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MEDITATION

BETTER THAN LIFE?

"Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee!" Psalm 63:3

In God's conversation with Satan we hear the devil say concerning Job: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life!"

Well, there is much truth in that statement, even though coming from the liar *par excellence*.

Life is very sweet.

That is, looked at from a certain viewpoint.

Is it not true that everything will be given for a man's life?

Suppose a millionaire receives the news from his doctor that he has an incurable cancer and that his days are numbered, would not such a man give all his possessions for a cure from the dread disease? Of course, he would.

There is some kind of popular song which has it that the most important, or the most wonderful things are free. And it leaves the listener with the sentiment that after all a man is very rich, even though he may not possess a solitary farthing.

A man's life is rich and full.

And very sweet.

Attend to such a man: he is sick, poor, miserable, in great pain and anguish.

But say to him: "Curse God, and die!" even as the wife of Job, and he will turn from you and hate you. He wants to live! Even in spite of all his miseries.

No, it seems entirely true what Satan said. Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life! Satan knew his men alright.

I have seen Christians who seem to fit this sentiment. You never saw them so intent and so serious and urgent as

when the messenger was sent to Doctor Smith: "And tell him to hurry up!"

And yet these same Christians would sing: "The loving-kindness of my God is more than life to me!"

What must we make of all this?

Better than life?

* * * *

Yes, better than life!

No less than the Holy Spirit says this. And so it must be true.

The lovingkindness of our God is indeed more than life to us. It is worth more than the whole world. Our Lord held this up to His audience when he said: What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

The lovingkindness of my God is worth more than all the sweetness of life, and that includes more than I can catalog in this short meditation. Let's take the sweetest things of our life: your wife and child! They are the very heart of the great world in which we live. Sometimes we have heard a man say when addressing his wife or his child: you are my life!

That wife and that child are placed in a setting that is indeed wonderful. To that setting belongs the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ear. What shall I say of such beauties, of this world of sight and hearing?

A good man once said to me: "You know, when I look on all this, all these trees, on that blue expanse of the heavens, on the great world of things and movement, of color and tune, of form and substance, and then think of my dissolution, I feel sad! And I understood him.

Oh, our life here below is sweet to us, even in dire circumstances.

It is not only the worldly man that rushes to the doctor first, and then to the minister in days of threatening death.

A great many years ago I heard it already when still a little boy: A man is not made to die, but to live!

The loss of one's life is so unnatural. Death is the great enemy of man.

And yet there is that text: The lovingkindness of my God is more than life to me! What must we do with it?

And it is so true that the poet continues: So I will bless Thee while I live and lift my prayer to Thee!

And that sentiment brings us to Thanksgiving Day worship. It will soon be here. So soon that it is over by the time you read this. But I will act as though you and I stand before that day, or on that day.

Oh yes, better than life!

* * * *

Better than life!

But then there is much that is hollow in our present day thanksgiving.

And it is because we do not rightly evaluate life.

Time and again we have said that life is sweet. But is it?

That is, if we rightly consider it.

I would say in great seriousness: Take a good look in the Mirror. Take a good long look at your self. Did you notice that I had the word mirror capitalized? I had in mind, not the mirror of quicksilver, but the mirror of the Law of Liberty: the Bible. Take a good look at yourself, that is, your life, in that Mirror.

Did it escape you that my text was composed in the wilderness, and that David spoke the words of Jesus Christ many years before His sojourn? That this psalm is strongly Messianic?

I can imagine that Jesus often quoted the words of Psalm 63 which were spoken before by His servant David. He quoted David rather often anyhow. The most grievous cry He ever uttered He took from David's 22nd psalm: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?!

David was in the wilderness of Judah, fleeing either before the face of Saul or of Absalom. And there he cried this beautiful psalm. And there he learned that the lovingkindness of his God was more than life to him. It was in the wilderness of Judah that David celebrated Thanksgiving Day.

And when it was fulfilled in Jesus, it was on the Cross that He uttered His great thirst for God. See the first verse of the 63rd psalm. It is a good thing that also we celebrate Thanksgiving Day after being in the desert places. It is good before we give thanks to take a look in the wilderness.

I spoke of hollowness in our thanksgiving.

Attend to this: Suppose you give a man a lift in your car when you see him standing at the curb in the rain. When you drop him off at his destination, and when he has an ounce of good manners, he will say: Thanks!

In the morning of the resurrection, in the garden of Joseph, Jesus also said: Thanks! looking up to heaven. Can you measure the distances here? Both the man who rode your car, and the Christ of God gave thanks, but what distance between the one and the Other.

The man thought of his predicament at the curb: far from home, and it was raining. And he said: Thank you!

Christ thought of His hell and eternal death, and also gave thanks, but what awful difference.

Think on that when you go to church on Thanksgiving Day.

It is well that you first go to the desert, and take a good look at yourself and your life.

Then look at God and His lovingkindness.

And then say: I thank Thee!

Your thanks shall be heavy, and not hollow.

For, indeed, His lovingkindness is better than life.

And so I will praise Thee with my lips! Well, that is the Old Testament version of giving thanks. Thanksgiving is the praises of God.

Oh yes, better than life.

* * * *

Better than life.

Let us see.

We did as we suggested before, we went and stood before the great Law of Liberty, and we looked into it as in a mirror.

We may just as well say that the Christian really always stands before that Mirror. He is not as the reprobate who takes a hasty glance into it, and runs away. For a moment he also saw his natural face, but he did not like it and ran. But the Christian abides before that mirror. He is constantly reminded of his natural face. And I assure you that it is terrible.

Yes, take a long look at yourself before you prepare yourself to give thanks.

And this is what you will see, have seen, and will see.

You see the face of a liar, a cheat, a fornicator, a thief, a corrupter, an idol worshipper, a rebel, an enemy of God.

You see, moreover, a man who is guilty unto eternal death. With trembling hand you underscore all such monstrosities and whisper: Oh God, it is true: I lie in the midst of death. I am worthy of all Thy wrath! I have forfeited all life, health, strength, sweetness and beauty.

We are not as nice as we seem.

And that means all of us.

God warns us: Put no confidence in princes!

Even the princes in Judah are liars, and cheats, rebels and wholly corrupt.

What makes all this of your life? Oh, I can understand how the fathers died: oud en der dagen zat! In English you read: old and full of days. It has not that deeper meaning of "zat." "Zat" means satiated. They looked at their long life; they saw all the corruption of their lives, and they felt spiritual nausea.

Our life? The best of our days are labor and sorrow.

We know only in part. And sometimes I think it is a good thing. If we knew and saw ourselves as the angels and God see us, I am persuaded that we would cry and weep all the day long.

* * * *

And now look at God's lovingkindness.

It is His eager and earnest desire, longing, ardour and zeal to bless you.

When He beholds all your misery, He rushes from the heavens to your help, and people heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind. The Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ was on the way to help, to save you. That beauteous Spirit shed abroad the love of God in your heart. And that makes all the difference. And the same Spirit teaches you all things from the Word. It tells you that God Himself took your death and corruption, and destroyed it.

And He was, is and shall be eager, zealous to do it.

Instead of going to hell where you and I belong, that Spirit shall utterly redeem you, raise you and set you in heavenly places.

Then say: I thank Thee, oh my Lord and my God!

Thanksgiving Day!

G.V.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

1917 — 1957

On December 17, Our beloved parents

PETER M. HOEKSTRA

and

FLORENCE HOEKSTRA (DE BOER)

commemorate their 40th Anniversary.

That our God may bless them in the future as He has blessed them in the past is the prayer and wish of their beloved children:

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Brummel
Mr. and Mrs. George Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Bert Van Mannen
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Brunsting
Mr. and Mrs. John Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Mulder
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoekstra
and 38 Grandchildren

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EDITORIALS

Daane's Distortion of Reformed Truth

One of the most foolish sections of the article of Daane in the *Reformed Journal* which we are discussing is found on p. 9.

There the writer sets forth the view some would-be Reformed theologians have of the sovereignty of God in relation to His counsel. They, according to him, (I know not who they are; he never quotes and never gives any references) make sovereignty as such the explanation of sin and reprobation. And this is then applied to the counsel of God. The result, according to Daane, is that, just as these theologians, whoever they are, make God the ultimate cause of sin and reprobation, so His sovereignty is made the ultimate cause of whatever comes to pass and whatever comes to pass is the expression of God's ultimate will. And thus . . . but now I better quote him literally for the view he now ascribes to these would be Reformed theologians is so utterly foolish, that I am afraid that I will do them an injustice if I attempt to explain their conception in my own words. Hence, here it is:

"Thus each item in 'whatsoever comes to pass', that is, of God's counsel, becomes equally expressive of God's sovereignty and equally revelatory of His will. In such a conception of God's counsel, it should be observed, nothing is central, nothing peripheral; nothing primary, nothing secondary and subsidiary. As reprobation and election are regarded as equally expressive of God's sovereignty and will, so now every item in God's counsel is made equally revelatory of God's sovereignty and will. In such a conception of God's counsel no item can be defeated by another, and none triumph over another. As actualized in history, there can be no genuine historical tensions, no real historical defeats and no genuine historical events of triumph, since everything is equally willed by God and equally expressive of His sovereignty. Christ himself is simply one item among many items, no more revelatory of divine sovereignty and the divine will than any other item. Stated in terms of history, God's will and sovereignty is no more adequately expressed at the Resurrection than at the Fall. Christ's victory over sin and death is no more revelatory of what the New Testament means by Lordship than is the defeat of the Yankees by the Chicago White Sox."

I can somewhat understand that Daane cannot help merging into mockery and sarcasm, as he does at the end of the last paragraph, when he describes the view of these would-be Reformed theologians.

Yet, the matter is very serious.

And because it is so very serious, it is all the more mandatory that Daane mentions the names of these would-be Reformed theologians and that he, not only mentions their names, but he also furnish us with references and quotations

to prove his contentions so that we may check up on his statements.

Honesty and the fear of God demands this.

If he does not do this, I am inclined to call him dishonest.

Do not forget that he befouls the names of these would-be Reformed theologians even though he does not mention them by name and presents them as downright fools and ignor-amuses. Whoever read of Reformed theologians that not only place election and reprobation on a par in the counsel of God, but that even present every item in the counsel of God as of equal value with every other item, even to such an extent that, in the counsel of God, the victory of Christ over sin and death is of equal value with the victory of the White Sox over the Yankees?

I never did read or hear of such theologians.

And, therefore, I demand names and proof. Such is my right.

This I may demand all the more, especially because in the same article he repeatedly mentions my name together with that of Van Til and, therefore, I have reason to suspect that, in the above quoted paragraph, he also refers to me. Even in the next paragraph he mentions my name.

If, however, this should be true, I may assure him that he is either utterly mistaken or deliberately misrepresents my view. That, according to my view, in God's council nothing is central and nothing peripheral, is so completely beside the truth that the very opposite is true. In support of this contention I could quote many passages from my books but the following quotation from *The Wonder of Grace*, pp. 22, 23, may be regarded as sufficient:

"But election is also organic. When we insist on the basis of Scripture that election is personal, we do not mean that God arbitrarily determined to save a number of persons, and just as arbitrarily let the rest go to perdition. There is no arbitrariness with God. All his works in time and eternity are perfect, and characterized by highest wisdom. Election is according to His eternal purpose. And that purpose is the highest revelation of the glory of God, through Jesus Christ, the incarnated Son of God, the firstborn of every creature, Who died and rose again, and Who is exalted at the right hand of God; and out of Jesus Christ that glory of God must be manifested through the millions upon millions of glorified elect that will know Him and declare His glorious praises; and through all the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell. To that grand purpose election is subservient. By that purpose it is dominated. Hence, God did not choose an arbitrary number of people. He chose a Church, the Body of Christ, a holy temple in the Lord. Now, a temple is not a mere pile of bricks and other building material, the larger the better; it is a beautiful whole, representing an idea, in which each part must occupy its own place in order to serve the beauty of the whole, so that the number as well as the position of each part is determined by the whole. The same

is true of the Church. It is one grand whole, representing one idea, the glory of God in Christ, conceived by the perfect artificer, and the position, but also the number of all the members of that whole is determined in the eternal wisdom and purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will. And presently, when all the elect shall have been gathered, and the church of all ages shall have been perfected and glorified, it shall stand at the head of the new creation, in which all things shall be united in Christ, and God shall be all in all! That is election!"

