

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Meditation: Rolling Our Way On Jehovah

A New Theological Method (see Editorial Department)

On-Going Reformation

Geelkerken Exonerated (see All Around Us)

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MEDITATION—

Rolling Our Way On Jehovah

by Rev. M. Schipper

*Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him;
and he shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37:5.*

Sage counsel is this Word of God!

Written by an old man whose years were filled with experience! In Verse 25 David writes: "I have been young, and now am old..." The old adage is well-known: Age speaks from experience. So often it is the bitter experience of youth that it rashly disregards the advice of old age. In short-sightedness they think

they know better, and often have to bear the fruits of their misdeeds. Like the prodigal, when they come to their senses and have grace to see, they become more ready to admit that they are sorry they did not listen to sound advice. Well, the Psalmist was just such an old man. And the entire Psalm bespeaks ripened wisdom and autumnal calm of age. The dim eyes have seen

and survived so much. Therefore what he observes and exhorts demands our eye and ear and heart, that we may give heed to words of wisdom, instruction, and comfort. To listen and take heed is true wisdom, and leads to peace and tranquility of spirit!

Commit thy way unto the Lord!

That is, roll thy way on Jehovah! The Holland translation is the correct one: *Wentel uwen weg op den Heere*; i.e., roll your way on the Lord.

This is, of course, figurative language. A way, in the most literal sense, is a well-beaten path, a road over which one may travel to reach a certain destination. It denotes the course to be used to get to a certain place. In the figurative sense, one's way is his mode of living, the whole course of his life. It signifies the manner in which one lives, one's conduct and behavior, one's lot. It is all that one experiences in this world. Our whole life is compared to a way; a way, which begins at birth and ends in eternity. It is given to us by God. It is given to both saint and sinner alike. Man is like a pilgrim; he travels a very definite way and to a very definite destination. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are each one on his own way to a certain destiny, and we are always on the way.

Our way has a two-fold aspect. It has an outward manifestation which is motivated and principled by an inner propulsion. Outwardly our way is our relation to our family, our church, and this world. It includes our relation to our work and our recreation. It includes our relation to state and government, as well as our relation to existing circumstances in the mundane and even spiritual spheres of life. This outward manifestation of our way is motivated and propelled by our inner walk of life, by our thinking, willing, and desiring. One's inner life is displayed in all his outward relationships. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "Out of the heart are all the issues of life."

Now the way concerning which the Psalmist gives exhortation is not the way of the ungodly, but of the child of God. As they are by nature, their way is no different than that of the ungodly. But when grace is given to them, their way is changed. With the regenerated heart the inward way of the godly is dominated by the love of God. He desires once more to be pleasing to God, and to keep His commandments. True, it is only a small beginning of new obedience; nevertheless there is a different motivating principle. And this is revealed also in his outward walk of life. He actually strives to keep the law of God. He fights the battle of faith. He is humble, meek, and lowly in heart and mind and walk. His way is manifested in moral purity, and it ends in peace.

However, because he is all as described above, his is a way of adversity, of sorrow, and pain. He is not loved and esteemed in the eyes of men. He is vexed not only with the filthy conversation of the wicked, but he is also burdened with the knowledge of his own sins and shortcomings. Moreover, he is also often pressed down with the extra burdens meted to him in the providence of God: his sons go to war; he lies on a bed of languishing; he is poor and often tempted to steal; his children go astray from the

truth; his crops are rained out or die of thirst. Like Job, he is found often on the ash heap; and those who should come to bring him comfort only add to his misery. His way becomes so heavy that he cannot proceed on it. To such an one is the exhortation of the text directed.

Roll your way upon Him!

You, who are suffering and laden with care and anxiety; you, who seem to have no days of sunshine and gladness; you, who often feel like giving up in despair; you, who also realize that your sins are great, and the good that you would you do not, and the evil that you would not that you do; you, who are weary and heavy laden; you, whose way is too heavy for you to bear; — hear the Word of God: Roll that way on Jehovah!

Jehovah, only trust-worthy Object!

Not only is He Lord and Sovereign, but He is also the Immutable, Covenant God, — the faithful "I am that I am." He fulfills His promises, and finishes what He begins. He never forsakes the righteous; and though He often chastises those whom He loves, He does so in His unchangeable love. He, Who revealed Himself in His Son in our nature, and under the Name Jesus stood before us in the flesh and cried: "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He, Who cried out: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He, Who took the burden of all our guilt, our sicknesses and pains, and carried them, — standing under the wrath of God until it was completely burned out, so that peace as a river could flow unto us. He is Jehovah, upon Whom we are exhorted to roll our way.

Trust also in Him!

Trust not in man whose breath is in his nostrils. Trust not in organizations and unions of men who cannot really carry your burden. Seek not to roll your way upon your pastor who also is often burdened with the way he has to carry; nor upon the church, who, sympathetic though she may be, must also heed the exhortation of the text. No, — our help is only in Jehovah Who made heaven and earth. We are advised to trust only in Him.

To trust is to rely upon, to confide in one implicitly. It is the practical side and principle part of faith. Not only is faith an assured knowledge that all God has revealed to me in His Word is true, but it is also a hearty confidence that He will work all things for my eternal welfare. O, to be sure, to trust one it is necessary that you know him. You do not put your confidence in one whom you do not know. To trust Jehovah means that you know Him as the God of your salvation in Christ Jesus. But then you also trust in Him you entrust your way completely to Him.

That you roll your way on Him, trusting in Him, implies that He is very near to you. In fact, the text suggests that He is at your side, with you on the way. It implies that you want Him to carry your way because you cannot carry it any longer.

And He will bring it to pass!

Not only will He carry your way for you, but He promises to bring it to pass. The meaning of this

promise is clear. It signifies that He will work it out to its very end. He will accomplish it for you. Yes, He will make your way perfect. Not only will he see to it that your way will run its course, but He has determined to finish it perfectly. And this, by implication, brings to you and me a most beautiful truth.

It implies that our way is really His way. In the first place, He planned it in His counsel. Nothing comes to us by chance, but all is directed by His hand and goodness. He decided each one's way. He laid it out for us, and even planned all the obstacles we were to meet on that way. Secondly, it implies that He gave it to us, so that when we walk our way, we walk His way. He gave it to us with all that it contains. He therefore knows our way, not only in its beginning, but also in its entire course and final destination. Thirdly, it implies that we also give it back to Him. He makes it so that we cannot carry it, in order that through faith we may wholly entrust it to Him. Indeed, the beginning, the experience, and the finishing of our way is all His work. He is truly the Author and the Finisher of our whole life and salvation.

Objectively He always brings our way to pass. It is not so that His finishing depends on our rolling, nor is it so that He must wait until we give it back to Him. If we truly understand the Scriptures, then we also understand that nothing of our salvation and the realization of our way depends on our will. Rather, Jehovah works from beginning to end His good pleasure concerning us. It is like the Psalmist expresses it in Psalm 73: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

But He also realizes His promise to us in a subjective way. He does not drag us to heaven, as it were, against our will. Rather, He realizes our way for us through our consciousness, so that we consciously and willingly roll that way upon Him. And when we are reluctant to roll our way upon Him, as so often is the case,—for we are stubborn and have only a small beginning of new obedience,—then He makes our way difficult. He sends to us in His providence and in His grace adversities, troubles, hard-

ships, so that we cannot carry the load and are forced to flee to Him. Most of us remember our childhood when winter came and we saw the first of the fallen snow. We took a handful and pressed it together to make a little ball, and then laid it on top of the snow and began to roll it until it became a huge ball that we could no longer roll. So it is in the experience of life. We roll our way until we cannot roll it any farther, and just then the Lord says to us: "Roll it on Me; and I will bring it to pass."

That His may be all the glory!

That is the purpose of His promise!

When by and by we come to the end of our way, when our way is perfected in glory, none of us shall have room for boasting in self. That somehow by our patience, endurance, long suffering, we merited the crown of glory that fadeth not away. That somehow the Lord ought to be pleased with us that we did not falter in the way, that courageously we pressed on to bring our way to its completion. This will never happen.

Nay, rather, Jehovah will see to it that all the glory that shall come to us at the end of the way shall all be His. Oh, indeed, we shall come to glory as His counsel directs, but it shall not be that glory which we have merited. It shall be His glory in which He has purposed that we shall be bathed.

In that glory we will joyfully acknowledge that we have been saved by grace through faith, and that not of our work, lest any should boast. It is all of Him Who from everlasting has chosen us in Christ, Who ordained and planned our way, Who made that way so difficult that we could not do anything but despair, Who directs us by faith to roll it on Him in order that He might complete it and receive all the glory.

And so, my brother and sister in affliction, believe this faithful promise of Jehovah!

Roll your way upon Him, trusting that He is able and willing to bring your way to the glorious end He has planned for you. Thus you shall experience the solid comfort you need in your affliction, and presently shall behold the glory of your Redeemer in which glory He has purposed you shall forever share.

EDITORIALS

The Christian Reformed Synod and the "Dekker Case"

A New "Anti-Abstract" Theological Method

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In my last editorial on the Dekker Case Decision, you will recall, I traced the charge of abstractness back to *The Reformed Journal*, and, specifically, to Dr. Henry Stob. It would appear that the miracle of

which Dr. Stob spoke at the August 30 session of the Christian Reformed Synod was accomplished not by the Holy Spirit, but by *The Reformed Journal*, the dangerous voice of a new theology which is sending

spine-chilling "winds of change" blasting through the Christian Reformed Church. Somehow the Christian Reformed Synod was at long last prevailed upon to say the same thing that Dr. Stob said: "Abstract!"

Let me once again caution the reader, on the one hand, against thinking that I accuse the Christian Reformed Synod of believing and expressing all that Dr. Stob says when he writes about the abstractness of Prof. Dekker and of the Study Committee. This I do not claim. For the Synod simply used the term *abstract* without further defining it. To say the least, however, this is a highly dangerous practice; it allows everyone the freedom of understanding what he will concerning this charge. On the other hand, let me also warn that this charge did not simply fall out of a blue sky. It would be less than realistic to imagine this. As I pointed out last time, the circumstantial evidence points a convincing finger of accusation at *The Reformed Journal* and at that group of Christian Reformed theologians which is generally thought of as protecting and defending Prof. Dekker against charges of being anti-creedal. And since *The Reformed Journal* originated this notion of abstractness, and since no other source can be found for this charge, and since the Synod apparently echoed Dr. Henry Stob's language, though it did not further define its use of the term, it is only logical to assume that the meaning attached to the term by *The Reformed Journal* is the meaning which will prevail in the mind of the church.

But this meaning is so very dangerous and destructive of all truly Reformed theology and is already creating such unspeakable theological chaos, both here and in the Netherlands, that I want to take the time to expose it and warn against it.

Lest I lose my readers, let me insert a word of explanation.

What we are talking about here is the deep, underlying question of *theological method*. This is an issue which is far greater than the Dekker Case as such. It lies at the root of this case. Professor Dekker himself has said little, if anything, about this subject. But others, such as Drs. Daane and Stob, have written about it. The question of method concerns not only the doctrines of the atonement and the love of God. It concerns all theology. Moreover, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are being troubled not only by some of the very same doctrinal issues as those of the Dekker Case; they are also being troubled by this allegedly "new" method. It is this so-called new method that is behind such basic issues as the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of creation (theistic evolution), the doctrine of reprobation, the doctrine of hell,—all of which are being challenged in the Netherlands as well as in the Reformed community in America. In fact, it is safe to say that the new theological method of which Dr. Henry Stob speaks is not new in the sense that it is original: it is an imported product, imported from the Netherlands, and especially from the Free University, and more especially still, from Dr. G. C. Berkouwer. And whether it is original with Dr. Berkouwer is at least questionable: the evidence points toward a heavy borrowing from the

so-called neo-orthodox theologians, such as Dr. Karl Barth.

