

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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**Editorials: The Christian Reformed Synod
and the "Dekker Case"**

**Consistorial Supervision of
Catechetical Instruction**

Reactions to the Dekker Decisions (see: All Around Us)

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MEDITATION—

Putting on Christian Virtues

by Rev. M. Schipper

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Colossians 3:12, 13

Therefore!

Significant word appearing in the introduction of this portion of Holy Writ! It has a twofold significance. On the one hand, it points to a conclusion, to something that follows out of something that precedes;

and on the other, it calls for consistency, that is, if that which precedes is true then that which follows should be in harmony with it.

To apply this to the text and the context at hand, the argument of the apostle goes something like this:

If we confess that we are Christ's and are risen with Him, then our life and walk must be consistent with our confession. If we claim that in principle we are putting off the old man with his deeds and putting on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, then we will be busy putting on bowels of mercies, etc.

Putting on Christian virtues!

Figurative language!

As one puts on clothing wherewith to cover himself, and being covered to thus make his appearance before others; so must these virtues be donned, and without them we should not be seen!

Put on bowels of mercies!

The term "bowels" refers properly to the vital, internal organs of the body, such as the heart, lungs, liver, intestines, etc., which were considered by the ancients as the seat of all emotions and affections, of all passions, good and bad. Rightly considered, however, the term undoubtedly refers to the heart, out of which are all the issues of life, which is the seat of all our thinking, willing, all our emotions from a spiritual-ethical point of view.

When the apostle speaks of bowels "of mercies" he qualifies this seat of emotion and affection. The mercy here signifies compassion, pity, and sympathy, so that the seat of the affection is characterized as having the quality of sympathetic pity and compassion, and as such is considered by the apostle as the fountain and source of all the other virtues he here enumerates. That is, kindness, lowliness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering have their beginning in this seat of the affections. And the relation is such that there is graduation in these concepts. Each added virtue adds to the original mercy, and longsuffering, which is mentioned last, is undoubtedly that which makes up the fulness of the concept mercy.

Kindness!

A most beautiful word as it is the expression of a most beautiful grace! It is a grace that pervades and penetrates the whole nature, mellowing there all which has the natural tendency to be harsh and austere. It signifies benevolence and sweetness of disposition as shown in the intercourse with others.

Lowliness or humbleness of mind!

One who possesses this virtue has a humble opinion of self. Such an one has a deep sense of littleness. It springs from the sense of unworthiness, of dependence, and finds its first expression in the confession of sin. When it is displayed over against another, it always deems the other better than oneself.

Meekness!

So closely related to the preceding virtue because it is only the humble heart which is also meek. One who is truly meek does not puff himself up as being better than others, but confesses freely his own unworthiness. It desires to see the other exalted rather than self.

Longsuffering!

One who possesses this virtue is able long to hold out before he gives room to action or passion. It expresses the willingness to bear reproaches and all evil treatment of the object that is loved.

All these virtues are characteristic of the new man! They are the reflection of the image of Christ as it comes to manifestation in the redeemed and regenerated sinner. And strikingly all of these virtues are intended to be displayed by the child of God to others. His heart is full of mercy and compassion. His disposition is kindly and beneficently disposed toward others. He has a deep sense of moral littleness which esteems other better than himself. He is always ready and willing to confess his own sin first before he is ready to point out the sin in others. And he is ready to suffer abuse and reproach of others, so long as he may thereby show that he has been with Jesus, and show to those who bring the abuse and reproach that they are the objects of the love which dwells in the heart of the one who is longsuffering.

Putting these virtues on!

But how shall we put on what is principally and essentially spiritual and internal?

Surely all these virtues which the apostle enumerates here are spiritual, and as such are invisible qualities of the inward man. However, when the apostle says that these must be put on, he means that we are to allow them to become manifest in our conduct. Not, you understand in the sense in which we often speak of "put on." For the apostle would never exhort us to hypocritically show off what really was not there; though it is possible that one with a vain show of piety can sometimes imitate these virtues, while in heart never mean them. But certainly no real child of God will merely show off or manifest what he really does not possess. Nay, rather, when he puts on these virtues it becomes outwardly seen what he already possesses inwardly and spiritually.

A continual act!

Indeed, the actual putting on of the new man takes place once, principally, when the child of God is regenerated, born again from above, when the Holy Spirit of Christ makes us partakers of the image of Christ, when our spiritually dead and corrupt heart is renewed, and we are changed from haters to lovers of God, His Christ, His people. But in the process of sanctification there is a continual putting on and putting off. When we are changed, we are changed principally, which means there is only a beginning of new obedience. But it lies in the very nature of this work of the Holy Spirit that it cannot stop with the mere implanting of the seed. The seed must grow, the new life must needs come to outward manifestation. It would be a contradiction to say that we have put on the new man, and not these virtues. The process must continue until the full new man is complete.

Forbearing one another!

Forgiving one another!

So this putting on of Christian virtues is brought to manifestation. In our Christian experience it is possible that offences will arise, though we should never seek them, and much less be the occasion for them. Offences may arise for many different reasons. Sometimes Christians because of their natures may become troublesome persons. They seem to delight in strutting about with a chip on their shoulder. They are

often great fault finders. They are people you could wish were delivered completely of the old man of sin and translated to heaven, so that you would not have to deal any longer with them. Then again, often these offences arise out of misunderstanding, or perhaps through lack of tact. Then again, they may be occasioned through some physical condition or weakness. Perhaps one is run down physically, so that we say his nerves have run away with him, and he says more or less than he ought to say, and he may do or say things which in a more reserved moment he would never do or say. Consequently friction results, sparks fly, and when these sparks fly long and fast enough, the result is a huge conflagration. What then should the Christian do? How must he act when there is something between him and the other? Should the sparks be allowed to start a fire? Or, should there be a withdrawal, and the position assumed that gives the heated person a long time to cool off?

The apostle exhorts: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ (or the Lord) forgave you, so also do ye!

Forbearing one another!

Longsuffering and forbearance are different. This is true especially as these two virtues are found in God Himself. Then longsuffering reflects His attitude over against His beloved people, while forbearance reflects His attitude over against the wicked. He bears with them just so long as He suffers with His people. He does not destroy them until they have served His purpose with them. But when these virtues are found in us, then we are longsuffering when we endure the reproaches of those whom we love, and we bear with their sin until they come to repentance, and seek for forgiveness. We do not condone their sin, but we bear with it, not returning evil for evil.

Forgiving one another!

That is, the grace that makes us willing to show kindness to the offending one, and the readiness to help him remove the offense so that it no longer exists.

Notice how the apostle stresses the mutual, the reciprocal nature of these graces. Forbearing one another. Forgiving one another. Forgiveness can never be the act of one alone. The offended must be willing to forgive, and the offender must seek forgiveness.

Only he who forbears and forgives, is putting on bowels of mercies. If we say we are putting on the new man, we must also be putting on bowels of mercies. And if we say we are putting on bowels of mercies, we must be willing to bear with one another and to forgive one another.

As Christ forgave you!

That Christ forgave us, we believe and confess. Therefore as He did so must we do. One who fails to forgive cannot say he has been forgiven. That is what Christ taught us. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will My Father forgive your trespasses." He taught us to pray: forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

As elect of God!

Holy and beloved!

You, the saints of Colossa! And you also who constitute the whole body of Christ! You have been chosen by God eternally, sovereignly. You were chosen in order that you should become holy, and because you were loved.

As a fruit of that election!

Put on bowels of mercy, all Christian virtues!

In order that you might appear without blame before Him, in love He has chosen you. In order that you may walk before Him without blame, He calls you whom He has chosen in love to be constant in putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which consists in putting on all these virtues.

That fruit which has its principle in election, must come to outward manifestation in our walk.

The seed always bears fruit!

EDITORIALS—

The Christian Reformed Synod and the "Dekker Case"

"Abstract"—Without Definition or Proof

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In its decision, quoted in full in a previous editorial, the Christian Reformed Synod not only decided that Professor Dekker expressed himself ambiguously about the love of God and the atonement, but also that he expressed himself in an *abstract* way. Moreover, the implication of Synod's decision to "admonish

Professor Dekker" for this is, of course, that it is wrong to express one's self in an abstract way. For certainly one is not admonished for expressing himself well, but only for expressing himself wrongly.

In a well-formulated decision, therefore, one might expect the following:

1) A clear statement of what Synod means by abstractness.

2) Proof that such abstractness is wrong and that, therefore, one who expresses himself abstractly is worthy of admonition.

3) Proof that Professor Dekker indeed expressed himself abstractly and that, therefore, he was subject to admonition.

First of all, let us examine Synod's decision in the light of these three criteria.

Does Synod anywhere explain what it means by the term "abstract"?

The answer to this question is negative. One may search the decisions of Synod from beginning to end, but nowhere will he find an explanation. Even when we consider the "Preliminary Observations" of Report IX-D, there is no help to be found. In its preliminary observations the committee does two things. It lists the statements of Professor Dekker which "have caused extensive discussion and controversy in the churches." And it informs Synod that it "is convinced that Professor Dekker has erred in making ambiguous statements and using them in an abstract way." But in vain does one look for any definition of what is meant by this charge.

But someone might object that this kind of reasoning, according to which Synod was duty bound to explain what it meant by this charge, would involve the Synod in endless explanations and endless debate. After all, words have meaning; and a Synod may certainly assume that its delegates are of normal intelligence and understand the meaning of those words. Moreover, the Synod may assume also that the ministers and elders of the churches will understand plain English, and that even the membership will, for the most part, understand this language. To this my answer is as follows:

1) There certainly was no evidence at Synod that the delegates, by and large, knew what they were adopting. There was no real inquiry into the meaning of this decision. There was no debate as to whether the decision was true. And there was no debate or discussion about the rightness or wrongness of being abstract. True, there was references made by some delegates to this idea of abstractness; and there were several references to what some call the "kerugmatic situation," — a much used (or: abused?) expression which is so little defined that it is itself much more open to the charge of "abstract" than are Dekker's statements. But there was absolutely no evidence that in the concrete situation before them the delegates clearly understood what they were saying. And even if this had been clearly before the minds of the delegates, or if it had become clearly evident in the discussion, the mind of the delegates and the discussion on the floor of Synod is not part of the official record. The result is that it is anyone's guess what this charge really means.

2) This element of "abstract" was, as far as the official proceedings of the Dekker Case are concerned, an entirely new element which arose on the floor of Synod and in the report of the Advisory Committee. It will not be found in the recommendations of the

Doctrinal Committee. It was not one of the issues in the interchange of ideas between Professor Dekker and the Doctrinal Committee. In fact, this element was introduced as a "way out" of the impasse to which Synod had come. Especially in this light it became incumbent upon Synod to explain what it meant. The Synod discarded the Report of the Doctrinal Committee, a report which was the result of three years' labor. And it adopted a new charge on the spur of the moment practically, without giving account of its meaning. Of the report of the Doctrinal Committee, whether one agreed with it or not, one could at least say that its meaning was clear; but the best that can be said of the present decision, taken at face value, is that it leaves matters undefined, and, to that extent, undecided.

