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MEDITATION

De Geboorte Van Den Zaligmaker

“En het geschiedde als zij daar waren, dat de dagen vervuld werden dat zij baren zoude; en zij baarde haren eerstgeboren zoon, en wond hem in doeken, en leide hem neder in de kribbe, omdat voor hen geene plaats was in de herberg.”

Lucas 2:6-7.

Deze morgen worden we geroepen om naar Bethlehem te gaan, ten minste met onze verbeelding. Het is goed, dat we hieraan toegeven, want er staat de belangrijkste gebeurtenis die ooit gezien werd te geschieden. Het punt des tijds waarop onzen tekst staat is verreweg de belangrijkste van alle eeuwen.

“En het geschiedde als zij daar waren, dat de dagen vervuld werden. . . .”

Dat zijn zware woorden. O ja, ik weet wel, dat dit allereerst beteekent hoe de dagen van Maria vervuld werden. De tijd van het baren was aangebroken. Maar als we het licht der geheele Schrift laten vallen op deze woorden, ontgaat het ons niet, dat hier meer gezegd wordt, dan juist maar het aangeven van de vervulling der dagen van Maria.

Voor elk onderdeel der geschiedenis is er een bestemde tijd. En zoo ook was daar het tijdstip voor Maria om te baren. Maar de Heilige Schrift spreekt meer dan eens van “de volheid des tijds”. En van wat er in die volheid des tijds geschieden zou, namelijk, dat God Zich zou openbaren in de gave van Zijn lieven Zoon tot verlossing der wereld. En daarvan spreken ook die woorden van onzen tekst.

Laat ons nooit vergeten, dat het geboren worden van Jezus, en dat is niet anders dan de vleeschwording Gods, is het centrale punt des tijds. Alles wat daarvoor ligt en loopt en zich beweegt, of dat daar stille ligt, wijst naar dit tijdstip, en alles wat er op volgt

in alle de dagen der historie der wereld, vloeit voort uit dit tijdstip.

Jezus' geboorte in Bethlehem is centraal. En zij is centraal de openbaaring Gods. Ik wil daar dit mee zeggen: Nooit of nimmer heeft God Zich zoo schoon, zoo heerlijk, zoo wonderlijk geopenbaard als in de geboorte van dien Zoon.

In die geboorte schittert ons tegen het deugdenbeeld van den onverderfelijken God. Als we het teken mogen zien in die nederige stal en in die nederige kribbe, dan hebben we het mysterie gezien waarvan de Heilige Schrift zoo vaak spreekt. Het mysterie, dat van het begin der wereld verborgen was, is in de geboorte van Jezus ons geopenbaard.

Het is de verborgenheid der Godzaligheid die groot is: God is geopenbaard in het vleesch! Dat is de blijde mare van het Kerstfeest.



Maria's dagen werden vervuld. Ik denk niet, dat het vele dagen was nadat zij in Bethlehem aangekomen waren. Er zijn redenen te over om aan te nemen, dat die dagen vervuld waren vlak nadat zij aangekomen waren. Immers, indien het dagen later geschiedde, dan zouden zij toch zeker niet in de stal gebleven zijn. Dan zou men zich toch zeker ontfermd hebben over die jonge vrouw die in zulk een teedere positie verkeerde. Om zulk een vrouw uit te stooten uit de geriefelijke huizen wordt immers zelfs niet in de wereld gevonden? Neen, ik ben er van overtuigd, dat de dagen van Maria vervuld werden aan den avond van den dag, dat zij aankwamen in de stad Davids. Ge kunt U toch wel voorstellen hoe Jozef, die een rechtschapen man was, zich ingespannen heeft om een geriefelijke plaats te bekomen voor zijn ondertrouwde vrouw? Maar de tijd was daar. En zoo spoedden zij zich naar de eenige plaats die nog open was: een stal, een beestenstal. En als straks het kindje geboren wordt is er geen wieg, geen bedje, ja zelfs geen schoone kist of iets dergelijks: en zoo komt Jezus Christus, de Zoon van God in de kribbe te liggen. Is het niet wonderlijk?

De dagen vervuld, dat zij baren zoude. Het tijdstip is aangebroken, dat de schoonste openbaring van God zal gezien worden. Maar wij zijn geneigd om uit te roepen: O God! van eeuwige mirakelen! Moest dat nu zoo? Moet Hij die God en heilig Mensch is zoo geboren worden? Is dat de volheid des tijds? Is dat tijdstip misschien wat verhaast, zoodat er geen juiste voorbereidselen gemaakt konden worden? Is alles hier niet wonderlijk?

Ja, het is wonderlijk en het is ook juist zooals het moet. Immers, de Engelen geven de juiste redactie van die geboorte: Ge zult het Kindeken vinden in doeken gewikkeld en liggende in de kribbe. Dus de herders verstaan het goed: de hemel zegt, dat Christus Jezus moet geboren worden in een beestenstal, liggen moet in een kribbe, en dat Hij zelfs geen kleedertjes mag hebben: Hij moet gewikkeld in doeken.

Ge roept met mij uit: Wat toch een armoedige geboorte! En terecht: het is zeer armoedig. Ge moogt zelfs zeggen: het is ongeveer zoo armoedig als het kan. En dat is ook Gods doelmerk. We mogen daarom niet trachten om die vuile beestenstal op te ruimen. We mogen die kribbe, die zure kribbe waar de beesten uit vreten, niet versieren met allerlei moois, zooals de wereld doet op haar prentjes. Ge moogt geen stralenkrans om die peinzende moeder vlechten; verhemelscht Jozef niet, en ook het Kindeken niet. Ge moet het even armoedig laten als de Bijbel het U schildert. En waarom niet? Omdat ge anders het eeuwig Evangelie verliest. Die armoedige geboorte behoort bij het Evangelie, is het hart van het Evangelie. God heeft ons wat te zeggen in die armoedige geboorte.

En het is dit: Hij is om onzentwille arm geworden, opdat Hij Zijn volk rijk zou maken met een hemelschen, eeuwigen, glorieijken en geestelijken rijkdom.

Ziet ge het niet? Jezus is geboren op het randje der wereld. Er scheelt niet veel aan of Hij zal van dat randje gevallen. Direkt bij Zijn geboorte is het al duidelijk, dat Hij onze plaats inneemt. Jezus, de groote plaatsvervanger. Dat wordt duidelijker als we opmerken hoe vreemd alles is bij die geboorte van Jezus. Laat ons hier wat over mogen zeggen.



Alles is hier vreemd. Er is geen plaats voor Hem. Hoe vreemd! Want Deze is een koningszoon. Voor koningen en hunne zonen is er meestal veel plaats. Er is meestal veel te veel plaats. Ze wonen en ze worden geboren in huizen en kasteelen die eigenlijk veel te groot zijn voor hen en de hunnen. En dan is Deze nog wel de Koning der koningen en de Heer der heeren. Is dat niet vreemd? In dien duisteren nacht kwam Hij rechtstreeks van het paleis van God uit den hemel. Dat gelooft ge toch wel? Luistert naar Jezus zooals Hij later tot Zijn Vader bidt: Verheerlijkt Mij met de

heerlijkheid die Ik bij U had eer de wereld was. Welnu, uit die heerlijkheid kwam Hij neer op aarde. Hij is immers de heerlijke God Zelf, te prijzen in alle eeuwigheid? Is het dan niet onuitsprekelijk wonderlijk, dat deze God uit God zoo vreemd aanlandt op deze aarde? Hij behoefde het geen roof te achten Gode evengeliek te zijn. En als Hij op aarde komt, dan belandt Hij in een vuile stal, en ligt in een vunzige kribbe, in doeken gewikkeld. Geen ruimte, geen plaats voor God? Hoe ter wereld moet ik dat verstaan?

Het is alles vreemd, het maakt geen verschil vanuit welk oogpunt ge deze beschiedenis beziet. Denkt er ook eens aan, dat Hij kwam tot het Zijne, en het Zijne wilde Hem niet! Was Hij nu nog een vreemde, dan zouden we het eenigzins verstaan. Het vreemde beangstigt. Het gemakkelijkst leven we in eigen kring, bij hen die we kennen en waarom we gewoon worden en zijn. Vreesachtigheid komt over ons bij de komst van het vreemde en den vreemde.

Maar dat was Hij niet. Hij was David's Zoon. Hij is die wortel uit den afgehouwen tronk van Isai. Hij is de Leeuw uit Juda's stam. Hij is die bekende Profeet uit de broederen. Mozes had Hem voorspeld. Hij kwam tot Zijn Eigen volk. Wie schopt nu toch zijn eigen bloedverwant het huis uit?

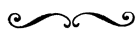
Alles is vreemd want alles is eigenlijk het Zijne. Niets is er gemaakt hetwelk Hij niet wrocht in de schepping en de herschepping. Alles is uit den Vader en door het Woord: en Hij is dat Woord.

Vreemd is alles hier want Hij kwam om goed te doen. Als er iets duidelijk werd bij Zijn latere omwandeling op aarde, dan was het wel dit: Hij kwam om goed te doen. Hij is het licht der wereld. En de gansche wereld lag in stikdonkere nacht der duisternissen. Het waren de duisternissen van de zonde en de schuld en den dood. En die deden alles verstijven en verstikken en verstollen. En daar komt het Licht der wereld! Die wereld zal wel snakken naar dat licht, opdat zij door dat licht het leven moge hebben. Maar neen; luistert wat God ervan zegt; de duisternis heeft het niet begrepen! Er is geen plaats ingeruimd voor dat lieflijke, hemelsche licht. De deuren bleven dicht, ook de deuren van hunne harten. Ook de deuren van de herberg en van de huizen in Bethlehem. Wendt U naar die beestenstal daarginds. Past op, het is donker in dezen nacht. Ziet het: in gindsche beestenstal schijnt het Licht der wereld. Is het niet alles zeer bevreedend?

Vreemd, want Hij werd aangekondigd. Hij heeft Zijne vele herauten gehad. Van den beginne tot op den huidige dag van Zijn geboorte had Israel het profetisch Woord dat zeer vast is. Hij werd afgeschaduw door land en stad en volk. Ge kunt Zijn schaduw en type zien in profeet, priester en koning. Er is een ontelbare kudde geweest door alle eeuwen heen van

lammerkens en schapen, van bokken en van stieren die alle te zamen van Hem getuigden. Voor vierduizend lange jaren heeft God getuigd van de komst van Zijn Zoon in de volheid des tijds. Hoe vreemd!

Maar Jezus is zeker aangekondigd. Er is geen verontschuldiging die voor God bestaat. Later berispte immers Jezus de Emmausgangers: O gij dwazen en dragen van hart! om te gelooven al hetgeen de profeten gesproken hebben! Tot in de kleinste bijzonderheden was alles voorspeld, en als Hij komt herkent men Hem niet! Hoe vreemd is alles hier.



En toch het is alleszins begrijpelijk.

Er is geen plaats voor Jezus in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in Jeruzalem, in de wereld aller eeuwen. Neen, en er is geen plaats voor Jezus in de wereld van het heden. Dat is ook duidelijk. Ik mag en moet verder gaan: er is geen plaats in het hart van iederen mensch, het maakt geen verschil hoe of wat hij is, van nature. Na onzen zondeval hebben we in het geheel geen plaats voor Jezus, en ook niet voor God. Dat is eenvoudig de waarheid. En het is alleszins begrijpelijk, zeiden we. In de herberg der wereld wordt den duivel gediend. Daar haat men het licht en komt tot dat licht niet, opdat men zijn vuile daden niet zien zal. Het licht Gods ontdekt de zonde.

Er is geen ruimte voor God of voor Jezus in het hart van den mensch, want dat hart is vol van zonde en overtreding. Het is vervuld met de dingen van het stof, van deze tegenwoordige wereld, van het creatuur inplaats van met den Schepper van 't Heelal. En zoo kan er geen plaats zijn voor het Licht der wereld. De in de zonde gevallen mensch wil niet tot het Licht komen, want dan zouden zijn booze werken geopenbaard worden, en dat wil hij niet.

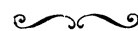
En toch: Jezus kwam. In de volheid des tijds werd Hij geboren, en nam op Zich de groote armoede der uitverkorenen. Dat is duidelijk geworden in het teeken, hetwelk de Engelen Gods verkondigden aan de herders. En zij zijn met haast gegaan en hebben het teeken gezien, en zich met groote verheuging verheugd.

