

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Meditation: Evidence of the Holy Spirit

Editorial: The Committee on the Atonement

David in Hiding

The Elder's Task

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THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July and August

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association

Editor -- Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, 1842 Plymouth Terrace, S.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506. Contributions will be limited to 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten. Copy deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month.

All church news items should be addressed to Mr. J. M. Faber, 1123 Cooper, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Announcements and Obituaries with the \$2.00 fee included must be in by the 5th or the 20th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively, send to Mr. James Dykstra see address below.

All matters relative to subscriptions should be addressed to Mr. James Dykstra, 1326 W. Butler Ave., S.E. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Renewal: Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Subscription price: \$5.00 per year

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Second Class Postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan

CALL TO SYNOD

By decision of the last Synod, the Consistory of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of 1580 Ferndale S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan, notifies the churches that the 1967 Synod will convene on Wednesday, June 7, 9:00 a.m., in the above mentioned church, D.V.

The pre-synodical service will be held on Tuesday, June 6, at 8:00 p.m. at Hope Church. Rev. G. Van Baren is scheduled to deliver the sermon.

Synodical delegates are requested to gather with the consistory before the service.

Those in need of lodging are asked to contact Dewey Engelsma, 1310 Kenowa S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49504; telephone 453-2578.

Consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church
Rev. J. L. Kortering, President
Dewey Engelsma, Clerk

MEDITATION—

Evidence of the Holy Spirit

by Rev. J. Kortering

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13

The lambs were in the den of lions.

Peter and John were in the midst of the Sanhedrin, the same group that had condemned Jesus to death.

Yet, they were not afraid. Undaunted they spoke concerning the greatness of God in raising Jesus from the dead. With irrepressible zeal they bubbled over with the message of salvation. Even threats could not dampen their joy.

There is only one thing that can account for this: the Person of the Holy Spirit dwelt in them. When God dwells in His people, His presence becomes evident. The glory of His name shines forth as He kindles in them the flame of life.

Pentecost had produced quite a change.

The resurrection of Christ had made them perplexed. During the dark hours of the Jewish Sabbath,

as the body of Jesus lay in the heart of the earth, the disciples had gathered together in the upper room. A dark cloud of gloom hovered over them. Even during the early days of the resurrection, the doors remained locked for fear of the Jews. The perplexed disciples struggled to understand what this was all about. Gradually this cloud evaporated, as the living Christ explained to them the necessity of His suffering and death as the way to His exaltation. During these forty days Christ expounded to them the importance of His finished work and how this related to His kingdom which was in heaven.

When Christ ascended up into heaven, the disciples understood that something was still going to happen that would sharpen their spiritual vision and give them understanding. They were commanded to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit.

Ten days later the Holy Spirit came to them. The exalted Christ had not forgotten His people that still remained upon the earth. As our great Intercessor, He prayed the Father for the Comforter Whom He would send to His beloved church that was upon the earth. The Father answered this prayer and crowned the work of the obedient servant with the gift of His Spirit.

When the day of Pentecost was fully come the 120 disciples were gathered together in the early morning hour. Suddenly the Spirit was poured out upon them. His presence was demonstrated by profound signs; the cloven tongues as of fire, the sound as of a mighty rushing wind, and the disciples began to speak in tongues.

A marked change overtook the disciples. The perplexed and confused minds were released from the bonds of doubt, and they understood things as they had never done before. The fear that held them in subjection dissipated, and the locked doors were thrown open so thousands could listen to them preach. It was the dawn of a better day in the history of the church.

The moment the church glories in victory the enemies of the truth plot destruction. The fire of evil passion was kindled anew in the hearts of the Sanhedrin. They were determined that those doors would be locked once again and the mouths of the disciples stopped.

In the words of our context we observe that Peter and John were taken from prison to be tried. On the previous day they had gone to the temple to worship. At the Gate Beautiful they had encountered a man that had been lame from birth. Daily his friends brought him to this place in order that he might beg alms from the worshippers. Peter had fixed his eyes upon this man and by the forceful words, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk," he was healed. A large multitude gathered and Peter preached to them, warning them that this was accomplished not by his power, but that of the living Lord. In the course of his sermon, Peter waxed bold, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just and desired a murderer to be granted unto you and killed the Prince of Life, Whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses... repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins

may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

This was too much for the Sanhedrin. They were not about to let this go unchallenged. They sent out soldiers to take them and place them "in hold unto the next day." Having assembled together, Annas, Caiphas, and all the members of the council, they placed Peter and John in their midst and asked, "By what power or by what name have ye done this?" This was a loaded question; they had decided ahead of time that their purpose could best be accomplished by asking it just this way. If the disciples would dare to identify their work with that of Jesus, they would by that very fact expose themselves to the same condemnation that Jesus received. If they would deny that it was in Jesus' name, the Sanhedrin would have no problem.

The answer of the Apostle Peter is the classic retort of the church of all ages, "If we this day be examined of the good deed done... be it known unto you all that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... doth this man stand here before you whole... neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

The amazing wonder of this answer is two-fold. Even the Sanhedrin recognized this. Here standing before them were "unlearned and ignorant men." That could better be translated, unlearned and common men. Peter and John had the ordinary schooling of their day. John was the son of Zebedee, who was a fisherman; Peter's father was in partnership with Zebedee. It must have been in the interest of this fishing business that John had come to Jerusalem and was acquainted with Caiphas the High Priest. The point is that they had little formal education, especially compared to the council members who were doctors and men of letters. Peter and John were crude fishermen from the region of Galilee. They didn't rank in the higher echelons of society; they were common ordinary fellows who had followed Jesus.

The council couldn't help marvelling that even though these differences existed they still spoke with authority. They didn't stammer out of an inferiority complex when they realized that they were called upon to speak before such learned men. Peter preached in clear and concise language the deep mysteries of the faith. He spoke with the tongue of the learned.

The council marvelled, and well they might!

Besides this, Peter and John were bold! If ever there was a time of crisis, it was at this very moment. This was the first time the disciples had to face the enemy without Christ being bodily with them. They were alone with the lions that snarled at them and threatened them. Was it not the time to use tact, to exercise every form of diplomacy? Should not the disciples concede that they had been too radical and they would go about their preaching without accusing the Jews of sin? No, it was not the time to cover up, it was the time for boldness. Without fear or hesitation, Peter and John emphasized that they would not keep silence, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

The council marvelled at this too.

There was only one explanation, and even the enemies of Christ understand this, "they took knowledge that they had been with Jesus."

What a beautiful testimony, even though it came from reprobate lips. The world is without excuse. The glory of the church is not in man, it is in Christ Jesus her Lord. Pentecost was His crowning work upon His precious church.

The explanation for such knowledge and boldness did not rest in the mere fact that Peter and John followed Jesus while He was preaching on earth. Judas had done this also, but Judas betrayed Christ. This indicates to us that Jesus was not simply a good example and that the power of His disciples rested in their following His worthy example. This would be impossible, for then Peter and John would be no different than Judas. The "being with Jesus" consisted in knowing what Jesus taught and believing it. This was given unto the disciples through the Holy Spirit. The presence of this Spirit in the church can be the only possible interpretation of such boldness and knowledge displayed by Peter and John before the Jewish council.

And thus it ever is for the church.

Well may we meditate upon this glorious truth and pray the Spirit to apply it unto our lives today. The mark of the church is that "she has been with Jesus." That mark is clearly seen as the church, through her ministry, proclaims the living gospel of Jesus Christ. The disciples of Christ must not sit at the feet of philosophers, scientists, and would-be learned men, and drink at the fountain of their lie and deny the word of Jesus Christ given to us in the infallible Scriptures. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in the sphere of the lie. The very nature of the Spirit is holiness; the sign of the cloven tongues of fire conveyed this truth on Pentecost. Holiness means that the church is consecrated unto God through Jesus Christ. This consecration is expressed in two ways: we must believe what God says to be true, we must do what God says must be done. The power to accomplish this is given us by the Holy Spirit. Our learning is governed by the Word of God;

our boldness is expressed in the sphere of the will of God.

Through this ministry the church of Jesus Christ is gathered. Yet, the more faithful we are in this calling the more we may expect the councils of the world to call us to account. The false church prates about a Jesus who is a good example, a Jesus who loves all men and thus as the son of God desires the brotherhood of all men under the universal fatherhood of God. It already has set up the machinery to accomplish this vain dream; the ecumenical movement and all connected with it is geared to this end. Yet, even as Peter and John stood before the Jewish council and condemned them without fear and compromise, so we too must condemn this evil design of the apostate church of our day.

This will involve persecution. It only took a little while and the Jews of the council unleashed the whip upon the disciples, stoned Stephen, beheaded James, and breathed threatenings and slaughter in the church. So, too, in our day, even though the clear testimony of the church must bring the admission from the world, "we have been with Jesus," yet this Jesus the false church and world do not want. They want to still the voice of a guilty conscience by removing the testimony of the faithful church. They constantly design to silence the faithful witness and leave their bodies lying dead in Jerusalem.

Shall we fear? Shall we resort to compromise? Shall we under the pretense of using tact soften the gospel?

God forbid!

For our strength is not that of men, it is given us of Jesus Christ. Sitting at His feet we need not doubt but He will continue to reveal to us His truth and give us the courage we need to be faithful in maintaining it.

Jesus promised, "when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

Take courage in the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

TEACHERS

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School needs teachers for the 1967-68 school year.

We need one full time teacher in one of the lower grades. We need one teacher in one of the lower grades for 1st semester only. We need one teacher 3 days each week in the 5th grade.

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EDITORIAL—

"Report of the Doctrinal Committee"

A Critical Study

The Committee on the Atonement

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The Atonement Issue In The 'Dekker Case'

There are, as I see it, three main issues in the debate concerning the "Dekker Case," all of which are closely related.

The first issue concerns the preaching of the gospel, especially the questions concerning the nature of that preaching (is it grace to all who hear?) and concerning the contents of that preaching (is it a well-meant offer to all who hear?), as these questions are, of course, related to the First Point of 1924. We must not confuse these questions with the question whether the gospel must be promiscuously, or generally, *proclaimed*. The latter is not and cannot be in question. No preacher can possibly avoid *proclaiming* the gospel promiscuously. Moreover, it is the Reformed position that the gospel must be promiscuously proclaimed to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends it. But the question is: *what gospel* must be proclaimed promiscuously? Is it a general gospel or a particular gospel? The position of the Christian Reformed Church, adopted in 1924, is that the gospel is a general and well-meant offer of grace and salvation to all who come under the preaching. The trouble is that this position was adopted along side of the position of our confessions, which is the very opposite position. Besides, there has always been a certain amount of confusion due to the fact that in the First Point the Christian Reformed Church actually adopted two doctrines,—the Kuyperian doctrine of common grace and the Arminian doctrine of general grace. But Prof. Dekker took hold of the First Point and carried it to its logical conclusion. The Doctrinal Committee, as we have seen, felt the pinch of the First Point, tried mightily to avoid the compulsion of Prof. Dekker's reasoning, but failed. They ended, as was to be expected, by saying in effect, "Yes, the preaching of the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation and grace to all who hear it."

