



The Blue Banner

A Publication of First Presbyterian Church, Rowlett, Texas / Vol 4 #3-4 March / April 1995

BEYOND CANTERBURY

Reviews of James B. Jordan's Views on Worship

Liturgical Nestorianism

by Richard Bacon

In 1984 Kevin Reed of Presbyterian Heritage Publications wrote an essay entitled "The Canterbury Tales." The title was intended as a play on words with the archbishopric of the Anglican church and the title of Chaucer's famous epic. Reed documented the liturgical tendencies within the [then] Westminster Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Texas and the essays on worship by James B. Jordan which were published as *Geneva Papers*, numbers 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, and 29.

Since Reed's publication of "The Canterbury Tales," the Westminster Presbyterian Church has become the Good Shepherd Episcopal church; its pastor has become an Episcopal priest along with a former member; and at least two families from the church have moved "beyond Canterbury" to Rome.¹

James B. Jordan has since left Good Shepherd and has begun his own parachurch organization called Biblical Horizons in Niceville, FL. From Florida he has published three booklets on worship: *The Liturgy Trap: The Bible versus Mere Tradition in Worship* (Reviewed within by Rev. Greg Price), a book purporting to oppose the errors of Rome, [Eastern] Orthodoxy and Anglo-Catholicism; *Theses on Worship: Notes Toward the Reformation of Worship* (Reviewed within by Tim Worrell), which claims to rediscover patterns of worship that eluded even the

Reformers; and *Liturgical Nestorianism: A Critical Review of Worship in the Presence of God*.

Much of the review that follows will be critical of Mr. Jordan's writing. It is only fair that we begin with a number of observations which demonstrate that there are many positive aspects to Jordan's thinking. First, the fact that Jordan or anyone else is giving serious thought to worship issues is encouraging. Very little serious attention has been paid to how we worship. Most Christians, of whatever persuasion, have been content to accept complacently the traditions received from their fathers. The fact that many of the "traditions" are of recent origin seems not to bother most, either. Therefore if Jordan's books serve as a wake-up call to the church on this vital subject they will have accomplished some good.

Another important part of what Mr. Jordan is saying is his emphasis on corporate worship. He rightly points out that American Evangelicalism (and Reformed, too, like a puppy at heel) has so individualized worship as to make corporate worship almost "optional." We have lost sight of that which was clearly seen by the Psalmist, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Psalm 87:2-3).

Yet another point that Jordan makes is the importance of using a precise and accurate translation of Scripture. I would add that it should be one suitable for public reading, i.e. it should have a considerable literary merit. However, in making his

¹ Kevin Reed, "The Canterbury Tales" (Dallas: PHP), p. 28.

point Mr. Jordan rather distorts the commissioning of the Authorized Version. Though King James I was head of the civil government, it was a group of ministers who first prodded the king into authorizing the translation and who then carried it out. While Jordan rightly rails against modern publishing houses mistreating the Word of God as private (i.e. nonecclesiastical) parties, he also ignores the salient fact that the AV was superintended by bishops of the English church in 1604-1611: such as Richard Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury; George Abbott, Bishop of London; Lancelot Andrewes, former chaplain to Queen Elizabeth I and a Dean in the Anglican church; Thomas Ravis, Dean of Christ Church; Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester; etc. Though the KJV (AV) was authorized by the King because of England's peculiar Erastian church discipline, the translating work was *in fact* carried out by the church, as were virtually all the Reformation translations.

Finally, and this list is not exhaustive, Jordan should be commended for the emphasis that he places on the covenant between God and his people. Thus the Presbyterian Church in America's *Book of Church Order* (chapter 47.2) states, "A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other, but before all else, a meeting of the triune God with his chosen people. God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the Divine omnipresence but, much more intimately, as the faithful Covenant Saviour." Unfortunately the PCA has never adopted chapter 47 of its *BoCO* so as to give it constitutional status.

often a useful tool of debaters to erect a "straw man" or caricature of their opponents' position in order to sway an audience more easily. However, that method does not serve us well if our pursuit is for the truth of God's Word. Now Jordan has been corrected repeatedly over the years and yet continues in his latest works to misrepresent the Westminster Confession's view of worship.

Jordan has been corrected repeatedly over the years and yet continues in his latest works to misrepresent the Westminster Confession's view of worship.

In Geneva Papers #25 (February 1984), Mr. Jordan published the following statement:

Most Reformed and Anabaptist Protestants subscribe to the so-called 'Regulative Principle of Worship.' This principle states that in worship, whatever is not expressly commanded in Scripture is forbidden. There are several problems with this First, no one is able to apply the principle without modifying it, because we find no Biblical grounds for church buildings, pews, etc. Second, this principle is almost always applied dispensationally, as if only the New Testament were allowed to teach us about worship.²

Compare this with Jordan's statement in *Liturgical Nestorianism*: "First, minimalists are dispensational. They have erected an arbitrary wall between Old Creation and New Creation worship, and they do not understand how the Old Creation is transfigured into the New in Christ."³

Yet this misrepresentation of Westminster Presbyterians does not square at all with the very book Jordan is supposedly reviewing. To characterize the Reformed regulative principle of worship as Anabaptist and Dispensational is either grossly uniformed at best or dishonest at worst.

Dr. Frank J. Smith, in the introductory article of *Worship in the Presence of God*, the book to which Jordan refers, states:

The public assembly is a covenantal gathering, a time and place for God to meet directly with his people. He lays down the law, and they are to bless him in return. This importance of listening to God may be perceived from the

² Cited in Reed, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

³ James B. Jordan, *Liturgical Nestorianism*. (Niceville, FL: Transfiguration Press, 1994), p. 21.

One of the chief difficulties with Jordan's view of worship, or perhaps we should even say the difficulty from which all others flow, is his basically faulty understanding of the regulative principle of worship.

One of the chief difficulties with Jordan's view of worship, or perhaps we should even say the difficulty from which all others flow, is his basically faulty understanding of the regulative principle of worship. This has been pointed out over the years by the reviewers of Jordan's work, yet he continues to misrepresent the principle in print. Of course, it is

terminology of Scripture: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.’ Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 tells of the importance of listening in God’s presence in contrast to sacrificing and speaking The Second Commandment demonstrates the importance of hearing rather than seeing.⁴

The importance of such quotations is that they demonstrate that the regulative principle of worship is not and never has been “Dispensational”

The importance of such quotations is that they demonstrate that the regulative principle of worship is not and never has been “Dispensational” in the sense in which that term is routinely used in Christian circles today. In fact, the regulative principle of worship is firmly grounded in the Old Testament as well as the New. In a chapter which speaks to the various worship practices of the Canaanites as the people of Israel entered the land, the Lord God specifically prohibited those same practices in biblical religion and at the same time laid down a principle by which his worship was to be regulated. This is neither a specifically Old Testament principle, nor a specifically New Testament principle – it is a biblical principle:

Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. (Deuteronomy 12:31-32)

It is clear from the book of Hebrews and from the practice of virtually all Christians today that there are God-appointed changes between the Old Testament and the New Testament. I am unaware of any Christian sect that teaches we are to continue making pilgrimages to Jerusalem thrice a year, offering lambs or goats on an altar, etc. There may be a difference of opinion as to precisely the form that the changes in worship from Old Testament to New Testament are to take; but it is both incorrect and misleading to characterize the regulative principle of worship as being dispensational. As Scripture says:

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law (Heb. 7:12). For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for

⁴ Frank J. Smith, “What is Worship?” in *Worship in the Presence of God* (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992), pp. 16-17

the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (Heb. 7:18). For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second (Heb. 8:7). In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4). For even that which was made glorious had not glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious (2 Cor. 3:10-11).

