

# THE STANDARD

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## MEDITATION

### De Waardij Van Christus' Werk

"En Jezus van daar voortgaande, zag eenen mensch in het tolhuis zitten, genaamd Mattheus, en zeide tot hem: Volg Mij. En hij opstaande, volgde Hem. En het geschiedde als Hij in het huis van Mattheus aanzat, zie, vele tollenaars en zondaars kwamen en zaten mede aan, met Jezus en Zijne discipelen. En de Farizeërs dat ziende, zeiden tot Zijne discipelen: Waarom eet uw Meester met de tollenaars en zondaren? Maar Jezus zulks hoorende, zeide tot hen: Die gezond zijn, hebben den medicijnmeester niet van noode, maar die ziek zijn. Doch gaat henen en leert wat het zij: Ik wil barmhartigheid, en niet offerande: want Ik ben niet gekomen om te roepen rechtvaardigen, maar zondaars tot bekeering."

Matth. 9:9-13.

Een van de redenen waarom de Farizeërs den Heere Jezus tegenstonden was wel, omdat Hij omging met tollenaars en zondaren. Zoo ook in de geschiedenis die in onzen tekst verhaald wordt.

Stelt het U voor; zoo klaagden de Farizeërs: deze mensch eet met tollenaars en zondaren!

Het was toch ongehoord!

Als die vreemde Rabbi werkelijk een van God gezondene is, dan zou Hij zich toch wachten om zoo vreemd te doen? Dan zou Hij toch veel liever omgaan met ons? Want wij zijn toch het schoonste deel der natie?

Wat blindheid!

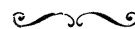
Wat vuile hoogmoed!

En wat vreeselijke miskenning van het groote werk dat Jezus op aarde deed!

O ja, deze Farizeërs hebben wel het werk van Jezus gewaardeerd, maar hun waardeering raakte kant noch wal.

Zij hadden het glad verkeerd.

We willen wat schrijven over de waardeering van Jezus' werk, en dan eerst zien de blijde aanleiding tot die waardeering; dan zullen we huiveren bij het zien van het booze spotbeeld hetwelk door de Farizeërs werd opgehangen van Jezus' werk; en, eindelijk, zullen we trachten om de ware inhoud van dat werk te benaderen.



Eerst dan die blijde aanleiding.

Het gaat hier over de roeping van Mattheüs tot het groote ambt van Apostel des Lams.

Oorspronkelijk was die Mattheüs, of Levi, een tollenaar.

Tollenaars waren zoowat het laagste soort menschen. Zij hadden zich verhuurd aan de gehate Romeinen, de onderdrukkers van het volk Gods. En door de Romeinen gehuurd zijnde werden zij aan 't werk gezet om de tol en cijns te innen voor den keizer van Rome.

Dat doende werden zij in één adem genoemd met de hoeren en zondaren. Zoodra een mensch zich overgaf tot de klas van tollenaars werd zoo iemand direkt uit de synagoge geworpen.

Men behoorde dan niet meer tot het oude bondsvolk. En men raakte zijn rechten kwijt, zooals het recht om een eed te doen voor de autoriteiten der Joden. En als een verbannene van het volk werd men geschuwd als de pest.

En zulk een mensch werd door Jezus geroepen om Hem te volgen? Het was ongehoord.

En let wel, hij werd niet alleen geroepen om een schaapje van Jezus' kudde te worden, neen, maar hij zou een Apostel worden van het Lam. Later zou er ook van hem gezegd en geschreven worden, dat de kerk gebouwd is op het fundament der Apostelen, waarvan De Heere Jezus de uiterste hoeksteen was.

Apostel te zijn is het ontvangen van het hoogste ambt der wereld. Er is niets hooger.

Een Apostel zou het Licht der wereld volgen; hij zou schrijver worden van den Bijbel; en zijn naam zou

gegraveerd worden in het fundament van het Nieuwe Jeruzalem.

Ik denk niet, dat Mattheüs beseft heeft bij deze roeping, dat hij tot alle deze heerlijkheden gebracht zou worden. Hij volgde Jezus om de eenvoudige reden, dat hij niet anders doen kon. Dit was een krachtdadige roeping.

Die vreemde Rabbi was bij zijn tolhuis gekomen, had tot hem gezegd: Volg Mij! En onmiddellijk was hij opgestaan en was Hem gevolgd. Het kwam in zijn hoofd niet op om dit niet te doen.

Als God roept met Zijn eigendommelijke roeping, dan komt er onmiddellijk gehoor aan die roeping. Dat kunt ge hier zien.

En Mattheüs was ook niet klagende en weenende gevolgd. Hij klaagde niet over het verlies van zijn werk, dat goed betaalde. In 't geheel niet. Men krijgt den indruk, dat hij Jezus gaarne volgde.

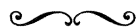
Daar komt nog bij, dat hij een groot feest bereidde voor Jezus en Zijn apostelen. Hij zegt dat zelf niet in zijn Evangelie.

In groote bescheidenheid verzwijgt hij het, maar Lucas vermeldt het in zijn Evangelie, waar hij deze roeping van Mattheüs ook beschrijft.

Daar lezen we, dat hij een groot feest maakte voor Jezus. En nu weet gij allen, dat men geen groot feest maakt ter gelegenheid van zulk een radikale verandering van zaken, indien men zulks doet uit dwang en niet gewilliglijk.

Neen, maar men maakt een feest als men groote lijs verblijd is. En zoo was het ook met deze Mattheüs-Levi. Hij was inniglijk verblijd, dat deze Rabbi Jezus hem geroepen had.

God had krachtdadiglijk gewrocht in zijn diepste hart, en hij was onmiddellijk een ander mensch geworden. En hij wil het ook bewijzen in dit feest.



En toen stond hij voor de vraag: maar wie zal ik nu nooden tot dit mijn groote feest? Al mijn bekenden en vrienden zijn tollenaars en zondaren. De andere menschen wilden niets met bij te doen hebben, en dat vanwege mijn verachte beroep. Wat zal ik doen?

En toen heeft hij besloten om dan maar eenvoudige die tollenaars en zondaren te roepen tot dit feest. Er bleef geen andere uitweg open.

En ik denk dat hij bij zichzelf instinctmatig gevoeld heeft, dat Jezus het verstaan zou. En zoo geschiedde het.

De Heere Jezus ontving de invitatie tot dit groote feest waar vele tollenaars en zondaren genoodigd waren, en de Heere Jezus nam de uitnoodiging aan!

En dit zal de aanleiding, de blijde aanleiding zijn tot de waardeering van Christus' werk op aarde.

Het was de gewoonte om zulke groote feesten waar toe velen genoodigd waren, te houden in groote binnenplaatsen, waar de tafels gedekt werden in de open lucht. Dat kon in het heilige land, vanwege het zachte klimaat.

En zoo kunnen we ons dit vreemde, doch schoone schouwspel eenigzins indenken en voor onze aandacht brengen.

Rij aan rij zaten de vrienden van dezen Levi, en daartusschen de Heere Jezus en Zijne discipelen die ook tot dit feest genoodigd waren.

De Heere schaamde zich niet om in dit gezelschap gevonden te worden. Daar zit Hij! In de open lucht. Een ieder die voorbij kwam kon Hem zien.

Het schijnt alsof deze vreemde gebeurtenis van mond tot mond gegaan was. Straks wist de geheele stad het: een Rabbi zat aan met tollenaars en zondaren.

Waar?

In het huis van Mattheüs-Levi, die door dezen Rabbi geroepen is om hem te volgen. Levi gaat zijn goed betalend ambt van tollenaars verlaten, en hij zal van nu aan dezen Jezus volgen.

En was ook ter oore gekomen van de Farizeërs en Schriftgeleerden.

Het duurde niet lang en daar kwam de voorname stoet van Farizeërs aangeloopt. Langzaam, met deftige stappen en op het aangezicht de verontwaardiging die onmiddellijk bij hen opkwam bij het hooren van zulk een verschrikkelijk optreden.

En dit was dan het Licht der wereld? Was Hij de Zoon was God? Was Hij de Messias die komen zou? En die gaat zóó behandelen?

't Is verschrikkelijk. Maar we zullen deze zaak onmiddellijk onderzoeken.

En daar komen zij aan. En het duurde niet lang of zij zagen het met eigen oogen: Jezus zat aan met tollenaars en zondaren!

't Was ongehoord!

En ook te veroordeelen. Wat moet er terecht komen van alle goede zeden, als een mensch die zich uitgeeft een Rabbi te zijn, met zulk gebroed omgaat, die zich verlaagt om met het afschrapsel der natie te eten en te drinken?



Neen, zij waren niet genoodigd tot dit feest. Eerst niet, omdat Levi hen niet durfde inviteeren. En, tweedens, indien zij al gevraagd werden, zoo zouden zij de invitatie toch niet aangenomen hebben. Levi had gelegenheid te over gehad in zijn beroep als tollenaar om het karakter der Farizeërs te kennen.

Maar luistert!

De deftige stoet der Farizeërs die stilhield voor

het huis van Levi, hadden zich gewend tot Jezus' discipelen.

Zij konden zich niet stilhouden. En zij vroegen: Waarom eet Uw Meester met de tollenaars en zondaren?

Daar zit veel en velerlei in die vraag. Leest er toch niet over heen. Hunne bedoeling met deze vraag is duidelijk. Zij wilden er mee zeggen: Uw meester is geen haar beter dan dit vuile gezelschap. Zoo als wij vaak zeggen met een spreekwoord: Soort zoekt soort. Uw meester geeft zich vaak groote en schoone benamingen. Maar Hij handelt er niet naar. En hier hebt ge het bewijs. Hij eet met het schuim der natie. Hij gaat om het hen die wij uitwerpen uit de synagoge.

En wat wil dat zeggen? Dit: wij achten dat hij van hetzelfde allooi is: soort zoekt soort. Uw meester is ook een misdadiger. Hij behoort, en Hij schijnt zich goed thuis te gevoelen bij vuile zondaren!

Ziedaar het spotbeeld van Jezus' werk op aarde!

En let wel, deze waardeering van Jezus' werk is vrucht van hun blinde haat en wrevel.

En wat is de grondfout dier Farizeërs? Dit: zij maten Jezus bij hun eigen booze maatstaven. En wat mogen die maatstaven der Farizeërs geweest zijn? Zij waren deze: Wij, Farizeërs, Schriftgeleerden, Overpriesters en Wetgeleerden, wij zijn het nobelste en het eelste deel der natie. En onze schoonheid en adel bestaat hierin, dat wij de Wet van God vervullen.

Daarin bestaat onze heerlijke gerechtigheid. Wij zijn beter dan wie dan ook. En om te gaan met het lage en domme volk is zonde. Het volk, dat de Wet niet kent is vervloekt. En wij laten ons daarom met zondaren niet in. Wijkt toch van ons, want wij zijn veel heiliger dan gij!

Maar Uw meester heeft vandaag bewezen, hetgeen wij allang geweten hebben: Hij is niet beter dan dat schuim, dat ruwe, goddelooze, onheilige volk!



Maar de Heere had het gehoord. Maar de Heere had hen aan zien komen. En de Heere kende ook hunne harten. Hij wist, dat hunne harten vol van onheiligheid waren. En Hij wist dat al hun wetsvervulling enkel ijdelheid was. Zij onderhielden wel de wet, maar het was slechts uitwendig werk. Hun hart hield zich verre van God en goddelijke deugden.

