

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### De Sprake Eens Worms

“Maar ik ben een worm en geen man, een smaad van menschen en veracht van het volk. Allen die mij zien bespotten mij, zij schudden het hoofd, zeggende: Hij heeft het op den Heere gewenteld: dat Hij Hem nu uithelpe, dat Hij Hem redde, dewijl Hij lust aan Hem heeft.”

—Psalm 22:7-9.

We mochten gerust Matth. 27:43 ook hierbij aanhalen, want daar wordt een gedeelte van onzen tekst door den Heiligen Geest aangehaald. Daar wordt duidelijk aangetoond, dat onze huidige tekst wel zekerlijk Messiaansch is. Daar staat dit: “Hij heeft op God betrouwd: dat Hij Hem nu verlosse, indien Hij Hem wél wil; want Hij heeft gezegd: Ik ben Gods Zoon.”

Vreeselijke goddeloosheid! Wat hoon en wat smaad heeft onze Heiland geleden! Het blijft een eeuwig wonder, dat God dit schouwspel kon zien, en niet komen om het gansche menschedom te verwoesten in grimmigen toorn. Maar daar schittert Gods ondoorgrondelijke genade. Hij wilde goddeloozen rechtvaardigen. Hij wilde Zijn Verbond gestand doen. Hij wilde het gansche menschedom doen zien hoe liefelijk het Goddelijke Wezen is in Zijn zondaarsliefde. Daarom blijft Jezus aan het gruis hangen, en lijdt den smaad en hoon.

We gaan heden wat zeggen van die vreeselijke dingen, en op den achtergrond van die vreeselijke dingen, zullen we zien de onbegrijpelijke liefde Gods tot Zijn verkoren volk, hetwelk is tot prijs Zijner genade. Want God moet geprezen tot in alle eeuwigheid.

We beluisteren heden de sprake van een worm en geen man; we zullen ijzen van het schouwspel van smaad, verachting, bespottung en hoon. Geve de Heere het aan U en aan mij. Om dan, door diezelfde genade te knielen bij het kruis van den Lijdenden Heer, om

daar te vinden meerdere genade om geholpen te worden ter bekwamer tijd.



Ge hebt het zeker wel gemerkt, dat als David hier spreekt van een worm hij beeldspraak bezigt? Dat vindt ge o zoo vaak in den Bijbel. De Heere gebruikt aardsche beelden om ons de hemelsche dingen van Zijn Koninkrijk af te malen. Zoo ook hier. David, en later Jezus, want David spreekt hier als Profeet, noemt zich een worm en geen man. Dat is levendige beeldspraak. Een ieder kent den worm. Hij kronkelt elken dag, en een ieder ziet hem.

De worm nu, is beeld van datgene wat zonder verdediging is, van het hulpeloze. De worm heeft noch wapenen van verdediging, noch voor den aanval. Hij heeft ook geen stel van beveiligende beenderen, zooals vele dieren. Een worm heeft net maar een capaciteit om te lijden, om vertrapt te worden, zoodat er niets overblijft dan een verpletterde smeer van iets wat vroeger een worm was. Maar er is nog meer in de sprake van den worm. Hij behoort tot de dieren die verafschuwd worden en verfoeid: hij behoort tot de kruipende dieren. Als men een worm ziet, denkt men onwillekeurig aan de slangen en adders. En het schijnt wel, dat deze laatste gedachte op den voorgrond staat, want we hooren immers verder van smaad, verachting en bespottung? Toen God Zijn vloek uitsprak over de slang, is het beest gaan kruipen, en van dien tijd af aan wordt de slang, en al het kruipend gedierte veracht door den mensch. En let er op, dat de Christus in en door David Zich een worm noemt, maar dan zooals dit beest een contrast vormt met den man die recht op gaat. Ik ben een worm en geen man!

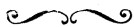
En de worm is ook beeld van vernedering. Hij kruipt op den grond. En men kan moeilijk lager gaan. Hij kronkelt zich aan Uw voet met zijn buik in het stof. Hij is eigenlijk altijd gereed om door U vertrapt te worden. Het beeld is compleet. De Worm: voorwerp van vernedering.

En dat is vervuld in den Christus Gods. Ja, en dan

moet ge wel verstaan, dat dit beeld maar zeer flauw en vaag tot U spreekt van Zijn vernedering. Er is niemand, dan God alleen, die weet ten volle hoe diep Jezus Zich vernederd heeft tot den versmadelijken dood des kruises. Maar we zien uit dit beeld, dat door den Heiligen Geest gebruikt wordt, hoe God wil, dat we er toch wat van zullen en moeten weten.

Jezus is de Heiland die Zichzelf niet verdedigt. Hij is de worm. Hij droeg geen verdedigende, noch ook aanvallende wapenen. En toen men eenmaal probeerde om voor Hem het zwaard te trekken, toen heeft Hij zulk eenen streng berispt. Hij is de worm en Hij kwam om net maar te lijden. En Hij heeft een verschrikkelijke capaciteit om te lijden. Wie zal die capaciteit meten? En Hij lijdt als die Zich niet verdedigt zonder te spreken, te klagen, te roepen in Zijn verdriet. O ja, Hij heeft wel geroepen, maar Hij deed dat in den nacht, in de woestijn, tot Zijn God. Maar anders? Dan leed Hij als een schaap, dat stemmeloos is voor het aangezicht zijner scheerders.

Jezus is degene die men verfoeit en veracht, zooals de worm veracht en verfoeid wordt. Alle vuilheid, zonde en ongerechtigheid kwam als schuld op Hem, en zoo werd Hij de verachte bij uitnemendheid. En noemt zich dan ook een worm en geen man.



En zoo spreekt de Gereformeerde Dogmatiek van Jezus in Zijn vernedering, en dat is goed. Er is nooit iemand, en er zal nooit iemand zóó vernederd worden als die Jezus. En let wel, Hij deed dat zelf. Gewilliglijk kwam Hij in de plaats te staan die door God van nature slangengebroed genaamd worden. En zoo kunt ge ook verstaan hoe Mozes een slang verhoogde op dien staf in de woestijn. Jezus, de diep vernederde.

Nu komen we tot het kapittel van den smaad, want daar spreekt de tekst van. Hij was een smaad van menschen en veracht van het volk. Allen die Hem zagen, bespotten Hem, zij staken de lip uit, schudden hun hoofd, en goten een stroom van honende woorden over Zijn arme hoofd.

En dat is erg. Elk mensch wil als een mensch behandeld worden. Dat zit in ons wezen in. Een ieder haat om uitgelachen en bespot te worden. En niets menselijks was den Heere Jezus vreemd.

Maar daar hangt Hij aan het kruis. Men verdringt zich om dat kruis, want men wil Hem zien, en Hem bespotten en uitlachen. Wat een verschrikkelijk schouwspel is dat geweest. Hoort! zij lachen Hem uit. Hem, die tot in alle eeuwigheid het gezang van engelen en menschen zal zijn. En luistert met beving, want men bespot Hem in de innigste en heerlijkste Zijner gewaarwordingen. Men heeft het over Zijn vertrouwen op God. Zij hebben Jezus in vroeger dagen beluisterd,

hoe Hij Zijn weg op den Heere wentelde, en nu zullen zij Hem om die lieflijke deugd bespotten. En als ge de editie van Mattheüs erbij wilt raadplegen, dan hadden zij uit Jezus' mond gehoord hoe Hij zichzelf Gods Zoon noemde. Maar nu moet Hij diezelfde getuigenis in hoon en spot beluisteren aan het kruis. Hij maakte Zich den Zoon van God, welnu, laat Zijn Vader Hem dan redden, dat wil zeggen, als het waar is dat Zijn God een lust aan Hem heeft. Maar, zoo gaat dit geboefte voort, het is natuurlijk niet waar. Het is ijdele taal geweest van dezen snoever. God heeft nooit een lust aan Hem gehad, anders zou Hij daar nu niet hangen aan het kruis. En zoo ging men voort te schreeuwen en te joelen rondom dat kruis, al honende den Zoon van den levenden God.



En wie waren dat geboefte? Waren zij het afschrapsel der aarde? Blinde heidenen uit de achteraf liggende landen? Misschien het volk uit de bosschen van Zuid-Africa? Neen, mijne vrienden, zij waren het beste wat de aarde ooit kon leveren: ze zijn de historische kerk Gods. Zijn zijn het Israel van Jezus' dagen. Zij zijn het volk, dat de Wet en de Profetie had. Hij kwam immers tot het Zijne? Maar ze hebben Hem niet aangenomen. Ze hebben Hem een beetje meer dan dertig jaren op aarde geduld, en toen hebben zij Hem aan een kruis van de aarde verhoogd. Luistert naar Jezus: Allen die Mij zien, bespotten Mij! Dat was ook waar van Pilatus en van Herodus, en ook van de Romeinsche soldaten. En toch, het gruwelijkste heeft Hij geleden van Zijn eigen volk. Hoe dichter de menschelijke natuur bij Jezus komt, hoe gruwelijker gloeit de haat.

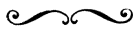
Hoe zit dit? Kan dat vreemde feit ook eenigzins verklaard worden? O zeker. God heeft er voor gezorgd, dat zulks klaarlijk geopenbaard is. Ziet ge, Jezus openbaarde de antithese. Hier was een mensch die Zichzelf God noemde, en dat konden de Farizeërs niet verkroppen. Hier was een Overwinnaar die aan het kruis terecht komt om de nederlaag te lijden. Hier was een Bevrijder van de gebondenen, en Zelf wordt Hij gebonden en aan het kruis gehecht. Hier was iemand die op God vertrouwde en God verliet Hem. En daarom begon men te lachen en te honen. Wat de mensch niet verstaat, bespot hij. De dwaas! Knikt gij het hoofd, mijn vriend? Maar weet ge wel, dat gij, die dit leest, van nature niets beter zijt dan die joelende massa rondom het kruis van Jezus?

De tweede reden waarom men Hem haatte is dit: Hij was het Licht der wereld. En de wereld haat het licht. Hij scheen te midden van de stikdonkere duisternis der zonde en der vuilheid en der ongerechtigheid. En dat bevalt de wereld niet. De wereld haat het licht. Licht is inbegrip van alle ware deugd. En

dat was Jezus. Al Zijn doen en laten voor meer dan dertig jaren was enkel licht. En daarom werd Hij tot op het laatste oogenblik van Zijn leven gehaat.

En de derde reden is, omdat Hij een worm was en geen man. De mensch der zonde bewondert het groote, het massale, het sterke, het behendige. Maar van een mensch die zichzelf wil geven voor anderen, en zoo aan een kruis gaat hangen, van zulk een mensch, walgt men. Let er op, dat alle discipelen voor Hem willen sterven. En Petrus nam het zwaard om voor Hem en met Hem te strijden. Maar als zij zien, dat Jezus Zich gewillig wil geven, Zijn handen uitsteekt om gebonden te worden, dan worden zij allen aan Hem geërgerd, en dan vlieden zij.

En de vierde reden waarom zij en de geheele wereld Hem haten is de ergste van allen, en ze is deze: Zijn kruis en Zijn lijden verkondigt, dat wij van nature waard zijn om veroemd te worden. De bloed-theologie is niet populair, dat weet ge wel. En we mogen hier ook nog wel noemen de andere reden waarom Hij zoo gehaat werd, en zij is deze: Hij lijdt voor Zijn eigen, particulier volk: de uitverkorenen. Jezus kwam niet om de geheele wereld, hoofd voor hoofd te redden. Maar Hij kwam om Zijn schapen te redden.



Dit leidt ons tot de laatste gedachte. Hij is de Redder, en Hij werd dat en is dat juist, omdat Hij gewilliglijk een worm werd, en bespot en gehoond.

De bende gilde voor dat kruis: Dat God Hem nu redde, dat God Hem nu uithelpe! Ik zou willen zeggen: eeuwiglijk gelukkig, dat God het niet deed. Als God het gedaan had, daar op die Hoofdschedelplaats, dan had Zijn volk gelijk een worm moeten kruipen tot in alle eeuwigheid in de hel. Als God Hem uitgeholpen had, dan waren wij allen verloren gegaan, en dan waren er geen menschen gered geworden.