I am afraid that Daane must have nothing of this beautiful truth of Scripture.

But this is not the question at present. I challenge him to show that in the above paragraph nothing is central and nothing is peripheral, nothing is primary and nothing secondary.

He cannot do it!

H.H.

The Standard Bearer and Our Future

What may be said of our future in the light of the promises of God?

This is the question we must still discuss briefly.

The question is: shall *The Standard Bearer*, through its staff of editors, in the future, remain faithful to the purpose for which it was originally organized and published? Shall it continue to maintain and further develop the Protestant Reformed truth, the truth concerning the whole counsel of God? Or shall it gradually become corrupt and apostatize from that truth?

And another question is closely related to the first: shall our churches remain Protestant Reformed and remain faithful to the truth as we believe it or shall they, too, become corrupt and, in the future, gradually deny the truth? Or shall we, perhaps, have another separation and more of them, such as we had recently because some advocated the error that the promise of God is conditional.

No doubt, God will certainly preserve His truth and His church in the world. But He will do so, not necessarily in and through our churches as they now exist. And the history of the church in the midst of the world reveals a repeated and continual separation and apostacy from the truth. The reason for this is, of course, in the first place, the carnal element in the church. This is always present. Never does the church, as far as its membership is concerned, exist as completely pure. Always there are reprobates as well as elect in the church in the world; always the carnal seed is present with the spiritual; always there is chaff among the wheat. Besides, in connection with the presence of this carnal seed in the church, there is also the power of temptation from without, the influence of false doctrine and false philosophy, as well as the lure of the pleasures and treasures of the world. This is the reason why the history

of the church reveals repeated apostocacy and continual separation.

Shall we, then, as Protestant Reformed Churches, together with our *Standard Bearer*, remain faithful to the truth in the future? That depends, as you understand, principally, not on us but on God alone. It depends on the sovereign grace of the God of our salvation.

Our future is hid in the counsel of God. We cannot read it.

Nevertheless, we have God's promise. That promise is revealed. And if that promise is for us as Protestant Reformed Churches, the future is ours.

Hence, the final question is whether the Protestant Reformed Churches may and have a right to believe that the promise is for them. We know, of course, that the promise is not for all. It is only for the elect. Hence, the further question is whether the Protestant Reformed Churches may believe, at any given moment in their history, that they belong to that elect church of God in Christ. If so, the future is ours; if not, we have no future.

But is not this a rather abstract question? Can we know at all that we belong to the elect church of God in Christ, that, therefore, we may believe that ours is the promise of God and that, therefore, we have a future?

In answer I would say that the question is not abstract whatsoever but, on the contrary, very concrete. It is true, of course, that election belongs to the counsel of God and that we cannot read that counsel. But that counsel of election becomes revealed to us and becomes very actual and concrete in its manifestation in the life of the Church and of believers. How can we know that we belong to the church-elect? The very concrete answer is: when God realizes His counsel of election in us as Protestant Reformed Churches, they are and remain faithful. When God realizes His counsel, He fulfills His promise. And when He does fulfill His promise, the seed of the promise manifest this in all their life and walk in the midst of the world. And when God thus realizes His counsel of election and His promise in the Protestant Reformed Churches they believe, maintain the truth and walk in the way of the truth to serve and glorify the God of their salvation in Jesus Christ their Lord. And what is true of the churches also applies to *The Standard Bearer* and its staff of editors.

Hence, we may read our future in the seven churches that are described to us in the Book of Revelation. There we have an answer to the question: when will our Protestant Reformed Churches have a future? The answer is: when they do not leave their first love but stand in the love of God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when they are faithful to the truth God has revealed to them. When they stand in that truth, which is the chief distinguishing mark of the church. When they confess that truth in the midst of the church and of the world. When they remain faithful to that truth in all their walk and life. When they

(Continued on page 105)

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 13

THE FOUR HORSEMEN

Revelation 6:1-8

There are always two or more nations that rival with each-other for the control of the world. It is Assyria and Babylonia, Babylonia and Persia, Persia and Greece, Greece and Rome, the latter and the dark hordes from the north of Europe, the Netherlands and Spain, France and England, or as it is today, alliance against alliance. All thru history things are so controlled that there is nation rising against nation and war ensues. And as long as the situation is thus the end cannot come. There are, indeed, that have expressed the expectation that this war will not end. But this expectation is erroneous. The present conflict will surely end again. For nation must rise against nation but the end is not yet. For as long as nation rises against nation the world-power cannot realize itself, for the simple reason that it labors continually for its own destruction. A time will come when wars shall apparently cease and the great world-confederacy whose principle is enmity against Christ, shall be realized. And that time of world-peace will be the most dangerous period of history for the church of God in the world. But that time is not yet, and therefore, wars must come. The same purpose is served by the black horse and its rider. Just as nation rises against nation so also one element rises against the other in the midst of these nations, in society because of the tremendous contrast between rich and poor. Whatever men may do this contrast cannot be eliminated. As soon as the wages increase the prices of all commodities are raised and the relation remains as it always was. Rich and poor, labor and capital will remain. And it is this continual contrast between poverty and luxury that causes society to be a house divided against itself and is the source of strikes and social convulsions and panics, of insurrections and revolutions many a time. Just recall the bloody scenes of the French Revolution and you will be able to understand how the drive of this black horse prevents the establishment of the kingdom of outward peace and righteousness. Also to this there will come an end for some time. We know not how. Not impossible it seems at present that this social contrast will find its final solution in the socialistic state of things, for Socialism is advancing with tremendous strides in our own day. But true it is, that also socially the kingdom of antichrist will be allowed to realize itself for a time. As yet, however, this may not be. And, therefore, the presence of the black horse is required and the sin of covetousness and greed is so controlled by the Lord that always again this

social contrast appears with all that is implied in it. And lastly, also the pale horse must serve the same purpose. Clearly you will realize this, if you consider the significant addition that this horse and its horseman have power over one-fourth part of the earth. That is, death always mows away the proper persons at the proper place, and at the proper time. Whenever a person has served God's purpose in the economy of this dispensation he is mowed away and is no more. At the moment when Pharaoh and his powerful army become real perilous to the children of Israel in their exodus from Egypt, this pale horse appears on the scene and destroys the army of Pharaoh together with its king. When the enemy endangers the gates of Jerusalem this horseman with his pale horse removes an entire force of 185000 from the scene of action. He enters the palace of Alexander the Great and kills him by a fever at the moment when he would be lord of all the world, that his kingdom may be divided. And when Antiochus Epiphanes would become too perilous to the little remnant of Israel, this awful horseman makes the cruel monarch a prey of Hades in a moment. Always this formidable rider selects the proper persons at the proper time and place, and whenever a person's purpose is served and he would perhaps become too powerful or dangerous to the people of the kingdom the pale horse appears on the scene and snatches him away.

And, therefore, if you ask: why these horses? Why war, why social contrast, why death in all its forms? my answer is: to prevent the premature establishment of the imitation-kingdom of antichrist, of that kingdom that resembles in outward form the kingdom of Christ, but is based on the principle of enmity against God and His Anointed. All these three horses check the development of the world-kingdom in this dispensation. They all make the world-power too busy with itself to launch its final attack upon the children of the kingdom.

Not difficult it is to understand that these last three horses are not harmful, but must be beneficent in their effect upon the children of the kingdom. Wars and revolutions, famines and pestilences and death cannot injure the kingdom of God for the simple reason that as yet it exists purely spiritual. War does not hurt the people of God *qua talis*. Surely, they also suffer according to the flesh, they also are grieved when their sons die on the battle-field, they too are troubled when their homes are destroyed and their fields are devastated. But all things work together for good to them that love God. In trouble and affliction, in tribulation and sorrow, in the midst of ruin and terror they are spiritually never harmed, for by faith they cling to their God. And as they experience the troubles and trials of this present time, the eyes of their faith are fastened more and more on the glory that awaits them in the future, their hope is quickened. Here it is war, — soon it will be peace. Here it is misery, — soon it will be glory. Here it is sin and imperfection, rebellion against the God they love and the power of antichrist

comes more and more to its full manifestation,—but presently it will be righteousness and holiness, peace and splendor, when the kingdom of Christ shall have been completed and appear in finest glory in the new heaven and the new earth. And, therefore, the contemplation of this tremendous contrast between what is and what will be strengthens and quickens their hope and with all creation they begin to groan with longing for the glory that shall be revealed in them. And as far as death is concerned, to their faith the pale horse is no terror but merely an instrument to transfer them to the anticipatory state of glory in the house of many mansions. And, therefore, be not afraid, ye people of the kingdom. All these things must needs come to pass. In times of war and trouble, of famine and pestilence, when the red horse drives thru the earth, the black horse appears in your streets or the pale horse enters into your homes, let your hearts rest in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, who holds the book with the seven seals, and controls all things in heaven and earth to the ultimate completion of His glorious kingdom!

CHAPTER XIV

The Slain Witnesses and Their Outcry

Revelation 6:9-11

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

This passage speaks of the fifth seal. The first four seals we already discussed. They revealed the horsemen, the white horse representing the victorious march of the gospel throughout the world, the red horse representing war, the black horse revealing social contrasts, and the last horse representing death in all its forms. Now we have the fifth seal, which speaks of the souls under the altar, or the slain witnesses and their outcry.

It is, in my opinion, impossible to explain the seals in such a way that they refer to the future only, or especially to a period of tribulation after the church has been taken to heaven, or as referring to special periods in the past, as others do maintain. This was difficult already, as we have explained, in respect to the first four seals. But this becomes still more absurd as soon as we come to the contemplation of the fifth seal. True, there is indeed a certain progress in history and also in the order of these seals. Also this fifth seal, and still more plainly the sixth, shall be most clearly and definitely realized towards the end of this dispensation. But it is not true that these seals have either already been fulfilled or that

they belong all to the future in all their effect. It is evident on the very face of it that this fifth seal speaks of martyrdom, of a being slain for the Word of God and the testimony which the saints proclaim in the midst of the world. But this does not refer to any specific period in the history of the church in the past, as, for instance, the period of the Waldenses or Albigenses or the period of the Reformation. It is true that also in those days this fifth seal was plainly manifested and realized. But it was not only in those times, but also in various other periods throughout the new dispensation that the operation of this seal was seen. Was not John exiled to the isle of Patmos for the Word of God and the testimony which he held? Did not most of the apostles suffer violent death because of the same fact? Did not the church suffer one of the most terrible persecutions under the Roman Emperor Domitian? And thus it is and was all through the new dispensation. Nor can it be true that this part of the Book of Revelation must be referred to the future only. To be sure, also in the future the saints will suffer for the Word of God and the testimony which they hold. Most violently the people of God shall suffer martyrdom towards the end of this dispensation. But also in the past they have suffered as severely as one can possibly conceive. Hence, also this fifth seal we understand to refer to the entire history of the present dispensation though we may no doubt expect that it will increase in force and that at the same time there is a certain logical sequence and connection between the first four seals and this fifth one. Nor is it difficult to discover that connection. The tremendous contrast caused by the white horse naturally causes martyrdom for the loyal subjects of the kingdom of Christ. The real spiritual kingdom employs no physical force or means, and its subjects merely testify of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the God of our salvation in the midst of the world. But this is not true of the kingdom of darkness. That kingdom, in order to maintain itself, is bound to employ force, and fights those that oppose it with scaffold and stake. The result is martyrdom for those that are faithful. Besides, it must also clearly be discerned that as far as the material of this fifth seal is concerned, it is in a way already implied in the fourth seal, which represented, as we saw, the power of death mowing away the righteous and the wicked, and doing so in all manner of ways, killing also by means of violent death the faithful witnesses of the truth. This fifth seal, therefore, does not mean to emphasize the martyrdom of the saints as they are being slain and persecuted. This the fifth seal rather presupposes. The saints that are mentioned in this fifth seal have already fought the good fight, and are evidently in heaven, waiting for their full adoption and the final glory. And one of the chief purposes of this special seal is undoubtedly to show clearly that also the martyrdom of the saints is controlled by Christ Jesus, and that the world avails nothing unless the Lord wills it. For it is only when He opens the seal that there are martyrs crying for vengeance. And it was also only when He opened the seal that

they were slain. We may add to this that also the purpose of this seal is to assure us that the martyrdom of the saints is an element in the progress toward the completion of the kingdom of Christ.