3) It is indeed true that words have meaning. Anyone, therefore, has the perfect right to turn to the dictionary in order to discover, if he can, what this charge of being "abstract" means. However, when we attempt to apply the dictionary meaning of the term "abstract" to Dekker's statements, we discover, as I shall point out later, that there is nothing abstract about them.

What really happened, then, when Synod adopted this charge and decided to admonish Professor Dekker? On the surface of things, this charge appears to be innocent. It is undefined. It is rather meaningless, apparently. It did not decide very much. And because of its very vagueness, this term apparently served as a means of deciding the case *without deciding the issues*. For it must be remembered that the basic issue before the Synod was this: *are Professor Dekker's statements in harmony with the creeds, or are they in conflict with the creeds?* From a formal point of view, this issue was shelved: it was twice tabled. From a material point of view, however, it was not shelved. Synod twice refused to declare Professor Dekker to be in conflict with the creeds. Twice the Synod declared, in effect, that Professor Dekker, as far as Scripture and the creeds are concerned, may continue to teach his Arminian views.

But there is even more to be said concerning this charge of abstractness. It is an innocent term only on the surface of things. It is apparently innocent only because Synod did not give account of its meaning. But that term "abstract" is like an iceberg. In the synodical decision you only see that part of the iceberg which is above the surface of the ecclesiastical waters. By far the largest part of that iceberg is lurking below the surface; and the real danger is in that part which lurks below the surface of this synodical decision. This I will prove later.

There are two more questions which we must face before we go into the deeper implications of this charge, however.

One question is this: did Synod show that it is wrong to be abstract, and that, therefore, one who is abstract is worthy of admonition?

Also this question must be answered negatively. Neither the grounds of the decision nor the preliminary observations of the advisory committee show this. There is not an iota of proof furnished.

The decision simply *assumes* that it is wrong to be abstract, or to express one's self in an abstract way. In other words, Synod's decision begs the question. It assumes that which should be proved. Moreover, as I will show when we study the deeper implications of this charge, both Scripture and the confessions make so-called "abstract" statements in the same way in which Professor Dekker makes "abstract" statements. Again, therefore, the conclusion in regard to Synod's decision is: *tried, and found wanting!*

The second question is this: were Professor Dekker's statements indeed *abstract*,—understanding the term "abstract" in the ordinary sense of the word?

According to the dictionary, "abstract" is the opposite of "concrete." It refers to that which is "considered apart from any application to a particular object." Or, the term "abstract" is defined as "dealing with a subject in its theoretical considerations only."

Apply these descriptions, if you will, to the three sets of statements which the committee quotes in Report IX-D.

Do they fit? Are they apt descriptions of Dekker's statements?

Even as with that term "ambiguous," so it is with this term: a calm and careful consideration of Dekker's statements, whether taken all by themselves or taken in the context of the entire discussion as he introduced it in the *Reformed Journal*, will reveal that there is nothing abstract about them. To be sure, they are *doctrinal* statements; but that is not the same as "abstract." Indeed, they are *objective* statements; but that also is not the same as "abstract." Surely, the question may be raised whether these objective, doctrinal statements are true or false; but that is an altogether different question than the question whether they are abstract.

What is the truth about Professor Dekker's statements?

First of all, we point out that the professor from the very beginning of his writings was dealing with a concrete problem and a concrete situation. The problem, according to Dekker, was that the Christian Reformed mission program was ineffectual: it did not produce enough converts. The solution to the problem, according to the professor of missions, lay in the fact that the *mission message* was not correct. Specifically, Professor Dekker maintained that the mission message was not correctly understood on two counts: the love of God and the atonement of Christ.

In the second place, we should note that as a solution to the concrete problem Professor Dekker proposed two correctives: 1) The (to him) gospel must be proclaimed that God loves all men with a redemptive love. This, according to Dekker, must be the contents of the preaching. 2) The (to him) gospel must be proclaimed that Christ died for all men, head for head and soul for soul. We may say to *any man* (seeing that Christ died for *every man*), "Christ died for you."

In the third place, in the course of the discussion with the Doctrinal Committee, Professor Dekker was confronted by the question whether he included the idea of expiation in the death of Christ for every man.

This question he answered affirmatively and in the most concrete language possible: "I mean to say that Christ has actually suffered for his sins and has in that sense expiated his guilt."

I ask: what is abstract about Professor Dekker's language?

Is the love of God an abstraction? Is the oneness of God's love an abstraction? Is the redemptive character of God's love an abstraction? Is "all men" an abstraction? Is the death of Christ, or the atonement, an abstraction? Is expiation abstract? Are all these things theoretical considerations? Did Dekker consider the love of God or the atonement of Christ apart from any application to a particular object?

The answer to these questions is plain. Professor Dekker was dealing with what to him was a concrete problem in missions, that of the content of mission preaching. And when he dealt with this problem he did not speak of abstractions, but of concrete realities, of such eternal verities as the love of God, the atonement of Christ, the expiation of sin and guilt. Moreover, although indeed he maintained that the love of God and the death of Christ are universal, that is, all-inclusive, he did not separate that love and atonement from particular objects. He exactly maintained that the particular objects concerned in that love and atonement were "all men," that is, every member of the human race, and "every man," that is, every human being to whom a missionary speaks or whom he might possibly meet.

There might indeed be room for applying the term "abstract" when Dekker employs such terms as "inherently universal" and "concept of limited atonement." But such language is "abstract" only in the sense that we all use abstract language,—to express a concrete truth in concept form. There is nothing wrong about this, especially not when the concept is generally understood and when it is made in a context which leaves no doubt about its concrete implications.

What, then, is the only possible conclusion?

Professor Dekker did not make abstract statements. He made very concrete statements as to what he maintains is the objective truth and the objective content of the gospel.

Synod's decision to admonish Professor Dekker for expressing himself in an abstract way is absolutely unfounded.

But it is worse than unfounded. It is deceptive.

For Dekker's expressions are not abstract, even as they are not ambiguous. They are concretely and unambiguously Arminian. They constitute a concrete and unambiguous denial of the Reformed faith.

Synod's decision is deceptive, too, because that term "abstract" has deeper implications. It carries with it a freight of which perhaps some, even many, delegates were unaware. It is expressive of a cancer that is eating at the vitals of the Reformed faith, both in this country and the Netherlands. This I shall show next time, D.V., when I discuss: The Evolution of the Charge "Abstract."

If you are curious about this subject, read Professor Hanko's report of what the RES News says about the Dekker Case decision.

Consistorial Supervision of Catechetical Instruction

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

(Note: At the request of the Officebearers' Conference of Classis East, I have prepared for publication an address delivered at their October meeting on the above subject. It will appear serially in the *Standard Bearer*. H.C.H.)

INTRODUCTION

As far as this subject is concerned, I suppose I might almost be counted a "has-been." Catechetics has never been one of my subjects in the seminary; and Church Polity is no longer one of my branches of instruction. Moreover, though I am an officebearer, I have no active part in any consistorial labor; and it is, besides, very seldom that I ever teach catechism any more, except occasionally as a substitute.

Nevertheless, I deem this subject both interesting and important, and that for more than one reason. In the first place, it is as important as catechetical instruction itself is; and that is probably even more important than we think it to be and than we sometimes treat it as being. But it can surely be readily understood that a consistory which considers catechism instruction to be important will also consider consistorial supervision thereof to be important. For, basically, the quality of the former can be no better than the thoroughness and the carefulness of the latter. In the second place, I deem this subject important because I am of the opinion that catechetical instruction could receive more attention and emphasis than it sometimes does. It is, of course, always a mistake to assume that there is not room for improvement. But it is also true that even where there is a high level of quality in the instruction given in the catechism room, this can only be maintained by careful supervision and oversight on the part of those responsible. Good things have a quiet way of slipping away from us and of becoming neglected merely by default and through a process of being taken for granted. And certainly our consistories must take care that catechetical instruction does not have a "second fiddle" role in our congregations. Positively speaking, we must take care that this instruction is as thorough and as intensive as possible.

As far as the origin of this assigned subject is concerned, I would guess that it has probably arisen in part out of that sometimes nettlesome question that is addressed to the consistory at church visitation

concerning the visiting of catechism classes. We will come to that problem eventually in the course of this discussion; but I consider that particular problem to be only one phase of a larger and very important subject. The actual visiting of catechism classes is but one part of a very important duty of any consistory, namely, to assume the chief responsibility for catechetical instruction and therefore to supervise all that belongs to that instruction.

To various aspects of this consistorial responsibility I now call your attention.

The Importance of This Consistorial Supervision

As I already suggested, this importance lies, in the deepest sense, in the importance of catechetical instruction itself. And the importance of catechetical instruction, in turn, can only be seen correctly when we note the nature and purpose of catechetical instruction. To that nature and purpose, therefore, we must give our attention.

For a description of the nature of catechetical instruction I will quote from our seminary's "Catechetics Notes," written by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema:

Catechetical instruction is the official labor which the church by way of instruction is called to bestow upon the seed of the covenant, in order that it may attain to the knowledge of the covenant and be enabled consciously to assume its part in that covenant.

In distinction from all other instruction, it is spiritual, religious instruction, the contents of which must be derived directly from Holy Writ.

It (catechetical instruction) is official ecclesiastical instruction. It is a form of the ministry of the Word. It is more particularly the task of the minister of the Word. And it is a very important part of that task. For by catechetical instruction the seed of the covenant is prepared for the preaching.

As far as the task and purpose of catechetical instruction are concerned, I quote the following from the same notes:

The task may be described as consisting in this, that the church instruct the seed of the covenant in the whole counsel of God. And the purpose of catechetical instruction...is to lead the seed of the covenant from the state of spiritual immaturity to that state of maturity in virtue of which they can take their position in the church in which they have a place, make confession of their faith consciously in the fellowship

of that particular church, and consciously take their place at the communion table. The children of believers must come to a conscious possession of all the benefits God's people have in Christ. They must learn to know these benefits and to appropriate them. They must learn to know their calling as members of the body of Christ and of God's covenant, not only as such, but also in antithesis to the world that lies in darkness. And they must learn to consider it grace in the cause of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer with Him. For this purpose it is not sufficient, as the purpose of catechism is sometimes presented to be, to lead the seed of the covenant to conversion. On the contrary, it must as much as possible be founded in all the truth of Scripture as it is understood and confessed by the church that instructs. Moreover, it must not merely be instructed in the positive knowledge of this truth, but also learn to distinguish it from every wind of doctrine, and by the truth be trained to put on the whole armor of God, fight the good fight, and stand in the evil day. Such is the task of catechetical instruction, and the end which the catechizing church must keep constantly in mind.

Let me briefly point out that the basis of all this is the fact that God establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations. If God had not connected the historical development of His covenant with the organic continuity of generations, and if there were, therefore, no certainty whatsoever that He would gather His church from generation to generation, there would be no basis for catechetical instruction. And since God gives the children of the covenant not only to the parents, but also to the church in the midst of the world, and instituted the church and gives her the offices, it follows that the church has a sacred calling to minister the Word of God to the lambs of Jesus' flock according to their capacity. And we need not be surprised that it is only in those circles where this idea of the covenant of God running in the line of continued generations is maintained that catechetical instruction flourishes.