Neen, de weg tot een eeuwige redding en zaligheid en heerlijkheid lag over dat kruis, en langs den nederigen weg van den worm. Leest Filipp. 2:6-8. Daar staat: "Die (en dat is Jezus) in de gestaltenis Gods zijnde, geen roof geacht heeft Gode evengelijk te zijn. Maar heeft Zichzelven vernietigd, de gestaltenis eens dienstknechts aangenomen hebbende, en is den menschen gelijk geworden; en in gedaante gevonden als een mensch, heeft Hij zichzelven vernederd, gehoorzaam geworden zijnde tot den dood, ja, den dood des kruises."

En weet ge nu wel wat de diepste reden is waarom Jezus dezen weg moest bewandelen? Dan zal ik het U zeggen: al die spot en hoon, al dat verachten en bespotten, al die vreeselijke vernedering die Jezus ervoer, is de uiterlijke vorm van een diep innerlijk lijden, dat niemand U ten volle kan schilderen.

Ziet ge, God is een rechtvaardig God, en de mensch,

alle menschen, hebben het verzondigd. En de straf op de zonde is de eeuwige dood. Daar is nu eenmaal geen uitzondering op. De ziel die gezondigd heeft zal sterven. God komt daar tot in eeuwigheid niet van terug.

Evenwel, diezelfde God heeft Zich een volk verkoren van voor de grondlegging der wereld, hen liefhebbende met een eeuwige liefde. En toen dat volk in den tijd goddeloos werd en verdiende om tot in eeuwigheid veroemd te worden, toen is God Zelf gekomen in den Zoon Zijner eeuwige liefde, en toen is God uit God een worm geworden, en heeft Zich overgegeven in de menschelijke natuur aan de gerechte straf die wij anders hadden moeten dragen.

God aan het kruis!

Dat is het hart van het Evangelie. En dat voor zondaren, voor uitverkoren zondaren.

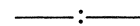
En zoo ziet gij Jezus ten diepste vernederd aan het kruis, onze smaadheid en hoon dragende, die wij anders hadden moeten dragen in de buitenste duisternis.

En daarom zegt de uitverkoren kerk van Christus: Gode zij dank, dat Hij niet van dat kruis afkwam, dat God Hem niet uithelp of redde, want dan ware onze zon ondergegaan, en hadden wij zelf alle smarten der veroemenis geleden.

Maar nu: Jezus is gekruist, en opgestaan ten derde dage. En Hij voer naar den hemel heen in triumf. En Hij zal de Zijnen redden met een volkomene uitredding. Tot glorie van God tot in der eeuwigheid.

O, buigt U toch voor dat kruis in aanbidding ter neder! Amen.

G. Vos.



#### ANNIVERSARY

On February 22, 1951, our beloved parents and grand-parents

**Mr. and Mrs. Richard Dykstra**

hope to celebrate their fortieth wedding anniversary.

We thank our heavenly Father, Who has so graciously spared them for each other and for us these many years, and pray that He will continue to bless them in the years to come.

The grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Arie Dykstra

Mr. and Mrs. Simon Dykstra

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence J. Cole

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Nyenhuis

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Huizenga

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Postema

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Klinge

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Dykstra Jr.

Grand Rapids, Michigan

and twenty-six grandchildren.

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## EDITORIALS

### Dr. Schilder And The Declaration

In several issues of *De Reformatie* my friend Schilder (O yes, he is still my friend, although I do not agree with him on the question of the covenant and the promise) wrote about the Declaration of Principles.

I first planned to let him finish his series of articles and not to interrupt his argument. But seeing that some of us are getting impatient (see *Periscope* in the last S. B., which is hardly peri-scope) and almost suggest that I intend to ignore what my colleague in the old country wrote on the matter, I will reply now to his criticism, and ask the printer to send him an air-mail copy of this issue of *The Standard Bearer*.

Much of what Dr. Schilder wrote is not to the point, and we, therefore, can safely eliminate it from our discussion. To this belongs, in my opinion:

1. All that the brother wrote about supralapsarianism. The confessions are definitely infralapsarian. And although I personally am supralapsarian (which is my privilege), yet the Declaration is based, not on any private conviction or conception, but on the confessions only.

2. All that he wrote about his repudiation of the preparatory grace theory of Heyns. We have never accused the Liberated of teaching this particular heresy. Yet, we maintain that their view of the covenant and of the promise is Heynsian, and that it implies the teaching of common grace applied to the covenant. See one of my editorials below.

3. All that he wrote about theologians in the past that taught that faith is a condition. I grant all of it. And I can quote some more of other theologians. But we are not concerned with private opinions, but with the Declarations of Principles. This is based only on the confessions. And these teach plainly (1) that faith is not a condition but (2) a means or instrument whereby we are ingrafted into Christ and appropriate all his benefits.

I challenge my esteemed friend and colleague to deny this.

There remains really only two items in the articles of Dr. Schilder to which I must reply.

The first concerns his criticism of our use of the term *cause and fountain of our salvation*. The Declaration of Principles states that "election . . . is the sole fountain and cause of all our salvation."

To this Dr. Schilder objects.

Writes he (*De Reformatie*, vol. 26, no. 6):

"First of all, a small item. The piece (Declaration, H.H.) commences with the declaration: 'that election . . . is the sole fountain and cause of all our salvation'.

"Is this correctly expressed—a binding piece?

"Naturally, we probably expressed ourselves in the same way, in a loose article, or little talk. We will blame no one, if he expresses it that way.

"*But when you establish something and make it binding*, we say: wait a minute. Is it, indeed, precisely expressed, when it is said: election *cause and fountain*?

"I do not believe it. If you want to be precise, it should have been election is the *ground*. A decree is never the *cause* of its execution nor the *fountain* of it. *Cause and fountain* fall in time, and are also themselves implied in the decree."

Thus far Dr. Schilder.

It would be easy to correct the Declaration in this fashion, if it were, indeed, a correction. All we would have to do would be to substitute *ground* for *cause and fountain*.

And it would, indeed, have been a loose and thoughtless way of formulating a Declaration of Principles by a whole synod, if they had not carefully distinguished between *ground* on the one hand and *fountain and cause* on the other.

But this is not the case.

My friend Schilder must not have the impression that the delegates to the synod of 1950 were slouches, that did not know the meaning of terms, or that did not carefully weigh them before they employed them. Even though it is true that it did not take long to draw up and to adopt this proposed declaration, do not forget that it represents years of Protestant Reformed thought, and that the terms are very carefully chosen.

The same is true with regard to the terms *fountain, cause, and ground*.

The *ground* of all our salvation is Christ.

The *fountain and cause* of all our salvation is the decree of election.

This is the language of our confessions, and the Declaration of Principles means to speak that language, and nothing else.

For proof of this, I refer to Canons I, A. 6: "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree (*id ab aeterno decreto provenit*). Now, it ought to be plain that something does not proceed from a ground, but from a source or fountain. Hence, we maintain, with the declaration, that the decree is not the ground of the gift of faith, and, therefore, of all our salvation, but the source or fountain.

And as to the term *cause*, I refer to Canons I, A. 10. There we read: "The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election." Now, in the first

place, if the *beneplacitum Dei*, the *eudokia Theou*, the good pleasure of God, is the sole cause of election (*causa vero hujus gratuita electionis*), election is surely the cause of all our salvation. And, secondly, to maintain, as does colleague Schilder, that *fountain and cause fall in time* certainly is not confessionally Reformed language. The confessions place cause, not in time, but in eternity.

I challenge my friend and colleague to disprove this.

I am afraid that, not the Declaration, but he himself was writing rather hastily and thoughtlessly when he wrote the above quoted sentences.

We are, however, more interested in what Dr. Schilder writes about the *promise* and about faith as a *condition unto the promise*.

Writes he (De Reformatie, Vol. 26, No. 5):

"A. Do you mean, by 'condition', something that would *bind God*? Then we say unconditionally: *unconditionally* be the slogan.

"B. Do you mean, by condition, something *for which God must wait*, before He can go further? Then we say unconditionally: 'unconditionally be the slogan.'

"C. Do you mean, by condition: something that *we must fulfill to merit something*? Then we say unconditionally: "unconditionally be the slogan."

"D. Do you mean, by condition: something *that God firmly linked with something else*, to make *plain to us*, that the one thing cannot come without the other, and that we cannot be assured of the one thing, unless we have also become assured of the other? Then we say unconditionally: 'conditionally be the slogan'."

At the close of his article Dr. Schilder writes:

"I think, that colleague Hoeksema will agree with us in all this.

"But for this reason we appeal to him. He is a keen theologian (thanks, amice! H.H.), and he hates, when it comes to the point, all foolish binding. Let him cooperate to prevent all ambiguous and impractical declarations as so many impediments on the way to unity, etc."

And yet, I cannot agree with my esteemed colleague, and that exactly because I want to avoid all "ambiguous and impractical declarations". I want to be very clear, sharp, and to the point, when it concerns the definition of theological terms.

O, how sorry I am, that all these things were not discussed between us as deputies for correspondence, rather than to confer, behind our back, with the Revs. De Jong and Kok, who were not authorized, neither, judging from the letter of prof. Holwerda, capable to speak for our churches! The Lord willing, we are coming next summer, if the world situation permits. We have reservations on the boat for the twenty-fourth



of June and plan to remain in the Netherlands till the beginning of September. That is, if they still want to see us, and if they still desire correspondence *in spite of our doctrinal differences*. Otherwise, they better let us know, and we will cancel our reservations.

Now, let me return to the subject.

In the first place, I want to say that, of course, I agree with the negative propositions A, B, and C.

But I want to add one more proposition. It is similar to C with this difference that I want to stop at "fulfill" and omit "to merit something". The proposition then reads: "We do not believe in conditions which we must fulfill." Period.

I will presently explain the reason for this negative proposition.

But, first, I must criticize my colleague's own definition of "condition".

To my mind it is ambiguous. It can denote different notions.

The brother writes that a condition "is something which God has firmly linked to something else" etc.

Very well. Let us test this definition. Cause and effect God has firmly linked together. Colleague Schilder surely does not mean this by condition. Hence, the definition is ambiguous. Yet it is important that we use clear terms.

Work and reward are also firmly linked together by God. Yet, my friend Schilder does not mean that faith is a work rewarded by God. Hence, the definition is guilty of ambiguity.

Means and end are also firmly linked by God. Yet, brother Schilder does not want this implication of this definition, for then faith is a means (according to our confessions) and not a condition at all. Again, the definition lacks clarity. Yet, we must clearly define our terms.

After all, is there any definition of "condition" that is clear, not only, but that also is conveyed to the mind of anyone that hears the term, except the following: "A condition is a prerequisite which one must fulfill or comply with in order to receive something or to have something done unto him"?

Now, apply this to faith, and I claim that you sail in Arminian waters, and are not Reformed.

We must, therefore, have a clear definition of terms before I can agree with my colleague across the ocean.

But what about a conditional or unconditional promise.

About this next time, D. V.

H. H.

## Let Us Be Brotherly

The Rev. L. Vermeer writes in *Concordia*, Jan. 18, 1951:

"And please reply in brotherly spirit and toleration, such articles as are mentioned above. Meet the arguments squarely."

With this I perfectly agree.

We should always preserve a brotherly spirit, not only in answering such articles as the Rev. Vermeer has in mind, but in all our writings. And surely, we should always meet arguments with arguments, squarely. And I challenge the Rev. Vermeer to show that in my writing about the Liberated, or about conditions, or about the Declaration of Principles I have ever violated that brotherly spirit, or have ever failed to meet the arguments squarely.

But how about his own brotherly spirit, as manifested in the above article in *Concordia*? And how about his own weighing of arguments honestly?

In the same article he writes as follows:

"I DEPLORE AND PROTEST AGAINST:

"1. First, the wild way in which the charge of Heynsianism is thrown at people, and especially against the Liberated leaders . . . Throwing that charge around wildly, we hurt innocent people, and lay ourselves open to the charge of dishonesty."