Wat een miskenning!

Zij miskenden Israel. Deze zondaren en tollenaars waren Israel. En Israel was een volk, dat genoemd mag worden de zonen en de dochteren van God. Zij waren de schapen die de leiders moesten weiden en hoeden.

Zij miskenden zichzelf. Zij waren de herders en

zij waren geroepen om die schapen met groote liefde te hoeden en te weiden.

En zij miskenden Jezus, de groote Herder der schapen. Bij implicatie hadden zij Hem uitgescholten voor tollenaar en zondaar: waarom eet Uw Mester met tollenaars en zondaren?

En zij miskenden God ook. Want God had in Mozes en de Profeten duidelijk geopenbaard, dat Hij een ontfermend God was voor de schapen die Hij zou willen trekken en leiden tot de groote schaapskooi. En zij hadden dit kunnen weten.

Maar daar treedt Jezus op hen toe. Hij zal hun van antwoord dienen en bestraffen!

Laat ons luisteren naar de gouden woorden van den Zoon van God!

"Die gezond zijn, hebben den medicijnmeester niet van noode, maar die ziek zijn!"

Dit was een spreekwoord uit hun eigen bundel van overleveringen. Ze waren wel bekend met dit spreekwoord, maar vandaag zat er een engel in die hem zou scheuren.

Wat is de beteekenis? Dit: Gij zijt immers de leiders, de medicijnmeesters van Israel? Welnu, gij noemt deze arme tollenaars en zondaren ziek, zoo ziek, dat gij hen schuwt. Welnu, vervul Uw ambt! En indien gij niet wilt, laat Mij met rust: Ik ben de groote Medicijnmeester, en Ik ben Mijn werk aan 't doen. Laat Mij met rust!

Maar er zat meer in dit spreekwoord. Gij zijt gezond, naar Uw eigen getuigenis. En daarom laat Ik U met rust. Alleen die ziek zijn hebben Mij van noode.

En nu komt er nog een woord uit het Oude Testament, Hosea 6:6. Maar gaat henen en leert wat het zij: Ik wil barmhartigheid, en niet offerande; want Ik ben niet gekomen om te roepen rechtvaardigen, maar zondaars tot bekeering.

Deze woorden van Jezus hebben gebrand op de harten van deze Farizeërs. Gaat henen en leert! Dat wilde zeggen: Gij noemt U leeraars in Israel, maar gij hebt van noode om zelf onderwezen te worden. Tweedens, Ik zal U toestemmen, dat deze zondaren en tollenaars ziek, doodziek zijn.

Nu dan, en dan zegt Mijn God: Ik wil barmhartigheid. Ik wil Mijn hart van groote zondaarsliefde openbaren. En daarom ben Ik hier om Mijn werk te doen. Laat Mij toch met rust!

Maar Gij Farizeërs wilt altijd de offerande! Gij wilt groote dingen doen voor God. Zoodat God U mag danken voor zoo schoone en groote daden. Maar God wil geen offerande. Hij wil barmhartigheid.

O God, wij danken U voor Uwe groote zondaarsliefde in Jezus!

G. Vos.

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## EDITORIALS

### The Declaration Of Principles

The discussion of the main contents of the Declaration of Principles was finished in my last editorial on the subject. What follows is chiefly in the form of conclusions that are based on the preceding part of the Declaration. For the sake of completeness I publish it here once more.

The Declaration concludes as follows;

"III. Seeing then that this is the clear teaching of the confession,

"A. We repudiate:

"1. The teaching:

"a. That the promise of the covenant is conditional and for all that are baptized.

"b. That we may presuppose that all the children that are baptized are regenerated, for we know on the basis of Scripture, as well as in the light of all history and experience, that the contrary is true.

"2. The teaching that the promise of the covenant is an objective bequest on the part of God giving to every baptized child the right to Christ and all the blessings of salvation."

Here I may, perhaps, add a word of explanation to A, 1, b.

The emphasis in this proposition must fall on the word *all*. We would have no principal objection to maintain that the *elect* infants are regenerated, although we cannot have certainty in this respect. We believe, in fact, that this is usually the case. But the presumption that *all* baptized children are regenerated is certainly untenable. It is quite contrary to the expressed teaching of Scripture that only the children of the promise are counted for the seed, and all are not Israel that are of Israel. It is contrary to all the history of the covenant, which illustrates very plainly that thousands upon thousands, in the old dispensation as well as in the new, violate the covenant of God and do not become partakers of the promise. And, therefore, we certainly cannot presuppose anything that is so evidently in conflict with Scripture and experience.

The rest of the above conclusions have been sufficiently demonstrated from our Confessions.

The Declaration continues:

"B. And we maintain:

"1. That God surely and infallibly fulfills His promise to the elect.

"2. That when He so fulfills His promise and establishes His covenant, the elect are not mere stocks and

blocks, but obliged and willing to fulfill their part of the covenant, to love the Lord their God with all their heart and mind and soul and strength, to forsake the world, to crucify their old nature, and to walk in a new and holy life.

"3. That the ground of infant baptism is the command of God, and the fact that according to Scripture He establishes His covenant in the line of continued generations."

In 2 above the Declaration refutes the accusation, always directed against those who maintain the truth of sovereign grace and absolute predestination, that the latter deny the responsibility of man. If the promise of God is unconditional, so that man has to do nothing in order to obtain the promise, nor has to comply with any prerequisite in order to remain heir of the promise, you make of man, so say our opponents, mere stocks and blocks. They forget that the work of grace never violates man's moral nature. Grace does not destroy man's responsibility, but rather causes him to feel all the more deeply his responsibility before the God of His salvation.

This is the teaching of our Confessions.

The Heidelberg Catechism teaches us in question and answer 64 as follows: "But does not this doctrine make men careless and profane? By no means: for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruit of thankfulness."

In Canons III, IV, A, we read:

"But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature, endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind, deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death; so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it; that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. Wherefore unless the admirable author of every good work wrought in us, man could have no hope of recovering from his fall by his own free will, by the abuse of which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin."

Again in Canons V, A, 12 we confess:

"This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting on believers a spirit of pride, or rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary, it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering, and in confessing the truth, and

solid rejoicing in God: so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice in gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture, and the example of the saints."

Again, in Canons V, A, 13:

Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness, or a disregard to piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which he hath ordained, lest by abusing his fatherly kindness, God should turn away his gracious countenance from them, to behold which is to the godly dearer than life: the withdrawing whereof is more bitter than death, and they in consequence hereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience."

And, in Canons V, B, 6, they repudiate the errors of those:

....  
 "Who teach: that the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and of salvation from its own character and nature is a cause of indolence and is injurious to godliness, good morals, prayers, and other holy exercises, but that on the contrary it is praiseworthy to doubt. For these show that they do not know the power of divine grace and the working of the indwelling Spirit. And they contradict the apostle John, who teaches the opposite with express words in his first epistle: 'Beloved now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is. And everyone that hath this hope on him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.' I John 2:2, 3. Furthermore these are contradicted by the examples of the saints, both of the old and of the New Testament, who though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless constant in prayers and other exercises of godliness."

All these passages plainly teach that, while grace is surely sovereign and unconditional, this sovereign grace does not destroy, but rather increase and enhance man's responsibility.

The Declaration continues:

"IV. 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 the right to protest.

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

"B. And they believe and maintain the autonomy of the local church."



This applies to the Christian Reformed Church in our country as well as to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Also the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 made their doctrinal decisions binding, and demanded of us a promise to express agreement with these decisions, or at least to acquiesce in them and never to teach anything against them. This we would not possibly promise for the simple reason that the well-known three points were, according to our deepest conviction contrary to Scripture and the Confession. Under such a promise, it would have been impossible for us to preach. Besides, also the Christian Reformed Church, in 1924, violated the principle of the autonomy of the local church by deposing office-bearers, as well as speaking of the broader gatherings as "the proper ecclesiastical authorities". The Protestant Reformed Churches maintain the autonomy of the local church and acknowledge no higher authority than the consistory. It is a well-known fact that also the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands violated this principle.

And although we quite fundamentally differ with the Reformed Churches, maintaining Art. 31, of the Netherlands, in respect to the question concerning the promise of the covenant, we are glad to agree with them on the important church-political principle of the autonomy of the local church.

Thus far the Declaration of principles proper.

There is, however, a postscript, which reads as follows:

"If Synod adopts the above proposition, we advise:

"1. That Synod subject this entire document to the approval of the churches.

"2. If no objection is offered to adopt this at our next Synod.

"3. To adopt this in the meantime as a working hypothesis for our mission committee and for our missionaries in the organization of churches."

And herewith I close my discussion of the Declaration of Principles.

The reader cannot have doubted that I favor the adoption of this Declaration by our next synod. All the dust that has been raised about it has only served to convince me more deeply that it is high time that our churches adopt it as an expression to all that want to join our churches of what we have always believed and still believe to be the truth according to our confessions.

It contains nothing new.

It merely and simply represents what we have always believed.

No one among us has succeeded to show, with any semblance of an argument, that this is not the case.

Remember that the Declaration is nothing else than a form to be used by our mission committee and our missionaries as a basis for the organization of churches.

If our next synod should dare to reject it, I see no longer any hope for the future of our Protestant Reformed Churches as remaining distinctively Reformed.

Hence, "with malice toward none," I shall fight for it.

H. H.



## Classis West's Overture To Synod

We hereby present to our readers the overture *in re* the Declaration which Classis West decided to send to synod.

The overture was presented to Classis West by the consistory of Bellflower.

The part that is placed in parenthesis was eliminated by way of an amendment. However, because its very elimination is significant, we here insert it.

\* \* \*

Esteemed brethren:

We have received the declaration of principles which were drawn up by our last Synod and submitted to our consistories to be approved by our 1951 Synod if no objections are given.

We understand that we are to study the declaration and express our approval of the contents of the document or disapproval by submitting well motivated reasons. We do not understand our Synod to mean to decide to approve in 1951 by the majority vote of our churches alone. Such would not do justice to the cause of the truth. In a sense the matter has been decided by our last Synod, and the Synod of 1951 will take the final decision upon consideration of the reasons advanced by the churches. Any valid objection or weighty reason advanced for approval should decide the issue regardless of the opinions of the majority of the churches.

Although we agree with the essential thrust of these declarations, we feel that they are in a measure inadequate to the present day discussion upon the matters referred to in the interpretative section of the declaration. We have in mind, for example, the statement that the promise of the Gospel is not for all. To enlighten, such a statement should explain that the Gospel of the promise of the Gospel is to be preached to all and that all who have heard it are held accountable for having heard it. There is also the statement under II, B, 1, "Little infants surely cannot fulfill any

conditions, and if the promise of God is for them, the promise is infallible and unconditional". In a sense this may be interpreted to mean that there are conditions, but since infants cannot fulfill them these conditions do not determine their inclusion or exclusion from the covenant and promise of God, or that the promise in its essential character is unconditional. Such is true of the Bible also. Infants cannot read the Bible, nor have they that conscious knowledge of salvation, yet no one would draw the conclusion that the Bible is not the written Word of God which is the means for us to come to the conscious saving knowledge of the truth of God in Christ . . . that God does not use this means to bring us to the knowledge of salvation.

