

The
Standard
Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Meditation: Thanking Jehovah For His Goodness

Editorials: The C. R. Synod and the "Dekker Case"

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MEDITATION—

Thanking Jehovah For His Goodness

by Rev. M. Schipper

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.'
Psalm 100:4, 5.

Be thankful unto the Lord!
Bless His name!
Most worthy object of praise and thanksgiving!
Not only is He Almighty God, Creator of
all things, and our Creator. O, indeed, He is

that too; for it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves. And we acknowledge that because He is the Creator He is also Almighty, Supreme in Being, and the Governor of the universe; an acknowledgment that is not forced out of our lips as it ap-

parently is out of the lips of the children of this world at thanksgiving time. They, too, will speak of the Almighty, the Supreme Being, Whom somehow they recognize as Creator of all Whose existence they cannot deny, for He has revealed Himself to them in the things He has made, so that in their inexcusable consciences they are fully aware that He is. They also speak of God as Blind Force and Beneficent Father. Though they also express many eulogies in praise to themselves for their manifold accomplishments, how they have preserved the peace, how they harvested a great crop which will supply not only the needs of our country but also the needy in the world, and how they made the wheels of industry to turn, they feel that after all they should call on Kind Providence to express their elation over the abundance they enjoy. They appear as the heathen who need a god before whom they can dance and sing, and they seem not to dare exclude him from their feastings.

Not so does the poet, and not so does the child of God.

Though the object of thanksgiving is the Almighty God, Supreme Ruler of the universe, Who is at the same time Beneficent Father, always giving, and to Whom nothing can be given that He does not already possess, the object of our thanksgiving is more than a vague reminiscence of some super-being whom we are forced to acknowledge. His Object is to be feared, not with the fear of dread, but of love; and the thanksgiving is not mixed with expression to the divine and the human, but one of filial devotion.

Moreover, that Object of thanksgiving is more particularly defined in the text.

He is Jehovah!

The I AM THAT I AM!

That is, the perfectly sufficient One in Himself! This is most important to a correct understanding of thanksgiving. Nothing can be given to Him, not even thanksgiving as a payment for value received. For He is in Being and Works the eternally independent God.

That He is Jehovah also points Him out as the All-Wise God; Who eternally has ordained all things according to His predetermined plan, and Who ably reaches His purpose by the very best means.

That He is Jehovah also indicates that He is the Unchangeable One. He is that in Himself, eternally set as He is in the meridian of His own glory, so that there is no shadow that is cast by turning. And He is that also in respect to His covenant people whom He has chosen in Christ from everlasting, whom He loves with eternal, immutable love. All that He has spoken and promised concerning that people, shall be realized absolutely.

Jehovah! That is His Name!

He is His Name. His Name is not a mere abstraction, but a tangible reality. When you touch His Name you touch Him. When you bless His Name, you bless Him. "That His Name is near, His wondrous works declare." It is written on all the creatures of His hand. It is written on all that takes place, on our prosperity and adversity, on our riches and poverty,

on our health and sickness, on rain and drought, on peace and war.

Sole Object of our thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving is not a rejoicing in things! It is the rejoicing in gratitude to Jehovah, and the blessing of His Name!

* * * * *

Be thankful unto Him!

Most beautiful grace!

For it means literally, to point out with the hand, away from ourselves, to the object of our thanksgiving. It implies that the one who thanks knows his dependence on Jehovah alone, that what he is and has he has only Jehovah to thank. It implies, too, that he knows that he has forfeited the least of Jehovah's bounties, and deserved nothing but the curse of death because of his sins and his guilt.

Bless His Name!

That is the manner in which the thanksgiving must be given. The term "bless" comes from a word, the root meaning of which is: to bend the knees, to kneel down. Hence, when one blesses he humbly adores with bended knee. Bowing the knee before another is the sign of humility, obeisance. And humbling self, one exalts the other. This implies that only one who has the grace of humility can really bless, bless Jehovah. Sacrifices of bulls and goats without humility is an abomination. Jehovah delights in a broken and contrite heart. And having been humbled, the child of God kneels before His God. It implies, too, that God, Jehovah, and His Name, are to the child of God exceeding great, and worthy of all adoration. He loses himself in his God, and bowing before Him points his hand away from himself to Jehovah's Name which he sees engraven on all he has received.

Bless His Name!

This means also that thanksgiving is accompanied by praise. And to praise means to glorify with song.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; thank Him, and bless His Name!

How beautifully all the actions of the child of God harmonize, how they move forward in ascending scale, until Jehovah is glorified with thanksgiving, blessing, and praise! He begins on bended knee, and most properly with bowed head. He raises his hand and points with the finger to Jehovah and His Name. Then he glorifies his God with song and adoration. Thus Jehovah receives thanksgiving.

The most opportune place where this may be done is Jehovah's house!

Enter into His gates!

And into His courts!

The gates and the courts for the psalmist were those of the temple, the place where Jehovah dwelt in the midst of His people. Through those gates and into those courts God's people came before His holy presence, to worship and adore Him. There in communion with God's people the psalmist exhorts the people of God to come with thanksgiving and praise.

O, indeed, thanksgiving is primarily a personal matter! It begins with one's soul. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me bless His holy name"

(Psalm 103:1). And again, "I will offer to thee the sacrifices of thanksgiving." (Psalm 116:17). Even in the congregation thanksgiving is a matter of each individual. "I will praise thee with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation." (Psalm 111:1). And again, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people." (Psalm 116:8).

But the child of God can never really stand alone when he gives thanks. When he points his finger to Jehovah, he at the same time directs the attention of his fellow saints to follow his example.

Hence, the most opportune place for thanksgiving is the Lord's house, in the company of God's people. And all together on bended knee they point to the sole object of their praise and thanksgiving, offering praise that glorifies Jehovah's Name!

* * * * *

For Jehovah is good!

His mercy is everlasting!

And His truth endureth to all generations!

Sufficient reason indeed for thanksgiving and praise!

When the poet says that Jehovah is good, he implies that Jehovah is good in Himself, first of all. He is purest perfection. With perfect mind and will He lives the life of purest goodness. He is immaculately beautiful. There is no evil, no darkness in Him. He is light and dwells in the unapproachable light. And because this is true, the poet means to imply, in the second place, He is also good to His creatures. He is good when He lavishes profuse abundance on all the wide creation. His goodness adorns the lily of the field. His goodness clothes the cedars of Lebanon with majesty. His goodness causes the eagle to renew his strength and supplies the roaring lion and the chirping sparrow with food. All that the creature receives from the hand of the Creator is goodness. Every good gift and

every perfect gift is from above, from the Father of Lights. And in the center of all the goodness is the highest and central Good, Christ Jesus, God's Son in the flesh. It is this goodness which the poet senses most of all.

Jehovah's goodness is revealed in His eternal mercy!

Mercy, that grace of God's goodness according to which He bends down in pity and bowels of compassion, with the fervent desire to make the chosen, regenerated and justified sinner blessed as He is blessed. This mercy He revealed in the giving of His Son Whom He sent into the state of our guilt and condition of our misery to deliver us and bring us to the Highest Good.

And His truth endureth to all generations!

That is, His faithfulness abides throughout all the generations of the objects of His mercy. His faithfulness consists in His firm resolve to realize His covenant promises to them. Hence, His truth. From generation to generation He utters His truth that He will continue in faithfulness to realize His mercy to His covenant people.

God's covenant faithfulness and the blessings of that covenant are the chief goodnesses of Jehovah. All other gifts are revelations of goodness only when they are related to His mercy. Though material things are good in themselves, they are not good for us unless they are related to the Good, Christ Jesus. Therefore when the child of God sees Jehovah's goodness and thanks Him for His mercy and faithfulness, he does so in the light of the cross.

Seen in this light, it is only the redeemed child of God who can properly thank and bless Jehovah's Name.

With this in mind, let us this Thanksgiving Day, enter into His house in the company of His saints to thank and praise Jehovah, and to bless His Holy Name!

For Jehovah is good!

EDITORIALS—

The Christian Reformed Synod and the "Dekker Case"

The Evolution of the Charge "Abstract"

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

At the conclusion of my last editorial on this subject I promised to say more about this matter of being "abstract." This I now do. And I do it because I am convinced that here we are getting at the heart of the entire theological conflict exemplified in the "Dekker Case,"—not indeed from a material point of view, but from the point of view of theological *method*.

I suggested that some, if not many, delegates were unaware of what they were adopting when they gave

their approval to this charge. This stands to reason; the term was not explained in Synod's decision. Nor did Synod say what it meant when it decided in particular that Professor Dekker's expressions on the atonement and the love of God were abstract. Nor did Synod give any proof whatsoever that the charge was true. As I suggested before, this is a thoroughly unworthy way of making decisions. Nevertheless, thus matters stand.

To me it is not inconceivable that when the first

reluctance to discuss these subjects disappears, and when some of the former disputants are brave enough to resume the debate, there may even be considerable difference of opinion about what is meant by "abstract." When synodical decisions leave matters vague and ill-defined, such decisions have a way of rising to plague the churches anew. One may say in the future, "Synod meant this." Another will retort, "No, that was not my understanding of the matter when I voted in favor of that motion."

However, much as it may seem so, a term like this is not simply pulled out of thin air, so to speak. It did not find its way into Synod's language by some kind of magical hocus-pocus.

Hence, let us investigate the evolution of this charge. Let us trace, if we can, its origin. Probably it will have to be granted that the evidence is circumstantial. That is due only to the fact that Synod did not give account of the meaning and the reasons for its own decision. But when the evidence is in, I think the reader will have to agree that the case is strong, if not airtight. It may even be that some delegates to the 1967 Synod, if confronted with this evidence, will cry, "We've been taken!" But that will be only because they failed to do their home-work; or could it be that they were so very eager to have "unity and peace" that they were tricked into accepting the decision only because it seemed to be a way out of a difficult situation?

The first ancestor of Synod's decision is, of course, the preliminary observation of the advisory committee in Report IX-D. The committee said: "After long consideration and much discussion...your advisory committee is convinced that Professor Dekker has erred in making ambiguous statements and using them *in an abstract way.*" (emphasis mine) Judging from the record, Synod simply took over this judgment of the committee (altogether ungrounded and undefined, mind you) and said, "Yes, abstract!"

But where did the Advisory Committee get this idea?

The answer is that the second ancestor of Synod's decision is in Report IX-C of the same Advisory Committee. This was the report, you will recall, which was drawn up in the interim between the June and August sessions. That earlier report already advised to "admonish Prof. Dekker for the ambiguous and abstract way in which he has used" certain quoted statements. But this report had more to say on the subject of being abstract. For you find in it this recommendation, followed by an anonymous "Elaboration":

That Synod warn against making abstract theological statements which may give the impression that either the doctrine of particular atonement or the well-meant gospel offer is being denied.

(Elaboration: The following statement was submitted to the advisory committee as an illustration of a concrete approach to the problem that faces us -- an approach that seeks to avoid the abstract theologizing warned against in recommendations a and b immediately above.

"A statement like 'God loves all men with a re-

demptive love' is ambiguous and liable to be misunderstood. For if the word 'redemptive' be understood in the sense in which it is used in the Canons of Dort, II, 8 ('effectually redeem...all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation'), the statement says more than Scripture or the creeds permit us to say. Because this is the sense in which the word 'redemptive' is commonly used among us, the above statement is likely to be so understood.

