

The  
Standard  
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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**Report of the Doctrinal Committee**

**The Importance of Maintaining  
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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION—

## Walking In The Midst Of The Fire

by Rev. J. Kortering

*He answered and said, Lo I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

*Daniel 3:25*

"Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

That was the challenge: the daring taunts of anti-christ against the Christ.

Who were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to face it? How could these mortal men, fashioned of dust—

a composite of flesh and bones, ever endure the heat of the fire raging sevenfold?

They were men of faith, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king."



Their God did deliver them, for they walked in the mist of the fire with Jesus, the Son of God at their side. And so it is with us.

The forces of evil had arranged a mighty confrontation. It centered in the image of Nebuchadnezzar.

The King had a dream and forthwith had forgotten it. In deepest consternation he had turned to his wise-men, magicians, and sorcerers in hope of learning the dream and the interpretation thereof. This proved futile. His consternation turned to wrath and he issued a decree that all these would-be wise men should be put to death. He was convinced that they possessed no more power of divination than he. This edict of death was published by the executioners themselves. Coming to Daniel, they plotted their bloody deed. Quite naturally Daniel's response was, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" Immediately he implored of the king that time be given and he would show the king his dream and the interpretation. Daniel went to his three friends and together they brought their need unto God, that He might show the dream to Daniel and their lives might be spared.

The God of revelation answered their prayers. Daniel went in before the king and related to him what God had revealed. His dream consisted of a mighty image whose head was made of gold, breast and arms were of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and his feet of iron and clay. A stone was cut out of the mountain without men's hands, and this stone smote the image and destroyed it, with the result that the stone became larger and larger till it filled all the earth.

In the interpretation of this dream Daniel pointed Nebuchadnezzar to the golden head. His kingdom was one of power, strength, and glory. Following him would be three kingdoms in decreasing glory, which in turn would be divided into many smaller kingdoms, all of which would eventually be destroyed by the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The whole image was no better than the ten toes of iron and clay wrought by an impossible mixture.

Nebuchadnezzar ignored the little stone that would destroy the kingdoms of the world. All he cared about was that head of gold. His was a golden kingdom, and he was the golden king. What more fitting way to express the glittering vanity than to build a huge image, overlay it with gold, tell all the princes of the kingdom that this image represented the king, and command all the princes to bow down and worship the image and thereby pay tribute to the king.

His proud heart throbbed excitedly at the very thought. Construction began immediately and before long the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer and all kinds of music was heard and the heads of all the princes and governors bowed low before the image that rose some 90 feet above the plain of Dura.

All, that is, except three Jews, the friends of Daniel, who had refused. Daniel must have been absent because "he sat in the gate of the king." The three friends of Daniel however, were among the governors of the land.

Why did they refuse? The answer is very simple: they refused to bow before antichrist. The golden image was the natural by-product of the king's dream. The statue in the king's dream is one of the clearest revelations of the kingdom of antichrist from a historical point of view. It consists of outward glory, but has no foundation and therefore no real durability. It is marked by division that for a time may appear unified but in essence is bound to crumble into ruin. Spiritually it stands opposed to Christ, it glories in gold and the things that perish, and hates the Kingdom of Christ. Yet, the Kingdom of Christ is triumphant, for as a mighty mountain it shall fill the whole earth. This world shall be destroyed and the kingdoms of men shall perish, but the Kingdom of Christ shall be built upon its ruins in the new heaven and new earth.

For Daniel's three friends, this kingdom of antichrist was personified in Nebuchadnezzar and his image. Subsequently we have passed through the Persian rule, the silver soon tarnished and Persian rule gave way to Roman power. Even the brass could not endure the weathering forces of time, and soon the glory of Greece overtook Rome. History indicates to us that this too was but iron, an internal weakness that led to the dark ages and division of the nations into splintered world powers, that had no backbone of durability and therefore were as ten toes of part iron and part clay.

This entire image nevertheless represents antichrist as he will be revealed in the last days. It isn't so that the antichrist that now reigns and is assuming his last "glorious" dominion consists of one of the ten toes of part iron and part clay. The entire image represents the anti-christian kingdom of the last days. This image is the product of history. This is the ultimate of what man has produced.

When Daniel's three friends were required by the king to bow before the image of gold, this in essence meant that they were required to bow before the antichristian world power as it was represented in their day.

We stand before this same image today. It is obvious in the political sphere, the world is working for a unification of the ten toes into one great body controlled by a golden head. This is the world unity that is sought today by such organizations as the United Nations. This same goal permeates the social sphere; big government is reaching its greedy fingers into every sphere of life. Government is not simply providing education for its citizens, it is even interfering with parents who feel it their duty to fulfill this responsibility themselves. Government presumes to itself the care of the poor and even determines what should be preached in the churches. Powerful labor unions have the blessing of government, to the degree that the rights of the minority who cannot for conscience sake join them are disregarded more and more. The nominal churches gladly flirt with government favors and abandon their calling to preach the gospel, in order that they can serve as mistress to the state to accomplish its dreams. What else is the World Council of Churches doing?



The child of God may not recognize and take part in this evil design. Surely the antichristian powers desire and demand that we recognize them. Daniel's three friends were not excluded from the assembly. They had to come. The music was sounded and they were expected to bow. Yet they didn't. The same holds for us. We *may not* preach a social gospel even though this is popular and doing it wins government favors. We may not join worldly unions and sacrifice our Lordship to Christ in order to get a little more gold. We may not enter into the social sphere of antichristian "culture." We may not obey the government if its orders conflict with those of the Word of God. We may not bow before the image of gold.

The result is always the same, fire!

Of course they didn't grab the three friends of Daniel and immediately throw them into the fire. Nebuchadnezzar had better psychology than that. Listen, "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet...ye fall down and worship the image...well, but if not ye shall be cast into the burning fiery furnace." Nebuchadnezzar did a little elbow twisting first, it would be better for his "image" to have all bow rather than have three refusals and force them to death in a furnace.

So he offered them a second chance. Sounds familiar doesn't it? That's that union manager who confronts you with all the "advantages" of the union and begs you to join. Sometimes it comes in the form of the county superintendent of public education who threatens to take action if our schools can't meet the required teacher certification. Remember the Amish! Our ministers get mail by the tons, brought by the Ministerial Unions and Councils of Churches telling us what to do and how to preach. The schools of our land are infested with the god of Science before whom children are told to bow rather than before the Word of God. And the answer to it all: unification, one world government, one world society, one world church, one world people joined in the common good of man. Their arm twisting is appealing to the flesh.

Refuse to bow, and there is only fire.

Just as surely as the three friends of Daniel were at last thrown into the fiery furnace heated seven times greater as an appeasement to the burning wrath of the king, so the church of all ages bears the brunt of the enmity of antichrist. The history of the church is written in blood from this point of view. Stephen,

Paul, the saints during the days of Nero, the persecuted under the Inquisition, our Reformed forebearers, and even today.

On the part of antichrist there is no compromise. Refuse to join the union and the boss can only point to the door and say goodbye. It's not difficult to see that if we refuse to cooperate with government in education we may be forced to close our schools. We refuse to preach the popular gospel, we won't be allowed to preach. We refuse to go along with the social program, we won't be allowed to live in this society. Sometimes death is the product of an extended period of suffering, sometimes it comes suddenly with murderous wrath. Yet, it is death.

Daniel's three friends walked through the fire.

Christ was with them. The Kingdom of Christ is victorious. He vanquished the foe when He established our peace with God on the cross. The devil and the world are living in a marked age; their time is limited and the devil knows it. Feverishly he drives men to accomplish their empty dream of building a kingdom of gold on feet of iron and clay. A kingdom established on the "virtues" of natural man and founded upon the dreams of depraved man is a kingdom that is the object of the wrath of God. When Christ merited peace for His elect through the blood of atonement, He also received the necessary power to realize it. This is two fold: the power to gather His church in history and the power to destroy His enemies.

The king had to admit that there was a fourth Man walking in the midst of the fire, and with Him a mighty work had been accomplished. The wicked shall eternally acknowledge, though by force, that God is God alone and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is victorious; it is a mountain that shall endure forever.

No, Daniel's three friends didn't escape the fire. We would desire that, but that isn't promised us. The indignant wrath of the citizens of the kingdom of this world shall surely be upon us; it will bring suffering and death, yet God through Jesus Christ shall escort us safely through that fire as we walk our pathway to glory.

And they had no hurt! What was true physically for Daniel's three friends is true spiritually for us. The courage, the conviction, and the spiritual wisdom shall be given us as Christ walks besides us by His Word and Spirit.

With God all things are possible.

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....The Church of Christ is not a mere number of saved believers: it is a body, a unity. And its purpose is to show forth the glory of God in Christ. This one theme all the saints sing and develop in their good works, each in his own position, and performing his own part. And the great Artist ordained and prepared all the several parts of this glorious theme for every one of the saints, just as He, by grace, prepares them all for the parts they are to perform. He created us in Christ Jesus exactly unto those good works which He prepared for us, that we might walk in them.

— H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 91



## EDITORIALS—

## Pons Assinorum In Signo Ecclesiae!

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Decorating the cover of the Agenda for the 1967 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church is the proposed denominational seal. And occupying first place in the Agenda is the Report of the Denominational Seal Committee. As said report also puts it, in the center of this proposed seal is a TULIP. Moreover, according to the report, "The tulip in the center of the design refers to the well-known version of the 'five points of Calvinism' elaborated by the Synod of Dordt: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints."

This is, of course, strictly a symbolic, Calvinistic tulip. For a real tulip has six petals, not five.

And, according to the Editor of *De Wachter*, this TULIP is an *ezelsbruggetje*, — or, more refinedly put, a *pons assinorum*. In plain English: an ass's bridge, — only a picturesque term for *mnemonic*, or memory aid.

Hence the title above this editorial: An Ass's Bridge in the Ecclesiastical Seal!

Now I might have some objections to this proposed seal. But I would not object to this TULIP because, as I indicated before, I never think of it in terms of an ass's bridge. To me it is a very beautiful flower. However, I can imagine that the Editor of *De Wachter* was not a little perturbed at the sight of this "*pons assinorum*" decorating the cover of the Agenda, and that too, even before it has been adopted by Synod.

But this leads me to proffer him some advice, even though in his editor's capacity, at least, he does not relish unsolicited advice. For the Editor of *De Wachter* is also a delegate to the forthcoming Synod. Perhaps he will not be on the committee that must serve Synod with advice about this seal; but in that case he can give his advice from the floor, and perhaps even put it in the form of a motion. I would not, however advise that the matter of the adoption of this denominational seal be made to hinge on such a trivial question as that of an "ass's bridge," or mnemonic. For after all, that is not such a basic matter. It hardly merits the editorial attention it received in *De Wachter*, especially not when the Christian Reformed ship is being rocked by winds of false doctrine and liberal ecumenicism.

