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MEDITATION

The Wonder Of Satisfaction

"And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the Name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and My people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I am the Lord your God, and none else; and My people shall never be ashamed."

—Joel 2:26-27.

We have heard much of fundamental truths. And how important they are to the correct understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

We thought of this when preaching on the text which is quoted above. Generalize this text, and make it to apply to Judah and Israel, head for head, and you miss the mark. What will you do with the twice repeated: and My people shall never be ashamed? If ever people were ashamed it was when Nebuchadnezzar dragged them away from their country, temple and city to the land that is situated between the rivers.

If you would understand Joel's prophecy, and indeed all of the Holy Scriptures, you must attend to what I would call a fundamental truth. Attend to this: "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, *and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.*"

If we do not see that all the deliverance of the Lord is fulfilled in the remnant whom the Lord shall call with His effectual call, all of the Word of God is a closed book. If we keep this truth before our eyes, all is clear. Then we also see how all things work together for good unto those that love God. Then the truth that God's people shall never be ashamed is clear too. Even when they find themselves in Babylon, in

the wicked world, where everything seems to be against them, they will sing their song of deliverance.

And they will give thanks. For they eat in plenty. And that is the miracle of grace.



They will eat in plenty.

The text is prophetic. It prophesies of the remnant which will return from the Babylonian captivity. In that wicked land they mixed their food with bitter tears. They hung their harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof. They smarted under the taunting of the wicked who employed derision and mockery in order to aggravate the plight of poor and miserable captives. But God sent light into the soul of the prophets and they saw deliverance for the remnant which the Lord would call. And in the prospect of that deliverance, they saw the people of God, returned to their own land, and eating and drinking to the full.

Yes, that was natural eating and drinking. And it was blessedness to them also. And they would thank and praise the Lord for all the dainties which He had given them. And so also we, on the day of Thanksgiving, entered the house of God and we thanked Him, also for the wonderful blessings which are natural, earthly, temporal.

I know that they are not the most important of God's blessings, but we will appreciate them, evaluate them rightly, and think God for them, in the name of Jesus. We are not indifferent to them. And we may not be indifferent to them. Note this: "... meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer."

And so we thanked God, and will thank Him again and again, for the meat and all other food and drink, with clothing and shelter, and all the other temporal blessings which He so liberally bestows upon us.

Do I understand it? Do I understand why the Lord

deals so bountifully with us here in America, while thousands upon thousands are without? No. But I will thank Him nevertheless. The Bible tells me that I should.

But they are not the most important.

And sometimes the Lord will come and break the staff of bread, and then we will see famine in the land, and desolation, and great suffering.

But we will thank God anyhow. That is, if we receive His grace in our hearts.

Attend to Habakkuk 3:17: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

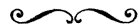
In other words: we will "give thanks in everything".

How in the world must I understand this? Leaping for joy in a famine? Giving thanks when there is desolation and suffering? Giving thanks to God when war breaks out, and the fields that normally show the peace of waving grain, changed into gory wastes of slaughter?

Remember two things: the name of God, and the "remnant". The name of God is this: the God of my *salvation*. And: in the midst of the remnant there is deliverance always.

"Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!"

Beautiful thanksgiving!



In the midst of thee!

There you are! That is the explanation. A little while ago I told you that we will properly appreciate and evaluate the natural blessings of God, and properly give thanks for them. They are good and may not be refused, but must be taken with thanks, with the Word of God and with prayer.

But if the Lord decides that we shall suffer in famine, we will nevertheless declare our Thanksgiving Days. We will give thanks in days of adversity as well as in days of prosperity.

And why?

Because great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee! You see, dear reader, when Joel told the remnant that they would eat in plenty and be satisfied, you must not forget to mark the symbolism there is in such abundance. When your table groans under the load of meats and drinks, so that mother must carry back oh so much, then you have heard and seen one of God's sermons in nature. God does not talk to you exclusively from His precious Word. He talks to you every day from out of the book of nature round about you. Every loaf of bread which you buy and eat, tells you that

Jesus is the Bread of life, and that there is deliverance in that Jesus.

Oh, what glorious sermons are spoken to us in these days and in this country. It matches the abundance of Joel's prophecy for Israel. But how terrible if we do not take heed to those sermons of plenty and satisfaction, and do not apply to ourselves the spiritual lesson there is in every hearty meal.

Attend to Joel again: You shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the Name of the Lord your God, *that hath dealt wondrously with you!* There is the spiritual application. Every meal tells you of the greatest Wonder of God. And that wonder of God is further explained in the text. And if we lay hold of the truth of that wonder, we shall begin to understand Habakkuk. And we shall also sing our song of praise in the night of suffering and famine.

Here is the wonder: God is in the midst of Israel.

I hear a bright reader ask: But is not God always in the midst of Israel? And, for that matter, is He not always in the midst of every nation, tongue and tribe? Is He not even in the midst of all the hosts of devils? Is He not in the midst of Satan himself? Did not Paul teach the heathen: "though He be not far from every one of us"?

Oh, but there is all the difference in the world *how* God is near, *how* He is in the midst of us. Here the meaning is that God would be in the midst of Israel in His love and lovingkindness.

According to the prophetic view of Joel, he had seen Israel forsaken by the Lord because of His wrath. They had sinned, and He had banished them to Babylon. But when they had repented and cried to Him, they had returned to Him with weeping and lamentation. And because of His eternal covenant of grace, He returned to them, moved the hearts of kings for them, and they might return to the land of their fathers, rebuild the temple and city, plant vineyards and olive yards, and eat in plenty and be satisfied,—for the Lord would be in the midst of them in His love.

And so they would praise the Name of the Lord.

Praising God: proper thanksgiving!

Because of the wondrous dealing with Israel.



Yes, God would be in their midst.

And they would know it. And so we begin to understand Joel, and also Habakkuk. When God is in your midst, there is liberty and joy.

What does it mean? In this twentieth century?

It means that He came in our midst in Jesus. That first of all.

In Joel's day God dwelled in the midst of Israel, and they knew it, for the sacrifices were made. The

sheep and lambs and goats and bullocks were slaughtered amidst great singing and rejoicing.

No, Israel did not understand fully how God would work salvation, but they did know that Jehovah and blood spelled deliverance.

But we live anno Domini 1950, and that makes a great difference. The bleeding lamb of the Old Testament has been substituted by the bleeding Lamb of God. And we see and understand in a measure the mystery of Godliness. God is manifested in the flesh.

God Incarnate dwells among us. Christ has come. And we know it.

But how? First, through His precious Word. That Word has told us the whole story, and soon now we will celebrate again the story of God's love in the sending of His dear Son. Second, because the Spirit of Jesus Christ has been shed abroad in the remnant. And through that Holy Spirit of Christ, God dwells in the remnant. And where that Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. And also knowledge.

You see, when the Word and the Holy Spirit of Christ is given unto you, you know that God is in the midst of us. We know that also about ourselves, but only in connection with all of Israel. For He has fashioned, and is fashioning a Body for His Son, who is the Head. And, thirdly, in that connection, you know individually also that God is in your midst, since that Spirit witnesseth with our Spirit that we are the sons of God. Then you know that God has dealt wondrously with you.

Is He not wondrous in all His works? Imagine, He has swallowed all your sin, guilt, death, condemnation, damnation and all your eternal curse which you deserve to have carried yourself. But it is gone.

Can you now see why Habakkuk will leap for joy in the God of his *salvation*, even in the midst of great famine and desolation?

Thanksgiving even in the desert!

Yes, and the remnant will understand.



And Israel will also know that God is their God, and none else.

That means first of all that they know how salvation came exclusively by and through God. From alpha and omega He is the God of our salvation, and none else. It is not superfluous that we emphasize that. Your and my understanding of that truth determines the climax or the bathos of your thanks.

God has saved us! From everlasting to everlasting He is the God of our salvation.

Paul chants: and all these things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself!

And, secondly, it means that God is their God in the sense that He and He only is their Sovereign. To have a God is tantamount to saying that you are His

worshipper. He is in your midst and there He tells you that you shall live unto Him in all your life. From morning till night you shall serve Him and praise Him.

Shall we do this, dear reader?

He is so worthy of it. Without Him and His salvation there is no sense in a Thanksgiving Day. For that reason I cannot understand our National Thanksgiving Day. As a nation we certainly do not worship, serve and praise Him. America, America, you are heaping up treasures of wrath with this God of our salvation. No, but the remnant will serve Him. For they know that He is in their midst and that He is their God, and none else.

And so this remnant have their Thanksgiving Day.

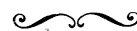
But did you note that this remnant have a Thanksgiving Day every day? They have heard and understood Paul when he said: in everything give thanks.

Joel speaks to them every day. And every day Joel says of them: and ye shall praise the Name of the Lord your God!

Continuous thanksgiving! How marvellous.

It is the beginning of an heavenly occupation.

In heaven there is always thanksgiving.



Joel fell into repetition: I have heard it twice: "and My people shall never be ashamed."

The point of view is deliverance, mind you.

Well, this remnant, this Israel, shall never be ashamed with respect to this deliverance. And deliverance at this late date is a portion with God in His new world that is coming. And we shall never be ashamed.

Ashamed you would be if you came to the pearly gates and if you would hear it said: It is not for you! What a shame that would be.

Ashamed we would be if the deliverance would not be there at the end of the ages. No heaven, no liberated and beautiful earth, no new Jerusalem, no eternity of serving and praising God! What a shame that would be.

Ashamed we would be if it were there, but if it did not come up to our expectation. If it were nice and all that, but not as wondrous as Joel and all the prophets made it, the men who had a pre-vision of the new Jerusalem. What a shame that would be.

But fear not, ye Israel: My people shall never be ashamed. You will go there, as surely as you have His love in your heart now. It is there: faith, even our faith, is a substance of the things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And it is more than just nice: it is untold rapture. You and I and all the remnant will say: the half has not been told!

Give thanks to God for great is He: His mercy endeth never!

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Theological Opinions or The Confessions?

Dr. Schilder published his first instalment of his criticism on our Declaration of Principles in the *Reformatie*, Vol. XXVI, p. 44.

Once more, I am very glad that he writes. If the Declaration of Principles even has no other fruit than that it provokes an open and above-board discussion of the truth and of the points of difference between the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) and our Protestant Reformed Churches, I think it is well worthwhile that the proposed declaration was decided upon by our last synod. This does not mean that I am of the opinion that the declaration, after it has been thoroughly discussed and criticized, should not be adopted by synod. On the contrary, I think it should be. But in the meantime the discussion concerning those important points of doctrine is itself very important.

Of course, I am still sorry that this discussion was not from the start led in the proper channels, that is, as a fraternal discussion between the deputies for correspondence of the Liberated Churches and ours. But the blame for this must be laid at the door of the deputies of the Netherlands churches. First they waited for more than a year before our deputies ever heard from them. Then they consulted the Revs. de Jong and Kok and met with them about the official business of the church, disregarding the official deputies that were appointed by our churches, and behind their backs. Besides, they met without keeping minutes and without publishing a report of what was discussed and agreed upon. The sad result was the now notorious letter of Prof. Holwerda addressed to the Canadian immigrants, a letter which, as far as its contents are concerned, was almost entirely untrue, irrespective of the question who is to blame for that thorough misrepresentation, Prof. Holwerda, or the Revs. de Jong and Kok, or both. The truth of this, I say once more, I have never been able to discover, although for my own peace of mind I am very much in need of it.

