

The
Standard
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE:

Meditation: The Ruler Out of Bethlehem

Editorials: The Upshot of the Case

Consistorial Supervision of Catechetical Instruction

Ecumenical Notes (see All Around Us)

On-Going Reformation

CONTENTS

Meditation -	
The Ruler Out of Bethlehem	122
Rev. M. Schipper	
Editorials -	
The Upshot of the Case	125
Prof. H. C. Hoeksema	
Consistorial Supervision of	
Catechetical Instruction	126
Prof. H. C. Hoeksema	
From Holy Writ -	
The Book of Hebrews	128
Rev. G. Lubbers	
A Cloud of Witnesses -	
The Spoiling of Ziklag	130
Rev. B. Woudenberg	
Trying the Spirits -	
The Kingly Office of Christ	132
Rev. R. C. Harbach	
Special Feature -	
The Reformation and Christian Education	134
Rev. D. Engelsma	
Contending For The Faith -	
The Doctrine of Sin	136
Rev. H. Veldman	
All Around Us -	
Ecumenical Notes	138
Prof. H. Hanko	
Pages From The Past -	
On-Going Reformation - 3	140
News From Our Churches -	
J. M. Faber	144

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

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. David J. Engelsma, Mr. John M. Faber, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Korterling, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Gerald Vanden Berg, Rev. Herman Veldman, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

Editorial Office: Prof. H. C. Hoeksema
1842 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Church News Editor: Mr. John M. Faber
1123 Cooper Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Business Office: Mr. James Dykstra, Bus. Mgr.
1326 W. Butler Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$5.00 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$2.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$2.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 5th or the 20th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

Second Class Postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan

MEDITATION—

The Ruler Out of Bethlehem

by Rev. M. Schipper

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Matthew 2:6

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Micah 5:2

And thou Bethlehem!
Art not the least!
This suggests a comparison!
Scripture, so it seems, loves to speak in comparisons. And especially is this so when it speaks of

the works of God, and of things related to the kingdom of heaven. Think of the Lord's parables, those earthly stories with heavenly meaning. And listen to Paul in I Corinthians 1:27 — "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath

chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." Or page through the Epistle to the Hebrews, where you find again and again your attention is called to that which is *better* and *greater*.

So also comparisons are brought to our attention in the Scripture verses appearing above this Meditation.

Thou art not the least!

This implies that Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, is greater than the least among the princes of Juda.

Though thou art little among the thousands of Judah!

This implies that Bethlehem in comparison with the thousands was very small.

To be noticed, too, is that the comparisons made by Micah and Matthew appear to conflict. While Micah, on the one hand, specifies Bethlehem's smallness — "little among the thousands of Judah," Matthew, on the other hand, stresses Bethlehem's greatness — "not the least among the princes of Juda." The apparent conflict is cleared up when you consider the viewpoint. Micah points up the fact that when the Ruler shall come forth out of Israel He will come out of Bethlehem little among the thousands of Judah, while Matthew's Gospel points up the fact that though Bethlehem was smallest among the princes of Juda, yet when God fulfills His Word and the Governor is actually born in this little town, it shall no longer be considered little, but great. Unto the end of the ages Bethlehem shall be known for the greatness of the part it played in the scheme of redemption.

Nor should it pass our notice that the text of Matthew is supposed to be a quotation of the text in Micah as it was expressed by the scribes and elders of the Jews.

For wise men from the east had appeared in Jerusalem and before Herod the king with the question: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." And Herod, and all Jerusalem with him, being troubled, demanded of the chief priests and scribes where Christ should be born. And they reply: "In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet — And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda..."

Awful indictment against the Jews!

Forced they are to admit that the Christ of Bethlehem is born according to their own Scripture, or they must tear from their Scripture this wonderful prophecy. The latter they cannot do. So they answer for all the Jewish race that Christ is born in Bethlehem according to the Scripture. When they therefore condemn Him of Whom the prophet did write, they condemn themselves in that there can be no other Messiah they could possibly have expected.

Out of Bethlehem shall come forth a Governor!

A Governor Who shall rule over Israel!

Hence, the Ruler out of Bethlehem!

* * * * *

Bethlehem!

In the fulness of time all things wend their way to Bethlehem!

First of all, God Himself is on His way to Bethlehem in the Person of His Son! He came down from the glorious heights of heaven, and makes Bethlehem the focal point in the universe, according to His all-wise counsel.

Then, because of this, Caesar Augustus, though he knows nothing of the purposes of God, unwittingly issues the decree that must send all who were born of the generations of David to this little town nestled in the Judean hills to be enrolled for the tax.

Therefore Joseph and Mary proceed from Nazareth of ill repute to comply with Caesar's decree, in order that Mary's Child, conceived without the will of man, and God's Son, may be born there.

Likewise angels, those shining messengers of good tidings, fly swiftly to hover, though it be for a moment, over Bethlehem's fields to announce the birth of the Saviour, and to preach the very first Christmas sermon, accompanied by a heavenly chorus of alleluias at the birth of the Christ-child.

This glorious announcement sends lowly shepherds, who had been watching over their flocks by night and no doubt often wondering when the promise of redemption would be fulfilled — sends them looking for the Babe that would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger of the smelly cattle stall.

Moreover, lest these lowly of the stock of Israel be the only human witnesses of the miracle of Bethlehem, the God of the universe causes the Star of Jacob to make its appearance in the heavens of the east to Gentiles, to magi, whose vocation it was to study the heavens. And they in turn are sent on a long trek to the land of Judah, via Jerusalem, where they would lay precious gifts at the feet of Him Who is the Lion of Judah's tribe and to worship before Him.

Yea, even the wicked must eventually go to Bethlehem in the persons of the army of Herod who are bent on slaying the Christ Child Who must be found among Rachel's children, that the prophecy spoken by Jeremy the prophet might be fulfilled. "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

To Bethlehem, the House of Bread!

From whence, in the days of the Judges, Naomi and her family had gone because there was no bread, evidently believing that God would not be able to supply them, but who is impelled on returning to exclaim: "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty," in order to return to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest.

Bethlehem of Judah!

Out of the house of David must the Ruler be born!

Of David's seed, and in the royal line of the covenant! This was God's promise to this man after God's heart. Of his seed would One rise up Who would sit on the throne of David forever.

And that royal line must come from the tribe of Judah. Thus Jacob in the pronouncement of blessings to his sons had spoken when his fourth son stood before him. "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren

shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

O, indeed, of Judah Bethlehem is not the least!

So it at first appeared, when in the days of Micah the prophet of the Lord had said that Bethlehem was little, least among the thousands of Judah. Because the Lord was there telling apostacizing Israel whom He would completely vanquish, that out of that little Bethlehem Ephratah would come forth One Who would be Ruler.

But when the Gospel of Matthew points to the fulfillment of that prophecy, Bethlehem is no longer considered among the least. Suddenly Bethlehem comes into prominence. And unto the end of the ages the little town of Bethlehem will be renowned for its gift to the world, even if the enemies of Bethlehem's Ruler must attest to it.

Out of thee shall come forth one Whose government shall shepherdize my people Israel!

Whose goings forth is from everlasting!

He is not of time, though He is born in the fulness of time. The Scribes and chief priests failed to tell Herod all that Micah had said. Emphatically the prophet had foretold that He would someday come forth out of Bethlehem, out of the land of Judah, thereby suggesting that He would be born out of David's line. Hence, He would be a Babe-Ruler. But the Person of this Son is not human and a child of time. He is the eternal Son of God. He is of the generations of our race, but He is also before our generations. He is the everlasting God!

He is of God!

He is of God because He is God. He is also of God because He is ordained of God in the eternal decrees. Thus His goings forth have been from everlasting.

* * * * *

Ruler of God's people!

O, to be sure, there is a sense in which He is Lord of all! For was He not to obtain a Name which is above every name? And was it not so that after He had

performed the feat of perfect obedience, obedience even unto death, that He was to have all things subjected to Him, both of things in heaven and things on earth? And every knee would bow before Him and acknowledge that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father? Indeed, He is even now, Lord and Governor of all!

Yet there is a sense in which He may be said to be the Ruler of His people; a people in distinction from all the world, whom God had chosen when He ordained that His Son should be born of a woman and in David's royal line in the little town of Bethlehem. A people whom He would form for Himself, and which He would call the lot of His inheritance, His portion forever. A people born out of sovereign grace, who had been born in trespasses and sins, and were children of wrath even as the rest. A people who would be born of His Spirit, who would share His life, and who should become the citizens of His heavenly and eternal kingdom.

My people Israel!

Which cannot mean the Jewish nation; for they are not all Israel that are called Israel, nor is he a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart ...Moreover, the Magi, those Gentiles from the east, also belong to His people, His people Israel. They, too, acknowledge Him as their King, and belong to Him as His people. For blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel, both of Jew and Gentile, shall be saved.

Of that people the Ruler out of Bethlehem is both the Deliverer and Shepherd!

Micah describes Him the Ruler Who will govern that people whom He delivers, and whom He delivers by ruling over them. Matthew, on the other hand, describes Him as the Governor Whose rule shall be exercised in such a way that He shall shepherdize this people as a flock. That is, He will lead them by feeding them with His Word and Spirit.

On such an one the Israel of God can set their hope, Who will so instruct, that is, feed them with His Word, thus preparing them to see in Him their Deliverer, Who is able to govern them and lead them into His kingdom, where they shall experience everlasting peace, and where righteousness shall dwell.

FOR SALE by the R.F.P.A.

Bound Volumes of the Standard Bearer, Vol. 7 through Vol. 43.

Contact:

Business Manager
James Dykstra
1326 W. Butler Ave., SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

EDITORIALS—

The Upshot of the Case

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

As has been reported in the columns of *All Around Us*, various evaluations of last summer's final decision in the so-called "Dekker Case" have appeared in the religious press, none of them critical.

Dr. Marten Woudstra minimized the entire controversy, comparing the concern about Dekker's teachings to concern about a leak in the roof, while there should be concern about more important matters, comparable to the threat of a flood. How it is possible for a Reformed seminary professor to relegate the error of rank Arminianism to the insignificance of a minor roof-leak is a conundrum to me. Moreover, it certainly has never been the style of our Reformed fathers.

The Rev. John Hulst even discovered in Synod's decision a mandate to the churches to defend the faith, — something which cannot even be discovered in any fine print, but which must have been pulled out of thin air.

The editor of *De Wachter*, the Rev. Wm. Haverkamp, also furnishes his readers with an evaluation of Synod's decision. He does this in connection with an "in depth" article which appeared in the *Grand Rapids Press*. Editor Haverkamp, as usual, is attempting in his editorial to calm the troubled waters and to prevent the Christian Reformed boat from being rocked too severely. However, in one paragraph of his editorial he came nearer to the truth in his evaluation than any other writer thus far. In the concluding paragraph of his article, he writes (I translate):

One thing indeed became very clear from the entire history, namely, that among the participants in the discussion and in the reports concerning the case there has never been any disagreement about the question whether Scripture teaches the well-meant offer of grace. About this they were all in agreement, be it then also with difference as concerns the function of this well-meant offer.

