

THE STANDARD

Bearer

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MEDITATION

The Pillar of the Lord

"And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

Exodus 13:21, 22

How empty is the well-wishing of the world!

"I wish you a very, very happy Christmas and a very, very happy New Year!"

In the various cartoons we see a very, very old man, stooped and bent, a long grey beard, his face all wrinkled and drawn: he came to the end of a long, weary journey. It is the Old Year.

And a little boy, attractive and sweet: there is a laugh on his mouth. He is the New Year.

Oh yes, I wish you a very, very happy and prosperous New Year. The least said about the Old Year the better.

And we, the people of God, join in to some extent. We send our cards with like sentiments. Sometimes we find a beautiful text engraved on the cards. And that is good and praiseworthy.

But the world? They are vainer than vanity itself. They are such with regard to our wondrous Christmas. They are such with regard to the ending of the Old and the beginning of the New Year.

I remember vividly how the people of God in the old country would visit one another on New Year's Eve (which means the last evening of the Old Year), and (or) on the first day of the New Year. And we, little ones, were taught to say with regard to the first occasion: "We wish you a blessed conclusion!" (Wij wensen U een zalig uiteinde!), or, with regard to the second occasion "We wish you much salvation and blessedness for the New Year!" (Wij wensen U veel heil en zegen voor het Nieuwe Jaar!)

Oh, but that sounds beautiful!

For so it is.

God's Pillar is ever before us, whether it be day or whether it be night.

And God's people are safe, beautifully safe!

* * * *

Even the world feels that the changing of the one year into the other is something special.

God has laid the speech of the Old and of the New in creation.

Attend to this word of God Triune: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years."

They are for signs, and for years.

There is a sign from God in the ending of one year and the beginning of a new year.

And the world has heard the speech of God.

And they at once began to corrupt that speech. They held its truth under in unrighteousness.

They said: "Boy, oh boy, are *we* going to have an Old Year's party!" You bring the liquor, and we shall take care of the music. We will dance and sing and drink the Old Year out and the New Year in!" And the wiser segment added: "Yes, boys, but let the last one for the road be coffee!" Don't be too righteous, and don't be too godless. The life you save (!) may be your own!"

It is said in Egyptian darkness and lived in wicked obscurity.

But God listened and wrote, and wrote and wrote. There is a book of remembrance before His countenance.

Instead of that they should have said: The way is dark and I am far from Home, O my God! Send out Thy light and Thy truth. Let them lead me to Thy Holy Hill and to Thy Tabernacles. Then shall I enter with joy and thanksgiving. Upon the harp shall I play songs to Thy praises, O God, my God!

But no, they do not. They live as the title of a godless movie read: "Merrily we go to hell!" On the billboard such a title was embellished (!) with an old, old man in a tuxedo; a glass of spirits in his hand, and waltzing to the tune of sweet music.

And we live in the midst of such darkness of sin.
 And our foolish heart would fain join in and corrupt
 ourselves with them.
 Far from the pillar of God.

* * * *

Yes, far, very far from the wondrous pillar by day and
 by night.

No, we are not a bit better than the world. Not by
 nature.

For proof I would ask you to read the book of your
 heart, such as that heart has written in the year that went
 past. Yes, we better read that book when the shadows of
 life's sun lengthen at the evening of 1955.

Read that book! Read it and your tears will flow. Per-
 haps they will be tears such as only God can see: tears of
 the heart, flowing from the eyes of the heart.

Read that book in the light of the Bible, having Christ's
 testimony in the heart. And it will be bitter.

But that is good and comely.

Such tears are unto rejoicing in heaven.

The book of your heart!

The book, or rather, the chapter of that book which is
 numbered: 1955.

It is enough for this once.

What corruption, what sins, what hard-heartedness, what
 indifference, what evil, what filth! Imagine, my dear reader,
 a talking movie of the thoughts and the words and the deeds
 of your heart, to be read by all the world, all the church, all
 the angels of God, read also by Christ and by God!

Its sound and its scenes stepped up, amplified, so that
 the whole Universe can hear and see your whole life from
 the cradle to the grave!

Stop! Wait! Do not run to yonder cave!

The Bible has another version of such conduct. The
 world shall cry: "Then shall they begin to say to the moun-
 tains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." Luke 23:30.

Yes, *then*.

But God's people say that now! That is, when they see
 their sins and guilt. For their little book is also very dirty.

* * * *

But, God be thanked, they say more.

They do not only say: O God! I am worthy of dam-
 nation and hell! But they also say: O God! Let Thy pillar
 lead me all the day and all the night!

Let that pillar cleanse me and redeem me, and make me
 blessed everlastingly!

For the Pillar that leads Israel in deepest night and in
 the light of God is God in Christ.

The pillar of God which leads God's church is salvation,
 eternal salvation through the mystery of His love in Jesus.

Israel was at the very edge of the wilderness. (vs. 20b)

And they were still within reach of the godless Egyp-
 tians.

What a combination! The wilderness, barren and dry.
 The Egyptians, mighty and wicked. And a slave people,
 cumbered by women and the little ones, and much cattle.
 And they have no weapons.

But wait! They have God.

Three months later they shall hear The Voice! I am the
 Lord thy God who led thee out of Egypt, out of the house of
 bondage. Yes, you are black with service of sin and cor-
 ruption, but I have found a ransom for thee!

And here is My Sign. It is a Sign of salvation. It is My
 pillar by day and My pillar by night.

Trust and obey.

Moses said: The Lord shall fight for you and you shall
 be still.

And later: the Manna came and the Quails and the
 Water.

And still later: Canaan, the land flowing with milk and
 honey.

And it all came because of the Pillar of Jehovah.

* * * *

Ah, yes, the Pillar of Jehovah!

That is Jehovah Himself, revealed in Old Testament
 signs and wonders.

That is Jesus Christ, Whose birthday we celebrated a
 few days ago.

Blessed Pillar of Jehovah.

The text tells us that this pillar was a pillar of cloud by
 day and a pillar of fire by night. But I am persuaded to
 believe that it was the self-same pillar whether it appeared
 by day or by night. It was the cloud of the glory of God.
 You read of that more. F. i., when the temple was dedi-
 cated by Solomon, on Mount Olivet at the occasion of Jesus'
 ascension, and the cloud which shall be His chariot at His
 final coming.

The cloud is the glory of God.

And His glory is the radiation of His virtues. It is the
 shining God.

That was seen also in the fiery cloud at night. That fire
 was also hidden in that cloud by day. It is the fire of His
 holiness, righteousness and truth.

But it is also the radiation of a goodness that shall make
 you smile and laugh and dance and sing unto everlasting.

The cloud said to Israel: I love you, Jacob; I adore you,
 Israel!

I love you, My People, although you agree with Me that
 you have forfeited all right to My communion.

But this My Pillar tells you in a sign that I will cast My
 Shadow over you, My Shadow of glory such as this sorry
 earth hath never seen.

I will show My Pillar many years hence, and it shall be
 to the cleansing of the people.

At that time, the fulness of time, I will exegete My

Pillar, and you will hear the groaning of a Man of Sorrows. I will show you Golgotha. And that cloud and that fire shall be glorious.

That Pillar of Mine shall lead you through the wilderness of snakes and serpents and adders, and bring you to the Canaan of Rest.

And that will be a New earth and a New heaven where righteousness shall dwell.

Oh no, I will "not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before you, My people!"

Jesus is always with us, dear reader.

And we follow Him step by step through this desert of sin, this wilderness of fiery serpents.

The hills of the heavenly Judah beckon.

Methinks I hear the singing of angels and of souls made perfect.

* * * *

Yes, when it is Old Year's evening, I tremble when I page in my little book of life.

And I look with tearstained cheeks up to the Countenance of my heavenly Father, and I stammer: Oh God, lead me, lead me and I will follow.

And let the blood of Jesus cover me and my children and their little ones.

Let me experience, O my God, that my name and the name of the little ones are written in Thy Book of Life which was written from the beginning of the world.

And I rest in prospect!

It is New!

Everlasting New!

G. Vos

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, Wednesday, March 7, 1956, at Edgerton, Minnesota.

The consistories are reminded that all matters for the classical agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk not later than thirty days before the date of Classis.

The Stated Clerk,

Rev. H. Veldman

IN MEMORIAM

The Ladies' Aid of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota, hereby wishes to express its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Gerrit Gunnink, in the loss of her son, and to our former member, Mrs. Arthur Gunnink, in the loss of her husband,

ARTHUR GUNNINK.

May the Lord sustain and strengthen them, and comfort them with the blessed assurance that his work is perfect and is done in love to his children.

Rev. H. Veldman, President

Mrs. J. Brummel, Secretary

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EDITORIALS

The Apostates of 1953 and the Three Points

In my former article I mentioned that, although the synod of 1924 originally meant to maintain so-called common grace in the Kuyperian sense of the word, they ended up by defending Arminianism in the Three Points.

The trouble was that they had to find something in the confessions to support their contentions and, seeing that they never mention "common grace" except once and then in a condemnatory way (Canons III, IV, the rejection of errors V) but always speak of the sovereign grace of God unto salvation, it was but natural that the synod committed the error of presenting the latter as common.

They did so, not only by distorting the meaning of the confessions some passages of which they quoted, but also by suggesting an Arminian sense of some texts of Scripture which they also quoted as proof of "common grace."

One of these passages is Ez. 33:11.: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

This is quoted, not in proof of any Kuyperian common grace but to support a well meant offer of grace and salvation to all in the preaching of the gospel, just as those that recently left us now again maintain. Prof. L. Berkhof writes in his pamphlet "The Three Points Reformed in every part" in connection with this text: with this passage as follows:

"The next link in the argument of the synod is this: The general and well meant offer of salvation is a sign of God's favor toward sinners, is for these a blessing from the Lord. On this must fall all the emphasis, because those that cannot agree with this declaration of synod maintain that the preaching of the Word is meant only as a curse for the reprobate that hear it. He does not bless but curse them thereby. He uses this preaching in as far as it concerns them only as means to cast them more deeply into perdition and, therefore, as an instrument of His hatred. This is definitely an unscriptural thought. The Scripture teaches very definitely that in the offer of salvation we must see a temporal blessing also for those that do not follow up the invitation. The following considerations serve as proof for this:

(1) That God calls sinners to repentance is presented in Holy Writ as desiring their salvation. (Who would deny this as long as you speak of sinners in general, and not of elect and reprobate, as was the definite question before the synod of 1924? H. H.). In the prophecy of Ezekiel we hear the voice of the Lord in words, that witness of mercy: "Have I any pleasure at all the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" And again: 'For I have no pleasure in the death

of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn ye yourselves and live ye.' These passages tell us as clearly as is possible to express in words that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (note that he does not say 'of the elect sinner,' but 'of the wicked' entirely in general); and the tender call which we hear in this witness of His ever so great love to sinners and of His pleasure in the salvation of the wicked."

A little farther in the same pamphlet Berkhof writes:

"There is still another place in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where the Lord expresses the same thought in still stronger language, wherein He confirms it with an oath, viz, Ez. 33:11: 'As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked return from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' Are these not words of tender mercy (to every wicked that hears the gospel, H.H.), in which a Father implores his deviating children (all the wicked are children of God and He is Father of them all, H. H.) to return to the house and heart of the Father. Do you listen here, in any way the voice of hatred? . . .

We will quote no more.

This, according to the professor, is "common grace."

This is the teaching of the Three Points of 1924.

This is the meaning of the well meant offer of salvation, on the part of God, to all that hear the gospel.

This is no Arminianism?

Do you really imagine that if this were the Reformed faith, which teaches a universal love and mercy to all that hear the gospel, which teaches a universal Fatherhood of God and a universal sonship of men, which plainly presupposes that God stands powerless over against the wicked if he will not return from his evil ways and which, by implication denies sovereign and efficacious grace, — do you really imagine that our fathers would ever have convened the synod of Dordrecht and compose the Canons?

Don't you ever believe it!

Our fathers insisted on and contended for the faith of election and reprobation. They taught in Canons I, 7:

"Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath, out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

"This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally,

to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace."