Nevertheless, I am glad that now, at least, the Declaration of Principles provokes a belated discussion. And once more, I wish to state that I hope that the discussion remains brotherly and above all, clear and succinct and to the point.

Dr. Schilder in his first instalment discusses the following quotation from our Declaration of Principles: "Seeing then that this is the clear teaching of our con-

fession, we repudiate the teaching that the promise of the covenant is conditional and for all that are baptized."

The main thrust of the article by Dr. Schilder is that he tries to show that this statement is completely lacking in clarity and in succinct formulation, and for that reason cannot serve as a binding formula of doctrine.

Proof for this statement is, as I expect, still forthcoming. It is at least not in the article itself.

But in the end of his article Prof. Schilder appeals to the preface of the Statenvertaling of the Dutch Bible, which was rendered by Dutch theologians appointed by the Synod of Dordrecht. In that preface they speak repeatedly of conditions. And Dr. Schilder asks whether it is at all conceivable that these Dutch theologians were so naive that they, right after they condemned the Remonstrants, would write the following sentences:

"By this (that is, by the word 'berith' or 'covenant') is properly understood the covenant itself, which God made with men, to give unto them under certain conditions eternal life. . . . The old covenant is that which God made with the first man before the fall, in which eternal life is promised under condition of a completely perfect obedience and keeping of the law . . . and is therefore called the covenant of the law, which God again proposed to the Israelites, in order that they might learn therefrom that they must seek their salvation in another covenant, which is called the new covenant and consists in this, that God ordained His Son to be Mediator and promises eternal life under condition that we believe in him; and is called the covenant of grace. . . . These two covenants are indeed one and the same as far as their essence is concerned, seeing that in both the remission of sins, salvation and eternal life is promised under condition of believing in the Mediator, but are being distinguished in respect to the administration of both, which is much clearer in the New."

I am rather surprised that Dr. Schilder appeals to this preface of the Statenvertaling in support of the contention that faith is a condition unto eternal life in the covenant of grace. For after all, this preface is nothing but the expression of the private opinion of a few theologians,—I think there were six—appointed by the Synod of Dordrecht. It therefore has no authority whatsoever. To many of the statements in the preface, as quoted by Dr. Schilder, I strenuously object as unReformed and contrary to the confessions. But if Dr. Schilder wants to criticize the Declaration of Principles, he must certainly appeal to the confessions, and to them alone. For on the Three Forms of Unity it is based, and on it only. We are not dealing with the opinion of private theologians, but with the confession. It uniformly speaks of faith not as a con-

dition, but as a means and instrument. It speaks as follows:

"We reject the errors of those who teach that God chose the act of faith as a condition of salvation." Canons, I, B, 3.

And again: "We reject the errors 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 I B, 5.

And again: "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." Canons I, B, 7.

And again: "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." Canons, V, B, 1.

Dr. Schilder seems to be surprised or thinks it is inconceivable that so soon after the adoption of the Canons and the rejection of the Remonstrants these deviating expressions (deviating in my opinion) are found in the preface of the Staten Bijbel. But there is nothing surprising in this at all.

History, on the contrary, teaches very clearly that repeatedly men corrupt the Reformed faith exactly right after a mountain peak of faith and truth is attained. Besides, do not forget that all the delegates to the Synod of Dordrecht were by no means equally Reformed. There were even downright Arminians at the Synod. Think of a man like Martinus. However this may be, one certainly cannot appeal to the opinions of private theologians over against such a document as the Canons of Dordrecht. If, therefore, Dr. Schilder wants to argue, he must place himself foursquare on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity.

To it alone the Declaration of Principles appeals.

And nothing else can possibly be mixed into our discussion.

H. H.

NOTICE TO OUR CHURCHES

Our last Synod decided: "that Brother H. H. Kuiper be permitted to exhort in our churches and after a period of six months shall be eligible to receive a call."

The six months have elapsed; so after December 8, 1950, Brother H. H. Kuiper will be eligible to receive a call.

D. Jonker,
Stated Clerk of Synod.

THE TRIPLE KNOWLEDGE

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

Of Man's Redemption

LORD'S DAY XXX.

Qu. 80. What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the popish mass?

A. The Lord's Supper testifies to us, that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself has once accomplished on the cross; and, that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, who, according to his human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven, at the right hand of God his Father, and will there be worshipped by us:—but the mass teaches, that the living and the dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests; and further, that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshipped in them; so that the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.

Qu. 81. For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?

A. For those who are truly sorrowful for their sins, and yet trust that they are forgiven them for the sake of Christ; and that their remaining infirmities are covered by his passion and death; and who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy; but hypocrites, and such as turn not to God with sincere hearts, eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Qu. 82. Are they also to be admitted to this supper, who, by confession and life, declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No; for by this, the covenant of God would be profaned, and his wrath kindled against the whole congregation; therefore it is the duty of the Christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and his apostles, to exclude such persons, by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, till they show amendment of life.

1.

An Accursed Idolatry.

The eightieth question, with the well-known sentence that the mass "is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry", did not appear in the first and original edition of the Heidelberg Catechism. It did appear in part in the second edition, and, in the form in which it appears now, in the third edition of the Catechism. Some claim that the question and answer were inserted under the influence and at the advice of Calvin, but this is at least doubtful. It was inserted by order of the Elector Frederick III as a counter-blast

to the anathemas of the Council of Trent, which concluded its sessions Dec. 4, 1563. Schaff, "Creeds of Christendom", I, p. 563, writes: "The same view of the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass was generally entertained by the reformers, and is set forth as strongly in the articles of Smalcald and other symbolical books, both Lutheran and Reformed. It must be allowed to remain as a solemn protest against idolatry. But the wisdom of inserting controversial matter into a catechism for the instruction of the youth has been justly doubted. The eightieth question disturbs the peaceful harmony of the book, it rewards evil for evil, it countenances intolerance, which is unprotestant and unevangelical. It provoked much unnecessary hostility, and led even, under the Romish rule of the Elector Charles Philip in 1719, to the prohibition of the Catechism; but the loud remonstrance of England, Prussia, Holland, and other protestant states forced the elector to withdraw the tyrannical decree within a year under certain condition, to save appearances." With this judgment of Dr. Schaff we cannot agree. There certainly is more controversial material in the Heidelberg Catechism than that which is contained in the eightieth question, although it is not always so definitely and clearly expressed. And why a book that is used for the instruction of the youth should not contain controversial matter is difficult to understand. At any rate, the eightieth question with its severe judgment about the mass as an accursed idolatry is now included in the Heidelberg Catechism, and we have to explain it.

In his own exposition of the Catechism Ursinus has some interesting remarks on the term *mass*. Writes he: "Before we proceed, however, to point out the differences between the Lord's Supper and the popish mass, it is proper that we should say a few words in reference to the term, *mass*. And first, there are some who derive the word *mass* from the Hebrew *masas*, which signifies a tribute, or voluntary offering. The word has this meaning in Deut. 16:10, where it is said, 'Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand.' This offering was so called, being as it were, a yearly tribute, which was given most willingly and cheerfully. It is also understood by some to signify a sufficiency, meaning that so much should be given as might be sufficient, which, perhaps, is the more correct interpretation since God in Deut. 15:8, commanded the Israelites to open their hands wide unto the poor, and to lend that which was sufficient for their need. This the Chaldee paraphrast interprets *missah*; from which it is supposed that it is called *mass*, or *missa*, as if it were a tribute, and a free-will offering, which should everywhere be offered to God in the church for the living and the dead. But this is not probable. It is true, indeed, that the church has borrowed some

words from the Hebrew; as Satan, sabaoth, hallelujah, etc.; but these and similar words were introduced into the Greek Testament when it was first written in the Greek language; nor have we any Hebrew words in our church which the Greek church had not before. Furthermore, if we examine the writings of the Greek Fathers it will be seen, that the word *missa* is never used by them; from which we are inclined to believe that the word *missa* was not derived from the Hebrew.

"Therefore the term *missa*, which is doubtless a Latin word, seems to be taken from the Fathers, who used *remissa* for *remissio*. Turtullian says: 'We have spoken of remission (*remissa*) of sins.' Cyprian says: 'He who was to grant remission of sins, did not disdain to be baptized.' Again: 'He who blasphemes against the Holy Ghost, obtains no remission of sins.' Hence, as the Latin Fathers used the term *remissa* for *remissio*, so they also seem to have used *missa* for *missio*, which is derived from *mittendo*. But here again there is a great diversity of sentiment. For some will have it that *missa* is to be understood in the sense of *missio*, from an ancient custom of ecclesiastical rites, which was introduced into the Latin churches from the Greek, that when the sermon and the lecture were over, the deacon before the consecration of the mysteries sent away or commanded the catechumens, the demoniacs, and such as were excommunicated, to depart, saying, with a loud voice 'If there be any catechumen still remaining in the church, let him depart;' so that *missa* seems to be used in the sense of *missio* (sending away), because it was the last part of divine service. Others suppose that it is called *missa* in the sense of *dismissa*, or *dismissio*, from the manner in which the ecclesiastical assemblies, or congregations were dismissed; because, when the prayers and other services were ended, the deacon exclaimed, '*Ite, missa est*;' that is, Go, you may depart. Others, again, understand it thus: 'Go, now is the collection of alms;' which they say were called *missa*, from being sent, or thrown in for the benefit of the poor. In short, it was that which was transacted in the church after the departure of the catechumens or the collection of alms."

Thus far Ursinus on the term *mass*.

The Catechism calls attention to a two-fold difference between the Lord's Supper and the mass. The first difference is that the Lord's Supper testifies to us "that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself has once accomplished on the cross; and, that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ;" while, on the other hand, the mass teaches "that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests." And the second point of difference is indicated in the Catechism by the words that Christ

"according to his human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven, at the right hand of God his Father, and will there be worshipped by us;" while the mass, on the other hand, teaches "that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshipped in them."

It is on the basis of this two-fold Roman Catholic teaching concerning the mass that the Heidelberg Catechism pronounces the severe, but nevertheless perfectly true judgment, that "the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry."

We can therefore distinguish between the eucharist and the mass. Both presuppose that the bread and wine at the Lord's table are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. But while the eucharist, or the communion proper, consists only in the eating of the wafer and the drinking, by the priest, of the wine, the mass proper really consists in the sacrifice of Christ, also by the priest, under the form of bread and wine.

The question now is: does the Roman Catholic church really teach, in the first place, that Christ must be worshipped as He is present in the bread and wine; and secondly, that there is a continual sacrifice of Christ, offered by the priest, through the substantiated signs on the altar?

Of the first point, namely, that Christ under the symbols of bread and wine is to be worshipped and adored, the decrees of the Council of Trent leave no doubt. In the Thirteenth Session it declared in Chapter V of those Canons: "Wherefore, there is no room left for doubt, that all the faithful of Christ may, according to the custom ever received in the Catholic Church, render in veneration the worship of latria, which is due to the true God, to this most holy sacrament. For not therefore is it the less to be adored on this account that it was instituted by Christ, the Lord, in order to be received; for we believe that same God to be present therein, of whom the eternal Father, when introducing him into the world, says: *And let all the angels of God adore him*. Whom the magi, *falling down, adored*; who, in fine, as the Scripture testifies, was adored by the apostles in Galilee.

