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MEDITATION

De Vernieuwing Aller Dingen

“Maar wij verwachten, naar Zijne belofte, nieuwe hemelen en eene nieuwe aarde, in dewelke gerechtigheid woont.”

II Petr. 3:13.

Wel, we zijn den nacht doorgekomen, en het is nu het nieuwe jaar 1951.

Ik denk, dat duizenden en duizenden dat zeggen zullen, gezegd hebben, of het gedacht hebben. En misschien hebben zij er bij gezegd: nu zal het beter gaan, nu zal het beter worden. We beginnen een nieuwe bladzijde van ons leven, en we zullen het nu er beter afbrengen!

Wat ijdele illusie.

Ik zou hier willen vragen: wat is er van terecht gekomen in het jaar, dat voorbijsnelde? Dat was toch ook eens een nieuw jaar? Zijn we er beter op geworden? Is er iets dat waarlijk nieuw is gekomen in ons leven voor God?

Ge weet het antwoord. In de stilte van zonde-besef hebt ge het gezegd of gedacht.

Nee, mijne vrienden, laten we niet ondoordacht, ijdel, of boos spreken en denken en werken met dit feit, het feit, namelijk, dat we een nieuw jaar mochten binnentreden. Verleden week hebben we leiding gezocht en gevonden om het Oude Jaar vaarwel te zeggen. En nu gaan we weer God vragen om ons te leiden in dit vierten van den Nieuw-Jaarsdag. En ik geloof die leiding gevonden te hebben in het U voor-gelezen gedeelte van Gods Woord in den brief van den Apostel Petrus.

We gaan wat spreken over de werkelijke Vernieuwing aller dingen.

En dan gaan we drie vragen stellen: Vernieuwing

van wat? Vernieuwing tot wat? en Vernieuwing: wat is onze verhouding tot die grootheid?



Eerst dan: Vernieuwing van wat?

Het Nieuwe Jaar! Wat een hopen en verwachten. Wat een rijkhalzend uitzien naar verlossingen van allerlei aard en vorm.

Wij en de onzen, onze magen en burens en bekenden, onze wereld rondom ons, wij allen hunkeren vaak naar het komende. En dan zal het beter gaan.

Het nieuwe Jaar! Nu zal het beter gaan, zucht de zieke, de doodelijke kranke. Nu zal ik misschien beter worden. Die onder zware lasten zuchten hopen op verlichting, redding uit groote nooden. Nu zal het komen.

En zegt nu niet, dat wij als Kerk van Christus anders zijn. Dat zijn we niet van nature. Ook wij koesteren vaak ijdele hoop en verwachtingen. Ja, verwachtingen van het aardsche.

Ons duistere hart bedriegt ons vaak. En dan wil dat hart andere goden najagen, goden die zullen helpen en verlossen. Daar is de god van menschenlijke kracht en genie. Of de god van geld en goed. Of de god van onze wijsheid en vernuft.

Maar het is alles ijdelheid der ijdelheden. Er is eigenlijk niets nieuws onder de zon. Laat ons eens zien. Is dit eigenlijk wel een Nieuw Jaar? Wat is het Nieuwe van dit jaar? Blijft alles niet bij het oude? Erger nog: wordt alles niet steeds ouder? En leelijker? Is de aarde en de wereld door het komen van zooveel Nieuwe Jaren niet ontzaglijk oud en verouderd geworden? En daar komt nog bij, dat zij verouderde en verkankerde in de zonde en de schuld! Dat is het ergste van alles. Nee, mijne vrienden, ik verwacht niet veel goeds van dit Nieuwe Jaar. Er zijn donkere wolken aan de horizon. Ik hoor een donderend geschut in de verte. En het komt al nader. Misschien is de derde wereldbrand dan alreede uitgebroken. Alles wijst erop.

Nee, alles blijft bij het oude. Wij waren zondaren toen we met elkander zuchtten bij het verscheiden van het Oude Jaar. En toen we onze oogen openen bij

den morgen van het Nieuwe Jaar, toen vonden we bij onze bedsteden de bestraffingen Gods. Alle morgens, ook aan den morgen van het Nieuwe Jaar, is er de bestraffing Gods. Vraagt het maar aan Asaf. En hij was een teeder kind van God, en de Heilige Geest sprak door hem.



Heeft dan het Nieuwe Jaar geen aparte beteekenis voor ons? O ja. Dat heeft het terdege. God heeft de zon en de maan en de sterren in den hemel gezet opdat zij zouden zijn tot "teekenen en tot gezette tijden, en tot dagen en jaren!" O ja, het Nieuwe Jaar heeft zeer groote beteekenis. Als we maar recht oordeelen, in het rechte zien der dingen. God heeft een aparte boodschap voor ons aan den morgen van elk Nieuw Jaar. Maar de beteekenis is zekerlijk niet, dat wij het nu eens zullen doen, of dat we nu iets herlijks mogen verwachten *in deze wereld*. Ik onderschrap deze laatste woorden. Want dat is niet dan bedrog. Zoo spreekt de wereld die in het duistere en in het booze ligt. En zoo mag Christen niet spreken.

Wat mag dan wel die boodschap van God zijn waarvan ik sprak. En wat heeft God te zeggen in het ronddraaien van werelddol en het ronddraaien van die andere hemellichamen, waardoor wij op aarde spreken van het komen van gezette tijden en jaren? Het is dit: Ge zijt een jaar ouder geworden, o mensch! Ge gaat steeds verder op Uw reis naar de eeuwigheid. Hebt ge winst gemaakt in het jaar dat wegging? En wat gaat ge doen in dit jaar hetwelk Ik U weer schenk? Zult ge dit jaar voleinden? Wat weet ge ervan of Ik U niet zal komen halen in dit jaar? En als Ik dan kom om U te onderzoeken, zal het dan goed zijn met U? Zijt ge al bekeerd? Geloofst ge al in Mijn Zoon? Weet ge wat er te komen staat aan het einde der eeuwen, wanneer het laatste Nieuwe Jaar ingeluid zal worden? Weet ge, dat er vlammen en vuur zullen komen? Beseft ge, dat de eene zonde op de andere gevolgd is tot den hemel toe, en dat Ik in al Mijn grimmigheid aan 't komen ben om gericht te doen op de aarde? En dat er dan een groote vlammenzee zal komen, dat Ik de aarde met vuur zal verbranden, met de hemelen die met een groot geruisch voorbij zullen gaan? Hebt ge een schuilplaats voor dien storm gezicht en gevonden bij Mijn Golgotha?

Dat zijn sommige der vragen die naar Gods Woord elk Nieuw Jaar weer aan gevraagd worden door een alwetend God.

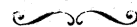
Ziet ge, Petrus sprak van die dingen in het onmiddellijke verband. Hij sprak daar van die vlammenzee, van het versmelten der elementen. En als een groot contrast spreekt hij in onzen tekst van onze verwachting, van de verwachting der Christenen, van de Kerk van Christus. Maar wij, zoo zegt Petrus, verwachten, naar Zijne belofte, nieuwe hemelen en eene

nieuwe aarde, in dewelke gerechtigheid woont.

En als ge nu met mij vraagt: maar waarvan is die vernieuwing? dan is het antwoord: vanuit de oude dingen komt de vernieuwing.

De dingen, alle dingen in hemel en op aarde zijn oud en verouderd, en zij zijn den ondergang nabij.

Dat zijn de dingen der aarde en de werken die daarin zijn. Ge merkt, dat ik Petrus aanhaal in het tiende vers. En ook dit: dat zijn de goddelooze menschen van vers 7.



De aarde is oud geworden in de zonde. En door de zonde kwam de schuld. En die schuld riep om straf. En de straf is de uitgieting van den toorn Gods. En die toorn Gods wierd openbaar in de verderving van den mensch der zonde. Let er op, dat ik niet zeg, dat die straf komt, want die straf is er al. God straft zonde met zonde. De geestelijke dood is Gods straf. Leest Rom. 1, waar tweemaal staat hoe God de goddeloozen overgeeft in grootere, meer liederlijke goddeloosheid. God is begonnen te slaan in den vroegen morgen der geschiedenis en Zijn slagen zijn al zwaarder aangekomen op den rug der menschheid. En waar de mensch nu koning bleef zelfs in zijn ongehoorzaamheid, zoodat hij alle werken der aarde kon werken, zoo heeft hij die aarde opgeëischt en al hare volheid, en in dienst gesteld van de ongehoorzaamheid. En toen zijn alle die werken en de aarde zeer oud geworden, en zij worden steeds ouder in de goddeloosheid.

Temidden van die oude en verouderde dingen wandelt Christen. En dat is een vreeselijke wandeling. Die wandeling doet hem lijden. Hij hoort het geschrei en het gekerm en het zuchten van allen en alles. Leest Rom. 8, dat spreekt van het zuchten en het verlangen van het brute schepsel. Leest Jesaja die ook spreekt van het zuchten en kermen der dingen. Leest het ook in Openbaringen. Daar hooren we van de vorige dingen en het zijn de dingen des doods. Weet ge het, beseft ge het, dat wij onze wandeling hebben temidden van één groot kerkhof? Dat het gansche menschedom gestorven is in Adam en dat zij steeds meer sterven? Stervende zult gij sterven, zeide God en de geschiedenis bewijst het. Op velerlei gebied sterft het menschedom. En het vreeselijkste wel is de geestelijke dood. Dat is het haten van God, het zich stellen tegenover den Almachtige met de dwaze woorden: Ik wil niet dat Gij, o God, Koning over ons zou zijn!

En die goddeloosheid neemt toe en schreeuwt als 't ware om den oordeelsdag. De dingen waarvan vernieuwing komt zijn de stokoude dingen der zonde en des doods.



En waarheen gaat het in die Vernieuwing aller Dingen?

Dat zegt Petrus. God gaf een belofte, en die belofte is vaak herhaald. In vele variaties. Die belofte zat al in de eerste, die Moederbelofte in het Paradijs na den val in de zonde. Die belofte werd steeds rijker. Hebt ge er wel eens op gelet, dat het altaar een hoopje zand of een hoopje steenen is? Dat is een beeld van de verhooving der aarde vanuit de diepte der zonde en des doods. En dat altaar had een voornaam plaats in de belofte van God. Straks wordt de belofte duidelijker geopenbaard. Het altaar komt bij het Heilige der heiligen. In het binnenste heiligdom staat het gouden altaar van de Arke des Verbonds met het verzoendeksel. Nog later komt de belofte van de verhooving der aarde in Jesaja. Ook Jesaja spreekt immers van het komen van nieuwe hemelen en de nieuwe aarde. En in de volheid des tijds komt de centrale vervulling der belofte in de komst van Jezus Christus den Heere. In Hem is altaar, offerande en de verhooving en vernieuwing der dingen vervuld. Want Hij is de eerste Erfgenaam der nieuwe dingen. Op de basis van Zijn bloed zal de vernieuwde schepping verrijzen. Geen nieuwe schepping, maar een herschepping die tevens verhooving is, gelijk in alle altaren vooruit afgebeeld werd. En het eigenlijke, en het laatste altaar was opgericht op den kruin van Hoofdschedelplaats. En dat altaar is ook de vervulling van de Arke des Verbonds van het Heilige der heiligen.

Nu dan, al de oude dingen der zonde en des doods zullen straks verbranden en versmelten, en uit dien wereldbrand zal een algeheele nieuwe wereld verschijnen, waarin gerechtigheid wonen zal. In de duizende jaren van de oude en verouderde wereld regeerde de ongerechtigheid. Maar dan zal de gerechtigheid Gods regeren.