This point therefore, although true if interpreted correctly, does not serve to clarify the discussions that have been confusing issues. It does not take into consideration the conditions in the Bible and the correct interpretation of this conditional form as it serves to bring out the essential unconditional nature of God's words.

This is not derogatory criticism.

This follows inevitably from the procedure that Synod took in the formulation of such a document.

Upon considering the action itself, therefore, as it is given in the Acts, page 90, Article 117, we have decided to protest. We protest that Synod accepted the document of the committee of pre-advice, or even instructed its committee to draw up any such document which is an interpretation of the Confessions, without having the proper occasion for such action, the proper instruction to do so.

The following are our reasons:

1. The Mission Committee should not have come with the question that they did present. If they did come with such a request they should have been referred to the same basis that we have used previously and the basis which is still the basis for the unity of all our churches.

a. The Mission Committee requested something uniform and definite to present to these groups of immigrants, particularly when they request organization. That refers, evidently to the question stated, what is binding in our churches? Art. 63, page 54.

b. If we bear in mind what is the real situation in doing mission work, we shall avoid such misunderstanding. In doing mission work, or organizing groups of immigrants into Protestant Reformed Churches, we do not decide anew what is our confession, or whether we are the purest manifestation of the Reformed church in America. That lies in the very nature of our taking up the work among any group, that we have such a conviction. The burden of proof remains

no longer with us. It is incumbent upon the immigrants and any one who seeks to have correspondence with us that they make a decision about us, about our confession officially recognized not only, but also about the proclamation and life with respect to our confession. Upon having made such a decision to become a Protestant Reformed Church such a group by virtue of that very act agrees with our proclamation and life as in harmony with God's Word and the Confessions. If their action has not been honest or has been made without proper deliberation and examination, the subsequent relationship will bear it out and we then are faced with the task of determining whether the proclamation of such a group is in harmony with us, not before. If it should occur that a group after organization disagrees with our proclamation of the truth, we are cautioned to make our missionary preparatory work more thorough by more specific examination of the candidates for admission about their confession and their desire for instruction. To throw up added formulas for interpretation confuses and weakens our stand.

c. The Mission Committee and missionaries indicate that they were able to instruct in our specific Protestant Reformed proclamation. That is their calling and our Churches place confidence in them and support them with supervision until their work is challenged.

d. For purposes of clarification of our point, let us assume that the missionaries came in contact with those who have problems which have never been met by them before. (This assumption we do not actually make. For we all maintain that we have a definite proclamation on the issues of the day; for if we do not, our mission ceases).

Such matters about questions of interpretation of the Confessions or of certain passages of the Word of God lies outside of the range of the missionaries and mission committee as such. Personally they may have serious doubts, but these must be presented to theologians or if no satisfaction is obtained under the present aid of the Confessions, these questions must then be submitted to the churches in the proper ecclesiastical way. If they do so as Mission Committee and missionaries they make a fatal error of admitting that they are not clear in their mission.

2. In the second place it follows that Synod should not have answered the Mission Committee as it did. It should not have allowed itself to become involved in the questions without the proper preparation and occasion, nor have drawn up such a document, but should have very clearly pointed the Committee to its task to proclaim our truth unequivocally. It may have cautioned not to condemn views of others if not called upon to do so under our Confessions, or views which

are compatible with ours, in order to keep our positive teaching clearly before the minds of the hearers.

a. If we understand the task of the Mission Committee, we shall also see that it cannot request a general interpretation and Synod cannot accede to such a request. The Mission Committee is under Synod and cannot instruct or mandate Synod. Synod may only receive instructions and mandates from the Churches by way of Consistory and Classis.

b. To allow the Mission Committee to request an interpretation of the Confessions and Synod to draw up such a document is equal to saying that Synod may initiate such matters.

If we allow the Mission Committee the right to do this and Synod to comply with their request and thus approve of the action of Synod of 1950 in this respect, we have opened another way than the correct Reformed way, and we have a back door, through which we shall be flooded with all kinds of requests and dangers of wrong interpretations.

This would be equal to allowing the Committees of Synod to present material which, although the concern of the Churches in general, is nevertheless outside of their jurisdiction to request or mandate. The faculty may then do the same and through the theological school committee come with propositions for instructions in their particular views.

This, however, is contrary to the specific task of these committees as given them in their constitutions and it denies the proper procedure of all such interpretation of the Confessions, which is out of the bosom of the Church.

c. We may add that this action of Synod also violates the intention of Art. 4:2 of the rules of Order of Synod (Church Order, p. 55).

3. In the third place, looking at this action to interpret Confessions as such, we believe that Synod forgot that any interpretation of the Confessions which becomes the official statement of the Churches should have a specific occasion and statement of the problem or error which it seeks to combat, clearly before its mind and stated in definite language for the churches.

4. It also follows that this specific statement of error can only be presented by way of protest or request from the churches.

a. Consider that we all agree that we do not make a confession beyond the Word of God and what we already have in our Confessions unless there is a specific occasion of attack. Confessions must be based upon the Word of God and serve as a means of instruction as well as to combat error. They arise organically in the consciousness of the Church, and arise under various influences of attack, persecution, and other such denials of the truth. When the truth is ripe,

this truth is contracted into a brief statement and expressed by the church.

b. We ought also to agree that this holds true for any interpretation of the confessions. (That was the history of the Reformed Churches. That is also the history of our heritage in the past in this country as it lies in the Christian Reformed Church. There are examples of the Bultema case, the Jansen case, and our own case. There was first of all error or protest of error and this was presented by way of consistory and Classis to Synod. Thereupon Synod made its interpretation of Scripture and the Confessions relevant to the specific denial of the truth as presented to it.) Confessions are not made to prevent error. Confessions combat error.

It is important to realize that Confessions do not prevent error. The real confession of the truth is made by the organism of the Church and where the Truth of the Word is most purely preached there you also have the most bitter struggle against it. When error presents itself in the open it is repudiated officially by the Synod by way of appeal as a corrective measure. This again becomes the directive of the future church as it seeks to live close to the truth.

c. We believe that this has not been the case with this declaration of principles. It has not first presented an error to repudiate. The Mission Committee asks only a general request, in effect, what is binding in our churches. Besides it cannot come with a specific charge for such is outside of its jurisdiction.

Such action which does not deal with a specific charge of error may make rash and unnecessary statements, and be the cause of wrong division in the church. The truth as it lives in the consciousness of the organism of the church should be allowed to prevail over the lie. Through proper debate and discussion there is time and room for shepherd work to win souls and minds to the truth. To have committees and synods initiate propositions about our confessions, even though true, is nothing but unwise action which causes divisions where they should not be, instead of where they should be between the truth and the lie not only but also between those who belong together and those who do not.

5. Our fifth objection is against the Synod's submitting this document for the approval of the churches. The first wrong action of initiating something outside of a proper request and mandate resulted we feel in this regrettable situation.

We have the peculiar situation in which the Synod submits for consideration and advice something to the churches. This reverses the proper procedure in which consistories and classes instruct or seek advice of Synod and send delegates to take part in discussion



and bind themselves to these decisions unless proven contrary to the Word of God.

If it was the intention of the 1950 Synod to submit for approval, we also have a peculiar situation in which the churches individually and separately (democratically) decide outside of the accepted way of Synod's deliberation.

6. Finally, we wish to protest against point IV of the brief Declaration, particularly point A.

Although it is our common opinion that there is error in the actions of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands with respect to the recent deposition of ministers, nevertheless we question the right of our Synod to sit in judgment over another church with whom we do not have correspondence and off-hand express an official condemnation of action without having beneficially called to do so and without having been presented with material to study for the delegates and the churches. If all this has been done we should have the courtesy and brotherly love to present our criticism to that church.

We trust that we have made our protest clear. We have made this rather lengthy protest because we feel that the problem has become so involved and Synod deals with a difficult situation.

#### OVERTURE:

In order to present something positive to Synod and to continue action in our testimony to the truth, we overture Synod:

1. To repudiate the action of Synod of 1950 as found in the Acts, page 54, Art. 64 and page 90, Art. 117.

a. Because Synod cannot interpret the Confessions without a specific charge of error and instruction from the churches.

b. Although this does not mean that we reject the essential thrust of the declaration. Rather we refuse to be committed unnecessarily in an improper way.

c. That we agree with the essential teaching of the principles and express our willingness to fulfill our calling to formulate this teaching when instructed to do so being presented with error within our churches.

2. To instruct our Committee for correspondence with other churches to submit a documented report of the confession and teaching with their criticism or approval of:

a. churches which seek correspondence with us.

b. and churches with whom the committee shows evidence that we should seek correspondence.

3. To take no further action until this has been presented. And that such a decision with respect to such a report will constitute our official stand upon our confessions with relation to other churches.

H. H.

## OUR DOCTRINE

### Days or Periods

2.

#### THE CONCORDISTIC THEORY

We concluded our preceding article with the statement that Dr. Bavinck declares that also that exegesis of Genesis 1 is possible which regards the six days as periods. Mind you, he does not say that this exegesis is necessary but merely that it is possible. It is true that he does not attach much value to the fact that the word "day" does occur often in Holy Writ as not merely referring to a period of twenty four hours. Some seek support for their contention that the days of Genesis 1 are periods from the fact that often in Holy Writ the word "day" refers to a period of time longer than twenty-four hours. With these passages, I am sure, we are all acquainted. Scripture, e.g., speaks of the entire New Dispensation as the "last hour". However, Dr. Bavinck does not attach much significance to these passages in support of his contention that also the days of Genesis 1 may be long periods of time.

But, Dr. Bavinck does attach significance to the following considerations. First, and we have already called attention to this, the late professor declares that if Gen. 1:1 must be considered as constituting a part of the first day, then that first day must be regarded as a very unusual and extraordinary day.

Secondly, he opines that the first three days, also as according to the intention of Genesis, must be reckoned according to or by a different standard than the latter three. The expression "day and night" does not refer to a period of shorter or longer duration, but to an exchange of light and darkness. This exchange of light and darkness was not affected by the sun during the first three days, inasmuch as the sun was created upon the fourth day, but it was effected in a different way by the light which was created upon the first day. Hence, the length of the first three days cannot be determined.

Thirdly, the latter three days can be regarded in the same light as the first three days and in harmony with them. Scripture speaks of all six days in the same sense. Genesis 1 does not warrant the conclusion that there is any difference between them. Of all these six days we read that it was evening and it was morning. Hence, if the first three days were long periods of time, the same applies to the latter three days.

Fourthly, it is very difficult to place upon the sixth day all that was created upon that day according to

the Scriptures. Upon that day were created the animals, the forming of Adam, the planting of the garden, the announcement of the probationary command, the bringing of the animals and the giving of names to them by Adam, the sleep of Adam and the accompanying creation of Eve. Bavinck declares that all this may have been possible, but not probable.

Fifthly, it is not the intention of Genesis to show that the creation of the world occurred in six days of twenty-four hours duration; these days simply refer to the time in which God was creatively busy. With each morning He created something new, and the evening set in when that thing had been completed.