"Again, a statement like 'Christ died for all men' is ambiguous and likely to be misunderstood. If it is understood to mean that all men will eventually be saved, it says too much; if it is understood to mean that Christ only gives men an opportunity to be saved, it says far too little. Besides, the statement, 'Christ died for me,' is a confession one can only make in faith, not an abstract statement which holds true whether one has faith or not.

"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.'"

"If this approach be followed we shall be able to retain the essence of what Prof. Dekker has been driving at, while at the same time avoiding expressions which are ambiguous, confusing, and which can easily be misinterpreted."

In a way, it is too bad that this part of Report IX-C never came up for discussion on the floor of Synod. That might have been very interesting. And it would be very interesting, too, to compare Prof. Dekker's statements with the above example with respect to ambiguity. Talk about a studied effort to be ambiguous!

The discerning reader will recognize, I take it, that the entire difficulty in the above quotation is basically this, that the anonymous author (who could that be?) is trying desperately to reconcile the irreconcilable, that is, Reformed truth and Arminianism, or, Reformed truth and the well-meant offer of grace. Or perhaps he is trying desperately to avoid the necessity of attempting to reconcile the two.

But this is not the point at present. We are tracing the evolution of the charge "abstract." And here it is evident that some time during the summer recess of Synod this idea had found its way into the report of the Advisory Committee.

Where did it come from?

You will not find it in Report IX-B, the Minority Report of June. Nor will you find it in Report IX-A, the Majority Report of June. You will find what was

perhaps a first cousin of it in the Majority Report. That Majority Report does not speak of "ambiguous" and "abstract." It refers, in connection with Prof. Dekker's statements, to the "faulty use" of such expressions. It also recommends that "Synod admonish Professor Dekker for the *imprecise and indiscreet way* in which he used" the quoted statements (emphasis mine). And especially if one studies the Majority Report in detail and recalls some of the mention of paradoxes and of the "kerugmatic approach" by adherents of the Majority Report's position, he can see a relationship. The fact remains, however, that while there is a similarity between the two reports, Report IX-A does not literally mention the charge of abstractness.

Again, therefore: where did this idea originate? How did it find its way into Report IX-C, then into Report IX-D, and finally into Synod's decision?

An investigation into the many writings about the Dekker Case and into the various opinions, pro and con, which have been expressed will lead the investigator to but one conclusion.

This charge of abstractness came directly from the pro-Dekker camp. It came from those who, at all costs, did not want the recommendations of the Study Committee adopted and did not want to see Prof. Dekker's position condemned as being anti-confessional.

In other words, Synod, as far as the *language* is concerned, though it did not define its terminology, adopted literally the position of the pro-Dekker camp. I say again: I do not know how many delegates were aware of this and knew what they were really voting for. But the fact is very plain.

And here is the evidence,—at least, the clearest piece of evidence; there are several more such items which could be presented. I quote from the article by Dr. Henry Stob in the *Reformed Journal* of May-June, 1967, pages 5 and 6. It is entitled "Synod, The Committee, and Professor Dekker — Again."

What has become plain in the last few years is that the issues raised in Professor Dekker's article of December 1962 are complex and not easy to resolve. And what has become equally plain is that the scientific method which we have customarily employed in our address to theological issues is in need of patient review and important revision. No one is here entitled to cast stones at any other; all of us have in the past been victimized by what increasingly appears to be an *abstract and rationalistic method of doing theology* (italics mine, HCH); but we can ill afford now, when we are just beginning to reach out for a new and more biblically oriented method of theological understanding and construction, to arrest our advance by making pronouncements dictated by a purely *objectivistic mode of thinking* (italics mine, HCH).

We are experiencing today a theological renaissance (winds of change? HCH), and as in every case of rebirth and renewal, there exist in the present theological world a number of excesses and aberrations. But, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is manifestly renewing the Church's understanding of things divine. New and responsible biblical studies have taught us to recognize that inherited Greek-philosophic modes

of understanding are not suited to the Revelation given by the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and by the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are beginning to understand that biblical truth is historical, kerygmatic, and existential, and that it exists and has meaning, not in static isolation, apart from the divinely addressed human situation, but only within the context of man's response, only within the context of belief and unbelief.

It has become evident to many of us—the point has often been made by Dr. Daane and is currently being made by Dr. Pietersma and Rev. J. DeMoor—that the present dispute revolves about a pseudo-problem, a problem stated in terms of non-biblical categories, and a problem, therefore, which cannot be solved by the biblical givens. Neither Professor Dekker nor the Committee is questioning the faith; both wish to honor the Scriptures and the Creeds. But both are caught in the toils of a method—the Committee, I'm afraid, much more than Professor Dekker—which prevents them from resolving their differences. Both, though in significantly different degrees, disengage biblical truth from the kerygmatic situation and, by *abstracting* it (italics mine, HCH), inadvertently, and contrary to every intention, falsify it.

Take, for example, the question: Did Christ die for everybody? Consider that as an *abstract* (emphasis mine, HCH) question of fact, consider that as a scientific question concerning an *objective state of affairs* (italics mine, HCH), and you have an insoluble question on your hands. If you answer Yes!, how is it then that not all men are saved? If you answer No!, how is it then that the crucified and risen Christ can be genuinely and unreservedly offered to all? To avoid this impasse, to escape this cul-de-sac, we must descend from the cold heights of *abstract "truth"* (italics mine, HCH) and ask the biblical question: What is every man who hears the preached Gospel—every such man without exception—called upon to *believe*?

Dr. Stob at this point attempts to answer this question. We shall return to that matter later, when we criticize this "new" method of theology. We are busy now investigating the evidence, remember. And in this connection I must quote one more paragraph.

It is this, I am sure, that Professor Dekker wished to say....But partly in accommodation to inherited modes of thought, and chiefly in forced response to *abstract questions framed in isolation from the existential situation of Gospel preaching*, he was led to make less felicitous *objective assertions about the atonement* which were qualitatively no better, but certainly no worse, than those the Committee has hitherto been urging for adoption. (italics mine, HCH)

There you have it. Synod's language is obviously, by a process of evolution, the language of the *Reformed Journal*.

As I reread this language of Dr. Stob, I am constrained to say that when he spoke of a "miracle" on the floor of Synod, he probably meant—be it, then, only sub-consciously—that the real miracle was that the view of the *Reformed Journal* had officially gained the field!

(to be continued)

SPECIAL FEATURE—

On-Going Reformation

1

(Editor's Note: At our last annual staff meeting it was decided to introduce a new department in our *Standard Bearer* which would feature worthwhile articles from early volumes of our magazine which are no longer available to most of our readers. It was felt that there were a goodly number of such articles which would also be pertinent today. Besides, many such articles in our early days appeared in the Holland language, which most of our readers are unable to read today. The committee appointed to take care of this department has chosen as the first feature a series of articles by the Rev. H. Hoeksema which originally appeared thirty-seven years ago under the heading, "*Voortgaande Reformatie*," that is, "On-Going (or: Continuing) Reformation." There were four articles in this series, some of which were considerably longer than today's average article. These will appear serially in several installments. Our thanks to the committee, Rev. M. Schipper and Prof. H. Hanko, and to the translator, who wishes to remain anonymous. HCH)

Is there any increase?

Are we growing? Are we becoming larger as churches?

These are questions not seldom asked, also among us, when men would like to know whether the cause of the Lord as we are called to represent it is making good progress. If only these questions can be answered affirmatively, then there is joy and good courage for the future; if, however, the answer must be negative, or if the answer must be that we lose members now and then, that there are also those who in time reveal themselves as never having been of us, then faces fall and men appear inclined to hang their harps upon the willows.

Now it is very well possible that these questions harbor an element of sound and genuine interest.

Whoever believes that with regard to the Three Points the Christian Reformed Churches have truly departed from the truth of God's Word and of the Reformed confession; whoever also trusts that there continue to be many in those Churches who, in the final analysis, continue to love the Reformed truth,—these must surely long prayerfully that the Lord may not only open their eyes but also give them the courage of faith no longer to remain responsible for what has been done by those Churches, both from the viewpoint of the trampling under foot of justice and from the viewpoint of the violation of the truth of God. And whoever inquires whether the churches are growing

with that prayerful longing in the heart surely reveals a sincere interest in the cause of the Lord.

But the fear is not ungrounded that such questions arise sometimes out of a less spiritual interest, are asked out of the desire to become big again, also according to the standard of the world, out of the desire to develop power and have a name.

The desire for external growth is imbedded in us, in our bone and marrow.

It has been one of the causes of the deterioration of the Christian Reformed Churches.

This applies, for example, to their school. They wanted to expand and become great. They wanted to grow according to the standard of the world. Large buildings had to be built. Much money had to be spent for external greatness. People even spoke of a million dollar endowment fund. The instruction must become more and more scientific! They sought acknowledgement by the world. They were proud of the fact that young men who had studied for a time in the school of the Churches now sought further training in institutions of unbelief and won laurels in those schools. But the necessity of holding fast to principle and of developing that principle more and more, of being distinctive in faith and confession, of maintaining the principle of spiritual isolation, was forgotten; whoever spoke of it was not infrequently tolerated with a kind of compassionate disdain!

But—let us not forget this—that desire for outward greatness is also in our blood.

It is one of the traits of our sinful nature to want to judge things according to the standard of external glory, to want to evaluate also the Church of the Lord according to the number of members, to "weigh it by the pound."

This we may never do.

To long for growth from such motives is sin before God. And the striving which arises out of such a sinful desire for greatness soon brings us again into misery, contributes immediately again to the ruin of the Churches.

The chief question is not: is there any increase?

This applies also to my garden: often there is considerable growth. And if it be merely a matter of satisfying the eye, then one would be inclined to say that this garden is in a prosperous condition when everything grows luxuriantly. But if I do not maintain daily watch over it, to pull out undesirable growth, then the fruit chokes among the weeds. It is good that there is increase, provided that the increase is good.

It is, and ever remains, the chief question: is there spiritual growth? Is there a holding fast to principle? Do our Churches stand firmly for the truth of God in doctrine and in life? Gideon also had assembled a considerable army. With such a mighty army one could attack the Midianites and put the battle in array with results. But alas! When it was proclaimed throughout the host that the timid and faint-hearted might remain behind and depart for the mountains of Gilead, then the mighty army shrank to one-third its size. And when the remaining ten thousand men were led to the water and given the opportunity to refresh themselves with a cooling drink, it appeared that there were only three hundred who did not give themselves time to rest upon their knees to lick up the water with their tongue! And only three hundred men were finally called to wield the sword of the Lord and of Gideon against Midian!

The Lord does not will any greatness.

He glorifies Himself in that which is small and insignificant.

Also we as Churches may never forget this. And instead of always and again inquiring whether there is any increase, it could be profitable for us also to stop and consider the necessity of continuing Reformation.

Immediately after a tense period of battle and struggle, such as we experienced when a place was no longer granted us within the Christian Reformed Churches, people are inclined, out of reaction, to rest on their laurels, imagining that the battle has been won once and for all, and acting as though the ideal of a pure Church has finally been reached. Whoever takes such a view of things is nevertheless mistaken. And bitter disappointment must certainly soon follow upon such an expectation.

