

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XXVII

March 1, 1951 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

NUMBER 11

MEDITATION

The Dying Christ

"Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."—Matt. 27:50-54.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus He gave up the ghost."

—Luke 23:46

Everything surrounding this awful cross is wonderful.

We feel a great humility when we set ourselves to say something about one of its episodes. This is true of every attempt at exegesis of the Holy Word; but how much more when we attempt to say something of the dying Christ of God!

It was early when we arrived at the place of a skull. The rulers of the people had done everything with expediency and dispatch. They must have congratulated one another, and themselves. There! That is work that is well done. We are rid of Him, who really was a thorn in our sides! At nine o'clock in the morning it was finished, as far as their nefarious labor was concerned. The Christ (in their eyes, the pseudo-Christ) hung on the cross. Let now every one look to Him.

Oh yes, the devil had his hour, we read; and he certainly used his hour. Every spirit or man at his post, each doing the thing that fitted the hellish plot;

and here we have the result: Christ is on the tree of shame and dishonor. Satan has won his war!



But has he?

There is a masterpiece in existence, depicting the awful scene of the crucifixion. And with marvellous skill the artist has depicted on the fact of Satan, hovering above the cross in a dark and lurid background of clouds, a sardonic leer or grin, but in it there is also an unspoken question of awful dread: Did I have the victory?

I wonder what exegesis Satan put on the *perfectum* of Jesus: It is finished!

And then that loud cry of Jesus as He bowed the head and gave up the ghost. Satan must have heard it. He certainly was there at the time.

And the import of the last crossword! Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!

Also the terrifying signs at the death of Jesus: the earth quaked, the rocks rent, the graves were opened, the veil was rent, and even from the top to the bottom, signifying that it was God's hand!

Of course, Satan now knows that with all his hatred of God in the persecution of Jesus, he did nothing but help to lay the foundation of the holy city where the perfected kingdom shall be to God's praises forever!

Sorrows of Satan!



Yes, Jesus died on the cross.

And what marvellous things happened at His death.

First, He cried with a loud voice just before He died, and said: Father, into Thy hands I commend Hy spirit!

This is a quotation from Psalm 31. And yet, it is no quotation, for they are the words of His own speech as He spoke them through the mouth of the prophet many ages before. He simply enters His own words

and deepens them to the utmost and fullest significance.

Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit! I hear in these words an exuberant gladness; it sounds to me like a shout of victory. That is especially so when we connect this last crossword with the one He uttered just before: It is finished!

We realize full well that His physical death is part and parcel of His humiliation; and that His body must rest in the grave so that He might show to the church of all ages that He has overcome death in all its agonizing phases, to show that He opens the grave for all those that follow Him. But let us also see that this last cry of Jesus signifies that He is going HOME! He is going Home! Home to God, His Father in heaven.

From the moment that Jesus bowed His head and died, He arrived in the arms of God and at once He was in the midst of great rejoicings and jubilant singing.

The Blood of the New Testament arrived.

I realize full well that the victory began with His resurrection, but I would like to contrast this last crossword with the fourth, and then we will realize that Jesus came to rest in Father's arms. In His arms the spirit of Jesus rejoiced. Moreover, in His second crossword He had already prophesied: *today* thou shalt be with Me in *Paradise*!

And in Paradise it is well with Jesus! What inexpressible contrast to the cry from out of the depths and from out of the impenetrable darkness of a few moments before! There He felt *forsaken of God*; here He is in the *hand of Father*. Where He experienced an agonizing agony; here He experiences the delight of heaven.

There is glory already in His dying, a glory that shall progress to dizzying heights of the New Jerusalem in His final day.



Yes, the Christ of God died.

And both the church and the world shall know it. God will take care that this date does not pass unnoticed. Awful things shall happen.

The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Why is that added to the holy record?

Undoubtedly it points to the fact that all this cross and dying, all this redemption and glory, is a work of the Triune God. He will not give His praises to another. For Himself He created all things; well, it shall become evident that also recreation is His own work alone.

The veil is rent. O yes, but God reached down

into the temple, and His own hands ripped the veil in twain!

There is Gospel joy in that act.

For ages it was told the church that God dwelled in the holy of holies, and that no one might enter there that he die not. The high priest might enter there once each year, but he did so because of the fact that he was an *official*, a copy, a shadow, a type of One who was to come. But God was not at home for just anyone. That had to wait for more gladsome days.

The holy of holies was shut to all men because of their evil, filth, corruption and guilt.

And this is the Gospel: a Man was found who would open the door that led to the holy of holies, the Home of God. And that Man is Jesus. He will rend the veil, and that veil is His own flesh.

Do you notice how God's timing is absolute and perfect?

At the moment Jesus died, the veil is rent, the body and the soul of Jesus are parted in death, and so the opening is made that leads to the inner sanctuary.

I think that Sanhedrin appointed an able committee to see to this strange phenomenon; and that this committee did good work: the veil was repaired or a new one bought and installed. I shudder at the implications of such an act. It says: I refuse to enter the sanctuary. And if we note that the sanctuary, or rather, the opening into the sanctuary, is the symbolic representation of the open arms of God, the matter becomes so horrible that we tremble. Sanhedrin, through its able committee, gave notice to God that they refused His Son!

But to the church of Jesus Christ, this act of God is Gospel joy.

The door is open!

Heaven itself lies open to our wondering gaze.

Through the death of Jesus a new and living way is opened to the heart of God.

Oh no, we will not repair that breach which God made. But we will come, we do come to Thee, for Thou art our God in this dying Christ!

The blessing of a dying Christ!



The earth did quake and the rocks rent!

If you lived in places where earthquakes happen you see more of the import of this testimony than if you have never before felt the earth shake beneath your feet.

We speak of *terra firma*, the firm and stable earth!

Well, if the creature is to be at rest and comfortable, the earth should be firm. It belongs to our nature

to live upon *terra firma*. It is unnatural if the earth quakes. It should not be, according to the ordinances of creation.

But let us not accuse God when He takes the earth in His hands in order to shake it and cause all manner of hardship and fatality.

It is not God who is to blame! Perish the thought!

We, it is man himself, who is to blame. We have turned the foundations of the earth upside down through our sin and iniquity. You can find that in the Bible too. Sin is perverseness. And that word is akin to the earthquake. Oh, I am certain that when the judgment day comes all the calamities that shall befall the wicked shall be beautifully right, entirely just, wholly righteous. Our condemnation shall equal our corruption.

The earth must be moved. God's justice demands it. He has done so many times. It really was not the first time the earth quaked when Jesus died. In the Old Testament they reckoned their years sometimes from "the great earthquake". God has rocked the world in His anger many times.

But I must tremble when I remember a word from Paul: Once more I shall move the earth, and all things!

And that is anticipated every time there has been an earthquake, and especially when Jesus died. It was a prophecy of the final earthquake of the last day. The rending of the veil is a blessing, but the rending of the earth and of the rocks is a curse, or, rather, the promise of the final curse of God when He shall take the earth and shake it in the full revelation of His righteous anger. I think that there shall be an eternal earthquake in hell.

But there is a blessing in it for you, my brother, a blessing in disguise.

The splitting earth and the rending rocks tell you that on the basis of the dying Christ there shall come a palace that is built on the immovable rock, and the rock is Christ. And Christ the Rock is the revelation of God the Rock. Deut. 32:4.

The rocks that split and the earth that quaked when the Christ died tell the church that they shall stand secure forever on the rock of God's everlasting love.

Oh, the blessings of a dying Christ!



He bowed the head and gave up the ghost!

Presently loving hands will take Him down from the cross and lay Him in a grave.

But when His body is separated from His spirit, it spelled life for many bodies of the saints that were resurrected and who appeared unto many after Christ's resurrection.

Another sign of the last day, and wrought for your and my comfort in the valley of the dead in which we dwell here below.

Oh yes, at the last day the graves of the saints shall be opened and they shall not only appear unto many, but they shall walk at liberty in the new Paradise of God forever and ever.

What beautiful contrast! When Christ is made ready to fill the grave, the graves of His saints are opened. It is the Gospel in wondrous acts of God. His death is our life. His burial is our resurrection. His agony is our bless. Shall we not love Him?

The marvel of God's everlasting Gospel!

The blessings of the dying Christ!



The victim of Sanhedrin, Pilate, Herod, and the wicked world had died.

Their representative and officiating factotum, the centurion, could testify to the fact. God took care of that! He had not only seen the death of this Strange Man, but he also saw the attending signs.

And he marvelled with great admiration.

A great change had come about.

First the howling mob with their gibes and jokes and taunts and sneers, reviling the dying Christ.

And now the quaking earth, the rending rocks, after the inexplicable three hours darkness! And the mockers flee in great fear!

The strange death of this victim: he cried with a loud voice, and then such mystifying language: "into Thy hands I commend My spirit!"

It was all so unusual, so strange, so out of the ordinary!

God will have His witnesses even out of the Roman oppressors.

No, I do not know if the testimony of this man spelled salvation for him. He may have meant: this dying man is more than an ordinary mortal. We know that the superstitious Romans believed in the gods dwelling with men.

But, at any rate, this man must be a witness for God. Even as Nebuchadnezzar, the wicked king of the Old Testament. He must attest unto the great deed of almighty God, when His Christ died.

But I like to believe that this centurion is a representative of God's elect out of the great heathen world that will find all their joy in the dying Christ, but then the Christ who rose again, and is now sitting at the right hand of God!

O God! We thank Thee for this dying Christ, for His blood speaks good things, better things than the blood of Abel!

Good Friday is good, for it tells me that His death is my life for evermore!

G. Vos.

The Standard Bearer

Semi-Monthly, except Monthly in July and August

Published By

The Reformed Free Publishing Association

Box 124, Sta. C., Grand Rapids, Mich.

EDITOR: — Rev. H. Hoeksema.

Communications relative to contents should be addressed to REV. H. HOEKSEMA, 1139 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Communications relative to subscription should be addressed to Mr. J. BOUWMAN, 1350 Giddings S.E., Grand Rapids 7, Mich. Announcements and Obituaries must be mailed to the above address and will be published at a fee of \$1.00 for each notice.

Renewals:—Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes his subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order.

Entered as Second Class Mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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EDITORIALS

The Declaration Of Principles

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,” is by no means contradicted, but rather confirmed by what is stated in Canons II. A, 5. There we read:

“Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel.”

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, 1924, appealed to this part of the Confession to support its doctrine of common grace. According to this theory the promise of the gospel is a well-meaning offer on the part of God to all that hear, and is therefore grace to all to whom the gospel is preached.

But in this the Synod was utterly mistaken.

Note, first of all, how the promise of the gospel is here described: “. . . The promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

To be sure, the viewpoint here is different from that of the quotations we made before from the Canons and from the Baptism Form. It evidently refers to the promise as *preached*, rather than to the promise essentially. And as such the promise is heard in a saving sense, received, and appropriated, only by faith. In the second place, do not overlook the fact that the promise is here presented not in all its contents, but only as everlasting life. It has in mind only the promise of the goal, and not that of the means to reach the goal. Hence, it is said that the promise is that they who receive it shall have eternal life and not perish, and, that it concerns only those that believe in Christ.