Let us then look more closely for a moment at the description of these martyrs. We must not lose ourselves in the contemplation of all kinds of non-essential details. Nor must we forget that the whole is symbolical and visionary. If we do, we are apt to ask and find an answer to all kinds of foolish questions. Thus, the question has been indeed asked whether it were possible to see souls, that are spiritual. For John in this passage tells us that when the fifth seal was opened, he saw souls beneath the altar. But is it possible to see souls, it is asked. But the question is absurd. We must not forget that John is in the Spirit; and in the Spirit he is in heaven. All that he beholds he sees in the Spirit and in a vision, so that the question, whether in our present state we would also be able to see souls, may indeed be considered absurd. Then too, the use of this passage in order to picture the abode of the dead after this present life and before the resurrection is equally absurd for the same reason, namely, that the whole is visionary and symbolical. And as to the use made of this passage to prove that the souls after death are conscious, since they cry for vengeance, we may indeed conclude from other parts of Scripture that the souls after death and before the final resurrection live consciously in glory. And perhaps we may also admit that there is some proof in the words of this particular passage from the Book of Revelation. Yet we must guard against the danger of making too much of a passage that is visionary and symbolical in itself. Besides, we cannot tarry here to make a lengthy discourse on this particular question. Our purpose in the study of the Book of Revelation is not the establishment of all kinds of different doctrines, but rather to obtain as clear a view as possible of the coming of Christ. And although it is undoubtedly true that there are many portions in the Book of Revelation that afford beautiful material for building up of dogma, nevertheless we must at this time pass that by with a mere mention.

The chief purpose therefore is that we learn to understand the meaning of the symbolism. John, in the first place, sees an altar. There can be little question that the altar which he here sees is the altar of burnt offering, which originally stood in the temple court. In the first place, it may be said that the original word for "altar" points us in that direction, and not to the altar of incense. In the second place, the souls that are under this altar point to the shedding of blood, as was characteristic and essential to the altar of burnt offering, and not to the altar of incense. Also the fact that John saw the altar makes us think that it was the altar of burnt offering, that stood in the outer court and that, in distinction from the altar of incense, could be seen by the people. To that altar, therefore, the text evidently refers. On this altar the bloody sacrifices were made. Under this altar, we are told, was a large basin, into which the blood of the sacrificial ani-

mals was poured. And the sacrifices that were brought on this altar were symbolic of reconciliation and consecration to God the Lord. If we bear this in mind, and find that in the vision John does not see the blood of animals under the altar, but the souls of men, the souls of the saints, we may from the outset draw the conclusion that the whole is symbolical of the fact that witnesses of Christ Jesus have laid their lives upon the altar of consecration to their God and Savior in Christ Jesus their Lord. These souls are men that have literally been slain, that have been butchered, on the altar of consecration to God in Christ. The opening of the fifth seal, therefore, shows us the martyrs in the church after they have fought the good fight and have been faithful even unto the end.

All this is corroborated by the further description of these souls under the altar. For we read that they had been slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held. Literally it says here that they had been butchered, and therefore they had suffered violent death at the hand of the enemies of Christ and His church. And the occasion and reason for this violent treatment by the enemies of Christ is also clearly stated in the text. It was the fact, namely, that they clung to the Word of God and that they openly testified for the truth of that Word. They were men that had been touched by the rider on the first horse, so that they had been changed from darkness into God's marvelous light. By nature they belonged to the kingdom of darkness, and they were subject to the power and dominion of the devil. But the white horse had approached, and the rider on that horse had touched them. The result was that their inner being had been turned about. They had been regenerated by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. They had been called by His Word. They had obtained a vision of the glorious kingdom that was to be established by Jesus Christ, the Servant of God, their Mediator and Intercessor. Thus the Word had become their subjective possession. They were dominated by that Word of God. They knew the truth, and loved it with all their heart. Hence, for and according to that Word they lived in the midst of the world. On the basis of that Word they stood and manifested themselves in the present world. They claimed that in every sphere Christ Jesus is Lord, that He is King over all the world and over all the hidden powers of that world. They firmly believed that there was hope for that world only in the blood of their Redeemer, and that only when a man was touched by the Spirit of Christ and was regenerated, so that he had a new life, could he possibly be called a subject of Christ. Such was the Word. And thus they believed. And the truth had struck root more and more in their inmost heart.

But there is more. They did not hide their light under a bushel, but they testified of it. The Word as they appropriated it was burning in their hearts, and they were bound to express it. They could not possibly keep silent. And they felt that over against the world in the midst of which they lived they were bound to witness of the name of

Jesus Christ their Lord. Such is the meaning of the words "and the testimony which they held." There are interpreters indeed who maintain that this must be understood as a testimony which Christ gave of them before the Father which is in heaven. But it is rather difficult to understand how for such a testimony they could ever suffer martyrdom on earth. Hence, it must be understood as referring to the testimony which they gave, which they expressed before all the world. They were obedient to the injunction of Jesus: "He that confesseth me before men, I will confess before my Father which is in heaven." Thus they were witnesses. The central idea and the chief contents of their testimony was that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Constantly they must have spoken of the cross as the only hope for sinners. They witnessed that man was lost in himself because of his fallen and sinful state, and that therefore there was no hope for him outside of Christ Jesus and His cross. They witnessed undoubtedly also of the necessity of regeneration in order to enter into the true kingdom of God. And they boldly maintained that all that was not in harmony with the principle of the sovereignty of Christ in the present world did not and could not belong to the kingdom of God. In the blood of Jesus was the only righteousness of sinners. For at the bottom of all questions and problems in the world lies the guilt of man. Thus they testified. We can easily understand that as they bore this testimony in the world, they came into conflict with worldly men. For as we have seen before, even the world is touched by the white horse. But the only possible result of this is that it aims at the establishment of what they conceive to be the kingdom of God, but which is in reality a kingdom of man. O yes, also the world wants peace and righteousness, bliss and happiness. But that world never confesses its guilt and its impotence to do any good. And therefore they must have nothing of the blood of Jesus Christ as the propitiation for their sins, and of the truth that the sinner must be regenerated by the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus. They establish an imitation kingdom, a kingdom without Christ as He is revealed in Holy Writ. And the faithful witnesses of Christ condemned this kingdom of man and predicted its utter destruction. Thus they principally incurred the displeasure and hatred of the world because they confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, the only Sovereign and King over all even in the present dispensation. They came into conflict with this world because they testified of the principle that God is the highest and only Sovereign of heaven and earth, and that all men must bow before Him, — something they will never do apart from Christ Jesus, His cross and His Spirit. And this hatred of the world became so bitter, and the attitude of the world to those that are of Christ became so hateful and intolerant that they finally cast themselves upon these faithful witnesses and butchered them, killed them because of the testimony which they had. And thus they were slain because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Is it necessary that I point to the history of the world,

and particularly to the history of this present dispensation, to prove that this seal is actually opened? A long list of names could indeed be mentioned of them that are slain for the name and the truth of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Even in the old dispensation the history of these faithful witnesses was written in blood. There is the name of Abel, killed, no doubt, because of his faithfulness to God and to His service. There is the name of Enoch and the name of Noah, who truly were not killed, but who must have endured the reproach of the world for the name of the God they confessed. There are, as you know, the names of all the prophets, most of whom have been killed because of their faithful testimony, so that Jesus might indeed say: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets and killest them that are sent against thee" Or, if you please, read the latter part of that memorable chapter of Hebrews 11, and you will be surprised that even in the author's time there were so many of these souls under the altar of consecration to God that had been butchered for the Word of God and the testimony which they held. However, this seal does not refer to the old, but to the new dispensation. Christ has received the book with its seven seals. And He is opening the seals. It is under His administration that His saints, His servants, His witnesses, are slain. And also here it is evident from all the history of this dispensation that this fifth seal is constantly being realized. Think of the apostles, that first bore the testimony of Christ into the world. How they suffered and were persecuted, how they were hated and finally killed by a world that would not receive their testimony! Think also of the churches that are pictured in the first part of the Book of Revelation, of Smyrna, Pergamum, and Philadelphia. They were persecuted and hated, and the saints in Christ Jesus were killed. Think of the terrible persecutions under the Roman emperors, how they were literally butchered and tortured to death that confessed the name of Christ Jesus. Think also of the forerunners of the Reformation and of thousands of martyrs at the time of the Reformation that did not wish to return to the mother church, to the harlot church of the sixteenth century. How they all suffered! How they all were persecuted! How they were driven from place to place!

H.H.

EDITORIALS

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also remain faithful in discipline and cast the carnal element out of their midst. If not, the Lord will spew them out of His mouth.

May God give us grace to be faithful.

May the Lord our God give grace also to the editors of *The Standard Bearer* to be faithful in the presentation and development of the truth, in order that it may continue to be a means in the hand of our God for the well-being of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

H.H.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Prophecy of Zechariah

The shepherding of the flock of slaughter

Chapter 11:1-14

Let us briefly pass in review the thought of the verses in this section already treated (4-11). The prophet is commanded to shepherd the flock of slaughter by which must be understood the Israel of the old dispensation both according to its reprobated husk and elect kernel. It is called the flock of slaughter because according to the good pleasure of His will God will give its men each into the hand of his neighbor and into the hand of his king who through the years will afflict and kill it until it be destroyed as an organized nation. Surely it will perish because of its unwill to repent of its wickedness. But this unwill will enter in only as the secondary reason of its fall and ruin. Time and again in the centuries of the past it was covered with the cloud of God's anger. Then war and pestilence or famine was its portion or it was sold into the hand of its enemies. Once it was transplanted to a foreign country. But always the cloud was lifted and the old condition returned. But now it approaches a judgment that will be final, so that in it the nation as a typical kingdom will disappear from the stage of history forever. The prophet must shepherd the flock of slaughter that the spiritual Israel may be instructed and comforted and the carnal Israel hardened and thereby prepared for the final judgment. So he takes to himself two staves and calls the one beauty and the other bands. Jointly they signify the Gospel in its beauty and pleasantness and the oneness of the ideal flock as this is effected by the Gospel as sanctified to the hearts of the redeemed sheep by Christ's Spirit. As equipped with these staves, the Gospel of God—another equipment there is not—the prophet shepherds the flock of slaughter. The shepherd must soon experience the wrath of the carnal Israel. In one month he cuts off three unworthy shepherds and for this they abhor him. Deeply grieved he lets it be known that he will no longer shepherd them and forthwith breaks with them the covenant.

12. All is now over. But before the shepherd takes leave of the flock of slaughter, he confronts them with a request. If it seemeth good in your eyes, give me my wages; if not, forbear, is now his word to them. Surely the flock is under the obligation to provide in the material necessities of its shepherds. But this is not what this shepherd means. He is asking them to set a price upon him as shepherd and thereby indicate what in their estimation he is worth. He does not command them. If they prefer not to commit themselves, it is well. There is purpose in his allowing them to decide. Then they will be revealing the inward man in evaluating him, and it will become evident how intensely they hate God.

For then they will be acting solely from subjective compulsion. And therefore, If it seemeth good in your eyes. And so it does. For their hatred of the good shepherd is too bitter to allow them to pass by the opportunity to show in what low esteem they hold him. They weigh out his wages, thirty pieces of silver. A piece or shekel of silver is equivalent to about 60 cents; thirty pieces to about \$18. This was the price of a slave in Israel. If an ox killed a manservant or a maidservant, the owner of the ox had to make restitution by giving to the master of the servant that was killed thirty shekels of silver.

13. Surely the doing of the apostate Israel bespeaks utter contempt for the good shepherd. It is an insult to the Lord and was also so intended. The Lord does not keep silence. Says He to the shepherd, *Cast it to the potter*. This is a much discussed phrase. It is not necessary to assume the presence of a potter in the temple, be it for the purpose of repairing or selling dishes. The form of the words of the phrase—*cast, violently throw* to the potter strongly suggests that it was a proverbial expression for contemptuous treatment like the expression, *Throw it to the dogs*. If this is correct, the expression discloses how the next statement of the Lord is to be understood, "*a goodly price that I was prized of them.*" This has the sound of being irony. Doubtless the implication of the utterance is the opposite from the literal sense of its words. What the Lord means is that the price at which He was prized at of them was ignoble, insulting.