Verheuging, zeide ik. En terecht.

Het is eeuwig gelukkig, dat Jezus kwam. Luistert naar Zijn stem: "En Ik, zoo wanneer Ik van de aarde zal verhoofd zijn, zal ze allen tot Mij trekken."

Ziet ge, de wegwerping en verguizing van Jezus is de aanname van Gods volk. Daarom is er zulk een groote blijdschap bij het telkens wederkeerende Kerstmisfeest. Zonder die wegwerping van Jezus geen kruis. Zonder dat Kruis geen betaling van zonde en schuld. Hoe verder die wegwerping geschiedt zoo veel te meer wordt het gebouw daartoe moet het hardvochtige Bethlehem, de Satan, de wereld en het booze

vleesch dienen. Het armoedige beeld in die stal is mijn kroon. Vanaf het kruis begint de trekking der gekenden.



En door die wegwerping ontvangt Hij juist plaats voor Zijn geestelijk Koninkrijk. Er komt plaats voor Jezus, voor God en voor het Koninkrijk der hemelen. Een plaats die Hij zelf veroverd. En de kracht dier verovering is Zijn gehoorzaamheid in liefde. De Drie-Eenige God had een eisch gesteld aan den mensch. Gij zult Mij liefhebben boven alles, en uwen naaste als uzelf. Maar wij deden het niet. Wij hebben juist andersom gedaan. We hebben God en onzen naaste gehaat. En nu moet Jezus alles wat wij krom getrokken hebben in die fundamentele relaties weer rechtzetten. Met andere woorden: Hij moet liefhebben Zijn God voor het volk, dat Zijn Vader Hem gaf. In hun plaats moet Hij eerst voor de zonde en schuld betalen, en, ten tweede, moet Hij alleen de Wet der liefde vervullen, en dan zoo intensief, dat Hij het alleen voor de ontelbare schare der uitverkorenen doen moet. En dat niet alleen, Hij heeft den Heere Zijn God zoo intensief liefgehad, dat Hij hen niet alleen terugbrengt naar de vroegere glorie van het eerste Paradijs, maar Hij brengt hen tot in het Nieuwe Koninkrijk Gods, waar hemel en aarde vereenigd, verhemelscht en vergeestelijkt zijn. Hij brengt Zijn volk tot in de duizelingwekkende hoogte van die plaats die genaamd wordt in Gods Woord: de boezem Gods. Daar kon Adam ons nooit gebracht hebben.

We lezen in den tekst, dat er geen plaats voor hen was in de herberg. Eerst zijn we daar van geschrokken, maar nu niet meer. We kunnen nu eenigzins begrijpen, dat de herders verheugd terugkeerden.

Hoewel er geen plaats was in Bethlehem voor Jezus, we weten nu, dat God Hem plaats verschaft in de harten van Zijn volk, in de kerk van Christus en, ten slotte, in dien nieuwen hemel en nieuwe aarde waarin gerechtigheid wonen zal. Hoe verschaft Zich die Jezus een plaats in het hart van Zijn volk? Ik zal het U zeggen: Hij stort Zijn Heiligen Geest uit in Uw hart en door dien Geest, die Zijn Woord toepast, wordt Gij verslagen van hart en geheel en al verbroken in het binnenst van U. En dan zegt God: Ik woon in het hooge en in het heilige, maar ook bij dien die eens verbrijzelden en nederigen geestes is, opdat Ik levend make den geest der nederigen en opdat Ik levend make het hart der verbrijzelden.

Ik mag daarom besluiten en zeggen, dat Kerstmis een feestdag is alleen voor de verbrijzelden van hart en de nederigen van geest. Want daar in die harten is plaats voor Jezus.

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

Binding Or Not Binding? *

This is really the burning question today.

It is not a burning question for us as Protestant Reformed Churches, for we were always satisfied with the Three Forms of Unity, and consider ourselves to be bound by them alone. And we still are.

That we want to be bound by nothing else than the Confessions is very plain from the Declaration of Principles.

After all, the only question concerning this Declaration is whether it is according to the Confessions, or not. If it is not, we do not want it. In as far as it is not let us criticize it and correct it. But the question is pure and simple whether or not this Declaration is an expression of the Confessions.

But about this only question that is of import no one has written as yet.

The Declaration of Principles has been submitted to the consideration of our churches in order that they might express themselves about the question whether or not it is in harmony with the Confessions. A half a year has been wasted, and no one has as yet discussed the contents of this Declaration.

No, the question of binding or not binding is not important for us as Protestant Reformed Churches.

But it has been introduced into our churches by the Liberated.

And to put the matter in its simplest form: they do not agree with the Protestant Reformed truth of the covenant and of the promise of God. They insist upon maintaining their own view, which is Heynsian. And Heynsianism is in our conviction Arminianism,—common grace applied to the covenant. That this is true is plain from all that is written in the papers of the Netherlands, from the very earliest numbers of the *Reformatie* which we received after the war.

This conception of the covenant the Liberated mean to maintain.

On the basis of that conception they maintain that they are the true church. We are not.

They want to throw the church doors wide open, well aware of the fact that only Liberated immigrants will enter through that wide open door. They want to make propaganda in our Protestant Reformed Churches for their Heynsian view of the covenant and refuse to answer the second question of baptism, whether they believe the doctrine as taught here in this Protestant Reformed Church.

* The above and the following editorials were written after I read the able and refreshing reply to Mr. IJtsma in *Concordia* by the Rev. P. De Boer. Let us have more, brother! We need it!

For this I have by this time abundant proof.

If we allow this, the result will be that in a few years our churches will be swamped by thousands of Liberated immigrants and the Heynsian view of the covenant.

Some among us are openly aiding and abetting this pernicious cause. To prove this I have but to refer you to *Concordia*.

On my part I will fight against it till my last breath. I will never go along with a church that adopts the Heynsian view of the covenant and of the promise of God. Nor will I ever belong to a church that officially opens its doors wide for that conception.

If this means a split in our churches, as some of us already suggest and as it is rumored in the old country, I would deplore it, of course. But for the sake of our beautiful Protestant Reformed conception of the eternal covenant of God I cannot waver. And I lay the blame for the schism, if it comes, at the door of those that in late years have attacked or compromised our Protestant Reformed faith.

It is always better to be small and strong than to be big and corrupt.

H. H.

Misleading

Since, however, no one has thus far discussed the contents of the Declaration of Principles, the *Standard Bearer* proposes to do so.

But first of all, I want to reflect upon what is in my opinion a very misleading letter by Mr. K. C. Van Spronsen, a letter which was published in *Concordia*.

I say that this letter is misleading because it attacks the Declaration of Principles without once referring to the Confessions. This is misleading because the Declaration of Principles does not mean to be anything at all but the Confessions themselves. But although Mr. Van Spronsen does not refer to the Confessions, nor quote them in opposition to the Declaration of Principles, he nevertheless insinuates and suggests and leaves the impression that it is not in harmony with the confessions. And insinuations and suggestions are dangerous. We must not have them, but we must have clear language, language that is to the point. But of such clear language, that shows without any ambiguity that the Declaration is not based upon the Confessions, Mr. Van Spronsen does not avail himself. Instead he writes:

"But I am willing to tell you something about the reaction of our churches in re the proposal of your synod. In general we are very sorry about this decision. We have become extremely afraid of bindings, explanations of opinions, additions, etc. We have ex-

perienced much misery with such things in the Netherlands. Finally the church was torn by it. And according to my opinion such things are not necessary at all. Our confession is clear and plain enough, and all our interpretations make matters more complicated and more difficult. None of us can say it as clearly and plainly as our fathers did say it in their time. Besides, there is a great danger of onesidedness, because the theologian who makes formulas to further explain the confession, is always in danger to put his own dogmatical construction in these 'further explanations'. That is what Dr. Kuyper did, that's what they did by us in 1944, and I fear that this will also take place by you if you don't watch out. And there is nothing more dangerous for the church than dogmatics. The Bible is not a dogmatical textbook. But it is the living Word of God, and that's what our fathers also purposed with their confessions. When Calvin talked with a friend about the death bed of his wife he said: 'Before she died we talked together about the doctrine'. From what follows it is clear that Calvin meant with this 'doctrine' nothing else but the abundant grace which a believer may have on his death bed by his unshakeable faith in the all-cleansing blood of Christ. And thus we must read the Scriptures, and also preach out of them from the pulpits. Then it becomes rich and cogent both with a view to judgment and blessing. Above all there is a danger, in spite of our best intentions, that we give the wrong contents to the words of our fathers by trying to 'explain' into a system what our fathers had in mind in their confessions."

Let me clarify some of these ambiguous statements.

Mr. Van Spronsen writes: "Our confession is clear and plain enough." With this I agree. And that means that our confession does not teach Heynsianism. Our confession does not teach that the promise of God is for all, that the promise of God is conditional, or that faith is a condition. Our confession teaches quite the contrary. And that that is true is plainly expressed in the Declaration of Principles. Hence, I agree with Mr. Van Spronsen in a different sense than he means it that our confessions are plain enough.

I can even admit to a certain extent that "none of us can say it as clearly and plainly as our fathers did say it in their time." But then I must include in our Confessions what I would call the Confessions of a minor order, such as especially the Baptism Form. That Baptism Form teaches as plainly as anyone can wish that God establishes and maintains and realizes His covenant with His elect without fail and unconditionally, and that as a fruit of that part of God our part is that we love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. But our Baptism Form never speaks of a conditional covenant. Our Baptism Form asks the

question whether the parents believe that the children must be baptized as members of His church that are "sanctified in Christ". And that the fathers that composed our Baptism Form did not mean by this expression a mere outward sanctification, mere outward membership in the church, mere external separation from the world, is well-known. The Liberated view of that phrase is certainly not historically Reformed. By that phrase in the Baptism Form the fathers certainly meant nothing else than real spiritual sanctification. The same is true of the thanksgiving in the Baptism Form when it puts upon the lips of the believing church the following words: "Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise thee, that thou hast forgiven us, and our children, all our sins, through the blood of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ and received us through thy Holy Spirit as members of thine only begotten Son, and adopted us to be thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism." It is simply a distortion of the plain meaning of the words to make of all this nothing but an objective bequest that can still be accepted or rejected by those that are baptized. And therefore: I agree with Mr. Van Spronsen, although he certainly does not agree with me, and therefore not with the Confession, when he writes that none of us can say it as clearly and plainly as our fathers did say it in their time. Nevertheless, from the pen of Mr. Van Spronsen these words are misleading.

Misleading is too what Mr. Van Spronsen writes about the danger of onesidedness and about the theologian that makes formulas and that is always in danger to put his own dogmatical construction in these explanations. Misleading is too, for the same reason, what he writes in the last part of the words I quoted above, namely, about the danger that we give wrong contents to the words of our fathers by trying to explain into a system what our fathers had in mind in their confession. All these things are misleading because Mr. Van Spronsen really says nothing. What he has to prove is that the Declaration is guilty of onesidedness, that it is the mere opinion of a theologian, that the Declaration of Principles is guilty of putting a wrong dogmatical construction upon what our Confessions teach. I want to call the attention of our readers emphatically to the fact that Mr. Van Spronsen says nothing, but that he does leave a certain impression that the Declaration of Principles is guilty of corrupting the Confessions.

Misleading is also the false contrast which Mr. Van Spronsen makes between the Bible and dogmatics or between true preaching of the Word of God and dogmatics. True, dogmatics, and that is what we are talking about, is nothing else than the systematic setting forth of the contents of Scripture. And although preaching is much more than dogmatics, and although

I always warn our students against preaching dogmatics from the pulpit instead of the living Word of God, yet true preaching is based upon true doctrine, and true doctrine is dogmatics. And as far as the quotation that Mr. Van Spronsen makes of what Calvin said concerning the death bed of his wife is concerned, we like to have him give us the reference or make the full quotation in its context before we believe what he writes.

H. H.

Unconditional Covenant

Misleading is the letter too, because after all Mr. Van Spronsen defends his own covenant view, which is the Heynsian view, over against ours. And thus after all he tries to persuade our people to adopt his conception. Writes he:

"Furthermore, I hope, and pray God for it, that your ministers do not preach a nonconditional covenant. Because Scripture knows no covenant without conditions. At home I read with my wife always through the entire Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. I believe we do this now for the seventeenth time, but I maintain that wherever God gives His promise this promise is invariably connected to a condition. If you know a text where this is not the case, I hold myself recommended. Look for it once."

