

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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A Mutilated Ecclesiology

All Around Us: The Battle Over Confessions

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CORRECTION

A very serious error appears in my article of Feb. 1, 1967: The Providence of God; Miracles. In the second column, page 208, six lines from the bottom, instead of reading: "We must conceive of two spheres of life, a natural and earthly sphere and a spiritual and heavenly sphere," we should read: "We must not conceive of two spheres of life, a natural and earthly sphere and a spiritual and heavenly sphere."

Rev. H. Veldman

MEDITATION—

ENDURANCE

by Rev. J. Kortering

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

Psalm 125:1, 2

Some of you may never have seen a mountain. You've missed something. In fact, it will be somewhat difficult for you to become gripped with the message of this text.

Try anyway; it will be worth it.

They that trust in Jehovah *are* as mount Zion. The Psalmist David lived on top of this mountain. Its splendor consisted not in the glamor of a frosty crown which flirted with the clouds. Rather it arose as a mighty mass of granite about 500 feet above the

Valley of Kidron. The surrounding boulders formed an imaginary staircase for the stars.

This mount proclaimed the gospel of endurance.

If you have ever traveled through the mountains and taken the time to absorb its message, you undoubtedly have sensed this same thing that David did. Yonder lies a sizable rock, you naively kick it, only to recoil with a contused appendage. Incensed with rage you resolve revenge and determine to reduce its mass to smithereens on the rocks below. But alas, its weight makes mockery of rage. Gradually its message penetrates your blinded soul. It's rock! Lifting your eyes upward to the rising hills, one thought is driven home: how durable. The winds of time have blown upon it, the sun has baked it, the storms have unleashed their fury upon it, lightening, rain, and ice, yet there it stands, unaffected and immovable.

Well may we blend one song with another, "Bless the Lord O my soul, O Lord my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with honor and majesty....Who laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be removed forever," Psalm 104:1, 5.

Mount Zion was a picture of the people of God. You and I are represented in that mountain. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever."

That's good news.

We are as durable as a mountain.

Quite obviously the Psalmist does not speak of the child of God from the view-point of his physical and natural life. This is described for us in Psalm 90:5, 6, "In the morning they are like grass which groweth up; in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth." All this transpires within the span of three or four score years, or less.

Rather, he speaks concerning the durability of the faith that God has given to each of His children. The secret to the rock-like perseverance of the child of God in the midst of the storms of life lies in the heart. It is there that God has implanted a mighty power of endurance. God has given us a bond of fellowship that places us in union with the Dynamo of life, Jesus Christ. Through faith we receive spiritual understanding, spiritual power, spiritual encouragement to press on. When the raw winds of death sweep over the child of God, he lifts his head heavenward and cries out exaltingly, "Great is Jehovah and greatly to be praised."

You have experienced this, haven't you? Surely you have seen it in your brethren and sisters in the faith.

When the lightening of death strikes a loved one, the thunder of doubt rolls over the storm tossed soul. Tears of sorrow well from the fountains of grief. The pain of separation lasts many a long lonely night. Yet, the grief of a child of God is different from the unbeliever. Beneath the surface of the storm lies an inner calm. The heart is not troubled, for from its inner recesses comes the amazing cry, "God is good."

Some storms are sudden and devastating in tornadic force, others are extended and ravage the soul through

its persistent and wearing force. Think of the emergency operation or hospitalization that followed some "accident." Its suddenness shakes us to the foundation. Without warning we are cast into great crisis, the routine of life is changed so quickly that its dazzling speed creates confusion in our weary brain. The fear of surgery, the critical moments when life hangs in the balance, the inquisitive wonderings whether a loved one will ever be normal again, all these weigh upon the soul. Even then the believer knows of a loving hand that rests upon the weak and faithful arms that bear up the troubled. God is good! Usually there is healing and soon we go on in life. For others however, there is a perpetual period of trouble. These storms are of quite a different nature. Perhaps it is an incurable disease, one that is not deadly, but limits one's life. For some it comes in the form of mental stress in varying degrees of intensity. Others suffer bodily pains. The burden of these lies in its persistence. One gets up in the morning, it's on his mind and he immediately faces it. All through the day, whether it limits activity or makes usual activity more difficult, the raw winds erode our soul. Sometimes we're pushed aside from the traffic of life, we're forgotten, we don't seem to count. Emblazoned on our forehead is that dreaded title, "Handicapped." Long night evolves into weary day and one after another. Yet there is an amazing difference between the child of God who faces these trials and the unbeliever. That point of difference is in the heart. The believer's heart is rock-like in strength. Oh, the clouds are dark, the rains beat heavily, yet within our inmost being we look beyond the churning clouds and behold Father. He promised, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Faith responds, "God is good" even in the hour of trial.

One could multiply these troubles ream after ream. David knew them; even though we are not able to discern the nature of that trouble, it is obvious one storm after another swirled down upon him. Many are the afflictions of the righteous! We could delineate the pains of the battle of faith, the anguish of suffering for Christ's sake. Incessantly, the ecclesiastical waters are churning, troubled by the vexing winds of heresy. As the end of the world approaches, the tempest increases.

Yet, David describes the child of God as mount Zion, strong, steadfast, durable in the midst of the storms. David uses Old Testament language; the Apostle Paul declares the same truth in the New Testament in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed." II Cor. 4:8, 9.

The supreme question is, how can that be? How does one ever come to this point, calm in the midst of the storm?

It must become apparent immediately that the children of God do not attain this supreme blessedness through an effort on their part. No man possesses this calm in himself. It follows from this that mere man cannot give it to another man. An unbelieving psychiatrist will not bring calm to the heart. Counsel-

ing apart from the Word of God will never produce this calm. Drugs, cocktails, the pleasures may distract the soul from its present plight, but these will never reach the heart. Unless the heart is calm there is no true peace, only hopeless confusion and despair.

There is only one way to inner heart-felt peace, that is faith. No gift is more precious than this one. This gift is given us freely as we gather in worship from sabbath to sabbath. David realized this. This Psalm is one of fourteen (Psalms 120-134) classified as the Psalms of Degrees. Listen to the emphasis upon the house of God. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." Ps. 122:1. "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it, except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Ps. 127:1. "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning." Ps. 130:6. "We will go into his tabernacles, we will worship at his footstool, arise O Lord into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength." Ps. 134:7. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Ps. 133:1. "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and bless the Lord." Ps. 134:2.

While we are gathered together in worship, God reveals Himself to us. Through the Holy Spirit we begin to understand who God is and the more we gaze upon His Revelation and hear what God has to say to us the more we grow in inner peace. We see ourselves in proper relationship with God. We are weak — He is strong. We are faltering — He is faithful. We are prone to darkness — He dwells in an unchangeable light. We hate — He loves. We are sinful — He is righteous.

Still more, we learn to understand that all that God is in Himself, is for our benefit, for He is *our* God and Father through Jesus Christ.

Then we are able to understand why the Psalmist adds to the first verse of our text, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people for henceforth even forever."

You see, there is more to the figure than Mount Zion. Round about Mount Zion were massive bulwarks. These, too, enter into the picture. Mount Zion was strong and steadfast as a dwelling place because round about were these other mountains. The safety of David living in Jerusalem rested for a large part upon those surrounding mountains which formed a natural wall of security.

Applied to our lives, we recognize the durability of our faith does not rest in faith itself, but in the God that sustains that faith. We recognize that we are not alone in the storms of life, we are surrounded on every side by the mighty Arm of Jehovah, Jesus Christ. Apart from Him there is no life. Even devils and angels serve His sovereign will. Brute creation is made subject to His powerful command. The proud world of fallen man is reduced to unwilling servitude under our Lord Jesus Christ. That Jesus is *our* Lord. He has taken away the curse of our sins and merited our peace with God. All things are now for our sakes, even as we are Christ's and Christ is God's.

Faith recognizes this nugget of truth. Disease, suffering, war, pestilence, even death is not apart from God, but is *from* God. These things do not work against us, they work for us. God is with us in the midst of the storm to bring us safely through. The purpose of the storm is not to destroy, but to build. The proof rests in the testimony of faith, "Affliction has been for my profit."

What is the conclusion to this? Our endurance is a living reality only because Jehovah Himself as a mountain encircles us in the arms of Jesus Christ. God endures! He is faithful. He who loved us even unto death, while we were yet sinners, how much more is that love now that we are justified through His blood. He does not love us one day and hate us the next. His attention is not limited, so that it is possible for Him to be distracted and forget His precious seed. As a steadfast and enduring mountain, so Jehovah is round about his people. His faithfulness reaches into the mystery of His eternal decree, it is revealed in all its splendor at the cross, and it is experienced now in our hearts. From the flaming cherubim of Eden to the pearly gates of heaven, He directs all things for the final salvation of His church and the glorification of His holy name.

Mount Zion *cannot* be removed. It is impossible.

You are weary and troubled?

Trust in this Jehovah. He that thinketh that he can stand, let him beware lest he fall. Trust in yourself or in men, you will never endure. Jehovah is faithful and sure. Lift up your weary storm-tossed soul and look upon Him who has revealed Himself to us in His Word, behold Him in Jesus Christ and be not faithless, but believing.

They that trust in the Lord *are* as Mount Zion.

This is the blessedness of endurance.

It is of the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth, that your salvation comes. His work it is. To His glory it must tend. Would you not fear and tremble, then, while working out this marvellous work of the great God, lest you make a mistake, lest you think an evil thought, speak a wrong word, commit a sinful act, and lest you do not let your light shine to His glory as brightly as you ought?

- H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 89

EDITORIAL—

The Nature Of The Atonement

Limited or General?

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

THE CONFESSIONS ON THE DEFINITE AND PERSONAL ELEMENT OF THE ATONEMENT (continued)

We are now ready to turn to that part of the Canons of Dordrecht which speaks directly of the atonement, and, particularly of the definite (commonly called "limited") nature of the atonement. It is nothing short of amazing that those addicted to Professor Dekker's ideas on the atonement could appeal exactly to that article of Canons II which sets forth the Reformed doctrine of definite atonement. I refer, of course, to Article 8, which reads as follows:

For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever.

I characterized it as amazing that anyone addicted to the Dekker view of the atonement should appeal to this article. Yet in a sense it is not so very amazing. For the fact of the matter is that in this article we have the very heart of Canons II and the very heart of the Reformed view of the atonement. Without this article, it is safe to say, it is impossible to maintain any real distinction between the Reformed and the Arminian doctrines concerning "The Death of Christ and the Redemption of Men Thereby," — the subject in Canons II. This is not to say that the other articles of this chapter are not Reformed. But it is to say that they either cannot be maintained, or they make no sense, or they cannot be distinguished from the Arminian presentation, apart from Article 8. Anyone in a Reformed

church, therefore, who wants to deny what is commonly called "limited atonement" must do away with the thrust and plain meaning of Article 8. From this point of view it is no wonder that the Dekker forces made a frontal attack on Article 8 at various times; if they could somehow change the meaning of Article 8 or give it an "interpretation" that would fit their ideas, they would win the battle.