What wickedness! what folly! Certainly the shepherds of the section of the scriptures with which we are now occupied is in the first instance Zechariah as representative of all the prophets and the apostles and all the pastors and teachers in the church of the past, present and future. But secondarily this shepherd is God indeed. God is the good shepherd of the flock, the sheep. He chose the sheep in Christ unto everlasting life. And according to His abundant mercy He has begotten them again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an incorruptible inheritance. But the shepherd of these verses is also God revealed in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the good shepherd. For His sheep He laid down His life. That the shepherd of this vision is God and the Christ of God is clear from its language. Who but God may say, "I will not shepherd you, that which dieth, let it die" (verse 9). And of the works that some of these verses make mention God alone is capable. Who but God can break the covenant, take it away (verse 10), and break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (verse 14)? It is God and His Christ and not a mere man that the apostates belittle and deride in weighing out their thirty pieces of silver. How can the worth of God be expressed in terms of dollars and cents anyway? It would be blasphemy to weigh out for God's price the whole world and its treasures multiplied by a countless number of worlds. Can the creature serve as a standard for evaluating God? How can His worth be measured at all, if His good-

ness be infinite? Appraising Him rightly can only be done by saying that He is the incomparable God, that He is God and none else. And this is to praise and adore Him as the God of our salvation. To think then that these apostates should weigh out for His price thirty pieces of silver. Thirty shekels as their price for God, the Christ of God, His salvation, His covenant, His heavenly kingdom. For this is here the question precisely. What price are they setting upon the Heavenly. They have given their answer: Thirty pieces of silver.

The prophet does as instructed of the Lord. He takes the thirty pieces of silver and casts them to the potter in the house of the Lord. He may have cast the money away before the eyes of the worshippers in the temple, or may have flung it violently on the floor of the temple and trampled upon it. Whatever he did with it was to shew the Lord's indignation and to be token that the flock of slaughter was now forsaken of Him. The action with the money had to be performed before the eyes of the leaders and the people. It was done therefore in the temple. For here is where leaders and people congregated.

14. The weighing out of the money as the price for God was the crowning act of insolence. The shepherd therefore does one more thing. It is his final act. He cuts assunder the other staff even bands that, in his own words, I may destroy the brotherhood between Israel and Judah. The two will be divided, separated, Israel from Judah and Judah from Israel. The symbolical action with the staff bands, its being cut asunder, indicates that the separation is to be effected through the breaking of the spiritual ties by which Israel and Judah are binded together to form one brotherhood in Christ. Since Christ is in the loins of Judah, what this means for Israel is that it is to be cut off from Christ. Not that there is to be a falling away of saints, a losing of the new life and the living faith that was once given and falling back into the old state of spiritual death. This is not possible. No saint will be cut off. Surely once a believer always a believer. What is to be cut off is the Israel according to its reprobated husk, the unfruitful branch. Not that this branch as such is in Christ. Yet it will surely be cut off. Every branch in Christ that bears not fruit the Father, the divine husbandman, takes away (John 6:1). However not the individual reprobate but the reprobated family of men is the branch. The Israel to which our prophet in this section of his discourse has reference was such a family. It was the Israel in the point of view of its reprobated husk. The shepherd will cut it off through his taking out of it the last and only surviving believers that are still found in it, the only and very spiritual element—the elect—through which as a family it may be said to be in Christ. The ties of faith and love by which as a family it is in Christ are established with this elect and believing element. Hence when this element is removed, the reprobated family is thereby cut off. With the brotherhood between Judah and Israel destroyed, the carnal Israel will rise up in rebellion against Judah, that is,

Christ, as of yore and will end in crucifying Him. Then will it have filled up its measure of iniquity and be ripe for the final judgment.

The character of this entire section, especially the rapidity with which the transactions reported in this section follow each other, warrants the assumption that it confronts us with a revelation that was communicated to the prophet in the form of a vision the scenes of which again meet the eye in the Gospel narratives of the new testament Bible. Only here they confront us as actualities. The Word becomes flesh. Christ, God's only begotten Son, assumse the flesh and blood of His brethren in the womb of Mary and is born. As sent by the Father He comes to His own, Israel, His brethren according to the flesh and shepherds the flock. It is the same flock of slaughter. And they loathe and abhor Him, and His soul is grieved on account of them as of yore. Just before His crucifixion, on the night of betrayal, He mandates Judas, What thou doest, do it quickly. For the carnal Israel must give Him His wages. And so they covenant with the traitor for thirty pieces of silver. This is their price for Him. So is He so long a time after marvelously and horribly insulted and belittled in a manner identical to that in which they had insulted and belittled Him in the vision. Contrary to all reason, unbelief will say that it was a hap ascribable to some unknown power, or they will end with this particular and amazing element in His humiliation in the will of man, in the hatred of His enemies. But every one to whom it is given by His mercy to believe says with the evangelist, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy (Zechariah) the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel set a price on." Surely in thus exhibiting their low esteem of Him, they were moved by unspeakable hatred of Him. But we may not put the period here. It's a question of the deepest, primary and sovereign reason. In this instance and in every other instance they were fulfilling the Scriptures. For the Scriptures had spoken, the prophet, nay, God had spoken, willed, determined in His counsel, that they weigh that amount of money for His price, and in accordance therewith He hardened them, gave them up through the lusts of their own heart thus to dishonour His only begotten Son. God reigned at the cross of the Saviour and not men and devils. And therefore alone it is and can be gloriously true that God was bruising Him, putting Him to grief, making His soul an offering for sin, that He might see His seed.

The Foolish Shepherd, 15-17

15. *And the Lord said unto me, Take again the implements of a foolish shepherd.* 16. *For, behold, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who shall not visit those that be hidden, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that which is broken, nor feed that which standeth still, but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and the hoofs he shall break off.* 17. *Woe to the vain shepherd that forsaketh the flock! A Sword shall be upon his arm and upon his right eye. His arm shall be*

clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

Having disclosed the reason of the calamities in store for Israel, the flock of slaughter—Israel despises God, the Christ of God and His salvation—the prophet briefly returns to the subject of Israel's oppressions by his godless rulers.

The prophet is now requested of the Lord to take again the implements of a foolish shepherd, that is, he again is told to take to himself the implements of a shepherd but this time those of a foolish shepherd. The articles of a shepherd included a staff, a bag, a pipe, a knife. These other implements are not specified but they must have been designated for a use injurious to the flock. The word fool in its scriptural meaning denotes one spiritually and morally depraved. The fool is without spiritual understanding. His mind is so darkened, warped, by his sinful biases that he can't see the kingdom of heaven, much less desire it. He says in his heart that there is no God, builds his house upon sand, and wraps himself in deep slumber though he knows that the bridegroom comes. And if the fool is also shepherd behaves toward the flock as does the foolish shepherd in these verses. The prophet must refrain surely from impersonating the foolish shepherd beyond the point of taking to himself his implements. The foolish shepherd will neglect his flock. He will pay no attention to his sheep. The hidden ones, the sheep ill and dying, will not be visited. The young one, the lamb straying from the flock and lost and undone, will not be sought. The wounds of the broken will not be healed. Then there are the standing ones, the lambs that cannot keep pace with the rest of the flock. A good shepherd carries them in his bosom. Not so this foolish shepherd, but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, that is, the fatlings of the flock. How it fares with the flock is of no concern to him but he thinks only of his own well-being and to satisfy his own appetite he sacrifices his sheep. The phrase, *and the hoofs he shall break*, has received various interpretations. Some have thought that the reference is to the cruel practice of driving the flocks over rough roads; some have interpreted it of the intense greed of the shepherd that manifests itself in the tearing to pieces of the hoofs, so as to secure the last morsel of flesh or fat. Others have thought of the tearing of the hoofs, that the sheep might not wander to far, and thus give the shepherd trouble. The first and third interpretations are possible. In either case the picture is that of extreme cruelty. What a contrast his treatment of the flock forms with what Christ is represented as doing in Isa. 40:11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

This is the kind of shepherd that the Lord will raise up in the land, because the good shepherd was loathed and rejected. The foolish shepherd is not alone but is representative of the whole body of evil rulers. They will be the scourge of the nation. So God has decreed. As oppressors of His people they serve His counsel and the cause of His

covenant. But they mean it not so, but it is in their heart to cut off and destroy Israel. And they shall be held fully accountable. The Lord shall cut them off when they have done serving His purpose.

17. *Woe to the vain shepherd that leaveth the flock!* The Lord will give His people into his hands and use him as His rod to lay His strokes upon His people. Yet the the Lord's will for the foolish shepherd is that he be a good shepherd to the flock, the sheep, feeding, leading, and protecting them and, if need be, giving his life for the sheep. But he afflicts and destroys the flock in his foolishness. For he is a hireling, and not the shepherd. The sheep are not his. And so, seeing the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf catches them and scatters the sheep. He is a hireling and cares not for the sheep. The Lord will reward him according to his works. *The sword shall be upon his arm.* These and the succeeding words should be translated as a curse, *A sword upon his arm, and upon his right eye.* Let his arm which should have shepherded the flock be cut off, and let the eyes which should have selected good pastures for the flock and watched against peril be destroyed. The concluding sentences give assurance that the imprecations shall materialize. *His arm shall be dried up and his eyes shall be darkened.* The one cursing is the Lord whose word never returns to Him void. *Woe to the vain shepherd!* The prediction of his destruction is Gospel to the spiritual seed, seeing that this overthrow spells out their deliverance. The Lord will break His covenant with Israel. He shall be cut off from Judah. Once again the Lord will cover Israel with the cloud of His anger. But only the chaff will be consumed. The remnant will be saved and pass over into the New Testament church.

The good shepherd destroys three shepherds in one month. They must have been godless, profane, desecraters of the covenant. They were cut off through death from the congregation of the Lord. The extermination of all such sinners was required by Israel's law, Ex. 15:15; 30:33; 31:14; Lev. 7:20, etc. It is not improbable that the reference is not to three distinct individuals but to the three classes of rulers—civil authorities, priests and prophets with the scribes and the Pharisees as the successors of the last named. The three orders are mentioned in Jer. 2:8, where it is stated that the priests said not, Where is the Lord? and the shepherds transgressed against the Lord and the prophets prophesied by Baal. The extermination of the three shepherds must then be regarded as an act repeated over and over. The pronoun *I* in the phrase "I cut off" signifies Jehovah. He is the destroyer. This divine working was revealed to the prophet in the form of a vision of the cutting off of the three shepherds in one month. "And my soul was grieved on account of them and their soul also abhorred me." Also the pronouns *my* and *me* indicate the Lord, so that the prophet could have written: Thus saith the Lord, Three shepherds I cut off . . . and my soul was grieved . . . The

(Continued on page 120)

THE HARMONY BETWEEN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND MERCY

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10).

How should man be just with God? is a question which arises from the consciousness of all men. Every individual is made to consider this staggering inquiry. For its very language implies its humanly insuperable difficulty. It is a question which the mind of man has wrestled with from the beginnings of the race to this present age of science and intellectual development without discovering its solution. Philosophy, logic and science have thrown little light on the subject. In fact every attempt, and there have been many, to answer the interrogation apart from the assistance of Divine revelation has resulted in the most miserable failure. Every man knows in the depths of his conscience that God is. He has been created with that testimony in his conscience; he cannot withdraw from it. He knows that God is just. He would like to believe that God is also merciful. But so far from finding comfort there, it is precisely at that point where his problem begins. For he knows, too, that he is a guilty sinner against the just God; and that in and of himself there is "no truth nor mercy" (Hos. 4:1). This makes even more apparent the great disparity between him and God, for "mercy and truth go before *His* face" (Ps. 89:14). Truth will then say to him, "I will by no means clear the guilty." What then can Mercy do? Truth, so far from recommending a way of deliverance, again asserts, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." How then shall mercy, tho it desireth not the death of a sinner, give life? Here now the thinking man perceives a dilemma which neither human nor angelic intelligence can answer! Truth and mercy seem to quarrel and oppose each other; truth to prevent mercy from being exercised, and mercy to keep truth from being vindicated. This means, and so man very readily understands it, that God in all justice must make the sinner miserable; but according to His mercy He must relieve that misery without the execution of the least justice. How, it is asked, can God be good and kind if He is angry and punishes? And so some to resolve this question have identified justice with benevolence, claiming that punishment is not penal but rehabilitating. Otherwise, if in court the judge would be lenient and show mercy, justice must be overruled. The accused is actually worthy of a just punishment, but what the judge in effect does is to bless him in his sin. In the interest of this position appeal is made to Jas. 2:13, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." But may a judge be regarded as merciful who pardons vicious criminals? Is it mercy to excuse the violent? Would it be mercy to make them at ease in their sin? How much mercy would it be showing to society to release all criminals from our penitentiaries? Not all showing of kindness is necessarily mercy. Is it kind to spare a spoiled child? Was it just of Pilate to crucify Jesus? Was it merciful of him to release

Barabbas? Can it be said in truth that Pilate knew either of those virtues?

