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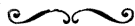
MEDITATION

De Waardij Van Het Lijden Christi

Waarlijk hij heeft onze krankheden op zich genomen, en onze smarten heeft hij gedragen; doch wij achtten hem, dat hij geplaagd, van God geslagen en verdrukt was. Maar hij is om onze overtredingen verwond, om onze ongerechtigheden is hij verbrijzeld; de straf, die ons den vrede aanbrengt, was op hem, en door zijne striemen is ons genezing geworden.

—Jesaja 53:4-5.

Het eerste vers van dit hoofdstuk komt tot ons met een vraag: Wie heeft onze prediking geloofd? En het antwoord zit in de vraag in, namelijk: Niemand geloofde die prediking, d.w.z. niemand van nature. En wat mag de reden zijn? Dit: die prediking was zoo vreemd. Door ellende tot verlossing was het thema van die prediking, en dat begrijpt het natuurlijk verstand niet, en wat de natuurlijke mensch niet begrijpt verwerpt hij. Dat de eeuwige zaligheid komen moet door het smartelijke lijden van den gehoorzamen knecht des Heeren, en niet door ons eigen pogen en streven en goede werken, ziet, dat wil er niet bij den hoovaardigen mensch in. Wat wij zagen was een worm en geen mensch. En de worm werd veracht. We hebben daar wat van gezien den vorigen keer, dat we stilstonden bij den lijdenden knecht des Heeren. We willen nu wat verder gaan, onder den afgebeden zegen des Heeren.



En nu willen we zien hoe die knecht des Heeren gewaardeerd is door het oude bondsvolk, en ook door ons. Als we als thema schrijven: de waardij van het lijden Christi, dan zien we eerst dat lijden naar den schijn, dan naar haar wezen, en eindelijk naar haar vrucht.

Eerst dan dat lijden van Christus naar den schijn. Hij verschijnt op het toneel der historie als een rijtje, als een scheutje op een afgehouden tronk. En we vragen weer: wat kan men daar nu van verwachten? Verwacht men, kan men verwachten, dat daar een forsche boom uit zal groeien? Natuurlijk niet. Dezelfde gedachte vonden we in die wortel in een dorre aarde. Er was immers geen gedaante noch heerlijkheid in den Christus, dat wil zeggen, voor het oog des vleesch. En zoo is het vandaag nog. Niemand bemint Jezus van nature, want Hij biedt niets voor het vleesch. En zoo wordt Jezus de verachte bij uitnemendheid. Niemand is ooit zoo veracht als Jezus, onzen Koning. Laat mij slechts één voorbeeld mogen geven. Men zette Hem op zekeren dag naast een moordenaar en rebel: Bar-abbas. En toen vroeg Pilatus aan het eelste wat de aarde toentertijd kende, namelijk, het Israel Gods: Wien wilt ge, dat ik U zal loslaten? Wien begeert ge van deze twee? En ge weet het antwoord. Men verkoos Bar-abbas, den moordenaar, boven Jezus Christus, den Zoon van God. Dus Hij was wel de onwaardigste onder de menschen.

En men heeft Hem gehaat boven alles, omdat Hij kwam met zulke groote pretenties, en met zulk een mensch-veroordeelend getuigenis. Hij zeide van Zichzelf: Ik ben de Zoon van God! Ik ben de Messias. Ik ben de Goël. Ik ben het Brood, het Water en het Licht der wereld. En door Mijn kruisdood en vreeselijk lijden zal Ik Mijn kerk verlossen en tot groote glorie brengen. En ziet, dat kon men niet staan. Want dat vernederde den mensch. Hij zeide immers: Ik stel Mijn leven voor de schapen! Groote pretenties, want Hij zeide van Zichzelf: Ik ben de weg tot den Vader; ik ben de weg, de waarheid en het leven.

Maar als we Hem aanzagen, zoo bemerkten we, dat Hij een mensch was die zeer zwak was, en zeer ellendig. En toen hebben we de conclusie getrokken: God haat Hem; God plaagt Hem; God slaat Hem en God verdrukt Hem. En daarom achtte men, dat Hij een snoever was. En men kruisigde Hem. En het

is wel duidelijk, dat de grootste haat over Hem kwam, omdat Zijn geheele verschijning, lijden en kruisdood predikte onze zonde-schuld, en dat konden de menschen niet staan. De bloed-theologie is niet populair.

Dus als ge mij zoudt vragen: wat is de waardeering van dien lijdenden knecht des Heeren, dan is het antwoord van de Schrijft: Hij werd geacht een mensch te zijn die te mijden was. Want de hand Gods was tegen Hem ten kwade. Hij leed, en het was duidelijk, dat zulk lijden over Hem kwam vanwege Zijn goddeloosheid. God was tegen Hem. En daarom: weg met Hem! Als het er op aan komt, dan hebben we veel liever Bar-abbas, al is het dan ook, dat die man een moordenaar is.



Maar wat was het lijden van Jezus naar zijn wezen?

De tekst geeft daarop een voldoende antwoord. Dat lijden was plaatsvervangend. Hij leed om onze krankheden.

Krankheden beteekend hier niet physische krankheden, zooals de tering, kanker, diphtherie, enz. De Heilige Schrift is vol beeldspraak. Zoo ook hier. Die krankheden zijn geestelijke-ethische krankheden. Om U een duidelijk voorbeeld te geven van het gebruik van zulk een beeld, moet ge eens luisteren naar Jesaja 1:5b en 6. Daar vindt ge een beschrijving van den zondigen toestand van het historische Israel van Jesaja's dagen. Dat is duidelijk uit het verband daar. Er staat: Het gansche hoofd is krank, en het gansche hart is mat; van de voetzool af tot het hoofd toe is er niets geheels aan hetzelfde, maar wonden en striemen en etterbuilen, die niet uitgedrukt noch verbonden zijn, en geen derzelve is met olie veracht. En zooals we zeiden, het verband van deze woorden duiden aan, dat deze beschrijving doelt op de zonde van Israel. En zoo is het ook hier. Onze krankheden zijn de krankheden die geestelijk zijn. En zij zijn het bewijs, en de openbaring van den geestelijken dood die in ons woelt, en woelen zal totdat de mensch naar ziel en lichaam ondergaat in den eeuwigen dood.

Nu dan, die krankheden nam Jezus op Zich. En dat verklaart ook Zijn lijden. Geestelijke krankheid, en dat is de zonde, is oorzaak van smart.

Hoe zit dat?

Hier is het antwoord. God heeft het van voorlang gegeven: de ziel die zondigt zal sterven. God zeide dit ook aan het begin van de historie: Ten dage dat ge daarvan eet zult ge den dood sterven. En God komt daar tot in der eeuwigheid niet van terug. En er zijn ook geen uitzonderingen op dien regel. De krankheid, en dat is de zonde, roept om straf. En het ondergaan van de straf Gods brengt smart.

Leest den tekst nu nog eens, en laat ons dan ook die andere woorden onderzoeken die tezamen met krankheden gebezigd worden om de zonde van Gods volk af te meten. Ze zijn deze: onze overtredingen, onze ongerechtigheden. En de smart die deze geestelijke krankheden met zich brengen vindt ge ook in den tekst. Zij is deze: de straf, en de striemen.

Welnu, de tekst zegt, dat ge zóó het lijden van Christus moet verstaan: Christus nam onze krankheden op zich, en daardoor kwam Hij te staan voor God die geen uitzonderingen op Zijn regels toelaat. En moest den Zoon geslagen, geplaagd en verdrukt worden. Hij ontvangt onze straf en Hij ontvangt onze striemen.

En let er nu op, dat de tekst zegt, dat Hij die krankheden op Zich nam. Leest daar niet overheen. Daar zit een wereld van liefde Gods in. En dan bedoel ik de liefde van Christus waarmede Hij allereerst den Vader minde. Hij nam die krankheden op Zich. Daar zit in de gehoorzaamheid der liefde. Hij wist dat God dit van Hem wilde. Hij moest slachtoffer worden voor hen die door God bemind waren van eeuwigheid. Hij wist, dat God in Hem wilde openbaren hoe lieflijk en hoe groot Hij is van goedertierenheid. En zoo boog Hij gewillig het moede hoofd en ging het hellelijden in.

Zoo moet ge het lijden van Jezus waardeeren.



En moeten we onder dit thema nog één ding duidelijk maken. Het is dit. Als Jesaja al maar spreekt van "wij" en van "ons" en van "onze", wat bedoelt hij dan daarmee? Spreekt hij daar van alle menschen die ooit leefden, en nog leven zullen? Bedoelt Jesaja te zeggen, dat Jezus Christus de krankheden van het geheele menschelijke geslacht, hoofd voor hoofd, op Zich nam?

En dan moet ons antwoord zijn: Neen, dat kan de bedoeling niet zijn, want dan moest daarop volgen, dat alle menschen die ooit leefden, nu leven, of nog leven zullen, alle naar den hemel gaan. En naar Gods Woord weten we beter. De Bijbel zegt zelfs: velen zijn geroepen, maar weinigen uitverkoren. Dus verreweg het grootste gedeelte van het menschedom gaan verloren. Dat is wel een verschrikkelijke leer, maar het is de waarheid.

Bedoelt dan Jesaja, dat Christus de krankheden van het geheele Israel op zich laadde? Neen, dat ook niet, want Gods Woord zegt ons duidelijk, dat niet allen Israel zijn die uit Israel zijn. Alleen de kinderen der beloften worden voor het zaad gerekend.

Wat dan?

Hier is het antwoord: God kent degenen die de Zijnen zijn. Er is een boek geschreven door God, en

in dat boek zijn de namen geschreven van een volk, dat uitverkorenen heet. En voor dat volk kwam Jezus. De krankheden van dat volk neemt Hij op Zich. Voor dat volk ondergaat Hij de straf en voor dat volk wordt Hij gestriemd. Dat is de eenvoudige en doorlopende leer der Heilige Schrift.

En zoo werd onze Jezus verwond, en verbrijzeld. Voor de uitverkorenen werd Hij gestriemd en moest Hij de straf ondergaan. Dat is het Evangelie.

En als ge mij dan vraagt: Maar hoe kom ik te weten, dat ik uitverkoren ben, dan is het antwoord gemakkelijk. Ziet ge, op een keer zeide de Heere Jezus: Ik geef Mijn leven voor de schapen. Indien ge een uitverkorene zijt, dan wordt gij gemaakt tot een schaapje van Jezus kudde. Dan wederbaart Hij U, en dat beduidt, dat Hij U van een wolf tot een schaap maakt. En als ge blijft vragen en zegt: Maar hoe weet ik dat ik een schaap ben? Dan is het antwoord: ge hoort Jezus' stem, en ge volgt Hem. En het resultaat is, dat ge het eeuwige leven van Hem ontvangt. Daar zullen we straks wat meer van zeggen. Alleen dit nog: die uitverkoren is, gelooft het Woord van God. Als ge gelooft in den gekruisten Christus bewijst ge voor Uzelf en voor anderen, dat ge een uitverkoren kind van God zijt.

Luistert naar Jezus' eigen stem. Hij is de waarheid, dus kunt ge U op Hem verlaten. Hij zegt dit: Ik ben de goede Herder, en Ik ken de mijnen en word van de mijnen gekend. En Hij zegt verder, in hetzelfde hoofdstuk (Johannes 10:14 en 27) "Mijne schapen hooren Mijne stem, en Ik ken dezelve en zij volgen Mij." Is dat duidelijk genoeg?



O, er zijn veel meerdere getuigenissen in de Heilige Schrift die ons duidelijk aantoonen of we binnen dan wel buiten zijn, of we naar den hemel reizen, dan wel op weg zijn naar de hel. Denkt, b.v., aan de zaligsprekingen: Zalig zijn de armen van geest, die treuren, de zachtmoedigen, die hongeren en dorsten naar de gerechtigheid, enz. Denkt aan dien armen tollenaar: O God wees mij zondaar genadig! Die man ging af gerechtvaardigd naar zijn huis, meer dan die. . . .

Er zijn duizend getuigenissen in de Schrift die aantoonen wie binnen en wie buiten zijn. Om niet meer te noemen: de uitverkorenen gelooven in Christus, en door Hem, in God. Gelooft gij?

Als nu maar duidelijk geworden is, dat het wezen van Jezus' lijden is geweest, het dragen van onze krankheden, en dat is het dragen van onze ongerechtigheden, onze overtredingen, en daarom ook van onze straf en van onze striemen. En dat Hij dat gewillig deed, uit het motief der pure liefde Gods. Het was Zijn eten en drinken om den wil Gods te doen.

En het resultaat, de vrucht?

De tekst zegt het ons in twee woorden: genezing en vrede.

Door Zijne striemen is ons genezing geworden. Ziedaar in eenige woorden de vrucht van Jezus' lijden.