I call this the first issue because it is historically first. We must remember that the underlying issue in the entire "Dekker Case" is this: what must be preached, especially on the mission field? This was Prof. Dekker's basic approach, an approach to which he was led by his dismay about the meager fruits of Christian Reformed mission work. And to put it

bluntly, Prof. Dekker really came to the conclusion that his denomination was not consistently and to the fullest extent conforming its preaching to the well-meant offer position of the First Point.

And in a very real and practical sense this is indeed the *first* issue. Always the church has been confronted by the question as to the nature and contents of the preaching of the gospel. And it is inevitable that as soon as one says anything about the nature and contents of the preaching, he is bound to say something about the facts of salvation, that is, about the objective work of Christ that lies at the basis of the gospel-message and that forms the content of it,—hence, about the atonement. And then, in turn, it is inevitable that one is bound to say something about the divine purpose and motive and intent that lie behind that atonement of Christ and that are revealed in it. And thus one arrives at the deepest issue, the issue of God's love and grace, and, inevitably, the issue of election and reprobation.

That is also the reason why in this critical study I treated the matter of the so-called offer first. And that is also the reason why I have pointed out not only that this matter of the offer has bothered the committee throughout its report, but also emphasized that as long as one takes the position that the preaching of the gospel is a general offer of grace,—is, in fact, an offer at all,—there is no solution possible for the difficulties which Prof. Dekker has caused by his writings. The position of the First Point and its offer of grace is intrinsically an Arminian position, and it will inevitably give rise to Arminianism as respects the atonement and as respects the love of God and predestination. Basically, therefore, the Doctrinal Report is just as Arminian as Prof. Dekker's writings are. The only difference is that the latter are more consistent and less confused.

And now we come to the second main issue, that of the atonement.

In this part of our evaluation we are not confronted by the question whether Prof. Dekker holds to the Reformed doctrine of the atonement. It is plain that he does not. It has become plain from his writings, and plainer still from his statements to the committee,

that Prof. Dekker's position as to the atonement is one hundred per cent Arminian. He denies all efficacy in the atonement, and he even denies, in effect, that the atonement is expiatory in character. What could be more Arminian?

The question is rather one concerning the *committee's position*. Does the committee correctly and consistently and justifiably condemn and refute the position taken by Dekker? Does the committee itself hold to the Reformed and confessional and Scriptural doctrine of particular (limited) atonement?

The Importance Of The Question

It remains to be seen, of course, whether the coming Christian Reformed Synod will actually adopt any recommendations of its committee whatsoever or whether it will again try to avoid saying anything definitive. I will not prophesy the outcome; but sometimes I get the impression that nothing definitive will be said. There surely are loudly critical voices, both journalistic and official, clamoring that the Report of the Doctrinal Committee must not be adopted, and, in fact, that nothing at all of a binding nature must be adopted.

Frankly, I cannot see how anyone, whether pro-Dekker or anti-Dekker, could be happy with the adoption of the committee's work, even from a Christian Reformed point of view.

But there are those who apparently would consider it tragic if the committee's position would not be adopted. There are also those who would consider it tragic if the committee's position would be adopted. And both groups seem to have the same reason, namely, that they think that the committee holds to the position of particular (limited) atonement.

Now I certainly would have no criticism if the Christian Reformed Church would reaffirm the confessional and Scriptural doctrine of limited (particular) atonement as such. Notice that I say: *reaffirm*. The doctrine of limited atonement cannot be *adopted* by a church that holds the Reformed confessions, for the simple reason that in those confessions the doctrine of particular (limited) atonement was adopted long ago. In fact, even at Dordrecht it was only reaffirmed confessionally, and, of course, made more explicit. But if the Christian Reformed Church would reaffirm the confessional doctrine of particular atonement, I could only rejoice in that fact as such. How could a Reformed man do anything but rejoice about that? I hasten to add, however, that should the Christian Reformed Church do that, they would do it very inconsistently; nor would they have solved the problems that have plagued them ever since 1924.

But the question is: would the adoption of the committee's work be equivalent to such a reaffirmation?

I gather that the committee thinks so, for they speak of "Scripture and the Confessions" in their conclusions. I gather, too, that the Reporter of the doctrinal committee, Adam Persenaire, seems to think so, — even though in *The Banner* (April 7) he continues to be blind to the connection between limited atonement and 1924. I gather also that Editor Vander Ploeg

of *The Banner* seems to think so: for he evidently writes in the same April 7 issue with an eye to Mr. Peters' criticism of the committee, as is plain from his answer to the very strange question, "Does the fact that our Protestant Reformed brethren are emphatic in affirming limited atonement mean that this doctrine is therefore to be regarded as suspect?" Editor Vander Ploeg also tries to avoid this implication of "guilt by association" by denying the connection between limited atonement and the First Point. But underlying his and others' position seems to be the assumption that the committee actually holds to the Reformed and Scriptural doctrine of particular atonement.

This is also the assumption of many opponents of the committee's report. An example of this is the article of Mr. Leo Peters in *The Banner* of April 7. Incidentally, I deny that my doctrine of limited atonement is "a personal theology outside of the official creeds." I also thank him for characterizing my articles on the atonement as "vigorous." I also am happy that he finds us "at the other end of the scale" from Arminianism, for the latter we certainly want to avoid like the plague, and we wish to be known as anti-Arminian. I also suggest, to put it mildly, that Mr. Peters does not seem to know what fatalism is. But my main point is at present that Mr. Peters assumes that the committee holds to limited atonement, as is evident from the fact that he wants to put the committee in the same bed with me.

Now, frankly, I rather resent that; and I think the committee resents that also, though for a different reason. My reason is that the committee does not hold the same doctrine of the atonement that I do, although I can understand that Mr. Peters thinks they do. But because we do not hold the same doctrine of the atonement, we do not belong in the same bed.

The question to be faced, therefore, is: *does the committee actually hold to the Reformed and Scriptural doctrine of limited atonement?*

And, as far as the importance of the question is concerned, the question is this: *by adopting the position of the committee would the Christian Reformed Church be re-affirming the Reformed and Scriptural doctrine of limited atonement?*

It is my conviction that the answer to this question is: No. It is my conviction that basically the committee, as well as Prof. Dekker, departs from the doctrine of limited atonement. And it is my conviction that if the Christian Reformed Church adopts the report of its doctrinal committee, it will make official a doctrine which is not found in the confessions or in Scripture. This I propose to show.

The Atonement In The Committee's Mandate

The committee has been severely criticized for not carrying out its mandate from Synod, especially from the quarter of *The Reformed Journal*. It will be recalled that in 1964 the Synod of the CRC listed seven items in the study committee's mandate to which the committee was to give specific attention. These seven items the committee reduced to what some have

charged is an altogether different and self-charted mandate. I shall let the committee itself state this:

....Instead, we have taken the liberty to single out two subjects which seem to us most fundamental in the consideration of our task. If we shall be able to give Synod a clear exposition of these two subjects, then we believe we shall also have dealt with all the questions which the Synod of 1964 put to us.

The first subject concerns the love of God and the question whether, in the light of Scripture and the Confession, it is valid to make a qualitative distinction between the general love of God for all His creatures and His special love for the elect. The second subject concerns the doctrine of the atonement and raises the question whether, in the light of Scripture and the Confession, we may properly speak of a universal atonement, or whether the traditionally Reformed terminology about an atonement which is limited and particular should be maintained. After this study we also wish to consider the following two questions, namely, whether it is proper to say to every man "Christ died for you," and whether "the doctrine of limited atonement as commonly understood and observed in the Christian Reformed Church impairs the principle of the universal love of God and tends to inhibit missions." And finally, we expect to present to the Synod certain propositions flowing forth from our study, with the recommendation that Synod adopt these.

Now I do not intend to enter into the whole quarrel about the mandate. From a Protestant Reformed viewpoint, of course, neither the committee's version nor the Synod's version would be acceptable, chiefly for the reason that both mandates *assume* the heresy of a general love of God, whether that love is qualitatively distinct from God's love of the elect or not. Besides, I believe that from a church political point of view the entire case is illegal. It must surely be kept in mind that although for convenience' sake we speak of the "Dekker Case," there is not any case pending against Prof. Dekker. Nor did Synod of 1964 intend, according to its mandate, to make a case against Prof. Dekker. There *should*, indeed, have been a case brought by way of protest and on the basis of the Formula of Subscription. But there never has been a case. And even if the committee's position would be adopted by Synod, in my opinion it is doubtful whether a case would or could then be made against Dekker; and I certainly believe it would be highly unethical to do so. What the 1964 Synod intended was a peaceful study, nothing more. And this peaceful study the Synod instituted without having a concrete case before it, — supposedly, according to the first ground, to allay unrest in the churches.

However, I do believe that the committee is guilty of oversimplifying its mandate. In the first place, it should be noted that the doctrine of the atonement is involved in every item of Synod's mandate. In fact, the atonement is so involved in every item of the mandate that if the committee had followed their original mandate, they would have been faced by some very sticky problems; I would even hazard the guess that if they had openly faced these problems without too many prepossessions, they might have come up with a genuinely helpful report, one which could have led the

CRC back to single-track Reformed theology. But it is perfectly obvious that the committee wanted to avoid these sticky questions. Hence, they separated two main questions out of the mandate (the two quoted above), and they treat these questions, which are interwoven throughout the original mandate, separately. This is surely not what Synod wanted in 1964.

Moreover, it is also true that the answers the committee is going to give to its reformulated questions are a foregone conclusion. How, in the light of the First Point of 1924, could a Christian Reformed committee give anything but an affirmative answer to the first question? And how, — amazing though it is that the second question could even be raised, — how could any man who claims to be Reformed dare to say that in the light of Scripture and the Confessions the traditionally Reformed terminology about an atonement which is limited and particular should not be maintained?

Yet I maintain that when we study the committee's work with respect to their second question, we will discover that though they do lip-service to the doctrine of particular atonement, they contradict themselves.

The Atonement In The Committee's Recommended Propositions

That the committee gives lip-service to the doctrine of particular (limited) atonement, but basically contradicts that doctrine, becomes evident very plainly in their second proposition, which reads as follows:

II. That, in the light of Scripture and the Confession, the doctrine of a definite or particular (limited) atonement must be maintained.

GROUND:

A. Although in accordance with Christ's universal dominion which He exercises as a reward for His sacrifice on the cross there are universal and undeserved benefits accruing to all men from His death, yet Christ's atonement, in its specific character as atonement, — expressed by the words: obedience, expiation, satisfaction, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption — was not made for all men, but only for the believers or the elect.

B. The particularistic terms used in the Scripture, such as "sheep," "His people," "Church," etc., are intended to speak exclusivistically.

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

Notice, first of all, that this is the committee's chief and positive proposition concerning the atonement. The first proposition does not speak of the atonement at all. And the remaining propositions are negative, except for the last one. But this second proposition is supposed to be *the pillar* of all the recommendations. And indeed, although the proposition does not go into detail and definition whatsoever, it is, in itself, a wholly sound proposition. Any Reformed man should be willing to subscribe to it. This, of course, is the

fooler in the committee's recommendations: it has led many to think that the committee holds firmly to the doctrine of limited atonement.