Whether the matter of this seal is treated before or after the "Dekker Case," I would advise the Editor of *De Wachter* to make a motion somewhat as follows:

"Synod declares that the proposed denominational

seal is not acceptable because it does not truthfully represent the doctrinal position of the Christian Reformed Church, due to the symbolism of the tulip in the proposed seal. *Grounds:*

"1. There is a large segment of our denomination which openly denies the doctrine of Limited Atonement represented by one of the petals of this tulip.

"2. There is another large part of the denomination which covertly denies the doctrine of Limited Atonement, who, even though they will speak of a certain Limited Atonement, nevertheless do not believe that the atonement is limited in its nature. Moreover, they compromise and in effect deny this doctrine: a) By claiming that there are benefits of the atonement which accrue to all men. b) By claiming that the term "world" refers to "an undifferentiated totality." c) By making the preaching of the cross (particular atonement) a general and well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God to all who hear.

"3. There are many representatives of our denomination, both in the seminary, on the mission field, and in our home pulpits who maintain that the atonement is general, not limited."

The above suggested motion has this to recommend it, that it is truthful, and that it would avoid the problem of the ass's bridge at which the Editor of *De Wachter* stumbles.

Perhaps Synod could also serve its committee for a Denominational Seal with some positive advice. In that case it could suggest that the committee seriously consider the possibility of placing in the center of the design a Janus-head, or perhaps a bust of James Arminius.

\* \* \*

Lest any reader think that I am being facetious in this editorial, let me assure you that I am in dead earnest!

To date I have seen no evidence that any Christian Reformed leader holds 100% to the doctrine of Limited Atonement and to the whole of the Five Points of Dordrecht. I believe, therefore, that to adopt a denominational seal with this beautiful TULIP in the center of the design would be a piece of ecclesiastical hypocrisy.

And hypocrisy is an abomination to the Lord!

Only if the Christian Reformed Church would repent and return to the Reformed heritage would it have the moral right to include this TULIP in its seal!



# "Report of the Doctrinal Committee"

## A Critical Study

# The Committee on the Atonement

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

### The Atonement in the New Formulation

Since my last editorial on this subject was written, the revised report of the doctrinal committee has been published in the Agenda for the 1967 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. The appearance of this revised report somewhat upsets my planned criticism in so far as it was based on the committee's original formulation. I had intended to continue my critique along the lines begun in the May 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Now, however, I must change my plans somewhat. We may ask the question whether or not the committee has substantially improved its conclusions on the doctrine of the atonement in its revised report.

It would be interesting to make a detailed comparison of the two reports in this respect, and to lay the reports side by side. However, space does not permit this. The concluding recommendations in the revised report are very lengthy, due to the fact that the committee has added many Scriptural and confessional grounds. For the propositions themselves, I refer the reader to Prof. Hanko's department in this issue of our magazine. The reader should remember, however, that due to the addition of grounds from Scripture and the confession, the "Conclusion and Recommendations" of the committee have now grown from 2 1/2 pages to 9 1/2 pages in the Agenda. The number of propositions has also increased from 5 to 6.

What has happened in this revised formulation to the doctrine of the atonement? This is the important question.

In answer to this question I present the following:

1) From a formal point of view, the committee has certainly improved its report. I refer to the addition of numerous grounds from Scripture and the confessions. It will be recalled that in its original report the committee repeatedly used the phrase, "In the light of Scripture and the Confession," but cited almost nothing from either Scripture or the confessions as grounds. This is, therefore, a formal improvement. It will, — at least, if the committee's report is actually submitted for adoption at the coming Christian Re-

formed Synod, — open up the whole report for extensive debate also. For the adoption of any proposition depends upon the grounds of that proposition. And now that the committee has stated its grounds in greater detail and with an appeal to Scripture and the confessions, there is something to debate about, namely, whether the grounds prove the committee's propositions.

2) It must also be admitted that the grounds from Scripture and the confessions give the report, at first glance, a more Reformed appearance. The reader might almost be fooled by this, in fact. The committee presents some very sound and beautiful proofs from Scripture and the confessions. And if one divorces these grounds from the propositions which they are supposed to prove, he might arrive at the conclusion that this new report is much more Reformed than the old one. However, a more careful analysis of the conclusions will show that the grounds from Scripture and the confessions serve as grounds only for the Reformed elements in each proposition, while the elements which are not Reformed have no proof from Scripture and the confessions. This is painfully obvious, it seems to me, already with the very first proposition, which speaks about the love of God. All the proofs from Scripture and the confessions are very good proofs for God's sovereign and particular love, His love for His people in Christ Jesus. However, this same proposition now also speaks of "God's general benevolence toward all His creatures" and of "God's love of compassion for every sinner." And for these two elements there is not one iota of proof from Scripture and the confessions. What does the committee do? It adds a third kind of grounds, — *synodical decisions!* And, of course, those synodical decisions are the decisions on common grace.

This same policy is followed throughout the conclusions. All the elements in the conclusions which are not Reformed have no proof from Scripture and the confessions. And in some cases, especially when it comes to the matters concerning the universal offer, the committee cites grounds from Scripture and the



confessions which do not prove a universal whatsoever, but prove the thoroughly Reformed truth of the general proclamation of a particular promise and the necessity that the preaching of the promise always be accompanied by the demand of faith and repentance.

3) In this same connection, the committee has undoubtedly removed from its conclusions some expressions which would be very troublesome to them and which would open up areas of valid criticism on the part of the pro-Dekker forces. I refer especially to proposition IV of the old report, which has been replaced by proposition V in the new report. This is also true, to an extent, of proposition V in the old report as compared with proposition VI in the new report. Space does not permit me to go into detail on this matter. But I submit that the committee has not changed its position essentially. What has happened is that the committee has made its own position more vague and ambiguous. The committee, of course, must be Reformed enough to condemn Dekker's position; but it must not be so Reformed that it lets go of the First Point of 1924 and its well-meant offer. The result is that it recedes as much as possible into the ambiguity of the traditional double-track theology. A Reformed man will not be satisfied with this double-talk; and the Dekker forces will not be fooled by it, I predict.

4) But has the committee changed its position on the atonement? Absolutely not! Certainly, the committee in part has taken a very Reformed position on the atonement. Moreover, the committee has furnished abundant grounds from Scripture and the confessions for this position. The committee has even emphasized the very key element that the Holy Spirit Himself, Who applies the benefits of salvation to the elect, is a gift merited for God's people by Christ's atonement. However:

a) The committee continues to speak, — without an iota of proof from Scripture and the confessions, and in contradiction of the Reformed doctrine of the atonement, — of "certain universal and undeserved benefits accruing to all men from the death of Christ." This is basically, — though the committee tries vainly to make a distinction, — universal atonement.

b) The committee continues to speak of the "world" which God loved and for which He gave His only begotten Son, John 3:16, as "an undifferentiated totality." Note: it is a totality! And as surely as the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, that undifferentiated totality of the committee is equal to all men. This is universal atonement, pure and simple.

c) The committee continues to make the very same Christ-crucified concerning whom it insists in part of its report that He was crucified for the elect only, — they make that same Christ-crucified universal in the preaching. For they maintain the universal, well-meant offer of grace. This is universal atonement.

### The Atonement in the Body of the Report

When one turns to the body of the committee's report, he finds the same ambiguity and the same

double-track theology with respect to the atonement as in the conclusions. I had intended, prior to the appearance of the revised report, to enter into this aspect in greater detail. Now, however, space and time do not permit this. If, after the coming Christian Reformed Synod, it is still pertinent to do so, I shall enter into these matters at a later date, D.V.

Now, however, I wish to point out, briefly, the following:

1) Although the committee has revised its report and removed the statement that no Reformed person would maintain that the atonement is limited in its *nature*, (probably in order to take away the ground for criticism such as Dr. Daane has made on this count), at no point does the committee state that the atonement *is* limited in its very nature. But this is the most basic issue. If this is not maintained, — and it is not maintained in the report, — the battle for the Reformed doctrine of the atonement is lost.

2) The committee, also in the body of its lengthy report, has absolutely no proof from either Scripture or the confessions that there are universal and undeserved benefits which accrue to all men from the (atoning) death of Christ. We have seen that this is true of the committee's conclusions. But it is also true of the body of the report. What the committee offers as proof is *mere statements of theologians*. They quote Murray and Stonehouse and Vos. And what is the reason for this? It is very simple: the committee's proposition *cannot be proved from Scripture and the confessions!* Meanwhile, the fact remains that while the committee does not want to go as far as Dekker does, they nevertheless concede the basic point that the atonement is general.

3) And when the committee confronts Prof. Dekker's claim that the universal, well-meant offer of salvation demands a universal atonement, they continue to insist, of course, upon the universal offer. And remember: this universal offer means actually nothing less than this, that Christ-crucified, though actually crucified for the elect alone, is in the preaching of the gospel made general and undifferentiated! But what is the committee's solution for this contradiction? Do they come with Scripture and the confessions? Of course not; this is impossible! They come with a "very illuminating illustration" by Dr. Roger Nicole. It is the illustration of a department store offering for sale a brand name refrigerator at the cost of \$199.95! Now apart from the fact that it is very well possible, both from the point of view of the Dekker forces and from a Reformed point of view, to shoot this illustration full of holes, the simple fact is that such work is altogether unworthy of a doctrinal study committee. The committee should have come with Scripture and the confessions. This they could not do. Instead the committee resorts to the method of rationalism, — the same rationalism with which we have always been unjustly charged in connection with 1924. They come with human reasonings and human illustrations apart from Scripture and the confessions. And these human reasonings are altogether unsatisfactory. If rationalism we must have, then give me Prof. Dekker's rationalism:



universal availability of salvation (in the general offer) requires universal atonement. That makes sense, at least, even though it is not true! But why, — this is the important question, — why must the committee resort to this method? Because when it comes to the well-meant offer, they must agree that in that offer Christ-crucified is universal, while they do not want to admit to Prof. Dekker that Christ-crucified on Golgotha nineteen hundred years ago was universal. In other words, the committee is basically committed to the doctrine of universal atonement, but does not want to face up to this reality.

### The Most Important Issue In The Report

For the time being we may conclude this critical study at this point and await further developments.

But in conclusion I must point out that the underlying issue of the entire "Dekker Case" is that of the love of God.

In this connection, the committee wants a three-fold love of God: His general benevolence toward all His creatures, His love of compassion for every sinner, and His unique love for His elect. (Proposition I)

As I have already pointed out, it is only for the last of these three that the committee offers proof from Scripture and the confessions in its conclusions. For the other two it offers proof from "synodical decisions."

But it is in this proposition of the committee that the fundamental question is involved, — from a Reformed point of view. From this point of view, the stand of Dekker (though more consistently Arminian) and that of

the committee offer little choice.

And I can put the matter, as far as the committee's statement is concerned, very succinctly.

1) The committee's divine "love of compassion for every sinner" presents a compassion and a love that is not worthy of God! It is a love so compassionate that it allows its objects to go to hell!

2) By this doctrine the committee presents the God of the supposed Reformed faith as a *weak God*, — as weak as the God of the Arminians. Though He loves the sinner and is filled with compassion toward him, He is unable to prevent the sinner's destruction.