According to this article God's love, mercy and grace are particular, and He reveals this in the gospel. According to Berkhof and the Three Points, however, in the preaching of the gospel, which is supposed to be a well meant offer of mercy and salvation to everybody, God wants to assure us that His love and mercy are universal and that they are not limited to anyone in particular.

Berkhof and the Three Points simply make God a liar!

Again in Canons II, 8 our fathers teach as follows:

"For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God that Christ, by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and language, all those and those only, who were from eternity chosen unto salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual. Whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

This is Reformed.

To this confession also Berkhof is supposed to subscribe.

No doubt, He will say that he does subscribe to this, too, as well as to the First Point of 1924 as it was explained by him above.

But this is absolutely impossible. For the two constitute a flagrant contradiction.

Notice, that in the above quotations from the Canons it is strongly emphasized that God loves and is merciful to the elect and to them only.

But according to Berkhof and the First Point God's love and mercy are universal and, as far as God is concerned, for all men, at least, for all that hear the gospel.

According to the Canons of Dort God wills that only the elect shall be saved and He also wills that the reprobate shall be left in their sin unto eternal perdition.

But according to the First Point as interpreted by Berkhof, God reveals in the preaching of the gospel that he hates no one, that He does not want anyone to be lost but that He would like all men to be saved. He even implores them all, every single individual, in His tender mercy to return to His Father's heart and house.

Perhaps, he will say that we must have both and that this is a deep mystery.

But this is no mystery, it is sheer nonsense.

Nor is this Scripture, for it teaches very plainly that God hates the wicked every day, that He is merciful to whom He will be merciful and whom He will He hardens and that, too, even under and through the preaching of the gospel.

It is not my purpose to discuss the Three Points in detail, although it may well be salutary even for our own people to be reminded of these three fundamental errors and departures from the Reformed faith.

My purpose is rather to demonstrate that those that have recently departed from us certainly have no difficulty to subscribe to these errors, for they teach the same thing.

This, however, I must postpone till the next number of our magazine, the Lord willing.

This article I will conclude by noting that I received entirely unexpected support from a presbyterian minister of New Glasgow in Nova Scotia, who devotes almost an entire article to the subject of the Three Points in his paper "The Contender" on the basis of my pamphlet *A Triple Breach*. He writes:

"Before referring again to the Arminianizing leaven which is at work in *The Free Offer Of The Gospel* by Professors Murray and Stonehouse, let us notice another and very important document which was drawn up by ministers of the Christian Reformed Church in the United States and accepted by that church's highest body, the Synod at Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1924 The reason we are bringing up the declaration of the Synod of Kalamazoo is that its (false) doctrinal teaching and influence is not a local issue but goes far beyond the borders of the Christian Reformed Church. We would say that every true Christian believer ought to be concerned with it for it has to do with the tremendous issues of the sovereignty of God and heaven and hell. It concerns the dealings of God with the elect or redeemed whose destiny is heaven, and with the non-elect or reprobate whose destiny is hell. This is what is at stake in the Christian Reformed Church's declaration and what is at stake in "The Free Offer Of The Gospel" and other such like writings. It is no exaggeration to say that the present writer considers that material on this subject which has come into his hand is as significant as anything which he has ever read. This material, both pro and con, has been published at various times during the past thirty years, beginning with the declaration itself in 1924, and followed by various writings against the declaration by the Rev. Herman Hoeksema especially *A Triple Breach in the Foundation of the Reformed Truth*."

After this the author goes on to discuss *A Triple Breach*.

It is, indeed, refreshing to note that there are still seven thousand that have not bowed their knee to Baal.

H. H.

"A man's free-will cannot cure him even of the toothache, or of a sore finger; and yet he madly thinks it is in his power to cure his soul." Toplady

OUR DOCTRINE

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

PART III — OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 50.

Chapter Three

The Implications of the Fourth Petition

Secondly, having been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, he seeks the kingdom of God, the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. He knows that God is not ashamed to be called his God: for He has prepared for him a city, the heavenly city, that has foundations. Here he knows he lies in the midst of death. And in the midst of death he eats his bread. But he looks forward to the glory of his risen and exalted Lord, the heavenly Jerusalem, that shall come down out of heaven from his God. In that faith he knows himself to be only a sojourner, a stranger and a pilgrim in this world. He is content to live in tents. He does not lay his foundation deep and strong, and build magnificent houses in this world. He must travel. He cannot tarry. And living in tents, and having his eye fixed on the city that has foundations, he is satisfied day by day to receive that portion of his daily bread which is sufficient for him to continue his journey. And so he prays every morning, as he pulls up his stakes to resume his journey: "Our Father in heaven, give us this day our daily bread."

Realizing, however, that this is the spiritual dispensation required to utter this petition in spirit and in truth, we at the same time feel that we are still far from the spiritual perfection. How carnal we often are! How we too are inclined to seek the things that are below! How little of the pilgrim's attitude becomes manifest in our lives! How often we murmur against the will and the way of the Lord! And how little do we evince of that spirit of child-like confidence that expects all good things from the God of our salvation. Well, therefore, we may conclude also this meditation on the prayer of the Lord with the humble request: "Lord, give us grace to pray, Give us this day our daily bread."

LORD'S DAY 51

Q. 126. Which is the fifth petition?

A. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;" that is, be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute to us poor sinners, our transgressions, nor that depravity, which always cleaves to us; even as we feel this evidence of thy grace in us, that it is our firm resolution from the heart to forgive our neighbor.

Chapter I

The Prayer for Forgiveness

The perfection of the Lord's Prayer appears very plainly in the order in which the various petitions occur. Also this fifth petition occupies a perfect position in the whole of the prayer.

We may well consider this position of the petition for the forgiveness of sins for a moment.

If we have understood the real meaning and implications of all the preceding petitions, the very exercise of sending them to the throne of grace must have awakened within us a deep sense of our imperfections and sins, and therefore must have deepened our feeling of need for the forgiveness of our sinful condition and of our actual transgressions.

This was true emphatically when we prayed the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." As we were praying, we felt deeply in our hearts that often we do seek things quite different from those we professed to seek in the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and we realized that there is but a small beginning of the new obedience within us, and that all the rest is still sinful. How small is the principle of perfection within us, by virtue of which we also seek the glory of God's name first and above all. How frequently we are seeking the things that are below and the things of the flesh, rather than the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And how we are inclined to rebel against and transgress the will of our heavenly Father, rather than keep it perfectly.

But this does not only apply to the first three petitions. Also while we stammered the prayer for bread, we felt our lack of faith and confidence, our sinful anxiety for the morrow, as well as our lusting after the things of this present world. We felt indeed that if our Father in heaven would literally hear our prayer and give us nothing but bread for this day, we would not be content, but rather be filled with anxiety.

And therefore, if we have uttered these petitions in the sanctuary before the face of God in spirit and in truth, we should be quite ready now to pray: "And forgive us our debts." Do not remember, our Father in heaven, even the sins that characterized and marred my prayer before Thy face.

Let us note too that the petition for the forgiveness of sins follows the prayer for our daily bread. This is quite in accord with the principle that the natural is first, afterward that which is spiritual. I Cor. 15:46. Our daily bread is not more important than the forgiveness of sins, but it is nevertheless first in order of time. Only in this world, and therefore only as long as we need bread, are we in need of forgiveness. In heavenly perfection we shall never utter this fifth petition any more. In the tabernacle of God with men we shall be perfectly delivered from sin and corruption, and walk in the light forever. Secondly, this prayer for forgive-

ness precedes the petition for grace against temptation and for deliverance from evil. This too is quite in harmony with the important truth that justification must needs precede sanctification. We must be justified before we can be sanctified. We must have the forgiveness of sins before we can even have the right to be delivered from the bondage of sin and from the dominion of the evil one. On the other hand, even while we pray for forgiveness, we already have in mind the petition for deliverance from sin that immediately follows. We could not possibly pray sincerely for remission of our transgressions unless there were in our hearts the sincere longing for complete deliverance from all evil and for spiritual perfection.

This petition, we must remember, is not a prayer for atonement or for satisfaction or reconciliation with God. The prayer for forgiveness is based on the faith in the atonement of Christ. This must be remembered over against those that claim that this particular petition for the forgiveness of sins is obsolete, is antiquated, is out of date. It was quite proper in the old dispensation to seek forgiveness and to ask for the remission of sins. For in those days the people of God still lived in the shadows, and sin offerings had to be repeatedly presented in the temple. The prayer for the forgiveness of sins at that time meant the expression of earnest longing for Him that was to come and that would blot out their sins forever. Now, however, Christ has come, and He has finished all. In the old dispensation "every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." Heb. 10:11. But now Christ is come. And "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever those that are sanctified." And therefore, according to them, in the new dispensation we can no longer pray for the forgiveness of sins: for our sins are forever blotted out.

Over against this we may remark, in the first place, that it is rather impossible to understand how there can be true Christians, or those that profess to be such, who claim that there is no longer any place for this prayer for the forgiveness of sins in the life of the child of God, and that to pray this is a manifestation of ignorance or an expression of unbelief. Even apart from the doctrinal error implied in such a conception, it is rather difficult to understand how a true child of God, who knows himself, is able not only to make such statements, but to live according to them, that is, without the prayer for forgiveness. To us it rather seems that every day and every moment the believer must feel the need exactly of this prayer in his heart, and that, as he grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, this need will become deeper and this prayer will grow more intense. Even in those times when his spiritual life is at low tide and when he does not feel much need of prayer, it would seem that the burden of this petition still lies heavily upon his heart, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." But

the doctrinal error in this conception is very evident. It confuses atonement with the forgiveness of sins. It does not distinguish between the objective blotting out of all our transgressions on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and the application of that atoning blood in the forgiveness of our sins to the heart of the believer. The fifth petition does not pray for atonement or for satisfaction or for the blotting out of sins, but simply for the forgiveness of all our transgressions. The atonement is finished for ever. It is an accomplished fact. In God's counsel it is eternally real. For "he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." Numbers 23:21. But that eternal counsel God also realized in time in the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. For "he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:25. And "he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." II Cor. 5:21. And this atonement of Christ on the cross is also realized in the heart of him who prays for the forgiveness of sins through the faith which God has given him. For do not forget that all prayer is an expression of faith, not of doubt or of unbelief. And this is also true of the prayer for the forgiveness of sins. It is an expression of the faith that there is forgiveness and that there is forgiveness for him that prays. Once more, therefore, this fifth petition does not pray for atonement or satisfaction, but simply for the application of this atonement in the forgiveness of sins to the heart of the believer that lives in the midst of the world and that is still conscious of violating all God's commandments, even though he has a beginning of the new obedience in his heart.

Various questions present themselves when we contemplate the meaning of this fifth petition. The first question is, of course: what is sin? The Catechism speaks of "our transgressions, nor that depravity, which always cleaves to us." It therefore includes in this petition not only our actual sins and transgressions, but also the corruption of our nature, from which we are not delivered as yet, and for which we are responsible before God. In the second place, the question is: what is forgiveness, and how is forgiveness of sins possible? The Catechism teaches us that in this petition we pray to our Father in heaven "not to impute to us poor sinners our transgressions." In the third place, the question arises as to the ground of this forgiveness. And this too is indicated in the Heidelberg Catechism when it teaches us that in this prayer for forgiveness we ask: "be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood not to impute to us our transgressions." And finally, the question is: what is the meaning of that significant limiting clause, "as we forgive our debtors?" This the Catechism interprets in the words, "even as we feel this evidence of thy grace in us, that it is our firm resolution from the heart to forgive our neighbor."

These questions we shall now attempt to answer.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

8. *And I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle shrubs that were in a deep place and behind him (there were) horses red, bay and white.*

Behold — Literally not a verb — see, look — but an interjection, lo. The novelty and strangeness of the vision caused astonishment on the part of the prophet. The beings appearing in this first vision are the following: 1) The prophet; 2) The interpreting angel; 3) The man riding upon the red horse; 4) The men riding upon the red, bay and white horses; 5) The angel of Jehovah; 6) Jehovah Himself.