Notice, in the second place, however, that when it comes to grounds for this proposition, this is a woe-fully weak and vague statement for a Synod to adopt. "In the light of Scripture and the Confession," the committee says. Now what would one expect to find in the grounds? I would expect to find, first of all, abundant proof from the confessions. But not a single item from the confessions is found. I would expect to find clear proof from Scripture in the grounds. But the only explicit references to Scripture are references to passages containing terms that are frequently used by Arminians in a universalistic sense. I claim that even in this light it is wholly justifiable to say that this proposition merely gives lip-service to the doctrine of particular atonement. No content is given to the doctrine; no definition is made; no explicit proof, or even references to proof, from the confessions and from Scripture! A statement like this is not worthy of adoption by an ecclesiastical assembly.

Incidentally, let me point out that throughout the five recommendations of the committee there is a sore famine when it comes to proof of the repeated expression "in the light of Scripture and the Confession." Only in proposition II is there any reference to Scripture; and only in proposition III is there any reference to the confessions. For the rest, the committee simply makes an ungrounded claim: "...in the light of scripture and the Confession..."

But notice the *vagueness* of language also. Consider the language of ground B. "The particularistic terms used in the Scripture....are intended to speak exclusively." Talk about vagueness! I could imagine that an Arminian would go along with such a statement. Intended to speak? *Do* they indeed speak? Exclusivistically? But then the question remains: who are excluded, and who are included? Moreover, how is the exclusion accomplished? Besides, these so-called "particularistic terms" are not even connected in ground B with the atonement. In ground A the same vagueness is found. What is meant by an expression such as "Christ's atonement, in its specific character as atonement?" Does the atonement also have a non-specific character as something other than atonement? And even the last expression in ground A is vague: "for the believers or the elect." Mark you well, I do not say that this expression is Arminian; but I do say that in its vagueness it does not exclude an Arminian connotation.

But the worst aspect of proposition II is that it is plainly contradictory. The committee actually has a new and strange brand of universal atonement. True, it is a common grace brand of universal atonement. That is, it has reference not to an atonement with actual saving power and saving results, but only to an atonement with the power to provide all men with some *temporal* benefits. But universal it certainly is! True, the committee cloaks this doctrine in extremely vague and round about language; but if you grope your way through that language, the conclusion is as clear as the sun in the heavens on a cloudless day. Reduce the "although....yet" statement of ground A to its simple and direct form, and the result is not a concession, but a contradiction. And the contradiction is this: although Christ's atonement is in a sense universal, yet it is not universal, but only for the elect. Yes, yes: these universal benefits are "in accordance with Christ's universal dominion," whatever that may mean. But then again, that universal dominion is a reward "for His sacrifice on the cross," that is, His atonement. Besides, these "universal and undeserved benefits accrue to all men from His death," that is, His atoning death!

Hocus-pocus! The atonement is particular, but also universal!

True to form, by the way, Dr. James Daane reveals himself again as being right, but dead wrong. For he has 20/20 vision on the committee's contradiction (see *The Reformed Journal*, March, 1967).

Finally, let it be noted in this same connection that when in ground C the committee speaks of the Scriptural term "world" as being "an undifferentiated totality," this is not only an extremely vague term, but actually a thoroughly universalistic expression. It certainly is not an expression which, as an interpretation of the term "world," will assist anyone in understanding and maintaining that the atonement is for the elect, and for the elect only. The opposite is true: in effect the committee excludes from the term "world" any idea of election and reprobation.

What, then, is the conclusion thus far?

In the first place, this is a new doctrine for the Christian Reformed Church. In no official decision heretofore has the Christian Reformed Church ever connected common grace with Christ's atoning death. If this is adopted, therefore, it is indeed a change, but a change for the worse.

In the second place, let no one in the CRC comfort himself with the thought that the Report of the Doc-

....As believers we are God's workmanship, in no sense our own. It is He that created us, made us new creatures in Christ Jesus by His almighty power of wondrous grace. And He performed this wonder of grace, in order, to be sure, that we should do good works; but even these works were ordained for every one of us before the foundation of the world by God Himself, and it is our privilege to walk in them.

— H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 90

trinal Committee is strong on particular atonement. At the very best it is afflicted by the weakness of a both-and, a yes-no, position. It is contradictory. But in its contradiction the report concedes the basic point to Dekker: the atoning death of Christ is for all men. The only remaining point of disagreement is: *in what sense* is it for all men?

In the third place, although the anti-committee, pro-Dekker forces are not at all satisfied with the committee's position, due to the fact that the committee *also* maintains that the atonement is limited, yet it seems to me that fundamentally they have already gained the field. They need not be nearly as perturbed about the committee's report as the anti-Dekker forces. For if

the committee has conceded the basic principle of universal atonement, it can only be a matter of time before the doctrine of limited atonement will be denied altogether.

But all this is sad, very sad, for any man who is Reformed at heart!

And those in the Christian Reformed Church who love the Reformed faith must make up their minds that they must do more, much more, than wring their hands in despair if they expect to keep their heritage for themselves and their children. They must rise up and fight for their heritage. They must engage in the proper work of Reformed believers, namely, Reformation! (to be continued)

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

David In Hiding

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And David abode in the wilderness in strongholds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.
I Samuel 23:14

If one ever stops to think about them closely, there can be something very disconcerting about the "male-dictory" Psalms, that is, about those Psalms which cry out for judgment upon one's enemies. This is particularly true because many of these Psalms were written by David, whom we usually think of either as a mild-mannered young man quietly caring for his sheep or as the great and prosperous king before whom all of the world bowed in submission. In either case it seems strange and almost improper that he should wish for evil to come to anyone. Forgotten is often the fact that many of these Psalms came neither from David's youth nor from his later prosperity, but were written either during or about those anguished years in the hills of Judea, when he learned as few men ever do how wicked, faithless, and dishonest men can truly be. The wonder is not that, having tasted the dreadful bitterness of human treachery, he should cry to God for a judgment that is just; the wonder is that he through it all refused to take this judgment into his own hands but was satisfied to leave it with "him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people."

The territory into which David fled from the hatred of Saul was in the southern portion of the land of Judah. It was a wild and untamed land, with some fertile valleys in which one could easily live and prosper; but next to and around these valleys was wild, desolate hill country where only the wild animals could find a living. It was this wild hill country that made this land so difficult. Not only was it completely unproductive, but

it provided shelter for marauding animals and robbers. Even more, it provided a ready means of entrance into the land for invading enemies. Under cover of the hills, they could penetrate deeply into the land, only to sally forth when they wished to plunder and then returning quickly again into the shelter of the hills before a defending army could be summoned. It was into this land that David with his four hundred men went and settled down.

The land was by every measure well suited to David's purpose. It was the kind of land into which Saul and his army could not easily follow: in fact, it was even difficult for them to discover with any certainty exactly where David and his men were living at any particular time. There were innumerable caves of all sizes scattered throughout the hills in which David and his men could easily find shelter for any length of time they desired, while leaving themselves free to pick up and leave at an extremely short notice. At the same time, it gave to David and his men a service which they could fill, for the nation and the people to whom they were still loyal and whom they still loved. By living in the hills themselves, they were able to clean out and punish all those who used those hills as a means of escape after robbing and stealing; and, what was even more important, they were able to prevent in a large measure the forces of the enemies from using the cover of these hills as a route to invade the land.

Through it all though, there was one problem for which David could find no easy answer and which troubled him continually: that was the ever present

need to supply his men with sufficient food for them to live. Being rugged men and used to hardship, they were able to do a great deal to supply their own needs. There were always the wild animals of the hills which could be hunted and undoubtedly were in great numbers; but these were not always sufficient, the terrain could make the catching of them very difficult, and by no means all of them were clean for eating under the ceremonial law. It was also possible for them to do some farming in isolated mountain valleys; but here again they could never be sure that they would still be around to reap their harvest. More inclined was David to look to the people of the territory to assist in supplying their needs. There was in his mind good reason for him to expect this of the people. With the coming of his men into the territory, the people who lived there for the first time obtained an effective defense against the many dangers which constantly threatened their lives. With David's men constantly hunting in the hills the wild scavenger animals which constantly preyed upon their flocks were checked and held under control, the ruthless thieves that so often hid in the hills were driven out, and the invading enemies were prevented from falling upon them and doing them harm. It seemed but a small price to ask of the people who benefited directly from this to do their part in supporting the men who brought it about. But it did not work out that way, and once again David was to gain a hard lesson in how ungrateful and treacherous people can actually be.

One of the first and most bitter instances of this kind took place soon after David came down with his men to live in the hill country. He was just beginning to establish himself as a defender of the people when the Philistines made a foray into the land. It was not surprising. The time was the time of harvest when the grain was still on the threshing floor. It was a favorite season for invading armies to make a quick sweep through the land and run off with the fruits of a whole year's labor in a matter of days. It was exactly the sort of situation which David had set for himself to prevent. But before he did anything of such great importance, there was one important check which had to be made. When Abiathar the priest had escaped the hands of Saul and come to live with him, he had brought along the holy ephod with the Urim and Thummim by which it was possible to consult with God on every important move. Thus he called Abiathar and asked of God, "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" But the answer came almost as a surprise. His forces were so very small and unprepared in comparison with the armies of the Philistines that it seemed almost completely unreasonable that they should go to fight with them. The answer of God, however, was, "Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah," and accordingly David went to his men and told them to prepare for the battle.

But the men were not so easily satisfied. Many of them were not trained fighting men, and whole thing looked rather completely impossible. Here they had come to this hill country to escape the army of Saul, and were they now supposed to go and fight against the

larger and much better army of the Philistines. They told David this in so many words, saying, "Behold, we be afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?"

To their reasoning David had no answer except that it had been commanded by God; and to satisfy them, he called Abiathar once again and repeated the former inquiry. Once again the answer came, "Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand."

There was now no question left, for the men knew that they were not to argue with the command of God. Quickly they went down to Keilah, and soon it was just as God had promised, the Philistines were driven back with a great slaughter and a great victory was accredited to David and his men.

At first it looked as though this was the answer to David's problem. With enthusiasm the inhabitants of Keilah welcomed David and his men and invited them into the city to live with them. Here in the city, it seemed, they surely would be able to live a much more normal life than out in the wild hill country where they had been.

It was not long, however, before the news had gotten through to Saul that David was living in Keilah, and to him it was most welcome news. All the time that David was hiding in the hill country, he had found himself completely frustrated. It seemed that nothing really mattered in his life any more except that he should get rid of David; but what was he to do against a man who lived like a fox in the caves of the mountains. All of his experience left him completely unprepared for a situation like that. In fact, he had not even a very sure idea any more in what general area David was to be found. But as soon as he heard that David had taken up abode in a closed city with gates and walls, then he knew what he could do. Joyfully he exclaimed, "God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars." Yes, Saul had rationalized with his sin so long and become so hardened in it that he had actually convinced himself that what he wanted was really also the will of God.

It was not long before the call had gone out for the soldiers of Saul's army to gather themselves together and prepare themselves to go down and lay siege upon the city. As it was though, news passed swiftly not only from Keilah to the rest of the nation, it came swiftly back again too. He understood immediately what Saul intended to do; but normally it was nothing special to fear. In a walled and defended city such as Keilah, he and his four hundred men held a much stronger position over against the army of Saul than upon the open field of battle. Nevertheless, David was careful not to neglect his most important source of strength. Once again he called Abiathar the priest to him with the ephod to inquire of the Lord what he should do. To God he addressed this prayer, "O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy

servant." To the latter question the answer came quickly back, "He will come down." This was to be expected. But when he repeated the former question and the answer came back, it must have driven deeply into David's soul, for the answer was, "They will deliver thee up."