Jordan’s claim that the regulative principle is a “New Testament only” hermeneutic or that it is dispensational simply ignores what the Reformers claimed for it.

Jordan’s claim that the regulative principle is a “New Testament only” hermeneutic (relating it to the Anabaptists) or that it is dispensational simply ignores what the Reformers claimed for it.⁵ There will be some honest differences of opinion on precisely how the Scriptures should be interpreted on any specific worship practice. But the fact that men differ with respect to their interpretation of Scripture does not nullify the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*; neither should we suppose that the fact that there are disagreements among Reformed authors over specific applications of the regulative principle means that the principle is at fault.

The point of this rather lengthy correction of Jordan’s misrepresentation of the regulative principle is simply this: Jordan repeatedly accuses the authors of *Worship in the Presence of God* of “minimalism” and “dispensationalism.”

Jordan’s biggest disappointment with Thomas Reid’s essay⁶ is that he does not include more Eastern Orthodox (Alexander Schmemmann), Roman Catholic (Louis Bouyer), Lutheran (Luther Reed) and liberal

⁵ See, e.g. W. Robert Godfrey, “Calvin and the Worship of God,” in *The Blue Banner*, vol. 3, no 11-12, p. 2. “Calvin’s approach to worship later came to be called the regulative principle. This principle holds that the Scriptures must so regulate public worship that only what is explicitly commanded in the Bible may be an element of worship.”

⁶ Thomas G. Reid, “The Acceptable Way of Worshipping the True God: Recent Writings on Worship of Particular Interest to Reformed Christians” in *Worship in the Presence of God*, pp. 335-368.

(Geddes MacGregor) works in his bibliography. Or it may be that Mr. Jordan confesses his real reason for his criticisms when he says, “The first reason this essay disappoints me is that none of my numerous writings in this area are mentioned, nor are the works of my colleagues, past and present, in the liturgical wing of conservative Presbyterianism.”⁷ Given the repeated hostility and name calling that Mr. Jordan has exhibited toward Reformed worship, it is at least possible that many in the Reformed camp do not consider him “one of their own.” Still, whether Mr. Jordan’s essays are numerous does not determine whether they are important.

Perhaps one of the reasons Jordan’s works were not mentioned in Thomas Reid’s bibliography is Jordan’s view, expressed in his *The Sociology of the Church* that the reading of Scripture and the sermon “is all designed to lead us to the second act of sacrifice: the Offertory Thus the offering plates are brought down front to the minister, who holds them up before God (‘heave offering’) and gives them to Him.”⁸ Jordan continues in another place to claim that worship should be characterized by “singing, falling down, kneeling, dancing, clapping, processions, and so forth. The recovery of all these things for worship . . . must be our eventual goal.”⁹ One is left to wonder whether they are to be recovered from the weak and beggarly elements of bondage (Galatians 4:9-11) or recovered from Roman Catholicism and the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.

The greatest problem with Jordan’s writings is his frequent resorting to hasty generalizations and *non sequitur*. Thus, Jordan claims, while reviewing *Worship in the Presence of God*, “Most of this book is a serious attempt to defend the Puritan or anti-liturgical approach to worship, and as such merits our attention.”¹⁰ Of course what Mr. Jordan means by “anti-liturgical” is the regulative principle of worship. By his use of such language he begs the question. After all, the English word “liturgy” is from the Greek “leitourgia” which had a classic meaning, but was also used by Paul in Romans 15:27 and 2 Corinthians 9:12 in reference to offerings for the poor. In other words, liturgy is not limited to the idea of elaborate and illogical ritual designed simply to

make us feel good. Acceptable worship is not incense and candles – it is what the Lord God *says* it is – it is what he has appointed.

Jordan engages in hasty generalization and non sequitur in his chapter on “Girardeau and Musical Instruments in Worship.”

Jordan engages in hasty generalization and *non sequitur* in his chapter on “Girardeau and Musical Instruments in Worship.”¹¹ First Jordan argues against Girardeau’s assertion that instruments were not used to accompany singing in the synagogue. He opines, “Against Girardeau, however, it must be said that Jewish worship and life was seriously corrupt by that time, as the New Testament makes plain, and so it is entirely possible that the rejection of musical instruments by Pharisees and Saducees reflected the influence of Greek philosophy rather than historic Hebrew tradition.”¹² In a footnote to this sentence, Jordan commits another informal fallacy by assuming that because Plato was opposed to musical instruments the reason for their absence in the synagogue is somehow tied to Plato. Jordan – as is often the case – offers opinion, but zero evidence for his claim. In fact, one of Jordan’s chief problems is that in his attempt to strain out Plato he swallows Aristotle. Jordan seems to be under the impression that truth can be conveyed by the senses.¹³

On the next page, Jordan claims “as we have seen, he [Girardeau] cannot show that musical instruments were always absent from the synagogue.”¹⁴ Well, Jordan may have “seen” that, but *we* certainly saw no such thing. What we saw was an unproved and unproveable assertion by Jordan that maybe the reason for the absence of musical instruments from the tabernacle had something or other to do with

¹¹ Not only is Girardeau’s lengthy work *contra* instrumental accompaniment not contained in the book Jordan is reviewing, the entire subject of mechanical instruments in worship was neglected as a separate essay. For those interested in reading the Reformed view on instruments in worship, Blue Banner is planning to publish John M’Donald’s excellent tract on the subject. Write for details.

¹² Jordan, *Lit. Nest.*, pp. 31-32.

¹³ Thus his repeated reference to those who think truth is conveyed by propositions as “rationalists.”

¹⁴ Jordan, *Lit. Nest.*, p. 33.

⁷ Jordan, *Lit. Nest.*, p. 27.

⁸ Jordan, *Sociology of the Church*. (Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, 1986), p. 27, cited in *Trinity Review*, no. 88, p.1.

⁹ Jordan, *ibid.*, p.32, cited in *Trinity Review*, no. 88, p. 2.

¹⁰ Jordan, *Lit. Nest.*, p. 5.

Plato's *Republic*. We saw nothing by way of historical argument or logical connection. Unfortunately, this is typical of Jordan's approach.

On page 79 he claims, "We have already seen that the synagogue from Moses to David would almost certainly have sung at least two non-psalms: the Song of Moses and the Song of the Red Sea."¹⁵ Where did we learn that these songs were sung in the synagogue? Why, on page 75 under such irrefutable evidence as this: concerning Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses, "Were they allowed to sing it in synagogue meetings? I would say, obviously yes." This is what counts to Jordan as "we have already seen." It would be far more accurate for him to say, "I have already asserted without a shred of evidence but am now going to assume as something proven." Of course the evidence for the singing of the Song of the Red Sea (Exodus 15) is quite similar. "I personally think they also sang this song in the synagogue."¹⁶

Liturgical Nestorianism receives its title from page 56. It is typical of the lengths to which Jordan will go in order to misrepresent those who disagree with him.

