

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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The Faithful Saying

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**Iconographic, Pornographic, and Distortionistic
A United Reformed Church?**

**“World Economic and Social Development”
(see: Examining Ecumenicalism)**

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Meditation

The Faithful Saying

Rev. M. Schipper

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

I Timothy 1:15

A faithful saying!

Which can stand much repetition in our time, when its contents are almost obliterated with all the tinsel and noise hosting the myth concerning a jolly old St. Nick, a myth which has largely replaced the infallible truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to save

sinners.

Faithful saying!

A reliable, trustworthy doctrine which was intended to be not merely a formula of faith to be taken on the lips of the professor, but a tried doctrinal truth which constitutes the very heart of the gospel. A truth

which has passed through many a controversial melee; which has engendered the gibes of Satan, and brought the professors of it into the flames of persecution. A truth which nevertheless has emerged as the granite rock out of the tempestuous sea — more sparkling and glorious than ever. Which was embedded itself in the hearts and has been expressed on the lips of the believing church as an unshakable conviction.

Worthy of all acceptance!

Because it merits your approbation, and appropriation! Because your faith, that gift of the grace of God in you, embraces it as the fundamental, basic truth upon which all your faith and hope rests.

Such is the nature of the saying and your reaction to it when you learn to know yourself as a sinner, among whom, like the apostle, you consider yourself to be chief.

The saying was undoubtedly restated so many times that it is pointless to say that the apostle is referring to any particular statement which Jesus Himself made, or that others made concerning Him. In other words, you cannot find in the gospels any literal statement as it appears in the text; while all of the gospels, and especially that according to John, emphasize the truth of the statement again and again. How often the Lord speaks of His coming into the world to seek and to find the lost. And does not Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus, declare: "Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world?" O, indeed, it was a faithful, reliable, trustworthy saying which was handed down to and appropriated as infallible truth by the apostle.

Once the apostle evidently considered it a preposterous lie, and therefore he sought to silence those who repeated it by having them imprisoned and killed. It is this fact that he bemoans in the context when he says: "Who was before a blasphemer, and persecutor and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." How different was his attitude and his reaction to the saying when the grace of God captured him, implanting in his heart faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

A faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance!

Does this mean that the saying is worthy to be accepted by all men? or does it mean that the saying should be considered worthy of acceptance in its entirety? It should not be difficult to see that the apostle refers to the former, and that for two reasons. In the first place, it goes without saying that the statement: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" should be accepted in its entirety. The saying cannot be altered, nor can any portion of it be omitted without destroying the saying. And in the second place, the last part of the saying, namely, "to save sinners," implies that the "all" refers to all sinners, and since all men are sinners therefore the saying should be acceptable to all men. It merits the appropriation and recep-

tion of all.

Christ Jesus came into the world!

That is the first element in the saying that commands your acceptance! Into the world He came!

But was He not always in the world, that is, since its creation? Indeed He was, but not as Christ Jesus! Surely as the son of God, and more particularly as the Logos, the Word of God, He is the very Word by which God called the world, the cosmos, into being. He is also the Word which God continually speaks that sustains the world and all that is contains. But the apostle is not thinking merely of the world of creation and the Divine Logos whereby the world came forth from the hand of the Creator in all its splendor, harmony, and beauty. Rather it is that created world as it now lies under the curse of God in the midst of sin and death. It is the world of which Satan is prince, and in which fallen mankind gropes in darkness and in slavery to sin. It is the world of creation as it also came under the curse for man's sin, and which now groans and travails in pain, waiting for our redemption, and looking in hope to be delivered.

Into *that* world Christ Jesus came!

God's anointed Saviour!

That He is Saviour is already indicated in the name Jesus! "For thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through Him might be saved." "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Beautiful Saviour!

Anointed of God! That is the significance of the name Christ! God set Him apart in His eternal counsel, appointed Him, and by His spirit qualified Him to be the Saviour of the world — the world that God loved.

Through the conception of the Holy Spirit, therefore, and through the birth of a virgin, Christ Jesus made His entrance into the world, our world of sin and death, but God's world which He planned to save through the way of sin and grace.

Wonder of wonders! The Divine Saviour came into the world!

Oh, indeed, He was sent of the Father!

But He also came! Preparing a place for Himself in the womb of the virgin, He is born of the seed of David, born under the law. It was in Bethlehem of Judea that He chose to make His lowly entrance into our world. At His birth the heavenly angels of God are sent to signal its reality, and the lowly shepherds from the fields of Ephratha rush to be the first witnesses of His humble appearance; for the virgin brought forth her first-born Son, God's Only-Begotten, and dressed Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger.

Thus He made His entrance into our world, and into our nature!

And He came to save sinners!

Not to save all sinners did He come! Nor was it His intention in coming into our nature to make salvation possible for all men!

Rather, among all the sinners are His people whom He came to save! Those given Him by the Father from everlasting, when He was anointed and appointed to be their Saviour!

To save them He had to first enter their state. This He could and did do when He assumed their nature, and in that nature assumed also their guilt, and with their guilt passed under the righteous judgment of the Holy God. Moreover, to save these sinners He had to merit righteousness for them by walking with their guilt in the way of perfect obedience. To save them He not only had to bring a sacrifice of atonement in His blood for their sin and guilt, but at the same time fulfill the law of God so perfectly that He Himself could not be condemned. In other words, as their anointed Head and Redeemer He must not only satisfy God's justice overagainst their sins, but He must also merit the right to have them declared perfectly righteous in the same judgment of God. But this is not all. For He must not only be Christ Jesus for them – He must also be Christ Jesus in them, shall they be saved. So as Christ Jesus He by His Word and by His Spirit enters their hearts and applies unto each of them His saving grace. So His itinerary in the world takes Him from Bethlehem over the hill of the skull to Pentecost and the upper room, and by the Spirit of Pentecost through the preaching of the gospel into every heart – regenerating, calling, justifying and sanctifying them – applying unto them His saving power.

Thus He saves them by delivering them from the greatest possible evil, and bringing them into the possession and enjoyment of the highest possible bliss.

Sinners He saves!

Those who through their first father Adam have missed the mark of the high calling of God to love Him with all their heart, mind, and strength. And who ever since can only increase their debt – who consequently are totally depraved and inclined to all evil. But who have been brought to a spiritual knowledge of their depravity, of their sin and guilt and corruption, having been confronted with the law and the gospel, and in whom the Word and Spirit of Christ Jesus dwells – convicting them of sin, and impelling them to cry out to the living God: O, God, be merciful to me the

sinner. Sinners they are who sense their great need of the Saviour and the salvation He came to realize for them and in them.

Of whom I am chief!

But is not the apostle mistaken? Should he not rather have said: Of whom I *was* chief? And is not his statement a gross exaggeration? Is it not the same apostle who elsewhere declares: “touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless?” And are there not myriads of sinners who would heartily disagree with the apostle? Would not Augustine and John Bunyan take the apostle to task for this exclusive appropriation of the title: chief of sinners? And how about you, my reader, do you agree with him?

As to that first question, no, the apostle is not mistaken. He may have been and was a forgiven sinner, and a cleansed sinner, and a sanctified sinner, but he would still have to say, not, I *was*, but I *am* a sinner. And the answer to the second, again is: no, this is not an exaggeration. When the apostle saw his sin in the light of the salvation wrought by his Saviour, then his sin was so great that the sins of others could not compare to it. The meaning cannot be that the apostle was guilty of more sin than any other fellow sinner, except in his own assessment, in his own condemnation of his own guilt. And that is why Augustine and John Bunyan, along with myriads of other sinners, and why you and I will say the same as Paul: Of whom I am chief.

There is here the personal appropriation of the faithful saying! Though we are not saved apart from the people of God who are saved from their sins, there is nevertheless a personal appropriation of Christ Jesus the Saviour which forces you and me to stand at the cross alone and experience that salvation as if He died for us only. Like the publican (Luke 18:13) we exclaim: “God be merciful to me (not: *a*; but: *the*) sinner”; as if among all the sinners there is none like you and me.

That is what saving grace does to the sinner. It makes him to exclaim: I am the least of all saints, and the foremost of all sinners. It humbles us into the dust so completely, that it can be fully appreciated that salvation is of Christ Jesus alone!

It is that Saviour, God's anointed Servant, whose coming into the world we celebrate this Christmas tide, because He saved us from our sins!

Have you ordered your copy of *Therefore Have I Spoken?*

Editorials

EDITOR'S NOTES

Once in a while when we try to plan a given issue, it turns out to be impossible to avoid breaking up an article and continuing it in the next issue. This happened in our December 1 issue, and the victim of the surgery was Rev. Kortering's department. You will find the conclusion of his article on "The Error of Situations Ethics" in this issue.

* * *

The faculty of our Theological School is happy to announce that three more of our seminarians have been licensed, under faculty supervision, to speak a word of edification in our churches. They are Messrs.

Rodney Miersma, James Slopsema, and Ronald Van Overloop.

* * *

By the time you receive this issue, the biography of Rev. Herman Hoeksema, "Therefore Have I Spoken," should have come from the press, and copies should be on the way to those who ordered promptly. If you hurry, perhaps you can still get copies before Christmas. Use the order envelope which was enclosed in the Nov. 15 issue. If you have lost the envelope, send your order, accompanied by \$5.95, to: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

Iconographic, Pornographic, and Distortionistic

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The October 10 issue of *The Banner* carried, contrary to the expressed judgment of its Editor, the Reverend J. Vander Ploeg, an article entitled "Christian Art," written by Dr. Calvin Seerveld, professor of philosophy at Trinity Christian College, and placed as one of a series of articles on "New Frontiers for the Reformed Faith." One might almost have expected, in the light of some recent past performances, a set of "pro" and "con" articles about this article of Dr. Seerveld, with the Executive Committee of the Board of Publications (who placed the article) taking the "pro" side, and Editor Vander Ploeg taking the "con" side. At the very least, one would have expected that after the Editor's dissenting note, his "expressed judgment" would also have been "expressed" in print; or would that have been contrary, perhaps, to the "expressed judgment" of the Executive Committee of the Board of Publications? At any rate, such stuff as Seerveld would pass off as "Christian art" ought not to go unchallenged. And so *The Standard Bearer* will break the silence.

This writer does not claim to be an artist. Neither does he claim to be an expert art critic. Neither would he presume to set forth a "philosophy" of Christian art. Yet he does claim to have some degree of Christian discernment, a discernment which has its objective standard in the Word of God and its subjective principle in the grace of regeneration. And to his Christian

discernment Dr. Seerveld's allegedly Christian art is utterly repulsive.