Onze ziekte is dat wij God haten en Zijn wet overtreden. En genezing is, dat door Jezus' lijden en sterven, allereerst, de schuld weggenomen is. Dat is de rechtelijke genezing. En door wedergeboorte, bekeering, geloof en heiligmaking worden we genezen van het inwonend verderf. Hallelujah!

En het einde is vrede. Och lieve, wat zal ik daar van zeggen? Vrede is het eigen leven van Gods Vreeverbond. In God is het de harmonie tusschen Vader, Zoon, en den Heiligen Geest. Op de onmetelijke oceanen van Gods verbondsleven is er nooit de kleinste rimpel van oneenigheid of disharmonie. Maar, integendeel, ze lieven en leven het verbondsleven volmaaktelijk van eeuwigheid tot eeuwigheid.

Welnu, in dat leven worden we opgenomen. De vrede Gods woont dan in Uw hart. Ik kan het misschien niet beter uitdrukken dan te zeggen: Als gij den vrede Gods hebt, dan zijt gij in harmonie met den hartslag van den DrieEenigen VerbondsGod!

De Heere geve het aan U en aan mij!

G. Vos.

A PRAYER IN WAR AND PEACE

Father, our children keep!

We know not what is coming on the earth;
Beneath the shadow of Thy heavenly wing,
O keep them, keep them, Thou who gavest
them birth.

Father, draw nearer us!

Draw firmer 'round us Thy protecting arm;
O clasp our children closer to Thy side,
Uninjured in the day of earth's alarm.

Them in Thy chambers hide!

O hide them and preserve them calm and safe,
When sin abounds, and error flows abroad,
And Satan tempts, and human passions chafe.

O keep them undefiled!

Unspotted from a tempting world of sin;
That, clothed in white, through the bright city
gates,

They may with us in triumph enter in.

—Horatius Bonar.

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CONTENTS

MEDITATION—	
De Waardij Van Het Lijden Christi	265
Rev. Gerrit Vos	
EDITORIALS—	
The Declaration Of Principles	268
Rev. H. Hoeksema	
We Need The Declaration	272
Rev. H. Veldman	
OUR DOCTRINE—	
The Creation Of The Spirit World	276
Rev. H. Veldman	
Rev. Petter Repeats Still Another of His Accusation	278
Rev. G. M. Ophoff	
FROM HOLY WRIT—	
Exposition of Luke 2:40-52	281
Rev. Geo. C. Lubbers	
PERISCOPE—	
1924 Still Binding in the Chr. Ref. Churches	283
Rev. J. Howerzyl	
CONTRIBUTIONS—	
About the Declaration (II)	285
Rev. W. Hofman	
Where Do We Stand?	286
Antwoord Aan Ds. J. Van Raalte	287
Mr. H. De Jong	
Letter To The Editor	287
Mr. O. Monsma	

EDITORIALS

The Declaration Of Principles

Redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to infants no less than to the adults.

Thus the Declaration of Principles quotes from the Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 74.

Attend, please, closely to the meaning of these words, and you will surely acknowledge that the promise is not conditional and cannot possibly be.

What is meant, in these words by the promise?

Is it a prediction of what God will do in the future?

The answer is, and must be, negative.

For, first of all, it is a distortion of the term to say: a promise is a prediction. The promise, of course, include a prediction and often does. Thus it is with respect to the promise of the first coming of Christ as well as with "the promise of His coming" the second time. But even then, the main idea is not a prediction, but a *promise*, a pledge, an oath of God that He will surely save His people, and, therefore, is vowed only to the elect. The destruction of Jerusalem is also a prediction, so is the destruction of Babylon, but this surely cannot be called a promise to those cities. A promise, therefore, though it may be predicted as to its certain fulfillment, can never be called a prediction.

And that the promise is, indeed, an oath of God to lead the elect infallibly unto salvation is taught us in so many words in Heb. 6:16-18: "For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew *unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel*, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

Secondly, that the promise meant in question and answer 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism cannot refer to a prediction of what God will do in the future, but is a pledge of God that He surely will fulfill His promise and that, too, unconditionally, is evident from the fact that, in this answer, the promise is said to be for infants no less than for the adults.

Now, in the first place, many of those little children die in infancy, and if the promise is a prediction, the fulfillment of which must wait until those that are comprehended in the covenant of God come to years of discretion and are in a position to fulfill the conditions, it certainly has no meaning for them.

But, secondly, it lies in the very nature of the covenant dispensation that God fulfills His promise of salvation in the majority, yea, in by far the majority of them, in infancy, before there can be any question of conditions. I say that this lies in the very nature of the covenant dispensation. Why should God place His covenant children in the sphere of His covenant, where the Word of God has its influence, where the child is brought into contact with the promise of the gospel, where the operations of the Holy Spirit are dominant, I say, why should God place His children in that sphere for the first few years of their life, in fact, until they can fulfill conditions, *as dead children*? I say, therefore, that it lies in the nature of the covenant dispensation, that God fulfills His promise, in by far the majority of cases, in infancy. In infancy He gives them His Holy Spirit, in infancy He regenerates them and implants into their heart the power, the faculty of faith, in order that from infancy they may be under the saving influence of the Holy Spirit and the gospel, in the sphere of the covenant. The promise is, therefore, not a prediction of what God will do in some future time, but an oath of God, an immutable pledge that He will lead the elect infallibly to salvation.

Besides, this is also a matter of general experience in the covenant of God. You ask any normal covenant child that belongs to the children of the promise, when he comes to years of discretion, whether he is conscious of any particular moment or time in his life when he was converted, or when he began to believe in the God of his salvation, and he will reply in the negative. But you ask him whether he believes that he is converted, and whether he has a sincere desire to walk in the way of God's covenant, he will just as surely answer positively. In other words, his experience is that God fulfilled His promise unto him all his life long, even before he was conscious of it, and surely before he could fulfill any conditions. It is, therefore, quite contrary to the general experience of normal covenant children to say that the promise of God is a prediction which God will fulfill in some future time, when the covenant child comes to years of discretion, and when he is capable of fulfilling conditions.

And what is the contents of the promise according to the 74th answer of the Heidelberg Catechism? It is "redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith." Also this shows very clearly that the promise is unconditional, and that faith is not a condition in order to obtain the promise. It might conceivably be said that the promise is conditioned by faith, if it included only the redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, although even this is not true. But now the promise is said to include also the Holy Ghost as the author of faith, the very possibility of presenting faith as a condition to receive the

realization of the promise is ruled out. For what is first: the effect or the cause? You answer: the cause. What is first: the author or that which he works? You say: the author. Very well. It follows: 1. that the promise includes the gift of the Holy Ghost; 2. that the promise includes the gift of faith; 3. that faith is the fruit of the realization of the promise, and cannot be a condition for receiving the promise. It is a means, a God-given means, whereby we may and do lay hold on all the blessings of salvation included in the promise of God. Faith cannot be a condition to receive faith.

That faith is nothing but an instrument or means whereby God brings us into saving contact with all the benefits of Christ, is the language of our Confessions throughout.

It is safe to adhere to the plain language of our confessions rather than to introduce all kinds of questionable innovations.

That God actually fulfills His promise of the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, to children as well as to adults, and that, therefore, little children have the faith before they can hear the preaching of the gospel, and before they can fulfill any conditions, is also the conviction of Ursinus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, who, in his exposition of question and answer 74, writes as follows:

"But, say our opponents, the church ought to be satisfied with the profession of faith. This we admit, and we would add, that to be born in the church, is, to infants, the same thing as a profession of faith. Faith is, indeed, necessary to the use of baptism with this distinction. Actual faith is required in adults, and an inclination to faith in infants. There are, therefore, four terms in this syllogism, or there is a fallacy in understanding that as spoken particularly, which must be understood generally. Those who do not believe, that is, who have no faith at all, neither by profession nor by inclination, are not to be baptized. But those who are born of believing parents have faith as to inclination. We also deny the minor proposition; for infants do believe after their manner, or according to the condition of their age; they have an inclination to faith. Faith is in infants potentially and by inclination, although not actually as in adults. For, as infants born of ungodly parents who are without the church, have no actual wickedness, but only an inclination thereto, so those who are born of godly parents have no actual holiness, but only an inclination to it; not according to nature, but according to the grace of the covenant. And still further: infants have the Holy Ghost, and are regenerated by him. John the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and Jeremiah is said to have been sanctified before he came out of the womb. (Luke 1:15, Jer. 1:5). If infants now have the Holy Ghost, he certainly works in them regeneration, good inclinations, new desires,

and such other things as are necessary for their salvation, or he at least supplies them with every thing that is requisite for their baptism, according to the declaration of Peter. 'Can any man forbid water to them who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?' It is for this reason that Christ enumerates little children among those that believe, saying, 'Who shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me.' (Matt. 18:6) In as much now as infants are fit subjects for baptism, they do not profane it as the Anabaptists wickedly affirm."

The Declaration, therefore, is perfectly correct, and stands entirely on the basis of the confession, when it states that "the promise is infallible and unconditional, and therefore only for the elect."

The Declaration continues:

"The same is taught in the Netherland Confession, Articles 33-35. In Article 33 we read:

"We believe that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities hath ordained the sacraments for us, thereby to seal unto us his promises, and also to be pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith; which he hath joined to the Word of the gospel, the better to present to our senses, both that which he signifies to us by his Word, and that which he inwardly works in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which he imparts to us. For they are visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means whereof God worketh in us the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the signs are not vain or insignificant, so as to deceive us. For Jesus Christ is the true object presented by them, without whom they would be of no moment."

Now, notice in the first place, that this article of our Confession speaks of the sacraments in general, and, therefore, of baptism as well as of the Lord's Supper.

Notice, in the second place, that both the sacraments, baptism as well as the Lord's Supper, are said to nourish and strengthen our faith. They, therefore, are certainly for believers. Without faith, the sacraments, to be sure, are not vain, no more than the preaching of the Word is ever vain, but they have no saving efficacy. They are a savor of death unto death.

Notice, thirdly, that the sacraments are said to seal the promises of God. The question now is: what is implied in these promises of God. Do these promises, that are signified and sealed by the sacraments, only imply the objective salvation, redemption through the blood of Christ, or do they include the actual impartation of that salvation, regeneration, calling, faith, etc.? The latter, for the article plainly states that the sacraments also present to our senses "that which he inwardly works in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which he imparts to us."

In other words, the promise of God includes the gift of faith, and since faith is included in the promise, it cannot be a condition unto the promise. Moreover, since faith is wrought only in the elect, it is evident that the promise is not for all, nor for all the children that are born under the historical dispensation of the covenant, but for the elect alone.

God, therefore, fulfills His promise infallibly and unconditionally and in the elect only.

In article 34 of the same confession we read:

"We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, hath made an end, by the shedding of his blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin: and that he, having abolished circumcision, which was done with blood, hath instituted the sacrament of baptism instead thereof; by which we are received into the church of God, and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to him, whose ensign and banner we bear; and which serves as a testimony to us that he will forever be our gracious God and Father. Therefore he has commanded all those, who are his, to be baptized with pure water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; thereby signifying to us, that as water washeth away the filth of the body, when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized, when sprinkled upon him; so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerates us from children of wrath. Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God; who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass, to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is the devil, and to enter into the spiritual land of Canaan. Therefore the ministers, on their part, administer the sacrament, and that which is visible, but our Lord giveth that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing, and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts, and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of his fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with his deeds."

Now let us read this, first of all, in connection with what was said of the sacraments in general.

In the Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 66 we read that the sacraments are visible signs and seals of the promise of the gospel. In the Netherland Confession we read that the sacraments seal unto us the promises of God.

Again the question is: what is the promise? What is included in the promise? Does it imply only the objective bequest of salvation, or does it include also the application of that salvation, including, therefore, the gift of faith, by the Holy Spirit?

Evidently, according to the above quoted article of the Confession, it includes everything, the whole of salvation. For the promise that is signified and sealed in the sacrament of baptism means that "the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, doth internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerates us from children of wrath, unto children of God." It signifies, moreover, the promise of "the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing, purging our souls from all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts, and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of his fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds."

All this is included in the promise of God.

The promise, therefore, includes faith.

And again I ask: How, then, can faith be a condition unto the promise? Is faith a condition for the gift of faith? Or is the act of believing a condition for regeneration? Is the act of faith a condition for God's putting on us the new man and putting off the old man? All this is simply absurd. Hence, the promise of God is absolutely unconditional.

And by the same token, the promise of God is not for all, nor even for all that are born in the historical line of the covenant, but only for the spiritual seed, that is, for the elect.

That this is true is, besides, evident from the very wording of the above quoted articles.