Now I must confess that when I first read this paragraph, I rubbed my eyes, wondering whether I had read correctly. But yes, there it stood: "One thing indeed became very clear..."

Then I began to think: "Could it be that an even greater miracle than Dr. Henry Stob's miracle has happened, namely, that the editor of *De Wachter* and the editor of the *Standard Bearer* agreed in their evaluation of the Dekker Case? Could it be that the

Rev. Haverkamp is at last beginning to heed our Protestant Reformed witness and to see that the deepest root of all the difficulties of the Dekker Case is the error of the well-meant offer of grace, adopted in 1924?" In fact, for a brief moment I almost began to rejoice.

For what Editor Haverkamp writes is certainly a correct evaluation as far as it goes. It is certainly objectively a fact. We may overlook the fact that the Synodical decision as such says nothing about this. We may overlook the fact, too, that the Rev. Haverkamp speaks only of Scripture, not of the confessions, in this connection. Perhaps the Doctrinal Committee members will also overlook the fact that the Rev. Haverkamp uses that naughty little expression "*aanbod der genade* (offer of grace)" which they criticized. For after all the Synod did not adopt what the Doctrinal Committee wrote in their report, and Editor Haverkamp is therefore not bound by their opinion. The fact remains that the Rev. Haverkamp states the truth. It certainly did become abundantly clear from all the discussion at the Synod, from the report of the Doctrinal Committee, and from the various reports of the Advisory Committee that there was no disagreement about the question whether Scripture teaches the well-meant offer of grace. Any fair and objective observer who is at all acquainted with the history and with the issues involved therein would have to come to that conclusion. In fact, the *Standard Bearer* expressed this same thought long before the Synod, and *predicted* that Prof. Dekker would never be condemned as long as the Christian Reformed Church maintained the First Point of 1924.

But then I began to think about this paragraph more calmly and soberly.

And that calmer analysis brought me to the conclusion that Editor Haverkamp did not really mean to say "the question whether Scripture teaches the well-meant offer of grace." For this is not a question with him, and it is not a question in the Christian Reformed Church. It is an officially adopted doctrine, against which no one has the right to militate. What he really meant to say was: "...there has never been any disagreement about *the fact that* Scripture teaches the well-meant offer of grace." That this is true is plain from the very next sentence. There may be some disagreement about the *function* of that well-meant

offer; but as to the doctrine of the well-meant offer as such there is no disagreement. It is accepted as a Scriptural doctrine, — at least by all the participants in the discussion and by those responsible for the committee reports.

When the real meaning of this paragraph became clear to me, however, my momentary hopes were dashed. For then the following also became clear to me:

1) That the Rev. Haverkamp is after all giving expression in this paragraph to what I had felt all along, both before and during the Synod, namely, that one thing was uppermost in his mind, in the minds of the anti-Dekker forces, and in the minds of the pro-Dekker forces, — but especially in the minds of the former, — and that was this: the First Point and its doctrine of the well-meant offer must by all means be maintained and protected.

2) That the editor of *De Wachter* does not really tell his readers the truth, but a half-truth. In connection with the quoted paragraph the title of his editorial should not have been "Round About That Synodical Decision." From his point of view it could have better been "The Upshot of the Case." And from the point of view of truth and reality it should have been "Behind That Synodical Decision." For the First Point and its well-meant offer were indeed behind the decision. Because of it, the Doctrinal Committee was principally hamstrung and could not forthrightly condemn Dekker's position. Because of it, the Synod was first unable to reach a decision, and then came to a decision which did not face the issue, a decision which failed to say what it should have said, namely, that it is contrary to Scripture and the confessions to teach a universal love of God and a general

atonement. Because of it, the Synod, while it did not quite dare positively to uphold Prof. Dekker's position, nevertheless found itself in the position of refusing to condemn Arminianism, and, in effect, shielding it. If Editor Haverkamp wanted to tell his readers the whole truth, he would have said: "It became very plain that we were all agreed that the doctrine of the well-meant offer of grace is Scriptural, AND THAT WAS OUR WHOLE TROUBLE." And he would have further instructed his readers that Synod should have gone back to 1924, reviewed it, concluded that its doctrinal pronouncements were contrary to Scripture and our Reformed confessions, and repudiated its dreadful errors as principally Arminian and Pelagian. He would have informed his readers, further, that the decisions of 1924 are directly related to the debacle of 1967 as cause and effect.

3) That the editor of *De Wachter* is after all up to his old strategy of attempting to calm the waters. He is in effect trying to reassure his readers and to say: "At ease! The trouble is over. It was after all nothing but a tempest in a teapot. For we are all agreed that Scripture teaches a well-meant offer of grace. There is some difference among us as to the function of that offer; but on the offer itself we are agreed. This became abundantly clear at Synod."

I am nevertheless curious as to why after more than forty years there is still disagreement about the function of that well-meant offer. In 1924 the doctrine of the offer was so important that men were deposed for denying it. In 1967 the Rev. Haverkamp says in effect: "We have a thing. We know that it is Scriptural. But we don't know how it works and what to do with it." Perhaps he could editorialize on that!

Consistorial Supervision of Catechetical Instruction (continued)

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In the second place, I would suggest the possibility of regular monthly reports to the consistory concerning catechetical instruction by both the pastor and the visiting elders. Moreover, these reports should be official and written, so that they may be entered in the records. Possibly this sounds like "red tape" to some, and perhaps the reports will at times be very brief, especially if everything is going well. But such reports will have the advantage that a consistory pays regular and conscious attention to this important part of the labor of the ministry. And the policy of having

regular reports will result also in the consistory paying prompt attention to any irregularities which need correction and to any delinquency which needs to be nipped in the bud.

In the third place, I wish to make a few remarks concerning the visiting of catechism classes by the elders. This is something which is frequently neglected and thought lightly of. Sometimes it is considered a necessary evil; sometimes it is viewed as one of those annoying technicalities which must be tended to in order that the consistory may give the proper answers when

the church visitors question them. I realize, too, that the visiting of classes is beset by difficulties of a practical nature. It is sometimes very difficult for elders to visit daytime classes, for example, because of their work. And not infrequently the elders have enough to do so that it is difficult to squeeze in visits to the evening classes.

Yet, let me call attention to the fact, first of all, that our elders surely would not think of treating the preaching of the Word on Sunday as the visiting of catechism classes is often treated. But then why should not our catechism classes be visited? Catechetical instruction is also preaching of the Word. Ideally, there should *always* be an elder or elders present in the catechism room; and these visits should not be considered routine in a bad sense. They should not be considered an annoyance; they should be more than formal.

A few suggestions concerning these visits are the following. In the first place, in order that the visits may be more frequent and in order to make it more convenient for the elders to visit, why would it not be possible that one elder visits a class, rather than two elders? I suppose that the objection will be that one is not a committee. I would suggest that a committee of two or three be appointed for a given month, and that these elders could divide their labors and each observe a different class. Then let each elder prepare his personal report on the classes he has visited; and then let the committee of elders come together and prepare their joint report for the consistory. The benefit of such a system would be that in the long run more visits would be made, a more complete picture will be obtained by the consistory, and yet there will be a confirmed picture from more than one witness. The result will be that the visiting of classes will be more than the "wax nose" which it is now sometimes. I would suggest, too, that in each consistory a schedule of visits and assignments be prepared by the elders; that this schedule be entered in the minutes; that they adhere to this schedule, so that they are responsible for visits to certain classes in certain months; and that the consistory require that reports of these scheduled visits be filed. In the third place, I would suggest that these reports be more than routine. The reports should pay attention to the items mentioned earlier in our discussion. They should report on the doctrinal purity and specificness of the instruction. They should report on class order. They should report on the faithfulness of the catechumens. The consistory should learn from these reports, for example, whether the catechumens are doing their memory work well or poorly, or whether they are perhaps getting away with reading their answers unbeknownst to the minister. They should report whether there is evidence that the minister prepares thoroughly, and whether there is evidence of class interest, whether there is evidence that the catechumens apprehend the instruction, etc. Reports of this kind can be helpful and can bring about improvement when necessary.

Finally, as I have already suggested, our consis-

tories can profitably pay attention to some of the special problems connected with catechism instruction, as, for example, the proposal brought to our last synod to add catechism books about the Canons and about our church history. Nor need a consistory wait until such matters arise at a synodical level; an alert consistory can very well initiate proposals which may be of benefit to all the churches.

In conclusion, let me emphasize once again the great importance of proper catechetical instruction. If this importance is kept in view, our consistories have a strong incentive to exercise careful supervision. We must guard against a de-emphasis of catechetical instruction. Especially in times like ours the covenant seed is in dire need of all the sound instruction with which we can provide them. And our elders, together with the ministers, must with respect to this instruction function as faithful watchmen, so that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

There is still another area for consistorial supervision which is, perhaps, less routine, but to which, by the same token, most consistories probably pay little attention. I refer to the matter of possible changes in and improvements of and additions to the instructional materials which we use in our churches. As I said, most consistories probably pay little attention to this; and this is understandable to an extent. Besides, we certainly must not forever be changing our catechism books. All change is not improvement. There must be a certain stability in this regard also. On the other hand, however, we must never merely drift along. We must never assume the attitude that we have arrived and that there is no room for improvement. Nor must we assume the attitude that this is only the business of synod and of the synodically appointed catechism book committee. This is not true. It is certainly possible and proper that a consistory should initiate proposals to improve and add to our instructional materials; in what better place than the bosom of the churches should such proposals originate? But let me take a concrete example. At our last synod the Catechism Book Committee brought to synod's attention two possible additions to our instructional materials which they obviously also considered to be improvements. It is not my purpose at this time to discuss the merits of their proposal. I would rather call attention to the fact that the proposal was brought to synod and was by synod returned to the committee for further study and further light. It may be expected, therefore, that this committee will report to the next annual synod. There has already been some discussion at the 1967 synod of the merits of the proposal and of the necessity of the proposed additions; and this is good. Undoubtedly when the matter comes back to synod it will have to be discussed again. But this is not sufficient. This is a matter to which all our consistories could and should give specific attention. I wonder how many of our consistories have already done so or will do so in the coming year. Probably many of our elders read this proposal in the synodical agenda last spring; and quite possibly they paid no further attention to the

matter. But here is an area in which our consistories could be profitably busy. It is not my idea that every consistory should come with overtures or opinions about this to the next synod. But I do suggest that the consistories study and discuss a matter like this as a body; and I do suggest that if any consistory finds that it has something worthwhile to contribute they do so by consistorial decision and give the Catechism Book Committee the benefit of their study. This is a concrete example of what I mean in this part of our discussion.

