

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### The Flesh And The Spirit

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." —Romans 8:5-8.

They that are after the flesh!

A thousand times unhappy people!

Note that I said: a thousand times unhappy people!

How poor is our language! I try and cannot find words to describe the unhappy estate of those that are after the flesh. What is a thousand times misery compared to the *eternal* woe in hell?

Does not your heart melt within you when you think on the millions of people such as you and I that are weeping and gnashing their teeth right now, while I write or while you read this? Did you ever think on this? They are or were people of like passions as you and I. They were not worse than you and I. It is very well possible that some of them were not as evil as you or I. And yet, they are in hell, or they are on their miserable journey to hell, and you and I travel to the Zion of God!

O, I can understand how the church of all ages have sung, Why didst Thou think on me, o God!

They are after the flesh!

Therein is all their misery.

Note that they are *after* the flesh. That means that they were or are *according to* the flesh. They and the flesh are one. And that is a terrible estate. That means misery here on earth, all the days of their vain life on earth. That means that the wrath of God was

continually above them, around them, within them. That means that the wrath of God shall be poured out upon them for evermore. O, to be in the flesh and according to the flesh is so terrible that I cannot find words to aptly describe it.

To be in the flesh is the same as to be in death, nay, then you are death itself.



No, the flesh as such is not bad.

Christ came in the flesh. And Paul speaks of being seen in the flesh, and he did not mean anything miserable in that.

But flesh here has a terrible meaning. Flesh in my text is the sinful flesh.

The sinful flesh is, first, earthly man, of the earth earthy with a thousand bonds that bind him to humanity and the earth.

But it is that earthly and earthy man as he is fallen headlong into sin. And such it is the full nature of man with all his gifts, talents, with his body and soul and spirit, under the dominion of sin and the devil.

And all this together is called the mind of the flesh, the minding of the flesh, if you please. And it is awful that I find so few words and so feeble words to describe its horror.

It is a man, created in the beautiful image of God, but who has lost all that original beauty of holiness, and who is now filled with all perverseness and evil of every description.

They never aspire higher than humanity and the earth. And even in those aspirations they are always wilfully against God and all real virtue.

And so God could look down upon them that walk after the flesh, listen to them, taste of them, even smell of them, and come to the awful conclusion: No, there is no one that doeth good. No, not one. They have become stinking! And I would beg of you to realize that this last evaluation is of the Holy Spirit of God.

Oh, to be according to the flesh is so indescribably miserable!

But Paul also speaks of another kind of people.

He speaks of those that are after the Spirit. Yes, we capitalize the letter "s". It is the Holy Spirit of God.

The word Spirit is first of all the Holy Spirit as the third Person in the holy Trinity.

But He is the Spirit as He is given to Jesus Christ the Lord at His exaltation.

And, third, He is that Spirit of God and of Christ as He is poured out in the wonderful Church of God. As such He is the Spirit of the Church.

And so we come to the conclusion: He is the Spirit of God and of Christ and of the Church, and He dwells in every saint of God.

Ah, but they are a happy people! I was going to write: a thousand times happy people

But I meet the same difficulty here as I had in the description of those unhappy souls that are after the flesh. A thousand times happy is so poor when you speak of the happiness of God's saints. They are happy for evermore. They will drink of the river of God that is full of water. They will eternally see God's beautiful Face. And that will satisfy them with an eternal satisfaction. How then could I speak of a thousand times here?

But they are happy. For they are after the Spirit.

And how shall I describe it? Here is an ocean of beauty and holiness and ecstasy.

Well, this time I will begin in history.

They are people that were visited by the Dayspring from on high. They are people that were equally as wicked and miserable as those whom I began to describe at the beginning of this meditation. Their ways were evil from their youth. And they were travelling to hell. And they liked it.

But some day, some hour, some minute, some second (the fathers have called it, the hour of love) there came like a flash of Divine Lightning the Holy Spirit of God and of Christ and of the Church, and He performed a wonderful miracle in their inmost heart.

No, they were not aware of it. It happened in their subconscious heart.

But it was real nevertheless. It was real, for they lived to tell the story of it when God continued to cherish that work in their inmost heart, when He continued to love that heart, and warmed it by His love through Word and Spirit, until they came to the conscious stature of the man in Christ.

That first flash of Divine Lightning we call regeneration. And the continual cherishing of that heart until it came to consciousness we call conversion.

And so these happy people became spiritually minded. Note that we here quote the text. That is their name, for that is their essence. They have the mind of Christ and of the Spirit.

Since that visit of God's Dayspring you may say that these people live in the sphere of the Holy Spirit of God.



All such things must be proven. And we will prove it.

These people manifest themselves.

Let us look at the first kind of people.

They are those that mind the flesh; they are called carnally minded.

Their manifestation is shocking to all that is good, virtuous and right.

Here is their first name: they are enmity against God.

Note the choice of words of the Holy Spirit. He does not say that they are enemies of God. No, but they are enmity, and then, enmity against Him who is adorable eternally. Against Him who never did anything that is evil.

It stresses the fact that their whole make-up, with body and soul, with all their functions of heart and will and mind, are nothing but evil. It is not so that they are characterized, beset by evil and wicked hatred against God; no, but they *are* such. Not characterized by a hateful spirit, but they *are* hateful and they are such always.

They are not subject to the law of God.

Attend to this awful description of the wicked. The law of God is expressed in one word, and that one word is the sweetest word which man ever heard. It is *love*. And then the love of God, of course.

And these people are not subject to it. That is, they will not love, but they will hate God and one another. That is the manifestation of the flesh.

Neither indeed can be.

A few simple and short words. But full of untold misery for the wicked. They are impotent to anything that is called loveable and good. They are impotent to love the adorable God to be loved and praised forever, Amen. It is one thing to be wicked and to hate God, but it is another thing when I must and will remain in that prison, since I lack the potency to return, to convert, to repent, to turn around, and in tears say to God: O God, forgive! They are impotent. Neither indeed can be. In these few and short words I hear the clanging of the prison doors that shut the wicked in their captivity for evermore.

And if there are any of my readers who would doubt the absolute truth of these evaluations, then I would catalog this manifestation of the wicked. They manifest themselves in these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.

The faithful Bible reader has noted that I quoted Scripture.

Oh, I would say it again with a pitying heart: they are a thousand times unhappy people!

God have mercy upon us, for we are not better than they are by nature.

Have mercy on us!



Perhaps there is a soul that would say: but you make too much of the beauty of the people of God.

Then my answer would be: I cannot possibly do that, for when we begin to exegete the descriptions which God Himself gives of His saints, then we stammer, and feel at once that they are infinitely more beautiful than we possibly could make them.

God has gone much farther than Reformed dogmatics. God says of you: You are my Child and you will not lie (Isaiah); you are born of Me, and you cannot sin (John). And you are pure of heart (Jesus).

Oh yes, I may say and that in truth, that these spiritually minded people have the love and friendship of God's covenant in their heart. And do not say that I idealize God's people, that, in practice, it is not true. That I take poetic license and that it is not true that God's people are as lovely as I sing of them.

Do not say that for it is not true.

I will prove it to your own satisfaction.

Attend to this: the least in the Kingdom of God, be he man or woman, that ever lived had this: he or she had the love of God spread abroad in his or her heart through the Holy Ghost that is given to us. Romans 5.

And now I would ask: how can you refrain from calling such a being altogether lovely, when the very love of God is in his *heart*, of all things. As the heart is so is the man, and that is also a text.

These happy people are subject to the law of God, for indeed they can be.

They have the Spirit of God as their constant and eternal companion. Christ cannot lie, and He promised that the Spirit would never depart from them anymore.

Oh, they are happy. They have their strength renewed as an eagle. They journey from such strength to strength, until every one of them appears before God in Zion.

And here is the manifested proof of their happy estate, the estate that they are spiritually minded: they have love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

And here again: I was quoting from God's holy Word.

A thousand times happy people? No, but they are eternally happy. Even now, while they must often

weep. Do they not weep often? Yes, but they are basically always happy. Understand it, if you can. It is Paul's evaluation.



And what are the spoils?

I shudder when I must again begin with those unhappy people that are carnally minded. They receive a fitting spoil for their endeavors.

The text mentions the foul harvest which they must and will gather in.

First, if you are a carnally minded man, and if you will not repent before you die, then your harvest is death.

Is there a word that is more horrible?

Our Psalter gives a very simple definition of death. We sing: To be apart from God is death!

I think it will do. Therein lies all the horror. I do not know the full meaning. I think that if I would know, I would not have another quiet hour. I would see then and I would appreciate to the full the horrors of eternal hell.

And if the wicked knew and understood death, they would do nothing but weep.

To be apart from God. And not to be pleasing to God. But that is awful. He is the only good. There is no good of any kind outside of Him!

Negatively, it is the estate of outer darkness. Here lie horrors that my soul cannot fathom. Christ speaks of gnashing of teeth and of weeping. I hear of their smoke, the smoke of their torment that shall arise forever. I hear of unquenchable fire that will burn and burn everlastingly. I hear of damnation and desolation. I hear of the pit of fire and brimstone.

It is the fitting harvest of those whose whole essence breathed hatred against God. Oh, remember here that God is adorably just. Do not charge Him foolishly.

And your harvest?

It is life and peace. I think that the latter is the result of the former.

To see the face of God is life. And to see that face, turned to us in love and eternal good pleasure. O, that is heaven itself.

Christ said: this is eternal life: to know the only and the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Therefore, we would always turn to Jesus, so that He might lead us to His Father in heaven.

And that brings peace.

And peace is that your heart and God's heart beat in unison.

God bring you there!

G. Vos.

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#### HOLLANDSE EMIGRANTEN!

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## EDITORIALS

### Criticism And Its Answer

Dr. K. Schilder, in the *Reformatie*, proposes to dis-  
cuss the Declaration of Principles adopted by our last  
synod.

Of this we cannot but be glad, and we can only  
hope that he does so thoroughly and without mincing  
words. For it certainly was one of the purposes of  
this Declaration and of its proposal to our churches  
that it be tested and thoroughly discussed. As I wrote  
already in answer to the Rev. Blankespoor's questions,  
we do not mean to propose a fourth form, in addition  
to our Three Forms of Unity. We recognize nothing  
else as binding than Scripture and our Confessions.  
But it is necessary sometimes to express clearly and  
definitely what the Scriptures and the Confessions  
teach. There are all kinds of so-called Reformed churches;  
and they all appeal to the Confessions. In the  
Netherlands you have the Synodicals and the Liberated  
and the Christian Reformed and the Hervormde  
Church and the Nederduitsche Church. And in this  
country we have the Christian Reformed Churches and  
the Free Reformed Churches and the Reformed Church  
of America and the Protestant Reformed Churches;  
and they all claim to be Reformed on the basis of the  
Confessions. Thus, for instance, the Christian Re-  
formed Churches in 1924 tried to appeal to the Con-  
fessions in corroboration of their Three Points. And  
they claim to have found the error of common grace  
in the Three Forms of Unity. The Synodicals base  
their decisions of 1942-'44 on the same Confessions.  
And no doubt the Liberated are convinced that the  
Heynsian view of the covenant is the pure teaching of  
the Three Forms of Unity. Therefore, it does not  
seem to be superfluous to formulate a brief declara-  
tion, as our last synod did, of what is truly and really  
Reformed, according to our Confessions. And that is  
the purpose of the Declaration of Principles. If, there-  
fore, it can be clearly shown and definitely proved that  
this Declaration of Principles is not according to our  
Three Forms of Unity, we will thankfully accept that  
proof and will certainly not accept that Declaration  
at our next synod.

Dr. Schilder introduces his articles, in which he  
proposes to criticize our Declaration of Principles with  
an article under the caption, "Waarheen in Amerika,  
Canada?" (Whither in America, Canada?), which is  
chiefly addressed to the immigrants. I will follow his  
example, and also preface my reply to his criticism,—  
which he may, of course, expect,—by an introductory  
article of my own, at the same time reflecting upon

some of the statements which he writes in his introduction.

The main thrust of his introductory article is the advice to the immigrants not to allow themselves to be bound by the Declaration of Principles, and not to join the Protestant Reformed Churches if the Declaration of Principles should be adopted at our next synod.

From this article we wish to make a few quotations and reflect upon them.

Dr. Schilder writes: "In een brief, dien we als deputaten voor buitenlandsche kerken in handen kregen van de Prot. Ref. Churches, werd nu aanvankelijk een goed standpunt ingenomen. Letterlijk citeeren kan ik niet, omdat in het stuk niet bij me heb. Maar ik meen me niet te vergissen, als ik den hoofdinhoud aldus vrij weergeef: tusschen u en ons liggen misschien wel theologische verschillen, maar geen confessioneele. Dat was een goede en nuchtere opmerking, die meteen de basis aangaf; waarop m.i. geloovigen elkaar in een kerkverband ontmoeten mogen." That is translated: "In a letter which we as deputies for foreign churches received from the Prot. Ref. Churches a sound standpoint was at first assumed. I cannot quote literally, because I do not have the letter with me. But I think I am not mistaken when I freely reproduce the main content as follows: between you and us there are probably theological differences, but no confessional differences. That was a good and sober remark, which at the same time indicated the basis on which in my opinion believers may meet one another in church fellowship."