Now, in the first place, I want to remind Mr. Van Spronsen again that the Declaration of Principles is based first of all upon the Confessions. From the Confessions, including the Confessions of a minor order, he must prove the conditional covenant and the conditional promise. He must not argue against the Confessions. And the Confessions know nothing of a conditional promise.

But nevertheless, I intend to take up the challenge by Mr. Van Spronsen. And over against his prayer I put mine, that our ministers may never preach a conditional covenant. His challenge is rather bold. And I cannot disregard it.

To do this, however, I must needs elaborate on our conception of the covenant as it is based upon Scripture and upon the Confessions, especially upon the Baptism Form.

And, first of all, I want to state that the different views of the covenant that have been offered in Reformed circles can be distinguished under two heads, namely: those which consider the covenant as a means to an end, and secondly, those which consider it an end in itself.

According to the first conception, which is not ours, the covenant is either an agreement between two parties, or an agreement between two parties against

a third, or it is identified with the promise, or it is termed a way to salvation.

According to the second conception, which is ours, the covenant is essential, and therefore an end in itself. It is that living relationship of most intimate fellowship of friendship which is a reflection of God's own Triune life according to which He makes Himself known and blesses His people and they know Him and find their delight in His fellowship and service.

Let me very briefly point out that this essential idea of the covenant is based upon Scripture.

First of all, the covenant with Adam, which certainly was not an agreement at all, nor an alliance between God and Adam, an agreement made after his creation, but was rather a relationship which was given with Adam's creation after the image of God, certainly was essentially a relation of friendship between God and Adam. God reveals Himself to Adam and speaks to Him as a friend to his friend, while Adam knows God as He speaks to him in the garden in the cool of day. Adam in his original state of righteousness was the friend of God. And that relation of friendship is essentially the covenant. It certainly was not an agreement or a way in which Adam might attain to eternal life, which was impossible.

We find support of this truth in what we read of the covenant people in their relation to God: "they walked with God," Gen. 5:22, 6:8. And to walk with someone is an act of friendship and fellowship. We read that they talked with Him and God reveals thereby His counsel to them and hides nothing from them. Gen. 6:13, 9:9, 8:17, ff. Moses knew and saw God face to face. Deut. 30:10. And Abraham is called "the friend of God". Is. 41:8; James 2:23.

This idea of friendship and fellowship is certainly the central notion that is symbolized in the tabernacle and temple. God dwells with His people under one roof. This idea is literally expressed in many texts. I refer to Ps. 25:11, Is. 55:3, Is. 61:8, Jer. 32:40; Ezek. 37:26, John 17:23, II Cor. 6:16, Rev. 21:3.

This covenant is established by God alone and is strictly unilateral. God therefore establishes His covenant sovereignly and without any condition on the part of man, even though He establishes that covenant with rational moral creatures, who as the fruit of the establishment of the covenant are bound to love the Lord their God with all their heart, etc. But that the covenant is established by God alone and is unconditional and unilateral is not only maintained in all Scripture, but is also plainly taught in all our Confessions. How could the Heidelberg Catechism speak of the baptism of infants on the ground that they as well as their parents are in the covenant if God alone had not established His covenant with them? Children, infants, certainly cannot accept any conditions. If they as well as their parents are in the covenant,

they must be in that covenant of God unconditionally. The unilateral conception of the covenant is also very strongly emphasized in our Form for Baptism. According to this Form, God the Father makes an eternal covenant of grace with us, God the Son washes us in His blood from all our sins, and God the Holy Spirit sanctifies us and dwells in us.

Besides, that the covenant is strictly unilateral and is established by God is evident from Scripture. It is plain:

1) From the Scriptural teaching concerning the covenant and from the equally Scriptural teaching that man of himself is totally depraved and incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. How could man, either as a creature or as a sinner, secure for himself any right or have any power to enter into that relation of friendship or make himself the friend of God. It is evident that the relation as well as his being taken into that relation must be of God only; otherwise it is absolutely impossible.

2) From the covenant as God established it with Adam. There is no reciprocal action recorded in the first chapter of Genesis or in the immediately subsequent chapters on the part of God and Adam to establish or to realize any covenant relationship. God simply created him a covenant creature after His image, and He placed him in the proper relation of such a creature to Himself. And Adam functions on the basis of that which God has made him as the friend-servant of his Creator.

3) From God's dealings with Adam after the fall, especially from Gen. 3:15, which, by the way, is the mother of promises and is surely absolutely unconditional. God offers nothing and makes no conditions to fallen man, but simply declares that in spite of the work of Satan and of Adam He will maintain His covenant and will put enmity between man and the devil in their generations, an enmity that is positively nothing but the friendship with God. There is on the very first pages of Scripture the first absolutely unconditional promise.

4) From the teaching throughout Scripture. Uniformly we read in Scripture: "I will establish my covenant. . . ." Or: "I will make an everlasting covenant of peace with you." Or again: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel." Gen. 6:18; Gen. 17:7; Is. 55:3; Ezek. 37:26; Jer. 31:31; Heb. 8:8-10.

5) From the vision of Gen. 15. Abraham is commanded to take sacrificial animals, heifer, she-goat, ram, turtle dove, young pigeon. And he is commanded to divide them into halves and lay the halves of each animal over against each other in two rows. The Lord, under the symbols of a smoking furnace and burning lamp, passed between the pieces. The meaning of the vision is plain. The passing between the halves of the slaughtered animals signified or symbolized the ratifica-

tion of the covenant. It was a testimony on the part of covenanting persons that they would be faithful in the covenant even unto and, if need be, through death. Naturally, in case of a man's covenant both persons passed between the halves of the slaughtered animals. But in this case Abraham is merely a witness. God passes through the halves of the slaughtered animals alone. The covenant is His and He establishes it. It is based upon His faithfulness. And He will maintain and realize it even through the death of His Son. It is absolutely unconditional.

I have much more to write about this unconditional nature of the covenant of God with His people. But this must suffice for the present as an answer to the challenge of Mr. Van Spronsen.

Mr. Van Spronsen writes further: "Let us therefore not expose one another as heretics, neither let us lay bindings upon one another either to the one or to the other side. That tears the church of our Saviour. The church is not a communion of people who must in all things exactly think the same. That's foolishness and kills the power of prophecy in our midst. There is not a soul among us without heresy. We are all but fragmentary beings, who know but in part. It was the haughtiness and self-conceit of the Synodicals who thought that they knew everything and therefore bound others. This should not be so in the Lord's church. We have a common confession, and within the framework of that confession there must be liberty to sharpen each other. They who in the church bind to human theories and dogmatical formulas make of the church a sect."

There again you have some very general and very misleading statements, especially if viewed in the light of Mr. Van Spronsen's opposition to the Declaration of Principles, which he undoubtedly intends. Says he: "There is not a soul among us without heresy. We are all but fragmentary beings, who know but in part." Let me apply this statement to myself. According to Van Spronsen I am also heretical. Very well. I do not admit this; in fact, I deny it. Now let Mr. Van Spronsen prove his statement. Then we have something concrete. We can do nothing with mere generalities and suggestions. Heretical is to my mind that which is contrary to Scripture and to the Confessions. I am not conscious of any heresy in this regard.

I certainly agree with Mr. Van Spronsen when he writes: "We have a common confession, and within the framework of that confession there must be liberty to sharpen each other." I like that. And I fully agree with it. But do not forget that Heynsianism is not within the framework of the Confession. Within the church we do not have to brand one another as heretics, for only our Confession is binding. But within the same church we certainly must not be the occasion to cause the members to be liars. And liars we make

them if they do not agree with the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches and nevertheless answer the second question in Baptism affirmatively. Therefore, I maintain that if any Christian, a brother in Christ, cannot agree with the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant and of baptism and of the promise, cannot and must not have his child or his children baptized in our churches, and is bound to join himself to a church in which this is possible. And there are many.

That is how I think about it.

And that is the truth. And that is honest before God.

H. H.

True and False Church

Finally, I must say a few words about Mr. Van Spronsen's conception of the true church.

Writes he: "I believe if there is one important question which you need to study, it is the question: 'What is the church?; Where is the true church in America?' This question must become an urgent one among you. You have to come so far that you dare to say: 'We are the true church here.' If you say this, you speak the language of the fathers who state that it can easily be determined where at a certain place the true church is. And if you are that far then you also understand that you must not soon bind to formulas, etc. For if they go away then you must be able to say: This person is excluded from the kingdom of heaven. It becomes a question again of discipline, of the ban, of excommunication. We have learned that in the Netherlands again through our liberation. I believe that when you see this, the rest will take care of itself."

Let us note the implication of this untenable position.

Mr. Van Spronsen wants us to study the question concerning the church; more particularly he wants us to ask the question: what is the true church in America? And he wants us to reach the conclusion that we, the Protestant Reformed Churches, are the true church and that all the rest are false churches. That this is true is very plain from his statement that when anyone leaves our churches we must be able to say that such a person is excluded from the kingdom of heaven, in other words, that he goes to hell. That means of course, that here in Grand Rapids we must have the courage to say that anyone that belongs to a different church than ours or that goes away from our fellowship is lost. The Protestant Reformed Churches are the only true church, and all the rest,—the Christian Reformed and the Reformed Churches and the Baptist and Methodist Churches and whatever other churches

may be in our city,—are the false church.

No wonder that with such a conception of the true church Mr. Van Spronsen wants nothing binding in the church. If we are the true church in the sense that anyone that leaves us, for whatever reason it may be, goes to hell, I, for one, would hesitate,—no; I will put it more strongly,—would refuse to accept even the Three Forms of Unity as binding and merely accept an open Bible as the basis for church fellowship.

Instead, I still prefer our conception of the true church as including all true believers in Christ, and then maintain that we, as Protestant Reformed churches, are the purest manifestation of that church in the world. If, in a certain community, there is no other church than the Protestant Reformed, I would say that any believer can join himself to our church, providing he promises to be instructed in our doctrine, submit to the preaching, and not to agitate within our communion against our doctrine.

If one leaves that purest manifestation of the body of Christ on earth, which according to our conviction is represented by the Protestant Reformed Churches, the question still is: from what motive and for what reason does he leave? If he leaves it from the conviction that the Protestant Reformed Churches are not the purest manifestation of the church in the world, we will not excommunicate him from the kingdom of heaven. But if he should leave for other reasons, and from other motives which are carnal and sinful, although he knows that the Protestant Reformed Churches are the purest manifestation of the body of Christ in the world, he deliberately walks in sin. And in such a case we would not hesitate to say that he is excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

I think this is quite in harmony with the confession, which reads in article 27: "We believe and profess, one catholic or universal church, which is an holy congregation, of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost. This church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal king, which, without subjects, cannot be. And this holy church is preserved or supported by God against the rage of the whole world; though she sometimes (for a while) appears very small, and in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing: as during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord reserved unto him seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knees to Baal. Furthermore, this holy church is not confirmed, bound or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world; and yet is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, and one and the same Spirit."

And in Art. 28, which speaks of the calling of

everyone to join himself to the true church we read:

"We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them. And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it, even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment. Therefore all those who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the word of God."

In Art. 29 we read of the marks of the true church and wherein she differs from the false church as follows:

"We believe, that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the word of God which is the true church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the church. But we speak not here of the hypocrites, who are mixed in the church with the good, yet are not of the church, though externally in it; but we say that the body and communion of the true church must be distinguished from all sects, who call themselves the church. The marks, by which the true church is known, are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintain the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin: in short, if all things are managed according to the pure word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only head of the church. Hereby the true church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself. With respect to those, who are members of the church, they may be known by the marks of Christians: namely, by faith; and when they have received Jesus Christ the only Saviour, they avoid sin, follow after righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour, neither turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof. But this is not to be understood as if there did not remain in them great infirmities; but they fight against them through the Spirit, all the days of their life, continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, 'in whom they have remission of sins, through faith

in him.' As for the false church, she ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the word of God, and will not submit herself to the yoke of Christ. Neither does she administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in His Word, but adds to and takes from them, as she thinks proper; she relieth more upon men than upon Christ; and persecutes those, who live holily according to the word of God, and rebuke her for her errors, covetousness, and idolatry. These two churches are easily known and distinguished from each other."