Finally, much more was created on each day than that which is held before us in Genesis 1 and 2. This, for example, also applies to the commandments of the Lord. We know that these commandments are much broader than merely that which is stated literally in them. The commandment, e.g., "Thou shalt not kill," also implies that we must not hate, yea, that we must love the neighbor. This, then, according to Dr. Bavinck, also applies to the Scriptural account of creation in Genesis.

#### *Our appraisal of this view.*

What, now, shall be said of this concordistic theory of the week of creation which would regard the "days" of Genesis 1 as long periods of time rather than as days of twenty-four hours?

First, it is characterized by its utter lack of Scriptural proof. This should be self-evident. And this is all the more remarkable because the late Professor Bavinck can be so mighty in the Scriptures and quote from the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation. Yet, here he outlines and would champion a view without any Scriptural support. Moreover, he really does not know what to do with Ex. 20:11 and 31:17: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it . . . It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed." Does it really make any difference if the first day appears to have been unusual and extraordinary, and if many things were called into existence upon the sixth day? Does Genesis 1 give us at any time the impression that the Lord took considerable time to do the things He did? Did He not call all things into existence by His almighty and irresistible will and word?

Secondly, the attempt to explain the days of creation as periods of time and not as ordinary days can hardly be considered to rest upon sound and honest exegesis of the Word of the Lord. Also Prof. Berkhof,

in his Reformed Dogmatics, declares that the tendency to explain the "days" of Genesis as periods and not as ordinary days developed only after the new sciences of geology and palaeontology came forward with their theories of the enormous age of the earth; and he also declares that the opinion that the days of creation are long periods of time came to the foreground, not as the result of exegetical studies, but under the influence of the disclosures of science. And, this is indeed true. Men had become fearful and apprehensive because of the "findings" of "Science". It seemed to them that the plain word of the Scriptures was in conflict with these "scientific facts". Surely, we cannot doubt the geologist who examines the earth and who, because of the various layers of the earth and the different fossils found there and the skeletons and bones of people and animals who must have lived ages and ages ago, came to the conclusion that this earth must surely be older than a mere six thousand years, and that our world has been in a process of formation which lasted thousands and millions of years. This was the undeniable conclusion of the geologist and the students of Holy Writ did not dare to disagree.

Hence, they now once more approached the Scriptures, not, we understand, to bow before the authority of the sacred record, but to try to explain Holy Writ in such a way that the Word of God could somehow be harmonized with these so-called scientific findings. This explains why it happens that, although the late Dr. Bavinck, in the same context to which we have already referred in the foregoing, cautions on the one hand again placing too much confidence in these geological findings, he nevertheless also declares that Genesis 1 can be exegeted in such a way that the "days" of Genesis 1 were long periods of time. The students of Scripture did not permit Scripture to speak its own language; they did not turn unto the Word of the Lord because they would be led by the light of God's infallible testimony; they read the Bible with the fear of the scientific findings and data gnawing at their hearts and minds; and they made the desperate attempt to explain Scripture in the light of Science, and assumed an apologetic attitude toward the Scriptures because of the rather quaint testimony, the rather "old-fashioned" testimony of God's own infallible Word. This, we surely understand, is thoroughly fallacious, may never characterize us. We cannot and may not assume a "neutral" or a critical attitude over against the Word of the living God. We must not permit Science to dictate unto us the true interpretation of Holy Writ. If it be true, and it is, that Dogmatics may never Lord it over Exegesis, then it is just as true that so-called Science may not dominate over our interpretation of God's Word. I say: so-called Science. For true Science certainly implies true knowledge—"knowledge" is the literal mean-

ing of the word. Any "Science" which dares to raise its head above the Word of the living God, and usurps to itself the sole right and ability to know things, cannot be true Science, for it places itself against the infallible Scriptures, the one and only record of the infallible God.

\* \* \*

#### THE DAYS OF GENESIS ORDINARY DAYS.

And, therefore, we must maintain, irrespective of what Science may say and irrespective of the fact that many things were apparently created or called into existence upon the sixth day of creation, that the days of Genesis were ordinary days of twenty-four hours duration, and that all things, also Genesis 1:1, were called into existence by the omnipotent will of the living God in the space of six twenty-four hours days. For this we have the following reasons, all based upon what we read in the Word of God.

*First, Scripture makes no distinction between the first three days and the latter three days of the Hexaemeron.*

We understand that those who do not accept that the days of creation are to be regarded as ordinary days, surely must agree that the latter three days of creation-week were days of twenty four hours duration. It is a fact that the sun, moon, and stars were created upon the fourth day, and that then the change of day and night was caused by the fact that the earth turns around the sun on its axis. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to maintain that the latter three days, because of the creation of the sun upon the fourth day, were long periods and not ordinary days of twenty four hours duration. It is true that the late Dr. A. Kuyper suggests the possibility that the earth may have turned on its axis more slowly and that, therefore, the latter three days, the days 4-6, may have been periods instead of days, but he also hastens to add that we know nothing of this. And this is true, i.e., that we know nothing about this, except that we must clearly understand that the Scriptures do not give us a single indication that such indeed was the case, yea, that the Scriptures give us every reason to believe that the latter three days were ordinary days and not periods of thousands of years.

However, if we must believe that the latter three days were ordinary days then we must also believe that the first three days were days of twenty four hours duration. A very fundamental rule of exegesis is involved here, namely, that the same word in the same context must have the same significance, unless there is something in the text which clearly indicates an opposite or different interpretation. And in the Scriptural narrative of Genesis 1 we have the repeated

repetition of the expression: "And the evening and the morning were the first day." This expression occurs in this chapter in the verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31. That the days 4-6, the fourth through the sixth day, are to be viewed as days of shorter duration than the first three days is not indicated in this chapter in any way. Hence, the above rule of exegesis certainly applies here.

*Secondly, Scriptures tells us that the days of creation were days, limited by one morning and one evening.*

It is true that the Word of God also speaks of days and hours in a figurative sense of the word. We read, for example, that "now is the day of salvation", and it is clear that the expression does not refer to a day of twenty four hours. We also read in the Word of God that "this is the last hour", and we realize that this is not merely an hour of sixty minutes. But, whenever we read of such a day or such an hour in Holy Writ, do we read that it was a day limited by one morning and one evening? Fact remains that the theory which advocates that the "days" of Genesis 1 were long periods of time denies that they were *days*. According to this theory these "days" lasted thousands of years. Hence, these "days" consisted of thousands upon thousands of days, of thousands upon thousands of mornings and evenings. But Genesis 1 tells us that these were days which had but one morning and but one evening. Surely these were days of twenty four hours.

*Thirdly, the attempt by the theorists who would explain these "days" as periods to base their theory upon the seventh day is absurd.*

The theorists who would base their period conception of the days of creation upon Scripture have appealed to the seventh day. We read in the Scriptures that the Lord rested on the seventh day. And we also know that the Lord even until now rests of His work of creation. God's resting is continuous. The seventh day, therefore, was not merely a day but is a long period. Hence, also the other "days" must be viewed as long periods of time.

However, this reasoning is obviously absurd. On the one hand, this would make that seventh day endless. God's resting is eternal and endless; hence, also this seventh day must be endless. But this is absurd, because what then must we say of Adam's sin, etc. which happened upon the following days. If the seventh day is endless, then we still have that day and no other day has ever succeeded it. This is obviously so ridiculous that no comment is necessary. Besides, Scripture informs us that God rested upon that seventh day in a special sense, inasmuch as He also sanctified that day. Hence, He rested therefore in that special sense in order that man should enter into His rest,

and that therefore also this seventh day of rest was an ordinary day of twenty four hours. If this seventh day of rest is endless, then also Adam is still in that rest, and this, too, is obviously absurd. And this is confirmed by the fact that also the fourth commandment, which speaks of the "seventh day", also mentions our work, and calls attention to the fact that we must work six days and rest upon the seventh day. Surely this seventh day is therefore no longer than the other six days of the week. This is clearly the implication of the fourth commandment.

*Fourthly, the theory that these "days" were periods leads us into Evolution.*

Of this theory we expect to have more to say, when we call attention to the Scriptural account of the creation of man. We will, therefore, not enter into a detailed discussion of this bit of worldly philosophy at this time.

Only, we wish to point out now that this "periods-theory" is surely evolutionistic. This lies in the very nature of the case. Is it not a fact that, according to this presentation of the Divine work of creation, each "day" lasted thousands of years, that, therefore, God's speaking whereby He called various things into existence must be considered as stretching over a long period of time. This implies that the various creatures came into existence through a long process, and this even though one would not necessarily consent to the conception (as the evolutionists clearly teach) that the one type of creature developed into another. Does not the late Dr. Bavinck suggest that much more was created upon each of the six days than that which is recorded in Scripture, yea, that so much was created upon the sixth day that it is difficult to believe that this sixth day was an ordinary day of twenty four hours? Does this not imply that it then required the Lord thousands and thousands of years to create and call into existence the things which were made upon that day? Well, if this be true, then we simply have the evolutionistic conception applied to this account of the creation of the world. This simply means that the calling of things into existence (not to speak now of merely the coming of things into existence) passed through a process, a very lengthy process which required thousands upon thousands of years.

However, this conception is surely impossible. In the first place, we would ask the question: But why must we have this interpretation of the things? Could not the Lord have called the things into existence by the word of His almighty power, in the "twinkling of an eye"? Is not the Lord the Almighty God? Why, in the light of the fact that many things were called into being upon the sixth day of the week, should it be necessary to conclude from the formation of these many things that therefore their being called into

existence passed through a lengthy process of time? Must the things themselves determine their origin or the manner and length of time of their creation? Hence, we ask the question: why must the church take recourse to this "interpretation" of the origin of the world? Is it easier to understand than the account which is held before us in the Holy Scriptures? Does the theory of "periods instead of days" bring us one step closer to a clearer understanding of the formation of all things? To ask this question is to answer it. One thing is sure: these theorists surely do not enable us to bow before the authority and authenticity of Holy Writ with increasing awe and adoration.

In the second place, does not Scripture teach us exactly the truth that the world and all the things that are therein were called into existence and being by the almighty and irresistible Word of the living God? Where do we read in the book of Genesis, or in Scripture's account there of the creation of the universe, that the creation of the world was the result of a long process of development or that it required thousands and thousands of years? Could the Scriptures describe the work of creation as the result of the Lord's almighty and irresistible speaking more vividly than it does? Do we not read, over and over again: "And God said."? And is it not, therefore, true that it is exactly this almighty Word of the Lord which called all things into being? And is this not verified elsewhere in Holy Writ when we read that God speaks and it is, that He commands and it stands? Is it not true that all the works of the Lord are characterized by the fact that they are works of a moment, which occur in the "twinkling of an eye"? This is true of the Divine work of recreation, which we also call regeneration. And this also applies to the heavenly renewal of all things in eternal and heavenly glory. Must we accept, even as the earthly creation passed through a period of thousands and thousands of years, that therefore also the transfiguration of all things, the regeneration of all things in heavenly perfection will require hundreds and thousands of years? Moreover, this is exactly what Modernism teaches, namely, that the world is gradually becoming better and better, and that it ultimately will reach perfection. But this is not Scripture's description of all things. We must therefore maintain that the concordistic conception of the creation of the universe is impossible. The Lord created all things in creation-week by the word of His power, in the "twinkling of an eye", and also for this reason the "period-theory" is untenable and impossible.