What, then, are some of the marks of this theological method?

The first that I want to mention is that it is, according to its own claim, a *new* method.

This is not my claim; it is the claim of this new theology itself. For my part, I am rather certain that what we have in this alleged new theology is not really new at all. It is something very old that is dressed up in the garb of a new terminology. But I will return to this aspect of the subject later. Just now I want to point to the claim of being a new method.

In the quotation from Dr. Stob's editorial made in the last issue of the *Standard Bearer*, statements like the following are found:

...And what has become equally plain is that the scientific method which we have customarily employed in our address to theological issues is in need of patient review and revision....but we can ill afford now, when we are just beginning to reach out for a new and more biblically oriented method of theological understanding and construction, to arrest our advance....

We are experiencing today a theological renaissance...But, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is manifestly renewing the Church's understanding of things divine. New and responsible biblical studies... We are beginning to understand...

It is very evident from statements like those above that this theology claims,—or shall we say: admits?—to be *new*. This, by the way, is also evident from many statements by James Daane, who, as usual, is right, but dead wrong. The "winds of change" of which he wrote in the July-August, 1966, issue of *The Reformed Journal* are the winds of this self-proclaimed new method of theologizing. In fact, James Daane seems to be so enamored of his own new theology that he cannot even be fair and truthful about the theology, method, and exegesis of others. That is why he never fails to misrepresent the theology of Herman Hoeksema, as he does, for example, in the same issue of *The Reformed Journal* in which Dr. Stob writes about the new theology. He forevermore accuses Herman Hoeksema of simply equating the "world" and the "all men" whom God loved and for whom Christ died with the elect by "an exegesis in which time and history were not allowed to interfere." This is a plain and unvarnished misrepresentation on Daane's part; and it is about as far from the truth as he could get. If Daane wants a new theology, that is one thing; but that he cannot even truthfully represent the "old theology" is quite another. Anyone who has ever read Herman Hoeksema's exegesis of the "world" in John 3:16, for example, knows that he exactly does not equate "world" and "elect," and above all not with an exegesis in which time and history have no place.

But what about this self-proclaimed newness?

In the first place, we must remember that all change is not improvement. That is especially true in theology, and more especially in Reformed theology. Change, especially in such an important area

as theological method, should be viewed with extreme caution. It is rather fashionable, also in the area of theology, to picture those who oppose change or who view it with caution as stick-in-the-mud conservatives, as the "old guard," who are standing in the way of progress. Moreover, it may sound up-to-date, progressive,—maybe I should use that naughty word "relevant"—to speak of a new and more biblically oriented method of theological understanding and construction, of a theological renaissance, of the Holy Spirit's manifestly renewing the Church's understanding of things divine, of descending from the cold heights of abstract truth; but these are in themselves only high-sounding phrases. And especially if we remember that this change involves the repudiation of the theological method which has stood the test of centuries and which has brought the Reformed heritage to its beautiful expression in our Three Forms of Unity,—then, I say, caution is in order. To say the very least, it remains to be seen whether this change is indeed an improvement, a rebirth, a renewal. Before we are swept off our theological feet by the cry of progress and by the warning against arresting advance, and before we are tempted to accept the products of this new method, we should examine the method itself carefully.

That brings me to my second observation. It is this: the very claim of being new implies the admission that it is *departure*. It is well to recognize this fact. These so-called new theologians are *departing*. They are departing in their method; and they are necessarily departing in their theology, the product of that method. Moreover, this means inevitably, as I will point out in detail in another connection and in a later editorial, that they are departing from our confessions. This has already proceeded so far in the Netherlands that there is discussion of changing the confessions, particularly Canons I, 6 and Canons I, 15. But such theologians should be open about this.

They should tell the churches that they are departing, and then depart from the church also. It is corrupt first to change the theological method and thinking of the church and then to attempt to change the confessions. This is revolution. Honesty demands that he who disagrees with the confessions registers a *graven*, not that he propagandizes the church to undermine the confessions.

My third and final (for the present issue) observation is this: the burden of proof in favor of this new and departing method is on its proponents. Theirs is the new method. Theirs is also the burden of proof. Moreover, it seems to me that responsible theology would find this burden weighing heavily upon its shoulders. After all, such a thing as theological method is basic. It is at the root of all theology and theologizing. Are theologians,—and more seriously still, are the churches,—simply to accept this theology because it is new? Or are they, perhaps, to accept it on a trial-and-error basis? Or are they to accept it only because various scholarly and erudite theologians acclaim it? This could be devastating! Nor should responsible adherents of the (by contrast) "old" method of theology allow the burden of proof to be shifted to them. Too often this happens. For too long conservative Reformed theology has allowed itself to be put in the unhappy and uncomfortable position of being solely on the defensive. We should break loose from that position. We should go on the offensive, and we should do it with a sense of urgency. We have nothing to be ashamed of and everything to boast of in the Lord. Our attitude should be that we shun and teach men to shun these innovations in theology and in theological method like the plague,—unless and until they meet the solemn obligation of the burden of proof that is upon them, and meet it with Scripture and the confessions in hand.

Such is responsible theology, whether new or old.

Consistorial Supervision of Catechetical Instruction

(continued from Nov. 1 issue)

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

THE AREA OF SUPERVISION

In the light of the data cited previously, we are now ready to turn our attention more directly to the duties of a consistory with respect to catechetical instruction.

Perhaps it is thought by some that a consistory actually has little to do with catechetical instruction and that much of what a consistory must do is so extremely routine that it requires little attention.

There are, however, several important areas in which the consistory's supervision is required and also fruitful. If there are times when this supervision seems to be rather routine, perhaps that is a good sign, a sign that the labor of catechetical instruction is running smoothly, being well-performed and well-received. This certainly is not a reason to remove or to relax the supervision; it is, in fact, a reason to continue it carefully and faithfully, routine though it

may seem to be. For without such faithful supervision that favorable situation cannot long continue. But if that supervision becomes routine in the sense that it becomes meaningless, becomes a "wax nose," becomes rather careless and is viewed simply as one of those annoying official duties which must be performed but which could as well be dispensed with; or if in its duty of supervision the consistory becomes a kind of "rubber stamp" for the pastor,—then there is danger. Routine labors must never be allowed to become routine in that sense. Then they may as well not be performed. Elders whose labors become routine in that bad sense are not functioning as faithful watchmen. It is well, therefore, that we call attention to several distinct areas in which the consistory must exercise supervision, in order that catechetical instruction may be properly and faithfully and fruitfully conducted.

In the first place, there is the area of instructional materials. In this connection it should be noted that we not only have various catechism books which have been synodically prepared and approved; but we have an entire *system* of instructional materials for the catechism classes in our churches. This system is so arranged that when it is followed, our catechumens are thoroughly instructed according to a plan that is adapted to their ages and adapted to the task and purpose of catechetical instruction as described earlier in our discussion.

Let me outline this system.

For children of the ages of 6 to 8 years old, we have "Bible Stories For Beginners." There are three such books: two devoted to the Old Testament and one to the New Testament. For children of these ages the purpose is that they be taught simple Biblical stories, without much attention to time and place and historical connection; and the memory work of these three books is designed to serve the purpose of such instruction. There are twenty-five lessons in each of these books; and these lessons, together with five reviews, call for a catechism season of thirty weeks for each book.

For the ages of 9 and 10, we have two books of Sacred History for Juniors: one based on the Old Testament and one on the New Testament. With these books the catechumens are also required to use workbooks for written work. The latter material is designed to supplement the memory work. In these two courses the emphasis is on consecutive Biblical historical narratives, with emphasis on time and place and historical connection of events and on division into periods. The books are obviously designed, there-

fore, to acquaint the catechumens as thoroughly as possible with the *facts* of Biblical history in their connection. We may also note that in these two courses there is emphasis on Bible memory work,—something, by the way, on which there is not easily too much emphasis in our day, and something which bears great rewards in later life.

For children of the ages of 11 and 12 years old, there are two courses in Sacred History for Seniors, again one based on the Old Testament and one on the New. And again, these two question-books are accompanied by two companion workbooks for written work. The purpose of these courses is to provide our catechumens with an interpretive treatment of Biblical history and to emphasize the deeper meaning of this history as revelation and with respect to the realization of God's covenant and kingdom.

At this point in the system emphasis begins to be laid upon doctrinal instruction. We are a confessional church, and the covenant seed must be instructed to confess the truth with us; they must therefore learn to speak the language of our confessions intelligently.

For the ages of 13 and 14 there should be instruction in the knowledge of simple Biblical doctrines, and this instruction should be connected as much as possible with Bible history. At these ages also there must be strong emphasis on memory work. For this purpose we use the "Heidelberg Catechism for Junior Catechumens." This is a little book containing thirty lessons, based upon our Heidelberg Catechism. If all thirty lessons are to be taught in one year, and if, on the average, there is a review, or test, at the end of every five lessons, this would require a catechism season of thirty-six weeks. If, however, two weeks are devoted to each lesson,—something which is not at all impossible, and which I have found to be successful,—then fifteen lessons would be taught in thirty weeks, plus, possibly, three reviews. A total of thirty-three weeks would be required. In the former case, the entire book would be covered for two consecutive years; and naturally these years should not be mere repetition. In the latter case, the pace would be more leisurely, more attention would be devoted to each lesson, and the entire book would be treated "in depth" over the span of two catechism seasons. We may also note that there is no prepared manual of written work for this course; the assignment of such written work is left to local discretion, as is the preparation of notes and outlines on the lessons. There is room for both kinds of supplementary material in this course.

For catechumens of the ages of 15 and 16, there is provided doctrinal instruction with a deeper and broad-

... Even though the calling takes place through the preaching of the gospel, it is not that preaching, nor the preacher, but Christ that calls through the preaching and by His own Spirit. In fact, unless Christ Himself calls there is no preaching. Christ, Who died and rose again, Who is exalted at the right hand of God, and received the promise of the Holy Ghost, is not only the contents of the gospel, He is also our chief Prophet, Who calls His own unto salvation by His mighty Word. It is He that gathers His Church out of the whole world, not we.

er explanation of the various doctrines in their connection with one another, as well as with application to the reality of life. For this purpose the objective, or dogmatic, order is followed, along the lines of our Belgic Confession. The book provided for this course is the "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine." Also in this course there are memory work lessons; and each lesson is accompanied by various study and discussion questions; and again, there is no written work manual provided, this being left to the instructor's discretion. There are thirty lessons in this book; and the choice of plans could be followed, such as is suggested above for the earlier doctrinal class. Especially in connection with these lessons, however, I personally found it very difficult to completely treat one lesson per week; and I believe two class sessions can better be devoted to each lesson.

Finally, although this is not an integral part of our system of instruction, we also have provided a little book entitled, "Doctrinal Review," which is, as its name suggests, a refresher or review course in doctrine, in preparation for the doctrinal examination conducted by the consistory at the occasion of confession of faith.

Now there are certain rather obvious elements in connection with the above system which belong to the consistory's duty of supervision. We may mention those of a formal nature, in the first place.