"The holy synod declares moreover, that very piously and religiously was this custom introduced into the church, that this sublime and venerable sacrament be, with special veneration and solemnity, celebrated, every year, on a certain day, and that a festival; and that it be borne reverently and with honor in processions through the streets and public places. For it is most just that there be certain appointed holy days whereon all Christians may, with a special and unusual demonstration, testify that their minds are grateful and thankful to their common Lord and Redeemer for so ineffable and truly divine a benefit, whereby the vic-

tory and triumph of his death are represented. And so indeed did it behoove victorious truth to celebrate a triumph over falsehood and heresy, that this her adversaries, at the sight of so much splendor, and in the midst of so great joy of the universal church, may either pine away weakened and broken; or, touched with shame and confounded, at length repent."

In a series of radio questions and answers by Conway, published in 1903, we read on page 447: "Why do Catholics place one knee upon the floor before entering the pew? Catholics genuflect on entering and leaving the church as a mark of love and adoration to Christ, the Son of God, who is really present upon the Catholic altar."

And again, on page 448: "After the candles are lighted upon the altar, the priest takes the host consecrated at the mass out of the tabernacle, and places it in a stand of gold or silver, called the monstrance, or ostensorium, which remains upon the altar, or upon an elevated throne, where it may be seen by all the people. The priest then puts incense into the thurible and waves it three times in the direction of the blessed sacrament as a symbol of the people's prayer. Then placing over his shoulders a long silk scarf, called the humerale veil, the priest takes up the monstrance, and with it makes the sign of the cross over the people; and thus the eucharistic Christ blesses the people."

It certainly is evident from all this that it is the bread called the eucharistic Christ that is worshipped as God and is the object of prayer by the audience. The same eucharistic Christ is supposed to bless the people. Now all this the Catechism rightly calls idolatry. It stands to reason that the Catholics deny this accusation. And it is also true that as soon as one accepts the Roman Catholic theory of transubstantiation, this accusation of idolatry must fall. After all, the doctrine of transubstantiation is the sole basis upon which the mass rests. According to Catholics, they do not worship bread and wine, but they worship what is called "the real presence". And therefore they hurl their anathemas at all that maintain "that in the holy sacrament of the eucharist, Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship, even external of latria; and is, consequently, neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in procession, according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of the church; or is not to be proposed publicly to the people to be adored, and that the adorers thereof are idolaters." Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Canon VI. Nevertheless, from the protestant viewpoint, which denies transubstantiation, there is on the altar nothing but bread and wine. And therefore the Roman Catholics do not worship Christ and God in Christ, but render homage to mere material signs. And this is idolatry pure and simple.

H. H.

Een Brief Uit Chatham

Geachte Redacteur!

Mag ik ook eens een plaatsje in "The Standard Bearer"? Ik zou graag iets schrijven over de dingen die op 't oogenblik onder ons in discussie zijn.

Als emigrant, vroeger behorende tot de Gereformeerde Kerken (art. 31) in Nederland, heb ik—en meerderen met mij—in het nieuwe land onzer inwoning gezocht naar een kerkelijk onderdak. En na langdurig en intensief contact met de Prot. Ger. Kerken en vele van haar ambtsdragers zijn we tot de overtuiging gekomen dat het onze roeping was ons bij haar aan te sluiten, omdat we zagen dat ze de *ware* kerk was; en het dus zeer beslist zonde zou zijn geweest om ons vanwege bestaande meningsverschillen van haar afkeerig te houden, of ook, zooals den laatsten tijd gebeurd is: Vrije Geref. Kerken te organiseren, of iets dergelijks. Die overtuiging ben ik nog toegedaan.

Nu is er echter in het recente verleden iets gebeurd dat nogal beroering schijnt te veroorzaken. Om kort te gaan, ik bedoel de opstelling en publiceering door onze laatste synode van de "Korte Verklaring van Beginselen der Prot. Ger. Kerken". Persoonlijk stem ik met den inhoud daarvan in. Ook de kerkrechtelijke bezwaren die ik aanvankelijk had zijn door de beantwoording door Ds. H. Hoeksema van Ds. J. Blankespoor's vragen weggenomen. Van de noodzakelijkheid van, en de behoefte aan dit stuk ben ik echter nog niet overtuigd. Immers, de Schrift en de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid zijn genoegzaam om de in dit stuk genoemde werkelijke en "vermeende" dwalingen te weerleggen. Daar is geen aparte "verklaring", die maar onrust veroorzaakt, voor nodig.

In verband hiermee wil ik probeeren een misverstand, wat klaarblijkelijk mee aanleiding is geweest tot het totstandkomen van dit stuk, op te helderen. In zijn repliek aan Ds. J. Blankespoor, in de Standard Bearer van 1 Oct., Schrijft Ds. H. Hoeksema naar aanleiding van de in den laatsten tijd bij het Zendings-Comité ingekomen aanvragen om organisatie als kerken binnen het verband der Prot. Ger. Kerken, o.a.: "no wonder then they lived under the impression that they could simply, without further instruction, be organized into Prot. Ref. Churches." Die impressie—ik spreek over Chatham, want dat bedoelt Ds. Hoeksema hier—hebben we nooit gehad. Ook hebben we in persoonlijke gesprekken en discussies ons altijd bereid getoond in de Prot. Ger. leer onderwezen te willen worden. Bovendien hadden we bij den tijd dat we onze aanvraag indienden al heel wat instructie ontvangen. Dat mag hier wel ter eere van de Prot. Ger. predikanten en ouderlingen gezegd worden.

Verder schrijft hij: "But at the same time they wanted to adhere to their own peculiar view of the covenant. They even sent a request to the Mission Committee to be organized on their own basis." Dit is slechts ten deele juist. Ik kan begrijpen dat die indruk gewekt is. Daar ik geen copie van die betreffende aanvraag bij de hand heb zal ik probeeren de betreffende passage vrij te citeeren. Ze luidde ongeveer aldus: "Aangezien ons uit gesprekken met verschillende van Uwe predikanten gebleken is dat er tusschen U en ons verschil van meening bestaat ten opzichte van Verbond en Doop, wenschen we niet gebonden te worden aan de persoonlijke meening van sommigen in Uwe kerken." Hier wordt niet gezegd dat we de "vrijgemaakte" beschouwing wilden vasthouden; hoewel ik toestem dat dat er misschien uit gelezen zou kunnen worden. Maar de bedoeling was: "indien er onder ons zijn die in hun hart een van de Prot. Geref. leer over Verbond en Doop afwijkende meening huldigen, terwijl ze daar geen propaganda voor maken of ageeren tegen de leer der kerk; iets wat op grond van het feit van het plaatsen van hun handteekening onder de aanvraag tot organisatie als P. R. C., wat toch inhoudt de erkenning dat zij de ware kerk is, reeds onmogelijk is,—moeten die of kunnen die, om *die* reden, ooit voorwerp van kerkelijke tucht worden? Dat was al! En: op dat request zijn we ook niet georganiseerd. De Zendingscommissie wees dat af. We zijn—in Chatham; van andere plaatsen weet ik niets—georganiseerd "op basis van de Schrift en de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid, zooals die door de P. R. C. worden geïnterpreteerd in het licht van de verwerping der Drie Punten van Kalamazoo". Maar houdt dat nu in dat men niet meer vriendschappelijk en broederlijk mag discussieëren over Verbond en Doop, of welk stuk van de Geref. leer ook maar? Immers neen!

En wat nu het punt (of punten) van verschil betreft: is dat nu werkelijk wel zoo groot als het vaak wordt voorgesteld? Ik geloof van niet. Ik ben nog steeds van meening dat er tusschen de P. R. C. en de Geref. Kerken (art. 31) een groote "spraakverwarring" heerscht. Voor een goed deel zit m.i. de zaak vast op een verschil in terminologie: een verschillende inhoud toekennen aan dezelfde woorden. Ik gevoel me niet in staat een dogmatische beschouwing te geven over Verbond en Doop, enz., tegenover het lezend publiek van the Standard Bearer. Maar ik geloof: dat Gods Verbondsbelofte die alleen aan de uitverkorenen geschonken wordt, in wezen onvoorwaardelijk is, en Zijn genade particulier en onwederstandelijk; dat God in souverain welbehagen verkiest en verwerpt; dat de mensch—hoewel van nature gansch onbekwaam tot éénig goed en geneigd tot alle kwaad, dus totaal verdorven—de ernstige roeping heeft zich te bekeeren. Dat het God is—en niet wij—die ons daartoe bekwaamt, werkende in ons het willen en het werken

naar Zijn welbehagen. En ik ontken elken vorm van algemeene genade. Is dat Prot. Gereformeerd? Het is óók Vrijgemaakt! Geen enkele "Vrijgemaakte" zal bedoelen te zeggen dat God de vervulling van de belofte verbindt aan de voorwaarde van het geloof als een actie, van den mensch uitgaande. Dan zouden ze inderdaad Arminiaansch zijn. Als zij echter de term: "voorwaarde of conditie" in den mond nemen, doen zij dat "rather freely". Ze hebben niet den strijd gehad tegen het Remonstrantisme, zooals de P. R. C. die gekend hebben. En ik geloof dat we dat in het oog moeten houden bij de beoordeeling van hun leer.

En ik wil eindigen met een ernstige oproep tot eensgezindheid en verdraagzaamheid. Zoo juist heb ik gelezen Filipp. 2. Zouden we dat niet wat meer moeten betrachten? Ik denk vaak dat de Satan lacht om onze twisten. We leven in den Apocalyptischen tijd. Wie niet geestelijk blind is ziet de contouren van den Antichrist zich al duidelijker afteekenen. Het gaat snel naar het einde. Er zal wel niemand onder ons zijn die dat niet gelooft. Zullen we dan niet met te meer ijver bezielde zijn om samen, schouder aan schouder, te strijden den goeden strijd des geloofs, met degenen die van Christus zijn? Laat alle vooroordeel varen—over en weer—en breek alle "heilige huisjes" af. En laat ons bidden, bidden om den vrede van Jeruzalem. Dan zal het ons (als kerk) wel gaan. En Gods Naam zal worden verheerlijkt. O, ik weet wel dat ik lang niet volledig geweest ben. Dan kan ik niet. En dat was ook mijn bedoeling niet. Als deze brief maar een beetje kon meewerken om de verstoorde verhoudingen te herstellen en het vertrouwen over heel de linie is te vernieuwen, zou ik al heel dankbaar zijn. De eenige bedoeling van dit schrijven is: te dienen de Kerk van Jezus Christus die ik liefheb, met al de liefde van mijn hart.

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Here follows the translation of this letter:

Esteemed Editor:

May I also have a little space in the Standard Bearer? I would like very much to write something regarding the things which are discussed among us.

As an emigrant, formerly belonging to the Reformed Churches, maintaining Art. 31, I, and many more with me have looked for an ecclesiastical roof over my head in this new land of our sojourning. And after a lengthy and intensive contact with the Prot. Ref. Churches and their office bearers we came to the conviction that it was our calling to join those churches, since we saw that they were the *true* church;

and therefore it would have been deliberately sinful to hold ourselves averse from them because of existing differences of opinion, or, even as has recently happened, to organize Free Reformed Churches or something like that. And I still am of the same conviction.

However, something happened in the recent past which seems to cause quite a commotion. In short, I have in mind the drawing up and the publishing by our last synod of the "Brief Declaration of Principles of the Prot. Ref. Churches". Personally I am agreed with its contents. Also the church-political objections which I had at first are taken away by the Rev. H. Hoeksema's answer to the Rev. J. Blankespoor's questions. However, I am not convinced as yet of the necessity and need of this document. The Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity are sufficient to refute the real and "fancied" errors which are mentioned in this document, are they not? For that purpose there is no need of a separate "declaration", which causes unrest.

