying the reality of hell, and some, the future state altogether.

In close connection with the coming of Antichrist and the few examples of doctrinal apostasy that we have noted, there is also an obsession in the church world today with unity, with ecumenism. And as has been faithfully pointed out to us by our leaders, this unity that is being demanded is not a unity of doctrine, of faith, of the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:13), but is a pseudo-unity that ignores the obvious truths of Scripture and uses for a basis the flimsiest, vaguest expressions imaginable; expressions which anyone can embrace, and which let down all the bars, so that the enemies and errors which the church has in the past expelled are now most welcome to come in. Of course, to those who want this kind of unity, the creeds are anathema! Creeds, they say, are divisive and a hindrance to unity — the hidden assumption being that the

confessions caused the divisions instead of giving expression to already existing division. Besides, it is argued, the creeds are so old! We must not look back to all that sordid Reformation history, but we must look ahead to what the Spirit will accomplish in the future. This is the twentieth century! Don't try to bind us with old dusty creeds. The result is that the work of the Spirit in the history of the church is despised and ignored; and these would-be unifiers cut themselves off from the fathers, many of whom gave their lives in the defense of the very truths which these now would so willingly abandon. So in conclusion, we may certainly say that this age is characterized by an ignorance of the creeds and their history, by a despising of them, and by a denial of their present day relevancy.

Now to demonstrate the pertinence and applicability of our creeds three points should be made. In the first place, creeds are necessary. In fact, creeds are more necessary today and in the future than ever before! In these days of apostasy and aberration, we need confessions to preserve the truth of the Scriptures for our children, for the seed of the covenant. In this age of spiritual ignorance, we need the confessions as a means of instruction. Taken together, the Three Forms are a wonderful and systematic body of doctrinal and practical instruction. And as the "super-church" emerges and Christ's Church becomes smaller and more persecuted, we will need the confessions as a rallying point for the saints, and as a means of witnessing and testifying of God's grace, come what may. Make no mistake, our creeds will always fill a vital place in the life of the church.

Secondly, our confessions are relevant because the battle of the church is always the same. The battle is always truth versus error, the Word of God over against the word of man. In this incessant struggle, strange as it may seem, both sides claim to possess and stand firmly upon the Word of God. Therefore, it ought to be clear that the Word of God *in that form* is not enough. Oh, the Word of God is sufficient! The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God is our only defense. We must always and only come with the Word. But the enemy also claims to come with God's Word. And that enemy is so adept at twisting that Word. They can make it say what they want it to say, or so they think. But the confessions cannot be twisted. They were purposely written so that they systematize the truths of Scripture in such a way that no one can distort them! So the truth of the matter is that the confessions are relevant because they are Scriptural! Oh, that does not mean they are infallible. But at the same time it must be pointed out that in almost 400 years no one has proved that they are not firmly based on the Word of God. Hence, to deny that the confessions are pertinent is tantamount to saying that Scripture is not pertinent!

Finally, the Three Forms are relevant because they were written by the church in her heated battle against Pelagianism and Arminianism. Those heresies still fill the world today; our battle is against the same

foe that our fathers met ages ago. When we notice God-dishonoring and man-elevating tendencies seeking to make inroads into our churches and schools, what are we going to do? Sit down and write a new creed? Forge a new weapon a minute? We must not try that. Rather, let us use the weapons which the Spirit gave to the church shortly after the Reformation: the creeds which have proved so effective in stemming the tide of the enemy; the creeds which have endured the onslaught of scoffers for 400 years; the creeds which by

God's grace we still have today!

Let us continue to hold them fast, and to *study* them. And let us by all means continue to require our office-bearers to subscribe to them, so that they not only reject all errors which militate against the creeds, but also refute and contradict them, and exert themselves in keeping the church free from such errors. For our safety is not in numbers, nor in some kind of outward unity, but our safety is in the pure truth of God's Word, as expressed in our confessions!

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

The RES - and the Union Question

2

by Rev. G. Van Baren

In the last issue we considered the stand of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) on the question of the union. Seven resolutions were adopted expressing the Synod's mind on the subject. The three resolutions which we have already considered are briefly, (1) that it is the calling of the believer to reflect upon his responsibility in political and social fields and the manner in which this responsibility can be discharged. (2) Synod expresses that there is need for greater stress on considering concerted Christian action in these fields. (3) In the social and political fields, Christians are encouraged to organize whenever possible to promote the one true justice and righteousness.

It was pointed out that there were attempts made to introduce into the third resolution the idea that the Christian can be more effective through organization (any organization), though sometimes most effective through Christian organization. Such an amendment would have been an encouragement to the Christian to join worldly organizations. This the Synod refused to do—commendably so. Another similar amendment was made to add the words “and effective” to the resolution. With that amendment the resolution would have encouraged separate Christian organizations when possible *and effective*. That is, the Christian must judge (subjectively, I imagine) if a separate Christian organization will be effective—and if so, that then he should promote it. The result would be that there could seldom, if ever, be any Christian organizations in social and political fields, since the Christian in this world can not expect to be “effective,” at least not according to any earthly standards. But Synod also rejected this amendment.

REMAINING RESOLUTIONS

The fourth resolution reads as follows:

4. Since the contrast between the kingdom of light and that of darkness is becoming more sharply defined in the sphere of political and social relations, and it therefore becomes increasingly difficult for Christians who have united with so-called general or neutral organizations, to give due heed to their Evangelical mandate, there is a growing need for separate organizations of believers.

Grounds:

a. Since in many countries and many situations there exists an increasing unchristian activity, appealing to ruthless power only, and not seeking a justice and fellowship that is in accord with Scriptures, a separate Christian organization (in the social field of employers as well as of employees), will provide believers with the opportunity to exhibit their concept of society and to appeal to biblical norms.

b. Experiences with separate Christian political and social organizations in which the employee as well as the employer are viewed as God's creation, and in which harmonious cooperation between employers and employees, especially in trade unions, plays a central role, indicate that in this way the believer is enabled to make a fruitful contribution to the promotion of better social relations.

To this resolution also Prof. H. Stob took exception and recorded his dissent. The resolution itself contains rather strong arguments against membership in worldly unions. The RES, though, was not ready to condemn membership in such worldly organizations. If what they state concerning worldly organizations, particularly unions is true (and it is), there is then no place at all in them for the Christian. There are questions which ought to be answered here too: what does the RES consider to be our “Evangelical mandate?” There is the implication that in the past it was possible

to carry out this "Evangelical mandate" within worldly organizations; specifically, in what ways was this done in the past? I would deny that it was possible to carry out this "Evangelical mandate" in worldly organizations.

The fifth resolution is concerned specifically with separate Christian organizations:

The purpose of separate Christian organizations must always be the service of God and fellow-men and never a matter of seeking isolation.

Ground:

Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world and are admonished to function as such (cf. Matt. 5:13-16).

One could discuss many questions which arise respecting this resolution. That Christian organizations must seek always the service of God is true. But what is the implication of this phrase: "never a matter of seeking isolation?" It is correct to maintain that we as Christians can not live in isolation as some sects have tried. Yet the opposite of this negative statement, together with the ground offered, appears to suggest a working together with the world through our separate organizations toward a common goal. The passage from Matt. 5:13-16 is quoted to suggest, I feel, that the Christian and his separate organizations must affect and improve the world about us — that the Christian will make this unsavory world yet savory before God. The resolution appears to be based on post-millennialism. Yes, we have a calling on the earth to "labor in the service of God"; but this must not be done under the impression that this old wicked world is going to become better under the influence of our "salt." The contrary is true. The more faithfully one maintains the "justice and righteousness" of God in the earth, the more he will be hated and despised. And though we are called to maintain this "justice and righteousness," the result will be that the wicked world will be hardened and will oppose such righteousness. Let us faithfully maintain that righteousness, but let us not deceive ourselves concerning its effect upon the world.

The sixth resolution is the most lengthy:

With respect to the so-called general or neutral political and social organizations, believers in consultation with fellow believers who are in the same situation, must decide in the light of Holy Writ, taking into consideration the circumstances of time and place, whether they may or may not unite with such organizations, provided that the basis, aims and practice of such organizations allow them to exercise their calling in this world. It is understood, of course, that if a Christian joins such a non-Christian organization, he alone and unitedly with other Christians in the organization is in duty bound at all times to live by and advance Christian principles within the organization.