One can just about imagine the pain with which these words came to David. Here was a city for which he and his men had risked their own lives against the strongest and most terrible enemy they had, the army of the Philistines. And the city had recognized this, expressing its gratitude and welcoming them into the city. But now he learned that treachery lurked within their hearts. Not that it was so much intentional. It was just that when the army of Saul appeared and they would be asked to suffer some in return for David's sake, then they would weaken, they would lose courage and betray him to his enemy. But there was nothing that David could do about it now. To accuse the people would only bring a denial. The only thing left was to call his men to him; and, leaving the comfort of the city, return in sorrow to the uncertainties of life in

the hills. This David did; but need we be surprised that reflecting back upon experiences such as this, he in latter years should pen such words as those of Psalm 55:12-14, 20-23.

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:

But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company....

He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant.

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

But thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee."

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

Dispensationalism and the Gentile Remnant

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

What we have been maintaining, according to Scripture, is that God has but one people in all dispensations, and that therefore, O. and N.T. saints are identified by the same name. This is borne out in the following. "One shall say, 'I am the Lord's'; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." (Isa. 44:5) The Israel in view here is the spiritual Israel, that remnant according to the election of grace, "whom I have chosen" out of the nation; for the Lord never comforts any but the elect with "Fear not!" (v. 2) To this elect Israel the Lord promises the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (v.3) As a result of that effusion the holy seed "shall spring up as willows by the water courses," (v. 4) which was fulfilled at Pentecost. Then the words quoted from verse 5 point to after Pentecost when the Gentiles would become spiritual Israelites indeed.

Dispensationalists will regard the comment of great teachers of the church as lacking in light if they do not produce at every point what they regard as some "dispensational interpretation." But there is one Bible commentary which they could profitably take as their instructor and rectifier. Neither F. Delitsch nor

J. A. Alexander are of much value on this passage. But Matthew Henry has much to teach the dispensationalist. He was by far the adept at "rightly dividing the Word of truth!" He based his thinking on the covenant. His comments introductory to this chapter are, "That the people of God are a happy people, especially upon account of the covenant between them and God. The people of Israel were...a figure of the gospel Israel." Then he treats "the covenant relations wherein they stand to God." The basic covenant relation Henry takes to be, "O Jacob my *servant!* thou and I will be *friends!*" "The relations wherein they stand to Him are very encouraging. (1) They are His servants." Here then is the covenant relation of friend-servant! The speaker in this passage, Henry points out, is the God of Israel, a great God, who is God alone, a "God of incontestible sovereignty," who "stands in relation to, and has a particular concern for, His church. He is *the King of Israel and his Redeemer.*" Thus He is Israel's Sovereign-Friend! Henry continues with the covenant relations. "(2) They are His chosen." So they are His elect. "For those only, like Nathanael, are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, and those only shall have the everlasting

benefit of these promises." Next he counts "the covenant blessings which He has secured to" the elect, in verses 3, 4. "The pardon of sin is the inlet of all the other blessings of the covenant" which flow out of mercy and forgiveness through the flood-gate, "Fear Not!" "For so the covenant of grace runs: 'I will be a God to thee and to thy seed.'" Henry is quite correct when he sees that "Hereby there shall be a great increase of the *church*." He then remarks on "the consent they (the elect) cheerfully give to their part of the covenant...For there was one law, one covenant, 'for the stranger and for those that were born in the land.'" Especially the dispensationalist ought to have this pointed out to him: "Doubtless it looks further yet, to the conversion of the *Gentiles*, and the multitudes of them who, upon the effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension, should be joined to the Lord and added to the church...(1) They shall resign themselves to God: not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, 'I am the Lord's; He has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to Him, to all His commands, all His disposals. I am and will be, His only, His wholly, His for ever, will be for His interests, will be for His praise; living and dying I will be His!' (2) They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, 'call themselves by the name of Jacob,' forgetting their own people and their fathers' house, and desirous to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship..." The point is, Gentiles belong to Israel in the new dispensation.

The same truth is found in Jer. 31:31, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Those days did come in the Christian dispensation, as the writer to the Hebrews applies it to the same in Heb. 8:8-12; 9:15. The *new* covenant (mentioned in Luke 22:20 and II Cor. 3:6) makes the Mosaic covenant the *old* covenant. But the *new* is not so because of a change in the law, but in the way the law is given, namely, not outwardly on tables of stone, but inwardly by inscripturation upon the fleshly tables of the heart. Again, on this matter, Matthew Henry has a worthy contribution. "This covenant refers to gospel times, the latter days that 'shall come;'... Observe, who the persons are with whom this covenant is made—'with the house of Israel and Judah,' with the gospel church, 'the Israel of God' on which 'peace shall be' (Gal. 6:16), with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return...so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel church and covenant...'I will be their God and they shall be My people.' God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness. Our being to Him a people may be taken...as a further branch of the *promise* that God will by His grace make us His people, a willing people, in the day of His power." With reference to "the house of Israel and the house of Judah," the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms, "whose house are we" (3:6) who "hold fast the confidence and the re-

joicing of the hope firm unto the end." That makes the *we*, whether Jews or Gentiles, believers! See Eph. 2:14-16; John 11:52; Eph. 1:10.

The prophets continually spoke of the Gentiles being brought into the company of the children of Israel. This is taught in Hosea 1:10, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, 'Ye are not My people,' there it shall be said unto them, 'Ye are the sons of the living God.'" A strange teaching it is when it is claimed that "the children of Israel" in this passage refers exclusively to God's future dealings with natural and national Israel. But so the writer was taught in dispensationalist days. However, Paul in Rom. 9:25, 26 explains that the phrase includes elect *Gentiles*, in the words, "Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but *also* of the *Gentiles*." We continue to quote Henry, as he is particularly edifying on this matter of Dispensationalism's compartmentalizing "Jew, Gentile and the Church of God." "It is certain that this promise *had* its accomplishment in the setting up of the *kingdom of Christ*, by the preaching of the *gospel*, and the bringing in both of Jews *and* *Gentiles* to it, for to this these words are applied by Paul and Peter when he writes to the Jews (I Pet. 2:10). Israel here is *the gospel church*, the spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16), all believers who follow the steps and inherit the blessings of faithful Abraham, who is the father of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles." (Rom. 4:11, 12) (ital. added) Christians are now, according to Peter, the chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation and peculiar people (people for a possession), as he teaches in I Pet. 2:9, 10.

The prophets believed that the Gentiles belonged to the tabernacle of David. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen (Gentiles) which are called by My name, saith the Lord that doeth this." (Amos 9:11, 12) The breaches in the ruins of the tabernacle of David were closed up to embrace the elect remnant of the Gentiles in the Christian dispensation. The first council of the church in Jerusalem saw the prophecy of Amos fulfilled in their New Testament church. *It* was the tabernacle of David restored! Christ rebuilt David's tabernacle—His own church! He built again these ruins "by breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and letting in the latter into the gospel church with the former..." "The remnant of Edom" design the Gentiles," (John Gill) Then God had a tabernacle (a house of spiritual, regenerated people) in the old dispensation. It was then called the tabernacle of David (displacing the tabernacle of Moses) because Gentiles were to be brought into it (and *were*, in David's day!). It was therefore not something which merely had "been in progress since Pentecost," (Scofield) an absurd idea, for the tabernacle of David has evidently been in progress since David. Nor did the Jerusalem church in their

joyous contemplation of this now fulfilled Amos-passage even dream that its realization meant "re-establishment of David's earthly kingdom of power over national Israel." They saw in that tabernacle the *church*, the "one body," "the household of faith," the "holy temple in the Lord," the "habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:16, 19, 21, 22)

There are then two Israels: a carnal and false Israel, and a spiritual and true (regenerate) Israel. Jesus tested many who applied to Him according to this distinction. He said to the Syro-Phoenician woman, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of

the house of Israel." (Mt. 15:24) His meaning was not that He was sent only to the natural clan of Jacob, for some of them He excluded as "'not of My sheep.'" (John 10:26) Paul also saw this exclusion when he taught, "they are not all Israel that are of Israel." (Rom. 9:6) No, this *house* Jesus referred to is "built up a *spiritual* house," which "ye," newborn babes (regenerated) are (I Pet. 2:2-5)! Scripture is full of references to the *spiritual* and elect *Israel*: John 1:31; Acts 5:31; 13:23; 28:20. In every age believers of every race desired nothing more than to belong to that Israel!

IN HIS FEAR—

Virgins For Christ's Sake

by Rev. J. A. Heys

In the Church of Jesus Christ here below fornication, when it is found, is usually found among the youth rather than among the adults.

Adultery, as we have seen, is practiced by the married and is the introduction of the third party, which is a foreign element, between those who before God are one flesh. But fornication is the same sin as it is practiced by two who before God are not one flesh but take the liberties of being one flesh. Fornication is using the powers and members of the body, which God has given that we may serve Him, to satisfy our flesh instead.

God has made us to be male and female and given each his own peculiar powers and members. There is absolutely nothing wrong either with the members or the power invested in them. In Hebrews 13:4 we read, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." There is a time and a way and a place where those who before God have agreed to be one flesh can serve God with what He has entrusted to them for service in His kingdom. And God made us man and wife, male and female, for the sake of bringing forth the covenant seed. In the Church a man must take a wife with that basic purpose of marriage in mind. In the world nothing can be done right. The unbeliever cannot marry for the proper purpose. He cannot even refrain from murder for the right reason. He may abhor lying and condemn stealing, but he cannot do this because he desires the glory of God. He can only be humanistic and see that it is good *for man* to refrain from these sins; which he will only call social evils. But in the Church, where the believer and his seed is found, all things will in principle be done because of love to God and with the desire to glorify Him.

Now it is understandable, though not excusable, that our covenant children fall into this sin of fornication. In their early teens their sexual powers begin not only to develop but to make themselves known. Let it be clearly understood that this is God's work in them. There is absolutely nothing evil in sex as we already pointed out in quoting Hebrews 13:4. God does not put some filthy thing in us. God does not invest our covenant seed with some wicked power. He begins to prepare them for the ability and desire to bring forth the future church here below. And we repeat that they have this power given to them for that reason and with that in mind. Actually it is a wonderful thing to observe and to witness with a pure mind. Not only do they gradually, and sometimes quite suddenly, put away childish things and show a different interest in the other sex, but their bodies develop and grow and there is outward evidence that these powers are developing. God does not hide that from the parents, nor from the children themselves. And it is a matter for thanksgiving to see the children of the church here below develop and grow to be able to become the mothers and fathers in Israel. We must not be evil minded witnesses, but neither must we be unscripturally Victorian.

It certainly would be advantageous if parents would feel freer to teach their children the matters of this development rather than to let them learn it from the world and from youths of their own age, whose interest in these matters is only carnal. But as a rule this is not the case and they are willing either to let their children pick up the knowledge of their sexual powers wherever they can or to expect the teacher in school to do so. Now we will grant that the school is the extension of the home, and the parents hire the teachers,

through a society, to give their children the instruction that they cannot give themselves. But in the school you have the added difficulty that the sexes are met together, and what a parent might be able to do at the same time with his son and daughter would not be received the same way by children of both sexes from several families with different backgrounds. Nevertheless the children should be taught and not be self-taught or wrongly taught. Their development and growing powers should be made known unto them in connection with the fact that their bodies were and are, in this growing development, temples of the Holy Spirit. The beauty and wonder of their new strength and power rather than the filthiness of the world's misuse should be shown them. And by all means their calling to reserve and preserve and shield these powers for service before the living God should be shown them. Filthy speech in the home, suggestive actions and deeds should be kept out of the home. And we may add that these have absolutely no place either at the wedding reception and feast! So many otherwise beautiful weddings are spoiled that way, and a master of ceremonies or toastmaster who keeps things pure and clean at the wedding reception deserves to receive not only a word of commendation but also one of thanks.