I will pass by the fact that in his remarks on "understanding art" Dr. Seerveld fails to give his readers something to understand, that is, a clear statement of what Christian art is. I will pass by the fact that even what he says is left completely without foundation, so that apparently the reader is expected to accept what is written on the writer's say-so. I will pass by, too, the following statement, which indeed makes one wonder whether Christian art could possibly be produced by a non-Christian artist: "You also do not determine what is Christian art by whether, upon checking, you can determine whether the artist was an orthodox, church-going believer who lived an impeccable, moral life. Sometimes a believer's right hand does not know what his left hand is doing."

Instead, I will turn to the three examples of "Christian art" which accompany the article in photograph form and to Seerveld's comments about them. Evidently it was the photos as well as the article that offended Editor Vander Ploeg. They offended me too; and I would not reproduce them in *The Standard Bearer* even if I could. We can judge them, however, from Seerveld's own interpretation and evaluation.

ICONOGRAPHIC

Concerning the first illustration accompanying his article Dr. Seerveld writes as follows:

Take a look at the sculptured, robed figure hovering, as it were, suspended over everyone below (fig. A). It has a venerable, patriarchal, grand distance to it that commands respect. Yet the arms are stiffly forward — no, better — stretched out in those sleeves, straining to reach, the hands simultaneously blessing and wanting to touch. . . . While the visage is stern, forehead and eyes concentrated in prayer, the ancient beard is alive, like strong flames of fire that are steady but could consume. The round holes of the two sleeves could be trumpets! announcing. . . . And notice the chips missing on the top fold of the robed arms? As if the majestic figure is hurt, nicked, grieved while loving, waiting and wanting to embrace.

This art product is Ernst Barlach's attempt to make known the *meaning* of our Father who is in heaven, God of the Old Testament who showed himself in Jesus Christ.

Now it surpasses what little artistic sense I may have how anyone can derive Seerveld's description from the figure accompanying it. To me the figure appears similar to some grotesque, misshapen Buddha. In other words, what we have here is a piece of pure subjectivism, not a work of art in which there is harmony of form and essence, designed to express objective reality, truth. And this is one serious objection which I have to all of Seerveld's illustrations. The alleged beauty of Seerveld's kind of art is simply in the eye of the beholder or of the artist. There is much of this kind of "art" nowadays, some of it pretending to be Christian, some not making this claim. And the more faithfully this philosophy of art is practiced, of course, the more diverse become the interpretations, highly imaginative, which one might attach to the works of art. Even of this first illustration six different viewers might very well have six totally different interpretations. Frankly, when I behold such "art," my reaction is such that I am usually left in a quandary as to what the "artist" is trying to express; and my next reaction is that I am always tempted to "spoof" it.

But what greatly troubles me is that from a material point of view this is an utter perversion of art.

For it is iconography.

What is iconography? It is "the art of representation by . . . images." the term comes from *eikon*, image, and *graphein*, to describe.

In other words, this first illustration involves the sin of making a graven image; and it invites the viewers (at least, if Seerveld's description, quoted above, is supposed to be the meaning of this image) to join in this sin against the Second Commandment.

Did not Dr. Seerveld, before he presumed to call this Christian art, not ponder the fact that true beauty and virtue are inseparable? And did he not ponder the fact that virtue and the keeping of God's commandments

are inseparable? And was he not reminded of the words of the Heidelberg Catechism: "That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word?" Or how about the following language of the same Catechism? "God neither can, nor may be represented by any means: but as to creatures, though they may be represented, yet God forbids to make, or have any resemblance of them, either in order to worship them or to serve God by them." Or this? ". . . we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have his people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of his word." Or if the Catechism was far from his thoughts, was he not reminded of the direct Word of God? "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female . . ." Deuteronomy 4:15, 16.

Indeed, "To recognize Christian art you must study the product, and test its spirit," as Seerveld says. You must ask, "What kind of allegiance penetrates its symbolical form?" My answer is — and it is, I believe, an answer based on the Word of God: "Not an allegiance to the one true God of the Scriptures, Who commands us not to make graven images." This "art" is iconographic; it is not art, but the perversion of art. For beauty is virtue; and virtue is the love of and keeping of God's commandments.

PORNOGRAPHIC

The second illustration presented by Dr. Seerveld is as follows:

Now examine the two misshapen figures seated naked on a bench (fig. B). The black shoulder lines slump down. The belly is a tub of fat and sunken flesh; the ugly breasts have been wrestled and mauled. The jaw is set, the thick neck coarse, ringed ironically with baubles. The blue-brown, sunken colors reinforce the heavy-hearted lines: these bodies have been bruised! wasted! ruined from any glory. There is a kind of hurt horror and sorrowing compassion in the smeared, stolid, pitiful composition of these two old prostitutes, gross, socially discarded, enslaved.

This art product is the way Georges Rouault tried expressing the truth that the wages of sin is death and that the wiles of the "strange woman" are an evil full of heart-breaking and heart-broken misery.

Again, this illustration is an example of pure subjectivism. In fact, the painter, Georges Rouault, is described by *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. 17, pp. 59, 60; 1958 Edition) as belonging to a movement called Fauvism: "*Les Fauves*, variously called the 'Wild Beasts' or the 'Wild Men,' were distinguished by a

general freedom of colour usage and design elements. Actually the entire movement was a form of subjective Impressionism, in which the formal elements of painting appeared to be used quite arbitrarily." He is noted for "following a mystic line of inner vision." The illustration, according to Seerveld's description and interpretation, is an outstanding example of such subjective Impressionism. I know not whether this is Seerveld's own interpretation or that of the artist.

But this is not the worst aspect.

This is pornograph (from *porne*, harlot, + *graphein*), meaning obscene or licentious painting. By what right, even in the name of art, does a man put on public display the nakedness of women, be they supposedly prostitutes, when the Lord God Himself gave clothing to cover their nakedness? Any artist or viewer of art who knows himself and his own lecherous, depraved nature will have to admit that stuff such as this is an appeal to the "lust of the flesh," though it be in a perverted and repulsive manner. And in this age, which in its various art forms is notorious for its pornography and its trampling of the Seventh Commandment ("All uncleanness is accursed of God!"), to me it borders on the sacrilegious to present this as an illustration of "New Frontiers for the Reformed Faith" with an appeal to Scripture. It is a perverted sense of the grace of sanctification which imagines that one can put "call girls" (whether young and voluptuous or old and worn out) on public display, whether in painting or photography, in a Christian manner. If it appears in *Playboy*, then we ban it from our homes, and probably go on a holy crusade against pornography. But if it appears in *The Banner* in the name of Christian art . . . ?

DISTORTIONISTIC

Dr. Seerveld's third illustration is also neither art nor Christian. He describes it, in part, as follows: "Do you see the spring-clean, outdoor world of kite-flying boys and girls (fig. C)? There is space on the green and lightness in the sky, and their simple stylized bodies show how fresh and uncomplicated, easy, really, it is to be very young. Those are a child's hands. And the figures dance in pantomime, as it were, . . ." And again: "There is certainty, simplicity, gentleness, air to breathe and order, suggests the painting, in this world we inhabit. Creation is the playground of God where He lets his kids fly kites together, in happiness, when they stay close to him. Henk Krijger, coming resident artist at the Institute for Christian Art (Chicago Ridge), puts symbolically to canvas here a modern beatitude: Blessed are the children who fly kites, in peace, for they are benefiting from the redeeming mercy of our creator God." And again, in question

form: "Does the sculpture or painting or poem or music or architecture or dance, or whatever kind of art piece it be, witness with laughter and hope to the goodly rich, earthly creation our Lord made for us to be obedient in (as fig. C does)?"

This last illustration is, in the first place, the most obvious example of purely subjectivistic impressionism. One would almost judge from Seerveld's description that this would be an interesting picture of children flying kites in the setting of an open meadow. He speaks of green and of lightness in the sky and of simple stylized bodies, etc. But even in the black-and-white reproduction of this painting one can readily tell that this "art" violates every rule of line and form and perspective. Everything in the picture is distorted, grotesque, out of proportion, without proper perspective. I cannot believe that the God of order and beauty wants even "kite-flying boys and girls" portrayed in this manner. Nor could I get it over my conscience to call this in any sense beautiful. In fact, I am tempted to say that a kite-flying boy or girl could paint a better picture; this work actually impresses one as being the work of someone who either lacked the energy or the artistic ability to produce a well-arranged, well-proportioned, natural picture.

And as to the purported theme of this painting?

Well, just what does one say about such things?

Far-fetched? Yes! I rubbed my eyes in amazement when I read it. Modern beatitude? "Modernistic," I think, would be a better word.

But *Christian* art? Hardly.

I can almost hear one of my Northwest Iowa friends grumble, "Humbug!"

* * *

All this would be ridiculous, were it not extremely serious.

Serious it is, in the first place, that *The Banner* can even dream of placing such stuff, and that in the name of "New Frontiers for the Reformed Faith." By this sort of thing *The Banner* misleads its many readers, and it does despite to the names "Christian" and "Reformed." Let no one imagine that I can take delight in this. I cannot! I can only weep over it. But I cannot and will not refrain from exposing it and warning against it.

Serious it is, in the second place, because if this is a sample of the kind of instruction which emanates from Trinity Christian College — and I fear it is, — then the young people at that college are not receiving proper instruction. And those of our own young people who are attending there should be on their guard, lest they imbibe this corruption. Let them not be eager to

accept every new idea at face value just because it has a pseudo-relevant sound and a pseudo-Reformed name.

And serious it is, in the third place, because it does not speak well for the A.A.C.S. I am reminded, in this connection, that this same Calvin Seerveld is the author of "A Christian Critique of Art," published by

the A.A.C.S. (then the A.R.S.S.) in its "Christian Perspectives Series 1963." If this is a sample of the philosophy of Christian art in their proposed Christian university, then the whole project is not worth the time, energy, and money required to establish such a university.

A United Reformed Church?