All of the above items belong in the area of consistorial supervision. They belong not merely to the pastor. If a consistory follows the policy of leaving these matters to the pastor alone, that consistory abdicates its God-given position and responsibility and is also guilty of fostering clericalism. This we must not have; it is neither Reformed nor healthy.

THE MANNER OF EXECUTION

In this section I can be brief.

In considering the practice of this consistorial supervision, the chief and very obvious thing to say is: let the consistory pay attention to its work!

But I also wish to emphasize a few points and to make a few suggestions with respect to the execution of this task.

In the first place, I would emphasize that there ought to be careful consistorial regulation of catechetical instruction. As I suggested before, a consistory must not simply be a rubber stamp for the minister's plans and proposals with respect to catechism classes.

The consistory should actively oversee these matters and decide upon them. And I mean that such matters as the specific courses to be taught during a given season, as well as the schedule and the season of instruction, should be entered in the minutes of the consistory in detail. They should be so detailedly entered in the minutes that if, for example, there is a change of ministers during the season or between seasons, continuity may be maintained and the system may be followed where the former pastor left off, so that there will be no repetition and so that there will be no lapses in the instruction, and so that all the catechumens may benefit from the full course of instruction.

But to this quality of the instruction belongs, in the second place, the educational quality of instruction. Does the minister come well-prepared to catechism class? Or does he give evidence, perhaps, of "shaking something out of his sleeve"? Does he succeed in maintaining good order in his classes? Does he follow good teaching methods? Does he have the interest and the attention of his catechumens? And does he teach the lesson in such a way that he gets it across? Moreover, does he teach catechism merely in an intellectualistic way, or does he follow a spiritual approach, so that his catechumens are also aware that they are under the ministration of the means of grace, the ministry of the Word? For all these matters the minister is indeed responsible. But the minister is under the supervision and subject to the correction of the elders.

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book Of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

Hebrews 4:11-13

THE PREDICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

(Vss. 12, 13 - continued)

Although there can be no doubt that the term *word* of God cannot be separated from the personal Word, the *Logos*, contextually it seems that the term here refers to the preached word in the gospel. It is in accordance with this word, that God will judge the world and the secrets of men in righteousness. For in the context throughout, the writer is speaking of the gospel that was preached to us as well as to those who perished in the wilderness in unbelief. (Vss. 1, 2.) And the writer here quotes from the preached word, the Scriptures, throughout. (Vss. 6-8) Besides, the word as it is a "discerner" is a judge of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. Thus Jesus speaks of the word which he preached, in John 5:45 "there is

one that accuseth you, even Moses (the Scriptures) in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he *wrote* of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Truly, the Word is the preached word as it is accompanied by the working of the Holy Spirit.

And since this preached word is "living," the lively oracles of God, it can also be said that it is "powerful." It is living *energy*, proceeding from God in Christ, even when it is preached by weak men. The term in the Greek for powerful is "energees." It is not a mere weak word of man, but is overpowering, so that it stops the mouths of liars, and convicts the sinner of his sin, and also is such that it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believeth. It is not a mere invitation of man, of the preacher.

When preached purely this word is God's living power.
And what a living power!

We have but to see how it works in the inner recesses of man, who is most wonderfully made. What the writer to the Hebrews here states about this word, David humbly confesses in deep awe and wondrous amazement. We have but to read what David utters concerning this "knowledge which is too wonderful for me; it is high. I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit: or whither shall I flee from thy presence.....Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.....Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139

We do well to bear in mind that here we experience more than we can show by careful and painstaking analysis.

However, let us attempt to understand the various elements in the text just a bit.

This word goes right through us. There is nothing which this preaching does not affect, disclose and show for what it really is as to its spiritual nature and quality, whether it be good or evil. It penetrates (*diiknoumenos*) soul and spirit as an instrument in the hand of God which is sharper than any twoedged sword. No edge on any sword is honed so fine as is this one. It can pierce through, even between the boundary line of soul and spirit of man. Just where that boundary line is, no human eye can tell with exactitude. Oh, we may say that the spirit in man is as he is adapted to God as moral rational being, and his soul is the seat of his feelings; that "the soul" is life emanating from the "spirit" when connected with the body." (Delitzsch) But even then we do not yet with our mind pierce through the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. Yes, this word even pierces through to the "joints and marrow," says the text. It is living energy even here. Many a man has felt the effect of a sermon in his very marrow and bones, whether it were bone-chilling in fear, or whether it be in the ecstasy of heaven's joys. Does not David say in his confession of guilt in Psam 32:3 "when I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." Does not guilt of sin and unrest in the soul cause one to suffer physically? Here is where one finds a Biblical motif for a reappraisal of the psychosomatic therapy of our day which will not acknowledge the deeper storms of life, the conscience of men as it roars within him, and when deep calls unto deep — at the pain of the preaching of the Word which is so sharp that it will not let him rest...will not let him rest! Yes, then the bones and marrow are affected. It always is thus under the preaching, this living preaching! When one comes under this preaching he comes under the lively oracles of the living God! What preacher has not had to deal with this effect of his own preaching in his own soul, spirit, bones and marrow! It is no solution to the problem to remove from the preaching, even upon a christian (?) psy-

chiatrist's advice. That is only a fleeing away from the tree of life and from the flaming sword of the cherubim!

Yes, it is even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow!

And the reason?

It is because the preached Word, as accompanied by the Spirit, is a "Discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart." The Word acts the part of a competent and unerring "Judge!" He is a "Kritikos." The word is exceedingly skilled in judging. It does not judge according to man; it judges a righteous judgment. It judges the *thoughts* of man, his basic spiritual considerations in relationship to God and his neighbor. The word of the preaching judges the "intents" of the "heart." At the very fountain of man's thoughts a judgment is made. This caused an Adam and an Eve to attempt to hide from God. It will make the entire world say: mountains fall upon us, and hills cover us. And that makes this word to divide asunder even to the joints and marrow, between soul and spirit! It is the searching out of the most High. And ever God is marshalling all His armies against the proud in the preaching, even as he lifts up the lowly.

Such is the predication of the preached word: living, energetic, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul, spirit, marrow and joints.

He who preaches such a word must say: my sufficiency is of God! II Cor. 3:5

ALL THINGS NAKED AND OPENED (Vs. 13)

The writer to the Hebrews says further as a word of explanation concerning God that "there is no creature which is not manifest in his sight." This is the penetrating omniscience of God in every creature. The so-called "nature Psalms" are replete with this truth and reality. God does not need a physicist, and expert in thermo-dynamics to lay bare to Him the secrets of the atom, or the ultimate essence of all created existence. He does not need a psycho-analyst to tell why what is in man. He does not need a proud humanist to tell him of the excellencies of fallen man. God looks down from heaven and sees that there is not one that doeth good, no not one! He calls the stars by name because of the greatness of his power. This is what we read in Isaiah in the wondrous 40th chapter. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding." (Isaiah 40:28)

It is with this God with whom we have to do in the preaching. It was with this God that Israel had to do in their wanderings in the desert, with the Word of God in their ears; the living, powerful, soul-searching Word! Yes all things are naked and opened before Him. They are not merely "open"; no, they are open-*ed*! They are in a continual state of being opened. They are opened before God, but also so that man understands the deepest intents of his own heart before God, whether faith or unbelief. God turned us inside out! This he does in the preaching!

And this is the great reason for us, under the preaching, to beware how we hear! Let it be a hearing mingled with faith which takes refuge to the Cross of Christ, and to the great High-Priest, Jesus, who is greater than Moses!

Thus it is unto the eyes of the Lord. His all-seeing eyes behold the secrets of men and all things.

And this is the great sphere, under the preaching, where the hearers of the Word either walk in the example of unbelieving Israel, or walk with a hearing of faith. Yes, the unbelievers hear the gospel preaching, but do not understand spiritually. They are disobedient to the gospel-preaching which rings in their ears, together with the command to enter into the rest of God. That unbelief refuses, and, in this refusal, the horrible unbelief of their hearts is laid opened and naked, even to themselves! However, those who give diligence to enter into the rest look under the preaching of the promise to Christ, the Great High Priest!

Let us give diligence to enter into the Sabbath-rest of God!

HOLDING FAST THE PROFESSION (Vs. 14)

In this verse the writer once more returns to the starting-point in Chapter 3:1-6. Only if we hold fast and persevere does it show that we are indeed striving to enter into the rest. Then we must hold fast to the profession concerning the Great High-Priest, who is greater than Moses and all of the prophets together.

The writer will again speak of "holding fast" in Hebrews 10:23. Ever that is the watch-word against all apostasy from the faith, which is apostasy from the living God.

To hold fast to the profession means that we cling by faith to the preached word, and the promise of entering into the rest by faith.

The term in the Greek for holding fast means: to take hold of, to seize, and hold fast, and never let go! To cling to Christ by a true and living faith, which does not merely consist in a certainty of all that God has revealed in his word, but is also a hearty trust which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts by the preaching of the Gospel, that not only to others but to me also there is forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and eternal life, merely for the sake of Christ's merits.

If then the Word of God lays this bare to us that we are sinners, and that God is true in His promise of salvation in the Gospel, then too we will be incited by the Holy Spirit to hold fast what we have that no one take our crown. Negatively, we will then not swerve from the profession of our faith. No influences of Satan and of the false preachers, and lies and propaganda of the lie, will induce us to be terrified by their threatenings, even to the spoiling of our goods and the suffering unto blood.

For in the preaching of the Gospel Christ says to every one who believes: fear not, I am with thee. Hold fast that thou hast, and I will give you the victory. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down from heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name. (Revelation 3:11, 12)

We are Christ's house — if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope, firm to the end!

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

The Spoiling of Ziklag

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

And had taken the women captives, that were therein; they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way...

And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

I Samuel 30:1, 2, 6

It was perhaps, at about the same time that Saul was making his way toward the Witch of Endor, David was returning toward his home at Ziklag. Both men had been following their own wilful way in opposition to the command of God, and each was being visited

with the fruits of his own sin. Only there was a difference; and the difference was that between punishment and chastisement. Saul had followed his own way in opposition to God, and there had now been brought against him an overwhelmingly large force of Philis-

tines. It was the just desert of Saul's sins; but there was no softening of grace in the heart of Saul that would enable him to acknowledge this in repentance. Rather, it only turned him deeper into sin as he frantically began to look for some hope of salvation and redemption even from the sorcery and incantations which he had always despised and hated. But with David it was different. Coming back to Ziklag, he found that the results of his sins had been visited upon him, his city was destroyed, his possessions had all been stolen, and the families of all his men had been taken captive. In his heart, however, grace was working, and the very extensiveness of his sorrow turned him again to his God where he should have turned long before.