I maintain that in these sentences the Rev. Vermeer is guilty on both counts. He does not preserve a brotherly spirit in this language, for it is not in harmony with facts that I ever was guilty of throwing the charge of Heynsianism *wildly* at anybody. And it is a very unfounded and unbrotherly accusation to accuse us of dishonesty. Nor does the Rev. Vermeer meet the arguments squarely, for he does not even investigate the many articles I have written in the past about the Heynsian view of the Liberated. Still less does he attempt to contradict what I have written on this score. It therefore will be brotherly if the Rev. Vermeer apologizes for these wild accusations.

In the same article the Rev. Vermeer writes:

"Now, many of the arguments used also by the Rev. H. Hoeksema and the Rev. Ophoff, in favor of the 'Declaration of Principles' are based on the reckless charge that the Liberated are all Heynsian."

Also in this sentence the Rev. Vermeer is guilty on both counts. It is a false accusation that we hurl a reckless charge at the Liberated, when we say that they are Heynsian in their covenant view. And again, the Rev. Vermeer does not put forth any argument to prove the contrary. I therefore say again that he is guilty on both counts.

Once more, in the same article, the Rev. Vermeer writes:

"Now it SEEMS to me that men like Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff do not even TRY to understand the position of the Liberated as it is expounded by Schilder."

Also here I consider that the Rev. Vermeer is guilty on both counts. For this see my next editorial.

To quote no more, I call attention to the following:

"3. Thirdly, I deplore and protest the foolish and rash haste in formulating and adopting the 'Declaration' by the last Synod, as well as the foolish and rash haste of some who even now push for its ratification by the consistories."

It is certainly not brotherly to accuse an entire Synod, who invoked the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and who adopted the Declaration of Principles virtually without opposition, unanimously, of foolishness and rash haste. Nor is it brotherly to accuse those whose conviction it is that this Declaration must be adopted by the next Synod of foolishly and rashly pushing the thing.

Wild throwing of charges? Dishonesty? Reckless charges? Not even trying to understand? Foolishness and rash haste?

All these accusations the Rev. Vermeer flings at us without any rhyme or reason.

Yet the Rev. Vermeer admonishes us to write in a brotherly spirit and to meet arguments squarely!

*O tempora! O mores!*

#### Not Try To Understand?

The Rev. Vermeer also accuses us of not even trying to understand the position of the Liberated.

Carefully he adds: "as it is expounded by Schilder."

This last phrase may mean several things. It may mean that the Rev. Vermeer never read much about the Liberated and their view of the covenant except Schilder. It may also suggest that according to him Schilder's view differs principally from that of the rest of the Liberated churches. If either of these suppositions is correct, I can only say that the Rev. Vermeer is very unfair to the Liberated. For he certainly cannot obtain a correct conception of the Liberated view of the covenant by reading only the writings of one man. And besides, I think it is also unfair to Dr. Schilder, for he has never yet suggested that his view of the covenant differs from that of the Liberated churches.

But what about the accusation that we, the Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff, do not even try to understand their view. I consider this a rather heavy accusation. For it really implies that we deliberately falsify their conception.

But let us meet argument with argument, to see whether this accusation is true or false.

The accusation means, of course, that the Rev. Vermeer thoroughly understands the view of the Liberated, while I do not, and do not even try to understand it. It implies too, of course, that the Rev. Vermeer has in his possession and has studied the sources in which their views can be found, and that either I have not these sources, or have not studied them, or have deliberately falsified them.

Now let us meet argument with argument, shall we?

In the first place, I have studied literally dozens of pamphlets and books, both from the Liberated and from the Synodicals, concerning this question of the covenant conception. I believe I gave a list of these sources one in the *Standard Bearer*, which the Rev. Vermeer may look up. Now, how many of these sources did the Rev. Vermeer study, from which he draws the conclusion that the conception of the Liberated is not the same as the Heynsian conception, except, of course, the Heynsian conception of preparatory grace, concerning which see my next editorial?

Besides, I read and still read many papers of the Synodicals as well as of the Liberated, including, of course, the *Reformatie*. How many of these papers and magazines did the Rev. Vermeer read to substantiate the charge that I do not understand and do not even try to understand the Liberated view of the covenant?

Besides, I have had correspondence with several of the Liberated ministers, both private and public, as the Rev. Vermeer can verify if he only consults the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 22, ff.,—a correspondence which uniformly substantiates my conviction that their view of the covenant is Heynsian.

Finally, as to the attempt on my part thoroughly to understand their view, I may refer the Rev. Vermeer to the questions I put to Dr. Holwerda and to Prof. Veenhof, which he may read in the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 26, pp. 7, 8. For the importance of the issue between the Rev. Vermeer and myself, i.e., whether I try to understand the view of the Liberated, I repeat these questions here. They are as follows:

"a. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to your theology God establishes His covenant equally with all the children that are born of believing parents, head for head and soul for soul?

"b. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the theology of the Liberated the promise of God is equally for all that are born in the historical line of the covenant, elect and reprobate alike?

"c. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the theology of the Liberated God gives that promise to all, elect and reprobate, in His grace and in His love?

"d. Is it true, or is it not true, that God seriously

says to all the children that are born in the historical line of the covenant that He gives them a right to all the blessings of the covenant?

"e. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the covenant theology of the Liberated God assures all the children that are born of believing parents in the historical line of the covenant that He washes them in the blood of Christ?

"f. Is it true, or is it not true, that according to the covenant theology of the Liberated God assures all the children of believers that he will give them His Holy Spirit to dwell in them and to make them partakers of all the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus?

"g. Is it true, or is it not true, that in answer to the question why many of the baptized children are not saved you say that their corrupt nature prevents the grace of God from operating in their hearts?

"h. Is it true, or is it not true, that in the case of those baptized children that are lost you teach that it is their unbelief that bars the way of God's grace?"

To this I added the following:

"A few years ago I was in correspondence with one of your Liberated ministers concerning this very question. He told me that in his preaching he said to all the children of the covenant, that is, head for head and soul for soul, that are born in the historical line of the covenant, that they had a check in their pocket and all they had to do was to go to the bank and cash the check. I asked him just what was written on that check: did the check read thus: 'I, Jehovah God, promise to all that believe eternal life?' Or did it state: 'I, Jehovah God, promise you all, John, Peter, and Clarence, eternal life?' He answered me that it was the latter. Again I asked him how God could issue such checks, seeing there was not sufficient capital in the bank, at least according to the truth of particular atonement. The answer was: that is a mystery. Now, professor, does that fairly represent the abc of the covenant theology of the Liberated, or does it not?"

Now let us meet arguments with arguments, squarely. And let the Rev. Vermeer prove that I did not even try to understand the view of the Liberated concerning the covenant.

Let him answer in the same brotherly spirit in which I am writing these editorials. And above all, let us have the truth.

On my part, I am afraid that the Rev. Vermeer did not know what he was writing about.

#### Not Heynsian?

The Rev. Vermeer also accuses us of dishonesty and of wildly hurling charges at the Liberated when we say that they adopt the Heynsian view of the covenant.

The only argument which the Rev. Vermeer pro-

duces to substantiate this charge is that the Liberated evidently do not adopt the Heynsian view of preparatory grace.

If the Rev. Vermeer will consult the *Standard Bearers* of the past, he will discover that I never accused them of this particular Heynsian tenet. He will find that at first, when I started to criticize the Liberated view of the covenant, I merely politely asked them whether they also accepted this Heynsian view of preparatory grace. When Dr. Schilder was here, it was we that called his attention to that theory, as it is expounded especially in Heyns' *Catechetics*. And after we had called his attention to this, he carefully wrote an article in the *Reformatie* repudiating this particular element of the Heynsian conception. But for the rest, he did not repudiate the Heynsian view of the covenant whatsoever.

Now, although this theory of preparatory grace is peculiar to Heyns, yet it is by no means the main principle of his conception of the covenant.

The conception of Heyns is that the covenant of God is principally and essentially His promise. That promise is a bequest on the part of God to all that are baptized. God bequeaths upon all the children of believers all the blessings of salvation. He gives them the right by testament to the riches of grace. And He solemnly seals His bequest, this testament, this objective right to the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, to them all by baptism. But this promise is conditional. And the condition connected with the promise is faith and repentance. All have the promise. On the part of God the bequest is made to all by promise. God swears to all in baptism that their names are written in His testament. But the blessings promised are applied only to those that accept the promise by faith.

That is Heynsianism.

And this conception of the covenant is accepted uniformly by all the Liberated.

To substantiate this contention, I quote, first of all, from the *Reformatie*, vol. 20, no. 51. In this number of the *Reformatie* Dr. R. H. Bremmer writes:

"What follows from this for the practical life of faith, may easily be surmised. To make this clear, we will not now appeal to men like Woelderink and Van Dijk, but to the American professor Heyns. He is, we believe, not as yet suspected of being 'remonstrant'. Dr. H. Bouwman wrote a preface for his 'Gereformeerde Geloofsleer' in which he says: 'Prof. Heyns gave us, in this Reformed Confession of Faith, a book which is not only thoroughly Reformed, but which, because of its consecrated style and lucidity of presentation, makes pleasant reading, and is easily understood.

"Now, this Prof. Heyns writes on page 206: 'Then, when all support for our faith threatens to collapse,



the Form (of Baptism) means to say, the support of our baptism is still left us as an undoubted testimony. Thus the Form can speak only by ascribing to baptism an objective significance, valid for all, for never could baptism be such an undoubted testimony for one that is fallen into sin, if it were a real baptism and if it really sealed those benefits only for the elect or for the regenerated. One fallen into sin, who is in danger of despairing of God's mercy, will doubt, first of all, his election or his being regenerated, and thus he would find no support at all for his faith in his baptism.'

"A little further the professor writes: 'Baptism seals unto us the BEQUEST (SCHENKING) as being a matter of fact, not the IMPARTATION (DEEL-ACHTIGMAKING) as having taken place; it seals the benefits as BEQUEATHED (GESCHONKENE) not as SUBJECTIVELY IMPARTED (ONDERWERPELIJK DEELACHTIG gemaakte). That this is the meaning of the Form for Baptism is, among other things, evident from the expression: *applying unto us that which we have in Christ*. That which baptism seals unto us as being in our possession is the objective *having in Christ* in virtue of the bequest. But this can only acquire a saving character through the application of the Holy Spirit, and, in reference to this the Holy Spirit again seals unto all equally, not that He has done this or shall do this, but that He WILL do this'."

It is clear, therefore, that in their covenant conception the Liberated churches admittedly agree with Heyns. Objectively all the blessings of the covenant are for all that are baptized. To all they are bequeathed. Their bequest is sealed to all in baptism. But whether this bequest is to be realized unto them, whether they shall actually enter upon the possession of the solemnly promised inheritance depends upon the question whether they accept this inheritance or this promise by faith, yes or no.

With this view of the covenant and of the promise the Liberated agree, as far as I know, without exception.

I will also quote from the well-known "Appel" of Prof. Veenhof. Writes he, on page 4: "For when God gives His baptism to a human being, He bestows upon him a very particular proof of His love." Again: "When a child is being baptized, the Lord Himself approaches that little child. He Himself sprinkles the water on its little head and says very really and very personally: John, Marie, Anna, I, the Lord Himself, baptize thee, immerse thee, in my holy name. Thou now belongest to me." And again: "Baptism given us by the Lord remains ever a power, every day, every hour, even until our death, yea, unto all eternity. Fact is really that the Lord continually baptizes us. After

He sprinkled us with water, when we were only a few days old, He keeps, so to speak, that water always fresh and living and powerful upon our forehead. And the words which He spoke then for the first time He continues to speak throughout our whole life! Every second Jehovah repeats: Charles, William, Marie, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Or rather: Jehovah does not repeat that word: He continues to speak it, it continues to come to us out of His heart in unbroken power, seriousness, and grace."

And in the same pamphlet, p. 5, the Professor writes: "To understand clearly what the sentence means (Baptism is a seal upon the promise of God, H.H.) we must thoroughly know and ever maintain, that the Lord was pleased in His wonderful love to give to *all* the children of believers His *promise*. Or, to say it differently: It pleased Him to give a glorious pledge to those children. He says namely to *all* those children, head for head, day in day out, well-meaningly and uprightly: I am the Lord your God. I establish my covenant with you. I wash you of all your sins in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. My Holy Spirit will dwell in you. Briefly: I pledge to you the full forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation: all the treasures and riches, which I will and am able to give to men."

This is Heynsianism.