Fact is that there is a continuous deformation and degeneration of the Churches. This is inevitable; it can never be avoided.

Such a process of deformation has also been in operation among us from the very beginning, and it became manifest in various ways.

There are various causes of this phenomenon that may be cited.

First of all, the phenomenon asserts itself that in every Reformation-movement many go along who do not carry the principle of such a reformation in their heart. They go along for various reasons and out of widely divergent motives, which, however, generally concentrate about their own "I." It was thus with the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt. A mixed multitude went along with Israel. And it is conceivable that Moses later often wished that many of them had drowned in the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his host. This was also true of David when he had been anointed king and was fleeing before the face of Saul. Whoever had a grievance joined his band. It has been ever thus. This was also true of us. How often this has become evident in the past! Oh, how many could we not mention who seemed to be full of enthusiasm for the cause of the Lord, who joined us of their own volition, went along with us when we were cast out of the Christian Reformed Churches, but whose fervor was

not rooted in proper principle, and before long appeared false! The one "had sought it everywhere" and believed that now he had finally found it; but soon he discovered his mistake. Another imagined that he would be a far greater man in a small and insignificant group than in the midst of a great multitude; he longed to be a big frog in a small pond; but when even in that small pond they gave no heed to his tremendous croaking, he soon left, greatly disappointed. A third had a delusion that he had to preach, and he saw the opportunity of becoming a preacher among us. A fourth desired the exercise of the ministry (*oefenen*); a fifth was so determined to be an elder that he even voted for himself (he had all the votes); a sixth was simply a windbag, who had need of a new movement now and then, in order to rid himself of some wind if he were not to burst; a seventh.... But why mention more? We know them by experience in the short history which now lies behind us,—those who sought their own "I," who had the most to say for a while, but who then would destroy the cause of the Lord when they were not flattered sufficiently.

In the second place, we must not forget that there is always an element which joins our churches, but which is not prompted by principle. When men are in difficulty with others (we do not now refer to those who are oppressed in a righteous cause), then it is so easy that there is still another church which they can join. Or people will establish relations with others, outside of our churches, and these latter will then affiliate with us. It cannot possibly be avoided that also among them who join us from without there will always be found those who do not actually understand the issue, those for whom it was never a matter of principle. And however we may rejoice when the Lord open the eyes of others and moves them to join us, we must never forget that also in this respect it is true that all that glitters is not gold.

In the third place, there is the undeniable fact that also from within the carnal seed always springs up; branches shoot forth on the vine which never bring forth fruit. All is not Israel that is called Israel. It was thus in the old dispensation; it is thus today. The line of election and reprobation runs directly through the historical line of the generations of the covenant; and always it makes separation. A two-fold seed will always grow up in the midst of the Church of Christ. And not seldom the relation is such that the carnal seed grows and develops much more abundantly than the spiritual. The Church is always corrupted, not only from without but also from within. There is always the development of an element whereby the process of deformation enters into the church and comes to manifestation.

In the fourth place, in explanation of this phenomenon of continuous deformation and degeneration, this falling away and decline of the Church, we must also not forget this, that among the believers even the very holiest has but a small principle of this obedience. The old power of sin, it is true, has been broken in principle; but it has not been completely rooted out. There is also with believers, with those who really

joined us out of principle, or those who grow up in the midst of the Church as the true seed of Israel,—there is always a strong inclination to go along with the world. The desire to be great according to the standard of the world plays an important role with them. Or they permit themselves to be lulled to sleep at their post. They do not always watch and pray. They permit themselves to be swept along with those who would deliver the Church over unto the world. They do not protest when the carnal element in the Church sits upon the throne, takes over, would enforce its will. And thus they cooperate in the degeneration of the Churches in doctrine and in life, in

discipline and in the worship services.

And if, finally, we add to this that the Church of Christ is called to live in the midst of the world, that the enemy never sleeps, that Satan goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, that the world seduces, offers to the Church its sham beauty, sings its siren song, allures and threatens, and that the power of the temptation of sin is great, then we can understand that the danger of deformation always threatens the Church; in fact, the process of degeneration and decay is ever present.

(to be continued)

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book Of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

Hebrews 4:11-13 (Read from own Bible)
**NOT AN ABSTRACT THEORY ON BIBLICAL
PSYCHOLOGY (Vss. 11-13)**

Biblical scholars often have a strong leaning toward theorizing and dogmatizing on the concepts of a given text. When this is brought into the text, the result is not interpretation of the word of God as it is profitable to equip the believer unto every good work, but rather that we then have an abbreviated biblical lexicon. And in the matter at hand in the text the concepts soul, spirit and heart are so worked out that we arrived at theological definition without having Scriptural exhortations through which God works repentance unto life and glory.

The Bible is not dogmatics in the formal sense. It is the word of God, spoken through His Son in these last days. Of old time God spoke this word through the prophets. They said: thus saith the Lord. And when Christ opened his mouth, God was speaking in Christ, in the Son. This speech of God may not be distilled by theological study into mere abstract theory, or even into mere theological concepts, important though such labors may be as guide-posts for correct thinking as to the structural truths taught in the church.

It is true that the verses 11-13 of Hebrews 4 speak of the "soul," "spirit" and "heart" of man as entities created by God. And the thinking of interpreters grapples with these concepts to come to conceptual clarity. But we must do more than try to come to a conception of the terms in the text, and that, too, according to hermeneutical rules. For the text also speaks of the "joints" and "marrow" of man, together with the "thoughts and intents of the heart."

This all makes for a very vivid and total picture of man; it is a picture of man as he concretely in life moves and lives and has his being. There is merit in the brief resume of Calvin's commentary on this section where he writes "Whenever the Lord addresses us by his word, he deals seriously with us, in order that he may touch all our inmost thoughts and feelings; and so there is no part of our soul which ought not to be roused (Calvin's Commentary of Hebrews, page 100)." For the preaching of the word is most serious on the part of God. And this is the word which by the gospel is proclaimed to us. Unless we hear this serious admonition here in the text, we have not heard what God speaks to us in his exhortation and in the great example of his dealings with unbelieving Israel in the desert. Let us therefore rather fear, and give heed!

A STRONGLY MOTIVATED EXHORTATION (Vs. 12)

This exhortation in the text reads as follows "Wherefore let us give all diligence to enter into that rest, lest (in order that not) any fall in the same example of unbelief." This exhortation is clear and concise. The KJV translates the Greek verb "Spoudasoomen" by the term "let us labor." The term really means: to give *diligence*. A certain English divine says of this term "It includes a fervent spirit, a strong desire, a serious attempt with all the powers and faculties of the soul and body to enhance this effort," Interesting it is to notice that II Peter 1:10 also speaks of "spoudazein," to give diligence in this sense. It means to add in faith virtue, and in virtue knowledge, and in knowledge self-control, and in self-control patience, and in patience godliness, and

in godliness brotherly love, and in brotherly love the love! This shows that entering into the rest is a battle of faith against all unbelief and against all that which opposes God's word and promises. Such is the battle of faith. Such was the battle of the Hebrews against all who would deny the reality of Christ's King-Priesthood and equate the mere types and shadows with the reality. It is the battle against unbelief in whatever form such unbelief raises its foul head.

In this diligence we have a strong positive purpose. It is to enter into *that* rest, that is, the rest into which Jesus brought us by his death and resurrection and glorious ascension, passing through the very heavens. (vs. 14) Here we have strong eschatological motifs. Christ has sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, having brought about the purification of our sins. (1:3b) And, therefore, the entering into the rest in its final consummation is the entering with body and soul into the heavenly Canaan, a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness shall dwell. Into that rest Jesus brings us. Ever that rest remains for the children of God from Joshua's day till now, and from henceforth till Jesus comes with clouds!

That which is the legal ground for not entering into the rest is unbelief. The *legal ground* for not entering into the rest is not reprobation. Says the writer to the Hebrews "therefore they *could* not enter because of unbelief!" (3:19) Now the great example of unbelief in all of the history of the church is the basic attitude and manifestation of unbelieving Israel in the wilderness. It is Meriba and Massa. There is only one *spiritual-psychological way* in which not to fall in the example of unbelief. That is to give diligence in faith to enter into the rest. It is a fine point of distinction which we may notice in the text. In the Greek we read "en too autoo...hupodeigmati," that is "in" the same example. The English translation has "according to the same example of unbelief," or "after the same example." Perhaps the emphasis falls on the preposition "en", indicating that the writer thinks of the danger of walking *in* the very example, and thus falling under the same judgment of God; let none of you be refractory and unbelieving! For to us is the word of God preached as it was to them. From that viewpoint our status quo is the same as that of Israel of old. God, who spoke of old time through the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us through His Son! In both there is the serious preaching!

That example of Israel's unbelief was not a mere weakness of believers; it was something quite radically different from the "daily to strive against the weakness of our faith, and that we do not have perfect faith, for which sins we are as believers sorry from the heart. Nay, this is the sin of unbelief, that is, the stubborn, persistent and increasingly progressive refusal to bow before the word of God. To truly flee from this the only recourse is to give diligence to enter into the rest.

Navigators at sea have buoys to guide them to keep them from the shallow channel through which the boat may pass; they have lighthouses, built on the shore, from which the beacon light shines to guide them lest

they fall upon the rocks and suffer shipwreck. God has set as a constant warning to all men, and particularly to the church of all ages, the example of Sodom and Gomorrah in their destruction for sin. It is a bit of eschatological display in the beginning of the post-diluvian period of the world. That is the meaning of the word of God when he says "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Genesis 18:17-19) This means that, in the generations of Abraham, what God does to Sodom, will be perpetuated as the example which we must flee. First it was told by Abraham to Isaac and Jacob and the patriarchs, and it is written in Moses and the prophets. In II Peter 2:6 we read of this perpetual example up to the present moment in all the Scriptures. Says Peter "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemning them with an overthrow, making them *an example* unto those that after should live ungodly." The term in the Greek for "making them" is "tetheikoos," a perfect participle, indicating completed action and state up to the present moment. This example is established in all of Scripture. See Deut. 29:23; 32:32; Isaiah 1:9, 10; 13:19; Jeremiah 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9; Matthew 10:15; Mark 6:11; Romans 9:29; II Peter 2:6; Jude 7. It is the classic example of the destruction of the world. We do not need many of such. Only One is sufficient. Thus also there is one classic example of unbelief! It is that of Israel in the desert and of their perishing, due to their unbelief. It is *the* example. And it was written for us upon whom the end of the ages has come, that we should not walk in the same example of unbelief!

In this destruction of unbelieving Israel—unbelieving over against the preaching of the Word of God—we see the great and powerful and living Word of God at work. We see it also in those who believe.

For the word of God *is living*.....!

THE PREDICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD (Vss. 12, 13)

Yes, the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

It is a remarkable thing that the emphasis falls not on what the word *does* first of all, but on what the word of God *is*. Really, the text in the original Greek says: Living, the word of God....! (*zoon ho logos tou theou*). The emphasis falls on the predication: *living*. The *adjectival* notion of the participle stands on the foreground. That the word is living indicates that it is not dead, lifeless, weak, fruitless. It is living and operative. It is living as God is living. (Matthew 22:32) Jesus lives through the living Father. (John

6:57) Christ is the living one, and therefore we shall live, for even as the Father hath life in Himself thus hath he given the Son to have life in himself. (John 5:26) And as the living God he is the very opposite of idols which do not exist. As the living God he is the eternal God. (Revelation 4:10; 10:6) All this too must be attributed to the word of God as spoken of here in the text. Were the word of God not "living" then it could not be powerful, sharper than any twoedged sword, etc. Only because the Word of God is living does and can it do what it does in the deepest recesses of the being, and heart, and existence of man!

