

may take up for discussion as many of these other matters as we think it worth our while.

Finally, the ground on which the "Declaration" may be rejected is that as to its subject matter it is not the Confessions.

There is also the question whether the adoption of the "Declaration" may be postponed say for a year. It may not be done. Allow me to state the reason. Let us once more get before us the doctrine of the "Declaration". It is this: The promise of God is an unconditional and unfailing oath bequeathing salvation only upon the elect and assuring it to them alone. It was as moved by the conviction that this doctrine is the Gospel of the Confession and the Scriptures that we chose being expelled from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches rather than sign the Three Points. By signing these points we would have denied this doctrine. As moved by this same conviction we have been preaching this doctrine from our pulpits through all the years of our existence as churches. Think what it would mean should we on the coming synod declare the doctrine of the "Declaration" not to be the doctrine of the "Confession and the Scriptures" and on that ground deny it. We would thereby pronounce our conviction false, and accordingly our refusal to subscribe the Three Points a mistake, and our separate existence as churches pointless.

But certainly our firm belief still is that the doctrine of the "Declaration" is the Gospel of the Confessions and the Scriptures. Such being our conviction, how can we postpone adopting the "Declaration" in order to give the Liberated time to make up their minds about it? It may not be done. For to postpone adopting the "Declaration" for that purpose, we as churches on our synod put a question mark not only behind the "Declaration" but behind the Confession and the very Scriptures as well. For our conviction is that the doctrine of the "Declaration" is the Gospel of the Confession and the Scriptures.

This is as plain as can be. As churches we may not certainly on our next synod decide to postpone adopting the "Declaration" and then in the same breath declare that as to its subject matter it is the confession. Doing the latter we are morally obliged to adopt the "Declaration" at once without delay. The only way in which we can free ourselves from this responsibility before the eyes of the world is officially to refrain from declaring the "Declaration" to be the Confession as to its subject matter. But doing the latter we officially put a question mark behind it. This can't be helped.

But our conviction being what it is, how can it be right for us to put a question mark behind the "Declaration". How, in other words, can it be right for us to *postpone* its adoption even, our conviction being what it is. It cannot be right. G. M. Ophoff.

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## IN HIS FEAR

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### A Healthy Attitude

As we pointed out in our last article, it is our intention in these present articles to underscore the fact that the present controversy, as it has now rather centered about the *Declaration of Principles*, must be viewed and treated in the *fear of the Lord*. In that connection we called attention in the last issue to certain "pseudo-arguments" which are used and of which as people of God we must beware as we take a stand and maintain the position that we take. In the present article we will call attention to some dangerous attitudes which are assumed or could be assumed in regard to the controversy, in the hope that also in this respect "forewarned is fore-armed."

We would emphasize, however, once again before we proceed, that it is not our intention to enter into the contents of the controversy as such in these articles. We say this not because we personally are in a "neutral corner". We are not. We take our stand without any question on the side of the truth as it is maintained in the Declaration on the basis of our Reformed Confessions and also maintain that the declaration of that truth, far from being obstructive or schismatic, is at this stage of our history highly necessary and salutary for our churches in view of recent developments both at home and on the mission field. But the arguments as such, pro and con, do not belong in this rubric, but to the editorial department. And we leave them to our editor gladly. We merely here recognize the fact that the proposed Declaration as well as the truth contained in it have been and are being opposed: there is a controversy. Arguments are being made back and forth. And our churches, all our people, are faced by that controversy. They must weigh the arguments, and they must needs assume certain definite attitudes. And we urge that this must be done in the fear of the Lord. And hence we here call attention to some wrong attitudes with which one comes into contact.