Die gerechtigheid is de gerechtigheid die Christus verwierf aan het Kruis. En als ge mij vragen zoudt: wat is die gerechtigheid, dan is ons antwoord: het is het willen en het werken van het goede. Gerechtigheid is het willen en het werken van datgene wat in overeenstemming is met het goede. Gerechtigheid is de maatstaf van het alleen-goede, van het hoogste goed, en dat is het Wezen Gods. Als gij gerechtigt zijt, dan beantwoordt ge aan Gods maatstaf van het goede, en dat is Gods hart.



Nu dan, die gerechtigheid zal de Nieuwe Wereld kenmerken. Ziet ge nu niet, dat die dag waarlijk nieuw zal zijn? En daarom zien wij uit naar dien dag, wij die in Christus Jezus zijn, en die op Zijn belofte hopen. En als het uitzien en verwachten al zoo schoon is, wat zal de vervulling zijn? Want we moesten nog één vraag beantwoorden. Wat is onze verhouding tot beide: de oude en verouderde wereld en de nieuwe die komt?

Om met het eerste te beginnen: als Jezus Christus U veroverd heeft met Zijn pijlen der liefde, dan zijt ge een vijand van de tegenwoordige wereld. Dan zijt ge die wereld gekruisigd, en dan kruisigt die wereld U. Dan haat ge het vleesch en al zijn begeerlijkheden, en dan vooral Uw eigen vleesch. Dan haat ge Uw eigen leven, naar Jezus' eigen zeggen. Dan verkiest ge boven alles God te hebben voor Uw hart en leven. En dan strijdt ge den goeden strijd des geloofs.

Als ge Jezus Christus hebt tot Uw middelaar en verlosser, dan zijt ge een vijand van Satan en zijn legers, en daarom ook van alle leugen en bedrog. Dan zijt ge ook een vijand van zijn leger der menschen. Dan haat ge de wereld, en dat is de begeerlijkheid des vleesches, en de begeerlijkheid der oogen en de grootschheid des levens. En dan hebt ge geleerd om nederig te knielen voor God.

En dan is Uw verhouding tot het komende nieuwe een houding van verwachting, zooals Petrus zegt. Dan ziet ge reikhalzend uit naar die wereld die aan 't komen is. Dan hoort ge in de verte het blazen van de bazuin des archangels. En dan zijt ge sober en wakende. Opdat ge Uw kleederen niet besmet met de besmetting der zonde en der ongerechtigheid.



Voorts is Uwe verhouding tot de nieuwe wereld een verhouding van verlangen. Want ge hebt die wereld van Gods geneugten lief met al de liefde van Uw hart. Dan leeft en waakt en slaapt en droomt ge van die wereld. Want die wereld is Uw ware leven. Leest Coll. 3. Opgestaan zijnde met Christus, die Uw leven is, bedenkt ge de dingen die boven zijn, niet die op de aarde zijn. Daar zijn de Engelen Gods en we hebben hen lief. Zij zullen ons eeuwig dienen, opdat wij God dienen mogen. Daar zijn de volmaakt rechtvaardigen, en we hebben hen lief. We verlangen er naar om Adam en Eva, om Henoch en Noach te zien, met Abraham en de patriarchen. We zien uit om Jesaja en Jeremia te zien met alle de profeten. En daar zijn ook God en Christus, en dat is ons grootste verlangen. Hier op aarde zongen we met tranen. En we hebben al zingende onze liefde tot die wereld bezongen: 'k Heb mijn tranen onder 't klagen, tot mijn spijze dag en nacht. En we hebben geweend want het ging om God die de liefde van ons hart heeft. En we hebben al klagende gevraagd: Wanneer zal ik inkomen en voor Uw aangezicht verschijnen?

Ziet ge, zoo moeten we het Nieuwe Jaar ingaan en het Nieuwe Jaar viere. We moeten uitzien, verlangen naar het Nieuwe Jaar van Gods geneugten.

En daarom, mijne vrienden, wensch ik U allen veel heil en zegen in het Nieuwe Jaar.

G. Vos.

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EDITORIALS

The Proposed Declaration

There are several reasons why the Declaration that was proposed by our last Synod to the churches should be adopted at our next Synod.

Its adoption should not be postponed.

The Mission Committee evidently felt that they had need of such a declaration as a basis for their work and deliberations. And this basis must not be left uncertain for another year. The missionaries themselves evidently felt the need of it as a basis for their labors and for the organization of churches. At least, the Rev. A. Cammenga, who was present at our last Synod, strongly expressed himself in favor of adopting this declaration. And, at our last Synod it was virtually adopted without a dissenting vote. Surely a year should be long enough for the churches to consider such a document as the Declaration of Principles, which virtually offers nothing else than the Confessions themselves. Nor should we postpone the adoption of this declaration because of a possible visit of the Committee of Correspondence to the Netherlands. For, in the first place, it is not even certain, in view of the world situation, that the committee is able to go this year. And secondly, if they do go, it is advisable that the Deputies for Correspondence in the Netherlands stand on a definite basis such as the Declaration of Principles offers.

Hence, I would not be in favor of postponing a final decision by the Synod on this important matter.

But should this declaration be adopted at all? Is there any reason for its adoption by our churches? To this question I answer affirmatively. And I have the following reasons:

1. It is indeed often necessary that within the Confessions the Churches clearly express what according to their conviction is the plain teaching of those Confessions. This becomes necessary when one or a group of persons within the churches claim to stand on the basis of the confessions but nevertheless deviate from them. Such was the case in the Christian Reformed Churches in 1918, when the Rev. H. Bultema attempted to propagate his premillennial and dispensational doctrine in the Reformed churches. The Synod then appealed to the Confessions to prove the unity of the church of all ages both in the old and new dispensations, and the Kingship of Christ over His church. Again, this was necessary when Dr. Jansen tried to inculcate into the students of the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Churches his modernistic teachings concerning Holy Writ. Also then the Synod

appealed to the Confessions to prove that he was in error. Once more it became necessary for those who loved the Reformed faith in 1924 to express their conviction as to what is the plain teaching of the Three Forms of Unity over against the error of the Three Points adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo, 1924.

As churches we are in the same situation today. We must clearly express what according to the conviction of the Protestant Reformed Churches is the plain teaching of the Confessions, not only over against the Three Points adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 but also in distinction from the Liberated view of the covenant and of the promise of God, which is principally the same as the Heynsian conception.

Now let us note,—and this is my main and principle ground on which I base the contention that the Declaration of Principles should be adopted,—*that the declaration is based from beginning to end on our Three Forms of Unity, as well as on our Baptism Form.*

Some have alleged, without any proof for their contention, that the Declaration of Principles is nothing but a private theological opinion, or that it is at least extra-confessional. But this certainly is not true. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. Let us not overlook the fact that the entire Declaration consists almost entirely of literal quotations from the Confessions. Only occasionally Synod expresses very briefly in its own words what the Confessions teach. Hence, the Declaration is essentially nothing else than the Three Forms of Unity and the Baptism Form as they have always been understood by the Protestant Reformed Churches. Even the terms *fountain* and *cause of our salvation*, which are used in II, A, to which Dr. Schilder objects, are nevertheless quite confessional. For in Canons I, A, 6 we read that the gift of faith proceeds from God's eternal decree, which certainly presents the decree as the fountainhead of faith. And in Canons I, A, 10 we read: "The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election." But whatever minor criticisms may be offered, it is safe to say that the Declaration of Principles is the language of the Confessions; it offers nothing new.

2. The Declaration of Principles was adopted as a proposal to all our churches in the regular ecclesiastical way. No one can refute this on any sound church political basis. As I have repeatedly stated, it was adopted at the request of the Mission Committee. That committee is a synodical committee and cannot send its proposals or requests in the way of consistory and classis to synod, but must report to Synod directly. It is concerned with the mission work of our churches. And that work certainly pertains to all the churches in common. It was therefore no violation of Art. 30 of the Church Order when Synod received and acted on the request of the Mission Committee. Besides, let us

never forget that the Synod of 1950 did not definitely adopt the Declaration of Principles, but to avoid all semblance of hierarchy decided simply to propose it to all our churches, in order that in the way of consistories and classes it might be adopted at our next Synod. How anyone can content on good grounds that the Synod violated any rule of the Church Order is certainly a mystery to me.

3. The Declaration of Principles will certainly serve as a sound and clear basis for the organization of prospective Protestant Reformed Churches. And that there is dire need for such a definite basis for organization is already clearly proved by the history of our congregation in Hamilton, Ontario. There the consistory refused to stand by its own decision, which was corroborated by Classis East, namely, to ask of all prospective members that they submit to the instruction of our Protestant Reformed Churches and that they refrain from agitating against our doctrine. In my presence the members of the consistory definitely stated that at the time they were organized they did not promise anything and did not bind themselves to adhere to Protestant Reformed doctrine whatsoever. There was nothing binding in our churches according to them, except, of course, the Three Forms of Unity, which they interpret in their own fashion. Certainly a definite basis for organization of prospective Protestant Reformed Churches is a dire need. It was such a basis which the Mission Committee needed and requested and which was supplied by the proposed Declaration of Principles. And this Declaration will certainly admirably serve the purpose. Also for this reason I propose that the Declaration be adopted at our next Synod.

4. The Declaration of Principles will serve as a clear proclamation to all that are without of the faithful adherence of the Protestant Reformed Churches to the Reformed faith as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, over against all that deviate from these Confessions. This is true particularly in the first place over against the errors of the Three Points, which teach that there is a grace of God to all men, including the reprobate, in the common gifts to men; which teach, besides, that the promise of the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God to all that hear the gospel; and which teach, finally, that through an influence of common grace the natural man can do good in this world. And secondly, this is true over against the Heynsian view of the promise and the covenant, which according to the conviction of the Protestant Reformed Churches is certainly Arminian. It is especially over against these errors that the Declaration of Principles clearly sets forth what is according to the Protestant Reformed Churches the clear teaching of the Confessions.

5. It will safeguard our Protestant Reformed Churches

ches by the grace of God against the influence of those who claim that they adhere to the Reformed Confessions, but who nevertheless deviate from them. There is more than one reason for this attitude. Some indeed do not like the clear language of the Confessions with their emphasis on particularism, unconditional election, the total depravity of man, and sovereign grace. But there are others too, not only among the common laity but also among the leaders, that have never made a thorough and careful study of the Confessions. The former tendency to deviate from the strict language of the Confessions regarding the sovereignty of God, unconditional election, and the total depravity of man was evident when the Synod of 1924 of the Christian Reformed Churches adopted the well-known Three points. But this is no less true of many of the Liberated, who claim that they are bound only by the Three Forms of Unity but in the meantime teach that the promise is on the part of God for all the children that are baptized. But among them there are certainly very many that have never studied the Confessions. Their claim that they will be bound by nothing but the Three Forms of Unity is a mere empty slogan, by which they nevertheless want to throw open the doors of the church wide to whoever may want to join. This is evident from the attitude of the Consistory of Hamilton. Fact is that such people do not want to stand on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity but want to be bound by nothing at all, although they claim that they are bound by the Confessions. This is a great danger. If we follow their lead, our Protestant Reformed Churches will soon lose their distinctiveness. And therefore I claim that the Declaration of Principles, which clearly enunciates the teachings of the Confessions, will, by the grace of God, serve as a safeguard against all who claim that they are bound by the Confessions but who principally must have nothing of them.