Do not overlook the fact these articles are part of a confession of faith. And confessions are not made by unbelievers, or by the reprobate, but by believers, or by the elect. Now, that the believing Church speaks in these articles, that it speaks about the promises of God, and about these promises *being sealed to them* alone is very plain from the very wording of these articles. Throughout they use personal pronouns *we*, *us*, and *our*. God is *our* gracious God, He has ordained the sacraments on account of *our* weakness and infirmities, to seal unto *us* his promises, and to be pledges of His good will toward *us*, as well as to strengthen *our* faith. By the sacraments He presents to our senses that which He inwardly works in *our* hearts, and confirms in *us* the salvation which He imparts to *us*. By means of them He works in *us* the power of the Holy Ghost. By means of the sacrament of baptism *we* are received into the church of God, that *we* may wholly belong to Him. Baptism serves as a testimony to *us* that He will forever be *our* gracious God and Father, and it signifies that He regenerates *us*. In baptism *our* Lord giveth that which is signified by the sacrament, purging *our* souls from filth and unrighteousness, renewing *our* hearts, giving unto *us* a true assurance of his fatherly goodness, and putting on *us* the new man and putting off the old man with all his deeds.

Substitute for all these personal pronouns of the first person that of the third, or again, substitute for them the term "all, head for head", or "all that are born in the historical line of the covenant", and you will find that you corrupt the confessions. But substitute for them terms like "the believers," or "the spiritual seed," and, therefore, *the elect*, and you will preserve the truth of the confession, though, by doing so, you mar its personal note.

Hence, also from these parts of the Confession, it is evident that the promise of God is unconditional and only for the elect.

And, therefore, the Declaration continues:

"That all this, washing and cleansing and purging of our souls of all filth and unrighteousness, the renewal of our hearts, is only the fruit of the saving efficacy of the death of Christ and therefore is only for the elect is very evident. The same is true of what we read in the same article of the baptism of infants: 'And indeed Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful, than for the adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that, which Christ hath done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law, that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death, shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, that baptism is to our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ.' If, according to art. 8 of the Second Head of Doctrine, A, in the Canons, the saving efficacy of the death of Christ extends only to the elect, it follows that when in this article of the Netherland Confession it is stated that 'Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for the adult person', also here the reference is to the elect children.

"Moreover, that the promise of the gospel which God signifies and seals in the sacraments is not for all is also abundantly evident from Art. 35 of the same Netherland Confession, which speaks of the Holy supper, of our Lord Jesus Christ. For there we read: 'we believe and confess, that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper, to nourish and support those whom he hath already regenerated and incorporated into his family, which is his Church.'

"In the same article we read: 'Further, though the sacraments are connected with the thing signified, nevertheless both are not received by all men: the ungodly receives the sacrament to his condemnation, but he doth not receive the truth of this sacrament. As Judas and Simon the sorcerer, both indeed received the sacrament, but not Christ, who was signified by it, of whom believers only are made partakers.'

"It follows from that that both the sacraments, as

well as the preaching of the gospel, are a savor of death unto death for the reprobate, as well as a savor of life unto life for the elect. Hence, the promise of God, preached by the gospel, signified and sealed in both the sacraments, is not for all, but for the elect only."

Thus teaches the Declaration.

There is more of this, but about this next time, D.V.
H. H.



We Need The Declaration*

The undersigned, too, wishes to express himself on our Declaration of Principles which was adopted at our Synod of 1950. This I wish to do not because my convictions in regard to these principles are unknown. I am convinced that our churches must adopt this Declaration, and that we must adopt it *now*. Of this I am convinced all the more because of my experiences among the Canadian immigrants among whom I labored during the year of 1950. It is because of this conviction that I write this article.

A Few Observations.

First, we need not discuss the church-political angle of the Declaration of Principles. It has certainly been established by this time that our Synod of 1950 acted completely within its bounds when it drew up this statement of what we as churches have believed and confessed all the years of our existence. Not even Dr. K. Schilder has uttered one word in connection with this aspect of the Declaration, and the undersigned has read, as of now, some ten articles by the professor on the Declaration. Of course, the professor may reserve this criticism for some future articles, but until now this criticism has not appeared.

Secondly, Rev. Petter writes in Concordia of Jan. 4, 1951, that our consistories have about two months to prepare an evaluation and criticism of the work of the last Synod. The brother refers to the fact that all matters for Synod must be brought to the January 2, 1951 meeting of Classis East, including the reports of the consistories on the Brief Declaration. And he bases this observation upon the fact that we did not get the full picture of the origin of the Declaration until October when the Acts of the 1950 Synod appeared. Now, in the first place, from October 3, let us say, until January 3 is a period of three months and not of two months. However, already July 1, 1950, the Declaration appeared in the Standard Bearer. This means that the consistories of Classis East had six

* This article was written by the undersigned before he wrote the article: The End Of Hamilton. The reader is kindly requested to bear this in mind.

months instead of two months to study this document. But, Classis West meets, I understand, in March. Hence, the consistories of Classis West have eight months to prepare their answer instead of two months. Quite a difference!

Thirdly, in the same Concordia of January 4, 1951, appears an article by brother Van Spronsen of the Netherlands. In this article he mentions my article in the Standard Bearer of December 15, 1950. The brother does not comment on my article as such. He merely makes the remark that also my article strengthened him in his conviction that we are dominated by a fear-psychosis. If the brother means that we were dominated by a certain fear of what we repeatedly heard the immigrants express, that we were mortally afraid of the things we heard them say, he is quite correct. We fear all arminianism. And of arminianism we heard plenty. If, on the other hand, the brother means to suggest that we had become panicky, he is completely in error. This the esteemed brother from the Netherlands can never conclude from my article. On the contrary, brother Van Spronsen, I was quite convinced of my calling, of my calling before God and the churches I am privileged to serve, and I acted from that principle of conviction, without doubt and without hesitation. It was not "fear" but conviction, and the love of our churches that prompted me in all my activity in Hamilton. However, I wish that brother Van Spronsen would tell us whether the immigrants whom I met and heard express themselves according to my article are reformed. Is it reformed to teach an election and a reprobation upon foreseen faith and unbelief, to teach that Christ died for all, that the Lord wishes to save all, that "I am not an election man (ik ben geen verkiezings man)"? Or, is the following statement reformed: "God loves every child and wishes to save every child; and if that child is not saved it is because he does not believe"? Brother Van Spronsen, I do not understand how a reformed man can say such things. And, why is it that the fact that one does not obtain the promise is continuously ascribed to unbelief, also when discussing Rom. 9, whereas that portion of Holy Writ clearly expresses *that all* simply did not receive the promises? I repeat: we are mortally afraid of this arminianism.

A Glaring Inconsistency.

I now refer to the fact that we can say on the one hand, that these Canadian immigrants are fundamentally Reformed, Scripturally and Confessionally, and must therefore be welcomed into our fellowship, and that, on the other hand, it is also mentioned that the two-point decision of the Hamilton consistory of June 5, 1950 (only to accept such who express the desire to be further instructed in our doctrine and who also promise not to agitate against this doctrine) must be

enforced. This I fail to understand. On the one hand it is said that these people are fundamentally Reformed and must be welcomed into our midst. This can only mean that they *are* fundamentally reformed and must be welcomed *as such*. If this is not the meaning of the above expression which appeared in our missionaries' articles last December 1, I stand to be corrected. It is difficult for me to conclude from this statement that these immigrants must first be thoroughly instructed. And, on the other hand, it is said that Hamilton's decision of last June 5 must be enforced.

However, this places me in a quandary. I wish to emphasize and impress upon our people that the undersigned struggled with the agonizing thought that I would be held responsible (I mean that I would actually be guilty of this) for the collapse of our missionary activity in Canada, that this activity would suffer shipwreck because of me. I repeat: this was for us an agonizing thought. What sane man would leave a congregation behind such as the undersigned left behind, take his children off the Christian school and into a Dutch community for the sake of wrecking the Protestant Reformed cause in Hamilton? Hence, aware of the seriousness of the situation already last June and July, I asked Rev. Kok at the time of the July Classis whether children might be baptized whose parents could not answer the second baptism question in the affirmative. He answered in the negative. I also asked him whether thorough instruction in our doctrine must precede membership. And this the brother answered in the affirmative. Last year, in August, our missionaries visited at our home. We discussed, of course, the Hamilton situation. I asked them the same questions. And they gave me the same answer as Rev. Kok. Moreover, they said to me that in their opinion the stand of the consistory of Hamilton was weak. Then I also asked them whether we should accept anyone who, after instruction, should maintain the Heynsian conception of the covenant and the promise. And their answer was a vehement NO. And now we are told that these people are fundamentally reformed and should be welcomed into our fellowship. Frankly, I do not understand. This I call a glaring inconsistency. Last August I rejoiced and was strengthened by the fact that the missionaries and I saw eye to eye. I even mentioned this to several people. Of course, we understand, we were talking about the Liberated immigrants.

Our Need Of The Declaration.

First, the Liberated immigrants whom I met last year, and we, as Protestant Reformed Churches, are widely divergent. Let me, for the sake of our churches and our truth, declare this with all the power and solemnity which I can possibly muster. Let us not be

deceived. I am speaking, let us understand, of the immigrants whom I met during my labors in Canada. I have already mentioned some of these things in my December 15, 1950 article. Regardless of what Dr. K. Schilder may write in the *Reformatie* about the Declaration (who, e.g., among us does not believe in a general preaching of a particular gospel, or who among us believes that we preach only to and for the elect, etc.—did we not hear the same thing in 1924?), the undersigned knows what he experienced and encountered in our Canadian mission field in the vicinity of Hamilton. People left our church who declared that they were starving under our preaching. Others declared that they desired more “conversion” preaching, and this not in a Scriptural, Reformed sense of the word. I have not met, among all the newly arrived immigrants, with one possible exception, a single one who spoke of Divine election as the heart and core of the Church. On the contrary, the doctrine of Election was hardly mentioned and that of Reprobation completely ignored. What we as churches mean when we say that the promise concerns only the elect (*geldt alleen den uitverkorenen*) we all understand. And I do not hesitate to say that Dr. Schilder understands this also. However, be this as it may, the undersigned made it perfectly plain to these immigrants. I emphasized the seriousness of being born under the dispensation of the covenant, of being baptized, of receiving the preaching and catechetical instruction, that it were better for the wicked had they never been born. I emphasized God's command to repent, our obligation before the living God, and the awfulness of knowing the way and not walking in it. I was never as subjective and practical as during the months that I have labored in Hamilton. But, I did not add what the immigrants wanted me to add, namely: the promise is for you all. Indeed, I said over and over again that the promise surely comes to all (as in the preaching, etc.), that all must give an answer to it, etc., but I could not add the arminian “touch” of a promise *for* all. In fact, I have the testimony of the consistory of Hamilton that I preached the Word of God fully, *subjectively* and *practically*. Let us make no mistake here. The difference between these immigrants and our churches is clear as crystal. And we owe it to them and to us that we present this difference clear as crystal. A mere difference in terminology? Let the Liberated leaders tell us what they mean by their terminology. This we asked them months ago. We know what we believe, do we not? Moreover, I now have evidence that these immigrants do not believe in the doctrine of our Protestant Reformed Churches. More of this later.

Secondly, we must preserve our Protestant Reformed Cause. Our Cause is God's Cause, is it not? The question does not concern the difference between

Supralapsarianism and Infralapsarianism. Let us please not confuse or becloud the issue. The question concerns the eternally sovereign and particular character of the grace and salvation of our God. Twenty-five years ago we disposed of the Heynsian conception of the covenant and the promise. Twenty-five years ago we vowed before the living God to maintain the truth of God's absolute sovereignty. This is the issue, the same issue which was also decided at the Synod of Dordt in 1618-1619. Did we, in 1924, believe that we were maintaining something new? It is not a question of the responsibility of man or of a general preaching of a particular gospel. How often have we as Protestant Reformed Churches not maintained these truths! The question is simply this: shall we permit people to affiliate themselves with our churches who cut the very heart and core out of our churches and the Reformed truth? To this I say: God forbid! We must be concerned, not primarily for immigrants who refuse to be or become Protestant Reformed, but for our churches. The Protestant Reformed Cause is, in this country, nothing else than *the* Reformed maintaining of the Confessions. What would brethren, such as the professors, Schilder, Holwerda and Veenhof, etc. say if a horde of Protestant Reformed immigrants were to descend upon the Netherlands, seek membership in the Liberated Churches, continue to receive their literature out of America and intend to maintain and disseminate their Protestant Reformed conception and conviction in the Liberated Churches? Surely, if the Liberated immigrants are advised not to join the Protestant Reformed Churches if they must submit to the Protestant Reformed covenant conception, then no Protestant Reformed member, who maintains that covenant conception, would be permitted membership in the Liberated Churches. It is said that there is no room for the Liberated within the Protestant Reformed Churches, as Liberated; to this we reply: neither is there room for the Protestant Reformed, as Protestant Reformed, within the Liberated Churches. At least, such has been my experience in our Canadian mission field.