Ground:

The Christian is called upon to be obedient to Christ in every activity (cf. I Cor. 10:31). He must therefore live consistently with his confession.

The emphasis in this resolution ought to rest upon the statement: "...provided that the basis, aims and practice of such organizations allow (believers) to

exercise their calling in this world." We have maintained as churches, at least with respect to labor organizations, that their basis, aims, and practices are contrary to Christian principles — hence membership within them is impossible. The basis of any worldly union surely will not allow the believer "at all times to live by and advance Christian principles within the organization." Nor would it be difficult to show that the "aims" of these organizations are contrary to that which any Christian may hold. And that their practices are contrary to Christian principles can be seen in every daily newspaper which reports on the activities of various unions. If the emphasis were upon the above line, the RES could not even suggest that the believer must decide on the basis of Scripture...whether he "may or may not unite with such organizations...." The ground given for this resolution is very good, and if it is maintained, the believer *will not* unite with these "general or neutral political and social organizations."

The final resolution is very much to the point. One could desire that this be more consistently maintained by the believer wherever he might be.

Christians may not be members of or give aid to social and political organizations whose principles and/or whose common and regular practices conflict with biblical norms.

Ground:

To live in a manner inconsistent with biblical norms is sin, and this sin is aggravated when a Christian is aware of the contradiction and continues to ignore it (cf. James 4:12; I Thess. 5:22).

The above represents the position of the RES on social and political organizations. The resolutions, of course, can be interpreted in different ways by different denominations. From the above one could conclude that membership in worldly unions is impossible. Yet many could argue that such membership is compatible with church membership — in light of the decisions which were taken. RES ought to be more definite in harmonizing these contradictory conclusions which can be drawn.

It is interesting also to note how one of the member denominations of RES acted on these resolutions. The matter came before the Christian Reformed Synod in 1964 and was placed in the hands of a committee to come with advice the next year. In 1965 the committee proposed: "That the Synod of 1965 adopt these resolutions as its own." Several grounds were proposed for this recommendation. Though Synod adopted virtually the same grounds offered by the committee, it did not adopt the recommendation itself, but revised it in such a way that it appeared on the one hand that Synod supported the resolutions of the RES, yet actually did not commit itself at all. This was decided:

Synod receive these resolutions as furnishing important guidelines for Christian thought and action in our day.

Grounds:

a. They reflect in their main thrust the teaching of the Word of God as it bears on Christian organizations.

b. They are in harmony with the historic stand of the Christian Reformed Church in these matters.

CONTRIBUTIONS—

Letter from a Reader

Dear Editor:

I write to you regarding two matters. First of all, we find greater and greater diversification of liturgical forms in our churches today. To me a similarity in the form of worship has resulted in a display of unity which our churches hold in common. We find that each church is free to choose its own form of worship whether they do or do not have the knowledge of Reformed practice that has led to our forms of worship.

I believe that generally our liturgy can be improved, — such as more oral participation by the congregation. It seems to me that Synod, through a Liturgy Committee, could recommend a form of worship and inform each consistory of their proposal, to guard the worship practice in our churches. Could there not be an article written on the history of Reformed liturgy, dealing with Reformed and non-Reformed practices? Perhaps these remarks will generate a discussion by other concerned individuals regarding this matter.

Secondly, I write in regard to recent

articles on movie attendance, with the mode of the editorial "In Support of Movies" (March 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*) more specifically in mind. It is my understanding that our churches have not made an ecclesiastical decision regarding movie attendance, but that, therefore, this article is an opinion. I was taught in my youth that Reformed people cannot make hard rules pertaining to matters not explicitly forbidden in Scripture; for such imposes an illegitimate restriction on the liberty of a Christian. An excellent past article dealing with our liberty and unlawful restrictions is "Christian Liberty vs. Judging and Despising," by Rev. Harbach in the May, 1963 issue of *Beacon Lights*. I am persuaded that certain travel and adventure movies are instructive and are not the spirit of antichrist. It seems to me that there is an inconsistency when all movies are condemned rather than the far majority, which are to be condemned, and for this reason the Christian does not belong in a theater. Here our churches speak out strongly,

and on other evil practices we hear nothing. I have in mind, for example, the lack of self-control over cigarettes by many members in our churches who must turn to them for the relief of tension to the destruction of their own bodies.

I do not write in defense of the corrupt movies which are, I believe, gaining in immorality and sin. Especially the youth who more greatly face this temptation must be warned that because of the corruption found in most movies they do not belong in attendance.

I have always noted a lack of textual proof of no movie attendance, but rather logic. By a reasoning of what is considered sound sense almost anything can be condemned, i.e., sports, customs, etc.

This warning against carnal movies must not be directed to others too quickly, but must be directed to our Protestant Reformed people who cannot control their private screen.

Faternally,

Frank Van Baren,
Loveland, Colorado

Is *Kosmos* An Undifferentiated Totality?

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

In Prof. H. C. Hoeksema's very illuminating and adroit editorial series on the "'Report of the Doctrinal Committee' — A Critical Study — The Committee on the Atonement" the reader is provided with the most competent leadership and commentary relative to the so called "Dekker Case," the Christian Reformed Three Points of Common Grace and the "atonement issue." In these editorial pieces the best and safest guidelines are indicated and the Reformed truth is expressed and expounded in the clearest and most unambiguous terms. Certainly, for the security and the well-being of the church founded on the Reformed truth, it behoves all concerned to benefit from the friendly warnings and wise counsel so capably delineated in these articles.

What this writer is particularly concerned with at this time is the above committee's alleged grounds for maintaining the doctrine of limited atonement, especially Ground C as quoted in

The Standard Bearer, May 15, 1967, p. 367:

C. The word "world" in John 3:16 and related passages is to be interpreted not distributively, but as referring to an *undifferentiated totality*. Also the words "all" and "all men" used in such passages as II Cor. 5:14, 15; I Tim. 2:4-6; 4:10; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 2:9; II Pe. 3:9; should be interpreted in the light of the delimitations evident in the context." (Ital. added).

It ought to be obvious to the above committee and to every Reformed mind that the above "ground" cannot be a ground for maintaining limited atonement. For to take the word "world" as "referring to an undifferentiated totality" is to think in terms of universalism. The word "world" in Scripture does indeed refer to a totality. In II Pe. 2:5 it refers to the totality of the reprobate. In John 1:29 it refers to the totality of the elect. The word as used in Scripture *never* refers to an undifferentiated totality, for the simple

reason that Scripture is definitive — of its own terms. The word "undifferentiated" means, according to Funk and Wagnall's, "not differentiated; not clearly distinguished or distinguishable, or having parts that cannot be distinguished; not exhibiting distinctive characters." The term, then, cannot apply to the word "world", for the word is one which in Scripture is as differentiated as possible. The careful examination of every context where *kosmos* appears will prove this. In Acts 17:24, the word "God that made the world" means the totality of the universe. In John 13:1; 16:21, 28, the word means the *earth*: "I am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." In Rom. 3:19 it means the whole human race without exception: "all the world — guilty!" In John 15:18 it means the human race, *believers expected*: "the world hates you (and) hated Me." In Rom. 11:12, it means the world of Gentiles, for "the riches of the world" is distinc-

tive, being explained by "the riches of the Gentiles," and so excludes the Jews! In John 1:29; 3:16; 6:33; 12:47 it means the totality of believers only! In John 3:17 it means that world which never is, never to be condemned. In 12:31 and 1 Cor. 11:32 it means the world which is and shall be condemned. Ground C, above, by the employ of the word "undifferentiated" has emptied itself of meaning. For *world* in the NT is as distinguished and distinguishable as possibly can be!

In the same editorial, on the next page (p. 368, second column, 8th line from bottom) our editor writes, "...this is a new doctrine for the Christian Reformed Church. In no official decision heretofore has the Christian Reformed Church ever connected common grace with Christ's atoning death..." We agree with this. No *official* decision in the CRC has connected common grace with limited atonement. But *practically* this is so. For as Part II, Chapter V, of *The Protestant Reformed*

Churches in America, pp. 343ff shows, the very texts *all* the Reformed explain as maintaining Limited Atonement, and so explain in refutation of its antithesis—Arminianism, the CR advocates of common grace and of a general offer of salvation also try to explain as teaching common grace. But it should be plain to all that the *same* texts cannot possibly teach *particular* atonement and *common* grace. That would mean that these texts do and do not teach particular atonement. And that is nonsense!