This is common grace applied to the covenant.

And this is the general view of the Liberated.

Now let the Rev. Vermeer prove, squarely facing my arguments (and I can quote much more), that I wildly hurl the charge of Heynsianism against the Liberated.

And if he cannot prove this, let him apologize for his wild accusation in a brotherly spirit.

I expect an answer.

H. H.

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#### CLASSIS EAST

will meet in special session Wednesday, February 28, at 9:00 A.M. This meeting will be a continuation of the January meeting for the purpose of treating the Declaration of Principles.

D. Jonker, (S. C.)

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#### ATTENTION!

#### CLASSIST WEST

meets in Hull, Iowa, Wednesday, March 7, 1951

## The Declaration Of Principles

As to the Declaration of Principles, we will first of all discuss what is found under I, D, 2: "That the promise of the gospel is not a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, nor a conditional offer to all that are born in the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, to all that are baptized, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith."

The first part of this paragraph is directed against the First Point of 1924. In that First Point it was declared by the synod that God is gracious to all that hear the gospel as a well-meaning offer on the part of God, in other words, that the preaching of the gospel is grace to all.

The second part, namely, that the promise of the gospel is "not a conditional offer to all that are born in the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, to all that are baptized, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith", is virtually directed against the same error. The error is common grace applied to the sphere of the historical line of the covenant. This is Heynsianism. And it is at the same time the theory of the Liberated.

The question therefore is chiefly what is meant by the promise of God.

They say that the promise is conditional. We maintain that it is unconditional. They claim that the promise of God is for all that are born in the historical line of the covenant. We insist that it is for the elect alone and that it is an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith.

It will be evident that according to the conception of the Liberated faith is excluded from the promise. I am well aware that on the other hand also the Liberated teach that faith is a gift of God, and that man of himself cannot believe, and that therefore really they also teach that faith is included in the promise. But on the other hand, they plainly insist that faith is a condition which we must fulfill in order to obtain the promise. And therefore the promise, according to them, does not include faith. This is really the old double-track theology which we have always rejected. Repeatedly I have asked them to explain this contradiction, but thus far they have never succeeded.

Let us clearly see this difference.

Is faith a condition which we must fulfill in order to obtain the promise? Or is faith included in the promise, so that God also promises faith?

Both cannot be true. It is either . . . or.

Now it certainly is Reformed, confessionally Re-

formed, to say that faith is not a condition unto the promise, but that God promises faith.

And this is certainly traditionally Protestant Reformed, ever since 1924. Everyone may know that we as Protestant Reformed Churches have always sounded the same note in this respect. The promise includes all of salvation, and faith is not a condition unto that promise.

I quote and translate from "Het Evangelie", pp. 142, ff.:

"A promise rests only in the one that promises, the promise of the gospel rests for its certain fulfillment only in the eternal and faithful God; the gospel of the promise is therefore eternally certain. For a promise is a written or verbal declaration, whereby he that promises is bound to do or to grant something. The gospel of the promise therefore is the glad tidings that God has bound Himself to give unto the heirs of the promise eternal life. And this leads me to the second point of difference: an offer is in its very nature general and indefinite; a promise is particular and definite. If the gospel is an offer, it is a glad tidings to all men without distinction; if the gospel is a promise, as the Scripture teaches, it is glad tidings of God only to the heirs of the promise.

"This idea, this Scriptural idea of the gospel, also determines the contents of the gospel. If according to its idea the gospel is glad tidings concerning the promise to Abraham and his seed, it follows that the gospel cannot be anything else than the proclamation of that promise. The promise is the contents of the gospel. It is nothing else. It is nothing more. It is nothing less. Whoever preaches the gospel has to speak according to the contents of his proclamation nothing else than of this promise of God. Whoever proclaims something else is simply no minister of the gospel. A *Verbi Dei Minister* is a proclaimer of the gospel of God, or he is an intruder. And not only is it impossible that his proclamation can have another content than the promise of God, but he is also called to present that gospel as the glad tidings of a *promise* which God surely fulfills. Whoever makes of the promise of God an offer which for its fulfillment is dependent on the will of man distorts the gospel of God. And finally, this proclamation must be the glad tidings of a certain promise of God *to the heirs of the promise*. He who presents it differently, who presents the matter as if the promise of God is meant for all men, makes God a liar. For He does not realize His promise to all men; nor did He ever promise anything like salvation to all men; but He promises the inheritance only to the heirs, Abraham and his seed, and this promise He Himself realizes as the faithful and unchangeable God."

"If the gospel is according to Scripture the glad tidings concerning the promise, it lies in the nature

of the case, that the contents of this promise of God is also the contents of the holy gospel. From this point of view we may distinguish the contents of the gospel according to its objective and subjective aspect. Objectively speaking, the central contents of the promise and therefore also of the gospel is Christ and all His benefits. Christ is the realization of the promise, because God realizes His eternal covenant in and through Him. For that reason through the gospel Christ must be proclaimed in all His significance, in His incarnation, His person and natures, His offices and His relation to the covenant of God and His kingdom, in His Word, in which He revealed to us the whole counsel of God concerning our redemption, in His work, His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of the Father, His dominion and power over all things, and His return to judgment, in order to make all things new and to subject them unto the Father.

"But there is also a subjective aspect of the gospel, which according to its contents is the realization of the promise. It also belongs to the contents of the promise that God makes us really partakers of all the benefits of salvation in Christ Jesus, and that, too, through the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ. For the promise is also the promise of the Holy Spirit. And this promise of the Spirit is first of all and centrally fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in and through Him also in the church which is His body. He received the promise of the Holy Spirit and poured out that Spirit in the church on the day of Pentecost. And through that Spirit He came to dwell in His own. And it is through that Spirit that He imparts Himself and all His benefits to the church. Hence also all the work of the Holy Spirit belongs to the promise, to the contents of the gospel and to true gospel teaching. Regeneration and the efficacious calling through the Word unto true life and light, justification and sanctification together with perseverance unto the very end and the final glorification, life, love, faith, and hope, and all that belongs to the life of the Spirit of Christ as He realizes it in the church,—all this belongs to the contents of the promise of God to His people and must be proclaimed as the work of God, the certain work of God in us through His grace, in the preaching of the gospel. You certainly detract from the work of God if you would present all this as an uncertain or conditional offer. God, Who cannot lie, has also promised these benefits to the heirs of the promise and swore with an oath that He would grant them unto them. That God fulfills the promise of the Holy Spirit to the elect, just as surely as He centrally fulfilled them in Christ, must be proclaimed in the preaching of the gospel.

"We understand very well, that the contents of salvation, that the blessing of God's covenant and

kingdom assumes a spiritual, ethical character, and that we are subsumed in the whole of the work of God unto salvation as rational, moral creatures. If the work of salvation were merely a deliverance from hell and a receiving into heaven, it could be accomplished without us in the sense that the inner life of our soul, our moral consciousness, had nothing to do with that salvation. But now it is different. Through the work of salvation we are translated from darkness into light, from death into life. Through that work a very fundamental change takes place in the very root of our life and of our person. It is a change in our judicial and spiritual, ethical relation to God! For that reason this salvation comes to us as rational, moral creatures. For that reason it comes to us through the Word of God. Through that Word God speaks unto us. Through that Word He carries the salvation into our consciousness. He addresses us. He directs that Word to our intellect. Through that Word He addresses our will. He teaches, illuminates, instructs, reveals, warns, demands, admonishes, calls unto the obedience of the gospel, invites, draws, even prays, encourages and comforts, exhorts and calls to the fight of faith unto the end. Never are we stocks and blocks. Also the proclamation of the gospel ever places us before the inevitable: Yea and No! And seeing that this proclamation of the gospel reaches many more persons than the elect, the ungodly reprobate are also compelled to say *yes* and *no*, sin is revealed as being really sin, and God is being justified when He judges. But this does not change the fact, that the preaching of the gospel is not a general offer of God to all men, but the proclamation of the contents of the promise, which God certainly fulfills only to the heirs of the promise."

This, and not the theory that faith is a condition to obtain the promise, is Protestant Reformed language. It has always been Protestant Reformed since 1924.

Nor can anyone deduce a different sound from a quotation from my "Abundant Mercy", p. 171, to which also the Rev. Blankespoor refers.

Let me offer the full quotation:

"Nor is the relation between faith and justification to be conceived and presented as that of a benefit on God's part and a condition on our part. This, too, is often alleged. God saves and justifies us on condition that we believe. Superficially considered, it might seem as if there were truth in this assertion. Is it not true that we must believe in order to be saved? If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be justified; if not, we shall be damned. It appears, then, that justification is conditioned by faith.

"Yet this cannot be the relation. First of all, it should be remembered that objective justification is before faith. Objectively, we are justified regardless

of our faith. In eternal election all those given Christ by the Father are righteous before God forever. And this righteousness cannot be contingent upon faith, even though it is true that we cannot appropriate this gift of righteousness except by a true and living faith. Besides, long before we believe, the justification of all the elect is accomplished forever in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, secondly, although it is true that justification in the subjective sense is contingent upon faith, we must never forget that faith is not of ourselves, it is a gift of God. It is therefore not a condition which we must fulfill in order to be justified: God Himself fulfills all the conditions of salvation."

How anyone can deduce from these paragraphs that I teach that faith is a condition unto justification, whether in the objective or in the subjective sense of the word, is a mystery to me. It is true that I say that justification in the subjective sense is contingent upon faith. But in the first place, it is very plain that I teach here that faith is not a condition even of justification in the subjective sense. And secondly, although the word contingent is probably not a happy term, it certainly does not have the meaning of condition in this connection. I take it here in the sense of dependence upon a cause which is beyond our control. And that cause is faith which God works in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. When God fulfills all the conditions, there are certainly no conditions which we must fulfill at all.

Once more I want to emphasize that this is Protestant Reformed language, and has always been.

But the Declaration of Principles does not claim to be based on Protestant Reformed tradition, but on the Three Forms of Unity pure and simple. And therefore the question is further, whether this truth, that the promise of God is an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith, is Reformed in the confessional sense of the word.

In parentheses let me emphasize that this Declaration of Principles was not composed as a certain fourth form for our churches, but that it was simply meant as a basis for the work of our missionaries in the organization of new churches. In our discussion this has almost been lost sight of, but it is nevertheless true. And it is well to be reminded of this fact. Nevertheless, also such a basis for the organization of prospective Protestant Reformed Churches must, of course, be based four-squarely on our Confessions. And therefore the question is certainly whether this statement, that the promise is an oath of God which He infallibly fulfills unto all the elect, is based four-squarely on the Three Forms of Unity.

That this is indeed the case can be very easily

proved. This we do in II, A, of the Declaration. There we read:

"That election, which is the unconditional and unchangeable decree of God to redeem in Christ a certain number of persons, is the sole cause and fountain of all our salvation, whence flow all the gifts of grace, including faith. This is the plain teaching of our confession in the Canons of Dordrecht, I, A, 6, 7.

"Art. 6. That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree, (by the way, this plainly shows that the decree of God is the fountain from which all the benefits of salvation, including faith, flow), 'For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world', Acts 15:8. 'Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will', Eph. 1:11. According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation."

And again:

"Art. 7. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation."

And again:

"This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in the common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace; as it is written: 'According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made

us accepted in the beloved! Eph. 1:4, 5, 6. And elsewhere: 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Rom. 8:30."

Now first of all, I want to call the attention of our readers to the fact that this has nothing to do with the question concerning *supra* or *infra*. The Confessions, as we all know, are infralapsarian, representing therefore the mildest form of the doctrine of predestination. And that we quote from the infralapsarian confession is plain from the following quotations: "And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men *equally involved in ruin*." And again, God has "chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction." And once more: "This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in the common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ." These quotations abundantly show that the confession is infralapsarian. And as far as the Declaration of Principles is concerned, we are quite willing to leave them thus. Hence, the question of supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism has nothing to do with the Declaration of Principles.

Yet these quotations, especially the last one, plainly prove that the promise of God is an oath that He will infallibly lead the elect unto salvation in Christ through faith, and that it is unconditional.

You say, perhaps, that these quotations do not speak of the promise, but of the decree of God concerning the promise.

And that is certainly true.