Thirdly, let us bear this in mind: this (to remain Liberated in their conception of the covenant and the promise) is exactly what these immigrants intend to do. They have no intention of becoming Protestant Reformed. This, too, I wish to emphasize with all the power I can possibly muster. In fact, they have been advised out of the Netherlands to remain Liberated, receive their literature from the Netherlands, and spread it in our Protestant Reformed Churches. Of this fact (that they intend to remain Liberated) the congregation of Hamilton furnishes us with a striking example. The consistory simply refused to function as a *Protestant Reformed* consistory and desired to continue without any binding. This they have de-

clared literally. In fact, this consistory had promised the undersigned to support him fully in all his Protestant Reformed preaching and teaching. This surely implies that they declared themselves willing to bind themselves to my preaching and teaching (as a Protestant Reformed minister). Thereupon the consistory decided to refuse all binding, declared themselves unwilling to bind themselves and the congregation of Hamilton to the Protestant Reformed truth. And finally the consistory had the boldness to ask the release of the undersigned because he refused to submit to them, thereby paralyzing his labors in Hamilton. And when I, after the recently held classical meeting, asked the consistory of Hamilton what they desired they simply said to me: submit to us. I declared at our recently held classical meeting that I distributed considerable Protestant Reformed literature among the immigrants whom I visited last year, and never had an opportunity to discuss this literature with them. The implication of this is, of course, that they never intended to become Protestant Reformed. Until now I have been some eleven months in Hamilton, and during all this time never received one visit from one for the purpose of discussing with me our Protestant Reformed covenant conception. In fact, unmarried confessing members were urged to attend the confession class which I was conducting for those who had expressed the desire to make confession of faith for the purpose of acquainting themselves with our truth, but never appeared. These are facts. And today the Protestant Reformed Church at Hamilton has disappeared simply because they refuse to be a Protestant Reformed Church. In constant touch with the Netherlands, they are simply determined to remain Liberated, and this I mean, if you please, in distinction from our Protestant Reformed Churches. Do we need the Declaration? And this, if you please, is general. Very rarely did I meet a Liberated immigrant in our Canadian mission field who really intended to join the Protestant Reformed Churches for the sake of those Churches. For this statement, too, I have abundant evidence.

Besides, several immigrants have expressed the desire that we organize many churches in this Canadian province of Ontario, as in Sarnia, London, Orangeville, etc. What would happen if we had more churches in Canada than in the United States? Does anyone doubt? I ask: do we need a distinctly Protestant Reformed basis for the organization of Protestant Reformed Churches? Do we need the Declaration?

Furthermore, we even have churches, besides our congregations in Canada, who can verify the truth that these Liberated immigrants remain Liberated and have no intention to become Protestant Reformed. The undersigned can also verify this statement.

To this we may add that the consistory of Hamilton insists that they were organized, not upon the basis of the Three Forms of Unity as interpreted by the Protestant Reformed Churches, but simply upon the basis of the Three Forms of Unity. With this they mean that the Protestant Reformed emphasis upon the truth is extra-confessional, is not necessarily contained in those Three Forms of Unity. Hence, a man can believe in the Liberated view of the covenant and the promise and stand upon the Three Forms of Unity as well as a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And the consistory of Hamilton has maintained that they were never bound to the Protestant Reformed conception of the truth, but only to those Three Forms of Unity, and that no person may therefore be excluded from the fellowship of the church simply because he believes in the Liberated conception of the promise and of baptism. Do we need the Declaration, a specific setting forth of our Protestant Reformed doctrine? What this stand of Hamilton implied and what the results were will become plain in the following paragraph.

I have already told our readers in my article which appeared in the Standard Bearer last Dec. 15 how I labored in Hamilton. At a consistory meeting which was held the Thursday evening of Jan. 11, 1951, seven families severed connections with our Protestant Reformed Church of Hamilton. All sent in a written request for their papers. Six families declared that they did not agree with the doctrine of our church (mind you, these families boast of the fact that they stand upon our Three Forms of Unity). Another declared that he had discovered lately that he was Liberated at heart. Still another expressed the thought that the Liberated view and the Protestant Reformed conception could not exist side by side, whereas at a recently held meeting of the young people of Hamilton it was stated that the opposing views of the Liberated and the Protestant Reformed could not exist together in the same society (and then we are told in Concordia that the Liberated and we have so much in common). A third party wrote the consistory that the Protestant Reformed Churches proclaim a pernicious or ruinous (*verderfelijk*) doctrine. And at a recent consistory meeting an elder declared that I had been offensive to the people in the Divine services because I had maintained that the promise is not general, whereas he also stated that I should have preached so as not to hurt their feelings. Certain leaders among us may declare that the Liberated and the Protestant Reformed Churches have much in common, but the undersigned assures our readers that this is not the opinion of these former members of the congregation of Hamilton. I ask in all seriousness: do we need the Declaration? No Liberated immigrant, when asked whether he believes in the Three Forms of Unity, will

answer in the negative. And yet, if we have much in common with those whom I contacted last year, I assure our readers that we have everything in common except that which constitutes the very heart and core of our Protestant Reformed Cause and truth. Mind you, these people who left our church of Hamilton because they did not agree with us and our doctrine, never appeared at a consistory meeting and never visited with the undersigned to discuss their problems and grievances. Neither did they point to a specific point of doctrine with which they did not agree. They left us simply because they were never of us and never intended to become Protestant Reformed. Do our readers now understand why I thanked God when the Declaration of Principles was announced?

Fourthly, what sound argument can anyone possibly raise against this Declaration of Principles? We deal with immigrants who do not hesitate to say that they stand upon the Word of God and upon the Three Forms of Unity, for the simple reason that, upon that basis, we would be compelled to accept persons from several Reformed churches who all stand upon the same Bible and the same Forms of Unity. This means that we must discuss the truth with them. But how? This we shall do certainly as Protestant Reformed Churches. We certainly intend to teach them in the Three Forms of Unity *as interpreted by the Protestant Reformed Churches*. That is the solemn calling and duty of every office-bearer, yea, of every member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. We must surely have the Declaration, be it written or not written and merely understood. It is said that this Declaration will bar Calvinistic, Biblical, Reformed people from our churches. Will someone please make plain how it is possible that this Declaration can bar reformed people from our fellowship? Is this Declaration perhaps not calvinistic, biblical, reformed, confessional? But, is it not merely a statement of that which we, as Protestant Reformed Churches, have believed all the years of our existence? Only, the Heynsianism which we rejected some twenty-five years ago once more rears up its head and seeks to infiltrate into our Protestant Reformed Churches. This is the experience of the undersigned. Professor Schilder may then write that he is reformed and also that he would never subscribe to this Declaration. To this we answer: "Professor Schilder, we do not understand how you, as the reformed man which we always believed you to be, can be in disagreement with this Declaration. But we know what we have encountered in our Canadian mission field. And we also know these immigrants have little respect for the doctrine of God's sovereign and unconditional predestination. We wish to stand upon the Reformed truth that salvation is of God alone, from the beginning even unto the end, that grace is exclusively particular, also sovereignly." Let, then,

the Liberated, if they wish to maintain a general promise, etc., go their own ecclesiastical way. We will maintain over against their view of a general promise our view that God's promise is particular and unconditional. Both cannot dwell together underneath one roof. They contradict each other. Besides, our Liberated immigrants have absolutely no intention that these views shall dwell together underneath one roof. They firmly intend that their conception shall triumph. It is indeed either-or, one or the other. And, our Protestant Reformed conception is surely not according to the flesh. The undersigned once asked an immigrant family which is easier to say to his children, that God loves them all and would save them all, or that the promise is exclusively particular and unconditional. And when this party answered me that the former was easier I countered with the question why the Protestant Reformed Churches then continue to preach and teach the latter. Indeed, our view is not of the flesh or according to the flesh.

We remarked in the preceding paragraph that according to some we must not have the Declaration because it would bar Calvinistic, Reformed, Biblical people from our churches. I wish to conclude this article with the following which I have also experienced here in Canada among these Liberated immigrants. Last July and August it was maintained by the consistory that we must bar none from the fellowship of our churches, and that therefore the two-point binding of June 5 was wrong. The consistory maintained that the preaching must drive the "undesirables" out. At that time, and also later, it was said that the Protestant Reformed truth is the purest presentation of the truth today, and that the purity of this truth must be maintained. But, we must not bar people from the church and thereby exclude them from this purest preaching of the truth of the Word of God. At that time we told the consistory that the result would be, if we permit all these immigrants to join our church: instead of witnessing the fact that the preaching drives out these undesirables, we would witness the fact that they would drive out the preaching. And what has now been the experience of the undersigned? I am accused of offending the people because of my emphasis upon the Protestant Reformed doctrine and am told that the preaching must be such as not to hurt and offend. O, it is true, that never did anyone visit me to call my attention to anything that I had said from the pulpit. In fact, the consistory has even until now never singled out a single expression which I used from the pulpit. In Hamilton we witness the spectacle of a Protestant Reformed minister being held captive within his own church and forbidden to preach distinctively. Do we need the Declaration? And then it is being maintained, even by some of our own men, that we must reject this Declaration because

it would bar these calvinistic, biblical, and reformed immigrants. It is said that the Liberated detest binding. I assure you that they intend to bind our churches to their own conception of the covenant and the promise. I declare, solemnly, in the light of my own personal experiences, that the people among whom I have labored, notwithstanding that all those who joined our church last year did so upon the promise that they would be further instructed and not to agitate, have no intention that the Protestant Reformed truth and their conception of a general promise shall exist side by side. I assure our readers that it is exactly our distinctively Protestant Reformed truth, which we believe is founded upon our Confessions, which they reject. And if the result of the Declaration is that we exclude from our fellowship such as those among whom the undersigned might labor this last year, people who have no intention of being or becoming Protestant Reformed, this would be reason enough. We must have the Declaration because our only right of existence lies in our distinctiveness, and this is the issue at stake. May the Lord give us grace to hold fast that which we have.

H. Veldman.



OUR DOCTRINE

The Creation Of The Spirit World

(4)

THEIR SERVICE AND ACTIVITY

The idea of the guardian angel.

Apart from other passages of Holy Writ which have been quoted in support of the idea of guardian angels and their intercessory prayers (Deut. 32:8, Daniel 10:13, 20, 12:1, Rev. 1:20, 2:1f.f., Job 33:23, Zech. 1:12, Luke 15:7, Rev. 18:3), the one place in Scripture which accords this conception most support is Matt. 18:10: "Take heed that we despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My father which is in heaven." We read in Daniel 10:13, 20 and 12:1: "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. . . . Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. . . . And at that time shall Michael stand up,

the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." The most that can be gathered from these passages is that the great angel of the Lord, Michael, will fight for the people of God against the spiritual powers that oppose and would frustrate the cause of the Lord in the midst of the world. This, however, is surely not the same as the idea of a guardian angel for each child of God. It is indeed difficult to understand how Deut. 32:8 can be quoted in support of this conception. In Revelation 1:20 and 2:1 we read of the angels of the seven churches, and the reference is clearly to the ministers of these seven churches. The text which gives the conception of a guardian angel for every child of God most support is Matt. 18:10 where we read that the angels of "these little ones" always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven.

Secondly, one cannot object as such against the idea of a guardian angel. First, what objection could there be, fundamentally, against the idea that each child of the Lord has his own guardian angel? Is it impossible that the Lord should lead and protect His people also through the instrumentality of a heavenly spirit? Secondly, what objection, fundamentally, could be lodged against the idea of intercessory prayers by the angels? Is it not true that they are vitally interested in and concerned about our salvation, and is it so strange that the angels then should pray unto the living God in our behalf? Do we not pray in behalf of one another to the living God? Do not the souls of those who have been slain cry day and night in behalf of the people of the Lord who are yet in the midst of the world and must still continue in the fight of faith? Is it therefore so strange that these angels who are vitally interested in the cause of God and in the development and coming of His kingdom should pray unto the living God and remember us in their daily petitions? In fact, what else would we expect of them? Christ prays for us; we pray in behalf of one another; why, then, should not these heavenly spirits also pray for us?