However, the language of Article 8 is so very clear that the attempt to maintain general atonement and to swear allegiance to Article 8 is self-contradictory. It would be extremely difficult to imagine an article which more clearly and unmistakably sets forth this truth, that Christ's atonement is IN ITS VERY NATURE both definite (particular, limited) and personal.

Remember, too, that neither Professor Dekker nor the Doctrinal Committee want this doctrine.

People are being fooled on this score. They seem to imagine that the Doctrinal Report upholds the doctrine of limited atonement, and that the report is even rather strong in its emphasis on the teaching of Article 8. More than appearance, however, this is not. For: 1) The Doctrinal Report nevertheless upholds the general offer and by implication, therefore, denies limited atonement. 2) The Doctrinal Report nevertheless wants to find room in Christ's atonement for some general and non-saving benefits for all men. 3) The Doctrinal Report makes the fundamental error of agreeing that the atonement is not limited *in its nature*. This last error is more serious than appears at first glance. At any rate, it must be remembered that one does not truly subscribe to the Reformed doctrine of the atonement or to Article 8 of Canons II if he does not maintain that the atonement is definite (limited) in its very nature.

In order to understand the significance of this article of the Canons and its implications for the Dekker Case, we should note the following:

1) This article very definitely speaks of the *atonement*. True, it does not use the term *atonement*. But it speaks of the atonement when it uses the following expressions: the most precious death of his Son; the blood of the cross; effectually redeem; purchased for them by his death. Right here we may also dispose of the attempt to make a disjunction between atonement and redemption, as though it were possible that the

atonement is general and redemption particular and efficacious. The two terms simply look at the same reality from different viewpoints. Atonement refers to the payment, the satisfaction of God's justice, made by Christ's laying down of His life. Redemption refers to the purchase that was transacted by that payment, or satisfaction. Atonement is the paying of the ransom whereby the ransoming (redemption) of the redeemed is accomplished.

2) In the second place, it should be carefully noted that this article speaks of *efficacious atonement*. It does not do this because there is also a non-*efficacious* atonement, but exactly because it opposes every idea of a non-*efficacious* atonement. It was the Arminians who taught, and who still teach, the latter. They spoke only of a non-*efficacious* atonement: Christ died for all and every man; but the limitation comes because we must separate between meriting (wrought by the atonement) and appropriating (wrought by man when the conditions of faith and repentance are met). Prof. Dekker originally wanted to distinguish three aspects of the atonement, (design, availability, desire) in which the atonement was general and non-*efficacious* and one aspect of the atonement which was limited, namely, its efficacy. Later (as I noted in my first article about the Doctrinal Report, Feb. 1 issue) he did away with these distinctions. He now denies any limitation in the atonement: it is general. And he now denies any efficacy in the atonement. Prof. Dekker wants to restrict any limitation in salvation to the realm of what is called in dogmatics "soteriology," that is, to the realm not of the atonement and the work of Christ *for* us, but to the realm of the actual application of the benefits of salvation and to the work of Christ *in* us.

Now it might seem to some as though the article is speaking about this soteriological aspect of Christ's work, His work in us. And, in fact, the article certainly does mention this. It speaks of the fact that it was the will of God "...that he should confer upon them faith.... should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing." Moreover, it even speaks of preservation and final glorification: "and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever." All of this certainly belongs to the *application* of the blessings of salvation to the elect, to the work of Christ *in* us, not to the work of Christ *for* us. About this there can be no argument. *But this is not the main thrust of the article!*

The question is: what is the main thrust of the article? And why, in connection with that main thrust, does it say something about soteriology, about the actual application of the benefits of salvation to the elect?

The answer is: *the main thrust of the article is that Christ efficaciously atoned for and redeemed His elect people only when He died.* That is: Christ actually and in the objective sense of the word satisfied for their sins and thereby actually and in the objective sense of the word purchased, merited, obtained for His elect people, and for them only, all the blessings of salva-

tion, so that before God all those blessings of salvation accrued to the account of all who were represented by Christ in His atoning death, namely, the elect.

And when, then, does the article also speak of the actual application of the benefits of salvation to the elect? The answer is: exactly to show and to emphasize the unbreakable connection between the atonement and that application of the benefits of salvation, between the work of Christ for us and the work of Christ in us, between the extent of the atonement and the extent of actual salvation, between the objective work of Christ in His death and the subjective work of Christ as the quickening Spirit. The two are absolutely co-extensive! And this co-extensiveness is absolutely necessary! On the one hand, if the blessings of salvation are to be applied to any man, they must be purchased, merited, for him. On the other hand, if the blessings of salvation are purchased, merited, for any man, they must and they will be applied to him.

This, of course, is what Dekker, Daane, and others have repeatedly denied. For the same reason they want nothing of the argument that particular salvation also means particular, limited, atonement.

But this is the teaching that permeates Article 8. And anyone who does not want this doctrine should be honest enough to inform the churches of his disagreement with the Canons forthrightly.

Here is the proof from the article itself that this is meaning:

In the first place, the article speaks of the "saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son." Notice: it is the efficacy of Christ's *death*. There is efficacy, power, in that death. That death accomplished something. Mark you well, this term "efficacy of Christ's death," is not the same as a term like "efficacious calling" or "efficacy of grace." The latter terms belong in the realm of soteriology; they express doctrines which are treated in Canons III and IV. But Article 8 of Canons II speaks of the fact that in that death of Christ, in the atonement, there was quickening, enlivening, and saving power. As the hymn has it, "There is power in the blood!"

In the second place, notice that the article very plainly distinguishes between that efficacy of Christ's death and the actual *bestowing* upon the elect of faith and all the other blessings of salvation. That bestowing of justifying faith (and the other blessings of salvation) was exactly the purpose which God had in view when He purposed that the saving efficacy of Christ's death should extend to all the elect.

In the third place, notice that this is all connected with *infallible salvation*, certain, unfailing salvation. This is what Arminianism does not have. As Canons II, B, 1 puts it, the Arminians had a doctrine according to which it was possible that no one would actually be saved, and therefore a doctrine according to which there was no certain, or infallible, salvation. But the Reformed faith has a salvation that is absolutely certain. And that certainty lies in the first instance in the unbreakable connection between efficacious atonement and efficacious salvation for the elect alone: "...that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious

death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, *thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation.*"

In the fourth place, notice the emphasis upon the gift of faith in this connection. Reformed, as well as Arminians, emphasize the absolute necessity of faith for salvation. That faith is the connecting link between a man and salvation; without it there can be no reception of all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Arminians made faith a condition of salvation; they said the connecting link was forged by man. The Reformed said (and say) that faith is not a condition and a link forged by man, but it is a gift of God. But the question is: how can God justly bestow that gift of faith (as well as all the other gifts of salvation), — that gift of faith which is the crucial thing, the connecting link that is indispensable for salvation, — how can God bestow saving faith as a gift upon a man who in himself deserves no gift, but only damnation? The answer is: *it must be purchased*, and it *was* purchased for him. By whom and how was it purchased? By Christ through His atoning death. That is why salvation is infallible. Christ purchased all the blessings of salvation: righteousness and justification, holiness and sanctification, and everlasting life and glory. But He did more than that. He purchased for us that gift, faith, which was the absolutely necessary means whereby all the other blessings of salvation come into our actual possession. This is the reason why this article speaks of effectual redemption: "...it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross...should effectually redeem...." And this is doubly emphasized in the article. For notice that when in the last part of the article mention is made of the actual conferring of faith and the other saving gifts (the work of Christ *in us*), the article is very careful to mention the fact that these gifts were purchased: "...that he should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, *he purchased for them by his death....*" Before faith and all the gifts of salvation could be conferred on the elect, they had to be purchased for the elect. If the latter did not take place, then there could be nothing to confer upon the elect.

3) Returning now to the main thread of our discussion, we note, in the third place, that this efficacious atonement is both definite (or: limited) and personal. This is so evident from the article that it need hardly be pointed out. The saving efficacy of Christ's death is for *all the elect*, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring *them* infallibly to salvation. It was the will of God that Christ should effectually redeem *all those, and those only*, (restricted, limited, definite), *who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father*. Notice also how very really personal this is. The idea is not a mere number of men, regardless of identity. They are mentioned throughout as persons. They are mentioned as individuals "out of every people, tribe, nation, and language." And they are mentioned not only as being chosen from eternity unto salvation, *but as having been given to Christ by the Father*. They were given to Christ, of course, from eternity. But

this means, mind you, that when Christ went to the cross and died His atoning death, He possessed this great multitude of elect people, His sheep. They belonged to Him. They were a sacred charge given to Him by the Father. Some of them had been born four thousand years before, and were long dead. Some of them were living on earth at the time when Christ died and atoned. Some of them were yet to be born. But all of them Christ possessed and knew and personally represented when He died His atoning death; and for all of them He consciously atoned, so that He might effectually redeem them.

4) Finally, notice that all this is a matter of the nature, the design, of the atonement. This is, in the first place, simply an historic fact. We are not speaking of abstract atonement. Nor are we speaking of what might have been. But we are speaking of the *atonement*, the only atonement there ever was or shall be. And the *nature of the atonement* was that its extent was definite, limited, particular. This is simply a fact. There was nothing accomplished for anyone else in that death of Christ. There were no others included in Christ's substitutionary death. There are no benefits in that death for anyone. When all the elect shall have been born and saved, there will be, so to speak, no left-overs in that atoning death. To be sure, the benefits of that death are infinite: to all eternity the elect shall continue to reap its benefits, and the end of them shall never be reached. But all the infinite fulness of those benefits, though never exhausted, shall be fully applied to all the elect, and to them only, to endless ages.

But the article also explains this particular nature of the atonement. This was its divine design *from eternity*. This truth, in fact, receives strong emphasis in the article. For it explains this definite, or limited, character of the atonement from God's sovereign counsel, His gracious will and purpose. And again, the article speaks of its being *the will of God* that Christ by the blood of the cross...should effectually redeem... And what, pray, could be of a more fixed nature, design, than that which is fixed from eternity by God's sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose? Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the word rendered "purpose" in our English version of the Canons is actually the Latin word *intention*. This means, therefore, that the atonement was limited according to God's *intention*. God intended that the atonement should have a certain design, a certain effect, a certain extent; and that atonement was exactly as God intended.

How beautiful is the conception of salvation presented in this article of the Canons! Salvation is absolutely a closed system! From its design and conception in God's eternal counsel, through its objective realization in Christ's death, to its actual bestowal by the Spirit of Christ, and all the way to its final realization in everlasting glory, it is a closed system: it is for the elect alone. Because it is, it is absolutely certain. For it is from beginning to end of the Lord, and of the Lord alone!