And, finally, what a strange conception of the creation and development of the world we must entertain if we subscribe to this "period-theory"? But to this we hope to call attention in our following article.

H. Veldman.

## What Then?

When one compares the report of the special session of Classis East which was held in February with the report of the March session of Classis West, one is forced to conclude that unless there are sudden and complete reversals of opinion, the Declaration of Principles as drawn up by the 1950 Synod will be rejected by our churches. Classis West had almost unanimously decided to advise Synod not to adopt it. Classis East is very greatly divided in its stand over against this declaration. How can one conclude anything else than that to all appearances our churches do not want this document adopted? Reasons are given why it should be adopted. Fully as many, and perhaps even more numerous are the reasons drawn up to bolster the stand that the Declaration must be rejected.

Among those given as reasons for its complete rejection are the following: 1. It has been illegally and in an hierarchical way brought to the attention of our churches; 2. To adopt would mean that we have a fourth form and we ought not spoil our tradition; 3. It is not necessary since we have gotten along without one these twenty-seven years; 4. It is not the answer to the request of the Mission Committee for a form; and 5. Some are not ready to agree with the contents of the document and to say that this is what our churches have always taught and believed. And so, unless a great change of mind occurs, the Declaration of Principles will be rejected.

But . . . what then?

The matter is not quite as simple as all that. The matter before the Synod of 1951 is not simply: shall we have the Declaration or not? The moment that the Declaration is out of the way, that moment Synod will indeed stand before the question, "What then?", or "What now?" For the request of the Mission Committee will stand there unanswered. Now there are only two things which Synod can consider, and there is only one of two things which she can decide. Either Synod must draw up such a form as requested by the Mission Committee, or Synod will have to inform the Mission Committee that it is of the opinion that no such form is necessary either.

If Synod should decide to draw up such a form, the whole matter of what we want to express as our peculiar heritage will again come up for discussion. Would Synod reconsider the first advice given it by the Committee of Pre-advice? For the sake of those who do not have their Acts of Synod at hand we will quote it. It reads thus: "To adopt the following clear-cut expression as one which should appear in each request for organization, along with the denial of common grace and the Three Points of 1924, and profession of adherence to the Three Forms of Unity and

the Church Order of Dordrecht and professing the Scriptures to be the infallible Word of God (as stands to reason): 'The promise of the Gospel, both as to the will of God to save His people and the execution of His will to save them, is not general, that is, it does not include all the baptized children of the church, but is particular, that is, it pertains only to the elect of God.' " This expression, you will note, says nothing of the controversial subject of conditions or no conditions and would surely allow us to make use of what several of our ministers call "conditions in the reformed sense." It surely does not present us as living and teaching a deadly passivism. Nor does it deny man's responsibility. Neither can it be used to accuse us of saying that the preaching of the promise is not in any sense for the reprobate, for we surely do believe that it is used by God *for* the hardening of the reprobate as a savour of death unto death. Understand, the undersigned is not urging the delegates to Synod to adopt this advice given to the last Synod. But he asks, what then? If not the Declaration, then this perhaps? Let the delegates consider now already what they intend to do when they vote against the Declaration and realize that their work is not finished with this matter when they vote against it.

Or shall it be another still briefer statement that, "we the undersigned desiring to become members of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America or to organize as a congregation in this federation of churches express . . ." Express what? The matter of *Infra* and *Supra* we can safely leave out of the discussion. For both trace all our salvation to election. *Supra* and *Infra* have to do with the relation between the Fall and Election and not between Election and Faith. But what shall we say and maintain about the preaching of the Gospel and the presentation of the promise to all who hear it? When believers come to us from the Christian Reformed churches we ask them to declare that they deny "Common Grace". By doing so we demand that they believe that the preaching of the Gospel is grace only for the elect. May we not also demand that they or any others declare that they believe that the promises spoken at Baptism speak of a grace that God swears He will give only to the elect?

The consistory of our church at Holland, Michigan advises Synod to reject this Declaration. But Holland's consistory is to be commended in this that she does not simply overthrow, she suggests something positive. That is always commendable. And we believe that we may say with confidence, presenting proof thereof, that Holland's consistory wants to preserve the truth as our churches have been privileged to cherish it all these years. For Holland's consistory after rejecting the Declaration presents three points which it would have Synod adopt instead. They are:



1. Agreement with the Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity. 2. A promise to be willing to come under instruction in the Protestant Reformed Truth. And 3. A promise not to militate against this truth. Note that second point. It speaks of Protestant Reformed Truth. It acknowledges that we have something very precious, something distinct from ALL other churches and that we want to preserve it. And we forbid (point 3) agitation against it. Though it is against the Declaration, Holland's Consistory does want Synod to draw *something* up that the truth which we have may be preserved and may be kept even from being attacked as though it were contrary to the Scriptures and the Confessions.

There may be delegates to Synod who are of a different opinion. Even as the opponents of the Declaration are divided in their reasons for rejecting it, they may also be divided in their opinion as to whether a form should be drawn up for the Mission Committee. At present we have no way of determining that. It is, of course, entirely possible that Synod does want to decide that our Mission Committee needs no such form.

But . . . what then?

The matter here again is not quite so simple that we can tell the Mission Committee this. To say the very least it does not recognize the problem which has been the Mission Committee's in the past two years. To instruct the Mission Committee simply to demand of those from the Liberated Churches agreement with the Three Formulas of Unity and with the Scriptures would be equal to informing these Liberated Churches that we desire immediate sister-church relations with them. For we know definitely that officially the Liberated Churches have no Confession besides the Three Formulas of Unity. We know also that they maintain that their covenant conception is based upon the Confessions.

Now when an individual comes to our churches with a certificate from a Liberated Church stating that he is in good standing or sound in faith and walk, is that not a testimonial from this consistory that he, in its opinion, believes the Scriptures and the Three Formulas of Unity and hold to no other confessions? We need but receive their papers without asking one question.

When one comes from the Christian Reformed Churches to our church we ask him whether he repudiates "Common Grace" because we are convinced that the Confessions do not allow this view. Then, by this action, we *specify* what we believe to be contrary to the Confessions. Here it is not necessary that we have a Declaration because the Christian Reformed Churches drew up an heretical Declaration in 1924, and we need but demand repudiation of it. If the Declaration of Principles must go because it did not

come from the bottom, is not necessary and would be a fourth form, *may* we not yet instruct the Mission Committee to demand something more than a statement of agreement with the Scriptures and Confessions? Holland's consistory certainly is of that opinion, though it does not favour the Declaration.

Must we not insist that the Mission Committee demand more of those who desire to organize as Protestant Reformed Churches? When we read and hear, not only from ministers and professors in the Netherlands but also in personal contact with Immigrants in Canada, things which sound exactly like the first point of 1924 but now applied to the sacraments and to the covenant blessings rather than to the preaching of the Gospel, and those who declare and write such things maintain that the Confessions allow these views and statements, must we inform the Mission Committee to go ahead and organize them if they will simply declare that they agree to the Scriptures and the Confessions, permitting them to interpret them as they will? This they surely will do and will continue to maintain the things which we fought against in 1924 and *which we forbid* those from the Christian Reformed Churches to maintain in our fellowship.

Another thing, we surely need not bind anyone in our fellowship to a definite concept of the covenant as to whether it is an arrangement or whether as to its idea it is the relationship of friendship between God and His people, but is it possible for the Liberated view of baptism and of the promise to exist side by side with our view? The advice of Holland's consistory shows that it does not believe this, for it wants Synod to declare that those who join our churches may not agitate against our truth. And is it not exactly in these matters that we differ with the Liberated churches? Three of the former consistory members of our congregation at Hamilton have put it down black on white that they deem our doctrine, our truth, of which Holland's consistory speaks, to be heretical. For did they not send a letter to all our Churches (Classis East at least) stating that they would be willing to return to membership in our churches if and when we would maintain only the Scripture and the Three Formulas of Unity? Does that not mean that they considered the Protestant Reformed truth as preached by the Rev. H. Veldman as being contrary to Scripture and the Confessions? Their protest was never against the Rev. H. Veldman personally nor of his personal doctrine. It was against the whole of Classis East which demanded what Holland's Consistory suggests to the Synod of 1951. Never did they protest to Classis that the Rev. H. Veldman was not preaching Protestant Reformed doctrine. But it was just exactly this Protestant Reformed doctrine which he preached to which they objected. It was because he insisted on the last two points of Holland's advice

that they left him and our churches. And these men still maintain that they agree with the Three Formulas of Unity. These lines are written without any malice whatsoever, and if the undersigned has misunderstood, let the brethren say so. Let them say whether Scripture and Confessions leave room for our view of the promise.

Then, too, when we desire to lay the emphasis upon election, brother Van Spronsen accuses us of letting our dogmatics rule our exegesis and so allowing it to lead us to a wrong conclusion. Let the undersigned state that he appreciates the brother's charitable and brotherly attitude in all his writings. But the point we wish to make is that our Protestant Reformed Truth is questioned by the Liberated. Therefore we ask whether both views can exist side by side in one church. We would like to hear the brother explain also the things which we maintain are the First Point of "Common Grace" applied to the covenant such as the statement: "For when God gives His baptism to a human being, He bestows upon him a very particular proof of His love." And the statement, "He says to *all* those children, head for head . . . I pledge to you the full forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation: all the treasures and riches, which I am able to give to men." Will the brother show us how this can be said of *every* baptized child without teaching the grace-to-all-who-hear-the-Gospel theory of "Common Grace"? The brother attacks our view of the promise, and he has the right to do so, if he thinks that it is unscriptural and unreformed. But we also have a right to expect him to show us that statements such as those above are not the same as the things which we have consistently condemned since 1924. And if we do tell the Mission Committee to demand no more than a statement of agreement with the Confessions and Scripture and we organize congregations on that basis, may we not expect such congregations to allow our ministers also to preach the Protestant Reformed Truth in the circle of *our own churches*? And may we not exegete God's Word in the light of that same Word, letting Scripture explain Scripture so that even though the text may speak simply of believers we may explain that these believers are, of course, in every instance the elect? That is not letting Dogmatics rule exegesis but is the explanation of *all* faith by the Saviour Himself when He declared in John 10:26, "Ye believe not because we are not of my sheep." Let us never turn that around as though election is determined by faith. We do not believe that the brother Van Spronsen has one fiber in his being that wants to do such a thing, but the undersigned does want to be allowed to exegete with such guidance from Scripture itself.