This is not quite true. The letter to which Dr. Schilder refers was, as he well knows, not sent by the Protestant Reformed Churches, but simply by the committee of correspondence. When this letter was brought to the attention of our Synod, 1948, our synod did not approve of the terminology of that letter, and therefore decided to send another letter, which was officially adopted by the broadest gathering of our churches, and which the deputies for correspondence with foreign churches also received, as Dr. Schilder well knows. In that letter the matter to which Dr. Schilder refers was expressed more soberly as follows: "Dat onze Synode het in het algemeen met de strekking van voornoemden brief eens is. Gaarne zoekt zij nauwer contact met de Gereformeerde Kerken onderhoudende Art. 31. Zooals gezegd is in den door de deputaten verzonden brief, wij staan met U op den grondslag van de Schrift en de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid, en handhaven het zuivere gereformeerde kerkrecht, wars zijnde van alle hiërarchie." Acts of Synod, 1948, p. 53. That is: "That in general our Synod agrees with the intent of the aforementioned letter. She likes to have closer contact with the Reformed Churches maintaining Art. 31. As has been said in the letter that was sent by our deputies, we stand with you on

the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity, and maintain pure reformed church polity, being averse to all hierarchy". In the same letter of synod we wrote as follows: "Dat wij natuurlijk niet verwachten, dat uwe Synode reeds op de e.k. vergadering tot de betrekking van zusterkerken tusschen U en ons zal besluiten, evenmin als U dat van ons verwacht. Mocht uwe Synode echter besluiten om stappen te nemen in de richting van nauwer contact met onze kerken, dan verzoeken we U om door uwe deputaten met de onze te correspondeeren of samen te spreken, om onze Synode, zoowel als de uwe, in de kwestie van contact tusschen beide kerkengroepen, van advies te dienen, en alsdan definitieve besluiten te nemen." Acts of Synod, 1948, pp. 53, 54. And we translate: "That we naturally do not expect, that your Synod will already in its next meeting decide to establish the relation of sister churches between you and us, no more than you expect this of us. If, however, your Synod should decide to take steps in the direction of closer contact with our churches, we invite you through your deputies to correspond or confer with our deputies, in order to serve our Synod as well as yours with advice in the question of contact between both church groups, and thereupon to take definite decisions."

This official letter of Synod naturally superseded the letter sent by our committee of correspondence and was the only letter that could come officially before the Synod of Amersfoort, 1948. Note how carefully this letter of Synod was worded. We did not ask for immediate correspondence, but wanted to confer and to correspond with the deputies for correspondence in the Netherlands. But neither the Synod of Amersfoort, 1948, nor the deputies for correspondence with foreign churches acted upon our advice. The latter never conferred and never corresponded with us about the question. For over a year we never heard of them at all. And when we finally did hear from them after they had conferred with the Revs. de Jong and Kok, they simply proposed a complete and full-fledged relation of correspondence between the Reformed Churches maintaining Art. 31 and ours, which we could only place in the hands of our Synod. I have written before, and I write it again, that this is not doing the business of the church properly. And I am convinced that if the Synod of Amersfoort had acted on the request and advice of our Synod of 1948 instead of plunging headlong into a decision for establishing correspondence with our churches, all the miserable history of the last couple years would have been avoided.

After Dr. Schilder mentions some of what he considers the good points in the Declaration of Principles, he continues as follows: "Maar wanneer nu deze zelfde kerken eigen uitspraken zouden vastleggen, die naar den inhoud óf ondoordacht en slordig geformuleerd (en dus als bindende leer-uitspraken af te wijzen) zijn,

óf onjuist zijn, dan scheppen ze daarmee een nieuwe situatie. Die verschilt van het aanvankelijk in bovenbedoelden brief ingenomen standpunt. En dan kunnen en mogen onze emigranten niet daarvoor capituleeren. Deze nieuwe situatie is er nog niet, maar bedreigt hen wel, ingeval nl. de Prot. Ref. kerken tezamen de voorstellen zouden aanvaarden. En daarom is het goed, iets naders te gaan zeggen van die voorgestelde uitspraken." And we translate: "But when now these same churches would establish their own declarations, which according to the content are either thoughtless and carelessly formulated (and therefore must be repudiated as binding expressions of doctrine) or incorrect, they thereby create a new situation. This differs from the standpoint at first assumed in the above mentioned letter. And then our emigrants may and cannot capitulate. This new situation is not yet existing, but does indeed threaten them, in case, namely, the Protestant Reformed churches together adopt the proposed declarations. And therefore it is good to say something more about these proposed declarations."

And a little farther Dr. Schilder writes: "Zonder daarom de deur voor gesprekken van en met de deputaten over mogelijke correspondentie af te willen sluiten, zonder ook vooruit te loopen op wat deputaten nog zullen hebben te verrichten, willen we wel—want dat is oud nieuws—constateeren, dat INDIEN reeds hier en daar plaatselijk onze emigranten mochten gebonden worden aan theologische meeningen, als we hierboven weergaven, en die we deels zullen afwijzen als bindende formules, de weigering daarvan noodzakelijk is.

"De veranderde situatie is dan in dat geval niet van ons uitgegaan, doch tot onzen grooten spijt van de Prot. Ref. churches zelf. Ze hebben zonder met deputaten te komen tót afsluitende handelingen al vast deze nieuwe uitspraken op stapel gezet. Iets waarover wij ons verwonderen. Immers:

"a) deze kerken hebben zelf leergeld gegeven, toen in Kalamazoo men Rev. Hoeksema uitdreef met den stok van ondoordachte en slecht geformuleerde aan de confessie toegevoegde uitspraken;

"b) we hadden gehoopt, dat ze zouden zien, dat in sterke handhaving der bestaande belijdenis, met gelijktijdige verwerping van elke gedachte van daarboven uitgaande bindingen, ze haar roeping zouden verstaan om zooveel mogelijk geloovigen op te vangen die van over den oceaan komen wonen in 't gebied, waarop zij zelf zijn gevestigd en waartegenover zij een roeping hebben. Het is geen kleinigheid, zelf de oorzaak ervan te zijn, dat menschen, die God vreezen, en de gereformeerde belijdenis handhaven, niet aan onze avondmaals-tafel kunnen plaats nemen. Dat hebben we volgehouden in 1944 en v.v. in Nederland. Dat zullen we ook volhouden tegenover Amerika. Ook tegenover beste vrienden en welmeedende kennissen. Het kan

pijn doen, vooral omdat we meenen dat er misverstand in het spel is. Maar het is nu eenmaal niet anders.

"Daarom blijven we, meenen we, in de lijn van onze vroegere adviezen, als we zeggen: meldt u bij de Prot. Ref. Churches, maar laat meteen duidelijk weten, dat en waarom ge er niet aan denken kunt, bedoelde uitspraken te aanvaarden. Tenminste, indien ge het eens zoudt zijn met wat wij daartegenover zullen aanvoeren. Neemt men u dan niet aan, laat u dat, ook om hunnentwil, spijten mogen, maar zegt geen "ja" als ge "neen" bedoelt. Dan maar liever afwachten, en zien wat er verder terecht komt van de poging om de kous in het gelijk te breien."

Thus far Dr. Schilder. And we translate: "Without therefore wishing to shut the door for conversations of and with the deputies about possible correspondence, and also without wishing to anticipate what the deputies still have to do, we certainly want to state—for this is nothing new—that IF our emigrants here and there already might be bound to theological opinions, as we mentioned above, and which in part we will repudiate as binding formulas, refusal is necessary.

"The changed situation in that case did not proceed from us, but to our deep regret from the Prot. Ref. Churches themselves. They have proposed these new declarations without reaching definite conclusions with the deputies. Something about which we are surprised. For:

"a) these churches themselves gave apprenticeship money when in Kalamazoo the Rev. Hoeksema was driven out with the stick of thoughtless and badly formulated additions to the confessions;

"b) we had hoped, that they would see that in strong maintenance of the existing confession, with simultaneous rejection of every idea to be bound by anything else, would understand their calling to gather as many as possible believers who come to dwell from the other side of the ocean in the territory in which they themselves are established and over against whom they have a calling. It is not a small thing, to become the cause that people that fear God and maintain the Reformed confession cannot take their places with us at the table of the Lord. This we maintained ever since 1944 in the Netherlands. And this we will maintain also over against America. Also over against the best of friends and well-meaning acquaintances. It may be painful, especially because we are of the opinion that there is misunderstanding here. But the fact remains.

"Therefore we remain, we think, in the line of our former advices, when we say: make application with the Prot. Ref. Churches, but state at the same time clearly, that and why you cannot conceive of accepting the proposed declaration. At least, if you will agree with what we will advance against it. If then they do not accept you, you may be sorry, also for their sake,

but do not say 'yes' when you mean 'no'. Then you better wait and see what will come of the attempt to knit the stocking evenly."

What shall be replied to all this?

Dr. Schilder suggests that our Declaration of Principles is thoughtlessly and carelessly formulated, and is in part, at least, incorrect. We will wait for him to prove this before we answer. But it is not true that we have changed or that we created a new situation. In this Dr. Schilder is utterly mistaken. He speaks of a situation that is different from the standpoint assumed in the letter that was sent by the deputies, to which we already referred. But that letter was not adopted by the Synod of 1948. And therefore Dr. Schilder cannot appeal to that letter as representing the standpoint of our churches. In the letter that was adopted by our Synod of 1948 our standpoint and attitude has been expressed much more correctly and soberly. And that is the only letter to which Dr. Schilder has the right officially to refer.

Dr. Schilder alleges further that we attempt to bind the immigrant to theological opinions. He refers, of course, to the Declaration of Principles. Without anticipating a reply to what he is going to write in the future, we here nevertheless maintain that this is not true, and that the Declaration of Principles contains nothing that is not clearly taught in our Confessions. But, as I say, this must wait until we receive the criticism of Dr. Schilder black on white.

Although the situation principally, therefore, has not changed, Dr. Schilder now joins the ranks of those who advise the immigrants not to join the Protestant Reformed Churches. I mean, of course, men like the Rev. van Raalte, the Rev. van Dijk, Prof. Holwerda, and others. About this advice we shall have more to say presently. Only once more I want to emphasize that the situation with us has not changed one bit.

As concerning the comparison which Dr. Schilder draws between the Declaration of Principles and the Three Points of Kalamazoo, 1924, I maintain that it does not hold at all, and that there is no similarity between the two. For I maintain that in the Declaration of Principles nothing whatever is added to the Confessions, while the Three Points of Kalamazoo certainly are additions to our Three Forms of Unity. And secondly, the Three Points are not only additions to, but also corruptions of the Confession. This I have definitely and very clearly shown more than once. If this had not been the case, we would have had no objection to consider the Three Points binding upon ourselves and upon the churches. But this certainly is not true of the Declaration of Principles. And if Dr. Schilder can clearly prove that the Declaration of Principles is not only an addition, but also a corruption of our Confessions, I promise him that our churches will never adopt it.

Dr. Schilder suggests that we would be the cause of refusing people admittance to the Lord's table that fear God and maintain the Reformed confession. This I deny. And Dr. Schilder himself knows better. But we do not admit anyone to the table of the Lord in our fellowship that calls himself Reformed, or even one that has an attest in his pocket of another Reformed church, with which we do not stand in relation of correspondence. Nor do we receive members in our churches that present an attestation from any other Reformed churches unless they first are examined and show that they are acquainted with the Reformed doctrine as it is taught in our Prot. Ref. Churches, and express agreement with it. This has always been the custom in our churches; and I think that this custom is perfectly correct. And if any man after he is examined proves that he does not agree "with the doctrine that is taught in this Christian church", or openly declares that he does not agree with that doctrine, not we, but he himself is the cause of the fact that he cannot be admitted to the Lord's table in our fellowship. About this I also will have to say more presently.

And now I wish to make a few remarks of my own in this introductory article.

In the first place, I want to emphasize that that the leaders in the Liberated Churches have done untold harm to their own immigrants, especially in Canada, and to the cause of our laboring among them. I have especially in mind men like the Rev. van Raalte, the Rev. van Dijk, and Prof. Holwerda. And now, sad to say, Dr. Schilder joins their ranks. Let me inform the brethren that we have as Prot. Ref. Churches faithfully labored among the immigrants in Canada; that we have literally taken them into our bosom; that we have loved them; that we have spent thousands and thousands of dollars for their benefit; that we have faithfully instructed them; and that we have tried to organize them into Protestant Reformed Churches. But it was always the influence exerted upon them from the old country that made our labor very difficult and practically impossible. Their leaders from the old country stir them up against us, both by public articles in their papers and by private correspondence. Their purpose evidently was to create in America an extension of the Liberated Churches, or even to persuade the Protestant Reformed Churches to assume the same stand as they. I assure the brethren that this will prove to be impossible for more than one reason. I have advised the immigrants more than once, both in Hamilton and in Chatham, that they must not be incited against us by the old country, but that they must learn to stand on their own feet. They must judge for themselves what is the purest manifestation of the body of Christ in America. And I am confident that if they do so, and if they are really Reformed at heart, and understand the Reformed truth,

they will certainly join the Protestant Reformed Churches. But I say once more that the influence from the old country has been detrimental to the cause of the Liberated immigrants and has been a stumbling-block for them to join our churches.

As a glaring example of this pernicious influence and propaganda I refer once more to the letter which Prof. Holwerda wrote to the Liberated immigrants in Canada. The exact truth concerning this letter I have never been able to discover. But be that as it may, the letter itself is full of untruths concerning our churches and their leaders, and at the same time an instigation of the Liberated to make propaganda for their view in the midst of our churches. In that letter a sharp distinction is made between the view of the Rev. Hoeksema concerning election and that of the Prot. Ref. Churches. The conception of the Rev. Hoeksema is not church doctrine, and no one is bound by it. Most of the Prot. Ref. people, according to the letter of Holwerda, did not think as the Rev. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophoff. Sympathy for the Liberated and their view of the covenant was supposed to be great in our churches. And for the covenant conception of the Liberated there was supposed to be ample room. The Prot. Ref. Churches are supposed to be the true church also because they allow ample room for the conception of the Liberated. Besides, the letter of Prof. Holwerda urges the Liberated immigrants in Canada by all means to preserve contact with Holland and to spread the Dutch literature. And he writes that the Liberated would be doing a good work if they labored in the Prot. Ref. Churches to remove misunderstanding and to deepen insight. And the Liberated must disseminate the dogmatical wealth of Holland in the Protestant Reformed Churches. If the conception of the Rev. Hoeksema was binding, thus the writer concludes, he would advise the immigrants never to join. Propaganda of this nature, brethren, and there has been a good deal of it, certainly has injured the cause of the Liberated immigrants in Canada and has made it well-nigh impossible for us to labor among them.