This is the truth which is under attack in the propositions of Prof. Dekker and others.

But this truth the Christian Reformed Church and its committee cannot consistently defend on account of the First Point, — the Achilles heel at which Dekker

and Daane can aim in order to shoot down the Doctrinal Report.

But this is the truth of our Reformed Confessions. If we would be truly and Scripturally Reformed, to this truth we must hold wholeheartedly and consistently!

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod

by Rev. G. Van Baren

Our readers are likely acquainted with the fact that there is a "Reformed Ecumenical Synod." This "Synod" is composed presently of 23 Reformed and Presbyterian denominations from all six continents and totalling about three million people. This ecumenical endeavor differs somewhat from others which exist today in that it is limited to those churches which are confessionally Reformed in doctrine. The question has been asked if perhaps we also could have a place in this organization. Our past Synods have also confronted this question. Since we will possibly face the question again, it is well that we, members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, are aware of what this organization is. The present article is written with the purpose of encouraging discussion on this subject in societies or possibly in our visits in one another's homes.

THE HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION

The first R.E.S. meeting was held in Grand Rapids, Mich. in August 1946 with three denominations represented: the Reformed Church in South Africa, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

This first Ecumenical Synod, which was foundational and preparatory in character, set the structure, and to an extent the agenda, for all succeeding ones. It declared that its purpose was to give a united testimony of its faith in the midst of the world and to other churches "which need to return to the faith of the fathers." In deliberations that lasted two and a half weeks, the delegates considered not only the proper name for the assembly and its ecumenical character, but also set guide lines for membership, broached the question of relationship to other churches and church groups (especially the Church Union Movement) and issued a ringing testimony in a reaffirmation of the fundamental convictions which are embodied in the churches' standards. ("The Reformed Ecumenical Synod: a Venture in Confessional Ecumenism," Paul G. Schrottenboer)

A second "synod" was held in 1949 in Amsterdam to which delegates from fourteen denominations were sent. At this meeting the "Rules and Standing Orders" were discussed as well as the subjects of Christian education, eschatology, creation and evolution, and the relation of church and state.

The third "synod" met in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1953. At this gathering the name of the organization was finally decided upon: "The Reformed Ecumenical Synod." From reports given, this meeting was not "fully satisfying to the delegates." Evidently not much was done at the meeting. The next "synod" was held five years later in 1958 at Potchefstroom, South Africa. Here too "one of the disquieting features...was the failure of some committees to present reports or to submit reports of the entire committee."

The last-held "synod" was in 1963 in Grand Rapids. A part-time secretary was appointed to prepare for this meeting. At this meeting the "Synod established a permanent secretariat and appointed a general secretary to be the liaison officer between the churches and the committees. This Synod also empowered the Interim Committee to meet between the meetings of Synod. In addition, it made provision for the erection of regional sub-committees on all study committees considering major issues and for the eventual meeting of the conveners of these regional committees. It established a standing committee on missions, advisory and consultative in nature, to assist the member churches to proclaim the gospel to the world. It erected a committee on evangelism and instructed it to prepare a report to the churches." (op. cit.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

I am including in this article a copy of the "Rules and Standing Orders of the Reformed Ecumenical Synods." Read and study it — and in light of its contents consider and discuss some of these questions.

1. Is the basis for the R.E.S. of a sufficiently limited character? Could we as Protestant Reformed

Churches subscribe to this basis?

2. Could we benefit from a treatment of "questions and problems of import pertaining to the spiritual welfare and the Scriptural government of the churches." If so, how?

3. Could this R.E.S. also be of assistance to us in our mission work? How?

4. In how far could we, with them, give "united testimony to our common Reformed faith?"¹

5. Under point V, would we not likely be in violation of Art. 30 of our Church Order (In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted...)? According to the "Rules," the churches "are under obligation to take such decisions and deliverances under serious consideration...." Would we not then obligate ourselves to discuss on our own Synodical gatherings subjects which are not strictly "ecclesiastical matters?"

6. One of the purposes of this R.E.S. is "to express our precious unity in Christ and our oneness as Reformed Churches, though scattered over the earth." Would we not need a clearer idea of the phrase "to express our precious unity" before we could join the R.E.S.?

Discuss some of these questions in light of the "Rules" which follow.

* * *

RULES AND STANDING ORDERS OF THE REFORMED ECUMENICAL SYNODS

I. NAME

The name of the gatherings to which these rules pertain shall be The Reformed Ecumenical Synod.

II. BASIS

The foundation of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as interpreted by the Confessions of the Reformed faith, namely the Second Helvetic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Gallican Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Thirty-nine Articles. It should be understood that these Scriptures in their entirety, as well as in every part thereof, are the infallible and ever-abiding Word of the living Triune God, absolutely authoritative in all matters of creed and conduct, and the Confessions of the Reformed faith are accepted because they present the divine revealed truth, the

forsaking of which has caused the deplorable decline of modern life. It has to be emphasized that only a whole-hearted and consistent return to this Scriptural truth, of which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the core and the apex, can bring salvation to mankind and effectuate the so sorely needed renewal of the world.

Because of the diversity in the forms of government of the Reformed Churches, uniformity of church policy cannot be stressed as a fundamental requisite, except in so far as the principles of this policy are contained in the Reformed Confessions, as, for example the headship of Christ and the marks of the true Church; the pure preaching of the Gospel, the Scriptural administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful exercise of discipline.

III. PURPOSE

The purpose for the holding of Reformed Ecumenical Synods shall be five-fold:

1. To advise one another regarding questions and problems of import pertaining to the spiritual welfare and the Scriptural government of the churches.

2. To confer together, as far as advisability or necessity may require, regarding missionary work of the churches at home and abroad.

3. To strive to attain a common course of action with respect to common problems; likewise to issue joint resolutions regarding movements, practices or dangers, when joint statements are deemed necessary.

4. To give united testimony to our common Reformed faith in the midst of a world living in error and groping in darkness, particularly to the many churches which have so lamentably departed from the truth of God's Holy Word, and which are in dire need of a return to the faith of their fathers.

5. To express our precious unity in Christ and our oneness as Reformed Churches, though scattered over the earth.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod shall be open to all denominations which profess and maintain the Reformed faith and which therefore subscribe to the Basis as expressed in Article II of these Rules and Standing Orders.

Delegates to all Synod meetings are expected to express their agreement with the aforementioned Basis and to give testimony to the fact that they adhere to the Confessions of the Reformed faith.

Thus the way to final glory is not like taking a Pullman and going to sleep till the angels meet us at the final station; it is rather like a steep and rugged road which we can take, and on the which we can advance only in the strength of His grace, who worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is a battle. The way often is difficult. The battle is hard. But be of good cheer: the end is sure, the victory is won, the crown of life shall surely be given us in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who fought the battle for us, and Who will fight it through us even unto the end!

- H. Hoeksema, "The Wonder of Grace," p. 89

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

Dispensationalism

A Mutilated Ecclesiology

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"I will build My Church" (Mt. 16:18). These words of Christ are appealed to by dispensationalists in their attempt to prove that there was no church in the Old Testament. They insist that such saints as Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Malachi and John the Baptist were not in the church. The words, "I will build My Church" are said to be in the future tense, implying that the Church did not then exist, nor prior to that time, but was yet to be established at Pentecost. At this point in his reference Bible, Scofield, on the Greek word for *church*, *ekklesia*, says that it means "an assembly of called out ones" and "implies no more." So that Israel in the Old Testament, in Egypt for example, was simply an assembly. What Scofield means here is that *ekklesia* does not necessarily mean *church* and definitely does not mean so here. But the word *ekklesia*, to get at the truth of the matter, contains not only the meaning of the term *church*, but also the extent of its membership. It signifies a separated company. "The Church of God" is synonymous with "the elect of God." For the Church is neither broader nor narrower in scope than the whole election of grace. This we can prove with the greatest ease and clarity. Compare Col. 1:24, where Paul speaks of his "sufferings" for Christ's "body's sake, which is the church," with II Tim. 2:10 where Paul says he endured those sufferings "for the elect's sakes." The inference is that the Church and the elect are one and *the same!* The same evidence we have in Eph. 5:25-27 where it is stated: "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it..." Here the teaching is that Christ loved a people prior to His giving Himself for them. Who are they? N.T. saints only? The O.T. saints He also loved prior to His giving Himself for them. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). Both Old and New Testament believers are "the saints that are in the earth...the excellent in whom is all My delight." (Ps. 16:3)

"I will build My Church" makes not so much a reference to the future (I shall) as to the promise (I will). The Lord does not teach here that there was no church in the old dispensation. There was such a church, but the stones and the materials of it, although provided and amassed, were not yet put into place. This awaited the laying of the "Sure Foundation." The "living stones" were cut out beforehand, but could not be actually built in O.T. times to *then* form the com-

pleted habitation of God through the Spirit, because the building was to be raised upon Jesus Christ crucified and risen as the sure foundation and chief cornerstone.

Therefore, "I will *build* My Church" does not mean, "I will bring into existence My church." Nor does it mean, "I will *begin* to build My Church." It means, "I will *continue* to build it." For the building had already been begun in the making ready of the stones and materials. That was the O.T. stage of the Church. The N.T. phase was in the putting of the stones together upon the cornerstone. Jesus was referring only to this latter operation. The O.T. church is symbolized in David and his reign, while the N.T. church is typified in Solomon and his reign. David provided all the building materials for the temple of Solomon. Of Solomon's actually raising of the edifice it is said that "the house, when it was in building, was built of stone *made ready before it was brought thither.*" (I Kings 6:7) The O.T. church was a readying of the stones and a providing of the materials for the building. There were living stones, but they were not yet set on the foundation (except in plan and principle), for the simple reason that the foundation stone had not yet been formed (from the Virgin!). The N.T. church was in the bringing of all the materials to the erection site and the actual framing of them together. The O.T. church was in that dispensation so readied that when the N.T. church was built "there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building." There was an O.T. church; it was then a prepared work. The N.T. church is the finished building. Proof? This: "*Prepare thy work* without and make it fit for thyself in the field; and *afterwards* build thine house." (Prov. 24:27) The church of the old dispensation was being prepared without and made fit in the field. *Afterwards* in the church of the new dispensation the building of the prepared house was accomplished. It was in two different forms in the two dispensations, but throughout it is the *same* house!