6. Finally, the Declaration of Principles will serve as a sound and safe basis and starting-point for correspondence with other Reformed Churches, especially also with the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) of the Netherlands. I can very well understand and agree with men like the Rev. van Dijk of Groningen, Prof. Holwerda, and Rev. van Raalte and others, who protested at the Synod of Amersfoort when it decided to establish full correspondence with our churches and to open their pulpits to our ministers without any preliminary discussion. Honest correspondence demands first of all that we clearly enunciate the principles on which we stand and that in that way we may learn to know one another as churches. Correspondence with the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands certainly cannot be established by our opening our pulpits to them and they to us and by accepting one another's membership papers without first discussing the doc-

trinal differences that cause us to differ from one another. It is a well-known fact that the Liberated, though they deny that they have any officially adopted covenant view, all embrace the Heynsian conception. For proof I refer to the articles by Dr. Bremmer in the issues of the *Reformatie* that appeared soon after the war, to Prof. Veenhof's *Appél* and to his *Unica Catholica* as well as to many other articles in several church papers. We do not blame them for this. Nor do I think that correspondence with them is impossible. We can have correspondence, for instance, by sending delegates to one another's synods; we can have correspondence, too, by getting into closer and constant contact with each other and by honestly and openly discussing the doctrinal differences that separate us. But it stands to reason that to establish the beginning of such correspondence we must clearly and definitely enunciate our conception of the covenant and of the promise of God, in order that we may stand in an honest relation to one another from the beginning. And the Declaration of Principles will certainly serve to enunciate clearly what our Confession teaches concerning these matters, and therefore will serve also as a safe and proper basis and starting-point for correspondence.

These are some of the reasons why, in my opinion, the Synod of 1951 should adopt the Declaration of Principles.

H. H.

MY SHEPHERD

The Lord is my Shepherd, oh, blessed thought!
 I shall not want. His love has bought
 The pastures green where I may lie
 By waters still, where hopes soar high.
 My soul restored for His name's sake,
 E'en fear of death from me did take.
 He is with me through weal and woe,
 My every word and thought to know.
 His rod and staff they comfort me.
 His word from fear has set me free.
 He feeds and tends me with loving care
 And guards the raiment that I wear
 To keep it pure and spotless white,
 That from its beauty shall shine a light
 To keep my soul in righteous truth
 In childhood, age, and valiant youth.
 My cup shall with His love run o'er.
 His mercy, goodness, grace shall pour
 Into my soul. From His care be parted never,
 For I shall dwell in His home forever.

OUR DOCTRINE

The Creation Of The Spirit World

(3)

THEIR NATURE.

Secondly, the angels are spiritual and incorporeal beings.

With respect to this point there has not always been unanimity of opinion. The Jews and many of the early Church Fathers ascribed to the angels airy or fiery bodies. The Synod of Nicea, 787, declared its agreement with a certain John of Thessalonica who opined that the angels had fine, delicate bodies, and with another who stated that the angels were limited as far as space is concerned and had appeared in the form of men and could therefore be portrayed and represented. However, a council in 1215 declared that the angels had a spiritual nature and being, and the Church of the Middle Ages came to the conclusion that they were spiritual beings.

In support of the contention that also the angels must be characterized by a material substance, be it altogether different from that which characterizes mankind, the following grounds were presented. The various appearances of angels whereof we read so often in Holy Writ were quoted as proof for the contention that the heavenly beings had a material substance. How often it was declared, did they not appear as men. Secondly, the vision in Isaiah 6 was quoted in support of this contention. In that vision of the prophet the seraphims appear as having a face, feet, and hands. Thirdly, this contention rested upon a comparison which was drawn between the Lord and the angels. God is pure Spirit, but He is also Simple, omnipresent, eternal. The angels, however, are limited, also from the aspect of time and place; if they actually move about from one place to another, and are not to be identified with the living God, then they must, in their own way, be characterized by a bodily, corporeal existence. Hence, they must be characterized by a certain material existence, be it not in the rude, coarse sense of the word which, then is true of us as children of men.

In connection with this problem involving the question whether the angels are characterized by a material substance, we would state the following. First, we deal here with a mystery. This lies in the nature of the case. We do not even understand our own being, do not understand the existence of an animal; how, then, shall we understand and comprehend the nature and being of an angel? Secondly, in connection with the grounds which were presented for the contention

that the angels have material existence (see the preceding paragraph) we may say that, first, the reference to Isaiah 6 is surely pointless. It is a fact, is it not, that the prophet, Isaiah, also beholds the Lord sitting upon a throne, yea, that His train filled the temple. Hence, if it be true that the Seraphims have a material existence because they appear in this vision to Isaiah as having a face, hands, and feet, must the same not apply to the Lord? Secondly, we have already called attention to the fact that the Cherubims appear in different forms and that, therefore, these forms cannot constitute an essential part of their being and existence. Thirdly, it is true that God is Spirit and also that the angels are spiritual beings. However, we must bear in mind that God is uncreated, that the angels were or are created spirits, and that a created spirit does not necessarily imply that such a being has a material existence or body.

That the angels are spirits and incorporeal beings is taught in the Scriptures. The Word of God tells us plainly that the angels are spirits, as in Matt. 8:16, 12:45: "When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His Word, and healed all that were sick. . . . Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation;" Luke 7:21, 8:2, 11:26: "And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. . . . And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils. . . . Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."; Acts 19:12: "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."; Eph. 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."; Hebrews 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Moreover, they have no flesh and bone, Luke 24:39: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have"; they do not marry, Matt. 22:30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." It is true that also the people of God will not marry or be given in marriage in heaven, and that from this fact one might conceivably conclude

that, therefore, also they will not have a material existence in heaven. However, this conclusion cannot be drawn from this passage in Matthew. Jesus, in these words, simply declares that we shall be like unto the angels in this respect: we shall not marry or be given in marriage; this does not imply that the reason why we shall not marry or be given in marriage is necessarily the same as that which applies to the heavenly beings. That the angels do not marry is due, we know, to their peculiar existence. The angels, moreover, can be present in great numbers in a very limited space, Luke 8:30: "And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name: And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him." Finally, according to Col. 1:16, they were invisible: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him."

Hence, we would conclude that the angels are spiritual beings, not consisting of substance or material. Also our souls are immaterial, are they not, and yet they have been created and are able to exist apart from the bodies, which does not happen when the soul leaves its dead body. Animals are purely material; angels are spirits; man is so created that he is adapted to both worlds, the material and the spiritual (his soul and body). In heaven God's people shall continue to be beings with a material existence, although we know that our bodies then will be different than they are now. And, as beings whose bodies shall be characterized by a heavenly substance in distinction from the earthly which characterizes us upon the earth, we shall be higher than the angels, who are incorporeal beings.

Thirdly, the angels are rational creatures, gifted with mind and will.

Both faculties, of the mind and of the will, are repeatedly ascribed to the angels by Holy Writ. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it . . .", Job 1:6 f.f.; "And he showed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him."—Zech. 3:1 f.f.; "And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? are Thou come hither to torment us before the time? . . . Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." Matth. 8:29, 18:10; "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through

his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.", 2 Cor. 11:3; "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" Eph. 6:11-12.

Various personal attributes and activities are attributed to the angels as e.g.. self-consciousness, Luke 1:19: "And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings."; speaking and desire, I Pet. 1:12: "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."; rejoicing, Luke 15:10: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."; praying, Heb. 1:6: "And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him."; believing, James 2:19: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."; lying, John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father the devil ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."; sinning, John 8:44.

A great power is ascribed to them; angels are not timid beings, but an army, host, mighty in strength. This is clearly taught in Ps. 103:20-21: "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye His hosts; ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure."; Luke 11:21: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace."; Col. 1:16: "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for him:" 2 Thess. 1:7-8: "And to you who are troubled with us, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."; Acts 5:19: "But the angels of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said."; Heb. 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

In knowledge they are richer than we upon the earth. This we read in Matt. 18:10 and 24:36: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I

say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven. . . . But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only." Surely, the implication in the latter passage is that not even the angels in heaven know that day or hour. They acquire their knowledge out of their own nature, John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." Furthermore, they attain unto this knowledge out of their viewing of the works of God, Eph. 3:10, I Tim. 3:16, and I Pet. 1:12: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. . . . And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. . . . Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." They also acquire their knowledge from revelations which God imparted unto them, Daniel 8:15-16, 9:21-22, and Revelation 1:1: "And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. . . . Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. . . . The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." However, the knowledge of the angels is limited to the objects, Eph. 3:10, I Pet. 1:12: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. . . . Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

They do not know our nor another's thoughts of the heart, I Kings 8:39: "Then hear Thou in heaven

Thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart Thou knowest; (for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men);", or Ps. 139:2-4: "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether."; and in Acts 1:24: "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, Which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen."

They do not know the future, Is. 41:22, 23: "Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together." Neither do they know the day of judgment, Matt. 24:36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only." Also, their knowledge is subject to increase and development, Eph. 3:10: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known the manifold wisdom of God."

Finally, we may also believe that the knowledge and power among the angels varies considerably, and that the angels are to be distinguished, not only in classes and groups, but also personally so that each angel bears his own particular personality. This is also true among men. A person's characteristics and "make-up" determines to a large extent the nature and extent of his knowledge. The one thirsts after medical knowledge and another concerns himself with the study of plants, etc. As a person is, so he studies. This is often the case among men. Why should not the same distinction hold forth among the heavenly spirits?

Finally, all the angels have also in common that they are moral, ethical beings.

This appears from what Scripture teaches us in connection with the good angels who serve God day and night, and the bad angels who did not continue in their original state.

The Word of God does not say much about the original state of the angels. We do read that God saw at the end of His work of creation, that all was very good. This, we know, is told in Genesis 1:31. Besides, a good and perfect original condition of the angels is surely presupposed in Judas 6 and II Pet. 2:4: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. . . . For if God spared not the angels that sinned,

but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." That the evil angels existed eternally, so that they were not created good and therefore did not fall from their high estate is surely not taught in the Holy Scriptures. And we need not at this time discuss the many views which have been developed in connection with the original condition of the angels and their subsequent fall.

The Word of God simply informs us that all were created good, that some sinned and are eternally damned, and that others remained standing and were confirmed in their goodness. Also over against the Remonstrants (Arminians) who taught that the will of the good angels was changeable, the Church of God has maintained the contrary. Everywhere in Holy Writ the good angels are pictured as a faithful host who perform unceasingly the will of the Lord. They are called angels of the Lord in Ps. 103:20 and Ps. 104:4: "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. . . . Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire." They are called elect in I Tim. 5:21: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." They are called holy in Matt. 25:31: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." The same thought is expressed in Luke 9:26, Acts 10:22, II Cor. 11:14, and Rev. 14:10, and we quote the last text: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Daily they see the face of the Lord, Matt. 18:810: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." And the believers shall one day be like unto them, according to Luke 20:35-36: "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

Of the angels we may, therefore, say that they are created beings, and that they are spiritual, incorporeal beings. Holy Writ also informs us that they are rational creatures, gifted with mind and will. And, finally, they are moral, ethical beings. We must still call attention to their service and activity and, finally, to their significance for the Church of God. But this must wait until a following article.

H. Veldman.

Contribution

Holland, Michigan
December 22, 1950

Dear Editor of the Standard Bearer:

In re Rev. Kok's article which he handed out to the personel of the Holland Men's Society, and which also appeared in the Standard Bearer, I would like to state the following:

That although Rev. Kok is "becoming more and more convinced that the 'Declaration of Principles' is a sad mistake, and that we as churches, should reject it"; that I am becoming a thousandfold more convinced every time I read this 'Declaration' from the hand of Rev. Kok, that if there ever was a time that we as churches needed such a 'Declaration' that the time is NOW; not only because the immigrants have asked Synod through the Mission Committee, but it is becoming more and more evident that we need this 'Declaration' for the very personel of our own churches in order to save our churches from being swallowed up by Arminianism and Pelagianism.