Man — probably an angel in the form of a man. *Riding* — the thought is that the man was mounted upon a horse and not that the horse with its rider was in motion. *Red horse* — Red is the color of blood. In Rev. vi, 4 it is the rider upon the red horse that is given a great sword and authority to take peace from the earth that men may kill one another. The color of the horse then symbolizes war and bloodshed. *And he was standing among the myrtle shrubs* — The pronoun looks back to the rider. The horse upon which he was seated was standing. Hence it is said that he was standing. He was standing in the grove of myrtles, because there was waiting the angel of the Lord to whom report had to be made. *Myrtle* — Not a mighty and stately tree but a lowly shrub that, in the vision, symbolizes the church. As she exists on this earth she is always a little flock, weak, afflicted and despised as was the case with her Lord and Saviour in His state of humiliation. *Deep place* — Abyss. A symbolical designation of the diabolical world-power in which the church stands as a lowly shrub by which she is held captive and oppressed. *And behind him horses* — The man riding upon the red horse was not alone. Behind him stood an unnamed number of horses of which some were red, some bay, and the rest white. It must be imagined that a horseman sat upon each of them. That this is not stated is owing to the fact that the emphasis rests upon the color of the horses. *Red* — (explained above) The same color as that of the horse upon which sat the leading horseman. *Bay* — reddish brown and symbolizing doubtless the working of God's wrath in destruction by fire. *White* — The symbol of the heavenly glory of Christ and therefore also of His victory over all the enemies of the church (Matt. 27:2; Rev. 6:2). Thus the office of the horsemen is to plague the nations of the earth with war and bloodshed and destruction by fire and thereby to pave the way for the victorious appearance of the church in glory.

According to some, the colors are without symbolic meaning; they are only incidents introduced to make the picture complete. But this is a mistaken view, as will become clear as I proceed with my exposition.

9. *Then said I, O my Lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these (be).*

My Lord, what are these? — The prophet addresses his request to the interpreting angel. He is the prophet's constant companion throughout all the visions. His task is to explain to Zechariah what he sees and hears. *I will shew thee what these be* — Reply of the interpreting angel. He will explain the vision.

10. *And answered the man standing among the myrtle shrubs and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.* The interpreting angel explained the vision. He did so, however, not personally, but through the agency of the leading horseman, the man seated upon the red horse. *And the man . . . answered and said* — He replied to the prophet's request for an explanation of the vision. *These* — The mounted horsemen that stood back of him. His answer to the prophet was that they were messengers of Jehovah, sent of Him to walk to and fro through the earth. From the succeeding verse it appears that they had been sent to observe conditions on the earth and to report on them.

II. *And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle shrubs, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still and is at rest.* Having been presented by their leader, the horsemen made their report. *And they answered* — Their report was in reply to the question implicit in their mission, namely what they had found conditions on the earth to be. Hence, it is said that they answered, though no question was put to them orally. Whether they answered in unison or through a spokesman is not stated. *The angel of the Lord* — To the angel, who is now introduced for the first time and of whom it is stated that he, too, stood among the myrtles, the horsemen report. Who is this angel? In chapter 2:1-5 he is identified with Jehovah (see also Gen. 16:1-10; 31:11-13; 32:25-31). On the other hand, in the same passage (chapter 2:1-5) he is discriminated from Jehovah (see also Ex. 33:20-23). Thus he is discriminated from and at the same time identified with Jehovah, that is, rightly considered, called Jehovah. This angel, therefore, is not a created angel but the second person in the Godhead, the same divine person that in the New Testament Scriptures is presented to us as the incarnate word, the Christ of God, in whose face shines God's glory, and in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. It explains why the horsemen report to Him. They were sent also of Him. *Behold! All the earth sitteth still and is quiet* — The horsemen report that they have gone through the earth and find that all is tranquil, undisturbed by war and revolution. This was sad news, utterly discouraging. For by the former prophets and only recently by Haggai (2:6, 7, 21, 22), Jehovah had promised that He would shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and the nations. He had vowed that He would overthrow the kingdoms of the nations

through war in which they would destroy themselves and each other; and all this not alone preliminary to the salvation of Israel but also to secure Israel's salvation, so that, if the desirable things of the nations were to come and God's house built, if the church was to be gathered and Jerusalem exalted and the cities of Judah were to overflow with good (see the following verses) — if, in a word, these promised things were to become an accomplished fact, the heavens had to be shaken, the nations shaken and the kingdoms of the heathen had to be overthrown in order that they in their totality might pass away forever.

Yet the horsemen report that the nations were not being shaken. The whole earth was still. Seemingly sad news. True, Jehovah had turned the captivity of His people. The church was back in God's country. But she was still in a sad state. — Jerusalem for the greater part rubble, her gates burnt, her walls broken down, the remnant small and poor and under the dominion of the heathen, and the kingdoms of the heathen established, strong and prosperous with no sign of their being shaken. When would their troubles end? Where was the coming of His promise? Would His mercies never return? These questions were present in the souls of His people and bespoke their despondency and discouragement, which the angel and Jehovah would now remove.

12. *Then answered the angel of the Lord and said, O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jerusalem and upon the cities of Judah against which thou hast been angry these three-score and ten years?* The horsemen had done reporting. The one to speak next was the angel of Jehovah. He answered, replied to the report. But His reply was a question that He addressed not to the horsemen but to Jehovah Himself. And with reason. In merely observing conditions on the earth instead of having stirred up the nations by war, which was properly their office, the horsemen had acted under the instruction of Jehovah, it must be assumed. It was therefore to Jehovah that the angel put his question. *How long wilt thou not have mercy . . . ?* It was like asking how long before Jehovah would send forth His ministers — the horsemen — to plague the nations with war.

What the church at that moment was made to behold, in the vision, was a wonderful thing. — The Son of God interceding for His chosen people before the face of Jehovah all those years before His incarnation, actually functioning as their great priest touched by their infirmities. "For," so it is written of Him, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in his love and in his mercy he redeemed them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63:9).

O, Jehovah of hosts, how long — This was the cry of every distressed believer. It is the cry of all the saints of all the ages (Rev. 6:10). In the vision the angel is presented as making this cry his own. As his cry it was a sinless and calm reminder to Jehovah's face of His promises to His people and of His eternal purposes regarding them. And as

His cry it availed already then, being the cry of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world.

Wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem — The reference is not to Jehovah's mercies as such, which is His will to bless and His actually blessing His people always, but to that working of His mercy that resulted in the temple being built and Jerusalem delivered, rehabilitated and exalted. *Against which thou hast been angry* — With respect to His chosen people the anger of His love by which they were brought to repentance and driven into the arms of Christ. *These three score and ten years* — The seventy years of the Babylonian captivity. These years had been predicted by Jeremiah (25:12), "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon . . ." This period had expired about fourteen years prior to the date of this vision. Though the Lord had turned the captivity of His people, the condition of the remnant in Jerusalem was still hopeless from a human standpoint (see above).

13. *And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with words good and comfortable.*

And Jehovah answered — Jehovah addressed His answer not to the questioner, the angel of Jehovah, but to the interpreting angel, the constant companion of the prophet. But why should Jehovah ignore the angel of Jehovah in replying to His question? According to some, the angel of Jehovah had no need of the comfort of the answer. But being afflicted in all the afflictions of His people, he did have need of the comfort of the answer to His question as well as they. May it not be, therefore, that the fact that Jehovah passes by the angel of Jehovah in replying to His question must be taken as an indication of the identification of the two — Jehovah and the angel of Jehovah — also here, so that the speaker is again the angel of Jehovah here, too, designated by the name Jehovah, which, as was said, is proper, seeing that He is the second person in the Godhead. Through Him in His office of mediator of God and of man the triune Jehovah answers as addressing His reply to the interpreting angel. *Words good and comfortable* — The prophet's characterization of the answer. For it was the Gospel of Christ and of God, the glad promises of salvation by which Jehovah, its author and true preacher, lifted up the drooping spirits of His afflicted and despondent people and made them to shout with joy. And so a word good and comfortable, literally consolation. The prophet could say that as he, himself, tasted its goodness and experienced its power to comfort.

14. *So the angel that talked with me said unto me, Cry thou saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.*

The angel that talked with me — Is the angel that talked with the prophet the angel of Jehovah? This is rather difficult to determine. What is in favor of identifying the two are the following: 1) The interpreting angel explained the visions to the prophet so that he had spiritual understanding of them and believed and was comforted. 2) The interpret-

ing angel explained the visions and thus seemed to be gifted with an insight into the meaning of the Word of God to which no mere human could attain unless instructed by Him. 3) Though the preceding verse states that Jehovah answered, it is the angel that talked with the prophet that did the answering. 4) It was the angel that talked with the prophet, the interpreting angel, that commanded the prophet to cry — cry the answer — and the prophet did so as moved and inspired by that command of the interpreting angel. All this would seem clearly to indicate that the angel that talked with the prophet was the angel of Jehovah.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. The Scriptures ascribe to Jehovah jealousy. As jealousy is adopted from marriage, it means that the relation that obtains between Jehovah and Israel is that of spiritual marriage. Jehovah's jealousy then is His zeal for Israel as His spouse, — a zeal that rises from His love of His people. In His jealousy for His people as their husband He insists that they love and serve Him alone in rejection of all other gods. His jealousy burns, therefore, when His people become unfaithful to Him as His spouse and also when, as a result of His having sold His people into the hands of their enemies in punishment of their adulteries, they find themselves under the dominion of strange masters that, as activated by hatred and malice, oppress and afflict them in the attempt to destroy them from the face of the earth.

Jerusalem — The church as the capital of Christ's kingdom but in the first instance the earthly Jerusalem of our prophet's day. *Zion* — Jerusalem and Zion were identical. Despite all her sins and backslidings Jerusalem is Jehovah's beloved spouse by virtue of His having chosen her in Christ. Hence, His great jealousy for Jerusalem and Zion and for the cities of Judah.

15, *And with great anger I am angry with the heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little angry, and they helped for evil.*

And with great anger I was angry with the heathen — A participial construction expressing the idea that Jehovah's anger with the heathen was permanent, an enduring fire that burned with steady flame and with fierce and undiminished heat. Here the heathen, therefore, are the reprobated heathen. Implied is the thought that in due time Jehovah, without fail, would also reveal His anger over the heathen. *That are at ease* — Though Jehovah was angry with the heathen, they were tranquil, in a state of carnal security, confident in their power and prosperity. *For I was but a little angry* — Jehovah was but a little angry with His people. Indicated is not the degree but the duration of Jehovah's anger regarding Jerusalem. It had lasted but a little while comparatively speaking. The reference is in the first instance to the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity of Judah into which the church had been led by Jehovah. *They had helped* — The heathen had helped not certainly as co-laborers with Jehovah but as the rods of His anger. Through

the heathen as His organs, that He had prepared for Himself and raised up for that very hour, "He had swallowed up all the inhabitants of Jacob . . . thrown down the stronghold of Judah . . . cut off the horn of Israel . . . swallowed up Israel" (quotations from Jeremiah 2). All was Jehovah's work and at once the act of the heathen as His agents. So, in this sense they had helped. *They had helped for evil* — So the text here reads literally. *For evil* — as the act of the heathen it was evil work in every point of view. What had moved the heathen was hatred of Israel and carnal ambition. Their design was to destroy the church from the face of the earth (Ps. 74:8). Though but rods of Jehovah's anger, they gave Him not the glory but boasted in their own wisdom and power (Isa. 10:13), and delighted in the afflictions and sorrows of God's captive people. Therefore Jehovah was angry with the heathen with a great anger.