The question has been one of exegetical difference

whether the "word of God" (*ho logos tou Theou*) must be interpreted as the personal, the hypostatical Word, which became flesh and dwelt among us, or whether this refers to the inspired word, which is preached in the word. It was none less than Augustine, Ambrose, Dr. Owen and Doddridge who held the position that the word here refers to the hypostatical word, the Christ Himself. Others, such as Calvin, Beza, Macknight and Scott held that the "Word of God" refers to the preached word, the infallible Scriptures. The question is really of importance to understand, lest we fail to hear and heed the exhortation and admonition of the Lord.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP—

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

Our Liturgy

by Rev. G. Vanden Berg

Before we consider the meaning of the various elements that constitute our public worship, there are some matters that demand prior consideration. A general orientation in the science of Christian Liturgics will give us the necessary background for the proper understanding of the material of our subject. It is difficult, if not impossible, to form a real sense of appreciation of the elements that constitute our public worship without realizing first the principles, the history, the doctrine and interpretation that lies behind these elements. The science is not complete unless it is viewed in this broader perspective. Much then as we might like to delve immediately into the consideration of questions and problems that relate directly to the things we do in our public worship, this will have to be held in abeyance until we have finished our preparatory study.

The Name — Liturgics

In our last article we stated that the term "Liturgy" is derived from the Greek term "leitourgia" or "leitourgein" which is a composite of two terms, "leiton" meaning people, and "ergon" meaning work or service. Hence, the root meaning or idea of the term is that it denotes the "people's work or service."

In Classical Greek the term was used primarily to denote civic service required by law of wealthy citizens, or voluntarily proffered by them, as the discharge of the duty of public-spiritedness. Since religious services were conducted under the auspices of the civil magistrate, the term could have a religious connotation in some instances. But even so it was primarily civic and soial and only secondarily religious in its specific character. A very prominent instance of "leitourgia" was providing entertainment

for the populace. Ultimately the term acquired a wider meaning and was used for all manner of work or services by whomsoever performed, viz. the labor of slaves, the work of artisans, the conduct of business, etc. It is worthy of note that by calling all manner of work, the ordinary word for which was "ergon," "leitourgia" the Greeks expressed their philosophy of work. According to their views the connotation of all labor performed was social and altruistic; it was done ultimately in the interest of the people, and not for personal enrichment and aggrandizement. How far would this conception of work be accepted in our modern American society? Furthermore, how many are there who belong to the church who would be quite ready to approve this view of the labor of man, forgetting of course that the sole objective of man's labor and service must always be the promotion of the Kingdom of God and His glory. "Labor not for the meat that perishes!" (John 6:27)

In the New Testament the word (leitourgia) occurs repeatedly in various forms. According to Zahn¹, Paul uses the term consistently in the antique Greek sense and with particular reference to the financial sacrifice involved in serving the people.² Public service, spiritedly rendered at considerable cost, would seem to be the sense of the passages mentioned.

In other New Testament writings the term appears to have a more specifically religious signification.³ This use of the term was not arbitrary. Among the Greeks this term, as we have found, might denote financing a religious festival and rendering assistance to the religious leaders upon such occasions. The Septuagint accordingly used the term for the services of the priests and Levites in the Temple. In Luke

1:23 it is used for *priestly* service with reference to the labor of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. In Hebrews 10:11 the sense is similar. In Hebrews 9:21 mention is made of the vessels that were employed in the service (leitourgia) of the temple. In Hebrews 8:2 reference is made to Christ as the minister (leitourgos) of the sanctuary; in 8:6 to his ministry (leitourgia) as being more excellent than the Aaronitic ministry. In Hebrews 1:14 the angels are called ministering spirits (leitourgika pneumata). The meaning might be simply ministering in general but it is more likely that the term here too has the connotation of temple-service, since the writer to the Hebrews represents heaven, the abode of the angels, as the New Testament temple into which Christ has entered with His own blood. If it be remembered that in Paul's writings the church is considered God's temple, this term as apexegeted in Hebrews 1:14 would also appear to signify temple-service. Acts 13:2, where the verbal form of the term is used, is an interesting passage. The entire verse reads: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Some contend that this ministering refers to the public worship of the congregation at Antioch. Others hold that it signifies the specific services or functions of the prophets and teachers mentioned in verse 1. At any rate, these men no doubt exercised their function upon the occasion of public worship and so it would seem that we have here a foundation for the technical use of the term in the history of the Christian Church.

Even so, however, in ecclesiastical literature the term was not used to designate public worship at first. Subsequently the Eastern church styled the administration of the Lord's Supper "leitourgia" and still later the official public labors of bishops, presbyters and deacons were so denominated. The Western church at first called the public services of its office-bearers *officium* or *ministerium divinum*, but eventually also adopted the word "Liturgia."

Protestantism was slow to use the term for its public worship. In light of all the foregoing the reason for this is not difficult to see. In its original meaning and exclusive Old Testament and partial New Testament usage, the word did not altogether suit Protestant public worship. In Athens and among Israel the "leitourgoi" (worshippers) were set over against the people sharply; their work was done for the people, the people themselves meanwhile being utterly passive; not serving at all, but being served. In spite of the New Testament a hierarchical spirit arose in the church at an early date. The Greek Orthodox, the Eastern section and the Roman Catholic, the Western section, of the original Ecumenical church to 1054 A.D. have on principle excluded the laity from active participation in public worship. The term "leitourgia" consequently suited their ecclesiastical views but was militant to Protestant views of worship.

The Protestant conception of worship is based on the New Testament and takes into account the majority which the church attained at Pentecost. It proceeds

on the assumption that the position of the clergy must be construed not only in terms of authority but also of fellowship, and that even the authority of the clergy has as its corollary the liberty of the laity. It is to be noted that a strong element in the liberty which the apostle Paul advocated and defended was freedom from Old Testament ritualism, i.e., liturgical freedom. The implication of that freedom is activity. The New Testament idea of worship includes not only the leadership of the ministry, but a series of liturgical activities on the part of the people. The Roman Catholic liturgician, Thalhofer, therefore concludes that Protestants cannot properly use the terms liturgy and liturgical. However, this conclusion is entirely unwarranted. The use of a term in the course of history is not conditioned by the retention of all its original implications. Lexicography is an organic growth and is not dominated by etymology. The example of Acts 13:2, mentioned above, is proof against Thalhofer. The application of the originally political term to the temple-service of the Old Testament by the Septuagint also is a telling instance of the new adaptation of old terms. Moreover, the fundamental idea of "leitourgia" is that God is *worshipped*. The manner how is accidental. The term then denotes *worship*, however performed, whether after the Old Testament or after the New Testament fashion. Be that as it may, Protestantism could hardly help associating the blight of hierarchy with the term Liturgy, and was therefore inclined to avoid the term in order to steer clear of its obnoxious historical implications. According to Rietschl the term does not occur in the multitudinous Kirchenordnungen of the 16th and 17th centuries in which public worship was regulated. It seems to have come into use in England in Anglican circles toward the end of the 17th century. It was soon adopted in other lands and before long was everywhere in use. There is however a slight discrepancy in the use of the term. The science of Public Worship is generally called Liturgics; the adjective Liturgical is used as the technical description of public worship; yet some writers persist in classifying the churches as *liturgical* and *non-liturgical* churches, on the basis, not of engaging in worship or not, for obviously all churches without exception have worship, but of the distinctive manner in which worship is exercised, ritualistically or not. In other words, liturgical and ritualistic are mistakenly considered convertible terms. This is obviously an error although it may also be said that the two are often difficult to differentiate. Perhaps we may say that because ritual is so often interwoven into the liturgy, ritualistic practices become part of the liturgy but at the same time all ritual is not liturgical.

The term "Liturgy" then, in our present study, is to be taken in the broadest sense to include all that is embodied in the *worship* of the people of God, the church.

The Concept of Liturgy

Liturgics is that theological science dealing with Public Worship. Some liturgicians will not subscribe

to this but hold that it is the science dealing only with the *prescribed forms* of Public Worship. One of the objectives of this distinction is to exclude from the field of Liturgy the sermon or the preaching and to relegate this to another theological science which is known as Homeletics. These then further distinguish the prescribed forms of worship as being either *prescribed* or *free*. By the former is meant those forms whose character and content have been prescribed by the church institutionally while the latter are determined by the choice of the worshippers. Conceivably all the forms of public worship might be either prescriptive, as in the hierarchical churches, fully or nearly so, or free, as the Puritans desired. Lutheran and Reformed Churches condemn neither prescriptive nor free forms of worship in principle; and have so signified by combining the prescriptive and the free in their public worship. Hence, there is really no reason why these should not be treated in the same science.

“By public worship”, wrote Rev. H. Hoeksema,⁴ “we mean that service of God which takes place wherever God meets with His people as the instituted church on earth, and that too, through the medium of the offices. Public worship must principally always be ‘in Spirit and in truth.’ This implies that it is not limited by a prescribed code of laws or rules that determine its external form, but is characterized by freedom, so that the form of public worship is controlled and determined by and is the proper expression of its idea, viz., the meeting of God with His people.”

1. Romerbrief, pg. 560
2. Rom. 13:6, 15:27, II Cor. 9:12, Philip. 2:17, 25, 30.
3. Luke 1:23, Acts 13:2, Heb. 1:14, 8:2, 6, 9:21, 10:11
4. Liturgics, pg. 1.

IN HIS FEAR—

The Blessed Giver

by Rev. J. A. Heys

From the moment of his creation man had a calling.

In Genesis 2:15 we read, “And the Lord God took the man, and put him in the garden to dress it and keep it.” Whatever that work in that day consisted in and required, it was man’s calling before God. From that moment onward he was God’s steward. God placed certain creatures in his hand, under his control and wherewith he could serve. God gave him tools and means wherewith to serve. And only today do we see how complex and manifold those means and tools are. Adam had the garden to dress and keep; we have a whole world of goods and creatures. Our reach is so much greater than Adam’s. Our earth is bigger than his small garden before his fall, and the expanse of the land of Eden after that fall. Today a man flies in less than a day from continent to continent. He reaches out and touches the moon and distant planets. This he does not do with his hand in the literal sense. But he is able to hold in his hand the close-up pictures he has taken of these heavenly bodies. He has reached them with his eye to see their detail as Adam could never see it. He has touched many creatures in between as he rockets through space at speeds unbelievable to Adam and to the whole human race only a few hundred years ago. He digs down into the bowels of the earth to a depth that man found impossible in centuries gone by. He

has explored the depth of the sea and seen creatures that Solomon in all his wisdom never knew existed. He has gotten possession of and placed his name upon objects and creatures that the patriarchs never dreamed would exist.

But two truths lie behind this whole experience of man and must be borne in mind by him. The first is that “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein.” Psalm 24:1. The cattle on a thousand hills, the hills on which they graze, each blade of grass growing upon those hills, the men who tend the cattle and the sun that shines upon them, all are God’s in the absolute sense of the word. Man possesses goods relatively. The one man owns that to which his neighbour has no right; but he owns it only as God’s steward and for a few brief years. He owns what he has in relation to his fellow-men. In relation to God he has only received some tools, some means wherewith he is to serve His Creator.