In Rev. Kok's article it strikes me that there are two parts to which we must pay particular attention: 1) His deep love for the immigrants, so much so, that he would leave open (?) or open WIDE the doors of the Protestant Reformed Churches so that they could enter peacefully, to believe and defend whatever is dearest to their heart, even at the expense of we denying our doctrine; and 2) That in order to arrive at this possibility to procure this for the Liberated, Rev. Kok assails our Synod with the accusation that they (the synod) have violated Art. 30 of the D.K.O., which, *if this can be proven* would certainly be a strong point to overthrow the possibility of ever adopting this, or any Declaration similar to it which in any way would be offensive to the hearts and minds of the Liberated brethren in Canada, or the Netherlands, in order then that they with us could unmolestedly all live under the same church roof. That to me seems to be the entire content of the article Rev. Kok handed out to us, which (as he told me) would also appear in the Standard Bearer, for which I shall not wait.

These two parts in his article are clearly discernable if and when we carefully study the matter in the light of the material which he advances to prove his contention:

"The 'Declaration' is a sad mistake: Partly (?) because of its doctrinal content; and Synod violated Art. 30 of the D.K.O.; Synod acted TOO hastily; and this 'Declaration' UNLESS GOD WILL GRACIOUSLY FORBID, will cause dissension and schism in our churches . . . (because ?) because the questions (???)

involved are extra-confessional?) . . . and debatable?) . . . and because of that may NOT determine membership or non-membership *in the church of Christ*. (why not the Prot. Ref. Churches, which would be to the point, H.V.P.)

To the above assertions, Rev. Kok then ushers in HIS material from here and there to substantiate HIS contention; and what is this? Let us see:

"Instead of the Synod (where ALL the churches are represented) expressing whether our view of the 'Covenant and Baptism' are *BINDING* in our churches, Rev. Kok would have A *consistory* answer that question for the Mission Committee; which HE claims '*is the only authoritative body* in this matter', and thus HE thinks to do justice to Art. 30 of the D.K.O. which Synod violated. However(?) IF THIS CONSISTORY could not reach a decision, THEN the matter could have been taken to Synod. (I underscore, H.V.P.)

But what IF this consistory *WOULD HAVE REACHED A DECISION*, then what? According to Rev. Kok then Art. 30 would not have been violated. But I ask: would then Art. 84, D.K.O. also have been maintained, as also Art. 31? Rev. Kok *would bind* 24 consistories to the decision of that ONE consistory. And that he then calls GOOD CHURCH POLITY? But so it is; that is his version . . . (but not mine, H.V.P.) One consistory would then lord it over 24 other consistories, who had no vote in the matter (Art. 84 of the D.K.O.) and bind their consciences which Art. 31 D.K.O. forbids; and this would be O.K. And we adopt a heresy again and Art. 80 D.K.O. would look nice. Is that good church order Rev. Kok?

"Synod acted too hastily says Rev. Kok, for which I can find no reason, and he furnishes none, so it is anyone's guess just what he means with this assertion. It is true that he could mean that Synod wasn't ABLE to express itself on what we as churches have taught and believed for the last 20-25 years already; as also that we could have explained the D.K.O. to the Synod first before they acted on the request from the Canadian immigrants; both of these suggestions seem to be incorporated in his article.

And, if God does not graciously forbid etc." My question is FORBID WHAT? The Synod (churches) passing this Declaration? This is evidently what is at stake, and this then is either the salvation, or destruction of our churches. But WHAT is Rev. Kok's solution to the problem then? Evidently the following: Prevent schism and dissension in our churches, by drawing up some sort of letter which every Liberated immigrant can sign with a FREE conscience, to do and believe as he deems proper, by propagating the old Heynsian views into our churches again, (that which we so hate, and which they so love); but for conscience sake, let us bind NO ONE; because IF WE

DO, then *we bar* such an one from the kingdom of heaven and *such an Anathema* would be terrible; and this we shall do (?) if and when we pass this Declaration???. (That seems to be Rev. Kok's difficulty, H. V. P.) AND THERE WOULD BE NO DISSENSION IF the Liberated could FREELY propagate that old Heynsian view into our churches again; and NO ONE could do anything about it? That would be the peace of the graveyard, would it not? And a peace at any price, JUST SO the Liberated find shadow under the church roof of the Prot. Ref. Churches, which, as soon as we concede to such a proposition, the Prot. Ref. Churches will exist NO MORE. (Strange reasoning indeed, and difficult to follow, H.V.P.)

Then Rev. Kok states: "We may not determine membership or non-membership in (the church of Christ) or in our Prot. Ref. Churches". Where did Rev. Kok coin such phraseology? The Reverend must possess a D. K. O. all of his own; but this cannot be a D.K.O. He may own one, but I challenge him to prove that according to OUR accepted Confessions, and OUR D.K.O. formula of subscription; of making confession of faith; form of installation of ministers, and that of Elders and Deacons etc. etc., that that which HE asserts here contains one-billionth of a degree of the truth of the Reformed Confessions ever before or even now. It may be REAL arminianism and pelagianism, but there isn't a shadow of Reformed truth in his contention at best.

To me it seems SO PATHETIC that a man claiming to see the matter so clearly as what Rev. Kok seems to would have us believe; that instead of his assailing the matter as he does; that instead he would have given us ABUNDANT proofs from God's Word, our accepted Confessions (major and minor) and the D.K.O. I feel that this is not only his privilege, but also his duty as a minister who was taught at our school, and has been a minister in our churches for some 16 years already. With the exception of Rev. Vos; he is one of the oldest ministers, and should be WELL ABLE to clearly and concisely explain what he means, instead of doing as he does. Then we will get somewhere in the proper direction, instead of what his article advocates. Let us be realistic, instead of shadow-boxing one another with hazy insinuations of "wolf! wolf!"

I for one (and there are others with me in Holland) feel that IT IS MORE THAN HIGH TIME, that this Declaration be passed, not only for the Liberated, but also for the benefit of our churches, lest we be swallowed up in the mire of Arminianism and Pelagianism now and forever. So help us God is my prayer, to preserve our doctrine.

Your brother in Christ,

H. A. Van Putten.

Contribution

Holland, Michigan
December 26, 1950

Dear Editor:

If possible will you please place the following in the Standard Bearer?

THE ISSUES?

In our discussions of "conditions" and "The Brief Declaration of Principles" I believe we very often fail to properly distinguish the real issues involved. Consequently many insinuations and charges are hurled back and forth which, if the issues were properly evaluated and understood, would never be made. It is because we are convinced of this that we put forth this effort to smooth the waters and conserve the unity of our churches. We would also make the plea that we carry on our discussion as brethren who are seeking the *truth*, and *one another*, in *love*.

With the above in mind, we would set forth some thoughts which we have gathered in our study of the discussions, both in our papers and in personal conversations. It has become clear to us that there are two distinct issues involved. The conception of the "Liberated" churches in re the covenant and baptism, and the conception of "conditions" in our own Protestant Reformed theology.

With respect to the former we make bold to assert that we have no reason to believe that any of our ministers agree with the views which are generally accepted by us as being those of the "liberated" churches. In all the published articles no one has embraced those views, but on the contrary have expressed disagreement. We refer here, of course, to the conceptions of the "Liberated" on such questions as: what is the covenant?, who are in the covenant?, etc. Experience has taught us that their view has led in the wrong direction. How else would we account for the fact that amongst them we find Arminian and Heynsian individuals? None of us, I am sure, would want an open-door policy over against that conception. If that were the only issue involved I believe there would be little or no opposition to the adoption of the "Declaration of Principles". But the issue of the concept of "conditions" in our own theology is also involved and therein lies the reason for the discussion in our midst.

It has been our experience that whenever we, as society, consistory, or otherwise, begin to discuss the "Declaration" we find ourselves immediately in a controversy over "conditions". The other issue is rarely brought up. We realize, of course, that the second issue arose out of a discussion of the Liberated view, in which the writer refused to condemn them for

their concept of a "conditional promise" in baptism. That alone is the bone of contention in our circles. Can we speak of conditions in the reformed sense? If we can, then may we, by declaration, officially affirm that the promises of God are unconditional? If the answer to the former is "yes" then to the latter we must say "no". In the discussion of this question we must be careful to remain brotherly and honest with one another. Let us keep a warm heart and a cool head. Let us not label as Arminian, Pelagian, or Heynsian those who argue for conditions. **WE ARE ALL PROTESTANT REFORMED!** (although, in passing, I would like to repeat what others have said: namely, that some who defend conditions do not sufficiently make clear their position). We, personally, have never heard one Protestant Reformed man deny that God fulfills all conditions. On the other hand we have experienced that, in a group discussion, those who earnestly oppose conditions have been forced to admit that in a certain sense there is a conditionality to the promises of God. But they would rather not use that word. They would like to term it something else. It should be borne in mind that this position stems from a sincere love for the Truth of Sovereign Grace and a fear that the continued use of the word condition may endanger the retainment of that truth by our Protestant Reformed Churches. On the other hand we must also bear in mind that those who take the opposite stand are also motivated by love for our churches and that their fear is that we may become unbalanced in our theology by failing to emphasize the responsibility of man. In the heat of the discussion these two fears have become so magnified in our minds that we begin to speak of our foundations being shaken, our walls crumbling, and our future at stake. We draw up a "Declaration" we don't need. We almost bring up the age-old charge, "doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane". Let's put the concept of "conditionality" back in its proper place in our theology and return to our former unity and trust of one another!

What is that place? There is a place. There has been a place for twenty-five years. But that place is not on the foreground. WE have not found it necessary to speak of conditions very often. The reformed "fathers" composed the confessions without having to use the word, although the idea may be found in such portions as Article 5, 2nd head of doctrine, Canons; article 8, 3rd and 4th. The word is not found in such works as the "Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism", "In the Sanctuary", "Whosoever Will", and others from the pen of Rev. H. Hoeksema. If our ministers used the word in their sermons it was so infrequently that it passed unnoticed.

The word has been used occasionally to refute charges brought against our emphasis of the doctrine of Sovereign Grace. It was used recently to arouse us

out of spiritual lethargy as churches. It probably was used occasionally by our ministers in their sermons. When used in those isolated instances it never was challenged or protested. So, for twenty-five years, conditions had their *proper* place among us. That proper place was way back on the shelf, to be brought out only when occasion required. We have items like that in our naturel life. Things, though good in themselves, which we would not partake of every day, not only because it might lead to harm for ourselves but might also lead our children astray. And yet we keep them on hand for the time when we might need them for their medicinal value. But we keep them way back on the shelf. Let's do that with the words "condition" and "conditional". And then let's not apologize for the times we have found it necessary to use it. Let's not ban the "medicine" from our cupboard with declarations. The Three Forms of Unity are sufficient to ban the "poison" of Arminianism and Heynsianism.

But don't we need the "Declaration" in dealing with the "liberated" in Canada? I do not believe that we do. We should draw up instead a form for prospective congregations and individual members to sign which would demand the following:

1. Agreement with the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity.
2. A promise to be willing to come under the instruction and preaching of the Protestant Reformed Churches.
3. A promise not to militate against the Protestant Reformed doctrine.

Less than this we cannot demand. More than this is superfluous. By demanding agreement to these three points we safeguard our precious heritage; we leave to the preaching of the Word and catechetical instruction the task of opening and closing the door; and we have a signed promise to use in case anyone militates against *the Truth*.

H. H. Windemuller.

IN MEMORIAM

It pleased the Lord our God to take unto Himself by the hand of death, our beloved brother and fellow member,

William Holleman

at the age of twenty-five years.