But there is more.

It is not we, but the Liberated immigrants themselves, that created the necessity for a declaration of principles such as our last synod adopted. When we labored among them, they themselves always accentuated the difference between them and us regarding the covenant. And mark you well, it was they that ever came with the claim that they were the true church and all other churches were simply the false church. Now it is a well-known fact that in the Liberated Churches, although they claim that no covenant conception is binding, the Heynsian theology concerning the covenant of God is generally accepted as the only true conception. From this Heynsian conception our view of the covenant, as is well-known,—also to Dr.

Schilder,—differs radically. To us that Heynsian view certainly maintains the false theory of common grace applied to the sphere of the covenant. We condemn that view as principally Arminian, and maintain that the promise of God is only for the elect. Thus was the situation between us and the Liberated immigrants in Canada. What could we do? We certainly could not organize the true and the false church in one and the same church fellowship. As long as they claimed to be the true church, we were, of course, the false church. How then could we receive them into our fellowship? Besides, we must not forget that among them there are all kinds of people. Some were positively Arminian. Some openly claimed that God loved every child and all the children that were born under the covenant, head for head and soul for soul. Some openly stated that Christ died for all men. Could we possibly corrupt our own churches by openly admitting Arminians into our communion. That were, of course, impossible. So we decided to instruct them before we organized them into churches. And thus we finally organized two congregations, the one of Hamilton and that of Chatham.

But still the problem was not solved. Many other immigrants entered into Canada, both Synodicals and Liberated. The Synodicals would not very likely join our churches. They usually went to the Christian Reformed Church. Our problem always was with the Liberated. Could they be admitted simply on the basis of their attestation? They were visited, and always they insisted on their own peculiar covenant view. How then could they possibly answer affirmatively to the second baptismal question concerning the doctrine that "is taught here in this Christian church"? The Consistory of Hamilton finally made a decision to ask of those that would be admitted to membership that they promise to be instructed in our Prot. Ref. truth and that they would make no propaganda in the congregation for their own peculiar covenant conception. On that basis the Consistory worked with the immigrants for a time. But soon they weakened, and they refused to stand by their very reasonable decision. The matter was brought to the attention of our Classis (East) by the Consistory of Hamilton themselves. The classis decided that they should maintain their decision, and not allow members on any other basis. And just as I was writing this editorial, I received the news that the Consistory of Hamilton refused to abide by the decision of classis.

You must not receive the impression that the change in the stand of Hamilton's Consistory regarding the admittance to membership in their Church was caused by the Declaration of Principles. For they changed their stand before that Declaration was adopted.

But again I say that they were influenced by

pressure from the old country. They did not have sufficient stamina to stand on their own feet. This is the history behind the Declaration of Principles. As I have explained in a former editorial, the Mission Committee asked for such a declaration as a basis upon which they might conduct their mission work especially among the Canadian immigrants. The Synod acceded to their request.

And if we were to maintain the purity of doctrine in our Protestant Reformed Churches, this Declaration certainly was necessary.

H. H.

Hier volgt de vertaling van dit hoofdartikel:

Dr. Schilder is van plan de Verklaring van Beginselen, door onze laatste Synode aangenomen, te bespreken in *De Reformatie*.

Hierover kunnen we ons niet anders dan verheugen, en we hopen tevens, dat hij het volledig doen zal, zonder er doekjes om te winden. Want het was zeker een der doelmerken dezer Verklaring en van haar voorslag aan onze kerken, dat zij getoetst en door en door besproken zou worden. Zooals ik reeds schreef in antwoord op Ds. Blankespoor's vragen: ons doel is niet om een vierde formulier voor te stellen, als een toevoeging aan de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid. Wij erkennen niets anders bindend dan de Heilige Schrift en de Confessies. Maar het is soms noodzakelijk om klaarlijk en duidelijk omschreven uit te drukken wat de Schrift en de Confessies leeren. Er zijn allerlei soorten van zoogenaamde Gereformeerde Kerken; en zij beroepen zich allen op de Confessies. In Nederland heeft men de Synodalen, de Vrijgemaakten, de Christelijke Gereformeerden, de Hervormden en de Nederduitschen. En hier te lande heeft men de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, de Vrije Gereformeerde Kerken, De Gereformeerde Kerk van Amerika en De Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken; en zij allen maken aanspraak op den naam Gereformeerd op grond van de Confessies. Zoo probeerden de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, b.v., zich te beroepen op de Confessies ter bekrachtiging van hunne Drie Punten, in 1924. En zij beweren de dwaling der algemeene genade in de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid gevonden te hebben. De Synodalen baseeren hun besluiten van 1924-'44 op dezelfde Confessies. En zonder twijfel zijn de Vrijgemaakten van overtuiging, dat de Heynsiaansche beschouwing van het verbond de zuivere leer is der Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid. Daarom schijnt het niet overbodig te zijn een korte verklaring op te stellen, zooals onze laatste synode deed, van wat waarlijk en werkelijk Gereformeerd is, overeenkomstig onze Confessies. En dat is het doelmerk der Verklaring van Beginselen. Als het, daarom, klaarlijk betoond en defi-

nitief bewezen kan worden dat deze Verklaring van Beginselen niet overeenkomstig onze Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid is, dan zullen we dat bewijs dankbaar aanvaarden, en dan zullen we zekerlijk deze Verklaring niet accepteren op onze volgende synode.

Dr. Schilder introduceert zijn reeks artikelen, waarin hij van plan is onze Verklaring van Beginselen te critiseeren, met een artikel onder het kopstuk: "Waarheen in Amerika, Canada?", hetwelk voornamelijk geadresseerd is aan de immigranten. Ik zal zijn voorbeeld volgen, en mijn antwoord aan zijn critiek (hetwelk hij natuurlijk verwacht) laten voorafgaan door een inleidend artikel mijnerzijds, om terzelfder tijd eenige opmerkingen te maken aangaande sommige gezegden die hij neerpent in zijn inleiding.

Het hoofdpunt in zijn inleidend artikel is het advies aan de immigranten, om zich niet te laten binden door de Verklaring van Beginselen, en om niet toe te treden tot de Prot. Geref. Kerken indien de Verklaring van Beginselen mocht aangenomen worden op onze volgende synode.

Uit dit artikel wenschen we eenige citaten aan te halen, en er eenige opmerkingen over te maken.

Dr. Schilder schrijft: "In een brief, dien we als deputaten voor buitenlandsche kerken in handen kregen van de Prot. Ref. Churches, werd nu aanvankelijk een goed standpunt ingenomen. Letterlijk citeeren kan ik niet, omdat ik het stuk niet bij me heb. Maar ik meen me niet te vergissen, als ik den hoofdinhoud aldus vrij weergeef: tusschen u en ons liggen misschien wel theologische verschillen, maar geen confessioneele. Dat was een goede en nuchtere opmerking, die meteen de basis aangaf, waarop m.i. geloovigen elkaar in een kerkverband ontmoeten mogen."

Dit is niet geheel waar. De brief waarvan Dr. Schilder spreekt werd niet door de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken gezonden, zooals hij zeer goed weet, maar eenvoudig door de commissie van correspondentie. Toen deze brief voor de aandacht van onze synode van 1948 gebracht werd, heeft onze synode de terminologie van dien brief niet goedgekeurd, en besloot daarom een anderen brief te zenden, dewelke officieel aangenomen werd door de breedste vergadering onzer kerken, en dewelke de deputaten tot correspondentie met buitenlandsche kerken ook ontvingen, zooals Dr. Schilder zeer wel weet. In dien brief werd de zaak waarover Dr. Schilder spreekt met meer bezadigheid uitgedrukt, als volgt: "Dat onze Synode het in het algemeen met de strekking van voornoemden brief eens is. Gaarne zoekt zij nauwer contact met de Gereformeerde Kerken, onderhoudende Art. 31. Zooals gezegd is in den door de deputaten verzonden brief, wij staan met U op den grondslag van de Schrift en de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid, en handhaven het zuivere gereformeerde Kerkrecht, wars zijnde van alle hiërarchie." Synodale Acta, 1948, p. 53. In denzelf-

den brief der synode schreven we als volgt: "Dat wij natuurlijk niet verwachten, dat uwe Synode reeds op de e.k. vergadering tot de betrekking van zusterkerken tusschen U en ons zal besluiten, evenmin als U dat van ons verwacht. Mocht uwe Synode echter besluiten om stappen te nemen in de richting van nauwer contact met onze kerken, dan verzoeken we U om door uwe deputaten met de onze te correspondeeren of samen te spreken, om onze Synode, zoowel als de uwe, in de kwestie van contact tusschen beide kerkengroepen, van advies te dienen, en alsdan definitieve besluiten te nemen." Synodale Acta, 1948, pp. 53, 54.

Deze officieele brief der Synode verving natuurlijk den brief die door onze commissie van correspondentie verzonden was, en was de eenige brief die officieel voor de Synode van Amersfoort, 1948, kon komen. Merkt er op hoe voorzichtig deze brief der Synode geformuleerd was. We vroegen niet om dadelijke, directe correspondentie, maar wenschten te confereeren en te correspondeeren met de deputaten voor correspondentie in Nederland. Evenwel, noch de Synode van Amersfoort, noch de deputaten voor correspondentie met de buitenlandsche kerken handelden naar ons advies. De laatsten hebben nooit met ons geconfereerd en nooit met ons gecorrespondeerd aangaande de kwestie. Voor meer dan een jaar hoorden we in het geheel niet van hen. En toen we eindelijk van hen hoorden, nadat zij geconfereerd hadden met de Dss. de Jong en Kok, stelden zij eenvoudig een complete en geheel ontwikkelde relatie van correspondentie voor tusschen de Gereformeerde Kerken, onderhoudende Art. 31 en onze kerken, dewelke we slechts konden doorgeven in de handen onzer Synode. Ik heb reeds eerder geschreven, en ik doe het nu weer, dat men zóó de zaken der kerk niet behoorlijk behartigt. En ik ben er van overtuigd, dat indien de Synode van Amersfoort gehandeld had overeenkomstig het verzoek en advies onzer Synode van 1948, in plaats van hals over kop in een besluit te vallen tot daarstellen van correspondentie met onze kerken, de geheele ellendige historie der laatste paar jaren vermeden had kunnen worden.

Nadat Dr. Schilder gewag maakt van hetgeen hij denkt de goede gedeelten der Verklaring der Beginselen te zijn, gaat hij door als volgt: "Maar wanneer nu deze zelfde kerken eigen uitspraken zouden vastleggen, die naar den inhoud óf ondoordacht en slordig geformuleerd (en dus als bindende leer-uitspraken af te wijzen) zijn, óf onjuist zijn, dan scheppen ze daarmee een nieuwe situatie. Die verschilt van het aanvankelijk in bovenbedoelden brief ingenomen standpunt. En dan kunnen en mogen onze emigranten niet daarvoor capituleeren. Deze nieuwe situatie IS er nog niet, maar bedreigt hen wel, ingeval n.l. de Prot. Ref. kerken de voorstellen zouden aanvaarden. En daarom is het goed, iets naders te gaan zeggen van die voorgestelde uitspraken."

Iets verder schrijft Dr. Schilder: "Zonder daarom de deur voor gesprekken van en met deputaten over mogelijke correspondentie af te willen sluiten, zonder ook vooruit te loopen op wat deputaten nog zullen hebben te verrichten, willen we wel—want dat is oud nieuws—constateeren, dat INDIEN reeds hier en daar plaatselijk onze emigranten mochten gebonden worden aan theologische meeningen, als we hierboven weergaven, en die we deels zullen afwijzen als bindende formules, de weigering daarvan noodzakelijk is.

De veranderde situatie is dan in dat geval niet van ons uitgegaan, doch tot onzen grooten spijt van de Prot. Ref. Churches zelf. Ze hebben zonder met deputaten te komen tot afsluitende handelingen al vast deze nieuwe uitspraken op stapel gezet. Iets waarover wij ons verwonderen. Immers:

a) deze kerken hebben zelf leergeld gegeven, toen in Kalamazoo men Rev. Hoeksema uitdreef met den stok van ondoordachte en slecht geformuleerde aan de confessie toegevoegde uitspraken;

b) we hadden gehoopt, dat ze zouden zien, dat in sterke handhaving der bestaande belijdenis, met gelijktijdige verwerping van elke gedachte van daarboven uitgaande bindingen, ze haar roeping zouden verstaan om zooveel mogelijk geloovigen op te vangen die van over den oceaan komen wonen in 't gebied, waarop zij zelf zijn gevestigd en waartegenover zij een roeping hebben. Het is geen kleinigheid, zelf de oorzaak ervan te zijn, dat menschen, die God vreezen, en de gereformeerde belijdenis handhaven, niet aan onze avondmaalstafel kunnen plaats nemen. Dat hebben we volgehouden in 1944 en v.v. in Nederland. Dat zullen we ook volhouden tegenover Amerika. Ook tegenover beste vrienden en welmeenende kennissen. Het kan pijn doen, vooral omdat we meenen dat er misverstand in het spel is. Maar het is nu eenmaal niet anders.