This brief review of the nature and task and purpose of catechetical instruction is sufficient, I think, to make it clear, in the first place, that catechism instruction is important. It is safe to say, I believe, that catechetical instruction is second only to the preaching of the Word itself. In the second place, that importance of catechetical instruction is *closely connected* with the preaching of the Word in the church. Through the means of catechetical instruction the seed of the covenant is led to spiritual maturity. And a very important part of the life of the spiritually mature child of God is his being under the preaching of the Word, listening to, understanding, and appropriating the Word preached. And by means of catechetical training the seed of the covenant is prepared for the preaching. This means, therefore, that a generation that is not properly catechized is not properly prepared for the preaching of the Word. Such a generation will be unable to understand the preaching of the Word. Such a generation will not be able properly to discern whether or not that preaching of the Word is true and pure. Such a generation will have no spiritual appetite for the pure preaching of the Word. Such a generation will not know and under-

stand the vocabulary of the Reformed faith. And therefore, ultimately the preaching of the Word itself must needs deteriorate according as a generation grows up which is not properly catechized. Moreover, all the various elements which were mentioned above in connection with the purpose of catechetical instruction must needs be affected whenever and wherever that instruction is neglected.

From all this, it follows that this official work of the ministry must be carefully and very thoroughly and zealously performed. And from this it follows that it is a far from unimportant task for a consistory carefully to supervise this part of the work of the ministry. Even as it is the consistory's task to oversee the ministry of the Word, so it is the consistory's task to oversee the catechizing of the covenant seed. And even as the responsibility for the ministry of the Word does not lie ultimately with the individual minister, but with the consistory, so the responsibility for the task of catechizing the covenant seed does not lie ultimately with the individual teacher, but with the consistory.

Yet, while theoretically and principally we will all undoubtedly acknowledge this importance of catechetical instruction, and therefore the importance of its supervision by the consistory, it is not difficult to point out how, in various practical ways, the importance is often minimized. Let me mention a few items which will be familiar to you merely by their being mentioned. Consider how the catechism season has been abbreviated, so that it is by no means as long, for example, as the school term. In most of our churches the maximum catechism season is some thirty weeks, three-fifths of the year. Or consider how sometimes the catechism season is simply allowed to "tail off" and to be terminated without really being completed. Spring weather comes. Perhaps the neighboring church has ceased holding classes. Possibly the pastor would like to bring the "busy season" to a close. And so it is proposed that catechism be stopped, though the various courses have not been finished. Or consider how catechism sessions can be shortened to a scant forty-five minutes, so that it is all but impossible adequately to treat a lesson. Or consider the fact that catechism classes are in many cases required to be taught at a most disadvantageous time, at the tag end of a school day, when it is virtually a psychological impossibility to retain the full attention of children who have already been in school all day. Consider, too, the fact that though this instruction is very important, covenant parents will allow their children to go to catechism class with little or no preparation and little or no parental supervision. Or consider how sometimes children and young people are allowed to skip catechism for the most flimsy, and sometimes the most carnal, of excuses,—so that, for example, school programs or basketball games can come before catechism in importance. Or consider how little actual knowledge a consistory may have as to what goes on in the catechism room, and how little actual supervision is exercised by the elders, and how difficult it seems for the elders to accomplish class visitation.

The above are but a few practical items which I mention from observation and which may serve to illustrate how the importance of catechetical instruction can sometimes be minimized.

Hence, it is clear that consistorial supervision of catechetical instruction is not a small thing, but ought to be counted an important task and responsibility of the consistory. It surely must not be treated as a matter of empty routine by the elders, or as one of those numerous, bothersome tasks which must be performed, but which are not of great importance.

Its Authority and Necessity

When we turn to our Liturgical Forms and to the Church Order, we do not find many direct references to this consistorial task. There is, in fact, very little direct mention either of catechetical instruction or of the supervision of it in these documents. This does not mean, however, by any means that the authority and necessity of catechetical instruction and of consistorial supervision thereof are without basis in our Reformed system. I would suggest rather that because catechetical instruction became an inherent part of our Reformed system, and because historically it has been taken for granted as belonging to the task of the preaching of the Word, therefore it received little separate mention alongside of the preaching of the Word.

In the Form for the Ordination of Elders we find no special mention of the fact that the elders must supervise catechetical instruction. Nevertheless this task is implied in and certainly constitutes a part of the task of the elders as set forth in this Form. The elders are called "to take the oversight of the Church ...and diligently to look whether everyone properly deports himself in his confession and conversation." To this department of the church belongs the faithful use of the means of grace; and to these means of grace belongs the preaching of the Word; and to the preaching of the Word belongs catechetical instruction. From this it follows that faithfulness with respect to this catechetical instruction, both on the part of the parents and on the part of the covenant seed, comes under the oversight of the elders.

Moreover, the elders must "have regard to the doctrine and conversation of the ministers of the Word, to the end that all things may be directed to the edification of the Church, that no strange doctrine be taught..." Here also it is plain that to the task of the elders belongs the supervision of catechetical instruction. They must have regard to the doctrine of the ministers of the Word also in the catechism classes. Also in the catechism classes they must see to it that all things are directed to the edification of the church. And also in the catechism classes they must see to it that no strange doctrine be taught.

When we turn to our Church Order, we discover again that there are very few direct references to the matter of catechism instruction and its supervision. There are in our Church Order no separate articles about these matters. Our present Article 21 refers to the consistory's responsibility with respect to Christian education. The original version of Article

21, dating from 1586, read as follows: "Everywhere consistories shall see to it that there are good schoolmasters, who shall not only instruct the children in reading, writing, languages, and the liberal arts, but likewise in godliness and in the catechism." In former years catechetical instruction was in part the task of the schoolmasters. We must remember that at that time the schools were under the supervision of the consistories, and the schoolmasters had to sign the Formula of Subscription. They were bound by that Formula to teach according to our Reformed confessions. In the original Article 21, therefore, supervision of catechetical instruction was clearly assigned to the consistories. We no longer have that article; and undoubtedly we lost something of its meaning in the process of the revision of it. But this reference nevertheless will suffice to show the thinking of our Reformed fathers about the matter under discussion.

Article 23 of the Church Order describes the office of elder as including this: "...to take heed that the ministers...faithfully discharge their office..." There is no specific mention of catechetical instruction here; but as surely as that instruction belongs to the office of minister, so surely the office of elder implies the responsibility to take heed that the minister faithfully catechizes. And that catechetical instruction belongs to the office of minister is clearly spelled out in the minister's call letter.

Article 44 of the Church Order speaks indirectly of this supervision. This is the article about the task of the church visitors. These church visitors must "take heed whether the minister and the consistory faithfully perform the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, through word and deed, the upbuilding of the congregation, *in particular of the youth...*" (italics mine, H.C.H.) Note that according to this article it belongs to the task of minister *and consistory* to promote through word and deed the upbuilding of the congregation, in particular of the youth. Catechetical instruction is obviously included here. And that this conclusion is correct is plain from the fact that the adopted "Questions for Church Visitation" include questions which the church visitors must ask about catechetical instruction.

Article 55 also implies the necessity of catechetical instruction and ascribes responsibility to elders as well as ministers: "To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in christian teaching and family-visiting."

And Article 61, which requires a confession of the reformed religion by those who are admitted to the Lord's Supper, and which places this matter under the supervision of the consistory, certainly implies the necessity of instruction in that "reformed religion" and implies a responsibility of the consistory to provide it and to see that it is adequate.

Finally, there are two questions asked at Church Visitation which directly refer to consistorial super-

vision. Question 5 of the questions to the full consistory reads as follows: "Does the consistory see to it that catechism classes are regularly conducted? Does the consistory determine the material for instruction? And does it see to it that the classes are regularly attended?" Notice that this question speaks of three specific items of responsibility: 1) the conducting of catechism classes; 2) the instructional materials; 3) the attendance of classes.

And among the questions addressed to the minister and deacons in the absence of the elders is Question 2: "Do they at set times attend the catechism classes to see how they are conducted and attended; and do they

assist the minister when the need requires it in catechizing?" Notice that this question does not merely speak of visiting, but mentions the purpose of these visits: "to see how they are conducted and attended." Besides, the article presupposes that it is the duty of the elders to assist the minister as the need requires.

From all this it is plain that the responsibility and authority lie with the consistory. Catechetical instruction is not the task of the minister alone, no more than the preaching of the Word is his sole responsibility. The ultimate responsibility for catechetical instruction lies at the door of the elders.
(to be continued)

IN HIS FEAR—

The Blessed Giver

by Rev. J. A. Heys

The Church has no "social gospel" to proclaim to the world.

She is indeed concerned with all the evils that are in the world. For she is desirous of warning her membership against them and of seeing these members flee from them. She also abhors all this evil that is in the world. She testifies through the mouth and pen of the psalmist in Psalm 119:136, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." All sin, and not simply social evils, troubles the soul of the Church. She does not walk through this life in the blissful ignorance that all is well She is not indifferent to the sufferings of the poor and has her diaconate to relieve and help the poor. And the Word of God is full of condemnation of all the social evils that are in the world and ever lifted their proud heads upon the face of this earth.

But the calling of the Church is to preach the gospel; and she realizes that all true reform, whether that be social, political or economic, even must be realized in the way of spiritual reform wrought by the Spirit of Christ through the regenerating grace of God which causes a new and heavenly life to be implanted in the depth of the sinner's being. Let it be pointed out, first of all, that the Church is called to preach the good news of salvation in the blood of Christ, whereby one is translated from the "kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Colossians 1:13) And the gospel, the good news that this Church is to proclaim, is expressed, as to the heart of it, in Matthew 1:21, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins."

Here is the good news, for here is what the Son of God came in our flesh to do and did so perfectly accomplish as far as the legal aspect is concerned at

Calvary; this He continues to do as far as the subjective and ethical aspect is concerned every day by His Spirit, until the full deliverance is attained in the resurrection of the flesh, and our adoption is completed. This is the good news, and anything short of this is disappointing news, sad and bad news. All seeming social improvements, all removal of class distinctions, curbing of riots, complete integration, high wages, comfortable housing and the like go up in smoke anyway in the day of Christ; they are left behind at the moment of death and have such a temporary and therefore also deceiving value, that there is nothing truly good in proclaiming such an ideal as worth striving for or as having been reached.

Let us note that, through the angel, God proclaimed a good news that promises salvation from SIN, and let us not overlook the fact that the gospel also promises this salvation only to some. And the promise is not conditional, for the simple reason that they need salvation exactly because they have no power to fulfill any conditions. We are spiritually dead the moment we receive physical life. We stand in need of being born again the moment we are born for the first time. He shall SAVE His people from their sins and not offer to save them, not assist them in saving themselves, nor try His best to save them. He shall do it; and therefore He must be named Jesus. There is no doubt about it that He will save them, every single one of them. And therefore as a little Babe lying in the manger He may receive already the name of Saviour, or Jesus.