There is also the matter of magazines and that extremely dangerous television whereby we do bring the adultery and fornication of the world to the attention of our children. Of course they are going to meet it elsewhere. And we cannot and may not lock them up in a monastery cell. But it makes a world of difference whether they meet these things first in the home and with tacit approval — at least without any spoken disapproval — of the parents in the home. What with the widespread paper-back novels that either glory in adultery openly or are written to arouse in the readers a sinful consciousness of it, parents cannot be too careful and diligent in approving and of disapproving that which their children read. And remember that a lasciviously written novel is as dangerous if not more inflaming and dangerous than any mere picture. What is more, every single one of the novels of the world presents the whole matter of courtship, love and marriage from a wicked and godless point of view. Show me even one that proceeds from the principle of I Corinthians 6:18-20 to which we referred before! What unbeliever ever has as his starting point and as the "moral" of his story that "he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body?" Which unbeliever is able to write a book that has for its aim instructing his fellowmen that we with our sexual powers and members are not our own but are bought with a price with the calling to glorify God in our bodies? The love of husband and wife in the unbelieving and unregenerated is nothing but a vicious circle that gets nowhere and produces nothing truly good. It is like the ox that treadeth out the corn, walking ever in a circle and getting nowhere. Tomorrow it is the same thing. Eat, sleep, work! Walk in a circle! Their married life is as a wheel that is lying on the ground and turns from right to left or left to right but gets nowhere. The married life of the child of God, and the sexual powers

and members of the youth, under the regenerating grace of God, are like a wheel that is standing up and turns from the earth on which it stands to the heavens where is the Christ Who bought them with the precious price of His blood. For Him they remain virgins. And a wheel standing up that turns from the earth to the sky in its activity GETS SOMEWHERE! It goes forward in His fear. It makes progress in glorifying the Christ to Whom we are betrothed. It takes Him into consideration. It uses its powers and members for His sake. And therefore the covenant youth will keep his vessels in covenant subjection.

There is also that matter of dress as well as of undress. It is not always and only a matter of suggestive exposure (or shall we say disclosure?) but also of design. And by design we do not simply mean dress style. We mean exactly that dress styles are designed to excite, suggest, entice and even encourage. The many perfumes with their daring and suggestive names are not the only elements in a woman's life that have names for a specific sinful purpose. And these are not advertized for the wife to make herself attractive and alluring to her lawful husband. Neither the scanty dress nor the deliberate lines are designed for the young woman to be appealing to the new man of a young man. Where is the dress designed by the world that is aimed to harmonize with the truth that the body that wears it is the temple of the Holy Spirit? All too often — and sad to say also in the sphere of the church — the dress declares that this is the temple of an adulterous spirit and of one that is more interested in pleasing the lust of man than to receive the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The plunging neckline must now be supplemented by the sleeveless dress with, of all things, a square arm hole! And that square arm hole is not meant to make it easier to slip that dress on and to take it off again. We can only ask, "What is next?"

The miniskirt will probably disappear after it has served its purpose and no longer produces its desired effect. And man will have to come up with something new. As we suggested above, this does not necessarily mean that there will be more disclosure and more actual nakedness. The world is not at all afraid or ashamed to admit this. The Oracle of Toronto, Marshall McLuhan, is not a bit hesitant to state, "There has been a dimming down of the visual. We are now in the all-involving tactile mode." And the dress is designed to attract attention, to advertise direct thought and attention. The fishnet stockings, the sleek black silk dress and sex-displaying wear make that temple of the Holy Spirit far more attractive for evil purposes than the savages ever experienced in their naked customs.

And in this installment — we plan, D.V., another with youth in mind next time — we wish to call attention to that extremely important matter that is stated in the Heidelberg Catechism in regard to the seventh commandment, and that is so easily ignored by parents in regard to their children, but also by parents themselves. We read that God commands us to preserve our bodies as pure and therefore "forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and what-

ever can entice men thereto." We refer to that last phrase, "And whatever can entice men thereto."

It is the young man that gets the young woman in trouble, we often hear. And perhaps in many cases this is true. Rape is a way of life in some men. But let the (young) woman be sure that she has not lead the (young) man on by her dress, behaviour, gestures, speech or failure to give a firm discouragement of his advances. We have no interest in excusing or exonerating either the young man or the young woman. And it is none of the business of the church council when they come to confess to try to determine whose fault it was. Unless it is actual rape, it is the fault of both. But the point we make now is that there is so very much truth in that statement of the Catechism that we sin when we entice men to fornication as surely as when we commit the act ourselves.

As we rush toward the end of all things and the last manifestations of the harlot who rides on the beast, it is high time that some reform and return to modesty in dress and practice is found in the church. And that

means that as men we cease clamoring for these suggestive and enticing elements. Again we are not interested in deciding whether the blame should be upon the women who dress to please the lusts of man or the man who indicates that the woman must so conduct herself in order to be acceptable to man. It is of the nature of the woman to desire to be accepted of man. And this can be without sin. But whether we set the sinful standards or whether we capitulate and accept them in the hope and fear that it will not involve us in that which we know is wrong, we have by the enticement and the desire to be enticed already committed the sin in our hearts.

In His fear we know ourselves as the bride of Christ and will keep ourselves as virgins for His sake. Instead of being glad for The Pill, we are thankful to God for The Book. And we strive according to its teachings to be attractive and pleasing and faithful before His face. Try that out, young people, and put a sudden stop to friendship with those not interested therein, and you will be safe and continue as a virgin for Christ's sake.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

The Elder's Task

Overseers

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

"Therefore, in the first place, the office of elders is, together with the ministers of the Word, to take the oversight of the Church, which is committed to them, and diligently to look, whether everyone properly departs himself in his confession and conversation; to admonish those who behave themselves disorderly, and to prevent, as much as possible, the sacraments from being profaned; also to act (according to the Christian discipline) against the impenitent, and to receive the penitent again into the bosom of the Church, as doth not only appear from the above mentioned saying of Christ, but also from many other places of Holy Writ, as I Cor. chap. 5 and II Cor. chap. 2, that these things are not alone intrusted to one or two persons, but to many who are ordained thereto." (Form of Ordination)

The first facet of the important office of the elder in the church of Christ is that of overseer. The elder is one who is called of God to rule. When this is pointed out, the warning of the apostle Peter must also immediately be observed. To the elders of the church Peter wrote, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." The elder is a pastor-ruler, a keeper of God's sheep, and not a despot. He whose motivation is not the care of the sheep and who in all his labor is not moved by love for their souls, is unfit for and unable to perform the functions of an elder in Christ's Church. The very purpose of the establishment of a council of elders in the church is "that thereby all tyranny and lording may be kept out of the Church of God, which may sooner creep in, when the government is placed in the hands of one alone, or of a very few." (Form of Ordination)

This relationship of elders to the church as overseers implies the subjection of the members of the church to those who are given this position of authority. They must love them and respect them in that position for Christ's sake, and furthermore to their authority they must be subject as unto Christ. On the other hand, the elders must at all times realize that their calling and the exercise of the authority of their office is exactly limited to that which Christ has conferred upon them. To transgress this limitation is to introduce tyranny in the church.

"The church is not only not bound to be guided by any other rule or standard, but is not at liberty to have regard to any other; as this would be virtually to withdraw herself from subjection to Christ's authority, and voluntarily to submit to a foreign yoke. No mere laws or statutes of men — no mere regard for worldly or secular advantages — should ever regulate the conduct of the church of Christ, or of any section or branch of it. She should be guided solely by the revealed will of Christ, and she should ascertain what that will is by diligent and prayerful study of His word." (C. Cunningham, Historical Theology)

"To be a dutiful undershepherd, is, in another view, to be a faithful sheep, following the Chief Shepherd whithersoever He goes. Pastors are not lords over God's heritage, but mere servants of Christ, the great Head of the Church, bound to regard His will as their law, and His life as their model...It is well that our Lord made this plain by the words addressed to the representative man among the apostles; for Christians of active, energetic, and earnest natures are very apt to have very exaggerated ideas of their responsibilities, and to take on themselves the care of the whole world, and impose on themselves the duty of remedying every evil that is done under the sun." (A.B. Bruce, The Training Of The Twelve)

"We admit, therefore, that ecclesiastical pastors are to be heard just like Christ Himself, but they must be pastors, who execute the office entrusted to them. And this office, we maintain, is not presumptuously to introduce whatever their own pleasure has rashly devised, but religiously and in good faith to deliver the oracles which they have received at the mouth of the Lord. For within these boundaries Christ confined the reverence which he required to be paid to the Apostles; nor does Peter (1 Peter 4:11) either claim for himself or allow to others anything more than that, as often as they speak among the faithful, they speak as from the mouth of the Lord." (John Calvin, Reply to Cardinal Sadolet)

The point brought out here is important and must be strongly emphasized. Christ rules His Church through the offices which He has instituted. That rule of Christ however is negated when those who occupy the office transgress its proper limitation. Christ does not enforce upon the church the will of man in "whatever their own pleasure may rashly devise." Christ does impose and enforce His own will upon His body, the Church, and He does this through men who, in subjection to Himself, execute the functions of the office of elder in accord with His will as revealed in His Word. "Let all things be done decently and in good order" is no trite saying, but is a fundamental principle of truth, the departure from which is catastrophic for the church.