Our fervent prayer arises to the throne of grace that the God of all comfort may by His Word and Spirit abundantly comfort the bereaved family and friends. May the widow and child especially experience the Lord's blessed nearness.

This loss, which we believe is our brother's gain, serves as another exhortation to us all to seek the things that are above and not the things that are on earth.

Edgerton Men's Society,

B. Gritters, Secretary.

Hoeless Weeding and Ecclesiastical Bifocals

With considerable interest and also some amazement we have read the eviseration of our recent contribution wherein we attempted to state why we considered the adoption of the Declaration undesirable.

We appreciate the fact that the Rev. Ophoff has felt it worthy of his time and talent to take this material and not only to comment upon it in general but to treat it paragraph by paragraph and express his opinion not only on those things wherein we disagree but also here and there to express agreement.

However, I beg to be excused from some of the conclusions which he draws. I do not say that they *could* not be drawn but rather that they are not the simple meaning which I intended and which I expected should have been understood by all. Let us then blame it to my awkward pen and faulty thought structure.

For example I did not state that all who are in favor of the Declaration would, as it were, spew the Liberated out of their mouth. I do not know. I would not even venture a guess either numerically or percentage-wise. But you and I both know that there are some who say: "Those liberated—bah!" And I am very glad that the Reverend is not one of them.

But, the Reverend supplies us with a very fitting definition of the Declaration. He calls it the hoe with which we are to remove the weeds of error. Further, he also claims that we cannot weed without a hoe. And with this I disagree. I believe that there is a time when we must get down on our hands and knees even as the muck-farmers do with their celery and onions. And why do they do so? Why do they not use a hoe? With a hoe they could save themselves much back-breaking labor. They could stand upright and with mighty strokes clean their fields. Ah, but they know that the plants are young and tender and those little plants would be in danger of being sliced off with the weeds. They are wise and willing to prostrate themselves under the heat of the sun rather than to take an easier method and endanger their crop.

And again, the Reverend disagrees when I state that declarations are a sign of weakness in the church. Allow me to use another figure. Let us consider it this way: With a perfect vision we could so clearly see the meaning that we could use only the Scriptures. But, since our vision is impaired and we see darkly, we have quite properly added confessions which, to stay with the figure, are spectacles (eye-glasses) enabling us to more clearly and in a systematic manner see the truths of the Word.

But what now is a sign of weakness? It is wher-

the oculist says, "I'm afraid we'll have to make your next pair bifocals." And yet, through these bifocals you'll still see the same thing but they serve only to magnify the objects which appear before them. I do not believe that we as a denomination are that senile. And I do not like to see the spectacles of our confessions reground in certain spots. They will certainly be strange looking spectacles if we, each time a new situation arises cut other menisci into them.

Privately I have asked what we would do were we called upon to labor among our pre-millennialists or baptists. Would each new situation require a new declaration?

And I cannot help but be reminded of the advice which James gives in Acts 15:19. Those Gentiles too may have had many doctrinal imperfections but they would lay no greater burden upon them than that they abstain from pollutions of idols and fornication and things strangled, and blood. In other words, the minimum requirements.

And now, in closing, there remains one more thought wherein the Reverend and I agree so well. He calls attention to the fact that essentially every sermon is a declaration. And he is so correct. Normally then we hear one hundred and four declarations per year. And each one is a facet on the stone of the Truth of God's Word. And as each ray penetrates the inmost recesses of our hearts it reflects the virtues of Him who speaks to us through that Word. And so powerful is that preaching that although there be three earmarks of the true church, yet is the preaching of the Word the chief and indispensable one.

But, let us become concrete. Surely the Reverend and I both know that outside of the younger generation many who are today Protestant Reformed owe this inheritance to a diligent attention to the preaching of the Word and instruction from our faithful pastors. And if those means which God has given us fail (as we count failure) surely man-given declarations will not and cannot succeed (as we count success).

I repeat, don't go through the Canadian Customs office with a hoe over your shoulder nor much less a bull-dozer. It will be much more fitting to the dignity of the cloth if you cross the border with a Bible under one arm and the three forms of unity under the other. And if with tools such as these we cannot or will not work or if we suppose that with a hoe and bifocals we more properly identify ourselves we may as well admit that we are afraid of losing our identity whereas it could not be better preserved than it is now by the lively proclamation of the Word.

Respectfully,
Geo. Ten Elshof.

Rev. Petter's Sixth Instalment

Rev. Petter does not write the truth about the "Declaration". He does not write the truth about us, who urge the adoption of the "Declaration". He does not write the truth about our last Synod by whom the "Declaration" was drafted and tentatively adopted. He does not write the truth about Rev. Hoeksema. He brings us one and all under a thick cloud. I have need of making this plain.

1. First to be considered is this excerpt from Rev. Petter's writings: "As to the origination (of the "Declaration") there already has been some brow-raising and it is no wonder that Rev. Blankespoor came with questions in the Standard Bearer as to the motive of the origination of the document. It certainly is the concern of our people how things that they are responsible for originate," writes Rev. Petter, meaning to say that he is going to tell them. ("Concordia" for Dec. 7).

Remark. I don't like these statements. They are bad statements for several reasons, the chief of which is that, taken together, they leave the impression that in Rev. Petter our people have a conductor of a kind of "News Behind the News" column, the revealer of hidden and questionable synodical transactions that our people may not know and would never get to knowing, were it not for Rev. Petter's skill at getting to the bottom of things (definitely to the bottom of the origination of the "Declaration") and for his courage to publish his findings.

This impression is deepened by Rev. Petter's telling his readers that the statement of Rev. Hoeksema to the effect that synod heeded the request of the Mission Committee and adopted the "Declaration",—this statement of Rev. Hoeksema, according to Rev. Petter, "is a slipshod expression that completely reverses the facts". According to Rev. Petter, "it is not true in any sense that the synod heeded the request of the Mission Committee". ("Concordia for Dec. 21).

Mark you, Rev. Hoeksema, according to Rev. Petter, reversed the facts, which is equivalent to saying that at least apparently *he* does not want our people to know how things that they are responsible for originate.

But let me continue with my article. The truth will out.

2. As we just saw, Rev. Petter maintains that the origination of the "Declaration" causes brow-raising; that, in other words, it is the product of a series of unethical synodical acts. Is this true? The "Acts" of Synod, 1950, reveals that it is not true. It reveals, does the "Acts" that the "Declaration" is the product of a series of synodical acts strictly orderly, legal, and

thus ethical, absolutely so. Here are the facts as gleaned from the "Acts" of Synod (pp. 52-54).

The Mission Committee received from various groups in Canada a request to state what is binding in the communion of Protestant Reformed churches. The Mission Committee replied that, and now I quote (from the Acts): "although we do not feel that it lies within our jurisdiction to give answer to this question, we do not hesitate to express that the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity, as interpreted by us overagainst the theory of 'common grace', and also the theory of 'general grace', as expressed in the 'Three Points' of 1924, are binding in our churches."

At the same time the Mission Committee addressed to the Synod (1950) the following request: "We would appreciate having something uniform and definite to present to these groups, particularly when they request organization. Therefore, *your committee requests synod to draw up a form that may be used by those families requesting organization into a Protestant Reformed congregation. We believe that this would serve to remove all misunderstanding and aid toward unity.* (italics—O.)

Synod (1950) did as the Mission Committee requested. It instructed its committee of pre-advice to draw up for our missionaries such a "form" that "could be used by those families requesting organization."

Synod's committee of pre-advice did its work and reported to synod as follows:

"Your committee of pre-advice advises:

2. In re point II of the report, dealing with the matter of an adopted "Form" for requests for organization:
 - a. To adopt the following clear-cut expression as one which should appear in each request for organization, along with the denial of common grace and the Three Points of 1924, and profession of adherence to the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordrecht and professing the Scriptures to be the infallible Word of God (as stands to reason): 'The promise of the Gospel, both as to the will of God to save His people and the execution of His will to save them, is not general, that is, it does not include all the baptized children of the church, but is particular, that is, it pertains only to the elect of God.'
 - b. To send the above proposed expression to all the consistories for their reactions and to advise them to bring findings to Synod via Classis, since such proposed action ought to follow the proper Reformed Church Political way of consistory, classis and synod."

I continue to quote the "Acts" as follows:

"A motion is made that this proposed form be used by groups desiring organization as Protestant Re-

formed Churches, and that it be forwarded to consistories for consideration.

Art. 64

"A substitute motion is made to re-submit this matter to the committee of pre-advice, and to add the two professors as advisors to this committee.

Friday Afternoon Session

Art. 66

"Mr. R. Doezeema opens the afternoon session with a word of prayer. The Rev. H. Hoeksema again serves as delegate.

Art. 67

"After further discussion the substitute motion of article 64 carries."

Synod's enlarged committee of pre-advice did its work, and on the following Monday evening reported.

I again quote the "Acts":

Monday Evening Session

Art. 115

"The meeting is called to order. The Rev. Hanko leads in prayer.

Art. 116

"The Rev. G. Vos reads the report of the committee (the report of Synod's enlarged committee of pre-advice to whom the "Form" had been re-submitted—O. Cf. Art. 63, 64, and 67). The document read bears the title, 'A Brief Declaration of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Churches'."

I again quote the minutes:

Art. 116

"Motion is made to accept the document as drawn up by the committee of pre-advice and to act according to the three propositions found at the conclusion of the document. The motion carries."

The three propositions found at the conclusion of the "document" (The Declaration) read:

1. That synod subject this entire document to the approval of the churches.
2. If no objection is offered, to adopt this at our next synod.
3. To adopt this in the meantime as a working hypothesis for our mission committee and for our missionaries in the organization of churches."

Remarks. Such is the history of the origination of the "New Declaration" as recorded in the "Acts of Synod". And I now challenge Rev. Petter or anyone else to point to a single statement in this record indicative of a brow-raising act or actions on the part of synod regarding its origination of the "Declaration". No such statement at all occurs. I maintain that what this record reveals is that the series of synodical acts

that resulted in the appearance of the "Declaration" was strictly orderly, legal in the point of view of the requirements of the Church Order, and therefore also ethical, absolutely so. I challenge Rev. Petter to disprove this statement of mine and thus to prove his own accusation with the "Acts" of Synod. He cannot do it. And therefore he should retract. It is not a small thing openly to bring a whole Synod under a cloud.

2. Rev. Petter's latest article ("Concordia" for Dec. 21) sets out as follows:

"It is of interest to our churches to know what the request of the Mission Committee was and what became of this request at Synod."

Here Rev. Petter means to be promising our people that he will tell them what became of this request of the Mission Committee at Synod—the request that Synod provide it with something uniform and definite to present to groups of immigrants when they request organization into Protestant Reformed congregations. Let us take notice of what Rev. Petter tells our people as to what became of this request of the Mission Committee. It is this:

"Synod simply ignored their request. . . . It is not true in any sense that Synod heeded the request. One gets the impression (from the "Acts of Synod", Rev. Petter means) that Synod completely forgot the request of the Committee and began to work at something altogether different."

Remark. We should know what Rev. Petter means by these statements. This appears from the following sentences from his pen:

"Thus it is plain what kind (mark you well, *what kind—O.*) of statement or formula the Mission Committee had in mind" (Concordia, for Dec. 7).

This statement from Rev. Petter's pen clarifies the point that he argues. It is this: What synod ignored is not the Mission Committee's request *as such* but its request *for the kind of statement or formula that it had in mind*.

But this is not true. But let us suppose that it is true. How could that be a just cause for brow-raising? Is Synod *obliged* to heed its committee's requests and adopt their advice? Is Synod the servant of its committees? Or are the synodical committees servants of the Synod? The latter, to be sure.