#### *I Don't Care.*

Surprising as it may seem, this attitude is taken by some. It isn't expressed in so many words. Who would do that? But the attitude is there nevertheless. It is really the attitude of those who don't know in the least what is going on these days. They never talk about the matters at hand. They wouldn't know where to begin talking about them. They don't know what matters are the subject of discussion. They don't say, "I don't care," but they act it. They probably don't read either the *Standard Bearer* or *Concordia*. If the

subject is broached in the pulpit, they can't grasp it because they haven't kept themselves informed, haven't lived along. They really take the attitude expressed in the words, "I don't care."

Dangerous? That goes without saying.

If everyone took that attitude, the church would be so dead that there could no longer be any controversy. In fact, throughout church history it has been because there were those dead, inactive, uninformed, uninterested I-don't-care-ists that heresy has ever been able to raise its ugly head in the midst of the church. As long as the church is on its guard and alert and mindful of what is being said and written and actively concerned about it, false doctrine never stands a chance.

Watch, therefore!

#### *Anti-controversialists.*

The twin brother of I-don't-care-ism is anti-controversialism. Those who take this attitude insist that all controversy is distasteful, that we should not sully the pages of our periodicals with these "petty" differences, that no one is edified thereby. They want to leave these doctrinal differences to the private discussion of the clergy. And, with a view to those outside our circles, they don't want to hang our dirty wash on the line for all to see. Rather, do they emphasize, we should be positive, not call attention to the falsehood of the lie. They sometimes even go so far as to maintain that it has always been the trouble of the Protestant Reformed Churches that they have been controversial, troublesome, meddlesome, intolerant. We should seek unity, and should cooperate on what common ground we can find, forget the differences, both among ourselves and between us and other groups.

Now there is a certain twisted element of truth in this attitude which is very deceptive. In fact, usually these anti-controversialists make their position sound so deceptively pious and true that one is easily impressed by them as high-minded Christians. The element of truth is this, that controversy is distasteful to most of us, distasteful to our flesh. I refer, of course, to controversy not as fighting for the sake of a fight, but as striving for the maintenance of the truth of God's Word over against the philosophy of men. That true controversy is distasteful to our flesh. We don't want to fight that fight. That is why Scripture so frequently must warn us of the certainty that false doctrine shall arise in the church and must admonish us to be on our guard against heresy and to oppose the lie. In that connection, with a view to the present situation in our churches let us note:

1) That the controversy is there; it is a fact. To say that we must avoid it is to deny reality. And let us not try to take the spiritual attitude of the pro-

verbial ostrich, who blithely sticks his head in the sand and says he can't see any danger.

2) That the cause of that controversy is not the truth, but the appearance of the lie, the Heynsian error. And let us never forget that throughout the history of the church the truth and the maintenance of the truth has not been the cause of schism and dissension. That charge must be laid at the door of heresy. The truth is not a departure, and those who maintain the truth are not schismatic. But the lie is the departure, and those who insist on it over against the truth are the schismatics. If you forget that, you take away your own right of existence as sons of the Reformation. Or, to bring the matter closer home, you take away your right of existence as Protestant Reformed Churches.

3) That controversy should be public. The present controversy is public, of course. And it was brought into public by the public opposition of some to the Protestant Reformed truth. But that it is public is proper. I would not at all be in favor of limiting the present discussions, for example, to a private ministers' conference. Not because I want to see our churches torn by trouble, nor because I like to display our troubles for all to see, but because the matters involved concern the churches. And the churches are not the clergy, but all our congregations and the members thereof.

4) That when and since this controversy is public, everyone must take it as his duty to investigate it not only, but to determine where he stands. You can't be neutral. Nor can you view the whole matter as a sort of philosophical discussion. But because the truth as it is in Christ Jesus is involved, every member of the church must be vitally and intensely concerned. You can't sit by yawning, while the battle of the truth is being fought.

#### *Appeasers.*

It stands to reason that these appeasers are really of the same party as the anti-controversialists. They are those who insist that we must seek peace, that we must pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and that lament the present controversy because it is a breach of the peace.