Man was created as the most unique among all of God’s earthly creatures. He was created so that spiritually he faced God and physically he faced this earth with all that which it contains. He was created with a spiritual side to his soul that knew God, loved Him, recognized Him as his master and himself as the friend-servant. And he likewise had a physical side to his soul whereby he could work with that whole

earthly creation in God's service and then render Him praise and thanksgiving. With his hand he could keep and dress the garden, but then with his lips and soul he cried out, "O God, How great Thou art!" He could reach out and eat the fruit of the ground and of the trees and herbs as a purely physical act; but then his soul would respond, and he would look away from the earth unto the Creator thereof and sing, "O God, How good Thou art!" Through man the lifeless rocks, the speechless beasts, the irrational creature all came before God's face in praise and adoration. They did this through Adam's soul. Through Adam in his state of righteousness all creation came to God and said, "Thank you, Lord." Picture in your mind a triangle with its base downward and its apex pointing up to heaven, and then you have a figure of Adam, the king of all that earthly creation in his state of righteousness. At the base in all its broadest extent Adam touched the earthly creation; but through his soul it all pointed upward to his Maker, the God of heaven and of earth.

All this ceased when Adam became a rebel against the living God and the point of that triangle became turned downward and inward. He became a self-seeker, a selfish, greedy, covetous rebel. And he became a thief. For he still stood on God's earth and increasingly began to reach out to the extent of that earth until he has today, as we pointed out, reached it almost as far as he can go. But he no longer goes to God with that creation even though it everlastingly remains God's in the most absolute sense. Paul writes in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And one of the most frequently used words in Scripture for sin means "to miss the mark." Man is not even aiming in the general direction. The apex of that triangle, we said, is now pointed downward and inward towards the flesh of man himself. He does not come anywhere near the glory of God but goes in the opposite direction of the glory of self. And it is not merely a matter of "losing the game" when he does not hit the target. It is far more serious, for he goes "on strike" against the living God! He sits in God's factory and uses his raw material, machines and tools, and then sells the goods, pockets the money and goes home with it! He takes over God's creation, and then he says, "There is no God; all this is mine to do with as my flesh pleases." He may be "cultured and civilized." He may profess even to be a Christian. His name may be inscribed in the books of a church here below. He may even be a regenerated child of God. But whenever he uses any of the goods of this earth for himself and does not render the due praise and thanks to God, by his actions he does say, "There is no God; all this is mine to do with as I please."

You see, then, the first theft of Adam and Eve was not that they robbed the neighbour of any of his goods. They had no neighbour yet. We may say, perhaps, that Eve through her temptation robbed Adam of his righteousness and thus of his life. But even then her first deed was to rob God of His glory, to come short of it, to miss the mark that He had placed before her

when He created her. And that was a serious thing! For that was everything!

What can we give to God other than praise and thanksgiving? Since those cattle on a thousand hills are His; since we with all of our possessions also are His; and since we cannot do anything without the breath of life and heart beat which He gives us; what is there to bring to Him that He does not already possess? What goods can we bestow upon Him? How can we ever enrich Him and add to His wealth? And, by the way, did you ever hear of anyone making God the beneficiary in his last will and testament? Not that He wants that. He does not. And it cannot be done anyway. But no man ever thinks of doing that. God wants it during your life and not after you have given your last breath of life. God wants it in the form of praise and thanksgiving. Listen to what He says Himself in Psalm 50:7-15, "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel and I will testify against thee. I am God even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountain; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

Indeed, Offer unto God thanksgiving and glorify Him! That is your calling. And if you do not, you rob Him of that which rightfully is His. And because it is His, He is going to get it. Because all things are in the absolute sense of the word His, He is going to take them all back in the fire of the judgment day. And He will still get Himself that praise and glory through the salvation of His people in Christ and through the everlasting desolation of the other thieves in the torment of hell. The one thief on the cross goes by Christ's cross into a perfect life of praising and glorifying God for salvation and a new creation. The other thief from his cross goes into terror where he will confess the glory of a righteous and sovereign God. His knee will bow. His tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God. He will say in hell that God is great and that God is good, even in and because of this terrible punishment.

But, again, Offer to God thanksgiving and render Him praise, That is your calling. That is what salvation enables us to do once again, Peter calls us a royal priesthood that has been called out of darkness in order that we should show forth God's praises. I Peter 2:9. We are, first of all (and such we were in the beginning) the blessed givers who give praise and thanksgiving to God; who give Him service and render Him the honour of being GOD! These we can give to Him because He has given them to us. We can take the cup of salvation which He gave, and we can come with the contents of that cup which He has filled, and

render thanksgiving and praise to the most High. It is quite obvious, is it not, that we cannot give thanks unless we are thankful. There is no thanks-*giving* when one is not thank-*full*. The heart full of thanks, the heart filled with gratitude by God, can give it back to Him. Even as the river and brook must continue to receive and be filled in order to give water to the sea or ocean, so God fills our cup; and we by that power and gift, with the point of the triangle lifted again on high to Him, give praise as we are given grace. We receive a new man in Christ who once again faces God spiritually in his soul. Once again through the mind and heart and by the tongue of the regenerated man the whole earthly creation in its much wider extent and multiplicity of creatures in their complex forms comes in a steady stream of praise and thanksgiving and glory to God, being dedicated to His service.

When this is the case, there will be the faithful labor so that we "may also relieve the poor," as the Heidelberg Catechism points out in its explanation of the meaning of the eighth commandment. Where this is not the case, there will be nothing but stealing away from the neighbour—be he rich or poor--the tools which God has given him for his stewardship. Either we are faithful stewards ourselves with all that God gives us, or we are going to try to prevent others from being steward by stealing their goods. In His fear we face God spiritually; and it has a tremendous effect upon our whole attitude towards the man God brings across our path. In His fear we give to him rather than take away from him, because we would be the blessed givers who render unto God the praise and glory and thanksgiving due to His Holy Name.

ALL AROUND US—

Confession of Guilt Freedom For Lawbreakers Merger Progress Pike Exonerated

by Prof. H. Hanko

CONFESSION OF GUILT

The following article appeared in the R.E.S. News Exchange:

Following an animated discussion, the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken) decided to express guilt for the church conflict that led in 1944 to the formation of the Liberated Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

The Synod made clear that it was not trying to fix the blame solely on those who were the only ones to recognize their guilt. It rather wanted to state in humble confession that in the entire quarrel among brothers it was not guiltless.

The Synod thereupon asked the Liberated churches for forgiveness for everything done in conflict, especially in disciplinary action, which was not according to the Spirit of Christ or the catholicity of the church.

The decision was occasioned by numerous requests received by the Synod from church councils, from eleven theological students in Kampen and several ministers. The Synod decided to send the letter to the Synod of the Liberated Churches and to urge its own congregations to seek reconciliation with local sister churches. Except for a single dissent, the decision was unanimous.

It is interesting that, as far as can be judged from this report, while the Gereformeerde Kerken made a

general confession of guilt, they did not specifically say what actions of theirs were wrong. They spoke generally of things "done in the conflict, especially in disciplinary action, which was not according to the Spirit of Christ or the catholicity of the church;" but they do not make mention of specific errors. If some sort of reconciliation is to be effected (and this seems to be the intent of the decision), the question comes up how this can be done without treating specifically the causes which led to the breach. It will be interesting to see what the reaction of the Liberated Churches is to this confession.

FREEDOM FOR LAWBREAKERS

In an editorial which was first given over WRAL-TV in Raleigh, North Carolina and which was quoted in the *Presbyterian Journal*, some interesting statistics were cited. The editorial was dealing with the part the church has played in bringing about recent race riots. But the article also gives some figures concerning what has happened to those arrested in the rioting.

Speaking of the Watts riot in Los Angeles in 1965, the claim is made that, while 3,827 persons were arrested for crimes of violence, looting and destruction, only seven have been given prison sentences. The same thing is true in Chicago. In 1966, 533 people

were arrested for participating in the riots there. Of these only three were given prison sentences.

In May of 1967 rioting broke out on the campus of Texas Southern University in Houston. A police officer was murdered and 400 were arrested, including 5 charged with the murder of this police officer. The results to date are: 1) Not one of the five charged with murder have been tried and convicted. 2) These five have had their charges reduced and are presently free on bond awaiting trial tentatively scheduled for last month. 3) Congress is investigating charges that federal funds were used to post bond. 4) Two of the men were on government payrolls as poverty workers. They were fired after their arrest, but the Houston poverty office is protesting their firing and is asking that their salaries be continued even though they are accused of murdering a policeman.

Presumably the figures are not yet in on last summer's riots, and the machinery of legal processes has not yet finished processing the many cases of arrest. But the fact is that this is the general course this country is taking. In the Congress the charge was raised that rioters are being rewarded by the Federal Government when, even though they destroy property and steal, the government pours federal funds into these areas to rebuild them and eradicate the scars caused by the violence. This is surely true and a devastating indictment of what goes on in this country. But the fact remains that murder, theft, arson, and general lawlessness go unpunished. What will be the end of this? Is it not plain to those in positions of authority that such action can only increase lawlessness? The argument is raised that to crack down hard on law breakers will only incense rioters to great hatred and move them to worse acts of destruction than ever before. But if a man can steal with impunity, commit arson without fear of punishment, engage in acts of brutality and murder without having to endure the consequences of his crime, then lawlessness will be encouraged and crime will continue to increase to unimaginable proportions.

The trouble is that men will not recognize that these things are violations of the law of God. The little word "sin" is no longer in style. Men find the root of these problems in social, economic and environmental maladjustments and not in the wicked heart of man. The result is that these acts are condoned as being but natural outbreaks and protests against social injustices. And so guilt and punishment are no longer good words to use.

But it still remains the God-given calling of those vested with the authority of Christ to punish evil-doers with the power of the sword. To fail to do this will result in anarchy.

MERGER PROGRESS

We have tried to keep our readers posted on developments in the merger talks currently going on between the Presbyterian Church US (Southern) and the Reformed Church of America. The two broadest ecclesiastical assemblies of these denominations voted

last summer to instruct their joint committee to come with definite merger proposals.

It appears now as if the committee is going to recommend that all congregations of both denominations be obligated to join the newly merged Presbyterian Reformed Church when it is brought into existence. However, this will last for one year. During a second year to follow every congregation will be given the option of withdrawing from the new denomination with their property if it chooses. If personally a congregation is not happy with the marriage, it has the right to call it quits without being penalized in any way. But if, after the second year is over, a congregation has not withdrawn, withdrawal after that is no longer possible.

It strikes me as a strange way to marry. In a marriage between a young man and a young woman the marriage partners first attempt to learn whether they are suitable to each other before the wedding is celebrated and the marriage consummated. If their marriage is in the Lord, this is surely what they will do. But it seems that this same principle holds good in an ecclesiastical marriage. Surely the two contemplating such a union ought to decide before the wedding whether before God they are suited to each other. A trial marriage seems to be out of keeping with the dignity and sanctity of ecclesiastical affairs. The trouble is that those congregations who want no part in the merger will not need a year of experimentation to find out their mutual compatibility. They must know that in advance. But if they are forced to join in the marriage against their better judgment and wishes, it will be extremely difficult to sue for divorce after the year is up. A separation seems to be a trying and difficult process, fraught with many dangers.