3) By this doctrine the committee must needs accept the implication that the sinner is a powerful sinner, — as powerful as the Arminians' sinner, more powerful than God. For though God loves him and is filled with compassion toward him, the sinner is able to overcome the love and compassion of God by his sin and unbelief and goes lost in spite of divine love!

This is not the God of the Reformed faith, however. It is the God of the First Point of 1924!

And until the Christian Reformed Church forsakes and repudiates the errors of 1924, it will never be able to fight Arminianism, but will continue to be swallowed up by it.

And to those seriously Reformed believers who want neither the Arminianism of Prof. Dekker nor the Arminianism of the committee's double-track theology (the theology of 1924), but who want the God of the Reformed faith, — to them I say in all earnestness and good will: Come out, exercise your right of reformation, and stand with us! We are Reformed according to Scripture and the confessions!

## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

# David and The Ziphites

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

*Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.  
Here my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.  
For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul;  
they have not see God before them. Selah.  
Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.  
He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.  
I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good.  
For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire  
upon mine enemies.*

Psalm 54

Escaping from Keilah before Saul could gather his forces to march against him, David was left no choice but to return to the wild hills, valleys and woodlands of southern Judah. It was in the mountain territories that David found the best protection; but finding sufficient food for his soldiers was difficult there. Thus it

was that David finally moved down into the woods close by the town of Ziph. From many points of view, it appeared to be an almost ideal location. The woods were thick and few people thought to pass through them, providing an opportunity for David and his men to make camp, with very few being conscious of their exact



location. Much more than in the mountains, there was the possibility of catching game for food and even farming a little in the small clearings that were found amid the trees. In addition, the town of Ziph was close. They could go there to do their necessary trading, and there was the possibility of holding what small bit of fellowship their life allowed with people of their own nation. Nor was it infrequent that they found for themselves opportunities to aid and assist the peoples of the territory with the kind of deeds of kindness they were much prone to perform. Next to the actual convenience of living in a town itself, as they had done in Keilah, it was about the best situation that they could hope for. Gradually the wound that had been inflicted upon their hearts by the treachery of Keilah began to heal.

It was during this time that David was staying with his men in the woodlands of Ziph that there came to him one of the most impressive events of that period of his life; he was visited by Jonathan.

Undoubtedly, Jonathan stands upon the pages of Scripture as one of the most amazing persons in the history of the church. The son of a viciously proud and wicked father, his own disposition was one of meekness and kindness throughout. A man through whom some of the greatest victories to come to Israel were brought about, he had no desire at all to receive a hero's reward. Himself being the seed royal of the nation, he might well have taken to himself airs above every one else in Israel; but he was quite willing to conduct himself as a servant to all. Through his heart ran the love and faithfulness of friendship so that his name stands as a symbol of the same to this day. Even when it became evident that his best friend was ordained to receive the throne of Israel instead of himself, he was the first to acknowledge it openly and without one trace of bitterness or regret. His life held as its fountain-spring, the love of God and a child-like devotion of true faith. It was this finally which bound him so closely to David with a bond of love and faithfulness which could not be broken.

It came out most beautifully in an event that we are often inclined to overlook completely -- the visit of Jonathan to David while he was living in the woodlands of Ziph. The mere fact that he should have made that visit is in itself touching and goes far to demonstrate the meekness and beauty of his love. Here he was the seed royal, living in all of the splendor and ease of the royal court. The opportunities which he had to pursue almost any interest or diversion he might desire were present. But his life in the court of Israel was to him one constant source of grief and sorrow, for, through the months and years, the palace of Israel had become more and more dominated by one thing -- the overwhelming hatred of his father for David. Never had any heathen nation been hated so bitterly by the royal court, never had the vile Philistines been so derided as David was, never had strategy against any enemy of Israel been so determinedly pursued as the various plots to destroy David and his small but valiant force. In the midst of it Jonathan was forced to live, and under it his soul suffered and wept. No dungeon

could ever have become so oppressive to him as the atmosphere in his father's court where he had to dwell. Undoubtedly he himself would have fled to live with David in the wilderness had not his own duties in the court been of such responsibility that they were necessary to keep Israel functioning as a nation; and, of course, his presence as the royal seed of Israel in the camp of David would have done more to confuse the situation than to help it. Nevertheless, when there came through to his attention the news that David was encamped in the woods of Ziph, Jonathan determined that he would go down to render what little help and encouragement he could. Thus it was that Jonathan all by himself left the court of Saul and made his way down to the forest of Ziph.

One can well imagine, although it is not recorded for us, the emotion with which David and Jonathan met there under the canopy of the trees. Nevertheless, we are given Jonathan's reason for coming to David and the words that he spoke. He came to strengthen David's hand in the Lord, and his words were these, "Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth." It was not a prophecy which Jonathan had received directly from God; for, Jonathan was not a prophet and his words contained an error. He would not serve as second man under the throne of David; but he would himself be privileged to precede David to a far more wonderful throne in glory. It was only Jonathan's personal conclusion which he had observed from watching the workings of Jehovah in Israel. And yet, by that very measure, was it so wonderfully great for it was completely contrary to what the present circumstances suggested and was based alone upon the faith that God would reward his servants according to their faithfulness. Thus it was that once again the two friends renewed their friendship in a covenant before their God. Little did they realize that they would never meet again until their covenant had obtained its perfect fulfillment in the presence of God.

It was not long after Jonathan returned from his visit with David that the situation of David changed and the need for the encouragement that Jonathan had provided became evident. Once again, it was the treachery of David's own countrymen with whom he had taken up his dwelling. David had never done anything but good to the inhabitants of Ziph and it was to be expected that he had nothing to fear from them. But these men knew, as did everyone in Israel, that David was hated by Saul, and that Saul wanted desperately to kill David. To them it appeared to be a perfect opportunity to ingratiate themselves to the king. Secretly they sent a delegation to Saul, saying, "Doth not David hide himself with us in strongholds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand."

The response of Saul was quick and elated and expressed itself in words that are apt to make us wince. He said, "Blessed be ye of the Lord; for ye



have compassion on me. Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah."

The depravity of King Saul had reached a new level of perversity and hardness. Although he had never been a sincerely religious man, of course, it had not become openly evident until after his battle with Amalek when Samuel had informed him that God had rejected him and his family from continuing upon the throne of Israel. This had hit him hard, for he had always considered himself to be somewhat of a favorite with the God of Israel even though religion itself did not appeal particularly to him. At the pronouncement of Samuel it seemed as though the spirit which had been upholding him had suddenly vanished from him and he had been cast into a fit of deep depression. It was a long time before Saul was able to cast this off completely, and then it was only to have it replaced by a much greater form of wickedness. He determined that David was ordained to be king after him, and somehow it relieved him to have a specific enemy upon which to focus his hatred. At first, he had more or less felt that in fighting against David, he was also fighting against God. But now time had passed and he had spent so much time mulling over his plans to destroy David that he had finally even convinced himself, at least at times, that it was a righteous battle that he was fighting, that David was a man of wickedness, and God was on his own side. It was this that he was expressing when he assured the Ziphites that he considered them to be blessed of God in their betrayal of David.

Soon, once again, David found himself in a most critical position. Without warning one day, the Ziphites appeared at the edge of the wood where he and his men were camped leading a great army of Israelites. The situation was as crucial as any he had ever before

confronted. He had indeed been surrounded by Saul's men before; but that was when he was alone and able to slip through the enemy lines undetected. Now he had four hundred men with him, and he could not escape himself without seeing them through to safety also. Quickly David did what he could to try to evade Saul's forces. The territory was large and he made every possible evasive move. First he brought the men up into the rocky hills and then down into the open plains; but Saul was prepared this time and with the men of Ziph to guide him he was able to keep in very close pursuit of David. At last, there was only a small mountain between them, and every possible route of escape for David was cut off. David was shut in by an army many times the size of his own force and one made up of his own countrymen against whom he was most hesitant to do battle. David's whole being drew back with revulsion from the very thought that he might have to fight against his own king and destroy his own countrymen. But what could he do? It appeared truly unavoidable.

But God was with David, and at the last moment there came a messenger running desperately into the camp of King Saul. His message was this, "Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land." To Saul it was the most terrible news imaginable, not because he feared to fight the Philistines, but because he wanted so badly to have out this battle with David. But there really was no choice. With an anguished sigh he signaled the men to turn back from their pursuit of David and to follow him back to the borders of Philistia; and as he went he knew deep down in his heart that so all of his efforts against David would have to come to naught. But this was a voice to which he would never listen.

It was David alone that openly recognized and acknowledged that true power which had saved him once again. It was then, at that moment, that he began to compose the words of Psalm 54, "Behold, God is mine helper...For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eyes hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Eunice Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to Mrs. Albert Talsma in the loss of her brother

MR. ANTHONIE DE KRAKER

May our Heavenly Father comfort her in the knowledge that He doeth all things well and for the welfare of His children.

Rev. G. Lubbers, Pres.  
Mrs. R. Clawson, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary Martha Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California, herewith expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Kate Veldman, in the loss of her sister,

MRS. NELLIE VAN DYK

May the Lord comfort you in this time of sorrow.

Donna Huisken, Sec'y.



## ALL AROUND US—

# The CRC Synodical Agenda

## The Question of Evolution

### The Position on the WCC

### The Dekker Case

### Other Matters of Interest

by Prof. H. Hanko

#### THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED SYNODICAL AGENDA

The Agenda of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches is a large book of 550 pages this year. We give here a brief summary of some of the matters of interest which are coming before the Synod.

Perhaps the three items of greatest interest to our readers are: The Dekker Case; The Question of Evolution; The Christian Reformed Churches' position on the World Council of Churches.

#### THE QUESTION OF EVOLUTION

Our readers will recall that last year's Synod gave the material on evolution to a committee which was charged with the mandate of recommending a committee to study the question and of formulating a specific mandate for this committee. The present committee recommended a committee of eight to study the question; and it recommended that this committee be given the following mandate:

To serve Synod with a study of the problem of origins, as it confronts the Christian community today, which will assist pastors, ecclesiastical assemblies, and the whole body of Christian believers in dealing with this problem in Biblical perspective.

Specifically, the committee is asked to address itself to such matters as the following:

##### I. Matters of Perspective:

A. The proper role of the church as community of believers, and the specific role of the church as ecclesiastical organization, in dealing with the problem of origins.

B. The Christian evaluation of the cultural context in which the question of origins has arisen among us as a *problem*.

C. The proper function of Scripture and of General Revelation in the development of a Christian understanding of the origin of the universe and of man.

D. The nature of the sciences (natural, anthropological, theological, etc.) from the Christian perspective, and an evaluation of their consequent contributions to our knowledge of the origin of the universe and of man.