In regard to this attitude, let it be said that we must beware that our peace-seeking is not pacifism. There must be no appeasement through compromise. The churches must beware of a Munich. In our seeking of peace, we must very consciously seek *peace*; and in our prayer for the peace of Jerusalem, we must very consciously pray for the peace of *Jerusalem*. Peace is after all the sweet consciousness that all is well with us before God. And it is only when we have that peace with God that we can have peace with one another and peace with all things. And remember:

God is a God of truth. There can be no peace with God as long as we hold a lie in our hand, no peace for us as churches and no peace for us as members of the church.

And so: by all means, seek peace. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. But do it with the confession: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

#### *Lack of Love?*

There is also the danger that we simply in a general and hazy way attribute all trouble to a lack of love, often to a lack of love on the part of those who sharply and clearly define and maintain the truth, sometimes to a lack of love on the part of both sides, and sometimes without any specification.

No one will deny that we must be motivated by the love of Christ in all that we do and say. But we must not make a general charge of this kind and then disgustedly turn away from this controversy. Nor should we sling that term *love of Christ* around loosely. Love is concrete. It is, in the first place, love of God in Christ to us. And therefore it is manifest in this that we love the God of our salvation in Christ. And the God of our salvation is the God of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Hence, the activity of love is also this, that we seek and maintain the truth, also among one another. And the activity of love is this, that we condemn all that is not in harmony with that truth, and that we do not hesitate to do that. That is the very necessary activity of love. Love is not a superficial sentiment that will tolerate any and every deviation from the path of truth. In respect to the truth love is very severe. It cannot function where there is the lie. It ferrets out the lie, condemns it, warns against it, points out the way of the truth. If then the accusation of a lack of the love of Christ is made, it must be specific, it must point out where and how that love is lacking, and it must do so on the basis of the Word of God. And let it be remembered that no deviation from the truth of the Word of God has ever yet had its root in the love of Christ.

And now I would like to sound a warning from the pages of church history. The pseudo-arguments of which I wrote last time, and the various attitudes to which I call attention in this article are nothing new in the history of the church. There has never been a time in all the ages of church history when they have not arisen. In fact, if we are mindful of our own history of 25 short years' duration, we cannot fail, surely, to note that all these arguments and different expressions of attitude have ominously familiar

ring. Has it not been exactly the opposition in all the history of our churches that tried to dull the sharp sword of the truth by calling the differences between us and our mother-church a matter of terms, or of a difference of emphasis? Have they not often pointed to the fact that we were a minority? Have they not often boasted in authorities? Have they not often clamored, "me too", in regard to being Reformed? Has not the breach of the peace often been lamented, with the sword of deposition in the hand? Has not the ostrich frequently put its head in the sand ecclesiastically? Has not the general and sentimental charge of a lack of love often been made?

History's page carries the clear warning to all who would walk in the fear of the Lord: Be careful! Be not deceived!

We must not be turned aside from the path of truth. We must be straight-forward, honest, clear, and concise in our arguments, and in our evaluation of them. We must above all else seek the truth, and must be guided by nothing else than a desire for the truth. We must stand concretely upon the basis of the Confessions and continue to maintain them without hesitation over against any and all who slip from that basis and cannot clearly point to any confessional ground in their views.

The fear of the Lord is concrete.

It is the way of truth.

H. C. Hoeksema.




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## FROM HOLY WRIT

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### Exposition Of Hebrews 10:19-25

#### VIII.

In this article we will continue our exposition of Hebrews 10:23. This verse reads as follows: "Let us hold fast the confession of the unwavering hope, for he that hath promised is faithful."

We wish to recall here to the reader, that in our former article, we called attention to two elements in the text. The first element, that we underscored in the above-named article is: the proper understanding of the term "the unwavering hope". We emphasized that this is not the hope in the subjective sense of the term merely, but that this is rather the objective hope in heaven, the realities in Christ as they shall be realized in the future and are the object of our joyful and ardent longing.

The second element to which we called attention is, that the confession here referred to, is not primarily