It is still a question whether the two denominations will accept such a plan as this.

PIKE EXONERATED

Pike has been in trouble with his church for denying cardinal truths of the Christian faith. Last year the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church to which Pike belongs had called his statements irresponsible. This mild rebuke made Pike furious; and, in a fit of pique, he demanded a heresy trial. This kind of trial the leaders in the church wanted to avoid at all costs fearing what it would do to the church's "image". To avoid it a committee was appointed to advise on the general subject of "theological freedom". Pike let it be known that if this report was favorable and if the Episcopal Convention adopted it, he would drop his request for a trial. When the report came out it was apparent that Pike had gained the victory. The report advised the Convention to declare that the term "heresy" was out of date and that therefore censure should never be brought against a person for opinions and teachings. The Convention ratified this report and Pike seemed to have gained the day.

However, in the course of the discussion, someone asked whether last year's action to censure was still in force. The presiding officer said it was. Pike began to scribble furiously and shortly advised the assembly

that he was renewing his call for a heresy trial. A motion was made to erase last year's censure of Pike, but a motion to adjourn carried before this could be acted on. In the recess the leaders huddled and came up with a compromise. This compromise was presented to Pike (also behind closed doors) and he agreed to it. It stipulated that while the censure was still in force the House of Bishops was also to be reprimanded for denying Pike due process of law. The compromise was ratified by the Convention.

As far as the Episcopal Church is concerned, there is no longer any such thing as heresy. Yet, even though the Episcopal Church openly took such a stand, nevertheless, this is implicitly the position of practically every denomination in the country. It is almost impossible these days to get an ecclesiastical assembly to declare any statement to be heretical. Ministers, professors or members teach anything they please; but, while some voices of protest may be raised, the power to condemn such statements has disappeared from the churches. This was evident too in the

decisions of the Christian Reformed Church on the Dekker case. The truth of God means nothing. And the churches go the sad way to apostasy.

* * *

Meanwhile Pike succeeded in staying in the news by means of another strange ploy. He claimed that he spoke with his dead son James Jr. who committed suicide in February of 1966. This conversation was supposed to have taken place through a medium in a seance taped for television in Toronto. Pike claims not only to have spoken to his son, but claims too that his son seemed to be aware of what Pike was going through in his struggles in the church, and that his son seemed to be optimistic about the outcome.

It is a striking thing that those who abandon the authority of God's Word in favor of the authority of man's reason or science can nevertheless fall into the black superstition of necromancy. And yet, this is to be expected when one turns his back upon the truth of God revealed in Scripture.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES—

David Called To Fight Against Israel

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.

And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

I Samuel 28:1, 2

For a time in the land of the Philistines, it seemed as if David was carrying off his ruse quite well. Through a careful plot of pretense, he appeared to have everything working in his direction. Dwelling within the borders of Philistia he had escape and protection from the hatred of Saul. By marching each morning in the direction of Israel, he made it appear that he was fighting against his own people and alienating himself from them. Meanwhile, David and his men were actually raiding the cities of the Geshurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites, enemies of Israel and friends of the Philistines; but he kept Achish from learning of it by destroying every human being in each city that he invaded. It was indeed a precarious balance that he was maintaining; but it seemed as if he was pulling it all off quite well, that is, until God intervened. Suddenly David found himself in a most difficult situation.

It all began when the Philistine kings got together and decided to put forth a mass campaign against the kingdom of Israel. It was a most natural thing for them to do. Mass campaigns had often been con-

ducted by them before. It was just that David had failed to consider the likelihood of such a situation. All at once he found himself on the side of the enemies of Israel with a great battle looming up before him. Achish, of course, had taken him at his word and was quite convinced that David had come to hate the people of Israel because of their treachery. He fully expected that David's loyalty would continue with him, and that David's forces would join his own in the coming battle. Without hesitation, he called David to him and said, "Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men."

Actually the answer of David was veiled in vagueness and ambiguity. He said to Achish, "Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do." For Achish, convinced as he was of David's loyalty to him, it was enough. David was promising to do his utmost for him. But what was actually meant by David is considerably more uncertain; in fact, David very likely did not know himself what was actually intended. The whole situation as it was suddenly thrown in his face was such as to tear his soul and all of its convictions asunder.

Life was becoming infinitely more complex for David than he had ever thought possible. As a young man he had had a strong conviction of loyalty to God and His people, and he had followed that conviction with a simple confidence. He was sure that faithfulness to God would win out against all opposition. Even when Saul had turned against him for no apparent reason, David had been willing to follow this conviction. No matter what Saul did to him, he was determined to answer with subservience and humility, convinced that in this way he could surely prove his love to the king and restore Saul's favor as at the first. But it hadn't worked out that way. No matter how he tried, he could not turn that man from his wickedness. In fact, the more David demonstrated his humility and his love for the king, the more fanatically hateful Saul became, until he was persecuting David unrelentingly. It was finally as a move of almost complete desperation that David left his native country to take escape in the land of the Philistines. There at least he would be able to fight for his rights and life. But ironically, it wasn't necessary. In the land of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel which he had always hated, he was freely given the peace and security that Israel had refused him. It hurt almost more than if the Philistines had met him with open battle. What was he now supposed to think?

It was not, of course, that David had lost his faith. He had tasted the true love of God, and once that has happened a person cannot renounce it. In fact, separated as he was in the town of Ziklag, it was the God of Israel alone that he and his men worshipped. These were men of deep-set conviction, and they did not quickly waver because of some external change of fortune. So generally understood was this that the most faithful of Israel continued to come to him in great numbers (see I Chronicles 12). Even men of Saul's own tribe, disillusioned with their king's wickedness, came across the border to join themselves to David. Some of them were the most valiant fighting men in all of the kingdom. But their righteous souls were vexed beyond endurance under Saul, and they came to be with David where Jehovah was worshipped in truth.

Nevertheless, the problem remained. What was the proper thing to do in the situation? After all, there was no question but that Achish had befriended them in time of need, and much more so than anyone in Israel had. It was not surprising or unfair, therefore, that he should expect loyalty of David when he was himself called to go out into battle. And the fact of the matter was that a good many of David's own men were quite anxious to march against the army of Saul. It was not that they had really renounced their own country. To them it was just a matter of considering Saul to be the greatest enemy of Israel that there was, and they would do anything that they could to undermine or overthrow his position as head of the nation. It was as simple as that to them. They would not be fighting against Israel, just against Saul.

As easy as it seemed, David's mind had never let him take that position. He had always had absolute

confidence in God, and in Samuel through whom Saul had been anointed to be king over Israel. That appointment he had to recognize; it might not be denied. For this reason, with all of the determination that was in him, he had always refused to do anything that might bring the least harm to God's anointed.

Still, the time came when even David began to wonder. He was always so much alone in the conviction that Saul should not be harmed. The only one he had ever shared it with was Samuel, in fact he had first learned it from him, but now even Samuel was gone. He had only recently died, an old man, but of course David had not been able to go to mourn his passing like everyone else in Israel. It was just another of the cruel results of Saul's wickedness. Was there no end to that man's dastardliness? Would it actually be so bad to assist in his overthrow?

The time had come when David could withstand the pressure no longer. Actually, he was carried along with hardly any choice in the matter. All of the land of the Philistines was in preparation for the coming campaign against Israel and for David to have failed to make the same preparations would have been altogether too evident. Moreover, even as he was doing so, there happened something that almost seemed to be a sign in favor of his doing so: a large company of men from the tribe of Manasseh came across the border to join David just because they too wanted to do what they could to overthrow their king. Gradually, slowly, but very surely David found himself giving in. He had not real heart for it. He stalled until, when the armies were all come together, he and Achish were the last ones to appear. But he was there, nonetheless, carried along by a lot of things that he had started until he could control them no longer and he found himself controlled by them. But in these days, he was not very close to God, his conscience was numbed, and he was just going along wherever circumstances led him. It was a sad day in David's life.

But God had not forsaken him, and when David was found too weak, He intervened. It happened when all of the Philistine armies were gathering together at Aphek to form their lines for battle. There were hundreds and thousands of Philistines there, and last of all to draw up were Achish and David with his men of battle. It was a strange situation for them, to be present with the Philistines as they prepared to do battle with Israel. Somehow they didn't fit. David and his men were Israelites. About them were going on all kinds of heathen ceremonies and superstitions which they did not understand and with which they would have no part. Huddled together as they were on the sidelines, these men felt as if they didn't belong and looked as if they didn't belong. Neither did it take long for the lords of the Philistines to notice this. Quickly they turned to Achish demanding an explanation, "What do these Hebrews here?"

To Achish, naive man that he was, it was quite simple. David had been living in his domain many days and years now. Everyone knew this. He considered it his own chief claim to recognition. He had converted the very slayer of mighty Goliath and

brought him over to their side. Now he was going to use this David against his very own people. Almost indignantly, he stood before the greatest lords of the Philistines and explained, "Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?"

But the princes of the Philistines were not all so foolish. They understood the situation much better than Achish, and for that matter than did David at the moment. Disgustedly they answered Achish, "Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us; for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?"

Achish stood humiliated, first before his fellow Philistines, and then he had to return and pass the word along himself to David. He had insisted that David fight along with him, and now he had to tell him that he couldn't. Calling David to him, he tried to explain, "Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto

this day: nevertheless the lords favor thee not. Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines."

Well might David have felt the sting of those words, for he had not been as honest as Achish thought he had. But David was not in a moment of moral sensitivity. He felt only the humiliation of not being trusted. In self-righteous indignation he answered back. "But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"

But there was nothing Achish could do. He could only say again, "I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God; notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart."

So it was that David returned toward Ziklag without going to battle. It was well, for there was more for him to do at Ziklag than he realized. But even more, had he actually gone into battle, he might well have found that there was more to the warning of the Philistine lords than even he was willing to admit. The fact was, he was an Israelite and the Philistines were his enemies. This he should have never doubted as he did.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH—

The Doctrine Of Sin

The Second Period — 250-730 A.D.

The Pelagian Controversy

Life of Augustine (Philip Schaff)

by Rev. H. Veldman

We now continue with our quotation from Philip Schaff (Vol. III, 988 f.f.), on the life of Augustine.

Augustine, the man with upturned eye, with pen in the left hand, and a burning heart in the right (as he is usually represented), is a philosophical and theological genius of the first order, towering like a pyramid above his age, and looking down commandingly upon succeeding centuries. He had a mind uncommonly fertile and deep, bold and soaring; and with it, what is better, a heart full of Christian love and humility. He stands of right by the side of the greatest philosophers of antiquity and of modern times. We meet him alike on the broad highways and the narrow footpaths, on the giddy Alpine heights and in the awful depths of speculation, wherever philosophical thinkers before

him or after him have trod. As a theologian he is *facile princeps*, at least surpassed by no church father, scholastic, or reformer. With royal munificence he scattered ideas in passing, which have set in mighty motion other lands and later times. He combined the creative power of Tertullian with the churchly spirit of Cyprian, the speculative intellect of the Greek church with the practical tact of the Latin. He was a Christian philosopher and a philosophical theologian to the full. It was his need and his delight to wrestle again and again with the hardest problems of thought, and to comprehend to the utmost the divinely revealed matter of the faith. He always asserted, indeed, the primacy of faith, according to his maxim: *Fides precedit intellectum* (faith precedes intellect); appealing, with theologians before, to the well known

passage of Isaiah 7:9 (in the LXX): "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." But to him faith itself was an acting of reason, and from faith to knowledge, therefore, there was a necessary transition. He constantly looked below the surface to the hidden motives of actions and to the universal laws of diverse events. The metaphysician and the Christian believer coalesced in him. His *meditatio* passes with the utmost ease into *oratio*, and his *oratio* into *meditatio*. With profundity he combined an equal clearness and sharpness of thought. He was an extremely skilful and a successful dialectician, inexhaustible in arguments and in answers to the objections of his adversaries.