QUESTION BOX—

Still More On Dispensationalism

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

Again L. W. of Spokane writes, and informs us that it was a slip of memory which resulted in the Dec. 1, 1966 title "Dispensationalism an Ancient Error" being misquoted. He then questions a statement in the May 1, 1967 article, which had read, "What Calvinistic theology gives credence to Dispensationalism?" and calls attention to Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology* as being "Calvinistic, premillennial and dispensational." Perhaps our own theological library at the Protestant Reformed Seminary contains this work. If so, then our own editor and professor of theology would be in a position to say, as this writer is not, whether the work referred to is indeed "Calvinistic." But almost without exception, dispensational spheres are not Calvinistic. A quote, from, of all people, Herbert Lockyer (*All the Doctrines of the Bible*, Zondervan, 1964, p. 223) hardly proves dispensationalists to be Calvinist. From of old, Fundamentalists have laid claim to Calvinism merely because they hold to what they call "the doctrine of eternal security," and because the antithesis to that doctrine is so glaringly Arminianistic. Many feel they have the right to call themselves Calvinist because they hold "the perseverance of the saints." But no one really holds the perseverance of the saints who does not understand the preservation of the saints, or who rejects the other four points of Calvinism. He is a Calvinist, e.g., who believes the perseverance of the saints, but not limited atonement? Nonsense!

We had said in our first answer to L.W. that "it is rather well known that they (dispensationalists) have...manifested a contempt for theology..." This

is evident in his quote from Chafer: "the very fact that I did not study a prescribed course in theology made it possible for me to approach the subject with an unprejudiced mind and be concerned only with what the Bible actually teaches" (*Sys. Theol.*, Vol. 8, pp. 5, 6). If this implies—and to this writer it is obvious that it does—that holding and coming to the Bible with a prescribed theology is to approach same with a prejudiced mind, we can only agree, for we are admittedly prejudiced in favor of the Reformed theology, which we believe to be the systematic setting forth of the teaching of the Bible. But we cannot agree with the further implication that a prescribed theology, as Reformed theology, so prejudices the mind that it ill fits one for being concerned with, or able to reach, what the Bible *actually* teaches! For this hints that theology in general and Reformed theology in particular are far afield from "what the Bible actually teaches." But let it be proved where Reformed theology differs from "what the Bible actually teaches."

As Christians we are not inventors, but disciples, learners. We do not try to think, as God does, univocally. We think analogically, patterning our thought after His. Nor are we pioneers in the field of the truth of Scripture and its development. That is, we do not by-pass a prescribed and scripturally based theology to take up the study of Holy Writ from scratch. That is not the method of the best defenders of the faith. That is too much like the modern "instant theology" which insults the Holy Spirit by ignoring what He has given the church in ages past, and presumes to

come up with discoveries the result of its own "independent research" (*ibid.*). Let every one study Scripture for himself, but let the study be done in connection with the moorings of the history of doctrine and the foundation of the faith of our fathers.

We had criticized Scofield for remarks which implied two ways of salvation (May 1, Question Box). L. W. feels this out of place since C. Hodge and O. T. Allis, Reformed men, also make unfortunate statements and come out with conditional theology. He writes "that Dispensationalists believe that salvation is only through 'the power of God...through the sacrifice of Christ,'" and not, as regrettably, Scofield implied at one time through "doing righteously." Now conditional theology is no more consistent than dispensationalism. But Scofield once had these words in a footnote at 1 John 3:7, "'Righteousness' here, and in the passages having marginal references to this, means the righteous life which is the result of salvation through Christ." The implication of these words seems to be that there is a righteous life which is not the result of salvation in Christ, but rather the result of man's doing righteously. For Scofield's next sentence is, "The righteous man under law became righteous (cf. Gal. 2:16, RCH) by doing righteously; under grace he does righteously because he has been made righteous..." Now, in the *New Scofield Reference Edition*, p. 1344, the note reads, "'Righteousness' here, and in the passages having marginal reference to this verse, means the righteous life which is the result of salvation through Christ. By God's grace the Christian does righteously because he has been made righteous..."

At first glance, this seems an improvement over the former unfortunate remark of Scofield's. But yet the note still seems to imply that under the dispensation of law, the last quoted sentence could not have been made.

Did the believer in that day do righteously because he had been made righteous, had been viewed as righteous in Christ? Or was it that then he (as per the *old* Scofield Bible) "became righteous by doing righteously?" The

latter, we as dispensationalists were taught and as many of our dispensationalist friends mistakenly believed. The note ought to read something like this: "In every age the child of God *does* righteously only because he *is* righteous *in Christ!*"

IN HIS FEAR—

Virgins For Christ's Sake

(Continued)

by Rev. J. A. Heys

Rhythm is a creature of God. And man can praise Him in the dance. David danced before the Lord when he succeeded in bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem after that first frightening experience, when God smote Uzzah for touching the ark. And in Psalm 30:11 David declares, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness." The Psalmist in Psalm 149:3 exhorts his listeners with the words, "Let them praise His name in the dance; let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp." So also does the Psalmist in Psalm 150:4, "Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with the stringed instruments and organs."

Three-quarter time is no more sinful than four-four time. And to feel the smooth flowing rhythm of the dance is no more sinful than to be inclined to tap one's toe at the definite and steady beat of the march and the marching band. In three-quarter time we sing, "Wholehearted thanksgiving to Thee will I bring, In praise of Thy marvelous deeds I will sing. In Thee will I joy and exultingly cry. Thy name I will praise, O Jehovah Most High." It is in three-quarter time that the Church sings of Christ's agony on His cross with the words, "My God, My God, I cry to Thee; O why hast Thou forsaken Me? Afar from Me, Thou dost not heed, Though day and night for help I plead." In three-quarter rhythm the Church makes mention of its own prayer to God with the words, "I love the Lord Who heard my cry and granted my request; In Him Who hears and answers prayer My trust through life shall rest." In the very first chorus of that majestic "Messiah" that flowed forth from Handel's pen, the saints sing in three-quarter time, "And the glory, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." Shall we rewrite all these songs? Shall we ignore the fact that God Himself is the Great Three in One? What is wrong with three beats in a measure? Nothing! Absolutely nothing!

This does not mean that we approve of all dancing. It must not even be misconstrued as looking the other way in the present day clamor of our young people for

square dancing. We are reminded of Israel and wish to make a few remarks, before we go on with this subject, in regard to this spirit which also touches our children and our adults as well. Other churches allow this and that. They have lost their doctrine; and therefore there is nothing to practice. For a practical sermon should be nothing more than a guide for putting doctrine into practice. And therefore a practical sermon, a truly practical sermon, is doctrinal. And a practical sermon is not and may not be one in which the doctrine of our Great God and His Almighty Sovereign Son is put on the shelf, in order to tell man what he has to do, and how God cannot save him until he gives God the permission. But it is so easy and according to human nature to point to others who are lax and have lost their spiritual sensitivity and then to say, "They can do it, why cannot we?" Other churches allow their young people to attend supervised dances; and some have introduced square dancing. Why cannot we? Will we not keep our young men and young women off the worldly dance floor this way? As we said, we are reminded of the words of Israel to Samuel when he was old, and his sons showed themselves to be far inferior to their father in spirituality and leadership. They wanted a king, and their reason, among other reasons was, "That we may be like all the nations..." Let us not desire to be like the other churches except in as far as they reveal the Spirit of Christ, love pure doctrine, have zeal for righteousness and look eagerly for the day of Christ! But that spirit is there in our flesh. We, too, would be like others in their walk of life. We do not like to "stick out like a sore thumb!" We do not relish distinctiveness, that is, our flesh does not. Beware of an ecumenical movement that aims at removing all distinctiveness, to be one organization not only, but to have one watered-down, general doctrine that allows every practice that is not outwardly barbarian, uncouth, uncultured and uncivilized.