This same principle applies when members of the church refuse to submit themselves to the proper authority of the elders. This authority, properly administered, is rightly the authority of Christ Himself, and to defy it is to invoke judgment upon one's self. Indeed, "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31)

Hence, the sole ruling power in the Church of Christ is His Word. The elders are called to diligently watch over the flock to see to it that every one deports himself in confession and conversation according to that Word. Those that behave themselves disorderly must be admonished, and, again this admonition must be according to the Word of Christ. Finally, as much as possible the purity of the holy sacraments must be maintained, and this, too, is accomplished only in the measure that all things in the church are governed by and subjected to the Word of Christ. The sacraments of the church are indeed profaned when members, who walk in disobedience to the Word of Christ, are permitted under the sanction of the church to partake of them, but equally profaned are these same sacraments when the criterion for participation becomes compliance with some "rashly devised" human innovation. Such "mixtures and damnable inventions," according to our Confession, "we must reject as profanations of the sacraments." (Belgic Confession, Art. 35)

Fundamentally, therefore, the principle of the Fifth Commandment lies at the root of the elder's function as overseer in the church of Christ. Christ, the Head of the Church, is the sole authority. Derived from Him, the elders receive authority which may be used only in harmony with His instruction. The elders themselves then, though they are seated in positions of authority, are also subject to authority, and without this submission they have no authority to exercise. Under them the members of the church are subject to their authority as it is very really then the authority of Christ. Only when these relationships are properly maintained is there and can there be an effective spiritual rule in the church which is conducive to the well-being of its members. In that light, let both elders and members remember the exhortation of the Word of God, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13:17)

COUNSELLORS

"Secondly, since the apostle enjoineth, that all things shall be done decently and in order, amongst Christians, and that no other persons ought to serve in the Church of Christ, but those who are lawfully called, according to the christian ordinance, therefore it is also the duty of the elders to pay regard to it, and in all occurrences, which relate to the welfare and good order of the Church, to be assistant with their good counsel and advice, to the ministers of the Word, yea, also to serve all Christians with advice and consolation." (Form of Ordination)

Three things may be observed at the very outset in this connection. The first should be understood, namely, that the advice and consolation that is expected from the elders must always be based upon the Word of God. The elder is not asked here to simply give his own opinion with regard to various problems, troubles and trials that arise in the experience of the members of the church, but it is required of him to give instruc-

tion and directive from the Word of God. He must be able to back up what he says with the Scriptures, and to show that his counsel is that of God Himself. That is the only advice that can be consoling. In the second place, this advice and consolation must be willingly given. He may never refuse to be assistant in this respect. Certain things may conceivably be asked of an elder which lie entirely outside of the scope and function of his office, and with respect to these he has every right to refuse. Not so, however, with respect to being "assistant with their good counsel and advice." This is an inherent function of the office that may not be denied. To deny it is a violation of their ordination. And finally, we must note that our ordination form does not speak of giving this advice and consolation only to those who are members of the particular church in which the elder serves, but it states, "to the ministers of the Word, yea, also to serve all Christians." Certainly this does not place the office of the elder in an inferior or subordinate position. Together with the ministers of the Word they must exercise the government of the church. Together with the ministers they must instruct from the Word. And "to the ministers" as well as to all Christians, they must give advice and consolation. This phase of the elder's work is extremely important, because it directly concerns the labor of "caring for the soul." It should not be divorced from the elder's labor as overseer but it must be integrated with it, and then we must remember that the soul of the Christian is not

cared for by tyrannizing it or using a rod upon it, but through the administration of patient advice and loving consolation is the soul nurtured. This must be exercised, and only when it is apparent that the sound advice of the Word is rejected and the soul upon which this labor is performed is obstinately rebellious does it become an imperative necessity to use the force of excommunication.

Calvin, in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, wrote: "The first foundation of discipline is to provide for private admonition; that is, if any one does not do his duty spontaneously, or behaves insolently, or lives not quite honestly, or commits something worthy of blame, he must allow himself to be admonished; and every one must study to admonish his brother when the case requires. Here especially is there occasion for the vigilance of pastors and presbyters, whose duty is not only to preach to the people, but to exhort and admonish from house to house, whenever their hearers have not profited sufficiently by general teaching; as Paul shows, when he relates that he taught 'publicly, and from house to house', and testifies that he is 'pure from the blood of all men,' because he had not shunned to declare 'all the counsel of God' (Acts 20:20, 26, 27). Then does doctrine obtain force and authority, not only when the minister publicly expounds to all what they owe to Christ, but has the right and means of exacting this from those whom he may observe to be sluggish or disobedient to his doctrine."

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Sin

The First Period, 80-250 A.D.

by Rev. G. Veldman

Writing of the doctrine of sin during the early period of the Christian Church in the New Dispensation, and specifically on this doctrine of sin in general, we concluded our preceding article with a quotation from Clement of Alexandria. We now continue with this in this present article.

Justin Martyr ascribes the origin of evil to the sensuous nature, as in his first Apology, chapter 10, "How God is to be served,":

For as in the beginning He created us when we were not, so do we consider that, in like manner, those who choose what is pleasing to Him are, on account of their choice, deemed worthy of incorruption and of fellowship with Him. For the coming into being at first was not in our own power; and in order that we may follow those things which please Him, choosing them by means of the rational faculties He has Himself

endowed us with, He both persuades us and leads us to faith. And we think it for the advantage of all men that they are not restrained from learning these things, but are even urged thereto. For the restraint which human laws could not effect, the Word, inasmuch as He is divine, would have effected, had not the wicked demons, taking as their ally the lust of wickedness which is in every man, and draws variously to all manner of vice, scattered many false and profane accusations, none of which attach to us.

In this quotation, Justin Martyr speaks of the lust of wickedness which the demons take as their ally, and which lust of wickedness is in every man. With this lust of wickedness the demons draw men to all manner of vice.

Origin speaks of sin in his *De Principiis*, Book II, 9, 2, and he writes as follows:

For the Creator gave, as an indulgence to the understandings created by Him, the power of free and voluntary action, by which the good that was in them might become their own, being preserved by the exertion of their own will; but slothfulness, and a dislike of labour in preserving what is good, and an aversion to and a neglect of better things, furnished the beginning of a departure from goodness. But to depart from good is nothing else than to be made bad. For it is certain that to want goodness (be in want of — H.V.) is to be wicked. Whence it happens that, in proportion as one falls away from goodness, in the same proportion does he become involved in wickedness. In which condition, according to its actions, each understanding, neglecting goodness either to a greater or more limited extent, was dragged into the opposite of good, which undoubtedly is evil.

It is evident in this quotation that Origin writes that moral evil is something negative, that wickedness is the absence of good.

In his writings against Celsus, Book VI, 55, Origin clears God of all responsibility with respect to sin:

Passages, indeed, might be found where corporeal and external (benefits) are improperly called "good," — those things, viz., which contribute to the natural life, while those which do the reverse are termed "evil." It is in this sense that Job says to his wife: "If we have received good at the hand of the Lord, shall we not also receive evil?" Since, then, there is found in the sacred Scriptures, in a certain passage, this statement put into the mouth of God, "I make peace, and create evil;" and again another, where it is said of Him that "evil came down from the Lord to the gate of Jerusalem, the noise of chariots and horsemen," — passages which have disturbed many readers of Scripture, who are unable to see what Scripture means by "good" and "evil," — it is probable that Celsus, being perplexed thereby, gave utterance to the question, "How is it that God created evil?" or, perhaps, having heard some one discussing the matters relating to it in an ignorant manner, he made this statement which we have noticed. We, on the other hand, maintain that "evil," or "wickedness," and the actions which proceed from it, were not created by God. For if God created that which is really evil, how was it possible that the proclamation regarding (the last) judgment should be confidently announced, which informs us that the wicked are to be punished for their evil deeds in proportion to the amount of their wickedness, while those who have lived a virtuous life, or performed virtuous actions, will be in the enjoyment of blessedness, and will receive rewards from God? I am well aware that those who would daringly assert that these evils were created by God will quote certain expressions of Scripture (in their support), because we are not able to show one consistent series of passages; for although Scripture (generally) blames the wicked and approves of the righteous, it nevertheless contains some statements which, although comparatively few in number, seem to disturb the minds of ignorant readers of holy Scripture. I have not, however, deemed it appropriate to my present treatise to quote on the present occasion those discordant statements, which are many in number, and their explanations, which would require a long array of proofs. Evils, then, if those be meant which are properly so called, were not created by God; but some, although few in comparison with the order of the whole world, have resulted from

His principal works, as there follow from the chief works of the carpenter such things as spiral shavings and sawdust, or as architects might appear to be the cause of the rubbish which lies around their buildings in the form of the filth which drops from the stones and the plaster.

INTERPRETATION of the NARRATIVE of the FALL

The documents contained in the five books of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy, were to the early church the historical foundation, not only of the doctrine of the creation of the world, and of man, but also of the doctrine of the origin of sin, which appears as a fact in the history of Adam. However, some writers rejected the literal interpretation of this narrative. Thus Origin (after the example of Philo) regarded it as a type, historically clothed, of what takes place in free moral agents everywhere, and at all times. It is difficult to ascertain how far Irenaeus adhered to the letter of the narrative. Tertullian unhesitatingly pronounced in favor of its strict historical interpretation. Both the Gnostics and the author of the Clementine Homilies rejected this view on dogmatic grounds.

Origin appears to regard the Scriptural narrative of the fall as purely allegorical. This is evident from what he writes in his *De Principiis*, IV, 16:

It was not only, however, with the (Scriptures composed) before the advent (of Christ) that the Spirit thus dealt; but as being the same Spirit, and (proceeding) from the one God, He did the same thing both with the evangelists and the apostles, — as even these do not contain throughout a pure history of events, which are interwoven indeed according to the letter, but which did not actually occur. Nor even to the law and the commandments wholly convey what is agreeable to reason. For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? and that the first day was, as it were, also without a sky? And who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden, towards the east, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting of the fruit by the bodily teeth obtained life? and again, that one was a partaker of good and evil by masticating what was taken from the tree? And if God is said to walk in the paradise in the evening, and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that any one doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally. Cain also, when going forth from the presence of God, certainly appears to thoughtful men as likely to lead the reader to inquire what is the presence of God, and what is the meaning of going out from Him. And what need is there to say more, since those who are not altogether blind can collect countless instances of a similar kind recorded as having occurred, but which did not literally take place? Nay, the Gospels themselves are filled with the same kind of narratives; e.g., the devil leading Jesus up into a high mountain, in order to show him from thence the kingdoms of the whole world, and the glory of them. For who is there among those who do not read such accounts carelessly, that would not condemn those who think that with the eye of the body — which requires a lofty height in order that the parts lying (immediately)

under the adjacent may be seen — the kingdoms of the Persians, the Scythians, and Indians, and Parthians, were beheld, and the manner in which their princes are glorified among men? And the attentive reader may notice in the Gospels innumerable other passages like these, so that he will be convinced that in the histories that are literally recorded, circumstances that did not occur are inserted.

It appears from the above quotation that Origen follows the allegorical interpretation of the narrative of the fall of man. He also applies this allegorical interpretation to the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. But, of course, we may well ask; if the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures must be applied to the Word of God, what, then, are we to believe? If things are not as recorded in the Scriptures, how, then, are they? If there were no serpent who spoke to Eve, no tree of life and no tree of knowledge of good and evil, what right do we have to assume that there was a real Eve that was tempted by the devil, and a real Adam who ate of the forbidden fruit. If we may say of this or that part of the Word of God that it is not real,

of what part of the Scriptures may we say that it is real? Why were not the wilderness, the temple pinnacle and the mountain in the Scriptural account of Jesus' temptation by the devil in the wilderness real? If the account of this temptation be not real as recorded in the Word of God, who will prevent me from concluding that no temptation ever took place? And the same applies to the fall of Adam and Eve in Paradise. We certainly do not go along with this allegorical interpretation of Holy Writ, although we must bear in mind that the early Church Fathers did delight in the mystical interpretation of the Word of God.

According to some, Irenaeus must be understood as having explained the fall of man spiritually, although Hagenback writes that this Church Father speaks elsewhere plainly enough of the fall of Adam as an historical fact. However, we were not able to locate these quotations of Irenaeus, and are therefore unable to quote them. Irenaeus, however, is known as very fundamental in his views. The Lord willing, we will continue with this in our following article.

ALL AROUND US—

Confessional Change Among Presbyterians Trouble Among Roman Catholics

by Prof. H. Hanko

CONFESSIOAL CHANGE AMONG PRESBYTERIANS

The new "Confession of 1967" has been adopted by more than two-thirds of the presbyteries of the United Presbyterian Church USA. This was necessary in order for the Confession to come before the General Assembly for a final vote of approval. This final vote will take place at the General Assembly Meeting May 16-24, and needs only a simple majority to pass.