Now the question is: does the preaching of the promise, according to this canon, make the promise a conditional offer, dependent on any prerequisite which man must fulfill in order to obtain the promise? Or does also this canon, when read in the light of its context, present the promise as an unconditional oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation in Christ through faith?

The promise might indeed be said to be a conditional offer, if it, that is, the promise, or even the preaching of the promise, did not include more than the goal of eternal life.

But this is certainly not the case.

The promise of God, and even the preaching of the promise, also includes all that is necessary to reach that goal. It includes the gift of the Holy Spirit; and therefore, it includes the application of all the benefits of salvation to the elect. The promise includes the gift of faith. That this is the meaning is plain at once if we read Canons II, A, 5 in the light of what follows in the same chapter.

In Art. 7 we read: "But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God, given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own."

And in Art. 8: "For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, It was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his own presence forever."

Here, too, it is evident that according to the Reformed Confessions the promise is all-inclusive. For to be sure, the promise of the gospel is a declaration of the eternal will of God to save the elect. It is, according to this article of the Canons, the declaration of the will of God that He should redeem out of every nation, tribe, and tongue all the elect, and them alone; that He should confer upon the elect the gift of saving faith, and upon them alone; that He should confer upon the elect, and upon them alone, all the saving gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ purchased for them, that He should purge them from original and actual sins, and should lead them infallibly to everlasting glory. Such is the eternal will of God, and such is the declaration of the promise in the gospel, as we have it in Scripture. It is, therefore, all-inclusive.

Hence, Canons II, A, 5, in the light of the context,

cannot possibly mean that the promise of everlasting life is a conditional offer. But it teaches:

1. That the preaching of the promise is as to its contents particular: the promise of eternal life is not for all that hear the gospel. Nor is the promise for all that are baptized. But it is particular, that is, for all that believe in Christ.

2. That God includes in the promise the gift of faith which He bestows only on the elect.

3. That therefore the promise is an oath of God by which He leads the elect infallibly to salvation. Only the elect believe. The promise is only for them. And then God leads infallibly to everlasting life and glory.

To this Canons II, A, 5 adds:

1. That this particular promise must be proclaimed generally, or promiscuously, to all that hear the gospel. The gospel is proclaimed by men, and therefore it cannot be preached to the elect alone. And, even if it were possible that men could preach only to the elect, this certainly is not the will of God. According to the revelation of Scripture it is evident that it is the will of God that not only the elect, but also the reprobate, shall hear the preaching of the gospel, in order that God may be justified, and sin may become revealed as sin indeed.

2. That it must be proclaimed together with the command to repent and believe. The expression "the command to repent and believe" is by no means the same as saying "the condition of faith and repentance". When we speak of a condition, the implication is that God offers the sinner something which he can receive providing he first fulfills the condition of faith and repentance. But a command is unconditional. Unbelief is sin. And not to repent means to walk and continue to walk in the way of sin. The natural man has no right to live in unbelief and sin before God. Hence, God commands him to believe and to repent, unconditionally. And by the preaching of the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe, the sin of the natural man is sharply revealed and aggravated, and God is justified when He judgeth. Faith however, is a gift of grace. And by that gift of faith the believer fulfills his part of the covenant. He does believe and repent indeed. He walks in a new obedience, and by faith cleaves to the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and trusts in Him and loves Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, forsakes the world, crucifies his old nature, and walks in a new and holy life.

And finally, this same canon teaches that this gospel is preached wherever and to whomever God sends it; and that, too, according to His good pleasure. Even the gospel is not preached to all men. Many there are that never hear the gospel. This is true of thousands upon thousands of heathen, that lived and still live

outside of the pale of Christendom. And besides, it is true of many children that die in infancy and are nevertheless saved without hearing the preaching of the gospel, because they, as well as the adults, are included in the covenant of God.

In the meantime we have already proceeded with our discussion of the Declaration of Principles to what is found under II, B. There the Declaration states: "That Christ died only for the elect, and that the saving efficacy of the death of Christ extends to them only. This is evident from the Canons of Dordrecht, II, A, 8." And then we quote from the confessions this same eighth article of Canons II, to which we already referred above. From this article we briefly conclude in the Declaration:

"1. That all the covenant blessings are for the elect alone.

"2. That God's promise is unconditionally for them only: for God cannot promise what was not objectively merited by Christ.

"3. That the promise of God bestows the objective right of salvation not upon all the children that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, not upon all that are baptized, but only upon the spiritual seed."

Let us briefly elucidate these three items quoted from the Declaration.

As to the first of these three items, the truth of this ought to be evident to all that can read and are willing to subscribe to the Reformed Confessions. That all the covenant blessings are for the elect alone is literally stated in so many words in the article of the Canons to which we referred above. For the article states that it is the most gracious will and purpose of God the Father "that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation." And again, the article states that "it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing, and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in his presence forever." This point, therefore, needs no further explanation.

As to "2", this reflects upon the Heynsian view of the promise. According to Heyns, and also according to the Liberated, God's promise is an objective bequest

to all the children that are baptized. It is compared to a testament in which a father has bequeathed a certain sum of money which is deposited in the bank, and which every one of his children, head for head, may draw from the bank upon his decease. So God has written the names of all the children, head for head, that are baptized and that are born in the historical line of the covenant in His testament, sealed by the death of Christ. They, in other words, all have a check in their pocket, which they may cash in the bank of heaven. This promise God seals, that is, swears by an oath, unto all the baptized children in the sacrament of baptism. Such is the meaning of the objective promise to all the children that are born in the line of the historical dispensation of the covenant.

So far the Liberated agree with Heyns. That this is true is evident from the quotations we made in our last number of the *Standard Bearer*, the quotations from Dr. Bremmer in the *Reformatie* and from Prof. Veenhof in his *Appel*.

According to both Heyns and the Liberated, however, there is a condition attached to this promise. This condition is faith and obedience, or repentance.

They differ, as we have pointed out repeatedly,—at least Dr. Schilder differs,—in regard to the question of preparatory grace. According to Heyns, all baptized children have sufficient grace either to accept or reject the promise, to bring forth good fruits of repentance or stinking fruits of unbelief. It is this preparatory grace that distinguishes the baptized children from the children of the world, according to Heyns. The Liberated, as far as we know, do not subscribe to this particular theory of Heyns.

However, they stand before the question, which has never been answered, whether or not faith is included in the promise of God. That it is, is very evident from the doctrinal part of the Baptism Form, where we read: "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." The application of all that we have in Christ certainly includes the gift of faith. It therefore is undoubtedly part of the promise of God to us. But if this is true, how is it possible that faith can be a condition unto the promise? Is the condition of faith a prerequisite unto the gift of faith? Evidently this is absurd. But if faith is not included in the promise, the question is: where does it come from? For there is no gift of God which is not promised us. Yet, the Liberated insist that faith is a gift of God, and that

it is not of us. This problem, then, they have never solved. And therefore, we would like to have them answer the question: is faith as a condition, a prerequisite unto the promise of faith?

In distinction from all this the Protestant Reformed believers maintain on the basis of the Confession, including the Baptism Form:

1. That God cannot promise what is not objectively merited by Christ. And according to Art. 8, He merited all the blessings of salvation for the elect only. Atonement is particular, limited only to the elect. There is, therefore, to use the figure of the testament or the bequest that is deposited in the bank, no capital for all the children that are baptized in the bank. God does not issue false checks. The promise, therefore, and all the blessings of salvation, are for the elect alone.

2. This promise includes the gift of faith. This also is literally stated in the article from the Canons which we quoted above: "that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death."

3. Faith, therefore, is not a condition, but belongs to the fulfillment of the promise, and is a God-given means or instrument whereby the elect may lay hold on and appropriate the promise of eternal life and glory.

And therefore we conclude "that the promise of God bestows the objective right of salvation not upon all the children that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant, that is, not upon all that are baptized, but only upon the spiritual seed."

The Declaration continues: "This is also evident from other parts of our confession, as, for instance:

"Heidelberg Catechism, Qu. 65: 'Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed? From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.'"

"And in Qu. 66: 'What are the sacraments? The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross.'"

"If we compare with these statements from the Heidelberg what was taught concerning the saving efficacy of the death of Christ in Canons II, A, 8, it is evident that the promise of the gospel which is sealed by the sacraments concerns only the believers, that is, the elect."

This last statement also ought to be very evident. The point we wish to make here is that the promise is

unconditionally not for all, neither for all the children that are born of believing parents, but only for believers, that is, for the elect. Now Art. 8, of Canons II, A, emphasized "that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation." And again, in the same article we read that it was the will of God to redeem "all those, and those only who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death." Now Qu. 66 of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of the sacraments, and tells us that they are "appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal." And the question is: who are meant by the personal pronoun *us* in this answer of the Heidelberg Catechism? Does that refer to all that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant, in other words, to all that are baptized? Or does it refer to believers, and therefore, to the elect? The answer is plain: the latter only can be meant. And therefore, both baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments which God has appointed for the purpose of sealing unto His own people, the believers, the elect, the promise of the gospel. And therefore the promise of the gospel is only for them.

But there is more in the Declaration on this point. It continues:

"This is also evident from the Heidelberg Catechism, Qu. 74: 'Are infants also to be baptized? Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be admitted also into the Christian church: and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers, as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.'

"That in this question and answer of the Heidelberg not all the children that are baptized, but only the spiritual children, that is, the elect, are meant is evident. For:

"1. Little infants surely cannot fulfill any conditions. And if the promise of God is for them, the promise is infallible and unconditional, and therefore only for the elect.

"2. According to Canons II, A, 8, which we quoted above, the saving efficacy of the death of Christ is for the elect alone.

"3. According to this answer of the Heidelberg

Catechism, the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to the little children no less than to the adult. And God surely fulfills His promise. Hence, that promise is surely only for the elect."

I want to place all the emphasis in this connection on the element that the promise is unconditional. For if it were not, a little child, an infant, could never be said to have the promise of God.

Let us take for example an infant at the moment that it is baptized, say a child of two weeks old. The question is: does that little child have the promise that he is redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ? Does God promise to that infant that the Holy Ghost will dwell in him, and that God through the Holy Spirit will give unto that infant the true and saving faith, and therefore all the benefits of salvation? Or, as the Baptism Form has it, does God assure to that child that the Holy Ghost will dwell in it and sanctify it to be member of Christ, and apply unto it all that which it has in Christ, namely, the washing away of sins, and the daily renewal of its life, until it shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal? Moreover, let us presuppose, as certainly is very well possible, and as certainly we may assume that in the covenant it is most generally the case, that God fulfills His promise of salvation and the Holy Spirit unto that child, either before or during or immediately after baptism. Then it must be very evident that the promise which God gave to that child is absolutely unconditional. That child certainly cannot hear the gospel. It cannot hear or understand the demand of repentance and faith. Hence, to that little infant the promise of God is surely unconditional. If we don't want to fall into the error of the Baptist, then we certainly must maintain and teach that faith and repentance are not conditions unto the promise and unto our entering into the covenant of God, but that the promise of God is unconditional. Suppose, moreover, that that same infant dies when it is a half year old. Then God will surely realize all the benefits of salvation to that child that has never been able to fulfill any conditions whatsoever.