In this connection I will try to clear up a misunderstanding, which, at least in part, has clearly been the occasion unto the realization of this Declaration. In his answer to the Rev. J. Blankespoor, in the Standard Bearer of Oct. 1, the Rev. H. Hoeksema writes among other things, with reference to the recent requests for organization within the pale of the Prot. Ref. Churches, which requests were addressed to the Mission Committee, "no wonder then they lived under the impression that they could simply, without further instruction, be organized into Prot. Ref. Churches." That impression—I speak with reference to Chatham, for that is what the Rev. Hoeksema refers to here—was never left with us. We also revealed ourselves willing in personal conversations and discussions to be instructed in the Prot. Ref. doctrine. Moreover, at the time that we presented our request (for organization) we had already received quite a bit of instruction. That may be mentioned here to the honor of the Prot. Ref. ministers and elders.

He writes further: "But at the same time they wanted to adhere to their own peculiar view of the covenant. They even sent a request to the Mission Committee to be organized on their own basis." This is only partly true. I can understand how this impression was left. Inasmuch as I have no copy of the request referred to with me at present, I will try to cite freely the passage in question. It ran about as follows: "Inasmuch as it has appeared to us from conversations with several of your ministers that there is difference of opinion relative the Covenant and Baptism between you and us, we do not wish to be bound to the personal opinion of some (persons) in your churches." It is not held here that we wished to adhere to the "Liberated" view; although I agree that one could perhaps read this sentiment in the quotation.

But the intent was: "if there are among us those who hold in their heart to an opinion which deviates from the Prot. Ref. doctrine relative the Covenant and Baptism, but who will not make propaganda for, nor agitate against the doctrine of the church; which latter action is really impossible, based on the fact that they placed their signature under the request unto the organization as P. R. C., which implies that it is the true church—must such persons or can such person, for *that* reason, ever become objects of ecclesiastical censure? That was all there was to it! And: on the basis of *that* request we were *not* organized. The Mission Committee refused to organize us on that basis. We are organized (in Chatham; I know nothing regarding other places) "on the basis of the Scriptures and The Three Forms of Unity, as they are interpreted by the P. R. C. in the light of the rejection of the Three Points of Kalamazoo." But does this mean now that we cannot henceforth discuss together in a friendly and brotherly way anent the Covenant and Baptism, or about no matter what part of the Reformed doctrine? Of course not!

And concerning the point (or points) of difference: is that really as big as it is often presented? I do not believe it. I am still of the opinion that there is a great "confusion of tongues" between the P. R. C. and the Ref. Churches (maintaining art. 31). And for a good deal this is caused by a difference in terminology, according to my opinion: a different concept is given to the same words. I do not feel myself capable to give a dogmatic view relative the Covenant and Baptism, etc., unto the readers of the Standard Bearer. But I believe: that God's promise of the Covenant, which is given solely to the elect, is essentially unconditional and His grace is particular and irresistible; that God in His sovereign good pleasure elects and reprobates; that man—although by nature entirely unable unto good of any kind and inclined to all evil, and therefore totally depraved—has the earnest calling to convert himself. That it is God—and not we—who enables us unto this, working in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. And I deny every form of common grace. Is that Prot. Ref.? It is also Liberated! Not a single "Liberated" intends to say that God connects the fulfilment of the promise to the condition of faith as an action which proceeds from man. That would be, indeed, Arminian. However, when they speak of the term: "*voorwaarde* or condition", then they do so rather freely. They have not had their battle against Remonstrantism, even as the P. R. C. have had. And I believe that we must remember that when we judge their doctrine.

I will finish with an earnest call unto unity and forbearance. Just now I read Philipp. 2. Should we not practice that a little more? I think that Satan often laughs regarding our quarrels. We live in the

Apocalyptic time. He who is not spiritually blind is able to recognize the contours of Anti-Christ clearer and clearer. We are rushing toward the end. I am sure that there is no one among us who would disbelieve this. Shall we then not be the more zealous to fight together, standing shoulder to shoulder, fighting the good battle of faith, together with them that are of Christ? Throw away all prejudice—from both sides—and quit “riding hobbies”. And let us pray, pray for the peace of Jerusalem. And then it will be well with us (as church). And the name of God shall be praised and glorified. Oh, I know that I have not been exhaustive and complete, by any means. I cannot do that. Neither was that my purpose. If this letter could only work together a very little bit toward the repairing of the ruptured relations, and to renew our trust in one another along the whole line, then I would be very grateful. The only purpose of this missive is: to serve the church of Jesus Christ, which church I love with all the love of my heart.

D. Scheele
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Appin, Ontario, Canada.

P. S. I wish to thank brother Scheele for this beautiful contribution. You wrote after my heart, brother, especially in that you plainly evince that you understand and wholeheartedly embrace the Protestant Reformed truth.

Yet, I cannot agree with you that it is not necessary to adopt the Declaration of Principles. Recent happenings in our churches have convinced me more than ever that such a declaration is very necessary if we want to maintain the purity of our Reformed truth in our churches.

For proof, I refer you to what has happened in Hamilton. The brethren there want to throw the church doors wide open. They refuse to abide by their own decision, which was confirmed by the decision of Classis East, that members of another church that desire to join our congregation there promise: 1) to be instructed in our truth, and 2) that they do not agitate against the truth “as taught here in this Christian church.” Although I am sure that, before they organized, they were instructed in our Protestant Reformed truth, and they were well aware that we would never have organized them on any other basis, yet they now claim that, at the time of organization, they never promised anything at all. You see brother, no church of Christ can stand on the basis of such dishonesty. To prevent a repetition of this sad affair the Declaration of Principles is certainly necessary.

Secondly, I refer you to the contribution in *Con-*

cordia by Mr. A. J. IJtsma. That brother does not argue from the Confessions at all, but merely presents his own philosophy of the covenant and of conditions, while the Declaration of Principles, from beginning to end, is based on our Three Forms of Unity. In the meantime he makes propaganda for the old Heynsian view of the covenant, which we reject: the covenant is the promise, the promise is for all, the promise is conditional, faith is a condition. All this we have rejected as churches when we rejected the First Point of 1924. The brother simply does not belong to a Protestant Reformed church. Why does he not join the Christian Reformed Church in Chatham instead of trying to make propaganda for a view we have rejected long ago? He certainly cannot honestly answer the second question of our Baptism Form in a Protestant Reformed Church. But also the sad fact that this old heresy is openly defended in *Concordia* (and I am glad to say, ably contradicted by the Rev. P. De Boer) all the more convinces me of the necessity of the Declaration of Principles.

The third item to which I want to call attention in this connection is the letter of brother Van Spronsen in the same *Concordia* as above. He wants us to adopt the wholly untenable position that, in a certain place, there is but one true Church, and that by excluding anyone from that church you consign him to hell. Hence, he argues, we must bind no one by such a Declaration of Principles as we propose. Now, it is not true that we believe in the Kuyperian conception of the pluriformity of the church, as the brother supposes. But neither do we accept the absolute distinction between true and false church which he wants us to adopt. That would be impossible even from a geographical viewpoint. But we do confess that as Protestant Reformed Churches we are the purest manifestation of the body of Christ. Nor do we exclude anyone from the kingdom of heaven when he does not agree with the truth as we confess it. But binding in our churches, and in the Liberated Churches, is the second question of the Baptism Form, whether you believe in the doctrine as taught here in this Christian Church. That certainly implies our view of the covenant and baptism. And if one cannot answer this question he must never join us. Nor, if he and others establish a church of their own do we consign them to hell.

For all these reasons I am convinced that the Declaration of Principles should be adopted by our Synod.

We cannot afford to let our beautiful Protestant Reformed truth be corrupted by outside influences.

To my mind that has nothing to do with correspondence between the Liberated Churches and ours.

H. H.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Creation Of The Spirit World

(2)

We were busy in our preceding article with a discussion of the Cherubims. We called attention to the fact that the Lord had placed them at the entrance to the garden of Eden, and also that they gaze upon the mercyseat, between whom the Lord established His dwelling.

To continue now with the Scriptural references to these heavenly beings, when God descends to the earth, He is described as descending, riding upon the cherubims according to 2 Sam. 22: 11, Ps. 18:11, Ps. 104:3, Is. 66:15, Heb. 1:7. We quote 2 Sam. 2:11, Is. 66:15, and Heb. 1:7: "And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and He was seen upon the wings of the wind . . . For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire." In Ezekiel 1 and 10 and in Rev. 4 they are represented as living creatures in various forms. That the spirits of Ezekiel 1 are cherubims is evident from chapter 10 of this prophecy, where we read, e.g., in the verses 1 and 3: "Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court." In Ezek. 1 and 10 they are represented as four living creatures, having the likeness of man, each with four wings and with four faces, namely, of a man, a lion, an ox; and an eagle. And in Revelation 4 we read of them as the four beasts, each with a face and each with six wings, and they surround the throne of God and sing: Holy, Holy, Holy, day and night.

From these passages we would briefly conclude the following. That they appear in different forms implies these forms do not constitute an essential part of their existence—otherwise they would always appear in the same form. Hence, these forms or appearances are symbolical representations which are mentioned to emphasize their extraordinary power and majesty. Also, they are pictured as "living creatures" to emphasize the truth that in them the might and the power of the living God is better revealed than in weak man. They are living creatures, creatures full of life and vitality. Moreover, they are represented as possessing the power of the ox, the majesty of the lion,

the swiftness of the eagle, and the rationality of a man—these same attributes are implied in the wings which they carry and the sword wherewith they guard the entrance of paradise. The cherubims, therefore, refer us to a high class of angels who, more than any other creature, reveal the power, the majesty, the glory of the living God, and who therefore, have also been appointed by the Lord to guard the garden of Eden, and to guard His holiness in the tabernacle and the temple—hence, the Lord dwelleth between the cherubims. That the Lord dwelleth between the cherubims emphasizes therefore the power and glory and majesty of the living God, the Lord God of hosts.

Seraphims.

This particular class of angels is mentioned only in Isaiah 6:2, 6: "Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar."

In distinction from the cherubims the seraphims are continually round about the throne of God, sing His praises, wait upon the word and (or) commands of the Lord. While the cherubims are the mighty angels of God, according to Bavinck, the Seraphims may be called the nobles among these spiritual beings. They, too, are represented in human form. This is evident from Isaiah 6. We read of them that each had six wings and that each had a face, and feet. And in verse 6 we are told that one of the seraphims had a live coal in his *hand*. For this reason some would identify the cherubims and the seraphims.

The word, "seraphim," means literally: burning, bright, dazzling. We read in Isaiah 6:5-7: "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged." This can suggest that the seraphims are angels appointed by God to be peculiarly busy in the work of reconciliation. How and to what extent these spiritual beings are busy in this work of reconciliation we are unable at this time to say.

Gabriel and Michael.

We read of these angels in Holy Writ. Gabriel is mentioned in the following passages. We read in Dan. 8:16, and 9:21: "And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision . . . Yea, while I

was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I have seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." And in Luke 1:19 and 26 we read: "And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto the city of Galilee, named Nazareth." Michael, too, is mentioned several times in Holy Writ. We read in Daniel 10:13, 21, 12:1: "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia . . . But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince. And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." In 1 Thess. 4:16 we read: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." And in Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7 we read: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee . . . And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels."