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In the past few months several periodicals have reflected on the possibility of a merger, or at least discussions with a view to a possible merger, between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church. The *Reformed Journal*, in an article by Harry Boer, was, I believe the first to speak out on the subject. After the failure of the proposed merger between the RCA and the Southern Presbyterians, Dr. Louis H. Benes, editor of *The Church Herald*, seconded Dr. Boer's suggestion. His editorial, entitled "Church Union — And Reunion," was reprinted in *The Banner* of August 29, 1969. In that same issue of *The Banner* appeared an article entitled "The Lord Has Watched Between Us," from the pen of Rev. Arnold Brink, secretary of the denominational Committee on Inter-church Relations. And in that same issue Editor John Vander Ploeg reflected on the subject in a rather detailed manner, urging what he calls "ecumenical realism." In *De Wachter* of September 2, 1969, meanwhile, Editor William Haverkamp joined the discussion and advised that at present such discussions should not be held, but that the churches should wait to see the outcome of the labors of the committee for reconciliation in the RCA. Finally, *Torch and Trumpet*, October, 1969, carried a three-part feature on this subject under the title, "What About CRC-RCA Merger?" This was introduced by the following note, which will also serve to explain somewhat the nature of this symposium: "Rev. Gordon H. Girod, well known pastor of the Seventh Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was originally asked to describe and evaluate the fact of the failure of the merger proposal involving his denomination and the Presbyterian Church U.S. (Southern). This led very naturally to mention of and reaction to the current conferences with view to reunion between the RCA and the Christian Reformed Church. To these reactions of Rev. Girod, we asked Dr. Peter Y. De Jong, professor of Practical Theology, Calvin Seminary, and Rev. John H. Piersma, pastor of Bethany Chr. Ref. Church, South Holland, Ill., to

respond."

It is certainly not the intention of the present editorial to reflect in detail upon all of the above articles. I believe it is fair to say that there are rather widely varied attitudes expressed in them. Some of these writings appear to represent the broadminded spirit of ecumenicism (with emphasis on the *-ism!*) which is one of the characteristics of our times. In some I seem to smell the rather wishy-washy kiss-and-make-up spirit. Others favor a hands-off or wait-and-see attitude. And some appear to favor, to some degree, a discussion of issues, apparently in an attitude of ecumenical realism. Again, some speak of "merger," while others speak of "reunion." And do I also detect that some have an eye for a union of conservatives from both denominations? Perhaps there will be further developments; and I hope that there will be further — and more frank — journalistic discussion.

Meanwhile, *The Standard Bearer* is interested in this subject, as it always is interested in events which concern the Reformed community. It is interested not merely in the narrower and more immediate issue of a possible RCA-CRC merger or reunion and the discussions about it. Upon this subject we shall certainly comment, — from the viewpoint of a spectator and listener, perhaps more objectively than the participants are able to do. But *The Standard Bearer* is also interested in the broader aspects of this subject which are necessarily involved, namely, the aspects of ecclesiastical *unity* (not union) and of being *Reformed*.

Still more. *The Standard Bearer* is interested in these aspects not only abstractly and as a matter of theory, but concretely and as a matter of practice. I would not venture to say at this stage, in the light of past writings and past performance, that the Editor of *The Banner* and this writer would be meaning the same thing by these words when it comes to concrete specifics. But in his August 29 editorial he writes the following: "Conceivably, a United Reformed Church could some day still arise with its constituency drawn from the RCA,

the CRC, and other church bodies in which there are those who are eagerly longing for an affiliation that will allow for greater affinity and the possibility of seeing eye-to-eye and standing shoulder-to-shoulder at a time when it is so urgent that what we sing may really come to pass: 'Like a mighty army, moves the church of God.' " Editor Vander Ploeg is not specific in this statement; and it remains to be seen who are meant by "other church bodies" and what is meant by "an affiliation that will allow for greater affinity," etc. Does he, for example, mean some kind of vaguely conservative and Reformed umbrella under which a mixed constituency might find shelter?

Nevertheless, the idea of a united Reformed church is an interesting and attractive, and, understood rightly, a sound idea. Moreover, it sometimes seems that the time must come, amid all the ecclesiastical tensions caused by today's rapid apostasy, when those who desire to be and remain genuinely Reformed must be well-nigh compelled (or impelled?) to flock together. Who knows? I have no grand illusions, when I view the Reformed scene, as to the size of those remnants who desire to be genuinely Reformed. And I know that there are others, also from other denominations, who share my opinion on this score. But size and numbers are of no account. Did not our Savior Himself address His church as a "little flock?"

It is, then, with a view to this idea that *The Standard Bearer* will also discuss some of the matters already mentioned in connection with the RCA-CRC question.

And for a starter, I will propose three items which I believe must needs have a place in any fruitful labor toward a united Reformed church:

1. A united Reformed church must be *united*, that is, *genuinely one* as to the three marks of the church, Article 29 of the Belgic Confession.
2. Such unity implies being *Reformed*, not in name or mere lip-service, but in the genuine, full, and strict sense of the word, and that too, on the basis of the Word of God and the Reformed confessions.
3. The Protestant Reformed Churches as a denomination, both in name and ecclesiastical conduct, represent such unity and such Reformed-ness, "and desire to receive into our church communion everyone that agrees to our confession," Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity.

For my part, I welcome and encourage discussion of this subject, — be that journalistic discussion, or be it discussion on official or unofficial conference, provided such discussion is specific, full, frank, and honest.

All Around Us

Decisions of the Gereformeerde Kerken An Important Union-Labor Decision in Canada

Prof. H. Hanko

DECISIONS OF THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN

At its latest session of the General Synod the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken) took some important decisions affecting the future of that denomination and perhaps of other Reformed Church bodies.

The first of these was a decision to join the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.). We quote from the *R.E.S. News Exchange*.

(Utrecht) In an almost unanimous decision, the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands decided to join the World Council of Churches. Dr. Eugene Canon (should be Carson, H.H.) Blake, in replying to the telegram in which the decision was communicated to the World Council, expressed his satisfaction with the decision and ob-

served that the Reformed churches in the Netherlands had for many years cooperated already in WCC activities and that their work was greatly appreciated. Many members of the Synod expressed the opinion that membership in the WCC may not mean that the tie with the Reformed sister churches in the world, which are not members of the WCC, will be weakened. Relations with these churches, they said, should be maintained.

Dr. P. G. Kunst, president of the Synod, stressed that the Reformed Churches must become members with a "clear Reformed identity." The church was not asked to become part of a colorless ecumenism.

The decision marks the end of a discussion that lasted fourteen years. A decision to join was not taken earlier because there was no general agreement regarding membership.

The Synod will establish guide lines for those who will represent the church in the WCC. The request was made that an extensive explanation be sent to the Reformed sister churches which are critical of the World Council of Churches.

In a way this decision was inevitable. The Gereformeerde Kerken had already decided that there was no obstacle to membership in the W.C.C. They had only waited with implementing the decision by actually joining to seek the opinion of their sister Reformed Churches and, as the report quoted above says: "because there was no general agreement regarding membership." Nevertheless, the decision to join the W.C.C. is clearly an indication of how far the Gereformeerde Kerken have forsaken their Reformed heritage.

One wonders what effect all this will have on the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The Synod of the Gereformeerden Kerken was at great pains to stress that they want to retain their ties with their sister Reformed churches in the world which are not members. But the fact is that the R.E.S. specifically advised the Gereformeerde Kerken not to join the W.C.C. What, if anything, will the R.E.S. do about this?

Apparently in order to retain their own "clear Reformed identity" within the W.C.C., the Synod will "establish guidelines for those who will represent the church in the WCC." It will be interesting to see what these guidelines have to say.

In another decision, the General Synod discussed the whole matter of the binding character of the church's confessions. We quote the *R.E.S. News Exchange*.

(Utrecht) The General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands reminded all local churches in a letter that the church confessions have binding authority upon all as an accepted basis of fellowship. The Synod also appointed a commission to investigate whether, and if so, in what way a new contemporary confession of faith should be made.

The Synod recognized that the manner of expression and the method of argument in the creedal standards should offer no obstacle to officers of the church to express their complete agreement. Therefore all church officers should abide by the form of subscription.

The Synod reached this decision after a lengthy debate on the binding nature of the confession and its function. On the one hand there was concern to maintain the old truth, in honest fellowship with the forefathers. On the other hand the Synod recognized the need for a new confession that is directed to the issues of today. "We confess all kinds of things which are no longer at stake, and about those matters which are at stake today we make no confession" one delegate stated.

In its instructions to the commission to consider a new confession the Synod asked that it study the present confessions to determine which elements, besides the manner of expression and the method of

argument, stand in the way of a complete agreement with the confessional standards. It also asked that the commission give attention to the way in which the church could arrive at an eventual new confession.

It is difficult to believe that the Synod was sincere in its decisions concerning the binding character of the creeds. For one thing, it was but a short time ago that the Synod completely exonerated Geelkerken who was condemned at Assen for teaching doctrines contrary to the creeds. That the Synod should exonerate him means that the creeds are no longer taken seriously. For another thing, there are many in the Church who not only teach doctrines explicitly contrary to the creeds, but who openly announce their disagreement with the creeds. Yet Synod does nothing about these men and permits them to continue to function in their offices even though now they state that "all church officers should abide by the form of subscription." And finally, incorporated in this decision is another decision to instruct a commission to investigate the possibility of a new confession. One instruction to the commission is that the commission "determine which elements, besides the manner of expression and the method of argument, stand in the way of a complete agreement with the confessional standards." This certainly suggests that one important reason for studying the possibility of a new confession is the lack of agreement with the old forms of unity.

Another interesting development at this Synod is described in the *R.E.S. Newsletter*.

(Utrecht) The General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands held a discussion that lasted through an afternoon and an evening session with a group of concerned people called the association for "Scripture and Confession." Representatives of the periodical "Truth and Unity" also participated. The great public interest in the meeting was shown in the large number of people who attended the sessions.

According to observers, the discussion resulted in a clearer image of the central question of the authority of the Bible and the confessions and a great mutual understanding of the varying positions.

The Rev. E.J. Oomkes, chairman of the association "Scripture and Confession" outlined the concern and alarm about the newest ideas on the Bible and the confession. At stake in the "neo-reformed radical theology" he said, is not a view of the Bible but the Scripture itself. When one explains stories of the Bible as non-historical events, one attacks the divine authority of the Scripture. Oomkes charged that many in the church subscribe to the confessions, but do not keep their promise to be faithful. He said that the church now faces the question whether or not it can be called Reformed. The spokesmen for the concerned stated that such a great "credibility crisis" had arisen that they feared a "situation of conflict" would ensue. Some have left the church and others are contemplating leaving, they claimed.