Not only is Dispensationalism far wrong, then, in its shallow interpretation of Matt. 16:18; but also in its claim that the body of Christ is never mentioned in the Old Testament, it is fundamentally mistaken. But before we turn to O.T. Scripture, which is most irrefutable and abundant on the subject, let us form in our minds some idea of the body of Christ. Here is an illustration: "And he fell to the earth, and heard a

voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me?*'" (Acts 9:4). It would take an extremely carnal eye, indeed, not to see in these words any reference to the body (the church) of Christ. For it is undeniably there. Saul learned then that he had not been prosecuting heretics and extremists, but had been persecuting no less than the Lord of Glory. That is not difficult to see. Christ and His people are so united that what is done to Christ's members is done to Him. He and they are one, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," (Eph. 5:30) He and they are one spirit. (I Cor. 6:17) When *they* are persecuted, *He* is persecuted. "In all *their* affliction *He* was afflicted," (Isa. 63:9) i.e., "all the members suffer with" any suffering member. (I Cor. 12:26) When *they* suffer, the *Head* suffers too. This truth runs so deeply and widely throughout the Old Testament that it cannot be as Scofield claimed, an entirely unheard of new truth revealed exclusively through the Apostle Paul. Hence, *the body of Christ* is found revealed in the Old Testament. This contention we will now proceed convincingly and conclusively to prove.

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gn. 49:10) This is the O.T. form of the N.T. prophecy where the Messiah "should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad," (Jn. 11:52) The same truth is more highly developed in Eph. 1:10, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him." What is here in view is not something yet to occur in the future, but that which has been accomplished ever since God *set* Christ "at His own right hand" and "*hath* put all under His feet, and *gave* Him, the head over all, to the church," (1:20, 22) He *has* assumed this authority far above all principality (1:21), and *is* thus over all things whatsoever. They are under Him *now*, (Matt. 28:18), so that He *is* the head of the church. In this dispensation of the fulness of times the Shiloh prophecy has its fulfilment.

"And Moses said (to Pharaoh), Thus saith the Lord, 'About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die...and all these thy servants shall come down unto Me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow Thee! and after that I will go out.''" (Ex. 11:4, 5, 8) In verse 4 the first personal pronoun is emphatic, i.e., the Lord will act here by no instrumentality, but wholly of

Himself. So that the antecedents to these pronouns is the Lord alone, who said, "*I* will go out," thus expressing His identity with His people in the exodus — the Head intimately united with His body.

"The land shall not be sold, forever; for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners *with Me*." (Lev. 25:23) The N.T. expression of this thought is had in, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world." (John 17:16) Again God is graciously identified with His people. David saw this spiritual union as a ground for answered prayer, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger *with Thee*, a sojourner as all my fathers were." (Ps. 39:12)

"All My *bones* shall say, 'Lord, who is like unto Thee, which deliverest the *poor* from him that is too strong for him; yea, the poor and the *needy* from him that spoileth him.'" (Ps. 35:10) A parallel passage we have in Isa. 26:19, "Thy dead shall live. *My* dead *body* — *they* shall arise! Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust!" How utterly insupportable is the contention that the body of Christ is a spiritual reality unknown to the O.T.! In this Messianic Psalm Christ speaks, as verses 7, 11-16, 19 undeniably show. He speaks as Head of the Church, His body, and makes reference to His members. "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of *His bones*." (Eph. 5:30)

Psalm 40 is another where Christ speaks of Himself and His body. That this is a messianic Psalm is plain from a comparison of verses 6-7 with Heb. 10. Verse 1 presents a foreview of Christ in Gethsemane; verse 2, He is delivered from the sufferings of Gethsemane and the curse of the cross through the resurrection; verse 3 records His praise for that deliverance, "He hath put a new song in *My* mouth, even praise unto *our* God." In victory over death the Redeemer is quite conscious of the spiritual union between Him and the redeemed. He constantly delights in it. This is the covenant idea. "Many, O Lord, *My* God, are Thy wonderful works, which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to *us-ward*." (vs. 5) Christ in the O.T. insisted that the Head and the members of His body are *one* in God's sight.

According to Dispensationalism, the Church in union with Christ, and especially conceived of as the body of Christ, is not revealed in the O.T. How foreign to Scripture this poverty-stricken view! How far short of the whole range of the Old Testament! But very much more proof that the body of Christ *is* revealed therein can be furnished, and, D.V., will be.

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School, the Lord willing, will open its doors September of 1967. Two teachers are needed: one for grades 1 to 4, the other for grades 5 to 8. Prospective teachers may write:

Mr. Ray Brunsting
R.R. 2, Rock Valley, Iowa 51247
The Northwest Iowa Protestant
Reformed School Board

IN HIS FEAR—

Virgins For Christ's Sake

by Rev. J. A. Heys

It is a delicate subject.

Men speak more openly and boldly concerning it today, not because we live in a more chaste world where these things can be spoken with less danger of inviting and encouraging the sin, but because the sin itself has developed to such tremendous proportions that we are hardly shocked any more by anything of the immorality and filth of the day.

But it is a delicate subject exactly because it deals with the most intimate of all the relationships of man. The fifth commandment deals with the neighbour as he stands before us representing God in the office to which God has called him. In a sense it forms a beautiful transition from the first to the second table of the law. For indeed we are still dealing with our relationship to God in the second table as well as in the first. In the first table we deal with our direct relationship to God; and in the second with the indirect relation through the human being whom He places next to us. In the fifth commandment—the first of this second table—that man next to us stands also as the man over us, whom we must honour in order to keep the first table of the law. The sixth commandment deals with that neighbour, that man God placed next to us, as one who has equal rights, from our point of view, to life as we do. To have no other God besides Jehovah we must accept this person whom He places next to us and may not remove him from the scene and in any way reveal a desire to injure him and limit him in his actions before and next to us as a neighbour. The seventh commandment deals with man in his relation to his helpmeet (please note not helpmate) and physical, psychical and spiritual counterpart, his life's companion who rounds out his life and enables him to have the full life of man.

The seventh commandment deals not first of all with sexual immorality in all the forms committed by the unmarried but exactly and literally with the sin as practiced by the married. It does not ignore the rest, and it surely does not condone it by simply speaking of adultery. But because it has to do with the relation between a husband and wife, and because we are male and female for the sake of the marriage relationship, the commandment speaks simply of adultery.

There is a beautiful figure in Scripture that is

implied in this seventh commandment. It is that of the bride and bridegroom, which is used in Scripture to teach us of the intimate relationship of God's covenant that exists between Himself and us as the bride of Christ. The Church is betrothed to Christ. And therefore she has a calling to be a virgin for His sake. The betrothal in that day when Scripture spoke of it was far more than our present day engagement. A betrothal, so we are told, took place before witnesses and was very much comparable to our marriage ceremony. The young man took a particular woman for his wife before witnesses, even as we do now in our marriage ceremony. And the young woman likewise took a man for her husband before witnesses. It was not simply engagement. It was more than a promise to be husband and wife, it was taking the first step of being man and wife, the legal step. It is exactly for that reason that righteous Joseph intended to proceed with the divorce of Mary, his espoused wife. He was minded to "put her away." It was not breaking an engagement, it was separating from her to behave as though the legal tie did not exist. It was divorce on the grounds of an adultery that he feared had taken place.

We are such betrothed of Christ. The Church is not simply living in a promise—as wonderful as all of Christ's promises are—to become His bride. We are! And as was the case in the days when Jesus was on earth when the wedding feast was celebrated a long time after the betrothal and only when the man had all arranged for a place for him and his betrothed wife to live, so we must wait for the wedding feast of the Lamb. But we are His bride right now. The Church always has been since God began the work of regeneration in the hearts of Adam and Eve, because in His eternal counsel He had betrothed a Church unto Christ. He picked the Bride of His Son from eternity; and He does not wait to see what in time can be salvaged for His Son. He is far more interested in a wife for His Son than Abraham ever was and could have been in getting one for Isaac from his kinsmen in Haran. And we are never to give Abraham credit for more concern and thoughtfulness than the living God! Abraham's covenant concern, according to which he made his servant swear an oath before God that he would not let Isaac take a wife from the wicked Canaanites, was only a

faint reflection of what is in the eternal and sovereign mind of God. Abraham did this because God had done so long before. God put that covenant concern in Abraham's heart because of what is eternally in His own. The distant window pane that lights up at sundown with a warm reddish glow does not cause the setting sun to be, as it were, on fire. The fire of that setting sun is reflected in that window pane. We do not show God how things ought to be done. He teaches us how we must do them. He betrothed us unto Himself before we even knew that He existed. Christ is quite capable of choosing His own bride and is no beggar Who is dependent upon the whims and fancies of men. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." John 15:16. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the *purpose of God* (italics added) according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, (not begs or invites but commands) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, (before they did good or evil) Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," Romans 9:11-13. And hated is not the same as loved less. It is the opposite of love and is used that way by Jesus when He says, *using the same word*, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." John 15:25. And this was written in their law in Psalm 69:4 where it is explained not as loving less but as that most intense of man's passions that leads him to seek to *destroy*. Note the text, "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me (and here the Hebrew parallelism explains the hatred), being mine enemies wrongfully are mighty." Thus to hate is to desire to destroy!

Nay, Christ chooses His Church and that from eternity, and not because of something that we do in time. And Scripture is full of references to this relationship to Christ. In Isaiah 54:5 we read, "For thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name." This truth is implied in what we read in Jeremiah 1 and 14, "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted, but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers: yet return again to me, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." More literally we find in the New Testament these words, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church; and He is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in every thing." Ephesians 5:23, 24. And again in Revelation 19:7 and 21:9 we read, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready," which is further explained then as to who that wife is, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the

seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." John is then carried away to see the Church. For we read in the next verse, Revelation 21:10, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." And that this city, the new Jerusalem, is the Church is evident from so many passages of Holy Writ.

That therefore the Word of God forbids rather than condones a divorce that allows remarriage, and calls remarrying of such a violation of the seventh commandment is plain to all who want to listen to that Word. The union between Christ and His bride is unbreakable. No matter how unfaithful His Church becomes, and the passages already quoted indicate that she has given Him every reason in the world to put her away (Which, by the way, is not the same as divorce and remarriage), Christ remains faithful, forgives His faithless Bride because He died for her sins on the cross. And through the Apostle Paul he gives those unequivocal words quoted above, "Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in every thing." Yes, *in every thing* except in the sphere where they have no right to subject and command, and that is in the sphere of sin. Moses did not give the Israelites a bill of divorcement that dissolved the legal tie and allowed remarriage, and Jesus does not agree with the wicked Jews that he did. He concedes that because of the hardness of their hearts Moses gave them a right to put away, set loose from that subjection under their roof, those mates who were filthy and whose sexual corruption made it impossible for them to live under the same roof, to prevent a filthy home from being established and maintained. But we are to note that this is due to the hardness of their hearts and that, according to Matthew 5:31, 32 who-soever marries that filthy partner commits adultery not only, but whoso marrieth one put away for *any other cause* causeth her to commit adultery.