16. *Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies, my house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.*

Therefore — the thought is that, because of His jealousy for Jerusalem, He was returned to her with mercies and implying that He would surely punish the heathen for their ill-treatment of His people. The mercies wherewith Jehovah was returned to Jerusalem can be named. He had returned the captivity of His people. They were back again in God's own city. His house was in process of being built. But this was not all. *My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord* — Building operations would continue uninterrupted until His house was completed. And with His house completed, He would again be dwelling in their midst. Amazing mercy. *And a line will be stretched forth upon Jerusalem* — The measuring line that was to be used in marking off the space upon which the city was to stand and implying that the city was to be built according to a fixed plan (2:2; Jer. 31:39). So, not only His house but also the city was to be rebuilt.

17. *Cry yet saying, For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, my cities shall yet overflow with good; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.*

Cry yet — Still other mercies to be announced. *My cities* — The cities of Judah that were scattered throughout the land of Jehovah and that were in a state just as sad as that of Jerusalem. *Shall yet overflow with good* — So reads the text literally. Everywhere in the land is distress, but when Jehovah has returned to His holy temple the whole land and every place in it shall be filled to overflowing with goodnesses all the fountains of which are in Him, Jehovah. This is the idea. *And Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion* — Doing so by returning to Jerusalem with these His mercies. *And shall yet choose Jerusalem* — As His abode that she might be to the praise of His grace. *Yet* — that is, despite the fact that from a human standpoint Jerusalem's condition

(Continued on page 163)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

6.

We will now begin our expository observations on the next section of the first Chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, which we have been considering.

We call attention to the verses 18-25.

Before we quote this passage in part we feel we ought to make a few introductory observations concerning this part of Chapter 1, the verses 18-25. We shall attend to the following:

We ought to notice that Paul is here not beginning with a new subject in the proper sense of the word. What Paul is here doing is *continuing* with his polemic against schism and party-strife in the church of God at Corinth. Fact is, that he will continue with this through chapter 4.

It has been said that we here deal with the doctrinal part of Paul's letter. With this observation we can agree, provided that we do not understand this to be pure and simple systematic dogmatics! This latter we surely do not have here. We do have here *sound doctrine*. But we have doctrine here as it makes an appeal to the reality of the power of the Word of the Cross in the sanctified conscience of the church of the living God at Corinth, so that they may see the ludicrous incongruity of the party-strife and schism in which they are engaged.

Paul so employs the Word of God here, that with the Sword of the Spirit he deals the death-blow to all party-strife in the church at all times. He leads the church at Corinth in a masterful way to higher and holier ground!

He points away from man-made divisions to the God-made division between the seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent, that is, between "those perishing" and between "*us*, who are being saved," as this historically is manifested in the *attitude* of the former toward the Word of the Cross, and in the renewed lives of "*us* who are being saved". Thus the church is called to the sobering and wonderful reality of what she has become in Christ, and of what she experiences under the preaching of the Word of the Cross.

Here Paul cuts at the very heart of the real issue of life under the preaching of the Cross and, at once, cuts out the festering boil of party-strife, which is, sad to say, present in this church of God. He, indeed touches upon the quintessence of the issue!

Well may we take the shoes from off our feet and listen attentively to this masterful refutation of such sinful effrontery in God's church!

Writes Paul in verse 18 "*For the Word of the Cross is, indeed, to those who are perishing foolishness, but unto us, who are being saved, it is the power of God.*"

In this verse it becomes evident that the two groups are

by no means viewed as equals in their relationship to the Word of the Cross. Both come under the *preaching* of the same, but they are by no means in the same state and condition. The one is in a constant state and condition of "perishing," of being inwardly and outwardly destroyed in body and soul, while the other is in the state and condition of being lifted up in body and soul out of the deepest death and hell and raised to the "glory which shall be ours." (Cf. 2:7b)

The group that "are perishing" are in this state of doom *while* they hear the Word of the Cross proclaimed.

While the only Word of hope and salvation in Christ is preached, the Word that speaks of the Son of God having become a "curse" for all those who believe in him, whether Jew or Greek, they perish under the curse and the wrath of almighty God, which destroys them in their life and thinking, their striving and evil aspirations, casting them down from their imaginary heights and their proud and haughty attitude toward the Word of the Cross, which is to them "foolishness."

Such the Word of the Cross is "indeed" (*men in greek*) to those perishing.

Now Paul contrasts with these who thus perish "*us*, who are being saved." Paul here includes himself with the church which is sanctified in Christ and which will be presented blameless in that day. He places himself here not as an alleged leader in the church, but he here places himself in the midst of the saints, a poor sinner, the chief of sinners, being saved by grace. Here Paul *implicitly* say "follow my example," without becoming involved in the brawl over his own person as a preacher. He here walks in the wisdom of the just which is always justified in the children of wisdom!

Paul a great preacher, saved by grace!

Here is godliness in evidence that protects them from the wiles of the Devil.

Well may every preacher see this fine touch of Paul in his masterful polemic, which breathes childlike godliness on the part of this preacher. Here the party-strife is stopped in its tracks, by giving leadership, which is of such a nature, that there is only *one party*. It is: *us* who are being saved! It is the party of the living God!

And what does not belong to this party, this church of the living God, is the party of the Prince of this world, which is *perishing*.

A *schism* between the twofold seeds.

It is the only "schism" which has the sanction from God, being "established" by the Lord Himself!

The party-strife in Corinth was such that the "Word of the Cross" would be made "empty" of its power to save, not being proclaimed purely, and would lose its power of excluding the unbelievers, and of actually bringing the children into the everlasting Kingdom of glory. And such was the temptation of Satan.

In the stead of the "Word of the wisdom of God of the Cross" would come the would-be substitution of the "wisdom of words"!

Not for one minute does Paul, however, fall into this error of substituting the "*wisdom of words*" for the "*Word of wisdom*." He will maintain the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament as the rule and standard whereby the hearts of unbelievers must be judged in their attitude toward the Word of the Cross.

To demonstrate the *inner nature* of this group that "are perishing," and to whom the Word of the Cross is folly, Paul quotes certain passages of the Old Testament Scriptures. These Scriptures are the last word with Paul, and Paul maintains it as the end of all argument also for the Corinthian believers.

Writes Paul, quoting Isaiah 29:14; Job. 12:17; Isaiah 19:12; 33:13, in verses 19 and 20 as follows: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. Where is the wise? where is the Scribe? where is the disputer of this world."

The passage from Isaiah 29:14 refers particularly to those under the Old Testament Dispensation, who speak highly of God with their lips, but whose heart is far from the Lord (Matt. 15:8, 9) and who institute the commandments of men in the stead of living Word of God. In their not bowing before the Word of God, but rather before their own word, their *own* conscience, it becomes evident that it is no service of the living God, but it is but lip service that they pay to God. They lay down their own conditions for joy, while not knowing that the Word of the Cross is the central truth in the Scriptures.

Hence, to them the Scriptures are a closed book. The words of the vision of God had become unto them as a book that is sealed, which one delivers to one that is learned, saying, Read this I pray thee, and he saith, I cannot for it is sealed. Or the book is delivered to one that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith I am not learned. Isaiah 29:11, 12.

Thus it was with the Jews in Jesus day when they spoke with him. He told them that Moses, in all of his writings, wrote of Him, the Christ, as He now stands in their midst. He is the Christ to be crucified. And with this Word of the Cross in their hands they cannot read its content, demand a sign of Jesus. And to them is given no other sign than that of Jonas the Prophet; they receive the sign of the death and resurrection of Christ, the Word of the Cross. But this is foolishness to them. God thus destroys their wisdom, by making the Stone rejected of the builders the chief of the Corner.

Where are now these Scribes? What has become of them? Did God not destroy them in their very heart and mind so that, they, under the hammers blows of Peter's preaching of this Word of the Cross, in cringing fear say:

Stop preaching this Word to us; you will bring the blood of this man upon us? (Acts 5:28)

Where is the disputer of the Scriptures. He misunderstood the entire Bible since it was foolishness to them. They may say when you speak to them of the Word of the Cross being a power unto salvation, and that without man fulfilling conditions "I cannot see it that way," but that is no argument, it is merely an admission of "inability"! And God in heaven makes them foolish.

Oh the Jew with his proud pretense of possessing the truth may "ask," that is, "demand" a sign but the sign he gets is one in which it is clearly demonstrated that in the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom did not know God. And God's wisdom sets all this worldly wisdom at nought by saving "those believing" (not "everyone, if they believe") by the foolishness of preaching.

The greek may "seek for wisdom," but he only does this because he first closes his eyes to the true "wisdom of the Cross," and he too in all his search for wisdom is made foolish by God; he goes down under the wrath of almighty God.

Where is the Scribe? Where is the seeking Greek? Has "common grace" in him not been made foolish, and all the "civil" righteousness he practiced in this "wisdom of the world," since it is no *righteousness* in civil affairs, but rather a *keeping down* of the truth in unrighteousness.

Has God not made also the "common grace" in the wisdom of the world foolishness? And does God not do this with all attempts to join "Athens" and "Jerusalem"?

Did Isaiah write vainly "The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the counselor of the wisest counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish . . . Where then are the wise-men? And let them tell thee now!"

If such is the case with all "*wisdom of words*," well may our only concern be with the Word of the wisdom of God in the Cross, which is to *us* the power of God — whether it be Paul, or Apollos or Peter.

And let him, therefore, that glorieth glory in the Cross.

And let him that preacheth preach nought else but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

It is the only foundation besides which there is none other.

G. L.

Knowledge of sins still loved, beckons perdition; knowledge of sins hated arouses battlelust; knowledge of sins atoned, assures eternal and perfect peace. H. H. K.

The storehouse of God's infinite love would forever remain locked, if man's desire for it must serve as a key to open it. H. H. K.

IN HIS FEAR

The Sabbath In His Fear

Saturday or Sunday?

That is not the problem we propose to discuss at this time.

However, it must be conceded that even that matter must be settled in His Fear. We may not arbitrarily chose the one day or the other for our Sabbath worship. It is not a matter of individual choice. It is not for us to decide which day we would like to set aside for our Sabbath worship. It is a matter of determining in His Fear what day God has chosen for us to observe.

All things must be done in His fear.

Therefore the day which we set aside for Sabbath worship also must be chosen in the fear of the Lord.

That means, of course, that we let Him speak. That we humble ourselves before Him and turn to His Word to learn what He has to say concerning this matter. That is the fear of the Lord. It never behaves any other way than to bow before Him and to be willing to be taught by Him.

Then there can be no question either as to the day that He has designated for us to observe. In His fear we will observe the first day of the week and no longer hold on to the seventh day to which the Jewish race that crucified Christ and still continues to deny His resurrection in unbelief clings. The fear of the Lord is faith in Him. And faith takes hold of all the truth in Christ and therefore observes the first day of the week.

In His fear we do not discount the importance of His resurrection on the first day of the week. In His fear we dare not say that this has no significance for the New Testament Church.

In His fear we do not set aside as unimportant the fact that the inspired writers of Holy Writ after His resurrection call that first day of the week *the Lord's Day*. Nor do we overlook the fact that the New Testament church did meet on that first day of the week, Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 16:2. And in His fear we cannot overlook the fact that there is here in the wisdom of the Lord a development of the truth of His covenant in this *new* thing as it points to a new and eternal Sabbath which is commemorative not simply of His glorious work of creation but of that work of surpassing beauty and glory: The work of salvation and re-creation in Christ.

The New Testament Church stands before the cross, the open grave and on the mount of Ascension. And in His fear it worships Him for the wonder of all this work for which God set aside the day when He arose from the dead. With the Psalmist it sings a *new* song to Jehovah for the wonders He has wrought. And to do so it gathers on this new day

that speaks of His glorious victory over sin and death. It observes the Lord's Day to observe the Sabbath; the rest that remaineth for the children of God. The New Testament Church rejoicing in the salvation of which that first day of the week testifies — for as Paul writes: "He was raised for our justification"—and does not want to remain at Mt. Sinai. But in His fear, heeding the instruction of the Lord Himself, the Church rejoices in the beauty and glory of Mt. Zion, the mount unto which Christ has now ascended.

But observing the Sabbath in His fear is not simply a matter of designating a day wherein we ought to worship Him. It means that we do worship Him on that day in a special way and even to a special degree.