In their responses to the spokesmen for the 'concerned', many members of the Synod showed that they could understand what motivated the concerned group in their desire to maintain the true confession. At the same time some voiced criticism at the group's manner of organized approach that tended to form dangerous fronts in church life.

Professor H. M. Kuitert, whose writings have been much in dispute, said that he could not understand why he was accused of unfaithfulness to the Holy Scriptures. "That is of course the foundation of your life," he declared. But the theologian has the task of unfettering the language of the Bible, that is, liberating it from the formulations of yesterday in order to give to men today an insight in the liberation of the gospel. The theologian must deal with the formulations in an integral way without compromise. The time is past for trying to solve problems by splitting the church, he said.

AN IMPORTANT UNION-LABOR DECISION IN CANADA

While we are quoting the *R.E.S. Newsletter* anyway, we may as well refer to another item which deals with the question of religious conscientious objectors in a closed shop or a union shop. The article reads:

(Toronto) By enactment of law, the Government of Ontario has allowed new employees who object to payroll deductions for union dues "on the basis of religious or moral convictions" to have these deduc-

tions remitted to the registered charity of their choice.

This action was hailed by Gerald Vande Zande, Executive Secretary of the Committee for Justice and Liberty, as a "precedent-setting move — a move that should have far-reaching positive effect on the freedom of association still being denied to thousands of other Ontario residents not employed in the Civil Service." Prior to the enactment of the regulation all civil service employees were required to pay dues to the Civil Service Association of Ontario as a condition of employment.

While the new legislation is a step toward complete freedom of association, Vande Zande observed, it is only a beginning. He expressed the hope that the same legal privilege "will also be granted to the thousands of non-government workers who currently are 'captive supporters' of secular unions to whose social and political views they are entirely opposed."

Vande Zande also pointed out that the right of laborers to designate the charity to receive the equivalent of their union dues is a far cry from the right of sending payroll deductions to the union of their choice. As an alternative to the present closed shop and union shop arrangements in which the majority makes decisions for all, regardless of their religious convictions, Vande Zande advocated "multi-union bargaining — a set-up which would allow differently-motivated trade unions, which enjoy a certain minimum percentage of support, jointly to represent all employees involved."

A Cloud of Witnesses

THE FAMINE

Rev. B. Woudenberg

Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

II Samuel 21:1

There are certain events recorded in the Bible which jar uncomfortably against our modern sense of propriety and even of justice: but these also have their continuing purpose. They are reminders for us of the fact that our world is not the only world, there have been places and days when people's values and attitudes have been far different from what they are now. But even more, because these events are recorded in the Bible with divine approval, they form an occasion for us to stop and remember that everything that we assume today is not necessarily as final and normative as we often think.

One such an event is the account of the famine in

David's day recorded for us toward the end of the second book of Samuel. In all likelihood the chronological time of this event was much earlier, perhaps soon after David first became king over all Israel. The event is not given us, however, just to fill out a historical record. It is given to us, along with the account of the pestilence which follows, to assure us that in Israel God did not allow those who ruled as kings to do whatsoever they willed. For that which they did they were held responsible; and, when such things were evil, He exacted punishment even unto the succeeding generations.

The famine struck the kingdom of David suddenly

and unexpectedly. In fact, it appears to have been taken first as a mere natural and normal event. At least, David did not think to inquire with the Lord concerning it until the third year of famine was upon them and the situation for this kingdom was becoming extremely critical. Then only did David inquire, and the answer was given to him, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

The Gibeonites were a strange people within the over all design of the land of Canaan. They were the one people who thought to try to make peace with Israel in the days of Joshua when the land of Canaan was given to them according to promise by the hand of God. They alone sent messengers to Joshua pleading for a treaty of peace between them and the nation of Israel, which treaty was also granted. The only trouble was that they obtained this agreement by deceit, by claiming and pretending to be much farther removed from the heart of the land of Canaan than they really were. Nevertheless, the promise was given in the name of the Lord and was not to be broken. The only thing was that the reservation was made that the Gibeonites would serve as servants to the Israelites forever.

Actually, there was a particularly significant place which the Gibeonites filled in the typical pattern set forth by God in Canaan. They were the proof of the fact that God is no respecter of persons nor of nationality in His elective grace. Although His covenant was established with Abraham and his generations in a very special way, there was no one, not even in the Old Testament age, who seeking peace with Him would be refused. All of the other nations were given to destruction because of their sins and also because they refused to recognize the greatness and authority of Israel's God when Israel entered the promised land. The Gibeonites were the one exception, and they were not refused but were given a place within the nation even though they had sought it in weakness and deceit. They were the demonstration of the fact that God would refuse His peace to no one who sought it in sincerity no matter what the age of time. They were a foretaste of the gathering of the Gentile nations fulfilled with the coming of Christ.

There was a danger here, however, particularly from those who were not spiritually sensitive to the divine design behind those things which happened within God's chosen nation. These were the carnal in Israel who found great satisfaction in their earthly, physical characteristics. Their pride was in the fact that they were physical descendants of Abraham. To them the Gibeonites were a corrupting force within the nation, an impurity among those who boasted in their blood descent. They were a people to be despised and mistreated, a people always to be reminded of the wretched deceit by which they had gained the ear of Joshua, a people to be scorned and disparaged at every opportunity. They actually took the attitude that to

persecute these people was in some way defending Israel and doing its God a service.

Of such a kind was king Saul, particularly in his latter days. His respect and influence in the land was slipping badly and he knew it. He blamed it, of course, to David accusing him of treachery. Actually it was due to inane raging. But it came to the point where he became desperate in his determination to regain favor with his people. That in those days he should set his eyes upon the Gibeonites was not surprising. A more hapless, helpless people could not be found anywhere. For a man of a basically cowardly nature, such as Saul's, they were an ideal victim. With self-righteous arrogance he set himself upon them, working havoc and destruction among them. Thousands were defenselessly slain, and this gave to Saul the opportunity for which he was looking. The lands which the Gibeonites had possessed, as limited as they were, became his to do with what he wanted, to keep for himself and his family or to distribute among his favorites. It enabled him to say to his own tribe, in defense of himself against the popularity of David, "Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards." It was an abominable perversion of righteousness and justice, but they were only Gibeonites and no one was about to exert himself in their defense.

But God in heaven was watching, and He always remembers even though at times He bears things with much longsuffering. It was not just Saul that was to be blamed; it was the whole nation. They were all responsible to defend the poor and helpless and surely not to co-operate in the destruction of an innocent people or to stand by without protest or objection. Of particular blame were those who consented to take of the spoil of the Gibeonites for their own advancement. Even David, when he came to the throne many years later, was not to be exempted. He knew what had happened and he should have responded immediately to restore and correct as far as he could the injustice that had been done to these poor and afflicted people. But even he remained unmindful of them.

Thus it was that rather soon after David became king over the whole of Israel, a severe famine beset the land. At first David looked upon it as merely a natural event and thought little of it. However, time went on and there came no relief. One whole year passed and then another. Finally the third year was upon them and the situation in Israel was becoming desperate. At last David thought to go to the Lord and inquire into the matter. Immediately the answer came back to him, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

There was a reason why in Israel this matter could not be forgotten. Israel was a nation under God and to whom had been given His law. Never might it be thought that even the king was free to do whatever he

willed. God always stood in judgment over them, and His justice had to be maintained in the land. Moreover, because they formed one nation, there was always a corporate responsibility among them. Even though the king who had perpetrated this great injustice over the Gibeonites was now dead and gone, the responsibility for the deed still rested upon the nation. For it to be forgotten would be as much as to say that it didn't matter, and this the Lord would never do.

David realized immediately the validity of this position. Before the nation could be justified it had to turn in repentance and proclaim its rejection of what had happened in an act of expiation. The world must be made to know that in Israel the law of God was more important than the wiles of any man, even though he be king.

Thus David went to the Gibeonites which remained and simply laid the matter before them. As the ones who had been sinned against, it was they who could best determine what would be sufficient recompense. Therefore David asked them, "What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?"

At first the Gibeonites rejected any recompense whatsoever. They answered, "We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel." They did not want it to appear that they were eager to gather earthly gain from the death of their brethren, nor even that they had any desire to revenge.

With this, however, David could not be satisfied. It was God that was demanding that expiation should be publicly made for this sin. It might not be merely passed over and ignored. Thus David insisted, "What ye shall say, that will I do for you."

It was what came back which is so shocking to our modern sense of justice. The Gibeonites finally answered, "The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coast of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose." Neither did David object to this. He made only one qualification. Those who so died might not be of the sons of Jonathan whom he had promised to keep safely forever. For the rest, he simply went out

and took seven of the descendants of Saul, two sons of his concubine Rizpah and five of Michal from the second husband Saul had given her, and he gave them to the Gibeonites. These men the Gibeonites killed and hung up their bodies on the walls of Gibeah from the barley harvest in April to the early rains of fall — a sign to all the world of the repentance of Israel from the sin of king Saul.

To our day, of course, the whole thing appears repugnant and repulsive. We have no feeling for "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Our day would rather err on the side of mercy.

We need not assume, however, that our modern feelings in such matters are necessarily so virtuous. They may well arise not so much out of a love for mercy as out of a lack of feeling of moral indignation for a terrible moral atrocity as well as our lack of feeling for the reality of corporate responsibility. Nor is it necessarily true that these sons of Saul were actually so very far removed from his crime. They may well have been actual participants in the sin against the Gibeonites, and it is altogether likely that they may still have been benefiting from it not living upon lands which had been taken so unjustly away from the Gibeonites. If the principle of justice was to remain in the land, punishment had to be exacted lest Israel should become engulfed in the very kind of lawlessness which fills the world of our day.

Nevertheless, there was a tinge of bitter sorrow in what happened. We find it in Rizpah, the mother of two of the men that perished. She could not interfere with the execution of justice; but she would do what she could to soften the shame of it. Her sons were dead and their bodies would rot; but she would not leave them prey to the scavenger birds and animals. As long as they hung upon the wall, she sat beneath them exposed to the weather, with nothing but mourner's rags for a bed. It was a touching move of tender sorrow that finally was told of even in the court of the king. David was moved and ordered that the bones of these should be taken down and together with those of Saul and Jonathan which had hung in disgrace on the Philistine walls of Bethshan buried in honor in the sepulchre of Kish in Benjamin.

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would make a worthwhile Christmas gift.

Contending for the Faith

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

THE THIRD PERIOD — 730-1517 A.D.