Perhaps those were merely a couple of oversights on Jordan's part. Perhaps he just got in too big a hurry. According to Jordan, the church taught for the first 1000+ years of her history that food was dangerous; sex was dangerous; and even sinful. Thus because fear of food, music and sex runs through pagan asceticism, the *real* reason the church did not use musical instruments for 1000 years of her history is a similar fear of music. To add arrogance to mischief, Jordan says "appeals to Church history can be valid, but only if they are carefully made."¹⁷

Jordan's carelessness is further exposed in his claim, "Only the Covenanter Psalter (*The Book of Psalms for Singing*) and the Canadian Reformed *Book of Praise* (Anglo-Genevan Psalter) contain complete metrical

versions of all 150 [Psalms]."¹⁸ Jordan's statement ignores two relatively new psalters, the *Trinity Psalter*,¹⁹ and *The Complete Book of Psalms for Singing*, with study notes.²⁰ He also neglects to mention the *Scottish Psalter*²¹ which dates from 1650.

Liturgical Nestorianism receives its title from page 56. It is typical of the lengths to which Jordan will go in order to misrepresent those who disagree with him. Nestorianism was a Christological issue. Nestorius claimed that Christ is actually two persons – a divine person and a human person. For this reason Berkhof complains, "Instead of blending the two natures [of Christ] into a single self-consciousness, Nestorianism places them alongside of each other with nothing more than a moral and sympathetic union between them. The man Christ was not God, but God-bearer, *theophoros*, a possessor of the Godhead. Christ is worshipped, not because He is God, but because God is in Him."²²

Jordan claims, "Those who give virtually all power to man to decide how to worship are guilty of identifying man with God in a kind of liturgical Monophysitism,²³ but those who radically separate man and God tend toward liturgical Nestorianism."²⁴ There is a vague extrinsic similarity in the words "separate man and God" in Jordan's explanation and in historical Nestorianism. Apart from that his statement is simply a misrepresentation of Dr. William Young, whom he accuses of this supposed liturgical error, and the Reformed understanding of worship.²⁵

Jordan claims, "Nestorian Christology, however, denigrates human nature, saying that God and man in Christ were not joined."²⁶ Actually that is not

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁹ Though the *Trinity Psalter* leans heavily on the *Book of Psalms for Singing* it is not simply a reproduction of it, but draws from other sources as well.

²⁰ This Psalter is from Australian Rowland Ward.

²¹ Also known as the *Psalms of David in Metre* and available in at least three editions in this country.

²² Louis Berkhof. *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1937 and 1975), p. 104.

²³ Monophysitism is the "opposite" error of Nestorianism. It teaches that there is but one nature in Christ. The modern Coptic church is about the only remnant of Monophysitism in the world today.

²⁴ Jordan, *Lit. Nest.*, p. 56.

²⁵ Dr. William Young, "Second Commandment: The Principle that God is to be Worshipped Only in Ways Prescribed in Holy Scripture . . ." in *Worship in the Presence of God*, pp. 75-90.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

accurate. What Nestorianism claims is that the deity

of Christ and the humanity of Christ were not joined *as one person*. Jordan apparently does not understand Nestorianism very well, for he goes on to say that as a result of the two person view, the humanity of Christ becomes a mere slave to his deity. In point of fact, that was the view of the Monophysites (particularly Eutyches and Theodoret) who maintained that there was a complete fusion of the two natures such that Christ's humanity was no longer truly human. Theodoret was condemned by the Council of Constantinople and his appeal became an important occasion of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD.²⁷

Except to bring a totally irrelevant Christological controversy into the discussion, Jordan's use of the term "Nestorianism" has no purpose. There is no logical connection between the regulative principle of worship and Nestorianism except in Jordan's overactive imagination. It is simply an attempt to associate an historical Christological error with a teaching that Jordan opposes.

A mature reader could profit from some of Jordan's insights. However, an uncritical reader would have considerable difficulty separating that which is good in Jordan from that which consists of flights of fancy.

A mature reader could profit from some of Jordan's insights. However, an uncritical reader would have considerable difficulty separating that which is good in Jordan from that which consists of flights of fancy. A good, solid foundation in Reformed hermeneutics is recommended before reading *Liturgical Nestorianism* or any other work by James B. Jordan. ♦

Theses on Worship

by Timothy J. Worrell²⁸

During the past decade, James Jordan has embarked

²⁷ Berkhof, op.cit., pp. 106-107.

²⁸ Timothy J. Worrell is the first licentiate for the PCCR and is planting a church in Atlanta, GA. He is completing his theological studies at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

on an attempt to reconstruct and reform the corporate worship of the church, particularly the Presbyterian church. He has done this by making a frontal attack upon the historical understanding of the Reformed "Regulative Principle" and then seeking to justify the introduction of superstitious and unwarranted practices into the corporate worship services. His recent effort, entitled *Theses on Worship*,²⁹ originally appeared in "Rite Reasons", a bi-monthly periodical issued during 1989-1991. Jordan states that these theses were written "in a spirit of dialogue". It is in that same spirit, that I must commend Mr. Jordan for his discernment in recognizing the bankruptcy of much of what is called "corporate worship" in Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in America. Yet in that same spirit, I must take him to task for caricaturing the regulative principle and failing to establish principles by which one can select which traditions of historic Christianity to hold and which to eschew.

In the introduction of the book, Jordan reveals that his intent in this series of papers is "to develop principles and patterns of Christian worship." Here is the Achilles heal of all that he has to say.

In the introduction of the book, Jordan reveals that his intent in this series of papers is "to develop principles and patterns of Christian worship." Here is the Achilles heal of all that he has to say. He wants to "develop" principles and patterns of worship. I believe a much loftier, and also more profitable, goal would be to ascertain the principles and patterns of worship found in the Word of God, to compare and contrast these principles and patterns found in the Scripture with the practice of the Church throughout the ages, and to propound a path forward in the restoration and reformation of worship *a la* Josiah in 2 Kings 23.

Mr. Jordan should certainly be commended for the following assertions:

1. The recognition of the unique place of prayer in corporate worship. This is in accord with the understanding of our Puritan and Presbyterian forefathers at Westminster. The Westminster

²⁹ James B. Jordan, *Theses on Worship: Notes Toward the Reformation of Worship* (Niceville, FL: Transfiguration Press, 1994).

Confession Chapter 21, Paragraph 2, states “Prayer,

with thanksgiving, *being one special part* of religious worship . . .”. Very often in Reformed Churches today, the minister apparently spends little time in preparation for public prayer. This practice needs to be rectified! See Samuel Miller on *Public Prayer*.