We stand, today, greatly in danger of being a people that rapidly is coming to the point where we will have to confess that there are but nine commandments and that one has fallen away! We will frown upon the breaking of these nine and smile at the old-fashioned idea of observing or even thinking of observing the Sabbath, even of observing it on the first day of the week.

Go back to Sinai?

Never!

That, as we have already suggested is not in His fear.

But neither must we behave as though God has erased for the New Testament Church what He wrote for the Old Testament Church. We may not with cement and mortar and perhaps twentieth century plastics and manufacturing methods try to fill in that which God had engraven into the two tables of stone and so try to make for man today a little more freedom to sin.

The inner principle of the law is love to God.

That inner principle of love to God is expressed in the fourth commandment as well as in the other nine.

And God does not excuse the New Testament Church of that obligation to love Him and to show that love in one phase of its life. From Mt. Sinai He spoke and instructed the Church in her calling to love Him in His works as well as in His name, in His revelation and in His divinity. He has not excused the New Testament Church of this obligation.

He has glorified it. He has enriched it.

He has performed a new, a more glorious, a more wonderful work.

And He has set aside a new day of the week to observe properly this wonderful, new work.

But He has not filled up the bold lines of that commandment which He with His own finger had engraven into the tables of stone. And when He cut out of the rock and spelled in words His unchangeable will concerning His works, no man can fill up those grooves, cut into the rock of the two tables and make this will of God silent and of none effect for man!

And He carved into solid rock the letters that declared His unchangeable will exactly because He would have the Church learn that as the granite rock abides thru all time till He will cause the very elements to burn with a fervent heat, so through all time this will of His stands. It stands not simply until Christ comes in the flesh. It stands after His resurrection and exaltation. He Himself testifies to us that He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. Not one jot — the smallest letter of the alphabet — nor one tittle — the little part of a letter — will pass away till all be fulfilled.

And listen! Jesus adds in Matthew 5:19, "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom; but whosoever shall teach and do them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Understand that Christ is speaking of the kingdom of heaven and not the kingdom of Israel. He is speaking unto and of the New Testament Church.

What is more, we surely are agreed, are we not, that in the New Creation when God shall be all in all, it shall be one endless day of rest? The rest that remaineth for the people of God remaineth! And it is not interrupted by six days of secular work.

To be sure, in the New Jerusalem there will no longer be time as we now know it. We will not speak of years, months, weeks, days, hours and minutes. Nevertheless, being creatures we will always be, even in everlasting glory, subject to time and space. There will be a succession of moments in the everlasting life that God has prepared for us. In fact that very word "everlasting" indicates a succession of moments that never ceases. But each moment of conscious service and praise of God shall be followed by another moment of conscious praise and service unto Him. He will be all in all our thoughts. He will be all in all our desires. He will be all in all our lives.

That rest shall neither be idleness nor the seeking of that which the flesh craves of the pleasures and treasures of this world. Nor will the worship of God in that everlasting day of rest weary us and make a rest of idleness look good to us or even necessary.

Did you ever hear or read in the Scriptures of an angel sleeping before God's face? Adam in the state of perfection in Paradise, created with a body of flesh and blood and created out of the dust of the earth was so made that apart from sin he needed sleep. The angels as heavenly, spiritual beings are ceaselessly busy before God's face in adoring and extolling Him for His mighty works and majesty. To that we shall also attain. There is no night there.

Seeing these things shall be, according to Holy Writ, how dare we take the stand that in the period of time between the coming of Christ in the flesh and between His coming again in power and glory at the end of time there is a period when the Fourth Commandment is erased from the law

to be put back into the law again when time shall be no more. Such is not the case.

The will of God is as unchangeable as God is.

Jesus Himself made plain that such was not the case. He kept the Sabbath and was seen in the synagogue.

He did not in anyway by any of His deeds indicate that now this commandment was to be erased from the Decalogue. Never did He in any way indicate that it was now about to be outmoded.

He healed on the Sabbath

He told the sick to take up their beds and walk to their homes with them.

He did many good things upon the Sabbath.

He declared that the Sabbath was made for man and not men for the Sabbath.

But that very fact that it was made for man indicates that it must still be observed today.

He said that in the New Testament dispensation!

It was made not simply for man in the Old Testament times. It was also made for the New Testament Church. And it was made especially for the redeemed and glorified man in the New Creation.

And Christ observed it.

He observed it even in His resurrection from the dead. And upon it He brought to His Church the joy of victory over sin and death, the joy of a wonderful work of God. He brought the joy of salvation of deliverance according to body as well as to soul from out of sin and death!

In His fear we do not ignore all this. But especially in all this we stand in awe before Him. With true reverence and humility we take note of all this wonderful work because in His fear we believe it is all accomplished for us personally.

In His fear, then, we do not eagerly look forward to a week-end which we can turn into a holiday for our flesh. In His fear we look with eager expectation for the Sabbath as an holy day.

It is for us an holy day not an holiday!

And there is abundant room for us to consider further: The Sabbath in His Fear.

Come let us sing:

"With joy and gladness in my soul
I hear the call to prayer;
Let us go up to God's own house
And bow before Him there.

J. A. H.

Humility is fruit of that grace whereby we unflinchingly apply the same rigid standards to our own lives, as those by which we so eagerly judge others by nature. HHK

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE SECOND PERIOD (300-750 A.D.)

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

THE PAPACY (by Philip Schaff).

(Continued)

Augustine (died in the year 430), the greatest theological authority of the Latin church, at first referred the words, "On this rock I will build my church," to the person of Peter, but afterward expressly retracted this interpretation, and considered the *petra* (rock, H.V.) to be Christ, on the ground of a distinction between *petra* (upon this rock) and Petrus (thou art Peter); a distinction which Jerome also makes, though with the intimation that it is not properly applicable to the Hebrew and Syriac Cephas. "I have somewhere said of St. Peter"—thus Augustine corrects himself in his *Retractions* at the close of his life—"that the church is built upon him as the rock; a thought which is sung by many in the verses of St. Ambrose:

'Hoc ipsa petra ecclesiae
canente, culpam diluit.'

(The Rock of the church himself

In the cock-crowing atones his guilt).

But I know that I have since frequently said, that the word of the Lord, "Thou art Petrus, and on this *petra* I will build my church," must be understood of him, whom Peter confessed as Son of the living God; and Peter, so named after this rock, represents the person of the church, which is founded on this rock and has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For it was not said to him: 'Thou art a rock' (*Petra*), but, 'Thou art Peter' (Petrus); and the rock was Christ, through confession of whom Simon received the name of Peter. Yet the reader may decide which of the two interpretations is the more probable." In the same strain he says, in another place: "Peter, in virtue of the primacy of his apostolate, stands, by a figurative generalization, for the church When it said to him, 'I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' etc., he represented the whole church, which in this world is assailed by various temptations, as if by floods and storms, yet does not fall, because it is founded upon a rock, from which Peter received his name. For the rock is not so named from Peter, but Peter from the rock, even as Christ is not so called after the Christian, but the Christian after Christ. For the reason why the Lord says, 'On this rock I will build my church,' is that Peter had said: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' On this rock, which thou hast confessed, says he, I will build my church. For Christ was

the rock upon which also Peter himself was built; for other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Thus the church, which is built upon Christ, has received from him, in the person of Peter, the keys of heaven; that is, the power of binding and loosing sins." This Augustinian interpretation of *petra* has since been revived by some Protestant theologians in the cause of anti-Romanism. Augustine, it is true, unquestionably understood by the church the visible Catholic church, descended from the apostles, especially from Peter, through the succession of bishops; and according to the usage of his time he called the Roman church by eminence the *sedes apostolica*. But on the other hand, like Cyprian and Jerome, he lays stress upon the essential unity of the episcopate, and insists that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were committed not to a single man, but to the whole church, which Peter was only set to represent. With this view agrees the independent position of the North African church in the time of Augustine toward Rome, as we have already observed it in the case of the appeal of Apiarus, and as it appears in the Pelagian controversy, of which Augustine was the leader. This father, therefore, can at all events be cited only as a witness to the limited authority of the Roman chair. And it should also, in justice, be observed, that in his numerous writings he very rarely speaks of that authority at all, and then for the most part incidentally; showing that he attached far less importance to this matter than the Roman divines.

The later Latin fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries prefer the reference of the *petra* to Peter and his confession, and transfer his prerogatives to the Roman bishops as his successors, but produce no new arguments. Among them we mention MAXIMUS of Turin (About 450), who, however, like Ambrose, places Paul on a level with Peter; then ORISIUS, and several popes; above all LEO, of whom we shall speak more fully in the following section.

2. As to the Greek fathers: EUSEBIUS, CYRIL of Jerusalem, BASIL, the two GREGORIES, EPHRAIM, SYRUS, ASTERIUS, CYRIL of Alexandria, CHRYSOSTOM, and THEODORET refer the *petra* now to the confession, now to the person, of Peter; sometimes to both. They speak of this apostle uniformly in very lofty terms, at times in rhetorical extravagance, calling him the "coryphaeus of the choir of apostles," the "prince of the apostles," the "tongue of the apostles," the "bearer of the keys," the "keeper of the kingdom of heaven," the "pillar," the "rock," the "firm foundation of the church." But, in the first place, they understand by all this simply an honorary primacy of Peter, to whom that power was but first committed, which the Lord afterward conferred on all the apostles alike; and, in the second place, they by no means favor an *exclusive* transfer of this prerogative to the bishop of Rome, but claim it also for the bishops of Antioch, where Peter, according to Gal. II, sojourned a long time, and where, according to tradition, he was bishop, and appointed a successor.

So CHRYSOSTOM, for instance, calls Ignatius of Antioch a "successor of Peter, on whom, after Peter, the government of the church devolved," and in another place says still more distinctly: "Since I have named Peter, I am reminded of another Peter (Flavian, bishop of Antioch), our common father and teacher, who has inherited as well the virtues as the chair of Peter. Yea, for this is the privilege of this city of ours (Antioch), to have first had the coryphaeus (the chorus-leader in the ancient Greek drama; hence, in modern usage, the leader of a chorus; any leader — H.V.) of the apostles for its teacher. For it was proper that the city, where the Christian name originated, should receive the first of the apostles for its pastor. But after we had him for our teacher, we did not retain him, but transferred him to imperial Rome."

THEODORET also, who, like Chrysostom, proceeded from the Antichian school, says of the "great city of Antioch," that it has the "throne of Peter." In a letter to Pope Leo he speaks, it is true, in very extravagant terms of Peter and his successors at Rome, in whom all the conditions, external and internal, of the highest eminence and control in the church are combined. But in the same epistle he remarks, that the "thrice blessed and divine double star of Peter and Paul rose in the East and shed its rays in every direction;" in connection with which it must be remembered that he was at that time seeking protection in Leo against the Eutychian robber-council of Ephesus (449), which had unjustly deposed both himself and Flavian of Constantinople.

His bitter antagonist also, the arrogant and overbearing Cyril of Alexandria, descended some years before, in his battle against Nestorius, to unworthy flattery, and called Pope Coelestine "the archbishop of the whole (Roman) world." The same prelates, under other circumstances, repelled with proud indignation the encroachments of Rome on their jurisdiction.

THE DECREES OF COUNCILS ON THE PAPAL AUTHORITY.

Much more important than the opinions of individual fathers are the formal decrees of the councils.

First mention here belongs to the council of SARDICA in Illyria (now Sofia in Bulgaria) in 343, during the Arian controversy. This council is the most favorable of all to the Roman claims. In the interest of the deposed Athanasius and of the Nicene orthodoxy it decreed:

(1) That a deposed bishop, who feels he has a good cause, may apply, out of reverence to the memory of the apostle Peter, to the Roman bishop Julius, and shall leave it with him to either ratify the deposition or to summon a new council.

(2) That the vacant bishopric shall not be filled till the decision of Rome be received.

(3) That the Roman bishop, in such a case of appeal,

may, according to his best judgment, either institute a new trial by the bishops of an neighboring province, or send delegates to the spot with full power to decide the matter with the bishops.