PROTESTANT DOCTRINE OF SIN
ACCORDING TO CALVIN

Rev. H. Veldman

We concluded our preceding article by calling attention to Point Three of the Three Points of 1924 and expressing the conviction that this conception is in violent conflict with all the writings of Calvin. In II, 2, 6, toward the close of this paragraph, Calvin writes: "And this liberty is not diminished, although we are corrupt, and the slaves of sin, and capable of doing nothing but sin." And in II, 2, 18 Calvin writes:

We now proceed to show what human reason can discover, when it comes to the kingdom of God, and to that spiritual wisdom, which consists chiefly in three things — to know God, His paternal favour towards us, on which depends our salvation, and the method of regulating our lives according to the rule of the law. In the two first points, but especially in the second, the most sagacious of mankind are blinder than moles. I do not deny that some judicious and apposite observations concerning God may be found scattered in the writings of the philosophers; but they always betray a confused imagination. The Lord afforded them, as we have before observed, some slight sense of His Divinity, that they might not be able to plead ignorance as an excuse for impiety, and sometimes impelled them to utter things, by the confession of which they might themselves be convinced. But they saw the objects presented to their view in such a manner, that by the sight they were not even directed to the truth, much less did they arrive at it; just as a man, who is travelling by night across a field, sees the coruscations of lightning extending for a moment far and wide, but with such an evanescent view, that so far from being assisted by them in proceeding on his journey, he is re-absorbed in the darkness of the night before he can advance a single step. Besides, those few truths, with which they, as it were, fortuitously besprinkle their books, with what numerous and monstrous falsehoods are they defiled!

In the light of these quotations, that there is no love, grace, mercy of God except as in Christ Jesus, and then only of Him in the Church of God, through the Spirit of sanctification, that the preaching of the gospel is of no benefit to the reprobates, that Common Grace does not restrain sin, neither enables him to do any good; yea, that the doctrine of the Three Points is not to be found within Calvin's doctrine of Common Grace, we understand that Calvin's doctrine in this question is very limited in scope.

Let us note here the place which is ascribed in the present day to the doctrine of Common Grace, as set forth in the Three Points and taught subsequently by the advocates and defenders of this doctrine. First, as far as the Three Points are concerned. Common Grace is not merely a grace which extends to the realm of nature. But it also extends to the realm of grace. For God does not merely show grace to the elect, which, then, is particular, but also to the entire creation. The Common Grace of the present day is not only a grace found among the heathen outside the realm of grace, but it is definitely common, embracing also the reprobate. Besides, the Common Grace of today is surely a denial of Particular Grace. Actually, Common Grace consists of an offer of Particular Grace. God's love and grace, always particular in the writings of Calvin, are meant by the Lord for all men. Secondly, according to late leaders such as H. Bavinck and A. Kuyper, Common Grace is the basis for Special Grace. And another wrote once that Calvin never tires of speaking of God's Common Grace to all men. In fact, Common Grace is greater in scope than Particular Grace. Particular Grace extends only to the elect, but Common Grace is the basis for the Particular, and extends to all men. In fact, this Common Grace would also reach out to the godless into all eternity, for the gospel is a well-meaning offer of salvation in Christ to all.

Is it any wonder that a church, advocating and teaching a theory of Common Grace, should proclaim a social gospel, and that more and more this social gospel is being preached today. Should we be too surprised when a social gospel is increasingly receiving the emphasis, proclaiming a universal fatherhood of God and a universal brotherhood of men, calling attention to segregation and integration, social inequalities and injustices, also nationally and internationally, and setting forth a remedy in which all men can share and which can make this world a better place in which to live? Does not God love all men? This is surely a universal fatherhood of God. And if God loves all men, should not all men love one another? More and more the fundamental truths of Christ's particular atonement and of the Kingdom of Heaven as antithetically opposed to the kingdom of darkness and of this world are being silenced and replaced by a social gospel

which can be of benefit to the whole world, without the Christ and without His cross.

What a tremendous difference we notice in Calvin's Doctrine of Common Grace. Calvin's Common Grace extends only to the realm of nature. And also in this connection the reformer speaks of a common and particular grace, in the sense that some persons are more richly gifted than others. But when Calvin speaks of the realm of grace, then he maintains an essential distinction, expressed on page 62 of Calvin's Calvinism, namely that the redeemed are distinguished from the children of destruction exactly by grace, and we quote:

In a word, most true is that which Augustine testifies: "That the redeemed are distinguished from the children of perdition by grace alone, which redeemed ones that common mass of original corruption would have gathered to the same perdition but for the free grace of God. Whence it follows, that the grace of God to be preached is that by which He *makes* men His *elect*, not that by which He *finds* them as such.

God loves only His people in Christ Jesus. Outside of that Church of God everything is curse. Then the gospel is a savour of death unto death, and never anything else. And, according to Calvin, Common Grace, consisting of external gifts, is found alone among the godless. In the sphere of Divine grace, the godly and the ungodly are distinguished exactly by grace, and they have nothing in common. We would not expect anything else from Calvin, the defender of God's sovereign will over against Pelagianism. It is true that Calvin speaks of a common grace to all men in the realm of nature, but he confuses the grace of God with the things, and the Lord bestows upon them only temporal mercy.

This view of Calvin receives added emphasis when we note the heresies which Calvin opposed.

First, he opposed the heresy that all good gifts were ascribed to the devil. That God was the source of all these things was denied. It is for this reason that Calvin writes the following in II, 2, 16: "Yet let us not forget that these are most excellent gifts of the Divine Spirit, which for the common benefit of mankind He dispenses to whomsoever He pleases." It has been contended that Calvin never tires of writing that God's mercy, favour and goodness are bestowed upon all. Fact is, however, that also these thoughts of the reformer must be viewed in the light of Calvin's defense of God's sovereignty. Over against this heresy, that these gifts were ascribed to the devil, Calvin maintains that the sovereign Lord is the Source of all good and He alone. How strange it would be that Calvin, the man of God's sovereign election, who consistently separated the church and the world, should rejoice particularly in a favour of God to all men! Incidentally, to emphasize that all good gifts are from the Lord, Calvin, in the paragraph from which we quoted, in II, 2, 16,

writes that it was necessary that the Spirit of God should infuse into Bezaleel and Aholiab the understanding and skill requisite for the construction of the tabernacle.

Secondly, Calvin opposed the Pelagian conception which denied man's corruption and maintained an election upon foreseen faith. That Calvin opposed this heresy bitterly is acknowledged by all. But we must not forget that this sovereign election was also the key-note of God's election as a nation. Repeatedly he asserts that also this election of Israel as a nation was a proof of God's sovereignty. Besides, we must note that God's so-called Common Grace was not a burning issue in those days. And it is simply a fact that Calvin was a wonder of God's grace in the midst of an age of blindness and heresy.

Calvin's Common Grace, although broad in content, is nevertheless very limited in scope. It is very limited because, as the portion shared by elect and reprobate, it is to be limited only to the realm of nature. It is very limited because it is to be found only in temporal things, and is of no meaning for that which is spiritual and eternal. And this grace is very limited also because it is never the key-note of Calvin's writings. In the present day, they speak jubilantly of God's Common Grace; Calvin, however, rejoices in the doctrine of God's Special Grace. Today they say that we must not concern ourselves with God's hidden will; Calvin declares that the revealed will must be explained in the light of God's hidden will.

Finally, what is the Divine purpose of this common grace as set forth in the writings of Calvin? It is peculiar of Calvin that he, in connection with his doctrine of Common Grace, always maintains the doctrine of God's sovereign grace, and that he always seeks the purpose of Common Grace in this, that the Lord maintains His righteousness, and all men are rendered inexcusable before God.

This question, or rather its answer is called in the present day a problem which cannot be solved, and will ever remain a problem here below. Today they are afraid to proclaim the clear teaching of Ps. 73. They are correct when they declare that Asaph's problem consisted in the prosperity of the wicked. But they err when they declare that Asaph's problem was solved when he trusted in the Lord but that the problem, as such, remained unsolved. In the present day what is revealed is separated from that which is eternal. And they do not seek the solution by comparing the things that are seen with the things that are eternal and unseen.

This failure to solve the problem of Asaph might be understandable if the Scriptures denied us this solution. The Common Grace theorists would have us believe that there are two tracks running through this world and that these tracks are parallel. They prefer to speak of two spheres, the earthy and the heavenly, and

declare that they cannot be reconciled. They would have us believe that an offer of salvation to all who hear the gospel may be in conflict with God's eternal decree of election and reprobation, but hasten to add that this conflict is not real but only as existing in our defective minds. The conflict lies only in our thinking. And I repeat: this would be understandable if only the

Scriptures supported this contention. But such is not the case. The Word of God does not separate the things that are present and earthy from the things that are eternal, and surely teaches us to view them in the light of each other. And that this is also the position of Calvin we will see, the Lord willing, in our following article. Then we will briefly point to this.

The Strength of Youth

The Error of Situation Ethics

(continued from preceding issue)

Rev. J. Kortering

The natural man cannot fulfill this law. Already in Israel, the law was a taskmaster which drove them to Christ, Gal. 3:24. No man can keep the law of himself, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves," Rom. 2:14. Even for Israel, the law itself could not save, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. 3:20. The law shows us our sins; and by the grace of God we are humbled to seek our salvation outside of ourselves in Jesus Christ, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. 3:28. Through this faith in Christ, we do not reproach the law, we do not say that the law has no meaning for us; we see that only in keeping the law by grace through the work of the Holy Spirit, have we fellowship with God. In the words of Paul, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law," Rom. 3:31.

This law has two aspects, the outward form and the inward spirit. This includes the outward deed as well as the inward motivation. These two are inseparably connected. Situationists show their ignorance of the Word of God when they attack the law of God as being a mere code. Jesus made plain that the sin of adultery is not just the deed, but the inward attitude as well, cf. Matt. 5:27, 28. Paul continues this same thought in II Cor. 3:6, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The letter without the spirit kills; the two must be taken together. Much of the outward "letter" was fulfilled in the coming of Christ, but the spirit which applied to the moral aspect continued.

If one has a wrong idea of law, it stands to reason such an one will also have a wrong idea of love. Here too, the situationist is entirely in error. Their idea of

love is purely humanistic. It is brotherhood, not love expressed to a personal God directly by the keeping of His law and indirectly by loving the neighbor. Their idea of love begins and ends in man himself.