By the hardness of their hearts Jesus plainly means, for this is set forth in that beautiful Sermon on the Mount, that Sermon on the Kingdom, which describes the citizens and portrays their spiritual characteristics, that these are not able to forgive and forget! That is the first calling and duty of the mate whose partner has become unfaithful and is not a "virgin" either for Christ's sake or for the human partner's sake. Here, too, "Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," Matthew 7:1, 2. If we are hardhearted and cannot forgive the unfaithful mate (and cannot forgive young people who sincerely do confess their evil, and therefore constantly hold it against them) we must not expect Christ to forgive and forget our constant unfaithfulness to Him as His Bride. We are not very often virgins for His sake. We are ready to marry the world, the devil in his Antichrist for gold, silver, houses, land, fame, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life! Every time we sin we have ceased being virgins for Christ's sake. A little self-examination will reveal

that we deserve to be divorced from Christ forever and to be banished to hell.

If the sin committed bothers so much that with our hard hearts we are troubled by the presence of one who committed it, then the rule is to put away, set loose from the subjection that a husband has over his wife. But before God they remain "one flesh" and that is not changed as long as their flesh remains. Only death can sever that "one flesh" bond. Therefore whosoever marries the "innocent" party commits adultery. To adulterate is to add a foreign element. To mix in that which does not belong there. From marriage onward man and wife *before God* become "one flesh", and when-

ever a third party is added *in that relationship* it is adulterating and it is sin before the living God. Death severs the bond. Death takes away the one element so that there is now no mixing of flesh, no adding of a foreign flesh. Separation may sometimes become necessary because of the weakness of the flesh and often because of the hardness of the heart, but this putting away, this loosing from subjection does not declare them no longer man and wife and one flesh but a separated man and wife, who by all must still be considered man and wife, because God so considers them. To be a virgin for Christ's sake, all divorce in the sense of claiming to be a free flesh to be joined thus to another must be put aside and be condemned.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

The Ceremony Of Ordination

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

Ordaining a man in the ministry of the Word is always a most solemn act. It ought not to be accompanied with a gaudy and pompous ritual which can only divert the attention of the congregation from the real significance of the occasion. Prolongation of the affair through the addition of many superficial, meaningless activities does not enhance its beauty.

With this in mind the ceremony prescribed in our Form for Ordination is limited to two things. The officiating minister pronounces a benediction while he, and the other ministers who are present, engage in the laying on of hands ceremony. Concerning the laying on of hands, however, it may be observed that Reformed Synods did not always insist upon this practice. Some of them, perhaps out of fear that this might lead to some superstitions, omitted it. But the Synod of the Hague in 1586 and also the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618 prescribed it, and since that time it has been observed in the Reformed Churches. There can, of course, be no objection to this practice, provided it is understood by the congregation and is given a correct interpretation according to the Word of God.

Before we discuss the laying on of hands ceremony, we must take note of the benediction pronounced by the officiating minister. He says:

"God our heavenly Father, Who hath called thee to His holy ministry, enlighten thee with His Holy Spirit, strengthen thee with His hand, and so govern thee in thy ministry, that thou mayest decently and fruitfully walk therein, to the glory of His name, and the propagation of the kingdom of His Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

The significance of this benediction lies in the fact

that it expresses unmistakably the fundamental truth that the work of the ministry and all that is involved therein is dependent solely upon God, our Heavenly Father. The success of the ministry is contingent upon His enlightening, strengthening and governing the minister of the Word. The power of the Word unto salvation is not bound up in the personality and oratorical ability of man. God can and does bestow gifts upon His servants which are necessary and useful in the ministry, but these things in themselves do not assure an effective and fruitful ministry. The purpose of the ministry is the impartation of spiritual blessings, and this no man can accomplish except that God works through him. Thus the ministry aims at the glory of God exclusively through the propagation of the Kingdom of Christ. The bestowal of this gift by God Himself constitutes the heart of the ordination.

The ceremony of the laying on of hands then must collaborate this purpose. Whatever significance is attached to it must certainly agree with the underlying idea of the ordination, and otherwise this ceremony becomes a needless additive which we might better omit altogether. It is to be observed that this practice is employed only in cases where one is ordained in the ministry for the first time. It is not repeated with each installation.

The custom of the laying on of hands is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. James Orr, in the I.S.B., Vol. II, page 1335, remarks:

"The act or ceremony of the imposition of hands appears in the Old Testament in various connections: in the act of blessing (Gen. 48:14ff); in the ritual of

sacrifice (Ex. 29:10, 15, 19; Lev. 1:4; 3:2, 8, 13); in witness-bearing in capital offences (Lev. 24:14). The tribe of Levi was set apart by solemn imposition of hands (Numb. 8:10); Moses appointed Joshua to be his successor by a similar act (Nu. 27:18, 23). The idea in these cases varies with the purpose of the act. The primary idea seems to be that of conveyance or transference (cf. Lev. 16:21), but, conjoined with this, in certain instances, are the ideas of identification and of devotion to God.

"In the New Testament Jesus laid hands on the little children (Matt. 19:13, 15; Mark 10:16) and on the sick (Matt. 9:18, Mk. 6:5), and the apostles laid hands on those whom they baptized that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17, 19; 19:6), and in healing (Acts 12:17). Specially the imposition of hands was used in the setting apart of persons to a particular office or work in the church. This is noticed as taking place in the appointment of the Seven (Acts 6:6), in the sending out of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:3), at the ordination of Timothy (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6), but though not directly mentioned, it seems likely that it accompanied all acts of ordination of presbyters and deacons (Cf. I Tim. 5:22; Heb. 6:2). The presbyters could hardly convey what they had not themselves received (I Tim. 1:14). Here again the fundamental idea is communication. The act of laying on of hands was accompanied by prayer (Acts 6:6; 8:15; 13:3), and the blessing sought was imparted by God Himself. No ground is afforded by this symbolical action for a sacrament of 'Orders.'"

It appears then that the significance of this act in connection with the ordination of ministers is that it is a natural symbol for the transmission of the power of the Holy Spirit which is necessary for the proper exercise of the office. More than this we may not attribute to it, and even then we must be on our guard against the danger of conceiving of this in some mystical way, limiting the transmission of the Spirit to the ritual itself. This, of course, would be all wrong. Rev. Hoeksema says, "The meaning of this ceremony cannot be that at the moment of the laying on of hands the Holy Spirit is imparted to the one that is installed into the ministry of the Word. Nor can it be that the one installed receives the consciousness of his having received the Holy Spirit. All this is in the calling of God, through the church and therefore prior to the ceremony of the laying on of hands. Nevertheless, it is meant to be a symbol of the fact that seeing that he is called through the church by God, he has received the Spirit necessary for his functioning in the ministry of the Word, and that he will in the future receive the Spirit, Who only can enable him to function in this office. As such it is of significance both for him that is installed and for the congregation that witnesses the installation." (Liturgics, page 24)

THE EXHORTATIONS

Following the installation ceremony, the officiating minister, from the pulpit, charges the installed minister and the congregation. The exhortations addressed to both are taken from the Word of God, and the importance of this may not be minimized. In effect this means

that God Himself speaks through these admonitions of His Word, declaring what is expected and demanded of both the minister and the congregation in their new relationship.

The charge of the minister is summarized under four headings by Rev. Hoeksema in his "Liturgics." These are:

"1. He must take heed to himself and to the flock.

"2. He must also be an example to believers in all his word and walk, speak and live and walk in the midst of the congregation and in the midst of the world as a believer in Christ Jesus.

"3. He must give attendance to reading, exhortation, and doctrine, must meditate on those things, give himself wholly to them, and continue steadfast in the doctrine.

"4. He must be willing patiently to bear all suffering, not only from the world, but also from evil men in the church."

Doing this faithfully the minister of the Word may look forward to the crown of glory that fades not away and that surely awaits him in the day of Christ. Although the procural of reward may not be the motivation of his labor, the minister finds in this comforting promise a strong incentive to carry on in labors that are so often disheartening, discouraging and disappointing. The minister labors in the consciousness that he is only a steward of Christ. He is given charge of Christ's precious heritage, a heritage which Christ purchased with His own blood. The minister must love that heritage, zealously guard it and feed and nourish it through the teaching and preaching of God's Word. In doing this he must not be moved by any carnal consideration or motive, but with a willing heart and mind, constrained by the love of Christ, he must labor for the well-being of Zion. That well-being of the church is not the same as material prosperity, but it is emphatically *spiritual* and consists in her growth and development in the truth. Thus the minister must be a faithful student of the Word of God. He must study the Scriptures, meditate on them, give himself wholly to them, and that necessarily implies that he himself must be a living example of the power of the Scriptures. He must "go forth in God's service, and strong in His might, to conquer all evil and stand for the right." In this he will unavoidably be assailed by evil men who will oppose him and make him suffer. All this, however, may not dissuade him from obedience to his calling and he must "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that his labor in Him is not in vain."

The congregation too must be exhorted. She must receive her minister with gladness, esteem him highly for the works sake, remembering that God will speak through him to her. She must not oppose the Word of God that is preached to her, but she must receive it with meekness and in obedience honor it as the Word of God. It stands to reason that any philosophy that is not of the Word of God she must also reject. To those that are in authority over her, she must be submissive, knowing that they watch over her soul. In the way of

her spiritual cooperation there will be joy in the labor of the ministry. And when the congregation is faithful to this her exalted calling, she also will experience the peace of God that passes all understanding, and she will have the consciousness of eternal life.

The necessity of these exhortations stems from the fact that reality in life in the church in the present world does not very often correspond to the ideal situation set forth in these admonitions from the Word of God. Sin, with all of its horribleness, remains in the church and is forever lifting up its ugly face. Repeated reminder of the responsibilities of the office of the ministry as well as the duties of the congregation is not out of order. The bond of unity between

minister and congregation in the execution of their mutually God-given task must be so firmly cemented together that no intruding power of evil can break it. The more faithful the minister is and the more diligent the congregation, the stronger this bond becomes.

Yet both minister and congregation must also realize that "no man is of himself fit for any of these things" and that our "strength and help is always in the Lord our God." Therefore, this beautiful ordination form also closes with a prayer, committing these needs to Him Who alone can fulfill them and giving praise and thanksgiving to Him from Whom all blessings flow.

But our consideration of this prayer must wait, D.V., until next time.