The whole situation came upon David suddenly and unexpectedly. The return of David and his men from Aphek to Ziklag had not been a pleasant journey. There were those among David's men who were no doubt relieved to know that they would not have to fight against their own brethren. But there were also those among them that would have welcomed the opportunity to help toward the overthrow of Saul whom they had come to hate with a passion. And all felt, of course, the shame of the manner in which they had been dismissed by the Philistine lords. It is not at all unlikely that David felt all three of these feelings wrestling for dominance in his own breast until he was quite miserable. When, therefore, they finally turned the last corner to where their homes and city had stood, only to gaze upon a smoldering heap of ruins, it was as though the final judgment and the curse had descended upon them.

One can just about imagine that stunned moment of silence as the men stood there looking, hardly believing what their eyes clearly told them, and the hurried yet hesitant rush down to the ruins to see if they could determine to any real degree what had happened. But the message was clear and not hard to learn. The whole situation was familiar enough to them as men of war. The destruction was just as thorough as that which they had so often left in their wake. Every possession of value had been taken and what could not be taken left in smoldering ruin. The only thing different from what they had so often left was that there were no bodies, every living creature had been carried away captive. Even this, though, was a doubtful consolation, for the treatment which might be expected for their dear ones was hardly to be preferred to death itself. All that it left was the faint hope of restitution; but at the moment even that seemed dim.

The look of anguished unbelief on the faces of the men was pitiful to behold. True, they had often done the same, but through it all they had somehow always firmly believed that their God would never let it happen in return to them. But it had, and now who was there left in whom to trust. Finally, as though needing someone upon whom to vent the anguish of their despair, they turned even on David himself. They needed someone to blame, and as the responsible leader, he seemed the logical one to blame.

Neither was it easy for David to answer the com-

plaint of the men. After all, he was the responsible leader; and as a seasoned man of war he should have known better than to leave a city as rich as his had become completely unprotected. It was just that he wanted to present as large a force as he could muster to the lords of the Philistines so that they might not receive a bad impression of him; and he too had somehow always believed that God would never let this happen to him. It was just that as he thought upon it, he began to realize how little he had actually relied upon the guidance of God in recent days. Surely no one was to be blamed for what had happened but himself.

It was at this very point, though, that the true excellency of David came through. Seeing his guilt, he was not afraid to acknowledge it and turn from it. If he had neglected the guidance of His God, he would do so no longer. Calling Abiathar to him, he commanded him to bring the ephod. Then, he laid his next question before God, "Shall I pursue after this troop?" And immediately the answer came back, "Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." As surely as he had remembered his God, His God had not forgotten him; and by the message his men were encouraged also.

It was with eagerness and determination that the whole company set out as swiftly as they could push themselves. After all, what could possibly matter to them than the retrieving of their possessions and families. Still, for all of their determination, there was the limit beyond which they could not push the whole company. The time came when some simply could not keep up the pace set by the stronger ones. The march back to Ziklag had been strenuous enough, and to go on from there without rest or refreshment into a forced march over rugged terrain was more than they were capable of doing. But David was never a cruel or unreasonable leader. He recognized natural limitations and kindly commanded a full two hundred of his men to remain at the brook Besor with some of their heavier equipment.

It was at about the same vicinity that David's men happened upon a young man lying almost dead in a field. It was as much a matter of general kindness as discretion that they gave the man food and drink until his strength returned and he was able to talk with them. It was then for the first time that David learned with certainty who it was that had ruined his city, for he asked the young man, "To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou?" to which he replied, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire."

Here was a find of the most valuable kind. This man belonged to their enemy and knew where they would be going. This was valuable because the Amalekites were following a wandering and rugged path to make it difficult for any pursuers. To be able to head directly toward their ultimate destination could save much time and many miles. Thus David asked the young man,

"Canst thou bring me down to this company?" But the man was hesitant, for the Amalekites were cruel and he feared lest he fall again into the hands of his master. So he answered, "Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company." But David made the promise and soon they were on their way again.

The time at which David and his men finally came upon the Amalekites was most fortunate. For many days now, they had been marching as forced as their tender captives had been able to bear, while all of the time they had watched carefully for a swifter company which might come to pursue them; but there had been no sign of pursuers at all that they were able to detect. Thus at last, they had come to the conclusion that they could rest a while and celebrate their great victory. And a great victory it was for them indeed. From their captives it had not been difficult to discover that they belonged to the very men who had for so long been mysteriously raiding and destroying so many of their own countrymen. Now with the loot that they had taken, they could celebrate what had happened.

It was a wild orgy that followed as only the heathen could practice them. In wild abandon the men ate and drank and danced until they fell to the ground in utter exhaustion. It was at that point that David and his men came upon the scene. There was no need to wait until morning. The capacity for the Amalekites to fight back ~~was~~ gone, and in the darkness of night the captives ~~would~~ be much safer than in the light of morning. David's men fell upon the camp and took it without a struggle except for four hundred of the Amalekites who managed to make it to their camels.

The joy of the reunion that followed we can only imagine. If the men of David's company were happy, surely much more so were the women and children. What they had undoubtedly suffered already at the

hands of the Amalekites was bad enough to think nothing of the fear and anticipation of what might yet have followed. The way back was much slower but marked with joy and profound gratitude to their God.

Still, as always, there were problems. Not all of David's men were of the same gracious and kind nature as he was, and selfishness was not absent from among them. There were those of his men who were only too willing to enrich themselves at the expense of others; and when at last they came back to the brook Besor where those who had been left behind were waiting, thus the suggestion was brought to David, "Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart."

But David would have none of it. Quickly he remonstrated, "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff; they shall part alike." It was a principle of fairness from which David would not depart.

Even more than this, however, David became once more determined that his future was no longer among the Philistines. It was not the life appointed to him by God, and he would follow it no longer. Ziklag was now in ruins and held nothing for them any longer. It was perhaps as much a discreet means of preparing for his return into Judah and it was a sheer expression of joy that he took of the spoil of the Amalekites and sent it to many cities of Judah with the message, "Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD." It was surely an opportune gesture, for the backing of these cities was soon to be sorely needed.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Kingly Office of Christ

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

Christ is King in a double sense. As God, the second Person of the trinity, as God equal with God, He has an absolute, inherent sovereignty over the entire universe. This dominion is natural, independent, underived. As the Mediator He was appointed a King by the authority of the triune Godhead. His mediatorial dominion is official, derived, given Him as a reward

for the faithful accomplishment of His redemptive work (Phil. 2:7-11).

Dispensationalists have not liked to think of Christ as the King of the Church. They have, generally, agreed with C. I. Scofield in his footnote on Matthew 2:2, "*The King* is one of the divine titles (Ps. 10:16), and so used in the *worship* of the Church (I Tim. 1:17),

but Christ is never called 'King of the Church.' He is 'King of the Jews' (Matt. 2:2) and Lord and 'Head of the Church' (Eph. 1:22, 23).'' This note is omitted from the New Scofield Reference Bible. Yet the "New Edition" states on p. 988, that "Christ is never called King of the Church. 'The King' is indeed one of His divine titles, and the Church joins Israel in exalting 'the King eternal, immortal, invisible' (Ps. 10:6; I Tim. 1:17). The Church is to reign under Him..." Since Dispensationalism distinguishes Israel from the Church, strange are the words, "the Church joins Israel in exalting the King," for natural Israel does not exalt the King, and therefore the Church does not so join Israel!

Further, Dispensationalists have also taught that Christ is not now a king, not since He was rejected as such at the close of His earthly ministry, and is not destined to be a king until His second coming in the millennial kingdom of glory. But it is evident from a comparison of Ps. 2:6-8 ("Yet I *have* set My King upon My holy hill of Zion!") with Acts 13:33 that Christ from His resurrection is King of the Gentiles. He is also King of saints (Rev. 15:3). This He must be, if Heb. 13:8 is true. He is King of the world; for "the kingdom of this world became the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. 11:5, Gk.). When He became King of this Cosmos is clear from Psalm 2 — at His resurrection. For further proof, compare Ps. 2:6, 8 with Matt. 28:18. There is no question that He is King of the Jews. He is the King of Israel (John 1:49), which cannot be understood apart from Gal. 6:16. He also is the King of nations (Jer. 10:7). This is all true, because Christ is King and has a kingdom appointed to Him. (Luke 22:29). It is also true because our Lord bears all the marks of royalty. Kings were anointed to their office (I Sam. 15:17; I Kings 1:39; II Kings 11:12; 23:30). So Christ had been "anointed with the oil of gladness above" His fellows, and that as *King*, as a comparison of Heb. 1:9 with 1:8 shows. Kings were also inaugurated, placed upon a throne, sceptred and crowned; so with Christ. He took the eternal throne, the sceptre of righteousness, and was crowned with glory and honor (1:8 with 2:7, 9). Kings sit on thrones in royal state (I Kings 2:19; 10:18). So Christ sat in the Old Dispensation, as Isaiah saw Him, in vision, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up; and is now set down on His throne with His Father on His throne (Rev. 3:21). Kings send out ambassadors. When the apostles preached, "We are ambassadors for Christ," they recognized Him as their king. Kings reign with authority over their realms. Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18). Scofieldians point out that "Christ is never *called* King of the *Church*" (ital. added). Yet they admit that the Church exalts "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God (I Tim. 1:17)." This can only mean that the Church exalts *its* King. Christ, then, certainly must be King *now*; only at present He is *invisible*! But "in His times He shall *show*" it, that is, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (6:16) shall display the Epiphany!

Then the King shall emerge from His present invisibility.

Christ was King in the O.T. dispensation. As Melchizedek, a type of Christ, was both king of righteousness and king of peace, so also is Christ. For He is Jehovah-tsidkebu, the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). He is the Prince of Peace, but as Melchizedekian antitype, King of Peace. Psalm 45 is the great Psalm of the King reigning over His people (vv. 5, 7, 11, 17). At Sinai and in the wilderness "He was King in Jeshurun (Deut. 33:2-5)." Indeed, prior to Saul, "the Lord your God was your King (I Sam. 12:12)." For "the Lord is King forever" (Ps. 10:16). Zion and her children had a King (Ps. 149:2), the King of Glory (24:7, 8, 10).

Christ was King in His state of humiliation. He was born King of the Jews. At His birth He would be great, be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God would give Him the throne of His father David. "During all the years of the earthly life of the (King), alike while an unconscious babe in the manger and while hanging a dying victim on the cross, the eternal Son of God was exercising His Sovereign dominion over the entire universe." (A. A. Hodge, "Popular Lectures on Theological Themes," 261). His dominion shall continue, for "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk. 1:32f). He was recognized and confessed the King of Israel (Jn. 1:49). When Pilate asked Him, "Art thou a king, then?", He answered, "Thou sayest it! because I am a king!" (18:36f, Gk.). The more enlightened of Jesus' disciples acclaimed Him King and praised God for the heavenly character of His kingdom, saying, "Blessed be the *King* that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace *in heaven*, and glory in the highest (Luke 19:37f)."