##### II. Matters of Specific Concern:

A. What is the nature of the Divine revelation in Genesis 1-11?

B. What is the essential teaching of Gen. 1-11 regarding the origin of the universe and of man.

C. In the light of these considerations, how should we deal with the questions of detail such as have arisen among us?

In this same connection a protest against the decision of last year's Synod will have to be considered by this year's Synod. This protest is a very well worked out protest which questions "the decision of the Synod of 1966 to appoint a committee to recommend a committee" to study these matters of evolution. The well-grounded protest (grounds from Scripture itself and the Confessions) reads in part:

I. Specifically we protest the consideration of certain matters which the Synod of 1966 seems to regard as legitimate for discussion such as:

1. The possibility that Genesis 1, 2, and 3 may be viewed as being symbolic or poetic rather than historical and literal.

2. The possibility that sub-human creation may have developed gradually from lower to higher forms of existence under divine direction by way of theistic evolution.

3. The possibility that Adam may have developed gradually from some lower form of animal under divine direction by way of theistic evolution.

II. Specifically we are concerned about the following:

1. "Theistic evolution" is being embraced and espoused by many present and future leaders in our church.

2. The time factor and the element of indefiniteness involved in appointing a committee to recommend a committee to study this problem.

3. The considerable emphasis placed on "the present status of scientific studies" and the necessity of having members on the committee who possess scientific competence, making these requirements



almost equally as important as theological competence and the ability to interpret the Reformed Confessions.

4. The seeming disregard for the perspicuity of Scripture and the competence of the average member to exercise spiritual discernment in understanding by faith such matters as creation, the fall and redemption.

III. In the light of the above, we respectfully overture the Synod of 1967:

1. To reaffirm the Biblical and traditional Reformed view of the historicity of Genesis 1, 2 and 3 and of creation by divine fiat: — "by the word of His power."

2. To remind Classes, the Board of Trustees, School Boards, Consistories and all in positions of teaching and leadership that this is the official position of our church which signers of the "Form of Subscription" are obligated to endorse, which they promise to diligently teach and faithfully defend and which they will in no way contradict either by proposal, preaching, teaching or writing unless there is an official change of position.

### POSITION ON THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The committee appointed to study the position of the Christian Reformed Church in relation to the World Council of Churches was asked to do this especially in the light of the decision of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the Netherlands who had gone on record as seeing no reason why membership in this body was to be opposed.

The committee split into a majority and minority element. The majority report is a very lengthy but extremely well-worked out report which ends with recommendations to Synod advising Synod to express her disapproval of the World Council of Churches; and advising Synod to send a copy of the report to the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

The minority report while also recommending that Synod decide "not to commit the Christian Reformed Church to membership in the World Council of Churches at this time" nevertheless also asks Synod to declare that there is nothing in the basis, nature and purpose of the World Council of Churches as defined by the Constitution which makes membership impossible.

There is also one overture sent to Synod from Classis Wisconsin petitioning Synod not to join the W.C.C. and to advise the *Gereformeerde Kerken* not to affiliate with this body.

### THE DEKKER CASE

It is not surprising that material concerning the "Dekker Case" constitutes a large part of the material coming before Synod.

There is first of all a lengthy document from Prof. Dekker himself which is a defense of his position which he has taken on the atonement. This document alone is 27 pages long.

Further the committee which has studied the Dekker Case for two years comes with a report to Synod covering 84 pages to which is attached an appendix of 8 additional pages. In general, the report of the committee is much the same as last year's report. However, some changes have been made in the recommendations with which the report ends. Along with extensive

grounds which we cannot quote, the recommendations read:

We therefore propose that Synod do not make isolated extra-creedal statements, but that it deal with the theological problems involved, by adopting the following recommendations:

I. In the light of Scripture and the Confessions a distinction must be maintained between God's general benevolence toward all His creatures; His love of compassion for every sinner; and His unique love for His own (the elect). It is therefore unwarranted to speak of one love of God which is redemptive in nature for all men distributively.

II. In the light of Scripture and the Confessions it must be maintained that, although there are certain universal and undeserved benefits accruing to all men from the death of Christ, the atonement of Christ, as expressed by the Biblical terms: obedience, expiation, satisfaction, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption, is definite and particular (limited). It is therefore unwarranted to state that "the atonement itself is inherently universal" and "there is neither need nor warrant for retaining the concept of limited atonement, as it has been traditionally used among us."

III. In the light of Scripture and the Confessions it must be maintained that the atonement is efficacious and that there is no disjunction, but essential unity in the work of the Triune God concerning our salvation. What God the Father willed in sovereign love for the salvation of those elected in Christ; was effectually merited by Christ through His death on the cross; and is being savingly applied through the work of Holy Spirit. It is therefore unwarranted to state, "Redeeming efficacy lies neither in the love of God nor in the atonement as such, but rather in the redeeming work of the Holy Spirit."

IV. In the light of Scripture and the Confessions it must be maintained that the particularism of redemption, historically applied in the lives of believers, is the fruit of a definite and particular (limited) atonement, since the Holy Spirit Himself, who applies that redemption, is a gift which Christ has merited for His people through His death. It is therefore unwarranted to "insist on a universal atonement, in the sense that . . . Christ died for all, and a particular redemption based on God's decree to save only the elect," and incompatible with the statement: "At the same time I recognize . . . that the redeeming work of the Holy Spirit is a fruit of and is dependent upon Christ's atonement."

V. In the light of Scripture and the Confessions it must be maintained that when we preach and confront men with the Christ of the Scriptures we are not dealing with them as elect or non-elect, nor yet as those whose eternal destiny is an accomplished fact; but we are dealing with them as sinners who must be pleaded with to be reconciled to God in the way of repentance and faith. It is therefore unwarranted to state: "We may say to every man individually . . . 'Christ died for you'; or to state: "When I say 'Christ died for you' to any man, I mean to say that Christ has actually suffered for his sins and has in that sense expiated his guilt. If, however, the word 'expiate' is intended by definition to include the idea of *effectuation*, . . . I would not want to use the word *expiation* to describe what Christ has done for all men."

VI. In the light of Scripture and the Confessions



the Church must maintain that the atoning work of Christ is the basis for the universal and well-meant offer of the gospel in missionary preaching, the heart of its message, and the guarantee of its fruitfulness. And this is an incentive to mission spirit and activity. It is, therefore, unwarranted to state that "the doctrine of limited atonement, as commonly understood and observed in the Christian Reformed Church . . . tends to inhibit missionary spirit and activity."

There are also various overtures coming to Synod dealing with this same case. Although these overtures overlap somewhat, they do express also a certain difference of opinion in the churches. Two overtures ask for a continued discussion of the atonement using the material thus far presented to Synod as a guide. Five overtures ask for a decision which is in harmony with the Doctrinal Study Committee's recommendations, three of these five also asking for enforcement of the Formula of Subscription and treatment of departures from the view of the committee according to the Church Order and the Formula of Subscription. Two overtures specifically request that the views of Prof. Dekker be condemned and one asks that measures be taken to insure that these views of Prof. Dekker no longer be taught in the Seminary.

#### OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST

One overture is coming to Synod requesting once

again that a study committee be appointed to seek ways to bring Calvin College under society control rather than ecclesiastical control.

One overture asks "that those who are teaching in Calvin College and Seminary contrary to Holy Scripture as we of the Christian Reformed church as a denomination believe Scripture ought to be interpreted, viz.: in harmony with our accepted Forms of Unity (Heid. Catechism, Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt) be forbidden from the promotion of such views."

There is an overture protesting the Catechism material published by the Synodical Committee on Education.

There is also an appeal against Dr. Kromminga's participation in the "interfaith ecumenical service" last November. This appeal is against the decision of the Board of Trustees which upheld Dr. Kromminga's action.

All in all, matters coming before this year's Synod are important for the maintenance of the Reformed faith in the Christian Reformed Church. It is our sincere hope that the Christian Reformed Church will maintain the truth of Scripture and purge herself of the errors which now trouble the church deeply — errors which to a considerable extent go back to the basic error of common grace adopted now some 43 years ago.

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## CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

# The Effects of the Fall

## The First Period: 80-250 A.D.

by Rev. H. Veldman

Hagenbach, writing on the "Effects of the Fall," writes as follows:

Death was the punishment which Jehovah had threatened to inflict upon the transgressors of his law. Nevertheless the act of transgression was not immediately succeeded by death, but by a train of evils which came upon both the man and the woman, introductory to death, and testifying that man had become mortal. Accordingly, both death and physical evils were considered as the effects of Adam's sin; thus, e.g. by Irenaeus and others. But opinions were not as yet fully developed concerning the moral depravity of each individual, and the sin of the race in general, considered as the effect of the first sin. They were so much disposed to look upon sin as the free act of man's will, that they could hardly conceive of it as simply a hereditary tendency, transmitted from one to another. The

sin of every individual, as found in experience, had its type in the sin of Adam, and consequently appeared to be a repetition of the first sin rather than its necessary consequence. In order to explain the mysterious power which drives man to evil, they had recourse to the influence of the demons, strong, but not absolutely compulsory, rather than to a total bondage of the will (as the result of original sin). Nevertheless we meet in the writings of Irenaeus with intimations of more profound views about the effects of the fall. Tertullian and Origen aided more definitely the theory of original sin, though on different grounds. Origen thought that souls were stained with sin in a former state, and thus enter into the world in a sinful condition. To this idea he added another, allied to the notions of Gnostics and Manichees, viz., that there is a stain in physical generation itself. According to Tertullian, the soul itself is propagated with all its defects, as matter is



propagated. The phrase "vitium originis," first used by him, is in perfect accordance with this view. But were far from considering inherent depravity as constituting accountability, and still farther from believing in the entire absence of human liberty.

Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with the Jew, Trypho, chapter 95, laments the universal corruption of mankind. In this chapter, entitled: "Christ Took Upon Himself The Curse Due To Us," he writes:

For the whole human race will be found to be under a curse. For it is written in the law of Moses, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.' And no one has accurately done all, nor will you venture to deny this; but some more and some less than others have observed the ordinances enjoined. But if those who are under this law appear to be under a curse for not having observed all the requirements, how much more shall all the nations appear to be under a curse who practice idolatry, who seduce youths, and commit other crimes? If, then, the Father of all wished His Christ for the whole human family to take upon Him the curses of all, knowing that, after He had been crucified and was dead, He would raise Him up, why do you argue about Him, who submitted to suffer these things according to the Father's will, as if He were accursed, and do not rather bewail yourselves?

Nevertheless, it appears that original sin, and the imputation of Adam's guilt are conceptions foreign to Justin Martyr. At least, although there may be and are men who completely corrupt, yet there are others who are characterized by moral feelings. This appears in the same dialogue with Trypho, chapter 93:

For God sets before every race of mankind that which is always and universally just, as well as all righteousness; and every race knows that adultery, and fornication, and homicide, and such like, are sinful; and though they all commit such practices, yet they do not escape from the knowledge that they act unrighteously whenever they so do, with the exception of those who are possessed with an unclean spirit, and who have been debased by education, by wicked customs, and by sinful institutions, and who have lost, or rather quenched and put under, their natural ideas. For we may see that such persons are unwilling to submit to the same things which they inflict upon others, and reproach each other with hostile consciences for the acts which they perpetrate.