The world believes that God is merciful because they are not worse than others, and that God will certainly take this factor into account and pardon them. God did not make men to destroy them: surely in mercy He will save them. All this the world believes, but does so at the expense of the truth. The truth is hardly mentioned, and no place is given to righteousness. The world does not let mercy have her husband. They put God's attributes into conflict by their defense, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." The simple meaning of this Scripture is that the unmerciful shall find no mercy in the judgment at the last day. Jesus had made this clear when He stated that the last judgment shall be without mercy to him who did not show mercy (Mt. 25:41-45). But the merciful, made so in Christ by the power and gift of God's mercy, will be able to boast in the face of that judgment! Boasting in the Cross of Christ by which alone we may stand in the judgment and be delivered from it and even by it! No, mercy does not deny truth, but is maintained by the truth. Mercy is not lawless. (Ps. 18:25-27). The Cross proves this.

But what do these virtues specifically mean? We believe that justice is that virtue of God according to which He is absolutely good, knows and loves Himself as such, and wills and maintains Himself as the only Good. Mercy is the goodness of God according to which He is the Most Blessed One, wills to be such, and desires to so bless His creatures as to make them enjoy eternal bliss. Concerning righteousness we may say, God is. That first. And that which *is* ought to be if it is the only thing (One) that can be. God is, essentially and independently. God ought to be for He exists necessarily and absolutely. And there is no one else. He is the only infinite being that can infinitely be. He alone acts in harmony with His own infinite being. That is righteousness. Righteousness and mercy, for this reason, could never be in conflict. For God is one. His simplicity cannot be denied. Nor can His attributes be separated. God is His attributes. His mercy to His people is a righteous mercy. His justice to them is always merciful. He is at once King of righteousness and King of peace. He never acts at one time according to mercy, and at another time according to justice. He acts in harmony with both at all times. When He punishes in justice, it is not at the expense of mercy. When He pardons the malefactor, it is not at the expense of justice. Grace is always shown on a principle agreeable to righteousness. It is true that where sin did abound, grace did much more abound. But grace is never administered in defiance of righteousness, but "grace reigns thru righteousness (Rom. 5:21). God is light as well as love.

The text which fits in so appropriately with our theme speaks of truth and righteousness; mercy and peace. The former especially declare what God is; the latter what He gives. Truth operates in righteousness. Mercy comes in peace. The one cannot be where the other is not. They stand

in relation to one another as foundation and superstructure. Righteousness is the foundation of peace; truth the foundation of mercy. Mercy makes the promise. Truth keeps it. Thus, righteousness and mercy are not strangers. They go well together. So with truth and peace. These are four attributes of God's goodness which divided themselves naturally into two and two. They pair off well. They are of one disposition. The one couple favors us: mercy and peace. The other, truth and righteousness, may seem against us, actually never is, for God *swears mercy* to His elect in His *truth* (Ps. 89:49, Heb.). These attributes are most clearly seen in God's work of salvation. Mercy is seen in the promise; truth in its fulfilment; righteousness in the manner of its fulfilment; peace in its results. They are all harmonized first within the being of God, in His own inter-trinitarian covenant life. They meet in the covenant of grace, in the incarnate Word, in the written Word, at the Cross, at the conversion of every sinner, and in the completion of the church in heaven.

It is therefore objectively clear that the Scripture does not make an antithetical distinction between the demands of love. Scripture does not make the sharp contrast often drawn by philosophers between the righteousness and the mercy of God. Justice and saving activity are not antithetical, but harmonious principles in God. He is a just God *and* a Saviour (Is. 45:21). Accordingly, if we make any infractions of the principle of love to God or to the neighbor, we commit an injustice. Hence the conduct of the good Samaritan was that of love and conformity to the law of God. But both the priest and the Levite were guilty of injustice and transgression of the law. Their "mercy" vanished as a morning cloud, and as the early dew (Hos. 6:4, Heb.). Of them the Lord "desired mercy, and not sacrifice" (6:6); but according to Jesus they never learned the meaning of this (Mt. 9:13). However the Samaritan was conformed to the principle, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in mercy" (Hos. 10:12). Jesus never thought of these concepts in the vague, sentimental and abstract way the world does. He always thought of them in harmony with the being and nature of God, and according to the revelation of Scripture. He never presented mercy as mere "good-naturedness," which is the highest view many have of it; but He teaches that mercy is that devotion to God which produces true love to the neighbor, and which sometimes requires the taking of extreme measures of justice in order to prevent the spread of evil. And the Christian has so learned Christ, for he is taught to pray, "Of Thy *mercy* cut off mine enemies" (Ps. 143:12). Justice is not devoid of mercy, for it has two aspects, one which effects the deliverance of the righteous, and the other which destroys the wicked. If we would experience God's mercy we are to appeal to God's righteousness. To His righteousness we may turn, as David did, for all of God's grace and mercy: His deliverance (Ps. 31:1), for leading (5:8), for answer to prayer (143:1). So, righteousness is not only connected with punishment and retribution (e.g.,

Ps. 7:11; Is. 5:16, etc.), but is inseparably associated with other attributes which express the gracious attitude of God to His people, as for example, lovingkindness (Ps. 36:10), faithfulness (40:10), grace (116:5), and goodness (145:7).

God is Judge of all the earth who will do right. His people take comfort in the realization that He is Judge of all men, for as such He is their Protector and Avenger. Even in the latter capacity God displays mercy, for the casting of the reprobate into the lake of fire will be an act of mercy. Eternal punishment, from God's point of view is justice, for by it He vindicates His own honor, holiness and righteousness. From the side of the wicked it is an act of equity, an impartial distribution of justice, for they are given exactly what they justly deserve. From the standpoint of the righteous (the elect chosen in Christ's righteousness), it is mercy. To be entirely free of the presence of the wicked will be a mercy. What a mercy that "there shall in no wise enter into" the New Jerusalem "anything that defileth, neither worketh abomination, or maketh a lie (Rev. 21:27)! Philosophy vainly tortures itself for an answer to the question concerning the harmony between justice and mercy. The Word of God knows nothing of any discord between them. Both of these graces are in harmony with forgiveness. What modern school of thought can pretend to such excellence! One apostle ascribes forgiveness to God's grace: "We have redemption thru His blood, forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His *grace*" (Eph. 1:7). Another apostle ascribes forgiveness to God's justice: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). You will also notice in these two passages that forgiveness is based on atonement thru the shedding of Christ's blood; in the one reference being made to "redemption thru His blood," and in the other, to "the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin." From the point of view of Divine Revelation, forgiveness thru the redemption of Christ in one place is ascribed to *grace*, and in the very next breath it is spoken of as a manifestation of *justice*. "Being justified freely by His *grace*, thru the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation thru faith in His blood, to declare His *righteousness* for the remission of sins" (Rom. 3:24, 25). The idea of an essential incongruity between justice and mercy, or between righteousness and grace is utterly unknown to true (Reformed) Christianity. The so called wise and prudent of this world fail to grasp the simplicity, beauty and harmony of this truth; chiefly because God does not reveal it unto them (Mt. 11:25), but also because they do not view their concepts thru the Cross and in its light. There is also our great failure whenever we do not see light. But since Christ has come down from heaven, and on the Cross made complete satisfaction for our sins, we sing: "*Now* truth agrees with mercy mild, *Now* land and peace are reconciled; Behold the truth from earth arise, With justice shining from the skies."

R.C.H.

IN HIS FEAR

Spiritually Sensitive

(2)

How sensitive are you?

We mean, how sensitive are you spiritually?

Every regenerated child of God is spiritually sensitive. He is that by virtue of the new life that God has implanted in him. He is that because the Spirit dwells in him. But there are degrees of sensitivity. And there is not only a becoming dull and of becoming increasingly insensitive but also a growth in the sharpness and power of that sensitivity. Of that increase in spiritual sensitivity we wish to say a few things later. At the moment we are busy with that sad state in which the keenness of that sensitivity lessens and we are no longer "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil," Hebrews 5:14b.

The thermostat in your home or place of work is a device that is made to be sensitive to changes in the temperature of the room. Before your body can feel the drop in the room temperature, this little device has been affected and moves to close the switch necessary for causing the furnace to send forth more heat. The microphone in the radio studio or that plugs into your tape recorder is delicately made and finely adjusted to be sensitive to the sound waves. It will "pick up" sounds the human ear may not notice. A piano that may sound to your ear as being "in tune" when heard through the sensitive microphone of the radio studio or your tape recorder will make plain to you, by the wavy pulsing of the three strings at different vibrations, that the piano is out of tune. Your camera has a sensitive film in it that will make a good picture for you only if you expose it for the proper length of time to the existing light. So sensitive are some of the color films that exposure of one twenty-fifth of a second instead of one fiftieth will make a decided change in the colors, so that the printed picture will not be true to life. And to insure proper exposure of this sensitive film you may resort to a light meter with its photo-electric cell which measures the existing light and causes the needle to move back and forth at the slightest variation in the light falling upon it. And so we could continue concerning smell and taste; and there are men whose smell and taste is so highly developed that they can label correctly smells and tastes which you and I cannot detect.

Spiritually it is no different.

However we do well to consider that if we say no more, it must be conceded that all men are spiritually sensitive. The truth and the lie have their effect on believer and unbeliever alike. Sin and righteousness do not go unobserved by the unregenerated anymore than they do by the regener-

ated. It is not simply a question as to whether we are spiritually sensitive or not. All men are to one degree or another. The important question, therefore, is, What effect does it have upon us when we taste, touch, smell, hear or see spiritual things? That is where the difference comes in and where the life of a child of God comes to manifestation.

Listen once to the psalmist: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law," Psalm 119:136. Or take note of this significant statement in Luke 4:28, "And all they in the synagogue (Nazareth), when they heard these things, were filled with wrath." What brought rivers of waters of the eyes of the psalmist gave great delight and joy to those of whom he speaks. The same things were experienced by both the psalmist and those of whom he writes but with different, yea, with opposite reactions. The men gathered in the synagogue at Nazareth heard the Word of God. Their reaction to it was to be so filled with hatred that they sought to kill the Christ. That was a spiritual reaction, a reaction to spiritual things. The question, therefore, is, What sensation do we have when we come in contact with sin and righteousness, with the truth and with the lie? Do we immediately respond with delight when we hear the truth and immediately shudder with dislike and spiritual pain when we hear the lie proclaimed? Do the things of righteousness make us happy and fill us with song, while the things of wickedness bring tears to our eyes and an ache in our hearts?

Still worse, are we rapidly losing our hatred of the things of the world and becoming calloused and insensible to wickedness and the lie? Is there so little of the fear of the Lord in us that with the unregenerated we can laugh about sin, be filled with wrath when we hear men defend the truth of God's glory and with these unregenerated turn up our noses and flee from that which is good and true?

We live in a wicked age. Powerful forces are at work — and have been since the day God brought man upon the face of this earth — to turn us from the good and true. On every side the world, according to the plan of the Evil One himself, is pressing in upon the church to seek to dull the senses of the children of God so that they lose their awareness of evil and the lie and walk even as the world. How necessary! that prayer of Paul for the Philippians: "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ," Philippians 1:9, 10. How revealing! that statement of Jesus, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8.

This increasing insensibility and callousness of that which is spiritually evil and untrue may even be seen in the development of the world itself into more and more boldness to do and say that which is unseemly, wicked and of the lie. The boldness of Sabbath desecration, the full — lettered spelling out of cursing and swearing in print — over against a former

restraint manifested in only indicating the words by their first and last letters, the glorification of adultery and divorce, to mention only a few things which merely skim the surface of the sad situation, give clear evidence of the forces round about us which seek to drag us down to that same level.

And we . . . ?

How far are we from these same things?

We tremble inwardly when we come in contact with clear manifestations that in our own circles, among us who claim to rejoice to be considered as those who partake of Christ's anointing, there is a growing lack of sensitivity over against wickedness and the lie to cause us to react with inward pain and the shudder of abhorance. Things do not hurt us spiritually, as they formerly did.