Christ was King in His ascension and exaltation. For in that great event, according to Daniel, He ascended in clouds to the Ancient of Days, where before Him, He was given everlasting dominion, glory and a kingdom. In the same passage (Dan. 7:9-14), He himself is seen as the Ancient of Days sitting on His throne, arrayed in a "garment white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool (cp. Rev. 1:13f)." Psalm 24 is an ascension Psalm, exalting the King of Glory. Psalm 47 is an ascension Psalm where it is exulted, "The Lord Most High... is a great King over all the earth. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet! Sing praises unto our (ascended) King! For God is the King of all the earth! God reigneth over the heathen! God sitteth upon the throne... (47:2, 5, 6-8)." Psalm 68 is another ascension Psalm in which we read, "Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men... They have seen Thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary... Sing praises... to Him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens." (See also Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:20-23).

Christ is King now at the right hand of God. There "He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under

His feet (I Cor. 15:25).” For He is “the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5, ASV).” So that now “a Man sits upon the mediatorial throne of the universe. He who stood insulted, despised, condemned at Pilate’s judgment-seat, now sitting at the right hand of God, rules all worlds, as He will hereafter, seated on the great white throne, judge all men.” (A. A. Hodge, “Popular Lectures...” 262).

“How doth Christ execute the office of a king? Christ executeth the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies (SC, 26).” According to the Heidelberg Catechism, Christ is a soteriological King. “Why is He called Christ, that is, Anointed? Because He is ordained of God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our... eternal King, who governs us by His Word and Spirit; and who defends and preserves us in the enjoyment of that salvation He has purchased for us (Q. 31).” Also as King “the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves to Himself, by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life (Q. 54).” How does Christ as King rule and defend us? He does so by His Word and Spirit, so that we as subject-kings submit ourselves more and more to Him, preserve and increase His church, destroy the works of the devil and all violence which would exalt itself against Him, and also all wicked counsels devised against His holy Word, til the full perfection of His kingdom takes place (Q. 123). In the “Reformation

Principles Exhibited by the Reformed Presbyterian Church (USA)” the Testimony of the Covenanters, whose motto is, “For Christ’s Crown and Covenant,” reads, “God manifested in the flesh will never cease to be the Mediator, but as the Prophet, the Priest, and the King, shall remain through eternity in full possession of the glory of God, the Head of His body, the Church (VII, 6).” “Christ Jesus, as the Head of the Church, rules by His infinite power, and in perfect wisdom and justice, over all parts of the inanimate and irrational creation, and over all wicked men and devils; making them, and all their changes, counsels and efforts, subservient to the manifestation of God’s glory, in the system of redemption (XX, 4).”

This truth has a very practical application, which may be made in the following question. Is Christ *our* King? or do we say in our hearts, “we will not have this Man to reign over us (Guke 19:14)?” This is no mere laboratory problem, nor debate theme which Dispensationalists may argue. It is a matter of vital concern to us, and our straight answer to it will reveal whether we are of God or not. If Christ is not our King, in faith and life, then our profession is false, and we are rebels against the King. The question demands whether His will is our law, His Word our rule, His sceptre our authority. By nature we all must confess, “Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over me (Isa. 26:13).” But let us also confess, “God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth (Ps. 74:12).”

SPECIAL FEATURE—

The Reformation and Christian Education

by Rev. D. Engelsma

On October 31, we celebrate the 450th anniversary of the Reformation. On the 31st of October, 1517, Martin Luther posted the 95 theses, an act which God graciously made the onset of the Reformation and the deliverance of His Church. Included among the innumerable and precious benefits of the Reformation, as one of the chiefest of them, is the Christian education of the children of believers.

It is not widely recognized that the practise of educating children, grossly neglected prior to the Reformation, was encouraged and in large part established by the Reformation. In 1524, seven years after the posting of the theses, Luther addressed the civil authorities of all Germany (and those of much of the world) on this matter:

I beg you all, my dear lords and friends, for God’s sake to take care of the poor youth, and thereby, to help us all. So much money is spent year after year for arms, roads, dams, and innumerable similar objects, why should not as much be spent for the education of the poor youth?... It is a sin and shame that we should need to be admonished to educate our children, when nature itself and even the example of the heathen, urge us to do so...

Anticipating an objection, Luther continues:

We admit, you say, there should and must be schools, but what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and other liberal arts? Could we not teach, in German, the Bible and God’s word, which are sufficient for salvation? Answer: Yes, I well know,

alas! that we Germans must ever be and abide brutes and wild beasts, as the surrounding nations call us... The arts and languages, which do us no harm, nay, which are a greater ornament, benefit, honor, and advantage, both for understanding Holy Writ, and for managing civil affairs, we are disposed to despise; and foreign wares, which are neither necessary nor useful to us, and which, moreover, peel us to the very bone, these we are not willing to forego. (quoted in P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VI, pp. 514, 515)

But the education demanded by Luther was a thoroughly Christian education. It is striking that Luther saw the necessity of Christian education for the youth so quickly and so clearly. As early as 1520, a mere three years after he posted the theses, in his powerful work, "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate," Luther wrote:

The universities also need a good, thorough reformation... What else are the universities (schools — DE), if their present condition remains unchanged, than as the book of Maccabees says, "Places for training youth in Greek glory," in which loose living prevails, the Holy Scriptures and the Christian faith are little taught, and the blind, heathen master Aristotle rules alone, even more than Christ... "In truth, much depends upon it (the reform of the schools — DE); for it is here that the Christian youth and the best of our people, with whom the future of Christendom lies, are to be educated and trained. Therefore I consider that there is no work more worthy of pope or emperor than a thorough reformation of the universities, and there is nothing worse or more worthy of the devil than unreformed universities... where the Holy Scriptures do not rule, there I advise no one to send his son. Everyone not unceasingly busy with the Word of God must become corrupt; that is why the people who are in the universities and who are trained there are the kind of people they are... I greatly fear that the universities are wide gates of hell, if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scriptures and impress them on the youth. (Martin Luther, "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility," *Three Treatises*, Muhlenberg Press, 1960, pp. 9-111).

The historian D'Aubigne is correct, therefore, when he says: "It was not the public worship alone that the Reformation was ordained to change. The school was early placed beside the Church; and these two great institutions...were equally reanimated by it." (J. H. Merle D'Aubigne. *History of the Reformation*, Vol. III, p. 172)

From the very beginning, the Reformation emphasized the importance and even the necessity of an education of the children of the Church in all branches of learning that is based upon and permeated by the Word of God. There are several, related reasons for this.

First, the Reformation regarded all of God's people, not only the priests and monks, as prophets. All of God's people can know God and all of God's people are called to praise God. Indeed, to know and to praise God, as a true prophet, is the central, most important aspect of the life of God's child. Implied is the truth basic to Christian instruction, that the children of believers belong to the covenant and Church of God.

Secondly, the Reformation insisted that the entire man belongs to God and is redeemed and justified in order to praise God with all his being and faculties in every sphere of his life. The Reformation simply did not see the new life of liberty as a monastic, hole-in-the-wall kind of life. The lofty calling addressed by the Reformation to the Christian man was not solely to cultivate the piety of his soul. The believer's mind and talents must be developed and utilized, but in strict subservience to the Word of God.

Thirdly, the Reformation saw the oneness of all truth; it saw that ultimately all truth is theology; it saw that the divorcing of any science or branch of learning from the Word of God renders the instruction of that science the teaching of the lie. As D'Aubigne puts it, "The Reformation perceived the close tie that connected all the sciences; it saw that, as all knowledge is derived from God, it leads man back to God" (*ibid.*, p. 175).

In establishing, maintaining and relentlessly advancing our Christian School, we are not doing something new or strange. It can seem so only to those who do not know or do not care about the vital principles of the Reformation. We are showing ourselves genuine sons and daughters of the Reformation.

We do well on this 450th anniversary of the Reformation to note the credentials of Christian education.

We do well to rekindle our zeal for this cause in the fire of the Word of God that, 450 years ago, set the world ablaze.

We do well to provide Christian education for our children over against secular schools whose godlessness and "Biblelessness" are not only obvious but even prescribed by law.

We do well to provide Christian instruction, as those whose all-dominating concern is still that of the Reformation: Through the reign of His Word, let God alone be glorified.

ATTENTION: OFFICEBEARERS

There will be an office-bearers conference January 2, 1968 at 8:00 P.M., at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. All present and former office bearers are invited to attend.

Our speaker is Rev. G. Lubbers who will speak on the subject "Can we accept the baptism of the Romish Church."

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine of Sin

The Second Period — 250-730 AD

The Pelagian Controversy

Pelagianism

by Rev. H. Veldman

Writing on the external history of the Pelagian Controversy, A.D. 411-431, Philip Schaff, in Vol. III of his *History of the Christian Church*, 790ff., writes as follows:

Pelagius was a simple monk, born about the middle of the fourth century in Britain, the extremity of the then civilized world. His British name is said to have been Morgan, that is, of the sea. He was a man of clear intellect, mild disposition, learned culture, and spotless character; even Augustine, with all his abhorrence of his doctrines, repeatedly speaks respectfully of the man. Yet Augustine, not without reason, accused him of duplicity, on account of his conduct at the synod of Diopolis in Palestine, and Wiggers says of him: "It must be admitted that Pelagius was not always sufficiently straightforward; that he did not always express his views without ambiguity; that, in fact, he sometimes in synods condemned opinions which were manifestly his own." He studied the Greek theology, especially that of the Antichian school, and early showed great zeal for the improvement of himself and of the world. But his morality was not so much the rich, deep life of faith, as it was the external legalism, the ascetic self-discipline and self-righteousness of monkery. It was characteristic, that, even before the controversy, he took great offence at the well-known saying of Augustine: "Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt." He could not conceive, that the power to obey the commandment must come from the same source as the commandment itself. Faith, with him, was hardly more than a theoretical belief; the main thing in religion was moral action, the keeping of the commandments of God by one's own strength (of course, this is impossible. If and when we attempt to keep the commandments of the Lord in our own strength, then the fruit will be a merely external deportment, and this is an abomination in the sight of God—H.V.). This is also shown in the introductory remarks of his letter to Demetrias, a noble Roman nun, of the gens Anicia, in which he describes a model virgin as a proof of the excellency of human nature: "As often as I have to speak concerning moral improvement and the leading of a holy

life, I am accustomed first to set forth the power and quality of human nature, and to show what it can accomplish. For never are we able to enter upon the path of the virtues, unless hope, as companion, draws us to them. For every longing after anything dies within us, so soon as we despair of attaining that thing."