The undersigned has no hard feelings or malicious thoughts towards any of the Liberated (nor surely

for that matter towards any of our own people who do not favor the Declaration) and would sincerely rejoice to see our churches correspond with the Liberated churches and establish sister-church relations if and when it can be done without endangering our view of God's grace. He has spent many enjoyable hours and days with immigrants in Canada and has learned to respect them as brethren and sisters in the Lord. But he also loves the Protestant Reformed heritage which our Covenant God gave us to enjoy and to preserve for our children and the Church of God as it shall appear on this earth yet in the days to come. And he wants to be allowed to preach and to believe that truth in our churches in the days to come. Therefore he has asked the question, if the Declaration by majority vote is declared to be unnecessary and illegally presented, what then? And if the request of the Mission Committee is also declared to be improper so that Synod says, "Simply require a statement of agreement with the Scriptures and the Confessions", what then? The Christian Reformed Churches will quote these to maintain "Common Grace". Well, organize them then as Protestant Reformed Churches? None of us would think of such a thing. But on the basis of the *Confessions* then and not on the basis of the Declaration, may we not demand also of the Liberated that they deny that God declares to all baptized children His love for them? Let us be charitable with the Liberated, indeed, and let us exercise all patience, but let us also ask ourselves what the Rev. H. Veldman is constantly holding up before us, "Do we as Protestant Reformed Churches have a distinctive calling?" Of course, we do, and on this we are all agreed. We have the testimony even from the Liberated themselves that the Rev. De Jong and the Rev. Kok fought vigorously for *our* view when they were there a short time ago. It is plain then, is it not, that we have a distinct and precious view of God's grace, also as applied to every baptized child? We say again, let us deal in love and all patience with the Liberated both in Canada and in the Netherlands, but is it a lack of love to inform them that we believe that even as the Preaching of the Gospel is not grace to all who hear so the sacraments are not grace either to all who receive the sign? What is unbrotherly about that? Is it a lack of love when we tell them that the love of God constrains us to defend also in regard to the sacrament of Baptism as well as in regard to the Preaching of the Gospel the truth that God's grace is particular? Since 1924 we have defended that truth of God's particular grace, and in 1940 our Synod (see Acts of Synod, 1940, p. 41) went on record to send a letter to the Christian Reformed Churches declaring that we consider this matter of the Preaching of the Gospel to be contrary to the Scriptures and the Confessions. We cannot see how Synod can do anything less than in June than to

declare to the Mission Committee that we must insist that those who declare agreement with the Scriptures and the Confessions must declare that they believe that the Scriptures and the Confessions teach a particular grace both in the Preaching of the Word and in the Sacrament of Baptism. And we ask, is it a lack of love when, in our love for this truth which we have been privileged to enjoy and propagate, we put forth *serious* and *sincere* efforts of love to explain and defend this truth in the hearing of the Liberated immigrants so that they may enjoy its beauty and comfort with us?

If the Declaration must go because we are convinced that it is a detriment to the cause of the truth because of its illegality, then let us tell the Mission Committee that our stand of 1924 and 1940 is also our stand in 1951, namely, that we still believe that the Scriptures and the Confessions teach us that the grace and love of God are particular so that the Preaching of the Gospel is grace only to the elect and that the Sacraments are likewise grace only to those chosen from all eternity unto faith. If we can agree on this point then we have come a long way toward clearing up all misunderstanding of each others stand. Then calmly and with increased interest we can discuss such matters as the use of the word condition and what we ought to understand by the covenant. It is with a sincere desire to present the issue as clearly as he possibly can that the undersigned has penned the lines above.

John A. Heys.

#### IN MEMORIAM

On March 13, 1951, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself our beloved wife and mother.

Mrs. Geraldine Kerkstra (nee Knott)

at the age of 61 years.

Romans 8:28 — And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Mr. John Kerkstra  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Stouten  
Mr. and Mrs. H. Schipper  
Mr. and Mrs. C. Prince  
Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Kerkstra  
Frances Kerkstra

Grand Rapids, Michigan

## Contribution

Esteemed Editor:

Because of the response to my latest contribution and because for the sake of clarification which at least one of your answers requires and because I desire to publicly assure you that I love you as a brother in Christ and esteem you highly for your works' sake and because I also would inform you that I have upon various occasions and even very lately defended your name and person, I sincerely hope that you will not advise me to also keep this contribution in my pen.

Allow me to answer as the thoughts come rather than from your order. Granted?

In the first place, I did not say re Hamilton that that which we have read is *one-sided*. I wrote that we have heard from *one side*. That is quite different. What court is there that calls in one witness only? For myself, I would like to examine the corpse. Then I believe that the jury could better determine whether it was suicide, murder, negligent homicide, or a combination of any or all of these. This must not be taken to mean that I am casting aspersions on the detailed reports given by the Rev. H. Veldman but we must consider that there may be mitigating circumstances.

Secondly, you ask "Who says so?" Well, my signature was on the letter and it would not be difficult to obtain others, but in the past you have advised that a multitude of names carries no more weight. But I could possibly add yours too since your editorial was entitled "Another Reason". Brother IJtsma was one reason, Hamilton congregation a second and brother Van Dixhoorn another.

Thirdly, I don't care to have either you or anyone else sweep a sincere thought aside by labeling it "evil insinuations". That is reading my heart and is a sort of psycho-analysis which I will not concede to either you or any other mortal. I could with equal vigor state that that evil insinuation is an evil insinuation and we could continue unabated for page after page and accomplish and prove no more than when naughty boys quarrel and hurl improper epithets back and forth.

Fourthly, your staccato "not aware", namely, that the brother was not a member at the time, speaks volumes both by the admission and omission. The question immediately arises as to how many other matters lack the necessary factual background before construction is placed upon them and conclusions drawn? And the omission places us before the important question as to whether you would have dealt otherwise had you known?

I regret that I received but eight answers. You can do but little with the number eight. It is not a Scriptural number. True, eight makes an octave but

for a beautiful symphony we also require sharps and flats. Is it necessary to assure you that the above is not sarcasm but rather a meditative reflection?

But, I can help to raise it at least to nine by respectfully asking again: "Since when have we been giving public notes of advice to consistories?" Are you inferring thereby that they are incapable of managing their own local affairs at least until they request advice from the proper ecclesiastical bodies?

Finally, I do not blame you for taking the opportunity to call my expression blasphemous. It would indeed require an extra-ordinarily magnanimous character to pass it by. It was a loose chip and I am not surprised that you stuck your axe behind it. But one chip doesn't fell a tree. I would rather call it an indelicate expression. I should have found a better one rather than the first that came to mind.

I have received complaints on your method of answering at least my contributions. Readers have found it difficult to match the answer to the question and as I pointed out above, at least one question which I have repeated was not even touched upon.

And finally, I trust that we understand that I have raised these questions not for the sake of stirring up strife or attempting to depredate your writings, but rather that we may be able to properly answer when those who militate against us use such material to speak unfavorably of our denomination.

I believe that I too understand our concept of true love for the brethren. And I do not believe that it consists in a leaning backwards to be nice to people but rather a bending forward, a stooping forward and if need be a reaching downward to gather up and drawing close enough to tenderly whisper in the ear "Brethren, this is the glorious way of salvation. Here is the place where you may find rest for your weary souls. Harken unto us, also you Canadian immigrants, and we will testify what the Lord has done for us."

It is well that as parents we do not set our children out on the street every time they do not harken to sound teaching. The streets would be full of children. And if God so dealt with us our clergy would be preaching to empty benches.

Very respectfully,

George Ten Elshof.

*Note.* Brother Ten Elshof writes that in his former contribution he asked the question: "Since when have we been giving public notes of advice to consistories." It would have been impolite of me to neglect to answer a decent question. The trouble is that I still cannot find the question in the brother's contribution.

As to the matter itself: that has been done repeatedly, and there is nothing wrong in it.

H. H.

## Ingezonden

Wanneer men de verslagen leest van Classis Oost en West en de uitslag der stemming nagaat in beide vergaderingen, dan is er een zeer magere winst to boeken ten voordeele van hen die door hun rusteloos geschrijf de kerken trachten op het hart te drukken dat aanname der Declaration gebiedend noodzakelijk is. Voorwaar een diepe teleurstelling voor hen die meenen dat de Declaration het eenige behoud onzer kerken is zullen we niet in Arminiaansche wateren verzeilen.

Onwillekeurig gingen we de geschiedenis eens na der afscheiding in 1934 onder leiding van Ds. de Cock, men vond bij hem geen gefatsoeneer van onze oude beproefde belijdenis schriften, doch onder de kennelijke zegen des Heeren was het zwaard des Geestes 't welk is Gods Woord zijn eenig strijdwapen tegen de bittere vijandschap die er toen heerschte in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk.

En als we dan de niet minder felle kerkstrijd nagaan in 1886 onder leiding van Ds. Kuyper dan was het ook onder zijn optreden alleen zijn streven de zuivere verkondiging van Gods Woord, als een twee snijdend scherp zwaard, met dat zwaard in de vuist bond, Kuyper de strijd aan tegen de moderne Ned. Herv. kerk. En wat waren in beide reformaties afscheiding en Doleantie de vruchten? Dat als het ware door een electrische schok bijna door geheel Nederland de kerken uit de grond opreezen. Het volk werd wakker en de Heere wrocht mede. Broeders hebben beide reformaties ook ons niet iets te zeggen? Valt er voor ons uit de geschiedenis van '34 en '86 niet iets te leeren? Men maakte zich niet druk over onze formulieren, om die voor een zekere groep pasklaar te maken, doch om het gevleugelde woord van Groen van Prinsterer te gebruiken ('t welk sloeg op het terrein van den staat) en tot het onze te maken en dan op kerkelijk gebied: "tegen de revolutie het Evangelie". Ook daarin schuilt onze kracht. Predikt het Woord, zegt de Heilige Schrift, dat is alleen onze roeping, te strijden met dat Woord tegen allerlei wind van leer, daarin alleen ligt onze kracht, en in dien weg, mogen we onder den zegen des Heeren vruchten verwachten.

J. R. VanderWal.

## DATE CHANGED!

The League of Men's Societies will have their annual membership meeting on the 26th of April (instead of the 19th) at the Creston Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. E. Emanuel will be the guest speaker.

All men in this area are invited to attend this important meeting.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Cor. 15:25

"Thus also it is written: the first man, Adam, became a living soul; the last Adam became a quickening Spirit". I Cor. 15:25.

We ended our last article with the remark, that if any man preached well on Genesis 2:7, he would also preach well on Revelations 22, by so doing.

It is well to keep this in mind. Better still: let us try to set this forth in the very passage of the Word of God under consideration. For here, in I Cor. 15:45, Paul is setting forth the full revelational and Christological-Eschatological implication of Genesis 2:7.

Proof for our contention that this text is in its design Christological-Eschatological we have given in the former article. Into this we will not now enter more in detail. This would lead us too far from the purpose of this writing.

We will now simply listen to Paul and try to reproduce His excellent exegesis of Genesis 2:7. For Paul does more here than merely quote this passage. In quoting it he exegetes it for us. Let us not overlook this. It is the exegesis of the Holy Spirit in Paul.

The first man became a living soul, says Paul. Thus we literally read in Gen. 2:7. Literally the text reads: "And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Concerning this passage we would notice the following:

In the first place that we are here dealing with the creation-account of how man *became a living soul*. It is well to notice, that when the text speaks of "han" here it does not speak merely of the creation of Adam's *body* from the dust. God did not simply form Adam's body from the dust, but God "formed *man*" from the dust of the earth. Then, too, we should notice that this creation act, whereby God formed man from the dust of the ground, so that he was constituted a "living soul", was a twofold act. Yet, it was one creation act. The entire man was formed from the dust. Part of that forming was, that God breathed into him the breath of life and thus the entire man *became a living soul*.