Thirdly, the doctrine of a guardian angel and intercessory prayers by these heavenly spirits had the result that it speedily led to an honouring and worship of angels. Col. 2:8 surely implies such a worship of angels already in the time of the apostles. That text reads: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." In connection with Matt. 18:10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven

their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven," we would remark the following. On the one hand, we must in all honesty permit this text to speak to us, and this means that these angels are angels in the true, real sense of the word. Christ is not merely using figurative language here when He tells us that "their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven," in order to emphasize the value of "these little ones" whom we might be inclined to despise, so that the words "as it were" must be read in and added to this text. Then it is not really true that these "little ones" have their angels in heaven and that these angels constantly behold the face of our heavenly Father; but Jesus merely uses this form of speech to emphasize that the people of God are more important than generally acknowledged. Neither must we understand by these angels the souls of departed saints who occupy a preeminent place in glory. This would not constitute an honest attempt to explain this particular word of God. Moreover, the main thrust of this particular passage is clear. Christ would emphasize that we must beware lest we, despising "these little ones" are despising those who are held in high esteem in heavenly glory. Hence, whatever may be the interpretation of this passage in Matt. 18:10, two things are certain: first, real angels are meant here, and they constantly behold the face of the Father which is in heaven. Besides, these angels are called in this text: *their* angels. And, in the second place, the Lord wishes to emphasize the truth that we must not despise "these little ones", inasmuch as these "little ones" are held in high esteem in the heavenly glory. The Lord willing, we will continue with this passage in our following article, and also at that time conclude our discussion on these heavenly spirits.

We now continue with our discussion of Matt. 18:10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father Which is in heaven." This text surely does not confirm the teaching that each child of God has his own particular guardian angel. Calvin, among others, in his interpretation of this text, emphatically denies this conclusion. To be sure, the angels of God are ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14), sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. And when we read in this text that they do always behold the face of the Father Which is in heaven, the implication surely is that they are ever ready to be sent forth by the heavenly Father for the protection of His children. But, this does not necessarily mean that each person therefore has his own particular guardian angel who has been commissioned by the Lord to watch over a particular child of God. It is known that the Roman Catholic Church advocates the calling upon the angels, calls such practices good and beneficial. However, this honoring

(special) and worship of the angels was rejected un-animously by Lutherans and Reformed alike. Fact is, upon the basis of Holy Writ such adoration of angels is strictly forbidden, as in Matth. 4:10: "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve;" (see also Deut. 6:13, 10:20); Col. 2:18-19: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he that not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands have nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God"; Rev. 19:10, 22:9: "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. . . . Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the saying of this book: worship God."

Their Significance For The Church.

It is, of course, true that the angels do not constitute an essential, indispensable element in the religious life of the Church of God. They are not the authors of our salvation, the ground of our confidence, the object of our worship and adoration; we do not exercise fellowship with them, but with the living God. God, of course, alone is worthy of all our praise and adoration.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that what the Scriptures reveal to us of the angels is devoid of all significance. First, we cannot deny the truth that it has pleased the Lord to use them as instruments in the development of His Church and covenant. Secondly, for this reason an angel cannot be the object of our worship and adoration. To be sure, we would show them respect of they were to appear unto us, and we would surely receive them as graciously as was the case at various times in the development of God's covenant as revealed in the Scriptures. However, such appearances no longer occur. And, thirdly, we can surely derive much spiritual strength and comfort from the revelation in Holy Writ in regard to the angels. It ought to be borne in mind by us that the conversion of one sinner causes the angels to rejoice, and they can also serve us as examples to spur us on in the doing of God's precepts and commandments. We should bear in mind also that we are and ought to be one with them in life and striving, and in the expectation that one day we shall commune with them (Hebrews 12:22), and that we, with them, do and shall constitute one mighty chorus in the glorification of His Name, the Name of the alone adorable God.

And it certainly should encourage and strengthen us that, in the spiritual battle of faith, we do not stand alone. God has revealed this doctrine unto us to strengthen us in our weaknesses and encourages us in our despair. We are united with a tremendous Cloud of witnesses. There is another world, better than this world, where God is served perfectly. That world must ever be before us and constitute for us the object of spiritual longing and homesickness. We shall become like unto them and also see the face of our Father Who is in heaven.

H. Veldman.



Rev. Petter Repeats Still Another Of His Accusations

The readers will recall that in an earlier number of the "Concordia" (Dec. 7, 1951) Rev. Petter appeared in print with a statement to the effect that synod in no sense heeded the request of the Mission Committee for the kind of Formula that it had in mind. Here are Rev. Petter's own words ("Concordia" Dec. 7): "It is not true in any sense that Synod heeded the request (the Mission Committee's request for the kind of "Formula" that it had in mind—O.) One gets the impression that Synod completely forgot the request of the (Mission) committee and began to work at something altogether different."

As the readers will recall, I replied to this charge of Rev. Petter. I exposed it for what it is—thoroughly false. But Rev. Petter makes no attempt to overturn my argument. He ignores it completely and simply repeats his charge in his later article ("Concordia" for Dec. 1). He writes: "The Synod violated the Church Order when it abandoned this request of the Mission Committee (for a Formula—O.) and brought forth an altogether different document."

I shall now reply to Rev. Petter's Charge anew. I shall again confront him with the steps in the process of reasoning by which I arrived at the conclusion that his charge is false. And I shall ask him squarely to face my argument at each of its steps and to declare at each step whether or not it is true.

The first step is Rev. Petter's own statements. I quote the following from his pen, "And when (synod's.) committee of pre-advice which was well acquainted with the work and problems of the Mission Committee, came with its pre-advice, they proposed to adopt the following expression as one which should appear in each request for organization" etc. (See below for the rest of this advice).

Having quoted point a) of this advice, Rev. Petter

concludes, and I quote, "Thus far point a) of (synod's) advisory committee. *Thus it is quite plain what kind of a statement or Formula the mission committee had in mind.*" (italics—O.) Let now Rev. Petter take notice of what these italicized statements from his pen assert. Is it not this: that Synod's committee of pre-advice was well acquainted with the work and problems of the Mission Committee; and also that it is quite (mark you, *quite*, that is, perfectly, altogether—O.) plain from Synod's committee of pre-advice what kind of statement or formula the Mission Committee had in mind? Is not this what these statements from Rev. Petter's pen assert? Let Rev. Petter give answer.

B. The second step in my process of reasoning. It is this: if, as Rev. Petter says, the "Formula" that was proposed to synod by its committee of pre-advice is precisely what the Mission Committee had in mind and had requested, then it must follow that the "Declaration" is precisely what the Mission Committee had in mind and had requested. And why? Simply because the "Declaration" *is*—mark you, *is*—the very Formula proposed to Synod by its committee of pre-advice *clarified, improved and founded upon the Confession*.

A comparison of the two will fully bear out whether or not this statement of mine is true. Let us then compare the two (the "Formula" and the "Declaration").

a. Both the "Formula" and the "Declaration" declare that the Protestant Reformed Churches stand on the basis of the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and of the Three Forms of Unity.

Is this true? Let us see.

The Declaration sets out as follows, "The Protestant Reformed Churches stand on the basis of the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and of the Three Forms of Unity.

The Formula contains this statement, "Your Committee of pre-advice advises: in re point II of the report, dealing with the matter of an adopted Form for requests for organization: to adopt . . . profession of adherence to the Three Forms of Unity and professing the Scriptures to be the infallible Word of God."

Is it true or is it not true that both the "Declaration" and the "Formula" place the Protestant Reformed Churches on the basis of the Scriptures and of the Three Forms of Unity? Let Rev. Petter say.

b. Both the "Declaration" and the "Formula" repudiate common grace and the Three Points of 1924.

Is this true? Let us see.

I find in the Declaration this statement, "On the basis of this Word of God and these Confessions they (the Protestant Reformed Churches) repudiate the errors of the Three Points adopted by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches, 1924".

The Formula contains this statement, "Your committee of pre-advice advises to adopt . . . the denial of common grace and the Three Points of 1924."

Is it true or is it not true that both the "Declaration" and the "Formula" repudiate common grace and the Three Points of 1924? Let Rev. Petter answer.

c. Both the "Declaration" and the "Formula" set forth the Protestant Reformed Churches as a communion of congregations federally united in Classis and Synod on the basis of the Church Order of Dordt.

Is this true or not true? Let us see. The "Declaration" contains this statement as its close:

"Besides, the Protestant Reformed Churches:

A. Cannot condone the action of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands whereby:

1. They imposed certain doctrinal decisions upon the churches synodically, making these decisions binding upon the churches before they had time to protest.

2. And whereby they deposed many local office-bearers.

3. And they believe and maintain the autonomy of the local church.

Here the "Declaration" certainly lets it be known that the Protestant Reformed Churches are a communion of congregations federally united in Classis and Synod on the basis of the Church Order.

The "Formula" contains this statement, "Your committee of pre-advice advises (synod) to adopt . . . profession . . . of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

Is it true or is it not true that both the "Declaration" and the "Formula" profess adherence to the Church Order of Dordrecht? Let Rev. Petter answer.

d. Both the "Declaration" and the "Formula" declare that the promise of the Gospel includes not all the baptized but the elect baptized only, that it thus bequeaths salvation on and assures it only to them; and that therefore it is of necessity unconditional and unailing.

Is this true? Let us see.

The "Declaration" declares and I quote, "that the promise of the Gospel is not a gracious offer of salvation on the part of God to all men, nor an unconditional 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," and further, "that the promise is unconditionally for the elect only and that it 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." This is the essence of the teaching of the Declaration throughout.

The "Formula" contains this statement, "The promise of the Gospel, both as to the will of God to save His people and the execution of His will to save them,

is not general, that is, it does not include all the baptized children of the church, but is particular, that is, it pertains only to the elect of God."

It stands to reason that if, as the above statement declares, the promise includes only the elect baptized, it necessarily bequeaths salvation upon and assures it to the elect only and must therefore be unconditional and unfailing, an oath of God that He will infallibly lead all the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith.

I ask therefore, is it true or is it not true that both the "Declaration" and the "Formula" declare that the promise of the Gospel includes only the elect baptized and thus bequeaths salvation and assures it only to them and that, accordingly, it is an oath of God infallibly leading the elect unto salvation and glory through faith unconditionally? Let Rev. Petter answer.

In fine, is it true or is it not true that, as to the nature and character of their teaching, the "Declaration" is the Formula, and the Formula is the "Declaration"? Let Rev. Petter answer. And let not only Rev. Petter give answer but likewise those in our midst who hold with Rev. Petter that such is not the case. Let them squarely face this comparison—all the statements quoted—and answer in "The Standard Bearer", or in the "Concordia".

I maintain that from my *comparison* it is as plain as anything can be plain that the "Declaration" *is*—mark you, *is*—the "Formula" and that therefore, since the "Formula" is precisely what the Mission Committee had in mind, the "Declaration" is precisely what the Mission Committee had in mind; and that therefore the Mission Committee received from Synod exactly what it had asked for; nay more, what it received from Synod is the "Formula" clarified, improved, and founded on the Confessions. For that is the "Declaration." Let now Rev. Petter and all those who have been repeating his charges squarely face my whole argument in all its parts together with all my quotations, to be sure, and overturn it, if they can. But they cannot. Rev. Petter cannot. I anew challenge him to do so.

The sentence, "Is it true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter answer,"—this sentence appears several times in my two articles. Let Rev. Petter face this question each time anew, and give answer. Then we will get somewhere, but not if he ignores my argument and simply repeats his charges. In a word, let us have *truth* and not *falsehood*.

I maintain that with the truth of my argument bearing down on Rev. Petter's charges, they fall by the board, every one of them. Let Rev. Petter disprove this statement of of mine.

I just again made the statement that the "Declaration" *is* the "Formula" clarified, improved, and founded on our Confessions. Allow me to show how true this is,

a. Both the "Formula" and the "Declaration" repudiate the Three Points of 1924. But in addition the "Declaration" cites these Points. This is an improvement.

b. Both the "Formula" and the "Declaration" set forth the Protestant Reformed Churches as a communion of congregations federally united in Classis and Synod on the basis of the Church Order of Dordt. But in distinction from the "Formula" the "Declaration" clearly brings out that the Protestant Reformed Churches *do not* place the hierarchical construction on the Church Order, and that thus our churches also in their system of church government are *truly* Reformed. This certainly is a great improvement.

c. Both the "Formula" and the "Declaration" include in the promise only the elect. But the statement contained in the "Formula", though clear, is bungling. The "Declaration" on the other hand sets forth the matter of the character of the promise by means of sentences that possess all the virtues of a good style. This is an improvement certainly. And I now have reference not merely to the quotations from the Confessions—these certainly are clear, being, as they are, extracts from our Confessions—but to the statements affixed to these quotations as well. The "Declaration" from beginning to end and in all its parts is an excellent composition. It sets forth in unambiguous language what we as Protestant Reformed Churches believe to be the truth of our Confessions. Rev. Petter and Prof. Schilder notwithstanding. I shall make good this statement of mine in subsequent articles.

d. Finally, the "Declaration" is largely a concatenation of quotations from the Confessions. That is its peculiar excellence. The added propositions simply recapitulate the points in the quotations.

This is the document that Synod gave to the churches for study and adoption on the coming Synod. Is the membership of our churches grateful? Not the whole of it, sad to say. Judging from their writings and oral commitments, the sole ambition of some of the clergy seems to be to induce the churches to reject the document on the coming Synod. But if these brethren succeed, we are done for as a communion of Protestant Reformed Churches.