First of all, it should be plain that for successful catechetical instruction a consistory must see to it that the above course is followed completely and consecutively. These books are part of a system; and they must not be used on a hit-and-miss basis. If they are not followed consecutively, and if they are not followed according to the age-groups for which they have been designed, then it is perfectly obvious that some catechumens are going to miss something somewhere along the line in the course of their catechetical instruction. Not only that, but it is evident also that it simply will not do to mix the various age-groups; for example, to put the juniors and the seniors together, or the beginners and the juniors. The courses of instruction for these groups are distinct; and it is simply impossible, especially in the brief span of a 45-minute or 1-hour period, to treat the lessons properly and according to the specific design of the courses for two or more age-groups at once. Nor is it educationally sound. It may seem convenient and time-saving, either to minister or to parents. It may be very tempting, especially if the classes are small, as is sometimes the case in a smaller congregation. But it is not proper; it is not good catechetics. And to see that the course of instruction is properly adhered to is the consistory's responsibility, and may not and should not be left to the minister's discretion.

In the second place, it is evident that the completion of each of the above courses requires a certain number of class periods. The books for catechumens through the age of 12 require a catechism season of 30 weeks; and the books for the older catechumens require slightly more than 30 weeks. The controlling question here is not whether the weather is getting

nicer in spring, or whether minister or catechumens are getting "spring fever." The question is not whether the minister would like to have a little more free time, for whatever may be the reason. The controlling question is this: has the course of instruction been completed? And it is well for a consistory to fix the catechism season in advance. If 30 class periods are needed, then let the consistory determine in advance when the season shall begin and when there shall be a vacation and when the season shall end, in such a way that each class will be able to finish its work.

It must also be remembered that the instructional materials themselves are under the jurisdiction of the consistory. It is up to them to determine which instructional materials shall be used; and it is their responsibility to see that there are good, sound, Reformed instructional materials. This is not a matter of synodical determination and imposition. It is certainly true that a consistory will not lightly reject the materials which have been prepared for catechetical instruction by our churches in common through synodical action. It nevertheless remains true that it is the responsibility of the local consistory to supervise the instruction in its own congregation; and it is the consistory's responsibility and jurisdiction to decide which materials shall be used.

Another area for consistorial supervision is that of the catechumens themselves. Are they faithful in attending their proper classes? Are they faithful in the learning of their lessons and in study and preparation of assignments. Frequently matters like this are left solely to the minister, probably until some instance of chronic or gross delinquency appears and the minister feels obligated to report the matter to the consistory. We must remember, however, that matters of this kind lie in the jurisdiction of the elders. The elders must oversee the flock, also the lambs and the young sheep. And the elders must act to encourage faithfulness of parents and children with respect to catechetical instruction. They, and not the minister alone, are responsible.

Another area for consistorial supervision is that of the quality of the instruction. First of all, there is the question whether the instruction is doctrinally pure and sound. Usually this is taken for granted; and I suppose that sometimes it is thought that just because we have good and sound catechism books, synodically approved, it is also to be taken for granted that the instruction will be of high quality. Nevertheless, it is wrong merely to take a matter of this kind for granted. Even as the preaching of the Word must be under consistorial supervision, and even as the elders are called to take the oversight of the Word and doctrine as far as the preaching is concerned, so it is their calling with respect to catechetical instruction. They are responsible to see that the catechetical instruction of the covenant seed is specifically Reformed, that is, Protestant Reformed, in order that the children and youth of the church may be trained and prepared to assume their proper place in the midst of the congregation.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Saul at the Witch of Endor

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

Then said Samuel, Wherefore then does thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David.

I Samuel 28:15-17

David's withdrawal into the land of the Philistines had not been good for his spiritual life, but neither was it for King Saul. It had been hard on Saul knowing that David was roaming freely through the southern portion of his kingdom; but then at least he had been able to plan and manoeuvre trying to capture David and destroy him. But now that David had left the boundaries of his power, he was helpless. All he could do was sit and wait for that final catastrophe when David would take over the kingdom; and that was the one thing that Saul could not stand, just to sit and wait. It cast him into spells of ever deeper and deeper depression.

Those were dark days in Israel. During that time, Samuel died too, and it seemed that with his passing the last glimmer of spiritual light had passed away from the nation. For a time, it had appeared that things were going to be different and that the darkness of the days of the judges was passed. Saul in his earlier days as king, although he could blunder badly, had promised to be a worthwhile king nonetheless. Victory had returned to Israel's army, first under the inspiration of Jonathan, and then even more under David. Had things continued to go in the way that they did, Israel would have surely gained recognition among the nations and even become great. But then the wickedness of Saul's heart had erupted. First he had turned upon David, driving him out of the palace and finally out of the land. Even his own son Jonathan was shunted aside from all influence in the royal court to be replaced by advisers who were wicked men. And now that Samuel had died; the last spokesman for God was gone. All that remained in the land was the dark shadow of Saul's wickedness, the dark cloud of an evil spirit from the Lord. Samuel had warned them that the king they sought would bring no joy. They had not believed him; but now they knew, and now it was even too late for them to go to him to ask what they should do. Mixed with a wail of despair, the lamentation of Israel for Samuel arose from every corner of the land.

Even Saul himself was not able to escape the desperation of that hour. Even though it might have been thought that he would have come to hate the old prophet, he had not; he often had thought very bitterly toward him, but hate him he could not. Something within him would not allow it. From the time that Samuel had first called him aside to anoint him to be king, he had looked upon the old prophet as some kind of a supernatural power which had to be respected. Samuel, himself, of course, had always stressed that he was nothing more than a servant of the God of Israel, and Saul had accordingly conformed himself to the same way of speaking; but underneath Saul had never really found God to be very real for him; it was finally in Samuel that he felt the real power resided. That was why it had hurt him so badly when finally Samuel had turned against him and then away from him after that battle with the Amalekites. It had struck his heart with cold terror; and yet he had not been able to vent his feelings on the old prophet to pursue him and persecute him. Once he had discerned David as his probable successor, he had been able to do that to him, and he had too. As far as Samuel was concerned, however, Saul always kept secretly stowed away in the back of his heart the dream that he would be able to prove that the prophet had been wrong, so that Samuel would have to come back to him and admit his mistake and restore to Saul his favor. Then things would be well in Israel again, and only then. The longer Saul thought upon it the more demanding that dream became until at last it seemed to be the only thing that mattered any longer. But now Samuel was dead, and what really was there any longer for which Saul could live?

Still, even that was not all. It was not long before the news was brought to Saul that the Philistines were gathering against him to do battle. And this was no ordinary campaign for which they were preparing either. Ordinarily the Philistines always came to meet him at their closest borders along the tribes of

Benjamin and Judah; but this time they had taken the trouble of marching way around to the northern part of Israel where the land was flatter and where large open plains were to be found. This would allow them to mount a campaign of truly major proportions. And this was what they had in mind too. It appeared that all of the land of the Philistines had mobilized against him. Not just one of the kings of the Philistines was come this time, but all of them from every city, each one with his own army and all joined together into one great, unheard of force. Neither could Saul forget the fact that David was now living with the Philistines, and maybe he had heard that David was making preparation to fight in this battle also. It could only look to him as though David was conspiring with the Philistines to come and take over his throne at last in the move that Saul had so long expected. It truly seemed that all of the world had joined its forces against him.

Mechanically Saul went about the usual preparations of getting his army ready for battle and marching them to Gilboa in the area which the Philistines had chosen for the battle while his mind played despondently with thoughts of impending disaster. In all of this though, the anticipation was not nearly as bad as the reality. It was when he stood on the side of the mountain and looked across at the size of the Philistine army, then at last he saw how completely impossible his life had become for him. Always before, no matter how difficult the problem, how deep the despondency, he had always managed to believe in the back of his mind that somehow he had it within himself to find the answer. But now it was as though his world had come to an end. What could he possibly do to save himself from all this.

It was a frightful situation. As never before Israel needed a leader, and here he was the leader of Israel and could not so much as think. The only thought that seemed to go through his mind, and that again and again, was that he needed help, but where was help to be found. If only Samuel were still living, he would go to him. Surely he would not deny help in a situation as dire as this. But it didn't do any good. Samuel was not here, he was dead. He had to find another. Someone with power like Samuel's. Frantically, Saul called for a priest to come with the Urim. But Abiathar the true priest was with David, and the man who came to him could do nothing. Again he called for a prophet in the tradition of Samuel; but again those who were brought to him could say nothing. God had turned his face on him. Saul knew it and cried out in his despair. Only through it all there was one thought that never crossed his consciousness, that was a thought of repentance, the thought that this all was something he had brought upon himself, that he deserved it. That type of thinking Saul's nature would not allow for. His mind was directed only to how he could save his self-respect and pride, not to the sacrifice and destruction of it as is demanded by repentance.

It was while Saul was brooding on all this that suddenly there came to him, like a flash of darkness,

a thought which was shocking even to his hardened nature. He was just thinking once again, "If only Samuel were here," when suddenly the thought came to him that maybe he could be gotten, gotten even from the grave. It was a perverse thought, he knew it. It was contrary even to everything that he had wanted for himself. He had always been a man who wanted to solve his own problems and had never had any sympathy for alliances with the world of darkness. From the time he had become king, he had been very hard upon any one found meddling in the black arts, as much because he himself thought it unhealthy for the nation as because it was contrary to the law of God. But now things had changed. His own strength had proved impossible to save him from an impossible situation, and if strength to save himself must come from the world of darkness, so it would have to be. Quickly he sent out the order to find someone who could commune with the dead.

The distance which they had to travel was not great, about ten miles to Endor, although it was necessary to travel by night and under disguise, lest the men should learn of his departure and in order to gain the cooperation of the woman with the familiar spirit who had been located. Already Saul was beginning to feel better. So often in recent days had he bemoaned the death of Samuel that his mind just presumed that, if Samuel could be talked to, he would be sure to help him. Coming to the door of the woman of Endor, he quickly laid out his desire, saying, "I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee."

At first the woman was hesitant, replying, "Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirit, and the wizards, out of the land; wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" But Saul was insistent, answering, "As the LORD liveth, there shall be no punishment happen to thee for this thing."

Satisfied that these men were not agents of the court, the woman turned to her incantations. Usually it took long minutes and hours of strange contortions and dark utterances under which everyone fell into hypnotic trances in which the line between wish and reality almost seemed to disappear, but now suddenly there arose before the eyes of the woman a figure as real and yet unworldly as she had never seen before. In a moment she seemed to grasp the whole situation even to the point of recognizing the identity of the king who sat before her. Anguished, she cried out, "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul."

For Saul, who had never mixed with the occult before, there was no reason to be shocked at results so evidently real. He was only eager to know what she saw. Impatiently he replied, "Be not afraid; for what sawest thou?" and the woman said unto Saul, "I saw gods ascending out of the earth." But it was not enough, "What form is he of?" asked Saul, and she in mortal anguish replied, "And old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle." Then Saul saw too, and at the moment he saw he knew no good would come of this.

It was with a stern voice that Samuel spoke to Saul and said, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" And so Saul tried to explain, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, and that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

But with Samuel, coming as he did in vision from the presence of God, there was no sympathy for the troubled confusions of sin. Pointedly, he answered, "Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? and the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me; for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David; because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. Moreover, the

LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines." With that the figure of Samuel disappeared from sight while the legs of Saul crumbled in weakness beneath him.

The scene that followed was strange in its irony. The woman, used as she was to the strangeness of the occult, recovered quickly. Here was for her a true mark of distinction, the king of Israel had visited her home and joined her in her wickedness. She was determined to make the most of it and threw herself into the preparation of the best meal her home could furnish. He had been granted a requested glimpse into the future, and now the last thing he wanted was food; but neither did he have the heart to argue. An utterly condemned man, he sat down in the solitude of utter hopelessness to eat his last meal.