2. Mr. Jordan has also come to the conclusion that the Lord’s Supper should be performed on a weekly basis. This conclusion seems to accord with the patent implications of Acts 20:7. This was clearly the perspective that John Calvin adopted concerning the frequency at which the Lord’s Supper should be practiced. Calvin stated, concerning his desire for a weekly communion service, “I have taken care to record publicly that our custom is defective, so that those who come after me may be able to correct it more freely and easily.” It is also interesting to note, that though Scottish Presbyterians in general have practiced a quarterly or semi-annual frequency, the Westminster Confession includes the Sacraments (including the Lord’s Supper) as an ordinary part of worship along with prayer, the singing of the psalms, and the reading, preaching, and hearing the Word of God, instead of grouping them with Oaths & Vows, Thanksgivings, and Humiliations, as extraordinary elements of worship. The Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God states that “The communion, or supper of the Lord, is *frequently* to be celebrated . . .”. The Directory goes on to state that a Preparation service should be performed prior to the administration of the sacrament *if* the “sacrament cannot with convenience be frequently administered,” implying that the normative pattern is for frequent communion, not requiring the use of a preparation service.

3. Mr. Jordan is also correct to align his ammunition against the New International Version of the Bible. I wish he would have brought out the fact that the New Trinity Hymnal of the OPC/PCA has been greatly affected by the inclusion of the NIV translation in its Psalter Selections. The PCA Book of Church Order clearly and unequivocally asserts that “Paraphrase Bibles are not to be used in the public worship of God”. That is just what the NIV is! The NIV itself tells us this much, when the Translators inform us that the Bible was translated using the “dynamic equivalence” method in lieu of the “formal equivalence” method. For further study, read *Accuracy of Translation and the New*

International Version, by Robert Martin.

4. Throughout the book Jordan sees a primary solution to many of the problems with modern worship to be the centrality of the psalms. He does not propose “canonical psalmody”, yet his clarion call to predominate psalmody in worship is certainly a breath of fresh air. Jordan admonishes the reader, “How dare we sing man composed hymns if we have not yet mastered all 150 of God’s psalms . . .” He goes on to state that “God likes the psalms. He wrote them, and He likes to hear them sung. If we love Him, we will make the effort to learn them, all of them, and sing them to Him before His throne on His day.”

Mr. Jordan must be faulted for the following assertions: 1. His distinction between three types of worship; “close communion”, “informal body-life,” and “evangelistic”.

Mr. Jordan must be faulted for the following assertions:

1. His distinction between three types of worship; “close communion”, “informal body-life,” and “evangelistic”. These may be three valid spheres of Church activity, but they are not three types of worship. The three types of worship delineated in the Scriptures are secret, family, and corporate. I believe he is heading in the right direction in viewing the corporate worship service as private, and predominately for the members of the covenant community, yet I believe he is in error when he asserts, “Unbelievers have no business being there at all” and “Christians should never invite unbelievers to worship.” We affirm what is explicitly stated in Shorter Catechism Answer 89 which states that, “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.”

2. His failure to recognize the biblical command to keep one’s infant children from the table of the Lord until such time that they possess and have presented a credible profession to the session of their congregation, those entrusted by Christ with the keys of the Kingdom. For a more elaborate discussion and argument in favor of the standard historic Reformed

position concerning paedocommunion in the light of

the Passover, see Richard Bacon's excellent work on the subject entitled, "What Mean Ye By This Service?" available from the Blue Banner.

His position concerning the "regulative principle of worship" is at variance with the historic Reformed understanding.

3. His position concerning the "regulative principle of worship" is at variance with the historic Reformed understanding as defined in the Westminster Confession Chapter 21, Paragraph 1, which states, ". . . the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture" and the answers to questions 50 and 51 of the Shorter Catechism which state, "The second commandment requireth the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word" and "The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or any way not appointed in his word" respectively. Jordan is obviously not satisfied with the mind of God on the subject of worship, but believes he must add to the word of God. Yet God has commanded, 'thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.' This is none other than a denial of the Reformed principle of *Sola Scriptura*. It would conclude that scripture itself is insufficient to make the man of God thoroughly equipped unto every good work.

4. His position concerning the ceremonial law is also at variance with the historic Reformed position as delineated in the Westminster Confession Chapter 19, paragraph 3, which states that, "God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits . . ." The value of the ceremonial laws relating to worship for the Christian today is in the contemplation of Christ's work, not in the establishment of an order of worship for the New Covenant Church. Mr. Jordan attempts to apply the general equity of the ceremonial law to the

order of worship in both the Old and New

Testaments. Mr. Jordan recommends the study of the covenant renewal services in the Old Testament to seek to ascertain the biblical pattern (or order) of corporate worship. However, he fails to apply his own counsel and seeks to allegorize an order of worship out of the creation account and the order of sacrifices found in chapter nine of the book of Leviticus.

A variety of practices have crept into worship that have no scriptural warrant. The solution, however, is to return to the biblical principles of the Reformers, not to adopt a multitude of ceremonial superstitions, which would merely be exchanging one form of corruption for another.

We must admit there are many things which need reforming within the Reformed and Presbyterian churches of the present day. A variety of practices have crept into worship that have no scriptural warrant. The solution, however, is to return to the biblical principles of the Reformers, not to adopt a multitude of ceremonial superstitions, which would merely be exchanging one form of corruption for another. As those seeking to walk in the old paths concerning the corporate worship of the triune God as set forth in the Westminster Standards, we must welcome dialogue on the issue of worship. God has often used error to call the church to a more well defined position. American Presbyterianism has well nigh forgotten its legacy in this area. Oh, that God would use this onslaught to provoke the truly reformed church to proclaim *Sola Scriptura* and the regulative principle in all of life, and for American Presbyterians to return to the purity of worship that her brothers in Scotland have generally known for over 400 years.

Trapped in the Liturgy Trap.

By Greg L. Price³⁰

The Liturgy Trap³¹ is James Jordan's defense

³⁰ Greg Price is pastor of the Puritan Reformed Presbyterian Church in Edmonton, AB, one of the founding churches of the PCCR.

against the tug and pull of high church liturgy as found in Romanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Anglo-Catholicism upon the heart strings of Reformed Christians. Jordan is to be commended in recognizing the serious problem that exists in the trend toward Rome *et al.* on the part of some in Reformed churches, and also in confronting this serious error with biblical truth.

Jordan also levels some well-deserved criticism against modern Evangelicalism which has severely weakened the worship of God within many Reformed churches.

Jordan also levels some well-deserved criticism against modern Evangelicalism which has severely weakened the worship of God within many Reformed churches. According to Jordan, the devastating effects of modern Evangelicalism upon Reformed worship is evidenced in the tendency to hear so little Scripture read, to sing so rarely from “God’s Hymnal” (the Psalter), to celebrate so infrequently the Lord’s Supper, and to see so scarcely biblical church discipline used to restore the erring brother. For all the faults of high church liturgy in Romanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Anglo-Catholicism, Jordan rightly demonstrates the equally devastating errors of Evangelicalism practiced in many Reformed churches. The sword Jordan wields is two-edged cutting in both directions: toward Romanism and toward Evangelicalism. Touché!