The tragedy is that the natural man, who cannot keep the law of God, cannot love either God or the neighbor. John explains this in his first epistle, especially the second chapter. Of the world he says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The situationist wants to apply "love" to every man and vainly imagines that every man has the capacity to exercise this love. He obviously rejects the Scriptural idea of total depravity of the natural man. A morality based upon the innate goodness of man's love is bound to end in utter chaos; and the God of righteousness shall laugh at them with His derision, for He shall bring all this into judgment.

Only the children of God have the power to love. Without the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, we hate, only hate. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," I John 4:10. This love is applied in our heart by the Holy Spirit, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," Rom. 5:5.

This love is not expressed in some vague way of loving people. This love is expressed most intimately in the way of obedience. This obedience is expressed in doing what God commands us to do in His Word. Scripture is full of such references. James 1:25, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Consider I John 2:4, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in

him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

This applies to all of God's moral law. The way that Israel was instructed to express their love of God is the same for the New Testament church. Christ's summary of Matt. 22:37-39 is not a distillation, but a compendium. Proof of this is seen in that elsewhere in the New Testament, warnings are given of all the sins enumerated in the ten commandments. Consider Gal. 5:19-21, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these, adultery, fornication... idolatry... murders... drunkenness... but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace... and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit." The Word of God doesn't say adultery is wrong *under*

certain situations, we are warned against *all* adultery, both in thought and deed. This same thing is true with respect to all other sins.

It is our privilege to view the law of God not as a bond of slavery, but as a sphere of liberty. Freedom in Christ is not freedom from the law of God, but it is the freedom of grace to be made able to begin to keep, not some, but all the laws of God. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free," Gal. 5:1.

May God give us grace to be able to reject the apostate morality of the situationists and hold to the faithful observance of God's holy law and express our gratitude to him by loving obedience in every situation.

Only then is God glorified through covenant young people.

Examining Ecumenicalism

"World Economic and Social Development"

Rev. G. Van Baren

The World Council of Churches, meeting at Uppsala in 1968, adopted a third report entitled, "World Economic and Social Development." This document, too, serves as evidence why the faithful Christian and true church cannot belong to this world-wide organization. The document enters into an area which is not within the scope of the work of the church. In the document, conclusions are drawn which are opposed to the teachings of Scripture. There is not even an attempt made in the document to base conclusions upon the instruction of Scripture. Plainly, it is a document composed by men, based upon human philosophies, presenting solutions which are contrary to God's Word.

Several facts become obvious as one reads this brief report. First of all, it points to a developing unity or oneness of mankind. Now in this, I believe, the report is correct. Only this report presents the oneness as good — a goal towards which it strives. It does not recognize the developing oneness today as a sign of the coming of the antichristian kingdom which will unify mankind for a brief time. And this oneness becomes the incentive for the W.C.C. to promote equality of man and nations. The report states:

We live in a new world of exciting prospects. For the first time in history we can see the oneness of mankind as a reality. For the first time we know that all men could share in the proper use of the world's resources. . . .

Christians who know from their Scriptures that all men are created by God in His image and that Christ

died for all, should be in the forefront of the battle to overcome a provincial, narrow sense of solidarity and to create a sense of participation in a world-wide responsible society with justice for all. . . .

The church is called to work for a world-wide responsible society and to summon men and nations to repentance. To be complacent in the face of the world's need is to be guilty of practical heresy. As we try to meet this challenge, we recognize the importance of cooperating at every level with the Roman Catholic Church, with other non-member churches, with non-church organizations, adherents of other religions, men of no religion, indeed with men of good will everywhere. . . .

Churches are called, in their preaching and teaching, including theological education, to set forth the biblical view of the God-given oneness of mankind and to point out its concrete implications for the world-wide solidarity of man and the stewardship of the resources of the earth.

Secondly, and in harmony with earlier pronouncements, the W.C.C. emphasizes that the church must actively carry out its programs of justice for all men — even by means of revolution if necessary. Notice:

The death of the old may cause pain to some, but failure to build up a new world community may bring death to all. In their faith in the coming Kingdom of God and in their search for his righteousness, Christians are urged to participate in the struggle of millions of people for greater social justice and for world development. . . .

The building of political structures suitable to national development involves revolutionary changes

in social structures. Revolution is not to be identified with violence however. In countries where the ruling groups are oppressive or indifferent to the aspirations of the people, are often supported by foreign interests, and seek to resist all changes by the use of coercive or violent measures, including the "law and order" which may itself be a form of violence, the revolutionary change may take a violent form. Such changes are morally ambiguous. The churches have a special contribution towards the development of effective non-violent strategies of revolution and social change. Nevertheless we are called to participate creatively in the building of political institutions to implement the social changes that are desperately needed. . . .

The Church must actively promote the redistribution of power, without discrimination of any kind, so that all men, women and young people may participate in the benefits of development. . . .

The churches should . . . participate in a responsible way in movement for radical structural changes necessary to establish more justice in the society. . . .

Churches in developing countries should . . . take an open and public position calling on their communities to realize the need for revolutionary change. . . .

In order to achieve its desired goals, the W.C.C. would promote a union among peoples and nations. They would advocate lifting men out of the narrow confines of nationalism, and imposing upon them a form of international government and control. In this, the W.C.C. is advocating exactly what Scripture foretells concerning the end-days: there will be a healing of the wound of the beast (Rev. 13), so that all men will wonder after it. The W.C.C. does not seek that unity for which Christ prays in John 17, a unity of His disciples based upon that unity reflected within the Trinity, but rather it seeks a unity of all men. Thus would this organization promote the "kingdom of God" among mankind here on the earth. The report states it this way:

Collective international action to improve conditions conducive to development is called for; e.g., creation of supra-national structures to deal with regional and world economic planning involving the stabilization of the world market; an international taxation system to provide funds for development. . . .

They (the churches) should especially consider how the present economic structures in which national sovereignty plays a decisive role can be transformed into a structure in which decisions affecting the welfare of all are taken at the international level. . . .

The World Council of Churches must continue and increase its cooperation with United Nations agencies in the field of development. . . .

Upon the above foundation, the W.C.C. in its report lays out a general plan for the improvement of man on the earth — an improvement which, in this report, is exclusively concerned with the physical. It advocates

the development of "underdeveloped" nations. It urges aid to underdeveloped countries, and suggests that "developed" nations pay 1% of their gross national product to these poorer nations. It urges nations to work toward the elimination of hunger; of oppression of the poor by the rich; of unjust government. It sets forth a program that has found wide appeal especially in the eyes of idealistic youth of our day. Its motives seem so good; its goals so high. The W.C.C. is "Christianity in action."

It is not so striking, I suppose, that in a report such as this, there is no reference to Scriptural passages. The W.C.C. does not bolster its arguments by referring to Scripture. Many heretical sects do substantiate their false teachings upon certain passages of Scripture wrested out of context. But in this document, the W.C.C. does not even deign to try that. One receives the impression that the W.C.C. stands above the Bible — and will render its judgments even in spite of or in contradiction to Scripture.

Another striking thing in this document is that though the name of Christ is used (I believe three times), yet His work, His atonement, is not mentioned. Christ came into the world to redeem unto Himself His chosen people and deliver them from this world. The W.C.C., in this document, rather concludes that since "Christ died for all," now we have to seek to create a "world-wide responsible society with justice for all." That is the spirit of the antichrist which denies Christ openly — or which cleverly ignores His work and posits something else in its stead.

The document is an illustration of what happens when the "church" plunges out of its field. The faithful church is not interested in the area of economics nor of social development in the way this report suggests. Christ did point out that we were to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Christ warned His disciples not to set their hearts on clothing, food, or drink. He calls those who are so concerned with their food and clothing, "of little faith." Christ reminds the disciples that they must not fall into the error of the Gentiles who exactly seek always for material things. He directs them to look to their heavenly Father Who knoweth our need — and provides according to His promise. Christ admonishes the disciples to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness — and all these things will be added to you. (Matt. 6) The W.C.C. would have been better served if its report had reviewed and analyzed the meaning of Matthew 6.

That Scripture is opposed to the revolution advocated (in cases of necessity) by the W.C.C., is plain from Romans 13. One need not study long nor hard to discern that this passage exactly commands the Christian to submit to civil government — even if it is a wicked government, as that which ruled the world when Rom. 13 was written.

The church of Christ has the singular calling to preach Christ crucified. The church does have a calling with respect to the poor, too. For the mercies which are manifest to the elect church in the cross of Christ, will be reflected in faithful giving, in a manifestation of mercy, toward those in need. In these days of affluence, of government aid, of social security, of societies for the support of those who are ill — the church has almost forgotten what its calling is. It

would be beneficial for the church if a careful study were also made concerning the proper calling of the church with respect to works of mercy. But this calling of the church is far removed from the one suggested in the report of the W.C.C. The faithful church could never adopt their suggestions — in fact, would have a calling to separate from them on the basis of this evil report.

Studies in Depth

The Gideons

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

Bernard Levin, one of England's leading newspaper columnists, commented in the *London Daily Mail* on November 8, 1965, that "The only thing you always seem to find in an hotel room of any quality, wherever you are, is the Gideon Bible." The columnist added that the Gideon practice of placing Bibles is one "which only does good, and which has never hurt anybody in the doing of it." The object of the Gideons in performing this task of Scripture distribution is stated simply as "that of winning men and women, boys and girls to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." The means by which efforts are made to accomplish this stated objective take various forms. Gideons conduct evangelistic services in jails, city rescue missions, do personal witnessing, give "testimonies," distribute gospel tracts, and engage in open air preaching "to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ known." The mainstay means employed is that of placing the Bible "in certain well-defined traffic lanes . . . in the streams of national life." The Gideon program is called a non-sectarian, extended arm of the local church, as Bibles and Testaments are placed in areas not normally open to pastors and churches. "They reach out with the Precious Seed, the Word of God, to those who might never enter a church building."

The Sixty-ninth Gideons International Convention, held in Detroit, Michigan, at the Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel ballroom, in 1968, was attended by 1,624 people from 32 countries. (Bibles and Testaments are distributed in 77 countries). This convention decided to supply 100,000 English Testaments for distribution in the Philippines. Roman Catholic schools and colleges there gave permission for distribution of 50,000 Testaments. This project would cost \$36,000. Offering baskets were passed and \$36,555 were received. At the same convention, Mexico City Gideons reported a plan to distribute Spanish-English Testaments to hotels to

reach visitors from all over the world. This could be done if \$10,000 would be furnished to purchase the Testaments. In another offering, "exactly \$10,000 and 44 cents were supplied, the majority in checks!"