Nor can you possibly maintain that although the promise is unconditional for little children, it nevertheless becomes conditional when the children grow up and become adolescents and adults. To be sure, when that child grows up and comes to years of discretion and understanding, it will assume its part of the covenant of God, cleave to the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, forsake the world, crucify its old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. But that is not a condition, but is the fruit of the salvation which God according to His promise has first bestowed upon that child. There are not two different ways of salvation, an unconditional way for the child, for the little

infant, and a conditional way for the adult. But there is only one way. And that one way is the way of sovereign grace which God bestows without any conditions upon all His elect. Hence, we maintain that the promise is not for all, not even for all the children that are born of believing parents, but that it is for the elect alone, for the spiritual seed, and: unconditional.

H. H.



Dr. Schilder And The Declaration

In the present issue of the *Standard Bearer* I have not much space left for my reply to Dr. Schilder. But I must call attention to a bit of reasoning that, to my mind, is rather confusing, and because it is confusing is also dangerous, especially because it concerns some very specific terms of the confession. Dangerous it is, because Dr. Schilder presents those terms of the confession in so uncertain and ambiguous a light that no one knows anymore what is their contents, and that anyone can, apparently, read his own meaning into them.

I had almost written that my colleague in the old country is juggling the terms, but since this word has the connotation of intentional deception, I will not use it.

The reader will remember that Dr. Schilder criticized the statement in the Declaration of Principles that *election is the sole fountain and cause of our salvation*. He very definitely stated that he did not believe that these terms were correct. Cf. the last *Standard Bearer*.

I called his attention to the fact that both these terms occur literally in the confession.

But before I did so some other reader of *De Reformatie* called his attention to the same mistake.

Now, what does he do? Does he admit that he made a mistake, and that, when he wrote as he did above, he did not think of it that the terms "fountain" and "cause" were confessional terms? On the contrary, he attempts to explain the terms in such a way that, while he, apparently, still does not believe that they are correct, he, nevertheless, is in harmony with the contents of the confession.

I will quote and translate only the essential parts of what he writes in this connection:

"One might ask: but is not that objection imaginary?? Do not the Canons also say, I, 9, that election is the FOUNTAIN of all saving good? . . .

"To be sure, it stands there, and for that reason I stated immediately that no one that uses this term shall be troubled by us . . . (By the way, this state-

ment is very clearly not true. Dr. Schilder certainly did not write that it was for *that reason*, i.e., for the reason that the term "fountain" is a confessional term, that he would not trouble anyone that used it. Fact is, he did not think about the confession, and, therefore, unwittingly criticized it. How could he possibly trouble anyone for using a purely confessional term? H.H.).

"But when one wants to *bind* and *sharpen*, and wants to fasten people by a sharper expression to a new binding, then we say: pardon, it says 'fountain' (precisely what the Declaration says, H.H.). And fountain or source (fons) signifies, if you want to make a sharp distinction, very often, consciously, something quite different from 'cause' . . . (True enough, but "cause", of which colleague Schilder stated that it can refer only to time, also occurs in the confession with reference to God's eternal good pleasure. And who, please, is trying to bind people to any sharper dogmatical expression? We certainly do not, but simply use the terms of the confession. Hence, all this argumentation is nul and void).

"That means, therefore, that I have nothing against the word 'fountain', and nothing against the word 'cause' (He did though, in his first writing about this matter: he did not believe that the terms were correct, and blamed us for our slouchy terminology, H.H.), although this does not occur in this passage of the confession of Dordt (but it, nevertheless, does occur, H.H.), *as long as you allow me to say, what I, speaking more precisely, want to understand by it; and from this it will have to appear whether I agree with the CONTENTS of the Confession.*" (I underscore, H.H.).

"But one must not fasten me, in a more defined expression with sharper binding to the word, the term 'cause'. (The Declaration is not guilty of this, H.H.); *for then it is possible that he that uses it, takes it up erroneously, and that then it is in conflict with the contents of the confession; and that he that repudiates it exactly therewith protects the contents of the confession over against errors of a later date.*" (I underscore, H.H.).

I maintain that in the underscored sentences there lurks a great danger. They really imply that terms have no objective meaning, that, when our confession says one thing it may mean something entirely different, when our confession speaks of *fountain* and *cause* it may mean *ground*, when one faithfully uses the terms of the confession he may militate against its contents, and when one argues against the terms of the confession he may defend its contents. In other words, the terms of the confession have no objective significance, their meaning is so ambiguous, obscure, and uncertain, that anyone can read his own meaning into it.

When Schilder reads in the confession the terms *cause* and *fountain*, he says that, speaking more pre-

cisely, they mean *ground*, and he criticizes the simpletons that want to bind the people to the words of the confessions.

But does he not understand that, on this basis, we cannot have confessions?

If we may juggle terms in this fashion, words mean nothing anymore.

I think that Dr. Schilder stands on dangerous ground here.

* * * *

But let me, in conclusion, remind the reader once more of the history of this little but important skirmish.

1. We, on our part, did not, in the Declaration of Principles, insist upon any sharper accentuation or binding to any dogma, but simply used the terms of the confession.

2. Dr. Schilder declared those confessional terms incorrect, and wanted to put the term *ground* instead. That, according to him, is a more precise and sharper term than *cause* and *fountain*.

3. Exactly because of those confessional terms in the Declaration, he accuses us of wrongfully binding the people.

4. Instead of admitting that he erred, and that he never thought of the confessions, he makes things worse by depriving the terms of the confession of all objective meaning.

A dangerous business.

H. H.



Answer To Brother Flikkema

It is, evidently, not clear to brother Flikkema what is meant by III, A, of the Declaration of Principles: "We repudiate the teaching that the promise is conditional and for all that are baptized."

He asks the question whether this also implies our participation in these promises, i.e., the application of all the benefits of salvation. His question is, evidently, whether the unconditional promise also includes all the blessings of salvation in the subjective sense of the word.

Now, I have written rather extensively on this question in recent numbers of the *Standard Bearer*, before brother Flikkema wrote his contribution. I may, therefore, refer him to those articles in the hope that they shed light on his question. If not, he better write again.

Yet, in spite of the fact that I must needs repeat myself, I will briefly answer him once more.

First of all then, shall we agree on the definition of the term "condition" as I understand it, and as it is, undoubtedly, understood by all that employ the term. It is this: "a condition is a prerequisite which one must fulfill in order to, and before, he will or can receive something from someone else." With respect to the case in question, i.e., the promise of God, therefore, we may define a condition as a prerequisite which we, which man must fulfill, in order to, and before we, or man, can receive the promise, i.e., all the blessings of salvation." This is a correct definition. And this is, no doubt the meaning of the term in the popular mind.

Secondly, as I have explained in the articles referred to above, the promise of God certainly includes all the blessings of salvation, objective and subjective, all that we objectively have in Christ: reconciliation, the forgiveness of sins, the adoption unto children, eternal life; but also: the Holy Spirit, regeneration, calling, faith, justification in the subjective sense, sanctification, and preservation or perseverance.

Now, I apply my definition of "condition" and you will agree with me as a Reformed man that, if this promise is conditional, i.e., if it is depending upon any prerequisite which we must fulfill in order to receive the promise, it, i.e., the promise, lies exactly beyond our reach, is forever unattainable.

Just apply the test.

Let us apply it now only to the subjective possession of the blessings of salvation.

The promise includes the blessing of regeneration. Is this blessing conditional, i.e., dependent on anything we must do before we are regenerated? I don't care now whether you believe in mediate or immediate regeneration (personally, I believe that the seed of regeneration is implanted in our hearts immediately). But no Reformed man will say (the Arminian will) that the blessings of regeneration is conditional. If it were, no man, dead in sin and trespasses, could be regenerated. The very fact that God is first in applying unto us His promise makes the promise necessarily unconditional.

The promise includes the efficacious calling, i.e., that work of God whereby we are translated from darkness into light, from death into conscious life, through the preaching of the gospel. It includes the gift of faith, whereby we are ingrafted into Christ, and receive all His benefits. What must man do as a prerequisite, pray, to receive the gift of faith? Must he pray for it, perhaps? But prayer is already an act of faith. Must he hear the preaching of the gospel? But he cannot hear without faith? What then? Must he repent and obey? But faith is before repentance and obedience. He can do absolutely nothing unto salvation before God gives him the saving faith. And since faith itself is not a condition, but a God given

means or instrument, and since it is only by faith that we are justified and sanctified and preserved, it ought to be very plain to any Reformed man that all the blessings of salvation, included in the promise of God, are unconditional.

What all this has to do with responsibility I fail to understand, unless you mean to say that man is responsible for his own salvation, for his own regeneration, calling, faith, etc., in other words, unless you want to maintain that man is responsible for his receiving the grace of God. But that is impossible. Man is no more responsible for his own regeneration than Adam was for his own creation, than the dead are for their own resurrection. Why then bring the question of responsibility in connection with conditions, unless we want to become thoroughly Arminian?

Man is responsible, not for what God does, but for his own moral acts.

What is responsibility? It is that state of man in which he is the free agent, i.e., the conscious and willing subject of all his moral actions before and in relation to God.

Adam was free to serve God, but so that he could turn about and choose against God. He did the latter. That was his responsibility.

The natural man is free only to sin. He cannot, and will not, and cannot will to do righteousness. And when he comes into contact with the gospel he will not, and cannot will to receive it, because he hates the light and loves the darkness. That is his responsibility.

But the redeemed and regenerated and called and believing child of God is free in the highest sense of the word: he is free only unto righteousness. Principally he can never sin anymore. O, yes, sin is still in his members, but even over against sin he is free. What he hates he does, but he hates it nevertheless. Hence, to be sure, by baptism we are obliged unto a new obedience, "namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust in him, and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life." That is our responsibility, our part in the covenant of God. But it is a responsibility which we fulfill, not as a condition to obtain the promise, but as those that have already obtained the promise, the fruit of God's part in the covenant, which He, unconditionally, and by His absolutely sovereign grace, applied unto us. It is the responsibility of highest freedom. And that is what the Heidelberg Catechism means when in answer to the question whether the doctrine of free justification does not make men careless and profane, it teaches us that "*it is impossible* that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness."

See, brother, that is the Reformed, and surely the Protestant Reformed truth concerning responsibility.

And by all this talk about responsibility as if it were dependent on conditions, we are in danger of losing our Protestant Reformed heritage.

That is one reason why we surely must adopt the Declaration of Principles.

H. H.



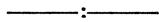
Of Books

The Brethren of the Common Life, by Dr. Albert Hyma. Published by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$3.50.

This is a very interesting and worthwhile book, written by a scholar, yet accessible to every reader who is interested in church history. It describes a phase and period of church history of which we heard even in the Christian School in the old country. "The Brethren of the Common Life", living in the latter part of the fourteenth and the first part of the fifteenth century belong to the forerunners of the Reformation. In a very interesting way Dr. Hyma pictures such men as Gerard Groote, Florentius Radewijns, Gerard Zerbolt, and John Cele. Especially Zerbolt, the best scholar of the movement, is esteemed very highly by the author.