The problem this reviewer has with Jordan’s evaluation is that he fails to see how his own tradition within worship is cut to the quick by the same sword of the Spirit that he so aptly uses against abuses within Romanism and Evangelicalism. In Jordan’s judgment, the high church liturgy proponents have gone “too far” (p. 6), while he implies the low church liturgy advocates have not gone far enough (pp. 6-8). Jordan’s criticism of both extremes in worship is simply one of degree (they have gone too far or they have not gone far enough). Apparently he views

himself on the same continuum of worship as those he criticizes (he is somewhere in the middle between the two extremes). And what is the principle of worship Jordan uses to judge his worship as acceptable and the extremes as unacceptable? Whatever contradicts biblical truth is dangerous for worship (p. 10). Certainly any worship that contradicts God’s Word is dangerous (it is also idolatrous), however, this is not the “Reformational” principle of worship as articulated by Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, or the Westminster Assembly (perhaps he refers to the principle of worship followed by Luther or the Church of England). The regulative principle of worship articulated by Calvin is not on the same continuum with Jordan or those he criticizes, for the Westminster Confession of Faith correctly delineates the principle of worship followed by Calvin and his heirs: “But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, *or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture*” (WCF XXI:1, emphasis added). Contrary to Jordan’s position, this principle of worship seeks positive warrant from Scripture for every religious act in the worship of God, rather than simply allowing a practice within worship because it doesn’t expressly contradict Scripture.

The problem this reviewer has with Jordan’s evaluation is that he fails to see how his own tradition within worship is cut to the quick by the same sword of the Spirit that he so aptly uses against abuses within Romanism and Evangelicalism.

For example, burning incense, lighting candles, or signing oneself with the form of the cross as religious acts of worship may not be directly contradictory to Scripture (the first two religious acts were practiced by the Levitical priests of the Old Covenant, the third act is neither commanded nor expressly forbidden in God’s Word), and thus according to Jordan’s principle should be acceptable in worship. However, since Old Covenant worship associated with the Levitical priesthood has been abolished, and since there is no express warrant for burning incense or lighting candles in the New Covenant, and since signing oneself with the form of the cross has no

³¹ James B. Jordan, *The Liturgy Trap: The Bible versus Mere Tradition in Worship* (Niceville, FL: Transfiguration Press, 1994).

positive warrant in either the Old Covenant nor in the New Covenant, all three of the above mentioned practices lack positive biblical warrant in the New Covenant and should be prohibited in the worship of God. On Jordan's worship principle of "contradiction," God should not have slain Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1), for their disobedience was not one of contradicting God's command (they did not contradict what God had expressly forbidden, rather they added to what God had not expressly commanded). In a similar vein, if a church were to institute into their worship a brief ceremony that consisted of the congregation pricking their fingers with a pin so as to signify the suffering of the Lord on their behalf, what Scripture would be expressly contradicted? And yet such religious acts could be multiplied (and have been multiplied) in the worship of God by following a principle that permits into worship whatever does not expressly contradict Scripture. The question asked should not be: Where does this practice contradict Scripture? Rather the question asked should be: Where is this practice expressly prescribed in Scripture (by positive commandment, authorized example, or good and necessary inference). The Reformed position on worship is herein expressed by God: "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; *you shall not add to it nor take away from it*" (Deut. 12:32, emphasis added).

Ultimately, Mr. Jordan cannot free himself from the liturgy trap out of which he seeks to rescue others.

Though Jordan does a laudable service in demonstrating how the traditions of Romanism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglo-Catholicism, and Evangelicalism "contradict" the Word of God, he has not demonstrated by what criteria traditions may be judged as acceptable in worship. Jordan's attempt to do so falls short of any non-arbitrary standard: "Only to the extent that ecclesiastical tradition develops *out of* Biblical tradition is it valid" (p. 59, emphasis added). Certainly Rome *et al.* would ably seek to defend their traditions as having been developed "out of" biblical tradition. Those whom Jordan critiques might rightly call Jordan to task, requiring from him biblical warrant for his ecclesiastical traditions that have developed "out of" Scripture ("Physician heal thyself"). The only tradition to be included in the worship of God is that tradition which is prescribed in the Scripture (1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6) — all other tradition is vain, will-worship (Mk. 7:7; Col. 2:8, 23) which makes the commandment of God of no effect (Mk. 7:13). Ultimately, Mr. Jordan cannot free himself from the liturgy trap out of which he seeks to rescue others.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE SALVATION OF MY FATHER'S SLAYER

by Rev. Prof. Dr. F. N. Lee

In April 1994, I was invited to fly round the world and expound the Lord's Prayer in the U. S. A. during September. Having acquired the plane ticket, as an only child I was much looking forward to visiting my parents in Barrydale (near Swellendam in South Africa) on my way from Australia to America.

... in July 1994, ... One week after being assaulted, my father died in hospital and went to be with the Lord.

However, in July 1994, my father (almost 86) was

robbed and left for dead in his home. My mother (having lost her mind and the use of some of her bodily functions) was permanently hospitalised. One week after being assaulted, my father died in hospital and went to be with the Lord.

Upon my arrival in South Africa in September, I headed for Swellendam (where my mother is still in hospital). There, I was amazed that the police had apprehended a young man in connection with the death of my father, and that the young man had signed a statement alleging that he alone had attacked my father. I also learned that my father, before dying, had given a description to the police of the young

man (which description is altogether in harmony with the appearance of the accused) and that the latter was being held in jail precisely in Swellendam, while awaiting his preliminary trial just one week after my own arrival there.

I immediately contacted the jail, requesting permission to come and speak to the accused (of whom it is alleged that he had killed also someone else even before attacking my father). The police warmly supported my request, but informed me the accused had the right to refuse to see me. He, however, being told who I was, agreed and even requested to meet with me.

On the 15th of September I went to the jail, where I was told to surrender my camera and tape-recorder and any firearms I may have been carrying. I was escorted to a room where three armed policemen and their officer were doing clerical work. One minute later, the accused was brought through the door into the room and stood there in front of me.

He was a strongly-built medium-sized man, answering exactly to the description given by my father to the police. He stood there, just looking down at the ground. I silently prayed to God for guidance as to what to do next. Then I got up from my chair; addressed him politely by his full name; greeted him with a handshake; thanked him sincerely for granting me the interview; and requesting him to sit down before I again did so.

I then said: "Mr. W., are you getting enough to eat here?" He replied: "Yes, thank you." I said: "Have you peace of mind here?" He replied: "Sir, I am very unhappy. I have been praying to God in my cell for the last three nights, but it's as if my prayers bounce back off the ceiling and don't get through."

I then said: "Mr. W., I am the only child of the old man who was left for dead behind the front door of his house in Barrydale on the 10th of July whom you are accused of having assaulted. I had been looking forward to spending a week with him in September, but as you can see this is now impossible." The young man nodded; looked down; and said nothing.

I then continued: "Mr. W., my father was not a Christian many years ago, but there came a time in his life when he turned from his sins and received Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. That is why he is now in heaven, and waiting for me to join him.