Social distresses, labor problems, discriminations and abuse touch every man woman and child that is born into this world. Even the rich and socially high climber suffers because of riots, strikes, and the like. But salvation from all these is not for all. He shall save His *people* from their sins. If there is a social

gospel—and there is complete deliverance from all social injustices and inequalities rooted in sin, from all abuse and cruelty in the Kingdom of Heaven—it is still only for some and then on the new earth and not in this present world.

Churches make a serious mistake when they unite with the world and worldly organizations to bring about social reform. They leave behind their armour and the very tools which God has given them. They also ignore the plain teachings of the Word of God. To begin with this last element, we may point out first of all that the believer is warned by Paul in II Corinthians 6 not to be unequally yoked with the unbeliever, because Christ and Belial have no concord, and have no common ground on which to stand. Churches can meet and discuss with the world these problems of natural life only if and when they leave the Word of God behind. For Belial does not believe in Christ as Jesus Who saves His people from their sins. They will concede that He was born and died a martyr's death. They will admit that He gave some fine social advice such as the so-called "Golden Rule." But they want nothing of regeneration as the only way of social reform. They know nothing of the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of His people. They ridicule the idea of being new creatures in Christ. Leaving the Word of God a closed book, as the unbeliever will demand, churches put on a shelf the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation and the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace when they seek social reform with the ungodly. They put in the sheath and lock in their closets the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Consequently they have no tools anymore wherewith to realize or seek to realize a real social reform and to fight sin.

Besides the Word of God makes it so very plain that there will be a development of sin and always has been a development of sin in the world. Canons III, IV, Article 4, may be quoted in defense of a restraint of sin and as proof of civic righteousness, if one quotes only the first half, as was done in 1924. But a reading of the whole article indicates that, "...so far is this light of nature (note not spiritual light) from being sufficient to bring him (fallen man) to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God."

From that rendering of his natural light *wholly* polluted springs forth this constant, steady development of sin. In fact, each generation learns to go a step further into sin and receives new means and instruments for added sin. He does not use it aright even in things natural and civil; and it is for that reason that we have all the social problems of this day. Look back upon the history of this world! Are we in a better world than some generations ago? We have had an industrial revolution. We have found and made many so-called labor-saving devices. We have raised the standard of living. But just what social evils have we eradicated? The negro who cannot get a job because he is discriminated against, who lives in a ghetto without food

sufficient for his needs and his family's, is he better off than the slave who had a bed on which to sleep and food to fill his stomach after the day's work? And with all our labor problems and strikes bringing hardships upon innocent victims of such lock-outs, boycotts and picket lines, have we really advanced, no let us change that, has the world advanced one whit in its social reform? We will soon have another step of inflation and raising of the cost of living. Automobiles, the radio announcement just declared, will cost over \$100 more per car than last year. Did we get somewhere? Can we really solve these problems in this life while the heart of man is unchanged? Can we do that which Christ did not even attempt to do?

His eye was not on this world but on the Kingdom of Heaven. He never strove to change this world into His Kingdom of Light. Indeed, He rebuked sin wherever He saw it and denounced all greed, hatred, covetousness, injustice, cruelty and unrighteousness. But when did He bother Himself with the kingdoms of this world? When did He send out His apostles and disciples out into the world to reform that world socially, economically and politically? There was plenty need and room for it in that day. He limited Himself only and always to the sphere of the Church. And He predicted that there would be wars and rumors - and these would be true and not false rumors - of war, that nation would rise up against nation. This is no restraint of sin wrought in the heart of the ungodly by the Spirit without renewing them - but a development of sin. Through the apostle Paul He did not say that unless we are careful and as a Church seek "social reform" their would be a day when men would be "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traiters, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God (II Timothy 3:1-4). He predicted that these would come. Cancer begun in one cell spreads through the whole body until it dies! All the attempts of spiritually dead men to change the outward appearance of this cancer patient, even with the help of the Church that discards the preaching of the Word and puts the weapons of the spiritual warfare on the shelf in order to be unequally yoked with Belial, the infidel, the children of darkness, are not going to save that patient but run the risk of spreading that cancer.

Jesus says, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets (Matthew 7:12)." But he says this in the sermon on the mount and unto the Church. The world can never heed this world, for they come into this life spiritually dead and remain in that state because God did not see fit to regenerate them. There can be no social reform worthy of the name among such but only in the Kingdom of Heaven, whose citizens Jesus is addressing here in the sermon on the mount. With the life of regeneration in them, these can do unto others as they would have them do unto themselves. These shall, when that Kingdom of Heaven is come on the new earth, do that, and meanwhile strive to do so with that principle of new life.

We have not come near our subject yet, "The Blessed Giver", but this will serve as an introduction to a consideration of the positive teaching of the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." What we have in mind is that other saying of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20: 35)." Blessed is the man who does not take his neighbor's goods but gives to his neighbor in his time of need. In the world there is theft; and the natural man is more

and more after what his neighbor has by outright theft, or by those evils that cannot be punished by the magistrates. But in His fear we give instead of taking. And in His fear we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. In His fear we seek reform from our sin *before God*; and we know that in this way we will be delivered from our cruelties and injustices *against man*. And we pray and wait for the Kingdom of Heaven, where all our physical and spiritual problems are solved.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Anointing of Christ

by R. C. Harbach

As to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, He has all power and wisdom. As to His humanity, He is limited and finite. As the second person of the trinity, He said, "I and the Father are one," (Jn. 10:30) As the Mediator, He said, "My Father is greater than I," (14:28) He said this in His humanity, in His humiliation, when He had made himself of no reputation. But it was the divine person of the Son who said it. For it would be folly for a mere creature to utter these words. Therefore the saying unveils God the Son in mediatorial office.

He was inducted into this office by His anointing. The anointing is inseparably connected with His mediation. The one is with a view to the other. In the office He bears many titles besides that of "Mediator." He is "the Christ," *the Anointed One*. It was He as the Mediator who met the deep longing of Job who complained, "Neither is there any Daysman (LXX, "Mediator," as in I Tim. 2:5) between us, that might lay His hand upon us both." (Job 9:33) The same yearnings for Him are expressed in, "Oh that One might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbor!" (16:21), in "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!" (23:3), in "Oh, that One would hear me! Behold, my desire is that the Almighty would answer me." (31:35) Job wished for a mediator in God's stead like himself formed of the clay, for one absolutely God made him afraid, weighed with a heavy hand upon him. (33:6,7) He therefore hoped for "a Messenger with Him an Interpreter, One among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then He is gracious unto him, and saith, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom!'" (33:23f)

Another synonymous mediatorial title is "the Angel." Christ is "the Angel of the covenant." (Mal. 3:1) This Angel is not one of the created angels, but the Son of God in His mediatorial office. This is indicated in Jacob's words, where he speaks of "the Angel who redeemed me from all evil." (Gen. 48:18) Certainly this angel is divine. For "the Angel of the Lord appeared" unto Moses "in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush" announcing himself as "the

God of Abraham." (Ex. 3:2,6) Where Jehovah said, "Mine Angel shall go before them," (Ex. 32:34) He explained in "My presence shall go with thee." (33:14) This Angel, then, is a manifestation of the divine presence. Another of these titles is "Advocate." "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," (I Jn. 2:1)

This Messenger, Angel, Mediator, in the prophecy according to Zechariah appears as a man. Yet the prophet addresses Him as Lord. In the next breath that Lord is "the man who stood among the myrtle trees." That man is the Angel of the Lord. (1:10, 11) "Then the Angel of the Lord" addressed Jehovah of hosts, making intercession before Him for Jerusalem. It is the Anointed One who makes intercession for the benefit of God's elect.

"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 chief prophet and teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption, and to be our only high priest, who by the one sacrifice of His body has redeemed us and makes continual intercession with the Father for us; and also 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." (HC, 31)

The same expression of truth is found in the Westminster standards. "Why was our Mediator called Christ? Because He was anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure; and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the office of prophet, priest and king of His church, in the estate both of His humiliation and exaltation." (LC, 42)

A passage referred to in the last article was Prov. 8:22-31. Verse 23 reads, "I was set up (anointed) from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The subject is the eternal Son of God who from eternity viewed himself as the anointed, ordained Mediator, incarnate and tabernacling with men. (v. 31) He speaks of the triune God, Jehovah, (v. 22) that from everlasting He was beside Him (v.

30, Heb.), that He was therefore co-equal with God. "Then I was beside Him, *as one brought up with Him.*" Omit the italicized words. The verse may then be translated, "I was beside Him a father," for so the original, rendered "one brought up," is in Isa. 49:23 the word for "father." Christ is a father in His own right, for He is known to the Church as "the Father of eternity." (9:6) In this passage He speaks in reference to and as the Head of the everlasting covenant. (Heb. 13:20) Before the foundation of the universe, "while as yet He had not made the earth... nor the...world," (v. 26) He was anointed as Mediator and appointed to that office. For it was the Christ "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" and was then viewed as a lamb without blemish and without spot. He is "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13:8) Being the Mediator from eternity, He acted in the office of Mediator all through the O.T. dispensation, as Zech. 1 proves. God's elect were always redeemed and taken to heaven through the mediation and intercession of Christ, the Angel of His presence. (Isa. 63:8, 9)

The appointment of Christ to His office of mediator signified a deputation to the kingdom while His anointing signified His ability to fill the royal position. His ability came from the power of the Spirit. The use of the anointing oil is closely connected to and meant to signify the anointing with the Spirit of God. In the consecration of David to the royal office, the sign of anointing is joined with the thing signified. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." (I S. 16:13f) Even more pointed is this word, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings." (Isa. 61:1) Peter says Christ was "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power." (Ac. 10:38)

The Word of God places weighty emphasis upon the Redeemer's office. He is called "the Christ," (Mt. 16:16) "that Christ," (Jn. 6:69) "very Christ," (Acts 9:22) "the Lord's Christ," (Lk. 2:26) "the Christ of God." (9:20). "Christ" is the Lord's official title which denotes His office or the position which the Son of God assumed to secure the salvation of His people. In this position of the one office of mediator, He has three functions, as prophet, priest and king. So that the Anointed is Christ, the Anointer the Father, (Acts 4:26f) and the Anointing the Spirit, (I Jn. 2:20, 27; Lk. 4:18) The title also denotes the *right* Christ has to assume these functions, and the *ability* to execute them. Hence, there can be only one Christ. (Mt. 24:5, 23, 24)

Anointing is a consecratory act. When the tabernacle had been finished, it was consecrated to the Lord by the anointing oil being applied to it, to all its parts and furniture. (Ex. 30:22-29) The tabernacle and everything in it were anointed. This signified the pouring out of the Spirit upon Christ and His Church, that the Body of Christ might be a habitation fit for His dwelling. The priests were likewise anointed with oil. In keeping with this, Christ was anointed in His baptism with a view to His soon-to-begin public

ministry. (Mt. 3:16) But there was a sense in which He also was anointed by the Spirit when conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, (Lk. 1:35) when His humanity was sanctified by the Spirit, so that He could be the Sin-bearer. There was a final and climactic anointing of Christ, which took place at His ascension. At that time, He ascended to His throne and took up His reign (Dan. 7:13, 14). Upon the throne He was anointed. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a righteous sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore, God, Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." (Ps. 45:6, 7)

The Mediator is here addressed as God: "therefore, God!" and is said to have been anointed by His God, "therefore, God, Thy God anointed Thee." As to His human nature, God was His God. (Jn. 20:17) God was His God in the covenant relation in which He was appointed Head and King of the Church. (Eph. 1:18ff) That He was "anointed with the oil of gladness *above*" His fellows refers to the supereminent honors given Him after He had humbled himself to death, the death of the cross, in which He completed His redemptive work. For the completion of this work He was rewarded with the highest exaltation to the right hand of God, far above all principalities, powers, might and dominion, above all creatures. This anointing is alluded to in the truth stated in Acts 2:33, "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." The Mediator still performs the work of His office. He does so from the throne in heaven, for He is there "now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24) We also learn from Psalm 45 that there is a spiritual union between Christ and His people who, here denominated His "fellows," are also anointed. God has established us in Christ and has anointed us (II Cor. 1:21) with the Spirit, and therefore has denominated us "Christians." (I Pet. 4:16) In fact, as we know, according to Scripture the Church and its Head together are denominated "Christ." (I Cor. 12:12; Gal. 3:16)

IS THE REFORMATION DEAD?