The entire last part of the book is designed to prove that, while Thomas á Kempis is the compiler of the famous *Imitatio Christi*, yet not he, but Zerbolt is its real author. Of the truth of this we are not able to judge, though it must be admitted that the author offers some strong arguments in favor of his contention. Yet we cannot escape the impression that Dr. Hyma was somewhat prejudiced against Thomas á Kempis in favor of Zerbolt.

H. H.



Eternal life God's Word proclaims
to lost and dying men;
By it alone we know the Lord,
unseen by mortal ken.
Then spread the Word, God's gracious Word,
and love it more and more;
O may it be our strength and sword,
till earthly strife is o'er.

—Selected.

The End Of Hamilton

Deceitful Dealings.—cont.

Thirdly, speaking of "deceitful dealings," I refer to my suspension the evening of January 12, 1951, and the consistory's reasoning last summer when they refused to enforce their binding decision of last June 5. I was denied the pulpit January 12 of this year. The ground of the suspension was that I refused to submit to the basis as willed by the consistory. At this meeting of the consistory elder Van Huizen said that I had offended the congregation of late in my preaching. When I asked him whether I had offended anyone personally he answered in the negative, but declared that I had offended members in my preaching because of my emphasis upon the truth that the promise was not general but only for the elect. Now I would like to have our readers bear this paragraph in mind because I intend to return to it. Last summer, as our people know, the consistory refused to enforce their binding decision of June 5. They reasoned that we must bar none from the congregation, that we have the pure preaching, that the preaching must drive out those who do not really belong to our church, and that we must not prevent anyone from coming under that preaching, which would be the case if we should bar people from the fellowship of the church by maintaining that binding decision of June 5. Elder Van Huizen went so far as to declare once that if the Liberated churches would ever have the boldness to differ from the Protestant Reformed Churches he would not hesitate to call the Liberated churches false. And deacon L. Klapwijk once remarked that we have the pure preaching of the truth, yea, that we were purer than the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands, and that it was our calling to maintain that pure truth, although, at the same time, he would not commit himself as far as the maintaining of the binding decision of June 5 was concerned. Elder Hart declared at the time that we have the pure preaching, and that there was no difference between him and me. The other deacon, John Ton, although never voting in support of the undersigned but always against him, never committed himself. I now ask our readers: did this consistory ever have the intention to maintain the doctrine of our churches? Were they honest when they declared that I must continue to preach the truth purely, according to our churches? Did not the consistory, at their meeting of Jan. 12, 1951, when they suspended me, declare that they did not agree with my emphasis upon the Protestant Reformed truth? I maintain that the consistory of Hamilton never intended to safeguard the truth of our churches, that they never intended to be a Protestant Reformed Church, and that

they never intended to bar anyone from the fellowship of this church. When the church visitors met with our consistory the evening of Sept. 11 (the Revs. Hanko and Blankespoor) L. Klapwijk asserted that it lies in the very nature of the case that people who join a church may not agitate against the doctrine of the church. Nevertheless, when a certain G. Hutten asked to be admitted into the fellowship of our congregation and boldly wrote the consistory that he did not agree with the Protestant Reformed truth and intended to agitate against that truth, brother Klapwijk said nothing but voted to admit the brother into our fellowship. I call these dealings deceitful and hypocritical. And our readers must bear in mind that no one ever visited the undersigned to discuss with him our truth or anything which was said in a sermon. When I, at the consistory meeting of Jan. 12 of this year, when elder Van Huizen said that he objected to certain emphasis which I laid upon our truth in the preaching, asked him why he had never visited me he answered me that it would be no use to visit me because they could not do anything with me anyway. And this same brother repeatedly declared last summer when I visited immigrants with him (this he would say to these immigrants): "Once I was just as Liberated as you; but now I have learned to be silent, because I cannot reason against Rev. Veldman; you just listen to him." Strange dealings, are they not? This impossible condition in the congregation began last July and the first week of August.

Sunday, January 14, 1951.

The foregoing paragraph will throw light upon that which I am now about to write in connection with the Sunday of Jan. 14 last. The undersigned attended both services. Elder Reitsma read in the morning service and announced to the congregation the suspension of the pastor. Elder Van Huizen read in the afternoon. In the afternoon service Van Huizen mentioned in his prayer that children of the Lord had been barred from the table of the Lord, or rather he accused our churches of barring children of God from the table of Communion. This I could understand if the matter had never been discussed. Surely the church visitors remember how they argued with the consistory exactly on this point, that it was not an issue of barring people from the table. Surely, the classical committee must remember how they argued with the consistory on this point, and attempted to make clear to them that it was not a matter of barring children of God from the Lord's Supper. And how often did not the undersigned deny this accusation of the consistory! This never was the issue. And, let me say that the consistory understood this very well. They simply insisted on maintaining their accusation because they did not wish to bar "true members of the true church" from

our fellowship. They simply gave no heed to whatever we said. It was simply the question whether we might accept members into our church who were and intended to remain Liberated. This was the sole issue. This was made plain over and over again. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the barring of children of God from the table was not the issue, and in spite of the fact that elder Van Huizen was fully acquainted with this, he persisted, in his congregational prayer the Sunday afternoon of last Jan. 14, to say before God and the church that it was a matter of barring people of the Lord from the communion table. This was simply a public untruth. I told the brother this after the afternoon service, and added that it was impossible for me to pray that prayer, and that I might expect of him that, if he wanted to mention the issue in his prayer, he should at least state the issue fairly and honestly. And, in the same meeting with the consistory that Sunday afternoon of last Jan. 14 (this was said at a meeting of the consistory members) I, in the light of the fact that the consistory had now begun to criticize me because of my emphasis upon the Protestant Reformed truth, had been deceitful when they had maintained last summer that I should preach the Protestant Reformed truth and that the preaching would take care of those who really did not belong to us. I confess that I was angry at Van Huizen that Sunday afternoon of last Jan. 14. But I was provoked at the things he had said in his congregational prayer, and also at their deceitfulness for first declaring that I should preach the Protestant Reformed truth and then criticizing me, at the time of my suspension, because of my emphasis upon the particular character of the promise. Never before had I had anything personal with any consistory member except Hart, until this Sunday of last Jan. 14. I repeat: the congregation of Hamilton never intended to become Protestant Reformed. In all my dealings with these immigrants here, I never heard one favorable comment on Rev. Hoeksema's meditations in the Dutch language; in fact, the only time that the immigrants evinced any interest in the Standard Bearer was when the Declaration was about to make its appearance. This is simply a fact.

The Week of January 14-20, 1951.

Monday, January 15, I wrote a letter to the consistory requesting the privilege of addressing the congregation after the afternoon service on Jan. 21 for the purpose of enlightening the congregation in connection with my suspension. I was told then that arrangements would be made to call a meeting of the consistory. However, no word reached either Reitsma or the undersigned. Wednesday noon we received word (I called John Ton, he did not call me) that the consistory meeting had been held the Tuesday even-

ing before, and we would receive word per letter. This consistory meeting, we understand, was illegal. Neither Reitsma nor I had been notified of the meeting. This implies, of course, that any decision taken at that meeting was also illegal. Well, Friday noon the undersigned received a letter from the clerk of the consistory, which we now quote: "Honorable Sir: The brethren, L. Van Huizen, J. Ton, and the undersigned have decided to acknowledge you and br. Reitsma no longer as legal officebearers of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton. From this it follows automatically that they present themselves as the legal consistory, and now follows a literal copy of the decision which we have taken in this capacity (qualiteit). 'The consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton, in their gathering of Jan. 16, 1951, feel themselves constrained to return to their decision of Friday, Jan. 12, 1951, and instead of the suspension of Rev. Veldman, to separate from the communion of churches, upon the ground that they are conscious of the impossibility to exercise their office laid upon them by Christ; inasmuch as the attitude of Rev. Veldman and the elder Reitsma last Sunday make it impossible for us to continue in the ecclesiastical way, while it appears that the churches in the States do not exercise the least effort to reveal any conception of our difficulties. This, however, does not imply that we, on our part, do not wish to be Protestant Reformed, but it merely implies that we accuse Rev. Veldman and the communion of churches (kerkverband) that they make it impossible for us to find a place for our reformatory striving in the communion of churches. The fact that Classis East answered: No, upon our request to make Rev. Veldman loose, and in addition adopted the report of the classical committee, in which it is declared that through our action, are guilty of violating our oath of office and, secondly, as if we sin against our signing of the formula of subscription and that we also sin against the second question of the Baptism Form and the first question to them who publicly confess their faith, proves to us abundantly that Classis East at least completely maintains the binding. They consider themselves obligated to make a final appeal to the church requesting that justice be done. Whereunto we declare that this severing from the communion of churches is in effect only as long as the Protestant Reformed Churches maintain the anti-scriptural binding, and will return to this fellowship as soon as they again begin to live according to Scripture and the Confessions. They also declare herewith that they wish to live in fellowship with all who heartily subscribe to Holy Writ and the Three Forms of Unity, and decide to seek association (toenadering) with the Free Reformed Churches of Canada." Thus far the letter which the undersigned received from the consistory, which we have translated into the English.

This missive speaks for itself. A long comment is not necessary. Our readers will notice that my suspension was lifted and also that I was virtually deposed at the same consistory meeting. The second paragraph speaks of "returning to the decision of Jan. 12 and instead of the suspension of Rev. Veldman." Hence, my suspension was lifted. At the same time, however, the beginning of the letter declares that Reitsma and I are no longer acknowledged as the legal officebearers and that they present themselves as the legal consistory. Here we are virtually deposed. We should also note that Reitsma was virtually deposed at a consistory meeting without being notified of this consistory meeting. He was simply deposed without a hearing, yea, without being informed that there was a consistory meeting. And, mind you, he was the vice-president of the consistory. They speak of their "reformatory striving" (reformatisch streven) within our churches. Does anyone wonder what kind of striving this is? And they declare themselves willing to return to our fellowship as soon as we once more live according to Scripture and the Confessions, whereas in the meantime the undersigned has the testimony of the consistory that he preached the full Word of God, subjectively and practically, and also that they never heard him say anything which, in their opinion, was not in harmony with those Scriptures and the Confessions. Of course, they mean the Scriptures and the Confessions as they interpret them.