But surely you cannot separate the realization of the promise from the decree of the promise. When our fathers say in Art. 7 of the Canons that "he hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and to draw them into his communion by His Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace," it means, of course, that this is the promise of God to the elect and to no one else, an oath of God based upon His secret decree that He will lead His people infallibly unto salvation in Christ. The moment you speak of conditions in the realization of the promise of God you certainly must project those conditions in the decree. This is inevitable. And the moment you make the promise, and also, therefore, the decree of God concerning the promise conditional, you have become Arminian. The Arminians teach that God has chosen with an infallible

and unchangeable decree those that would believe in Christ. That is projecting the condition of faith into the decree. And that demands, of course, that also the promise and the realization of the promise is conditional. And this Arminianism we certainly must not have. Hence, we claim that the proposition of I, D, 2 of the Declaration is certainly true and correct and based upon our Confessions, namely: "That the promise of the gospel is not a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, not a conditional offer of salvation to all that are born in the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, to all that are baptized, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith."

But there is more proof for this proposition.

The Declaration of Principles also quotes from the doctrinal part of the Form for Baptism as follows:

"For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized in the name of the Son, the Son sealeth unto us, that he doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins, and accounted righteous before God. In like manner, when we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost assures us, by this holy sacrament, that he will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins, and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

All this is God's part of the covenant, not ours.

And that it is sure and unconditional is very evident from the language of this part of our Baptism Form throughout.

God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that is, the elect, that He doth make an eternal covenant of grace, that He adopts us for His children and heirs, that He will provide us with every good thing and avert all evil or turn it to our profit. This covenant God establishes alone. It is absolutely a unilateral covenant. He establishes it not on condition of faith, but unconditionally.

Then, in baptism the Son sealeth unto us that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, He incorporates us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God. All this is the part of the covenant which the Son seals unto us.



And He does so without any condition on the part of man. In other words, baptism seals the complete and full promise unto the elect.

Finally, according to the Baptism Form, baptism also seals unto us that the Holy Ghost will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal. We know how Heyns, also quoted by the Liberated, evades the stringency of this plain language by separating in the Baptism Form the work of the Father and the Son from that of the Holy Spirit. According to him, when the Father assures us that He establishes His covenant with us and adopts us for His children and heirs, and when the Son in baptism seals unto us that He washes us in His blood and incorporates us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, this must be regarded as an objective bequest to all that are baptized, and not only to the elect. But when in the last part of this same passage of the Baptism Form we read that the Holy Ghost assures us by this holy sacrament that He will dwell in us, he wants to emphasize that word *WILL*, implying that this is not sure at all, but that it depends on the question whether we will accept our covenant obligation by faith. Hence, also Heyns wants to exclude faith from the promise. But this, of course, is a distortion of the meaning of the Baptism Form, as ought to be plain to all. We cannot so separate the work of the Father and the Son from that of the Holy Spirit. Besides, when the Baptism Form says that by baptism the Holy Ghost *assures* us that He will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us that which we have in Christ, it certainly means that in baptism the elect have the indubitable promise that the Holy Ghost will give them the true and living faith. Faith, therefore, is not presented as a condition at all, but is included in the promise. Faith is not a condition unto the promise, but God promises unto us the entire realization of the covenant, including faith.

And therefore, we claim that we teach nothing new, nothing extra-confessional, but only that which is based four-squarely on our Three Forms of Unity, when we claim that the promise of God is not an offer of salvation, nor a conditional offer to all that are baptized, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith.

We have more to say about this question, especially also in connection with the promiscuous declaration of the promise to all that hear the gospel.

But about this next time, the Lord willing.

H. H.

## Van Boeken

*Wat is Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte?*, door Ds. J. M. Spier. Uitgever: J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, the Netherlands. Prijs f. 1.95.

Dit boekje van 78 paginas bedoelt een soort van beknopte uiteenzetting te geven van de hoofdmomenten der Calvinistische wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee in populaire taal en stijl. De schrijver is zich bewust, dat "niet ieder calvinistisch christen lust, gelegenheid en bekwaamheid heeft om zich te verdiepen in de gedachten van de calvinistische wijsbegeerte". Maar toch meent hij, "dat velen in onzen kring wel iets naders begeren te weten van deze filosofie." Daarom heeft Ds. Spier dit boekje geschreven.

Misschien zijn er ook onder ons in Amerika, die van deze filosofie gaarne kennis zouden nemen. Bij hen bevelen we deze benopte uiteenzetting gaarne aan.

Ik kan het niet eens (zooals ik reeds vroeger heb opgemerkt t.a.v. de wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee) met des schrijvers omschrijving van "hart" en "ziel". En hoe kan hij schrijven, dat in de Heilige Schrift de ziel (nephesh, psyche) meestal het hart (lebh, kardia) wordt genoemd, versta ik niet.

H. H.

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*De Bekeering*, door Dr. G. Brillenburg Wurth. Uitgever: J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland.

Dit werkje over de Bekeering bevelen we gaarne bij ons nog Hollandsch lezend publiek aan. Het werd geschreven voornamelijk met het oog op het evangelisatie-werk. De taal is eenvoudig en goed verstaanbaar voor ons Hollandsch sprekend volk in Amerika. En het gehalte is gereformeerd.

Het is van belang het oordeel van den schrijver te lezen over de "revivals", zooals die ten onzent zoo dikwijls voorkomen. Ofschoon zijn oordeel niet bepaald gunstig is, zou mijn persoonlijk oordeel toch nog ongunstiger uitvallen.

Hartelijk aanbevolen.

H. H.

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*De Handelingen Der Apostelen*, door Dr. F. W. Grosheide, twee deelen. Uitgever: J. H. Kok, N.V. Kampen, Nederland. Prijs per deel f. 4.50.

Deze commentaar behoort bij de bekende serie "Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift". Ook deze verklaring van Dr. Grosheide bevelen we hartelijk aan. De exegese is degelijk, de taal is eenvoudig, de stijl is glashelder. Zij, die op onze vereenigingen de "Handelingen der Apostelen" bespreken, of in de toekomst denken te behandelen, zullen wel doen zich deze verklaring aan te schaffen.

H. H.

## Hamilton's Letter To All Our Consistories

Each consistory of our churches has received a letter from the consistory of what was the Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton relative my suspension and deposition and their departure from our communion of churches. In this letter these men declare, o.a., that my attitude and the attitude of S. Reitsma the Sunday of Jan. 14 are partly responsible for their decision to leave our churches.

At first I wondered whether it was necessary to answer this bit of slander, especially in the light of the fact that I have written another article in which also this particular detail of Hamilton's history appears. However, on the one hand I do not know whether this article will appear in the Standard Bearer and, secondly, I do not know when it will appear. It is probably best, therefore, that I answer this remark of the letter which has been sent to all our consistories.

Again I say, judging this particular remark in the light of the entire article, my answer should not be necessary. The brethren will surely have noticed that, at the same consistory meeting of Jan. 16, 1951, my suspension was lifted, and that brother Reitsma and the undersigned were deposed (no longer acknowledged as the legal office bearers). The brethren must also have noticed that a copy of this decision of the consistory was sent to Reitsma and the undersigned, that we, therefore, were not even present at the meeting. And the brethren must also understand that we were not even notified that this particular meeting of the consistory would be held that evening. We simply did not know that a consistory meeting was being held in which brother Reitsma and the undersigned were "read out" of the consistory.

Nevertheless, I do wish to say something about our attitude that particular Sunday of Jan. 14, 1951. That was the Sunday when my suspension was announced, a suspension, mind you, based upon my refusal to submit to the consistory upon the basis as willed by the consistory. When I asked L. Van Huizen, one of the elders, after the Sunday afternoon service why I had been deposed he answered that I had not been deposed upon any ground which appears in the Church Order. When I answered thereupon that then I had not been suspended, he replied that I was surely suspended, and that the ground of my suspension does not appear in the Church Order is not surprising, inasmuch as the fathers were not acquainted with everything either. Brother Reitsma read a sermon in the morning service, and mentioned in his prayer that "faithful office-bearers had been denied the pulpit in the Netherlands

and also in this strange land." He was deposed from office because he said this. This is meant with the "attitude of brother Reitsma". The clerk of the consistory here, L. Klapwijk, confirmed this last night when Reitsma and I met briefly with them to dispose of certain matters that had to be treated.

L. Van Huizen read in the afternoon. Incidentally, I attended both services. In his prayer he accused our churches of "barring children of God from the table of the Lord." If this matter had never been discussed with these men I could understand this assertion of Van Huizen and would not have criticized it. But such is not the case. Repeatedly these men at Hamilton have been told, by the undersigned and the church visitors and the classical committee, that it is not a matter of "barring children of God from the table of the Lord." If this were true, then the Liberated churches of the Netherlands would be guilty of the same sin when they refuse synodicals into their fellowship because they cling to their conceptions but concerning whom one must say that they are children of God. The sole issue here in Hamilton was that we may not permit brethren to be accepted into our fellowship who are and intend to remain Liberated, who will therefore not hesitate to destroy our Protestant Reformed cause. Van Huizen knew this. Yet, he prayed as he did. I told him after the afternoon service that I could not pray his prayer, inasmuch as he had not spoken the truth before God and the Church. However, I also told him to his face that he had been deceitful and hypocritical. Last summer, when the subject of "binding" was a burning question and the consistory refused to enforce their "binding" decision of June 5, the consistory told me that we have the truth, the pure preaching, yea, that our preaching is purer than that in the Netherlands, that I must preach that pure truth, that we must not bar people from the fellowship of our church because they then would not come underneath our preaching, that the preaching must and would drive out the undesirables. At that time I replied that the result of what they wanted to do would be that instead of the preaching driving out the undesirables these undesirables would drive out the preaching. However, the consistory insisted that we had the pure preaching and that I must by all means preach that truth. Now I have been suspended. Because I refused to submit to the will of the consistory. But this is not all. Van Huizen also declared, at the consistory meeting which suspended me, that I had offended the congregation, not personally (so he emphasized) but because I had emphasized that the promise is not general but only for the elect. He, too, found fault with the fact that I had been emphasizing the Protestant Reformed truth. Can anyone harmonize this with that which they told me last summer when the matter of binding was discussed. For this

reason I accused Van Huizen and John Ton (the only consistory members present that Sunday afternoon besides Reitsma and the undersigned) that the consistory had been deceitful because, in the first place, they never intended to bar anyone that was Liberated, and, in the second place, because they, in connection with my suspension, had begun to attack my Protestant Reformed preaching. This, our readers must understand, did not occur publicly, but only in the presence of consistory members. And it should also be borne in mind that this was the first time, as long as I have been minister of Hamilton, and in spite of the many difficulties which we experienced here, ever since the month of June and July, that I ever had anything personal with any consistory member except Hart of whom even the consistory said that he was guilty of backbiting and slander, and who left us Dec. 5. Yet, the first time that I become thus involved with these consistory members, they have the boldness to write as they did to all our consistories. When I say that this is the first time I became involved in personal difficulties with this consistory of Hamilton, this is the testimony of the consistory itself.

For the rest I can be brief. This consistory meeting was held Tuesday evening, Jan. 16 last. Reitsma and I were not notified of the meeting. Yet, they had the boldness to "read us out" of the consistory at this illegal meeting, illegal because Reitsma and I were not notified. They never discussed the matter with us, never brought an accusation against us, simply rid themselves of us and then had the boldness to announce themselves as the "legal consistory" of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton. Two elders deposed, at an illegal consistory meeting and without the advice of the neighboring consistory or the classis. Seldom have I read anything more hierarchical than this action. Klapwijk, not present at the conclusion of the January 14 afternoon service when I revealed my indignation and anger at Van Huizen and Ton, particularly the former, simply accepted the word of Van Huizen Jan. 16, signed his name to the letter which was sent to all the consistories, without asking that I be present at this meeting and without giving me an opportunity to defend myself. This is the happening of the Sunday afternoon of Jan. 24, 1951, to which the letter of the present "legal" consistory refers. I now leave this matter to the judgment of our readers. Besides, in conclusion, what right does any consistory have to send a document, such as this letter of Hamilton, to all the consistories without addressing it first to the classis?