Daarom blijven we, meenen we, in de lijn van onze vroegere adviezen, als we zeggen: meldt u bij de Prot. Ref. Churches, maar laat meteen duidelijk weten dat en waarom ge er niet aan denken kunt, bedoelde uitspraken te aanvaarden. Tenminste, indien ge het eens zoudt zijn met wat wij daartegenover zullen aanvoeren. Neemt men u dan niet aan, laat u dat, óók om hunnentwil, spijten mogen, maar zegt geen "ja" als ge "neen" bedoelt. Dan maar liever afwachten, en zien wat er verder terecht komt van de poging om de kous in het gelijk te breien."

Tot zoover Dr. Schilder.

Wat dient hierop geantwoord?

Dr. Schilder suggereert dat onze Verklaring van Beginselen ondoordacht en slordig geformuleerd is, en, ten minste, gedeeltelijk onjuist. We zullen wachten totdat hij zulks bewijst vooraleer we antwoorden. Maar het is niet waar, dat wij veranderd zijn of dat we een nieuwe situatie geschapen hebben. Hier ver-

gist Dr. Schilder zich geheel en al. Hij spreekt van een situatie die verschilt van het standpunt ingenomen in den brief die door de deputaten verzonden werd, en waar we alreede hierboven op wezen. Maar die brief werd niet door de Synode van 1948 aangenomen. En daarom kan Dr. Schilder zich niet beroepen op dien brief als zou hij het standpunt onzer kerken vertegenwoordigen. In den brief die door onze Synode van 1948 aangenomen werd is ons standpunt en onze houding veel juister en meer bezadigd uitgedrukt. En dat is de eenigste brief waarnaar Dr. Schilder het recht heeft officieel te verwijzen.

Verder beweert Dr. Schilder, dat wij trachten den immigrant aan theologische meeningen te binden. Hij heeft het oog, natuurlijk, op de Verklaring van Beginselen. We zullen niet vooruitloopen op ons antwoord op wat hij in de toekomst zal schrijven, maar wij willen hier toch even handhaven, dat dit niet waar is, en dat de Verklaring van Beginselen niets inhoudt, dat niet duidelijk in onze Confessies geleerd wordt. Maar, zooals reeds gezegd werd, dit moet wachten totdat we Dr. Schilder's critiek zwart op wit ontvangen.

Ofschoon, daarom, de situatie principieel niet veranderd is, treedt Dr. Schilder toe tot de rij dergenen die den immigranten adviseeren geen lid te worden van de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken. Ik bedoel, natuurlijk, de rij van mannen zooals Ds. van Raalte, Ds. van Dijk, Prof. Holwerda, en anderen. Aangaande dit advies hebben we straks nog meer te zeggen. Ik wil het echter nog eens met nadruk zeggen, dat de situatie, in zooverre zij ons aangaat, geen zier veranderd is.

Aangaande de vergelijking die Dr. Schilder maakt tusschen de Verklaring van Beginselen en de Drie Punten van Kalamazoo van 1924, zou ik willen volhouden dat die in het geheel niet opgaat, en dat er geen overeenkomst is tusschen die twee. Want ik houd staande, dat in de Verklaring van Beginselen in het geheel niets toegevoegd is tot de Confessies, terwijl de Drie Punten van Kalamazoo zeer zekerlijk toevoegselen zijn aan onze Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid. En in de tweede plaats zijn de Drie Punten niet alleen toevoegselen aan, maar ook verbasteringen van de belijdenisschriften. Dit heb ik meer dan eens definitief en zeer duidelijk aangetoond. Indien dit niet het geval geweest was, zouden we geen bezwaar gehad hebben de Drie Punten bindend te achten voor onszelf en voor onze kerken. Maar dit is zeker niet waar van de Verklaring van Beginselen. En indien Dr. Schilder duidelijk bewijzen kan, dat de Verklaring van Beginselen niet alleen een toevoeging aan, maar ook een verkrachting van onze Confessies is, dan beloof ik hem, dat onze kerken haar nooit zullen aanvaarden.

Dr. Schilder suggereert, dat wij de oorzaak zouden zijn om toegang tot de tafel des Heeren te weigeren aan volk, dat God vreest en dat de Gereformeerde Con-

fessie handhaaft. Dit ontken ik. En Dr. Schilder weet zelf wel beter. Evenwel laten we niemand toe tot de tafel des Heeren in onze gemeenschap die zichzelf Gereformeerd noemt, of zelfs iemand die een attestatie in zijn zak heeft van een andere Gereformeerde Kerk, waarmede we niet in betrekking van correspondentie staan. Noch ook ontvangen we leden in onze kerken die een attestatie presenteren van eenige andere Gereformeerde kerk, tenzij ze eerst onderzocht worden, en toonen dat zij op de hoogte zijn met de Gereformeerde leer, zooals die geleerd wordt in onze Prot. Geref. Kerken, en hunne overeenstemming daarmede uitspreken. Dit is altijd de gewoonte geweest in onze kerken; en ik denk, dat deze gewoonte correct is. En indien iemand betoont, nadat hij onderzocht werd, dat hij het niet eens is "met de leer die in deze Christelijke Kerk alhier geleerd wordt", of onverholen uitsprekt, dat hij het niet eens is met die leer, dan zijn niet wij, maar dan is hijzelf de oorzaak, dat hij niet toegelaten kan worden tot de tafel des Heeren in onze gemeenschap. Ook aangaande dit punt zal ik meer te zeggen hebben.

En nu wil ik ook zelf eenige opmerkingen maken in dit inleidende artikel.

Ten eerste, wil ik met nadruk zeggen, dat de leiders in de Vrijgemaakte kerken onuitsprekelijk veel schade berokkend hebben aan hun eigen immigranten, vooral die in Canada wonen, en ook aan de zaak van onze arbeid onder hen.

En dan heb ik vooral mannen voor mijn aandacht zooals Ds. van Raalte, Ds. van Dijk, en Prof. Holwerda. En nu treedt Dr. Schilder, helaas, tot hunne gelederen toe. En dan wil ik den broederen mededeelen, dat wij als Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken trouw gearbeid hebben onder de immigranten in Canada; dat wij hen letterlijk aan onzen boezem gedrukt hebben; dat wij hen hebben liefgehad; dat we duizende en duizende dollars aan hen besteed hebben en ten hunnen bate; dat we hen getrouwelijk onderwezen hebben; en dat we getracht hebben hen te organiseren in Prot. Geref. Kerken. Maar het was steeds de invloed die op hen uitgeoefend werd vanuit het oude vaderland, die onze arbeid zoo moeilijk en praktisch onmogelijk maakte. Hunne leiders uit het oude vaderland porren hen aan tegen ons, beide door openbare artikelen in hunne bladen en door private correspondentie. Blijkbaar was hun doel om in Amerika een verlenging der Vrijgemaakte Kerken te scheppen, of zelfs om de Prot. Geref. Kerken te bewegen hetzelfde standpunt in te nemen als zij ingenomen hadden in Nederland. Ik verzeker de broederen, dat dit om meer dan één reden onmogelijk zal blijken. Ik heb de immigranten meer dan eens geadviseerd, dat zij zich niet moeten laten ophitsen tegen ons door Nederland, maar dat zij leeren moeten om op eigen beenen te staan. Zij moeten voor zichzelf oordeelen wat de

zuiverste openbaring van het lichaam van Christus is in Amerika. En ik ben er zeker van, dat indien zij dit doen, en als zij van harte waarlijk Gereformeerd zijn, en de Gereformeerde waarheid verstaan, zij zich zekerlijk zullen aansluiten bij de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken. Maar ik zeg nog eens weer, dat de invloed vanuit Nederland schade heeft berokkend aan de zaak der Vrijgemaakte immigranten, en dat het een struikelblok bewees te zijn voor hen om zich bij onze kerken aan te sluiten.

Als een flagrant voorbeeld van dezen verderfelijken invloed en propaganda wil ik nog eens weer wijzen op den brief die Prof. Holwerda aan de immigranten in Canada schreef. Ik ben nooit bij machte geweest om de juiste waarheid aangaande dezen brief te ontdekken. Dat zij zoo; maar de brief zelf zit vol van onwaarheden aangaande onze kerken en hun leiders, en is terzelfder tijd een aansporing der Vrijgemaakten om propaganda te maken voor hunne beschouwing in het midden onzer kerken. In dien brief wordt een scherp onderscheid gemaakt tusschen de beschouwing van Ds. Hoeksema aangaande de uitverkiezing en die der Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken. De beschouwing van Ds. Hoeksema is niet de kerkleer, en niemand wordt er aan gebonden. Het grootste gedeelte van het Prot. Geref. volk, volgens Holwerda's brief, denkt niet zooals Ds. Hoeksema en Ds. Ophoff. Sympathie voor de Vrijgemaakten en voor hunne beschouwing des verbonds werd verondersteld groot te zijn in onze kerken. Voor vrijgemaakte opvattingen aangaande het verbond was volledig plaats. De Prot. Geref. Kerken worden geacht de ware kerk te zijn omdat zij een ruime plaats inruimen voor de conceptie der Vrijgemaakten. Bovendien dringt de brief van Prof. Holwerda er bij de Vrijgemaakte immigranten op aan om op alle manier contact te bewaren met Nederland en om de Nederlandsche literatuur te verspreiden. En hij schrijft, dat de Vrijgemaakten een zeer vruchtbaar werk zouden doen als zij werkten in de Prot. Geref. Kerken tot wegneming van misverstand en aan verdieping van inzicht. En de Vrijgemaakten moeten de dogmatische rijkdom van Holland doorgeven in de Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken. Indien de conceptie van Hoeksema bindend ware, zoo concludeert de schrijver, dan zou hij de immigranten adviseeren om zich nooit aan te sluiten. Propaganda van deze soort, broeders, en er is heel wat van die soort geweest, heeft de zaak der Vrijgemaakte immigranten in Canada veel schade berokkend, en heeft het voor ons nagenoeg onmogelijk gemaakt om onder hen te arbeiden.

Maar er is meer.

Wij waren het niet, maar het waren de Vrijgemaakte immigranten zelf, die de noodzakelijkheid schiepen tot een verklaring van beginselen zooals onze laatste synode aannam. Toen wij onder hen arbeidden,

accentueerden zij zelf altijd het verschil tusschen hen en ons aangaande het verbond. En let er op, zij zijn het geweest die steeds tot ons kwamen met de bewering, dat zij de ware kerk waren, en dat alle andere kerken eenvoudig de valsche kerk waren. Nu is het een welbekend feit, dat in de Vrijgemaakte Kerken, ofschoon ze beweren, dat niet één verbondsbeschouwing bindend is, de Heynsiaansche theologie aangaande het verbond Gods geaccepteerd wordt als de eenige ware conceptie. Van deze Heynsiaansche conceptie, zooals iedereen weet, ook Dr. Schilder, verschilt onze beschouwing radicaal. Voor ons handhaaft die Heynsiaansche beschouwing de valsche theorie der gemeene gratie, toegepast op de sfeer des verbonds. Wij veroordeelen die beschouwing als principieel Arminiaansch, en handhaven, dat de belofte Gods alleen voor de uitverkorenen is. Zoo is de situatie tusschen ons en de Vrijgemaakte immigranten in Canada. Hoe konden we anders handelen? We konden toch zekerlijk de ware en de valsche kerk niet organiseren in een en dezelfde kerkgemeenschap? Zoo lang als zij beweerden de ware kerk te zijn, waren wij, natuurlijk, de valsche kerk. Hoe konden wij hen dan in onze gemeenschap ontvangen? Bovendien moeten we niet vergeten dat onder hen allerlei soort volk is. Sommigen waren positief Arminiaansch. Sommigen beweerden openlijk, dat God elk en alle kinderen die onder het verbond geboren worden liefheeft, hoofd voor hoofd en ziel voor ziel. Sommigen beweerden openlijk dat Christus voor alle menschen gestorven was. Mochten wij mogelijk onze eigen kerken verderven door openlijk Arminianen toe te laten tot onze gemeenschap? Dat was natuurlijk onmogelijk. Daarom besloten we om hen te onderwijzen vooraleer we hen in kerken organiseerden. En zoo organiseerden we eindelijk twee kerken, een in Hamilton en een in Chatham.

En nog was het probleem niet opgelost. Vele andere immigranten kwamen naar Canada, beide Synodalen en Vrijgemaakten. De Synodalen werden niet verwacht, dat zij zich bij ons zouden aansluiten. Gewoonlijk gingen zij naar de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken. Ons probleem was altijd met de Vrijgemaakten. Konden zij eenvoudig toegelaten worden op hunne attestaties? Zij werden bezocht, maar zij stonden steeds op hun eigen bijzondere verbondsbeschouwing. Hoe was het dan mogelijk om de tweede doopvraag bevestigend te beantwoorden aangaande de leer "die in deze Christelijke Kerk alhier geleerd wordt"? De kerkeraad van Hamilton maakte eindelijk een besluit om degenen die toegelaten zouden worden tot lidmaatschap te vragen of zij beloofden zich te laten onderwijzen in de Prot. Geref. waarheid, en dat zij geen propaganda zouden maken in de gemeente voor hun eigen bijzondere verbondsbeschouwing. Op die basis werd door den kerkeraad met de immigranten gewerkt

voor tijd en wijle. Maar spoedig verzwakten ze, en zij weigerden om hun zeer redelijke besluit te handhaven. De zaak werd door den kerkeraad van Hamilton zelf ter attentie van de Classis (Oost) gebracht. De classis besloot hen te adviseeren bij hun besluit te blijven, en geen leden toe te laten op eenige andere basis. En juist toen ik dit hoofdartikel schreef, bereikte mij het bericht, dat de kerkeraad van Hamilton weigerde zich aan het besluit der classis te houden.