He has enriched Latin literature with a greater store of beautiful, original, and pregnant proverbial sayings, than any classic author, or any other teacher of the church.

He had a creative and decisive hand in almost every dogma of the church, completing some, and advancing others. The centre of his system is the FREE REDEEMING GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST, OPERATING THROUGH THE ACTUAL, HISTORICAL CHURCH. He is evangelical or Pauline in his doctrine of sin and grace, but catholic (that is, old-catholic, not Roman Catholic) in his doctrine of the church. The Pauline element comes forward mainly in the Pelagian controversy, the catholic-churchly in the Donatist; but each is modified by the other.

Dr. Baur incorrectly makes *freedom* the fundamental idea of the Augustinian system (it much better suits the Pelagian), and founds on this view an ingenious, but only half true, comparison between Augustine and Origen. "There is not church teacher of the ancient period," says he, "who, in intellect and in grandeur and consistency of view, can more justly be placed by the side of Origen than Augustine; none who, with all the difference in individuality and in mode of thought, so closely resembles him. How far both towered above their times, is most clearly manifest in the very fact that they alone, of all the theologians of the first six centuries, became the creators of distinct systems, each proceeding from its definite idea, and each completely carried out; and this fact proves also how much the one system has that is analogous to the other. The one system, like the other, is founded upon the idea of freedom; in both there is a specific act, by which the entire development of human life is determined; and in both this is an act which lies far outside of the temporal consciousness of the individual; with this difference alone, that in one system the act belongs to each separate individual himself, and only falls outside of his temporal life and consciousness; in the other, it lies within the sphere of the temporal history of man, but is only the act of one individual. If in the system of Origen nothing gives greater offence than the idea of the pre-existence and fall of souls, which seems to adopt heathen ideas into the Christian faith, there is in the system of Augustine the same overleaping of individual life and consciousness, in order to explain from an act in the past the present sinful condition of man; but the pagan Platonic point of view is exchanged for one taken from the Old Testament....What therefore essentially distinguishes the system of Augustine from that of Origen, is only this: the fall of Adam is substituted for the pre-temporal fall of souls, and what in Origen still wears a heathen garb, puts on in

Augustine a purely Old Testament form." (it seems to the undersigned that this can hardly be designated a small difference between Origen and Augustine, to substitute the fall of man for the pre-temporal fall of souls, and to exchange the pagan Platonic point of view for the teaching of the Old Testament. — H.V.)

The learning of Augustine was not equal to his genius, nor as extensive as that of Origen and Eusebius, but still considerable for his time, and superior to that of any of the Latin fathers, with the single exception of Jerome. He had received in the schools of Madaura and Carthage a good theoretical and rhetorical preparation for the forum, which stood him in good stead also in theology. He was familiar with Latin literature, and was by no means blind to the excellencies of the classics, though he placed them far below the higher beauty of the Holy Scriptures. The Hortensius of Cicero (a lost work) inspired him during his university course with enthusiasm for philosophy and for the knowledge of truth for its own sake; the study of Platonic and Neo-Platonic works (in the Latin version of the rhetorician Victorinus) kindled in him an incredible fire; though in both he missed the holy name of Jesus and the cardinal virtues of love and humility, and found in them only beautiful ideals without power to conform him to them. His City of God, his book on heresies, and other writings, show an extensive knowledge of ancient philosophy, poetry, and history, sacred and secular. He refers to the most distinguished persons of Greece and Rome; he often alludes to Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Plotin, Porphyry, Cicero, Seneca, Horace, Virgil, to the earlier Greek and Latin fathers, to Eastern and Western heretics. But his knowledge of Greek literature was mostly derived from Latin translations. It is sometimes asserted that he had no knowledge at all of the Greek. But this is certainly a mistake. However, with the Greek language, as he himself frankly and modestly confesses, he had, in comparison with Jerome, but a superficial acquaintance. Hebrew he did not understand at all. Hence, with all his extraordinary familiarity with the Latin Bible, he made many mistakes in exposition. He was rather a thinker than a scholar, and depended mainly on his own resources, which were always abundant.

We need not at this time call attention to the tremendous literary labor of this father of the church. Extending through a period of forty and four years, they constitute a mine of Christian knowledge and experience. It is certainly true what Philip Schaff writes of him: "As we survey this enormous literary labor, augmented by many other treatises and letters now lost, and as we consider his episcopal labors, his many journeys, and his adjudications of controversies among the faithful, which often robbed him of whole days, we must be really astounded at the fidelity, exuberance, energy, and perseverance of this father of the church."

Of interest, as far as the life of Augustine is concerned, is the influence which Augustine exercised upon posterity and his relation to Catholicism and Protestantism. On this Philip Schaff has the following, Vol. III, 1016 f.f.:

Augustine, in the first place, contributed much to the development of the doctrinal bases which Catholicism and Protestantism hold *in common* against such

radical heresies of antiquity as Manichaeism, Arianism, and Pelagianism. In all these great intellectual conflicts he was in general the champion of the cause of Christian truth against dangerous errors. Through his influence the canon of Holy Scripture was fixed in its present form by the councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397). He conquered the Manichaeism, hylozoism, and fatalism, and saved the biblical idea of God and of creation, and the biblical doctrine of the nature of sin and its origin in the free will of man. He developed the Nicene dogma of the Trinity, completed it by the doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Ghost, and gave it the form in which it has ever since prevailed in the West, and in which it received classical expression from his school in the Athanasian Creed. In Christology, on the contrary, he added nothing, and he died shortly before the great Christological conflicts opened, which reached their ecumenical settlement at the council of Chalcedon, twenty years after his death. Yet he anticipated Leo in giving currency in the West to the important formula: "Two natures in one person."

Augustine is also the principal theological creator of the *Latin-Catholic* system as distinct from the Greek Catholicism on the one hand, and from evan-

gelical Protestantism on the other. He ruled the entire theology of the middle age, and became the father of scholasticism in virtue of his dialectic mind, and the father of mysticism in virtue of his devout heart, without being responsible for the excesses of either system. For scholasticism thought to comprehend the divine with the understanding, and lost itself at last in empty dialectics; and mysticism endeavored to grasp the divine with feeling, and easily strayed into misty sentimentalism; Augustine sought to apprehend the divine with the united power of mind and heart, of bold thought and humble faith. Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, and Bonaventura, are his nearest of kin in this respect. Even now, since the Catholic church has become a Roman church, he enjoys greater consideration in it than Ambrose, Hilary, Jerome, or Gregory the Great. All this cannot possibly be explained with an interior affinity.

The Lord willing, we will conclude this statement on the influence of Augustine in our following article, and also call attention to Pelagius, Augustine's chief opponent in the struggle involving the doctrines of sin and grace.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Prophetic Office of Christ

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

The office in general to which our Lord was delegated was that of Mediator between God and men. It is to be noted that "the office is essentially one, not three. We may indeed distinguish the one office into three aspects of it that are denoted by the terms *prophet*, *priest* and *king*; but these may never be separated. They are not three separate offices, but rather three different aspects or functions of the one office. There is one fundamental thought in them all, one idea that lies at the basis of all three. And this fundamental notion we may briefly express by saying that by office is meant the position of servant-king in relation to God. We might also express the same idea by describing an office-bearer as the official representative of the invisible God in the visible world. More fully defined, by office is meant the position in which man is authorized and qualified to function in the name of God and in behalf of God's covenant and kingdom, to serve Him and to rule under Him. There are, therefore, two sides to the office. With relation to God, the office-bearer is servant...with relation to the creaturely sphere in which he functions, the office-bearer is king (Rev. H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 363)."

We saw that in the decree of God the Mediator was ordained to be Emmanuel, "God With Us," that He

should therefore be the incarnate Deity who should take up into union with His divine person a perfect, whole and holy humanity. We saw, too, that He was fitted for the execution of His office by His "anointing" which was His experience in eternity as well as in history. The office has its three functions of prophet, priest and king which is adumbrated in the anointings of Israel's prophets, priests and kings. But these three functions are not separate, nor successive, not of isolated performance. "They are rather like the several functions of the one living human body — as of the lungs in inhalation, as of the heart in blood circulation, and as of the brain and spinal column in innervation, they are functionally distinct, yet interdependent, and together they constitute one life. So the functions of prophet, priest and king mutually imply one another. Christ is always a prophetic priest, and a priestly prophet, and He is always a royal priest and a priestly king, and together they accomplish one redemption, to which all are equally essential (A. A. Hodge, *Popular Lectures on Theological Themes*, 235)."

Christ stood in His mediatorial office in all of its three functions in order to be a complete Saviour and Redeemer of God's elect. Man had originally been created a perfect office-bearer. A prophet, priest

and king was he, created in the image of God in knowledge, holiness and righteousness. But through the fall he lost that image and became so totally depraved that the image of God was reversed—he reflected the image of the devil in folly, sin and rebellion. To effect, then, the complete redemption of His people, Christ could not put aside one of the aspects of His office. For all those He had come to redeem were steeped in ignorance, guilt and bondage, which indicates that the image in which man had been originally created had been turned into its opposite. Christ then had to come as Prophet to remove their ignorance and their darkened understanding, and restore true knowledge; as Priest to atone for their sins; as King to set them free from the slavery of sin. As Prophet He reveals God. As Priest He brings us to God. As King He restores us in the image of God. He Himself bears that perfect image of God in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. For He “of God was made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption (I Cor. 1:30).”

Modern day altar-call evangelism does not proclaim a complete Saviour in that it does not preach Christ performing His functions in His office. He is rarely alluded to as Prophet or Priest, much less, King. He was merely a Saviour who did all He could to save all men, but left the matter of whether any will be saved to the whims of men. His chief end in coming into the world was not the glory of God (as He Himself taught, Jn. 17:1, 4), but the effecting of a scheme of universal redemption put at the disposal of man’s convenience. Never is it so much as hinted that it is Christ in His official character as covenant Head that renders the salvation of His whole Church a matter of infallible certainty.

What is the prophetic function of the office of Christ? “How does Christ execute the office of a prophet? Christ executes the office of a prophet in His revealing to the church in all ages, by His Spirit and Word, in divers ways of administration, the whole will of God, in all things concerning their edification and salvation (Westminster L. C., 43).” The prophet speaks from God, for God, to men. He is a seer because he has the mind of Christ, knows the things of God (I C. 2:12), and knows the needs of men.