The "Confession of 1967" was not exactly intended to replace the present confessions of the United Presbyterian Church — the Westminster Creeds. Rather, it will become a part of a doctrinal package which will be called a "Book of Confessions", and will include the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Shorter Catechism, but not the Larger Catechism composed by the Westminster divines.

However, none of the confessions will be binding upon the officebearers in the church. For, in connection with the adoption of this "book of confessions" a new ordination vow will also be adopted, in which officebearers merely pledge themselves to study the confessions and perform their duties under the guidance and instruction of these documents. In other words, it will presently be possible to believe anything one

pleases within the United Presbyterian Church without worrying about disagreement with any creeds. All one need do is be guided and instructed by these creeds; i.e. give the same value to them as to any book in one's library.

There is a necessity for this sort of action in a church such as the United Presbyterian Church — and many other churches as well. That necessity arises, in the first place, out of the fact that there are within these denominations many ministers who have rejected the truth of Scripture to a greater or lesser degree. One would think that the solution to this problem would be to censure these ministers and expel them from the church. But this has become impossible inasmuch as the church has lost the strength to exercise any form of christian discipline. So their presence has to be recognized and dealt with. The solution is therefore, to leave them in the church and give official approval to their right to deny Scripture.

In the second place, this necessity arises out of the commitments to ecumenism which the United Presbyterian Church (like many other denominations) has made. It is impossible for a denomination to unite with other denominations of different beliefs as long as

the creeds stand there as statements of faith. They are effective barriers on the road to ecclesiastical unity. Again the solution to the problem would be (obviously) to forget about these mergers which have nothing to do with the unity of the body of Christ. But, along with (and because of) the doctrinal apostasy in these denominations, goes the desire to form a world-wide church fashioned after the pattern of the World Council of Churches or the COCU (Conversations on Church Union) talks. And so again, the solution is simply to discard the creeds and make of them historical documents which have no more value than a dusty, archaic curiosity which we may consult if we are inclined to enjoy historical research. If you are interested in Egyptology, you will enjoy examining old mummies. If you are interested in church history, you can always pull these old creeds off the shelf and read in them from time to time.

But all this underscores precisely why the creeds were originally written; and what remains their abiding importance today.

Basic to our understanding of the creeds is the firm belief that they are statements of the Church of Jesus Christ in which that Church expresses what she believes to be the truth of the Word of God. Implicit in this statement are three corollaries. The first is that the Scriptures are the infallible record of the revelation of God through Jesus Christ. The second is that, because Scripture is the infallible record of the revelation of God in Christ, it is Truth (with a capital T), timeless and enduring. That is, the Church of 400 years ago was not simply confessing something which was truth in their time and for their time; but that with the changes of the ages this truth is no longer truth today. God's truth is the truth of an eternal and unchangeable God. It is truth today as it was always and as it will be forever. In the third place, the Church was able to confess that she believed these things to be the truth of Scripture because she possessed the guidance of the Spirit of Truth which Christ promised His Church before His passion. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14:16, 17. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." John 16:13.

If all this is true (and it surely is), then the creeds serve a most important purpose in the life of the church — a purpose which continues till today.

Essentially, they are the basis for the unity of the church of Christ. The unity of the church of Christ is a unity which she has only *in Christ*. Christ is the Head; the church constitutes the various members. But, as the apostle makes very clear, (Ephesians 4: 1-16) this unity of the church in her relationship to Christ is a unity of the mind of Christ. That is, it is a unity of the *truth* of God which Christ reveals as the fulness of God's revelation. And this unity is brought

about by the Spirit of Christ — the Spirit of Truth which dwells in the church in the entire New Dispensation.

This is the purpose of the creeds. They are an expression of the mind of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. And, as such, they form the basis of true union in Christ. The way to unity can never be the way of discarding the creeds and ceasing to be a creedal church. This is, in effect, the very opposite. It is a destruction of the unity of the church. It may be some sort of unity — a unity of sin and untruth. But it is a counterfeit unity that bears no resemblance to the unity of the church.

If there are men in the church who no longer subscribe to the creeds, nor confess their truth, the solution to the problem is not to dispose of the creeds; it is to cast out these men who have been "tossed about by every wind of doctrine" and preserve the unity of the church by expelling those who seek to destroy it by destroying the mind of Christ.

It is a sad day when not only in Presbyterian churches, but also in Reformed churches there is so much talk about ridding the church of the creeds. The cries are growing louder, at least to change them and rewrite what our fathers wrote. But in doing so the church in this age cuts herself off from the church in ages gone by. It destroys the unity which exists between the church today and the saints who have gone before us into glory. And in destroying this unity, unity in our present world becomes a spiritual impossibility. The men who advocate this detest the work of the Spirit of Truth, throw scorn upon the confession of saints who have sealed their faith oftentimes in blood, and then piously prate about seeking unity. This is, on the face of it, twaddle.

Our confessions, bases of true unity, must be retained exactly to keep out of the church those who (in the name of unity) destroy that unity by destroying the church.

But if our confessions are going to continue to mean anything to us, it is very important that these confessions continue to be *living* confessions of the saints. They must not remain on the back pages of the Psalter. They must live within the hearts of the faithful and become a confession by which their whole life is directed in the world.

* * *

There is a revision of the Apostle's Creed which is presently in use in the Community Church of a suburb of Chicago which we quote from the *Lutheran News*.

I believe in one God, the Father, all loving; Maker of all that is; and in Jesus Christ, loveliest of His many sons, our friend; who was born of the Mother, Mary; moved by the Spirit of God; suffered under the systems of men; was crucified and died for the sake of truth and right. Yet He lives again in the lives made beautiful by His truth, ascending into the hearts of men, and working at the right hand of God, the Father, who works all that is good. I believe in the Holy Spirit of truth, beauty, and goodness; the ministering Christian Church; the communion and cooperation of good men with God and with each other; the destruction of sin by righteousness; the worth and beauty of human personality;

and the everlastingness of the life that is in God. Amen.

It should not be too long before most churches will be able to subscribe without a gulp to these alterations in the creed.

TROUBLE AMONG ROMAN CATHOLICS FROM THE NETHERLANDS

The Second Vatican Council opened doors to change in the Roman Catholic Church which not even the Vatican can close. There are doctrinal disputes and discussions going on in Rome's communion of churches which sound as if the Romish hierarchy is trying desperately to catch up with Protestant modernism. While this is more or less true in many countries with Romish Churches, it is especially true in the Netherlands, once considered almost as conservative as the church in Italy.

Among ideas openly discussed and maintained in the Netherlands is a denial of the virgin birth of Christ. Many now think that the perpetual virginity of Mary is a myth and that Christ is the son of Joseph as well as Mary, and therefore, not divine. The resurrection of Christ too is no longer accepted by many of the clergy. One theologian writes, "One generally likes to consider his Resurrection as being the impact of his personality on his disciples and his presence in the hearts of all Christians." Original sin is claimed to be a symbolic means of expressing a state of imper-

fection in which we still live on our climb to perfection. Baptism of infants is consequently discarded. Heaven and hell are openly mocked. The doctrine of transubstantiation is criticized.

But this same spirit of change is present in the field of ethics. In the past three years almost 300 members of the clergy have left the church, many of them to marry. And there is strong agitation to end compulsory celibacy. Contraception is openly practiced and condoned by the hierarchy. And the "new morality" or "situation ethics" is welcomed as being more in keeping with the life we must live in our modern era. Sexual promiscuity is not considered to be sin.

All this brings Roman Catholicism much closer to Protestantism. The result is that there is more contact between Roman Catholics and Protestants in the Netherlands than anywhere else. Many combined services are held—even to the point of joint celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is forgotten that our fathers called the mass "an accursed idolatry." Marriages are performed with both protestant ministers and Romish priests presiding. And promises are no longer required to bring up children born in mixed marriages as Catholics.

When such things are going on, union cannot be far away—even if the Pope is distressed by these things and issues warnings against them. The church will carry him (or any successor) along the road to union. And the time may not be too far away.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

Hebrews 3:1-6

THE BACKWARD GLANCE IN THE TEXT (vs. 1)

In the first two Chapters of this letter the writer had laid down the solid basis for the entire argument and for all the exhortations which follow in this letter. He had pointed out the greatness of the Son of God, his exaltedness over all creatures in heaven and on earth through the suffering of death. He is appointed of God as the one who will destroy him who had the grip of death upon all the sons, the brethren who must be led to glory. He is made like unto us in all things, sin excepted. We see him stand before us in the Gospel as the merciful and faithful high priest.

There is abundant reason why we should take a good look of faith and consider this high priest as he is presented to us in the Old Testament Scriptures. Did not Moses, the Prophets and all the Psalms speak of

him; did they not all speak of the sufferings to come upon him and the glory to follow? Must not the Christ suffer all these things and thus enter into his glory. Must not the Son of man be lifted up on the Cross and thus be lifted up on high at God's right hand? (1 Peter 1:1-12; Luke 24:26, 27, 46; John 3:14) If Christ the anointed of God is so great, if the historical Jesus is so central and all-important, then surely we ought to give good heed and consider him a bit more in depth as portrayed and revealed to us in the Scriptures.

Besides, the Hebrew believers are not sharers (*metochoi*) of some earthly benefits, an earthly land and privileges, but they are in a common possession of some heavenly calling, a heavenly hope which is extended into the world to come. And this world to come is not some mere "world tomorrow," an earthly

Utopia of peace on earth, but means that by means of the efficacious calling by the Holy Spirit we are now already come to the heavenly mount Zion, the city of the living God! (Hebrews 11:12-16; 12:18-24) The status of the church, whether in the Old Testament in hope or in the New Testament in the risen, exalted and glorified Lord Jesus, is ever that we share in things heavenly. (Ephesians 2:6-10)

Since such is our status as believers in Christ Jesus our Lord we do well, and we are in good spiritual decorum and taste when we give an accurate and believing consideration to Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession!