Some have declared in the past that Gabriel and Michael are uncreated beings, the former to be identified with the Holy Spirit, while the latter is the Son of God. This, however, is surely impossible, as an honest reading of these various passages from the Holy Scriptures will indicate.

Gabriel appears in Holy Writ to be the angel endowed with the special task to interpret and proclaim Divine revelation and glad tidings. He is the angel who is sent to Mary, Zacharias, the empty tomb, etc. From the fact that he is called the "archangel" in Jude 9, and also from the expression used in Revelation 12:7, it would appear that Michael occupies an important place among the angels. He is probably the valiant angel who fights the battles of the Lord against the enemies of Israel and also against the evil powers in the spirit-world. Hence, whereas Gabriel, in the prophecy of Daniel, is the Divinely designated angel to interpret and explain the vision to that dauntless prophet Michael, on the other hand, in the same prophecy, is the angel appointed to come to the defence of Daniel and help him. And he also appears as the

great Defender in the Scripture passages which speak of him in the New Testament. Michael contends with the devil about the body of Moses, although he could not silence the father of the lie, and in Rev. 12:7 we see him and his angels fighting against the dragon and his angels.

Principalities, powers, thrones, and dominions.

In addition to the Scriptural passages already named, Holy Writ also speaks of certain classes of angels, which occupy places of authority in the angelic world. "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."—Eph. 1:21; "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."—Eph. 3:10; "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him."—Col. 1:16; "And ye are complete in Him, Which is the head of all principality and power."—Col. 1:10; "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him."—1 Pet. 3:22.

That Scripture should speak of certain classes of angels which occupy places of authority in the angelic world need not surprise us. God Himself is characterized by beauty and order. He is the God of order. Also His creature is characterized by order and beauty. The angelic world is therefore characterized by order and rank. The very fact that the Word of God speaks of principalities and powers and might and dominions among these heavenly spirits surely points us to this conclusion. This also explains why the devil is called in Scripture the prince of the powers of the air. Even as an earthly army is characterized by privates and officers of every rank, so also the angels are divided into various ranks, the one group of heavenly spirits being subject to another.

Their Nature.

First, the angels are created beings.

This is taught by our Confessions, as in Article 12 of our Confession of Faith, and we quote: "We believe that the Father, by the Word, that is, by His Son, hath created of nothing the heaven, the earth, and all creatures, as it seemed good unto Him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator. That He doth also still uphold and govern them by His eternal providence and infinite power, for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God. He also created the angels good, to be His messengers and to serve His elect: some of whom are fallen from that excellency in which

God created them, into everlasting perdition; and the others have, by the grace of God, remained steadfast and continued in their primitive state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved, that they are enemies of God and every good thing, to the utmost of their power, as murderers, watching to ruin the Church and every member thereof, and by their wicked stratagems to destroy all; and are, therefore, by their own wickedness, adjudged to eternal damnation daily expecting their horrible torments. Therefore we reject and abhor the error of the Sadducees, who deny the existence of spirits and angels: and also that of the Manichees, who assert that the devils have their origin of themselves, and that they are wicked of their own nature, without having been corrupted."

This, we know, is also the teaching of the Scripture. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and *all the host of them* by the breath of His mouth."—Ps. 33:6; "Who *maketh* His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire:"—Ps. 104:4; "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created *all things* by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the *principalities and powers* in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."—Eph. 3:9-10; "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him:"—Col. 1:16; "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds; And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire."—Hebrews 1:2, 7.

Concerning the time of their creation we cannot be certain. Some have thought that because of Job 38:7 they must have existed before the creation of the world. We read in this passage: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" In connection with this text I wish to quote an answer of the Rev. Hoeksema which he gave to the Men's Society of one of our churches at that time. This society asked him whether Job 38:4-7 proves the contention that the angels were created on the first day of creation with the heavens or on the sixth day with the first man, Adam. And now I quote this answer of Rev. Hoeksema:

"The passage of Scripture mentioned in the question here follows in full:

'Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang

together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

From this passage many have drawn the conclusion that the angels were created on the first day of creation. Others have inferred from it the more general theory that they were created before the creation of man. Still others maintain that the passage warrants the conclusion that the angels were created even before the first day, long before "the beginning" of Genesis 1:1.

Let us look a little more closely at the passage itself.

Verses 4-6 speak in highly poetic and figurative language, comparing the created world to a building, with its foundations, corner stone, measures, line, of the work of creation. Although it is true that the language leaves the impression that the reference is especially to the beginning of God's creative work, yet there is no reason at all in the text to draw the conclusion that only the first day of creation-week is meant. In fact, in my opinion this is excluded by what follows. The interpretation is not impossible that the reference is to the entire work of the creation of the earth, and it is presented as a laying of foundations, the corner stone, etc., with a view to the relation between the work of creation and the subsequent work of God in the history and development of the world.

Verse 7 speaks of the morning stars and of the sons of God. There is no doubt that by "sons of God" reference is had to the angels. This is evident from Job 1:6, 2:1: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." And again: "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord." That in these verses the expression "sons of God" refers to the angels may be regarded as without doubt. But then it may be accepted as the only possible interpretation of the same expression in 38:7. However, there is no reason at all to interpret that the "morning stars" is but another and figurative expression for the same "sons of God". In fact, in the book of Job the stars are the heavenly luminaries. I take it, therefore, that in the literal sense of the word the stars are meant in the first of verse 7.

The stars, however, are created on the fourth day. This excludes the interpretation that verses 4-6 refer only to the first day or to the very first beginning of creation-week. For this reason I rather understand the verses 4-6 as referring to creation in general as a laying of foundations for all the rest of the work of God in the earth.

But if this is the correct interpretation, there is no proof in these verses for the theory that the angels were created on the first day of creation-week. In fact, there is no indication at all as to the time when

the angels were created in this passage. Nor is there anywhere in Scripture.

The conjecture (for it is no more) that they were created on the sixth day is deduced from the fact that in the week of creation the creatures are formed in the way of an ascending scale. The lower creatures are formed first, then the higher, finally man. If we consider that the angels belong to the higher creatures, it is not impossible that they were created on the sixth day. However, more than a conjecture this is not. The fact is, that we cannot determine with certainty when the angels were created."—thus far the quotation of Rev. Hoeksema.

One thing is certain: the angels were not created before the first day of creation-week and they were not called into existence after the sixth day. That they were not created before the first day lies in the nature of the case. They certainly belong to the world of created things, and everything was created within the space of six days. For the same reason they were not formed after the sixth day. Fact is, everything was finished within this space of six days. This is also evident from the fourth commandment which reads: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt do no manner of work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." The fourth commandment, therefore, declares explicitly that all things were created in six days, and this also included the world of angels.

If we, therefore, proceed from the idea that the heavens and the earth were created in six days, it is surely possible that the rational creatures in heaven (the angels) as well as the rational creatures upon the earth (man) were formed the same day, namely the sixth. However, certainty with respect to the time of the creation of the angels we do not have, inasmuch as the Scriptures do not specifically inform us on this point.

H. Veldman.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session Wednesday at 9 o'clock A.M., January 3, 1951, at Fuller Ave.

All matters for Synod must be brought to this Classis, such as: subsidy requests, and the reports of the Consistories on the Brief Declaration of Principles.

D. Jonker,
Stated Clerk.

The Declaration Of Principles

(REV. PETTER ON CHURCH FACTIONS)

The "Concordia" for Nov. 9 contains Rev. Petter's third instalment of a contemplated series of articles on "The Brief Declaration". Having read also this article, it occurred to me that Rev. Petter's choice of title "The Brief Declaration" is a mistake. Rev. Petter is not treating the "Declaration". His present article is on the idea of "Separation of the church into factions."

His introductory remarks having been made, Rev. Petter goes on to explain what it means that God's people in this world must seek and strive for unity in order that they may become ever more one. It means, says he, that "they must learn to be subject to one another in the truth and learn to crucify their flesh for the sake of one another and the body." I can wholeheartedly subscribe this statement. Striving for unity is to be subject to one another *in the truth, and in the truth only*. But let us understand what this means. It means, certainly, to seek in love the true church—the church of the elect—solely by holding forth to men the truth, the true Gospel of the Scripture and opposing this gospel to the errors of the heresy. Certainly, striving for unity does not consist in shelving the truth because it happens to be offensive to the group with which we desire to unite. All such striving for unity is out of the flesh and its wages is death.

Elsewhere in this number of the "Concordia" Rev. J. D. de Jong also deplores the fact of our now having such a thing as this "Declaration of Principles". He writes: "I said that I consider this action very strange to say the least. Why couldn't the Committee first go to the Netherlands, talk to the brethren there and report back to our Synod? What was the hurry? Our churches were not clamoring for anything like this, neither were the missionaries. Why so hasty, what was the need of these declarations, and that just at this time? It has been expressed by some men in Holland church papers that in view of the fact that we talked about correspondence, and had advanced quite a ways, why not consult the brethren across the ocean before we make the final decisions? But the latter is not provided for at all in the adopted propositions. This much, so is has been written, the brethren in Holland could rightfully expect. Personally we agree wholeheartedly with such criticism." Thus Rev. De Jong.

But let us consider that the "Declaration" sets forth what we, Protestant Reformed, believe to be the true doctrine of the Scriptures and our Confessions relative to the promise of God, namely that it is an unconditional and unfailing oath assuring salvation to the elect—the contrite of heart—and to the elect only. It is the very doctrine on account of the defence of which we

were expelled from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed churches and subsequently brought into being as a communion of Protestant Reformed churches. It is the very doctrine that, as moved by conviction, we have been preaching from our pulpits through all the years of our existence as churches. Shall we now go up and down the earth with a question-mark behind our doctrine, asking men to help us decide whether it is the true gospel, and then, if the verdict turns out in favor of it, jointly make it our own officially? That is what Rev. De Jong advises. But following that advice we deny our doctrine and our calling to proclaim it because it is offensive to the group with which we desire to unite. Let us hold forth our doctrine—the only pure gospel—also to the Liberated across the sea. If they want to discuss it with us, it is well. We welcome discussion but only with ourselves as jointly and officially having voiced our conviction that it is the only true gospel. That is our calling as missionary church. In a word, we must adopt that “Declaration” without delay, unless, of course, it can be made plain that it is not of God. But that no one in our midst thus far has even attempted. What do we gain by mergers, if men refuse to unite with us on the basis of our doctrine? We will be no more united—truly united—than we were before the merger. United with men who refuse for whatever reason to occupy with us our doctrinal position we will be like the staves of a cask held together by iron-clad hoops. To say that such mergers reveal to some greater degree the unity of the church of the elect, established through Christ’s cross, is sheer folly. It is not true. There is nothing to be gained by such mergers; but certainly there is everything to lose. What we lose sooner or later is our doctrine.

Why should we not want to adopt that “Declaration” on our next synod? All we do in it is to quote our Confessions. Is it wrong to quote our Confessions? Are Confessions multiplied merely by quoting them? How will we ever discuss with the Liberated if quoting to them our Confessions is wrong?