It is also difficult to conclude from the following quotation of Justin Martyr that he understood fully the Scriptural truth of the imputation of Adam's guilt to all mankind and that Adam's corruption was transmitted to the entire human race, Chapter 88:

And then, when Jesus had gone to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, and when He had stepped into the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan; and when He came out of the water, the Holy Ghost lighted on Him like a dove, as the apostles of this very Christ of ours wrote. Now, we know that he did not go to the river because He stood in need of baptism, or of the descent of the Spirit like a dove; even as He submitted to be born and to be crucified, not because He needed such things, but because of the human race, which

from Adam had fallen under the power of death, and the guile of the serpent, and each one of which had committed personal transgression. For God, wishing both angels and men, who were endowed with freewill, and at their own disposal, to do whatever He had strengthened each to do, made them so, that if they chose the things acceptable to Himself, He would keep them free from death and from punishment; but that if they did evil, He would punish each as He sees fit.

Similar sentiments are also expressed by Justin Martyr in Chapter 124 of this dialogue. In this chapter he first quotes Ps. 82. And then he writes as follows:

But in the version of the Seventy it is written, "Behold, ye die like men, and fall like one of the princes," in order to manifest the disobedience of men, — I mean of Adam and Eve, — and the fall of one of the princes, i.e., of him who was called the serpent, who fell with a great overthrow, because he deceived Eve. But as my discourse is not intended to touch on this point, but to prove to you that the Holy Ghost reproaches men because they were made like God, free from suffering and death, provided that they kept His commandments, and were deemed deserving of the name of His sons, and yet, they, becoming like Adam and Eve, work out death for themselves; let the interpretation of the Psalm be held just as you wish, yet thereby it is demonstrated that all men are deemed worthy of becoming "gods," and of having power to become sons of the Highest; and shall be each by himself judged and condemned like Adam and Eve.

The same also applies to Clement of Alexandria. He, although admitting the universality of sin among men, does not seem to regard man as absolutely depraved. He sets forth the idea that men become noble and good by learning, as in Book I, chapter 6:

For nutriment, and the training which is maintained gentle, make noble natures; and noble natures, when they have received such training, become still better than before both in other respects, but especially in productiveness, as is the case with the other creatures. Wherefore it is said, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, and become wiser than it, which provideth much and varied food in the harvest against the inclemency of winter." Or go to the bee, and learn how laborious she is; for she, feeding on the whole meadow, produces one honey-comb. And if "thou prayest in the closet," as the Lord taught, "to worship in spirit," thy management will no longer be solely occupied about the house, but also about the soul, what must be bestowed on it, and how, and how much; and what must be laid aside and treasured up in it; and when it ought to be produced, and to whom. For it is not by nature, but by learning, that people become noble and good, as people also become physicians and pilots. We all in common, for example, see the vine and the horse. But the husbandman will know if the vine be good or bad at fruit-bearing; and the horseman will easily distinguish between the spiritless and the swift animal. But that some are naturally predisposed to virtue above others, certain pursuits of those, who are so naturally predisposed above others, show. But that perfection in virtue is not the exclusive property of those, whose natures are better, is proved, since also those who by nature are ill-disposed towards virtue, in obtaining suitable training, for the most part attain to excellence;



and, on the other hand, those whose natural dispositions are apt, become evil through neglect.

Clement also rejects the idea of original sin as already imputed to children, and he does not regard Ps. 51:5 and proof, which reads: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Irenaeus developed the doctrine of original sin and hereditary evil so fully, that the characteristic features of the western type of this doctrine may be fully recognized.

In his "Writings Against Heresies," Vol. IV, chapter 41, Irenaeus distinguishes between what men are by virtue of their creation by God and what they have become through their disobedience. He writes as follows:

Since therefore, all things were made by God, and since the devil has become the cause of apostasy to himself and others, justly does the Scripture always term those who remain in a state of apostasy "sons of the devil" and "angels of the wicked one" (maligni). For the word "son," as one before me has observed, has a twofold meaning: one is a son in the order of nature, because he was born a son; the other, in that he was made so, is reputed a son, although there be a

difference between being born so and being made so. For the first is indeed born from the person referred to; but the second is made so by him, whether as respects his creation or by the teaching of his doctrine. For when any person has been taught from the mouth of another, he is termed the son of him who instructs him, and the latter is called his father. According to nature, then—that is, according to creation, so to speak—we are all sons of God, because we have all been created by God. But with respect to obedience and doctrine we are not all the sons of God; those only are so who believe in Him and do His will. And those who do not believe, and do not obey His will, are sons and angels of the devil, because they do the works of the devil. And that such is the case He has declared in Isaiah: "I have begotten and brought up children, but they have rebelled against Me." And again, where He says that these children are aliens: "Strange children have lied unto Me." According to nature, then, they are His children, because they have been so created; but with regard to their works, they are not His children.

In this quotation Irenaeus distinguishes rather clearly, and does not hesitate to call man, as he is a sinner, a child of the devil.

## IN HIS FEAR—

# Virgins For Christ's Sake

(continued)

by Rev. J. A. Heys

There was a time when the murderer was looked upon as an evil man. Today he is often pitied more than the relatives of the murdered. And he is presented as the victim himself of an uncontrollable evil for which he is not responsible, namely, insanity.

Likewise the young man or young woman who commits the sin forbidden in the seventh commandment, instead of being considered to be a sinner is accused of no more than being guilty of a social indecency or evil and is presented as one who is to be pitied because he became a victim of some "body chemistry." The spiritual aspect of sins is talked away. That men have sinned against God is an old fashioned approach to modern problems and will bring no solution!

The sin forbidden by God in the seventh commandment is not forbidden today by men, but at best is frowned upon. If you can "get away with it," you are

still a very socially acceptable person. That is, of course, if you can get away with it before men. You never get away with it before God. If you get caught, there is a period of shame *before men* which you may have to experience. But more and more freedom for these evils is demanded and practiced, without any regard to the fact that God is still in heaven and not dead, as men would like to have Him be. The seventh commandment expresses His unchangeable will as surely as the sixth, which forbids murder. And the penalty for committing the sin forbidden by the seventh commandment is as great and identical to that of the sixth commandment. Sin is sin, and as James writes, whether we break this or that commandment, we break the whole law. It is not possible to love God while breaking the second table of the law any more than it is to do so while breaking the first table of the law.



Let it be stated here first of all that there is a difference between a public sin and making a sin public. The sin against the seventh commandment is usually one that must be confessed publicly before the church, not because it is worse than theft or murder or covetousness, but exactly because it is public and brings shame and reproach to the church of Christ. It becomes public because it bears visible and public fruit. And when it cannot be hid because it manifests itself in the birth of a child, or the coming birth of a child, it is a public sin, though it was committed, as usual, in secret and in darkness as a work of darkness. The church that does not demand public confession or public announcement of such confession invites all manner of increase in this evil not only, but advertises itself as one not concerned with the walk of life of its members and as one little concerned with the law of God, and consequently as one not moved by the love of God expressed in that law. It may look ever so merciful and "Christian" to overlook such sins, but it certainly is not. It shows no mercy to the rest of the congregation, and it is never mercy to encourage the rest of the young people in this sin, because the church council is sympathetic towards those who become victims of "body chemistry" and see little or no sin before God. Neither is it Christian. Christ never did that! He forgave the sin. And we want to say something about that presently. But He did not cover up any sin. Witness His public cleansings of the temple. This was a public sin, and He did not sit down and first write a few personal and private letters to the evil doers to warn them that they must get out! He did not quietly walk up to each one and whisper in his ears the fact that this was His Father's house and that they must take out their merchandize. He let the public know that the Church may not condone such things! He rebuked sin openly when the sin was openly committed. And even though Peter had run out weeping tears of repentance after his public denial of Christ, Jesus demanded of him a public confession before the Church, in the person of the disciples, at the Sea of Galilee. Peter had to answer three times before those before whom he publicly boasted of loving Him more than these. No, the Christian thing to do is to demand that people walk as Christians; and that means confess publicly sin that has been committed publicly or become publicly known because of the nature of that sin.

However, not every sin against the seventh commandment need be confessed *publicly*. As we said, there is a difference between public confession of sin and of making a sin public by confession. Lest we are misunderstood let it be stated first that every young man or young woman who commits the sin **MUST** confess that sin, regardless of whether he "gets caught" or not and regardless of whether the sin will become public or not. Sin must always be confessed. And the Pill does not eliminate the sin, even though it may eliminate the public nature of that sin. But the church is not to make public a sin that is not known. Which also means, of course, that once it has been confessed publicly, or the fact of the confession has been announced publicly, that sin is gone; and it is another sin when

the knowledge of that sin of adultery is spread perhaps even years and generations later by a gossipy, back-biting tongue!

As we wrote, there is forgiveness with God, and there ought, therefore, to be forgiveness with men. And forgiveness means receiving as though the sin has never been committed. The blood of Christ is able to make the scarlet white as snow. The cross that could promise a penitent malefactor immediate glory in heaven is able to save the adulterer and adulteress and to make us once again virgin's for Christ's sake. The adulterer and adulteress who have confessed their sins are more honourable than the thieves and murderers and liars and revolutionists who do not confess. This has always puzzled us in the church and has never looked to us as in His fear. Other sins have become public, and no confession is required. Why? A church member gets his name in the newspaper for theft, for breaking the fifth commandments in reckless driving or speeding (potential murder), or violating fishing and hunting laws. The world knows of these matters, and so does the church council and the congregation. Very often as far as traffic laws and hunting and fishing restrictions are concerned - which are laws imposed by those to whom GOD gives authority in these spheres - the violations are laughed about and the content of these episodes becomes the occasion for laughter and amusement. But they are not! They too are rebellion against God, Who is pleased to place men over us to rule us in every sphere and department of our life and with all the creatures of this earth. The young man or woman to whom God gives the grace to confess his sin of fornication is more honourable and pleasing in His sight than those who commit these other sins and laugh about them and make no confession private or public of having not walked in love before Him. And one who has fallen and risen in confession is a far stronger Christian than one who has never fallen and dares to boast of being incapable of falling. Peter was not strong in faith when he boasted of never forsaking Christ, even though all the other disciples would. But Peter was strong when he ran out weeping tears of repentance and publicly confessing by these tears his sorrow for his sin.

Confession is a good work, but it is far more pleasing in God's sight that we so walk that confession is not necessary. "To obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams." To remain a virgin for Christ's sake is far to be preferred to returning from adultery. Return we must, when we have departed. But it is far better to continue in good than to confess that we departed. A filled tooth is fine and may serve again for a long time. But the decay that demanded that filling was for a time painful and is not something to seek, even though it may be repaired. What a relief for the nearsighted to be able to have corrective lenses; but it is far better to be able to see well without them. God demands that we love Him uninterruptedly and not as a corrective measure. And confession does not pay for sin. It declares with God that it was sin. It honours and glorifies Him, but the better way to honour and glorify Him is not to commit



the sin in the first place.