"I assure you Mr. W., that if you make your peace with God – whether you die right now of a heart

attack; or are to be put to death for murder; or die naturally later on – you too will go to heaven. I also assure you that my father, whom you are accused of having murdered, will then be the first to welcome you there. However, Mr. W., if you do not repent and if you die in your sins, I assure you that you will spend eternity in hell-fire and damnation forever!

"Mr. W., whether you repent and become a Christian, or you harden yourself and die in your sins, know for sure that if found guilty by the court I would want you to receive the maximum penalty.

"I will plead no leniency whatsoever for you, even if you become a Christian, but I am offering you everlasting life in heaven after you die, if you will repent and come to Jesus.

"Mr. W., three men died on a little hill called Calvary. Two were guilty robbers; but the One in the middle, the Lord Jesus, was innocent. Robbers, as you know, include those who go around beating up old people and leaving them for dead after stealing from them. Both of those robbers jeered at the innocent Jesus crucified between them.

Mr. W. then tried to look in my eye. He said: "Sir, would you please show me how to become a Christian?" I then realised that the four policemen in the room had all put down their pens; had stopped working; and were straining their ears, listening to us. So I said: "Officer, could you kindly get us a Bible?"

"But then one of the robbers repented, turned to the other, and said: 'We are being condemned justly. For we are receiving the punishment due, for our deeds. But this man (Jesus) has done nothing amiss!' Then the penitent robber said to Jesus: 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!' So Jesus said: 'Truly, I tell you, today you shall be with me in paradise!'

"Mr. W., do you not see yourself as one of those two robbers next to Jesus on Calvary? Will you die in your sins and go to hell like the impenitent robber? Or will you, like the other robber, repent of your sins; receive Jesus as your Lord; and be assured by Him

that you will go to heaven when you die?

“Mr. W., if you wish, I will leave this jail right now. But if you prefer, I would be privileged to show you right now how you too can become a Christian. Which is it to be?”

Mr. W. then tried to look in my eye. He said: “Sir, would you please show me how to become a Christian?” I then realised that the four policemen in the room had all put down their pens; had stopped working; and were straining their ears, listening to us. So I said: “Officer, could you kindly get us a Bible?”

The officer went galloping out of the room, and immediately returned with a Bible and put it on my lap with great respect. I opened it at John 3:16, and asked Mr. W. if he could read. When he so indicated, I handed him the Bible, and asked him to read it. Loudly and clearly, he read it out, and then said: “I am too big a sinner!” But I replied: “Mr. W., it says here: ‘whosoever’; and that includes you too, if and when you put your trust in Jesus.”

The atmosphere was electric. All in that room felt the awesome presence of God the Holy Ghost. The silence was terrifying. Then I said: “Mr. W., will you come to Jesus?” He replied: “I will!”

The atmosphere was electric. All in that room felt the awesome presence of God the Holy Ghost. The silence was terrifying. Then I said: “Mr. W., will you come to Jesus?” He replied: “I will!”

So, two wicked hell-deserving sinners Rev. Prof. Dr. Nigel Lee and his father's slayer Mr. W., then went down on their knees in that jail together. I put my arm around his shoulder, and prayed first. I thanked God for our meeting; (re)confessed all my own fresh sins to the Lord; and then asked Him to have mercy on Mr. W., for Christ's sake.

Mr. W. then prayed. He said: “Lord, I’m a miserable sinner! Please don’t let Satan destroy me! I am sorry for all my sins. Forgive me, for the sake of Jesus who died for people like me!”

We then got off our knees. I assured him: “Mr. W., if you really meant that, you are now my brother. In that case, here is my right hand of fellowship. I will help you in any way I can. Here is my address in Australia. If you write to me, I promise to reply to every letter you may write, for the rest of my life.

When is your trial?”

He replied: “Thursday 22nd September.” I promised to pray for him on that day (when I would be overseas), that justice would be done and that he would continue to receive God’s grace whatever the outcome. I then again shook his hand and left the jail to the astonishment of both the grateful police and the bewildered convicts there who just kept on staring at me in amazement.

Driving back to Barrydale, I praised God and sang His Psalms the whole time – realizing anew that God is not dead but very much alive on this great planet earth. For God had revived my soul – and, I trust, those of all in that room in the jail.

Four days later, I visited the jail again. This time Mr. W. was waiting for me with a smile. He had been reading the Bible since I last saw him, and claimed to have peace. I urged him to speak to the other prisoners about what had happened to him; to tell the full truth at his trial.

I also urged him to work and witness for the Lord for the rest of his earthly life (be it short or long). He then prayed for both of us; thanked God for my visits; and boldly asked the Lord to bless me wherever I went (that same day to England, and thereafter to America).

God heard his prayer. In London, the Lord spoke powerfully even through my there relating the above events. In America, the effect was electrifying, and the tape-recording of my account is spreading like wildfire and producing awesome enquires and results. I used it there, as an illustration, while preaching on the fifth petition in the Lord’s Prayer: “And forgive men their debts, as we forgive our debtors!”

My fellow sinner, how stands it with your soul? Are you certain you are right with God for time and eternity? For Jesus assures us: “If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses!”

O that God would melt the heavens and come down, and touch and revive His hard-nosed children here on earth! Do you have the certainty that all your sins have been forgiven, for Christ’s sake? If not, settle this matter forthwith!

Sincerely in the Lord’s service, from a sinner saved by grace
(Rev. Prof. Dr.) F. N. Lee,
Queensland Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Brisbane, Australia.

Two Essays

by Richard Bacon

Lord God of Truth by Gordon Clark and *Concerning the Teacher* by Aurelius Augustine (Hobbs, NM: The Trinity Foundation), 120 + vii. pp. \$7.95.

This new booklet from Trinity Foundation contains two excellent introductory essays on the subject of epistemology: specifically an anti-empirical epistemology. Epistemology is the study of how we know; how one can come to know truth; how learning is possible. As Christian educators think more and more seriously about how knowledge is obtained and transmitted to others, we soon find that empirical assumptions simply cannot sustain the task of teaching.

The late Dr. Gordon H. Clark (1902-1985) was an avowed anti-empiricist. We have Dr. Clark to thank for making epistemology a serious study for Christians in the twentieth century. Clark was an Augustinian in a church populated by Thomists and irrationalists. He did not adopt every word Augustine wrote as though it were the voice of God, but by adopting the key insights of Augustine, Clark was able to speak with clarity to a church terribly muddled of thought.

John Robbins states in his Foreword to this book, "Personal encounter, sensate and mystic experience, and uninterrupted action have replaced argument, logic, and revealed information as the norms and touchstones of truth. But to those who have attempted to keep themselves unspotted from the world, these arguments may shine as lights in deepening darkness. It is certainly our hope that they do so, and that those who read this little book will be eternally benefited from it."

Clark introduces his essay by asserting that every Christian is either a Thomist or an Augustinian in his mode of thought. A master-artist, claims Clark, might picture Thomas Aquinas with his hand stretched toward the earth and Aurelius Augustine with his hand stretched toward heaven. From whence comes knowledge? For the Thomist knowledge comes from creation; for the Augustinian it comes from God's revelation.