There is another consideration that enters in here. Synod has instructed our Committee of Correspondence to go to the Netherlands and discuss with the Liberated our doctrinal differences. But to what purpose if, by our refusal to adopt betimes “The Declaration” this committee of ours cannot confront the Liberated with the official stand of our churches respecting the matters in dispute and accordingly would have to be regarded simply as an emissary voicing its own private views as a party to the debate? It would have to be said that all the Liberated were occupied with in its discussions with our committee is not the official doctrine of our churches but simply the private conceptions of three individuals. Is it necessary to send men to the Netherlands to discuss what would have to be pronounced their own private views with the Liberated?

Let us not commit that folly. Let us by adopting that “Declaration” make it possible for our committee to speak in their discussions with the Liberated not merely for themselves but for our churches as well. Why not? Would the adoption of the “Declaration” render impossible discussion? Of course it would not. What our committee would discuss with the brethren across the sea is precisely the content of the “Declaration”. Why then postpone its adoption? Why delay officially owning it as churches? Are we in doubt whether the Gospel it sets forth is the true Gospel of the Scriptures? But how can we now of a sudden be doubting the veracity of a Gospel that, as moved by conviction, we have been preaching from our pulpits during all the years of our existence? Are we then a people always learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth? If not, why should we refuse as churches to adopt betimes that “Declaration”? Let the Liberated doubt our Gospel, if they must; and, if they can, let them justify their doubts with the Scriptures and the Confession. But let us as churches in our discussions with them by all means officially be occupying the position that, according to our firm belief, our Gospel is of God and be prepared to justify that belief with the Scriptures and the Confessions. Then we do a good work; but not, certainly, if we first deny our Gospel because it is distasteful to men, and on the ground of that denial dispute about it with men.

Now back to Rev. Petter’s article. He next poses this question: “What is the meaning of churches separating?”

I cannot agree with Rev. Petter’s answer. He writes: “Especially the Liberated in their study of the church have come ever more to the conclusion that such separation is a great sin, so great in fact, that the one group must of necessity consider and call the other a false church.”

Remark. That would be a strange conclusion of the Liberated—the conclusion, for example, that the Protestants of the 16th century committed a great sin in forsaking the Roman Catholic hierarchy; that the Secession of 1836 in the Netherlands was a great sin chargeable also to the Seceders (Afgescheidenen); that finally, our break with the Christian Reformed churches in 1924 was a great sin on our part too. Certainly, no such conclusions were arrived at by the Liberated. What they concluded, surely, is this: that all such separations are a great sin only on the part of the group that corrupts the truth and expels from its communion faithful ministers of the Gospel for censuring its corruptions and refusing to subscribe them. Rev. Petter should have stated the matter correctly. What he actually told his readers is in effect this: that it is a great sin to forsake the false church.

The next question that Rev. Petter puts, reads: “What is the nature of the degree of sinfulness or

error that does at least warrant and necessitate a separation? I agree with Rev. Petter's statement that we do not split into separate churches because one believes in individual communion cups, others in a communal cup.

But what then does at last warrant and necessitate a separation? Rev. Petter believes that herein our Reformed fathers have shown us the way and set us an example. He says that they did not press for a separation in the church nor risk such a separation except on issues of doctrine that were clear-cut and that involved the very heart of the Gospel. I can't subscribe this statement of Rev. Petter because I do not know what he means by the "heart" of the Gospel. He doesn't explain. But I do know what the Reformed fathers meant by the heart of the Gospel, and also what they meant by the heart of heresy. They told us in their Creeds, definitely in the Canons of Dort. The positive expositions of doctrine in these Canons constituted for the Fathers the heart of the Gospel. And the rejection of errors in these Canons constituted for them the heart of heresy. And let us take notice that the errors rejected include also the following:

"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*." Certainly the unexpressed implication of this statement is not that there are, according to the way of thinking of the fathers, changeable and uncertain conditions, and besides *unchangeable and certain conditions*, and that it is against the former only that our fathers in this article were inveighing. To so contend is to play hocus pocus with the plain statements of our Canons. The error that the Canons here reject is that the fruit of election in the believer and his awareness that he is an elect is contingent on faith, repentance, obedience and perseverance as a *condition*. For in that case, it means to say, this fruit and this awareness were as changeable as faith is changeable, *were it a condition*. For, such is the reasoning, if faith were a condition, a man's believing or not believing would be contingent on his own free will (free in the arminian sense) and thus as uncertain and changeable as man's free will is uncertain and changeable. But a man's believing depends solely on God's eternal and sovereign election. Hence, his faith is indestructible and abiding, unchangeable and certain and thus also his fruit-bearing and the awareness of his sonship. I would like to see anyone, dealing honestly with this article, get another meaning out of it. It is plain what, according to the Fathers, constitutes the heart of the Gospel and also the heart of heresy. That the expression "changeable and uncertain condition" has reference to faith, obedience and perseverance conceived of as conditions, is evident from Canons 1, B, V:

"We reject the errors 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."

Rev. Petter finally raises and answers the question whether such a sinfulness or error is present in the Liberated, namely an error that demands continued separation between them and the Protestant Reformed. His answer reads: "I do not believe that the phase of the covenant truth in which we and the Liberated cannot readily find each other is so momentous and decisive as to require (continued—O) separation." To this I reply that I do hope that Rev. Petter has good reasons for believing as he does. But here again Rev. Petter fails to present the real issue,—the issue that the leaders among the Liberated have forced upon us. What the Liberated want and propose is verily this: that the two groups—Liberated and Protestant Reformed—unite on the basis of the agreement that each group refrain from officially declaring, confessing and proclaiming, jointly as churches, its own conceptions relative to the covenant and the promise. That is what they mean by their motto: nothing binding. But how may we agree to any such thing? It means that we agree as churches, as a communion of churches, to shelve, put under a bushel, what we believe to be the Gospel of God, the very Gospel that is being preached from Sabbath to Sabbath from our pulpits, the very Gospel that we bind on every married man and woman presenting their infant child for baptism. We may not agree to such a thing may we? Unless that "Declaration" can be shown to be heretical, if it must be admitted that it sets forth the true gospel of God as laid down in the Scriptures and the confessions' it must be adopted. To refuse to adopt that "Declaration" is officially to reject it—reject what we know and believe to be the gospel of God, all for the sake of church merger.

G. M. Ophoff.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 24, 1950, our beloved parents,

Mr. and Mrs. John P. Miedema

commemorated their 40th wedding anniversary.

We thank our heavenly Father with them, for having kept and sustained them together through the years, and pray that the Lord may grant them His peace in their remaining years.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Neal Mohr
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Miedema
Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Sytsma
Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Miedema
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Gritter
Pvt. Harold Miedema
Kenneth Miedema
10 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

IN HIS FEAR

Church Membership In His Fear

5.

Gathering Together.

We have begun to call attention to the practical import of the truth that the Son of God gathers His church by His Word and Spirit from the beginning to the end of the world out of the whole human race. And last time we mentioned specifically the practical significance of the truth that this gathering takes place in the line of continued generations. It still remains, therefore, to call attention to the importance for church membership in the fear of the Lord of the truth that the church is a gathering out of the whole human race, and that this gathering is manifested in gatherings. This we shall do in the present article.

* * * *

An Actual Gathering.

The result of the fact that the Son of God gathers to Himself a church is that the church *is gathered*, that it is a *gathering*. That stands to reason. That is a truism, you say. But let us try to understand the importance of this "truism".

On the one hand, of course, it is true that the end result of this gathering process is the complete and perfect body of Christ as it shall be realized in the day of the Lord, and as it shall consist of all His people, all the elect, of all ages, from every nation and tribe and tongue, and as they shall be presented without spot or wrinkle in the assembly of the elect in life eternal. And when we confess an holy catholic church, it is that church which is the subject of our confession of faith. Then the church shall not exist at all any more as a mixture. The carnal seed shall no longer be in her. The battle of the church will be over. The sinful flesh of the believers will be done away. The church also as to its membership will be absolutely pure, holy. That is in itself a very practical truth, also with respect to our church membership here below. Only we must remember that the power of that truth lies in the fact that it is strictly and only the Son of God Who gathers His church unto Himself. Take that fact away, lay the gathering of the church to the charge of man, to the charge of human preachers, to the charge of the members of that church in any way, compromise that truth by giving men a share in that gathering process, and its certainty is lost; and when the certainty is lost, the powerful comfort of that truth is lost. He, the mighty Son of God, and He alone, gathers to Himself a church chosen to everlasting life. And remember: He *does* it. He does not

merely try to gather a church; He actually gathers her. That is a very rich and beautiful truth. It means that the believers may rest quietly in the calm assurance of faith, when he looks about him and in himself. When he beholds one church after another succumbing to the manifold lies of human philosophy, when he sees it becoming manifest in the very congregation of which he is a member that all is not Israel that is called Israel, when he sees the faithful becoming few in number, when he sees the truth assailed and denied and compromised, when he sees what appear to be the overwhelming assaults of the powers of darkness tearing the church asunder, when he beholds how weakly the new life of the members of the body of Christ really comes to manifestation in the midst of the church, when he sees the very communion of churches in which he has been all his lifetime a member, and which holds the love of his heart and is the object of his loyalty, from which he only with difficulty can separate himself, falling into the way of error,—in a word, when his whole experience tells him that the cause of the church is a hopeless and lost cause, a miserable failure, then he may know with the knowledge of faith that the cause of the Son of God *cannot* fail, but that even through these very things the Son of God goes right on gathering, defending, and preserving His church. In that quiet assurance he can act also according to faith. It is only with that confidence that the faithful church has ever been able to maintain the truth. It was only with that confidence that mighty men of God in the past have had the courage to "break with the church," to oppose a mighty and powerful institute that had become corrupt. It was in that confidence that a Luther and a Calvin had the courage to maintain the truth of Scripture and to go a separate way in the Reformation of the 16th century. It was in that calm assurance that men have been willing to lie down at the stake, calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus. It was in that confidence that faithful leaders and whole congregations could be willing to lose their place in "the church", to be deposed and cast out, and to suffer the loss of their all as churches. Yes, it was in that confidence that the Protestant Reformed Churches had the courage to maintain themselves 25 years ago as a tiny and feeble baby, teetering on the brink of death. And yes, it is only in that confidence that the Son of God gathers His church by His Spirit and Word that we can and must go on defending the faith, small and despised and without outward might in the world though we continue to be.

And this implies further that all our efforts as churches, as members of the church, as ministry must stand in the service of that gathering work of the Son of God. More must be said also in this connection when we come to the subject of the church as insti-

tute. But even now we must emphasize that we may be busy as members of His church only in this faith, that the Son of God gathers His church. We do not gather it. We must never, as the gathering of the church on earth, labor out of the conceited and sinful idea of somehow adding our bit to that gathering work of Christ, either by our own membership or by our activities as members of His church. It is not *our* efforts toward growth, not *our* efforts toward unity, not *our* efforts even for the manifestation of the unity of the body of Christ that make the body of Christ that great wonderwork, that make it catholic and one, that cause the glory of the one Christ to shine in the one body of many members. No: the Son of God, only, strictly, and alone gathers His church. It is that faith that must control us as members of His church.