But, as we wrote last time, it is the bodily contact of the dance between those of opposite sexes in connection with that rhythm that contains the danger and the sin. The danger and the sin are inseparable. For

that bodily contact, with dress that the dance calls for (but not three-quarter time as such) incites and excites to that which either one may not have or may not yet have. The danger is in playing with fire, tempting one's self and inviting more intimacy and satisfaction of the flesh. Even the square dance, when the contact is not a close embrace and with clothing that reflects spirituality, rather than willingness to go part way, is a step towards the sensual dance and therefore a step in the WRONG direction. True, one is not as easily and fully excited by the touch of the hand in the square dance as the other. But there must be a reason why it is enjoyed only when conducted between the opposite sexes, and it loses its attraction and we have yet to hear our young people clamor for segregated square dances; and when we do, we want to be sure that this is not requested as a step towards such dances between the opposite sexes when performed by the same sex. Our view of these matters is not a prudish pessimistic approach but a cautious, sanctified approach to the whole problem of our young people.

They have a problem and a very, very real problem. Not only has the world advanced in this sin and the allurements thereof; not only do we live in an adulterous age; not only do we live in the days predicted in God's Word, that it would be like in the days of Noah when "every imagination of the heart was only evil, continually," also with this sin forbidden in the seventh commandment; but the whole social structure is so different and dangerous. So often a young couple sincerely in love and eager to be married in the Lord have to wait to finish a college education, get established in a profession, are called away from home, are drafted into the army and confronted with many, many temptations of which their grandparents could never have dreamed. Their ability physically to get away from the eye of their parents and from the public also is so much greater today. And a long engagement under control is for the flesh difficult. Body chemistry is there by the ordinance of God. The flesh responds as it does by a biological urge; and it becomes the duty of the young man and woman to control it by a spiritual dedication to Christ, and, by all means, by avoiding that bodily contact which incites it, feeds it and drives it. Their calling is not to play with fire nor to tempt themselves. Their calling is to remain virgins for Christ's sake. Their calling is to consider their bodies temples of the Holy Spirit and to live as God's royal priesthood.

For that reason what is true of the bodily contact of the dance is even more true of the closer contact in the dark and shady places and privacy of the automobile. For many, if not most, double dating is not only wise but mandatory. And then again the problem arises. After some companionship and even double dating and the bond of love becomes increasingly strong the inner drive to show affection and the longing to be with and as close as possible must exactly remain a show of affection and not a yielding to lustful contact and prolonged emotional excitement.

Parking in the dark is both literally and figuratively, "For the birds." It is quite natural and proper for

them to park in the park after dark. And they use the time for restful sleep and hiding from the enemy. But young people who resort to the park after dark to park must remember that The Enemy not only leads to such places but works very hard at his trade in these environs. We are reminded of the hymn, "Yield not to temptation, For yielding is sin." Sin is so often pictured in Scripture as the works of darkness. And the sinner usually waits till darkness has fallen to perform his evil in the foolish idea that he will not be seen and be apprehended. He wants to sin and does not want to be stopped in his sin. How awful! And darkness serves to hide his sins from the eyes of men, although he often leaves clues which the daylight will reveal; but in his folly the worker of iniquity fails to take into account the all-seeing eye of God. And you young people who seek darkness for your moments of companionship with a friend of the opposite sex had better look at the whole matter in broad daylight. The amazing thing — and yet not so amazing when you consider the power of sin — is that today there are so many more places to go on an evening than in grandfather's and grandmother's day. You could not get very far in the old sully; and a program in the next town was off limits for the horse. Besides it just took too long to get there. But with the modern automobile that makes it possible to go more than a hundred miles for an evening's fellowship and friendship and a sanctified and edifying program, the nearest park is sought instead, and young people are conspicuous by their absence at wholesome entertainment provided for them! This holds true of convention activities as well as other banquets, singspirations and programs. If we seek the literal darkness for our activities, it may be that it is because we want to perform the works of spiritual darkness. And we feel that we can have all the lustful bodily contact in this privacy of the cover of darkness and keep control of ourselves as virgins for Christ's sake?

But seeking darkness for such activity means that inside already we have ceased to be a virgin for Christ's sake. We must be virgins from the heart. Our thoughts must be pure. Our will must be to serve Christ. We must live for Him and for Him alone. With all our inner man as well as the external organs we must be dedicated to Christ. The seventh commandment exactly declares that we must live and move all of our being to the glory of Him in Whom we live and move and have all our being. We may only live to please Him. When Psalm 45:10 speaks to Christ's bride and counsels her to be His virgin in the words, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house", it means that any young man and/or young woman, whose companion stands in the way of service to Christ and demands making out instead of waiting out, must forsake this detriment to his or her spiritual life. We must love God more than father and mother, brother and sister, and surely more than those who would carry us along with them in doing deeds that deny love to the living God. Love to God and to the neighbour in such circumstances is not to yield to the

sin suggested or being pressed but in correcting with the Word of God and reminding of the solemn obligation to walk in His fear and therefore to remain virgins for Christ's sake.

Fellowship with this Christ in prayer will strengthen one to resist fellowship and intimacy with man that is sinful and tempts to further sin. And let us also remember Jesus' words to the devil, "Thou shalt not

tempt the Lord Thy God." That means surely that we do not tempt ourselves either, nor do we tempt others. Those who are virgins for Christ's sake will enjoy the blessedness of the wedding feast of The Lamb. The love of God and its enjoyment are so incomparably great that the pleasures of the flesh that we may experience for a moment in sin are foolish to seek as well as evil to perform.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

THE SPECIFIC CONSIDERATION: JESUS AND MOSES (vs. 3-6 continued)

Yes, Moses is indeed glorious as a servant. We have the expressed testimony of Scripture that God spake with Moses face to face. Thus did God speak upon more than one occasion during the forty years of wandering of Israel in the desert, particularly at Horeb, when God places the lively oracles in Moses' hands. Here Moses is so near to God that God spake with him as with a friend. And, to exhibit this greatness of Moses to all the people, God came and talked with Moses in the door of the tabernacle when Israel had sinned by contriving a golden calf. Thus we read "And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door; and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as man speaketh unto his friend...." (Exodus 33:9-11) It was only with Moses that the Lord communed from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims, which are upon the ark of the testimony. And as representative of the LORD of the mercy seat Moses could give commandment unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 25:21-22)

Such glory had been accorded to none other among the children of men. However, the very place of Moses was such that the oracles of God which he brought to the people were connected with the *mercy seat*, and with the blood of sprinkling. Moses was still a servant. The glory upon Moses' face was indeed great. It was, however, *reflected* glory. It was the glory of Jehovah God, which would be revealed in the reality of grace and truth in Jesus Christ. This is perfectly clear from II Corinthians 3:7-18. Moses' face shines with the same glory of grace of Christ, by which (glory) we are changed by the Spirit of the Lord from glory unto glory, made after the image of God. Moses' glory is therefore inferior! And this is one point which the Hebrew Christians must clearly see and consider!

Then they will also see Moses in the true light, since Moses has meaning only in relationship to Jesus, who alone will save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

It is exactly in that Jesus saves his people from their sins as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, that He excels in glory over Moses. Moses was merely the *Law* giver. However, he did not give a Law which could make alive. It could therefore, as law, only work death; it could only be the power of sin. (Galatians 3:21; Romans 7:7-11; I Corinthians 15:56b) Such a servant, a *Therapoon*, was Moses in God's house. But not so Jesus! He is a builder of the house! The builder has greater honor than the house which he builds. The house is his workmanship. Thus also is Christ the Builder of Moses! For Christ has greater honor than Moses, as a builder has than the building. This we get: Moses-building and Jesus-Builder! For Moses is indeed part of the building which Christ builds! Indeed, Jesus is greater in glory in the temple than is Moses. God spake face to face with Moses in the temple before all the people, but God speaks *in* Jesus Himself, in such a way that this Jesus is Jehovah, God Himself, speaking to Israel. He spake as one having authority, the very Son of God.

Yes, both Moses and Jesus were faithful. But they are really standing on two different levels of honor. Moses could only speak of the things which were to come. Writes the text here "for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later." Moses could only be faithful in the types and shadows. The reality would come later. Then they would be spoken clearly and it would be heralded: the kingdom of heaven is come! In the divine arrangement of salvation Moses stands on the level of servant, while Jesus stands on the higher level of being a Son! Thus Jesus stands on the level with God as Builder and Architect. For the writer tells us that every house is built of someone. But God is the Builder of all. And such is Christ: Builder of all. (Hebrews 1:3) He is indeed equal with God. (John 5:17-31)

Well may we then take heed to this Apostle and High Priest of our profession. As we enter into the temple of God we see Jesus standing in all His greatness and overshadowing glory. He is the Son who outshines the servant, Moses. Yea, He alone gives meaning to Moses!