Our young men, and those of us who spent months—if not years—among the ungodly during their stint in the armed services of our country know how the profanity, the blasphemy, the cursing and swearing of the children of the devil at first cut right through them. Father's name was being dragged in the mire; and we felt it. But that wore off; and today it does not make quite as deep a wound as it did. We still hear it. We still know that it is wrong. But our reaction inwardly is not as violent as it was.

We tremble inwardly, too, when we consider the potentialities of that in-itself wonderful invention that is so well nigh entirely in the service of Satan and his viper's brood, the television set. We tremble as it more and more takes the place of our "assembling of ourselves together," (Hebrews 10:25) in Men's, Ladies' and Young People's societies to study the Word of God. A "good" program for the flesh has power over us. It holds us and makes us despise these better things of God's kingdom. But we tremble even more when we learn what these "good" programs do to our spiritual sensitivity and how they wear down our feeling, our taste, our smell of that which is good in God's sight. As Paul writes in that same epistle to the Philippians, "Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

We tremble when we consider how close Hollywood and the movie have now been brought to us and to our children. Not too many years ago our churches took a definite stand over against movie attendance. We recall how several, who, in our group, appeared before the consistory to make confession of our faith, were asked whether they attended the movie. We were spiritually sensitive in those days as churches and considered movie attendance to be incompatible with confession of Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

What of today?

Perish even the thought And yet that thought comes constantly before our minds: Will the day soon come when we will no longer think it in order to ask such a question? Will we have to cease asking that question because the elders and deacons themselves go to the movie in their own living rooms with their children? Have we come to the point where we are so insensible to the wickedness of Hollywood and of the world, so insensitive to what the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, of which John speaks in I John 2:16, and which he declares are in the world, that what we formerly condemned in no uncertain terms, we are now going to allow? Have we come to those days of which Paul speaks, the perilous times of the last days, when men clearly show that they are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God"? Is that thing creeping into our churches too?

Is it simply that we feel uncomfortable about these things only before the eyes of men? We do not like to have men know that we go to the movie in our own living rooms. We do not like to have men know that we and our children are far better acquainted with Hollywood and its "stars" than we are with the Scriptures and our confessions? Children have a way of talking out of the house, and by their speech often reveal how well all these godless heroes of the world are known in the home. But if that is all that bothers us we are not spiritually sensitive. If, while the Living God Himself sees us in our living rooms going to Hollywood for entertainment and the satisfaction of our flesh, we dare to go ahead and do these things, the fear of the Lord is not in us!

We deem the question important: How spiritually sensitive are you?

We also have a word of advice. For God's sake heed it!

The Rev. R. Veldman some years ago wrote an exceptional pamphlet for the Sunday School Mission Publishing Association on *The Movie*. By all means read it AGAIN! If you never did, send for a free copy. We are sorry that we do not have the latest address of the Association. We trust that if you send to the Sunday School Mission Publishing Association in care of the Reformed Free Publishing Association, P. O. Box 881, Madison Square Station, Grand Rapids 7, Michigan, your request will be forwarded to the proper parties. We trust also that the association has an abundant supply; and we were not asked to advertise their brochure. We do it in His fear.

Give it to your children to read. And KEEP a copy next to the switch of your television set. I assure you that it will not do harm to the appearance of your set. Rather will it give your set the touch of His fear.

And may "your love abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment: That ye may approve the things that are excellent," and, of course, that means disapprove and judge as wicked the world and the lust that is therein.

Do all things in His fear!

J.A.H.

Contending For The Faith

The Church and the Sacraments

VIEWS DURING THE THIRD PERIOD (750-1517 A.D.)

THE SUPREMACY OF THE POPE

INNOCENT AND THE PAPACY (1198-1216 A.D.)

The interdict at once took effect, casting a deep gloom over the whole nation. The church bells remained unring. The church buildings were closed. The usual ministrations of the priesthood remained unperformed. The great doors of the monasteries were left unopened, and worshippers were only admitted by secret passages. Penance was inflicted upon the innocent as well as the erring. Women, after childbirth, presented themselves for purification outside the church walls. The dead were refused burial in consecrated ground, and the service of the priest was withheld.

John, although he had seen Philip Augustus bend under a similar censure, affected unconcern, and retaliated by confiscating the property of the higher clergy and convents and turning the inmates out of doors with little more than the clothes on their backs. The concubines of the priests were forcibly removed and purchased their ransom at heavy expense. A Welshman accused of murdering a priest was ordered by the king dismissed with the words, "Let him go, he has killed my enemy." The relatives of the fugitive bishops were thrown into prison.

In 1209 Innocent added to the interdict the solemn sentence of the personal anathema against the king. The bishops who remained in England did not dare publish it, "becoming like dumb dogs not daring to bark." John persisted in his defiant mood, continued to eke out his vengeance upon the innocent, and sought to divert the attention of his subjects by negotiations and wars with Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Geoffrey, archdeacon of Norwich, who had been in his service and now felt he could no longer so remain, was thrown into prison, and there allowed to languish to death, covered from shoulders to feet with a cope of lead (a cloke of lead). Another example of John's unspeakable cruelty was his treatment of a rich Jew of Bristol upon whom he had made a demand of 10,000 marks. On his refusing, John ordered ten teeth to be taken out, one each day. The executioner dentist began with the molars. The sufferer held out till he had been served this way seven times. He then yielded, giving up the money, which, as Matthew Paris says, he might have done seven days before, thus saving himself of his agony.

One more weapon lay in the pope's power. In 1212 John was declared unworthy of this throne, and deposed. His subjects were absolved from the obligation of allegiance, and Christian princes were summoned to execute the sentence and take the crown. Gregory VII had resorted to the same precarious measure with Henry IV and been defeated. The bull

was published at Soissons by Langton and the exiled bishops. Philip of France was quick to respond to the summons and collected an army. But the success of the English fleet checked the fear of an immediate invasion of the realm.

The nation's suspense, however, was taxed almost beyond the point of endurance. The king's arbitrary taxes and his amours with the wives and daughters of the barons aroused their determined hatred. Pressed from different sides, John suddenly had a meeting at Dover with the pope's special envoy, the subdeacon Pandulf. The hermit, Peter of Wakefield, had predicted that within three days of Ascension Day the king would cease to reign. Perhaps not without dread of the prediction, and not without irony to checkmate the plans of the French monarch, John gave in his submission, and on May 15, 1213, on bended knee, delivered up to Pandulf his kingdom and consented to receive it back again as a papal fief. Five months later the act was renewed in the presence of Nicolas, cardinal-archbishop of Tusculum, who had been sent to England with legatine authority. In the document which John signed and swore to keep, he blasphemously represented himself as imitating him "who humbled himself for us even unto death." This notorious paper ran as follows:—"We do freely offer and grant to God and the holy Apostles Peter and Paul and the holy Roman Church, our mother, and to our Lord the pope Innocent and his Catholic successors, the whole realm of England and the whole realm of Ireland with all their rights and appurtenances for the remission of our sins and those of all our race, as well quick as dead; and from now receiving back and holding these, as a feudal dependant, from God and the Roman Church, do and swear fealty for them to our Lord the pope Innocent, and his Catholic successors and the Roman Church." (Ignorance of the people and the mortal fear in which the people regarded the terrible interdict, by which an entire nation was placed under the ban, enabled Innocent, of course, to win in his struggle with King John of England. The victory, of course, was really empty. It was impossible of course, for any pope to put an entire nation under the curse of God. Later the pope would give the German reformer, Martin Luther, the same treatment. Then, in connection with the German reformer, this ban of excommunication did not work. Why not? Because the Lord had given Luther in his heart the unspeakable joy and blessedness of the forgiveness of sin and the reformer knew that the words of the pope at Rome were nothing but idleness and vanity.—H.V.)

John bound himself and England for all time to pay, in addition to the usual Peter's pence, 1000 marks annually to the Apostolic see, 700 for England and 300 for Ireland. The king's signature was witnessed by the archbishop of Dublin, the bishop of Norwich, and eleven noblemen. John also promised to reimburse the outlawed bishops, the amount finally settled upon being 40,000 marks.

Rightly does Matthew Paris call this the "detestable and lamentable charter." But although national abasement could scarcely further go, it is probable that the sense of shame

with which after generations have regarded John's act was only imperfectly felt by that generation of Englishmen. As a political measure it succeeded, bringing as it did keen disappointment to the warlike king of France. The interdict was revoked in 1214, after having been in force more than six years.

The victory of Innocent was complete. But in after years the remembrance of the dishonorable transaction encouraged steadfast resistance to the papal rule in England. The voice of Robert Grosseteste was lifted up against it, and Wyclif became champion of the king who refused to be bound by John's pledges. Writing to one of John's successors, the emperor Frederick II called upon him to remember the humiliation of his predecessor John and with other Christian princes resist the intolerable encroachments of the Apostolic see.

Innocent and Magna Charta.

An original manuscript of the Magna Chart, shrivelled with age and fire, but still showing the royal seal, is preserved in the British Museum. A facsimile is given in the official edition of the Statutes of the Realm.

In his treatment of the Great Charter, the venerable instrument of English popular rights, Innocent, with monarchical instinct, turned to the side of John and against the cause of popular liberty. Stephen Langton, who had released John from the ban of excommunication, espoused the popular cause, thereby incurring the condemnation of the pope. The agreement into which the barons entered to resist the king's despotism was treated by him with delay and subterfuge. Rebellion and civil war followed. As he had before been unscrupulous in his treatment of the Church, so now to win support he made fulsome religious promises he probably had no intention of keeping. To the clergy he granted freedom of election in the case of all prelates, greater and less. He also made a vow to lead a crusade. After the battle of Bouvines, John found himself forced to return to England, and was compelled by the organized strength of the barons to meet them at Runnymede, an island in the Thames near Windsor, where he signed and swore to keep the Magna Charta, June 15, 1215.

This document, with the Declaration of Independence, the most important contract in the civil history of the English-speaking peoples, meant defined law as against uncertain tradition and the arbitrary will of the monarch. It was the first act of the peoples, nobles, and Church in combination, a compact of Englishmen with the king. By it the sovereign agreed that justice should be denied or delayed to no one, and that trial should be by the peers of the accused. No taxes were to be levied without the vote of the common council of the realm, whose meetings were fixed by rule. The single clause bearing directly upon the Church confirmed the freedom of ecclesiastical elections.

After his first paroxysms of rage, when he gnawed sticks and straw as a madman, John called to his aid Innocent, on

the ground that he had attacked his seal under compulsion. In fact, he had yielded to the barons with no intention of keeping his oath. The pope made the fatal mistake of taking sides with perjured royalty against the reasonable demands of the nation. In two bulls he solemnly released John from his oath, declaring that "the enemy of the human race had, by his crafty arts, excited the barons against him." He asserted that the "wicked audacity of the barons tended to the contempt of the Apostolic see, the detriment of kingly prerogative, the disgrace of the English nation, and the endangering of the cross." He praised John for his Christian submission to the will of the supreme head of Christendom, and the pledge of annual tribute, and for his vow to lead a crusade. As for the document itself, he "utterly reprobated and condemned it" as "a low and base instrument, yea, truly wicked and deserving to be reprobated by all, especially because the king's assent was secured by force." Another ground given by the pope for annulling the document was that he as England's overlord had not been consulted before the king's signature was attached. Upon pain of excommunication he forbade its observance by the king, and pronounced it "null and void for all times." This language is the strongest. Some excuse has been found by advocates of papal infallibility for this fierce sentence upon the ground that Innocent was condemning the mode by which the king's consent was obtained. Innocent adduces three considerations, the conspiracy of the barons to force the king, their disregard of his Crusading vow, and the neglect of all parties to consult the pope as overlord. He condemns, it is true, the document as a document, and it has been said the contents were not aimed at. Innocent's mistake and official offence were that, passing by entirely, the merits of the Charter, he should have espoused the despotism of the iniquitous king.

The sentence of excommunication which Innocent fulminated against the refractory barons, Langton refused to publish. For his disobedience the pope suspended him from his office, Nov. 4, 1215, and he was not allowed to resume it till 1219, when Innocent had been in his grave three years. London, which supported the popular cause, was placed under the interdict, and the prelates of England who took the popular side Innocent denounced, "as worse than Saracens, worse than those open enemies of the cross." About the same time at John's request, Innocent annulled the election of Simon Langton, Stephen's brother, to the see of York.