In the day and age in which we live there is so much then that our young people need to avoid so as not to fall into the temptation and to continue as virgins, rather than to fall and confess the evil. That there is this element of "body chemistry" would be foolish to deny. That men were not so educated in the day when Moses was given this seventh commandment on Mt. Sinai that they knew anything about "body chemistry" does not take away the fact that it is there, and always was there. In itself this body chemistry is a wonderful function of these earthly tabernacles in which we dwell. And we are not simply referring to this body chemistry that sometimes leads to the sin condemned in the seventh commandment, but the whole amazing process that controls all the systems of the body, the digestive, circulatory, excretory as well as the reproductive systems. As we said, men were not so "educated" in the days of Moses, that is, as far as the workings of the various members and organs in our bodies, but they surely were spiritually educated and knew that God had wrought all this wonder and power in our bodies. Thus the psalmist says in Psalm 139:14, "I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Body chemistry being what it is, and there being in us as well the lust of the eyes and of the flesh, and therefore the desire to use our flesh for self rather than in His fear, in His service, and as virgins for Christ's sake, the one matter that above all bears watching by our covenant young people is bodily contact! There is enough for the eye to see in this lewd world to activate this body chemistry, that bodily contact must be watched as never before. The account of Ham's evil in connection with Noah's in Genesis 9 ought to be a warning and indicate to us what the sight of a naked

body can do to this body chemistry. Adam and Eve also became aware of their nakedness as soon as they had sinned. But Leviticus 18:6-19 is likewise a warning that is necessary not simply because of body chemistry but because of that lust of the flesh and of the eyes. To this may also be added Leviticus 20:17-21. All this falls in the category of that of which we spoke last time and is referred to in the Heidelberg Catechism in its explanation of what is demanded and forbidden in the seventh commandment. The Catechism, you will recall, condemned also that which "entices men thereto." This usually is what the eye sees and that to which the eye is attracted by the seducer. It can, however, be words and gestures. But the eye plays an important part in any attempt at seduction and temptation. Sad to say this is often that which attracts the covenant young man to an unbelieving young woman. It is not without good reason that God moved Moses to write in Genesis 6:2, "That the sons of God (the covenant young men) saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." And Delilah, the Philistine harlot, became such an enticement for Samson.

But matters become "worse" with bodily contact, and let us note that "worse" in quotation marks is due to the fact that we are speaking of the sin. This body chemistry through sight or touch is not in itself sinful but part of that fearful and wonderful way in which we were made. It is part of GOD'S marvellous work. But for the unmarried both of these are to be controlled in His fear and, the Lord willing, we want to say something about these matters in the dance, courtship, the teen-age date and the like. For our covenant seed must remain virgins for Christ's sake. And their bodies must be living sacrifices to God as their reasonable service.

## TRYING THE SPIRITS—

# Dispensationalism and The True Zion

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

The undersigned was born, baptized and raised in a Presbyterian church where Dispensationalism had crept in and imbued him with its teaching. By it he became acquainted with a certain class of "Bible teachers" who boast that they understand, interpret and teach the Bible *literally*. They emphasize this in such a way as to give the impression that they especially for this reason meet one of the principal tests of orthodoxy. They point out that by a "literal" interpre-

tation they mean, as the dictionary shows, one "according to the letter; real, not figurative." At this point we may save ourselves much confusion if we see that such texts as Rom. 2:27-29; 7:6 and II Cor. 3:6 do not apply in this definition, as the distinction between "letter" and "spirit" is not analogous to "literal" and "figurative." But we do not care much for the dictionary use here and the word "literal," not because Dispensationalists employ the term, but because it



is inadequate. For a passage of Scripture may be taken "literally" and still refer to that which is "real" or that which is "figurative." For example, the words, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6) surely are to be taken literally. Are they not literally true? But are they to be understood in the natural sense or the figurative sense? Evidently the latter! So when it is said, "She *literally* sailed into the room," what sense is intended? Obviously the *figurative*! But it is a mistake of the dispensationalists to suppose that the so called "literal" interpretation necessarily calls for something *material* or *natural*. For a comparison of Isa. 54:1 with Gal. 4:26f will prove otherwise.

We therefore rather prefer to distinguish between the *natural* and the *spiritual*. Scripture makes this distinction (I Cor. 15:46). The distinction is not that of the "figurative" and "real" ("literal"), but that of the natural and spiritual. To illustrate, the word "the reproach of the Christ" (Heb. 11:26) we are certainly to believe literally, but what is the sense intended in the words? a natural or a spiritual one? Plainly the latter, for "the Christ" here, according to the principle of parallelism refers to "the people of God" (v. 25) and so means the Church, the Body of Christ. To enlarge a little, Jesus said, "the Scripture cannot be broken." Without question we take those words literally. Yet we understand that Jesus did not have something material or natural in mind. He was talking about the infallibility of the truth. Where the Jews went wrong, and where the Dispensationalists perpetuate their error, is not in understanding the Scripture literally, but in interpreting it naturally where not only unwarranted, but where such an interpretation renders it altogether impossible to be understood. This is plainly delineated in Jesus' words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again" (John 2:19). The Jews understood this in the natural sense, as applying to that material building sited on one of the two peaks of Zion, Mt. Moriah. "But He spake of the temple of His body." Just so, when we read that "there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels," (Rev. 12:7) it ought to be perfectly clear that no mere natural meaning is intended, but spiritual ideas are in view. For "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12)

So, the Dispensationalists have been called extreme "literalists." But they naturalize Scripture more than they literalize it. The Scripture does not need to be literalized. It is already so. What the Bible needs is proper interpretation. When, for example, we read of "Zion," much more is meant than merely a mountain in Palestine. Naturalize the term "Zion," and a most glorious truth of the gospel is reduced to an absurdity. This will be evident in the following. Clarence Larkin of Foxchase, Philadelphia, than whom there is no one more dispensational, taught that the Mt. Zion of Rev. 14:1 is not "of the earthly Jerusalem, but of the heavenly Jerusalem, of which Paul (sic) speaks in Heb.

12:22, 23." (*The Book of Revelation*, p. 131) But William R. Newell, also a very strict Dispensationalist, takes the Mt. Zion here to be the "seat of the glorious reign" of Christ and the saints in the historical Jerusalem (*The Book of the Revelation*, p. 209). In the interest of adhering as strictly as possible to the so called "literal" interpretation (for he maintains that "the number 144,000 is literal," i.e., strictly arithmetical) Newell interprets, "And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the Mt. Zion" to mean that "the Lamb is seen standing on Mt. Zion before He actually comes there as in Revelation 19." This means, to be consistent with literalism, that the Lamb is seen on Mt. Zion "literally" and bodily before He comes there literally and bodily in the final and visible coming of Revelation 19.

Mt. Zion originally was a heathen Canaanite stronghold. David conquered it and fortified it. There he raised up the tabernacle of David and placed in it the ark of the covenant. So that here on Zion the church becomes centered. Not in the tabernacle of Moses, then at Gibeon, but in the tabernacle of David *Gentiles* were also gathered. Proof: Psalm 87! Eminently suited is Zion to be the symbol of the Church of God!

Let the reader take a concordance and trace the words "Sion" and "Zion" throughout the Scripture. He will find something like this: "But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which He loved." (Ps. 78:68) "And out of Zion it shall be said, 'This and that man was born in her: and the Highest Himself shall establish her.'" (87:5) "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time is come." (102:13) Expressed here is God's love and mercy upon the regenerated elect, not dotage upon a natural hilly locale in Palestine. The idea is not only meaningless, it is pitiable, as the following reveals. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (132:13f)

Many passages in the O.T. reveal that "Zion" is a designation of the people of God. "Remember *Thy congregation* which Thou hast purchased of old: the rod of Thine inheritance, which Thou hast redeemed; this *mount Zion*, wherein Thou hast dwelt." (74:2) Again notice Zion is a people. "*Zion* heard, and was glad, and *the daughters of Judah* rejoiced because of Thy judgments, O Lord." (97:8) "I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto *Zion*, *Thou art My people*." (Isa. 51:16) "They that trust in the Lord shall be as *mount Zion*, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about *His people* from henceforth, even forever." (Ps. 125:1) The real preaching agency in the world is the congregation (qahal) of the Lord, the *church* (ekklisia). "O *Zion*, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the highest mountain; O Jerusalem that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, but not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!'" (Isa. 40:6)



This is all in harmony with the interpretive passage in Hebrews 12:22, "But ye have come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the firstborn." Who have come already to Mt. Zion? According to this epistle, the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," (3:1) that is, true, regenerated Christians.

When we read "the Lord hath chosen Zion" (Ps. 132:13) the meaning is that God chose a people. When we read that God "dwelleth in Zion," (9:11), it is the O.T. way of referring to the "habitation of God through the Spirit," (Eph. 2:22; see I Tim. 3:15) "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." (87:2) Compare this with "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18) and "Christ loved the church." (Eph. 5:25) The mere natural hill of Zion in the earthly Jerusalem shall be burned up in that final universal conflagration (II Pet. 3). But the spiritual Zion "abideth forever." (Ps. 125:1) Hence, it is called "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," and "the perfection of beauty." (48:2; 50:2, 5) It is the place where God's elect are new-born. "And of Zion it shall be said, 'This and that man was born in her.'" (87:5) It is the sphere of election. "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." (I

Pet. 2:6) It was the place not only of glad tidings, but of salvation. "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people," (Ps. 14:7) an aspiration that is surely realized (Isa. 52:7), for it is the place of divine blessing: "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion," (Ps. 128:5) and no less than the blessing of eternal life: "as the dew of Hermon that descendeth upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (133:3) Zion indeed enjoyed salvation! "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness," (Isa. 1:27) "The Redeemer shall come to Zion." (59:20) It is also the place of the Redeemer's royal throne, which he shall occupy not for a mere millennium, but "the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever." (Mic. 4:7)

In the N.T. Zion is called "the city of the living God." In the O.T. Zion is called the city of God. He is the Builder of it. He inhabits it. He exercises His sovereign rule there. His elect Gentile children there "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints." (Eph. 2:19) Their citizenship is in the heavenly Jerusalem, where they principally already are. Zion, then, is *spiritual*, and in it is all the free and sovereign love of God made ours and ready for the faith of God's elect to appropriate and enjoy!

## THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

# The Elder's Task

(continued)

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

*Counsellors (Continued)*

We do not exaggerate when we say that the major task of the elder in the church is that of counselling. This does not mean that he is called upon at set times to sit down in conference, to deliberate and advise with regard to various problems that arise in the life of the members of the church and even in the church at large. Although this function is certainly not to be excluded, it may not be construed as the limitation of his task.