As Prophet, He is our omniscient Seer, seeing the end from the beginning. Known unto Him are all His works from the beginning of the world. The predictions of all the prophets are His foreordinations which must come to pass (Ac. 4:27f). Every event in history, every act of the church of all ages, every minute circumstance in the lives of His people was foreordained by Him. His friends, enemies, men, angels and all creatures live, are moved and have their being only as He appointed in His determinate counsel. Waiting on the Word of our great Prophet we live calmly, peacefully in the vicissitudes of a changing, inimical world. “Fire and hail, snow and vapors, stormy wind, fulfilling His Word!” He “still-eth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.” All things are under the controlling decree of our Prophet.

“Christ is *“the Prophet”* (Jn. 7:40). It was predicted that He should come to reveal the whole counsel of God, not to the world, but to the Israel of God. “I will raise *them* up a Prophet.” He himself would be of Israel, for He would be raised up “from among their (Israel’s) brethren.” He would also be a Prophet, like Moses, that is, the fulfilment or antitype of the typical prophet Moses was. For the Lord said, I will raise up a prophet “like unto thee.” He would deliver himself of the whole counsel of God: “He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him.” Any who should refuse Him that speaketh would do so at the peril of His eternal destiny. “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not harken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him (Dt. 18:18f).”

Christ being *the Prophet*, has in the prophetic function as in everything else, the preeminence. All the prophets were in His shade and in His line. They always had to preach, “Thus saith the *Lord!*” He proclaimed, “But *I* say unto you!” They said, “Hear the Word of the Lord.” He said, “I am the Truth!” They were commissioned with a message to proclaim. He delivered the whole counsel of God. They understood the Word of God according to their capacity and the gift of God. But “it pleased the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell (Col. 1:19).” They never fully understood their own message. In Him dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He was not only the Messenger of the Covenant, but He was also the Message; the Preacher of the Word, and *the Word!*

Christ exercised the office of prophet first from the fall to the incarnation. For it was He through all the ages of history who was the Saviour of the elect. The theophanies, appearances of God, were manifestations of the trinity, but especially of one of the divine persons in human form, the Angel of the Lord, who was also the Angel (Messenger) of His Presence, the Captain of the Lord’s Hosts (who was He but the Captain of our salvation!), the Angel (Messenger) of the Covenant (who but the Mediator!). He appeared for the help, blessing and protection of God’s people and was an anticipation of Christ the incarnate Son of God (I Cor. 10:4, 9).

Christ next exercised the office of prophet from His birth, or, officially, from His baptism to His death. It was then that the only-begotten God (Jn. 1:18, Gk.), the One being in the bosom of the Father, declared the invisible God, visibly and personally. He was the true Light, the Light of the world, the effulgence of God’s glory, God manifest in the flesh (Jn. 1:14; I T. 3:16), Emmanuel, God with us, the Messenger of the Covenant finally come to His temple.

Christ then exercised the office of prophet from the ascension, and now continues to the consummation of the age. At the present, He does this in the Scriptures, which are the Word of Christ (Col. 3:16), and which are indispensable to make wise unto salvation; through His ordained, sent ministers who as ambassadors have no other message than that of the same Scriptures; and by His Spirit who opens the Scriptures

to us and our understandings to the Scriptures. That great Prophet (Lk. 7:16) still speaks to us, and the same warning given through Moses to hear Him is given us. "If they escape not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven (Heb. 12:25)." Man knows nothing of God, of His sovereign, irresistible will, His eternal counsel, of His purpose in the creation and government of the world, of the epiphany of the world to come, except that revealed

in the prophetic ministry of our Chief Prophet and Teacher.

To hearken to this great Prophet means, not to bow to a woman god, a wooden god, a wafer god, nor to build magnificent temples, mass-houses, joss-houses, shrines and mosques, but to surrender unreservedly, body, soul and spirit, to the Word of Christ, be guided by His law, determined by His principles, employed in His service and having the glory of His name the whole business of life.

BOOK REVIEWS—

The Invitation System

The Davidson Affair

THE INVITATION SYSTEM, by Iain Murray; 32 pages (paper); Banner of Truth Trust, London, England; distributed by Puritan Publications, P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pa. 17013. Price: 15¢.

This is a very worthwhile booklet, as are many of the books and booklets published by the Banner of Truth Trust.

By the "invitation system" is meant the practice of calling people to the front which is so widely followed by Arminian evangelists in their crusades. Probably the best known example of those who follow this practice is Billy Graham. This invitation system is regarded by many as an essential part of evangelism.

Iain Murray, who is pastor of Grove Chapel, London, and is also editor of The Banner of Truth, a bi-monthly magazine, examines the various arguments adduced in favor of this invitation system. Such an examination, of course, is dependent on an accurate presentation of the arguments, first of all. And while this booklet is very brief, the author nevertheless succeeds in presenting the arguments fairly and accurately; and his presentation is well-documented by quotations from the proponents of the system being criticized.

The chief value of the booklet, however, lies in the thorough and Reformed manner in which the arguments are refuted. Moreover, the refutation is presented in a simple and thoroughly readable and interesting manner. Here

is a sample of what the reader may expect: "The invitation system misconceives the role of an evangelist. The gospel preacher is not a 'spiritual obstetrician' appointed to supervise the new birth of sinners; still less is he called to propose ways which, if complied with, will accomplish the rebirth." (p. 29)

It is encouraging to note that also in Great Britain there are still those who have not been deceived into departing from the truth of the gospel and from true methods of evangelism in this day of Arminianism gone wild. But American readers can profit greatly from the reading of this little booklet. In fact, if you are looking for good theological reading, you could do worse than to send for the latest catalogue of Banner of Truth Trust publications. H.C.H.

THE DAVIDSON AFFAIR, by Stuart Jackman; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; 181 pp., \$3.50.

This is a novel; and it is both interesting and unusual.

It is an attempt to put the Resurrection of Jesus Christ into modern dress. It is an attempt to give the Passion of Jesus immediacy. As the dust jacket puts it, in this story Jesus Davidson is executed for treason on Friday, and is rumored to be along again on Sunday. "Cass Tengel, TV reporter, flies to Jerusalem to investi-

igate and finds himself plunged into a tense political crisis. Or is it, perhaps, something more than that? In the space of thirty-six hours he interviews all sorts of people from the Governor-General to a notorious belly-dancer. Out of a tangle of conflicting reports he struggles to construct a documentary program to be screened on Monday evening, which will reflect the truth about Davidson. But what, in fact, is the truth? And how can Tengel, and through him the millions of viewers, come to terms with it?"

This book has been widely praised by reviewers, even in magazines from which I would not expect such praise.

This reviewer has serious reservations as to the legitimacy of this kind of attempt to put the gospel of the Resurrection into a twentieth-century setting. There is something very repulsive about making a novel out of the gospel.

But even apart from the above reservations, the book is to be criticized on one fundamental point. There is no blood of atonement in the story. Jesus Davidson was not crucified, but hanged. What the author fails to see, or deliberately ignores, is that there could have been no resurrection without the cross. This is a fatal flaw. If for no other reason than this, the story is a failure if it purposes to present the gospel.

Once again; the book is unusually interesting, and it is fast-moving. But it is a failure. Do not be deceived by it. H.C.H.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST -- October 4, 1967
At Holland, Michigan

Rev. R. C. Harbach led in the opening devotions, and declared Classis properly constituted after all the Credentials were read and adopted.

Rev. H. Veldman then presided, and Rev. Harbach recorded the minutes.

All the churches were represented by two delegates each.

The Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee tendered their reports.

Mr. J. De Vries and Mr. H. Kuiper were appointed to serve on the finance committee. The chair appointed the Revs. Harbach and Lubbers and Elder D. Langeland to prepare the classical appointment schedule which was later adopted as follows: SOUTH HOLLAND: Oct. 15 — R. Harbach, Oct. 22 — J. Kortering Oct. 29 — M. Schipper, Nov. 5 — R. Harbach, Nov. 19 — G. Lubbers, Nov. 26 — J. Kortering, Dec. 3 — R. Harbach, Dec. 10 — M. Schipper, Dec. 17 — G. Lubbers, Jan. 7 — J. Kortering.

HULL: Oct. 15, 22 - G. Van Baren, Nov. 12, 19 - J. Heys, Dec. 24, 31 - H. Veldman.

The above appointments were made upon the request of Classis West.

The Classical Committee prepared and distributed copies of the Constitution relative to this committee.

Classis treated a Protest registered against a decision of the July meeting of Classis. Classis Adopted the advice of a study committee composed of Revs. Heys, Kortering, and Elder Kalsbeek.

Rev. M. Schipper was re-elected to the office of Stated Clerk, and Rev. J. Heys was chosen assistant Stated Clerk.

Mr. H. Vander Kolk was appointed to thank the ladies of Holland for their excellent catering.

Classis decided to meet next time on Wednesday, January 3, 1968, in South East Church.

Questions of Article 41 of The Church Order were asked and answered satisfactorily.

Rev. G. Van Baren closed this meeting of Classis with prayer and Thanksgiving.

M. Schipper, S.C.

Oct. 25, 1967

Candidate D. Kuiper was installed into the office of the ministry Friday evening, Sept. 29, with Rev. G. Vanden Berg, of Oak Lawn, officiating. Rev. Vanden Berg chose to preach on, "And I will set shepherds over them which shall feed them", found in Jeremiah 23:4. The sermon's theme was, "Shepherds, a Gift of God", and was treated under these three points: The gift as such; The need for such gift; and, The benefits derived from that gift. After the sermon Rev.

Kuiper pronounced the blessing upon his flock. A reception followed the ceremony, and the congregation enjoyed a social hour with their new pastor and his family.

The Eastern League of Men's Societies met in annual meeting Oct. 9 at Hudsonville's church. Rev. J. A. Heys, of Holland, was the speaker, and gave a talk on, "Evangelism, what is its office, and what has happened to it." Rev. Heys held his audience's attention with his description of this early-church-office, to which Holy Writ refers in only three passages. The speaker deplored the corruption of this office by those who call themselves evangelists today. After the annual business was conducted, refreshments were served in the church parlors. After recess Rev. Heys answered questions from the floor pertaining to the general subject of evangelism.

Our friends in Jamaica are the happy recipients of the 400 Bibles and 100 Psalters we sent them recently. They sent "their glowing and heartfelt thanks for those gifts of love, and express a special word of thanks to the Sunday Schools, churches, and individuals who were the donors of those gifts." By the way — You can hear them sing some of the Psalter songs and hear the children recite some of the Heidleberg Catechism if you get the tape specially prepared by the Reformed Witness Hour staff for the after-recess programs in your societies.

Doon's School Dedication program was held Friday evening, Oct. 6. Mr. Edw. Van Egdome, president of the Board, led in opening devotions and Rev. R. Decker gave the address, speaking on the truth of God's Word as recorded for us in Deut. 6:7. Refreshments were served in the church basement after the program, and the new school was open for inspection for friends and visitors. The names of the thirty-nine pupils were listed on the printed programs with those of the two teachers. The glowing reports coming from Doon all express the joy and gratitude for this gift of grace by which they may "teach.... diligently.... their children." as prescribed in the sacred text from Deuteronomy.

Holland's consistory sponsored a public program giving their pastor the opportunity to give a detailed report of his labors in Jamaica which he did with the aid of colored slides. From viewing those pictures one can learn, among other things that abject poverty is no deterrent to spiritual happiness; one is forced to admit that "the have nots" truly *have something!*

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? Prov. 9:20 ... see you in church.

J.M.F.