"450 YEARS . . . AND THEN?"

by

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Commemorate with us the 450th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. We want you too to hear and be stirred by a relevant message which you will never forget. Mark the date on your calendar!

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2

AT 8:00 P.M.

First Protestant Reformed Church

(Fuller at Franklin)

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

*"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."
Psalm 96:9a*

Our Worship

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

Four years ago we introduced this rubric of the Standard Bearer, dealing with our Liturgy, to our readers. After a few brief articles in which we treated the idea and importance of our liturgy, we devoted ourselves to a discussion of some of the liturgical forms which are used in our churches. We have treated the Baptism and Lord's Supper Forms, the Excommunication Form and the Form for the Readmittance of Excommunicated Persons, as well as the Forms for the Installation of Office Bearers in the church of Christ. Although there are still forms which are worthy of our attention, we choose at this time to put these aside in order that we may concern ourselves with matters that deal directly with our public worship. Our intention is not only to discuss the various elements that are found in our worship but also to consider these things in the light of the historical development of liturgical practices. The church has not always worshipped according to the same form. Although the essence of worship remains the same through all the ages, its form is subject to constant change. This observation demands that we confront several important questions to which we also must find satisfactory answers.

Some of these questions are: Why did the church in past centuries worship as it did? What necessitated or brought about the changes in the form and order of her worship? Were these changes good or bad? Did they improve the service or did they detract from it? And, perhaps the most important question of all and consequently also the most difficult to answer is this: What, in the form and order of worship, belongs to the essence of the service of God and should therefore never be changed, and what is incidental and therefore subject to alterations? We should know not only what to do when we enter into the house of God but we should also know why we do the things we do. If this is not the case our worship reverts into a mere form, and formalism is, according to the Word of God, not worship at all, but it is very displeasing to God. In the Old Testament God severely reproveth His people because of their superficial and meaningless formalism. Consider, for example, the words of Isaiah 1:11-15

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomi-

nation unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

The prophet Malachi speaks in the same vein in Chapter 1:12-14 of his prophecy: "But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."

These unreserved condemnations of formalistic worship are in accord with the description given by the apostle Paul of those who in the last days will also in pretense worship God, "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." (II Tim. 3:5) Emphatically the apostle warns, "From such turn away." That may be individuals, but it may also consist of complete institutes of the church on this earth. The church that in its religious practices and worship turns formalistic; goes through the motions of serving God and no more, is not an institute that serves the edifying of the body of Christ, and neither does it glorify God through such practices. The child of God who sincerely desires to worship God in spirit and in truth cannot remain there. From it he must turn away and seek fellowship in that spiritual communion of saints where the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ breathes and upon which He bestows the blessings of His grace.

The point we wish to make here is that our obligation to God is not met by attending church once or twice each Sunday. Neither, from the viewpoint now of the church as such, is that obligation fulfilled when she conducts a formal service which in its formal aspect conforms with the traditions of the past. There is something much deeper that is so essential that without it all that appears externally in the form of worship stands condemned and is devoid of the blessing of God.

When we began this rubric four years ago we

pointed out that the term "Liturgy" is derived from the Greek term "leitourgia" or "leitourgein" which is a composite of two terms, "leitōs" meaning people, and "ergon" meaning work or service. Hence, the idea of our liturgy is that it reflects upon all that constitutes the service of the people. Specifically it refers to our service or worship of God. In a restricted sense the term is generally used then to denote that which belongs to the instituted worship of the church, but in the broader sense of the word we understand that our whole life upon this earth must consist of "leitourgia." "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (I Cor. 10:31) "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Col. 3:17) "For none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom. 14:7, 8) To these, many, many more passages from the Word of God can be added, but the point of the whole matter is beautifully expressed by Jesus Himself, when, after instructing us in the truth that the heart of God's law (criterion by which our service is to be measured) is that we shall love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, He teaches us that the second principle of the law, which is like unto the first, is: "Love thy neighbor as thyself". This principle of Christian love is absolutely fundamental in all worship. Without it our gathering together, our singing, praying, offering, preaching, listening and all the rest reverts to an empty form, simply because the blessing of God does not rest upon it. He abhors it and it wearies Him as much as the sacrifices and oblations of Israel of old did. If you doubt this, just read I Corinthians 13 and in the King James version insert the word "love" in the place of the word "charity" in each instance it occurs in the chapter. If the worship of the church is to be a potent, spiritual force, the membership of the church must practice the love of God and the love of one another in their daily life, and the force of that love must be the power that unites them in public worship.

Moreover, without that love we are not really able to understand or to realize experientially what we are doing in our public worship. We can go through the motions or we can follow certain established customs or practices in worship simply because these have been handed down to us or we have been told that this is the proper way to do things, but then we have not grasped their spiritual significance, and we cannot leave the House of God with the satisfaction that we have truly entered into worship. The latter is something else again. Now each part of our worship must be spiritually motivated and until we ourselves are able to enter personally into that motivation, we are unable to derive the spiritual blessing from that part of the service. And when we are able to do that we will also realize that the external form of this or that part of worship is not of primary importance, and we will not be hasty to condemn others, either of the past or the present, because they do not conform exactly

to our form of worship. We will be understanding.

At the same time, however, we will also realize that all form is not equally conducive to good worship. The form of worship must serve to give expression to the fundamental idea of worship. All form does not do this equally well, and therefore we must understand each aspect of our form of worship so well that we are able to give account as to why we do as we do, and also then be able to instruct those who worship according to an inferior form. This will not be easy and will require a measure of patience and tolerance.

On the other hand, we must also remember that there are some practices in the very form of worship that do not contribute at all to the idea of worship but rather detract from it. Such practices must not be tolerated but condemned. Here too we must be careful that we do not ban certain practices because they are not to our liking or because they are different than those practices to which we have become accustomed, but, if we are to ban them, we must be able to show why and in what way they detract from the fundamental idea of worship. With this in mind we purpose to examine some of the liturgical practices of the church of the past as well as the practices of some of our modern day churches. Our aim in doing so is not to be critical but rather: (1) to enable us to see the development of worship in the church under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. We believe that the Spirit has not only led the church in the development of the truth doctrinally but in line with that development the church has been taught to enrich her worship. It would follow that the more the church learns concerning the truth of God, the better equipped she becomes to enrich her service of Him, and this should be reflected in her worship. (2) to compare our own practices with those of others for the purpose of ascertaining which are really the best. In doing so we will be following the injunction of the apostle Paul to, "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." (I Thess. 5:21) We may concede that there is much yet to be desired in our worship and that perfection will not be reached in this world of sin, and consequently, we must with open mind be ready to consider whatever may enhance the beauty of worship. (3) to serve, if possible, in directing our churches to a unified practice in this regard. I am not sure that it is so but I am told that the order and form of worship in our various churches differs. To what extent I do not know but I might suggest that someone (the clerk perhaps) in each church send me their order of worship so that I can make a comparison and perhaps reflect on this in some later article. We must also realize, of course, that the choice of an order of worship belongs to the autonomy of each church and it is the prerogative of each consistory to determine this. No established order may be coercively imposed upon the churches and certainly our aim is not to attempt that. But if we consider carefully the various elements, their meaning, and their proper relation to each other and the whole of our worship, it may be that we can arrive at agreement on what should be included, what should be excluded and what order we should follow when we go up to the house of our God.

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

R.C.A. - P.C.U.S. - A Progress Report

by Rev. G. Van Baren

The reader is acquainted with the fact that the Reformed Church of America and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (commonly known as the Southern Presbyterian Church) have been working towards eventual merger. This past summer, at their broadest gatherings, further action was taken in that direction. Through the courtesy of the office of the stated clerk of the P.C.U.S., I received a copy of the minutes of the General Assembly of the P.C.U.S. From this I would like to quote such parts as show the development which is taking place, and what can be expected in the future.

Both the Reformed Church of America (reportedly with about 90% in favor) and the Southern Presbyterian Church adopted the recommendations of its Joint Committee of 24 (12 men from each denomination). The following are the recommendations which were adopted (pg. 166 of the Minutes):

"WE RECOMMEND THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE GENERAL SYNOD AFFIRM ONCE AGAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE PROVIDENCE OF THE POSSIBLE AND THEIR SERIOUS AND ENTHUSIASTIC PURPOSE TO PROCEED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE LOOKING TOWARD THE UNION OF OUR TWO CHURCHES."

The Joint Committee submits the above as our first recommendation. We further recommend:

(2) that the General Assembly and the General Synod direct the presbyteries, classes, sessions and consistories to study the first drafts of the plan of union as they are published and to respond as soon as possible with their comments, criticisms and suggestions.

(3) that the General Assembly and General Synod urge the congregations and institutions of our two denominations to take the initiative in arranging means of mutual acquaintance; and that each presbytery and classis, especially, be requested to undertake a specific project to that end between now and the next meeting of our Assembly and Synod.

(4) The General Synod (RCA) and the General Assembly (PCUS) have directed the Joint Committee to present to the respective courts in 1968 a Plan of Union. Each of the courts will consider the plan at the 1968 meeting of the court and may well determine to amend, change, alter or otherwise act upon the plan prior to any action sending the Plan of Union to the classes and presbyteries for their advice and consent. In view of the fact that the plan may be amended, changed, altered or otherwise revised by the highest courts of the two denominations, it is recommended THAT THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE REFORMED

CHURCH and THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH meet simultaneously (but not at the same place) in 1968 and that the date of meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church be fixed by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

There had appeared to be one barrier to the proposed union: in 1966 the P.C.U.S. had decided to be a full participant in the Consultation on Church Union. That is the Blake-Pike union plan for the churches of our land. It appeared to many to be impossible to "woo two mistresses." Some believe that the P.C.U.S. had to make a choice: merger with the Reformed Church or work with C.O.C.U. The Synod of the Reformed Church also submitted the following questions for an answer:

1. What is the relative importance of these several actions?
2. Were these actions intended to be inclusive or exclusive?
3. Is it expected that the General Assembly will vote on the matter of a commitment to the Church of the Consultation on Church Union either in 1967 or 1968?
4. Should the preparation of the Plan of Union of our two churches be continued as vigorously as possible in accord with the report of our Joint Committee?