JESUS, APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR PROFESSION (vs. 1, 2)

The writer is here speaking of the historical "Jesus." He refers most emphatically to the one of whom Peter says on the day of Pentecost "a man approved among you of God by signs and wonders." (Acts 2:22) Yes, God performed these wonders through him. Such was the testimony of a Nicodemus when he said "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles (signs) that thou doest except God be with him." (John 3:2; compare Hebrews 2:3; John 14:10)

There is some question as to the correct reading of the Greek text here. In some readings the name "Christ" is omitted. It really makes no essential difference whether it be retained or not. The main emphasis seems to fall on the name "Jesus." That he is the Christ is, of course, implied already in his being High Priest and that he is the Sent One, the Apostle of our profession. At any rate it ought not to escape our attention that the name "Jesus" is very often employed here by the writer to the Hebrews. Already in Chapter 2:9 we read "but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels crowned with glory and honor for the suffering of death." Is he not a brother amidst the brethren? (Hebrews 2:11-14) Is it not Jesus, the Son of God, who has passed through the heavens? (Hebrews 4:14) And did not the forerunner of our faith enter into the holy place as Jesus, who saves his people from their sins? (Hebrews 6:20) Was not Jesus made the surety of a better covenant? (Hebrews 7:22) And do we not have boldness to enter into the heavenly holy place by the blood of Jesus? (Hebrews 10:19) And is Jesus not the Author and finisher of our faith? (Hebrews 12:2) And is Jesus not the Mediator of the New Testament in his blood? (Hebrews 12:24) And, finally, did Jesus not sanctify the people through his own blood, while he suffered without the gate? (Hebrews 13:12)

Surely there was abundant reason to underscore the name of Jesus, the historical Christ, who was made like unto us in all things, sin excepted. The question is exactly, who is this Jesus? How does he stand and rate in glory compared with the greatest in the Old Testament amongst the servants of God? Hence, the writer proceeds to examine the greatness of this Jesus by comparing him with what God says of Moses' greatness in the Old Testament Scriptures. Surely both

Jesus and Moses had a direct testimony from God, and that repeatedly. For were not these Hebrews in danger of forgetting that if they would choose Moses instead of the historical Jesus, they would also deny Moses' meaning and exaltedness in the economy of salvation? It is here no question of either/or, Moses or Jesus; it is emphatically a question of adhering to both, but each in his God-ordained place and rank. We must have both Moses and Jesus. Does not Christ say to the Jews of his day "for if ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me." emphatic "*emoi*" = me, in Greek text for he wrote concerning me." (emphatic "*emou*" = me, in the Greek text) No, Moses did not simply write a few references to Christ, but the entire Moses, the Pentateuch Scriptures, have one subject: Jesus, who will save his people from their sins. (John 5:45-47)

For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth are (became a reality) through Jesus Christ! (John 1:17) And this Jesus is the Only Begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, and he it is that has declared (exegeted) God to us in the fulness of grace and truth! (John 1:18)

This Jesus is "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." The writer places himself on the same solid and hallowed ground with the readers. Both he and the readers have an avowed participation in this Jesus; both have this in a common profession. For the term "profession" here does not merely refer to the content and substance of our confession. It is more than a mere formulation of faith in the back of some church Psalter, upon which the dust of dead orthodoxy can gather, yea, often does! The KJV "profession" refers to the actual profession, the actual confession of Jesus as Lord. No one can say: Lord, JESUS, except through the Holy Ghost. As partakers of the heavenly calling, that is exactly what we confess: Jesus, my Lord! (I Corinthians 12:3) And this is the point of departure of the writer. If this be not true then are they reprobate. (II Corinthians 13:5)

The writer conceives of the "Apostle" and "High Priest" as being one and the same Jesus, as is evident from the use of the one article "the." There is a difference between these two. That the writer speaks of Jesus here as "the Apostle" is to indicate that Jesus is the one sent from the Father into the world. (John 3:17, 34; 5:38; 6:29 etc) He did not take this honor to himself. He is the Servant of Jehovah. It must be borne in mind that Jesus was sent emphatically of the Father to be the High Priest, to be the Builder of the church and to found her upon Himself as the Chief Corner-stone! Here he came into this world, he came into the very theatre where Moses had stood, so that they have become comparables. Their relative greatness can be compared.

It is from this vantage-point that the writer proceeds to make this comparison for those who are partakers of the heavenly calling, which reveals itself in their profession concerning this Jesus. We must take a good look at Jesus, we must consider this Jesus very carefully. No, we must not stare at Moses till we are blind for Christ's presence and greatness. On the

contrary, we must look at this Jesus as he stands in the house and temple of God, in the church in the midst of the brethren. Both Jesus and Moses are placed here, but each in their own order. Here we have a comparison made between the greatest among the Old Testament saints and servants of God and the very Son of God called Jesus! No, this is not a comparison between Aaron and Christ, between two orders of the priesthood, but between the Mediator, Jesus, and the Law-giver, Moses!

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

In the first place it ought to be observed that they are compared as to their faithfulness in their respective offices. Moses was faithful in all "his house." We have here a reference in the text to Numbers 12:7 where we read "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all *mine* house." That the writer to the Hebrews speaks of "his house" does not essentially alter the sense of the passage. The same house is meant. It is the church in the wilderness, gathered about the tent of meeting. The viewpoint is different. In Numbers 12:7 the Lord Himself is speaking of Moses to Miriam and Aaron, while here the writer is speaking of the Lord and changes the first person into the third person. In either case it refers to God!

It ought to be noticed that we have here a passage in which Moses is designated by the LORD Himself as being superior to Aaron. Now the priesthood would not come from Moses, but from Aaron. However, only

Moses might enter upon the Mount of God to speak with God face to face. The Lord counts Paul worthy and faithful to preach to the Gentiles, and the Lord counts Moses faithful in all his house by virtue of having appointed him as the Law-giver. It was Moses who saw the pattern of the things heavenly and who descended the mount, all on fire, with the fiery and holy oracles. He might see the similitude of God, be it then from the cleft of the rock. (Exodus 24:15-18; 33:20-23; 34:29-35) And the glory of Moses' face was even too much for Aaron to behold. It was indeed glorious but really had no glory because of the glory which excelleth in Jesus. (II Corinthians 3:8-18)

To such a glorious Moses, who is counted faithful by God, in all his house, is the Christ compared. Now let us notice this Moses in all his glory as a servant. He was no mere servant in the common sense of the term. He is no mere *doulos*, a slave, but he is a *Therapoon*, a helper, an attendant.¹ The emphasis does not fall upon his permanent social status, but rather upon his voluntary and free service. His work is emphasized and not his lowly station. And great was this work. However, even in this greatness it was limited to one who can be of service in a house that is already built, or which would be permanently and gloriously built by another according to the pattern shown on the mount. (Hebrews 8:5; Exodus 25:40; 26:30)

(1) "Here only in the N.T.: *Hoos Therapoon*. Thus in Septuagint in Deut. 12:7, Josh. 1:2; 8:31, 33. The same person may be described by both *doulos* and *thrapoon* under different aspects". Compare Westcott "The Epistle To The Hebrews" page 77.

NOTICE

Pre-Seminary and Seminary Students in need of financial assistance in attending our Protestant Reformed Seminary should come to the meeting of the Student Aid Committee to be held May 17 at 8 o'clock in our Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

P. Cnossen, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

On Monday evening, April 10, our Heavenly Father called to Himself our beloved Mother and Grandmother,

MRS. JENNIS ALSUM

at the age of 75 years.

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God". Job 19:25 and 26.

Mr. and Mrs. John Alsum
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Huizenga
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Slager
Mr. and Mrs. Ben De Young
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Westra
12 grandchildren
3 great grandchildren

Randolph, Wis.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sympathy to two of its members, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Huizenga, in the loss of her mother

MRS. JENNIE ALSUM

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.

Mr. Dewey Alsum, Pres.

Mrs. Frank Fisher, Sec'y

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church herewith expresses its sincere sympathy to two of its members, Mrs. Henry A. Schut, and Mrs. Harry Zwak, the former in the loss of her brother,

ANTHONY DE KRAKER

and the latter in the loss of her sister,

MRS. ANGY YULE

May the Lord comfort them by His grace which is always sufficient unto all things, and grant them the assurance that, when their earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, they will have a building of God, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. II Cor. 5:1

Mrs. Gerald Vander Kooy, Sec'y.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

May 1, 1967

Rev. D. Engelsma is again in receipt of a call from our Hull congregation, the second within a year, while he was still considering a call from South Holland, which he has subsequently declined.

* * *

Tornadoes have recently raked paths of destruction through the cities of Oak Lawn and Grand Rapids wherein some of our churches reside. Through this powerful manifestation of God's wrath upon this cursed world and fallen mankind we again witnessed a precursory sign of the complete destruction of this world and all it contains. But for people of God this same sign was a means to point us to our deliverance which will be ours at the final holocaust when we shall be lifted up to meet our Lord—to be separated from the old earth, melting with fervent heat, to be transplanted upon the new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell and the Eternal Tabernacle of God shall be with the men of His good pleasure. Surely, the *power* of a tornado is also a picture of the *Infinite Power* which we confess to be that by which "He upholds and governs all things for the service of mankind to the end that men may serve God".

* * *

Holland's new minister, Rev. J. A. Heys, was installed in a regular divine worship service Friday evening, April 28. Rev. H. Veldman conducted the service, including the reading of the Form for Installation. The sermon was an exposition of Ephesians 6:19 under the theme, "A Prayer for Utterance", examining the prayer from the three-fold aspect of its Object, its Necessity and its Fruit. A goodly number of visitors joined the congregation to fill the auditorium to near capacity to welcome Rev. Heys to Holland. At the conclusion of the service Rev. Heys pronounced the benediction of the Triune God upon his new flock.

* * *

The fourth of the current Lecture Series was held in First Church April 20 with Rev. G. Van Baren on the speaker's stand. The audience was the usual attentive one as they followed the speaker's treatise on, "Irresistible Grace". This evening differed from the first three in that there was no snow storm to dissuade the public from venturing out. We can indeed be grateful that so many people are interested in the truths set forth in Calvin's famous Five Points. Music was furnished by a male quartet from Hope Church, and Mrs. C. Lubbers was at her accustomed place at the pipe organ. Rev. Ban Baren has been named to render the final lecture of this series May 11. *Were you there?*

* * *

Lynden's Adult Bible Class examined the truth of Justification in their April 5th meeting. Significantly, the recommended reading for preparation for this study was pages 499-509 of Rev. H. Hoeksema's "Dogma-

tics". Rev. Woudenberg's "Studies in Biblical Doctrine" is still enjoying a wide response from many States. Readers write: "I am enjoying the "Studies" very much. It is a unique way of presenting the Word," and, "I certainly receive a blessing from the "Studies", and I want to thank you personally, even as I pray God's blessing upon them for others..."

* * *

Oak Lawn's Church Extension Committee regularly mails out neatly printed sheets under the title, "Scriptural Meditations". Number six was a dissertation on, "The Covenant of God". And so each of our churches, in its own way, strives to follow the injunction of our Lord to be as "a lighted candle set on a candlestick" and "a city set on a hill", remembering that it was He, our blessed Lord, Who told us that we are the light of the world!

* * *

The Eastern Ladies League Fall Meeting was held in Hudsonville Church, April 28, with Rev. H. Veldman as speaker. The topic of his speech was, "The New Morality" and was considered under three sub-titles, "The Meaning, The Fundamental Error, and The Certain Collapse". The speaker noted that modern men, as all their earlier counterparts, take it upon themselves to sit in judgment upon what is right and what is wrong, while only God has that prerogative, which shall be fully manifested in the Day of Judgment. The comforting theme found in the speech was the fact that the people of God still have the privilege to instruct their children in the Scriptural truth over against the lie of the modern educator. Special music was furnished by an octette from Southwest Church who sang, "Great is thy faithfulness". A very liberal offering was received, which was tagged for our own High School fund.

* * *

Hull's Young People's Society has extended an invitation to the Convention Board to hold the 1967 Convention in their church. The first harbinger of this event was seen in Loveland's bulletin in which appeared an announcement that their members could expect a visit from their young people soliciting donations for their annual assembly.

* * *

Another thought in connection with the recent tornado: Even as in the end of time, so now—as demonstrated by the published statement of a Grand Rapids clergyman that the Finger of God was not in this, but that it was merely a natural occurrence—The Book of Revelation prophesies: "And they repented not."

* * *

Oak Lawn's consistory originated preliminary steps to celebrate their 40th anniversary in June, appointing two of its members to the planning thereof.

. . .see you in church.

J.M.F.