It should not escape our notice, that this notice of man's becoming "living soul" is recorded to us in Genesis 2 and not in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1 we read of the Monologue of God in which He speaks of how He would make man after His image and likeness, giving him to have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living

creature that moveth upon the face of the earth. There we also read of the fact, that God created him male and female. The viewpoint there is the spiritual-ethical character of man, his exaltation above the other living creatures, in that he is created after the image of God. Man must portray God in His keeping of the commandments in true righteousness, holiness and knowledge. That is the view-point of the account of man's creation in Gen. 1:26-28.

But in Gen. 2:7 the viewpoint is quite different. It is here that we see this man that is created after the image of God as he is *constituted* living creature. God *made* him *living creature*, living soul, a *nephesh chajah*!

Now he is quite uniquely living soul, a *nephesh chajah*. I say this, because also all that God made to move upon the face of the earth is called "living soul", or "living creature". Thus we read in Gen. 1:20-21: "And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of *living creatures*, and let birds fly above the earth, in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after his kind: And God saw that it was good." This was His creation on the fifth day. It is the creation of fish and birds. And this moving creation, not tied to the earth in immobile fashion like as the trees, is called "living soul". Thus also in Gen. 1:24: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so." Also here the text speaks of the *living soul*. To distinguish this *living soul* of the animal world from the "living soul" of man the translators into the English language call the *living soul*, the *nephesh chajah* of the beast *living creature*, while man is called a *living soul*. However, in the Staten Vertaling, both are simply translated "levende ziel", that is, living soul.

Now, far be it from us to ever wish to identify the *living soul* of the animals, that move on the earth with the "living soul" of man. The one is living soul turned face downward to the earth. The man is turned face upward toward God and serves God in his spirit, in his mind and will, which is ethically determined from the heart. He is the *image-bearer* of God. Yet, and that is my point, he is made living soul. He is out of the earth earthy.

That point of distinction must never be minimized by us. Let us not, therefore, be misinterpreted, nor misunderstood!

When we stress the truth that man became a "living soul" we wish to point out the analogy between the animals and man; both walk on the earth; both eat the plants of the earth; both need the same vitamins; both have the increased power to reproduce its kind;



both have male and female, and in both there is more or less the conscious act in reproduction.

But there is a great difference. A great difference there is between the living soul and *in its spiritual constitution in man* as compared with the animal.

That point is strikingly brought out in Genesis 2.

Let us take notice of this. We read in Gen. 2:18 that "Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for (answering to) him." And then do we read of the forming of Eve immediately after this in verse 19? No, in the verses 19-20 we read of Adam's *naming of the animals*, of the naming of the *living creatures* (souls). And what Adam named them, that was the name, the *nature* of them. And then we read the very significant notice in Gen. 2:20: "And the man gave name to all the cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; *but for man there was not found a help-meet for him.*"

Now what is the logical conclusion? It is not this: Adam himself saw this significant fact, that in all the living soul there was made and female; but in his own case this was not this? Did he not see that he could not thus be the first Adam, he could not thus be "living soul"?

Adam must have a wife. A wife who is first named (Ishah—taken from man) woman, but who, when he, (Adam) sees the Christological perspectives is called Eve, mother of the living. Adam, too, sees that it is not good. And Jehovah taught Adam this truth through the naming of the animals. Let it not be forgotten, that Eve was taken out of the man, *after* Adam had named the animals.

And let it also be noticed, that even the first Adam looked for a wife, and God brought her to him with His own hand, as a pattern of the unity in marriage of man and wife ever afterwards. Here is not simply the coupling of the animals. Here is the holy matrimony. And in this matrimony the woman will be out of the husband, but man shall be through birth from a woman.

And the possibilities, the created possibilities of the first Adam, as Adam is that he brings forth through Eve the living soul, every living soul of the human race.

Higher than this earthy, and out of the "earth earthy" neither Adam nor Eve could rise. They could not bring forth the form of the heavenly. All, who are born out of them simply bear the form of the earthy.

And Adam and Eve bring forth children not simply after their kind (the genus) but they bring forth children in their likeness. Theirs is the image of God reflected in their being living soul.

But thus the whole human race comes forth from the one blood of Adam. And all bear the image of

the first Adam. That is the thrust of the saying: The first man became living soul!

It is in this setting that we must see Gen. 2:7. It would emphasize the living soul. It emphasizes the "living soul" without minimizing the creation after God's image as spoken on in Gen. 1:28. But it emphasizes this nonetheless. And it is this passage that is here interpreted in I Cor. 15:45. And it is stated that it was written. Yes, we repeat (see former article) that it was written for our instruction, admonition, correction and comfort, that we be thoroughly prepared and equipped unto every good work; that we be able to go on rejoicing ever unto the very open grave that will swallow us up, without being victorious over us.

The fruit of the womb in many living souls is not in vain! Gen. 2:7 and what follows in the chapter is not so, that man is really like the beast that dies.

For the "living soul" that Adam became is made the fit abode of the Son of God in the Virgin Mary. The Holy Ghost came upon her and the power of the Highest overshadowed her and, therefore, that Holy Thing that is born of her is called: God's Son. For unto us a Child is born, for unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

The Son of God came into our flesh.

He, the Son of God, came into the "living soul" of us. He is born from a woman and is made under law. He became like one of us. A very real man He became.

Yet, He did not need to see that there was no help-meet for Him. When He read the deep inner nature of the stars of heaven in their constellation and multitude, or when he spoke of the fish of the sea and the fowls of the air, (and what did He not speak of with a wisdom that far exceeded the wisdom of Solomon when He saw men and women joined in marriage) He did not feel that there was no help-meet for Him.

He is *not the bringer forth* of the living-soul. That was in the first Adam. And into it He entered. He suffers and dies as a *living soul* that He may *become the life-giving Spirit*.

He comes by the water and the blood.

He will rise on the third day. And will be the First-born out of the dead.

And, by His Holy Spirit, He thus opens for us the Scriptures that are written. And the glory of Gen. 2:7 is layed bare in His suffering, death, resurrection, and final glorification.

The Second Adam is made the life-giving Spirit!

Geo. G. Lubbers.

## IN HIS FEAR

### Church Membership In His Fear

10.

WHERE?

#### Introduction.

In this article we begin our discussion of a new question under our main theme of "Church Membership in His Fear". Thus far we have discussed the implications of church membership as such, emphasizing the calling of the believer with regard to the church to which he belongs. We have not mentioned directly the matter of to what church he belongs. We might, perhaps, have discussed this latter question first quite properly, although for various reasons we have left it until now. For underlying all our previous discussions has been the supposition that we did belong to some certain congregation. And underlying that supposition has been the more fundamental supposition that the church as a gathering becomes manifest in various gatherings. There is not merely an holy catholic church consisting of the gathering of the sum-total of all children of God as believers individually, but the body of our Lord Jesus Christ is fundamentally a gathering; and therefore when it becomes manifest in the world, it becomes manifest in its nature of being a gathering. Wherever, then, a group of believers gathers in the name of the Lord Jesus, there you have the visible manifestation of the body of Christ as a congregation.

But that is not all.

It is also the will of Christ that this gathering of believers should become manifest as a *well-ordered* and organized gathering, as an institute. This latter element is also an important one in any description of the manifestation of the church on earth. Just as you can distinguish between the body and organism of a nation on the one hand, and its instituted government on the other, so we must distinguish between the spiritual organism of the church, the gathering of believers and their children, and its institute, by which it pleases Christ to gather, preserve, and govern His church in the world, and through which the church as a whole functions.

This organized and well-ordered form of the church is not a mere accident. Just as it is in principle true that the church is a gathering and therefore must become manifest as a gathering on earth, so it is in principle true that the church is an *instituted* church, and hence must become manifest as such on earth. While the various institutions of the church here on earth will vanish when the church is finally perfected,

it must nevertheless be remembered that also in heaven there will be an instituted church, and the relation of Christ as *King* of His Church will remain everlastingly. And that royal position of Christ in relation to His Church is the very core of the Church as institute.

However, it has pleased Christ that His church in the world should also be instituted, that His kingly authority should become manifest in the church in the world. The exalted Lord, as He ascended up on high, led the captivity captive and gave gifts unto men; and He "gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. 4:11-12. This truth is also implied in the admonition of the apostle Paul to the elders at Ephesus: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28. And many other passages of Holy Writ might be adduced which, while they do not directly teach the institution of the church, nevertheless by their mention of the various offices presuppose this institution of the church by Christ through His apostles. And thus it was historically, that while according to the need of the early church there were special gifts and offices, such as that of tongues, prophecy, healing, evangelism, all under the guidance of the apostolic authority, the church soon appeared in the form of its permanent institution, with its so-called ordinary offices of ministers, elders, and deacons.

There can be no question about it, therefore, that the church as institute is not an invention of man, something which is non-essential and which may be lightly abolished, but that it is Christ-ordained, and that through this form He governs, defends, and preserves His church in the world.

This underlying principle is again important, of course, with respect to all that we have written previously about the activity of our church membership or its inactivity. And it simply underscores the fact that the Christian will not think lightly of his church membership. At the same time, moreover, this principle is the condemnation of all fly-by-night, crusading, revivalistic, un- and inter-denominational movements which usurp the authority and calling of the instituted church, and of those who follow and support such movements. It implies that the work of the ministry of the Word, of all mission endeavor, of theological training, and of whatever else belongs to the ministry of the Word in the wider sense, belongs to the church as institute and to no one else. And it is our calling as members of His church to recognize this and act accordingly. And to act accordingly means that we shall shun and disdain to support such movements in

any way. When we do so, we do not shun the cause of Christ, but we maintain it.

However, from this principle arises another question. For the fact is that there are many churches in the world. This is true, first of all, because of the limitations of locality: it is simply impossible for all the believers and their children to be gathered in one congregation. Besides, there are differences in race, color, nationality, language,—all of which require that the church shall be manifest not in one but in many instituted congregations.

But that is not the biggest difficulty.

There are also differences between one church and another that pertain to the very essence of the church. There are matters of doctrine and confession, matters of church government and form of worship. And it is a well-known fact that these differences have multiplied instead of diminishing, especially since the period of the Reformation. Since the time when the Romish church was toppled from its all dominating position on the ecclesiastical scene, and the principle was clearly announced that the conscience of the believer could be bound by the Word of God only in last instance, so that the church was liberated from the dictates of a supposed successor of Peter, freed from the killing uniformity of a dead religion, and set at liberty from the office-denying bondage of the hierarchy,—since that time denominations of all kinds and flying under various flags have multiplied, and hundreds of confessions have been composed, adopted, and in turn denied and opposed.

Such a scene the Christian beholds in the ecclesiastical world today.

And if he does not face the concrete question, "Where must I join?" he certainly does nevertheless face the task of giving account to himself before God of his membership in the church to which he belongs. He certainly in that sense always confronts the question, "To what church must I belong?" He must always be able to account for the fact that he is *here*, and not *there*. In the wider sense, the child of God stands before this duty with regard to every existing denomination, even though in the narrower sense he stands before this calling especially with regard to those churches with which he comes into contact, and in the narrowest sense with regard to those churches in which he had his origin historically.

Hence, even if we leave out of view those who openly repudiate the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and deny the very fundamentals of Christianity, such as the trinity, the divinity of Christ, the atonement through the blood of Christ, and the resurrection, there is still enough difference in doctrine and confession, in government and worship, to make it impossible for all these churches to live together under one roof. Often they oppose each other on such truths

as sovereign predestination, irresistible grace, total depravity, infant baptism, the sacrament of communion, the second coming of Christ. The unity of the church is by no means apparent in the manifestation of the church in the world; instead the church seems to be irreparably divided.