THE TRUE HOUSE OF GOD: WE THE BELIEVERS.
(vs. 6)

And, pray, what is this house of God? It is very interesting and profitable to notice the teaching of the Bible concerning the concept "house of God." It is really the place where God makes his abode; where he has come to dwell; where He has realized His covenant mercies. Of course, these mercies are the benefits of the Mercy seat in the holiest of all. Jacob speaks of the "house of God" at Bethel. Writes Moses of Jacob in Genesis 28:16 "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.... And he called the name of that place Bethel."

According to all the Old Testament Scriptures the house of God is ever associated with the tabernacle of the congregation. Moreover, the tabernacle needed two parts, two inhabitants. They are God and His people. Really it was: God dwelling with His people. It meant that the tabernacle symbolized exactly that truth: God with us! This is expressed especially in the name Immanuel. Now Moses could never be this Immanuel. He could only point toward this Immanuel. But Jesus is this Immanuel, born from a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) This means that the house of God was really never the tabernacle itself. Bethel is before Sinai's awful glory. Bethel, too, was dreadful in the dream of Jacob. It was the gateway of heaven! It was that which we have in the new and living way through the blood of sprinkling in Jesus.

The writer to the Hebrews therefore teaches according to the O.T. Scriptures when he writes "and this house are *we*!" We the believers, the sons of whom the Son is not ashamed are this house of God. God dwelling with His people. The tabernacle of God with man! (Revelation 21:3) This is what John sees in the vision on the isle of Patmos, when he says "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Here is the fulfilment of Jacob's dream!

Centrally this was fulfilled in Christ's ascension and in His outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now Paul can write the heart-searching question: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? And we also see the full implication of this word: If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye! (I Corinthians 3:16, 17)

For the Lord does not dwell in temples made with

hands. Does he not say: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool? Where is the house that ye shall build me? And where is the place of my rest? Not in temples made with hands! But the answer is: but to this man will I look, even he that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66: 1, 2)

Let us then give heed to this word, and taste the infallible fruit of elective grace in our hearts, to wit, that we are the house of God.

THE INFALLIBLE EARMARK
OF BEING GOD'S HOUSE (vs. 6b)

Yes, that too is a very important point to consider. The writer to the Hebrews touches upon this matter too in our text under consideration. It is a question which is really one of the certainty of faith. The question is: how do I know that my faith is real and genuine!

The answer given here in the text might sound rather Arminian. For the writer says "if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm to the end." The Arminian says here "...and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft of power of Satan, can be misled or plucked out of Christ's hands...." The being house of God is contingent upon the holding fast to the confidence! However, that is not the teaching here. The conditional sentence here expresses: objective possibility. There is implied here a threat and admonition against falling away from the faith. However, here is not teaching concerning salvation being dependent upon our perseverance. Rather our perseverance is proof and guarantee that our faith is real, and that we are ingrafted into Christ, and that our life is, indeed, hid with Christ in God. Our holding fast and rejoicing in hope is evidence of the unrepentant grace and mercy of God to us, and is a sure earmark that we are sons of God, the house of God.

Meanwhile more must be said. Often he who says too little says too much. We must not forget the truth that God *works* grace through admonitions. It is, indeed, understood that God works in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. But what is often not underscored is the *manner* in which God does this. The *Medas Gratia* which He employs are often not pointed out. That is in itself not so serious. However, what is serious is that these admonitions would not be preached in the church in their proper place and context. That is tempting God in the church by separating what He in his wisdom has most intimately joined together, viz., *means* and the *saving fruit* wrought thereby. Thus we read literally in the Canons of Dort "Wherefore as the apostles, and teachers who succeeded them, piously instructed the people concerning the grace of God, to his glory, and the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the gospel in the exercise of the Word, Sacraments and discipline, so even to this day be it far from either instruc-

tors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what he of his good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is *conferred* by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is his work advanced; to whom alone all the glory both of the means, and the saving efficacy is forever due." Canons of Dort, III, IV, 17

When we keep this in mind we will also be able to

see that only those who continue in the faith are the house of God, without jeopardizing the need of the admonitions, that we continue to walk in the faith. For should we do this we will make it impossible for ourselves to interpret the many admonitions, warnings and threatenings with which the letter to the Hebrews is interspersed.

Hence: *earmark* and *warning* in one conditional sentence which expresses objective possibility, that is, from the viewpoint of the writer to the Hebrews!

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

Dispensationalism and The Law Before Sinai

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

Just as Dispensationalism teaches that the Church never existed before Pentecost, so it maintains that the law never was given until Sinai. As taught in the footnote of the Scofield Reference Bible at Exodus 19:3 and Genesis 12:1, the dispensational theory has it that prior to Sinai the people of Jehovah were under free grace, but when the law was proposed for the first time at Sinai, Israel rashly accepted it, and so passed up grace for law.

But what really was the O.T. attitude toward the law, and how does that attitude compare to the N.T. one? Take David's words, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart (Ps. 40:8)." Much farther went David: "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver...O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day...Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them (119:72, 97, 165)." That is the O.T. attitude to the law. What is the N.T. view of it? one of opposition? Let the N.T. David, Paul, answer: "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good...The law is spiritual...I delight in the law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:12, 14, 22)."

Dispensationalism has a wrong view of the law because it holds four basic errors in regard to it. First, it teaches that the law was never given until revealed at Sinai. Second, the law was given exclusively to the earthly nation of Israel. Third, believers are dead to the law in every sense and not under it in any sense. Giving any place to the law is to lose the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free. Fourth, there is antithesis of law to grace, so that the two are in opposition to one another. These errors of Dispensationalism are widely held as evidences of the soundest biblical doctrine, but actually they cannot possibly stand the test of Scripture.

John Calvin exposed certain of these errors. He said, "Some unskilful men, being unable to discern

this distinction (i.e., that the law is condemnatory, but not when Christ is found in it—rch), rashly explode Moses altogether, and discard the two tables of the law; because they consider it improper for Christians to adhere to a doctrine which contains the administration of death. Far from us be this profane opinion; for Moses has abundantly taught us, that the law, which in sinners can only produce death, ought to have a better and more excellent use in the saints. For just before his death he thus addressed the people: 'Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe, to do all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life (Deut. 32:46f).' But if no one can deny that the law exhibits a perfect model of righteousness, either we ought to have no rule for an upright and just life, or it is criminal for us to deviate from it. For there are not many rules of life, but one, which is perpetually and immutably the same. Wherefore, when David represents the life of a righteous man as spent in continual meditations on the law (Ps. 1:2), we must not refer it to one period of time only, because it is very suitable for all ages, even to the end of the world (Calvin's *Institutes*, Vol. I, 390, Allen Transla., 1936)."

In a thoroughly Scriptural theological symbol we read: "Q. 92. What did God *at first* reveal unto men as the rule of his obedience? A. The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind in him, beside a special command, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the *moral law*. Q. 93. What is the moral law? A. The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to

God and man, promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it. Q. 94. Is there any use of the moral law to man since the fall? A. Although no man since the fall can attain to righteousness and life by the moral law, yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate. Q. 95. Of what use is the moral law to all men? A. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts and lives, to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience." (Westminster Larger Catechism)

We believe that Adam had the law of God as his model, was himself a model of righteousness (cf. Eccl. 7:29 with Eph. 4:24), and that therefore the law existed before man sinned. This may be deduced from Scripture. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Gal. 3:10)." The law mentioned is certainly prior to the curse. That law must have been in effect before man sinned, when he could and did continue, in his state of perfect rectitude, to do all required by it. If in his original righteousness he was not under the law (yet how can one speak of righteousness without a standard of law?), where would be the sense or point in this requirement to continue, or in the threatened penalty, the curse, when man had already violated the law, and so made it impossible to do all the things in the law? Man, then, from the beginning was under the law in his original righteousness, and the curse was denounced against all failure to render perfect obedience.