IN HIS FEAR—

The Blessed Giver

(continued)

by Rev. John A. Heys

The only way to serve God with the neighbour's possessions is to leave them in his hand.

That neighbour may misuse his goods. He may be a spendthrift and a squanderer of goods. And it is a foregone conclusion that, if he is an unbeliever, he is going to misuse every single material possession that God gives him. He will as we pointed out last time, come short of the glory of God with every thing given to him and miss the mark in all his actions. For, as the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And the carnal mind is the mind wherewith we come into this world. The mind of every man born of woman is a carnal mind. The word carnal here — as will become evident to all who know the Latin — is "fleshly." That is also the word that Paul uses. It means the mind which we receive by the first birth, the natural mind. And it is, therefore, the only mind that is to be found in the unregenerated. They have only one birth and only one mind, the fleshly mind. They, therefore, are not subject to the law of God and indeed cannot be. Their carnal minds will not allow them to be anything else but enemies of God. All their goods they will, then, use in a way that misses the mark of His service and His glory; and they will come short of that glory.

Our confessions declare that truth as the proper interpretation of the teachings of Scripture. That oft-quoted and well known 4th Article in the Third and

Fourth Heads of Doctrine of the Canons teaches this, in spite of what many try to make this article say. The article speaks of glimmerings of *natural* (under-scoring is ours) light in man after the fall "whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment." But the article says a whole lot more. Even as far as it was quoted above it gives no proof of the unregenerated man doing anything pleasing in God's sight. It in no way teaches that the natural man does to a degree do that which he is called to do. It speaks of knowledge of God and of the differences between good and evil; but it does not say that he is able to choose the good and walk according to it. He discovers some regard for virtue, good order and for maintaining an orderly *external* deportment. The idea is that he knows what is good *for man*, that decency and order *among men* is for *man's advantage* and safety. He has no interest in what is good in God's sight. And the rest of the article indicates that this is what our fathers meant by the article. "But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright, even in things natural and civil. Nay, further this light such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God."

It is a foregone conclusion then, that the natural man will misuse all of his goods. And we, by an act of unbelief, cannot take the possessions of the unbeliever away from him, against his will and without his knowledge, in order therewith to serve God. You cannot serve God by an act of unbelief. You cannot serve Him with sin. And taking the neighbour's possessions away against his will and without his knowledge is sin. It is an act of unbelief. For it is an act wherein we deny (rather than in faith confess) that God is wise and good and sovereign to distribute His creation to men. We may advise that neighbour as to how he should use his goods. We may rebuke him severely for squandering his goods and wasting them on his flesh; but we must leave them in his hands; and neither by force, stealth or trickery may we take them away from him. If we have stolen his goods, under one pretext or another, and have it in our hands, the only way to serve God with it is to return it to its lawful owner.

This, of course, holds also for the employee who holds in his hand for use, the goods and possessions of his employer. His work requires of him that he drive the employer's truck, run his machine, measure out his raw materials, employ his time and often live in his buildings. And Jesus' words may be paraphrased, "Do unto the property of others, their machines and raw materials, as you would have them do to yours." Squandering his goods, causing undue wear and tear to his machinery and equipment is stealing as surely as armed robbery. And loafing on the job, letting minute after minute go by while you are doing nothing, and then collecting a pay check for those moments, is also stealing his money from him. Whether he knows it or not makes no difference. There is a God Who sees it and Who demands faithfulness in all things at all times to the employer. And why is it that we will work faithfully while the employer is there to watch us and then will idle away his time as soon as he has gone away? Why is it that we are more concerned and more fearful of that man than of the all-seeing God Whose breath is in our nostrils? It shows how atheistic we all are by nature. We forget God so quickly. We have the fear of men rather than the fear of God. If only man does not see us in our evil, we are satisfied. And satisfying the living God and being pleasing in His sight often fades completely from our consciousness and from our will.

Let us not forget that stealing the goods of the neighbour in any way whatsoever, whether it be time or a material object, whether it be by trickery or force, whether the neighbour knows it or not, always is not simply an act of hatred towards that neighbour but is, in the very first place, and always, an act of hatred against God. If we love God, we will abide in His will. If we break His law, it means that we hate Him.

It is characteristic of love that it gives. It is in the very nature of hatred to take away. The parent that loves his child will give and provide, and in times of scarcity will go without himself in order to give to his child. It is characteristic of love to God that we

give Him service and praise and thanksgiving. Hatred of God, implanted in our hearts through the lie of Satan, led man to try to steal from God His glory. We would be like Him and so steal from Him His position of being God alone. We wanted His glory; and we ate of the forbidden fruit in the foolish thought that we could rob the Most High of His unique position as God alone. And our hatred of our fellowmen also manifests itself in taking away rather than in giving. The mind of our flesh is enmity against God, but it is also enmity against man. Not being desirous anymore of giving God the service and praise and glory due to His name, we cannot have the desire to give to our fellowmen in order to serve God and thus please God.

O, indeed, there is so much "charity" in the world! There are institutions of "mercy" of the world as well as of the church. There is so much kindness, so many helping hands, social agencies of welfare. There are, apparently, so many blessed givers in the world today. (We had better close our eyes for the moment to the riots that take away by destroying and boldly pilfering in broad daylight the stores in the area.) But there is so much "good" that sinners do. One would seem to have to state that there is so much love in the world for man and therefore also for God.

We do well, therefore, not to be guided by that only which meets the earthly eye. Our source of information and our basis for judgment must be the Word of God. Listen then to that wisest of mortals, Solomon, in Proverbs 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight." Now that sacrifice, mind you, is the gift of that wicked man unto God. Thus it was with Cain as well. As far as what the fleshly eye can see, he brought a gift to God. Often that gift of the ungodly is of greater material value than that which the persecuted believer can bring. But he brings nothing to God that pleases Him. It is not simply something in which God is not interested. It is an abomination to Him. He cannot have it before His holy eyes. It fills Him with abhorrence and righteous wrath to see this unbeliever bring his sacrifice. Man may give thousands to "charity"; but God says of it that it calls for thousands of degrees of punishment.

There is also Hebrews 11:6 which sheds light on this matter, although it states it more mildly. "For without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." The unbeliever simply does not please God. And he cannot please God no matter how wonderful his works seem to be to man's eyes. Let us not try to tell God that He does find delight and is pleased by the works of the wicked, when He tells us Himself that this is not so. In this connection let us also turn to Romans 14:23, "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Is it necessary to state that the unbeliever does nothing and can do nothing of faith? Is he not exactly an unbeliever because he has no faith? And if he does

not and cannot do anything out of faith, he does not and cannot please God.

There is also the Word of Jesus that although some seemed to be so diligent and faithful in this life and shall say in the judgment day, "Lord, did we not do this and that in Thy name.....", Jesus does not simply say, "No, I do not recall. I have no record of this fact." But very positively He says, "Depart from Me. I never knew you." And even though they claimed to do good, He calls them workers of iniquity. Their works that looked so lovely to us and were works of the "social gospel" that is lauded so highly in the

church world today, were bluntly called works of iniquity by Christ.

It is not, therefore, a gift to God. And though it remains a gift to man, it is not one that brings a blessing to the giver. Only in His fear can we give in a way that is pleasing in God's sight and can we refrain from taking from the neighbour his possessions. If all that which we have is the fear of men, we may by that fear be restrained from taking away his goods, but we will not please God by our works and receive a blessing from Him.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Sin

The Second Period - 250-730 A.D.

The Pelagian Controversy

Life of Augustine (Philip Schaff)

by Rev. H. Veldman

We were busy in our preceding article with a description of Augustine's influence upon posterity and his relation to Catholicism and Protestantism, as set forth by Philip Schaff in Vol. III of his History of the Christian Church. And we noted that this church father contributed much to the development of the doctrinal basis which Catholicism and Protestantism hold in common against such radical heresies of antiquity as Manichaeism, Arianism, and Pelagianism. Schaff also notes that Augustine is the principal theological creator of the *Latin-Catholic* system as distinct from the Greek Catholicism on the one hand, and from evangelical Protestantism on the other. We now continue with this.

His very conversion, in which, besides the Scriptures, the personal intercourse of the hierarchical Ambrose and the life of the ascetic Anthony had great influence, was a transition not from heathenism to Christianity (for he was already a Manichaean Christian), but from heresy to the historical, episcopally organized church, as, for the time, the sole authorized vehicle of the apostolic Christianity in conflict with those sects and parties which more or less assailed the foundations of the gospel. (In this connection, the undersigned would like to make a few remarks. What is meant by a "Manichaean Christian?" The writer, Philip Schaff, does not say. Augustine was surely converted, not from one form of Christianity to another, but out of sin into grace and into the fellowship of God. This conversion occurred when Augustine was approximately thirty years old—H.V.) It was, indeed, a full and unconditional surrender of his mind and heart to God, but it was at the same time a submission of his private judgment to the authority of the church which led him to the faith of the gospel. In the same spirit he embraced the ascetic life, without which, according to the Catholic principle, no high religion is

possible. He did not indeed enter a cloister, like Luther, whose conversion in Erfurt was likewise essentially catholic, but he lived in his house in the simplicity of a monk, and made and kept the vow of voluntary poverty and celibacy.

He adopted Cyprian's doctrine of the church, and completed it in the conflict with Donatism by transferring the predicates of unity, holiness, universality, exclusiveness, and maternity, directly to the actual church of the time, which, with a firm episcopal organization, an unbroken succession, and the Apostles' Creed, triumphantly withstood the eighty or the hundred opposing sects in the heretical catalogue of the day, and had its visible centre in Rome. In this church he had found rescue from the shipwreck of his life, the home of true Christianity, firm ground for his thinking, satisfaction for his heart, and a commensurate field for the wide range of his powers. The predicate of infallibility alone he does not plainly bring forward; he assumes a progressive correction of earlier councils by later; and in the Pelagian controversy he asserts the same independence towards pope Zosimus, which Cyprian before him had shown towards pope Stephen in the controversy on heretical baptism, with the advantage of having the right on his side, so that Zosimus found himself compelled to yield to the African church.

We do well to note that Philip Schaff writes here in regard to the infallibility of popes. It is obvious that Augustine did not subscribe to the modern Roman Catholic doctrine of the infallibility of the pope. It is true that this church father maintained the necessity of belonging to the old Catholic church, although we must bear in mind that this "old Catholic church" must not be identified with the modern Roman Catholic church. But we do well to note that Augustine assumed a corrective correction of earlier councils, and that

he therefore did not subscribe to the theory of their infallibility. And he also asserts the same independence towards pope Zosimus, so that this pope found himself compelled to yield to the African church. This certainly means that this church father did not subscribe to the theory that the popes are infallible.

It is also worthy of note what Schaff writes concerning Augustine's view on the sacraments, the sacrament of baptism and that of the Lord's Supper:

He was the first to give a clear and fixed definition of the sacrament, as a visible sign of invisible grace, resting on divine appointment; but he knows nothing of the number seven; this was a much later enactment. In the doctrine of baptism he is entirely Catholic, though in logical contradiction with his dogma of predestination; but in the doctrine of the holy communion he stands, like his predecessors, Tertullian and Cyprian, nearer to the Calvinistic theory of a spiritual presence and fruition of Christ's body and blood. He also contributed to promote, at least in his later writings, the Catholic faith of miracles, and the worship of Mary; though he exempts the Virgin only from actual sin, not from original, and, with all his reverence for her, never calls her mother of God.