Friday noon, Jan. 19, I contacted John Ton by telephone. I told him that I had received the letter and also that I desired to meet with the consistory that evening. Things had to be arranged and discussed. I have already stated that the consistory meeting of Jan. 16 was illegal and that therefore the decisions of that meeting were illegal. This implies that the deposition of Reitsma was illegal, that therefore my suspension was still in effect, for, inasmuch as the meeting of Jan. 16 was illegal and therefore everything decided after that meeting also illegal, things simply were as they were before the consistory meeting of Jan. 16. The synod of Middelburg, 1581, treated a case exactly as this. The provincial synod of Brabant came to that Synod with the question whether consistory meetings were illegal when all the members of the consistory had not been notified of a consistory meeting but only such members had been notified of the meeting who were in agreement with a certain motion or viewpoint. Our readers will understand that this question of the Synod of Brabant fits our present case in Hamilton exactly. The Synod of Middelburg, 1581, decided that decisions taken at such a consistory could be declared illegal by a legal consistory, and that unusual gatherings were only then legal when all the members had been properly notified. Surely the "consistory meeting" of Jan. 16 was an

unusual meeting, a meeting when the president and vice president were "read out" of the consistory, and the decision was reached to sever connections with the Protestant Reformed Churches. It is for this reason, and also because final arrangements had to be made that the undersigned urgently requested a meeting of the consistory. We wished to impress upon the "legal consistory" of Hamilton that they had acted contrary to the Church Order, that matters therefore stood as they were before the "consistory meeting" of Jan. 16. I was told by John Ton that this meeting which I requested would be difficult, inasmuch as the "legal" consistory was meeting that evening with the congregation. Hence, also without our knowledge, a congregational meeting was being held the Friday evening of Jan. 19, 1951. I persisted in my request for a consistory meeting, told the brother that the consistory meeting of Jan. 16 was illegal and that therefore any decision taken that evening was also illegal. In the evening Van Huizen called me to tell me that I would be given no opportunity to meet with the consistory, that they were through with Reitsma and also with me (these were literally his words), and that any arrangement which the consistory must make in my behalf they would make. When this brother remarked that any decision the consistory must make they would make, he meant to say (as he did say) that any decision they would have to make concerning me *they* would make and without my being present.

Even so, one final attempt was made to convince these erring brethren of Hamilton of the error and folly of their ways. The undersigned did not attend the services in the Labor Temple the Sunday morning of Jan. 21. However, my wife did. Also brother Reitsma went to the service that morning. He went there to read to them out of the Church Order and convince them that they must undo their folly of Jan. 16 and whatever happened subsequently. The deceitfulness of these people and their hatred of our churches became fully apparent that Sunday morning. One of the "brethren", of whom the undersigned can say that his relationship with him had always been most cordial (brother Linda of Brantford) simply poured out his gall upon the undersigned, declaring, among other things, that I had never preached a good sermon as long as I had been in Hamilton. When he was told that it had always been said that I was reformed, he replied that I had been reformed only in a half way. When my wife entered the room where the service was to be held, the people already assembled there left the room and left her sitting alone in the room. Reitsma was told upon his arrival that the service was to be held at the home of John Ton. We heard the evening before that the service was to be held in the Labor Temple. Besides, one of the deacons, when he arrived for the service the Sunday morning of Jan. 21,

said that the service was scheduled for the Labor Temple. These people evince no regard whatsoever for the Church Order. And they surely have no interest in the Cause of the Protestant Reformed Churches. They had regard for our churches only as long as they could affiliate themselves with our churches, *as Liberated*.

This concludes the history of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton. I need say no more. This is already my third article. May our Protestant Reformed Churches learn from this experience and once more vow to hold fast that which we have.

H. Veldman.



Rev. Petter Replies

In his latest article Rev. Petter accepts my challenge that he disprove my argument to the effect that the "origination" of the "Declaration was perfectly orderly in the point of view of the requirements of the Church Order and therefore ethical, absolutely so.

But the trouble is that in meeting this challenge Rev. Petter is not fair. First, he completely ignores my argument. He takes absolutely no notice of it. Second, he conveniently glides over the point at issue. Third, all he does in a positive way is to repeat his own reasonings.

First, Rev. Petter completely ignores my positive argument. That argument is this: (see *The Standard Bearer* for Jan. 15).

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

- a. Such as originate and, if possible, must be finished in the minor assemblies (consistory and classis).
- b. Such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly (synod) in common, and that therefore do not originate in minor assemblies to be dealt with and, if possible, finished in them.

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

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

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

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

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

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

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

5. That the management of mission work by synod includes also providing the Mission Committee and the Missionaries with a Formula, for:

a. The Mission Committee is a committee of synod and accordingly is mandated *not* by the consistory of the calling church nor by classis but by synod alone. (Art. 4, Constitution of the Mission Committee, p. 47, Church Order).

b. Though sent and called by the local congregation, the missionaries as preachers of the gospel represent all the churches. Therefore also any Formula for the organization of churches placed in their hands sets forth not what the calling church alone but what all the churches believe to be the truth of our Confessions (the Three Forms of Unity). From this it necessarily follows that such a Form may not be finished in the minor assemblies; it must be finished and adopted in synod for approbation by *all* the churches.

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

6. That synod therefore did not override the first part of Art. 30 of the Church Order in providing the Mission Committee with a Formula, and this because, for reasons just stated, the matter of constructing, adopting, and approbating a Form belongs to the churches of synod in common.

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

7. That therefore the Mission Committee did not override the first part of Art. 30 by directing its request for a Form to synod.

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

8. That the Mission Committee did not override the first part of Art. 30 in *by-passing the consistory and classis by coming directly* to synod, for

a. *According to Art. 1 of the Constitution* of the Mission Committee this committee is appointed not by the consistory of the calling church nor by classis but by synod alone; according to this same article it is therefore responsible not to the consistory of the calling church nor to classis but to synod alone. (p. 46, of the Church Order).

b. *According to Art. 4 of this same constitution*, the duty of this committee is to carry out all the mandates of synod that pertain to mission activity as conducted by the churches (p. 47, Church Order).

c. *According to this same constitution*, this committee submits not to consistory or classis but to synod a written report of its work and findings, together with the recommendations it may have to make to synod regarding mission work. (p. 47, Church Order).

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

In a word, Rev. Petter must not imagine that he can dispose of my argument with a few strokes of his pen. He must face this argument. He must not ignore it;

and as sliding over the issue simply repeat his own reasonings. That certainly is not meeting my challenge.

Rev. Petter glides over the issue. I am making this plain right now. He writes: "I believe my charges against the origination of the Declaration were plain enough for all to see that it was out of order and hierarchical. These points are as follows: The request of the Mission Committee came to synod contrary to C(hurch O(rder) (Art.) 30, for 'only such matters shall be dealt with (by synod—O) as could not be finished in the minor assemblies.' The other matters pertaining to the 'churches in common' of which the Church Order, Art. 30, speaks, could not be handled in the minor assembly."

Remark. So speaks Art. 30 of the Church Order. I have no comment. But we must now pay strict attention to what Rev. Petter next writes. It is this:

"But this mission question (the question of the Form—O) *could* be finished in a minor assembly, and that is where it belonged." To which I reply: "Yes, that is correct, it could be finished in a minor assembly; providing it belonged solely to the local consistory of the calling church or to the churches of classis in common. But that precisely is the issue. Rev. Petter conveniently evades it.

Is it true or not true that Rev. Petter evades the issue? Let Rev. Petter give answer.

In support of his contention that supplying the missionaries with a Form is a matter that could be handled and *finished* in the minor assemblies (consistory and classis), Rev. Petter appeals also to Art. 38 of the Church Order. He calls our attention to the fact that this article speaks of the *Classis* as the advisor regarding organization of churches. True it does. But the question is: the advisor of whom? Synod's Mission Committee and Synod? Of course not. How could classis advise synod and its committees. According to the Church Order classis appeals to synod but does not advise it. The only bodies that classis is authorized to advise is its own committees and the churches of the classis. Accordingly, the first by-rule affixed by our (Protestant Reformed) Churches to this article reads, "The customary usage for the organization of new congregations is as follows: a letter of request is directed to the classis *or*—mark you,—*or*—the Mission Committee, expressing the desire to organize a congregation in a certain locality."

Let us take notice. If the request comes to synod's Mission Committee, this committee goes about the business of organization as *unadvised by classis*. This is plain from by-rule 2) —a rule that reads, "The classis *or*—mark you, *or*—the Mission Committee shall thereupon deliberate whether such organization is possible. . . ." Mark you well, the rule is not to the effect that synod's Mission Committee and the classis

shall deliberate together, but that the classis or synod's Mission Committee shall deliberate. This is as it should be. For I repeat, classis does not advise synod and its committees.

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

Let us take notice also of this: If the request comes to synod's Mission Committee, classis does not even advise the *consistory* of the calling church. The reason is that no advice is in order. For according to Art. 4 of the Constitution of synod's Mission Committee, this committee serves in conjunction *not* with the consistory of the calling church "but," and I now quote, "*with the missionary in the organization of new congregations, giving advice and permission thereto, and to officiate at such organizations.*" This article excludes both the classis and the consistory of the calling church from the business of the organization of new churches. It limits this task solely to the Mission Committee and the missionary, and it assigns the task of *advising* solely to the Mission Committee.

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

In fine, how Rev. Petter can imagine to be deriving support for his stand from Art. 38 of the Church Order is to me a conundrum.

Further. In support of his stand Rev. Petter goes on to say that, and now I quote him, "according to the Constitution of the Mission Committee, this committee works in *conjunction* with the *calling church* and with the *missionaries.*" But this is not true. The Constitution of the Mission Committee nowhere states this. What Art. 4 of the Constitution does state is this: that the missionary works under the joint supervision of the Mission Committee and the consistory of the calling church. But if so, should not the Form have been handled and *finished* in the joint meeting of the Mission Committee and the consistory? Rev. Petter insists that it should. But see my reply to His next and final argument.

Rev. Petter's final argument is Rev. Hoeksema's statement to the effect that he (Rev. Hoeksema) could have drawn up the Form, and that the Committee could have drawn up its own. But Rev. Petter again evades the issue. The question is not whether Rev. Hoeksema or the Mission Committee or the missionaries or the consistory of the calling church could have drawn up a Formula, but whether the production of a Form is a matter that could have been handled and *finished*—mark you *finished*—by the Mission Committee or the missionaries or the consistory of the calling church. And there is but one answer. The production of a Form could not be *finished* in the consistory and the Classis or in the Mission Committee or by the missionaries. And the reason is obvious and simple: such a "Form" is a matter that belongs to all the churches—the churches of synod—in common; it is not a matter

that belongs solely to the consistory of the calling church or to the missionaries or to the Mission Committee, and this for all the above-stated reasons.

It also can be stated this way: the kind of Gospel that our missionaries proclaim in the field is not their concern alone; it is not the concern of the Mission Committee alone, nor of the consistory of the calling church, nor of the classis alone. On the contrary, the kind of gospel that our missionaries proclaim in the field is the concern of *all* the churches. And the reason is again simple. The missionaries, as was stated, represent in their gospel preaching all the churches and not merely the calling congregation alone; and certainly not the mission committee alone, but, I repeat all the churches. And on this account the missionaries are required to subscribe the official creeds of all the churches. And therefore also certainly it is but right and proper that any statement setting forth what all the churches believe to be the truth of these creeds—our Three Forms of Unity—should be adopted and approbated by *all the churches*.

Is this true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter say.

In fine, the facts of the matter being what they are, it is a conundrum to me how Rev. Petter in his latest article should have wanted to reappear in print with the following statements:

1. I believe my charges against the origination of the "Declaration" were plain enough and for all to see that it was out of order and hierarchical.