Another text referring to man in his primitive state we have in Rom. 7:10, where we are told that the law was ordained "unto life." That is the only period in history when the law was given unto life and man actually lived in the life adapted to the law and according to the law adapted to his nature. Since the fall of man, and his incurring a sinful nature, the law is "unto death" until he is justified by faith in Christ. In Adam the first, the law was unto life only in the original state of rectitude. Now since the fall, in Adam the first, the law is no longer unto life, but unto death. Only the Last Adam is the life-giving Spirit. If the law was not given to Adam, then his sin immediately upon committing it would have been a dead issue. "For without the law sin is dead (7:8)." But sin certainly was not dead in connection with fallen Adam and the history of his children as outlined in the Book of Genesis. They therefore had and knew the law of God. This is implied in the declaration, "Where no law is, there is no transgression (Rom. 5:4)." If those living in the patriarchal period were not under the law, as Dispensationalism contends, then there was no rule of conduct to guide their lives. If there was such a rule, but no law of God as yet, what was that rule? But we read, "Where no law is, there is no transgression." Then Adam and Eve were both under the law, for both

had transgression (Rom. 5:14; I Tim. 2:14).

We are further informed that "sin is not imputed where there is no law (Rom. 5:13)." This, too, is as plain as possible. Still, the eminent N.T. exegete, R. C. H. Lenski, takes the position that from Adam to Moses there was no law, nor anything in the nature of law. It was only with Moses that there was anything that had the quality of law. Prior to his day, history was devoid of law; nothing like law then existed. There simply was no law between Adam and Moses. (Interpretation of Romans, Wartburg Press, p. 362f). As you see, Lenski is very firm and insistent in maintaining this contention, which is very acceptable to Dispensationalists. W. R. Newell, who is very dispensational, in his *Romans Verse by Verse*, holds the same idea. Just the opposite to this thinking is the more preferable view of Robert Haldane in his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*. He writes, "Admitting, in the last clause of the verse (5:13), that sin could not be imputed without law, he proves that sin was in the world by the undeniable fact that there was death; and if this proves that there was sin, then it inevitably follows that there must have been law!" He goes on, "Many are greatly in error in the interpretation of this expression... It means that sin does not exist where there is no law. The conclusion, therefore, is that as sin is not reckoned where there is no law, and as sin was reckoned, or as it existed, before the law of Moses, therefore there was law before the law of Moses. The passage may thus be paraphrased: 'For sin existed among men from Adam to Moses, as well as afterwards. Yet there is no sin where there is no law. There were, then, both sin and law before the giving of the law of Moses.'..." Haldane added, "the human race have always been under law, and have universally been transgressors."

If those of the pre-Mosaic dispensation were not under the law of God, then God could not have imputed sin to Adam and Eve, as He did (Gen. 3:16-20, 21, 24). Nor could He have charged Cain with murder, if there were no law prohibiting murder. Nor could Noah have had any patriarchal authority to curse Canaan, if there were no law requiring honor to parents. Neither could Abimelech have been warned against adultery if there were no command prohibiting it. (Gen. 20:6). In the time of Moses the law read, "And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire (Lev. 21:9)." But back in the time of Judah the same law must have been known, for he blindly suggested its enforcement in a case involving himself (Gen. 38:24). If Noah was a preacher of righteousness (II Pet. 2:5), then he must have been under the law. For righteousness is an element of the law. The flood itself was proof positive that God imputed the sins of the antediluvians to them, and executed the penalty of the law against them. Nothing is clearer than the fact that Israel, before Sinai was reached, had God's commandments and laws. Abraham kept the commandments, statutes and laws of Jehovah (Gen. 26:5). Before Sinai there was "one law" for all men (Ex. 12:49). It was "the Lord's law (13:9)," which included the Sabbath law before the fourth commandment was given (16:4, 28, 29).

SPECIAL FEATURE—

The Importance of Maintaining the Three Forms of Unity

(Continued)

by Rev. J. Kortering

Today these Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription are the object of a subtle and persistent attack.

You realize that throughout the years there have been arguments brought against the Reformed churches because of these confessions. There always has been an attack upon our confessions from the outside, from churches that rally under the time-worn slogan, "No creed but Christ." These have been designated as "fundamentalist," "evangelical," or even today as "neo-evangelical." You are undoubtedly familiar with their "arguments" against any confession or creed. They like to assume a pious stance and declare that they have the Bible and surely that infallible Word of God is quite adequate for the church! They would even undermine all confessions as products of men, and therefore insinuate that they are in competition with the Bible, which can only detract from the Bible. With long arguments they warn the church that holds to confessions that she is falling into the inevitable abyss of dead orthodoxy. If a church is going to express her faith in a man-written confession, she will assume that now she has arrived at the summit of truth, and bragging of her creedal position will forthwith neglect the study of the Word of God and fall into fatal slumber. Besides these things the evangelicals bemoan any confession as a sure obstacle to effective mission work. In the sphere of Protestantism there are enough squabbles over the Bible and what the Bible teaches without introducing more fuel for the fire in the form of human confessions. Confessions can only excite greater differences among christians and thus impede effective evangelism. So we have heard plenty of arguments against confessions for years and years.

But, this isn't what we have in mind when we say that our Reformed confessions are under attack today. Surely this attack is still in force, but today there is a unique element in the form of this attack, and that is that there is also an attack upon the Three Forms of Unity from within, from those who have historically stood together for three and four centuries under the same banner. That is what is happening today. There is an increasing number of Reformed professors, ministers, elders, deacons, and church members that are clamoring for a rethinking on the matter of the Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription. Their goal is obviously to get rid of them.

This attack involves three definite stages.

The first stage may simply be described as ignoring the Reformed confessions. As some of you know, this has been going on already for decades. There have been those in the Reformed church world who have neglected to preach on the Heidelberg Catechism each Lord's Day, and this is spreading. For years the Netherlands Confession and the Canons of Dordt have been shelved and ignored. Office bearers and members of the church did not even study them and through ignoring them, office bearers and members of the church have become ignorant! I submit this is an *attack* upon the confessions. This is not mere negligence, this is a blatant assault upon that which the Spirit has given to the churches and which office bearers have vowed to *teach*. The motive for such ignoring can only be to rid the church of that which is considered of little value.

The second stage is more volatile; it reveals itself as more bold and its aggressiveness becomes more apparent. In this stage arguments can be heard why the confessions should no longer be considered of value, arguments for the discarding of the Formula of Subscription. This is happening all around us in the Reformed church world. Brothers who have the same Reformed heritage as we have are now clamoring for a wholesale removal of the binding force of the Reformed confessions. Those of you who read the Standard Bearer regularly surely are aware of this fact. It's interesting, yet sad, that what formerly were arguments from the fundamentalistic circles are now being sounded within Reformed circles. We hear the cry that the Bible is sufficient, we don't need human statements along side the Bible. We take note that learned men brashly brand those Three Forms of Unity as archaic and out of date. Even missionaries to foreign countries, e.g. Japan, claim that the Reformed confessions are of no use, in fact hindrances, because they are provincial, they are Dutch, and how can a Japanese be expected to subscribe or understand a Dutch confession.

The cry of opposition is becoming louder and louder each year. Today men are teaching and preaching views that are directly in conflict with our Reformed Confessions. The hardening process has already taken hold.

The third stage follows this open confession and

conflict. As soon as the church and members are aroused to doubt, the final stage is that of writing a new confession. The devil is sly enough to know that men cannot set aside their historic position or openly refute it. This delicate situation is nicely eliminated when someone suggests that an updated confession be written. We see this in the Presbyterian church with their "Confession of '67." With this stage the old is cast aside and promptly forgotten. The lie is openly introduced. At this point the change has become complete, the truth is forsaken and the lie exonerated and taught. So men are beginning to clamor for a new confession in the Reformed churches also. We stand at this point in our history as Reformed churches.

Undoubtedly you are concerned with the provoking question, why has this happened and why is it happening today? Why are believers who have their same roots in the Calvinistic Reformation as we have forsaking their traditional Reformed view and casting these confessions to the wind?

I submit that there are basically two reasons.