The Joint Committee of the two denominations discussed these questions for some time— and arrived at the following answer:

The action of the 1966 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States changing its relationship to the Consultation on Church Union from that of an observer to full participation prompted the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to inquire as to the meaning of this action as it affects the negotiations of the two communions looking toward union.

The Committee of Twenty-Four notes that both the Reformed Church in America and the Presbyterian Church in the United States have been related to COCU in some fashion for several years. The PCUS has been observer and is now a full participant in the consultation; the RCA has been an observer from the beginning. The 1966 General Synod instructed its Committee on Interchurch Relations to study the possibility of becoming a full participant in COCU.

The Committee of Twenty-Four also notes that the General Synod and the General Assembly have affirmed their support of the Committee of Twenty-Four in its

studies of ways and means of developing a more effective witness to the Gospel on the part of our two churches, and in 1965 instructed them to proceed as rapidly as possible to create a plan of union. The 1966 action on this matter by the General Synod and the General Assembly was unequivocal and strong.

The Committee recalls its findings which it has previously reported to the General Synod and the General Assembly. It has been found that common ground exists in theology and polity, in work and worship. Common ventures have been undertaken and successfully carried out. There is substantial evidence that this union can be consummated with a minimum of loss and a maximum of strengthening our witness and service.

The committee believes that the union of our two denominations is the only viable possibility of union before us either now or in the immediate future. We recall the action taken jointly by the 1965 General Synod and the General Assembly, "that the most genuine potential for advance of church union for both our denominations at the present time lies in continuing with integrity these conversations which were begun in 1962 and which are looking increasingly toward the union of our two denominations."

FULL SPEED AHEAD

So these two denominations continue in the course towards eventual merger. Definite progress is being made. Documents have already been drawn up with suggestions what the combined denomination will be. Decisions must be taken with respect to the creeds of a merged church. In a draft document on theology, there is a listing of the confessions of both denominations: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechism with editorial notes concerning changes and clarifications made by either denomination.

The listing of old and tried creeds is one thing. But another point of great danger in this merger process is the real possibility that a new creed will be drawn up which is not in harmony with the old confessions

nor with Scripture. The document on theology is to include a "summary statement expressing the relevance of our combined doctrinal standards to our witness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the present day." Now such a "summary statement" might be very beneficial—but possibly could be used also to minimize the significance of creeds in our day.

But the committee working on the subject of "theology" wants "a 'Statement of Commitment' which will bind the uniting churches to the appointment of a theological commission to prepare a new Confessional Statement, and will suggest guidelines as to procedure and content...." I would not deny that a new and profitable confession might conceivably be drawn up to guide such a united church. But considering the trends in our day, and recalling the obvious fact that there are "liberal" camps in both these denominations, one can only fear concerning the contents of any such new confession.

The Joint Committee has been drawing up also proposals on "Worship" and "Witness and Structure" for the new denomination. Some of these "draft documents" I have in my possession and hope, D.V., to consider them later.

One final matter that has been of concern to many in these denominations is the possibility of refusing, as congregation, to join in any merger — without consequent loss of properties. Concerning this, the committee advises:

The Committee also wishes to point out that the spirit of the drafts is intended to be one of persuasiveness rather than coercion. The Committee believes that if our two churches vote to unite, congregations and ministers who might feel impelled to leave the united church should be allowed to do so according to a clearly described procedure without loss of property or pension benefits. The first drafts are being submitted in the hope that they "press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," and that they afford an avenue by which the Holy Spirit will lead our two churches toward a more effective witness to the Gospel.

ALL AROUND US—

Reactions to the Dekker Decisions

by Prof. H. Hanko

Our readers will be interested in reading of some of the reactions to the decision of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in the "Dekker Case". These decisions of the Synod are particularly inter-

esting because: 1) The conservatives were very forceful for a time in expressing their view that Dekker's position must be condemned if the church was to remain Reformed. 2) The Synod did not condemn Dek-

ker at all although it administered a very mild rebuke. We need not quote the decision here since it has been quoted and is being discussed in the editorial columns of this paper.

Rev. John B. Hulst, an articulate spokesman for the conservative position and one who had insisted on the floor of the Christian Reformed Synod that Dekker's position was anti-confessional, writes in the Torch and Trumpet about Synod's decision. After reviewing the treatment of the case on Synod both in June and in August, he writes:

After brief and rather subdued discussion the recommendations were adopted. The recommendations satisfied Synod because, though brief, they spoke to the heart of the issue. And yet there was also much dissatisfaction expressed.

There were some, who had spoken in support of Prof. Dekker's position (although no one indicated a desire to identify himself completely with Dekker's teachings) who felt that the admonition was too strong.

On the other hand there were those who stated that the recommendations said too little. With these we agree. Indeed, the statements of Prof. Dekker were ambiguous and abstract. But is this not exactly what has caused such difficulty over the past four and a half years? And does not this very ambiguity and abstractness make Prof. Dekker's position erroneous? And should not Synod have said therefore that Prof. Dekker erred? We would answer these questions in the affirmative. The sound of the trumpet must be clear, not muffled. When it is muffled error results. And it is for this error, recognized in the observations of the advisory committee, that Prof. Dekker should have been admonished in the decisions taken by Synod.

But the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church has spoken. It has spoken softly, but it has spoken. And now, for the sake of the welfare of our Church, we must endeavor to live and work with this decision in all seriousness.

In conclusion we would make some observations.

First, we believe that Synod's decision and the discussion which preceded it indicate a genuine concern on the part of the Christian Reformed Church to maintain her doctrinal integrity. Even an admonition against ambiguity and abstractness constitutes a charge to all to respect our creeds, to adhere to them with devotion, and to articulate their meaning with care and precision *because* they are based upon the inspired and infallible Word of God.

Second, we believe that Synod's decision and the discussion preceding it indicate that the Christian Reformed Church is not concerned to stifle discussion of doctrinal issues. This is an accusation which is often leveled against the Church. But this accusation is not true. One of the reasons for not adopting the recommendations of the Study Committee was Synod's fear that such adoption would tend to curtail discussion in the churches. But Synod also spoke of "*legitimate*" discussion, indicating that there is a proper and an improper way to carry on discussion. This is all too often forgotten. Legitimate discussion is to be carried on within the framework of the Scriptures and the creeds. And should anyone have a problem with the teaching of the creeds, there is a proper way to seek a solution to that problem—the way of consistory, classis, and synod.

Third, and in connection with the above, we believe that Synod has also said something concerning future

discussion of the doctrine of limited atonement. In no instance has Synod recommended the teachings of Prof. Dekker to the Church's consideration. But Synod has decided to "commend the report of the doctrinal committee to the churches for guidance and as a valuable contribution, within the Reformed tradition, to the discussion of the matters contained within the report." This decision should be taken seriously.

Fourth, by its decision Synod has admonished Prof. Dekker. We are confident that the admonition will be received in all seriousness. We are confident, further, that Prof. Dekker will find in this admonition a positive charge, a charge to carefully and precisely clarify his teachings on the love of God and the atonement. Such a statement will be welcomed by the Church.

Finally, though much more can and undoubtedly will be said about Synod's decision, we wish to point out that there is in this decision an implied charge to the entire Christian Reformed Church, a charge to defend the Reformed faith with courage, to proclaim the Reformed faith with clarity and vigor, and to live the Reformed faith with Spirit-wrought devotion. God give us the grace to respond to this charge unto the glory of our God and the salvation of those for whom Christ died.

The Banner also commented on the decision editorially. Previously, Rev. Vander Ploeg, editor of *The Banner*, had pleaded for the doctrine of limited atonement. He now writes:

After almost five years of discussion in the church, this year's Synod agonized to come to a decision on doctrinal matters pertaining to what has been written among us about the atonement and the love of God.

Resisting suggestions that these matters be left for continuing discussion or for the theologians to work out, Synod judged that it was time for a decision and took action according to the best of its ability. The temptation to sidestep this issue and take the easy way out may have been strong, but it is a cause for gratitude that the body acted in keeping with its responsibility as "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15)....

Now if there are those who judge that Synod should have taken no adverse action as to Professor Harold Dekker's views, there are others equally emphatic in holding that these should have been repudiated in no uncertain terms. The dilemma that made a decision so difficult arose, as it appears to this observer at Synod, out of Professor Dekker's use of ambivalent language....

It is in the light of this situation that one should regard the decision of Synod to do no more than "admonish Professor Dekker for the ambiguous and abstract way in which he has expressed himself in his writing on the love of God and the atonement." No matter how much others together with this writer may wish that Synod had seen its way clear to adopt the recommendations of the Study Committee, the complicating circumstances just stated should be borne in mind to understand the action taken.

No wonder that there now are those confused as to what we are to believe about the love of God and the atonement. It is fortunate therefore that Synod decided also to "commend the report of the Doctrinal Committee to the churches for guidance and as a valuable contribution, within the Reformed tradition, to the discussion of the matters contained within the report."... In keeping with Synod's decision, we recommend this report to all who seek guidance in these important and interesting matters.

Prof. Martin H. Woudstra also comments on Synod's decision in *Church and Nation*. He also reviews the action of Synod and then writes:

And now we must look to the future and at the same time try to learn from the past. This writer wishes to go on record as having thought from the very beginning of this dispute that the basis on which to raise the tremendous problems that were raised in the original 1962 article was exceedingly narrow. Is this the way to theologize in this ecumenical age of ours? Do we really wish to direct our effort as theological instructors at some little distortion which we think we have discovered amongst ourselves? Certainly, distortions of truth, however little, could have disastrous consequences. But what would one say about a man who was busily trying to fix a leak in his roof while a tidal wave was about to carry away house, and roof and leak and man? Or are we exaggerating the threat which comes to us from a well-nigh boundless universalism which today seeks to cloak itself in the very clothes which God designed to express the truth of particularism? It is possible, of course, that the tidal wave would wash over us and leave us unharmed. But it is not very likely. While we must avoid undue entrenchment, no matter how great the dangers that threaten, we should on the other hand use our God-given time economically. Fixing a leakage does remain a useful thing to do even when the tidal wave is inches away, but only when looked upon in isolation. I believe therefore that what the hour demands of all those who seek to promote the Scriptural truth of sovereign grace is to agree on some global anti-tidal wave strategy, rather than on a technique of how to fix a leaky roof.

Every comparison has its weaknesses. One of the weaknesses in this comparison is that the missionary concern as such which prompted the recent discussion is by no means a trivial matter. This concern is more comparable with inviting threatened people under a safe roof so that they may be sheltered from the raging storm of God's judgment. But then let the roof be made of the stuff that will withstand the storm.