In the year 409, Pelagius, already advanced in life, was in Rome, and composed a brief commentary on the Epistles of Paul. This commentary, which has been preserved among the works of Jerome, displays a clear and sober exegetical talent. He labored quietly and peacefully for the improvement of the corrupt morals of Rome, and converted the advocate Coelestius, of distinguished, but otherwise unknown birth, to his monastic life, and to his views. It was from this man, younger, more skillful in argument, more ready for controversy, and more rigorously consistent than his teacher, that the controversy took its rise. Pelagius was the moral author, Coelestius the intellectual author, of the system represented by them. They did not mean actually to found a new system, but believed themselves in accordance with Scripture and established doctrine. They were more concerned with the ethical side of Christianity than with the dogmatic; but their endeavor after moral perfection was based upon certain views of the natural power of the will, and these views proved to be in conflict with anthropological principles which had been developed in the African church for the previous ten years under the influence of Augustine.

In the year, 411, the two friends, thus united in sentiment, left Rome, to escape the dreaded Gothic King Alaric, and went to Africa. They passed through Hippo, intending to visit Augustine, but found that he was just then at Carthage, occupied with the Donatists. Pelagius wrote him a very courteous letter, which Augustine answered in a similar tone; intimating, however, the importance of holding the true doctrine concerning sin. "Pray for me," he said, "that God may really make me that which you already take me to be." Pelagius soon proceeded to Palestine. Coelestius applied for presbyters' orders in Carthage, the very place where he had most reason to expect opposition. This inconsiderate step brought on the crisis. He gained many friends, it is true, by his talents and

his ascetic zeal, but at the same time awakened suspicion by his novel opinions.

The deacon Paulinus of Milan, who was just then in Carthage, and who shortly afterwards at the request of Augustine wrote the life of Ambrose, warned the bishop Aurelius against Coelestius, and at a council held by Aurelius at Carthage in 412, appeared as his accuser. Six or seven errors, he asserted he had found in the writings of Coelestius:

1. Adam was created mortal, and would have died, even if he had not sinned.

2. Adam's fall injured himself alone, not the human race.

3. Children come in the world in the same condition in which Adam was before the fall.

4. The human race neither dies in consequence of Adam's fall, nor rises again in consequence of Christ's resurrection.

5. Unbaptized children, as well as others, are saved.

6. The law, as well as the gospel, leads to the kingdom of heaven.

7. Even before Christ there were sinless men.

The principal propositions were the second and third, which are intimately connected, and which afterwards became the especial subject of controversy.

Coelestius returned evasive answers. He declared the propositions to be speculative questions of the schools, which did not concern the substance of the faith, and respecting which different opinions existed in the church. He refused to recant the errors charged upon him, and the synod excluded him from the communion of the church. He immediately went to Ephesus, and was there ordained presbyter.

Augustine had taken no part personally in these transactions. But as the Pelagian doctrines found many adherents even in Africa and in Sicily, he wrote several treatises in refutation of them so early as 412 and 415, expressing himself, however, with respect and forbearance.

Then, writing on the Pelagian Controversy in Palestine, Philip Schaff continues and writes as follows:

Meanwhile, in 414, the controversy broke out in Palestine, where Pelagius was residing, and where he had aroused attention by a letter to the nun Demetrias. His opinions gained much wider currency there, especially among the Origenists; for the Oriental church had not been at all affected by the Augustinian views, and accepted the two ideas of freedom and grace, without attempting to define their precise relation to each other. But just then there happened to be in Palestine two Western theologians, Jerome and Orosius; and they instituted opposition to Pelagius (how Divinely providential, that these men "happened" at that time to be in Palestine — H.V.).

Jerome, who lived a monk at Bethlehem, was at first decidedly favorable to the synergistic theory of the Greek fathers (that God and man must cooperate. The freedom of the will was rather widely accepted in the very early church — H.V.), but at the same time agreed with Ambrose and Augustine in the doctrine of the absolutely universal corruption of sin. But from an enthusiastic admirer of Origen he had been changed to a bitter enemy. The doctrine of Pelagius concerning free will and the moral ability of human nature he attributed to the influence of Origen and Rufinus; and

he took as a personal insult an attack of Pelagius on some of his writings. He therefore wrote against him, though from wounded pride and contempt he did not even mention his name; first in a letter answering inquiries of a certain Ctesiphon at Rome (415; then more at length in a dialogue of three books against the Pelagians, written towards the end of the year 415, and soon after the acquittal of Pelagius by the synod of Jerusalem. Yet in this treatise and elsewhere Jerome himself teaches the freedom of the will, and only a conditional predestination of divine foreknowledge, and thus, with all his personal bitterness against the Pelagians, stands on Semi-Pelagian ground, though Augustine eulogizes the dialogue.

A young Spanish ecclesiastic, Paul Orosius, was at that time living with Jerome for the sake of more extended study, and had been sent to him by Augustine with letters relating to the Origenistic and Pelagian controversy.

At a diocesan synod, convoked by the bishop John of Jerusalem in June, 415, this Orosius appeared against Pelagius, and gave information that a council at Carthage had condemned Coelestius, and that Augustine had written against his errors. Pelagius answered with evasion and disparagement: "What matters Augustine to me?" Orosius gave his opinion, that a man who presumed to speak contumeliously of the bishop to whom the whole North African church owed her restoration (alluding apparently to the settlement of the Donatist controversies), deserved to be excluded from the communion of the whole church. John, who was a great admirer of the condemned Origen, and made little account of the authority of Augustine, declared: "I am Augustine," and undertook the defence of the accused. He permitted Pelagius, although only a monk and layman, to take his seat among the presbyters. Nor did he find fault with Pelagius' assertion, that man can easily keep the commandments of God, and become free from sin, after the latter had conceded, in a very indefinite manner, that for this the help of God is necessary. Pelagius had the advantage of understanding both languages, while John spoke only Greek, Orosius only Latin, and the interpreter often translated inaccurately. After much discussion it was resolved, that the matter should be laid before the Roman bishop, Innocent, since both parties in the controversy belonged to the Western church. Meanwhile these should refrain from all further attacks on each other.

The Lord willing, we will continue with this in our following article. This Pelagian controversy, also as far as its historical development is concerned, must be of great interest to us. At this time, we would make one remark. John, we read, did not find fault with Pelagius' assertion that man can easily keep the commandments of God, and become free from sin, after Pelagius had conceded, in a very indefinite manner, that for this the help of God was necessary. This only proves that we must be so very careful when dealing with heretics. We must never be led astray by any pious remarks which they may make. These so-called pious remarks can never undo the wrong they declare and teach.

ALL AROUND US—

Ecumenical Notes

by Prof. H. Hanko

As is so often true these days, the news is of the ecumenical variety.

Two issues ago we called attention in the *Standard Bearer* to the fact that the Gereformeerde Kerken had sent a letter of confession of sin to the "Liberated Churches." This was, no doubt, in the hopes of attaining reconciliation. But the Gereformeerde Kerken did not stop there. They also sought closer contact with the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Not the Christian Reformed Church in this country with whom they already have fraternal relations.) Conversations with the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands have been going on since 1959, but have not had much success. The Christian Reformed Churches fear (and rightly so) that the Gereformeerde Kerken are too interested in union with the Hervormde (State) Kerk. They also are afraid that the Gereformeerden have left the teaching of the Confessions, have become very worldly, and have gone far in the direction of union with the World Council of Churches. These fears are certainly justified and ought to serve to give the Christian Reformed Church pause in these negotiations. If there are any there who still love the truth and the cause of Christ they surely will.

* * *

Another item concerning the Gereformeerde Kerken appearing in the *R.E.S. Newsletter* reads as follows:

The General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken) decided to establish official relations with the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands. The decision was occasioned by the pastoral council of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed churches could not be present at the Council because they had no official relationship. There are now 18 professors, ministers and others however, who are involved in the various activities of the Council.

In January the Synod hopes to issue a communique jointly with the Roman Catholic Episcopate on the meaning of baptism and the mutual recognition of the administration of this sacrament.

Another item of ecumenical interest appearing in the *R.E.S. Newsletter* reads as follows:

The Joint Committee of the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. on Church Union met in Atlanta, Georgia, September 6-8 to continue their preparation of documents as bases for the proposed new Presbyterian Reformed Church in America.

The committee of 24 gave considerable time to more than 1,000 letters received offering comments and suggestions concerning the first two sections of the study draft of a Plan of Union dealing with the Form of Government and the Worship and Work of the Church and Its Discipline. A third section concerning the Witness and Scripture Principles of a New United Church and Theology is expected to be ready for distribution shortly.

The committee voted that as soon as the new Presbyterian Reformed Church is constituted, the formulation of a new Confession "be taken without delay." The new Confession, said the committee, should be "as broadly Christian as possible, while faithful to the Reformed tradition." The committee to write such a new Confession would have equal representation from the two merging churches, and would also be charged with involving the new church in studies of the historic Reformed creeds and contemporary statements of faith. The existing doctrinal standards of both denominations are being proposed as the confessional basis of the new church.

A transition commission on Witness and Structure, consisting of twelve members from each denomination, is to be named at the constituting meeting of the new church, to plan the structure of the new church. This committee will be given the task of redesigning the organizational chart of all the program boards and agencies of the new church.

This commission will also have the task, "in close cooperation with the lower judicatories (presbyteries and classes, synods and particular synods), to study, develop, and propose to the General Assembly a plan for the reorganization of existing lower judicatories into more effective units for carrying out the business and mission of the church (possibly in the form of regional presbyteries)."

The committee voted specific time stipulations in its proposed provisions for withdrawal of a congregation from the new denomination. The agreement would bring all congregations of both communions into the

new church for a period of one year. After that time, a congregation would be allowed to withdraw, with its property, during the second year. Thereafter, none would be permitted to withdraw.

A suggestion that the same provision for the withdrawal of a congregation be written into the Form of Government for any future union was made by two Reformed Church members on the committee, who reported that many people in their areas were greatly concerned about possible later unions under discussion even now, and that such a standing provision would gain support for the present proposed union. There was little comment, and apparently little interest given to such a provision for possible future mergers.

The Committee of 24 also approved for publication a Statement containing a number of proposals for a more radical restructuring of the new church. These are not to be written into the Plan of Union, but will be published in the third book of the committee's first draft of a union plan. Some of these proposals were described as a "creative structuring" which would enlist the support of the "avant garde" in both denominations who may be interested in a more radical reorganization of present structures in the interest of a more tightly knit church organization and greater centralization of authority.

* * *

While more liberal churchmen have been capturing the ecclesiastical headlines with their ecumenical maneuverings, evangelicals have been not far behind.

A year ago the first efforts towards evangelical alliance were made at the World Congress on Evangelism. A lot of speeches were made at that meeting, but nothing concrete was accomplished. One important development however was the adoption of a working definition of evangelism which reads:

Evangelism is the proclamation of the Gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, the only Redeemer of men, according to the Scriptures, with the purpose of persuading condemned and lost sinners to put their trust in God by receiving and accepting Christ as Saviour through the power of the Holy Spirit, and to serve Christ as Lord in every calling of life and in the fellowship of his Church, looking forward toward the day of his coming in glory.