The first is this: a subtle and deadly error has begun to creep into the Reformed church world. This error is an improper view of Scripture. Our confessions are based upon the Bible. They have no authority except the authority of the Word of God itself. Today men are persistently picking away at the foundation upon which our Three Forms of Unity are built. This erroneous view of Scripture causes the whole structure of our Reformed confessions to collapse. If you destroy the foundation, the building that is built upon that foundation crumbles with it. This is happening today in the Reformed churches.

This attack upon Scripture is brought about by the influence of two German theologians, Barth and Brunner. I cannot go into detail here; it's not the purpose of this lecture, except to see its relationship to the total attack upon the confessions. According to this German school of thought, there is no objective revelation in creation, nor any objective revelation in the Bible. All revelation of God is in Christ. This was true when Christ was personally upon earth, this is true when one enters into the "crisis" of the encounter with Christ under the preaching of the gospel. The Bible is not the Word of God, rather it is the testimony of certain men to the word of God. Consequently the Bible contains personal opinions as they were understood by the authors in their generations. In the written word men expressed their reaction to the revelation of God. This includes many myths and stories. What the Christian church must do today is demythologize the Bible; we have to apply it to the life's situation in which we find ourselves. The Bible is not without errors; it has to be explained in light of all knowledge, especially as the body of truth has accumulated throughout the world's history. With this view of Scripture the church must change her doctrinal position from time to time. *Tradition* doesn't mean a snap, one's position is the keyword. (This by the way is Prof. Dekker's language in a recent article in the Banner.) The church has to be relevant to her generation. She has to reinterpret her position from time to time. The truth of creation

must be replaced with "theistic evolution." Adam was not a historical person, rather the center of a mythical saga. Miracles are cast aside one at a time and with eager tentacles the liar himself reaches ultimately for the central miracle, to suffocate belief in the virgin birth. With this attitude toward Scripture and doctrine, the confessions are nothing more than baggage that hinders the "church" in her development. This is the basic reason for a removal of and clamor against the Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription. One may be able to twist the Bible around and make it say whatever you want it to say, but one cannot do that with the bold and uncompromising language of the Reformed Confessions. Hence they must be discarded.

There is a second cause for the present day discarding of the confessions and it is closely related to the first. With this view of Scripture one is inevitably committed to the modern ecumenical movement. The craze to be so called relevant is motivated by the spirit of false ecumenism. I cannot warn you enough that the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches is motivated by a *false* ecumenism, namely that of modernism and antichrist. Why should Reformed scholars drive themselves so intently on finding ways to discard traditional Reformed views? The reason is obvious, they are an offense to the modern church. The clamor is heard already, if we are going to survive in our day and really witness effectively, we have to get into these organizations so that we can have opportunity to speak and influence them in a good direction. One of the subtle motivations for all this modernism within the sphere of the Reformed churches is just this thirst for recognition. We have to be big, we have to get in the inner circle. We mustn't have such out of date notions as creation, limited atonement, election and all the traditional Reformed views; no, these are an offense to antichrist. We have to be universal in our outlook. There are good points to *all* the religions of the world. God is a benevolent Father over all men and so we must love each other as brothers. This is antichristian. Let the Reformed churches brand these movements for what they are and take the only positive Scriptural position, and that is to stand upon the infallible Word of God and confess these truths as expounded in our Reformed confessions. Synthesis will not preserve the church, it will destroy it. We must take an antithetical position over against the world, including the false church.

There is an urgency to maintain the Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription.

In clear and uncompromising language we must maintain the correct attitude toward the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God. Even as our Reformed fathers championed the Word and based all the doctrines of the church upon that Word, so we must remain Biblical in all our theology. What is of man is sin; only that which is of God is true and must be maintained.

Because our Reformed confessions are based upon that Word of God, they are correct in all that they teach. They are relevant to our day. What nonsense to imagine that the God of revelation who is also the God of inspiration would produce in the midst of the

church a book, a record that is full of errors. Is the Spirit a liar? Is He a deceiver? God forbid. Because our Reformed confessions are based upon the Bible, they are the truth.

Let's maintain them. Let every office bearer in the Reformed churches that has subscribed to the formula of Subscription do exactly as he has vowed before God. We need this today as in no other generation. The lie is more subtle now, for the devil crouches at the door as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Anti-christ is at hand posing as an angel of light, but being a devil at heart. The line of demarcation is no longer drawn by certain denominations; the call comes to the faithful of all churches that love the truth of the Word of God to join hands against the evil influence that lies within. For this reason we must hold high the banner of the Reformed confessions! We must hold it higher and with less fear than ever before. It will mean persecution; the higher we hold it, the more it will come. Yet, true ecumenism can be accomplished only as the faithful gather beneath that banner. In the face of confusion and doubts, lying, and deceit, let the church hold high the

clear statement of what she believes to be the truth of the Word of God. Let all who love the Word of God stand in one confession, making great the name of our God, the God who has preserved His church throughout the generations.

Doing this we can be sure that God's purpose will be accomplished. We often fear that our young people will become deceived and winnowed away from the faith. God is faithful; never forget that. Let us use our Reformed confessions, teach them, defend them, expose error, and thus God will use them to instill the faith of the church of all ages in the hearts and minds of our youth. They too will confess with us Jesus who is the same yesterday today and forever.

The same Spirit that has so dwelt in the church to produce these confessions and preserved them through all the ages will surely cause them to be effective unto the end. There is no doubt but that there will be faith upon the earth when our Lord Jesus Christ will return. There will be those that confess the truth of God's Word as it is embodied in our Reformed Confessions.

Our God is faithful.

ALL AROUND US—

Report of the Synod of 1967

by Prof. H. Hanko

This report of our Synod held this year in the Hope Protestant Reformed Church will have to be somewhat general and incomplete. It will have to be incomplete because the Synod is still in session at the time this article is being written. It will have to be general because it is not the intention of this survey to inform our people in detail of all the decisions taken. Rather the purpose of this article is to give a general picture of the work of Synod with a few comments so that our people have some preliminary idea of what Synod did before they purchase and peruse their own copy of the printed *Acts*.

It could not escape the attention of the delegates to Synod that there was one striking difference between our Synodical meeting this year and so many Synods or General Assembly Meetings of other denominations meeting at approximately this same time. Almost without exception, other Synods are forced this year to deal with urgent and fundamental doctrinal issues which have risen within their respective denominations. The winds of error, or doctrinal change, of false ecumenism are blowing strongly through the ecclesiastical world. And much of the attention of other churches will have to be focused on the resolution of important theological controversies over various fundamental truths of Scripture and the Confessions. But such was not the case with the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches. With the issues facing the church world today — issues which threaten to tear present denominational alignments to pieces, it seemed almost anti climactic that

our Synod had no such pressing issues facing it. Yet this is reason for deep thankfulness. It is abundant testimony that the Lord has mercifully preserved us in the way of His truth and given us unity in the faith of the church of all ages. We have a goodly heritage; and we must pause to give thanks for this great blessing.

In a sense, this was almost the theme of this Synod. This was apparent already in the pre-synodical prayer service in which Rev. G. Van Baren called Synod's attention to this fact as he preached on the text: "And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17.

But there were more ways in which this truth became apparent in Synod's work.

This was the Synod in which Student Dale Kuiper became Candidate Dale Kuiper. The examination was conducted on Thursday and Friday of the first week of Synod. At the end of a successful examination, Mr. Kuiper was unanimously declared to be a candidate for the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. This announcement, made to the candidate in the presence of Synod, was followed by the singing of the doxology "May the Grace of Christ the Savior", prayer by Rev. Van Baren, and congratulations from the delegates. For myself, this was particularly a moving moment, for Mr. Kuiper is the first graduate from the Theological School during my labors in the Seminary. But, much more, this is reason for thanksgiving from our people, for the Lord has added another sorely

needed laborer in His vineyard.

The graduation exercises were held in Southeast Church on June 12. This graduation was the center of a beautiful and inspiring program.

As a footnote, Synod decided that Candidate Kuiper will be eligible for a call from our churches after July 7.

This same sense of unity in the truth of the Word of God became evident in Synod's deliberation concerning missions. It is not an exaggeration to say that Synod spent proportionately more time on the subject of missions than on any other report of committees coming before it. The work of missions which Synod performed was in several areas. In the first place, Synod took cognizance of the lecture series which has been given in the Grand Rapids area. In fact, Synod believed that this work had progressed far enough to give the matter of future lectures to the Consistories in that area as their responsibility. This will relieve the Mission Committee of the work of continuing this program and will give to our hard working and busy committee more time to concentrate their labors in other areas in the country.