But it isn't even true that Synod ignored the Mission Committee's request *for the kind of formula that it had in mind*. I can and shall prove from the "Acts of Synod" and, strange as this may sound, from Rev. Petter's own statements 1) that so far was Synod from ignoring the Mission Committee's request *for the kind of formula that it had in mind* (Rev. Petter's contention), that Synod took full cognizance of it; 2) that so far was Synod from not in any sense heeding the request (Rev. Petter's contention), that it did heed

the request in the fullest sense; 3) that so far was Synod from working at something altogether different from what the Mission Committee had requested (Rev. Petter's contention), that it certainly did work precisely at what the Mission Committee had in mind and accordingly had requested; 4) that Synod also gave the Mission Committee exactly what it had in mind and accordingly had requested; 5) that therefore Rev. Hoeksema spoke the truth and not untruth (Rev. Petter's contention) in saying *that Synod heeded the Mission Committee's request* and adopted the "Declaration", that thus this statement of Rev. Hoeksema is *not* a slipshod expression that completely reverses the facts.

Proof for these five contentions.

First to be examined are Rev. Petter's very own statements. I quote the following from his pen:

"And because of such requests the Mission Committee asked Synod for something uniform to present to those groups, particularly when they request organization. *And when the Committee of Pre-advice which was quite well acquainted with the work and problems of the Mission Committee, came with its pre-advice they proposed: (italics—O.)*

a) to adopt the following clearcut expression as one which should appear in each request for organization etc. (see above for the rest of this report—O.)

"Thus far point a) of the Advisory Committee. *Thus it is quite plain what kind of a statement or formula the Mission Committee had in mind (italics—O.)*" ("Concordia" for Dec. 7).

Let us take notice. According to the above-cited italicized statements from Rev. Petter's pen, the "formula" that was proposed to Synod by its Committee of pre-advice is precisely what the Mission Committee had in mind. It is exactly the kind of "Formula" the Mission Committee wanted and had requested.

What Rev. Petter here tells us is indeed true. As he himself says, this appears, and I now quote him, "from their own answers (the answers of the Mission Committee—O.) to certain letters of groups (Canadian immigrants) and from the wording of their request (the request of the Mission Committee—O.)." ("Concordia" for Dec. 7). A sample of the Mission Committee's answers to "these groups" (Canadian immigrants) is found on page 53 and 54 of the "Acts" of Synod, 1950.

But let us now pay strict attention. If, as Rev. Petter says, the "formula" that was proposed to Synod by its committee of pre-advice is precisely what the Mission Committee had in mind and had requested, then it *must* follow that the "New Declaration" is precisely what the Mission Committee had in mind and had requested. And why? Simply because the "New

Declaration" *is*—mark you, I say *is*—the very "Formula" proposed to Synod by its Committee of pre-advice *clarified, improved and founded upon our Confessions*. A comparison of the two fully bears out the truth of this statement of mine.

1. Both the "Formula" (proposed to Synod by its committee of pre-advice) and the "New Declaration" repudiate common grace and the Three Points of 1924.

2. Both the "Formula" and the "New Declaration" profess adherence to the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordrecht.

3. Both the "Formula" and the "New Declaration" limit the promise of the Gospel only to the elect in the sense that both declare it to be the will of God to save only the elect and not *all* the baptized.

4. Thus the implied teaching of the "Formula" also must be that the promise of God is an oath bequeathing salvation only on the elect and thus a promise unconditional and unailing.

5. In a word, substantially, the "Formula" (proposed to Synod by its committee of pre-advice) and the "Declaration" *are one and the same* document.

Herewith I have proved with the "Acts of Synod" in conjunction with Rev. Petter's own statements every one of my five contentions. And I challenge Rev. Petter to prove with the "Acts of Synod" the contrary. He cannot possibly do it. How truly amazing therefore that he could write: "It is not true in any sense that Synod heeded the request (The Mission Committee's request for the kind of "Formula" that it had in mind—O.). One gets the impression that the Synod completely forgot the request of the (Mission) Committee and began to work at something altogether different. For look what we now have. (We have the "New Declaration" Rev. Petter means to say). ("Concordia" for Dec. 21).

Yes, indeed, look what we now have!—precisely what the Mission Committee requested. So, let Rev. Petter look again at what we have. And, if he can, let him point out the essential difference between the Formula and the "New Declaration".

4. There is still a third fault that Rev. Petter finds with Synod (1950). Synod ignored a principle of Reformed Church government laid down in Art. 30 of the Church Order that "in major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies." Synod violated this principle when it heeded the Mission Committee's request for a formula to be used by families requesting organization. Quoting Rev. Petter, "The logical thing for Synod to do when the request of the Mission Committee came on the floor was to decline its consideration on the basis of the fact that it belonged to a minor gathering" in this case the Consistory of Fuller Ave. (the calling church), Rev. Petter means. For he also states, "Thus

it is evident that the Mission Committee with the *calling church* should have composed such a form if they felt the necessity of it in their work."

This reasoning of Rev. Petter is old. It already has been twice advanced, once by Rev. Blankespoor in "The Standard Bearer" for Oct. 1, and again in this same magazine by Rev. Kok. And we all know how well Rev. Hoeksema succeeded in exposing the fallacy of this reasoning. Why then must Rev. Petter appear with it anew in the "Concordia"? I would like to know. All he does is to repeat the old argument. He makes no attempt at refutation of the argument of Rev. Hoeksema. He chooses simply to ignore it. This is thoroughly discouraging.

Synod is not guilty of overriding the Church Order in heeding the request of the Mission Committee. Nor is this committee guilty of overriding the Church Order in directing to Synod its request for a formula.

Isn't the following as plain as the sun in a cloudless sky at midday? Namely:

1) That Art. 30 of the Church Order distinguishes two kinds of matters:

- a) such as originate and, if possible, must be finished in, the minor assemblies (consistory and classis).
- b) such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly (Synod) in common, and that therefore do not originate in the minor assemblies to be dealt with and, if possible, finished in them. (See the last clause of the article which, strange to say, Rev. Petter overlooked, but which reads: "or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common).

2) That our Mission work pertains to the churches of the major assembly (synod) in common.

3) That therefore *the management* of our Mission work pertains to the churches of the major assembly (Synod) in common, and that, accordingly, Art. 51 of the Church Order rules that "the missionary work of the churches is *regulated* by the general Synod in a Mission Order."

4) That therefore *the management* of mission work is done not in consistory and not in the classis but in the major assembly (Synod) alone.

5) That the management of mission work includes also providing the Mission Committee with a formula.

6) That Synod therefore did not override Art. 30 of the Church Order in providing the Mission Committee with a Formula.

7) That the Mission Committee did not override Art. 30 of the Church Order in by-passing the consistory and classis by coming directly to Synod with its request for a formula.

Let Rev. Petter now prove that the Church Order withholds from Synod the right to compose a form and that it bestows this right solely on the consistory and the Mission Committee. That this precisely is Rev. Petter's contention is evident from the following lines from his pen, "And then it strikes our attention that this request should never have been treated by Synod. . . . Thus it is evident that the *Mission Committee* with the *calling church* should have composed such a form if they felt the necessity of it and used it in their work."

It's amazing that Rev. Petter failed to realize that by this statement he overturns his whole position. Attend to what he says, "Not *Synod* but the *mission committee*—mark you, *the mission committee*—should have composed such a form." But isn't the mission committee a committee of synod? Let us take notice how "The Constitution of the Mission Committee" defines this committee, as follows: The mission committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches is a committee chosen by synod to regulate and supervise all missionary activity prescribed and delegated to it by synod. Hence, the committee is a synodical committee, and responsible *only* to synod for all its actions.

If this is true, how can the mission committee have the right in question and not the synod? This is impossible. For it is precisely synod and synod alone that bestows upon the mission committee whatever rights it exercises. How can synod bestow rights which it does not have, and which it may not itself also exercise, if it so chooses?

And this brings us to the question: How can the right in question belong to synod and at once to the lone consistory (of the calling church) to the exclusion of synod and thus of all the other churches. This is impossible.

It seems to me that Rev. Petter should retract also this charge—the charge that synod ignored the principles of Reformed church government laid down in Art. 30 of the Church Order. For, I repeat, it is not a small thing to bring a whole synod under a cloud.

Rev. Petter even has a fourth fault to find with the Synod (1950). Synod violated also the underlying principle of Art. 31 of the Church Order, an article that reads:

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

Rev. Petter accuses synod of violating not the letter of this article nor its spirit but the principle underly-

ing it. What is this principle. This is evident from the following lines from the brother's pen. He writes:

"Then the readers can judge whether the Synod (1950) could truthfully appeal to the underlying principle of Art. 31 and say, 'this is the best that worthy servants to whom, the oldest and most experienced, you have entrusted the formulation of your faith are able to do. This we consider so carefully and thoroughly carried through the whole process of ripening and formulation that is the best our churches can produce.'"

So then, the principle underlying this article is, that synod must make it possible and permissible for itself to declare that its formularies, doctrinal deliverances, are the best that the churches assembled in synod can produce. I certainly have no objection to this principle as such. Whether it definitely underlies Art. 31 is quite another question to which I shall return in the sequel. But the principle as such is a sound one, I believe.

Rev. Petter also shows how synod makes this principle to live, namely, by allowing its doctrinal deliverance or formulary to pass through a correcting, improving and developing process first in the consistory, then in classis, and finally in synod. Let us hear Rev. Petter on this point. He writes:

"For it is understood that such a product (doctrinal deliverance—O.) is proposed by a member who brings forward the best he can as to form and content, with this he goes to the consistory, where it is again seriously considered, controlled, corrected, improved. The improving, developing process is again repeated in classis. It then finally comes to Synod, where the eldest, most experienced, once more carefully weigh, consider, improve, perfect the projected deliverance or decision."

But certainly, if observing the principle that underlies Art. 31 consists in allowing the doctrinal deliverance to pass through such a developing process, synod (1950) cannot possibly be guilty of having violated it. For it decided to "subject this entire document ('New Declaration') to the approval of the churches. Hence, if our churches have been availing themselves of their opportunities, then by the time of the convening of the coming synod, the "New Declaration" will have passed through such an improving, developing process in all our consistories and in both our classes. This is inevitable, seeing that the "Declaration", was drafted by synod in compliance with the request of the Mission Committee and then given to the churches for study and approbation. Yet, this does not satisfy Rev. Petter. He still insists that synod is guilty of violating the principle underlying Art. 31.

Grounds for this charge of Rev. Petter will be considered in the following article.

G. M. Ophoff.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition Of Hebrews 10:19-25

IX.

There are two facts, which we feel have been established by us in our exposition of Hebrews 10:23.

The first of these is, that the "Confession of the Hope" is not merely a subjective hope, but that it 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, and as it shall ultimately and finally be realized in the return of Christ; when we shall see Him 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.

The second matter that we called attention to is, that the *believer* is indeed admonished to "hold fast" to this great confession of the hope—the hope that is layed away for us in heaven, and set before our believing eyes in the promise of the Gospel. And, in this connection in the former article, we noticed that this "holding fast" is the *deed*, the *act* of the elect believer. He, the believer, holds fast. He is very really the spiritual psychological *subject* of the deed. And he is this solely by virtue of the grace received. And, we hasten to add, that this our act of faith is at the same time so much worked into us by God that not only the *will to believe* is wrought in us by God, but that even the very *act of believing* also is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Canons of Dort III, IV, Art. 14.