FEATURE ARTICLE—

The Significance Of The Races In The World

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

Nimrod did not intend being an instrument in God's hands, fulfilling His will. But he became the sling, and the confederate humanity under him the stone, which, hurtling out with terrific centrifugal force flew into pieces, that in turn soared in orbit around a central Semitical fragment. These fragments, to begin with, were the 70 descendants of Noah, representing as many nations. In the number 70 we may see latent something of the destiny of the world's races and nations. In Scripture the number 70 is significant of humanity in covenant completeness with God. It so happens that in Scripture 7 signifies the covenant, and 10 the idea of completeness. This humanity originally embraced the sons of Noah and their seed. For "God spake unto Noah and to his sons, saying, 'I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you'...and the sons of Noah...were Shem and Ham and Japheth. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread." (9:8,9,18,19) Here then in the new world was humanity in covenant completeness with God. This idea is borne out in other places in Scripture, as for example, from the loins of Jacob there came 70 souls (a humanity in covenant completeness) who were preserved through the instrumentality of the Egyptian nation. (Ex. 1:5) Egypt, like the chaff, served the development of the wheat. The same was true of Assyria and Nimrod. They all, though unintentionally or ignorantly, subserve the salvation of the elect. Also in Israel there were 70 elders, (Ex. 24:1) signifying the covenant life of the nation. Further, upon this people 70 weeks (the fulness

of time) were determined to make an end of sins. (Deut. 9) Here with the cross in view covenant completeness is seen in one of its clearest and plainest O.T. forms! In the N.T., Jesus sent forth 70 disciples. (Lk. 10:11) In each of these instances there is the idea of humanity in covenant completeness with God. This is the destiny of redeemed humanity with its races and nations.

Plainly seen, then, is a fundamental reason for this register of the nations which we have in Genesis 10. The idea is that according to sovereign predestination, the decree of the covenant has a trinitarian-humanitarian consciousness. Election embraces a humanity, a world citizenship of mankind. Outside of Scripture, this idea was not found until the time of Alexander the Great, and especially in the Greek Stoics. Only, as they in their philosophy made the distinction of "Greek and Barbarian," everyone else was barbarian, while they alone were the citizens of the world. It was Paul who pierced the heart of this Greek pride when he said, God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." (Ac. 17:26) The point is, though this table shows that in the Shemites redemption comes to its fullest realization, yet the other nations are not relegated to biblical oblivion, nor are they dismissed to the mere fringes of biblical history. They are registered to establish the principle that in the fulness of time, God shall enclose them within the inner sanctum of His tabernacle.

A further insight into this destiny we have where the register makes reference to the *Cashuhim*, (10:14) an aggressor race whose origin and end are delineated in Scripture. They were a people sprung from the Egyptians. From them came the *Philistim* or the Philistines, whence Palestine derives its name, which, by the way, means "Wanderers," for they "wandered" from Egypt and settled in Canaan; it became their home. So they were not true pilgrims. Yet they claimed a place in the realm of faith. Their modern counterpart is not in heathendom, but within Christendom. In Jesus' day they were the Pharisees. They are any who are of the flesh, yet claim the blessings of the promise. In Gen. 26:14,15 we find them making trouble for Isaac by depriving God's people of the Water of Life. Final reference is made to the Philistines in Zech. 9:6,7, where we are told that they shall be cut off, except for an elect remnant of them, which shall be converted and "be for our God." This points to the N.T. era, when the universal character of the church is restored. Then God would save even Philistines!

The most important national genealogy of the three recorded here is that of the Semitic races. Not that there is any superiority claimed for them. They are elect, but election is sovereign, and unconditional, not for anything foreseen in man. There is nothing remarkable about the Shemites as compared to the Hamites or the Japhethites. What makes Shem outstanding is nothing in himself, but his election. Shem is last in this history of the world, but first in the eternal counsel of God. Before this point in history the human race was Adamic and Noahic. There were neither Jews nor Gentiles. Now out of the river of humanity, God, in the call of Abram, draws off a slender rill, the source of the nation of Israel. It shall be this tiny rill which shall purify the great river of humanity itself. For it is in Shem that the unity of mankind consists. Here is the first humanity in the post-deluvian world, which is a type of the new humanity, having its completion in the Second Man; and which, being new, shall not be merely something higher physically (although *that* would require God's power alone), but shall be in a glorified universe lifted entirely to the plane of eternal life.

In Eber (10:25) we have another inkling as to the destiny of the heathen peoples. The Lord began to separate the Jewish nation to himself in Eber, the father of the Hebrews. They would enjoy the peculiar favor of the Lord. Balaam's true prophecy relates to this. Foretelling the coming of Christ, the Star of Jacob and the Sceptre of Israel, he reveals that all the enemies of Israel would be destroyed, namely, Edom; Amalek, the first that warred against Israel; the Kenites though strong and secure would not continue, but Assur would take them away; Eber would be afflicted, yet Israel's chief enemies would fall. In fact, every heathen people, though firmly established, must perish. According to this remarkable prophecy, the whole heathen, reprobate, world is doomed to destruction.

Therefore in this Genesis record we see the beginning of races, cities, kingdoms and nations ordained and raised up of God. The kingdoms of this world come into being according to the counsel of God. This counsel includes the ordination of their sin and anti-God administrations. Yet so that God is not responsible for their sin and evil. Man in his totally depraved nature alone bears the responsibility for all racial, national and human sin. But God uses the wicked world civilizations to serve the church. In God's hands these civilizations are in themselves good; it is man who perverts them to an evil end. So, to the reprobate of the world, God's good gifts become a snare and a curse. To the elect they are a blessing in that they are a means to advance them in their pilgrim journey.

What this record puts forth clearly, then, is: 1. the original divine plan for the human race, namely, complete covenant communion with God. 2. The lost inheritance of man by the Fall. 3. The ultimate goal of the Christian dispensation, which is to restore and redeem mankind. 4. The renewed inheritance of the redeemed and glorified humanity, when there shall be neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, neither male nor female; for all shall then in the fullest sense be one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28) This divine plan shall be realized. For God himself is our Strong Tower, (Prov. 18:10) and from Him we get a name, for His promise is, "I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and I will write upon him My new name." (Rev. 3:12) This is the guarantee that our labor shall not come to naught. (I Cor. 15:57) For the city of man shall be burned up, (Rev. 18:9,10) but the city of God shall be everlasting. (22:5)

"So Jehovah scattered them." (11:8) He did this with a view to His end-purpose for them. It was a punishment meted out on them. It was a blessing on the righteous, but a curse on these wicked men. What brought the civilization of Cain to destruction was the idolizing of feminine beauty, (4:19,22; 6:2) lust (4:19, 23; 6:4) and anarchy. (4:23; 6:1,13) Then the building of cities, the discoveries of invention toward a better means of living, or art, industry, weapons of defense, all became buried in the corruption and overthrow of that humanity. Now the civilization of Nimrod falls by the lust of empire, the lust of glory (the pride of life), lust of display (the lust of the eyes), and world despotism. For man's national peculiarities and language differences tend to enrich the world. But the trend to absolute simplification and unification tends to impoverish all mankind. In our own day and age we see how, under dictatorial rule and totalitarian uniformity, men lose their individual character; they lose their opportunity to develop their diversity of gifts and talents. Thus the individual and his conscience, his convictions, his personality, his freedom, his private initiative must be sacrificed to this spirit of the world, whether it be in the world or in the church. In this movement we have the absence of real development, and the obstruction of the true progress of the world.

This being so, it may be easily seen that without the scattering of the nations, the development of Shem cannot take place. For if the people had continued one, vast areas of the earth would not have been replenished, and the political powers of their ruler (Nimrod) would have become that of the most enslaving despotism. Abounding violence, corruption and wickedness would be hideously rampant; for every means would be at their disposal to increase in the ingenuity of evil. The result would be that the church would be swept up into this maelstrom of iniquity, and the children of men would swallow up the little remnant of the children of God. The godly seed would become extinct. For in the religion of Shem lay the true unity of the human race. Things were moving in that direction. For in their "let us make us a *name*" (Heb., "*shem*") there is a sneer of derision at Shem. They derided him and his blessing (by Noah) in their proposal. But imperialism and totalitarianism are contrary to the will of God. Nationalism has God's sanction. In religion, many false ones are better than one corrupt one, since they cancel out one another. No human world-kingdom scheme has ever been successful, nor ever will. God frustrated their purpose by the miracle of the confusion of tongues. Thus the inventions and exploits of man become monuments of his folly. The world is full of such. Think of the Spanish Armada, destroyed by a storm and tempest off the Hebrides; of the great wall of China, of the Maginot Line in France, of the Graf Zeppelin and the steamship *Titanic*. But the wicked never learn. They quickly forgot the judgment of the Flood, and went back to their former evil ways. Sin still increased along with the development of the races; and this in spite of the fact that the ruins of the Flood were at this time still visible, and also the fact that they lived near the descendants of Noah, and he himself was still living. Nothing short

of the frustrating action of God could deter them from what they had imagined to do. So it is today. Men have forgotten the ravages of World Wars I and II, or so it would seem. They still persist in evil and violence with the horrible ruins of atomic warfare apparent. What then shall restrain men from the evil they have imagined to do? Nothing but judgment, — or the grace of God in Christ!

In the destiny of the races we see the nearer approach of the promise. History always invariably sped in the line of Shem. Now it flies in the same but advanced line of the covenant. Time speeds down the avenue of history. What conception do we have of either? of time, people or history? We know very little of the people who lived before us, even of those who live in the same places we live. We know so little of our neighboring contemporaries, and less of those who are distant from us. Apart from the Bible we would be *altogether* out of touch with men, the times and the meaning of history. History is the revelation of the narrative and development of the covenant of God in Christ in time and in the midst of the world.

Throughout all the ages of the church, the aim of God from all eternity with respect to all the races of the world is that they should overspread the earth. They, largely, should be God's scaffolding to serve His purpose according to election, to serve the cause of the church, in the bringing and building of God's Tabernacle with men, to order it and establish it in the New Jerusalem. For there shall take place the complete "healing of the nations," (Rev. 22:2) "and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it...They shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it." (21:24,26) Amen.

*Geike, *Hours with the Bible, I.*

ALL AROUND US—

The Battle Over Confessions

by Prof. H. Hanko

The apostasy which characterizes the ecclesiastical scene is notable for its hatred of the historic confessions of the church. It is not strange that this should be so; for the historic confessions of the church are barriers to false doctrine and bind the church closely to the truth of Scripture. If apostasy is to prevail

therefore, the creeds must be discarded. This can be done in the very subtle manner of simply ignoring them. And this often happens. But sooner or later comes a day of reckoning — a day usually brought on by some conservatives within the church who, to their dismay, notice that the creeds are being maligned and

denied. Hence, something has to be done about the creeds. The easiest thing to do is to consign them to oblivion by ecclesiastical decision.

This is precisely what is being done by the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. The method is extremely clever, however. The proponents of apostasy are not prepared merely to erase the Westminster Confession (the creedal basis of Presbyterian Churches) from the books. This would create too great an uproar. They propose rather the adoption of a new creed, "The Creed of 1967," which would be incorporated into a "Book of Confessions" and which would effectively dispose of any creedal basis in the church. There are many who are alarmed by this all, and who have voiced their protests of this action. A short time ago, a large ad appeared in over 100 newspapers and magazines, sponsored by the Presbyterian Lay Committee Inc. bringing their protest to the attention of the public. We have before us one which appeared in the *Farm Journal*.