As Dr. Clark points out, ". . . if anyone wishes to defend Christianity against its enemies, he must recognize that its most effective enemies are not auto-makers, but scientists and philosophers. Madalyn Murray O'Hair is no great threat. Aristotle, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant are. GWF Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, and perhaps Friedrich Nietzsche have done more damage than higher critic Julius Wellhausen ever did. Therefore a serious Christian apologetic must pay attention to the strategists before mopping up the tacticians."

Clark first takes on John Locke. Dr. Clark acknowledges that the three greatest empiricists of all time were the pagan Aristotle, the Roman Catholic Thomas Aquinas and the Protestant John Locke. Clark begins with Locke

because both use English as their native language. Locke maintained that all ideas come from sensation or reflection. He said "let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: How comes it to be furnished?" Of course, Locke's white paper is simply another statement of Aquinas' *tabula rasa*. Locke continued, "Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself."

But at this point it becomes necessary for the Christian educator to stop and ask a couple of questions. Locke began with a sheet of white paper. Then there was some writing on his sheet of paper. He assumed that the writing came from outside the paper — given his empirical assumptions it certainly seems quite impossible to prove that sensations are anything *other than* sensations. To assume that our sensations are sensations *of something* is a stretch that the white paper cannot make. As Clark points out, "He assumes what he ought to have proved. One notes that without any argumentation at all he assumes that these marks on the blank paper came from objects outside the mind."

Clark next examines Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Thomas depended upon Aristotle's theory of potentiality and actuality. The problem with both Aristotle and Thomas is that they never really define for us what it is that these terms mean. Since they never define either potentiality or actuality, they do not define motion either, for motion is defined simply as a reduction of a body from potentiality to actuality. Since we do not know what either the starting state or the ending state of the body is, neither can we know what motion is, for it is defined in terms of the starting and ending states.

The biggest problem with Aquinas, however, is his theory of analogy. For both Thomas and Aristotle, two things that make an analogy have a term in common. Thus when one uses such terms as an electrical guitar, an electrical power generator, and an electrical engineer, all three terms have a univocal definition of "electrical" which is "of or pertaining to electrical power." Thus an electrical guitar operates from electrical power, an electrical power generator converts some other energy source into electrical power, and an electrical engineer studies the applications of electrical power. So long as one term is used univocally throughout the analogy, it is no problem.

However, Thomas used the term "exist" in a way that is different for men than it is for God. Thomas denied that God exists in the same sense in which everything else exists. "God's essence and his existence are identical. A stone's or a man's are not. But if this be so, the conclusion contains an element, an essential element, that is not found in the premises. Therefore Thomas' (cosmological) argument is a fallacy."

One sometimes hears the argument put forth that God gave us sense organs (what we sometimes call the "five senses") and that therefore these sense organs must give us knowledge. Of course such an argument is a fallacy

known as *petitio principii*. It can no more be claimed that the purpose of sense organs is to give knowledge than it can be claimed that the purpose of my beard is to give knowledge (or as Dr. Clark says, “that the purpose of toenails is to give knowledge”).

Augustine's writings invited men to examine the rational basis for their faith. He did not deny that it is necessary to believe in order to know; understanding is the reward of faith. But he also declared that Christian doctrine contains many things that we cannot believe unless we understand them. A man who thinks it is sufficient to hold fast to the faith without aspiring to an understanding of it ignores the true end of faith (*Epist.* 120).

Augustine adopted and Christianized many of the Neoplatonic conceptions of reality. Augustine was endowed with a disposition ‘not merely to believe the truth, but also to understand it.’ (*Contra Acad.* III.xx.43)

For Augustine, ‘I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing besides? Nothing at all.’ (*Solil.* I.7) Our failure to understand the truths of faith arises not so much from an intellectual defect as moral turpitude. “What reason, then,” asked Augustine, “Is there why thou canst not see that light itself with steady eye except certainly infirmity? And what produced this in thee, except iniquity?” (*De Trin.* XV.27.50). We cannot properly grasp truth because we are sinners.

Augustine’s examination of the principles of thought are part of a vast “proof” for the existence of God. Augustine does not regard God’s existence as “provable” in a modern empirical sense. Rather, God should be conceived as the ideal of knowledge implicit in all human labor for understanding. God is the God of truth for Augustine. God is the teacher of truth; he is the truth itself; and he is the object of knowledge.

Augustine claimed in his *Confessions*, “For with complete conviction it [reason-RB] proclaimed that what is unchangeable is to be preferred to what is changeable, and thus it had knowledge of the unchangeable itself. For unless it had in some way known it, the mind would have had no ground for preferring it to the changeable. And so in one tremendous stroke of vision it arrived at that which is.” (*Conf.* VII.17.23)

The purpose of Augustine's investigation of, in turn, bodies, sensation, inner sense, judgment, pure thought, and intuition is to arrive at the existence of a realm of absolute timeless reality. The human intellect seemingly perceives ‘above’ the flux of visible things and signs and even above itself a system of unchangeable truth. (*De divers. Quaest.* xlv.1)

Augustine desired communion with God, but could not advance in that direction without first establishing confidence in knowledge. A study of the Platonists unquestionably directed him, but his discovery of the basis of truth (knowledge) is expressed in a form peculiarly his own. The substance of his argument is twofold: first, he argues that the very process of doubting presumes the knowledge that something exists, namely the doubter with

his mental activity. Second, the criticism of knowledge implies that there is an arbiter and criterion of truth (*Solil.* II.i; *De Trin.* X.10.14; *De Civ. Dei* XI.26). Otherwise there is nothing left for the mind but skepticism.

Augustine thus anticipated Descartes by 1200 years. There is one fact that cannot be doubted or called into question: each person must believe in his own existence. Though one doubts, he is aware of himself existing when he doubts. “*Si fallor sum.*” *If I am deceived, I exist.* This certain knowledge, for Augustine, includes all the processes that can be distinguished within it. It comprises a direct apprehension, a judgment, and a feeling: ‘I am most certain that I am, and I know it, and I enjoy it.’

This truth is immediately perceived. It does not come to us from the world or from our senses. Additionally Augustine was convinced that there are other truths of the same order. Augustine claimed “we do not discern these ideas through some bodily sense as we apprehend colors, sounds, and tastes; but without any delusive representation of spurious perception (*phantasiarum*) or of images (*phantasmatum*) I am most certain that I am and that I know this and enjoy it” (*De Civ. Dei, ibid.*). This knowledge is detached from all contact with the data of sense perception. Thus the ground of certitude for Augustine points to a radical dualism in knowledge; and perceptual experience is secondary in his dualistic hierarchy.

Though our ideas do not come to us from sensory data, they do refer to an objective and independent realm. Otherwise no intelligible discussion would be possible between men. Everyone would be limited or confined to his own ideas. The region of reality and commonality is the world of ideas. And that world of ideas is eternal, necessary, immutable, and intelligible.

The entire direction of Augustine's analysis of knowledge is toward the establishment immutable certainty. The mind willfully and knowingly makes corrections to the impressions it receives from the senses. Yet it is obvious to Augustine that if the mind makes corrections to physical sensations it receives, then it must be correcting them by an appeal to a principle or principles unaffected by the changeability of the sensory. An investigation into these principles seems to Augustine to reveal a knowable *structure* in the world which is changeless and therefore timeless.