Of this article I must make some remarks in the next editorial. For this present editorial is already too long.

Till next time, then, D. V.

H. H.



News From Hamilton

In the light of the latest history of our Protestant Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Canada, the undersigned wishes to acquaint our people with the following resumé. All of us are undoubtedly interested in the events which have transpired in this Canadian world city.

It will be difficult perhaps to harmonize the report which the undersigned offers our people in this article with Rev. De Jong's and Rev. Kok's reception in the Netherlands, according to the articles of Rev. De Jong in Concordia. Rev. De Jong's description of the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands is surely optimistic. It is his conviction that the members of those Churches are Reformed, love and seek the Reformed truth, and have a deep interest in our Protestant Reformed Churches. This we do not wish to deny. The undersigned, in the light of his own experiences here in Canada, can somewhat understand this reception of Rev. De Jong and Rev. Kok in the Netherlands. However, we mention this because, in the light of Rev. De Jong's optimistic report of his trip in Concordia, our people may perhaps be somewhat perplexed because of the conclusion of matters here in Hamilton. How is it possible that liberated members, who love the Reformed truth and have a great desire in our churches, instituted as a Protestant Reformed Church in Hamilton, turn their backs upon our churches? And then we would immediately make the following observation: there is a tremendous difference between the preaching and speaking of a Protestant Reformed minister in the Netherlands and the work of a Protestant Reformed minister in an instituted congregation such as Hamilton.

We begin at the beginning. Last year, 1949, in October, we received the call from Hamilton. This call did not enthuse us. November 6, last year, the

undersigned administered the Word in Hamilton. We went to Hamilton that particular Sunday with the definite intention of speaking with the consistory and the congregation about or concerning our call. Saturday evening we met with the consistory. Then each member of the consistory promised me that he would fully support me in all my preaching and instruction as a Protestant Reformed minister. The following sabbathday we administered the Word. After the afternoon service we met with the congregation. At that time the undersigned told the congregation plainly what they might expect of him. This gathering lasted at least an hour. None voiced any objection against me, or rather, against our doctrine and my maintaining of that doctrine. At that meeting some urgently requested me to come. And many wished me God's blessing and strength in connection with the choice which weighed heavily upon me. That week we accepted the call. And we have never regretted the choice which we made at that time.

Sunday, January 22, 1950, we bade farewell to the congregation of Kalamazoo, and the following Sunday we were installed in the office of minister in the congregation of Hamilton. Already before our arrival in Hamilton however, a cloud appeared in the heaven of our desire to assume our labours in Hamilton. We mention this because it is of interest in the light of the subsequent history of our congregation in Hamilton. Our readers will remember the letter of a Mrs. Klaver of Hudsonville, and an article which was written by the consistory of Hamilton and was placed in the Standard Bearer and in the Reformatie. That letter of Hamilton's consistory was already at that time for me a disappointment. We refer to that expression in that article which assured the liberated immigrants that they need have no fear of binding in the Protestant Reformed Churches. The later history has fully confirmed our fear of those days.

We began our labors in Hamilton with zeal and enthusiasm. There are people in our Protestant Reformed Churches who will verify this. It is true that the undersigned was confronted very quickly with the fear of members of the congregation of this matter of binding. Some even denied that such a binding existed in our churches, that one was bound to the Protestant Reformed conception of the covenant, baptism, and the promise. Men appeared to think that those conceptions concerning the covenant, baptism, and the promise were the personal conceptions of Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff and other ministers, but that those conceptions were not binding in the Protestant Reformed Churches. We never shared this view of the apprehensive immigrants concerning the question of what is binding or not binding in our Churches. However, at the time this fear for binding did not weigh heavily upon our heart. We were full of zeal

and enthusiasm, believed that the people loved our preaching, and that they were receptive for our Protestant Reformed instruction. Moreover, the consistory had promised us their complete support and cooperation. And so we advanced bravely, happy in the assurance that the Lord had called us unto this field of labour, and that in spite of the fact that our children had to forfeit many things, such as English preaching and the Christian school.

We must at the very outset unburden ourselves of the following. First, what has been from the very beginning our stand on this matter of binding, also as far as our labours in Hamilton were concerned? The readers of the Standard Bearer will recall the letter of Prof. Holwerda to the immigrants around Chatham. In that letter the professor gives the immigrants the advice to affiliate themselves with the Protestant Reformed Churches if they need not bind themselves, and he also advises them that they, behind our Protestant Reformed lines therefore, should maintain their own personal conceptions and spread them. From the very beginning we have declared that we had no principal interest in the maintaining of the significance of a word, as, e.g., the word "covenant". This we have said fifty times if we said it once. We prefer the definition of the word, covenant, which defines this idea or concept as the relation of friendship between God and His people in Christ Jesus. If people prefer the definition of Professor Schilder, that the covenant is the regulation of that relation of friendship, good. But, and this we added repeatedly, if people prefer the definition of this concept of Prof. Schilder, then all the emphasis falls, as far as we are concerned upon that friendship. Binding in our churches is not the definition of a word, as the word "covenant", but surely our Protestant Reformed covenant conception. Binding in our churches is that conception or view of the covenant, baptism, and the promise which is in harmony with the doctrine of God's sovereignly particular and unconditional grace. With the Protestant Reformed covenant conception (not merely the view of Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff, although we thank God for that which He has given us in them) I understand the Divine realization of His friendship and fellowship with His people, in Christ Jesus, in the consecutive lines of their generations, according to God's sovereign and eternal election, and that in connection with all things. This, according to my conviction, is the Protestant Reformed covenant conception. This is not merely Protestant Reformed, but Reformed. And we thank the Lord for this unspeakably glorious truth. This is the first thing of which I wish to unburden myself. Secondly, what has been my attitude toward the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands? Also this question is of interest, and was of interest for the congregation of Hamilton. Did the under-

signed condemn those Churches and from the very beginning maintain the Protestant Reformed Churches as over against the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands? Did we declare those Churches heretical and hold the head of our Churches above water? Nothing is farther from the truth. Also this the congregation of Hamilton will be willing to testify. We have continually laid the emphasis upon the things which we had in common with the Liberated Churches. We have repeatedly called attention to the autonomy of the local church, that we share the same viewpoint in regard to common grace, the doing or not doing of good by the natural man, and the Three Points of 1924. But for the rest we have also repeatedly declared that we, in regard to the covenant, baptism, and the promise, did not wish to pass judgment upon the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands, and that for the simple reason that we were not acquainted with their official stand in regard to these things. Prof. Schilder does not answer Rev. Ophoff's questions, and Rev. Hoeksema's questions addressed to Prof. Veenhof also remain unanswered. We know, from this viewpoint, as much today as three years ago. I know that Prof. Schilder has said things and that Prof. Veenhof has written things. However, have they not always asserted that individual expressions may not be confused with that which constitutes the official doctrine of the Churches? Thirdly, and this is of the greatest importance, the undersigned was dealing, not with the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands, but with immigrants *who wished to affiliate with our congregation of Hamilton*. We must bear this in mind. In the rest of this article I will comment upon the reformed or unreformed sentiments of these people. I had no struggle or dispute with the Churches of the Netherlands. I was called to deal with *our congregation of Hamilton* and with members who desired to affiliate themselves with our church. Overagainst them I stood as a Protestant Reformed minister who had promised before God and His Church to preach and maintain the doctrine of those Churches. This calling was ever before me. From that calling I might not depart. To that calling I have remained faithful. This I declared to the congregation, very plainly and without reservation, the Sunday of Nov. 6, 1949.

How did we work in Hamilton? We have already given a partial answer to this question. People who think (they mean it well) that we have made a hobby of the Protestant Reformed truth are beside the truth. We remember the installation sermon of the Rev. Hoeksema in which he declared with emphasis that we should not make a hobby of the word "covenant". The adherence to this advice (I am convinced that I may say this) has characterized my preaching here. The word, covenant, was purposely avoided by the undersigned. This does not imply that we were not "dog-

matical" in our preaching, did not enter fundamentally into the truth! Besides, in March of this year we received a letter from brother Van Spronsen from the Netherlands in which he also wrote us the following: "The liberated people out of the Netherlands are somewhat acquainted with the reformed truth, so that you in your preaching can safely enter into the depths of God's Word." Fact is, this was one of the reasons why we looked forward with enthusiasm to the beginning of our labours in Hamilton. We did not proceed from the thought that the congregation of Hamilton must be fed with "milk", be instructed anew, but certainly proceeded from the thought that they loved the fundamental truths of the reformed faith. They were somewhat acquainted with the reformed truth (according to Van Spronsen), surely were convinced of the truths of God's election and reprobation, of faith as a gift of God, the particular atonement of the cross, etc. We thought that we could safely proceed from these truths and that it would not be necessary to call attention to these things. In my personal contacts and conversations (and how we talked and conversed!) I always sought a point of contact, that which we had in common with one another. To this I have already called attention in the preceding. But, in the first place, it happened often that the immigrants themselves would ask the undersigned concerning the covenant, the promise, and baptism. And, in the second place, these immigrants came to us with their attestations. Then we were surely called upon to enter into the differences between our Protestant Reformed Churches and the Liberated Churches. Honesty demanded this policy, both from the viewpoint of the immigrants and of our churches. We surely could not accept them without any reservation! The first baptism question surely implies that they must be acquainted with the "doctrine as taught in this Christian Church" and in which they promised to instruct their children.

All went well until the first week of June. Until that time the undersigned simply went his own way, as a Protestant Reformed minister, whenever he with an elder visited people who wished to affiliate themselves with our church. Had the consistory not promised him their full support and cooperation? He asked these prospective members, after having discussed with them various things, whether they had the desire to be further instructed in our truth, and also whether they promised not to agitate against our doctrine. It is true, that already before the first week of June, one of the elders, after a visit with young married people who had answered our questions favorably, mentioned to me his objection against such questioning, and asked me whether it was according to the will of the King of the Church to lay such demands before children of God who wished to affiliate with our church. However, all went well, its normal course, until the con-

sistory meeting of June 5. Then the consistory decided (all three elders supported this decision) to accept only those members who expressed the desire to be further instructed in our doctrine and who also promised not to agitate against that doctrine.

What led to this decision of the consistory? We must bear in mind that before our arrival in Hamilton, the consistory had accepted members without confronting them with any demands or requirements. They simply accepted all liberated immigrants into the fellowship of the church when they presented their membership papers. Requirements or conditions were not laid before them. As one might expect the undersigned brought about a change in this way of doing things. In May we were involved in difficulties with a certain person, who later told one of the elders that formerly it was easier to become member of this church but that the consistory now danced according to the tunes of Rev. Veldman. Thereupon the undersigned, at the consistory meeting of June 5, requested that the consistory support him, make a decision in order that the consistory should henceforth assume the responsibility and that the minister should be able to act in the name of the consistory. The three elders considered this request fully justifiable and were completely in favour of this decision.

This consistory meeting of June 5 has been the beginning of struggle and disharmony in the congregation of Hamilton. What was the case? Although the three elders were originally in favour of the decision of the consistory, two speedily repented of their action and had a change of mind. To enter at this time into everything is surely unnecessary. Besides, then this article will surely become too long. Never did we exclude anyone from the table of the Lord except one, and this person was excluded from the table of the Lord not by me but by the consistory because he had said that the doctrine of the minister could lead to indifferent and godless people. At the consistory meeting of August 1, after the pastor had spoken and reasoned out of the Scriptures, our Confessions, our Baptism Form and the Form for the installation of elders, from 8:15 P.M. until about 11:30, the three elders were once more in favour of the decision of June 5. They declared that they would fully maintain that decision. This lasted, however, but a few days. Before the end of the week the two elders had once more undergone a change of mind. And since that time the consistory has absolutely refused to maintain that decision because they were of the opinion that the King of His Church did not permit them to do so.