And what must we say about all this? What must be our attitude as members of a certain congregation and a certain denomination over against all the others? Is this membership simply a matter of individual taste and preference? Does it matter little where we are members? Does a change in membership carry with it no responsibility? Is there any standard upon which I can base my decision and choice?

Before this question the believer must certainly stand all the days of his life as member of a certain congregation. And it may not remain merely a question for him. Standing before the question, he must also give and be able to give a firm and clear answer. And it is only when he sees the vital issue involved in his membership that he will ever be faithful in his life as member of the church.

H. C. Hoeksema.



## Technically Correct, Yet Irregular?

In the March 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer* the Rev. Hofman, writing about the Declaration of Principles, makes the following statement: "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." And a little further he writes: "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*."

This reasoning is not only incorrect with regard to the matter of the Declaration, but it is principally wrong, and therefore dangerous for our ecclesiastical life, and destructive of all good order. It involves, though from a slightly different viewpoint, an error which frequently arises, namely, the slighting of technicalities.

A little analization will make this clear. "Technically correct" can only mean: according to the rules, in this case, the rules of Reformed Church Order.

Rev. Hofman recognizes this fact when he grants that the Declaration is church politically proper. But what then is the meaning of the terms *regular* and *irregular*? They are derived from the Latin *regula*, which means "rule". Hence, the term *regular* means: according to rule. And the term *irregular* means: not according to rule. To say, then, that something is technically correct, yet irregular is a plain contradiction in terms.

With regard to the Declaration, then, it must also be clear that if from a church-political point of view it is "technically correct", that is certainly *one* of the grounds for its adoption, even though it is not the only one. If it were technically incorrect, as has been averred by some, then it certainly could never be adopted. One of the inherent grounds for the adoption of anything by an ecclesiastical body must always be that it is technically correct church politically.

And, apart now from the question of the Declaration, that principle should always be carefully maintained.

We should not slightly refer to technicalities, as though they may be lightly passed over, in favor of more important things. The underlying reason for this is the fact that form and essence, rules and truth are inseparably connected.

For a very enlightening editorial on this score, I refer both Rev. Hofman and our readers to Vol. 19, p. 52, of our *Standard Bearer*: "The Importance of Technicalities."

*Technically correct, yet irregular* in an inherent impossibility.

H. C. Hoeksema.

#### IN MEMORIAM

The Holland Ladies Aid of the Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, California, hereby wishes to express their sincere sympathy for our beloved pastor, Rev. Vermeer and family, in their deep sorrow in the sudden death of their daughter

JEAN

May the God of all grace and comfort be near unto them and may they rejoice in the knowledge that Jean is with her Lord.

Mrs. P. Boss, Vice Pres.

Mrs. P. Kooiman, Sec'y.

## PERISCOPE

### *Church Membership in the U.S.A.*

From our daily newspaper we glean the following:

"Church membership increased 51.5 percent while the nation's population increased only an estimated 30 percent between 1926 and 1949, the National Council of Churches reported today.

"The council said, 'American Church membership is at an all time high, not only in terms of actual numbers but in proportion to the population.'

"A council survey for the 24-year period showed that total membership of religious bodies, including a number of eastern orthodox churches rose from 53,204,413 in 1926 to 80,682,575, or more than 54 percent of the total population in 1949.

"Despite the upsurge, 'there are also more people not on the church rolls than ever before,' Dr. Benson Y. Landis, associate director of the council's research and survey department said.

"The council said its survey tabulated membership of 54 religious groups all with membership over 50,000. Combined these groups account for about 97 percent of total church membership in the U.S., the report said.

"Protestant groups, adding 16,954,322 new members for a 56 percent growth, showed the largest percentage gain. But the Roman Catholic church, which increased by 9,005,305 for a 48.4 percent rise showed the largest single increase in membership among the three major faiths.

"Jewish congregations increased by 918,758 members for a 22.5 percent rise.

"Among the Protestant denominations, the Southern Baptist made the largest increase with 3,236,887. Methodists were second with 2,031,927, the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc., third with 1,188,583 and the United Lutheran Church of America fourth with 738,229.

"Eleven Protestant groups surveyed reported 1,000,000 or more membership. Of these five averaged 85.3 percent increase: The Southern Baptist Convention, the national Baptist Convention U. S.A., Inc., the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church, The United Lutheran Church in America and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

"Landis says that the greatest percentage growth was among the smaller sects and denominations which are 'characterized by an intense evangelistic spirit and generally teach the second coming of Christ.'

"Once thought of as appealing especially to the socially disadvantaged," he said, "they are now apparently bringing into their ranks large numbers of the 'comfortable' portion of the population."

"The survey showed the Church of God in Christ had the highest percent increase in the group, increasing from 30,263 in 1926 to 240,530 in 1940, a percent rise of 1025.2."

Interesting as these figures are we may well place a question mark behind them if they are to be judged from the viewpoint of true *spiritual* worth. This in the first place because they were taken by the 'National Council of Churches' and everyone knows that they include the rankest of modernists. In the second place this is true because it gives no breaking down of the group into orthodox and modern, in fact simply lumps all together including Roman Catholics, Jews, and Protestants of every hue, and says nothing of faith—only membership. Finally as far as we are concerned it is interesting to note that as Protestant Reformed we belong to the 3 percent not even tabulated, because we number less than 50,000.

However it is interesting to note that 54 percent of the population of "Christian" America belongs to some church. It would be interesting to discover how many of those included in the 54 percent were orthodox, confessing, children of God. It does however indicate once again the reality of the prophecies of the book of Revelation concerning the false church.

And how must we evaluate the phenomenal growth of the "smaller sects". Is it to be explained from the fact that the older denominations have become so modern that they are turned from in disgust? Is this a sign that God still has His true people here who turn to the comparatively more sound "smaller sects"? Or is it a sign that the cause of God is almost extinct in the U.S.A. as far as the nominal church world is concerned?

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#### *President Truman's Advice Should Not Be Followed!*

Last week President Truman declared that things like "Denominational quarrels" ought to be forgotten "in this time of crisis."

The President was speaking to a group of editors representing the Associated Church press who gathered at the White House.

"Petty things should be forgotten, denominational quarrels should be overlooked," he said. He further told the group that he needed its aid to mobilize the moral forces of the world against the unmoral forces.

Now we would not deny that sometimes denominational quarrels degenerate, due to man's sinfulness,

into petty bickering over personalities, but to simply ignore the truth would neither be wise nor good. For that which separates the churches is the conviction concerning the truth and to deny that conviction is to deny the truth. Any superficial union on the basis of expediency and "crisis" at the expense of the truth must certainly be refused. It promotes only the cause of unbelief.

The President's advice should not be followed!

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#### *The Blood of Martyrs the Seed of the Church.*

The above heading has long been considered truth. True it is from history that persecution itself seemed rather to stimulate than to discourage the spread of the gospel.

That the devil also has learned this lesson and the "beast" with him is becoming increasingly evident. We were reminded of this by an article in the last "Presbyterian Guardian."

According to this article Dr. Tibor Csikesz, pastor of the Hungarian Evangelical and Reformed Church in Phoenixville, Penn. was the speaker at the evening meeting of the Alumni Homecoming of the Westminster Seminary.

Dr. Csikesz told of the progressive invasion of church life by the Communist government, (this concerns the Reformed Church of Hungary which is now under Communist control—J.H.) and of how leaders of the church, once thought to be strongly conservative, have compromised with the government under the necessity of securing a living. This procedure was rationalized by the idea of repentance—that the church had been too entangled with capitalism in the past, and of faith—that the church exists in the world, and must continue so to exist, whatever sort the world may be.

"At first the general attitude, according to Dr. Csikesz, was one of live and let live. But then the government came to demand that the church cooperate with it, and finally demanded that the church be enthusiastic and excited about cooperating with it.

"There is a certain amount of underground opposition to the communist rule on the part of the Christian people, but how much is uncertain. The speaker pointed out, in answer to questions, *that martyrdom is actually difficult in Hungary—at least the sort of martyrdom which receives attention.* (We underscore, J.H.). When Christian people or leaders appear too strenuous in their opposition, they simply disappear. No chance is given them to arouse a public following or even to attract attention."

If there is no "blood of the martyrs" visible there seems to be no "seed" of the church. Undoubtedly the



day is fast approaching in which "the two witnesses shall be killed." Rev. 11.

\* \* \* \*

### *Here and There.*

—The McCollum decision to be carried to its extreme? The Christian Century reports that "Frank C. Hughes, an avowed atheist has filed a complaint against the University of Minnesota, charging it with wholesale violation of the Constitution in aiding campus religious activities. Mr. Hughes, . . . an alumnus says he intends to fight his case to the Supreme Court and hopes for a decision similar to that handed in the McCollum case but this time affecting higher education."

### —Spain and the Gospel:

Spanish police have ordered a Cuban citizen who was working as a Protestant Missionary there to leave the country at once. The Spanish government forbids Protestants from making any effort to convert Roman Catholics to the Protestant faith.

### —Chile and Education:

In Chile a new religious bill has been passed which makes Roman Catholic teaching obligatory in schools under state control.

### —Greece and Education:

In Greece a private Christian School was forbidden to give instruction and its partially completed building abandoned. It was insisted by the government that no provisions were allowed by the government for such private education of a religious nature.

### —Tibet:

By the "Wachter" we are informed that the whole Bible is in the process of being printed in the Tibetan language.

J. Howerzyl.

### IN MEMORIAM

The Consistory of the First Prot. Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, expresses sincere sympathy to Rev. H. De Wolf in the death of his father, and also to Elder H. Knott in the death of his sister, Mrs. J. Kerkstra.

May our heavenly Father comfort the bereaved and may we at all times put our trust in Him.

H. Hoeksema, Pres.

J. M. Faber, Sec'y.

### ATTENTION!

### SOLDIERS & SAILORS

Our Missionary, Rev. A. Cammenga, would like to obtain the names and addresses of our military men in the camps and ports of the State of Washington. Since he is located in the vicinity of several of these camps and ports it is possible that he can contact our servicemen in this area and help provide for their spiritual needs. Kindly send all such names and addresses to:

Rev. A. Cammenga  
Box 481  
Sumas, Washington,

If any of our servicemen are at any time able to attend our services on Sunday in Lynden, Washington, we shall be happy to provide transportation information and lodging. Write to the above address or phone 992, Sumas, Washington.

### PRAYER

#### For a Loved One In the Service

O Lord, thou God in heaven above  
Look down upon me in thy love  
Hear this suppliant's humble plea  
And in mercy answer me.

Thou knowest my dear one, far from home  
Thou seest him, wher'er he roam  
On land, in air, or on the sea  
His way is truly known to thee.

In dangers great he oft may stand  
Keep him Lord, in thine own hand  
Keep him from harm and from all sin  
From harm without, from sin within.

Let thy grace upon him rest  
His body guard, his spirit bless  
And when thine own will it may be  
Return him safely home to me.

Then help me Lord, and give me grace  
To bow within thy holy place  
And give true thanks and praise to thee  
For mercies great to him and me.

—From Banner of Truth.