Synod was also informed of the many contacts made outside of our churches and of the broad distribution of literature through these lecture series—all an indication of the unrest which prevails in the church world and of the calling which is ours in these troubled times.

In the second place, Synod also took additional steps in the direction of implementing the new policy which was adopted three years ago, i.e., to coordinate more closely our various pamphlet programs, our radio ministry and our church periodicals with the mission program. Final work has not yet been done on this, but a sub-committee of the Mission Committee is being set up to perform this work.

In the third place, (and by no means least important) Synod took considerable action with respect to the work in Jamaica. Synod approved of the intention of the Mission Committee to send Rev. J. Heys and Elder H. Zwak for a two month visit to the island this summer. Rev. Heys presented Synod with a brief sketch of his plans for work on the island—plans which are especially concentrated on teaching the ministers there how to be more effective and expository in their preaching of God's Word.

Synod also paid close attention to the critical needs of the people in Jamaica. For one thing, Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church's Diaconate has been appointed by the Mission Committee to contact the various diaconates of our churches to raise benevolence money to care for the needs of the people. Rev. Heys told Synod of the need for clothing, for food at certain times of the year, and for medical attention among the sick. For example, these people have so few clothes that it is sometimes necessary for a mother and daughter to come separately to church because they have only one dress to share between them. There are also people who are very ill and do not recover because there is no money to secure the services of a doctor. Synod itself, through the Mission

Committee, will give attention to another aspect of the need of the people there. Some of the church buildings are very dilapidated, so much so that it is almost impossible to meet in them. Synod is going to ask the churches to take collections to help put these church buildings in somewhat better shape.

We, with our great abundance, can scarcely imagine how greatly the people suffer even physical want. They have shown themselves to be our brethren and sisters in one faith. And the words of Christ surely apply: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Rev. Heys also spoke to Synod of his work which he has performed over the past year—work of instructing the ministers via mailed lessons and tapes. Rev. C. Hanko will carry on this work in the coming year. These lessons are appreciated and used extensively by the ministers with whom this "correspondence course" is being carried out.

Two remarks by way of conclusion on this matter. First of all, those of our men who are laboring in this work are doing excellent work and need our continual prayers. Secondly, Synod felt keenly the need of a man who can labor full time on the island—a need which can be filled only as our shortage of ministers is gradually alleviated.

It was at last year's Synod that major steps were taken to advance the work of the Theological School. Then it was that Synod made preliminary preparations for a pre-seminary course and for new facilities for the School. The result was that this year Synod instituted no new programs, but rather continued the work begun last year. These programs are both long range; and the work on them will, hopefully, go on.

Our people may expect additional information on the work of the Mission Committee and the work of the Theological School Committee. The newsletters will surely be continued. But the *Standard Bearer* Staff decided to include in the next volume of our paper four articles on the mission work being done by the Mission Committee and two articles concerning the work being done by the Theological School Committee.

There was other work performed. In a sense it can be called "routine"; yet this is only true in the sense that it is work regularly appearing on Synod's agenda. From another vantage point, they are far from routine, for they are all matters of the church of Jesus Christ and the cause of His kingdom.

It is in this faith that Synod labored diligently and faithfully all the while in a spirit of unity and fraternity. A word of appreciation must be spoken publicly for the wise leadership of the president of Synod, Rev. C. Hanko. And our people ought to be thankful that the Lord has provided our churches with officebearers at Synod and in our congregations to work in God's kingdom.

Inasmuch as we are given graciously and mercifully such a glorious heritage, we have also a noble and exalted calling which is, at the same time, an urgent calling. May our churches be faithful in this calling, supporting it with their time, their several abilities, their gifts, and their prayers.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

June 15, 1967

Rev. D. Engelsma, of Loveland, Colo., has declined the call from Hull, Iowa.

South Holland has named a new trio consisting of the Revs. C. Hanko, M. Schipper and G. Lubbers.

* * *

The Annual *Standard Bearer* staff meeting was held during the June 14 noon recess of Synod. The results of this meeting will bring little changes in the format, with all of the editors re-appointed to their present rubrics. The magazine will, the Lord willing, go forward with Prof. H. C. Hoeksema capably handling the reins as Editor-in-Chief. In addition to the regular contributions, we may look forward to regular reports from the Mission Committee and from the Theological School Committee, as well as some translated reprints from yesteryear which are lost to this generation because of their original language. May it please our God to continue to privilege us clearly to set forth the Truth of His Revelation on the pages of our magazine!

* * *

The Graduation Exercises of our Seminary were held in Southeast Church June 14 under the supervision of the Synod and the Theological School Committee. Rev. G. Van Baren, president of the school committee led in the opening devotions. The Radio Choir, under the direction of Roland Petersen gave three numbers with Mrs. C. Lubbers accompanying them at the piano. Candidate Dale Kuiper was the lone graduate and his speech was on, "Present Day Relevancy of Our Creeds". Prof. H. Hanko followed with a speech on, "The Importance of Preaching."

The Rector, Prof. H. C. Hoeksema presented the graduate with his diploma which the Rector called a rare document; rare because relatively few receive one, rare because it represents the assimilation of rare instruction in a school which is rare now days because it is based four-squarely on the Infallible Word of God; that the document also opens the door to a rare calling-rare in the sense that it is precious; that of being Christ's ambassador to bring His Word to His Church.

It was indeed a memorable evening for Seminarian Kuiper and his family, but also to the well-wishers gathered with him in that auditorium, as well as to our whole denomination. It was an answer to the many prayers that went up asking to send workers into the harvest. Conflicting dates prevented many of the area people from attending, but to those in attendance it was a moving experience to welcome another minister into the ranks, to be sent into one of our vacant churches — those little flocks so sorely in need of a shepherd.

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The June *Beacon Lights* Hymnsing was held in First Church, and drew a large number of young people and their parents and friends. For a special treat the Radio Choir sang two groups of numbers. These songs

were of their usual character: words from the Scriptures and often direct quotations therefrom, and therefore all to the Glory of God. The last number the choir sang was that familiar rendition of the first three verses of Genesis One. As village band concerts are expected to conclude with Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever", so this listener would like to hear every Radio Choir concert conclude with this grand Creation Hymn which comes to a soul-stirring climax with the choir in full voice singing, "and there was LIGHT!"

* * *

Rev. Harbach had a "very enjoyable experience" before the school year ended by being invited by the instructor of Reformed Doctrine in the Kalamazoo Christian High School to take over the morning and afternoon classes in order to present the Protestant Reformed position of the Doctrine of Grace. This he did, as was expected of him, antithetically to the three points of "Common Grace", and was handled in discussion-and-debate style, answering questions and arguments from the members of the classes. Rev. Harbach says it was again revealed to him that God's answer to man is not philosophy, no matter how cleverly set forth in a Reformed framework, but plain Scripture — as laid down both in Holy Writ and in our Reformed Confessions.

* * *

Rev. C. Hanko, while in Grand Rapids as a Synodical delegate, was privileged to preach in First Church Sunday morning, and he preached a sermon before delivered to the Jamaicans while in their Island. The text: "Come unto me all ye that labor....", which served admirably as the basis for a "preparatory sermon," for which it was intended. The evening service, in which Rev. Hanko was scheduled to preach, was cancelled because of a "tornado warning", one of many that are on the increase as the Day of the Lord draws nigh.

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A joint committee from Hull, Edgerton and Doon are co-operating in a venture to sponsor a lecture series in their community next Fall and Winter under the supervision of the Mission Board of our churches.

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Oak Lawn's congregation is celebrating their 40th anniversary June 19 and has secured Rev. C. Hanko, one of their former ministers, to give a speech on the program which has been planned to commemorate the event. Rev. and Mrs. Hanko will then be in Oak Lawn on their way home after having visited their children in Grand Rapids while Rev. Hanko attended Synod.

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Commencement Exercises of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School featured Rev. D. Engelsma as speaker whose address was titled, "Faithful to His Covenant," Rev. Engelsma was also the Commencement speaker at South Holland's school exercises June 12 when he spoke on, "The Armor of God."