In a sense the life of the elder is in itself a giving of advice, good or bad. There is an adage, "Actions speak louder than words," which has considerable application here. The elders of the church ought to realize that their conduct is expected to be exemplary

for all Christians. Not infrequently we hear of members of the church, arguing in defense of questionable practices, say, "What's so wrong with that? The elders do it!" Any further attempt to convince such members of wrongdoing is futile, for if the elders do it, it must have the sanction of the church. In this respect the elders have a strong influence but also carry a very great responsibility. Always let it be remembered that one's conduct holds more potential advisory power than one's opinion, and especially when the latter is not in accord with the former, its strength is greatly weakened.

Counselling is soul-care. No one would question the fact that the souls of the people of God are often



disturbed, tried, troubled and even confused in this world of sin, and often therefore in need of the good advice of the elder. By counselling from the Word of God the elder can be a means to establish confidence, courage and hope in the troubled soul. Directing the soul to Him Who is "the Truth, the Way and the Life" is a glorious and important task. We do not minimize all of this when we point to the danger that always lurks of undermining and destroying the effectiveness of this work by the impartation of poor advice through unbecoming conduct on the part of an elder. The good elder not only holds fast the profession of faith; he lives it, and in so doing he gives an irrefutable testimony to all who know him.

Rev. R. Heynen, pastor of the Pine Rest Christian Psychopathic Hospital, wrote a little pamphlet entitled, "Guidelines For Elders." In this pamphlet he stresses the importance of the elder's work as a counselor. In our present article we will share some of his guidelines with our readers.

Defining the elder's task, the author quotes Dr. B. Wurth as follows: "In the care of souls we are concerned with an encounter, an encounter between us as elders with a person who needs our help, in the hope that this interpersonal encounter will be conducive to the great encounter of God with this person, and of this person with God." He then adds, "It is not enough to tell a person with a great problem, 'Just pray about it'. You must also try as a person to enter into the problem of this person and try to help him find a solution. But as an elder, you also represent the church. You are not just serving as a social worker or a non-Christian counselor. You become involved in the lives of the members of the church because of the position to which you have been chosen. So you use the best possible human means to assist the person, but your goal and aim always must be the spiritual benefit and spiritual growth of the members of the flock of Christ."

In this role the elder needs to exercise a great deal of patience and sympathy but he also needs "empathy," which means that you put yourself in the place of others. Yet so that he is not carried away, but only that he may really understand the problem and be an invincible aid in working toward a solution.

Discussing the methods of counseling, the above author mentions three approaches, admitting that every situation must determine which method is to be chosen and in many cases a combination of methods may be advisable. The author is critical of the three methods he mentions. By the "Warning and Advising Method" he points out "the only result that you can hope to achieve is to change the superficial behavior of people. You do not solve any problems. At best this method gives the elder the feeling that he has done his duty, and little more."

Because it fails to take into account the most important element in counseling, the "Intellectual Reasoning and Arguing Method" is also to be discouraged. Nothing is gained this way. Many will argue just for the sake of arguing but when all is said and done the situation is unchanged.

The third method the author rejects is the "Authoritarian Approach" in which the elder assumes the "father role" or "plays God" and assumes the position that he alone is capable of deciding the course of behavior for the members of the church. This method usually succeeds only in building up strong resentment. The one who is in need of counsel is not brought to see and to feel the need of his changing his course of action and adopting a different pattern for his life, and if such is actually the case, he cannot really be helped in his problem until he is brought to see that. Although the elder certainly is vested with the authority of his office, he must not use this as a coercion in rendering advice. This will weaken rather than strengthen his counsel.

From here the author of the above named pamphlet proceeds to outline a method of counseling which "is not intended to be a prescription as to 'how to do it', but lays down certain concepts which we hope you will find helpful in your work." The following points are enumerated in his outline:

(1) Learn the Art of Listening. Let the burdened one unburden himself and let him do this with the minimum of interference. Let him talk freely. Listen carefully and often you will discover the hidden cause of the problem.

(2) Be Alert to the Emotional Overtones. Here to be remembered is that what is said is not alone important but also *how* it is said. The author tells a story of a certain young man who came to see an elder and said, "I can't understand this matter of God's Providence." So the elder immediately started explaining this doctrine to him. When this was finished the young man got up to leave and said "My girl friend quit me last night." The elder had missed the whole point of the interview because he did not wait to find out what really was troubling the young man.

(3) Counseling also Includes Instruction. The author suggests three kinds of instruction: on an emotional level, on an intellectual level, or on a practical level. He cautions that none of this should be given in an authoritarian way but suggest the more effective method of giving the person counseled a choice of various alternatives or to put your instruction in an interrogative form. "Don't you think that it would be well to try it this way?" And in this connection must be kept in mind, as we have stressed before, that the counsel must be based on and in accord with the Word of God. It is best, whenever possible, to let the Word of God speak for itself.

(4) Prayer often Can Be a Strengthening Force in Counseling. We quote from the pamphlet here: "Not every visit or session need be closed with prayer. It is well to ask the person if he desires prayer. If the person requests it, it should be used. If the person should refuse, it would be sacrilegious to use it. Be sure that your prayer is genuine and that it is not just a means of getting in the last word to the person at a time when he cannot very well object. The prayer should fit the particular problem with which you have been dealing, and should not be long. Remember that



the great purpose of your visit is to encourage the person's relationships with God."

(5) The Goal of Counseling. "The purpose of counseling is not just to make the person feel more comfortable or to give him peace of heart. There are times when it is needful to stir up the person's feelings. Some should become a bit anxious and develop feelings of guilt. The real goal must be to lead the person to greater emotional and spiritual maturity."

From all the above it is evident that the work of the elder that we are now discussing is not an easy work. Yet the difficulty of the task must not cause us to shy away from it, but rather, realizing our sufficiency also in these things is in God, we must use the most effective means, do our best and leave the results in His gracious hands.

#### *Disciplinarians*

"Unto you is given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven."

"What you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven".

This forms the basis for that which is written in the Form of Ordination of Elders, describing the third and last part of their office. We quote:

"It is also the duty particularly to have regard unto the doctrine and conversation of the ministers of the Word, to the end that all things may be directed to the edification of the Church; and that no strange doctrine be taught, according to that which we read, Acts 20, where the apostle exhorteth to watch diligently against the wolves, which might come into the sheepfold of Christ; for the performance of which, the elders are in duty bound diligently to search the Word of God, and continually be meditating on the mysteries of faith."

Although no specific mention is made here of the keys of the kingdom or their use, the implication is clearly that the elders are to use this disciplinary power in the church to maintain purity of doctrine and

life. The purpose of the key power in the church is four-fold. First, it aims to keep in the church that which belongs there. Secondly, it purposes to put out of the church that which is within but belongs without. Thirdly, this power is designed to keep out of the church that which is without and belongs there. Finally, the key power draws into the church true believers who are still without. Thus must the elders use this power diligently and faithfully in taking heed to the flock of Christ and watching over God's heritage. They must safeguard the church against the intrusion of wolves who, often in sheep's clothing, creep in to devour the lambs. This supervision, though over the entire congregation, must begin with the ministers of the Word and must be directed not only at the doctrine which they preach in the pulpit but also the manner of life they live. The elders of the church have the right to demand that the ministers of the Word conduct themselves as good examples unto the flock. And if this is not the case, the elders must take action to depose them from their office for the sake of the welfare of the church. If this is not done, the church will suffer greatly and in due time reap the sad consequences of this neglect.

Requisite to the faithful performance of this duty is a sound and thorough knowledge of the Word of God on the part of the elders. Continually they are to meditate on the mysteries of faith. Diligently they are to search the Word. It is indeed a sad omen to find men, who are elders in the church, neglecting such opportunities for searching the Word as are afforded in our Men's Societies. Can we say that a man who has no interest in the activities of the Men's Society in the church lacks one of the essential qualifications of an elder?

Indeed, the task of the elder is an exalted one. The responsibility is very great. The performance of this duty is often extremely difficult but the encouragement may be found in the promise: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." (I Tim. 5:17)

### **SPECIAL FEATURE—**

## **The Importance of Maintaining the Three Forms of Unity**

*by Rev. J. Kortering*

The church and the world are spiritually antithetical. They are spiritual opposites. The calling of the church is to live in the midst of the world. Her calling is not physical or spiritual isolation, but rather that of witness. She must be in the world, but not of

the world. In the process of fulfilling her calling, it often happens that the church is influenced by this evil world. This I believe is the plague which besets the church today. This is the root cause of the problems which we face.



We're living in the "instant generation." Young people have adopted their own description; they call it the "Go-go generation." We adults are too sophisticated to admit that we are affected by the spirit of youth, yet the inevitable has happened. We eat our instant oatmeal for breakfast, we guzzle down our instant soup for lunch, we stash away our instant potatoes for dinner, and in between we sip our instant coffee and tea. Barely have our womenfolk learned to prepare one type of food and another is on the market. Canned foods are practically obsolete. It appears as if our freezers will soon give way to cupboards full of dehydrated foods. We are forever hurrying up and finding something new.

This "spirit" has seeped into the fibre of the church. The result is that what calls itself church is now busy producing what I want to call "instant theology." Today, any man with a bachelor or doctor's degree can sit in his ivory tower of theoretical thought and spin a few theories, compose them in presentable form, rush into print and make a hit under the pretense of "theology." The history of dogma and the particular position which the church has taken in centuries past mean nothing in today's world. We're living in our day and what the church had to say in the past cannot by any stretch of the imagination be relevant today. Only a mind thoroughly conditioned by our twentieth century can produce a "theology" significant to the modern mind. This I call "instant theology." And the peculiar point is that barely has the ink dried before the very same person has another book ready to print with the very opposite or different ideas. In the quest to be new and up-to-date, modern "theology" has lost her foundation.

This "spirit" has begun to make its impact upon the Reformed church world. There now arises within the sphere of the churches which have their common roots in the Reformation of Luther and especially of Calvin an attitude of historical indifference. Reformed tradition means nothing to them; they are thoroughly imbued with "instant theology." They are cut loose from the moorings of the Reformed faith and set adrift, being cast about by every wind of doctrine.

This fact becomes most evident by the attitude of many Reformed ministers, professors, and lay members toward our Reformed confessions. One gets the impression that there are many within the sphere of the Reformed churches that are ashamed of their confessions. They openly begin to criticize them, they teach views that are blatantly contrary to them, and even begin to cry aloud for a nullification of the Formula of Subscription.

I'm glad that the League of Protestant Reformed Men's Societies is aware of this situation. Evidently you have been alert enough to sense this tendency, and you believe that something is wrong, and therefore you desire to be instructed in the importance of maintaining our Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription. Since this is the subject you asked me to speak upon, I'll divide the material into three aspects: First, the significance of the Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription. Secondly, the attack

that is made upon them. And finally, the urgency to resist this attack and maintain them.

The way you have formulated the subject indicates to me that you understand that the Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription have value. You do not question this, you *assume* this in the subject you have chosen. You say it is important that we maintain them. This importance is subject of course to their value. We believe that the importance of maintaining the Three Forms of Unity rests exactly in their *great* value. This we must see from the very outset.