In close connection with the foregoing paragraph it must once more be emphasized, that God keeps us active in the strife as elect-believers also by means of the "exhortations, threatenings and promises of the Word", Canons V, 14. And we would here remind ourselves that it is good Reformed doctrine, and that too in Confessional statement that "grace is conferred by means of admonitions" upon those who heed these admonitions and keep these precepts. God, in other words, works in us to will and to do, yes, even the very *act* of faith by means of the admonitions. And the connection between these admonitions and the mysterious and wonderful operation of the Holy Spirit in the elect-believers, cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life. Canons III, IV, 13.

However, the need of the admonitions as a part of the Divine pedagogy of Grace stands. This pedagogy is employed by the writer of the Hebrews when He *admonishes* us to "hold fast" to the confession of the hope unwavering.

And the writer to the Hebrews gives us a most wonderful ground to encourage and strengthen us in the "holding fast". It is the statement in the latter part of verse 23, which reads: "For He that hath promised is faithful."

This statement from the pen of the sacred writer gives rise to various questions.

The first question that it gives rise to is: Is the faithfulness of God merely the assigned reason for the holding fast, or does this faithfulness of God refer to the immutable certainty of the fulfillment of the hope. We believe that it refers to the entire admonition to hold fast, including the certainty of the things hoped for. And the reason for holding this position is that such is first of all the very natural sense. Then, too, the statement of the faithfulness of God is stated very generally. The faithfulness of God is here stressed, as *He is the promising one*. And surely His promise is not *merely* a promise, an assurance *to those who persevere* that they will have the victory, but the promise of God is the last ground for the realization of the entire Counsel of God as it pertains to the glory of His name and the salvation of the saints. And the preaching of this promise, and the reminding of the faithfulness of God, is the God-ordained means by which the Holy Spirit stimulates us to *believing* perseverance. There is nothing that so calls forth cheerful confidence in the hearts of the elect as to be reminded that GOD, Who has PROMISED is FAITHFUL! That puts courage in our hearts. That is the watch-word that must resound from the pulpit. And it is with this word that we comfort and encourage one another. And, therefore, I hold that this statement concerning the faithfulness of the God Who has promised is that which underlies this entire admonition; it refers both to that which we hold on to, and to the "holding fast" itself. The Promise gives the assurance of the realization of salvation for us and in us, and the preaching of it gives us the glad assurance whereby we hold fast.

Then, too, it should not escape our notice, that the writer to the Hebrews evidently wishes, in this statement, to direct all of our attention to the faithfulness of *Him*, Who has promised. And the form of the word employed in the Greek indicates that this Promise has been given once and for all. It may be repeated in various given instances. But it is always the same Promise. Nothing is ever really added to it. All that is told us later about this Promise is simply a more specific unfolding of its content. It is God Who has promised once, and it shall not repent Him. That stands. Thus the writer here would evidently underscore. Then, too, we should notice that in the Greek all emphasis falls on the word "faithful"! "*Faithful* is the One having Promised". The ultimate certainty of the Promise rests in Him Who has given it, it rests in His *faithfulness*.

What is this *faithfulness*?

To form some conception of the faithfulness of God we may take an example of what is considered faithfulness among men, among men as God judges one to be faithful. Take, for example, the man, who enters into the work of the ministry of the Word of God. Upon His entrance into the ministry he is ordained or installed into office. He then promised before the congregation that he will faithfully perform his duties. Whether this man is really faithful we do not know until we have lived with him and observed him in the performance of his duties. It is only after he has finished the ministry that he can be proclaimed as having been a faithful servant. And his faithfulness will then be measured according to the nature of the vows that he uttered before the face of the Lord. Then the Lord says: Well done, thou good and *faithful* servant.

Faithfulness is the performance of the things promised. Such it is among men. And such it is also with the Lord, our God.

Now it is true that when we compare the faithfulness of God with the faithfulness of men, we must be careful that we do not bring the faithfulness of God down to our level. For God is the Lord. And when He would teach us faithfulness by what we see in the life of men, and by contrast the unfaithfulness of men, then this is to show us how we are to conduct ourselves toward His faithfulness. However, His faithfulness is infinitely higher than ours!

God has given us His Word of Promise. And to this Promise He is faithful. He gave this Promise, first of all, in Paradise. And this Promise is that the Seed of the woman shall triumph over the seed of the Serpent. And this Promise is centrally fulfilled in the dead and resurrection of Christ and ultimately it is fulfilled in His glorious return.

And in the fulfillment of this Promise God has so ordained all things in His unsearchable wisdom and in judgments that are past tracing out, that the greatness of His faithfulness comes to stand out in bold relief from age to age, it thus comes to stand out before the eye of faith, and is thus also experienced by the heirs of the promise. And whereas God had in former times spoken of this faithfulness by the prophets to the fathers, in diverse times and manners, so He now speaks of this faithfulness to us through His Son, as the latter speaks to us by this writer to the Hebrews.

And, evidently, the writer to the Hebrews alludes to the various manifestations of the faithfulness of Him Who promised.

We like to think in this connection of the manifestation of the faithfulness of God as manifested at the "burning bush" at the mount of God.

This incident at the burning bush is an intended

manifestation by God of His own faithfulness to His people as this is rooted in His unchangeable love to us His people. The historical circumstances are well-known to us all. Israel is in bondage in Egypt. They are under hard and severe taskmasters. And they cry unto the Lord. And then it is that the Lord comes to show His faithfulness to His own people. He is the same in His wondrous love as He Who had appeared to Abraham. He is the "I-shall-be-who-I-shall-be". He is even at this moment, Who He was when He spoke to Abraham more than four centuries earlier. And so He is faithful. He is faithful to His Promise.

And the history of Israel is simply replete with the evident tokens of the faithfulness of God. It is one grand exhibition of this faithfulness. To take but two other instances we refer you to the time of Israel's deportation to Babylon. It is then that the faithfulness of God shines forth in that wondrous word of Promise as recorded in Jer. 31:31-34. This passage is recorded in Hebrews 8:8-13 and in Hebrews 10:16-17. In this passage the Word of the Lord assures us that He will write His laws in our hearts and place them in our minds. And that when this is done, then the new covenant is made, enacted upon the better promises. And thus the faithfulness of God is shone in the darkest hour of Israel's history. The other instance that I have in mind is the word of the prophet Malachi, chap. 3:8, where we read: "I Jehovah change not, therefore ye are not consumed O house of Jacob". In the last word of the Old Testament the beacon light of prophecy that shines more and more unto the perfect day is grounded in the faithfulness of God to His own Promise.

And now this faithfulness of God has reached its zenith in these last days in the coming of the Son in the flesh. He suffered and died and rose again, and He ascended on high. Presently He will return again to judge the living and the dead. Then shall the faithfulness of God be forever demonstrated to us in all the exhibition of His goodness to us in the ages to come.

Our confession of the hope unmoveable rests in our confession of the faithfulness of God. And of this faithfulness the text reminds us. And this *reminding*, this *preaching* of this admonition plus the preaching of the reason for the admonition to hold fast, is the means employed by God to bring us to glory. Do not all hear the *preaching* of this Promise? Indeed all do who hear the Word proclaimed. But their hearing is not mingled with faith. But all the unbelief in the church cannot quench the faith of those who respond to the reminding of the faithfulness of God, and to keep them from "holding fast" lest anyone take their crown.

Geo. C. Lubbers.

IN HIS FEAR

Church Membership In His Fear

6.

Not Forsaking the Assemblies of The Saints.

With the present issue we turn once again to the subject which last had our attention in the December 1 *Standard Bearer*.

The reader may recall that in that article we concluded that "there can be no doubt about it that the church is actually and concretely manifest in gatherings of specific congregations at certain places and at stated times." Hence, we drew the conclusion that "the believer will not think lightly of his membership in the church in the world," and that "he knows. . . that it is therefore his obligation before God to belong to that gathering."

The question now is: what is the implication of belonging to that gathering? Does it mean simply that a person has his name on the membership record of a certain congregation? Such is often the case today. We are all acquainted with the fact that today there are many who view their church membership in just that way. People they are who never or seldom see the inside of the church, who possibly make their appearance on Christmas, since that is traditionally a church holiday, or on Easter Sunday, since it has become the vogue to show off new spring outfits on that day and to join the Easter parade. For the rest they have no interest. If their conscience pricks them a little and if they are of the class who don't easily miss a few dollars or even a few hundred, they send their check to the "Board of Trustees", because after all they want to keep their pride in the church property as part of their civic pride and perhaps they want their minister to have as good a living as the next or as other professional men. But other than that they have no interest in the church except when they have to be buried and want to be eulogied before their bodies rot in the grave.

To be sure, there is something wrong with the church they attend. Of course, church discipline has long been discarded as obsolete and unloving and intolerant. And, as is usually the case in such an extreme case as the one cited above, the church has in every way made herself unworthy of the name *church*. For the preaching of the Word the philosophy of man has long since been substituted, and it isn't at all difficult for the so-called preacher, who is a socially inclined gentleman anyway and has learned to get along well with his public and has rather enjoyed the benign philanthropies of these dead members, to extol them

greatly when they finally lie in state in the church to which they belonged but did not attend while the breath of life was still in them. And sacraments in such churches are unknown or have become lost in formal christening ceremonies or fellowship suppers.

But just as surely there is something wrong, radically wrong, with such church members. One had rather be an atheist professedly or a heathen. Such a caricature of the church and such mock membership is not even worthy of respect from a worldly point of view. Men don't even treat their membership in an athletic club or in the Chamber of Commerce or in a lodge with such haughty disdain. If they are devotees of the theater or the stage, they are faithful also then. If they are sports fans, you never miss them at an exciting event. But the church? That's different.

Now it is difficult to say just which took place first, the decline of the institute or the degeneration of the membership. One never occurs without the other, cannot, in fact. And so we shall have to call them concomitant causes. Nor will it do, of course, if the question would ever arise, for the degenerate membership to blame the corrupt institute or vice versa. But at present we want to view the matter from the point of view of church membership.

You say: "Why not come closer home? We aren't troubled by any such circumstances, and we all know that we should not live that way over against the church." Well enough: let's get closer home.

What church does Mr. Rich Apostate belong to? Well, it's that Downtown Presbyterian Church. What kind of church is that? When was it organized? Where did it come from? Was it always the same kind of church that it is now? Did it always hold only one brief service at 11 a.m. on Sunday to accommodate the sleeping habits of its members? Did it always close its doors for a couple of months during the summer for an ecclesiastical vacation?

Why no! It was organized when the city was a little village stockade, way back when some God-fearing pioneers settled here. It is Presbyterian, that is, it had its origin in the English branch of the Calvinistic Reformation, through the instrumentality of that God-fearing Reformed John Knox. At one time the Word of God was faithfully proclaimed, the sacraments were properly celebrated, and church discipline was strictly maintained. Two services of at least an hour and a half were held every Sunday, and were faithfully attended by all the members, who came to church as families. Besides, there was probably a mid-week service; and the youth were instructed at an early age; and all in all it was a busy and flourishing congregation of Jesus Christ.