H. Veldman.

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## The End Of Hamilton

Such is indeed the case. This week, the week of January 14-20, has witnessed the end of this congregation as a Protestant Reformed Church. The undersigned has already written two articles for the Standard Bearer in connection with the history of our church in this Canadian city, last Dec. 15 and in Feb. 15, 1951. These were lengthy articles. However, much has happened in Hamilton since our return from the January, 1951 Classis, with which our people ought to be acquainted. Besides, in the light of the insinuations against and attacks by these Liberated "brethren" upon the undersigned, I have decided to write another article which will enter somewhat in detail into these things. We will name persons and dates. We do this for the sake of the record, in order that our people as well as the churches in the Netherlands may know the things that have happened in Hamilton. Besides, when the undersigned asked the consistory of Hamilton during the week of January 14-20 for the privilege of addressing the congregation after the afternoon service of Jan. 21 (he had been suspended) for the purpose of giving the congregation all the facts in the case, this privilege was denied him by the consistory. Therefore this article, also for the sake of the record, however.

### *Was Hamilton Organized Without Any Binding Stipulation?*

It may be necessary, for the sake of the record, to repeat some things here which have appeared in my previous articles of last Dec. 15 and Feb. 15. However, I wish to begin with my experiences here before I became the minister of Hamilton. I first preached in Hamilton in the month of January, 1949. Also in the months of February, May, and August of that year. Strange as it may be, I was already under a cloud before I made my first appearance in Hamilton. I do not say this to cast any reflections upon anyone who may have put me under that cloud, but because I wish to emphasize that the people of Hamilton knew of my stand and convictions before I ever made an appearance there. And, I never failed to discuss with these people the things which distinguished us as Protestant Reformed Churches from the Liberated Churches. Besides, I always stressed the point that I was not speaking for myself, was not merely giving them my personal ideas or opinions, but that I was emphasizing that which characterized us as Protestant Reformed Churches. I discussed with them the covenant, baptism, the promise, infra- and supralapsarianism. I say this because I wish to emphasize that they called a minister concerning whom they knew what he would preach and teach. Our people must understand that,

when our missionary activity began in Canada, I belonged to those skeptical ones who were apprehensive of this work in Canada because of the differences between our churches and the Liberated. And it was always my conviction that we owed it to these people and also to our churches that, in all our labor among them, we draw the lines tightly and without compromise. This I did whenever I discussed the truth with them during the year of 1949. They, I am sure, will never deny this. And this is all the more striking in the light of the fact that I was under a cloud, as far as these people are concerned, before I ever made an appearance in Hamilton. I may also add that I enjoyed these discussions very much—members of our Kalamazoo church will verify this.

Bearing the above in mind, please note that, when I received the call, the consistory promised me that they would fully support me in all my Protestant Reformed preaching and teaching. Can there be any doubt in the minds of our people what I meant when I placed that consistory before that question, or whether they understood me when I asked them that question? And this receives the more emphasis in the light of what happened the Sunday of Nov. 6, 1949, when I led a congregational meeting after the afternoon service. Mind you, the consistory had promised to support me fully the preceding evening. At this congregational meeting one of the members asked me what my attitude would be toward newly arrived liberated immigrants, and I answered him: When I see an immigrant I will say to myself: you must become Protestant Reformed. Is it possible that these people could have misunderstood me when they promised to support me fully in all my Protestant Reformed preaching and teaching? How I worked and that I proceeded cautiously, after I became the minister of Hamilton, is fully set forth in my article last Dec. 15. I write this because I wish to emphasize that, binding themselves to my preaching and teaching, they were binding themselves to the Protestant Reformed truth.

There is more. Let no one say that the question of binding was not in the minds of these people when I accepted the call to Hamilton. I make also this clear in my article last Dec. 15, when I refer to the article which appeared in the *Reformatie* as an answer of the consistory of Hamilton to the slander of a certain Mrs. Klaver of Hudsonville. Nevertheless, although the question of binding was disturbing the minds of these people, and I emphasized that I would preach and teach the Protestant Reformed truth, no one voiced a single objection to me when I was considering the call of Hamilton.

Finally, what society permits a person to join its fellowship upon the condition that such person may agitate against said society? Should not members who intend to join a certain church upon the condition that

they will remain free to agitate against the doctrine of that church, not notify that church that they wish to join upon that condition? The immigrants of Chatham understood this in the autumn of 1949 when their first request for organization was refused.

#### *The Attitude of Van Huizen and Hart in April, 1950*

This, in the light of subsequent happenings, now becomes important. It was in the month of April that I, returning from one of my missionary tours, was told that Van Huizen had said that, if they enforce binding, the congregation of Hamilton would disintegrate. In the same month the undersigned visited a newly arrived family with elder Hart. When I asked these people whether they would promise to be further instructed in our doctrine and whether they also promised not to agitate and their answers to these questions were favorable, Hart asked me, while I was driving him home, whether the King of His Church required of the consistory to ask these newly arrived immigrants such questions. Bear in mind, please, that the elders L. Van Huizen and T. Hart expressed these sentiments long before there was any mention of any Declaration. I assure our readers that the Declaration is not the cause of their opposition, but that their rejection of the Declaration is simply the fruit of the fact that they have no intention to bind themselves to the Protestant Reformed Church.

#### *Deceitful Dealings.*

First, I refer to the backbiting and slander against the undersigned of elder T. Hart. On the one hand I have every reason to believe that he worked against me, behind my back, from the month of August on. A certain member of the congregation once told me, late in 1950, that she was irked because of what he said to the children about their minister. However, he not only worked against me within the congregation of Hamilton, but also slandered me outside the congregation. This was so clearly slander that the consistory of Hamilton, when I told them about it after Hart's departure, did not hesitate to say that the brother had made himself guilty of backbiting and slander. I brought the matter to the attention of the consistory only after I had personally visited the man and he had left our church. Of this matter I could write much more. If these remarks may surprise certain people who were present at our October, 1950, classis and who were amazed because of the fact that, in spite of difficulties in Hamilton, no personalities were involved, permit me to say that at the time of the October classis I knew nothing of all these things.

Secondly, I refer to the dealing of Mrs. L. Van Huizen. This may surprise many people. And then I wish to say that there was none in the congregation

of Hamilton whom I held in higher esteem than Mrs. Van Huizen. She was always so Protestant Reformed, always enjoyed the sermons immensely, never failed to express her admiration for our churches and the things we proclaim and teach. And yet she declared, immediately before the close of 1950, that hatred sizzled through my teeth and that the reason why the elder Van Huizen never prayed for me was because I had said at the congregational meeting of Nov. 16 that the people must not pray for my conversion. Permit me to shed light on these things. When at the congregational meeting of Nov. 16 (the classical committee can fortunately verify this because they were present at this meeting) one of the members declared that he would pray for my conversion he evidently meant that he would pray that the Lord would convert me to the Liberated thinking. This was understood by all. When I then declared that they might not pray for my conversion I certainly meant (and this, too, was understood by all) that they had called a Protestant Reformed minister and they they might not therefore pray that I become Liberated. To this Mrs. Van Huizen refers. To this must be added that, as long as I was the minister of Hamilton and whenever I was absent because of a classical appointment, the elders Van Huizen and Hart never mentioned me in their congregational prayers when they were in charge of the services. And now this Mrs. Van Huizen declares that the reason why her husband did not mention me in his prayers was because it was useless inasmuch as I myself had said that they might not pray for my conversion. Do our people understand the deceitfulness of such doings?

However, there is more in connection with the dealings of Mrs. Van Huizen. She also declared that hatred sizzled through my teeth. Now I would like to have our readers bear the following in mind. First, prior to Nov. 16 I had never been personal in the pulpit except once, and that was in connection with the slanderous dealings of elder Hart—when I learned of his dealings against me, the evening of Oct. 27, had visited him personally in vain, I could no longer endure him. I mention Nov. 16 because at that meeting one of the members held this one thing against me. And after Nov. 16 I avoided all personalities in the public services and confined myself strictly to preaching, although I will say that I emphasized our truth, as I stated at our January classis in connection with my sermon on Luke 1:68-69. Even so, I did not proceed from the purpose, be it then in my emphasis upon our truth, to offend the people. This the consistory confirmed as late as the evening of Jan. 12, 1951. Secondly, except for my dealings with elder Hart, I never had anything personal with the rest of the consistory until the Sunday of Jan. 14, 1951, to which I will presently refer. And, thirdly, as late as the Sunday of Dec. 17,

1950, the last Sunday prior to our going to the States, and the last time I saw Mrs. Van Huizen before the Sunday of Jan. 14, 1951, she said to me that I did not probably know how many of the people of this congregation loved me and wished to retain me as their minister. What do our readers now think of the dealings of Mrs. Van Huizen? Were they deceitful?

(To be continued in the next issue)

H. Veldman.



## Rev. Petter's 6th and 7th Instalments

I have not yet done with Rev. Petter's argument of these instalments. Let us again get this argument before us. It is this:

Synod's laying on the churches the burden of approbating the Declaration is unjust and dishonest and on this account hierarchical, for.

A. It was not the best that the churches assembled in Synod could produce, for,

1. The Declaration had not first been corrected, improved and developed in the Consistories and the Classes.
2. It was at best but two days in process of construction in Synod's enlarged committee of Pre-advice.
3. Synod read the Declaration and immediately thereupon adopted it without any discussion.

This must be considered amazing, for,

- x. The material of the Declaration is involved, argumentative matter.
- y. It is thirteen typewritten pages long.

Let us once more take notice. Rev. Petter's main proposition—the one to which all the other propositions are subordinate and must prove—reads: Synod's laying on the churches the burden of approbating the Declaration is unjust and dishonest and on this account hierarchical.

Inherent in this proposition are two fallacies. They are:

1. Synod has the power to lay burden on the churches.
2. In commanding (should be advising) the churches to approve (or disapprove) the "Declaration" Synod had reference to the "approbation" of Art. 31 of the Church Order.

With the first of these two fallacies—synod has the power to lay burden on the churches—I have already dealt. Let us then concentrate on the second of the two fallacies inherent in the proposition that Rev.



Petter sought to prove: In commanding the churches to approve the "Declaration" synod had reference to the "approbation" of Art. 31 of the Church Order. That this is Rev. Petter's stand is plain from everything he writes in his latest articles. To quote but one statement from his pen, "But that is only the beginning of the faulty origination. For also the principle of Art. 31 was violated. That article requires that the decisions of Synod shall be settled and binding unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles of the Church Order. . . . ' The implication of this part is of course that what the Synod decides is right. And it then places the burden of proof for any one differing in opinion from this, upon the aggrieved member. (Notice how true it is that, according to Rev. Petter's conception, Synod has the power to lay burdens upon the churches).

Plain isn't it? that, as Rev. Petter sees it, Synod in advising the churches to approve the "Declaration" had before its mind the "approbation" of Art. 31 (of the Church Order).

However, it is not true that in advising the churches to *approve* the "Declaration," Synod (1950) had reference to the "approbation" of Art. 31. An examination of the first two of the three concluding statements of the "Declaration" bears out the truth of my statements. Let us get these statements before us. They read:

1. That synod subject this entire document ("Declaration") to the approval of the churches.

2. If no objection is offered, to adopt this at the next synod.

Did not synod by adopting this advice, advise the churches to approve (or disapprove) the "Declaration"? For take notice, "That synod subject this entire document to the approval—mark you, approval—of the churches". So reads the first of these statements, doesn't it? Yes indeed. But the point is this: "the approval" of which the first of these statements makes mention is not the "approbation" of Art. 31. And here is the proof:

1) In point of view of time the "approbation" of Art. 31 follows *what Synod decides*, that is, *agrees on by majority vote*, and this of necessity as it is exactly synod's *decision*, *what synod agrees on by majority vote*, that the churches must approbate.

2) Synod (1950) did not decide, that is, *agree by majority vote*, to *adopt* the "Declaration". On the contrary, synod *decided*, *agreed by majority vote*, merely to advise the churches to approve the "Declaration" *for adoption* on the coming synod and for subsequent *approbation* by the churches (see the second of the three concluding statements of the "Declaration").