The Three Forms of Unity are made up of three confessions. The oldest of the three is the Netherlands or Belgic Confession. This confession was written by Guido de Bres in 1561. The faithful children of God who had followed in the footsteps of the reformers were undergoing the convulsive strains of persecution at this time. They were dying for the faith once delivered unto the saints. DeBres wrote this confession as a formulation of the faith, enabling the children of the Reformation to know the truth and maintain it even unto death. The second of the Three Forms is known as the Heidelberg Catechism. Two men were commissioned to write this catechism as a basis for instructing the members of the churches in the Netherlands. Zacharius Ursinus and Casper Olevianus presented the finished catechism to the Synod of Heidelberg in 1563, and it was subsequently adopted as the official textbook of instruction. The third of the Three Forms is the Canons of Dordt. This confession was composed and adopted by the great Synod of Dordt in 1618-1619 as an answer to the five points of the Remonstrance or the Arminians.

These three confessions are called the Three Forms of Unity because they were adopted as the expression of the faith that united the Reformed churches. They are three in number. Taken together they perfectly compliment each other. The Netherlands Confession is a dogmatical summary of the truth, The Heidelberg Catechism is arranged according to the significance of the doctrines of the Word of God for our daily life, and the Canons of Dordt is a formulation of the heart of the gospel over against the insipient error of Arminianism that had threatened the church in the past and continues to do even unto the present.

Added to the Three Forms of Unity is the Formula of Subscription. Prior to the early 1600's the church simply insisted that professors and ministers sign their names to the confessions themselves. However, already in 1608 the Classis of Alkmaar entertained a proposal to formulate a positive statement of agreement which should be signed by office-bearers. The Synod of Dordt likewise followed this direction and drew up what is now called the Formula of Subscription, which demands that all professors, ministers, elders and deacons agree with the Three Forms of Unity. This Formula places office bearers in the church before the duty to maintain the Three Forms of Unity.

The Three Forms of Unity are of great value to the Reformed Churches for four reasons.

First, they are a brief, systematic formulation of



the truth of the Word of God. Let me emphasize this; they are not *extra*-Biblical. There is nothing in the Reformed Confessions that is new, that one cannot find in the pages of the Bible. Rather, they are a systematic arrangement of the truths which are taught in the Bible. Their basis and value rests upon the Word of God itself.

Secondly, they are an expression of *Reformed* thought. The Reformation movement had begun under Luther and reached its forte in Calvin. This movement spread over Europe and especially to the Netherlands. The Synod of Dordt which adopted these Three Forms of Unity may be considered a Reformed international Synod. The children of the Calvinistic Reformation may find their faith articulated in these three confessions. This means that they are Reformed over against Roman Catholicism, over against other branches of Protestantism, and over against every cult and sect that may arise in the world. These Three Forms of Unity express what the Reformed christian believes to be the truth of the Word of God.

Thirdly, these three confessions were formulated during the golden age of the Reformed churches. That's of value, tremendous value. God had providentially delivered the faithful church from apostate Rome. In the process of reformation, the spiritual senses of the believers were sharpened. The battle over the truth had waged long and hard. The calumniators had assailed the truth by presenting every argument, but the faithful reformers had answered by slashing with the Sword of the Spirit undauntedly. This golden age was marked by two things. The one thing is that Scripture had a proper place in the mind of the reformers. For centuries it was lying on the shelf collecting dust; now at long last they could pour over its contents, drink of its fountain, and be thoroughly imbued with its message. One cannot help detecting this in the writings of Calvin, which influenced the writing of the Reformed Confessions. The other is that being Biblical, their thoughts were faithful to the Word of God and their theology was God-centered. They pondered the great truths in the glorious light of the pre-eminence of God. God is the center of truth and this had to be maintained at all cost. This I consider to be the distinct aspect of the golden age of Reformed thought that are manifest in the confessions.

Finally, the Holy Spirit so directed the things in the church that these Three Forms of Unity have been preserved and handed to us to be used by us. The Reformed church of the twentieth century did not have to discover these confessions; they were handed to us. They are part of our heritage. When we recognize this we clearly understand that their value rests in making use of them. They don't serve the cause of the church

lying idly on a shelf. What better means of instruction have we than by pondering the Word of God and studying the Word with the assist of the Three Forms of Unity. By preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism, by studying the Netherlands Confession in the catechism class, by discussing the Canons of Dordt in society we put to use this Reformed heritage. Through this instruction the truth is preserved from generation to generation. Only in this way can there be proper development in the truth; we begin where our forefathers left off. Holding high the banner of our Reformed confessions we testify to the whole world that this is what we believe to be the truth of the Word of God, and all who see this banner may know the truth and either reject it or walk with us.

The Reformed Confessions have great value to us.

It stands to reason that the Formula of Subscription is valuable to the extent that the Three Forms of Unity themselves are of value. Our Reformed fore-fathers recognized the significant place which office-bearers have in the church. The pulpit may be a tremendous influence for good or for evil. The same holds true for the seminary; professors have a powerful influence on the entire history of the church, they instruct future ministers, and that instruction may be either for good or evil. Elders and deacons have significant influence in the local congregations. Consequently, it was in the good interest of the church that the Synod of Dordt adopted a Formula of Subscription which had to be signed by all office-bearers. With their signature they promise four things. First, that they agree with the confessions and believe that they properly express the truth of the Word of God. Secondly, that they will teach and defend these confessions. Notice, office bearers agree to make use of the Three Forms of Unity and not let them lie idly on the shelf. Still more, they even promise to defend them if anyone should attack them. Thirdly, they promise to refute the errors that are enumerated in the Reformed confessions and if anyone should teach the errors that are condemned in them, they as office bearers will expose them as being un-reformed and contrary to Scripture. Finally, office bearers by signing the Formula of Subscription promise that they will be faithful to their promise and if any doubt arises in their mind, before publicly contradicting the Reformed confessions, they will request an examination by the Classis or Synod.

By signing the Formula of Subscription, office bearers promise to maintain the Three Forms of Unity. This, too, is of great value.

(Editor's Note: This special article is the text of an address to the spring meeting of the Men's League: it is being published in two installments, the second of which will appear in the July issue.)

#### CLASSIS EAST MEETING

Classis East will meet, D.V., in Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church on Wednesday, July 5, at 9 a.m. Consistories will take note of this in the appointment of delegates.

M. Schipper, S.C.

#### STAFF MEETING

The Standard Bearer Staff will meet Monday evening, June 12 at 8 o'clock in First Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. All Staff members please take note of this meeting.

Rev. J. A. Heys, sec'y



## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

May 15, 1967

The '66-'67 Lecture Series came to termination on the evening of May 11 with Rev. G. Van Baren giving the concluding lecture on, "Perseverance of the Saints" the fifth of the famous Five Points of Calvinism. The speaker examined that concept from three aspects, its essence, its basis and its comfort. He postulated the elemental fact that the Saints (Separated Ones) *persevere* unto the end because they are *preserved* by the same God Who chose them; that all of the Infinite Attributes of God are the basis for this truth; and, that when saints see themselves as sinners they are immeasurably comforted with the blessed truth that God will, for Jesus sake, preserve them unto the Day when they shall be lifted up to meet Him at His Coming.

This series of lectures was characterically Scripture-orientated. As Mexican food has gained its reputation by being liberally sprinkled with spicy condiments, so this final lecture, too, was liberally spiced with quotations from Holy Writ, giving it its flavor; that of *The Truth of God's Word*.

Special music was a vocal duet by Messers C. Jonker and A. Dykstra who sang a versification of Psalm 51; Mrs. C. Lubbers, organist for the whole series, was in her accustomed place at the console, accompanying the singing as well as performing some beautiful solo work for the prelude and postlude. Rev. C. Lubbers closed the meeting with a prayer of thanksgiving to our God Who so greatly privileged us in the past season. There were some empty seats, not surprisingly in these days of nonchalance in respect to the basic doctrines of the Church, but those in attendance were privileged to hear sound lectures by sound expositors of the Scriptures whose theme throughout was, "To God Be The Glory". It is hoped that the Mission Board will schedule a new series for next winter and that the dates will not coincide with the winter's worst storms as did the majority of the past series.

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Holland's new pastor preached his inaugural sermon Sunday morning, April 30. Rev. Heys chose the passage of God's Word, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom", one in a series of admonitions penned by the Apostle Paul to the Colossians. Fitting no less to the latter-day-saints in Holland, Michigan, than to the early Christians in Colosse, Asia Minor.

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As is our custom, all our churches met in Divine worship services on Ascension Day to commemorate the day when our Lord left the terrestrial to enter the celestial sphere. Rather than to take the earthly viewpoint Rev. Van Baren led his congregation into viewing it from Heaven's vantage point, sharing the joy of the heavenly host which the "Lamb that had been slain" occasioned at His reception into the company of the elders and Him that sat upon the throne when it was announced that He alone was worthy of opening the

Book of God's council—as we find this account portrayed in Revelations 5. And so, the annual celebrations which begin Dec. 25 and conclude May 14, commemorating the work of redemption accomplished by our Savior, is again ended, the final culmination of which we eagerly anticipate when we plead, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly".

\* \* \*

The Young People's Annual Spring Banquet was held in Grand Rapids May 9 with young folks coming from Holland, Kalamazoo, Oak Lawn and South Holland to help fill the Oakdale Church parlors to capacity. Rev. Kortering, Hope Church's pastor, in his address provided some worthwhile directional signals in developing the banquet theme, "Guidance of the Youth". The program included a male quartette consisting of Don Jonker, Gary Bylsma, Bob Velthouse and Jim Huizenga, and a violin solo by Mary Klop accompanied by Anita Clason, both from Kalamazoo. Surely, if ever Covenant Youth seek for guidance it is now, a time of violence in all spheres of life when it is becoming increasingly evident that, "the wickedness of man was (is) great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was (is) only evil continually". Pastors, elders, teachers, leaders and parents: this responsibility of guidance rests upon you!

\* \* \*

The Society of Protestant Reformed Secondary Education gathered in annual meeting May 10 and adopted the budget proposed by the Board, planning to erect the building this year and opening the doors in September of '68. This project is contingent upon the receipt of sufficient funds which are not yet in evidence but are hopefully anticipated. An administrator has been retained to expedite the work involving the details of personnel, curriculum, supplies, etc. Three new board members were elected and the work goes on with the blessing of the members of the society who, in effect, say "Go with God".

\* \* \*

The Sunday School children of First Church have contributed the funds to purchase 200 Bibles to be distributed to our Jamaican friends. The opportunity to contribute to this cause is open to all our people, and if you would like to donate Bibles or Psalters send them to Rev. G. Lubbers, 2612 Central Ave., Wyoming, Mich. 49509. Two hundred Bibles seems quite a large number, but there is need for many more, and many, many Psalters will also be appreciated by the Protestant Reformed people in Jamaica.

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In a May 15 congregational meeting First Church approved a substantial remodeling and repair proposal by the consistory. After nearly 40 years of service the property is in need of much work to bring it up to its value, which can now be realized.

. . . see you in church

J.M.F.