In the second place, we must remember that the gathering of the church is a gathering unto *spiritual separation*. The church is gathered *out of* the whole human race, a race that lies in the corruption of sin and death. And the church is called unto holiness. And it is holy in principle. And its members are holy in principle. And also on earth the gathering of the church becomes spiritually manifest. That the church is a gathering is not merely manifest, of course, in this, that it gathers locally and physically in a certain building at stated times to hear the preaching of the Word. That belongs to the manifestation of the church, as we shall see, and is an important element also. But we must understand that even then, when the members of the church come together in a public gathering, they manifest themselves as a *spiritual* gathering. Otherwise you might also draw the false conclusion that everyone who gathers with the church belongs to the body of Christ, and that being a member of the church is just a matter of "going to church". But the holiness of the church must be manifest in the holiness of her members. And the holiness of her members must be manifest in all their life in the midst of the world. It must be seen that the church and the members of the church are actually gathered *out of* the whole human race, and that they therefore are in the world, but not of the world. In all that you do and in every sphere and relationship of life it must be evident that you have been gathered by the Son of God.

In the third place, it follows from this truth of the gathering of the church that the church gathers together. We must not make the fatal mistake of separating the truth that the church gathers together from the truth that the Son of God gathers His church by His Word and Spirit. Then the whole confession that there is an holy catholic church becomes after all something hazy, something abstract, which has no effect at least on our life here below and in this present time. While it is true that the end result of Christ's gathering His church is the complete, glorified church in the

new heavens and the new earth, we should understand at once that also on earth the church becomes manifest as a gathering. This is plain from all Scripture. Already in the old dispensation the church is frequently pictured as gathering together. Israel is referred to as the congregation, or the congregation of Jehovah; and they assembled for the purpose of the worship of Jehovah at the tabernacle and later at the temple. Besides, other gatherings of the people of Israel are mentioned, as, for instance, during the time of Samuel, and in the time of Elijah. Thus also the Psalmist speaks of the amiableness of the tabernacles of the Lord. And he faints for the courts of the Lord. Ps. 84. In the New Testament this same fact is very evident. We have only to think of the numerous congregations which were established and also instituted by the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. Or we may remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit was poured out in the *church* as it was assembled in those days in Jerusalem. Or we may point to the many epistles which were addressed to specific congregations and which were read in the assemblies of the churches. And we must remember that these were the gatherings of the church on earth at those times. So true is this that the epistles are even addressed to "the church of God at . . ." There can be no doubt about it that the church is actually and concretely manifest in gatherings of specific congregations at certain places and at stated times.

And that means that the believer will not think lightly of his membership in the church in the world. He knows that it is the will of the Lord that His body shall become manifest in the world as the gathering of believers with their children and that it is therefore his obligation before God to belong to that gathering. He is aware also that the Spirit of Christ was poured out *in the church* as well as that Christ's Word is addressed *to the church*. And the believer will not separate himself from the gatherings of the church for any earthly or carnal considerations.

This follows, of course, from the very nature of the life of the believer and from the very manner of his salvation. By being called the believer becomes member of the body of Christ. He is not saved as an individual. He lives the life of regeneration as a member of the body. And just as in the natural sense no member of my body has any power in separation from my body, so the believer has no life in himself, apart from Christ, and in separation from the body of Christ, the church. It is the urge of his regenerated heart to join the fellowship of believers. He belongs with them. His life is a life in common with them. He cannot live alone. Membership in the church in the world is indispensable for his spiritual life.

(to be continued)

H. C. Hoeksema,

Among The Immigrants

For the past year we have spent a great deal of time among the Holland immigrants in Canada. More particularly our contacts have been with those of the Gereformeerde Kerken (Art. 31), who are more popularly known as the "Liberated". Our work has taken us from the St. Lawrence River in Eastern Ontario through all the Canadian Provinces to the West Coast. We have met people from every walk and position; farmers, laborers, professional people, married and single, young and old. These have also constituted a cross-section of their brethren in the Netherlands since there were representatives from almost all the Provinces in the Old Country.

Nor have these contacts been mere casual meetings. We have worshipped with them, eaten at their tables and been the guests in their homes. And naturally, we have spent hours and hours talking with them; debating and discussing the Reformed truth which is dear to us all. Just recently we have returned after eight weeks of traveling some 12,000 miles to visit various groups in more distant places. Now we would like to give a few general impressions which remain with us from these contacts. What is our judgment of them? How do they feel overagainst our Churches and her teaching? And what conclusions can we draw?

It is a pleasure to note, first of all, that our Dutch brethren are industrious and ambitious; hence, constitutionally well-fit for their task of pioneering in a new home-land. And they are recognized as such both by their new Canadian neighbors as well as the Canadian government itself. Already they are acquitting themselves well and give honor to the Dutch traditions and name which we all bear. Having been practically crowded out of their old Fatherland they have begun again from the bottom up; as strangers in a strange land. When one considers this a bit one gets an idea of what conditions are like in the Netherlands and what it has meant for the immigrant. They have left homes, dear ones, relatives, friends, church, school; societies, and made a host of other sacrifices, to start over "from scratch". Yet, almost without exception, though their present abode be but a hovel and their work and wages almost intolerable, they are hopeful and courageous and have no desire to return from whence they came.

But we are more interested, perhaps, in their spiritual make-up and reactions. Here, too, we have found them well-informed and well-read. They are acquainted not only with the Scriptures but also the Reformed faith and confessions and are properly zealous to maintain this faith in their new world. In fact, generally it can be said, that their primary concern is to establish affiliation with the Church that proclaims the pure

Word of God and holds to the faith of the Fathers in doctrine and life. They also begin to realize that in a large and ungodly land, such as our own or Canada, this is even more pressing and critical than in the confines of a small Netherlands.

It has indeed been refreshing to find them willing and able to discuss the Truth and Reformed Faith. One of the saddest signs of the last years here in America, is the deadly lethargy and sorry ignorance among that which is called Reformed, even of the simplest essentials. There is little knowledge and even less desire to learn or discuss. Yet, amongst these immigrants we have always been welcome and have had no difficulty at all in spending hours at a time in profitable and intelligent discussion. That there are differences in our position, no one can deny. But it is indeed refreshing to be able to meet as fellow-christians and brethren even though we may warmly speak of our convictions. It is encouraging that we can testify of one another that we love the Truth and bow before the Word of God. This latter, we have experienced time and again amongst them. Even though it seems at times that they must re-state their position and forsake the contentions of some of their "leaders", they are willing to be *led* by the Scriptures. And that they are fundamentally Reformed and that there should be room for them in our fellowship, we are convinced.

In a movement as broad as the "Vrijmaking", it stands to reason that there are also some who do not understand the Reformed truth and are antagonistic overagainst us. We have also met these amongst the immigrants. However, we believe their number to be comparatively small. Furthermore, when we related the views held by some of these less well-informed individuals to the better Liberated elements, these latter also expressed with us that such are certainly not true representatives of their Churches and have never understood the Reformed position. Moreover, when our position was made clear to them (i.e. to those who hold erroneous views) they themselves often expressed that they were not interested and no longer cared for our fellowship. But certainly they are not representative of the Liberated immigrants or the Liberated position. And even among them there is, perhaps, the possibility of laboring to teach them the validity of the Reformed position as we maintain it.

But to return to our general impressions. As stated above, these immigrants are concerned about their church affiliation. The question arises, why have they sought *our* fellowship? What is there that has attracted them to us?

In many instances, their own ministers, consistories and leaders, already in the Netherlands, had advised them to seek us. And until recently many have accepted this as a matter of course. We write until recently, for as is well known the situation has changed some-

what of late. That the work of the Rev. Hettinga in organizing the Free Reformed Churches, for example, has had detrimental effects for closer contact is simply a matter of fact. The ill-advised misuse which he made of the Declaration of Principles and other elements, is certainly regrettable. But that these elements were there for him to so use is also regrettable. However, apart from this we have experienced very little effective adverse interference, with our efforts among these immigrants, from the Netherlands. That they would not be immediately loosed from all influences of their former home but would continue to read the papers and respect the opinions of their former pastors and teachers is certainly to be expected. We believe that the favorable reports and suggestions concerning our Churches to these immigrants usually outweigh those that were adverse.

But even these suggestions to seek us have not been motivating reasons. Many of them came to Canada before we had even begun to labor there. Many more were in communities where it was impossible for us to contact them; due to our limited means and forces. Only in the past year have we made any concerted effort in Canada while the immigration is already in its fourth or fifth year.

Besides this, from a physical point of view, there is little to attract them to our Churches. Comparatively we cannot offer them the help and physical advantages that the Christian Reformed denomination can, for example. We are small and with limited means and men. Then, too, almost from the very beginning of our contact, we, too, have been divided in our judgment and feeling overagainst them. Many times they have been derided by us in no uncertain terms and we have charged them with maintaining various derogatory heresies. Certainly also our attitude overagainst them has often failed to leave the impression of evidence of a genuine concern and brotherly approach to them. Hence, we believe, that our own attitude has often done as much harm as any interference on their part.

Yet, in spite of all the elements that have beclouded the situation, they were still attracted to our Churches. And the reason is, as we have also expressed before, that they find in our midst the pure preaching of the Word which they want and seek. Nor is that a hasty or utilitarian judgment on their part. Many of them were at first members of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. Almost without exception, all have attended that Church and are acquainted with its preaching. And there they *could not* be satisfied. Hence, when our ministers began to labor in Canada these immigrants recognized in our preaching that which they sought. They had no need, for example, for a declaration of principles to reveal to them that the other Reformed Churches in Canada had departed

from the purity of the Word and Confessions. This was certainly clear from the poverty stricken preaching in those Churches. Nor did they have need of such a declaration to reveal that we as Churches did hew to the Confessions and pure Word of God. This, too, was plainly evident and discernible from the preaching of that Word. Hence, through the preaching of the Word and the patient labor of discussing that Word, they became convinced that we were the true Church, and that their calling was to seek our fellowship. This we believe, is a mighty testimony both of them and us and an important factor that must certainly condition our attitude towards these immigrants.

There were some, for example, who were extremely skeptical of us. From what they had read of our literature or heard by report, they recognized many "Synodale klanken", as they expressed it; or they felt that we proceeded too much from the doctrine of election and had no room for the responsibility of man. Yet, after hearing our preaching, they recognized what they wanted. And even though all their questions may not have been immediately answered they expressed their willingness to receive that preaching and their desire to be instructed by us, in seeking membership with us. In fact, we have personally heard the testimony more than once, both of those who were unduly influenced by correspondence with the Netherlands and from those that were definitely opposed to us, that from the very beginning of their contact with us they were attracted by the preaching. We believe this motivation and attraction to our preaching is a definite testimonial to the Reformed character of these immigrants.

It is evident, therefore, that we would conclude that we believe they belong in our fellowship and we should be willing to receive them. We belong together. On the one hand, we certainly have something for them. Our own Churches have been established for a number of years and we are acutely acquainted with the peculiar problems that face the child of God in this new world. We believe that through our own history and experience God has called us to maintain His Truth overagainst all the erroneous strivings here. By His Providence we have seen the need of emphasizing His Sovereign Grace, His Absolute Predestination, the true Responsibility of Man and the practical application of all these to the conditions in this new world. And to do so overagainst all the vain philosophies and streams of error as they reveal themselves here. This these immigrants should appreciate and acknowledge by taking their places with us in fighting the fight of faith according as God draws the battlelines here in America. And we believe that is their desire. They must also understand that they have not simply changed their residence but have entered a new world with its own peculiar problems and philosophies and history. They should, therefore, be willing to acknowledge that

in our experience and history we have been taught and led by the Grace of God to face *this* situation *here* and to maintain the purity of the Reformed faith over-against the evils that arise *here*. In other words, they should not expect to find or be able to transplant their Church to this country, but must join themselves to the True Church as God has established and conditioned it *here*. We also believe that that is their desire. And that Church here bears the name: Protestant Reformed!