En nu moet ge niet den indruk ontvangen, dat de verandering in het standpunt van Hamilton's kerkeraad aangaande het toelaten van leden in hun kerk veroorzaakt werd door de Verklaring van Beginselen. Want zij veranderden hun standpunt vooraleer die Verklaring aangenomen werd.

Maar ik herhaal, dat zij beïnvloed werden door pressie vanuit Nederland. Zij hadden niet voldoende weerstandsvermogen om op eigen beenen te staan.

En dit is de geschiedenis die achter de Verklaring van Beginselen ligt. Zooals ik uiteenzette in een vorig hoofdartikel, vroeg het Zendings-Comité om zulk een verklaring, dewelke dienen kon voor een basis waarop zij hun zendingswerk konden verrichten vooral onder de Canadeesche immigranten. De Synode willigde hun verzoek in.

In indien wij de zuiverheid der leer zouden handhaven in onze Protestantsche Gereformeerde Kerken, dan was deze Verklaring zeer zeker noodig.

H. H.



## Van Boeken

*Esther* (in de serie: Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift) door Dr. G. Ch. Aalders. Uitgever J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f.2.50.

Deze verklaring van het boek Esther bevelen we gaarne aan. Het is jammer, dat verreweg de meeste van onze jonge menschen het Hollandsch niet meer kunnen lezen, vooral daar juist dit bijbelboek op onze Jongeliedenvereëningingen besproken wordt. Hun, die echter het Nederlandsch nog machtig zijn, en vooral de leiders van onze vereëningingen, raden we aan om zich deze commentaars aan te schaffen.

In eene inleiding behandelt Dr. Aalders ook de bezwaren tegen de geloofwaardigheid van het boek Esther, maar hij merkt tevens op, dat hij dat niet deed, "omdat wij noodig hadden ons eerst van de betrouwbaarheid der medegedeelde feiten te verzekeren, maar eenig en alleen om aan te tonen, hoe zwak de gronden zijn, waarop men, menigmaal met de stoutste zelfverzekerdheid, de historiciteit van het boek betwist."

Wat ons bovenal bevalt is, dat de schrijver de

hoofdbedoeling van het boek Esther en zijn plaats in den kanon goed heeft gevat. "Haman's boze aanslag is in wezen een poging van den duivel om de komst van Christus te verhinderen."

Hartelijk aanbevolen.

H. H.

*Jakobus-Judas* (in één band) door Dr. F. W. Grosheide (Jakobus) en Dr. S. Grejdanus (Judas). Uitgever J. H. Kok, N. V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 2.75.

Ook deze beide commentaren, beide behoorend tot de serie: Korte Verklaring, en beide, evenals al de commentaren in deze serie, een tweeden druk belevend, bevelen we gaarne bij ons Hollandsch lezend publiek aan. Ze zijn beide geschreven in zeer heldere taal en stijl, gemakkelijk te verstaan zelfs voor onze Yankee-Dutch. En ze bieden in het algemeen degelijke exegetische.

Dit houdt niet in, dat we het altijd met de verklaring eens zijn: Op sommige punten verschillen we met de verklaring, vooral van den brief van Jakobus. Maar dit verschil betreft geen principieele zaken, maar louter kwesties van exegetischen aard.

Hartelijk aanbevolen.

H. H.

*De Voorzienigheid Gods*, door Dr. G. C. Berkhouwer (in de serie Dogmatische Studiën). Uitgever J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f. 6.90.

Dit is naar mijn oordeel, een der minst geslaagde der "dogmatische studiën" van Dr. Berkhouwer. Wel staan er in dit boek allerlei belangrijke en wetenwaardige dingen over de voorzienigheid, en wel worden allerlei beschouwingen van anderen kritisch onderzocht; maar ten eerste biedt Dr. Berkhouwer in 't geheel geen nieuwe gezichtspunten over de Voorzienigheid Gods, en ten tweeden, en dat is wel mijn hoofdbezwaar, heeft hij het probleem der voorzienigheid als geheel niet gevat en overzien.

Ik heb mij afgevraagd, hoe het komt, dat Dr. Berkhouwer, dien we anders uit zijn andere werken leerden kennen als een goed dogmaticus, zoo weinig grondige studie blijkt te hebben gewijd aan zulk een gewichtig probleem als dat der voorzienigheid Gods. Mijn antwoord is, dat hij zich op eens, zonder eenig verband, op het probleem der voorzienigheid heeft geworpen. Als hij eerst den raad Gods en de schepping had behandeld, in verband ook met de zonde en het wonder der genade, wellicht had hij beter licht geworpen op het probleem der voorzienigheid.

Misschien ga ik later nog eens antwoorden op zijn overigens zeer oppervlakkige kritiek op mijn gemeene gratie beschouwing, kritiek waarvoor ik hem overigens zeer dankbaar ben.

H. H.

*Bijbelse Encyclopaedie*, door Dr. W. H. Gispen, Dr. J. W. Grosheide, F. J. Bruijfel, Dr. A. Van Deursen. Uitgever J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs f.15.

Dit is eigenlijk een bijbelsch woordenboek. In een inleidend woord schrijven de samenstellers: "Het onderhavig werk draagt een geheel ander karakter (dan de Christelijke Encyclopaedie, H.H.). Thans worden alleen Bijbelse namen—dit dan te nemen in den ruimsten zin van het woord—opgenomen en uitvoerig verklaard. Niet besproken worden dogma's, begrippen, die hetzij door de kerk, hetzij door personen uit de Schrift werden afgeleid" etc. In hoofdzaak is dit waar. Deze encyclopaedie behandelt hoofdzakelijk bijbelse namen, en dan vooral eigennamen. Toch is dit niet geheel waar. Zoo behandelt het boek b.v. ook het begrip "geloof". Maar wie nu zoekt naar soortgelijke begrippen zooals "genade" b.v. vergist zich. Het is dus niet geheel duidelijk van welk principium de samenstellers bij de keuze der namen zijn uitgegaan.

Toch is er veel in dit woordenboek, dat belangrijk is, en we bevelen het gaarne aan allen, die Hollandsch kunnen lezen aan.

H. H.



## Rev. Petter Has Arrived

As we all know, Rev. Petter's section heading for his contributions in the "Concordia" is "Among Our Treasures". Under this heading the "Concordia" for October 12 (Number 16) contains two articles from the pen of Rev. Petter. The second half of the first of these—it bears the title "Temptation"—reads as follows:

"Should anyone have questions or desire a Biblical discussion on the conditions in the Bible, that could, of course, be instructive and edifying, no doubt. In the meantime, I will reassert that I maintain everything that I have written about conditions. And I also maintain that the earlier writings of Rev. Hoeksema, in which he taught conditions, faith as a condition, conversion as a condition, repentance as a condition to receive forgiveness, and conditions in the Confessions, condemn his present position and attitude against me. Without gloating I am very thankful that the Lord has deposited these materials in his earlier writings, whereby his present attack is so effectively put to shame. A so-called apology does not in the least affect the validity of my use of those writings to condemn his position."

Here Rev. Petter is telling us what he does with our position, that is, our teaching to the effect that in the covenant faith is not a condition but an instrument. In the above excerpt he openly condemns that teaching, which is equivalent to pronouncing it a heresy. To this teaching he opposes his own doctrine to the effect that faith is a condition. And judging from the language that he employs, we are driven to conclude that

he speaks and writes from conviction. He declares, does he not, that he will maintain everything that he has written about conditions. He declares, too, that he is thankful to God that in his earlier writings Rev. Hoeksema "taught conditions". That, says he, was the Lord's doings whereby He put to shame Rev. Hoeksema's present position, teaching, doctrine; and he concludes with telling us that it is right for him to use "these materials" to condemn Rev. Hoeksema's present position. This certainly is the language of conviction. It is language that Rev. Petter can use with a good conscience before God only if he be convinced in his heart that he writes and speaks the truth.

If Rev. Petter is now openly condemning our teaching, we, too, take and all along have been taking a definite stand publicly in the Standard Bearer regarding his teaching—we: Rev. H. Hoeksema, Rev. H. Veldman, and the undersigned. We hold and declare and all along have been arguing the point that the teaching of Rev. Petter runs contrary to the true doctrine of the Scriptures and of our Creeds.

What it means is that there is a controversy in progress between brethren of the same household of faith, that is, of the communion of churches that bears the name Protestant Reformed. The brethren involved are Rev. Petter on the one hand versus Rev. H. Hoeksema, Rev. H. Veldman and the undersigned on the other hand.

Mark you well, I say *controversy* and not *discussion*. A discussion in our case would be a debate in which the four of us took part for the sake of *arriving at the truth* regarding the matter in dispute through the investigation of the Scriptures.

On the other hand, the controversialist (*contra* opposite and *versus* pp of *vertere* to turn, hence *controvert to turn against*), the controverting church, *has arrived*—at the truth. She has seized the truth. The truth stands out clearly in her mind against the background of the lie, the heresy. Being thus spiritually equipped, she controverts: she exposes without mincing words the lie in all its fearful ramifications. She sets forth the truth, declares in the hearing of all men what she believes to be the truth of the Scriptures. And she opposes the truth to the lie. That is her calling. Woe unto her if she walks not worthily of it. And therefore I cannot subscribe what Rev. Petter in his second article says about controversy. He calls it a necessary evil. But controversy is not an evil. It is preaching the Gospel as Christ wants it preached. It is therefore a work necessary and good which God hath before ordained that His people—the church of the elect—should walk in it. Should we then be afraid of controversy? Should we not by all means refrain from calling it an evil? The church that will not controvert has lost its savor and is good only for being cast on the dunghill to be trodden by men. What we

should fear is not controversy but that which always wants to disqualify a Christian man for controversy, namely his sinful flesh.

Rev. Petter in that second article writes more things with which I cannot agree. For example this: "For it, controversy, presupposes a difference of opinion and thus an imperfection in our understanding of God's words." But controversy as a good work of the church of the elect is born of conviction not of opinion. What it presupposes is the clearest understanding of the Scriptures on the part of God's believing people. For the controverting church has arrived.

Rev. Petter has arrived. Whether he has arrived at the truth, whether, in other words, he is the true controversialist among us, is quite another question. Be this as it may, he has arrived. If not, how could he openly and publicly and apparently with such conviction be condemning our position. Verily, the brother has arrived. Hence, he has no more need of discussion on the points at issue in our dispute. This is so plain also from the following statement from his pen: "Should anyone have a question or desire a biblical discussion on the conditions in the Bible, that could of course be instructive and edifying, no doubt." Let us take notice. What Rev. Petter deems instructive and edifying is discussion *on conditions in the Bible*. The question whether or no the Bible actually teaches conditions has ceased to be a question for *him*. He is convinced that it does. Hence, what he would welcome is that we discuss the matter with him as occupying his position and accordingly as being motivated by the felt need of being grounded in his position. Very unwelcome therefore would be to him a discussion for the sake of *testing* his position. For he has arrived.

This is significant especially in the light of the following statement from Rev. Petter's pen: "And there is especially an urgent need of discussion with the Liberated churches and people of the Netherlands. There are many points on which we must clearly set our conceptions as we understand them in comparison with theirs whatever they are, and then discuss them through to the end."

I must comment first on the clause, "whatever they are." I believe Rev. Petter should have kept these words in his pen. For as appears from all his earlier articles he is thoroughly conversant with the conceptions of the Liberated, definitely with the two thought-pillars of their peculiar theology.

Second, let us take notice of this too: Rev. Petter wants to compare our conceptions with those of the Liberated. What conceptions please? I ask because Rev. Petter has arrived—at the position that faith is a condition. He thus embraces as truth exactly one half of liberated theology, if this theology allows being split into halves. And therefore his wanting to discuss with the Liberated causes me to ask: What for,

please? Not of course that I am opposed to discussing with the Liberated.

Rev. Petter continues: "And woe to us if we create an atmosphere that makes discussion practically impossible, and we become guilty of obstructing and impeding the shepherding and church-gathering work of Christ in this world of tangled relations."

"Therefore it is necessary to discuss the new Declaration."

"It may be possible that the embarrassing fruits of misunderstanding are already appearing in Canada."

These sentences, too, set me to thinking. I studied them long and hard. Let us first concentrate on the statement: "Therefore it is also necessary to discuss the new Declaration." Rev. Petter intends doing so in a series of articles to follow. But seeing that he has arrived, seeing that, according to his solemn conviction, faith is a condition and the contrary doctrine heresy, he shall have to discuss the new Declaration for the sake of condemning it and urge the churches to do likewise. For the essence of the new Declaration is that faith is not a condition, that it is solely an instrument, and that therefore the promises of God to His people are unconditional and unfailing. And that, according to Rev. Petter, is heresy. I repeat, Rev. Petter shall have to condemn the new Declaration; and that, certainly, he intends to do, must do. For a man, certainly, may not trample his convictions.

But Rev. Petter has still another reason for wanting the new Declaration condemned. The new Declaration impedes the shepherding and church-gathering word of Christ; that is, it excludes, Rev. Petter means to say, all such who hold with Rev. Petter that faith is a condition. And Rev. Petter wants these persons admitted. But supposing now that it were his rock-bottom and unshakable conviction that faith is *not* a condition but solely an instrument, and that the *contrary* view is heresy, would he then also be complaining that the new Declaration obstructs and impedes the shepherding and church-going work of Christ? Would he then be urging the churches to condemn the new Declaration? How could he? For that would be equivalent to urging the churches to open their doors to heretics, wouldn't it? Well, we are of the conviction that the doctrine to the effect that faith is not a condition but solely an instrument is the teaching of the Scriptures and our Confessions. Certainly, Rev. Petter can't blame us therefore, if we defend the new Declaration and urge its adoption. He would do the same, he would be compelled to do the same, if only he shared our convictions. So you see the attitude we take toward the new Declaration, must depend solely on our convictions. And this is but another way of saying that the sole question confronting each and every one of us regarding the new Declaration is: Is it true? Does it, yes or no, set forth certain points

of doctrine contained in our Confessions? If so, and if that is my conviction, I am in duty bound to adopt it, and urge the churches to do likewise. If not, and if this is my conviction, I am in duty bound to reject it, and to urge the churches to do likewise. For certainly I may not reject a document that, according to my firm conviction, sets forth the truth on the ground that its adoption would be untimely. How, I would like to know, could our owning, and championing the truth and our opposing the truth to error ever be untimely? Can our walking worthily of our calling as churches ever be untimely?