What is the issue? The undersigned has discussed matters a great deal with many liberated immigrants. And he came soon to the discovery that they differed sharply from the doctrine of our Churches. And to this I add: also from the doctrine of the Reformed con-

fessions. More than one told me that Christ suffered and died for all men, and I was compelled to read to them out of the Canons of Dordt that Christ died only for the elect. All, but one, told me that baptism is a sign and seal of God's love for each child, and that this signifies that God loves and would save *all* the children. It was said to me that God elected upon foreseen faith and that He had reprobated upon foreseen unbelief. And this would not be so bad if only they would be willing to say farewell to this error when it was pointed out to them that this, according to the canons of Dordt, is purely arminian. They presented faith as a condition of salvation, that God would save all, that the man, however, must believe, and that, if man did not believe, God at least would be exonerated inasmuch as He willed to save them. They appeal to texts such as John 3:16 and Matt. 23:37, etc. and explain them as referring to all men. It is almost unbelievable how reformed people can speak of the doctrine of election as the undersigned heard so often. One expressed himself thus: I am not an election man. How often did we not reason out of the Canons of Dordt; we even quoted out of the Canons of Dordt in our sermons. How often did we remind them of the well-known saying that the doctrine of election is the heart of the Church! In brief, the undersigned discovered in almost all these immigrants the Heynsian error which simply cuts the heart out of our Protestant Reformed doctrine and out of our beautiful Reformed Confessions. What was now the case? In general it can be said that the consistory of Hamilton was of the conviction that the doctrine of the Protestant Reformed Churches is pure. However, they simply refused to shut the door to anyone, who, being a child of God, sought admittance into the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton. The preaching of the Word must do the work. That preaching would either attract or repulse. But the consistory might not refuse admittance to anyone (i.e., the liberated members). Were they not confessing members of the true church? Surely, they also viewed the Protestant Reformed Churches as the true church. Well, then, how could the one true church refuse admittance to members of another true church, thereby "to chase them into the wilderness"? Overagainst this sentiment the undersigned believed that he was obligated to remain true to his calling as a Protestant Reformed minister. Please note, to him it was not a matter of "playing church". I did not desire to maintain the Protestant Reformed Church, whether they were reformed or not. I was not merely concerned with a church. But we proceeded from the conviction that the gathering of Christ's church (see Lord's Day 21), the gathering of the elect, and the doctrine of God's sovereignly particular grace are inseparably united. Only in the sphere of that truth will the gathering of

the elect continue in the successive lines of their generations. We also proceeded from the conviction that the Protestant Reformed Churches are the purest manifestation of the body of Christ, and that our doctrine of salvation is the perfect doctrine of salvation. Apart from what the Liberated Churches might believe (one of Hamilton's elders once declared that if the Liberated Churches would have the courage to reject our doctrine, he would view those churches as false), one thing is sure: our churches profess *the* Reformed truth, the perfect doctrine of salvation. Notice please, I speak now of *our doctrine*. What do we teach that we should not teach? Or, what do we not teach that should be taught? And, in parenthesis, the Rev. Petter has until now failed to show this lack unto our people. Therefore we have the calling as office-bearers to watch over that doctrine and maintain its purity. And therefore, we, as watchmen upon the walls of Zion, may admit only them who express the desire to fight with us the same fight. How often have we not assured the consistory that the issue did not concern the question whether one was a child of God, a believer, yes or no, but that the issue concerned the matter of admittance into the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and our calling to remain faithful in watching over the truth which was once delivered to our churches. And therefore we bind, we must bind people, not to a certain viewpoint or system of thought of certain leaders of the Protestant Reformed Churches, but to the doctrine of God's eternal, sovereignly particular, unconditional grace, the trust once committed to our churches. If we depart from that truth, the truth of God's sovereign grace, the Lord will continue to gather His Church, but that gathering of the elect will run dead in our midst. Only, we shall be asked to give an account of why we did not remain faithful in the keeping of the truth which was once bestowed upon us.

Let us thoroughly understand the seriousness of Hamilton's situation. The undersigned mentioned these various statements of immigrants not because he would accuse the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands of these untruths, but to emphasize the difficulties with which a Protestant Reformed consistory had to struggle. Our churches are surely not merely a reformed church among many reformed churches. Our churches are surely *the* Reformed Church, the purest manifestation of the body of Christ, proclaim *the* reformed truth in distinction from other reformed churches which, in greater or lesser degree, have departed from the reformed truth. That we have the perfect doctrine of salvation does not necessarily mean that we have reached the pinnacle of the revelation of the truth which the Lord will bestow upon His Church in the midst of the world. But this does mean that the doctrine which *is taught* in this Christian Church is the perfect doctrine of salvation, and therefore that *what we teach* is

in full harmony with the revelation of the truth which the Lord has until now revealed unto His Church. However, people, and this may surely be said in the general sense of the word, were not of the intention to submit themselves to our doctrine, become absorbed in our truth, fight for the welfare of our Protestant Reformed Churches. Young members of the congregation (full members), urgently asked by the pastor to attend the catechism class which was being held for those who had expressed the desire to make confession of faith to acquaint themselves more fully with our doctrine, never complied with this request. And the immigrants continue to come to Canada. And the consistory would accept them without laying any requirements before them. What would have been the result? Our cause here would have suffered shipwreck. The people were not concerned about our churches, but for the liberated immigrants. What else could I have done? The undersigned has conversed much, advised them to examine and study our churches and truth. But he could not possibly permit that people be accepted without being first instructed and without the promise to submit themselves to our churches.

Things went from bad to worse. In Georgetown, about 40 miles distant from Hamilton, liberated immigrants were organized into a Free Reformed Church under the guidance of Rev. Hettinga, a free church in which people are not free to believe the Protestant Reformed conception of the covenant, baptism, and the promise, and therefore not a free, reformed church. I dare say that that church is free only in the sense that they have retained the freedom to maintain their own conception of the covenant, baptism, and the promise. We have held long consistory meetings and long discussions. Never did the undersigned meet anyone, within the church or outside the church, who could bring in anything against the doctrine of our churches. But they did not want any binding, and they did not want that decision of June 5. The church visitors met with us the evening of Sept. 11. All discussion was in vain. The evening of Sept. 13 the consistory decided to lay this problem before the Classis, the problem relative the acceptance of members. The Classis of October 4-5 decided to advise the consistory to maintain its decision of June 5. Wednesday evening, Oct. 11, the consistory decided, without any discussion whatsoever, to reject the advice of the Classis and also to reject its decision of June 5. And this the consistory decided in spite of several suggestions by the pastor.

After the consistory had met with the classical committee the evening of Oct. 25, this committee again met with the consistory the evening of Nov. 15. We discussed with one another the question of binding. The consistory is of the opinion that we may have no other binding than the Three Forms of Unity. In this we agree. Also our Churches wish no other binding.

But, we do want those Three Forms of Unity, are of the conviction that our Churches maintain those Confessions, and that the Heynsian conception of the covenant and baptism are in conflict with those Forms of Unity. We attempted to make plain to the consistory that there are in the present day more than one Reformed Church which appeals to the same Forms of Unity, called their attention to the second baptism question, the first question asked at public confession of faith, the Formula of Subscription, and also the Form for the installation of elders and deacons. Moreover, the consistory assured the undersigned that they had never heard anything from him which was against Scripture or the Confessions. Yea, the consistory has even testified that the pastor has preached the full Word of God from both viewpoints, subjective and practical, and that he had never preached about election in a manner which, according to them, was unreformed. The undersigned also declared that he had been very careful in his preaching, and that he preached his first election sermon after he had been approximately four months in Hamilton. But, although they could not bring anything in against the Protestant Reformed truth, and they received the assurance that they could always walk the ecclesiastical way if our churches would ever depart from the Confessions according to their conviction, the consistory refused to maintain the decision of the Oct. 4 classis. And the consistory also declared the evening of Nov. 3 that they would protest against this classical decision at the following synod.

A congregational meeting was held the evening of Nov. 16. The preceding evening the consistory once more met with the classical committee. This committee was also present at the congregational meeting. Nothing helped. At the congregational meeting the congregation was informed of the course of events, and also of the decision of the consistory to protest against the decision of our Oct. Classis at the next synod. At present the matter in Hamilton is such, that the consistory purposes to protest at the next synod and, in the meantime, the undersigned will continue to labour as the minister of Hamilton.

Of the following, however, I must unburden myself. In all the discussions of the last few weeks (the classical committee has met twice with the consistory and once with the congregation), first of all not one word of appreciation has been uttered in connection with the pastor's difficult position and calling as a Protestant Reformed minister. Secondly, not one favorable word has been uttered in regard to the Protestant Reformed Churches and all that which those Churches have done for them. And, in the third place, they spoke of binding and that it was so terrible to "leave those calves in the ditch", and not to accept children of God as members, etc., but never did the consistory attempt to

enlighten the congregation in re the reason for this action of our Churches, why the undersigned, representing those Churches, acted thus, and that in spite of the fact that the consistory was completely acquainted with this.

Why do we write these things now? Fact is, the matter has not yet been settled, must wait until the synod. However, that synod does not meet until June. In the meantime various things are being said in connection with the struggle in Hamilton. It is indeed the desire of the undersigned that Hamilton may continue to exist, *as a Protestant Reformed Church*. But, we desire that our Churches, also the congregation of Hamilton, be acquainted with that which has happened in Hamilton.

Does this sad history have something to teach us as churches? The undersigned would reproach none. That Hamilton was organized altogether too hastily is simply not to be denied. Never, however, did we have any regret for having accepted the call to Hamilton. We were walking in the way of the Lord. That was clear to us. Therefore we wish to reproach none.

They stare themselves blind at the question of binding, and I fear, will turn their backs upon the Churches who teach and preach: God's unconditional election and reprobation, man's utter depravity, particular atonement, irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints, no common grace, no presumptive regeneration, the particular promise, the autonomy of the local congregation. Especially the leaders of the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands must bear the responsibility for this course of events here. What does this history teach us? This is a difficult question. The Lord give that this history may indeed have something to say to our churches and arouse us to renewed faithfulness in the maintaining of our unspeakably glorious truth. Rev. Petter, in his article of Oct. 12, 1950 in Concordia, proclaims woe upon us if we hinder the church-gathering work of Christ in the midst of the world. This is indeed a terrible sin. However, the undersigned does not believe that we, maintaining the pure Reformed truth and making every effort to instruct people in that doctrine of the Reformed Confessions, hinder and obstruct that work of Christ. The opposite is rather true; we hinder that work of Christ if we fail to maintain the reformed truth in all its purity. We could have had in Hamilton by this time a "good, substantial (flinke)" church if we had but allowed the immigrants the liberty to keep and maintain their particular conception and views. Yes, we could then organize several churches in Canada. But, what then? The result for our cause, our Churches? Therefore, we, too, would conclude our article with a woe. We proclaim woe upon us if we keep not unadulterated the truth and trust once committed unto us as Protestant Reformed Churches. May the Lord grant us that!

H. Veldman.

Rev. Petter's Fourth Instalment

Some time ago Rev. Petter informed his readers that he purposed to write a series of articles on "The Brief Declaration". The "Concordia" for Nov. 9 contains Rev. Petter's fourth instalment of this series. It, too, reveals that Rev. Petter's choice of the title, "The Brief Declaration" is a mistake. He still is not treating the "Declaration". In his latest article he is occupied with the Liberated reaction to our tentative adoption of "The New Declaration". Perhaps the worst feature of this article is that it cannot help but leave the impression on the thoughtful readers of the "Concordia" that the point that Rev. Petter argues is verily this: that, adopting "The New Declaration", we, as Protestant Reformed Churches, give to ourselves the mark of the false church. And why? Because with the "Declaration" as permanently adopted we as churches by our hierarchical bindings of the private opinions of men exclude from our fellowship faithful ministers of the Word and the flock of Christ.

It is this that Rev. Petter seems to be telling his readers in this latest production of his. Take notice of some of the things that he writes:

"... the professor (Schilder) sketches the situation as it was formerly when their immigrants to Canada joined our churches, and as the situation is at the present time, or rather, is and will be if and when the so-called "Declaration" becomes binding.

"The change of advice which he thus gives, he points out, has come about by a change of situation which we, the Protestant Reformed, have created. . . . We feel that the complaint of the professor is quite to the point.

"In this same article the professor points out that they—Liberated and Protestant Reformed—had hoped to seek each other within a strong maintenance of the Confessions. It was with this hope in mind that he had advised the immigrants to seek an ecclesiastical home in our churches.