In connection with this reference in the writings of Augustine to Mary, we do well to bear in mind that this church father did not teach what the Roman Catholic church later taught of the worship of Mary. It is undoubtedly true that Augustine held Mary in very high esteem, exempting her from actual sin. The Scriptures, we know, nowhere teach this. Her place in the Apostles' Creed must not be interpreted in the sense that it emphasizes the high esteem in which she must be held, but it must be interpreted as emphasizing that our Lord Jesus Christ was born without the will of man, and therefore that He is Immanuel, God with us. The later Roman Catholic doctrine that she is transformed into a mother of God, a queen of heaven, an intercessor above all women, a sinlessly holy co-redeemer, etc., is nowhere taught in the writings of Augustine. He held her in high veneration, but never does his high veneration of her become a worship of this mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, as He was born in our flesh and blood.

Schaff also calls attention to the fact that Augustine may be called the first forerunner of the Reformation. He writes concerning this as follows:

But, on the other hand, Augustine is, of all the fathers, nearest to evangelical Protestantism, and may be called, in respect of his doctrine of sin and grace, the first forerunner of the Reformation. The Lutheran and Reformed churches have ever conceded to him, without scruple, the cognomen of Saint, and claimed him as one of the most enlightened witnesses of the truth and most striking examples of the marvelous power of divine grace in the transformation of a sinner. It is worthy of mark, that his Pauline doctrines, which are most nearly akin to Protestantism, are the later and more mature parts of his system, and that just these found great acceptance with the laity. The Pelagian controversy, in which he developed his anthropology, marks the culmination of his theological and ecclesiastical career, and his latest writ-

ings were directed against the Pelagian Julian and the Semi-Pelagians in Gaul, who were brought to his notice by the two friendly laymen, Prosper and Hilary. These anti-Pelagian works have wrought mightily, it is most true, upon the Catholic church, and have held in check the Pelagianizing tendencies of the hierarchical and monastic system, but they have never passed into its blood and marrow. They waited for a favorable future, and nourished in silence an opposition to the prevailing system.

Even in the middle ages the better sects, which attempted to simplify, purify, and spiritualize the reigning Christianity by return to the Holy Scriptures, and the reformers before the Reformation, such as Wyclif, Huss, Wessel, resorted most, after the apostle Paul, to the bishop of Hippo as the representative of the doctrine of free grace.

The Reformers were led by his writings into a deeper understanding of Paul, and so prepared for their great vocation. No church teacher did so much to mould Luther and Calvin; none furnished them so powerful weapons against the dominant Pelagianism and formalism; none is so often quoted by them with esteem and love.

All the Reformers in the outset, Melancthon and Zwingli among them, adopted his denial of free will and his doctrine of predestination, and sometimes even went beyond him into the abyss of supralapsarianism, to cut out the last roots of human merit and boasting.....

We, of course, do not agree with Philip Schaff when he speaks of the "abyss" of supralapsarianism. We are grateful for the remark that these reformers sometimes went beyond him into the abyss of supralapsarianism, *to cut out the last roots of human merit and boasting*. And we know that Augustine not only fought all pelagianism, every concept of the free will of the natural sinner but he also championed the truth of Divine predestination, as we hope to see later in these articles. Only, we wish to make the remark at this time that the denial of the free will of the sinner and predestination are truths that go hand in hand. If it be true, and it is true, that the natural man cannot of himself do any good, cannot exert a single effort in behalf of his own salvation, then it must also be as clear as the sun in the heavens that it is God Who alone determines his salvation. If the sinner cannot put forth the first effort, then it is the Lord Who must save him, and this implies the truth of sovereign predestination because then it is the Lord Who determines in whom He will work His work of salvation.

We wish to conclude these quotations from Philip Schaff with the following:

Had he lived (Augustine--H.V.) at the time of the Reformation, he would in all probability have taken the lead of the evangelical movement against the prevailing Pelagianism of the Roman church. For we must not forget that, notwithstanding their strong affinity, there is an important difference between Catholicism and Romanism or Popery. They sustain a similar relation to each other as the Judaism of the Old Testament dispensation, which looked to, and prepared the way for, Christianity, and the Judaism after the crucifixion and after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is

antagonistic to Christianity. Catholicism covers the entire ancient and mediaeval history of the church, and includes the Pauline, Augustinian, or evangelical tendencies which increased with the corruptions of the papacy and the growing sense of the necessity of a "reformation in capite et membris." Romanism proper dates from the council of Trent, which gave it symbolical expression and anathematized the doctrines

of the Reformation. Catholicism is the strength of Romanism, Romanism is the weakness of Catholicism. Catholicism produced Jansenism (emphasis upon Augustinianism), Popery condemned it. Popery never forgets and never learns anything, and can allow no change in doctrine (except by way of addition), without sacrificing its fundamental principle of infallibility, and thus committing suicide.

PAGES FROM THE PAST—

On-Going Reformation

-2-

(Note: This is the second installment of a series of articles on the above subject. These articles are translations of a series which was written in the Holland language by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema thirty-seven years ago.)

In this way, first of all, degeneration and retrogression take place in the living confession of the Churches. We do not refer now to the confession as it is officially fixed in certain formulas and as it is adopted by the Churches in common, as it constitutes the basis for denominational ties and fellowship, — the confession as it is printed in the back of our Psalter. No, this is not the first to receive attention. In a certain sense the corruption of this confession is last in order. A church does not easily arrive at the point of changing and weakening its official confession. But we have in mind the living confession of the Church of Christ in the world, and that too, in word and in walk. The Church of Christ must be a confessing church. That is its calling. To confess the name of the Lord before men is its task. Unto that end the Church is in the world. And the Church must do this, not first of all by drawing up a set of articles in which it expresses the content of its faith, but in the living word and in a godly walk: in a walk in the world, but not of the world; in the proclaiming of the virtues of Him Who has called us out of the darkness into His marvellous light, and in the condemnation of the world which lies in darkness. And the Church is called to do this always and everywhere, in the midst of the church and in the midst of the world, in the home and in society, in the factory and in the office, and in the mutual life of the communion of the brethren. This is the Church's confession, which it is called to seal with its life.

It is at the point of this living confession that deformation first comes to manifestation. There is an inner weakening of life. The carnal element in the Church of Christ begins to rule. The others begin to weaken and to become lethargic, to fall asleep; they

no longer watch and pray; they do not witness and protest. The Church has lost its first love. No longer is there a confession before the world, either by word of mouth or in walk. As a rule, such a lethargy and falling asleep does not begin with the multitude, but with the leaders. As long as the leaders remain alert and receive the grace of the Spirit to lift themselves above such a general spirit of indifference and to protest against it resolutely, God's people do not easily fall asleep. But the leaders set the pace. They themselves fall asleep. No longer are they watchmen upon the walls of Zion; they give themselves over to a life of the flesh. How they can enjoy the highest salary, the best place, the least work, the most pleasure in the world, — these are the matters which captivate their heart and which occupy them in their mutual discussions. Their personal spiritual life is impoverished, prayer dies off, their testimony becomes mute, in their walk they are attracted by the vainglory of life. And: "As the priest, so the people" is a proverb which is soon confirmed by reality. This evil takes hold all around them. It reveals itself at every level. In the mutual life of the Church personal testimony is no longer heard. The things of God's kingdom no longer attract. The people come together to enjoy ordinary worldly sociability, things of "the most common grace"; they talk about the things of the world, make themselves guilty of backbiting and slander, play cards or dance to pass the time away. Once a Sunday they still go to church if the weather is not too unfavorable, but usually it is either too cold or too hot to attend twice; and they would prefer to go visiting or riding instead of attending church. Soon this spirit of degeneration reveals itself everywhere. It influences the home; it reveals itself in the instruction in the Christian grade school and in the secondary schools; and it comes to manifestation in the social life of the Christian. One's entire outlook becomes broader; co-operation becomes possible in everything; and Christ and Belial go hand in hand! The light has been put under a bushel, and the salt has lost its savor!

The living confession of the Church of Christ has been silenced!

Let synods be convened under such conditions, and let these broader gatherings issue precept upon precept and line upon line. It is absolutely fruitless. You cannot purify polluted water from a pump by painting the pump handle!

Now it surely lies in the nature of the case that the dying of this living testimony affects the life of the Church in its institutional manifestation and official calling, in its official confession, in its worship, its preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, in its discipline and church government.

With the officebearers' matters become increasingly poor. For even as they as leaders, who neglected their calling and themselves fell asleep, often are the first cause of apostasy and backsliding, so they themselves come forth again out of the life of the church. In that church which fell away, whose confession became silent, which left its first love, they are brought up, — instructed in its homes, in its catechism classes, in its schools; the spirit of that church they drink in; and before long you get officebearers who are strangers to the real life of the Church and who are even no longer acquainted with the tradition of that life.

Thus a condition is gradually created in which the Church can also corrupt its own confession, permit church discipline to be more lax, allow church government to take a hierarchical direction, and change the worship into mere formality.

As far as the established confession of the churches is concerned, usually this corruption begins with a dry and dead intellectualism. The confessions are still known. People study them. They are discussed in societies and in personal conversations. Men speak in imposing language of principles and of maintaining the confession, and then of conquering all spheres of life for Christ. But it is all dead and lifeless, a hollow cry, which also finds no longer any confirmation in practical life. The heart is not in it, and men no longer experience the spiritual power of the confession. However, such a situation cannot long continue, as lies in the nature of the case. This reasoning about the confession soon comes to an end. The confession is no longer investigated: men find such things too dull and dry, just as in reality it also had been. A further stage of decline is characterized by a contempt, the contempt of ignorance, with respect to the confession of the Churches. Men are not even able to name the Three Forms of Unity, much less tell you their contents. Whoever would speak yet of the Reformed truth either finds no audience or he is greeted with a sympathetic smile as one who is behind the times. A generation arises which, as I once put it in a sermon in my former congregation, would fail in a kindergarten-examination in the Reformed truth, but which nevertheless, with all its ignorance, begins to dominate in the Church.

But even this is not the end. The last stage in this development is characterized by a deep-seated hatred against everything which is specifically Reformed and by sharp and bitter opposition. And those who in the

final analysis still want to maintain the confession of the Churches and to hold fast to it are treated with contempt or are cast out.

Nor is it different with respect to the administration of the Word and the sacraments. The ministers also come forth out of the Church. Their preaching first becomes lifeless and mechanical. It is no longer a living witness and confession, a matter of the heart. There is no longer any power in the preaching. Yes, men continue to keep themselves within the confines of the confession and of tradition. One cannot exactly say that there is something definitely wrong and heretical proclaimed from the pulpit. But there is no life in it. The heart is out of it. The preacher no longer finds his soul's delight in the living proclamation of the Word of God. The situation, however, cannot remain thus. For who would be able, week after week, year in and year out, to speak of things in which his own heart does not live? They begin to cast about for something else. Gradually the Word of God must make room for the vain philosophy of the world. Yes, for a kind of motto a text is selected, but only never to be mentioned again in the course of the sermon. They speak about this and that and everything, except about the living and powerful Word of the Lord our God which abides forever. And so it happens that the Lord comes into that sleeping congregation unnoticed, as a thief in the night, removes the light from the candlestick, and goes on His way, without the congregation even noticing that a judgment of God has been executed upon it! The key power, either of the preaching of the Word or of Christian discipline, is no longer employed; the sacraments are desecrated; and the Church is delivered over to the heathen.