Thus was plainly committed to the Roman bishops an appellate and revisory jurisdiction in the case of a condemned or deposed bishop even of the East. But in the first place this authority is not here acknowledged as a right already existing in practice. It is conferred as a new power, and that merely as an honorary right, and as pertaining only to the bishop Julius in person. Otherwise, either this bishop would not be expressly named, or his successors would be named with him. Furthermore, the canons limit the appeal to the case of a bishop deposed by his comprovincials, and say nothing of other cases. Finally, the council of Sardica was not a general council, but only a local synod of the West, and could therefore establish no law for the whole church. For the Eastern bishops withdrew at the very beginning, and held an opposition council in the neighboring town of Philippopolis; and the city of Sardica, too, with the praefecture of Illyricum, at that time belonged to the Western empire and the Roman patriarchate: it was not detached from them till 379. The council was intended, indeed, to be ecumenical; but it consisted at first of only a hundred and seventy bishops, and after the succession of the seventy-six orientals, it had only ninety-four; and even by the two hundred signatures of absent bishops, mostly Egyptian, to whom the acts were sent for their approval, the East, and even the Latin Africa, with its three hundred bishoprics, were very feebly represented. It was not sanctioned by the emperor Constantius, and has by no subsequent authority been declared ecumenical. Accordingly its decrees soon fell into oblivion, and in the further course of the Arian controversy, and even throughout the Nestorian, where the bishops of Alexandria, and not those of Rome, were evidently at the head of the orthodox sentiment, they were utterly unnoticed. The general councils of 381, 451, and 680 know nothing of such a supreme appellate tribunal, but unanimously enacted, that all ecclesiastical matters, without exception, should first be decided in the provincial councils, with the right of appeal — not to the bishop of Rome, but to the patriarch of the proper diocese. Rome alone did not forget the Sardican decrees, but built on this single precedent a universal right. Pope Zosimus, in the case of the deposed presbyter Apiarius of Sicca (A.D. 417-318), made the significant mistake of taking the Sardican decrees for Nicene, and thus giving them greater weight than they really possessed; but he was referred by the Africans to the genuine text of the Nicene canon. The later popes, however, transcended the Sardican decrees, withdrawing from the provincial council, according to the pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, the right of deposing a bishop, which had been allowed by Sardica, and vesting it, as a *causa major*, exclusively in themselves.

H.V.

SHOULD ARTICLE 31 BE REVISED AND/OR CLARIFIED?

As must be obvious to the reader, the above caption refers to the well-known and much discussed article 31 of our church order. Therefore the question whether this particular article should be revised naturally falls under the much broader question of the revision of the entire church order. This matter was before our synod in 1950, occasioned by a letter addressed to our synod by the synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, in which cooperation was sought in the study of a possible revision of the church order, and grounds were adduced for the necessity of such a proposed study. At that time our synod appointed a committee, consisting of the Revs. H. Hoeksema, G. M. Ophoff and G. Vos to make a "preliminary study of the church order revision." (See Acts of Synod, 1950, pages 64 to 70.) This work is still in progress, although a short time ago, entirely independent from any other churches, the committee of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Synodical) presented a proposed change to their synod. As far as I know, this proposed revision is still under discussion there.

But apart from the entire question, we may well place ourselves before the question whether this particular article, namely, article 31, should be revised and/or clarified. That is, is the article as it now appears in our church order ambiguous, so that the interpretation is not entirely obvious from the text, and the possibility of more than one interpretation actually exists?

This article states: *"If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or the articles of the church order, as long as they have not been changed by a general synod."*

The main thrust of the article is clear. Plainly, the subject that is being treated is the matter of *appeal*. The article states:

1. That every person in the church has the right of appeal.

2. That he must appeal from a minor to a major assembly. If he is aggrieved by the action of a consistory, he can appeal to classis. And if he complains that he is wronged by the classis, he can appeal to synod.

3. The decision reached by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding. That decision is final, closes the case. It shall also be considered binding for all persons concerned, that is, also for the minority in the assembly, as well as for the appellant.

It may be well to add at this point that this article proceeds from the assumption that the *advice* of a major assembly is not advice in the sense that all parties concerned can take it or leave it, as fancy may dictate. The advice

of the major assemblies does imply a certain power or jurisdiction of the major assembly over the minor assembly. This is entirely in harmony with article 36, which speaks of the jurisdiction of the major assemblies, as well as with other articles in our church order. Appeal is generally made to such passages of Scripture as Mathh. 18:20, Acts 15:22-29.

4. There is, nevertheless, one exception to the statement, "whatever may be agreed upon by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding." The article adds, "unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order."

The difficulty obviously arises in connection with this last statement. At this point three questions are raised:

1. To whom must it be proved that the decision is in conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order? Must this be proved to the ecclesiastical assemblies? Or to the person himself, so that it is his sincere and considered conviction that for conscience sake he can not agree?

2. What is the import of this "unless." Does this mean that, in case the appellant does not agree with the decision, the case is not closed nor is the decision binding upon him? Or does the "unless" imply an "until?" Is this the meaning: The case is not settled, but the decision stands until it is reversed by a major assembly?

3. And that raises a third, related question: Is the individual obligated to submit to the decision while he is appealing his case, or not?

A few quotations from various writers on this subject will show these questions have been raised and variously answered.

Prof. H. Bouwman writes in his „Gereformeerde Kerkrecht" under the heading „Bindende Kracht der Meerdere Vergaderingen," (The Binding Power of the Major Assemblies) pages 47-93, the following: "Although in general it is true that it is necessary to submit to the major gathering, this submission is not possible when a person deems it proven for himself that the Word of God prohibits him from carrying out the decision. It lies in the nature of the case, as Voetius states, (Pol. Eccl. IV, 122, 123) that the church or the person appealing must show that the decision of the major assembly is not in harmony with Scripture. If the appellant convinces the assembly the difficulty is removed, but if he does not convince them, and the assembly to which he appeals, declares that it has not been proved to them that their decision is in conflict with the Word of God, and the appellant maintains his convictions, and is convinced that he cannot submit, and the synod insists that its decisions be carried out, then a conflict is bound to arise . . .

"If, according to the judgment of a certain church, a major assembly reaches beyond her jurisdiction and her decisions are found to be in conflict with the Word of God, and this major assembly demands that her decisions be carried out; then such a church will be compelled, Voetius states, rather to withdraw from the communion of churches

than to act contrary to Scripture and conscience. On the contrary, however, when it becomes evident that a church claims to be wronged only to escape the demand of the Scriptures, the confessions, and the church order, the major assembly is duty bound to exercise discipline. If the congregation takes a stand with the consistory, then the ecclesiastical fellowship is broken, but if objection is raised in the congregation against the consistory, and the aid of the major assembly is called in, the assembly must help these appellants, and maintain their right overagainst the departing consistory."

According to this rather lengthy quotation, the proof must be rendered, not to the individual conscience, but to the the major assembly. Moreover, the matter shall be considered binding until it is reversed by a major assembly. And finally, the appellant shall in all cases submit. There is only one possible exception, and that is, when it proves impossible for him to do so for conscience sake. In that case, it will be necessary for him to withdraw from the denomination.

Another authority in the Netherlands, Joh. Jansen, writes in his "Korte Verklaring," "Does this mean that the protestant must give proof to the major gathering and when he has convinced them with his arguments he may consider his task completed? Or does this mean, that we are bound to the decisions of the majority, unless a person regards a certain decision as proven *to himself* to be in conflict with the Word of God? The latter is the proper answer."

This particular writer maintains that we need consider a decision binding only when we agree with it. Moreover, the proof that it is in conflict with the Word of God or the church order must be rendered to himself. And the evident implication is, that in case he is convinced of this he need not submit, nor can it be demanded of him. The conscience is the last court of appeal. This is the view defended by the Liberated in the Netherlands, and also driven to an extreme by the Rev. Kok in the recent court trial in Grand Rapids.

There is one question that cannot be suppressed in this connection: If this were the intention of the composers of the church order, why didn't they say so? It would have been quite simple for them to write: "Unless a person is convinced before his own conscience that the decision is contrary to Scripture and the Church order. In that case he need not submit." That language would at least be free from all ambiguity.

Dr. J. Ridderbos writes in "Kerkscheuring," page 21, "The question is now: to whom it be proved? We say: of course, to the ecclesiastical assembly which must judge on this matter. Anyone who has any objection against a decision that has been made, must do so in an ecclesiastical manner, that is, he must present his objections to the proper ecclesiastical gathering. This assembly is obligated to give him a hearing, and to give him an opportunity to produce his evidence, that the decision is in conflict with Scripture or

the church order; and in case they cannot refute his arguments, they must retract their decision and declare it null and void. But as long as this has not taken place the appellant must submit to the decision, if he wishes to remain within the denomination."

The position of Dr. Ridderbos is quite evident: First, the decision shall be considered settled and binding until the time that it is proven to be in conflict with Scripture or the church order. Secondly, that the proof must be rendered to the major assemblies, not to the individual. And finally, that the appellant must submit as long as his appeal is pending. His only other alternative is to break with the denomination.

In the "Church Order Commentary" of the Revs. Van Dellen and Monsma, we find the following: "The question: To whom proved? Must the ecclesiastical assembly first declare that the unbiblical nature of the decision has been proven, before any one may withhold submission? Or may a church or an individual withhold submission when that church or individual is fully convinced that the conclusion reached is unbiblical, even before the assembly has reversed its conclusion? The latter by all means. The church cannot bind the conscience. The Bible only, as God's infallible and authoritative Word, can do this. If one is convinced that the Churches bid him contrary to Scripture, he must follow what he believes to be Scripture. He should try to prove this to the assemblies. If he fails the churches should try to bear with him. If not, he must get out."

These writers take the position with Joh. Jansen, that the matter is not binding upon the individual as long as he objects on the basis of Scripture and the church order. Moreover, the proof must be to his own conscience. Nor need he submit while his case is pending, but the churches must bear with him.

In that case, we cannot help but ask, first of all, whether the conscience of the churches should not be considered. If the churches are convinced that the decision is according to the Scriptures, can they bear with an individual who ignores that decision and refuses to submit to it? If the churches can bear with him, why cannot he bear with the churches? Or put it this way, can many individuals bear with one, while one cannot bear with the many? And is it not fully as important that one bear with the many, rather than that the many are forced to bear with one?

Or again we ask, what happens to the authority of Christ in His Church if these decisions can be completely ignored. Classis and synod are not an informal and unofficial convention. The various consistories send their delegates to classis with the credentials, signed by the consistory, which states, "We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in all the deliberations and transactions of classis regarding all matters legally coming before the meeting and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the conception of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as in harmony

with our church order." Can the decisions of those authorized by their consistories, and, in turn, authorized by the Classis, be completely ignored while the appeal is pending? Does that allow for law and order in the church of Christ? Or does this not tend toward anarchy?

Thirdly, we also face this question: Why should matters of doctrine require submission, while, other decisions of a major assembly may be ignored? The Formula Of Subscription declares: "And further, if at any time the consistory, classis or synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of an appeal, whenever we shall believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the consistory, the classis or the synod, *and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.*"

Here is a case where the office bearer promises to acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed. If he can do so in one matter, why not in others? And if he can do so in a weighty matter like doctrine, why can he not acquiesce, or submit, in other, often less weighty matters?

But from all these references one thing is obvious. There is no consensus of opinion in the Reformed church world in regard to this article. Nor has there been for decades. There is, therefore, abundant reason to plead for a revision of this article in our church order. Any committee engaged in studying a proposed revision must certainly take this article into consideration.

It is interesting to note, that the Reformed Church of the Netherlands (Synodical) has had the following proposed revision of this article before its assembly. First of all, that since other new articles were suggested to precede this one, article 31 should become article 35. Secondly, that the article should be revised to read:

"1. The decisions of the assemblies are always taken after a general discussion and as much as possible by unanimous vote. If entire agreement proves unattainable, the assembly shall submit to the sentiment of the majority. The decision of the assemblies have a binding character.