"This hope and advice rooted in their conception of the church of Christ. It was exactly the hierarchical bindings imposed by the so-called Synodicals by which they drove faithful office-bearers and ministers from the fellowship of the church that caused the Liberated to call the Synodical Church the false church. By this they meant that the marks of the true church as faithful administer of the Word and gatherer of the flock of Christ were forfeited by this hierachical binding and expulsion.

"And now over against this the Liberated consider themselves as having retained and preserved these marks of the true church, and they invite and urge all other denominations to seek with them this unity on the basis of these marks.

"The validity of this conception of the Liberated leaders is not always above question, *though it certainly is the direction in which the Bible points us as against the autocratic self-sufficiency of sectarianism* (italics—O.).

"Therefore I find it very lamentable that we have not been able to keep the discussion on a level. . . . where all the energy of discussion could conduce to an understanding, to a correction of whatever faulty understanding of the Scriptures *and the Confessions we had.*" (Italics—O.)

Who, thoughtfully reading these lines, can help but receive the impression that what Rev. Petter means to be telling his readers is that, should we as churches adopt the "New Declaration", we commit a sin identical to that in which the Synodicals involved themselves (according to Rev. Petter)—the sin of excluding by our imposition of hierarchical bindings of private opinions of men faithful office-bearers and ministers from the fellowship of the church.

I feel it my bounden duty to reply to this suggested accusation. It is certain that Rev. Petter means to label the "New Declaration" a document setting forth private opinions of men. In the sequel of his article he lets it be known that such precisely is his stand. He writes:

"Professor Holwerda felt that correspondence would have unbearable consequences, justifying the synodicals in their action, and exposing themselves to the charge that they flout the solemn agreement of 1905.

"Also this fear of the professor became clear from his well-known letter to an emigrant in which he said that if certain doctrines of individual persons regarding election, and so forth, was 'kerkleer' and binding, he would say, 'never join'. Now it would be absurd for us to understand these words from a Reformed man as meaning that he rejects the doctrine of election. *But it is plain that he is afraid of a binding to private opinions. Most of us undoubtedly would refuse the same thing that he does even though unquestionably all of us agree with this doctrinal opinion as a whole.*" (Italics—O.)

Remark. Let it be that Prof. Holwerda does not reject the doctrine of election. What he does reject certainly is the teaching that the promise of God is an unconditional and unfailing oath sealing and assuring salvation only *unto the elect*. It is this repudiation of Prof. Holwerda that Rev. Petter calls "private opinion of men". But this repudiation of Prof. Holwerda is the very teaching of "The New Declaration", so that what Rev. Petter labels "private opinions of men" is the very teaching of the "Declaration", the teaching, namely, that the promise of God is an unconditional and unfailing oath assuring salvation only unto the elect.

Rev. Petter's calling this teaching "private opinions

of men" is truly amazing for two reasons: 1) It is the very teaching of our Confessions; 2) Rev. Petter refuses even as much as to attempt to prove the contrary. Hence his doing—his calling the teaching in question "private opinion", is amazing indeed. For certainly if the teaching is not what it is claimed to be—the very teaching of our Confessions—if, accordingly, what we deal with in the "New Declaration" is indeed "private opinion" Rev. Petter's solemn duty is to make this plain to the congregations. Yet this precisely is what he refuses to do.

Equally amazing is Rev. Petter's suggestively calling the teaching in question—the teaching of the "Declaration" and of the Confessions—a *hierarchical binding*. Who is here the hierarch? I would like to know. Certainly not our last synod nor the coming synod. Not our last synod was the hierarch. What an astounding perversion of fact to say that it was. Consider the doing of our last synod relative to the "New Declaration". It advised (mark you, it advised; it did not command. *Our* synods are not hierarchs) the churches to study "The Declaration" and to test its content by the Scriptures and the Confessions; and only if the joint verdict of the churches is to the effect that what "The Declaration" sets forth is the true doctrine of the Scriptures and the Confessions, and jointly approve its adoption, can it be binding in our communion of churches. So I repeat my question: who is the hierarch in our communion? Certainly not synod.

Let us as churches on our synod jointly confess the true doctrine in opposition to the errors of the heresy. Let us adopt the "Declaration". Then do we exhibit the unity of Christ's body. Keeping silence for the sake of church merger we promote the ends of the kingdom of the anti-christ.

Men do not read the Scriptures alike. Men do not read the Confessions alike. This exactly accounts for the appearance of the Christian Creeds. Had the Christian church of the past refused to provide itself with just such formularies, she long ago would have disappeared from the face of the earth. Let us as a communion of churches be warned.

If we believe the teaching of the "Declaration" to be the true doctrine, it already binds our consciences; and in this case as office-bearers we bind it on our respective flocks through the preaching of the Word. Should we then on our coming synod reject the "Declaration" it could only be because our interest in numerical growth exceeds our love of the truth. Let anyone name a different reason, if he can, a reason of which it can be said that it has the sanction of Christ.

Rev. Petter also suggests that, should we as churches adopt "The Declaration" we would thereby exclude from our fellowship faithful office-bearers and ministers of the Word. Rev. Petter has not the right

to make that statement without first proving "The Declaration" heretical. How could the "Declaration", if its Gospel is of God, annoy the flock of Christ except it be carnal? That is impossible.

In fine, adopting the "Declaration" we reveal the marks of the true church. Rejecting it for the sake of numerical growth, we may be certain that we have lost these marks.

I invite also the Revs. Cammenga and Hofman to take notice of this. The argument of their latest article (The Standard Bearer for Dec. 1) is to say the least a strange one. They write:

"The ill-advised misuse which he (Rev. Hettinga) made of the Declaration of Principles and other elements is certainly regrettable. *But that these elements were there for him to use is also regrettable*". (Italics—O.)

The demonstrative "these" in the sentence: "But that *these* elements were there for him to use is also regrettable," looks back also to "The Declaration of Principles", so that what the Revs. Hofman and Cammenga are telling us here is verily this: But that the Declaration of Principles was there for him—Rev. Hettinga—to use is certainly regrettable. On the other hand Revs. Hofman and Cammenga also inform us in their article with which I am now occupied that the immigrants in Canada, as many as on their recent tour they have been able to contact, find in our midst the pure preaching of the gospel which they want and seek.

This is glad tidings indeed Barring exceptions, such has not been the attitude of the immigrants among whom we have thus far labored. But if these people recently contacted want and seek the pure Gospel, why should Revs. Cammenga and Hofman find it regrettable that we have such a thing as the "Declaration of Principles", if what it sets forth is the pure Gospel." Or have the Revs. Hofman and Cammenga perhaps studied the document and discovered that its gospel is anything but pure? If so, they should by all means enlighten the churches, something which thus far they have not even attempted. Besides, on our last synod we all heard Rev. Cammenga plead as many as fifteen minutes for exactly such a thing as "The Declaration". And now he finds it regrettable that we have it? I don't understand. Allow me to repeat: treating "The Declaration" is something that no one in our midst has as yet attempted. Prof. Schilder accross the seat is treating "The Declaration" in "De Reformatie". But it would be the easiest thing to show that all he thus far has accomplished is to obscure the real issues by a great flood of words. Rev. Petter may take notice of this should he be contemplating reviewing the rest of Prof. Schilder's articles in the "Concordia".

I must also say a word about the contribution of

George Ten Elshof (The Standard Bearer for Dec. 1). He writes: "For twenty five years we have labored among those who cast us out. 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."

The point that the brother argues is plain. It is this: Through all the years of our existence as Prot. Ref. churches we managed very well without a declaration and therefore we are not in need of one now surely.

But the brother is sorely mistaken. In addition to the Scriptures and the Confessions we did have a "Declaration" nearly through all the years of our existence as Prot. Ref. Churches. We had it in the form of an address to the Synod of the *Christian Reformed* churches assembled at Grand Rapids, Mich., June, 1949 (see Acts of our Synod of 1940, p. 41), in which we jointly and officially admonished these churches "concerning (and now I quote) your error, committed in adopting the said three doctrinal declarations. . . ." In this address our churches also stated why the deposed office-bearers refused to subscribe the doctrine of the points (stated in the preamble of the address). The reason given is that these Points "are not in harmony with the Reformed Confessions. . . ."

Let us take notice. The deposed office-bearer, so the statement informs us, refused to subscribe the "Points" not because they were hierarchically imposed by synod but because, according to the solemn convictions of the deposed office-bearers, they were unreformed. Had these "Points" set forth sound doctrine, the deposed office-bearer most assuredly would have subscribed them. Why not, I would like to know. Certainly, they could not have done anything else but subscribe them. How can we refuse to subscribe the truth? Not to subscribe it is to reject it.

The address contains also this important statement: "We consider it sufficient for the present to refer to all that has been written on this subject (the subject of "The Three Points") on our part in books and pamphlets and in "The Standard Bearer".

This statement shows what the "Declaration" included, namely the following: 1) the Address itself; 2) all that had been written on the subject in books and pamphlets; 3) all that had been written on the subject in The Standard Bearer. By the above statement our

Synod officially sanctioned all that material and thereby included it in the "Declaration". Was there need of this "Declaration"? Indeed there was. And the reasons are these: 1) The interpretation given to the Confessions by the Christian Reformed churches differed and still differs from our interpretation of the Confessions. 2) Hence, merely appealing to the Confessions in our controversy with these churches would have availed us nothing. We had in addition to declare what we believed to be the truth of our Confessions.

Do we as churches need the "New Declaration of Principles" drafted by our last synod? We do and the reasons are these: 1) As regards the promise and the covenant the interpretation that the Liberated give to the Confessions differs from our interpretation of the Confessions; 2) Hence, merely quoting to them our Confessions will avail us nothing. We must in addition declare what we believe to be the truth of our Confessions; 3) We have men knocking at the door of our churches who will not allow themselves to be instructed in the true doctrine; 4) What is worse, they insist on propogating their heresies in our communion; 5) If by our rejecting "The New Declaration" we admit them into our fellowship, we soon as Protestant Reformed Churches shall disappear from the face of the earth.

Brother Ten Elshof is now eager to admit certainly that in his "earnestness and sobriety" he was dreadfully mistaken.

G. M. Ophoff.



FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition Of Hebrews 10:19-25

VII.

We now come to our exposition of the twenty-third verse of the 10th chapter of Hebrews. This verse reads as follows: "Let us hold fast the confession of the (our) unwavering hope, for He that hath promised is faithful."

At the outset of this article we would notice that the writer does not connect our verse to the foregoing verses with any particle such as "for" or "wherefore", nor with a conjunction such as "and". This lack of any such connection of a grammatical nature does not mean that this verse is the beginning of a new and different subject. On the contrary! There is a rather close connection between the thought in our text and in that of the foregoing verses. The verb "let us hold fast" is grammatically coordinate with the verb "let us draw near" in the former verse. This fact of the grammatical coordination suggests that the exhorta-

tion to "hold fast" is most closely allied in meaning with the exhortation to "draw near in the full assurance of faith". Then, too, we would notice that the writer gives a third exhortation in verse 24 of this same chapter. Writes he: "Let us give heed to one another unto the sharpening of love. . . ." This third exhortation is most closely allied to the former two exhortations just mentioned.

There are three exhortations here, which in a certain sense are all intertwined. They are a triad of exhortations as they pertain to the actual triad of the life of faith, hope and love. It is to these three that we are admonished, the greatest of which three is undoubtedly love. The third exhortation is not given last because it is of the least significance. At the proper time and place we shall call attention to this.

Then, too, we would observe, in the light of the foregoing, that all of these admonitions are based on the fact of what we have in Christ Jesus *as believers* (credentes), they are based on the boldness that is ours by virtue of the death and resurrection and ascension of the Son of God in our flesh; they are based on what we have in Jesus through the sermon, the ministry of reconciliation, so that we may receive the goodness and mercy of the house of God, even the sure mercies of David!

But, let us attend to the words of verse 23—"Let us hold fast the confession of the unwavering hope, for He that hath promised is faithful".

This exhortation is likewise addressed to the Hebrew believers, to the "brethren", to those whom Jesus is not ashamed to call "brethren", (Hebrews 2:11) be it then through means of the inspired writer in this actual "ministry of reconciliation". For these, who are here addressed are viewed and addressed not as those who fall away unto destruction, but as those who believe to the saving of the soul. (Compare Hebrews 10:39). It is an exhortation to the confessing church, confessing themselves to be the heirs of the promise.