Mathematical ideas are of this variety; they are the same regardless of culture, circumstance or intelligence. “It offers itself equally to all who can grasp it; nor when perceived by anyone is it changed and altered for the nutriment, as it were, of the perceiver; nor does it cease when someone is deceived in it, but he is so much the more in error the less he sees it, while it remains true and whole” (*De Lib. Arb.* II.viii.20). Seven and three are ten not just today but always. Our judgment which detects errors in addition such that we know seven and three can never be any quantity other than ten Augustine called “the light of the mind.”

Augustine considered any sensible object as capable of infinite division. No body, however small it may be, is a

perfectly simple unity. But to know that no body is 'one' is to know in some sense what one is. Yet such knowledge cannot be known from sense perception because we are not acquainted with an indivisible body.

Augustine concluded that there are many such things that cannot be known by sense perception in such a direct way; "Again, when I call back to my mind some arch, turned beautifully and symmetrically, which, let us say, I saw at Carthage; a certain reality that had been made known to the mind through the eyes, and transferred to the memory, causes the imaginary view. But I behold in my mind yet another thing, according to which that work of art pleases me; and whence also, if it displeased me, I should correct it. We judge therefore of those particular things according to that [form of eternal truth], and discern that form by the intuition of the rational mind" (*De Trin.* IX.6.11).

Augustine's arguments suggest a fundamental, non-sensory structure to the world which intellect apprehends. But there is not an abrupt distinction between the structure of reality and bodily things. Number lies at the basis of reality — it forms the *structure* of reality — it does not form a separate reality. Mathematical ideas are generalized and appear under various forms such as order, rhythm, symmetry, harmony, etc. "Look upon the sky and the earth and the sea and all the things which shine in them or above them, or creep or fly or swim beneath them. They have forms because they have numbers; take that from them and they will cease to be" (*De Lib. Arb.* II.42). Things exist primarily in their eternal ideas, but they also exist for us in their material or corporeal mode (*De Vera Rel.* XXII.42). The sensible image is for feeble minds a necessary aid to the intellectual apprehension of the unchanging form.

For Augustine it seems that the light by which the mind is illuminated and by which it is allowed to make judgments is the eternal standard of truth, beauty and goodness which the mind contemplates. The intellect is informed by God and the mind has in this a purely passive role. The imprints of goodness, truth and beauty are placed upon our minds as seals in wax (*De Trin.* XIV.15.21.)

Augustine's theory of knowledge may be regarded as a vindication of Neoplatonic idealism or at least as a Christian modification of it. He taught the church of an ideal order which lies behind the fragmented changeable world of sense perception. The universe depends upon the *divine ideas* and the order we perceive in the universe is due to the *divine ideas*. [Hopefully it will be noted that by "divine ideas" we do not attribute deity to a realm of the ideal, but rather refer to that which is in the mind of God.]

Family Worship (Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, P. O. Box 9279, Greenville, SC 29604). 85 pp including front matter and bibliography, 8½ x 11" format. \$7.00 ppd. For quantity discount contact GPTS.

Pastor, when (not if) you get this booklet, turn immediately to chapter XI on page 69. Mr. Ptacek has provided in that chapter the very sort of practical advice that is needed by our families. The first ten chapter, covering the biblical and historical basis for family devotions are valuable and informative. If you are unconvinced of the importance of this subject for today, then carefully examine the first ten chapters until you become convinced.

Mr. Ptacek demonstrates from Scripture and history that worship is social and covenantal -no merely private. The importance of that fact for twentieth and twenty-first century Christianity cannot be over emphasized.

Strong family worship practice will build strong families. Strong families will, in turn, build strong churches. As Ptacek explains, "The church as it is described in the Old and New Testaments is an assembly of families, formed by covenants between God and the heads of families or the representative heads of families, elders. The covenant was with their descendants and therefore instruction in the terms of the covenant was required." (page 70.)

Ptacek deals with the obstacles to family worship: wrong priorities, perceived inadequacies, sin, and distractions. He also addresses the importance and practice of the various elements of family worship, specifically discipline, Bible reading, prayer and praise. This reviewer cannot condone Ptacek's recommendation of uninspired hymnody, but he also gives considerable emphasis to singing of Psalms, which I believe to be preferable to hymn singing.

Though this pamphlet is a little "pricey" it is well done, easy to read, and I understand that quantity discounts are available to churches wanting to use them with heads of households.

The Blue Banner

The Blue Banner is published by The First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, Texas. FPCR is one of the founding churches of the Presbyterian Church – Covenant Reformed (PCCR). This work is supported by gifts. The cost to produce and mail a subscription is about \$15.00 per year. If you are able, please consider giving a gift of \$30.00 to support your subscription and one other. If you are not able, we are pleased to send it to you for free.

All material in this issue Copyright © 1994 by *The Blue Banner*, a ministry of First Presbyterian Church Rowlett, except where noted. ♦

The First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, Texas

Session: Pastor Richard Bacon. Elder David Seekamp. *The Blue Banner* Editor: Christopher Coldwell. Publisher: Gary Swearingen. ♦

Blue Banner Video

Paedobaptism. Two 90 minute Tapes. \$33.95 postpaid. First Presbyterian had a marathon session recently one

Lord's Day, stretching through the SS hour, AM and PM worship services. The pastor asked church members to invite any anti-paedobaptists (not all antipaedobaptists belong to a 'Baptist' church) with whom they had discussed baptism in the last 6 months to a year or so to attend services with them. Then, over the course of the three sessions, Pastor Bacon presented the case for the underlying unity of the covenant in both testaments; the scriptural evidence that circumcision in the OT and baptism in the NT both point to the same spiritual realities; and answers to objections regarding paedobaptism. The final few minutes were spent answering some questions our guests had submitted. The Baptists who attended found the series thought provoking and very inoffensive in the manner of presentation. We recommend the tape series as a useful teaching tool for churches struggling with objections to paedobaptism. The series may be utilized with either a "new member's class" or in pre-baptismal counselling.

Tape One: Part I. Unity of the Covenant of Grace (Time 51 min). Part II. Circumcision and Baptism. (Time 26 min)

Tape Two: Part III Common Objections to Paedobaptism Answered. (90 min). ♦

The Blue Banner

Publication of
First Presbyterian Church Rowlett
P O Box 141084
Dallas, TX 75214

Beyond Canterbury

Liturgical Nestorianism, by Richard Bacon, p. 1.

Theses on Worship, by Timothy J. Worrell, p. 6.

Trapped in the Liturgy Trap, by Greg Price, p. 8.

✕

The Sovereignty of God in the Salvation of my father's slayer, by Rev. Prof. Dr. F. N. Lee, p. 10.

✕

Two Essays, by Richard Bacon, p. 13.

✕

Kerry Ptacek's Family Worship Reviewed, p. 15.

✕

New Video Tape, p. 16.

- *Beyond Canterbury. Reviews of James B. Jordan's views on worship, p. 1*
The Sovereignty of God in the salvation of my father's slayer, by Rev. Prof. Dr. F. N. Lee, page 10.