3) Conclusion: The "approval" of which the first of the three concluding statements of the "Declaration"

makes mention, is not, cannot be the "approbation" of Art. 31 of the Church Order. For if it were, the "Declaration" would already be adopted and on this account settled and binding. As it is, the "Declaration" is still in process of production in the consistories and in the Classes and accordingly must still be adopted by Synod and approbated by the churches. As we have seen, Rev. Petter insists that the "Declaration" as yet has not been adopted.

But now there is this question: What then can be the meaning of Synod's (1950) advice to the effect that the churches approve (or disapprove) the "Declaration" for adoption in the coming synod and for subsequent "approbation" by the churches? This is crystal clear. Synod could have meant but one thing, namely this: that in the intervening year the churches produce, not approbate, a formula or declaration, that they do so by approving and if need be, correcting, improving, reconstructing, and even, if need be, developing the "Declaration" provided them by Synod of 1950, and that they then again assemble in synod to adopt for *approbation* the finished product. Such are the facts. The "Declaration" right now is undergoing that correcting, improving, developing process in the ecclesiastical assemblies of Classis East.

As we saw, Rev. Petter insists that a synodical deliverance in order not to merit being branded a hierarchical imposition must originate even as to the form of its words with some "member", and be corrected, improved, and developed in consistory, classis and finally in synod. According to Rev. Petter, it is unjust and dishonest and on this account hierarchical of a synod to ask the churches to approbate deliverances that have not passed through these correcting and improving processes. But I ask, if the consistories, office-bearers and common members do their duty by the "Declaration" will not all the requirements layed down by Rev. Petter have been met, when finally the churches will be asked to approbate it?

The first requirement layed down by Rev. Petter is that such a document as to the form of its words originate with some "member". This requirement has been met, certainly. This "member" is synod's committee of pre-advice in whose meeting the "Declaration" originated.

The second requirement that Rev. Petter lays down is that this "member" submit his document to his consistory for correction and improvement. Also this requirement has been met. Synod (1950) submitted the committee's deliverance for that purpose not merely to one consistory but to all of them.

The third requirement layed down by Rev. Petter is that the document be corrected, improved and developed in classis and synod. Also this is being done with the "Declaration", so that when the churches finally will be asked to approbate it, all the require-

ments layed down by Rev. Petter regarding it will have been met in a measure far exceeding anything that Rev. Petter had conceived. For the "Declaration" will have passed through the required correcting and improving processes in *all* our consistories and not merely in one of them. Yet Rev. Petter lodges the heavy charge of hierarchy against synod. I don't understand.

It is now clear how Rev. Petter's proposition as freed from its two fallacies and how also the rest of his argument must be made to read, namely as follows:

Synod's advising, petitioning (not demanding) the churches to produce a Formula, Declaration, in the intervening year, and advising the churches to do so by approving and, if need be, by correcting, improving, reconstructing and developing the "Declaration" provided them by synod (1950) and, finally, advising the churches, when again assembled in synod, to adopt the finished product for *approbation* by the churches was just (not unjust) and honest (not dishonest) and therefore anything but hierarchical, for

- A. It will be the best that the churches assembled in the coming synod can produce, for
  - 1. The Declaration will have been taken into study by all the churches and both classes; thus it will have been corrected, improved and, if need be, reconstructed and further developed in all the consistories and both classes and finally in synod.
  - 2. It will have been the greater part of a whole year in process of construction in the churches.
  - 3. It should be permissable for the coming synod to read the finished product and immediately with little discussion adopt it for approbation by the churches, for
    - x. If the material of the "Declaration" is involved and argumentative it will surely have been simplified.
    - y. If it is too long, it surely will have been shortened.

What we now have is an argument strictly agreeable with reality. And with the truth of this argument bearing down on Rev. Petter's charge—the charge of hierarchy he lodges against synod (1950)—this charge vanishes into thin air never to be seen again except by such people who are in the habit of seeing things.

As we saw, Rev. Petter has much fault to find with the "Declaration". Let then the brother, let the clergy in the churches—Rev. Howerzyl and Rev. Vermeer and the rest of them—then cooperate with us in perfecting the "Declaration", freeing it of its faults, if it has any. Let them cooperate with us in explaining the "Declaration" to our people, its excellencies. Let them in a word, do right by the "Declaration". Then *our churches*, when again assembled in synod, will be able intelligently to do right by the "Declaration", which is to

adopt it for approbation. It is so true what Rev. Vermeer in a recent article ("Concordia") wrote about our people not being blind followers and about their demanding calm discussion. And how well synod (1950) was aware of this too. Also to avoid even the semblance of hierarchy it advised that before adopting the "Declaration" the churches take it in study for a year. And the motion was Rev. Hoeksema's.

And it is as Rev. Vermeer says, our people demand *calm*—mark you, *calm*—discussion. And therefore I didn't like the looks of brother Vermeer's article either. There is far too much of capitalized type in it—type indicative of a spirit if not excited than at least overly emphatic. Let the discussion be calm and brotherly.

And may I suggest that also Rev. Vermeer get busy discussing. I mean of course the *content* of the "Declaration". It's already February. And the coming June is Synod. And to date the "Declaration" has been in the possession of the consistories nearly a half year. (I learned from the stated clerk—Mr. D. Jonker—that as early as June he sent each consistory a copy.) But there is still ample time. For, as I now want to make plain, the material of the "Declaration" is not involved and argumentative. It is not at all difficult. It is easy for reasons I shall now name. But, as Rev. Vermeer says: let the discussion be calm and brotherly.

Indeed, also brotherly. Our people want this too. And therefore I didn't like some of Rev. Vermeer's remarks either. For example the following: "In that light I deplore and protest the foolish haste and rash eagerness of those who try to have our churches adopt the "Declaration". We must remember our people are no dupes and blind followers. They are not underlings who are like people that dwell under a political dictatorship and can be brought unto hasty subjection with the twist of a man's hand. This can be done in Russia, but not with deliberate thinking Reformed people. They demand calm discussion of the issues."

Of course, I fully agree with Rev. Vermeer that our people are not like that. How well the brother knows our people! But what I do not like is that in penning this statement, Rev. Vermeer was striking at the undersigned and Rev. Hoeksema. In his article Rev. Vermeer mentions our names several times. It means that he hangs up before our people a picture of us in which we appear as a couple of dictators even of the Russian brand. We want to bring people under subjection by twisting their hands. That, to my mind, is not brotherly. Wasn't it Rev. Hoeksema who proposed on the floor of synod (1950) that to avoid even the semblance of hierarchy synod advise that the churches, before adopting the "Declaration" for approbation, prove and approve it for the greater part of a year? So far from being true it is that we are trying

to bring our people into subjection even by "twisting their hands." True, we do advocate adoption of the "Declaration" in the coming synod. But our only weapon is true (not false) argument, calculated to persuade. And this certainly is our good right, and, such is our conviction—not opinion—also our solemn duty. And, as far as we are aware, our argument is not false but true.

But I am a fallible man. So if Rev. Vermeer or any of the other brethren, including to be sure Rev. Petter, has detected in all the criticism that I have brought to bear on Rev. Petter's writings any spurious reasonings, let Rev. Vermeer point them out to me, I implore. And I certainly will retract and tender my apologies.

As Rev. Vermeer says—let us be calm—and brotherly. And therefore I believe that Rev. Vermeer should take down that picture of us that he hung up before our people. It isn't true.

G. M. Ophoff.



## Contributions

### ANOTHER GOSPEL

Dark clouds are hovering over us, as Protestant Reformed people. Brothers stand over against brothers, and in some of our homes families are arrayed against each other, on account of this miserable conditional theology. O do not say it is not serious, that it is just a difference of opinion, for it is in reality another gospel. If only we had to do with open Arminianism this controversy would soon be over, but this conditional theology is brought in under the pretence, that it is in accordance and in harmony with Scripture and our Confessions. But in reality it strikes at the very heart of our salvation. And the issues are tremendous. We either stand or fall as Protestant Reformed churches. And many are our opponents both local and general, and a stand we must and do take. It is either, or. Faith as a condition is the full-orbed gospel, or unconditional faith is the full-orbed gospel. And the battle is on. We cannot tolerate both. For faith as a condition must not have a foot to stand on. Not even a toehold. It must be completely annihilated and utterly wiped out among us. And therefore we must put on the whole armour of unconditional salvation so that the *fiery darts* of this miserable conditional theology may be utterly smitten in the dust. Therefore do not do as some of our writers in our church papers, leaving loopholes. Those who can conceive of a justifiable use of the term condition: *tighten your lines, Brethren*. There is no such thing as a justifiable use of the term.

The Rev. Petter in all his writings has proven absolutely nothing. For I consider a great theologian, one who can bring out the profound truths so that every one that reads can understand them. He must be a *polemic* theologian who is a warrior and goes forth into the field of battle to encounter the adversaries of the truth. For if we are to have peace it must rest upon the foundation of truth. And the truth is that we are absolutely unconditionally saved. Also do not do as some of our leaders do who want to maintain that they are *distinctively reformed* but who in the meantime never warn their congregation against this conditional theology, and who go about belittling those leaders who oppose faith as a condition, and who by their actions isolate those that hold to our beautiful, reformed truth. And who openly say, I will never sign that Declaration of Principles, for they also are our opponents. Then there are others who isolate themselves. They are battle-weary. There has been so much trouble already. Why make more, for aren't you making a mountain out of a mole-hill? You cannot talk to them any more about controversies. And so you sit and talk about everything else, for if you would mention some article in one of our papers all the answer you would get is: If this controversy does not stop I am going to quit the Standard Bearer, etc. You used to enjoy their company but your visits become less and less. They too are our opponents, who call you fanatical and judge motives as the Rev. Cammenga, but who prove neither. Then there are others who say that all you did in your articles in the Standard Bearer was to hide behind Rev. Hoeksema's skirts. But let me make this statement, that I cannot in words utter how I detest this miserable conditional theology. And that I believe in unconditional salvation before I ever knew of a Protestant Reformed church. Nevertheless I maintain that Rev. Hoeksema and others have shed much light on this subject, whereby faith was strengthened. For I am one of those who confess that we are unconditionally saved. Now, the true gospel has it that we are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law. The false gospel has it that we are justified by faith but not without the deeds of the law; you must do something. The false gospel is a conditional gospel. And therefore not our opponents but *we* stand in the footsteps of the faith of the fathers and our shield and defense shall be: *Gij zijt hun roem, de kracht van hunne kracht!*"

Kryn Feenstra  
Redlands, Calif.

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Esteemed Editor:

Everyone who has even the slightest interest in the Protestant Reformed Churches has certainly by this

time been awakened to the fact that strange things are happening in our midst.

As in every controversy there are two sides, so also in our churches at present. We must of course be on one side or the other. I, personally, have, as this controversy progressed been on both sides and also in the middle.

After careful consideration of both views at long last I have chosen what I firmly believe to be the only side in this issue. Rev. Petter's article in the Concordia of Jan. 18, 1951 was actually the deciding factor in my choice.

As laymen, we are at a distinct disadvantage in a controversy of a theological nature. We don't have the necessary books and knowledge of the Scriptures to properly evaluate the situation as quickly as our leaders do. We have to take their word for many things. And we should too, of course. But it is rather difficult, nay, even impossible for us to immediately say, "There, I agree with and understand Rev. So and So perfectly". We should not, and I for one, will not follow a leader blindly just because he was correct in the past.

So, I for one, was very happy to see Rev. Petter's article in the Concordia. Here were references I too, could refer to and study. This time spent studying these references was not wasted. I have the Rev. Petter to thank for making everything so clear.

Let's examine his article once. Of the Declarations he says they are the private opinions of men. I agree with Rev. Petter. Naturally he also knows that the Confessions too are the private opinions of men. Only the Bible is the public Word of God.

Again I agree with Rev. Petter when he informs us that the basic problem with the Liberated is that of terminology. But he also knows of course through his thorough study of the matter that we have different meanings for the same word and who can have a discussion of any merit when the same words mean different things to each side?

Now the part we can all refer to. All of us surely have a Psalter in our homes. Turning to Q. 59 of the Catechism we find agreement when Rev. Petter tells us we are righteous by believing. Of course we know also that only the righteous in Christ before God and heirs of eternal life can be believers and thus be righteous.