I have need of once more repeating to Rev. Petter my question. Is Rev. Petter justified in telling his readers that Synod (1950) in no sense heeded the request of the Mission Committee for the kind of Formula that it had in mind? that Synod completely forgot the request of the Mission Committee and began to work at something altogether different? Is Rev. Petter justified in repeating this charge in his latest article? The facts being what they are, to my mind he is not justified. To my mind, these statements from his pen are amazing. Is this contention of mine true or is it not true? Let Rev. Petter face my whole argument and give answer.

G. M. Ophoff.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition Of Luke 2:40-52

This Scripture passage in Luke 2:40-52 reads, in part, as follows: "And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him. . . ." and again: "And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Child, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must be in the things of my Father? And they understood not the saying that He spake unto them. . . ." And then finally: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in grace (favor) with God and man."

We ask the attentive reader to read the entire text from his Bible. To quote the entire passage would require too much space. Hence, this request.

We would first of all call attention to the fact, that Luke, the Evangelist, brings two great gospel truths to the foreground, in a very striking way, in this chapter under consideration.

The first great gospel-truth is, that the Son of God came from a woman. We read in Luke 2:7: "And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." It is the truth that Paul utters in Galatians 4:4, where we read: "But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." That is the first glorious fact described, nay, *recorded* to us in this *gospel* account of Luke.

The second great gospel truth pointed out in this chapter of Luke is, that the Son of God *as* made of a woman, *became under law*. On the eighth day He was circumcized according to the law (even though circumcision is not of Moses but of the fathers. John 7:22) after His mother had been purified from the uncleanness of her blood. And on the fortieth day He was presented unto the Lord according to the Levitical ordinances. He was, indeed, redeemed from the temple worship of the earthly sanctuary, that He might be the Highpriest that becomes us; holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens in the heavenly sanctuary. That is the second glorious truth of the Gospel. The Son of God is born from a woman, but He is made *under law*. And the reason for this? It is: that we might, by His perfect obedience, be redeemed from *under law* and that we might *receive* the adoption unto children and

walk in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Now this second Gospel truth is, somewhat, the forgotten treasure as far as this Gospel account of Luke is concerned. Often we hear sermons on the first part of this chapter. Luke 2 is the classic chapter to tell us about the birth of Christ. That is true even in the most modernistic church. But the latter part of this chapter is either not understood, or is intentionally forgotten. It is, notwithstanding, very important; it contains the glorious gospel of the Cross of Calvary as Jesus came under law, to become the righteousness of God to all who believe. Let us not forget this. Better still: let us try to see this with believing hearts.

Here we have the pearls of great price lying at the very surface of the text.

The pearls? Yes, the pearls of the wondrous work of Christ under law as Mediator. For, let it be clearly understood, Jesus does not *begin* to be our Mediator at the age of thirty years, but He is our Mediator also at the age of eight days and at the age of forty days. Hear the aged Simeon cry in joyful strains that his eyes have now seen the Lord's Christ! Now this aged saint can depart in peace!

These are some of the presuppositions that we must keep clearly before our mind when we study the incident recorded in the passage that we have written at the head of this little essay.

For also in this passage in which we deal with the "self-disclosure" of the Son of God in the flesh in His mediatorial work, we see the Son of God, who was born from a woman, *under law*. *It is under law that He must be busy in the things of His Father!*

What we read concerning Jesus, the child, in these passages is no insignificant detail, no trite and commonplace account that we may read rather hurriedly and carelessly. This is no *detail* in the *life of Jesus*. It is the account of the *inspired Evangelist* (the preacher of glad-tidings in accurate account) wherein he lifts the veil upon the Son of God as He grows into the man Jesus, the perfect Son of Mary under law.

This account tells us the perfect obedience of Jesus under law—as child of Mary and Joseph and as the Son of God. We must read this passage in the light of the glorious truth of Isaiah 53. We must see in this passage the glory, the wisdom, the strength of God, as revealed in the Cross, in the Crucified (the to be crucified Savior of His people, saving us completely from all our sins) Savior!

The preacher who preaches on this passage may not pull this passage out of the divine design of "born from a woman and made under law." He must leave it just where it is placed. And when he says "Amen" to his own sermon, and when the congregation hears this sermon and also says "Amen" in their hearts, then

this must be due to the fact that nothing else was preached than *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*.

Let us attempt to see this.

We shall now, of course, bear in mind, that, in this entire passage, the Holy Spirit shows us the Obedient Christ, the Savior of His people.

To show that this is very really the truth we would like to point out, first of all, that in the text Jesus is very clearly *portrayed to us* in His *obedience*. We have but to notice the significant fact of His obedience to His parents Joseph and Mary in verse 51, where we read: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth; and He *was subject unto them*," to see that this passage presents to us the obedient Jesus. Then too, it is a fact that Jesus evidently was not disobedient in abiding in Jerusalem, but was clearly obedient to His heavenly Father in abiding in the temple. Hence, this passage clearly shows no disobedient Jesus.

Concerning this obedience the text shows us that this was a full-orbed obedience. To demonstrate what we understand by "full-orbed" we would call attention to the fact that this obedience of Jesus was the obedience of *man*. It was not the obedience as this comes to manifestation in the angelic hosts. It is the obedience as required of man. In Jesus' case the obedience as required of a child of the Covenant in the Covenant home. Jesus stood in all of our human relationships under law. He came also under the law of the children in their relationship to their Covenant parents.

This means that Jesus stood under the first commandment with the promise, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth". Under this law Jesus was to be obedient exactly as this obedience is required of all of us. And He is to obey His parents unless such subjection would make it impossible to be obedient to God.

Shall Jesus be obedient with a full-orbed obedience, then He must be obedient to His parents and therein be obedient to God. He must thus stand in the first commandment with a promise. That is just. The Son of God in our flesh is obedient to His parents and thus to God. Consider this to be the full-orbed obedience.

This obedience was perfect. It was an obedience not as a formal adherence to the law. It was perfect love for God from Jesus' *human heart, mind, soul and strength!* The Son of God is in human subjection to the will of God from perfect love! He is this not merely on Calvary, but already at the age of twelve. And He is here already conscious that He is the Savior of the world. Such seems to be the import of the saying: Knew ye not that I must be busy in the things of my Father? Here is, first of all, we should notice, that Jesus contrasts *His Father* with His parents as Mary

says: "Thy *father* and I sought. . . ." Then, too, the form of the question as asked by Jesus is such that this question of Jesus expects an answer *in the affirmative*. It is as we would say: "You knew, did you not, that I would be busy in the things of my Father? Of course, Mary knew this. Had she not often instructed this child Jesus, according to the special revelation and announcements brought to her by angelic and human messengers, to "the utmost of her ability"? Had she not told Jesus of the visit of Gabriel telling of His birth, of her visit in the hill country in Judea at the home of Zachariah and Elizabeth where she had prophesied, of the visit of the angel to Joseph, of the message of the shepherds in that wondrous night of His birth, of the strange language of Simeon in the temple, not to forget the aged Anna. And then later the equally wondrous visit of the Magi in Jerusalem and the appearance of the Star. . . . Ah, to be sure, Mary *should have known* that "this child that should be set for a fall and rising again of many in Israel and a sign that should be contradicted" was *even now* simply *walking in the way of her instruction*. Yes, Jesus is fully conscious of being obedient in the full-orbed sense of the term.

Here in this Child we have the perfectly wise child, the obedient child who binds the Words of God about His neck!

Here is the fulfillment of the beautiful admonition of Proverbs 3. Jesus perfectly walked according to the injunction: "My son forget not my law; but let thy heart keep my commandments. For length of days, and years of life, and peace will they add to thee. Let not kindness and truth forsake thee: Bind them about thy neck; Write them upon the tablet of thine heart. So shall thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and men. . . . Be not wise in thine own eyes, Fear Jehovah and depart from evil." Proverbs 3:1-7.

Nay, here in the temple we have the perfectly obedient Son.

And He returned with His parents to Nazareth and was constantly and progressively subject unto them.

It is the obedience rooted in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom!

He went along with His parents and the greatness of this Son is His obedience to His parents. He was like unto us in all things *sin excepted!*

Progressively he is obedient. He grows in wisdom. Nay, not that He ever had to *unlearn disobedience*. That He did not need to. But He surely had to *learn* obedience each day. Each day was a school for Him. He walked through every corner of our life and experience.

And He did this to save all His brethren. He came to save us from our sins.

He hacked a new and living way through all the foolishness and disobedience of men. And in His obedience, in which He brought the Sacrifice, we too may and can be obedient. He is the Author of our eternal salvation. Walking this way of obedience He brings us all the way to the perfect Fatherhouse above, as the First-born among many brethren.

Geo. C. Lubbers.



PERISCOPE

1924 Still Binding in the Chr. Ref. Churches.

Oftentimes among well-meaning(?) and sympathetic Christian Reformed individuals the statement is made repeatedly that there is actually not too much difference between the Christian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed Churches and that the differences are not sufficient to separate them. This is often accompanied by the flat statement that the Christian Reformed Churches do not demand agreement with the Three Points either of their members or ministers.

That this is not the view of the churches *officially* and that this should also be practiced is pointed out by the Rev. Martin Monsma in "De Wachter" of Jan. 30, 1951. In his rubric "Church Order and Church Polity" he was treating the subject, "Who may administer the Word in our Churches" (Chr. Ref. Churches—JH). In answer to this question, which according to the article is raised by the fact that in recent years ministers outside the Chr. Ref. Churches have been invited to occupy such pulpits with increasing frequency, the author gleans the various decisions of the Synods of the Chr. Ref. Churches in order to determine who may and who may not be invited to preach in those churches.

In the first place it is pointed out that ministers who belong to sister churches of the Chr. Ref. Churches (in this case the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands "Synodical", and the Reformed Churches of South Africa), can of course be invited to administer the Word. He then continues to point out that outside of these Sister Churches Synod has pointed the way as follows: That one may not be allowed to administer the Word in the Christian Reformed Churches unless the consistory is convinced that he is sound in the Reformed truth—this according to the Synod of 1904. And in 1882 it was decided that only those who were sound in doctrine, in church polity and who agreed with the stand overagainst the secret organizations might preach the Word.

Then the author goes on to say that there are other synodical decisions which limit the right of administering the word such as the matter of hallowing the Sab-

bath day. No one may be allowed on our pulpits, he says, who deviate from the Biblical truth concerning the Sabbath.

Then the Author continues and we translate and quote: "Then I think also in this connection of the Three Points of 1924 concerning the doctrine of common grace. They who are invited to administer the word among us must also be able to profess their agreement with these propositions."

There is therefore, if the author's advice is followed, no possibility of a Protestant Reformed minister administering the word in a Christian Ref. Church. In this I think the author also takes the proper and necessary stand. But would it not be consistent to point out that what is binding upon a minister must also be upon office-bearers in general and upon members also? And what about those ministers in the Christian Reformed Churches who openly (more or less) express that they do not agree with 1924?

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Radio Broadcasting in Southeast Iowa.

As some of our readers undoubtedly know, the combined consistories of Oskaloosa and Pella Protestant Reformed Churches have for some time, in fact for slightly more than a year, been sponsoring a radio broadcast in central and southeast Iowa. We thought you might like to hear a little about our experiences.

In the first place it should be pointed out that our broadcast is somewhat unique in that we do not have time on a public, commercial station, but rather on a private, all-religious station. Perhaps for our readers in general we can give the best idea by saying that this station, KFGQ in Boone, Iowa attempts to pattern itself after the well-known Moody radio station, WMBI in Chicago. This we were informed was their policy when we first attempted to buy time on the air.

In this same connection of course, not being a commercial station, they may not sell time, so we do not buy time but they give us time and we contribute freely, a sum that we have agreed upon to the Boone Biblical College and other related institutions of which also the radio station is a part.

In common with most religious broadcasts we have had a very poor mail response. This all the more so in our case because we have not been able to offer copies of the speeches on the air as the two ministers who carry on the work of this program could not as yet see their way clear to typing out the copies needed and there is no money available for printing or mimeographing by a commercial concern. Added to this is the fact that this is a religious station which has the effect upon the mail that when a person writes in they do not often single out a single program but rather inform the station that they enjoy its religious flavor,

its religious songs and music and the messages that are brought. So we labor under the handicap of not knowing exactly what the results may be, at least in as far as the radio audience is concerned.