And this leads me to the second point where the comparison I just used is weak. For I do not think that the roof which is made up of the doctrine of limited atonement and particular redemption as "traditionally used among us" is a roof that needs fixing. More in need of discussion and debate are in my opinion the doctrines of the church, the ministry....

...It is to be hoped that the Christian Reformed Church will go on discussing worthwhile subjects, not in isolation, but in the context of the tremendous developments of our time, so that the comforting truth of God's sovereign goodness may become ever better articulated in the face of the forces that threaten to undo us.

Dr. R. Kooistra also comments on the decision in the same paper. We can only quote him briefly.

First of all, it is indeed a *meager* decision.... (This in reference to the fact that Dekker was only admonished — H.H.)

In the second place, this decision has the character of a *compromise*. Quoting Rev. A. Persenaire, Kooistra says he pleaded for the compromise, since the controversy was not worth the price of a lasting division. Here you see the greatness of selfdenial.

This leads to our third observation. Namely, that

this decision, though very small and taken after much hesitation, is indeed *satisfactory*. It does what the report wanted to do. It put things straight. It states in the shortest possible manner that Professor Dekker was wrong: he erred in making ambiguous statements and in using these in an abstract way.... Our very careful 1967 Synod did not do much. But this Synod made no mistake in its concluding decision....

Finally, this decision demands *further action*. We have always accepted the sincerity of Professor Dekker. He wanted to improve our missionary understanding and activity. Fine! Now his medicine did not work. It had bad side-effects We must consider the root of the problem. Why can we not speak more meaningfully about our Saviour to unbelievers? And why do unbelievers often shy away from us as soon as they perceive that we want to talk about things not seen and as soon as they notice that we have a message for them?

It is our intention to place these problems into the focus of our attention in the future issues of our paper.

In the *R.E.S. News Exchange*, Paul G. Schrotenboer, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and one present at the sessions of Synod writes the following:

The decision was taken by a large majority in an unenthusiastic vote.

The decision was called a compromise by speakers who had favored both previous positions. The Rev. Adam Persenaire, chairman of the study committee, said that he still held that statements of Professor Dekker are anti-creedal and not in harmony with Scripture. He was willing to acquiesce only because (1). Professor Dekker thinks that his statements agree with the creeds and his intentions are good; (2). Many who defend Professor Dekker can use his statements to mean something entirely different. The differences, said Persenaire, are not worth a split in the church.

To those who wanted to "settle" the issue, the decision was disappointing. Others, who criticized the 'abstractness' of the way Professor Dekker had written, saw in the decision a new tact, *the kerugmatic emphasis*.

At this point the report in the *R.E.S. News Exchange* introduced a quotation from the final report of the Advisory Committee to demonstrate what Synod meant by abstractness and to show what is meant by this new "kerugmatic emphasis." What was meant was a fear that if Synod would condemn Prof. Dekker it would lose the first point of common grace and specifically the general offer of the gospel. In part this quotation from the Advisory Committee reads:

Other types of abstract theological statements may give the impression that we may not urge every man to whom the gospel comes to believe in Christ and be saved.

We can therefore best solve the problem which here confronts us, retaining full loyalty to Scripture and the creeds, and at the same time doing full justice to the well-meant gospel offer, by following a concrete, kerugmatic approach both in theologizing and in preaching. For example, instead of saying 'Christ died for all men,' we can better put it this way, 'We may say to any man whom we confront with the gospel, 'You must believe that Christ died for you.' Or again, instead of saying, 'God loves all men with a redemptive

love,' we can better put it this way: 'We may say to any man whom we confront with the gospel, 'God shows his love for you in entreating you now, through us who bring the gospel, to be reconciled to Him.'

It is obvious that this touches upon the very heart of the trouble in the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. To condemn Dekker was, by implication, a condemnation of the well-meant offer of the gospel. For the whole view of Dekker was a natural and inevitable conclusion from the position which the Christian Reformed Church took when they adopted this heresy. But they could not bring themselves to do this. And so they admonished Dekker for making ambiguous and abstract statements, by which they meant that Dekker really said the truth in essence, but erred in separating these statements from a discussion of the general offer of the gospel. If only he had done the latter, he would have been soundly Reformed. Hence the rebuke.

The report goes on to say:

In the view of many delegates the extent of the atonement and the nature of the love of God for all men cannot be answered in the way of theoretical theological statements but must be framed within the proclamation of the gospel in which God confronts man and elicits a response. That this view played a decisive role in the Synod's decision is supported by the fact that leading spokesmen for both positions appealed to it from the floor. Because it was a relatively new emphasis in the church and many would not express their views openly, the view did not appear in the decision in a clearly articulated form.

If the church, both in its presentation of the gospel and in its theologizing honours the kerugmatic nature of biblical truth, there is reason to hope that the unity that was found in Grand Rapids will spread through the churches. What abstract theology cannot effect, the understanding of gospel proclamation may achieve.

The point brought up in this report is worthy of far more extensive treatment than we can give it here. There is a fundamental point at issue which this report calls attention to. And, I think, rightly. But the point at issue sounds suspiciously like the plea that is being heard currently in the Christian Reformed Church that the Church cannot come to any objective knowledge of the truth of Scripture. All it can really do is preach the gospel. This is very dangerous and destructive of all truth.

Finally we call attention to a brief remark to be found in *De Wachter*. Prof. F. Klooster gave the convocation address at the opening of Calvin Theological Seminary. Rev. W. Haverkamp reports on this address in his editorial column. The address was entitled: "Four R's—Riot and Revolution, Reformation and Relevance." Most of the address is not of immediate concern to us. But near the end the Professor made reference to the Dekker controversy and to the crisis it created in the Christian Reformed Church and in the Seminary where Dekker is a colleague of Klooster. While not an elaborate reference, Klooster who has the reputation of being a conservative, called the Seminary faculty to forget the past and labor together in unity to promote the cause of the gospel. Evidently Klooster also is willing to overlook the Arminianism in the Seminary, let bygones be bygones and look to the future with hope.

We have no room to comment on these reactions quoted above. Nor is it necessary to comment on them extensively. It is apparent that while many are not happy with the decisions, they are not only willing to live with them, but they bend every effort to salvage some good out of them. But these salvage attempts will just not work. Dekker's blatant Arminianism has been excused by the Synod. No amount of talking is going to change that. And this bodes ill for the future of that denomination.

FROM OUR MISSION BOARD—

Our Mission Activities

by Rev. J. Kortering

The living church of Jesus Christ is constantly involved in missions. This is true not simply because the church's future depends upon it, but rather because our Lord commands this. A pragmatic approach toward missions will lead us inevitably into compromise, a forsaking of the right and true in order to get better results. Mission work is Christ's work which He commands His church to perform in His name, and

therefore it is the calling of the church to be faithful in this work no matter what the outcome may be.

Since mission work is the activity of the church, it stands to reason that it is of vital interest to all the members of the church. The labors of the Mission Committee are in the last analysis *our* activities, they are the products of our united efforts. The members of the Mission Committee are appointed by the

churches as they are represented in the Synodical session. The mandates given to the committee are those things which have arisen in the hearts and minds of our people, either certain individuals or consistories. The monies by which these labors are supported are brought up by all our people through the assessment placed upon the church budget or special collections. Consequently this interest transcends geographical boundaries. Our people, whether in Michigan, California, or Washington and all points in between, desire to know what is being done in missions and what fruits the Lord is giving us upon our work.

It is with a view to satisfying this need for information that the Mission Committee upon the invitation of the Standard Bearer Staff decided to publish in the *Standard Bearer* four reports during the coming year.

Our Mission Committee is composed of the following members: Revs. Harbach, Heys, Kortering, Lubbers, Schipper, and Van Baren, and the brethren D. Kooienga, H. Meulenberg, H. Ophoff, and H. Zwak. Rev. M. Schipper is president, and Rev. R. Harbach is the secretary. Our regular meeting date is the third Wednesday morning of the month at First Church of Grand Rapids.

Of keen interest to all our people is the labor that has been continued in Jamaica. The Synod of 1967 decided to approve the sending of two emissaries to the island to labor in the midst of the Protestant Reformed Churches there. Rev. J. Heys and Elder H. Zwak spent 56 days on the island, ministering to 11 churches (Lucea, Johnstown, Mt. Salem, Latium, Cambridge, Friendship Hill, Islington, Grange Hill — Crowder District, Lacovia — Reading District, Santa Cruz, and Sunderland). The main emphasis of this visit was upon instructing the ministers of the churches in the truths of the Word of God and as these truths are summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. To accomplish this end, twenty-one sessions were held, each lasting about 3 hours. Revs. Elliott, Frame, and Ruddock, as well as Elder Green and Deacon Binns, comprised the class; the latter two are considered possible future candidates for the ministry in those churches. Rev. Heys was specially suited for the task of instructing these men, since he had been their instructor in a correspondence course that had been given them during the preceding year. From the mouths of Rev. Heys and Elder Zwak as well as from letters received from the brethren and greetings sent via tape, we may conclude that God has richly blessed these labors unto the spiritual well-being of the churches of the island. In the report to the Mission Committee a plea is made that God will open the door still farther, so that the ministers there may be instructed by someone who would be able to labor there for a longer period of time. They also have need of more ministers that can labor among the churches there and serve the congregations as pastors. To these needs we must address ourselves constantly. Rev. C. Hanko will continue with the correspondence course this year and cover the material of the New Testament.

As far as their church building needs are con-

cerned it was pointed out that besides the churches mentioned above, 10 other churches were visited to ascertain what the condition of the church buildings is. Three had been rebuilt of cement block and were in the process of completion. These included the church at Waterworks, Islington, and Lacovia — Reading District. The others were still in the same condition as before. The representatives of the churches there discussed with our emissaries the possibility of merging into 4 main churches and thus eventually dissolving the many small congregations. There are mainly 2 reasons for going into this direction, first, from a financial point of view our churches can hardly help them maintain all the little churches. Besides this the 3 church buildings already constructed are so located that they could serve these needs. Secondly, with so many small congregations, some with only 4 or 5 families, they lack the proper preaching of the Word. If they would consolidate, this lack could then also be overcome. The problem with going in this direction is transportation for the people to go to church. The distance for many would be too far to walk. It was suggested that rather than going into the direction of building more church buildings we could better help them improve what they have and assist them with travel expense. There are trucks and busses which the people could take to church.

At this point we should emphasize that the collections which are being taken for the Jamaican churches be specified. At present we are not taking collections for foreign missions; Jamaica is under our domestic program. Synod decided to instruct the Mission Committee to request each of the churches to take 4 collections during the year for the church building needs. These monies will be used for the repair and construction that is still needed. In addition, Synod requested the deacons of Hudsonville to request the churches to contribute either from the Benevolence Funds or through special collection for the poor and indigent in the churches of Jamaica. Our emissaries distributed money when they were there, — some for medical bills they specified, and the rest was turned over to the churches for their distribution. It was decided by the Mission Committee to wait with conducting another clothing drive until it can be determined what the present set-up is on import duty. Rev. Heys is investigating this now. The churches responded with grateful hearts for blessings given them, spiritual and material. A special note of thanks was received for the 300 new and 100 used Bibles and 100 Psalters that were sent them. These had been donated by individuals, societies, and congregations.