In Q. 60 we both agree that God imputes to me righteousness if I have a believing heart. Somehow, though, he neglected to mention that we have this righteousness and believing heart *only* because God "without any merit of mine, but *only* of mere grace" imputes the same to us. I failed to find the word "accept" in this reference but that's not so important.

In Q. 61 we must also agree with Rev. Petter. We are righteous by faith only. Nothing else. But let's

also bear in mind that in the eyes of God even this faith is unworthy and it is *only* because of Christ that we are righteous before God.

In Q. 71 we agree with Rev. Petter yet again. He points out that the elect are not even mentioned in this article on baptism. Naturally he takes it for granted that the believers are the elect and the non-believers are the reprobate.

Questions 75 and 77 speak for themselves as long as we bear in mind that believers and elect are one and the same.

Here in Q. 84 we find the word "accept" again. Or rather Rev. Petter finds it. I found the word "receive" instead. We know now this must be just an oversight on Rev. Petter's part. We know of course and so does he naturally that to "accept" means to "receive a thing offered to one with a *consenting mind*" (Webster), while to "receive" means "*to come into possession of, from any source outside of oneself, without direct effort*" (Webster). If we take for granted the use of the word "accept" is an oversight, then we'll agree once more.

The reference to Canons II, B, 4 really confused me for awhile. Proving a point by referring to the negative is rather misleading sometimes. But I still find agreement on this point also.

Reading Canons III, IV, 8 we begin to wonder why so *much* is omitted in Rev. Petter's explanations. This is the writer who, you may recall, once accused the Rev. H. Veldman of failing to preach a full-orbed gospel.

Of course God promises eternal life to as many as "come" and "believe". But let's please add that all who are called *must* comply and that only the elect of course are called.

We can't take Canons II, 5 by itself anymore than we can take certain Scripture verses by themselves. Of course I agree too that this reference is the final word but we can't preach *only* that.

You have gathered by now, I hope, that although I agree with Rev. Petter as to what he has quoted, in actuality I violently disagree with the very misleading manner in which he attempts to direct our thoughts.

I feel that I have taken far too much space already. Space that could have been utilized much more effectively by far greater thinkers than myself.

In closing we can again find agreement when Rev. Petter says the authors of the "Declaration" are one-sided. Let's be thankful that they are. By being one-sided they are in perfect harmony with the Bible and the Confessions. We, too, should be one-sided in this grave matter.

Kenneth Ezinga.  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Letter From Menko Flikkema

Manhattan, Mont.  
January 6, 1951

Geachte Redakteur:

Enkele gedachten en een vraag betreffende de Verklaring van Beginselen.

Daar er de laatste maanden veel over het onderwerp *conditions* en deze Verklaring van Beginselen geschreven wordt in de Standard Bearer en Concordia, en velen onder ons gewone volk er zat van worden, vooral omdat men eigenlijk niet goed weet waarover deze strijd gaat, dacht ik om hierover enkele gedachten te schrijven en in verband daarmee ook eenige vragen aan U te richten. Te meer daar de a.s. Synode hierover zal beslissen, of de Verklaring van Beginselen voor ons als kerken bindende zal worden, ja of neen. Nu komt het mij voor, en velen met mij, dat er niet duidelijk en eenvoudig genoeg over wordt gediscussieerd zoodat we elkaar begrijpen. Ook meen ik vooreerst moeten op te merken, dat de z.g. Verklaring zelf wel, voor mij althans, wat aan duidelijkheid te wenschen overlaat. B.v., onder III A verwerpen wij, dat de belofte des verbonds voorwaardelijk is. Nu is mij dat toch niet heel duidelijk. Houdt dat in ook het deelachtig worden van deze beloften, waaronder we verstaan alle heilsweldaden? Zie, het is me nog niet heel duidelijk geworden wat juist bedoeld wordt met voorwaardelijk in dit verband. We kunnen dit woord toch met onderscheidene bedoeling gebruiken? Als hier bedoeld wordt de beloften des verbonds, dan is het ons duidelijk genoeg. Het heil is ons beloofd niet naar verdienste maar door genade alleen. Maar we kunnen ook toch spreken van voorwaarden die in 't geheel niet aan eenige verdienste denken doen. En ik meen dat we die voorwaarden niet moeten verwerpen. En dan bedoel ik hiermede de eisch des Heeren, welke ons bij de bevestiging van het verbond herhaaldelijk wordt opgelegd. Lezen we eens even dit deel van ons Doopsformulier: "Ten derde, overmits in alle verbonden twee deelen zijn, zoo worden ook wij wederom door den Heiligen Doop *vermaand en verplicht* tot een nieuwe gehoorzaamheid; namelijk, dat we dezen eenigen God, Vader, Zoon, en Heilige Geest, aanhangen, betrouwen en liefhebben van ganscher harte, van ganscher ziele, van ganscher gemoede en met alle krachten, de wereld verlaten, onze oude natuur dooden, en in een nieuw en godzalig leven wandelen." Nu kan men misschien wel zeggen: Deze verplichtingen en vermaningen zijn geen voorwaarden. Wat zijn het dan? Het zijn toch onmisbare voorwaarden in de beteekenis van gesteldheid in ons leven des geloofs? Laat me het hier nog even weer duidelijk zeggen: als ik hier spreek van voorwaarden zij alle gedachte aan verdienstelijke werken

of mogelijkheid bij ons om deze voorwaarden te vervullen, buiten gesloten. Dat zou onschriftuurlijk zijn. We spreken toch immers over voorwaarden in het *Genade Verbond*? En de Heere vraagt van ons niets minder dan onvoorwaardelijke overgave. Maar daar er wel meer dan één gedachte ligt in den term *voorwaarde*, moesten we toch, mijns inziens, niet het geheele woord overboord gooien, alsof de gedachte voorwaarde niet in ons gereformeerd denken thuishoort.

Zouden we het woord niet noodig zijn? Als we altoos maar voor onze aandacht houden, dat we *kinderen* zijn in het *Verbond der Genade*.

Enkele gedachten hierover.

Als we ons Gods beloften indenken, zijn die niet los te denken van Gods eisch. O zeker, we weten wel, dat al de eischen Gods door Zijne beloften gedekt worden. De Heere eischt van ons geloof en bekeering. Nu is het geloof een gave Gods. Doch als we spreken betreffende het geloof als een voorwaarde voor onzen geestelijken welstand, en tot het beërven van de zaligheid, dan denken we toch in het geheel niet aan het geloof als een verdienende oorzaak voor onze zaligheid, maar als de weg, of als een instrument, waardoor het de Heere belieft om ons het heil in Christus deelachtig te maken. Hij heeft reeds alles voor ons verdiend, doch wij plukken zoo door het instrument des geloofs, de vruchten van Christus' verdiensten. Of denken we eens even in de eisch van zelfverloochening. Is ook dat niet een voorwaarde in denzelfden zin genomen? Let eens op Matt. 16:24, 25. Of laten we even indenken de gedachte van de vergeving van zonden. O zeker, het is alleen de genade Gods hetwelk ons tot de bekeering leidt, en ons van de overtuiging van de vergeving onzer zonden deelachtig maakt, maar toch is het hier een voorwaarde, dat we het geloof in den Heere Jezus deelachtig zijn, en in Zijne wegen wandelen. En is het ook niet alzoo, dat het geloof, in den zin genomen van onze activiteit in het geloof, ons deel als redelijke, zedelijke schepselen, waarmee de Heere werkt, en daarom van ons eischt om Hem lief te hebben van ganscher harte, enz., een voorwaarde is, om ons de verzekering deelachtig te maken van onze zaligheid?

O zeker, ik begrijp wel, dat we dit alles ontvangen door Gods genade, door Zijne dringen in onze harten. Maar het is toch ook waar als we niet leven en wandelen in den weg des geloofs, geen acht geven op 's Heeren roepstem, de aandrang des Geestes versmoren, en alzoo den Heiligen Geest bedroeven (wat toch zeker wel gedaan wordt), we de verzekering der zaligheid niet deelachtig zijn.

Dit alles nu in acht nemende, is het mij nog niet duidelijk, waarom onze a.s. Synode het besluit zou nemen als kerken: dat wij verwerpen, dat de beloften des verbonds voorwaardelijk zijn. Zou het niet beter



zijn, dat eerst duidelijk uitgemaakt wordt, wat we juist verstaan en bedoelen met voorwaarden of condities? We hebben toch wel terdege te rekenen met onze verantwoordelijkheid?

Menko Flikkema.

*Note of the editor:*—I will answer this brother in the next issue of our paper.



## Een Brief Van J. R. VanderWal

Al lang waren we van plan een paar regels te schrijven over "The Declaration of Principles". Doch de vrees be kroop ons, dat we niet voldoende op de hoogte zouden zijn met de bewuste zaak, en zodoende weerhield ons de pen op de vatten. Doch waar de Standard Bearer, Concordia, en zelfs De Reformatie zich niet onledig houden de zaak telkens te berde te brengen, en waar die zaak van verschillende kanten wordt belicht, voelen we ons gedrongen de volgende opmerking neer te pennen.

Wordt het niet hoog tijd, dat er aan al dit geschrijf een einde komt, omreden dat, volgens onze bescheiden meening, veel van dit geschrijf op misverstand berust? Ons dunkt dat men elkaar eenvoudig voorbij praat. Bijvoorbeeld, Prof. Schilder is volgens De Standard Bearer een Heynsman, en als men de stukken in De Reformatie leest van December 1950 (meen ik) van Prof. Schilder, dan is hij net zoo min een Heynsman dan Ds. Hoeksema of Ds. Ophoff. En wanneer men dan de Standard Bearer leest en Concordia, en de bezwaren tegen de Declaration van sommige broeders leest, dan krijgt men den indruk, dat er geen jongens aan 't woord zijn, waar men vaak geen acht op slaat, doch dat mannen der zake kundig hun opinie ten beste geven, en die ook wel terdege weten waar het om gaat, en die ook het welzijn van Gods kerk op 't oog hebben.

Zoo, b.v., leest men in de Standard Bearer van December 15 een artikel van de hand van Ds. H. Veldman: "News from Hamilton", waar uitlatingen in voorkomen van menschen die thuis hooren bij de moderne richting in de Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk. B.v., A. Uitverkiezing op voorgezien geloof; B. Christus is voor allen gestorven; C. God heeft alle kinderen lief, en wil ze mitsdien ook allen zaligen; D. Geen geloof in de uitverkiezing, etc. Doch zulke menschen behooren bij ons heelemaal niet; die zijn zuiver modern. Bij zulke menschen zal een Declaration of Principles weinig nut doen.

Een vijftig jaar geleden werd in Nederland druk geschreven over infra en supra; beneden- en bovenal

drijvers. Doch is er toen ooit aan gedacht een soort van verlengstuk aan de Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid te voegen? Ons niet bekend. Beide werden in de Gereformeerde Kerken geduld, omreden de verschillen niet werden beschouwd als in strijd met Gods Woord. En waar de verbondskwestie zoo'n teer puntje altijd geweest is, en volgens ons ook wel zal blijven, vinden we het niet wijs broeders en zusters te weren die op dat stuk van ons verschillen. Het zal wel een kwestie blijven die we na dezen zullen verstaan.

We weten waartoe de meeningsverschillen in Nederland hebben geleid. Laat ons niet in hetzelfde euvel vervallen.

Ons dunkt in deze hoogst ernstige tijden die we nog nooit zoo hebben beleefd, verliezen we de hoofdzaken wel eens uit 't oog, en maken we ons druk over dingen waar het eeuwigdurende volk niets aan heeft. En dan bedoelen we met hoofdzaken: Welke is uwe eenige troost in leven en sterven.

J. R. VanderWal  
Redlands, Calif.

Redlands, Calif.  
January 25, 1951

Dear Rev. Hoeksema:

Will you please place this article in the Standard Bearer?

To the delegates of our last Synod:  
Dear Brethren,

The opinions expressed by the Rev. Vermeer in Concordia of January 18, 1951, under the heading: "A Statement Re Our Difficulties" are not shared by all our people here. They certainly are not mine. I want no part of it.

Your brother in Christ,  
Ben Meelker.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Contributors will please stand in line. Your editor will be fair to everybody, but he cannot fill the whole S. B. with contributions. And, please, be as brief as possible, and give others a chance.

EDITOR.