Let Rev. Petter act according to his convictions regarding that new Declaration. And we will do the same. And let him by all means and on his own responsibility, of course, persist in maintaining that faith is a condition, if that is his conviction. And let him persist in opposing his doctrine to our position. But let him remember that we, too, have our convictions. Let him remember that we, too, have arrived. It is our firm belief that his doctrine is unreformed, and that our stand, teaching, regarding conditions, is the true doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Confessions. We shall therefore continue to expose Rev. Petter's doctrine for what we believe it to be, namely an error. And we shall continue to set forth our doctrine in all its glory and oppose it to be that error. That, of course, will spell continued controversy within the bosom of our communion of churches for as long a time as necessity will dictate. And, our people must not be averse to controversy. For the true church controverts. Controverting, it preaches, as was stated, the Gospel as Christ wants it preached, that is antithetically. Rev. Petter, therefore did wrong in stating that he can feel for those readers who have a distaste for "this controversy" and who would keep it out of our papers and the eyes of the public; that he will not brush their feelings aside; and that he trusts that it is voiced by people, Christian people, who try to gather edification from our papers. His stating that he can feel for those readers who have a distaste for "this controversy" is really equivalent to his stating that he can feel for readers who have a distaste for preaching the Gospel as Christ wants it preached. Besides, Rev. Petter should bear in mind that it was he and not us who started "this controversy" in our circles. I know, in one of his articles he denies it, throwing the blame on the Liberated. But that is wrong: The Liberated may have started the controversy between us and themselves, but not, certainly, between Rev. Petter and us (Rev. Hoeksema, Rev. Veldman and the undersigned). That was solely the work of Rev. Petter.

And now the controversy is on. And our people must want it and follow it closely—very closely and studiously—for the rest of its duration. That is their solemn duty. And they shall have to choose sooner or

later between Rev. Petter's doctrine and ours. What is their choice going to be? Are our people, at least the great majority of them going to choose Rev. Petter's doctrine? Or will they cleave to the doctrine that has been preached among us from the beginning of our existence? God only knows. And He will reveal it. In the meantime we will continue to war what we believe to be His warfare.

Let not our people say that essentially Rev. Petter and we agree, and that it is only a squabble about words. That certainly is as little Rev. Petter's view of the matter as it is ours. Rev. Petter has openly condemned our position, hasn't he?

But I believe we should by all means take to heart these words of Rev. Petter: "I want to maintain that altogether too often controversy borders on the unchristian, the unbrotherly." That, alas, is only too true. Let us henceforth see to it that this can not be said of us. Let us not be fanatical in our reaction but let us remain calm and brotherly and in a spirit of meekness wage this controversy through to its end.

Rev. Petter's second article contains more such warnings and admonitions to brotherly conduct in controversy. He says for example, "And woe unto us if we create an atmosphere that makes discussion practically impossible." That of course would be terrible. But I was just wondering whether Rev. Petter directs this and similar speech only to us and not also to himself. He leaves that impression as in the statement, "And the present approach of the Standard Bearer does not lend to edification." He should not have neglected to make this clear; and certainly he should not have by-passed the Concordia, which he does. The way he treated Rev. R. Veldman is certainly calculated to make discussion practically impossible. And there is no excuse for his latest attack on Rev. Hoeksema. More could be mentioned.

But in fine: Let us without ceasing pray God for the grace that is needed to wage this controversy in a spirit clearly bespeaking that what we seek is not ourselves but the truth.

#### ONE MORE REMARK.

As far as the undersigned is concerned this controversy could end right now. For he, too, (the undersigned) has arrived. To him it has become as clear as the sun in the heavens that, according to the Scriptures and our Confessions, faith is not a condition in the covenant. The matter is remarkably simple. One of my earlier writings contains a definition of the term *condition*, taken from the Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia of the English language, a work of ten volumes. But Rev. Petter did not like that definition. He called it border-lined. So he presented in the Concordia for July 21, 1949 what to him is the proper defi-

dition of the term in dispute. "The simple dictionary definition," he wrote, "is perfectly valid, namely, an event, fact, or the like that is necessary to the occurrence of some other, though not its cause; a prerequisite."

But this makes *faith* a "*condition* required beforehand" (the part of this sentence inclosed in parenthesis was taken from my dictionary) and therefore a virtue that man must supply, provide, originate, if God is to save him. Certainly, such a conception is strange to the Scriptures and our Confession. This is plain and thoroughly understandable. It is not true that the matter in dispute is bafflingly intricate, involving us in innumerable difficulties and problems the solutions of which will come to us only after years and years and still more years of intensive and sustained study and discussion. It is simply a matter of Arminianism versus the truth—the true conception,—thus verily a matter that was settled, wasn't it? some 331 years ago on the synod of Dordt, 1618-'19, by our Reformed fathers. And the conclusions at which they arrived they laid down in a number of canons known as the Canons of Dordt.

Allow me to quote from these Canons:

Canons 1-B-III.

"We reject the errors of those who teach—that God chose the act of faith as a condition of salvation."

Canons 1-B-V.

"We reject the error of those who teach that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance, are conditions and causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur. . . ."

Canons 1-B-VII.

"We reject the errors of those who teach that . . . there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any certainty, except that which depends on a changeable and uncertain condition . . . ."

(Rev. Petter found fault with me for stating that, according to the dictionary, the essential characteristic of conditions is their changeableness. This characteristic was included in my definition of conditions—a definition that Rev. Petter brushed aside as claiming that it was border-lined. He will take notice of the expressions occurring in the above Canon: "changeable and uncertain conditions").

Canons 5-B-I.

"The synod rejects the errors of those who teach that . . . the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God, gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfill through his own free will."

The question is being put to me time and again, now by this one then by that one: "But doesn't Rev. Petter declare that faith is a gift of God and that sal-

vation from beginning to end and in all its phases is solely God's work in man?" Indeed this is also his teaching. But in defending among us the proposition to the effect that faith is a condition, he draws a line of thought in conflict with and thus exclusive of the true doctrine. It means that he has introduced in our communion the double-track theology of the Christian Reformed Churches.

Neither Rev. Petter nor anyone else must take it ill of me that I say these things publicly in the Standard Bearer. For, like Rev. Petter, we, too, have arrived. He is openly defending his position and condemning ours. This places us under the necessity of openly exposing his teaching. It compels us to set forth our doctrine and oppose it to what we believe to be his error. In a word, there is being waged in our midst a controversy, which was started by Rev. Petter, and meaning that he and we have arrived.

G. M. Ophoff.



## Ingezonden

Chatham, 21 October, 1950

Aan de Redacteur van de Standard Bearer,  
Geachte Redacteur:

Tegenover het ingezonden stuk van Mr. De Jong te Grand Rapids, Michigan in de Standard Bearer van 15 October 1950, nummer 2, zou ik het volgende willen stellen:

1e. Mr. De Jong vraagt wat beide kerkengroepen, te weten de Protestant Reformed Churches en de Gereformeerde Kerken (art. 31) gemeen hebben. Ik antwoord daarop: Beide hebben gemeen dat zij staan op de basis van de Heilige Schrift en de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid. Daarom is het geen pleiten (plead) van ons, emigranten, om ons als leden bij de Protestant Reformed Churches te voegen, maar . . . een iegelijk is volgens artikel 28 van de Ned. Geloofbelijdenis schuldig zich bij de ware kerk te voegen.

2e. Mr. De Jong generaliseert als hij in zijn "Contribution" degene, die zich in Hamilton en daarbuiten niet afscheiden, naar aanleiding van het bezoek van Ds. Hettinga, over dezelfde kam scheert, als hen die dit wel deden. Velen in en buiten Hamilton en Chatham keuren af hetgeen in Hamilton is gebeurd. U generaliseert nogmaals als U ons herinnert aan de "Januskop" in verband met de royale behandeling van sommige van Uw leiders (wie zijn dat?, ik ken in de Gereformeerde Kerken geen leiders-principe).

3e. Ik zou gaarne bewijs van U willen hebben van "their Arminian and Common Grace conception of the covenant and baptism". Met "their" zult U bedoelen, zij die als emigranten van Nederland, voorheen behoorende tot de Geref. Kerken (art. 31), thans in Can-

ada of Amerika vertoeven. Dit is de 2e keer dat ik deze onware beschuldiging onder de ogen krijg zonder enig bewijs. Als U zich op de hoogte had gesteld en van hetgeen op de Synode van Dordrecht in 1618-1619 en hetgeen de laatste jaren in Nederland in de kerkstrijd is voorgevallen, zou U een dergelijke beschuldiging niet schrijven. Ik geloof zeker dat Uw "leiders" het niet met U eens zijn.

4e. U schrijft: "One leader advises his people to be sure and join the Protestant Reformed Churches, whereas another great one (wie zijn dat dan?) among them sends out the alarm: "BEWARE". Ik moet opmerken dat de Gereformeerde Kerken (art. 31) in Nederland geen leiders kent. Zie hierover art. 7 en 30, 31, 32 van de Ned. Geloofsbelijdenis, en Zondag 34 vraag en antwoord 94 van de Heid. Catechismus.

5e. U schrijft verder: "It could very well be that we are much closer to the so-called "synodical" group than to the Liberated. "Nogmaals als U zich op de hoogte had gesteld van hetgeen de laatste jaren tijdens de Kerkstrijd officieel op papier is gezet in besluiten enz., U zoudt ook deze zin niet hebben geschreven. Welke groep staat dicht bij U? Zij, die de veronderstelde wedergeboorte leren en de Algemeene Genade theorie in de besluiten van 1939-1942 hebben vastgelegd en vooral deze laatste theorie tegenwoordig overal doorvoeren of die alleen ten aanzien van Verbond en Doop misschien een andere "opvatting" hebben? Uw "leiders" zullen het ook zeker hier niet met U eens zijn! Als U een goed theologisch onderscheidings-vermogen hebt, dan had U dat zeker in de prediking in de "synodale" Kerken kunnen horen.

6e. De Geref. Kerken (art. 31) vragen bij het afleggen van de openbare geloofsbelijdenis de vier (en niet drie zooals U schreef) geformuleerde vragen, welke U kunt vinden in het daarvoor betreffende formulier van elk Nederlands psalmboekje. Dus geen 4 of 5 vragen meer. Daarmee hebt U zich stellig vergist. Misschien dat de Nederlandse taal U toen "parten" heeft gespeeld. In de Geref. Kerken (art. 31) bestaat geen enkele andere binding dan die aan de Schrift en de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid. Precies als in de Protestant Reformed Churches.

Tenslotte hoop ik in de Standard Bearer ook eens andere stemmen te mogen horen als die van Mr. Haan en Mr. De Jong. Anders zou er stellig redenen zijn uit te roepen: "BEWARE". Dergelijke niet op argumenten berustende ingezonden stukken doen veel inbreuk op de verstandhouding tussen beide kerkengroepen. Vergeet niet dat velen van hen voorheen broeders en zusters waren in die Kerken in Nederland en zich dat nog voelen te zijn, maar juist in verband met het aangehaalde artikel 28 van de Ned. Geloofsbelijdenis zich bij U voegden.

Met hartelijke groeten,

A. J. IJtsma,

Chatham, Ontario, Canada.

## Contribution

Chatham, October 14, 1950

To Professor Rev. H. Hoeksema,  
Editor of the Standard Bearer.

Esteemed Editor.

I read in the Standard Bearer, number 1, October 1, 1950, under "Contribution" the following of Mr. A. H. Haan:

"But, the error of the Liberated Churches with regards to the Covenant and the error of Common Grace in the Christian Reformed Churches are simply one and the same error."

I should like to know of Mr. A. Haan in the Standard Bearer regarding the error of the Liberated Churches relative the Covenant. It is the first time that I have read and heard, that a member of the Prot. Ref. Churches puts the Liberated and Christian Reformed on the same level. It is simply nonsense to compare the stand of the Liberated Churches regarding the Covenant with the Common Grace of the Chr. Ref. Churches.

With kindest regards from,

A. J. IJtsma,

Member of the Prot. Ref. Church at Chatham.

### IN MEMORIAM

It pleased the Lord in His great wisdom to suddenly remove from us on September 25, 1950 our beloved husband, father and grandfather

Mr. Nickolas Vander Wal

at the age of 57 years.

We are comforted that our loss is his gain. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Mrs. N. Vander Wal  
Mr. and Mrs. John Koster  
Harvey  
Marvin

Grand Rapids, Mich.

two grandchildren.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 4, 1950 our beloved parents

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Pastoor

hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their grateful children, thank our covenant God that it has been His will to spare them for each other and for us. May their remaining years together be filled with the peace that passeth all understanding.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

Geraldine  
Howard  
Donald

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition Of Hebrews 10:19-25

#### IV.

At this juncture of our series it can do no harm to briefly restate what we have thus far learned from this portion of the book of Hebrews.

In our first article (see September 15 issue) we called attention to the meaning of the terms: "true hearts" and "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience". The implication of these terms, as we noticed, was, that only the *pure in heart shall see God*. Only those who are pure, can draw near unto God in confidence of being accepted of Him. This is not only true in heaven, but it is also true now in this present time.