While we have no intention of entering into a detailed discussion of this definition which is quite unacceptable on the basis of Scripture, it ought to be pointed out that there are serious doctrinal errors as well as important omissions. The definition hints, at least, of a universal atonement in the phrase "the only Redeemer of men." It speaks of the preaching of the gospel in terms of its purpose to *persuade* condemned and lost sinners, totally ignoring the fundamental truth that the gospel is God's power of salvation. It pointedly omits any reference to the relation between the eternal decree of election, the cross of Christ and the preaching of the gospel which would, in the nature of the case, force an entirely new definition.

But however that may be, this World Congress on Evangelism was followed up last September by a meeting of evangelicals in a motor hotel just across the

Potomac River from the nation's capital. Represented at this meeting were forty delegates from more than thirteen denominations including Baptist, Presbyterians, Reformed, Christian Reformed (represented by Dr. Anthony Hoekema from Calvin Seminary), Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran and Churches of Christ. The meetings were chaired in turn by Carl F. H. Henry and Billy Graham.

According to *Christianity Today*, this series of meetings went beyond the Congress held in Berlin last year in that, while last year the task and methods of evangelism were discussed, at this meeting the representatives explored ways of furthering cooperation among evangelicals in fields other than evangelism and in facing the pressing problems of these days by closer contact among evangelical churches.

The following areas were suggested as worthy of consideration for fields of cooperation:

Local fellowship of biblically minded clergy with a view to common evangelical witness and action.

Enlistment of the laity in larger fulfillment of the demands of Christian discipleship and vocation.

A special witness for biblical perspectives to the laity and to theological students, perhaps through a seminary-level Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.

A selective theological journal or monograph series on key issues, and perhaps a comprehensive evangelical book program.

A probing of mass media visibility for evangelical concerns, perhaps in a conference shaped by Evangelical Press Association.

A consultation to consider effective evangelical confrontation of secular ideas and ideals in the realm of education and learning.

This much the meeting accomplished concretely: it endorsed a proposal for a nationwide cooperative evangelistic campaign to be held in 1973. A committee of ten men was appointed to study the feasibility of such meetings in 1973 and to begin to coordinate church efforts.

Strikingly enough *Christianity Today* reported that "theological and ecclesiastical differences were not discussed at the Key Bridge Meeting." This was interpreted favorably as meaning that "participants made no move to compromise present denominational loyalties, and there were no proposals for a new organization."

However, this remains the crux of the question. In our opinion there is little point in any evangelical cooperation of any sort unless there is an honest and forthright attempt made to do exactly what the meeting did not do: discuss theological and ecclesiastical differences. This must be done before any efforts towards cooperation are made. This must be done on the basis of Scripture. "How shall two walk together except they be agreed?"

If this is not done, the venture becomes little more than a competing organization or effort which sets up some rivalry with the existing ecumenical endeavors. And this will produce nothing.

PAGES FROM THE PAST—

On-Going Reformation

(Note: This is the third installment of a translation of a series of articles by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema on the subject, "*Voortgaande Reformatie*," written thirty-seven years ago.)

Reformation of the Churches always has two sides, should always manifest those two aspects in order that it may really be Reformation in the full and good sense of the word.

It has a positive and a negative side.

It is strengthening and upbuilding, as well as combative and demolishing. It is a mortification of the wrong and sinful life in the bosom of the Churches; but it is also, and not less, an enlivening of the life of the Spirit in the Body of Christ.

It is, therefore, not unlike the conversion of a child of God. This consists, as the Heidelberg Catechism describes it, in the two parts of the quickening of the new man and the mortification of the old man: two aspects of the one, true conversion to God which are inseparably connected with each other. You never find the one without the other. The mortification of the old man without the quickening of the new man is inconceivable. Nor can you conceive of a quickening of the new man which is not accompanied by a mortification of the old man. The first, the quickening of the new man, does not consist in an ever-continuing process of regeneration: for there always remains, also in him who has advanced farthest on the way of conversion and sanctification and who therefore would have the right to the name of "holiest," only a small beginning of the obedience in Christ. But it consists in a sincere joy in God through Christ, through which the child of God becomes ever richer and stronger in the faith that he is a partaker of the everlasting benefits of salvation in Him, increasingly rejoices in his justification, his personal sonship, and in the forgiveness of sins; and that indeed in the way of a steadily growing love and delight to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God, and to be pleasing to Him. The new man in Christ arises, makes his influence more consciously experienced, and begins to dominate more and more the entire life of the child of God. And the mortification of the old man does not consist, as it is only too often presented, in a continuing process in which the child of God is increasingly rid of his old nature: for that old nature remains even until death, and he is not delivered from the body of this death until the moment when he dies. But it does consist in a becoming ever more keenly conscious of sin, and in a hearty sorrow

that we have provoked the Lord God with our sins and continue to provoke Him; and this is accompanied by an ever stronger desire and mightier striving, with watching and prayer, to hate sin more and more and to flee from it.

The Christian, therefore, cannot be a perfectionist.

Perfection, the condition in which he is completely delivered from all the onslaughts of sin and of Satan, in which all struggle and strife have ceased, in which all watching and prayer against the powers of darkness have become unnecessary, the Christian does not expect on this side of the grave. He is and remains a fighting Christian, who always, again and again, puts on the whole armor of God, that he may wrestle against the powers of temptation in the world and in his own heart.

Now thus it is also with respect to the Reformation of the Churches.

He who understands things correctly does not expect here upon earth a perfect Church of perfect saints; he will be on his guard against separating himself from a certain manifestation of the Church in the midst of the world merely because he does not find perfection in its midst. Such a striving could only lead to Darbyism, or to the dream of the Labadists, whose ideal was to bring to manifestation a congregation of pure saints and perfect, regenerated people of God. Separatism and sectarianism is then the inevitable consequence. Those who hold such views then finally reject the Church; and they seek their strength in this, that they present the Church as bad and as corrupt as possible, in order then to await the coming of Christ as separate groups of saints who stand on a higher level.

With such fanaticism, which militates against Scripture and does not reckon with reality, the child of God who has a healthy and Scriptural conception of the Church militant does not go along. He does not expect a perfect Church upon earth any more than he expects a perfect Christian upon earth. And this is his outlook because of all the various factors which we summed up in our first article.

Precisely for this reason he considers Reformation of the Churches to be necessary, even as he considers continuous conversion necessary for the Christian personally.

But also that Reformation of the Churches always has two sides which are inseparably connected with one another, both of which are indispensable in all true Reformation.

Even as there is in the conversion of the individual

child of God a quickening of the new man, so it also belongs to all Reformation of the Churches that there be upbuilding and strengthening, an awakening and a dominance of the life of the Spirit in the Church's entire manifestation of life in the midst of the world, whereby the Church comes to know an ever more hearty joy in God through Christ, finds itself ever richer in Him, and ever more consciously appropriates to itself the blessings of salvation which are in Him. And all this is accompanied by an inner desire and an earnest striving to be pleasing unto the Lord and to proclaim His virtues in word and in walk. But to this belongs also the other side, which is comparable to the mortification of the old man in the Christian, and which consists herein, that in the life of the Church everything which is not of Christ, but which is of sin and of the world and of the devil is opposed, suppressed, purged out, and conquered.

This two-fold Reformation of the Churches then penetrates into and comes to manifestation in the entire life of the Church as such, in its living and in its formulated confession, in the exercise of Christian discipline and in church government, in its worship and its administration of the Word and of the sacraments, - everywhere that living power of a sound Reformation takes hold, with the result of an enlivening and upbuilding of that which is of Christ, and the expurgation and suppression, the condemnation and mortification of that which is of sin in its midst, which always and again reveals itself.

Neither of these two aspects of the Reformation of the Churches can ever be missed. Mere condemnation and combatting of wrong elements is not enough.

It is indeed rather easy, - and this danger is also more than imaginary, to think in connection with the Reformation of the Churches solely of the negative side, to point to the manifestation of wrong elements, which must be condemned and rooted out. But a Church which does nothing else than this is doomed and dies. Positive upbuilding and continuous strengthening and development always constitute the chief element in the reformation of the Churches.

Emphasis, therefore, must always be laid upon both aspects. Only then does the Church show that it strives after genuine Reformation when the positive awakening and strengthening go hand in hand with the combatting and the rooting out of evil.

Now we speak in the title above these essays of "On-Going Reformation."

Reformation, we must remember, can take place in various ways, can assume widely different forms, although essentially it always remains the same and has the same end in view.

In the first place, it can assume the form of secession.

And it always *should* assume this form as soon as it has become apparent that it is impossible to reform the Church within the Church.

It lies in the nature of the case that secession cannot and may not wait, - hence, historically also never has waited, - until a certain church communion has

become in the absolute sense the *false church*.

Through such a waiting the Church would founder, would render its own reformation impossible.

Purposely we wish to call attention to this for a moment.

Many seem to be of the opinion that all separation must be condemned as long as one cannot say of a certain church communion that it has become entirely the false church.

And then the question arises: when has a church become the false church?

The answers to this question are widely divergent, and they are not infrequently controlled by the circumstances under which one is called upon to answer it. The marks of the true church are well known. They are the pure preaching of God's Word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. And therewith it is at the same time indicated how one may recognize the false church. Where the administration of the Word is not pure, where the sacraments are not administered according to that Word, and where the keys of the kingdom are no longer used, there you have the false church.

Nevertheless, the distinguishing marks of the true and of the false church are tolerably elastic when it comes to the practical application of them. There seem to be all kinds of degrees of difference in the trueness and the falseness of the Church on earth. If the Church only revealed itself definitely and fully as either the true or the false church, there would be no difficulty. If the case were only thus, that in the administration of the Word the Church either maintained the full truth or decisively and entirely rejected it, then it would be simple enough in actual practice. But such is not the case. Here one element, and there another element of the truth is denied; here the sacraments are changed into idolatry, and there you find open communion, and elsewhere their real sacramental character is denied. And in the same way there are also varying degrees between the proper use of the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the persecution of true believers. And now everything depends upon which standard one applies in judging the Church in order to come to an answer to the question whether a certain church fellowship may be called true or false church. If you assume the broadest viewpoint, namely, that the true Church is always found yet where they still seek salvation in the blood of Christ, and where the cross of Christ is still preached in the administration of the Word, and if you also insist that secession is unjustified as long as there is yet but the weakest manifestation of the true Church, then it lies in the nature of the case that there will hardly ever be a secession which can pass the test of the Word of God. On this basis, one would never be permitted to secede and to form a new denomination where, for example, the doctrine of predestination is not purely preached or is even denied and opposed. They preach then, indeed, an atonement in the blood of Christ, but one which is dependent upon man's choice of will as far as its application is concerned. And thus many elements of

the truth could be denied before a secession would be justified before the tribunal of the Lord.