2. Hence, this question of a Form for organization of churches was not a matter of the churches in common, which necessarily goes to synod; it was a matter for these minor bodies to settle.

3. "This Form could have been handled (and finished) in a minor assembly or body. Hence it was treated by synod *contrary* to C(hurch O(nder) (Art.) 30."

It's a peculiar thing. In one of his earlier articles Rev. Petter brands the "Declaration" a hierarchical imposition not alone because it was not corrected and perfected in consistory and Classis, but because it was not also perfected in synod. It was not the best that the churches could produce. But in his latest articles he brands the "Declarations" a hierarchical imposition *because it should have been finished in consistory and classis, but was not*, which is equivalent to calling it hierarchical *because it was* perfected also in synod, and thus *does* represent the best that the churches can produce. It is certain that as far as Rev. Petter's attitude is concerned the "Declaration" is in a bad way. In Rev. Petter's court it doesn't have a chance. For in his eyes it is guilty if it doesn't; it is guilty if it does.

But Rev. Petter must still meet my challenge.

G. M. Ophoff.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition Of Hebrews 10:19-25

XI.

In this instalment we wish to make a few concluding remarks on the meaning of the verses 24 and 25 of this chapter.

First of all, let us bear in mind, that the precepts given in these verses are not at all the *precepts of the law*, which a man *must do to live* by the same. The admonitions and the exhortations given here in these verses, as well as in all the exhortations of the gospel, are those that come to us by virtue of the accomplished work in Christ and because they are a part of the ministry of reconciliation. They are, therefore, most emphatically *precepts of the gospel*; they call to positive faith in Christ Jesus and His meritorious labors, and, thus, they call to repentance which is a godly sorrow to have transgressed against the holy law of God and a true joy in God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And thus these precepts are means employed by the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of the risen and glorified Christ, to fill us with His fulness of grace and truth. By means of these precepts He writes and continues to write His law in our hearts as the new Covenant enacted upon better promises.

Now the point in these two verses to which we would call attention in this essay is, that we are admonished and exhorted unto a certain activity of faith and love. We are to *give heed* unto each other unto the *sharpening of love* and *good works*.

Now the question here is: what is this *love* of which the text speaks? Our answer to this is, that in view of the fact, that the writer does not give any qualifying limitations to the term *love*, such as *love for good*, *love for the truth*, or *love of the brethren*, but that he simply writes: *sharpening of love*, we understand the meaning of *love* to be the *manifestation of love* in its broadest sense. No matter which aspect of love one may wish to suggest or mention, love here is the love in each of these senses. It is the love of God as it is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And it is the love *for God above all*, love with all our heart and mind and soul and strength and love for our neighbor as for ourselves. It is the love of the golden rule: As ye would have men do unto you, do ye even so to others. And this rule must then not be understood again in a certain formal utilitarian sense, but in the deep sense of love, the love that is the tie that binds in ethical perfection. It is love as the fulfillment of the law of God, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such is the love of which the text here speaks.

And this love is, as must not be overlooked, the energy of our living faith in Christ. It is the energy, the living impetus of the faith that is everywhere in Holy Writ denominated being a new creature in Christ Jesus. Such is the faith mentioned in the context of our verses. And this same love is also that which gives us the assurance that the hope which is ours will not put us to shame. For this love is the activating power of both faith and love. Only where this love is, is there a living faith and hope, and only where this love is activated and sharpened, is there a strong and vigorous faith, revealing itself in beautiful and God-glorifying works. Here alone will there be love in good works of faith.

This is good gospel truth. It is the truth as it is in Jesus. It is the truth of the nature of the saving work of Jesus in His vicarious suffering and death, in His glorious resurrection and ascension and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. It is the truth of the saving work of Christ in regenerating our hearts through the Holy Spirit, softening the obdurate and hard heart, bending and making wonderfully pliant and willing the obstinate will, enlightening our sin-darkened mind so that we may behold the loveliness of God's precepts, as these are adapted to fill the heart with great delight. It is the good gospel truth concerning the only way in which we experience the full cup of the blessing of God, that we have our joy constantly filled from the fulness of Christ.

Such is the truth in Jesus in our text.

For let it never be forgotten, that it is exactly hatred, envy, strife, malice, fornication, covetousness that are the bitter root in our lives that rob us of all our joys. The bitterness of life is not in the circumstances. But these are in our evil hearts that are loveless. And thus we do not taste the power of the Cross of Jesus as this comes to us through the Holy Spirit in the ministry of reconciliation. For in this hatred there is nothing of the beauty of grace and of the power of love. In this hatred for God and for our neighbor there is the awful flesh, the flesh that cannot be pleasing to God. Even the most holy confesses that in his flesh there dwells no good at all. This is very manifestly so. Life is rife with this lovelessness. Yea, who of us, that knows himself by the light of the perfect law of God as he is by nature, has not observed and does not constantly observe this lovelessness in himself toward others, even to the point of glorying in the misery of others? And then, what is worse, we even cover over this heinous sinfulness with the rationalizing crutch: *Misery likes company*. Forsooth, this saying is far from the obeying the precepts of the gospel! Yes, (o, horror!) we are so evil by nature that we not only do these things but ere we realize it we even have a co-delight in those who do this. Thus

is the mind of natural man; it is the reprobate mind that will not keep God in knowledge. Such is our stark blindness by nature. Let us beware!

Wherefore awake, thou that sleepest, from such reprobate pursuits. Awake from all hatred and works of the flesh to the pursuits of works proceeding from love for God and for our neighbor. Only such works are lovely and beautiful in the sight of God before Whom all things are naked and open. All other works reek with the vile and filthy stench of sin. And this is abominable in the holy nostrils of God. Wherefore let us put off all sordid filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness in heartfelt and godly sorrow. Then only will we be able to walk in good works and be able to receive, with all of the saints, the implanted word that is able to save our souls from death. For only thus shall we be in the spiritual state of mind to receive the pure milk of the word and the admonitions of the gospel to grow through the same. Then only shall we see the commandment of God as something holy, just, spiritual and good.

Unto this our text admonishes us. We are to joy in one another's joy and thus dwell together in sweet accord. Then we shall walk in the love and truth as it is in Jesus; then the truth of the Word of the Cross shall lift up our hearts to the higher plane, to the Rock that is higher than we are. And our lives shall be such, that they are full of good fruits, without hypocrisy and partiality. Our works will then be commendable by Him who alone is able to say: Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord. And instead of the sordid aftermath of an evil and polluted conscience to grieve over, if not worse, our works do then follow us, so that the glory of the nations is carried into the New Jerusalem.

Always we must give heed unto each other in view of sharpening unto love and good works. For such will be the life of heaven presently in the ages to come, and such must also be our life now in view of entering into the kingdom presently. Dear reader, such is the avowed purpose of this little essay. It is an attempt to give heed unto this word of the writer to the Hebrews to give heed unto one another. It would be the stupidity of sin and the blindness of iniquity not to *give heed* to this admonition *while* commenting on it. No one can write *about the truth* and on the truth without subjecting himself to it, without understanding that we are indeed each moment to live according to it. That is our spontaneous and constantly blessed task. And, therefore, we desire to be obedient to this exhortation and give heed also by this article unto one another unto the sharpening of love and good works.

With a view to such heeding on one another unto love and good works it is necessary that we keep in touch with each other as saints in Christ. It is necessary that we bow before the one Word of the gospel

and the precepts of the gospel. The whole church in this world, as she is saved by sovereign grace, must seek to keep this unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace. We may not just arbitrarily make divisions in the church where Christ has said: Father that they all be one! We may not live contrary to the intercessory prayer of the Great High Priest and Apostle of our faith. Only when we can say: *They are no church*, may we separate!

It seems that this was a passible fault among the believers of the Hebrews. They separated themselves from the believers of the Gentiles. That is sinful. And it is most dangerous. For it is separation from the church of the living God. Also in the controversy of the truth we must hold the bond of peace, the unity of the Spirit. That is true from the oftentimes contentious men society unto the sometimes not less quarrelsome Classis and Synod. It may be difficult to apply this rule. But the difficulty is in our flesh, in our flesh in which no good dwells.

Now this may not be. We must always speak the truth in love. And each one must be *fully* convinced and assured in his mind. Let each one *work out* his salvation with fear and trembling. Let him be as sensitive spiritually as the sensitive touch of a blind Helen Keller when she differentiates the birds that are nestled in the branches singing their morning song to the glory of their Maker! Dear reader: Do you ever fear and tremble before God. Tremble before Him in godly fear, and thus in beauty of holiness worship the Lord?! Then you will seek the brethren and you will not easily be absent where saints are want to meet.

Yes, always we must give heed to each other to the sharpening of love and good works. And with a view to this sharpening of love it is necessary that we keep in touch with one another. We need not go to Jerusalem to the temple that is earthly. That is a thing of the past. Wherever men call upon the name of the Lord in Spirit and in truth there God is in their midst. But we must be where this gathering is. We must desire to be in the midst of the saints. Otherwise the love of God does not *dwell* in us. And then we do not dwell in the Secret Place of the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty.

Not to will to come with the saints is wilful sinning! Such must not be our walk. We must be in the gathering of the saints. And we must be amongst the brethren of our own congregation. Here the Bread of Life is broken. Here we meet our God in the preaching of the Word and in the administration of the Sacraments. Here we call upon the Name of Lord.

Here we exhort one another unto love and good works. And this we here do the more in the same measure that we see the day of Jesus Christ our Lord draw nigh.

Geo. C. Lubbers.

IN HIS FEAR

Church Membership In His Fear

8.

Not Forsaking the Assemblies of the Saints.
(continued)

We do well to remind ourselves once again of our purpose in this discussion. We are busy with the practical implications of our church membership, or with the activity of our membership. And it stands to reason, that when we discuss this matter we must needs call attention to various errors and weaknesses which creep into our lives as church members. It is thus that we find ourselves discussing the deviation which we have called oncerism.

And it is necessary that we receive these remarks in the proper attitude first of all. That means that we do not read them with our eye on someone else, but that with godly fear we examine ourselves. Furthermore, especially now as we discuss what constitutes a proper or improper reason for absence from divine worship, we must certainly not read with the mental question, "What can I legally get away with?" Hence, it is also not our purpose to add line upon line and precept upon precept in this matter. If that should be done, the whole purpose of our discussion would fail to be reached. The matter is not after all legal, in distinction from ethical. If we merely intend to guide our church membership in an outward and purely formal sense according to certain external rules, we would fall into the error of boasting in the flesh. But they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth, must worship Him through the Spirit, must put not confidence in the flesh, and must glory in Christ Jesus. And therefore, let us remember that our calling is not to adhere merely to some external precepts in this matter of church attendance, and that we should humbly and in a deeply spiritual attitude examine ourselves to see if there be any evil way in us.

With that in mind we may also consider this subject of reasons for absence from divine worship.

Improper Reasons.