"From all over the world . . . openings (occur) to place and distribute Scriptures in Roman Catholic related institutions. An enthusiastic welcome from leaders in the Roman Catholic church and from the students themselves" is remarkable, inasmuch as Gideons offer only the King James Version of the New Testament, and the Gideon membership is not open to Roman Catholics, and the Gideon stewardship reports are not presented in Roman Catholic churches, even if requested.

The outreach of the youth New Testament ministry in other lands is overwhelming. Private, parochial and public schools in most countries are open for Gideons to distribute New Testaments to the children. "Many of these schools would not allow a foreign missionary to witness to the children, but do allow Gideons to distribute Testaments to them." "The work of the Gideons in other countries is carried on by Christian business and professional men who are nationals of each country. The work is truly indigenous . . . Nationals have greater access and liberty to reach their people with the Scriptures than do Americans." The Gideon outreach of placing Bibles is now extended to the airplanes of BOAC, United, American Airlines, South African, Ozark and 16 other airlines.

The 1967-68 total world funds goal was \$2,637,060. The amount actually raised was \$2,787,764. The goal for placing Scriptures throughout the world in that period was 5,000,000. Actually placed were 5,539,280. The previous year saw 5,062,000 Scriptures placed. The goal for this year is 6,000,000 Scriptures. (Note: — The *Reformed Herald*, May, 1969, reported that "a record total of 51,642,211 Scriptures were distributed throughout the United States by the Amer-

ican Bible Society in 1968. The goal for this year is 60 million Scriptures of the United States.”)

An index of pastors influenced or converted through the instrumentality of a Gideon Bible shows one Cumberland Presbyterian (Arminian), 4 Methodists, 5 Holiness-type and 17 Baptists. Gideon workers also have connections in the Youth for Christ movement and the Billy Graham Crusade. Billy Graham films seem to have quite an outlet at a Roman Catholic university in the Philippines. Recall at this point that Pelagianism has always been acceptable to the Roman Catholic Church. Gideon literature contains many “personal testimonies” of converts and “personal workers,” none of which, as noted above, are adherents of Presbyterian, Reformed or Calvinistic persuasion. The organization rings with a Baptist and individualistic tone throughout. Its emphasis is not upon the church or the family, but upon the individual. It emphasizes “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou (singular) shalt be saved” at the expense of the remainder of the text, “and thy house.” It quotes, “Marvel not that I said unto thee (singular), Ye (plural) must be born again” as though the text were purely individualistic, overlooking the passage from the singular to the plural. The construction in John 3:7 is similar to that in 1:51, “and He saith unto him (singular), ‘Amen, Amen, I say unto you (plural), hereafter ye (plural) shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’” The word is directed to Nathanael, and in chapter three to Nicodemus, but the blessing referred to is for Christ’s church, for “all the Father hath given Me.”

Conversions are invariably referred to in such language as “I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior,” and are usually from some socially unacceptable way of life, as conversion from sin is a rarity, if not, a non-entity. One is saved simply because of “accepting Christ as personal Savior.” There is no mention of belonging to the faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, of coming to a knowledge of sin, misery and condemnation under the wrath of God, or of a saving knowledge of deliverance from all that evil. Conversions are sudden, with little or no reference to the sin question. Salvation comes simply by “accepting the Lord,” regardless whether there be a particle of the knowledge that one is spiritually dead, helpless, hopeless, beyond all self-help, prone to hate God and the neighbor, incapable of doing *any* good and inclined to all evil. Experience true conviction of sin, know something of the plague of the heart, know yourself dead through trespasses and sins, and you also know the misery that you cannot and will not come to Christ, except the Father draw to Him. You then know that you receive Christ because God has accepted you. Dangerous it is to get over the “sin question” as quickly as possible and push the whole matter of man’s sin, misery and moral impotency aside so that the chance to “accept Christ” may be empha-

sized. He neither hears nor believes “good news” who believes that he can “accept the Savior,” if he only will. To one who knows he is dead in sins, such presentation, sentimental, emotional, sensational, individualistic, unbiblical, philosophizing, is not good, but bad news. What hope is there for a sinner who is carnally minded, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, receiving not the things of the Spirit of God, neither able to know them, guilty before God, no fear of God before his eyes and all his so-called righteousnesses nothing but filthy rags? What hope is there for the sinner who by nature loves sin, his pet sin, the slavery of sin, and cannot, any more than dead Lazarus, rise from his grave of sin? Certainly there is none in the bad news that “You, an Ethiopian, can change your skin; you who are accustomed to doing evil can do good; you can choose; you can accept Him and be saved.” Good news is that He shall save His people from their sins, raising them from their spiritual graves, giving them new hearts and faith to believe the Word of His grace.

The Bible ought to be read. All men are bound to read the Word of God, should read it daily, wherever they may be, even though spiritually incapable of understanding it. Originally man was capable of performing personal, perpetual and perfect obedience to the law of God, but by his own wilful disobedience he deprived himself of the divine gifts of knowledge and righteousness. But he continues in rebellion against God who refuses or neglects to read God’s Word. Yet without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit interpreting His own Word, understanding of it cannot be had. Then let a man read and pray for the light of the Spirit. Let him know that faith cometh by hearing, hearing by the Word of God preached and the Word of God preached by a duly called and sent preacher (Rom. 10:17, 14, 15). Such a preacher of the Word may make use of a Bible permanently placed in the hospital room as he conducts his pastoral sick visitation. But false interpretations of the Bible, printed on front or back of the Book is not only misleading, but perverting of the interpretation self-consistent with the Bible itself. Better to distribute Bibles with no interpretation whatever. The church is called of God to preach the gospel to every creature, which will then put the Bible at their disposal, even though no creature by nature has any spiritual receptivity. But the gospel is proclaimed only by setting forth the Bible’s own self-consistent message that salvation is “not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

Wonderful it is to be in possession of facts, the most essential and most precious, to preserve them, spread them over the earth, making them available in every place. But it is something else to have the right interpretation of the facts. Utterly necessary it is to have both fact and interpretation. The necessary, indispen-

sable, fundamental set of facts are found in the Bible. There are almost as many interpretations of these facts as minds to think them. Better to distribute the facts with no accompanying interpretation than to do so in connection with the wrong interpretation. The Spirit has promised to lead the church in all the truth. He has kept His Word in giving the church that great body of truth found in the Apostolical Confession, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Waldensian confessions, and the great Reformation confessions, among

which are the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster standards. Denial of these confessions is denial of the interpretation the Spirit has given His own Word of truth. These interpretations the Spirit has given His own Word of truth. These interpretations stand, ancient though they be, for truth is never out of date, and they go hand in hand with Scripture no matter what the ignorant nor the inimical may do.

In His Fear

Who Said So

Rev. John A. Heys

There really would be nothing so strange about it, if in your mind you put a question mark behind the title above and read it as though it asked, "Who said So?"

This is an expression that is so frequently used that way.

When we want to get out of some unpleasant work; when children do not want to obey the command given; when our flesh rebels at the order directed unto us, we question the authority of the author of that command or order by saying, "Who said so?" In effect it often means, Who is going to make me? And if we can put a question behind the authority of the speaker and so evade the unpleasant task, our flesh rejoices in getting away with it again.

As a question the expression belongs in the class with those of the defiant, "Who do you think that you are to order me around?" or the careless, "So what?" or even Cain's proud, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It smells of the conceited and rebellious reply of Pharaoh to Moses when he came with God's word of command to let His people go, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"

But there is no question mark behind the title above. And we do not want one there, for we are not presenting a question here. We are making a statement which in its entirety is this, "Who said so makes a tremendous difference." It certainly does. It makes a tremendous difference whether a citizen comes strolling up to tell you that you may not park there, or whether the authorities have said so. It makes a great deal of difference whether the hospital visitor stands at your bedside and tells you that you surely do have cancer, or whether it is your physician who knows your whole case and has examined the tissue. It makes an important difference whether the believer or the unbeliever says that he has had a good time. It makes a

vital difference whether the Unitarian or the Trinitarian says, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." And it certainly makes an infinite difference whether God speaks and says something or whether Satan does so, either directly or through men.

Why do we write about this difference?

There has been for a long time, and this evil is becoming almost the rule today, a practice to address the covenant youth at their graduation, at their conventions, at their clubs, and the like, with the word of man rather than the Word of God. There is a well-known radio program whose music or choir and organ are superb. But the spoken word always begins with a quotation from some philosopher of the world, some former president of our country, some unbelieving statesman or the like. The word of God is seldom if ever even quoted during that "spoken word." But the point of approach is always the words of some man in the world. And this is to be found in so many more fundamental circles as well. It is not strange to have the speech begin with, "Emerson said . . .", or "Lincoln once told . . ."

This we not only deem wrong but also extremely dangerous.

In the world this is all that we can expect. Having put the Bible on the shelf they must depend upon the words of men to preserve a little "culture," to spur the youth on to conquering the world for man's sake, to instill a little respect for law and order and the like. But in the church of God and among His covenant seed there is no substitute for the WORD of God.

Oh, that does not mean that we have to be "preachy." And commencement exercise speakers better beware that they do not come with a sermon. But they must come with the Word of God. They may approach the seed of God's covenant with nothing else.

These children of God must go home with what their God said and be able to go home convinced that, "Thus saith the Lord." All that which is said, must be that which God says. The Christian youth must hear Christ. And we have no right to approach them at any time with anything but the Word of God in Christ. We owe it to them; but we also have a solemn obligation in regard to them, one that cannot be taken too seriously.

And that at once reminds also of the speeches usually delivered in chapel services in the presence of covenant youth. Tragically enough the best speech is the one with the best jokes; and the success of chapel that morning is gauged by the amount of laughter that could be engendered among the young people. Although these chapel exercises were once instituted and have for their purpose the spiritual edification of the youth, they are turned into hours of entertainment of the flesh. The children then come home to retell the jokes they were taught that morning and have not the faintest idea anymore about what else was said and what the title or topic of the speech delivered was. Any resemblance between chapel in a Christian school and assembly in the public school system is earned rather than avoided. Distinctiveness and the antithetical position are not to be found to any great degree anymore.