Our second article (see October 1 issue) called attention to the fact, that the *text* teaches, that our drawing near unto God must be done in *full assurance* of faith. We must draw near unto God without doubtful wavering, without fear of being unacceptable to Him. The certainty of being well-pleasing to God must burn in our hearts. Faith must be *carried through to the very end*.

Our third instalment (see October 15 issue) called attention to the legal possibility of our drawing near to God in such full assurance of faith as we have just mentioned. We have a High-Priest in the house of God; He is over the house of God. He is none other than the Son of God in our flesh. At this very moment, throughout the entire New Testament Dispensation, He is in the glory of the inner heavenly Sanctuary, ever living to pray for us, wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost those who through Him go to the Father. Indeed, He is very God (Hebrews 1) and real, righteous man (Hebrews 2).

Such is the chain of thought as followed by us in our study of this rich and comforting portion of Holy Writ.

In this essay we wish to continue our study of this portion of the book of Hebrews. We must still give account of the following elements in the text:

1. What is the Scriptural idea of the "Holy Place" and its relationship to God, the Father as we know and confess Him to be our God?
2. What must we understand by the "new and living way dedicated by His blood"?
3. What is the meaning of the "boldness" to enter into the Holy Place?
4. And what is the sense of "having this boldness"? In what sense does the text speak of "having"?

Let us study our text.

It is quite evident from the terms "the veil" and the Holy Place" and also from the term "way into the

Holy Place", that we are here dealing in our text with highly symbolic language. These terms indicate an earthly, typical representation of a heavenly spiritual reality, of the intercourse and fellowship with God, a literal picture in earthly forms and dimensions portraying a higher heavenly reality.

The reason for this?

It is the manner of God's dealing with us in teaching us by means of earthly forms and symbols, He causes us to see the great work of His salvation in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

In the Old Testament tabernacle, He gives us a picture, a type, a replica of the heavenly temple, the temple not made with hands.

Thus we read literally in Hebrews 8:4 5: "Now if He were on earth He would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve that which is a *copy* and *shadow* of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when He is about to make the tabernacle; for, see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the *pattern* that I showed thee on the mount". (Compare EX. 25:40).

The underscoring in the text is of us. We have done so to call attention to the truth that the Old Testament tabernacle was made after the pattern of the heavenly tabernacle. Of this heavenly tabernacle we cannot possibly form any idea except by means of earthly forms and symbols.

Wherefore God speaks to us of heavenly things in and through the medium of the earthly. He knows which forms alone can teach us the truth as it is in Jesus. In fact, He even created and foreordained these revelational forms for us, who He also foreordained unto the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ. And in great gratitude of heart for such a display of Divine goodness and wisdom we cannot but bow in reverence. We shall only thus not be wiser than God. We shall humbly study these symbols and typical representations to know the love of the Father for us His children.

From the just quoted text from Hebrews 8:4, 5 we learn that the whole of the tabernacle, the tabernacle in its fundamental structure and dimensions, its rooms and furniture, its ceremonies and liturgy, is in its *totality* made after the *pattern* shown unto Moses in the Mount. About all of this the Architect and Builder was and is and shall be very jealous. "See", saith He, "that thou make *all things* according to the pattern, that I showed thee in the Mount."

It is very evident from the epistle to the Hebrews, that, what is true of the whole tabernacle in its being fashioned after the heavenly pattern, is equally true of every detail of it. And so we may safely conclude, that also that which is called "the way into the Holiest" is made after the pattern of the heavenly.

It is all a picture of Christ, Who is the way, the truth and the life. None can come to the Father, except through Him, through His righteousness realized on the Cross of Calvary. He who understands the import of this temple sees God revealed in Christ; sees God working in Christ, the Mediator of God and man, to bring us back to His favour. For God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It is God bringing us unto Himself. The temple is, indeed, a picture of the way unto God in the Mediator, Christ.

It is this truth that Jesus expresses in John 5:46, which truth is no trite and commonplace saying, namely, that if the Jews had believed Moses, they would have believed in Him, "for", says He, "he wrote of me". For what Jesus evidently has in mind in this passage, is not that Moses wrote about Jesus *here* and *there* in the first five books of the Bible, that he mentioned Jesus too while writing about many other people and happenings, but most emphatically, that in the entire collection of the inspired writings of Moses we have only to see Christ. Moses did not write biographies of certain saints, nor did he write a mere record of human events, but he wrote only of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, the work of the Mediator of God and man Jesus. He wrote of the sufferings to come upon the Son of Man and of the glory to follow afterwards.

We could cite many more instances in Scripture to substantiate our conviction, that the entire Pentateuch is nothing else than the revelation of God in Jesus. But the foregoing is sufficient to make our point clear.

Now this Gospel concerning the Christ, our Mediator, which is preached by patriarchs and prophets is also set forth, portrayed by the entire temple, its sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law. Also here Jesus says: "He wrote of me"! In this temple Jesus, no doubt, had His own work outlined.

Of this portraying of the Gospel, the glad tidings in Christ, our text here in Hebrews 10:19-25 speaks. We shall do well to constantly read our text against this exalted background of the purpose of the Chief Architect and Builder of His church. Thus we shall see the way unto God the Father in Christ, without seeing a visible, creaturely form of God Himself. For the temple shows us the *way* unto the Father. This way unto the Father should not be changed into the way into *heaven*. For it ought to be evident to all, who earnestly seek to understand the truth of the Gospel, that even when we presently arrive in heaven, we shall still only be able to draw nigh unto God in Christ, the only way unto the Father.

As long as we dwell here upon earth, and only see the great truth of the Gospel in a glass darkly, we can only see our Mediator with the help of the earthly forms and symbols given us by God Himself. And, therefore, the more we study the symbolism of the

temple with a *believing heart*, the more we shall, indeed, know the only true God and Jesus Christ, Whom He hath sent. And by means of this symbolic-revelation of the Mediator of God and man, we shall be led by the Holy Spirit to exclaim "and unto Him that loved us and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and He made us to be a kingdom, priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5, 6).

For God, Who sitteth on the throne of His holiness, is in this temple.

Let us see this in the text.

We notice, that the text speaks of the "Holy Place" and of the "entrance of the Holy Place".

To understand what the significance of the "Holy Place" is in our text we should notice what the "Holy Place" was in the Old Testament tabernacle.

In the first place, that it was that room in the tabernacle, which was most distant from the Outer Court, where the congregation gathered to worship God by bringing their sacrifices to the ministering priests at the Great Altar. Only the priests might enter into the Holy Place and only the High Priest might come into the Most Holy Place once a year. Now, in order to come into the Most Holy Place from this Outer Court, where the congregation met, the High Priest must pass through the Holy Place to enter into the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was separated from the Holy Place by "the veil". It is of this "veil" and of this "Most Holy Place" that our text speaks.

Secondly, we would notice, that this inner sanctuary is called the Most Holy Place because here God dwells with His people. In this inner sanctuary God gives us a visible representation, a replica of the throne of God in heaven. As the throne of God in heaven is surrounded by Cherubims so also these Cherubim are pictured in this earthly tabernacle. For the throne in the tabernacle is nothing less than the Ark of the Covenant. On this ark Moses was instructed to place the Cherubim, which are placed upon it in a bowing, God-adoring posture. It is the same picture of the Throne of God, as He rules not only over His people, but also as He rules over all in His majesty, revealing Himself as the Judge of the nations, while saving His people. For in this Ark we have the two Tables of Stone, written with the finger of God. (Evidently the first inspired writing in the Bible, and also written not through the medium of holy men, but by God Himself.) On this law the entire law and the prophets depend. They are the fundamental Statutes of the Throne of God whether viewed in relationship to the unbelievers as well as to the believers; both as a Throne of mercy in the blood of Jesus as well as a Throne of justice outside of Him!

(to be continued)

Rev. Geo. C. Lubbers.

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## IN HIS FEAR

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### Church Membership In His Fear

#### 3.

#### *The Church In The World.*

In our last article we called attention to the Reformed and Scriptural conception of the Holy Catholic Church. We did this, not because it was our intention to discuss dogmatically the idea of the church, as such. That does not belong in the territory of this rubric. We must remember that the chief question before us at present is: what is the significance of church membership in the fear of the Lord? And it was with a view to that question that it became necessary to briefly call attention to the fundamentals of the Christian faith concerning the holy catholic church. It is of the utmost importance that the child of God constantly remember that the matter of membership in *Christ's Church*, in the holy catholic church, is principally at stake when he deals with the various problems and questions which arise in connection with the church in the world and in connection with his own church membership and his attitude toward the church and in the congregation to which he belongs. The matter is not to be played with, nor lightly dealt with. But as we approach the question of our church membership we must be deeply conscious of the fact that it concerns the church of Christ Himself, that it concerns *Christ*, the Head of the church; and our attitude must be deeply spiritual and earnest.

For the fact of the matter is that while we may call this "church" and that "church", and while, to be sure,—and very properly and necessarily,—there are many congregations, there is nevertheless only one church. And again, while we make distinctions between true church and false church, or between true, truer, and truest over against false, falser, and falsest, or between pure, purer, and purest, over against corrupt more corrupt and most corrupt,—and undoubtedly here also with some justification,—Scripture knows of only one church essentially.

There are not many churches essentially, therefore, but in the real sense of the word only one Body of Christ. Nor, as we emphasized in the conclusion of our last article, must we make the mistake of multiplying churches when we begin to make distinctions.—Not that these distinctions are not proper in themselves, and necessary. But they must remain distinctions, and never become separations. The distinctions we make upon the basis of Holy Writ are only valid within the limits of the concept *holy catholic church*; and they

must always serve only and strictly to describe for us the various aspects of that church and her life. Hence, as we make these various distinctions, we must not end after all with a half dozen different churches which have little or no connection with the holy catholic church, so that there is a visible church and an invisible church, a militant church and a triumphant church, an instituted church and an organic church. Then, of course, all speech of the holy catholic church is devitalized. Then we finally arrive at the point where the holy catholic church is merely a hazy, idealistic, abstract theory, with which in our life as Christians we never come into vital contact and which never touches our lives in any concrete way. For that reason, too, the language which we use must express the fact that these distinctions are indeed only distinctions. It is improper to speak of a visible church, proper to speak of the church visible. Improper it is to speak of a militant church, proper to speak of the church militant, that is, the church from the aspect of her militance. Improper it is to speak of an instituted church, proper to speak of the church institute.

Proceeding from that standpoint we may inquire as to the relation between the holy catholic church and the church organism and the church institute, may investigate the relation between the holy catholic church and the church as she lives in the midst of the world and comes to manifestation in the midst of the world. Above all, however, also here we must bear in mind that God has only one church!

It is this inquiry which will be our second step in answering the question: what is the significance of church membership in His fear?

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#### *The Gathering of the Church.*

Considered in its entirety, the church includes all the redeemed, sanctified, and glorified elect; and as such it exists now yet only in the counsel of God. It has not yet been fully realized. But this church is gathered in time. It is gathered from out of the whole human race, from every nation, tongue, and tribe, from the beginning of the world to the end, so that in every generation the church exists and is gathered and becomes manifest on earth. There will be a time, therefore, when the church shall have been completely gathered, when every last one of the elect shall have been born and shall have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light, and when too the church shall be manifest completely and perfectly as one gathering and shall no longer be locally divided and temporally separated, but shall everlastingly live together in one place, in one glory, with the same Christ, fully and completely and unitedly enjoying the fellowship of the one God. Then the full counsel of God

concerning His church, as He has eternally conceived her, shall be realized.

Now, however, the church is still in the process of being gathered.

Concerning the *act* of gathering the church, as such, we do not intend to go into detail here. But I deem it important, nevertheless, that we remind ourselves of several elements in this connection.

1) This gathering of the church is the wonderwork of God. God gathers His church in every generation and from every nation throughout history. And the wonder of the gathering of the church is exactly that it consists in the resurrection of the dead, in calling light out of darkness, righteousness out of guilt, heaven out of hell. And it is through that wonderwork of the gathering of the elect church out of a race of damnable, corrupt, sin-darkened, dead men that God reveals Himself as God, the Lord. From the point of view of our subject in these articles this truth is important, for it means that the church is in no sense of the word a human institution. Man does in no sense bring the church into existence, or even cooperate with God in building His church. Nor does the church exist by the consent of its members. It is not a society, nor a school of philosophy, nor even a religious movement among others. It is the living body of the living Christ, the Son of God in the flesh, Who died and rose again, and Who imparts His own life to the members of His body. It is the wonderwork of divine grace alone!

2) God accomplishes this work of gathering the church through His own divine, irresistible, and efficacious calling. Everywhere in Scripture this truth is emphasized. God called His Son (Israel) out of Egypt. Hos. 11:1. The apostle Paul addresses himself to the communion of those who are *called* to be saints. Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2. Hence the church is designated in the New Testament Scriptures by the Greek word which means the gathering of those who are called out. God calls His church efficaciously into existence!

3) This divine calling whereby the church is gathered out of the world issues forth through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Word by which the church is called is the mighty Word of salvation. The Son of God in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, speaks the Word of the divine calling whereby the Church is gathered out of the world. The Son of God by His Word and Spirit gathers the church.