You understand, of course, that this type of station made our work somewhat more difficult or shall I say somewhat different perhaps than it would have been on a regular commercial station. Then you buy time and the time is practically your own, and with a few necessary restrictions you may say what you please on the air. Here, however, we were dealing with people that were very much interested in the messages that were brought, we were confronted with a listening audience that was almost entirely religious (in the broad sense of the word) and which in addition was almost entirely of the well-known Arminian, dispensational, and "fundamentalist" type. Now certainly we might never compromise the truth, neither might we hide the blessed light of the Word of God as it is expressed most clearly in the Reformed faith. But Rev. Gritters and the undersigned both felt that here was room for Christian psychology or shall we say for Christian "common sense". Therefore also our messages, at least in the beginning, were of the type that emphasized the fact that only in the way of God's election, of God's irresistible grace, of God's preservation, etc. was there any hope of salvation at all. Thus we attempted, by showing them the beauty of the Reformed truth as we may see it, to point out the truth of Scripture, the tremendous comfort which is ours when we embrace that truth, by the work of the Spirit in our hearts, and thus also tried to win any that might hear us, first of all into listening further and secondly, and if God gives His blessing also with the hope that perhaps something more positive might come out of it. As we said above, our audience reaction was disappointing. And yet we were not discouraged, for to our surprise our greatest reaction came from those who are connected with the station itself.

In order to present this picture clearly I will have to acquaint you a bit with the history of the "Boone Biblical College and Related Institutions". Before the turn of the century pastor Crawford, a United Presbyterian minister, came under the influence and for a time worked with D. L. Moody. From this contact Pastor Crawford broke his ties with the U. P. church and began an independent work in Boone, Iowa. It began as an orphanage, an old people's home, a church and a school for the training of the orphans, and finally also a Bible school for older students. Later a radio station was added some 25 years ago. But it was an independent work and never became large and financially solvent. When Pastor Crawford died some years ago the only one left to take up the work was his daughter Miss Lois Crawford. She serves as director of all the work as well as bringing the messages at the

church when a guest male minister cannot be obtained. There is no regular church membership at this church, everyone is welcome and hence also no definite organization behind it. Rather interesting is the fact that none of the workers in any of the institutions is paid but all live as a family, receive their food and board and clothing (if such is donated to the institution) but for the rest receive no money for their work. As Miss Crawford informed us—they live as one big family.

Now we noticed that the first few months we were listened to rather critically but gradually there was a feeling of trust and confidence awakened so that now there is no supervision of any kind over our program. But this is not the most interesting.

For some time we were given to understand that our Protestant Reformed radio messages were appreciated greatly by the station management. Then some three months ago in a conversation the director of the station, Miss Crawford, stated openly that she had begun to see, especially through her contact with us, and hearing the Word as it was preached by us, that her father had made his fundamental mistake when he had forsaken the United Presbyterian Church in order to begin an independent work. This together with the fact that they are deeply interested in such things as church discipline, the office of elder, Christian schools and the emphasis upon the family makes for an interesting work.

Recently it has begun to be felt by many in our constituency that the meager mail returns really do not warrant the continuation of our efforts on this station. This also with a view to the fact that reception for our own people is marginal. In preparation for this we spoke to the station management along the lines of the fact that because of the slight listener response we would probably not be on the air there after the month of March.

Imagine our surprise to hear repeatedly over this station in the past few weeks the significant phrase, "We desire to keep this worthwhile program on our station. It is however imperative that there be a mail response if this is to be the case. Please write in if you are hearing and enjoying the Protestant Reformed Hour." This unsolicited request for mail response is still being made by the station—not only upon the conclusion of our regular broadcast but also throughout the week. Already there have been a number of cards and letters in response.

What the future will bring we do not know. Whether we shall continue on this station we do not know. But this is certain once again that among God's children the pure Word of God, which is the Reformed truth as we hold it and preach it, is always recognized and appreciated. May God give us grace to continue to proclaim His truth through the preaching of His Word.

J. Howerzyl,

About The Declaration

II.

Among the grounds which are given for the adoption of the Declaration there is, first of all, the assertion that it is based solidly on our Confessions and hence that it offers nothing new. Now although I may believe and endorse these statements they do not yet present a ground or give a reason why the Declaration should be adopted. As statements of fact they do justify and defend the Declaration as such, but do not offer grounds for its adoption. In fact, they rather suggest a reason not to adopt the Declaration. For since the Declaration offers nothing new and is merely the clear and simple expression of the Confessions, we have no need of the Declaration—our present Confessions are sufficient.

There is, in the second place, the Church political argument. It is claimed that the Declaration came into being in the regular ecclesiastical way as the result of Synodical action upon the request of the Mission Committee; which is a Synodical committee performing duties which concern the Churches in general and, hence, directly responsible to Synod. To bolster this argument an appeal is made to the cases of the Rev. Bultema and Prof. Janssen which also resulted in Synodical action and declaration upon points of doctrine. I believe, however, that it has been shown that in presenting the Declaration, Synod did not fulfill the request of the Mission Committee but rather went beyond its mandate and presented an entirely new and different document than that which was requested. It should be evident that the Declaration of Principles is not a form for the organization of Churches for which the Mission Committee asked. Hence, the request of the Mission Committee, which is not answered by the Declaration, cannot be a ground for the present Declaration. (See also article in *Standard Bearer* of Jan. 15 entitled: "Among The Immigrants".)

But apart from this it may even be granted that the Declaration is Church-politically proper before our Churches. Technically, perhaps, it is true that no rule of our Church Order has been violated. But certainly the procedure is highly irregular. In fact, the appeal to the Bultema and Janssen cases, rather than proving the regularity, emphasizes exactly the irregularity in the case of the Declaration. In the cases of both the Rev. Bultema and Dr. Janssen specific charges were brought against specific individuals regarding specific false teachings; upon which Synod acted and declared itself. And they came through the proper channels; in the Bultema case of Consistory, Classis and Synod and in the case of Prof. Janssen, of Curatorium and Synod. In fact in the latter case the com-

plainants were at first rebuked for failing to come in the proper way.

Therefore, even though it may be granted that the Declaration is Church-politically proper it can hardly be said that the way it came was *regular*, but, on the contrary, quite *irregular*. And again, even though we may be able to maintain that technically the Church Order was not violated this is not yet ground for the adoption of the Declaration. Just because it is Church-politically correct does not yet answer the question why we should have it and cannot be a ground. On the other hand, the irregularity of the way in which it came into being should caution us.

In close connection with the above it is argued that the Declaration will serve as a clear and sound basis for the organization of Churches. One might ask in this connection whether the implication here is that Scripture and our present Confessions are *not* such a clear and sound basis. But that they are has been abundantly proven by the many fine Protestant Reformed Churches that have been organized upon the clear and sound basis of Scripture and the Confessions. Our strength of appeal has always lain in the fact that we are able to prove upon the basis of Scripture and the Confessions that others have departed from this clear and sound basis. Neither does the appeal to the history of the congregation in Hamilton substantiate this argument but rather proves again that the Declaration is not necessary. It has been publicly stated on more than one occasion that the history in Hamilton has nothing to do with the Declaration. And, in the second place, the case is Hamilton is being disposed of without, and apart from, the Declaration; revealing again that our present Confessions are entirely adequate to cover specific cases. Hence, it would seem, that the Hamilton history exactly proves that we do not need the Declaration to maintain distinctiveness.

Furthermore, I believe it has already become evident that a great objection to the Declaration is its lack of clarity. Because of this it has aroused much discussion and many questions within our own circles. And even though it might be quite clear to us as Protestant Reformed people it is certainly questionable whether it is clear and unambiguous for those who are without and for those for whom it is intended. That it is not so clear and simple is attested by the discussion that it has aroused also in the Netherlands.

Two grounds that are closely connected with one another are that the Declaration will serve as a testimony of our adherence to the Reformed faith and that it will also safeguard encroachments thereupon. But again this cannot be a ground or reason for its adoption. Our Confessions express that the marks of the True Church (i.e. that which is her testimony and witness to those that are without) are the pure preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the

sacraments and the faithful exercise of Christian discipline. And where these three are exercised there Christ gathers, defends and preserves His Church. On the other hand, if these are neglected, no amount of declaring will avail one wit. Hence, I consider these arguments a reflection upon the preaching in our Churches and upon the faithfulness of our consistories, as well as an implication that our Reformed Confessions are adequate. And this is in contradiction to all of our history as well as that of the historically Reformed Church since its inception.

Finally, it is stated that the Declaration will serve as a basis and starting-point for correspondence, especially with the Reformed Churches (Art. 31). However, once again this cannot be a ground, nor was it the purpose of *this* Declaration. For in this connection we should notice the following. In the first place, the original plan of the Committee of Correspondence was to visit the Netherlands last summer hence, before the Declaration could have been adopted or used for the purpose of establishing such correspondence. For this reason alone it is evident that this cannot be a valid ground for adopting the Declaration.

In the second place, it is also evident from the last Synodical Acts that Synod never intended the Declaration for this purpose. Further, that Synod exactly *did not* so desire to proceed in the matter of correspondence. For along with the suggestion that the Committee be sent to the Netherlands was the request for a definite mandate. However, Synod decided in a substitute motion (substitute for giving definite instructions and charge): "to express that this committee . . . discuss the question of correspondence with the deputies in the Netherlands". (Acts, 1950, Art. 97, page 78). This would certainly seem to indicate that Synod did not desire to send its Committee to the Netherlands with a pre-declared basis but rather that the Committee would discuss the possibility and basis for correspondence through mutual contact with the Netherlands deputies. This also was evidently in the mind of the Committee itself when they state in their report, in connection with the suggestion that they be sent to the Netherlands, that the purpose would be to "talk to the brethren over there in order that we might, if possible, come to a better, fuller and clearer understanding and appreciation of each other as churches". Once again, therefore, this cannot be a ground for the adoption of the Declaration.

We must conclude that the question why we should adopt the Declaration still remains, for such action would be a departure from the official *status quo* and a departure from the sound and worthy tradition of the true, historical Reformed Church of over 300 years standing.

W. Hofman.

Contributions

WHERE DO WE STAND?

What is really the issue of the present controversy in our midst?

When we read all that is published in our church papers about "conditions", the Declaration of Principles, our Mission work in Canada, the developments in the mission field, especially in Hamilton, and also in Chatham, then we again ask ourselves the question: What do our people want? What are they arguing about?

We are told in lengthy articles, in word and in pictures, how wonderful these Liberated people really are, how pious, how sincere, how fundamentally Reformed, how eager to hear our ministers preach, how they love our churches, how willing they are to be instructed in our doctrine, how able they are, how they like to debate, and argue about our doctrine, especially of course, about the Covenant and Baptism.

As soon as our doctrine is really preached and taught, it is expected that they will listen, and be willing to have their children and young people instructed "in the aforesaid doctrine".

But the tables turn.

This is proven by the developments in Hamilton.

But also in Chatham voices are raised already which openly show disagreement, of which they were well aware when they were organized as a Protestant Reformed Church.

What to think of things like these?

It seems strange that men like Dr. Schilder and Mr. Van Spronsen who knew of our conception of the covenant and of baptism, how we believe in it and that our ministers preach and teach the same, did not inform their people correctly about it before they joined our churches, as some of their leaders did who knew that this conception is one of the points of distinction distinguishing us from any other Reformed group. They seemed to have had no objection, as long as their people could do and believe as they pleased, or even take an open stand against it: of course, nothing was binding! But as soon as it is expected of them that they shall be, at least, willing to submit to instruction until they see our point of view, they refuse.

How to explain this? Could it be that they really thought that we would not mention these things; that we would be willing to speak about the *many* things we have in common, and ignore one of the fundamentals of Reformed doctrine for the sake of peace and fellowship? Or is the doctrine of the covenant probably of minor importance? Does it perhaps not matter very much what conception we have, that the one conception is as good as the other? We almost receive this impression when we read of these things,

as being debatable, as personal opinions, as conclusions and deductions. And then we often become puzzled. If this is so, have then our ministers preached and taught doctrine of the covenant which really is debatable? If it is true that we still are not so certain of what we have been taught these 26 years, wherein our children and young people have been instructed all these years, which things we have treasured and which no one has ever protested against or contradicted before, if this is then the way we feel about the covenant and baptism, who will guarantee us that not some other, nay, perhaps many more points of doctrine also will be called debatable? And if today we still need some light from across the ocean relative the true meaning of the covenant concept and the covenant promise, etc., then I call the situation quite hopeless.

If it is so that *there still is not a Reformed covenant view*, then I would suggest that we say with our Short Declaration of Principles what we as Protestant Reformed Churches declare to be Covenant and Baptism, and if we *cannot* or *dare not* do it now then we can make up our minds that we *never* will. Then we must freely admit, that as far as the covenant is concerned, *we know nothing about it*.

Oh yes, we know that there is such a thing as a covenant, for the Bible is full of it from cover to cover, but what it really is, and for whom it is or for whom it is not; what really the Covenant Promise is, and for whom, you see, all these things are debatable!

Not *one church* with a *definite, distinctive* conception of the Covenant? And we all speak of the Covenant God, the Covenant name, the Covenant people, Covenant instruction, Covenant seed, Covenant promise, etc., and we really do not know what we are talking about? Would a person not give up all hope that we will ever come to clarity?