This will happen every time when the Word of God is shelved for the word of man. The resemblance between chapel and assembly is not due to the fact that the public school system introduces the Word of God and sees the value of the truth. It is not that the unbeliever sees and is convinced that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Were that the case, we might perhaps find some room for rejoicing and have hope for the future. But it is due to the fact that the Christian school system has found some good in the words of men who have not been born again. The chapel has moved into the assembly room. The assembly room has not been converted into a chapel. The thoughts proclaimed in the assembly are not those of the man *who said so* in the chapel. The words echoed in the chapel are those of the man *who said so* in the assembly. Chapel is not anymore, "Thus saith the Lord" but "Let me tell you a little joke that you will also hear in the assembly room of the public school system and a few moral principles that are there advocated." Is it any wonder then, that, when the students themselves conduct chapel, they go a step further?

Oh, we do not mean to say that the sayings of the unbeliever may never be quoted. They do so often have such clever ways of saying things. From man we got the expression, "To err is human" and "Honesty is the best policy." But the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, simply is not in these expressions along with thousands of others. On the surface they seem quite harmless and usable. But exegete them once and place them alongside of "Thus saith the Lord";

and again Who said so makes a tremendous difference. God speaks the truth, the unadulterated truth. Man lies or speaks a half truth that is more dangerous than the open, outright lie.

"To err is human?" Well, what do you mean by erring? What does the natural man, who has never been born again, mean by erring? Indeed man does make so many mistakes; and that is why they put erasers on pencils. But is saying all this the same as what God says when He teaches us that we are all conceived and born in sin? Did David in Psalm 51:5 simply mean that he did the human thing when he committed adultery and killed Uriah? But be that as it may, does this statement do justice to God's Word that says that *after the fall* man is **TOTALLY DEPRAVED**? To err may be human, if you understand that erring correctly, for the human race today. But man was not so created, and therefore the statement in a sense says too much. It can easily lead to the attitude, "Oh, well, that is the way it is, Why fight it; Let's adapt ourselves to it and be charitable to each other because of it." Must we teach our children that we can expect a slip now and then by man, rather than to say what God says in Romans 8:7? "Because the carnal (natural) mind is enmity (not now and then displays enmity) against God: for it is not subject (ever) to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Why exchange the watered down "To err is human" for that powerful Word of God? Is it because our carnal mind wants to find a little good yet in man? But again it makes all the difference in the world who said so! GOD said what we quoted in Romans 8:7. And let that be taught to His covenant children, not man's philosophy.

Once again, you can just hear a commencement speaker address the graduates, "Abraham Lincoln once said, 'Honesty is the best policy.' Remember that as you go into the world. Let honesty rule you and you will have success in your business. 'Crime does not pay.' Honesty is the thing to seek and to follow . . ." That we are called to be honest by God for the glory of His name soon slips away, because we began with man and his word and found something "worthwhile" to say to youth apart from the Word of God. But is honesty the *best* policy? Dishonesty is a good policy, but honesty is the best? And do we follow policies because they are going to bring advantage to our flesh? If that is the principle we want to get across, we can soon come to advocating many violations of God's principles, because they seem to give us joy and do enrich the flesh. A half-truth is a more subtle and useful tool in the hands of Satan than the outright lie. Let us be sure we teach our covenant youth the whole truth, the pure truth, by letting God's Word shine on our subject not only by causing it to be the starting point of the speech. Rather than, "Emerson once said . . ." let it be, "In His Word God says . . ."

Therefore also class mottos are so much more beau-

tiful and safe when they are phrases from what God says. And first of all we will have to be convinced that it does make a difference who said so. We will have to believe that the natural mind is always going to have a different point of view and have different morals than the mind of God. The tragedy is that so much of the church world has cast away the doctrine of total depravity, which God says, and exchanged it for a partial depravity, so that they see some good in what the natural mind ("which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be") produces. Here, undoubtedly, is the explanation of the fact that the seed of the covenant in the churches are being fed what has been produced by the carnal minds of unregenerated men.

Even the reborn Christian, who still has his flesh, often speaks according to his carnal mind. And therefore we must always be so very sure that what we teach our children, even from the textbooks of these reborn children of God, actually is what God says.

Remember that we often get that other overtone of this matter as well. Parents have the tragic experience that their children begin to take hold of the philosophies of the world and the lies of the false church. And the answer that they get is, "Teacher said so." "Our pastor said so" "The Dean of our college, the chapel speakers, educated men said so." And the "said so" of the parent goes into file thirteen!

Who said so does make a tremendous difference. And let those then who have the say in teaching the children of God's kingdom be sure that they are followers (imitators) of God. Let it be so that when the instructed ask them on what they base their instruction, they are able to say, "God said so." Then we are safe. And our children are safe. Then we instruct in His fear.

NOTICE

There will be an Office Bearer's Conference January 6, 1970, at 8 P.M. in the South East Protestant Reformed Church.

Prof. H. Hanko will speak on the subject: "In the light of Article 25 of the Church Order, may we accept government aid, such as Medicaid or Medicare?"

John Dykstra, Sec'y

*Thou art my portion, Lord;
Thy words I ever heed;
With all my heart Thy grace I seek,
Thy promises I plead.*

*I thought upon my ways,
Thy testimonies learned;
With earnest haste, and waiting not,
To Thy commands I turned.*

*While snares beset my path,
Thy law I keep in view;
At midnight I will give Thee praise
For all Thy judgments true.*

*All those who fear Thy Name
Shall my companions be;
Thy mercy fills the earth, O Lord;
Thy statutes teach Thou me.*

— Psalm 119

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY.

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sympathy to two of their members, Mrs. Sy Aardema and Mrs. Don Aardema in the passing of their husband and father

MR. SIMON AARDEMA.

May the comforting words of II Cor. 5:1 — "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," — sustain them in their sorrow.

Mr. E. Van Egdom, Pres.
Mrs. C. E. Klein, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

Let's start with a couple of requested announcements. First of all, a bit of news concerning our radio broadcast. "The Program Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour informs us that Rev. John A. Heys will be the speaker on the radio broadcasts beginning the first Sunday of the New Year. Rev. Heys has prepared a very timely and interesting series of messages which should prove of interest to all of the listening audience. All of our Protestant Reformed Churches, with one exception (Redlands, California), are geographically located so that the radio broadcasts can be heard in their areas. Are you listening? Each Lord's Day?"

And then there's a rather mournful note from Mr. John Faber. "In my LAST Newpage I goofed!" The Missionary trio, as reported in the Nov. 15 issue, should have included the name of Rev. Harbach rather than that of Rev. Engelsma. He says that this should convince readers that it's "high time I was emertitated." This must have been with tongue in cheek, of course. But the new news editor hopes that this column in the future will be able to measure up to what it's been for the past twelve from the pen of J.M.F.

According to one of the speakers at the farewell program for Rev. Lubbers, the mission committee is "taken up with" the work in Jamaica. It seems that the same could be said about many others in our churches. The Senior Young People's Society of First Church in Grand Rapids, for example, sponsored a Thanksgiving Day program centered around the work in Jamaica. The somewhat disappointingly small, but certainly appreciative audience was treated to vocal solos by Priscilla Bol and Arnold Dykstra, and a Thanksgiving Reading by Pat Kamps. Part of the feature attraction was slides of Jamaica by Mr. Meulenberg while *Rev. Lubbers himself*, by means of a tape sent to Grand Rapids, reported on his activities during the first two weeks of his stay on the island. The audience could not help but be impressed with the fact that modern means of communications can certainly be put to good use by the Church. According to Rev. Lubbers' account, he's having what must be typical problems with red tape in his attempt to get possession of the clothing sent by Southwest Church. He also said that he misses his congregation and family and friends, but is experiencing God's richest blessing, and asks for our continued prayers. The collection taken at this program will be used to help alleviate the travelling expenses incurred by the Jamaican ministers.

The following from a reader in British Columbia to Rev. Woudenberg: "Thank you kindly for the tapes and the study outlines that I have been receiving from you. . . . This part of the country is going into a spiritual drought. Please keep up the good work and may the Lord keep on blessing you and your ministry." Incidentally, Rev. Woudenberg has recently declined the call extended to him from our church in Hull, Iowa.

From Doon's bulletin we learn that the consistory of that church has placed the following on trio: Revs. C. Hanko, H. Veldman, and D. Kuiper.

"Generation Gap? The Federation Board doesn't believe in one! Let's see young *and* old at Hudsonville Church Nov. 23 for a Singspiration! Bring your enthusiasm along!" That from Grand Rapids area bulletins. The only advance information was that Mr. Hib Kuiper would be the song leader and that "special numbers have been planned." The way to find out about those special numbers is to go. It happens that this writer didn't. But from reports, one of the several very fine numbers was a saxophone solo by Bruce Lubbers, who is fast becoming something of a favorite at "special number" time.

Also from Grand Rapids bulletins, an appeal from the Radio Choir. "Members are very urgently needed. Unless the turn-out is much better this week, we will be forced to permanently disband. This is a final plea for members." Like all good news items, this one also has a happy ending — the turn-out *was* better.

In the absence of Rev. Kortering, who had a three-week classical appointment in Pella, Rev. Veldman preached at Hope Church on Sunday, Nov. 23. At this service it was his happy privilege to baptize two of his grandchildren!

Members of Kalamazoo Church must really enjoy their Sunday bulletins — that is, if the ones I've received thus far are any indication of what's typical. The news is interspersed with quotes from the Standard Bearer, from the Bible, from the works of Spurgeon, etc. Very interesting!

From a couple of Nov. 28 congregational meetings — First Church of Grand Rapids, in its role as calling church, extended the call to Rev. Lubbers to serve as missionary in Jamaica. Hudsonville congregation decided against an addition, in the form of a south-side wing, to their present church building.

Some more news just in from the Jamaican front, thanks to Mr. H. Meulenberg with whom Rev. Lubbers corresponds regularly. Rev. Lubbers did not waste any time in purchasing a car with which to travel from church to church while on the island. He also bought the bare necessities to furnish the house on Garadet Terrace which will be "home" to the Lubbers for the next couple months. He writes that the sun shines every day. And the temperature is "not bad" — 80 degrees in the morning. In Michigan, at least, that sounds pretty *good*. He experiences some troubles, of course, but he writes, "the Lord brought us here; we are people of one day at a time, so we will see what the Lord has in store for us." He mentioned, by the way, that he had not heard from home yet. Note the new address:

General Delivery
White Sands Post Office
Montego Bay
Jamaica, W.I.

D.R.D.