It need not surprise us that such a Church, dead and lifeless and ignorant, also becomes ripe for hierarchy in its government. The multitude which knows not the law is no longer articulate, no longer concerns itself with the things pertaining to the life of the church, and is in fact, accursed. When the synod has spoken, then this is quite acceptable to them, and they gladly submit themselves to its decisions, even though they have not the faintest idea of what has been decided. *Papa dixit*, the pope has spoken: and that is the end of all contradiction. And the officebearers, who may not be anything else than disciples of Christ, gladly make use of the opportunity to be lords rather than servants, to pluck instead of to feed, to shear the sheep instead of tending the flock. The congregation has despised the truth, has rejected its living confession, has learned to love the world, has cast away its spiritual nobility, and has become the prey of wolves!

And so it happens that this spirit of laxity and apostasy, this process of deformation, finally is also seen in the public worship service. Where the essence is lacking, there the emphasis must be laid more and more upon outward form. Where the heart no longer beats in the worship service, there the corpse must be made attractive with cosmetics and flowers. Men seek after more liturgical form, more beautiful music,

more artistically gratifying singing. They demand shorter and shorter sermons, in many churches no longer than ten or fifteen minutes' duration. They introduce dead formulas of absolution instead of the living preaching of God's Word. Presently they will become ripe again for the confessional and for image-worship and for the accursed idolatry of the popish mass!

The ultimate result is that you have world-conformity instead of the living confession of God's people; freedom of doctrine and vain philosophy instead of the powerful and pure proclamation of the Word of God; hierarchical domineering instead of the freedom in which the congregation must stand;

the dead corpse of form-worship instead of the pulsating heart of the living fellowship of God with His people in the midst of the congregation. The true church becomes a sham church; the sham church becomes false church; the false church prepares the way for the Antichrist. The process of deformation has reached its climax.

And because the principles, the seeds, of this process of deformation are always present and operating in the Church of the Lord on earth, because no church is ever free of this leaven, therefore there is constant need of an on-going reformation of the Churches.

ALL AROUND US—

Geelkerken Exonerated Other Errors

by Prof. H. Hanko

All of the news items included in this column this time have to do with events in the Netherlands. The last years have seen swift changes in the Netherlands especially in the Gereformeerde Kerken; and these changes have not been good. The drift is towards modernism; and it is gaining momentum.

The first item of interest is a decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken concerning the "Geelkerken Case." Our readers will recall that in 1926 at the Synod of Assen Dr. Geelkerken was deposed from office for denying the literal interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3. He denied that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life was real; and he denied that the serpent through which Satan tempted Eve was real.

Concerning the action of this year's Synod we quote from the *R.E.S. News Exchange*:

(Lunten) The General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands decided in its meeting here that the church's declaration in 1926 (Assen) concerning the literal historicity of Genesis 1 and 2 is no longer binding upon the churches. In 1926 the church declared that the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the serpent which spoke must be understood as "sensuously perceptible entities." As a result of the decision, thousands of people left the Reformed churches in the late twenties and after the war joined the Netherlands Reformed Church (Hervormde).

While there is now greater freedom in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis, the Synod specifically limited the latitude of view to the bounds set by the church's confession. In its decision the Synod declared:

1. that it shares fully the concern of the Synod of Assen 1926 that the authority of Holy Scripture must be respected by the church.

2. that it does not consider itself competent to form a judgment concerning the specific nature of the scriptural story in Genesis 2 and 3 that would be sufficiently well established to continue to follow the exclusive way in which Synod of Assen 1926 expressed itself on the obvious meaning of specific details of this story.

3. that at the same time, that which is articulated verbally in the Confession of the church concerning the origin of sin and the effects of the fall into sin (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 3 and 4 and Belgic Confession Articles 14 and 15) clearly expresses the fundamental meaning which the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament (i.e. Romans 5) attribute to this history and therefore should be maintained by the church as being of essential importance for the proclamation of the gospel.

The decision reads:

"that the declaration of the special general synod held in Assen from January 26 to March 17, 1926:

a. that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent and its speaking and the tree of life, according to the obvious intention of Genesis 2 and 3 are to be understood in a real or literal sense and thus as sensuously perceptible realities; and

b. that therefore the opinion of Dr. Geelkerken, that one could render disputable whether these matters or facts were sensuously perceptible realities without coming in conflict with what is confessed in Articles 4 and 5 of the Belgic Confession, must be rejected, is no longer in force in the churches as a doctrinal declaration."

The Synod reached the decision after two full days of discussion by a vote of 64 to 2 with one abstention.

Informatiedienst explained that the difficulty in reaching a decision centered in the fact that while the delegates were of the opinion that it was not correct to consider a single interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 as the only permissible one, (They were agreed that Geelkerken ought to be exonerated, H.H.) they feared a freedom of doctrine that would be too great. For this reason the Synod's declaration indicates a continuing adherence to the creed.

The Synod appointed a special committee to propose what should be done with those persons who left the Reformed churches as a result of the 1926 decision. (This is indeed, quite a problem, H.H.) This committee will report to the Synod when it reconvenes in January.

This is certainly a strange decision — and a deceptive one. It ought to be clear to anyone that if the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the serpent, and the tree of life are not to be understood in the real and literal sense of Scripture, but only in some mythical sense then the same is true of the fact of the fall of our first parents. It is impossible then to maintain that the Scriptural narrative describing the fall into sin is a real historical event. It is dishonest and a camouflage for the Synod piously to assert nonetheless that it is remaining true to the creeds. The Heidelberg Catechism clearly presupposes the literal interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 when it explains that the depravity of human nature proceeds "from the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise." (Lord's Day 3.) The same is true of Arti le XIV of the Belgic Confession in which the Church confesses concerning the fall: "But being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death, and the curse, *giving ear to the words of the devil. For the commandment of life, which he had received,* he transgressed and by sin separated himself from God...."

The door has been opened to all forms of liberalism and modernism by this decision. Of course, it must be remembered that the Synod was forced to face the decisions of Assen by those within the Church who have gone far beyond Geelkerken in denying the truth of Scripture. (Cf. below.) And, in this respect, Synod was at least honest. For if they now tolerate views worse than those of Geelkerken, the least they can do is justify him. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church ought now to do the same with the decisions of their Synod in the Janssen case.

What now? Will Synod posthumously give Geelkerken a medal of honor and canonize him as a martyr in the cause of the truth? They should.

OTHER ERRORS

That Synod was almost forced to justify Geelkerken is evident from the fact that views such as those taught by Dr. H. M. Kuitert are tolerated within the Church.

In a recent issue of *Church and Nation* Dr. L. Praamsma makes mention of these views of Dr. Kuitert. He discusses a book by Prof. Dr. H. Van Riessen in which Dr. Van Riessen describes the views

of Kuitert and condemns them. Van Riessen points out that Kuitert denies the existence of a Paradise before the fall, maintains the presence of death from the beginning of creation, and insists that the Adam and Eve of Genesis never existed. He explains the presence of these stories in Scripture by saying that Israel knew the myths of its neighbors and reproduced them in Gen. 1-3 which part of the Bible should therefore be called "saga." Praamsma includes a couple of quotations from Van Riessen's discussion of Kuitert's views:

Two conclusions are obvious. This theory, being a scientific theory, starts with the idea that Gen. 1-3 is a human testimony and not the Word of God. This theory concludes that this part of the Bible does not tell what happened, but is the reconstructed folklore of the neighbors in which only this is reliable that the God of Israel's covenant is the same God who created the world.

This theology which acts as autonomous science in its relation to the Bible, abandons the authority of Scripture in favor of that of science. It tells us that what is written not is, what it means as we read it, and it does not want to elucidate for us what we read; but it wants to make clear to us that God meant something else than what He cause to be recorded. As a matter of fact Kuitert disclaims the last clause with its serious accusation, because according to his opinion only the writers of the Bible wrote the Bible.

In the theory of Kuitert the Bible as Word of God is altogether out of the question. This part of Genesis is in his opinion the work of the authors of the Bible with the limited knowledge and historical background of men in Israel of the 5th century B.C. who presumably were not interested in the genesis of the world.

Kuitert refuses to say that Scripture is the foundation of the Christian faith; rather, he insists that tradition alone can serve as such a foundation. Shades of Rome! Since Scripture has no authority of its own, this has got to be the case. Van Riessen continues concerning this point:

There is therefore no difference in structure (of revelation) between John, Paul, Augustine and the minister who preached last Sunday. The difference in authority is to be found exclusively in being closer to or more remote from the historical fact at stake. In this order, therefore, authority generally increases: the minister, Augustine, Paul, John.

The Bible is the human confessing response to God's self-revelation in His contact with the authors of the Bible. As such the Bible is not God's Word. Therefore the tradition takes the place of the Bible, because God's contact with men continues; also in the sermon to which I should listen from now on with more reverence than I am accustomed to. But that is an advantage in Kuitert's opinion, because persons who are not able to handle theology in the proper manner are neither able to read the Bible in the right manner.

Such are some of the theological trends in the Netherlands. And, strikingly, Kuitert has recently been appointed Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam.

In another article in the same issue of *Church and Nation*, Jac. Guezebroek discusses the question raised in a book by Drs. Puchinger entitled "Is de Gereformeerde Wereld Veranderd?" (Did the Reformed World Change?) Among other things he says:

In a very talented way Drs. Puchinger relates to us interviews with 20 people whose names in the Dutch world of Church and Theology have obtained prominence....

While reading this book, one cannot help but notice the very unique situation our Old Country finds itself in. You cannot escape the feeling of having come home again and of being, all of a sudden, in the midst of one large family. A family where all the members talk about a problem; a problem which is familiar to everyone....

A second impression is: time moves fast.... And how ridiculously unimportant certain issues have become, while only a few years ago they managed to set whole congregations afire! Families were torn apart and friendships broken because of those issues.

In every issue I read, Prof. Schilder was called one of the greatest leaders and the struggle started by him was deplored by all. And what about Geelkerken? The clash of personalities plays an important role in almost all church conflicts, although we might not want to admit it....

Yes, indeed, the Reformed world has changed!

The way of thinking has changed, the opinions have changed, the attitude towards each other has changed and the relations between the different churches have changed. Big changes have taken place, there is no doubt about it!

...While it is still difficult to really assess the developments in the Netherlands, it certainly is a wonderful thing that people can speak so openly with one another and with so much respect for each other's

opinion. Just read the discussion between Dooyewerd and Van Peursen. They disagree from beginning to end; yet, they speak to each other as brothers in an open and christian way.

We could learn something from them. When I read certain pamphlets which are being circulated in Christian Reformed circles, and when I see how our members are "classified" into different "categories," I cannot help but remember the times before the war in Holland, when this same situation existed. The people in Holland have changed and are cured from this. Yes, they are completely cured from this! It took some really bad experiences and some very earnest soul-searching was necessary—but the result is gratifying.

I sincerely hope that we will be spared these terrible experiences; but let us start now with the soul-searching!

So this is the conclusion of the matter. Not a swift and sharp condemnation of these vicious denials of Scripture. Rather a general observation: "How nice it is that brethren can discuss their differences in a fraternal spirit. Would there were more of these in the Christian Reformed Church."

And this is precisely the spirit of our days of theological apostasy. The truth of God is not important any more. What is important is that differences can be discussed even though men destroy the Word of God. The important thing is that men are sitting down together over a cup of coffee smoking cigars and fraternally discussing the death of God's truth. How nice to preside over the rush of the Church into modernism and the loss of the heritage of the truth in a brotherly spirit!