On this broad basis, one could not even call the Romish Church a false church.

And on this same basis one would be compelled to condemn the Secession (of 1834) and the *Doleantie* in the Netherlands.

A secession would not even be justified, for example, should a Reformed church lapse into Baptist tendencies and refuse to baptize the seed of the covenant.

Practically, then, this position is untenable. Also here we shall have to hold to the position of our own confession. And then, for one who is Reformed, nothing less than one's own church is the true Church in the full sense of the word, that is, the purest manifestation of the Body of Christ. He does not intend to say thereby that only in his own Church the true believers are found. He does not mean thereby that all other church denominations are to be condemned and classified under the heading: the false church. But he certainly intends to maintain that in the measure that a certain Church departs from the Reformed administration of the Word and of the sacraments and from the Reformed view and maintenance of the key power, in that same measure such a Church also manifests the marks of the false church. He who proclaims the doctrine of free will departs from the truth; and a Church which in its ministry of the Word maintains and defends that doctrine manifests in that respect a mark of the false church. He who denies infant baptism and despises the covenant of God departs from God's Word; and a Church which refuses to acknowledge the children of the Church as the seed of the covenant has become in that respect false Church. A Church which opens the table of the Lord to all and does not ban the ungodly from its midst has become false church with respect to Christian discipline. Along this line you can continue. And therefore, one who is Reformed can never do anything else with respect to this question than to stand upon the basis of his own confession and, judging accordingly, to follow up his calling to join himself to the purest manifestation of the Body of Christ.

Matters, however, do not stand thus, that the signal for secession must or may be given upon the very first manifestation of departure with respect to any point of the truth or in the life of the Church. This would lead to separatism. The Church on earth is never perfect and is, therefore, always inclined to go astray. For this reason, then it is also always the calling of believers to oppose such departure, to pray against it, to fight against it, to reform the Church within the Church, as long as possible, to the very end, as long as there is any reason to hope for restoration. This is why we wrote that secession becomes our calling as soon as it appears impossible to reform the Church within the Church. When the wicked are in command, when those who err are not only in the majority, but also occupy high places, so that error has not only found its way into the Church but is also defended by the Church as such, while the truth is trampled under foot and condemned; when the sacraments are not only

desecrated, but when this desecration is also officially defended and protected, while all protest is suppressed; when discipline is not only weakened, but is also systematically condemned, so that all exercise of church discipline appears impossible; and when they who love the truth have raised the trumpet to their lips and sounded the alarm again and again, but without result, - then it may be true that in such a Church fellowship salvation is still sought in the blood of Christ in a very general sense of the word, but the Reformed believer cannot endure it there any longer, may also not remain there, but is indeed called to separate himself and to strive after the pure manifestation of the Body of Christ.

Usually, however, in history this question of the proper moment of secession resolves itself spontaneously.

When the Church departs, he who blows the trumpet and calls to repentance without a favorable result always meets with opposition. When a Church does not listen to the protest of those who would maintain the truth purely, then that Church, under the guidance of evil leaders, will sooner or later arrive at the point that it persecutes the faithful and finally casts them out.

This was really true of Luther. As is well known, he did not intend to break with the Church. When he nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the church at Wittenburg, he did not intend separation, but protest; he did not intend a breach, but Reformation of the Church within the Church. It was finally the papal ban that struck him and forced him out of the Romish Church. His attempt at Church Reformation encountered bitter opposition and resulted in persecution. He was *compelled* to form a new church communion.

It was no different with Hendrik De Cock. His protest and his preaching were not tolerated by the enemies. The ecclesiastical boards finally forced him out of the fellowship of the existing Church.

And thus it usually goes.

It was no different in our own history.

Our separation was forced upon us.

We must never forget this. It is true that lately there are those who would present the matter differently. One hears many voices which lament the fact that we no longer have a place in the Christian Reformed Churches. And then they condemn it that we went out of the Church.

Such, however, is not the case.

Personally we never had any thought of forsaking the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches. On the contrary, we did everything possible, consistent with the maintenance of the truth, to remain in that fellowship. Personally, when it became plain that the case was proceeding to an evil conclusion, in order to fulfill all righteousness, we finally offered the Classis to allow ourselves to be examined on the ground of Scripture and the confession. But nothing could avail. They demanded that we subscribe to the un-Reformed Three Points, or at least promise that we would not fight against them. And that we might not do. For we had promised before God and the Churches

that we would maintain the Reformed truth. And the Three Points are not Reformed, but essentially Arminian and Pelagian, a denial of the confession. We could therefore do nothing else than refuse submission to the demand of the Classis.

And then the Classis simply trampled all Reformed church polity under foot, deposed my consistory, suspended me, and soon thereafter put me out of office, and thus compelled us to form our own church communion.

What happened to us was also the experience of the congregation of Kalamazoo and the congregation at Hope, Riverbend.

These are the facts.

And these facts may not now be distorted.

On our part, there was protest against the increasing corruption of the truth through the emphasis of the

false theory of Common Grace, and also against the accompanying retrogression in Christian life.

On its part, the Church opposed our protest, -not the Church in its entirety, but nevertheless under the guidance of its prominent leaders. They forbade us to protest. They would enforce silence upon us. They demanded submission to their teachings and practices of men. And because of our persistent refusal, they finally banned us out of their fellowship.

Hence, it is also true of our "secession" that it did not take place until it had become fully evident that all Reformation of the Church within the Churches was impossible.

And the Protestant Reformed Churches have before the tribunal of God the right of existence; and they are the purest manifestation of the Body of Christ.

That is our sacred conviction!

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Prof. H. Hanko,
4665 Ju-le-on Drive, S.W.,
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of the Hope Protestant Church of Redlands, Calif., hereby expresses its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. H. Veldman, in the loss of her brother,

MR. H. P. VAN DYKEN

May the Lord grant to her comfort with His Word and Spirit. Ps. 73:26 — "My flesh and heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Rev. C. H. Hanko, Pres.

Mrs. A. Karsemeyer, Sec'y.

ANNIVERSARY

On December 17, 1967, our beloved parents

MR. AND MRS. PETER HOEKSTRA

hope to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are grateful to our God for having spared them for each other and for us. Our prayer is that God may continue to bless them in the future as He has thus far, and may they always experience that God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Brummel
Mr. and Mrs. George Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Ted Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Bert Van Maanen
Mr. and Mrs. Ray Brunsting
Mr. and Mrs. John Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Pete Hoekstra
Rev. and Mrs. Alvin Mulder
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoekstra
and 64 grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

It pleased our heavenly Father to take out of our midst by the cold hand of death an elder and fellow member of our congregation at the age of 89 years

ARIE A. VAN WEELDEN

We, the consistory, are comforted in the truth that for our departed brother to live was Christ and that therefore for him to die is gain. Philippians 1:21. And our prayer is that of the Psalmist, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants and Thy glory unto their children." Psalm 90:16.

The Consistory of the Pella, Iowa
Protestant Reformed Church

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

The Beacon Lights November Hymnsing was held in Southeast Church with a capacity crowd joining in the spirited singing. Charles Westra, youth leader in Southeast Church, led the singing with an assist from Edw. Ophoff who directed a few numbers. Eunice Hoeksema was at the organ, and Dianne Hauck augmented the accompaniment with the piano. A small band had also been invited to swell the instrumental praise. In the final numbers the organ, piano, band, and human voices joined in a mighty chorus that filled the auditorium as suggested in Psalm 150. Miss Pat Kamps gave a reading entitled "Rejoice," which, when she had finished, she announced to be a "meditation" by the late Rev. H. Hoeksema found in a 1933 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. Something has happened to hymnsings lately — they are drawing bigger and bigger crowds that like to sing!

* * *

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema delivered a lecture in Pella, Iowa, November 9, the same he gave at the Reformation Day Rally in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was privileged to speak to an appreciative audience of about 150, and the committee reports that there is evidence of an awakening in the Pella area, which is heartening in this age of apostasy. There certainly is need for a spiritual "Paul Revere" to sound the tocsin that an enemy is coming to seize from us our Reformed heritage. Coming? No, *is* in the pulpits and seminary seats of our land, undermining the foundations so jealously laid by the Reformation fathers. May we continue to be willing servants of our King to sound this alarm.

* * *

The Young Peoples' Societies of Michigan held a Thanksgiving Mass Meeting in Southwest Church Sunday afternoon, Nov. 19. Don Offringa, vice-president of the host society, led in opening devotions, and introduced the speaker, Rev. Van Baren, of First Church. The topic of the speech was, "Thanksgiving — Its Practical Aspect for Young People." About 200 young folk were in attendance, quite filling the auditorium. An un-accompanied flute duet by Donna Knoper and Beth Westra was one of the special numbers. Also included in the "specials" was a girls quartette from Hudsonville — Judy Holstege, Marian Lubbers, Joanne Lubbers and Donna Kuiper, with Evelyn Lubbers at the piano. The Young People's Federation sponsored and Southwest hosted this get-together, a worthwhile Sunday afternoon activity.

* * *

Lynden's congregation was asked to decide on a proposal by the consistory, in their annual meeting, to build a "cry room" in the back lobby of their church; and First's consistory proposed to their men a

rejuvenation of the lighting system in the auditorium using indirect lighting and spotlighting in strategic places to bring the illumination up to par.

* * *

Quiet Thought found in Southeast's bulletin: "No man can live wrong and pray right. No man can pray right and live wrong."

* * *

Appearing in the area bulletins is an advance notice that Adams St. School will present their Christmas program in First Church, Dec. 21.

* * *

Did you know that Rev. R. Decker, of Doon, Iowa has received the call from South Holland, Ill.? and that Rev. G. Van Baren has declined the call he had received from Hull, Iowa?

* * *

The name of Oak Lawn's Young People's Society made news in their bulletin in three announcements: first, that they were traveling to Randolph, Wisc. to meet with that society Friday evening for an evening of Bible discussion, debate and other special numbers; secondly, that the consistory had asked them to prepare the annual Christmas Program; thirdly, that they were also planning a December 24th Singspiration.

* * *

Bulletin Quote (Oak Lawn's): The work is solemn ...therefore do not trifle; the work is difficult... therefore do not relax; the opportunity is brief... therefore do not delay; the path is narrow...therefore do not wander; the prize is glorious...therefore do not faint.

* * *

Have you noticed that the majority of news items on this page concern the young people? It seems that any activity worth noting was performed by our "teen-agers" who have absolutely nothing in common with their contemporaries in the world.

* * *

Scripture literally being fulfilled today: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof..." Paul, in writing to Timothy prophetically saw the close of our 20th century. He ended this graphic description of our neighbors with this solemn admonition; "From such turn away". Do you?

...see you in church

J.M.F.