"2. Those who have objections to submit to the sentiment of the majority, because they deem them in conflict with the Word of God or with the articles of the church order, can make their appeal to the next broader gathering.

"3. In consideration of the differences in boundary between the various churches, in as far as not more than one particular synod is involved, the right of appeal to a broader gathering does not extend beyond the particular synod.

"4. Those who appeal to a broader gathering are duty bound also to consider the regulations established by the general synod in regard to form and time limit of the appeal.

"5. An assembly can, in case of appeal, postpone the carrying out of her decision."

Although this article is rather verbose, and has lost practically every semblance of the original, it contains elements worthy of closer consideration. Undoubtedly some of the elements could be relegated to a foot note, since they do not apply to all Reformed Churches. I have in mind particularly point 3, which speaks of a particular synod in distinction from a general synod. But this applies also to point 4.

For that matter, in many instances the articles of the church order could far better be clarified by a foot note than be subjected to a radical change. This has many arguments in its favor. And since the entire matter of church order revision is still under consideration, we could very well clarify article 31 to our own satisfaction by adding a supplement in our own manual of the church order.

And although this lies beyond the scope of our caption, the following foot note, or supplement, might well be considered:

"The appellant must present his appeal with proof to the next major assembly, and while his appeal is pending he must submit to the decision of the minor assembly. Whenever it is deemed feasible and advisable, an assembly may postpone carrying out her decision until the broadest gathering has decided on the matter."

C. H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

(Continued from page 154)

is hopeless and also despite the fact that the city deserved to be obliterated forever on account of her sins.

However, eventually Zerubbabel's temple was destroyed and Jerusalem overthrown by the heathen and permanently forsaken by Jehovah, when the city had filled up her measure of iniquity. So Jehovah had sovereignly willed. For Zerubbabel's temple was but a shadow the body of which is the church of the redeemed. It is, obviously, with this house of God, founded by Christ in righteousness by His suffering and death upon the cross and of which therefore He is also the builder, that our prophet in the final instance is occupied. This being true, his gospel is also and especially for us, God's afflicted people of this present hour. It is a gospel the reach of which extends to the end of time and beyond. And its glad message is, that, however impossible from a human standpoint, because of the machinations of the wicked, heathen in the text, who are always destroying God's temple, this temple, God's house, shall be built, the church shall be gathered, so that, when, at Christ's appearing, the church with Him appears in glory, not one place in the family of redeemed shall be vacant, not one stone in God's temple will be missing. And the whole earth, the new earth, and every place in it, will be filled to overflowing with the fulness of the blessings of Jehovah, dwelling bodily in Christ. And the heathen with whom He is angry always He shall judge. And the sure pledge that all shall come to pass is the fact that Zerubbabel's temple was indeed completed and the earthly Jerusalem rebuilt, as He had promised. G. M. O.

DECENCY and ORDER

II. The Elder's Task

The church order speaks of the duties of the elders in more than one place. In the sixteenth article it is stated that their task is, together with the minister of the Word, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order. To this is added in the twenty-third article that elders are called upon to exercise supervision or oversight over their fellow office-bearers, the ministers and deacons, and to properly engage in the work of family visitation. Then in the fifty-fifth article they are called "to ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings." Article sixty-four speaks of their exercising supervision over the administration of the sacraments. And, finally, in the eighty-first article, the matter of *censura-morum* is mentioned as a duty which the elders, together with the other office bearers, are called to exercise before each celebration of the Lord's Supper.

To all of this may still be added other duties which are not specifically mentioned in the church order but which are nonetheless expected of the elders. They must visit the sick and comfort those in distress. They must serve with counsel and advice when needed. They are required to periodically attend the classes for catechetical instruction in order that there also the office of supervision may be maintained. Ready they must always be to assist the minister in the labor of teaching and, when the occasion may arise, they are expected to lead the congregation in their worship services. In addition to this they have many other labors that pertain to the administrative affairs of the church. In short, the task of the elder is to see to it that everything in the church is kept in proper subjection to the Word of God and that thus all things are done in good order.

Dr. Bouwman, in his "Kerkrecht," writes concerning the office of the elder as follows: "Drie zaken behooren dus tot het werk der ouderlingen: a. de regeering der gemeente met de dienaren des Woords waarin opgesloten ligt het houden van opzicht en tucht over de gemeente; b. het houden van opzicht over hunne medeambtsdragers, de Dienaren des Woords en de Diakenen en c. het huisbezoek." Freely translated this is: Three things belong to the work of the elders: a. Ruling the congregation with the minister of the Word in which is implied the exercise of oversight and discipline in the congregation; b. Exercising oversight over their fellow office-bearers, the minister of the Word and the Deacons and, c. Family visitation.

A. Ruling the Congregation

Article 23 refers this part of the elder's task to what was said in the sixteenth article of the church order where we find reference to the work of exercising christian discipline and seeing to it that everything is done decently and in good

order. Further, this whole matter can be properly and extensively treated in connection with Articles 71 to 80 which deal with the subject of censure and ecclesiastical admonition. It is through these means that the church is ruled by the elders. Nevertheless, since this is a very important part of the office of the elders, it is necessary to briefly describe the nature of this work here.

Firstly, it may never be forgotten that the sole authority and power to rule in the church is Christ. He is the Head of the church. His Word is binding upon the office bearers and members of the church alike. Everything must be brought into subjection and obedience to His will or there is no order. And, the church is no democracy nor may she be governed by mob-rule. Such is contrary to every ordinance of God. The church has one-man rule. She is ruled by her Lord Jesus Christ and by Him alone. Christ has been appointed sole Head of the body, His church. His Word is law and all that refuses to be bound by that Word is disorder.

Furthermore, Christ has purchased His own with His blood and has delivered them from the guilt and dominion of sin in order that they might be to the praise of His grace and serve Him without fear in righteousness and holiness all the days of their life. (Luke 1:75) Such is the order of the church and to bring this to manifestation Christ has ordained elders therein whom He mandates to maintain this order. Theirs is the responsibility to see to it that the church becomes manifest in the world as the holy people of God.

In the second place, therefore, the elder must constantly be mindful of this limitation of his authority to rule the congregation. He may not "lord it over the church." He has no right to impose himself and his own personal ambitions upon the congregation. It may appear a bit contradictory but it is nevertheless true that the ruling office of the elder is at the same time the office of a servant. Such is also the case with virtually every public office among men. However, the difference is that in the latter men serve men but the elder is called to be the servant of Christ. His task is to maintain and enforce the rule of Christ in the church. He may be no men-pleaser but must rather expect the displeasure of many as he faithfully administers the will of his Lord. The elder that does this rules well. To do this implies, of course, that the elder is the administrator of the Word for it is through the Word that Christ speaks and rules. Needless to say, the elder must know the Word, thoroughly understand it and only then is he able to direct the congregation in the way of the truth in which they are called to walk. He must demand this of the church in such a way that she feels the fulfillment of the word of Christ which He spoke to the seventy when He said, "He that heareth you, heareth ME; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent me." (Luke 10:16)

Consequently, to the rule of the elder belongs also the

unpleasant task of punishing those members who are disobedient unto the gospel of Christ. Unpleasant is this task only to the flesh. When the elder views his calling, as he should in the light of the Word of God, he finds it neither difficult nor unpleasant to put out of the kingdom of God that which does not belong within and reveals itself as such. In this line of duty, too, the elder must understand that he has no authority to inflict physical punishment but bears only the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and, therefore, must administer a spiritual punishment upon the evil doer. In the final analysis, it is again Christ Himself Who does this through His office-bearers.

B. Oversight of Fellow Office-Bearers

Also this duty must be distinguished from "lording it over one another." There is a marked difference. The latter is forbidden and condemned by the church order while the exercise of proper oversight by the elder over the minister, deacons and fellow-elders is enjoined. The very nature of things in the church on earth makes this a very necessary duty and when properly performed will prove beneficial not only to the individuals concerned but to the entire congregation.

This can and should be done in more than one way. First of all, the elders control the election of the office-bearers. Upon them, therefore, rests the responsibility to keep the office from unworthy and unscrupulous men as much as possible. If this preventive work is seriously and rightly done, the actual performance of this duty will be simplified greatly although never entirely eliminated. It should be remembered that in former times the elders had to also contend with the interference of the state which often sought to impose a minister upon the congregation or place certain men of their preference in the other offices. And, of course, the state had no regard for spiritual qualifications. This difficulty we do not have today.

Secondly, the elders must have oversight over the life and doctrine of the minister. This is very essential for the welfare of the entire congregation. And it may be emphasized that this oversight must include both the life and doctrine. The minister is the servant of Christ, called and sent to feed the flock and must, therefore, also conduct himself as a worthy example. And his doctrine and teaching must be pure so that by it the church may be built up in the faith. The elders, to see to this, attend to the preaching of the Word but this is not the extent of their duty here. They must also watch over and see to it that the catechetical instruction is what it ought to be. They serve Christ and His church by seeing to it that the whole church, including young and old, is properly fed and spiritually nourished with nothing but the Bread of Life.

This work is very essential. There is often a tendency where all things are harmonious in a congregation to minimize this but this is not right. On the one hand it should not be overlooked that the best ministers are prone to err

in either doctrine or life. They are fallible and earthly creatures who by nature are also depraved. The treasure of the Lord they carry in earthen vessels. And, on the other hand, there is always the danger and possibility of wolves (false teachers) creeping into the church in the guise of sheep's clothing. They appear for a time to be shepherds but are not. For this the elders must constantly be on guard. Let them beware and watch the house of God with vigilance as faithful watchmen of Zion. Surely the warning of Ezekiel 34 is very much needed today. And, accordingly, the task of the real and faithful elder becomes more and more necessary.

Finally, we would ask, "What should be done if and when an elder finds one of his fellow office-bearers, minister, elder or deacon, to be unfaithful in life, doctrine, or in the discharge of his duty? If the matter is of a public character and of extreme seriousness, it is best that it be reported at once to the entire consistory for its consideration and decision. If not, however, let the elder approach his fellow office-bearer in a friendly way and admonish him concerning his error. He must guard against a haughty or self-exalting attitude which may be more damaging than saving. Let him walk with his brother patiently, in the spirit of true christian love, seeking sincerely to correct the fault that may exist. If all efforts then fail the matter will have to be brought to the attention of the consistory, either in connection with "censura morum" (Act. 81) or at an earlier time depending on the seriousness of the matter.

Next time, D. V., we will consider the elder's work of family visitation!

G. Vanden Berg

Quotable Quote:

"... if any one attack us with such an inquiry as this, why God has from the beginning predestinated some men to death, who, not yet being brought into existence; could not yet deserve the sentence of death, — we will reply by asking them, in return, what they suppose God owes to man, if he chooses to judge of him from his own nature. As we are all corrupted by sin, we must necessarily be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruelty, but in the most equitable estimation of justice. If all whom the Lord predestinates to death are in their natural condition liable to the sentence of death, what injustice do they complain of receiving from him? Let all the sons of Adam come forward; let them all contend and dispute with their Creator, because by his eternal providence they were previously to their birth adjudged to endless misery. What murmur will they be able to raise against this vindication, when God, on the other hand, shall call them to a review of themselves. If they have all been taken from a corrupt mass, it is no wonder that they are subject to condemnation. Let them therefore not accuse God of injustice..."

Book III, Chapter XXIII, Par. 3.
Calvin's Institutes

ALL AROUND US

"Would You Dare to Pray Thus?"

We appreciate deeply the interest the readers of this department have and are showing respecting what we have to say in it. This interest is evidenced both in the letters we receive and in the clippings, etc., sent to us asking for our comment. That all the material does not find a place in our department is, of course, left to our judgment. I trust that my refusal to put everything I receive in this department will not discourage those who send it.