An excuse which is especially proffered frequently in rural districts is that of distance. One finds this to be the case, incidentally, not only with regard to church attendance, but also with regard to the closely related matter of Christian instruction. The reasoning runs somewhat along these lines. We live 25 miles from church. In the first place, we can hardly get

ready on time in the morning to be in church by 9:30 or 10 o'clock in the morning. Besides, it is well-nigh impossible to go home and come back to church between the morning and afternoon services. Added to this, we wouldn't have time to take care of our work in between services as we should. Hence, we stay home in the morning, and we can nicely attend at least the afternoon service.

Now, apart from any practical considerations which may enter in, let us first of all view the matter from the point of view of principle. And then the first question is: Must our place of residence determine our attitude toward the church and toward our church attendance, or must, if at all possible, our life as members of the church determine our place of residence? It can be seen at a glance that the latter is the case. If one should carry to its logical conclusion the principle that distance is a proper excuse for failure to attend church, you finally reach the position that one may move so far away that it is simply impossible to attend church at all. Hence, the principle to be followed is first of all that we must seek the kingdom of God first. And the danger is great that only too often when we are forced to move and to rent or buy another place, either in the city or in the country, that we consider only how good a buy we can make, how convenient the new house is, or how much better this farm is than the old one. And when finally we have closed the deal, we discover that we are inconveniently far from church, that it is hardly possible for the children to get to catechism on time, and that the great distance is a strong deterrent for us to join in with any of the congregational life. Some time such people might wake up to find themselves a couple hundred miles from church too. We certainly must follow the principle that we have no right to place ourselves in such a position that it is practically impossible to be faithful in our attendance as church members, and then offer that as an excuse. And positively, we should always attempt to live near enough to church so that we can conveniently and without too much temptation to be absent attend services on Sunday, join in the weekly functions of the congregation, and have our children in catechism regularly.

Besides, of course, there are many practical considerations, which certainly carry weight in the case of those who do live far from church. First of all, we should be mindful that it belongs to our human frailty that we easily excuse ourselves. And the more difficult a thing becomes, the more easily we excuse ourselves. Against that we must guard. And that means that in case we are far distant from church we must the more determinedly make up our minds to get to church if it all possible. Instead of excusing ourselves, we should diligently bend every effort to gather with the people of God. And we may add: we not only should,

but the earnest child of God *will* do this. He *will not* be a oncer. To be sure, that may mean that you have to roll out of bed an hour earlier on Sunday morning, which is not pleasant on a cold winter morning,—especially if there are chores to do. But if there is an earnest desire to be present in the services for divine worship, that will be the first consideration, not the warmth of the bed or the unpleasantness of chores on a cold winter's morning. It may also mean that you find it necessary to forego the trip home between services, and that you must take your lunch along or depend upon an invitation from friends who live nearby church. Why not? It may mean that you must take extra care on Saturday night that you have all things in readiness as much as possible, so that there will be no unnecessary delays on Sunday morning. It will mean that the children are taught to pitch in with household labors on Sunday morning especially, so that mother doesn't have to do everything alone. It all comes down to this, really: if there's a will, there's a way.

There is also the practical consideration which arises from a comparison of our present day attitude with that of the past, even the recent past. Nowadays it must not be too cold, nor too hot; there must not be too much snow, and possibly not even a forecast of snow; otherwise we have to stay home. Some of our parents can tell us of times when they were seldom absent from church, even when it meant traveling several miles twice a Sunday by horse and buggy, or even when they had to bundle up and go to church in the cutter on bitterly cold winter days. And in our time of paved highways and cars which you can heat as well as your own house, we complain much more quickly than they ever did. Again: where there's a will, there's a way!

By all means, therefore, if we deliberately or even from force of circumstances place ourselves in a position in which we are distant from our place of worship, let us face the situation earnestly, and with determination place ourselves under the obligation to be faithful before God in attending the means of grace and all congregational functions connected therewith.

A far more serious case of *oncerism*, however, is that in which there is simply no desire to attend services without even any apparent excuse, or with a very flimsy excuse. There are those, for example, who are too lazy, both physically and spiritually, to get out of bed on Sunday morning for church; those who manage to get to church once per Sunday, perhaps, in order to sooth their consciences, which tell them that they are walking in a wrong way; or those, sometimes, who know that if they don't attend church at least once, then the elders will surely pay them a visit. There are those sometimes, who openly say that they have need of only one service,—very unspiritually, who

openly say that they have need of only one service,—very unspiritually making church attendance a matter of *their need*, first of all, rather than a matter of desire to worship the God of our salvation. There are those who “just can't stand to listen to that preacher twice in one day”, even though he does bring the Word of God. There are those who dislike a certain type of preaching, usually Catechism preaching, even though the church has of old and wisely decided that such preaching is necessary for the maintenance of the truth. There are those who far too easily remain at home on account of some minor ailment, when they could as well sit in church as at home. All such excuses are hardly worth mentioning, for to mention them is at once to point out their impropriety.

Yet these things occur in the church.

And to such as are guilty, and whose eyes should fall on these words, I would say: Repent, and pray God to deliver you from this sin.

But above all, let us not mentally judge others and exalt ourselves above them. For, in the first place, you have nothing which you have not received out of pure grace. In the second place, it is also easy to be a oncer in this sense, that we are present in church in body, but absent in spirit. And in the third place, there is not one of us who is not subject to these temptations, and “pride cometh before a fall”.

H. C. Hoeksema.

Contributions

Neede, 28 Dec. 1950

Aan den Weleerw. Heer Ds. H. Hoeksema
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Hooggeachte Ds. Hoeksema,

Zou U me willen toestaan om het volgende in de *Standard Bearer* te schrijven? Ik zou daar zeer prijs op stellen, vooral omdat het gaat om een zaak, die ook PUBLIEK door een inzender in dat blad nu twee keer is genoemd.

TWEE VRAGEN AAN DEN HEER
HESSEL DE JONG

Hooggeachte Heer!

Tweemaal hebt U in de *Standard Bearer* een stukje geschreven over een afwijking van de vastgestelde kerkelijke Formulieren door predikanten in De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Eén zou bij gelegenheid van een openbare Geloofsbelijdenis veel meer hebben gevraagd, dan officieel is vastgelegd in het *Formulier voor de openbare Belijdenis des Geloofs*.

Een andere zou andere vragen hebben gesteld, dan

er voorkomen in het *Formulier om den Heiligen Doop aan Volwassenen to Bedienen*. Zou ik U vriendelijk mogen verzoeken om in dit blad publiek te willen antwoorden op deze vragen:

1. In welke Gereformeerde Kerk en door welken predikant eener Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland is bij gelegenheid van een openbare Belijdenis des Geloofs afgeweken van het daarvoor vastgestelde Formulier?

2. In welke Gereformeerde Kerk en door welken predikant eener Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland is bij gelegenheid van een volwassendoop afgeweken van de vijf vragen van het daarvoor vastgestelde Formulier?

Met de meeste hoogachting, Uw dw.

J. van Raalte

pred. van de Geref. Kerk van Neede.

A LETTER FROM NEERLANDIA

Neerlandia, Alta., Canada
Jan. 13, 1951

Hooggeachte Redakteur Hoeksema:

Gaarne zou ondergeteekende eenige plaatsruimte in Uw blad de *Standard Bearer* hebben voor onderstaande regelen. Bij voorbaat mijn dank.

Het is naar aanleiding van den brief die Dr. Prins van Groningen (Holland) schrijft in *De Wachter* van 4 Jullie, 1950, het kerkelijk blad van de Chr. Ger. Kerk in de U.S.A.

Dr. Prins had in dien brief een paar vragen te beantwoorden van een paar belangstellende lezers uit Canada of the U.S.A.

De eene vraag luidt: of die leerbesluiten van het jaar 1942 niet kunnen worden ingetrokken. Dr. Prins antwoordt daarop: Die zijn al ingetrokken in het jaar 1946. Toen is een nieuwe formule, een zoogenaamde vervangingsformule vastgesteld. Nu heb ik Dr. Prins gevraagd om officieel bewijs van de intrekking van de leerbesluiten. Nu, dit kan hij natuurlijk niet geven, want zij *zijn* eenvoudig niet ingetrokken. Ik heb dan ook nooit bericht daarvoor van Dr. Prins ontvangen. Het is eenvoudig misleidend om zoo te schrijven.

De besluiten zijn wel niet gehandhaafd; ze zijn genegeerd, en dat is tot schande van die kerken. Als een kerk leerbesluiten neemt, en later niet handhaaft, noch ook herroept, wat is dat voor een kerk?

Een andere broeder had hem geschreven, dat de Gereformeerde kerk in Holland stond in het teken van de valsche kerk, en meent dat van die kerk geldt wat in Art. 29 van de Geloofsbelijdenis staat, en stapelt dan de zwaarste beschuldigingen op tegen de Gereformeerde Kerken.

Dr. Prins echter verzuimt te schrijven, dat die broeder hem gewezen had op de *feiten* in de Gereformeerde Kerken begaan. In Art. 29 van de Geloofsbelijdenis staat, wat de valsche kerk aangaat: zij grondt zich meer op de menschen dan op Christus; zij vervolgt degenen, die heiliglijk leven naar het Woord Gods, enz. Die feiten (het vervolgen van de ware geloovigen) heeft die broeder Dr. Prins voorgehouden of geschreven. Maar dat zegt Dr. Prins niet. Dit is echter niet anders dan de zaak waarom het gaat verdoezelen.

Hooggeachte Redakteur, gaarne zou ondergeteekende deze regelen geplaatst zien in Uw blad te *Standard Bearer*. Nogmaals mijn dank.

L. Wierenga Sr.

Esteemed Editor:

It is not with pleasure that I again feel constrained to lift up my pen. I sincerely regret that it is necessary and the more so because it concerns your own material. And, strangely enough, I hope that I am entirely wrong and that you are entirely justified in that which I must comment upon.

And now to the subject. I refer specifically to your latest editorial entitled "Another Reason", wherein you publish a letter from a Mr. A. van Dischoven together with your comments and a *public note of advice* to Chatham's consistory.

I believe that there is one element which you either completely ignored or of which you were not aware and which our readers should know. (1) I refer to the fact that this brother joined our church at Chatham *after they were organized*. Surely that fact should not have been overlooked or neglected. I would not like to believe that you deliberately kept this from our readers. (2) Surely even the most simple should understand that I do not mean that we mete with two measures—one for those who are charter members and another for those who join us later. Of course, not, but I believe that we should use discretion and a judgment of love.

Would it not have been far more charitable and more in keeping with mature discretion to not publish such a letter but rather have given the brother a personal reply and perhaps privately advise the consistory that they have a brother in their midst who does not quite understand the implications of becoming a member of the Protestant Reformed Church? Is such a manner of dealing considered to be a promoting of our brother's welfare? I believe that we should reserve our sledge on anvil blows for the outright and unrepentant workers of iniquity. But, for our brethren may we be anything but tender and full of loving-kindness? (3)

And although my communication was specifically directed at the above editorial, I would like to say just a few words on the manner of dealing with a brother IJtsma a few issues ago. Since when have we, when one disagrees with us, *instead of praying for and pleading for his repentance* or that his eyes may be opened to the truth as we understand it, we take the *easiest possible method* and invite him to join another church!? Again, is *that* a love for the brother? Is *that* Christian charity? Not in my book! (4)

I can well recall a time when I argued rather vehemently against the doctrine of election. And I used the very arguments of the fool who argues with St. Paul in the Romans. And perhaps many of us can recall similar or related differences due to a lack of knowledge or even perhaps of a sanctified walk. And should to each of these be shown the door rather than an instruction in love?