Furthermore the Rev. Howerzyl suggested in the Standard Bearer of February 1 that we personally do "some periscoping in old Standard Bearer's to find some worthwhile material." Following up his suggestion I came across an article of our former Periscope editor, the Rev. W. Hofman, in the Standard Bearer of May 1, 1949. The Rev. Hofman quotes the Rev. Paul De Koekkoek as having written "neither our Christian Reformed leaders in Canada nor our church membership in general are wrapped up in disputations about fine shadings of Reformed doctrine." This was, according to this writer, to account for their success. The Rev. Hofman says, "as we read this, we wondered whether this is really as virtuous as it appears." "Compromise may bring organizational unity, but it will never satisfy the truth." Furthermore the Rev. Hofman writes about 1924, that "fine shadings" were used to depose office bearers, and caused a "denominational split." He writes finally,

"A church which is called Reformed should appreciate, rather than disparage exactions of the truth."

Nevertheless, he seems to be opposed to declare officially as churches *what we believe*, and what he also has been preaching in regard to the important doctrine of the Covenant.

We certainly cannot expect a clear conception from across the ocean, as we have read of late, and also as churches have (alas!) experienced.

And therefore, I would suggest that this Declaration of Protestant Reformed Principles be adopted, although there must be given plenty of time to study it. And let the people say what they have against the contents, but then in such a form that common people can understand what is meant.

The last developments in Canada should be a lesson.
H. De Jong.

* * * *

ANTWOORD AAN DS. J. VAN RAALTE

1. Het was de 2de Juli in de avonddienst in de Gereformeerde Kerk (onderhoudende art. 31) te Leeuwarden, dat acht jonge mensen openbare belijdenis deden, de naam van de leeraar was Ds. Jansen (?).

2. Dit was in Rijswijk (Z) Julie 23, waar een vrouw gedoopt werd, en onder meer werd gevraagd "of zij gelooft in één doop, en niet in twee n.l. een ware doop en een schijndoop." Ook deze leeraar's naam was Jansen of Janssen (?).

Ds. Van Raalte wil wel zoo vriendelijk zijn ons de uitslag van zijn onderzoek mede te delen? Please.

Hoogachtend,
H. De Jong.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dear Rev. Hoeksema,

Will you kindly answer a few questions in the Standard Bearer? in re Rev. Petter.

1. Could you point me to an article of the Rev. Petter where he says with round words "that you can not be saved, only on condition you do this or that". I never came across that saying. If he did he would not be Reformed anymore.

2. Don't you believe that a Christian, saved by the grace of God, nothing of man—is by God Himself put in a condition to serve Him, and will lead a Christian life? He certainly must show himself to be a Christian and show the condition God Himself has put him in.

As to your article of Dr. Schilder, he writes "that a condition is something which God has firmly linked to something else." Cause and effect God has firmly linked together. God is the cause of our salvation. The effect is that we as Christians are put in a con-

dition to serve Him, and work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Nothing of man, but all of God.

As to the definition of condition other than you give us: Webster's mode or state of being; essential quality; essential qualification—worked by God in our hearts, so we are in a condition to serve Him; with all our heart and mind and strength by God's grace alone.

Thanking you sincerely,

O. Monsma.

Answer in the next issue, D.V.

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

The English Men's Society of Fuller Ave. hereby expresses its sincere sympathy for one of its members James Vrieswyk, in the death of his father

E. Mellema

Our prayer is that our heavenly Father may comfort the bereaved family.

A. Van Tuinen, Pres.

H. Korhorn, Sec'y.

IN MEMORIAM

Very unexpectedly on February 3, 1951, the Lord in His infinite wisdom took unto Himself our beloved husband, father and grandfather

Peter Dyksterhuis, age 68

Though the suddenness of his departure was a great shock we have the confidence that he is now rejoicing before the throne of God.

Mrs. Peter Dyksterhuis

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Post

Kalamazoo, Michigan.

and children.

IN MEMORIAM

The following organizations of the Second Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan hereby express their sympathy to Mrs. H. Lotterman and family in the loss of their husband, and father

Mr. H. Lotterman

whom the Lord suddenly took away from them at the age of 51 years, on February 16, 1951.

May the Lord continually give them the comfort regarding their loved one that, blessed is that servant whom when His Lord cometh shall find faithful.

The Sunday School of which he was superintendent.

The Men's Society of which he was vice-president.

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of which he was vice-pres.

The Eunice Society.

The Young People's Society.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 22, 1951 our beloved parents and grandparents

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Mulder

hope to celebrate their Fortieth Wedding Anniversary.

We render thanksgiving again unto our God for the many blessings which we have been privileged to share with our parents for these past forty years in Christian fellowship. Our prayer is that He may spare them for each other and us many more years.

The grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Lambert Mulder

Mr. and Mrs. Herman Sjoerdsma

Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Mulder

Mr. and Mrs. Claytus Shoemaker

and 13 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday, March 11, 1951 our beloved parents

Mr. and Mrs. John Faber

celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

May our dear Lord spare them for one another and for us for many years, is our prayer, in subservience to His holy will.

Their grateful children:

John

William

Marvin

Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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.

CLASSIS EAST

will meet in regular session at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church on Wednesday, April 4, at 9 o'clock A. M.

D. Jonker, (S. C.)

Report of Classis East

IN SESSION FEB. 28-MARCH 1, 1951 AT FIRST CHURCH, GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

This meeting of Classis East, which was a continuation of the January meeting, was held at Fuller Ave. Rev. E. Knott presided and Rev. J. A. Heys took down the minutes.

Roll call shows that all the Church are represented by two delegates.

The advice of Second Church, which was not read at the January meeting of Classis, is read and received for information.

South Holland's consistory in their answer suggested the following additions to the Declaration:

"We also believe the Declaration should contain confessional proofs for our views respecting Common Grace and the Presumptive theory of regeneration. This appears as a weakness in the Declaration."

"We believe that concerning the section marked Roman numeral IV, this should be headed with the subject: What we believe concerning the autonomy of the Church. Then as sub-paragraphs we should have a statement of what we mean by this subject, as well as the proofs from the Scriptures, Confessions, and the Church Order."

In this connection Classis East adopted the following:

I. In re the overture of South Holland:

1. Insert under I, D:

"For proof we refer to: Canons I, 6-8; II, 5; II, B, 6; Heid. Cat. III, 8; XXXIII, 91; Neth. Conf. 14; Canons III, IV, 1-4."

2. Insert under III, A, 1, b:

"For proof we refer to: Canons I, 6-8; doctrinal part of Baptism Form; the thanksgiving after baptism. Refers only to the elect; cannot presuppose that it is for all."

3. Insert under IV, B:

"For proof we refer to: Neth. Conf. Art. 31; Church Order Art. 36; only the consistory has authority over the local congregation; Art. 84; Form for the Installation of Elders and Deacons; called by the congregation and, therefore by God."

Creston's Consistory suggested an addition to the Declaration in re "the preaching of the promise of the Gospel, which is absent in the Declaration of Principles."

In this connection Classis East adopted the following:

II. In re the overture Creston:

2. Insert under I, D:

"The Canons in II, 5, speak of the preaching of the promise. Presents the promise, not as general, but as particular, i.e. as for believers and, therefore, for the elect. This **preaching** of the particular promise is promiscuous to all that hear the gospel with the **command**, not a condition, to believe and repent."

Creston's Consistory suggested the following additions:

a. "We believe that quotations from the Confessions to show why we condemn the theory of 'Common Grace' would improve the Declaration".

b. "Since, because of our stand expressed in the Declaration, we are often accused of denying the responsibility of man and of teaching a deadly passivism, we believe that the section dealing with this matter should be given more prominence by a somewhat further development of this matter and by calling upon Lord's Day 24 and Art. 24 of the Neth. Conf. to show that the accusation that this doctrine makes men careless is entirely false."

In this connection Classis East adopted the following:

III. In re the Overture of Hope:

Insert under III, B, 2:

"For proof we refer to Heid. Cat., Lord's Day 24; Neth. Conf. Art. 24; Canons of Dordt III, IV, Art. 16."

The following amendment is also adopted by Classis East: to add to III, B. 2:

"That the preaching comes to all, and that God seriously commands to **faith** and **repentance**, and that to all those who come and **believe** He promises life and peace.

The following Preamble was adopted by Classis East:

"Declaration of Principles to be used by our Mission Committee and our Missionaries as a basis for organization of prospective churches."

Another amendment is adopted in which Classis expresses: "that what the Declaration expresses is the truth and language as believed and spoken by our Prot. Ref. Churches since the beginning of its history."

Classis now adopts the Declaration with the six grounds given by Fuller Ave.'s consistory, and overtures Synod to do likewise.

The following brethren request to have their negative vote recorded:

The Revs. Kok, Blankespoor and Knott; and the Elders, H. E. Windemuller, J. Geelhoed, Chas. Doezeema, J. Koster, and D. Scheele.

The following are the grounds suggested by Fuller Ave. and adopted by Classis:

Classis East, convened at Grand Rapids, Jan. 3, 1951

Esteemed Brethren:

The consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich., comes to Classis East with the following overture:

Classis adopt the Declaration of Principles proposed by our last Synod on the following grounds:

1. The Declaration of Principles is based foursquarely on our Three Forms of Unity and on the Baptism Form. It has been alleged by some, without any proof, that the Declaration represents a private theological opinion. But nothing could be farther from the truth. It consists almost exclusively of quotations from the Confessions. Essentially it is nothing else than the Three Forms of Unity as they have always been read and understood by the Protestant Reformed Churches. The Declaration offers nothing new.

2. The Declaration was adopted as a proposal to all our churches in the regular ecclesiastical way. It was adopted at the request of the Mission Committee, a synodical committee that is appointed to consider all matters pertaining to mission work, which belongs to the churches in common. Besides, to avoid all semblance of hierarchy, synod did not definitely adopt the Declaration, but decided to propose it to the churches, in order that, in the way of consistories and classes, it might be adopted at our next synod. No rule of the church order, therefore, was violated.

3. The Declaration will serve as a clear and sound basis for the organization of prospective Protestant Reformed churches. It was such a basis which the Mission Committee needed and requested, and which was supplied by the proposed Declaration of Principles. And already the history of the congregation of Hamilton proves the dire need of such a definite basis. The brethren there now claim that they were organized without promising or binding themselves to anything at all!

4. The Declaration of Principles will serve as a clear proclamation to those that are without of the faithful adherence of the Protestant Reformed Churches to the Reformed Faith as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity over against those that deviate from the Confessions, particularly over against the errors of the Three Points of 1924 and the Heynsian view of the covenant, which is Arminian.

5. It will safeguard our Protestant Reformed Churches against the influence of those who claim that they adhere to the Reformed Confessions but do not. This is true of the Christian Reformed Churches, who corrupted the Confession by their Three Points. But it is no less true of the Liberated, who claim that they are bound by the Three Forms of Unity, but in the meantime teach that the promise is, on the part of God, for all the children that are baptized. Their pretention that they will be bound for nothing but the Confessions is but an empty slogan by which they want to throw open the doors wide to whomever may want to join. If we follow their lead our Protestant Reformed Churches will soon lose their distinctiveness.

6. The Declaration of Principle will serve as a sound and safe basis and startingpoint for correspondence with other Reformed churches, especially also with the Reformed Churches (Art. 31) of the Netherlands. Honest correspondence demands, first of all, that we clearly enunciate the principles on which we stand and that, in that way, we may learn to know one another as churches. Correspondence with the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands cannot be established by opening our pulpits to them and they to us and by accepting one another's membership papers, without first discussing the doctrinal differences

that cause us to differ from one another. Now, the Liberated, though they deny that they have an officially adopted covenant view, all embrace the Heynsian conception. For proof I refer to the articles by Dr. Bremmer in the issues of *De Reformatie* that appeared soon after the war, to Prof. Veenhof's "Appel" and to his "Unica Catholica" as well as to many other articles in several church papers. Over against this we must clearly and definitely enunciate our view of the covenant and of the promise of God in order that we stand in an honest relation to one another from the beginning. The Declaration of Principles will serve to enunciate clearly what our Confession teaches concerning these matters, and, therefore, as a safe and proper basis and startingpoint for correspondence.

Respectfully submitted,

Your brethren in Christ,

The Consistory of the First Prot. Ref. Church
in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Rev. H. De Wolf, Pres.
James Kok, Clerk.

Classis gives the Classical Committee power to act in the emergency in which Hamilton's congregation finds itself.

The next meeting of Classis will be held in Hudsonville the first Wednesday in April.

Mr. J. Koster, in name of the congregation of Chatham, thanks the Classis for the support given them in their vacancy.

After the minutes are adopted, Rev. C. Hanko closes with prayer.

D. JONKER, (Stated Clerk).