God save us from such a fraternal spirit.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

The Concept of Our Liturgy

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

To our liturgical study belongs all of those things that are included in our public worship. Some, we wrote in our previous article, want to exclude from this study the sermon or the preaching. The argument for this is twofold. First of all this objection points to the fact that the sermon and preaching belong to another theological science called Homeletics, and the second argument is that the sermon is non-prescriptive, that is, free according to its form. The preacher is not bound in his preaching by a liturgical form. He does not prepare his sermon, get ecclesiastical approval on its form and contents, and then read it to the congregation. He freely prepares his sermon and delivers it in his own language and style.

A few things may be said in refutation to this and

in defense of retaining the sermon as a part of our liturgical study. It may be said that the preaching is a very fundamental, if not the most vital part of our worship. It is the very core of the meeting of God and His people. This does not mean that we are going to merge homeletics and liturgics, nor that we are going to deal with the various homeletic questions and problems in this rubric. This is not at all necessary and we can very well consider the sermon in relation to our worship without doing this. Furthermore, if there were validity in the first objection mentioned above, the same would have to apply to several other aspects of our worship. For example, our prayers in worship would be excluded because they are treated in another science known as Euehetics or Euehology. Our sing-

ing could not be considered as this would be treated under Psalmody. And as far as the second argument goes, we must remember that when the minister leads the congregation in prayer, he is also free with respect to his phraseology, language, style and content of the prayers offered. What is, however, more important is that this freedom is really very limited. It is strictly a limited, literary freedom. For the rest the preacher in leading the congregation is fenced in on every side. He is bound to the Scriptures as his source-book; he is bound to preach from texts of greater or lesser range; he must honor the standards of his church and is expected to construct his sermons according to a definite technique, etc.

Thus, in our present study we are going to include all that transpires in the meeting of public worship. Later on we hope to discuss the various elements of this worship, but for the present we must concentrate on its character. We remember then, as we wrote the last time, that Rev. Hoeksema defined public worship as "the meeting of God with His people. God comes to His people to have fellowship with them and to bless them. The church approaches God to serve and to worship Him and to extol His glory." From this it is evident that two parts may be distinguished in the act of worship, "a parte Dei" (God's part) and "a parte ecclesiae." (Church's part) In the former God comes to His people to bless them and in the latter, His people approach Him to worship Him.

What then belongs to that worship? To answer this is to delve into the material of our liturgical study. But to do this we must also bear in mind constantly that the nature of public worship is not missionary or evangelistic, the purpose of which is the saving of souls. Our liturgical practices will naturally be greatly affected if we hold to this conception of worship. We remember that the souls that unite in public worship are the saints, that is, the people of God with their children, and their purpose in gathering together is not to be saved but to unite in public service to glorify God with thanksgiving and joy in an orderly manner. Subordinate to this chief purpose is the building up and edifying of the saints, the strengthening and growth of God's people in the knowledge of the truth and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That which then is to be introduced into the liturgical practices must be conducive to serving that purpose, and only that which accomplishes this can properly belong to our worship. Worship practices of the past as well as the present must be studied with this in mind. The aim of liturgical practices is not to make an external, emotional impression; to cater to the desires of the flesh; to amuse or entertain, but emphatically to make a lasting spiritual impression and to strengthen faith. We can only say that we have been to the house of God to worship when we have poured out our hearts in praise and thanksgiving unto Him and have received spiritual edification. What takes place in worship then must serve to help us attain this objective.

One more thing must be added yet to our concept of liturgics. We have in mind that doctrine is vitally related to liturgy; the former having a very pronounced

effect upon the latter. Furthermore, during the last twenty centuries the fundamental divergencies that have broken up the quondam unity of the church are doctrinal, for as Calvin says: "Doctrine is the soul of the church." It follows from the fundamental character of doctrine that the differences arising in this field must affect the Polity and Government and Liturgy of the church materially. The simple fact is that one worships as he believes, and what he believes is unavoidably going to have a bearing upon how he worships. This simple deduction is historically demonstrated as that without going into particulars and without making any detailed applications we may say that in general history has produced two types of generically different worship patterns. These are:

(1) The hierarchical-ritualistic type represented by the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches which are corporatively the christian churches of antiquity; and

(2) The Protestant-Biblical type, represented by the churches of the Reformation.

Naturally among the latter lies our primary interest. Then it is to be noted that also among the churches of the Reformation there is again a large measure of liturgical diversity. Lutheran and Reformed churches, though both principally non-ritualistic, are not equally true to this fundamental position. The Reformed Churches, speaking generally, were more consistently reformatory in respect to the doctrine, polity and worship than the Lutheran Churches. Then too, the Anglican Church, though doctrinally protestant, historically and confessionally is virtually, though not consistently ritualistic. And we should not overlook the Romanizing tendencies in the Protestant Churches of our present time.

With a view to this situation it is necessary to qualify Liturgics as Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed, analogously to the qualification of doctrine and Polity. As a matter of fact there is no such thing as a simply Christian Church, *institutionally* speaking. The Christian Church one has in mind is affiliated with, serves, studies, is necessarily either the one church or the other, but never the non-existent undivided Christian Church. Likewise there is no Homeletics, Dogmatics, Polity and particularly Liturgics *in general*. Liturgics is the science of public worship, but a particular study in Liturgics is either Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican or Reformed. It need not be added that the Liturgics which we are interested in have to do with the Reformed Churches and, more particularly, the Protestant Reformed Churches. In this we neither imply nor express that we are not interested in the public worship of other churches or that this does not deserve some of our attention. It must be observed that certain aspects of the worship of many Christian Churches have a great deal in common and that a discussion of Reformed public worship will prove to be elucidatory of much in the public worship of other churches. In discussing the distinctive features of Reformed worship it is but natural to refer to the worship of other churches for the purpose of illustration and contrast.

And lastly, in the history of Reformed Liturgics the background and parallel liturgical movements must of necessity be sketched. In this way, though indeed incidentally, Reformed Liturgics cannot fail to acquaint the reader to a considerable extent with the Liturgies of non-Reformed Churches.

THE HISTORY OF LITURGICS

In sketching the history of liturgics we will divide the period of the last twenty centuries into several parts. Although interested mainly in Reformed Liturgics, our starting point will not be the Reformation, but we will go back to the beginning of the Dispensation, considering that the pre-reformation history of Liturgics is, in a sense, common property and may be viewed as introductory to Reformed Liturgics. Concerning the Ancient Church it may be observed that although history was made, it was but scantily recorded. Dogmas were formulated, but the History of Dogma was not written. Similarly Church Polity was construed, but not scientifically discussed. And, of course, Public Worship was engaged in and developed, but Liturgics in any real sense was not cultivated. There were, it is true, beginnings of theological study by Chrysostom in the last part of the 4th century, and Gregory the Great at the close of the 6th century. These men interested themselves in the study of Public Worship but even their work in this field was rudimentary. It is a far cry from their works to a Liturgics of modern times.

The very early worship of the Christian Church is somewhat described in the following quotation from Schaff's Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge:

The first Christians, being members of the Jewish Church, followed naturally the Jewish manner of worship. The services to which they were accustomed were those of the temple and of the synagogue. The temple service was elaborate, and was for the purpose of worship; the synagogue service was simple and was for the purpose of instruction. The temple contributed to liturgical development the tradition of a noble service, in a stately building, with vested clergy, with prayers accompanied by the symbol of Incense, with praises sung from the book of psalms, with an altar, and with the varied interests and significance of an ordered sequence of feasts and fasts. The fact, however, that the temple was in Jerusalem, and that it was destroyed and its services ended forever in 70 A.D., gave its liturgical precedents a minor part in the making of the primitive Christian devotions. These were patterned mainly upon those of the synagogue. The synagogue was a plain building, having a platform at the further end. On the platform were seats for church officials, and in the midst was a pulpit. Over the pulpit hung an ever-burning lamp, and back of the pulpit, behind a curtain against the wall, was a chest containing the rolls of the sacred books. The ordinary service began with the Shema, a habitual, daily devotion, like the Lord's Prayer, consisting of three passages of Scripture, Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41. After this came the Shemoneth esreh, or eighteen benedictions, each with a recurring phrase or refrain, followed by an Amen as a congregational response. This was succeeded by the first lesson, taken from the Law, read in seven parts by seven readers, each pronouncing a few verses, the verses being translated into Aramaic, with explanation, comment, and application. The second lesson was a single reading from the Prophets, translated and explained as before (Cf. Luke 4:16 sqq.). With a collection for the poor, and a benediction, perhaps with some singing of psalms, the service ended.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Priestly Office of Christ

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"How doth Christ execute the office of a priest? Christ executeth the office of a priest in His once offering Himself a sacrifice without spot to God, to be a reconciliation for the sins of His people; and in making continual intercession for them (LC, 44)." This function of His office was settled in the secret counsel of God. For He was "set forth (foreordained) a propitiation (Rom. 3:25)," an atoning sacrifice, for the sins of His people. This is the first part of His priestly office wherein He effects redemption through His blood. From all eternity He was foreordained a propitiation; He was "verily foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-20)." "He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8)." His crucifixion and death were centrally embraced in the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge

of God (Acts 2:23)" and brought about through the instrumentality of "wicked hands." From man's side His death was murder. He was murdered by the Jews and Gentiles, but they did to Him nothing else than "whatever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done," or "foreordained to come to pass (Acts 4:27, 28, ASV)." Christ so endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself in His priestly office, and it was all ordered and directed by the decree of God.

The high priest in the Old Testament was "taken from among men," for men were estranged from God and needed reconciliation. Old Covenant priests were taken from men for men, for the benefit of men, since men, not God, needed the priesthood. He was ordained in the things pertaining to God in order to place before God's people the only atonement, typically, in the death

of Christ (Heb. 5:1). The priest prevailed with God on the part of men in order to maintain God's covenant of friendship with men.

Christ was called to the office of priest by the highest authority — God. Let no one say that this subject has no relevancy in a modern age. For there are "priests" everywhere in the most enlightened countries. There are Roman Catholic priests, Orthodox priests, Anglican priests, Mormonite priests and Buddhist priests, to name considerable of them. Man himself is a "priest." But as fallen and unredeemed, man makes himself the great high priest, whereas he wants God to be a little god and lesser priest. But Christ, the Son of God, did not intrude himself into the office of priest. He was called of God to enter it (Heb. 5:5), was installed and sworn into it (Prov. 8:23; Ps. 110:4), and that from eternity within the decree of the covenant (Zech. 6:13). Therefore, it is the Son, the only begotten God (John 1:18, Gk.), who became flesh, who bears the priestly office with the utmost importance, in the highest dignity, the most indisputable validity and an absolutely unique perpetuity. To this divine appointment Christ agreed in the words, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not" — willed not as the reality, but only as the figure of the true. For the blood of animals offered, by men themselves sinful, could not be acceptable to Thee nor atone for sin. "But a body hast Thou prepared Me" in the eternal purpose and counsel of God, which I am willing in the last days (Heb. 1:2) to assume and offer to God a sacrifice, a sweet-smelling savor, for the children which God hath given Me (2:13). Therefore, "Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God (10:7)."

When the O.T. prophesies of a priest and priesthood in the future beyond the Aaronic priesthood of Israel, it presents God as speaking of a singular, exclusive priest-to-come. "I will raise Me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in Mine heart and in My mind: and I will build Him a sure house (I Sam. 2:35)." The character of His priesthood would be most singular — royal! For He would be "a priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13)." The order of His priesthood — "forever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4)." The sacrifice He would offer for sin — His soul, while the continual work He would carry on — intercession for the transgressors, the ones God had given Him (Isa. 53:10, 12 with John 17:9). In His O.T. theophanic appearances, He came on the scene as priest, being arrayed, as He was then, "clothed with linen (Ezek. 9:2; Dn. 10:5)."