The barons, in self-defence, called upon the Dauphin of France to accept the crown. He landed in England, but was met by the papal ban. During the struggle Innocent died, but his policy was continued by his successor. Three months later, Oct. 19, 1216, John died at Newark, after suffering the loss of his goods in crossing the Wash. He was thrown into a fever, but the probable cause of his death was excess in eating and drinking. He was buried at his own request in Worcester cathedral. In his last moments he received the sacrament and commended his children to the protection of the pope, who had stood by him in his last conflict. H.V.

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

OF THE CORRUPTION OF MAN, HIS CONVERSION TO GOD, AND THE MANNER THEREOF

Article 17. As the almighty operation of God, whereby he prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means, by which God of his infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert his influence, so also the before-mentioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise excludes, or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration, and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles, and teachers who succeeded them, piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to his glory, and the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the gospel in the exercise of the Word, sacraments and discipline; so even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what he of his good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is his work advanced; to whom alone all the glory both of means, and of their saving fruit and efficacy is forever due. Amen.

In the above translation of this article we offer the following corrections: 1) "whereby he prolongs and supports this our natural life," should be: "whereby he produces and sustains this our natural life." (2) "of his infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert his influence," should be: "of his infinite wisdom and goodness has willed to exercise this his power." 3) "by which we are regenerated" should be the active: "by which he regenerates us." 4) "sacred precepts of the gospel" should be "holy admonitions of the gospel." The same term is correctly translated "admonitions" later in the article. 5) The phrase "in the church" is misplaced. It should be so placed that the sentence reads: ". . . be it far from either instructors or instructed in the church to presume to tempt God . . ." 6) The last sentence should read: "For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our office, in this same measure is the blessing of the God who worketh in us wont to be the more eminent, and his work then proceeds most favorably. To whom alone all the glory, both of the means and of their saving fruit and efficacy is due forever. Amen."

It is not difficult at all to discern the false charge of the Arminians which this paragraph is designed to answer. It is a charge that is as a rule connected with the charge answered in the preceding article. The same opponents who charge that the Reformed doctrine of the effectual calling

reduces men to stocks and blocks also charge that in Reformed thought there is no room left for the admonitions of Holy Writ. And not infrequently they even charge that in actual fact these admonitions are not preached, though the truth is that these admonitions are not proclaimed in the Arminian sense and with an Arminian slant. One can readily understand the connection between these two charges also. It stands to reason that if man is no more a rational, moral creature, but a stock and block, there is no point in proclaiming an admonition to him, for he is in his very nature not adapted to any process of admonition. No more than one would admonish a tree, no more would one admonish a man who is a stock and block. Neither the one nor the other is capable from a psychological point of view of being admonished. Admonition certainly presupposes intellectual and volitional capacity to be admonished. And so the Arminians actually charged that in the Reformed system of thought there was no room left for admonition.

A few preliminary observations are in place before we consider the article itself.

In the first place, it should certainly be granted that the admonitions of the Word of God are important. Even if we consider their importance only from the point of view of quantity, and do not consider the content of the admonitions, a very superficial study of Scripture will reveal at once that its admonitions, both in the Old and New Testaments, occupy a large place. How many an admonition is found in a book like Proverbs; and how frequently the people of God are solemnly admonished and warned in the prophets. The Lord Jesus Himself, according to the gospel narratives, often admonishes His people. And the various epistles of the New Testament invariably contain a goodly portion of warnings and admonitions. Hence, it may also be granted at once that the charge of the Arminians, if true, would be serious indeed. This charge alone would be sufficient reason to discredit the entire Reformed doctrine concerning man's conversion.

In the second place, it should be seen that the admonitory words of Scripture occupy a strategic position in relation to the whole of the Word of God. If the need and importance of admonitions is denied, and if even the possibility of admonitions is excluded, the effect is necessarily that the whole of the Word of God is excluded as to its need and possibility. Then also those parts of Scripture which we would denote as "doctrinal" and those parts which contain the promises of God would be excluded. For after all, in general it may be said that always the calling admonition of the Word of God, whether expressed or implied, is: Repent and believe. Whenever the precious promises of God are proclaimed to the church, the people of God are exhorted to believe those promises and to cling to them. This factor makes the charge of the Arminians still more serious. And we may infer that the fathers had this element in mind too when they penned this article. For they speak not only of admonitions, but also of the entire gospel, of the apostles'

instruction of God's people concerning the grace of God, and of the fact that by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel the people of God are kept in the exercise of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline.

In the third place, we may observe that especially in the light of the fact that the entire gospel, and not only its admonitions, is at stake here, the realities of life and history truly make the Arminian charge absurd on the very face of it. For who, pray, in the entire history of the Reformed churches has denied the necessity of the preaching of the Word, of the whole counsel of God, including its admonitions? Or who in the name of the Reformed truth has ever practiced this denial? The Arminians knew very well that their charge was false. They certainly knew very well that Reformed preachers preached the Word of God diligently. And they were very well aware of the fact that from Reformed pulpits the admonitions of God's Word were not silenced. They followed wilfully what is called today "the big lie technique," namely, that if you repeat a lie often enough and vehemently enough, and din it monotonously into the ears of men, you will finally get them to accept that lie as truth.

And finally, we must not overlook the fact that the Arminians themselves were guilty of the very charge which they brought against the fathers. This, as we have said before, is characteristic of heretics. And it is true in this case. For under what system of doctrine could the preaching of the Word (again: including its admonitions) be more senseless and useless and fruitless than in a view which leaves the outcome of that preaching and exhortation to the free will of a dead sinner? How hopeless must become the outlook of a preacher under such circumstances. Is that very hopelessness, the awareness of the complete and utter uselessness and fruitlessness of the preaching, perhaps the occasion of all the wild rantings, the impassioned pleadings, the desperate begging of so many Arminian evangelists today?

As far as the content of the article itself is concerned, we may observe that it speaks of regeneration, and that too, of a *mediate* regeneration. In fact, the language of this article has been used to support the view that regeneration is always mediate, that is, takes place through means, and is in no sense immediate, that the doctrine of immediate regeneration is not Reformed. Thus, for example, the Rev. T. Bos, in his explanation of the Canons, page 175, writes in connection with this article: "Het gaat dus tegen de leer der Gereformeerden in, wanneer de wedergeboorte wordt voorgesteld als onmiddellijk, zonder het gebruik des Evangelies. Uitdrukkelijk en onwidersprekelijk wordt hier geleerd, dat het Evangelie een 'zaad der wedergeboorte' is. En dat juist om te bewijzen, dat God in de wedergeboorte — middellijk werkt. Eerst daarna wordt gezegd, dat het Evangelie ook middellijk dienst doet, om het leven, dat Hij voortgebracht heeft, te onderhouden. De dienst des Woords, of de prediking des

Evangelies is niet alleen bij den voortgang noodig, om het geestelijke leven te onderhouden en te sterken: dus niet alleen tot heiligmaking, en om tot *bewustzijn* des geloofs te komen, maar ook tot de wedergeboorte en tot het geloof.

"Het Evangelie, of het gebruik des Evangelies, is dus 'zaad' en 'spijze.'

"God werkt in beide: in het wekken des levens en in de onderhouding des levens. Niet den mensch de eer. God alleen. Desniettenstaande mogen wij niet wijzer zijn dan God, die middelen wil gebruiken. Wij mogen niet scheiden wat God vereenigd heeft. Wil Hij door de vermaningen des Evangelies de genade *mededeelen*, dan mogen wij niet spreken van onmiddellijke mededeeling, maar ons houden aan het voorbeeld der Apostelen en Leeraars, 'die hen zijn opgevolgd,' dus die na hen werkten in de gemeenten, welke Apostelen en Leeraars de middelen hebben bediend tot mededeeling der genade en des levens, en tot opbouwning des geloofs en tot onderhoud des levens."

Now without entering into a lengthy discussion of the entire controversy concerning mediate or immediate regeneration, we may make a few pertinent observations here. Those who insist on mediate regeneration, the above-cited Rev. Bos among them, maintain that all grace as it is applied to the sinner by the Holy Spirit, including the grace of regeneration, is mediate, and insist that the Holy Ghost always works through the means of the preaching of the gospel. For them the very first work of God's grace in the application of salvation to the heart of the elect sinner is the calling. And it follows that according to this view the preaching of the Word is necessarily first. Those, however, who maintain that regeneration is immediate hold to the view that the work of regeneration is the first work of God in the application of the work of salvation to the heart of the child of God, and that this first work of God takes place immediately, that is, by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, without the means of the preaching of the Word. In the second place, while it may perhaps be granted that all Reformed theologians oppose the doctrine of the Arminians, which present the work of regeneration as the effect of the external preaching of the gospel and of moral suasion, and that all Reformed theologians emphasize that regeneration is wholly the work of God, effected irresistibly, without the will of man, it is to be regretted that the proper distinctions are not clearly made. This is also the main fault of the quotation we made above. Our *Canons* do not differentiate between regeneration in the narrower and in the broader sense, but simply include in the work of regeneration the entire work of God which we denote the calling as well as the very first implanting of the new life in the heart of the elect. They include, as is very plain from a study of all the articles preceding this one, the entire work of conversion under the term "regeneration." And to be sure, if one includes all this in the term, and then views the

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DECENCY and ORDER

Article 31

Introduction

One of the most frequently discussed and controversial articles of our present Church Order is the one we are about to discuss. Volumes have been written concerning it. The various differences of interpretation have played no small part in the struggle and "splitting" of the Reformed Churches, both in The Netherlands and in our own country. From the church political aspect, the history of 1953 in our own churches found both sides attempting to use Article 31 to bolster and defend their positions. Hence, our personal interest and, we believe the interest of the readers of *The Standard Bearer*, in this article is more than an academic one. We are concerned about this matter because it involves fundamental principles of the truth with which no church or individual can afford to trifle!

The article in our present church order reads as follows:

"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 with the articles of the church order, so long as they are not changed by a general synod."

To this article our churches, through the Synod of 1944, have added the following which is substantially the same as is maintained by the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands:

"Appeal to a major gathering against any decision of an ecclesiastical body must be made upon the immediately following meeting of the body to which appeal is directed, at the same time giving notification to the secretary of the body by whose decision he is aggrieved. Of every judgment rendered in the case, those concerned shall receive a notification."

It is also of interest to note that the Committee for Church Order Revision of the Christian Reformed Church, in its report to Synod this past year, proposes some change in this article. In the proposed revision Article 31 becomes Article 49. It reads as follows:

"If anyone is persuaded that a decision of an assembly is contrary to God's Word or the Church Order, he shall have the right to address a protest to the assembly next in order, or, regarding decisions by the general synod, to the next general synod. Furthermore, if anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly. Whatever is agreed upon regarding protests and appeals shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order. The question whether or not a specific deci-

sion or ruling is in conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order is ultimately decided by the general synod."

It should be noted here that besides the additions and interpretations that are incorporated into this revision (to which we will come back later), the provision of the original article regarding "majority vote" is elided altogether. It may be argued that this is implied but, nonetheless, it is not expressly stated as in the original. We are informed that this entire revision has been submitted by the Synod to the various Classes and Consistories for further study and in the light of reports submitted by these bodies Synod will decide on the matter next year. We wonder whether there will be objections to this procedure as, for example, there were in our circles when in 1950 the matter of the Declaration of Principles was handled in this way, i.e., submitted by Synod to the churches for approval.

To the Rev. C. Hanko we are indebted for a translation of the proposed revision of Article 31 by the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (Synodical). It appears in his article entitled, "Should Article 31 be Revised and/or Clarified?," in Vol. 32, pg. 161 of *The Standard Bearer*. Whether this proposal has been formally adopted by the Synod there or not; whether it is still in the process of discussion and study or whether it has been rejected, I cannot at present say. At any rate the proposal, which would become Article 35 instead of Article 31 in the revision, reads:

"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."

Concerning this proposed revision, the Rev. C. Hanko adds: "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."

The latter Rev. Hanko advocates, pointing out that there are also other articles in our church order that could be clarified by the use of a foot-note rather than subjecting them to radical change. He cites that this method has many arguments in its favor and then he proceeds to offer for con-

sideration the following foot-note or appendage to the present Art. 31: "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 broadcast gathering has decided on the matter."