On the other hand, we also believe that they have a contribution to make to our Churches. With their knowledge and zeal to live an active life of faith in all departments and spheres they can serve as a refreshing and healthy influence among us. For example, apart now from all other considerations, we must admit that our contact with these brethren has set us all to thinking and discussing which is always hopeful and instructive. And personally, we greatly appreciate the spirit of these Liberated immigrants and can reflect with joy upon the many hours of brotherly spiritual communion we have had with them.

Next time, D. V., we hope to continue with a few more observations and suggestions as to the manner in which we believe we should seek closer contact with one another.

W. Hofman
A. Cammenga.



FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition Of Hebrews 10:19-25

VI.

In our previous article we were discussing the question, whether the term "flesh" in the phrase "through the veil, that is, His *flesh*" could be read as though the text said "His *body*".

We then remarked that, in our opinion, the two terms are not identical in meaning; that they are not used interchangeably without a distinctive meaning in each. It is, therefore, our conviction that for the proper understanding of the term "flesh" in our text it can aid us a great deal to inquire into the respective usage and meaning of the terms "flesh" and "body" in Holy Writ, that is, as these terms are used to designate the flesh of Jesus in distinction from His body.

• It was noted in the concluding paragraph of our previous writing, that these two terms are not identical. That they are not identical in scope and meaning should be evident merely from the consideration, that when we presently enter into heaven's glory after the

resurrection, we shall then not have flesh and blood, although we shall have our own *body*! We shall then have our own body raised from the dead; but this body will then not be "flesh and blood". The latter cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. (I Cor. 15:50). From this it is evident that "flesh" and "body" are not identical when speaking of the redeemed saints.

Body and flesh are not the same!

This fact is very evident also from what we read in Philippians 3:21, where we read: "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subject all things unto Himself." Now surely here we could not possibly substitute the terms "flesh" for the terms "body" and read: Who shall fashion anew the *flesh* of our humiliation, that it be conformed according to the *flesh* of His glory! Jesus' body as to the flesh was buried; but after three days He arose in the body that is heavenly. It is a body that is not at all flesh. It is the glorious body fitting in with the new heaven and the new earth, where "flesh and blood" cannot enter, not even the flesh and blood of Jesus!

Well may we take notice of this fact to our comfort and to the glory of God for such matchless wisdom!

In Hebrews 10:20 we read of Jesus passing through the veil of His flesh and we with Him. It is full of rich comfort. It is comforting to know that the Son of God came in our *flesh*. Yes, He also came a body; a body was prepared for Him from God. To that we would too presently call attention. But now we would concentrate on the implications of Jesus' coming in our "flesh". Let us attend to it.

The term "flesh" in distinction from "body" evidently indicates very strongly the commonness of nature between Jesus and all the human race out of which He according to eternal election gathers unto Himself a Church by His Word and Spirit. He is like unto us in all things, sin excepted. This is repeatedly emphasized by this term in various parts of the book of Hebrews as well as in other parts of Scripture.

Thus we read in Hebrews 2:10-18 as follows: "For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth (Christ) and they that are sanctified (we as the elect believers) are all of one (Adam). For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, In the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise. And again: I will put my trust in Him. And again: Behold I and the children whom God hath given me. Since then the *children are sharers of flesh and blood*, He (Jesus) also in like manner Himself partook of the same, that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death,

that is, the devil . . . Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

In the above quotation what is between brackets is of us; also the underscoring is of the undersigned.

In this quotation itself our chief interest is to show that the term "flesh" underscores the singular fact that it is exactly in the Son's becoming "flesh" that He is made like unto us in all things. The person of the Son comes to be united with our human nature, that is, in our flesh. The millions of human individuals all have their own individual bodies; each body is stamped with individuality! But all have the tie of flesh and blood in common. All are out of one blood, Adam, be it then in the way of the commingling of many bloods, either within one nation or by the commingling of the bloods of nations. In any case the term "flesh" indicates the notion of the commonness of a human nature. It is, no doubt, for this reason that we read of the whole human race as "all flesh".

For this very reason Jesus did not assume the nature of angels, nor is He a newly created being, but He is made like unto us in all things; He is born from a woman and made under the law, in order that He might give unto us the adoption of sons, that we might pass through His meritorious labors unto the Father in the full assurance of faith.

This fact, of Jesus being in the flesh, is also underscored in Hebrews 5:7, where we read, "*Who in the days of His flesh*, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience from the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all that obey Him the author of eternal salvation."

It should be noticed that Jesus was the author of eternal salvation in our flesh, in the days of His flesh. He thus cried to God in Gethsemane! He could only save us by thus bringing about our salvation, that is, by being the way for us to God the Father in His flesh. Here in the flesh He was so much like us, even though He is the Son, that He learns, learns, learns obedience from that which He suffers. And when He has learned the full implication of obedience, even in the depths of the agony of hell, then He can say: It is finished. He is then perfected. And we can through the rent veil of His flesh draw nigh unto God in the full assurance of faith.

O, wondrous God! Thou who hast so willed to be and who art thus indeed in Thy unsearchable being, that it behooved Thee thus to bring many sons to glory!

We can only worship here at Thy footstool in silent adoration as well as in audible praise. O, Mystery of Godliness that is great; Thy depths we cannot fathom. Could we Fathom Thee Thou shouldest not be true. Here in the Fathomless depths of wisdom in the Cross do we find rest and solace, In the midst of the temptations and storms of life we here rest assured in the Secret Place of Thy Throne and abide under the shadow of Thee the Almighty!

What a comfort that it is through the 'veil of Jesus' flesh' that we may boldly draw near unto the Holiest, the Throne of Grace. Indeed, *behold!* then that the veil in the temple is rent in twain from top to bottom at the very moment that Jesus said: It is finished. At that moment God said to the better than Abraham: It is enough. Now I know that thou indeed fearest Me my Son; Thou hast believed in Me before all the hosts of hell and before the Cherubims and Seraphims. It is enough, thy obedience is perfected in the "flesh". Abraham brought a sacrifice in faith; God saw the heart and accepted it; but here is the sacrifice Abraham might only behold, he might see this moment from afar and be glad in the full assurance of faith. O blessed *pleerophorias*. Faith is carried through to the very end in Abraham. It could rise no higher, the assurance could not be stronger in the father of believers than it was at that moment on Mount Moriah. But in the days of Jesus' flesh at Gethsemane as well as on Calvary's brow all Abraham's faith could not span the length and breadth, nor could it sound the depths of the love which energized the faith of Jesus in His mediatorial sufferings! Here is faith perfected in obedience in the Son in our flesh!

Let us draw near in faith.

Here stands a minister of the Gospel. He preaches the ministry of reconciliation. He does not make much pulpit ado. He simply preaches the Gospel of our salvation in Jesus. He preaches Jesus the Great High Priest in the temple of God. Not sacrifice delights the Lord. Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not. That did not befit God. Herein the greatness of God is not manifested. It is still man bringing something to God. Nay, but when God comes and reconciles us unto Himself in the Son in our flesh, that is God-glorifying. All God's virtues are thus made great. This Jesus sees. Hence he says: Behold, I come to do Thy will o God. Behold, in the volume of the book it is written of me. Now is God glorified in the Son, and God shall straightway glorify Him!

For Jesus stands here in our flesh, but He stands here too, in His own body. He has an eye to see. The Son of God, the person of the Son sees through human eyes, the eyes of a man under the curse of the law. He hears the law of God through the ears of a man, and that man is the Son of God in our flesh, like unto us in all things.

Yes, God has prepared for Him the body. It is the body of flesh and blood in the "days of his flesh". But now it is no more a body of flesh. It is the body glorious, the body of the Lord of Glory, the Last Adam, whose image we bear by faith.

The preacher still preaches. For it is through the preaching that God saves those *who believe*. (credentes). This must not be made the Arminian: if ye believe. And so the preacher preaches, teaches, admonishes and says: let us draw near in the full assurance of faith, let us not let this great salvation slip through our fingers. We have it, let us hold what we have that no one take our crown.

Ah, no, do not say: we do not need these admonitions. Let us not be wiser than God and separate what God had put together. Even the Lord Jesus in the High Priestly prayer says: Keep them in Thy Word; the Son of God gathers, defends and preserves His Church by His Spirit through the preaching. Being kept by this preaching let us draw near and abide under His wings!

Geo. C. Lubbers.



Contribution

Esteemed Editor:

For twenty-five years we as churches have labored among those who cast us out. And for twenty-five years we have felt somewhat as the prophet when he said, "All day long have I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people". And for twenty-five years we have labored among those who differ from us and have done so without so-called indispensable declarations of principles.

Not only have we bestowed labor upon them but we have, as it were, plucked out from among them that small kernel which confessed that God is Sovereign, gracious only to His own and is angry with the wicked every day. And, mind you, we have done so, and let us not forget that it has been a great and wondrous work, using as our instrument only the Word of God and the confessions.

I ask in all earnestness and sobriety surely if we need a declaration we have needed one for years which would according to form and content refute the error of common grace and related deviations. Are we going to say that those whose direct task it was to proclaim the truth to those who erred have stumbled and crippled along unaided by a crutch of declarations? Such a declaration would surely be the truth, would it not? And being the truth no one should have questions or doubts as to its propriety or necessity.

And now we find ourselves placed before the beauti-

ful and to us an almost unusually delightful privilege of bringing our truth, not to those by whom we are constantly rejected, but rather to those who are ready and who have been prepared and placed exactly at that place and in those circumstances to listen to us with an attentive ear. It is almost unbelievable! We do well to marvel and be astonished. For that too has been the work of the Lord and we do well to regard it reverently rather than to spew out our disgust when we find that the Lord's field is in need of a bit of cultivation in order to remove what appear to be weeds growing between the rows of sturdy corn. It is not for nothing that the figure of the husbandman is used in Scripture. Does the tenant-farmer turn to the landlord and say, "I cannot work your field for I find weeds there yea, even thorns and thistles. My back is sore, my hands are blistered from the years of hoeing and weeding in that other field to which you assigned me!"?

That briefly, is the past and the present. And, since some are of the opinion that now we need declarations, what of the future? May we expect to have declaration upon declaration, here a little, there a little? Suppose, to use a plain illustration that some years hence the Lord would be pleased to call us to labor among cannibals in the dark and uncivilized portions of the world. And if our missionaries escaped the stew-pot, are we to suppose that soon they would come running home shouting, "We need a declaration! We need a declaration! Those people eat strangers and our confession doesn't take care of a situation like that!" Now you may call the above sarcastic or ironical but, can't we see that the multiplicity of situations and circumstances can never be covered by a mass production declaration factory?

Has it not rather been a sign of weakness in the church when she finds it necessary to add to the confessions? Has it not been exactly so before? Are not the three points of '24 called an interpretation of the confessions? Has not all the legislation concerning worldly amusements, union membership, censored books, etc. etc. been a miserable failure? For, the adherence to sound doctrine and the observance of proper deportment must spring forth from a sanctified heart which humbly bows before the Word and is subservient to it. It cannot be accomplished by a superimposition of declarations or regulations unless one is satisfied with only a formal or external adherence to such regulations.

And, in closing, for the classic example of declarations look at the church of Rome. Count, if you can, her papal bulls and edicts and behold also a vast multitude who now bow before their declarations rather than before the Word!

George Ten Elshof.