Recently we received a page from the Christian Labor Herald of December, 1955, sent by a reader who called our attention to a brief article with the title stated above. We fear that when you read it you will be affected as we were, namely, with a series of chills and goose-pimples. We refer, of course, to the prayer which this article quoted. Here is the article:

"We are publishing below a prayer taken from a leaflet distributed by the Religion and Labor Committee of the CIO. The prayer was offered by Father Jerome A. Drolet, pastor of the St. Charles Catholic Church of Thibodaux, Louisiana, and was given at a strike meeting of CIO Packinghouse Workers. A friend of the CLA forwarded this to us with the suggestion that it be printed with appropriate remarks.

"There are not many remarks to be made. We would, however, like to ask sincere Christian workers who are members of the CIO whether they would dare to pray this prayer, which met with great approval and was therefore given wide publicity. We wonder, too, what their Christian leaders, who justify such membership on the basis of the call to Christian witnessing, think of such a prayer, and what results can be expected from Christian testimony within such an organization.

"This is the prayer:

'O God of infinite Justice and Love, we adore You as our Father in Heaven. Help us by your grace to build the kind of community and world in which men will more easily love You and Keep Your Commandments thus saving their immortal souls. Deliver us from the evils of war, and of any economic or political system which places profit or power above the dignity and sacredness of human persons.

'Teach us all, Almighty God, whether we be college students, school teachers, or those less privileged educationally, to realize that the sin of Strikebreaking is just as immoral and hateful to You as other sins such as adultery and theft, drunkenness and narcotics-peddling, white-slavery and blasphemy.

'May we always obey all just laws. Give us the courage to oppose unjust and immoral laws such as the compulsory open-shop laws in various states. May we always obey

Your command,' 'We must obey God rather than man.' 'May we always be ready with Your sustaining grace to stand up and fight and sacrifice for right, against wrong.' "

Never have I read anything purporting to be in the name of religion that is so thoroughly ungodly as this. You can almost hear Satan breathe in it.

We can well understand how the editor of The Christian Labor Herald is irked by the fact that members of the Christian Reformed and Reformed Churches who are advised so to be by their leaders, are members of an organization which condones such ungodliness. He calls them "Christian workers" and "Christian leaders." I confess he is more gracious than I am. I hesitate to call them that who would defend an organization which sponsors such corruption.

I also have a question for the editor of The Christian Labor Herald. Where is Christian Discipline in your Churches?

Only recently we were told how, mark you, an elder in your churches, a member and steward of the CIO, literally persecuted another member of your churches, in fact a member of the same church in which the office-bearer resided. What happened? The non-union Christian Reformed worker, who came to this country some five or six years ago from the Netherlands, unwittingly sought and found work in a so-called closed shop. The elder of his church, also a worker in this shop, gave the immigrant the idea that it ought to be a good place to work. However, shortly after he began working there, the union (CIO) began to pester the immigrant into joining the union. The immigrant refused. Soon the elder, who as I said was steward in the union, began to take the immigrant to task. He ordered his men to meet the immigrant at the gate one morning and threaten to tip his car over if he did not join. The immigrant remained adamant. So the elder and his CIO henchmen tipped the immigrants car upside down. The next Sunday was Lord's Supper. The immigrant felt that he could not have Lord's Supper with that elder. So he went to the consistory to signify his intention of absenting himself next Lord's Day from the Table, and stated his reason. What answer did the immigrant receive from his minister? "Brother, we are sorry about all this, but there is not much we can do about it, for if we should begin discipline with this elder there would be no end to the trouble. And we cannot afford trouble now since we are deeply in debt for our new church edifice."

If this story is true, and I have reason to believe that it is, I ask you Mr. Editor: What good are all your pleadings? Whether the Protestant Reformed Churches will be able to maintain their stand that membership in the so-called neutral unions and in our churches is incompatible, I cannot predict. But I assure you, Mr. Editor, that if the time ever comes that they alter their position, they will do so over my dead body.

The Evils of Calvinism.

This is the title of a little booklet we received from the author, Mr. Frank B. Beck, sometime ago. We neglected to comment on it at the time, and it was lost in the pile of other literature we received from different sources. Having found it again, we thought it well to call it to your attention.

The booklet is small, only twelve pages, but too long to quote in its entirety. Mr. Beck, with whom we have had some correspondence in the past and who purports himself to be an independent evangelist, calls attention in the introduction that "in recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on Calvinistic theology." He then develops his theme under three headings.

Under the first, he answers the question: "*What is Calvinism?*" Calvinism is a belief. It is a system of truth. It is a form of Bible teaching made popular by John Calvin, the great Reformer. Hence it is called *Calvinism*"

"Calvinism declares that the sinner is 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Eph. 2:1), and therefore can do *nothing* toward the saving of his soul. It declares that man has a will and therefore is not a machine, but not a *free* will in spiritual matters. He is bound captive by the Devil (II Tim. 2:26) and does not seek after God (Rom. 3:11).

"It believes that Christ died only for the elect, in a saving sense (John 10:15; I Pet. 2:24, 25). It believes that Christ saves *whom He will* (John 5:21; Rom. 9:18); that the regenerating Holy Spirit *creates* real repentance and saving faith in the hearts of those for whom Christ died (II Tim. 2:25 and Heb. 12:2).

"It declares that God's purposes can *never be defeated* (Isa. 46:10; Psa. 115:3).

"What shocking belief! This is the faith dear to these Calvinists. It is an error to call any who hold these views just mentioned *hyper* Calvinists. They are not hyper-Calvinists, but *Calvinists*!"

Under the second heading, Mr. Beck treats "some of the 'evils' of Calvinism."

"First, Calvinism *abases man*, and that is a great evil indeed, in the eyes of carnal men It never speaks good of them, but always evil Because of the total depravity and inability of man, Calvinism declares that man has a free will *only to choose sin* This is a great evil! Man does not like to be told he cannot do anything he wills

"Secondly, Calvinism *exalts God*. It not only lowers man and his will and works and worth into the dust, but it presents God as *God!* It places God upon the throne. It says, God can and does do as He pleases; God is altogether free and independent

"Thirdly, Calvinism *honors Christ's death*. It says that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ *really saves!* That Christ actually died in the *believer's place!* Those for whom Christ died are saved. He saved them by His *death* in their place. He did not die in vain.

"Fourthly, Calvinism recognizes the power of the Holy Ghost. The sinner is 'dead' spiritually. He cannot do *any-*

thing. He cannot hear, will, repent, or believe. This is another 'evil' of Calvinism. Man likes to think that he has *some* part in his salvation. But Calvinism gives all the glory to the Holy Ghost

"Fifthly, Calvinism magnifies the *grace of God* . . . *what great grace* that God should elect some of us to eternal life and saving faith That He should send His only begotten Son to take our sins in His own body on the tree (Isa. 53:6); in due time send His Holy Spirit to regenerate us; and fully, freely, and forever forgive us of all our guilt and sin

"Sixthly, Calvinism gives *eternal assurance* to believers. This is an enormous evil! It is called a 'dangerous doctrine' by many

"Seventhly, Calvinism gives the *right enthusiasm* to evangelism. If I know that God has a people who will be saved and that there is a certain number whom God the Father has given to God the Son, and that *all* of them *shall* come to the Son of God and that the sheep . . . hear His voice and follow Him, and that God's Word will *not* return unto Him void . . . should this cause me to ask, 'Well, why preach then? Why send missionaries?' No! There is every reason *for* preaching and for missions"

Under the third heading, Mr. Beck presents "some evils that can *never* be laid at the door of Calvinism. Among these he mentions the denial of responsibility, and the objection, If I believed that, I would lose all my zeal to win souls to Christ. Of course, if that would make you lose such zeal we can do nothing else but thank God for that! If believing the truth of the sacred Scriptures causes you to lose zeal for souls, praise be to God. You ought to lose that kind of zeal! It was evidently not the right kind of zeal in the first place. It could not have been created and controlled by the truth of God, but must have sprung from fleshly, emotionalism and sentimentality

"But these so-called evils, we who are Calvinists gladly plead guilty of believing and preaching:

Man is nothing apart from God's grace, but sin.

God does as He pleases.

Christ saves all for whom He died.

The Holy Spirit regenerates whom He will.

We are saved altogether by God's sovereign grace.

A scriptural and sensible evangelism.

Blessed assurance that born-again believers will never be lost.

Of these 'evils' we are guilty! Amen!"

Space will not allow us to offer comment except to say that with most of this we can agree. M.S.

Announcement

Notice change of address:

Rev. Marinus Schipper

1636 Martindale Ave., S. W.

Grand Rapids 9, Michigan

Phone: GLendale 2-1945.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dear Rev. Hoeksema: Please accept the following for Contribution column. This is now the second letter which is thoroughly Reformed that the Editor of The Banner has refused to accept. As we talked before, we make it many times a matter of prayer that the Chr. Ref. Church may repent and that the Protestant Reformed and Chr. Ref. churches may come together again. Let us continue to pray our Heavenly Father to break the strong bands of blindness, hatred, prejudice and unbelief and that those who are truly and really Christ's may be so manifested by lives of faith with love.

Grand Rapids, Mich.
November 6, 1955

Rev. H. J. Kuiper

Banner City

Please accept for Voices —

This is in regard to what was written by Rev. John Vander Ploeg, Banner, Sept. 30, 1955, that the antithesis is absolute and also relative. If this is a new teaching or another interpretation of our confessions, it seems such should be given adequate notice and ample clarification. To state the idea of a relative antithesis and then to pass it off in a few sentences is a dangerous procedure.

We well know that the practise of present day Christians just about wipes out the antithesis in the lives of God's people. They may go to church on Sunday but for the rest they live as does the world. Many avidly absorb the Devil's socialistic utopia of government totalitarianism and depend upon government hand-out just as does the world. Many send their children to Christ-less Public Schools as does the world and if the Public School in this world is not the world's plan of instruction, what is it? Many are members of Christless Labor Unions and declare they would have to starve if they did not become members. Many see no wrong in non-christian television shows with its lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life which is not from the Father but is of the world. Many now evidently do not have enough faith in Christ and in the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit to finance adequately our schools of Christ but have strong desire to have taxmoney of the world to support their religious privilege.

Must we maintain that the antithesis is relative because man in his miserable sin has made it so? Surely the important truth of the absolute antithesis will need more study and more earnest preaching especially since Scripture warns us concerning the world under domination of the Prince of this world who will show great wonders—great things in the scientific, economic and political spheres. Men will need to know something about this complete and only antithesis

in the world, otherwise they will prove to be non-Christian and fall away in the great tribulation, but the elect of God will be given grace to differentiate between right and wrong.

When we begin to speak of relativity concerning the antithesis, then we will erroneously say that the good works of the ungodly are not sin and then what will the end be? We will have lost our moorings and will be tossed on the sea of doubt and despair. We will not know what is absolute and what is relative in relation to the antithesis. Result? Chaos and destruction!

Please let us have the only and the true Gospel of salvation and whatever we do in prayer, word or in deed, let us do it all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Harold Tilma

The reformed Synod of Dort rejects the error of those who teach: "That without *special revelation* we have no certainty of future perseverance in this life. For by this doctrine the sure comfort of the true believers is taken away in this life, and the doubts of the papist are again introduced into the church, while the Holy Scriptures consistently deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks proper to the children of God and from the constant promises of God . . . And John declares "and he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us." I John 3:24.

Canons of Dort, Fifth Head of Doctrine,
Rejection of Errors, Article V.

On the question how good works may be performed Ursinus writes on Question 91 of the Heidelberg Catechism as follows:

"The explanation of this question is necessary on account of the Pelagians, who affirm that the unregenerate may also as well as the regenerate, perform good works; and also on account of the Papists and semi-Pelagians who imagine certain preparatory works of free-will. Good works are possible only by the grace and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and that by the regenerate alone, whose hearts have truly been regenerated by the Spirit of God, through the preaching of the gospel, and that not only in their first conversion and regeneration, but also by the constant and perpetual influence and direction of the same Spirit, who works in them the knowledge of sin, faith and a desire of new obedience, and also daily increases and confirms more and more the same gifts in them."

Ursinus, Page 479

"For wolves to devour sheep is no wonder: but for sheep to devour one another, is monstrous and astonishing." Anon.

"To a true believer death is but going to church: from the church below to the church above." Toplady.