In this exhortation the writer again includes himself among those addressed. He does not simply say: "hold *ye* fast", or "hold *thou* fast", but "let *us* hold fast." And this holding fast implies the *initial possession* by faith of the final possession of the things hoped for in Christ Jesus. What they have they must hold on to, lest any take their crown. And what God has thus begun in them He will certainly finish. And this bringing of the church to the final glory is indeed by faith in the power of God. But this power of God is operative in us by means of the preaching of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit. Thus we read in the Canons of Dort, V, 14: "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, *to begin this work of grace in us*, so He *preserves, continues and perfects* it by the *hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation there-*

on, and by the exhortations and threatenings and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments."

It is by these means, also by exhortations and threatenings, that the believers, the heirs of salvation are constantly kept in the footsteps of Abraham's faith, enduring even to the end.

In our verses we are dealing with such an exhortation. Yea, it is an exhortation with an implied "threat" that not to "hold fast" to the confession of the unwavering hope is tantamount to "sinning wilfully after having received a (thorough—epignosis) knowledge of the truth" as it is in Jesus, the mediator of the New Testament. The same must be said of the other verses here in Hebrews 10:19-25. It is the "exhortation and threat" whereby God "continues, preserves and perfects" what He Himself has begun in us through the preaching of the Gospel. Against the fundamental sin of unbelief we are warned, and by means of these warnings we daily fight against our sin and unbelief. It is a warning against this sin and unbelief that we repeatedly hear in this epistle. Is it not true, that Israel was not able to enter into the promised rest because of their unbelief? (Hebrews 3:19)

Against this the text admonishes us when it says: "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope firm. . . ."

This "confession" of the hope in our text is evidently not to be taken in the subjective sense of the term, namely, as the *act* of confessing springing forth from the actual hope in the heart of the redeemed saints. Rather should we view the "confession" here in the sense of *that which is confessed*. Thus, for instance, when we speak of the Confessions we refer not first of all to the act of our confessing, although this is not altogether excluded, but we refer to that body of saving truth in Jesus, as it is set down in written formulation in the Three Forms of Unity, to wit, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. Thus, too, in the Apostolicum (12 Article of Faith) we have a Confession, a brief summary of the entire glad tidings of the Gospel, as it is believed with the heart and confessed with the mouth unto salvation. But this Confession is first of all doctrine, it is the teaching of godliness and unto godliness. It is the objective Gospel as confessed by the *living believers*, that is, by those who have a living faith through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But confessed truth, doctrine it is, and in that sense it is Confession. It is the glad tidings as it is the prized and most highly cherished possession of the believers; it is the pearl of great price for which a man, when he has found it by faith unto the joy of salvation, will go and sell his all, that he may then go and obtain it.

Such is this Confession, as spoken of in the text.

It is further characterized in the text as the con-

fession of the hope. This is called the confession or the *well-known hope* as revealed in the glad-tidings of the Gospel. It is thus singled out in the text by the definite article. It is the well-known and all-controlling hope of the Gospel. It is indeed the hope as it shall be realized, not merely in our soul as a subjective hope through the Gospel each day anew; but it evidently refers to the entire hope of the promise of the Gospel, as it has been principally and legally realized through the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, as it shall ultimately and finally be revealed in the return of Christ, when we shall see Christ as the First-born Son, Lord of lords and King of kings, the Heir over all things in the glory of His Father, in the eternal Kingdom, when the tabernacle of God shall be with man! Then shall we see Christ in the reconstitution, the restitution of all things, the hope of glory!

That this hope is the content of the confession of our faith is not difficult to see. This confession of the hope is very evident in the Twelve Articles of Faith. In fact, it would only be blind stupidity or littleness of faith or worse not to see in this Apostolicum such a confession concerning the final hope as the realization of God's thoughts of peace in Christ Jesus our Lord. For are not the final articles: *the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting*? Do they not look unto the future and final realization of God's promise? They are indeed the expression of the fulfilment of the hope, the things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1); the fulfilment of the work of the Son of God in our flesh in His sufferings, death and resurrection and in His glorious ascension! From out of the most holy place at God's right hand He finishes this work for us, being able to save us to the uttermost, since He ever lives to pray for us.

Hence, this hope is indeed an unwavering one.

It shall surely be realized. All of God's promises are yea in Christ and in Him Amen. It neither goes to the right nor to the left. It is certainly to be realized through Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing is more sure and certain. It is grounded in the immutable counsel of God; this counsel is certainly to be realized in Christ, the Son of God in our flesh. Does He not pray: "Father I will, that those whom Thou hast given Me, may be where I am, that They may behold my glory, for Thou lovest me before the foundations of the world"? (John 17:25)

But to the confession of this immutable hope we must hold fast. What does this imply? Merely the careful maintainance of the terms of the doctrine? Dead orthodoxy? Nay, we must hold it fast by a living faith, that is wrought in us by the Gospel. We must cling to it by faith. (Compare verse 39) We must cling to it with all of our heart, with hearts

sprinkled from an evil conscience, and, thus, cling in the full assurance of faith. The certainty of the things hoped for must be fully real to our heart's eye as our blessed possession.

Now this Confession came into our possession, our actual conscious possession through the preaching of the Gospel, that is, by means of the serious calling (vocatio externa) through the Gospel (per Evangelium Canons of Dort, III, IV, 8). Thus it is also presented by the writer in Hebrews 2:1 f.f.: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to *the things which we have heard* (tois akouthesin) lest at any time we should let them slip. (mee pote pararuomen —lest we be carried away from grasping these things). Indeed it is by the preaching, that the things of the hope are heard. And these treasured possessions became the conscious portion of the Hebrew believer through the preaching of the Gospel. For we read: "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him". It was through the preaching of the eye- and ear-witnesses of Christ that these things were made sure to the church. (Hebrews 2:3, 4)

Must we hold fast to this great preached confession of the hope?

Yes!

But more of this in the next article.

Geo. C. Lubbers.



Antwoord Aan Broeder H. De Jong

Uw antwoord in de Standard Bearer van 15 Nov., No. 4, geeft mij aanleiding nog eenmaal daarop nader in te gaan. Mijnerzijds sluit ik hierbij dan de discussie.

Eerst een opmerking over Uw laatste anilea. Het wordt in de Prot. Ref. Church in Amerika (in Canada weet men wel beter) zo langzamerhand de gewoonte de Gereformeerde Kerken en Gereformeerden de naam te geven van Vrijgemaakte Kerken en Vrijgemaakten, daarbij blijkbaar vergetende dat zij dezelfden zijn en hun oude naam hebben behouden. De Synode van Amersfoort besloot dan ook in 1948 het toegevoegde onderhoudende art. 31 niet meer te gebruiken, daar dit slechts een postale aanduiding was direkt na de Vrijmaking. Als er dan ook emigranten in Canada komen roep ik hun alleen toe: Blijf Gereformeerd en dus niet blijf Vrijgemaakt of wordt Protestant Reformed. Verder is artikel 28 van de Ned. Geloofsbelijdenis duidelijk genoeg en niet voor tweeërlei zin uitlegbaar.

Op hetgeen U schrijft onder in de 1e plaats, ten tweede en ten derde behoef ik niet nader in te gaan. Ik heb mijn antwoord niet gericht tot Prof. Hoeksema maar tot broeder de Jong. Wat Prof. Hoeksema schrijft in zijn "Criticism and Its Answer" doet ten aanzien

van hetgeen U opmerkte niets ter zake. Op Prof. Hoeksema's schrijven zou ik een hele Standard Bearer als tegen antwoord vol kunnen schrijven, zoveel misverstanden (??) en onjuistheden staan daarin. Dit hoop ik te zijner tijd Prof. Hoeksema zelf mondeling mede te kunnen delen.

Ik hoop dat dit beroepen op "uw leiders" geen gewoonte van U is en van de overige leden der Prot. Ref. Churches in Amerika. Anders zou er sprake kunnen zijn van een zekere "lauwheid". Ik hoop dat wij er in Canada eveneens voor bewaard mogen blijven. Nogmaals ik ken in de Prot. Ref. Churches geen leiders en als iemand meent het wel te zijn, ik erken hem als zodanig niet. Ik ken alleen maar Herders, Leeraars, ouderlingen en diakenen in Christus Kerk. Dat woord "leider" herinnert je direkt aan de "Führer" van voor 1945. De dictator, die het alleen weet en het voor anderen weet. Die de baas wil spelen. Als hij het zegt dan is het zo en de rest heeft maar te volgen. Wat dat het betreft ben ik Gode dankbaar, dat Hij ook dat ons opnieuw weer heeft geschonken, n.l. zelf Zijn Woord naarstelijk onderzoeken. Ook wij waren voor 1939 ingesluimerd met al onze mooie en grote kerken.

U ontwijkt ook in ten vijfde mijn vraag, omdat U het bewijs over het in mijn vraag ten derde gestelde aan een ander overlaat. Uw tegenvraag is daarom geen antwoord op mijn vraag. Als U meent dat degenen, die in hun officiële stukken de veronderstelde wedergeboorte leren en de Algemene Genade (U kunt dus zo maar niet afgaan op een preek die U op 2e Kerstdag heb gehoord) dichter bij U staan dan degenen die op grond van de Schrift zeggen, dat de Belofte van het Verbond is voor allen die gedoopt zijn, dan hebt U inderdaad maar een heel, heel klein paar "Gereformeerde Voelhorens". Of we nu bepaald een paar voelhorens hiervoor behoeven te hebben, betwijfel ik. Als we maar *naarstelijk* en met goede voorzichtigheid Gods Woord gaan onderzoeken en onderscheiden en *levende* lidmaten van Christus Kerk zijn.

Tenslotte ga ik op het vragen stellen bij de Openbare Belijdenis in de Gereformeerde Kerken niet meer in. Ook daarvoor geen bewijs. Alleen wil ik nogmaals met nadruk wijzen op hetgeen ik daaromtrent in het eerste gedeelte van het 6e punt heb opgemerkt.

A. J. IJtsma.

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.

IN HIS FEAR

Church Membership In His Fear

AN INTERLUDE

My title in this case is not my subject.

I am not going to write about "an interlude", but rather my article is an interlude in the series with which I was busy. I want to interrupt my series on "Church Membership" to write about the controversial discussion which is being carried on between our churches and the Liberated, and which has also been transferred into our own circles and is becoming an intra-church controversy. But I want to write about it from the viewpoint of "In His Fear".

The occasion of this writing is a matter of personal experience and observation. Every once in a while once comes into contact in his discussions of the "subject of the hour" with certain expressions which almost leave the impression, when one analyzes them, of being false arguments. And often one comes into contact with certain attitudes which, it is to be feared, are also wrong. And: one who is at all acquainted with past history can sometimes only with difficulty refrain from drawing a parallel between the present and the past.

Now it is not our purpose to enter into the arguments themselves,—into their contents. That is the domain of the editorial department. And we are quite content to leave that domain to our editor. But rather do we propose to emphasize that this whole controversy must be motivated by the fear of the Lord, and that no argument may be used or heeded which is not in harmony with the fear of the Lord. We therefore want to warn against these pseudo-arguments and these wrong attitudes, *in as far as they exist and in as far as we are in danger of using or heeding them*. Our reason for warning you, whose desire as children of God is to walk in His fear, is simple: Forewarned is fore-armed.

—:—

Pseudo-arguments.

There are certain arguments which, though not as such wrong, and which if demonstrated, reasoned, calmly appraised, and clearly proved, are perfectly legitimate and powerful but which nevertheless carry with them the danger of being catch-phrases, slogans, argumentative traps designed to sway people, to move them from a sound foundation. They are pseudo-arguments, hackneyed, trite expressions, clichés, which have recurred in almost every controversy in church history, and which people have followed often without any sane investigation. I want to emphasize that the

people of God may *never* heed an argument without investigation. And I want to emphasize once more that as such these arguments may not be wrong, as I hope to point out in each case. And once more: we do not intend to enter the contents of the arguments in this article, but simply to point out the dangers that lurk when these arguments are wrongly used. Let me mention some of these arguments.

1. *Terminology argument.*

You have heard it as often as I. It is very simple. It runs like this: "The present controversy is just a difference of terms."