More information of Jamaican missions will be available, D. V., when Rev. Heys and Mr. Zwak will present a public program which is being planned.

Much of our immediate attention as Mission Committee has been directed to our witness at home. Since we are surrounded by apostasy, we must not neglect our witness to our neighbor in our immediate vicinity.

There will be a Reformation Day Celebration which will commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation on Thursday, Nov. 2 in the First

Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema will speak on "450 Years....And Then?" Plans have been made to advertise this widely in the Grand Rapids -- Holland area and a special plea goes out to all who are interested in the Reformed heritage to be present.

In keeping with the decision of previous Synods, our churches are responding to the need to be busily engaged in witnessing to the truth on the local level. This is evident in 4 ways.

First, upon the request of the Pella consistory, plans are being made to share this Reformation program with them as a witness in that community. Prof. Hoeksema is scheduled to give this same Reformation Day address in Pella on Thursday, Nov. 9. Rev. Heys was asked to accompany the Professor to assist him in conducting the meeting and in distributing literature.

Secondly, the Mission Committee decided that sponsoring public lectures in the Michigan area be done entirely by the local churches, and therefore a committee was appointed to advise ways in which the future Reformation Day rallies and public lectures be carried on by a committee of the local consistories and not by the Mission Committee. Nine specific proposals were adopted at our last meeting which will be forwarded to the consistories in Michigan calling for the organization of a steering committee which will be responsible for arranging, promoting, and financing future lectures.

Thirdly, a request came before our committee from the churches in Hull, Doon, and Edgerton for assistance in their sponsoring lectures in that area. It was decided to request Prof. H. C. Hoeksema to lecture there either Nov. 30 and Dec. 5, or Jan. 11 and Jan. 16. Details of these lectures will still be worked out. It was decided that expenses for these lectures be paid as much as possible through collections, etc., and that the deficit be paid out of the mission fund.

The fourth indication of local interest in mission activity came from Loveland, Colorado. The congregation there is active in distributing literature, the Reformed Witness pamphlet and the *Standard Bearer*. They requested the Mission Committee to underwrite the expenses of broadcasting the Reformed Witness Hour over station KLOV in Loveland. Since our Synod decided in 1964, "That as long as we have no missionary, the Mission Committee consider any request from local churches to assist them in church extension in their local areas by supplying of pamphlets, radio

broadcasting and necessary financial aid in carrying out this work". The Mission Committee approved this request for 1 year.

Another method of witnessing to the truth comes in the form of the printed page. The recently concluded lecture series on the Five Points of Calvinism will be printed in booklet form. This will be a handy compendium of the cardinal Reformed truths, one which all our readers will want and be able to use in distributing to others. These will soon be available from Rev. M. Schipper for the cost of \$1.00 each. We also received a request from a brother who appreciated the Reformed faith and has a reading room in Suez, Egypt. He desired to have a copy of "Reformed Dogmatics," by Rev. H. Hoeksema, which was sent to him. He also expressed the desire to complete his set of Rev. H. Hoeksema on the Heidelberg Catechism. He needs volumes VI (Baptized into Christ) and Volume VII (Eating and Drinking Christ). If any reader knows where such copies can be secured or desires to donate them, contact the undersigned. An offer was received from an anonymous party who was willing to have printed 10,000 copies of a pamphlet which would serve as a critique of the recent decisions of the Chr. Ref. Synod, if we would assume the expenses of distributing them. This offer was gratefully received, and Prof. H. C. Hoeksema consented to write this pamphlet which should be available in the near future.

Evidence of fruit upon past labors in the Houston area came to our attention. An independent Reformed church was organized there, and they asked Rev. Lubbers to be present to speak for their dedication services. The Mission Committee requested Rev. Lubbers to extend to them our greetings.

This presents some of the points of interest and work that has been occupying the attention of the Mission Committee. We are constantly reminded of our complete dependance upon God for His grace and wisdom, that we may be faithful stewards in His house. Let us unitedly raise a voice of thanksgiving for past blessings and implore our God for continued strength to carry on in this important work which is being done in His name. May He give us His light, that we may know wherein to walk in the midst of this sin-darkened world. May He guide the light of His Word that it shine exactly as He wills it, so that the wicked are without excuse and the children of God infallibly gathered within the fold.

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PICTORIAL NEWS—



This is the new Protestant Reformed school located in Doon, Iowa. This picture appeared in the Doon Press with the accompanying write-up:

"Months and years of planning culminated last Monday in what for many area families was a red letter day. The day was Monday, August 28, 1967—the opening day of the newly formed Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School. The school is a parentally-controlled grammar school, operated by the N.W. Iowa P.R. Christian School Society with membership in the Doon and Hull Protestant Reformed Churches, and is state-chartered educational institution. Enrollment in the opening term numbered 39 students. These are from the Doon, Hull, Rock Valley and Rock Rapids area. Administrator for the school

and teacher of grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 is Mr. Fred Hanco of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Teaching grades one thru four is Mrs. Edw. Van Egdom of rural Doon. The school's board of directors are, Edw. Van Egdom, pres., Doon; George Hoekstra, vice-pres., Hull; Gerald Vanden Top, sec., Rock Rapids; Elmer Vanden Top, treas., Rock Valley; John Hoekstra, Hull; and Ben Bleyenburgh, Sioux Center. The school is constructed of steel and includes two classrooms, two restrooms, a furnace room, supply room, and a large multipurpose room. The building is located 3 blocks north of the Bank on highway 167. A dedication date is planned for later."

And may we extend the congratulations of the entire membership of our denomination!

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church extends sincere sympathy to Dr. and Mrs. Dwight Monsma in the recent loss of his mother

Mrs. Dirk Monsma

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. Revelations 21:4

Prof. H. Hanco, Pres.

Mrs. M. Faber, Sec'y

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Board of the Society for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education extends its sympathy to its President, Dr. D. Monsma, in the loss of his mother,

MRS. EFFIE MONSMA

May the Lord comfort the sorrowing and grant them peace in the knowledge that "All things work together for good to them that love God." Romans 8:28a.

Harry Zwak, Vice-President
Don Lotterman, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Prot. Ref. Church expresses its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Pete Hoekstra, Sr., in the loss of her sister,

MRS. PETER WIERSMA

of Leeuwarden, Netherlands at the age of 88 years. May the God of all grace comfort the sorrowing by His Word and Spirit.

Mrs. T. Jansma, Vice Pres.

Mrs. J. Brummel, Sec'y

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

On October 13, 1967 after much suffering it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself —

MRS. EFFIE MONSMA

a member of the Ladies Aid Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church.

We herewith express our sincere sympathy to the bereaved family, we also rejoice with them in the assurance that she has gone to be with her Lord in glory.

Psalm 140:13, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Thy name, the upright shall dwell in Thy presence."

Mrs. B. Woudenberg, Sr., Vice-pres.
Mrs. J. Newhouse, Sec'y

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

Report of the Meeting of Classis West held in Loveland, Colorado, on Sept. 20, 21, 1967.

The highlight of the first meeting of Classis West ever held in Loveland, Colorado was the examination of Mr. Dale Kuiper. In accordance with the rules attached to Article 4 of the Church Order, Mr. Kuiper preached before the Classis on I Peter 2:1,2. Also, the ministers of Classis West examined Mr. Kuiper in dogmatics, knowledge of the Reformed Confessions, knowledge of Scripture, controversy and practica. The outcome of the examination was that Classis unanimously decided that Mr. Kuiper be ordained in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. This ordination is to take place, Lord willing, in our Randolph congregation on September 29.

It was with fervor that the delegates poured forth their gratitude to God for a capable and staunch minister of the Word, for the seminary professors whose able, dedicated, and faithful instruction was evident in the examination, and for the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ which we may serve and proclaim in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

Although there will now be one less vacancy, five vacant churches remain in the West: Forbes, Hull, Isabel, Pella and South Holland. Classis West requested Classis East to supply South Holland entirely during the next six months and drew up the following schedule for the other four churches:

HULL: Oct. 8 - G. Lanting; Oct. 15, 22 - Classis East; Nov. 12, 19 - Classis East; Dec. 3, 10, 17 - Classis East; Jan. 14, 21 - Classis East; Feb. 11, 18 - Classis East; March 18, 25 - C. Hanko.
ISABEL & FORBES: Oct. 8, 15, 22 - R. Decker; Nov. 5, 12, 19 - D. Engelsma; Dec. 3, 10, 17 - D. Kuiper; Jan. 7, 14 - Classis East; Feb. 11, 18, 25 - G. Vanden Berg; March 4, 11, 18 - G. Lanting.
PELLA: Oct. - G. Vanden Berg; Nov. - R. Decker; Dec. - G. Lanting; Jan. - R. Decker; Feb. - D. Kuiper; March - B. Woudenberg.

The South Holland consistory reported that it has set up a library of taped sermons and that it has on hand a number of sermons, including sermons for many special occasions. Plans are to build up this library in the coming months. The vacancies also require that the ministers in the West prepare more reading sermons. Reading sermons can be obtained from Mr. G. Broekhuis, 341 Maple St., Box 393, Edgerton, Minn. 56128.

Under the direction of the president of Classis,

Rev. B. Woudenberg, Classis treated several protests and appeals. Concerning an objection by the Oak Lawn School Board to the accuracy of a report of a committee of Classis, Classis decided that it could not enter into the matter because the entire case, to which the report and the objection belong, was removed from the table of Classis by the involved parties. In response to a brother's protest against a decision of Classis in March, 1967 that an appeal of his was illegal, Classis maintained its original decision. Classis also had before it an appeal that charged certain members of the church with sin. Classis decided that the action in question had not been proved to be sinful and could not be proved to be sinful.

One consistory requested the advice of Classis regarding the increase of censure upon a member, as Article 77 of the Church Order demands. Classis approved the action of the consistory.

The next meeting of Classis West is scheduled for South Holland, Illinois.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West of the Prot. Ref'd. Churches

The evening of Monday, October 2, was a festive occasion for Doon's Church. The whole congregation came out to a surprise celebration of the second anniversary of their pastor's ministration to their needs. Rev. Decker and family were feted in a true Christian manner with the emphasis on God's faithfulness in caring for His flock in Doon. Their thankfulness to God was revealed in the program of praise-worship, and their esteem and gratitude for their pastor was manifested by the presentation of a purse as a token of their love and appreciation.

The Radio Committee has prepared a tape for distribution to our societies for an after-recess program. The tape has recorded voices from Jamaica — from pastors, an elder, a deacon, a Sunday School class reciting Lord's Day 1, etc. For your copy write to Mr. Henry Vander Wal, 1047 Alto Ave., S.E. Grand Rapids, Mich. 49507.

The Mission Board of our churches has heeded the request of Loveland's Church Extension Comm. to air the Reformed Witness Hour on KLOV, a radio station with a 40 mile radius of interference free reception. ... see you in church

J.M.F.