Gradually, however, changes took place. Some members had not enough interest and spiritual energy to attend these long services and listen to that doc-

trinal preaching twice in one day.—Besides, the trip to church was a long and cold one with the horse and buggy.—Their laxity came to the attention of the elders, and they were admonished. And it seemed to help for a while: most of the time they attended twice, that is, as long as the admonition of the elders was fresh in their minds. But, of course, attendance at a mid-week service was unthinkable; and, to say the least, the attendance of the children at catechism was very irregular. However, before long the same thing happened. And this time the elders became weary. The absence of these members went not unnoticed, but unadmonished. The tendency increased. With it all, of course, went an increasingly worldly attitude and a growing ignorance and a corresponding weakening in the offices of ministry and government. And finally, came a time when the church was even closed on Sunday afternoon and evening and the much-watered-down truth was proclaimed only once per Sunday. From then on developments came rapidly. The next time a minister was called, he was no dried up ecclesiastical prude but a sociable, up-to-date, well-educated and polished man, with a degree in philosophy from one of the best known universities in the country. He didn't preach, but he gave a lecture every Sunday morning,—you know the contents. And on those beautiful summer mornings he wanted to go golfing with the rest of his congregation. The church doors were closed during the summer. No one minded if you didn't attend when they were open. If you showed up occasionally, contributed well for the upkeep of the property and the \$10,000 salary of Dr. Philosopher, attended all the luncheons and parties, and were willing to serve on the Board of Trustees occasionally, you were a member in good standing of the elite Downtown Presbyterian Church.

Fiction? Only to the extent that I used fictitious names. For not only is that the sad situation to be found in many churches today, but it is also the sad history of their degeneration.

If you would trace the history of all those churches which had their beginning in our country in the days before the Revolutionary War, in the days of the Pilgrim Fathers and the Puritans, you would find that in general it is exactly as I described it briefly above. Your modern Congregational and Methodist Churches in this country and your to-a-lesser-extent modern Reformed Churches were at one time orthodox, and even Calvinistically orthodox. But over the years tremendous changes took place, until today you have the lamentable picture I painted above.

And one of the contributing causes of such decadence is the sin of those who lightly esteem their membership in the church and are unmindful of their obligation to belong to that gathering and to gather with it. It is the sin of those who despise and wilfully

ignore the fact that the Word of Christ is addressed to the church and to the individual only as member, living member of the church. It is the sin of those who were not mindful that the Spirit of Christ was poured out *in the church*. It is the sin of those who presumed to say that they had no need of the regular ministry of the Word. It is the sin of those who forgot that the members of Christ's church are members of His *body* and that therefore all individualism and independentism is ruled out in the church. It is the sin of those who followed not the urge of their regenerated heart, but the urge of the sinful flesh. And in last instance it is the sin of those who after all have no life of regeneration in them at all, who have no life, who are not members of His body, and who therefore can have no church life in the real sense of the word.

That, if we at all know the fear of the Lord, is indeed sin.

I have brought the matter closer to home, if you know how to read history. And I hope to apply this lesson from history in the light of the Word of God next time. But perhaps you have already discerned that the picture of the "oncer" and the "wanderer" or *looper* are to be found in the bit of history which I have traced for you.

And that, indeed, comes close to home, doesn't it?

And *oncerism* is contrary to the fear of the Lord, isn't it?

H. C. Hoeksema.



Among The Immigrants (2)

We have found, especially in our latest contacts with the Immigrants in Canada, that the "Declaration of Principles" proposed by our last Synod has been construed by them as a stumbling-block to affiliation with our Churches. Undoubtedly, much of this fear is due to misunderstanding and misuse which has been made of that document. There has been little actual discussion of the content while a great deal has been written and said about what its power might be and how it might be used. Hence, it usually has been attacked as an already adopted and binding document and warnings have been issued to reject its binding. It has been treated as though it were already in force. Yet, even this attitude is not altogether unfounded. The manner in which the Declaration was presented certainly lends itself to misunderstanding. Without any explanation or note it was published under the heading: An Important Decision. Then to further add to possible misunderstanding it was stated that: Our last Synod adopted the following. Strictly speaking, of course, the only decision our Synod took and the only thing it adopted was the advice of the committee

which drew up the Declaration, that it be presented to our Churches.

And yet it is also true that Synod did more than this. Although Synod evidently meant only to present the Declaration for discussion, it nevertheless did decide to adopt it as a "working hypothesis for the Mission Committee and our missionaries in the organization of Churches". Hence, it has been correctly remarked, that although it is not yet officially binding within our Churches, it is for those who desire to come within. This last decision, therefore, certainly adds to the misunderstanding and substantiates the criticism and fear of its being a "binding" document.

In close connection with the above, the question is also often asked as to how the Declaration came into being and what was the purpose of proposing it. That question still remains, both for the Immigrants and also for many within our own Churches. Let us briefly trace the history. (The talk of "binding" really originates in the Netherlands since that was essentially THE issue in the Liberated movement. Naturally, therefore, the question was fresh and important in the minds of the Immigrants when they came to this country. They were anxious to join a Church in their new land in which they would be free from hierarchical decisions and bound only by the Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions. Hence, they also rejected the binding of the Three Points in the Christian Reformed Church and sought our fellowship; since they were assured that we stood upon the same basis as their former Church in the Old Country recognizing only the Scriptures and the Three Forms as binding. (See e.g. Acts of Synod of 1947, Art. 75, pages 53 and 54).

However, with the publication of the letter of Prof. Holwerda, and the ensuing comment and writing, doubts were raised in their minds and the question of binding arose again. Not only did Prof. Holwerda speak of binding but voices were raised also out of our own midst which added to the confusion. In those particular numbers of the *Standard Bearer*, for example, one can read not only statements that alone the Scriptures and Three Forms are binding in our midst but also implications that more than these are held to be binding for our Churches. Hence, it is not unreasonable that this question should be broached by the Immigrants.

These things also came to the attention of the Mission Committee. Not, however, through a flood of correspondence as the impression is sometimes left, but mainly through the reports of the Ministers and Missionaries who labored in Canada and reported these things as a matter of fact along with the information as to how these queries were met; so that the Mission Committee might be able to guide and advise those who labored in Canada. In fact, to our knowledge, the Mission Committee received only one letter

which specifically asks the question of what is binding. This letter and the answer of the Mission Committee may be found in the Acts of Synod of 1950, Art. 63, pages 52-54. We feel it is an overstatement to say that "this letter is quite typical of repeated requests that we have received from various groups in Canada." But at any rate, the answer of the Mission Committee was also essentially the substance of our method of procedure in the work in Canada. It was granted that our men who labored in Canada were sufficiently able and qualified to discuss and explain our position and the implication of '24. Hence, it was felt that a broader and more explicit *written* statement was unnecessary.

However, some members of the Mission Committee believed we should have something more definite. So the question was discussed, and at a meeting in the Spring of 1950 a motion was presented to ask the coming Synod to declare what was binding in our Churches. This motion was discussed by the Mission Committee and no unanimity could be reached. The Missionaries themselves, as well as some of the members of the Committee who had worked in Canada, felt there was no need for it and that a Synodical declaration would have a psychological ill-effect on the work. Hence, this motion was tabled. At a later meeting of the Mission Committee, at which the report to Synod was to be approved, the question was again brought up by asking whether anything at all should be stated or asked about this matter. Again no unanimity could be reached until it was finally agreed, upon the advice of one of the Missionaries, to ask Synod to draw up a form-letter to be signed by those requesting and desiring organization as a Protestant Reformed Church. The idea was, that even as we have such forms for the calling of a minister, etc., it might be well to have one also for organization; which would contain a brief statement of our position as Churches.

That this was so understood by the Committee of Pre-advice that handled the report of the Mission Committee is evident from the advice which this committee presented on this point of the Mission Committee's report. After setting forth a short statement they advised: "To adopt (the statement set forth) as one which should appear in each request for organization". (See Acts of Synod 1950, Art. 63, page 54). Undoubtedly, this was discussed on the floor of Synod but why it was not received and executed is not revealed in the Acts. The matter was, however, referred back to the Committee of Pre-advice which subsequently drew up the present Declaration and which was presented to and received by the Synod. Hence, it is evident that the present Declaration of Principles, both as to its' conception and material, originates with the Committee of Pre-advice (perhaps acting upon the basis of a discussion at Synod) but certainly does not

reflect what was in the mind of the Mission Committee.

But even apart from these considerations, the question still remains why these Immigrants should be so skeptical and hesitant to receive the Declaration. Since it is professedly the simple and clear expression of the Reformed Confessions, why the fear on their part. That last statement itself contains, partly at least, the reason for questioning it. They would answer: If the Declaration expresses the clear and unambiguous meaning of the Confessions then certainly there is no need for this restatement; then the Confessions themselves are adequate. Let us, then rather, discuss these things without the psychological barrier of a synodical declaration. In that way, they feel they would be better able to be led to learn to understand and appreciate our position, rather than appear to be forced to swallow in one gulp, and at one sitting of 15 or 20 minutes, that which has been developed in our Churches over a period of years.

And that attitude can again only be understood from their background; which is the essential reason for their skepticism. Perhaps, it is difficult for those of us who have had little or no contact with these Immigrants and who know little of the struggle in the Netherlands Churches, to appreciate this; but we should at least try to understand them. When these Immigrants are confronted with documents that bear the nature of a "binding", or with Synodical declarations concerning the teaching of the Confessions, the whole miserable history of their experience with these things in the Netherlands rushes into their minds. Just as when we hear the term "Common Grace" and "The Three Points" all of '24 is brought vividly to our attention, so it is with them. They immediately think of the binding decisions of the Synod of 1942 in the Netherlands; of the "Toelichting" and explanations; of the deposition of office-bearers and the split in the Churches with all its miserable history.

Hence, they begin to wonder if our Churches reveal that spirit which pervaded the Synodical Churches and if we too want to build the walls to exclude brethren who belong together. They wonder also whether this Declaration is indicative of a trend in our Churches so that other Synodical declarations will follow. Perhaps, in another year or two it will be felt expedient to declare ourselves on "Regeneration" or on the question of "Infra-Supra", for example. Nor are these fears entirely groundless. Already it becomes evident that a "Toelichting" or explanation is necessary to answer the many questions that have arisen in connection with the present Declaration. And so it also went in the Netherlands!

Therefore, the way towards closer communion has become a bit rough. Yet, in spite of it all, these Immigrants are still *willing* and *able* to discuss these things.

We are still welcome in their midst and they still desire to hear our preaching. They confess to enjoy the Word and are enthusiastic in their praise for the Dutch meditations of the Rev. Hoeksema which they receive as supplements to the Standard Bearer. Hence, we believe we should continue carefully with those whom God has placed on our way and try to avoid discouraging and disparaging them. Rather should we proceed with patience and love and understanding; as among brethren in the Lord.

We believe that this approach and method of procedure in our work amongst the Immigrants is extremely important. Certainly we cannot be expected to compromise our position or camouflage what we confess to be the Truth. Nor is that necessary. But we must seek one another in the spirit of love; with trust and confidence that we desire one another's good and spiritual welfare. As brethren in the Lord, we certainly must proceed believing that we will mutually bow before the Word of God. Nor is that being naïve or misinterpreting the Scriptural injunction to love one another. Rather will it result in "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"; revealing that the Word of Christ dwells in us richly in all wisdom.

In the second place, we believe that closer communion can be accomplished by freely preaching the whole counsel of God amongst the Immigrants. Time and again we have pointed out that it is our preaching that attracts. And through the pure preaching of His Word *Christ gathers His Church!* And His Church is not gathered where there are bitter envyings and strife. Let us, therefore, freely proclaim and preach the whole glorious truth of God's Sovereign grace with the assurance that through that *preaching* Christ will build His Church.

Finally, we believe it to be expedient and necessary that our Committee of Correspondence contact the Netherlands committee. From the very beginning of the work in Canada it has been pointed out that this work was very closely bound to the question of correspondence. Although the work in Canada has gradually gained momentum the question of correspondence is practically where it was when the Canadian work began. It remains true today, as at the beginning of our labors in Canada and perhaps now even more so, that the question of correspondence has a direct bearing on that work. We would urge, therefore, that this matter be expedited.

And in it all, let us strive to heed the injunction of the Apostle Paul: "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

W. Hofman.

A. Cammenga.