Now the *possibility* must be granted, of course, that this is true. In the abstract this must be granted; otherwise all possibility of argument and discussion is cut off, of course. But let us remember:

a. That terminology may never be slurringly referred to as "a mere technicality". Technicalities are important. And terms are and will be important as long as words have meaning.

b. You may never accept the argument just as it is stated above, period. If the argument is to be used, it must be thoroughly demonstrated. And if it is not demonstrated or demonstrable, the writer should keep it in his pen and the reader should close his eyes to it. To make an application, if anyone says that "condition" and "instrument" are different terms for the same thing, he must *prove* it and not just *say* it. Only then will the argument be legitimate. And under no circumstances may anyone simply state the argument and let it go at that.

2. *Authority argument.*

The quoting of authorities in support of one's view, and even the mere mention of authorities, has long been accepted technique in argument. In an ecclesiastical debate reference may quite properly be made to the view of this eminent theologian or that. And such arguments carry a certain amount of weight. But what should our evaluation of them be?

a. We must remember that the authority argument has never been recognized as being of primary value. The argument which cites an authority is of secondary value only.

b. One must therefore carefully choose the authorities quoted. They should really be eminent and of unsullied reputation. If the citing of an authority is to bear any weight in Reformed circles, for example, one must cite an authority who knows what he is talking about, not only, but one who has a reputation for being Reformed.

c. Authorities may not be blindly followed. One often discovers such a tendency. Members of a congregation are inclined to "stick with" their minister: if he says something, it must be so. If this great Re-

formed thinker says it, who am I to question it? And so forth. Now such loyalty is touching, and such humility appears becoming. But there is only one authority that may not be questioned: the authority of the Word of God. Even our Confessions are after all subject to its authority and may be followed only upon the basis of their Scriptural authority.

d. Hence, we should always be careful to analyze the statements of authorities, and hold ourselves in readiness to disagree. That is our right, and that is our duty. A mere statement is not an argument, no matter how great the man who makes it. On the other hand, we should not be quick to brush aside without consideration the thoughts and statements and arguments of those who by reason of past experience and past work have proved themselves worth listening to.

3. *Difference-of-emphasis argument.*

There is reason to doubt whether this argument is ever valid or decisive. The reason is very simple: everything should have its proper emphasis. A very common form of argument has been this: We emphasize the element of sovereign election, while the opposition emphasizes the element of human responsibility. And often the relative phrase is added, "more strongly". In addition to the remark made above, that everything should have its proper emphasis, we may observe:

a. The argument may not be used as a "nicety", that is, to take the edge off any differences. It should not be attempted to make relative differences out of fundamental ones.

b. That the difference is one of emphasis must, of course, be established. We should not be satisfied with the mere statement, for then we become guilty of begging the question. And therefore, we must never use the argument as a sort of sop.

c. In that connection, a neglect or denial must not be termed a difference in emphasis. Especially is that true when we speak of the doctrine of sovereign election, the *Cor ecclesiae*, the heart of the church. A weak heart beat may be fatal, you know.

d. Finally, the argument may not be used to make contrasting emphases of what should be coordinate emphases. We may not contrast human responsibility and divine sovereignty. The one without the other is impossible.

4. *Me-too-ism.*

We may borrow this term from present day politics to describe another type of false argument. It runs this way. When someone is accused of teaching a theory opposed to the Reformed truth, he replies that he too maintains sovereign election, total depravity, irresistible grace, etc., and he also maintains for example, that the promise is for all.

Once more, we remind you that we are not now entering the argument. We will grant the possibility in the abstract of such a position. The point is that the argument may not simply be used in the sense of "me-too-ism", in order to save one's Reformed reputation and maintain self in the good graces of the Reformed public. And no one may simply accept the statement at face value. The possibility exists and must be granted, but the actuality and the factuality must be demonstrated. And until it is, the position must stand condemned.

5. *The voice of the majority.*

Another argument which often arises is that of the majority opinion. It is often used as a mere "numbers" argument. So many of our leaders are of the opinion. Or: most of our people take that stand. Sometimes, as I recently heard, actual percentages are used: 90% of our people want conditions. And this is intended to sway others to agree with that stand. We may observe:

a. That the argument fails until a poll is taken. I know of no poll, for example, that has determined that 90% of our people want conditions.

b. Mere numbers mean absolutely nothing. The old saying that so many million Frenchman can't be wrong is simply not true. History, and especially church history, has demonstrated repeatedly that the majority has been wrong.

c. Remember that majorities are binding and majority decisions are taken on *official gatherings*.

d. Is then a majority to be sneered at? Not at all. But the opinion of a majority is to be accepted only when it is a well-reasoned and well-founded majority opinion. We are not subject ultimately to the will of men in the church, but to the will of the King of the church, Christ. Not the voice of the people rules, but the voice of the Son of God.

We have more to say. But for the present we may sum up by saying: in all our discussions we should beware of being swayed by any cliches, but let us have concise, well-grounded, well-founded, demonstrated arguments, founded upon the Reformed Confessions as the expression of the truth of Holy Writ. And you and I may listen only to such,—in the fear of the Lord.

H. C. Hoeksema.

IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church wish to express its sympathy to our brother elder, John Faber, in the loss of his mother.

H. Hoeksema, Pres.
James Kok, Sec'y.

PERISCOPE

The End of the Age?

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37-39.

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains, and their sores, and repented not of their deeds." Revelation 16:8-11.

To the twin characteristics of the time immediately preceding the return of Christ our attention was brought in the news which made headlines in most of our newspapers recently. We refer of course to the characteristics of a pleasure mad society and a hardening under the hand of God as He comes in judgment. Both these were strikingly illustrated in the following:

"Takes More Than Flood to Stop 'em.

"The Truckee river went on a rampage through downtown Reno today and residents stranded in Casinos and hotels stayed one of the biggest parties ever seen in the nation's gambling capital.

"The storm that caused the Truckee to rise was part of the same one that has deluged California for nine days causing at least seven deaths and \$12,000,000 in damage. . . .

"The party started after an estimated 6,000 residents came downtown to watch the river, swollen by torrents of rain and melted snow, creep over the sides of its 30 foot retaining walls.

"The streets became rivers as the water inched its way to the heart of the city and drove the sightseers into gambling casinos. While they were inside, the water rose even higher until it covered the five bridges spanning the Truckee and cut the city in two.

"At the million-dollar Mapes hotel, a jazz band came down from the sky-room to the lobby and struck up 'Singing in the Rain,' while workers sandbagged the building outside.

"In a short time the water was two feet deep and poured into the lobby and basement. The management invited its 350 customers to take the elevator to the

skyroom on the 14th floor where the festivities continued.

"The Riverside hotel management took no precautions to keep the water out. The slot machines whirled and the drinks poured over the bar while the customers sloshed around in water six inches deep."

The article goes on to tell us that after the electric power went off the gambling and carousing continued by kerosene lanterns until they were out and then by candlelight, and so the biggest night in Reno's gambling dens was caused by the greatest flood the city has ever seen.

Terrible indictment and warning to our age!

But what about us. Is it true of us also that we are so interested in the natural(?) phenomena causing these disasters that they oftentimes lose for us also the character of God's judgments. For it is indeed evident that God's judgments are stalking through the earth and that men, as also exemplified above, are hardening themselves against God and His revelation. It behooves us therefore to watch and pray and to be ready for we know not in what hour our Lord cometh.

* * * *

The Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

From the Calvin Forum we quote the following book review:

"As most, if not all, readers of the Calvin Forum know, the denomination which calls itself by this name came into existence in 1925 when the minister of the largest congregation of the Christian Reformed Church located at Grand Rapids, Michigan, refused to abide by the synodical pronouncement that his denial of the doctrine of Common Grace was not in harmony with the Reformed Faith. He took the position that belief in this doctrine was Arminian and this is maintained by that body to this day. The Rev. Mr. Hoeksema, the father of this movement, its keenest mind, and today still its real leader, is the author of this history and defense of the standpoint of his Church. Photographs of its ministers, church buildings, and some of its consistorial groups adorn the volume. The denomination is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year, but the author of this book in a recent editorial in his monthly *The Standard Bearer* (March 15, 1950), speaks in the most pessimistic terms about the present condition and the future prospects of his denomination. There are many personal insinuations in this book, but it makes the doctrinal and church-governmental position of the group, as the Rev. H. Hoeksema sees it, abundantly clear. This is not the place to start a polemic against the Protestant Reformed group. Those who are interested in the doctrinal issue and its implications may be directed to a recent statement of the Protestant Reformed Synod named "Brief Declaration

of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Churches", which is published in *The Standard Bearer* of July 1, 1950. It covers some eleven columns and is submitted for approval to the churches by the 1950 Synod. For a recent refutation of the views of the Rev. Mr. Hoeksame the reader may be referred to the latest volume in the series of Doctrinal Studies of Professor G. C. Berkouwer of the Free University of Amsterdam. (G. C. Berkouwer, *De Voorzienigheid Gods*: Kok, Kampen, 1950: pp. 79-99). Our readers will be interested to know that according to 1949 statistics there are 24 Protestant Reformed congregations, 23 ministers, about 1300 families, and approximately 5,500 souls. The proportion of 'mother' church 'daughter' churches may be gaged from the fact that two-fifths of the total membership of the denomination is found in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, and that this church contributes approximately one-half of all denominational funds."

This review was signed by Clarence Bouma.

* * * *

"The Church in China Carries On"

Many of us imagine that all foreign mission work in China was brought to a complete standstill by the conquest of that country by the Reds.

I confess that was also my impression, influenced largely by the fact that the Christian Reformed Church has withdrawn all their missionaries to China.

An article in the Southern Presbyterian Journal entitled "The Church in China Carries On" gives a somewhat different impression.

"Our 18 missionaries, (six men and twelve women), have been alerted by events. During the past summer they planned with Chinese leaders for transfer to the native church mission property and control of all the work.

"They will soon be telling us of this reorganization and the home church eagerly awaits the news. But it is even more important to keep abreast of the spiritual condition of the church. The following report highlights some recent events.

"The Salt City—Yiencheng.

"This was the last of our twelve stations opened just 40 years ago. It was made famous by the sacrificial work of eight devoted missionaries. Since 1937 it has suffered more than any field from Japanese and Communist persecution.

"Churches were confiscated or destroyed, the Christians scattered, and two of our pastors cruelly murdered. The names of these martyrs, and those in Haichow, should be on the roll of honor of our church.

"Missionaries were warned not to return at the peril of their lives. Since Pearl Harbor no missionary

has been able to live there. Only once since then has a missionary dared to visit the field. Mr. McLauchlin, at great personal danger, passed through the whole field alone in 1946, bringing to us a description of the sufferings of the Christians that was heart-rending.

"Through this reign of terror the mission has done all in its power to send messages of sympathy and to cheer them with supplies and money. What have we today? On August 1, 1950 three pastors and Bible women (native Chinese?—J.H.) re-entered this stricken field, two others having preceded them. They carried extra supplies of Bibles and hymn books to replace those destroyed. . . .

"Taichow

". . . We have churches and chapels scattered all over this vast field of two million souls. On August 13, 1950, 35 new members (ages 15-72) joined one of these churches on profession of faith. . . .

"Our Hospitals

"The mission has seven hospitals still running. Kiangyin is happy about securing their new superintendent, a doctor of Christian earnestness.

"They write: 'the Lord worked a miracle in bringing Dr. Kou to us. The Sarah Walkup hospital at Taichow sheds its healing beams afar. While parades still publicize anti-American propaganda, these same Communists bring their sick and wounded to the healing hands of Dr. Nelson and his staff. . . Our great Goldsby King hospital, located by the broad waters of the Yangtse, under the courageous leadership of Misses Dunlap, Worth and Wood, has weathered the storm so far. The people are friendly, the government officials cooperative, and the staff loyal.

"Kashing hospital has just sent in its best report, through Dr. Wilkerson, of whose lonely, heroic work, the church should know more. Suchow has never closed its hospital doors since 1912, for a single day. But that is a story too long to tell here."

The article then continues to describe the activities of the colleges, the theological seminary and various other fields of labor in which their missionaries are still active.

That these missionaries are laboring under great handicaps is evident. But that the work is going on even if more slowly is encouraging to all who are pleased that the heathen should hear the "Good Tidings."

J. Howerzyl.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Because of lack of space in this issue an article by the Rev. B. Kok must wait till the next number of our S. B.
—Editor.