4) This work of divine calling by the Son of God through His Word and Spirit takes place through the preaching of the Gospel. It is of the utmost importance, in the first place, that we understand that also this is strictly a divine work. We must not do an about face here, and begin to say that here the work of man finds a place in the gathering of the church. For according to Scripture, not only is the Gospel that

is preached Christ's, in the sense that He revealed it and that He is its contents. But the gospel is *never* heard unless Christ speaks it. And even when the calling comes through the preaching of the Word, it is Christ alone who calls and sends apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. It is Christ alone who prepares such preachers. And it is Christ who must and does speak His Word by His Spirit through the preaching, and Who thus calls His church. In the second place, we must remember that Christ thus speaks His Word and by His Word and Spirit gathers His church throughout the ages. It is the Word of Christ that is spoken throughout the old dispensation already. It was the Word of Christ which was realized in the fulness of time, in the cross and resurrection and exaltation of the Son of God in the flesh. And it is still the Word of Christ which is spoken through the apostles and evangelists and pastors and teachers whom He commissions and sends throughout the new dispensation. The Son of God Himself by His Spirit, through the Word of the Gospel, which is spoken and revealed from the beginning to the end of time, gathers His church throughout history.

5) Finally, we must remember the principle that in this world Christ gathers His church in the line of generations.

But our discussion of this truth together with our conclusions concerning the result of the work of the gathering of the church we shall leave for the next issue, D. V.

H. C. Hoeksema.



## PERISCOPE

*The Assumption of Mary and the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

It is expected that on the first of November of this year the Pope will announce that the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is now a dogma in the Roman Catholic Church. This theory held as a pious belief for some time by many in the Roman Catholic Church will now become an 'infallible dogma' of the Roman Catholic Church which no Roman Catholic may dare to doubt or reject. In order to understand this it is necessary to remember that in 1870 the Vatican Council declared that the Roman Pope was infallible, incapable of error when speaking officially "ex-cathedra". Now the pope will use this supposed power to make this dogma binding on the churches.

This new dogma will insist that the body of the mother of Jesus was, after her death, preserved from corruption and decay and in a short time "assumed" or raised up into heaven, and there reunited with her

soul. This is but one other step in the glorification of the Virgin Mary. Already in 1854 it was maintained as an official doctrine that Mary, though not virgin-born was kept from all stain of original sin. Now her body is believed kept from corruption.

Now certainly with this doctrine as such or with the supposed 'truth' which is expressed therein we as Protestant Reformed have little contact and there is little danger that we will believe or adopt such a 'doctrine'. Nor is this what we had in mind when we wrote the above heading.

But what is behind such a theory of infallibility, and what is behind the slavish adherence to such papal pronouncements? It is the comfortable (?) and easy (?) assurance of the correctness of everything that the church does. With this attitude we and especially our missionaries of the past have become familiar when we hear or have heard that oft repeated, "Well if our Synod said that Common Grace was Scriptural and if our College and Seminary professors say so too, and if my minister and my consistory also agree, well than it must be so and I will believe it too."

From this we, as Protestant Reformed, are free and insist that every individual member not only has the right but the calling, by virtue of the office of all believers, to search the Scripture and to try the spirits and to agree or disagree with such pronouncements, but then always on the basis of the Word of God. I say from this we are free, at least in theory, but I sometimes wonder about the practice.

Of this I was reminded when I read the contribution by A. H. Haan in the October I issue of the Standard Bearer. This in answer to Rev. Blankespoor who asks several questions about the "Statement of Principles". Now it may be that Rev. Blankespoor was objecting to them in the guise of questions. This I do not know neither am I able to assume this from his questions as such. But the point that I wish to make is this—that Rev. Blankespoor is taken to task for asking questions. "He speaks about origin, intentions, etc., but not one word about contents. I assume that he surely subscribes to the contents of this 'declaration' and I cannot understand why he should be so concerned about who formulated it, or who it is pointed at. He surely knows that it was adopted by our Synod, and that it was formulated by the Committee of Pre-advice with the advice of the two seminary professors. Also, that it was requested by our Mission Committee, which also represents our denomination in the Mission Field." So there you have it. It came from the Mission Committee representing all our churches, it was drawn up by Synod, with the advice of its Committee of Pre-advice and the two Professors and now while you may still question (?) the contents you may not even ask questions about the way it came to Synod.

Now perhaps we are reading more into the words

of Mr. Haan than he means to have there but if not we have an example of that same mental and spiritual attitude which carried to the extreme gives the Roman Catholic Church her "Assumption of Mary".

\* \* \* \*

#### *The Southern Presbyterian Church.*

Some time ago we pointed out the controversies that were then current in the Southern Presbyterian Church. At that time we pointed out that agitation was especially centered about two points, the membership of this church in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America and most important of all, the attempt to reunite the Southern Presbyterian with the Presbyterian Church of the USA (The Northern Presbyterian Church).

Still these issues are burning in the Southern Presbyterian Church and although there is supposedly a five year moratorium on all reunion efforts it becomes increasingly evident that eventually these two churches will reunite but that there will be a large segment of the Southern Church which will refuse the merger and will form a continuing Southern Presbyterian Church.

That this is indeed the trend is evident from several articles recently appearing in the "Southern Presbyterian Journal" organ of the continuing church movement. They deal with that difficult matter of church property in the event of merger.

The stand has been taken semi-officially in the church publications of the Southern Presbyterian Church that a local congregation holds its property only as long as it stays in the denomination, but that if it withdraws it loses its property.

The background of this question is to be found in the fact that when in 1936 the Orthodox Presbyterian Church withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in the USA the Presbyterian church claimed and was able through court action to keep possession of church property, even when the entire congregation had withdrawn and it had not a single member in the local congregation. Evidently this would be a strong factor in keeping the Southern church intact in case of a merger. Some of the Southern Presbyterian congregations have been taking the matter into their own hands, by reincorporating the local congregation, under a charter which did not mention the denominational name, but asserted that all rights to the local property were vested in the local congregation.

In the Southern Presbyterian Journal of Sept. 20 is a nine page article on the legal question of property rights in the Southern Presbyterian Churches written by Henry E. David an attorney and member of the group that is opposed to a merger. We will not quote all the legal arguments which do not apply to us or have a primary interest but would quote his conclusion as indicative of the trend which is present and the

split which is evidently widening in these churches.

"I say to the individual congregations of the Southern Presbyterian Church, incorporate your churches and have all muniments of title, such as deeds, specifically state that the property is held for your individual congregation and not in trust for the denomination; and I challenge any merged Church to take it away from you. This is not congregationalism. This is the Presbyterianism that has been understood and practiced in the South since the first Presbyterian Church was established therein.

"The contention that the property of an individual Presbyterian Church belongs to the denomination reduces in the last analysis to prelacy and not Presbyterianism. It was denounced years ago by Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer, who has no peer in any American pulpit today; and every strict Presbyterian should continue to denounce it and refuse to be driven into a Church dominated by rules utterly foreign to the Church of our fathers."

This question was also raised at the last General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church (comparable to our Synod). The Westminster Church of Atlanta of which the Rev. John R. Richardson, one of the contributing editors to the Southern Presbyterian Journal, is pastor had taken this step of re-incorporation. The Presbytery of Atlanta asked the General Assembly to rule on the legality of this procedure. The Assembly replied that this was wrong but did not give reasons for its being wrong but instead appointed a committee to study the question of church property.

In this whole matter of church property and church merger it becomes evident that the Southern Presbyterian denomination if it unites with the Northern church will try to retain all the property now connected with the Southern Church. Even though local congregations in part or in whole refuse to participate in the merger, and instead claim to be the continuation of the Southern Presbyterian denomination, they will have to fight for their property, and the chances appear good that they may lose it anyway.

We can well echo the sentiments of the editor of "The Presbyterian Guardian" from whom part of this information is received: "We hope this project does not dampen their opposition to the proposed merger. There are matters more important even than church buildings. . . . Ours is a time that calls for courage, courage to stand for the truth of God at whatever cost."

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#### *Doctrinal Preaching.*

An interesting and striking sidelight to the above struggle was presented in the Southern Presbyterian Journal under the title "Theology to be Preached".

"In some churches there is an aversion to theo-

logical preaching. This is not difficult to understand. To appreciate theological preaching one must develop a taste for it.

"The average congregation has not been exposed to enough of it to have such a taste. They have been given sermons on how to win friends, how to be a magnetic personality, how to forget our worries, how to feel good, and how to succeed in business. Though these topics have some value, they do not belong to the essence of the saving message of the gospel.

"Another reason is that theological preaching makes one think and most people prefer not to think—it is too laborious. Many modern congregations, therefore, desire sermons that are entertaining and oratorical rather than doctrinal.

"As Christian preachers we must be reminded that Christ was a theological preacher. The Apostles were theological preachers. They exhorted us to preach doctrines. Oratorical and topical preachers may have a larger audience; but it is a well known fact that when such preachers leave the people leave. . . .

"Theological preaching is broadening. It stretches the minds of people. Its range is wider than 'ethics' or 'religion'. Theology is broad since it embraces the Christian doctrines which deal with all of man's relations to God and the universe. Theology gives man a comprehensive world and life view. This is especially true of Reformed Theology. . . .

"Theological preaching is satisfying. . . .

"Christian theology does not deal with speculations but with finalities. . . .

"Theological preaching is strengthening. . . .

"More thought should be given to the eternal things and less time to the ephemerals. Let us pray that our Church will be revitalized by a new appreciation and a fresh presentation of the theological convictions set forth so marvelously in our Westminster Standards. These Standards have served as museum pieces too long. Let us take them off the shelf and permit them to give their timeless message to our age which is becoming conscious of its theological and moral bankruptcy, and its need of tested certainties and saving affirmations."

This article by the Rev. John R. Richardson mentioned above certainly indicates to us, that in the present struggle, the party represented by the "Southern Presbyterian Journal" must have our sympathy and we hope that the sentiments expressed may take root in this group.

J. Howerzyl.

#### NOTICE!

The League of Prot. Ref. Men's Societies was to meet at Hudsonville, Mich, Nov. 2. This date has been changed to Thursday, Nov. 9. Rev. Lubbers will speak on "The Raging of Satan, in the light of the Book of Revelation."

## Report of Classis East

MET IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICH., OCTOBER 4-5, 1950

The opening exercises were conducted by Rev. C. Hanko. The credentials are read and accepted according to rotation. Rev. J. A. Heys presides. Rev. C. Hanko is asked to serve as clerk.

Grand Haven, Chatham and Randolph ask for Classical appointments. Classis decides to give Classical appointments to these churches, leaving them one open Sunday per month; and that the appointments shall be equally divided between all our ministers. A committee is appointed to draw up a schedule. They later present the following schedule, which was adopted by Classis:

### Randolph:

October 8, H. Veldman  
October 15, G. Lubbers  
October 22, M. Schipper  
October 29, J. A. Heys  
November 5, R. Veldman  
November 12, C. Hanko  
November 19, J. Blankespoor  
December 3, B. Kok  
December 10, G. Vanden Berg  
December 17, E. Knott  
January 7, H. Veldman

### Chatham:

October 8, B. Kok  
October 15, G. Vos  
October 29, J. Blankespoor  
November 5, H. Veldman  
November 12, J. A. Heys  
November 19, E. Knott  
November 26, G. Lubbers  
December 3, M. Schipper  
December 10, C. Hanko  
December 17, R. Veldman  
January 7, G. Vanden Berg

### Grand Haven:

October 8, E. Knott  
October 22, C. Hanko  
October 29, G. Vanden Berg  
November 5, B. Kok  
November 12, M. Schipper

November 19, G. Vos  
November 26, H. Veldman  
December 3, R. Veldman  
December 10, J. Blankespoor  
December 17, G. Lubbers  
December 31, J. A. Heys  
January 7, G. Vos

The Committee, appointed in re the status of the Stated Clerk, is continued.

The Consistory of Fuller Ave. protests the decision of the April Classis in re the protest of Mr. D. Jonker. Classis treats this protest point by point, and maintains the stand and the decision taken at the former meeting of Classis. However Classis does admit having erred technically in that prior to the adoption of Art. 36 they did not reconsider Art. 33.

The report of the Church Visitors showed that on the whole, the condition of the Churches is about normal. In Hamilton the questions as to what is "binding" in our churches was discussed at some length and the question as to what is the proper approach in presenting these matters to newly arriving immigrants.

The Consistory of Hamilton had decided to bring this problem to the Classis in connection with the report of the Church Visitors. In June, 1950, this Consistory had decided to receive members who would promise to be instructed in our truth.

Later the Consistory repudiated these decisions. Now they appeal to Classis to advise them in this matter. And Classis decided as follows:

"Classis advises the Consistory of Hamilton to maintain their decision which they took on their meeting of June 5, 1950, namely, to request prospective members to promise:

1. to allow themselves to be instructed in the Protestant Reformed doctrine, and

2. that they will not make propaganda for opinions that militate against the Protestant Reformed Theology."

A request for support from the E.B.P. Fund by the students H. De Bo'ster and H. De Raad was received and referred to the E.B.P. Committee with recommendation to grant them their request.

There were three protests sent to Classis, against a decision of our last Synod. Two of these were referred back to the Consistories that brought them to Classis and the third protest was sustained by the Classis only in one point, the other three points were rejected.

There were two other protests of members against their Consistory. These protests were read and referred to a committee who will report to the next Classis and serve the Classis with advice in this matter.

Mr. F. La Grange was re-elected as Classical treasurer.

Classis decides to hold its next meeting on Wednesday, January 3, at the First Church of Grand Rapids.

The minutes are read and accepted, and Rev. G. Vos leads in the closing prayer.

D. JONKER, Stated Clerk.

P. S. — I have sent the Acts of the 1950 Synod to the various Consistories. Some Consistory members in Classis East have taken extra copies to sell. How about Classis West? Are there some Consistory members there who are willing to sell extra copies? Let me hear from you.

Any one desiring a copy of the Acts and Yearbook, please contact the undersigned. The price is \$1.00.

D. Jonker  
1210 Wealthy St., S. E.  
Grand Rapids 6, Mich.