We wonder what the ultimate effect of all this revising and alteration of the church order will be within the circle of Reformed Churches. It is lamentable that a gigantic task such as this is cannot be done through a united effort. With each group or denomination going its own way, we fear that the end result will be church-political confusion in which the original Church Order that has so ably stood the test for centuries will be lost. Although, therefore, we would favor limited revision and more broadly some necessary clarification of the present Church Order, we would also strongly urge retaining as much as possible the form of the original. As the Dutch would say, "Alle verandering is geene verbetering!"

* * * *

From this all, it should be evident, however, that the principal subject of this article is "the right of every member of the church to appeal decisions of the ecclesiastical bodies with which they are or may be aggrieved, believing that such decisions are contrary to the Word of God or the established rules of the church order." It would, however, be an oversimplification of the matter if we would limit the material of this article to this one thing, important as it is! This basic right of church members involves other things, such as, for example, the mutual responsibility on the part of all members of the church for those decisions which are made by the ecclesiastical assemblies. When this is not considered, the need to exercise the basic right is not felt. Often this is the case but it does not devoid the responsibility. When the church makes decisions regarding doctrines or such practical matters as Unions, Lodges, Divorce, Woman Suffrage, etc., these are not matters to be preserved on file in some hidden, ecclesiastical records but they are decisions — right or wrong — true or false — concerning the faith and life of the church and for which every member of the church is accountable before God! The underlying idea of Article 31 establishing the right of members to appeal or protest all wrong decisions involves the solemn duty of every member to know, to be thoroughly acquainted with the ecclesiastical Acts and to insist, through appeal, that every evil be rectified. It is a sad reflection upon the consciousness of this duty when members lack even that interest to procure for themselves a copy of the annual Acts of Synod. Certainly there must be concern over the welfare of Zion! Ignorance is never an excuse and no member of the church can be justified of the sin of living in silent submission under the false "regula fidei et vitae" established by ecclesiastical decisions which are contrary to the holy Word of God. No member can live under anti-

Scriptural regulations of the church without reaping the inevitable consequences of the just judgments of God Who punishes sin temporally as well as eternally. (Heid. Cat. Q. 10). Yet, the cry is often heard today in an attempted self-justification of such evils. "Oh, I know it's wrong . . . terribly wrong and the church is going with it all in the wrong direction . . . but I can't do anything about it. The majority want it that way."

Ah, yes! We do not doubt the truth of the last statement but that you can do nothing about it is an absurdity. You not only can, but it is your God-given duty! Article 31 of the Church Order maintains the established rule, based on God's Word, that every member has the right to appeal and if such appeal is made without avail, your out is to seek affiliation where you are not bound by the anti-Biblical regulations which, by your continuance in them, only intensify your guilt. God is not mocked!

Further, Article 31 establishes the principle that the decisions taken by majority vote in ecclesiastical assemblies are to be considered settled and binding. The very fact that an exception to this is immediately added in the article indicates that the Reformed Fathers rejected the claim of Rome that "the church in her decrees is infallible" and concede the point that "the church can and does err." The Scriptures alone are infallible, being the Word of God and, therefore, they must serve as the final court of appeal in any dispute or dissension. Hence, any appeal to reverse a decision of the church must be well substantiated by the Holy Scriptures.

Next time, D.V., we will outline the material of this article and begin to discuss its elements. G.V.D.B.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

(Continued from page 116)

work of regeneration as a whole, without making any distinctions, then it is certainly correct to speak of regeneration as being mediate. But then it is not at all to the point to cite the language of this 17th article in support of mediate regeneration in the controversy concerning mediate and immediate regeneration. For concerning regeneration in the sense in which the *Canons* speak of it, as including the entire work of conversion, there simply is no controversy as to whether that is mediate or immediate. All subscribe to the statement that this regeneration in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. But then it can not be said either that it is contrary to the doctrine of the Reformed churches to teach that regeneration is immediate in the narrower sense of the word.

H.C.H.

ALL AROUND US

The Nature of the Unity We Seek.

Such is the title of an article appearing in the October, 1957, issue of *The Reformed Journal* and written by the president of Calvin Seminary, Dr. John H. Kromminga. The writer in his article tells us that the above title did not originate with him but that he borrowed it "from the discussions of those churches which are members of the World Council."

The writer makes a point of it "that the World Council itself is not crystal-clear on the nature of the unity which it proposes to its member communions." As to his own position and that which he points up as the direction in which he would have the Christian Reformed Church go, he asserts "We have been inclined, due in part to our isolationist past, to regard all such questions and discussions as disreputable. But this attitude could not be more wrong." He further asserts "The question of unity centers about these very respectable theological concerns: What is the church and what is the nature of its mission in the world? Whether we want to or not, the church cannot escape these questions. They arise wherever cooperation with another church is called for, wherever the church is in the world. These are not merely someone else's problems. We do not have to borrow them to make them our own. We cannot do mission work without asking repeatedly what it is that we are doing. We cannot be a church without asking what it really is that we are."

A little later in his article Dr. Kromminga writes: "It is interesting and inspiring to note that the Christian Reformed Church has today committed itself to more union discussions than it ever before carried on at one time. What will come of these discussions? I imagine there must be very few in our own denomination who do not at the moment hope they are successful. And undoubtedly there must be those in the other denominations also who are eager for their success. But will this guarantee the outcome?"

"The very strength of the other denominations, the very thing that attracts us to them, may be the obstacle. Every one of the denominations involved in these discussions is deeply committed to its own position and tradition. The doctrinal and practical points which will be discussed will differ in each case. But the questions will come down to these: Will any of these churches be willing to make concessions to the other? To abandon pet projects? To share confessions? To overlook past differences and bitterness? To change the very name of the church?"

"Time alone will bring the answers. But this will be a real test of the vision of our own denomination; of our maturity; of our ability to discern between essentials and non-essentials, between the blacks and whites and grays of denominational existence. In the process of discussion we will learn to know others. But of equal importance is that

we shall come to learn about ourselves . . ."

The article of Dr. Kromminga is too lengthy to allow for much more quotation in our allotted space. But enough is quoted to provoke some thought and also some comment.

It seems to me that if we are going to talk about unity, as Dr. Kromminga has correctly observed, we will have to deal with the problem of denominations, but only after we have seen established first the unity of our own denomination. It will not do at all to invite discussion for determining unity with other churches before whom you cannot appear with a united front. By the latter we mean that the constituency of one's own denomination should be perfectly united on doctrinal bases that are unitedly and faithfully embraced by all the members of one's own denomination. A house that is divided against itself cannot very well seek unity with other houses, unless perhaps it is the intention to unscramble the mess of all houses concerned and draw out a unity of the scrambled mess and forsake what is still unscrambled.

It also seems to me that when one is able to declare that the unification of his own house has been established it will also follow that, before one seeks the unification with other denominations, he also ask himself first a few pertinent questions: What is a denomination? How does a denomination come into existence? How did the particular denomination or denominations with whom he would seek unity come into existence? Does that particular denomination have the right of existence? Does that particular denomination, to use the words of Dr. Kromminga, promote "pet projects," establish itself on pre-conceived notions, etc., or is it a denomination that has come into existence through the way of honest Scriptural reformation? And if the latter is true, why does not the denomination that forced the new denomination that came into existence because it would not walk in error confess its sin and in the way of repentance seek unity with that denomination that stands for the Reformed truth?

Just to make clear exactly what we are driving at, let us take for example the two denominations: Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed. By the latter, of course, we do not have in mind the group that calls itself Prot. Reformed, but have since 1953 left the fellowship of that denomination. Dr. Kromminga knows full well the history of the origin of the Prot. Ref. Churches. He knows that they had their origin in the common grace controversy that arose in his own denomination. He knows that certain ministers and their consistories were expelled from his denomination when they refused to subscribe to extra-confessional points of doctrine which his church imposed on them. He also knows that these Protestant Reformed Churches embrace unitedly the three Reformed confessional standards which his own church is supposed to embrace with the exclusion of the confessional addition of the Three Points. He also knows that these Prot. Ref. Churches have from the beginning of their existence repeatedly sought unity with the

Christian Reformed Church by calling her attention to the error of common grace and praying her to confess this error, which can be the only way for union with the Prot. Ref. Churches. He knows that each time this attempt was made by the Prot. Ref. Churches it was done in the love of Christ and with the prayer of Christ "that they all might be one." And he knows that each time this was done his church synodically dumped our prayer and request into the waste basket, even as late as the synod of 1957. He also knows that there has been since the beginning of the separation a segment in his denomination that has always and still today deplores this separation as much as they do the stand of his churches on the doctrine of common grace that caused it. He knows too that his church synodically or otherwise has always studiously avoided any discussion with the Prot. Ref. Churches for fear that such discussion might bring about another split in his denomination or cause some of his constituency to come to us. These things are well known to all who have followed closely the history and the life of these two denominations since 1924, and Dr. Kromminga will not deny them, I'm sure.

Now it is true that Dr. Kromminga concedes that there may be an obstacle, and we may add, obstacles, in the way of unity. I take it he means that it is possible that because of certain obstacles in the way two particular denominations seeking unity may not be able to bring about this unity. But what does he mean when he asks: "Will any of these churches be willing to make concessions to the other? To abandon pet projects? To share confessions? To overlook past differences and bitterness? To change the very name of the church?"

In the matter of the two churches above referred to, what concessions does he have in mind? Would he perhaps have the Prot. Ref. Churches concede that the doctrinal differences that separate us are of little significance? not worth all the controversy they evoked? Would he have us concede perhaps that the Christian Reformed Church is also 100 per cent Reformed in the world and life view they have adopted on the basis of their conception of a certain common grace? And by the "pet projects" he would see abandoned, does he mean perhaps that we like the sects with whom we have been compared are riding a certain pony to death? And what does he mean when he asks: "To share confessions?" Which confessions? Also those perhaps which are not so Reformed? And what does he mean when he asks: "To overlook past differences and bitterness?" Does he mean that we are to forgive and forget without confession of sin? And what does he mean when he asks: "To change the very name of the church?" Does he mean perhaps that he is willing to lose the name Christian Reformed if maintaining that name is the only obstacle in the way of union or reunion? Or does he mean in our case that if we truly sought union with the Christian Reformed Church we should be willing to lose our name if that was the only thing in the way of union?

Dr. Kromminga knows that the answer to most of his questions is negative not only in the denomination with whom his church might seek unity, but it is also negative in his own church, unless his church or any other should become so wholly indifferent with respect to principle things that it has no right of existence anyway.

Dr. Kromminga will pardon me for re-borrowing the theme of his article. We also seek a unity which has a nature. And the nature of the unity we seek is that for which our Lord prayed in John 17:21; the unity of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 4:3-6, 13. The perfection of this unity we seek first of all in our own churches, and then with those outside our denomination. It lies in the very nature of this unity that it will be established only on the truth of Scripture as that is interpreted in our doctrinal standards. Concerning those who do not stand on this basis, we will continue to call them to return to it if they have departed, and to instruct those who never stood on this basis by every means God provides if haply by the grace of God they may see their error and turn with us in the way of the truth. Briefly that is the only calling of us as Reformed churches.

And it should not be forgotten that when all is said and done, it is not the church at all that effects unity. It is the one Spirit, the Spirit of our exalted Christ, that realizes this unity. It is the Son of God by His Word and Spirit who gathers the church, and by the power of that Word and Spirit brings sinners to repentance, the erring back to the truth, those in darkness into His marvelous light. Only when the church is controlled by this principle can she begin to seek unity that has the blessing of God. All other unity is not of Christ, but of man and antichrist.

Christ does not allow His true church to live on "pet projects," neither does He allow her to make any concessions where the principles of the truth are involved, neither does he allow His church to overlook past differences and bitterness without confession of sin and amendment of life and walk. If the church does not have the conviction that she stands foursquare on the basis of the Word of God in doctrine and practice and cannot prove it with the Word and example that she does so, she is not worthy of the name. Nor should any church that has these convictions unite with the church that has lost her name and the right of existence.

M.S.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

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pronoun *them* looks to the carnal Israel. Over and over it is reported in the Scriptures that the soul of the Lord is grieved with this people. For it is a people that always err in their hearts and that do not know His ways and hear not His voice. It is a people that abhor God and for whom the heavenly is without any worth. The covenant will be taken from them and the kingdom. They will be cut off from the congregation of the Lord.

G.M.O.