This Lay Committee calls attention to the fact that, while the alteration in the creedal basis of the Church will bring about "the most radical and revolutionary change in its history," there was little "opportunity for effective opposition, criticism or careful consideration of such an important change."

Their objections are primarily that the new confession undermines the basic doctrines of the Christian faith and lacks the clarity which a confession ought to have. After offering a brief history of the new confession, they remark:

As often happens with the written efforts of committees, the resulting product is so full of compromises, concessions, contradictions, and obscure sentences that it promotes serious disagreements in the way it is interpreted and applied.

Far more serious, however, is the radical nature of some of the proposals that shatter the very foundation of our faith.

The Lay Committee calls attention to two fundamental changes in the confession of the Church. The first deals with the doctrine of Scripture:

Is the Bible "Words of Men" or the Infallible Word of God?"

Did you realize that the Bible will no longer be considered as the inspired and infallible Word of God? How far the authors would go in humanizing the Bible can be realized in this excerpt from the new confession:

"The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times in which they were written. They reflect views of life, history and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scripture with literary and historical understanding." (Part I, Sec. C, No. 2)....

Are you willing to give up your belief in the Bible as the true and infallible Word of God? Are the Scriptures a divine guide or is the Bible a human, and, therefore, unreliable document?

The new Confession now attempts to answer these questions in a way that weakens the concept of the Bible as we have always accepted it. It claims to be a mod-

ern document necessary to challenge the modern age. But careful study reveals a close parallel between the criticism of the Scriptures as stated in this new Confession and the criticism of atheists and extreme liberals down through history.

The second area in which the ad finds fault with the new confession is in its emphasis on social, political and economic issues. It quotes several paragraphs:

Part II, Sec. A, No. 4:

4a. "The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellow men, however subtly, resist the spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they possess.

4b. "The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This requires the pursuit of fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding."

4c. "A church that...evades responsibility in economic affairs...offers no acceptable worship to God."

The ad goes on to point out that all of this has no part in the calling and ministry of the church, and quotes the Westminster Confession which substantiates this position.

After calling attention to the significance of these charges, the ad goes on to warn against these dangers and to plead for more time to consider the implications of this radical step.

Naturally, some reaction to this ad was bound to appear. The Rev. Theophilus Taylor, secretary of the General Council of the United Presbyterian Church, issued the following statement: (We quote from the *Christian Beacon*.)

On Tuesday, December 27, Presbyterians in various cities across the country were surprised to find in their morning papers a large advertisement headlined, "A Call to Every United Presbyterian." The advertisement is signed by Mr. Roger Hull and other laymen under the masthead, "Presbyterian Lay Committee, Inc.," and is in no sense an official communication from the church.

The advertisement is deliberately calculated to undermine the faith of Presbyterians in their historic form of democratic representative government. In effect it challenges the integrity, theological and otherwise, not only of the members of two General Assembly committees which produced, studied, and recommended certain revisions in the *Confession of 1967*, but of the duly-elected representatives of nearly two hundred presbyteries which considered it and recommended revision of it last year. It also challenges the integrity of the General Assembly itself, composed of duly elected commissioners from all presbyteries of the church, which after the most extensive debate on any subject in recent years made

further revisions of the *Confession of 1967* and sent it down to the presbyteries for their action this year.

In particular the advertisement condemns by innuendo and the most arbitrary and untrue association the original drafters of the *Confession of 1967*, alleging that "careful study (sic!) reveals a close parallel between the criticism of the Scriptures as stated in this new Confession and the criticism of atheists and extreme liberals down through history." This kind of irrational and irresponsible statement will not be dignified by any refutation.

The sponsors of the advertisement have at least made clear their fundamental objections to the *Confession of 1967*, which are two: (1) They choose to ignore the obvious fact, which is true of all human literature including the Bible, that the words and thoughts of all human authors are inevitably conditioned by the times in which they live; (2) they insist that the church should keep silent on all social, political, and economic issues and confine its utterances to pious platitudes on "ecclesiastical and spiritual subjects." On the first point they are still fighting a battle that was lost a full century ago when most American theological schools of whatever denominational or confessional persuasion recognized the necessity of teaching the grammatico-historical method of interpretation of the Scriptures. This by no means denies what Christians have historically believed, that they hear the voice of God in the Bible. On the second point they are opposing a stand taken fifteen hundred years ago by the Hebrew prophets, that social and economic life and the affairs of state cannot be considered immune to the moral and ethical criticism of organized religion.

The sponsors of the advertisement seem to have a radical misconception of the nature of the church, and in particular of Presbyterian order. Perhaps they would be helped by a reading of the *Form of Government* as well as of *The Westminster Confession*. Presbyterians also believe "that all church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in a way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative"; and "that no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority" (FG I. 7). The sponsors of the ad are not bound by the declarations of the General Assembly in social, economic, and political matters. They will not be "read out" of the church even though their opinions may differ.

Nor is there any reason why Presbyterian laymen should not express their views, even though they differ from those of the majority in the church. But it is unfortunate that they choose to do it in the public press in a manner reminiscent of labor-management disputes rather than in the courts of the church.

This response of Taylor certainly demonstrates how evil the leaders of the church have become. He does not hesitate to confirm his belief in the destructive higher critics of Scripture. In a subtle way he condemns the views of these laymen, views so obviously based on Scripture and the Westminster Confession. And he castigates the Laymen's Committee for writing ads to make their views known while he knows full well that effective opposition to the new Confession was refused on the Assembly.

But the battle seems lost. The presbyteries are already voting on the new confession, which needs approval from two-thirds of the 188 presbyteries which make up the United Presbyterian Church. The latest tally available shows that of 25 which have voted thus far, only two have turned it down.

* * *

In a recent issue of the *Presbyterian Journal*, the editor calls attention to the fact that the writing of new confessions is being done elsewhere. The Southern Presbyterians appointed a committee at last year's assembly to write a new confession to supplement the Westminster Creed. The Reformed Church in America, presently engaged in merger talks with the Southern Presbyterians, is considering a new confession prepared by a Committee which also wants this new confession to supplement the historic confessions of the church and will serve as a "statement of our confessional beliefs in this time."

The editor asks, editorially: "Is This A 'Creed-Writing' Age?" I recall that, while I was going to Seminary, we were discussing in class the possibility of writing new confessions. Rev. Hoeksema made the very pointed remark at that time: "While certainly there would be nothing wrong in writing new confessions as the truth develops, nevertheless, the church today is not strong enough doctrinally or spiritually to write any new confessions." This is certainly being proved by the shoddy work which has thus far been produced and by the obvious intent of those who write them to destroy the church.

If there is any lesson in all this, it is certainly this: we must defend our historic creeds at all costs. We must know them by studying them; we must love them so that the truth of them lives within our hearts; and we must defend them against all attempts to destroy them or consign them to oblivion. These confessions form a sturdy barrier against apostasy.

NOTICE

Men, for an evening of Spiritual enjoyment attend the Men's League meeting.

WHEN	April 3, 8:00 p.m.
WHERE	Hope Protestant Reformed Church
SPEAKER	Rev. J. Kortering
TOPIC	The Important of Maintaining the Three Forms of Unity and the Formula of Subscription.

H. Dykstra, Sec'y.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book Of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come where of we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownest him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the work of thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Hebrews 2:5-18

A NEW SECTION INTRODUCED BY THE WRITER.
(vss. 5-18)

The writer had spoken in the foregoing concerning the greatness and the exaltedness of the Son over all things, far above the station of the angels in glory; now he will exhibit from the holy Scriptures that such exaltation and glory is only possible through the sufferings of death. The glory of the mediator is only possible through the sufferings of death on the accursed tree. To all of these things we are to give the more earnest heed as New Testament church.

We have good reason to give all our attention to what the Lord himself began to speak on earth, and that which was witnessed to us by those who saw him, and which was confirmed by signs, wonders and powers through the Holy Ghost according to God's will. For these things pertain to the world to come. In this world to come Christ is the exalted Lord. Into it many sons are brought to glory, and the Son is perfected through sufferings in bringing this about. And it became God thus to do; it was befitting to his Godhead, wisdom, power and glory.

It is a remarkable fact that the writer, already in this section, implicitly is speaking of him who is a King-Priest. The section begins with the setting forth of Christ's exaltedness; however, it ends with showing that it is an exaltedness which is through the office of being a priest, a high priest in the things pertaining to God. In a masterful way the writer exacts this teaching concerning the King-Priesthood of Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures. One hears in this section the refrain of Jesus, when he says: O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered all these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24: 25-27)

While the writer emphasized the real deity of Christ in Chapter 1:1ff., here he shows us the true humanity of the Christ in his utter humiliation being made like unto the brethren in all things. He is very God, and, at the same time, he is real and righteous man.

THE STRONG TESTIMONY OF "SOMEONE SOMEWHERE" CONCERNING MANS BEING VISITED IN GRACE (Psalm 8:5-7; Hebrews 2:6, 7)

It is to be observed that the writer to the Hebrews is writing on the general subject here of the "world to come", as this is the work of God in Jesus. The term *world* in the original Greek is "oikoumeneen" and refers to the inhabited world of men and angels in their relationship to the throne of God. To be sure this includes the entire universe, the Cosmos, which was finished from the beginning of creation (Hebrews 4:3) It also includes the "ages" of times and history. (Hebrews 1:2; 11:3) Yet the viewpoint here is that of the inhabitable world of men and angels. (Matthew 24:14; Luke 2:1; Acts 11:28; Romans 10:18; Hebrews 1:6).

The world *to come* must therefore refer to the world as it shall be in relationship to God, His throne, His kingdom, His temple, and the glory of God in setting all things in heaven and on earth in relationship to Himself: Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth among the men of His good-pleasure! This song of the angels in Bethlehem-Ephratha was sounded long before in Psalm 8:1 "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth; who hath set Thy glory above the heavens." This "glory above the heavens" must refer to the glory of God as this is revealed to us in the mystery of godliness in His Son, in his death and resurrection. There is an evident contrast in this world "to come" with the world that is past. The world that is past refers to the entire world as Satan would offer it to Christ, speaking of all the kingdoms of this world. (Luke 4:5) Here is the kingdom of sin and death, of darkness and corruption; it is men and angels as they are doomed by the righteous judgment of God, and the entire world as it is subjected to vanity. (Romans 8:20)

This world is definitely not subjected to the angels. It is true the writer had already stated this before in Chapter 1, but now he will demonstrate this more completely and with particulars in this section which we are considering. The name above every name is inherited by the Son of God.