"Concerning His priesthood, we have briefly to remark, that the end and use of it is, that He may... render us acceptable to God... That Christ might perform this office, it was necessary for Him to appear with a sacrifice. For under the law the priest was not permitted to enter the sanctuary without blood, that the faithful might know that, notwithstanding the interposition of the priest as an intercessor, yet it was impossible for God to be" satisfied without atonement for sins. "This subject" is discussed "at large in the Epistle to the Hebrews, from the seventh chapter almost to the end of the tenth. But the sum of the whole

is this — that *the sacerdotal dignity belongs exclusively to Christ*, because, by the sacrifice of His death, *He* has abolished our guilt, and made satisfaction for our sins... There is no access to God, either for ourselves or our prayers, unless our Priest sanctify us by taking away our sins, and obtain for us that grace from which we are excluded by the pollution of our vices and crimes... Hence it follows that He is an eternal intercessor, and that it is by *His* intervention we obtain favor with God..." Then we ourselves, "who are polluted in ourselves, being 'made priests' (Rev. 1:6) in Him offer ourselves and all our services to God, and enter boldly into the heavenly sanctuary, so that the sacrifices of prayers and praise, which proceed from us, are 'acceptable,' and 'a sweet-smelling savor' (Eph. 5:2) in the divine presence... Detestable is the invention of those, who, not content with the priesthood of Christ, have presumed to take upon themselves the office of sacrificing Him; which is daily attempted among the Papists, where the mass is considered as an immolation of Christ (Calvin's *Institutes*, II, XV, 6, ital. added)."

It is from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there only in the N.T., that we learn what priesthood intervenes between us and God, namely Christ's, which priesthood was typified by the priestly order of Aaron. Though He was "an High Priest *after* the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:10)," He was not a high priest *of* the order of Aaron, neither *of* the order of Melchizedek, for He was not of *any* certain human order, nor could any man or men prefigure, much less, perform that which inheres in His office and priesthood. But those who are enamored with any of the priesthoods of human order are either ignorant of or deliberately silent as to the content of that Epistle to the Hebrews.

Aaron and Melchizedek both represented Christ typically in His office of priest. The one represented the nature of the function of this office. The other represented the dignity of His person in that function. Aaron, not Melchizedek, offered an atoning sacrifice unto God, entered into the Holy of holies, bore the names of Israel in the priestly breastplate over his heart, and carried the fragrant incense into the presence of Jehovah, thus setting forth the redemption and the intercession of Christ. Melchizedek was a figure of the royal priest, of the priest who was without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days nor end of life (Heb. 7:3). His priesthood was not in the succession of Aaron. That succession was constantly interrupted by death. But Christ in His priestly order continues forever in an immutable priesthood (7:8, 16, 23, 24). Now that we have a priest after the order of Melchizedek, all human priestly orders are thereby ended, rendered passe, defunct. To revert to any earthly priesthood is to attempt to rebuild the middle wall of partition Christ hath broken down (Eph. 2:14); is to build again the things the coming of the Christian dispensation destroyed (Gal. 2:18), and so become a transgressor; is to return to the weak and beggarly elements, which only subject to bondage (4:9); is to be fallen from grace (5:4). We draw nigh to God by a much better priesthood (Heb. 7:18, 19).

Liberal preachers, and others infatuated with their drivel, appeal to Heb. 8:4 in support of their imagination that Christ was not a priest until after the ascension. "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." But all this is saying is that if Christ aspired to an earthly priesthood, He never could have been a priest, for He was of a tribe which had no right to function in such a priesthood (7:13,14). It also is saying that if the entirety of His function in this glorious office was to be executed on earth, He could not be a priest, for a king-priest from Judah had no legal right into the Holiest; and there in the earthly

temple of Jerusalem His blood could not be presented. The real-sacrifice could not be offered in the shadow-sanctuary. For He was "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (2:17)," and that reconciliation was effected when "we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10)." Further, He was, in His humiliation, tempted as the great High Priest (Heb. 4:14f). Also, in the days of His flesh He made intercession, prayers and supplication (5:7). As High Priest He offered up the sacrifice of himself (7:26-28; 8:3; 9:14). Certainly Christ entered heaven on the ground of His own sacrifice which He had offered on the altar of Calvary as High Priest (9:12).

BOOK REVIEWS—

Evolution and the Modern Christian The Child's Story Bible

EVOLUTION AND THE MODERN CHRISTIAN by Henry M. Morris; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; 72 pages (paper); price, \$1.00

Here is a fine little book, written by a scientist who is thoroughly committed to the infallible Biblical record concerning creation. The author is one of the few who stands foursquare for creation in six literal days and who does not hide or compromise his belief. It is heart-warming, in an age when Reformed men everywhere are busily propagating various theories of so-called theistic evolution, to read a book of this kind.

Of the five chapters in this book (The Meaning of Evolution; Scientific Weaknesses of Evolution; The Fossil Record; The Case for Creation; Evolution and the Bible), I personally found the last chapter the most appealing. Perhaps others would judge differently.

But this is a book which our schools should order and place in their libraries. It is a book which should be required reading for our junior and senior high school students. And it is a book which any of our young people can easily read in a couple hours. On the back cover is this promotional statement:

"Young people in practically all public schools today and many of those in private schools are continuously and increasingly and insistently being indoctrinated with the evolutionary philosophy. The truths of Christian

theism and Biblical Christianity, on the other hand, are increasingly being denied, ridiculed, or (which is worst of all) ignored as irrelevant. We urgently need literature which may reach those who are thus influenced, and which may open their minds and hearts to the true Biblical cosmology. This small book has been prepared with this one need in mind.

"This book is intentionally brief in order to minimize both the cost and the time required to read it. It is sufficiently non-technical so that no intelligent high school or college student should have difficulty in understanding it; but, at the same time, there has been no attempt to 'popularize' its style or vocabulary. The writer respects the intellectual capacity and integrity of young people too much for this kind of device."

While this recommendation does not mean that I subscribe to every statement made by the author, I agree with the promotional statement quoted above; and I heartily recommend this book, and urge especially that our young people read it.

H.C.H.

THE CHILD'S STORY BIBLE, by Catherine F. Vos; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1966; 435 pp. \$6.50.

This is a new edition of Catherine

Vos's Bible Story Book, known to so many parents and children. Several changes have been made: the language has been brought up to date; recent archeological discoveries shedding light on the Biblical account have been incorporated in the book; new maps and pictures have been prepared especially for this edition.

On the whole this book is still the best Child's Story Bible on the market today; and is therefore heartily recommended to our parents and children. However, in the opinion of this reviewer, the pictures and maps are scarcely an improvement. While the publishers contend that "the pictures endeavor to bring the child into close touch with the world of the Bible" they are too much like modern art. I doubt whether children will appreciate them either.

One more comment. While indeed a story Bible is ideally suited to lead little children into the knowledge of Scripture, covenant parents ought to be warned against over use of a story Bible. By this I mean that it is possible to make such extensive use of the Bible story book that the Bible itself is neglected. This should not be. From earliest childhood children should also become acquainted with the Word of God itself and not exclusively with a substitute—no matter how beautiful and accurate. With this reservation, this new edition of an old favorite is heartily recommended to our people.

Prof. H. Hanko

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

Nov. 10, 1967

The celebration of the 450th anniversary of The Reformation was held in First Church in Grand Rapids as scheduled. A large crowd came out to hear Prof. H. C. Hoeksema who spoke on, "Four Hundred Fifty Years, and Then..." The lecture was, as might be expected, one which captivated the audience in quiet attention from beginning to the end. Rev. Van Baren led in the opening devotions; Rev. Lubbers, chairman of the steering committee, introduced the speaker, and Rev. Schipper led in closing prayer. The audience sang two numbers from the Psalter and Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is our God," accompanied by the pipe organ with Mrs. C. Lubbers at the console. It was an evening of great value to our own people and those of other churches in attendance in that the speaker admonished us to watchfulness without which we will, in these days of "Ecumenism", inevitably lose our Reformed heritage sparked by Luther, strengthened by Calvin and developed by our forefathers who were true children of the Reformation. Indeed, listening to this lecture one becomes acutely aware of the fact that an annual admonition of this nature is hardly adequate—the Reformed Church community is lamentably losing its distinctiveness. Will the 451st anniversary see the Reformed churches in joint services with Lutherans and Roman Catholics (as these did in Redlands this year) with choirs joining in song and members enjoying(?) the sermon and partaking(?) of the Mass?

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An October 15 bulletin of Southeast Church expressed, "The Consistory wishes to take this opportunity to thank those responsible for the beautiful consistory room and its furnishings. We invite the entire congregation to view the magnificent improvement to our church edifice." And a Redlands' bulletin also carried a thank you note to one of its members for the surprise gift of a new piano, thereby diverting a growing "piano fund" to new consistory room furniture.

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The Eastern Ladies League scheduled a Fall meeting to be held in First Church featuring Rev. J. Korterling as speaker. His speech was titled, "The Great Tribulation and the Freedom of Speech."

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The Young People's Societies of Hope Church, in a recent meeting, heard and discussed an after recess paper by Larry Koole on, "Television." Probably the evils of television will have to be recognized by the young people themselves and who will then insist on strict parental television supervision.

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The Jamaican trip of Rev. Heys and Elder Zwak has caused reverberations in many places. Among others: The League of Mr. and Mrs. Societies and the Adams St. School Mothers' Club were so enter-

tained in their November meetings, without spoiling the anticipated Thanksgiving Day program scheduled for that evening in First Church which will be a different program with the latest pictures.

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Rev. Woudenberg's mail thanking him for his "Studies in Biblical Doctrine" is coming in from various quarters. Lately mail has come from Malibu, Calif.; Yucaipi, Calif.; Gaffney, S.C.; and one from one of the Professors in the Reformed Theological Seminary of Jackson, Miss., who asked for library copies, adding, "... I think this is an excellent idea to be supplying this type of study by mail. I find a great hunger on the part of many people for a better understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. I trust that God will bless your ministry in your church...."

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Hope's Men's Society visited Southeast's Society Oct. 30 with Mr. Tilma, of the guest society, giving an after recess paper on, "Praying in the Spirit." Hudsonville was host to First Church's society recently and Mr. Meulenberg, of First, gave a paper on "Self Discipline," relating especially to the area of allocating sufficient time for Bible study.

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The Protestant Reformed High School Society's financial report of this Fall revealed that the total financial value of the society is \$66,463.55 with under \$11,000 of that represented in the property and over \$55,000 in cash.

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Rev. C. Hanko, the new "professor" of the Jamaican Correspondence Course, is very happy to relate that his students are doing very well in their studies. On returning the tapes to their instructor they often record messages and parts of their services. On one of those tapes Rev. Hanko heard some of the children reciting, *from memory*, the first three articles of our Canons! He wonders if any of our children could duplicate that.

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Sunday, Nov. 5, Rev. Harbach was scheduled for a Classical appointment in South Holland but he preached in Holland instead, exchanging pulpits at Rev. Heys' request that he might officiate at his son's public profession of faith in South Holland.

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Loveland's School's "Ledger" of October featured an editorial by Rev. Engelsma on, "The Reformation and Christian Education"; and, The "Announcer" of the Adams St. School had the first installment of an editorial by Principal F. Block on, "Government Aid in Education"; and, South Holland's "Reflector" carried an editorial by Principal L. Lubbers on the 450th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, with a cover design of the Castle Church of Wittenburg, Germany, by J. Kalsbeek.

... see you in church.

J.M.F.