And, just how would *we* react if we were placed in similar circumstances? Suppose we were placed in the Netherlands and felt that our best church home was found in the Liberated Church. And should we have the courage (and we should) to disagree, would we consider it an earmark of Christian charity if their clergy or editors would treat us in other than a gentle Christian manner? Would we expect them to ever win us by any other means than by that of instructing us in love?

That is not compromising or opening our doors to all manner of heresy. (5) I do not believe that there is one sincere member of our churches either among the clergy or laity who will compromise. And further, it is an insult to the integrity and sincerity of all our people that we are in danger of being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. We are not children in that respect. And neither can we be panicked by name-calling of those who disagree with us.

If a declaration must be adopted simply because a few relatively new members are not ready to say "Ja Dominee, Ja Dominee" or even because one congregation withdraws itself from our communion (6) for reasons which we are asked to judge from one side only (7), we surely stand on weak ground.

And, in conclusion, I certainly hope we hear no more of that talk of the very foundations being shaken. That borders on blasphemy. Since we were children, we were taught to sing: "The church's one foundation, is Jesus Christ her lord". Since when—forgive me the expression—has the tail started wagging the dog! (8)

Respectfully,

George Ten Elshof.

- (1) Was not aware. Brother Van D. did not leave that impression. See his article.
- (2) Evil insinuations. Enough said.
- (3) I am not in the habit of refusing contributions.

Otherwise I would probably have advised brother T.E. to keep his article in the pen.

- (4) Mistaken love. Would that the brother give some of that love to me. It is certainly love of the right kind, when I advise a brother to join a church to which he belongs, rather than to agitate against the doctrine of a church to which he belongs but should not.
- (5) I think it is.
- (6) Who says so?
- (7) An untruth. Nothing onesided about it.
- (8) Yes, I will forgive the expression. It is blasphemy nevertheless.

H. H.

Madison, South Dakota
January 29, 1951

The Standard Bearer,
The Rev. H. Hoeksema, Editor.

About The Declaration

Dear Brother:

May I kindly request a bit of space in a few issues of the *Standard Bearer* to express myself around and about the Declaration of Principles? I would like to consider the Declaration both from a formal and material point of view and will attempt to show that we should not adopt it or, positively, that we as Churches should abide by our own tradition of officially standing upon the basis of the Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity alone. This does not mean that we may not and do not have a distinctive interpretation of these Confessions, but rather that the Confessions themselves should be sufficient to maintain our position.

The addition of an official declaration would be a departure from the official *status quo* and the official tradition of our history not only, but also a departure from the official position of the historically Reformed Church of the past 300 years. Our very name, Protestant Reformed, declares that we stand in that Reformed line of the Protestant Reformation, which line has always officially stood only upon the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity since their adoption in 1618-19. In 1924 the Christian Reformed Church adopted a corrupted addition to these confessions and we as Churches continued the traditional official Reformed line. At that time too, it was suggested that the protesting Churches officially draw up a Scriptural *contra* the Three Points of '24, but over-against this it was maintained that Scripture and the Confessions were sufficient to combat heresy. Hence, the adoption of an official interpretation or declaration

is a serious departure from the *status quo* and should be rejected.

However, in this introductory article I would like to discuss some of the arguments that have arisen around the Declaration. It has been stated that the Declaration simply expresses the truth of Scripture and the Confessions, and that if this is not so it should be pointed out that the Declaration expresses untruth. Hence, the argument is, that since it is the truth we should declare it. I maintain that this cannot be a ground for adopting the Declaration and that the argumentation itself is incorrect.

In the first place, this argument may be turned with greater force against adopting the Declaration. If the Declaration is simply the clear teaching of Scripture and the Confessions it is superfluous to add to these and depart from the official *status quo* and historical tradition. Hence, it may just as well be argued that since the Scripture and Confessions clearly teach the truths expressed in the Declaration, we have no need for it.

But, in the second place, the argumentation is incorrect. It does not necessarily follow that because a thing is true it must or should be declared. It is even possible to declare an objective truth and present the lie. Or again the objective truth may be declared in circumstances and conditions which cause it to be misconstrued and misunderstood. So, for example, one can read on a highway bill-board the objective truth of Scripture when a given text is quoted. Yet in the mind of those who placed it and in the circumstances and conditions in which it is read, it presents the lie of Arminianism. Now mark well, I do not maintain or state that this is also true of the Declaration but only mean to show that this argumentation is not valid. Granted that the Declaration means to, and actually does, express the truth, this in itself cannot serve as a ground or reason for its adoption. The question still remains why should we declare it, why is it necessary and why should we depart from the official historical position?

For, in the third place, the result of this argumentation, is that it lays the burden of proof at the door of those who maintain that the Declaration is not necessary. However, since the official adoption of the Declaration would be a departure from the *status quo* the burden of proof that we should adopt it rightly belongs to those who maintain that it is necessary and expedient. Once again, granted that what the Declaration expresses is the truth of Scripture and the Confessions, the burden of proof to show why it is necessary to declare this beyond the expression of Scripture and the Confessions certainly lies with those who maintain it should be adopted.

It has also been stated that those who believe the Declaration should be adopted are concerned about

maintaining our Protestant Reformed heritage and, on the other hand, those who do not favor its adoption would open the doors of our churches to Heynsian heresy. Once again I maintain that this argument is invalid and derogatory. This argument would declare that the only alternative is: the adoption of the Declaration or the introduction of Heynsian heresy. Now, unless one wishes to judge the mind and motives of those who oppose adoption, it certainly must be granted that these brethren have honest convictions and are not motivated by the desire to introduce heresy. It is even possible to oppose the *adoption* of the Declaration without necessarily opposing the Declaration itself. In the first place, therefore, this argument is invalid for it certainly lies within the realm of conceivable probability that there may be other and valid reasons for rejecting the adoption of the Declaration.

In the second place, this argument is unworthy since it discredits those who oppose the adoption and stigmatizes them as being desirous of introducing Heynsian heresy. Therefore, it is also derogatory in that it presents an unwarranted alternative:—the Declaration or Heynsian heresy. If this were true the Synod need never have sent the Declaration out for discussion but could have decided immediately. Or, perhaps better still, a case should be made pending against those who would introduce heresy. But the result is that this argument discredits and denies the right of that very discussion which Synod invited when it sent the Declaration out for discussion.

In the third place, the end of this argument is again that it would place the responsibility for the burden of proof at the door of those who oppose adoption of the Declaration. Once again rather, the burden of proof to show why, rests with those who maintain that we should adopt the Declaration. It might also be pointed out here that we as Churches were freed from Heynsian heresy already in 1924 upon the basis of Scripture and the Confessions alone and since that time have been instrumental in quite successfully turning others upon that same basis.

Now I realize that these arguments are not all that is said but are the general conclusions from various grounds that are presented as to why we should adopt the Declaration. Next time, therefore, we hope to examine some of these grounds.

W. Hofman.

ATTENTION!

CLASSIST WEST

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

A Final Report

The undersigned was asked to write up a report of the results of the election of committee members who are to assist the three ministers and their families who recently came to us from the Reformed Episcopal Church and who are now attending our Seminary.

Some time ago printed ballots were sent out to each one who contributed to their support. The ballots presented a nomination of eight. From these four were to be chosen to serve as a permanent committee. The following constitute the new committee: Sidney De Young, James Kok, Gerrit Pipe, and Donald Ondersma. At a recent meeting the committee officers were chosen as follows: president S. De Young, vice-president James Kok, secretary G. Pipe, treasurer D. Ondersma. At this meeting a committee was appointed to investigate the possibility of becoming incorporated as a non-profit corporation. Should this become a future reality, contributors to the fund could make deductions from their income tax reports of their contributions. This means also that our society will need a name. Any suggestions will be gladly received by the committee.

We wish also at this juncture to report that our treasurer reveals that sufficient funds have been received to take care of these families for this year. In round figures the receipts reached a total of \$7,000.00. The disbursements this year included a considerable amount for moving expenses which we trust will not be necessary again. So that unless there is a radical change in the cost of living, our anticipated receipts for the next year will not have to be as high as this year. We can also report that the three ministers are able to work a little on the side which means that our care of them will be made considerably easier. The committee informs us that work will soon be made of conducting another drive, announcements of which will be made at the proper time. With but few exceptions, those of our people who pledged to help in our last drive responded nobly. We are indeed grateful for this interest and help. Should those who made pledges still wish to keep them they may send their contributions to Donald Ondersma, 1135 Chicago Dr., S. W., Grand Rapids, Michigan. Please specify that your contribution is a payment of a pledge. Of course, any other contribution will be gratefully received and acknowledged. The committee has also decided with the consent of the three ministers, that henceforth all financial contributions, payments for service etc., to these men shall be reported to the committee, and that each family shall be cared for on an equal basis proportionate to the

number of children each has. It would be well that all contributors to the fund keep this in mind. Our society may therefore believe that their contributions will be carefully distributed and no partiality shown.

As to the three ministers, we may report that they are making very good progress at our school. In fact they have on several instances already been given license to speak a word of edification in our churches. And all three of them have told the undersigned that they still marvel at the wondrous ways of God Who has so graciously directed their way to our Protestant Reformed Churches. They all with their families are deeply appreciative of all our people have done and are doing for them, and would like you to know of this appreciation.

And now, as the title of this article suggests, this is a final report as far as the undersigned is concerned. From now on he will serve only in an advisory capacity, and all future correspondence should be sent to the secretary of the committee, Gerrit Pipe, 1463 Ardmore, S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan; while all contributions should be sent to the treasurer above named.

M. Schipper.

IN MEMORIAM

The following organizations of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo express their sympathy to Mrs. P. Dyksterhuis and Mr. and Mrs. A. Post and family in the loss of their husband, father, and grandfather,

Mr. Peter Dyksterhuis

whom the Lord called home very suddenly on Saturday morning, February 3, 1951. We pray that they may go on in the confidence that He doeth all things well and that they who die in the Lord are indeed blessed.

Men's Society
Ladies Aid
Eunice Circle
Yokefellows

The following organizations of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo express their sincere sympathy to Miss Jeanette Hamminga, and to Mrs. Jennie Weesies and family in the loss of their mother, daughter, and sister,

Mrs. Tena Hamminga

who went into the reward of the righteous on Tuesday, Feb. 13, 1951. We ask for them that they sorrow not as those that have no hope for we believe that those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

Ladies' Aid
Young People's Society.

SUBSCRIBERS — PLEASE NOTE!

Due to the increased cost of printing *The Standard Bearer* it has been necessary to raise the subscription price to \$3.00 per year. This will take effect with the subscriptions coming due on April 1st and thereafter. Will you please refer to your subscription date printed opposite your name on this issue, and if past due, forward a remittance at once. Your co-operation is kindly requested. At the present time there is no change in membership price which includes the subscription.

THE BOARD.