Concerning this we have strong testimony in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is vigorously and solemnly affirmed in the prophets through which God spoke in times past. The writer does not designate the secondary author. In the absence of such an indication all the attention is called to what was testified, and not to who it was that said it. The writer stands in the midst of men here on this earth, when he speaks, in Psalm 8. It is a Psalm in which it is joyfully and wonderingly affirmed that God has visited man. Jehovah remembered man in his plight as he did remember Noah in the ark of old during the time of the Flood. The term "remember" and "visit" according to the Hebrew parallelism are so related that the latter term shows, that the remembering was such, that it resulted in a "visit." It was a visit to help man in his sinful woe; it was the time of visitation in love: Immanuel, God-with-us, at the time when Jesus was upon earth.

These strains we hear in the song of Zacharias when he says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath *visited* and redeemed his people." It is the visit of redemption. (Luke 1:68) For the coming of the Christ is characterized in the same prophecy from Zacharias' lips "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath *visited* us." (Luke 1:77, 78) The Psalmist in Psalm 8 testifies vigorously of this visit by our God in Christ.

Furthermore, the Psalmist presents this visit as being such that it is for the exaltation of man over all things. In the poetical description we have more than a mere nature Psalm. The terms of the present earthly creation are employed to portray "all" things of the world to come. Sheep and oxen, the beast of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. These are all subjected to man. They refer to all things being subjected to the Christ of God, as so beautifully expressed by Paul in I Corinthians 3:21-23 "...For all things are yours; Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." This implies that in Psalm 8 the one who "testifies" concerning God's visiting men is not speaking of the first Adam and all things as they were to be subdued by him in the earthly creation, nor can this refer simply to David or any other mortal under the sun. For, as Calvin states in in his Commentary on this text, "...I indeed allow that man was first put in possession of the world, that he might rule over all the works of God; but by his own defection he deserved the loss of his dominion, for it was a just punishment for ingratitude as to one thus favoured, that the Lord, whom he refused to acknowledge and faithfully to worship, should have deprived him of a right previously granted him. As soon then as Adam alienated himself from God through sin, he was justly deprived of the good things which he had received; not that he was denied the use of them, but that he could have had no right to them after he had forsaken God. And in the very use of them God intended that there should be some tokens of this loss of right, such as these, — the wild beasts ferociously attack us, those who ought to be awed by our presence are dreaded by us, some never obey us, others can hardly be trained to submit, and they do us harm in various ways; the earth answers not to our expectation in cultivating it; the sky, the air, the sea, and other things are often adverse to us. But were all creatures to continue in subjection yet whatever the sons of Adam possessed would be deemed a robbery; for what can they call their own when they themselves are not God's?"

Hence, we must understand Psalm 8 as referring to man's dominion over all things due to Jehovah's gracious visit in Christ Jesus. Thus the Holy Spirit definitely interprets Psalm 8 here in Hebrews 2. Besides, the praise which God prepares for himself in this manifestation of Jehovah's name is interpreted by

Christ in Matthew 21:16 as referring to Himself as the one to whom Hosannas are sung by the children in the temple. Well may we give the more earnest heed to the things which Christ thus began to speak concerning Himself and his glorious exaltation through sufferings.

**THE "ALL THINGS" OF PSALM 8
AS INTERPRETED IN Hebrews 2:8, 9**

Sometimes "all things" are not *all* things; the expression "all things" often refers to all things within a certain class of things. However, here in Psalm 8, as interpreted in Hebrews 2:8, 9, the expression refers to all things without exception. There was nothing which was not put under Christ. For the world is here not the world of a Paradise Lost but the world of the

heavenly Paradise, when the tabernacle of God shall be with man. Small wonder that the Psalmist includes within the scope of his vision and ecstasy the sun, the moon and the stars. He is not interested in an astronaut on one of the planets, but rather the great wisdom and dependability of God as reflected in the constellation of the heavens, determining times and seasons. This all may seem so stupendously great and vast. And man is seemingly but a mere speck in the universe of the world. Yet, all things are subjected to man. Man is the concern of God. God did not visit the moon and the stars. He came and made His abode amongst men. And all things, nothing excluded, are subjected unto man, the man Christ Jesus. Thus we see the world to come subjected not to angels but to the Son of God in our flesh, the Word Incarnate!

BOOK REVIEWS—

Jesus Of Nazareth: Saviour And Lord

JESUS OF NAZARETH: SAVIOUR AND LORD, Edited by Carl F. H. Henry; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966; 277 pp., \$5.95.

This volume is another in a series of books dealing with contemporary evangelical thought. Other volumes in this series include: "Revelation and the Bible"; "Basic Christian Doctrines"; "Christian Faith and Modern Theology." The Foreword and initial essay is written by Carl F. H. Henry, editor of the magazine "Christianity Today." Other authors include Paul Althaus, F. F. Bruce, Gordon H. Clark, Adolph Koberle, Leon Morris, Merrill C. Tenney, Bastiaan Van Elderen.

The essays in this book deal with the modern questions of higher criticism especially as the guns of higher

criticism have been leveled against the gospel narratives of Scripture. All recent forms of higher criticism are dealt with extensively: demythologizing, form criticism, "the quest for the historical Jesus," *Sitz im Leben* theories, *Gemeinde*-theologie, etc.; as well as philosophies of history underlying these higher critical views. The philosophies of such men as Barth, Bultmann, Kahler and all recent higher critics are dealt with.

While the book is intended to be a critic of these higher critical views and a statement of the evangelical position, nevertheless, important concessions are made to the higher critics throughout the book. Especially the weakness appears of failure to emphasize strongly and throughout that Scripture is God's Word—His Word

alone without any human factor involved in it. Only such a position as this can successfully resist the devastating inroads of higher critical thought. The book does not do this.

While it is not a book written for those unversed in critical problems, it is a rather complete description of modern trends in this field. This is also its value. But the book must be read with discretion since many of these higher critical views are extremely dangerous. Even Prof. Van Elderen, professor of New Testament in Calvin Seminary, concedes major points to the *Sitz im Leben* theory. The conclusion can only be that evangelical thought is considerably removed from the position of the Reformers, and from the position the Reformed Church must take on the doctrine of Scripture.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation of the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to its members, Mr. and Mrs. George Moerman, Ronald, and Robert, Mr. and Mrs. Larry Moerman, Gwendolyn and to former member Mrs. Lambert Doornbos in the loss of their father, grandfather and husband,

MR. LAMBERT DOORNBOS

May the Lord comfort His sorrowing saints with the truth that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8).

Rev. R. C. Harbach, pastor
Wm. Clason, sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On February 3, 1967 it pleased our Heavenly Father to call home unto Himself after an illness of several years, our beloved husband, father and grandfather

MR. SAM VELDMAN

at the age of 79 years.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly". Psalm 84:11

Mrs. Sam Veldman	19 Grandchildren
Mr. and Mrs. Sieger Heys	1 great grand son
Mr. and Mrs. John Veldman	
Mr. and Mrs. John Bovenkerk	
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Veltman	

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

February 15, 1967

Holland's congregation has extended a call to Rev. J. A. Heys, of South Holland, Ill., to be their minister.

Rev. C. Hanko, of Redlands, Calif., has received the call from our church in Hull, Iowa to come over to help them.

* * *

The 1967 Lecture Series in Grand Rapids is off to a good start—the first meeting having been postponed due to severe weather conditions. The lecture on, "Total Depravity" was given by Prof. H. Hanko to a large audience in First Church a week later than was announced. The audience, like those of last year, was characterized by marked attentiveness. It is heartening to observe this interest shown in a subject such as this which, to say the least, is suffering neglect by the churches of the Reformation; this neglect is beginning to bear fruits of opposition and direct denial in some instances. But this is the sort of revival that Reformed people should experience—a revival of the basic truths as embodied in the Five Points of Calvinism. For you who would like tapes of each lecture the news is out that they are available for the nominal price of \$3.00 per tape. By the time you read this the first two lectures will have been taped for your benefit. Send your request to: Mr. H. Vander Wal 1047 Alto Ave., S.E. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507.

* * *

The blizzard that hit the Chicago area blanketed South Holland with twenty-six inches of snow, forcing the cancellation of Rev. Heys' morning service. Cars were forbidden to park on the streets but their parking lot was cleared in time for the evening service. Experiences like this, no doubt, were duplicated in many of our Western churches.

* * *

The Permanent Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature, those good people who gave us Rev. H. Hoeksema's Dogmatics, has decided to begin working with Rev. Hoeksema's commentary on the Book of Revelations, and expect to get it off the presses later this year. They are sure that book will have great appeal because of the general interest in The Doctrines of the Last Things generated by the many signs that so plainly indicate the nearness of the Day of the Lord. It is their hope that this forthcoming publication may help fill the need of the Christian who is awaiting that Day and who wants to be alert, to heed the word of Christ, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!"

* * *

Note this paragraph lifted from Doon's Feb. 5 bulletin: "A momentous and far-reaching step has been taken by our Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed

School Society at its meeting last Tuesday. It was decided to proceed with the building of our own school with a view to providing Protestant Reformed instruction for our children in September of this year. May God give us courage and strength to persevere in this our holy covenant calling that we may also experience His richest blessings in the future in our generations. To Him be the Glory."

* * *

The Winter Beacon Lights Singspiration was held in Southeast Church after the evening service, Feb. 11. The spirited singing was led by Mr. Henry Vander Vennen, and special music was furnished by Donna Knoper and Eunice Hoeksema who gave a piano-organ duet. The audience was neither too large or too small, just an average winter evening crowd.

* * *

Lynden's pastor, Rev. Woudenberg, informed his congregation, "One of the readers of our Study Sheets in Houston, Texas, has offered to send out one thousand sample copies to the members of a Christian Political Party to which he belongs."

* * *

One of the bulletin notices announcing the second lecture of Prof. H. Hanko on, "Unconditional Election" added this promise, "Not only is this series a diet of meat for the aged in the faith, but there also is plenty of milk for the babes in the faith."

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Oak Lawn's new clerk is Mr. J. W. Regnerus, 6855 W. 107th St., Worth, Illinois, 60482.

* * *

Rev. M. Schipper, of our Southeast Church, has submitted to a kidney stone operation Feb. 13, and the reports are that the surgery was successful.

* * *

Are you listening to the Reformed Witness Hour regularly? If you cannot tune in to the current series of sermons on the Book of Genesis by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, you should send for the free copies thereof. Every high school and college student should have them to combat the influence of their instruction regarding the revelation of God the Creator. Remember, young people, after Genesis has been safely covered up in your schoolroom's wastebasket the other sixty-five Books will soon follow it!

* * *

The Northwest Iowa "Reformed Witness" latest pamphlet is being mailed to many on the mailing lists of each church extension committee—Loveland alone sends out 500—and this one is by Rev. R. Dekker of Doon, on, "For Whom Did Christ Die?"

. . . see you in church.

J.M.F.