

Why

REFORMED
CHURCHES
IN
AUSTRALIA?

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WHY
REFORMED CHURCHES
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A PRESBYTERIAN APPEAL

The question is being asked again and again: why did many of the Protestant new settlers from The Netherlands establish a new denomination in this country, instead of joining one of the Australian Churches? Particularly in Presbyterian circles one can hear this question.

In a pamphlet, "Your Church," issued by the Immigration Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, this church presents herself to the "Dear New Fellow-Australians" as "The Reformed and Presbyterian Church," which is "making its witness to the glorious Gospel of our Saviour in the true succession of the Reformation fathers." In this pamphlet John Calvin is called the great Reformer, "who first confronted the Roman Church with a creed as vigorously systematic and a government as closely organised as its own. Supreme authority was given to the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, upon which all doctrine, worship and government must be founded and to which they must be agreeable."

In view of this claim of the Presbyterian Church to be truly Reformed and Calvinistic, it is only natural that among her members in particular the question should be asked: Why did so many Reformed, Calvinistic new settlers from the Netherlands not join our Church, but establish their own denomination "The Reformed Churches of Australia"?

Many people in other Australian denominations may be prompted to ask the same question. It is to this question that we are ready and willing to publish a reply.

FOREWORD

In 1953 the Synod of The Reformed Churches of Australia deemed it desirable that a Statement should be issued to explain the reason for the establishment of the said Churches. This task was entrusted to me and I hereby send it forth, with the prayer that it may achieve, under the blessing of God, the end that was desired.

Penguin, Tas.

J.A.S.

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SOME INCORRECT SUGGESTIONS

Before giving the answer in a positive sense we wish to deal with some incorrect suggestions as to why we have established our own churches.

1. Some have got the impression that we want to stay together as Dutch settlers, adhering to our Dutch language in a Dutch Reformed church, as we are sometimes called.

This, however, is far from the truth. It is true that most of our members are New Australians of Dutch stock. But this is so because new settlers from the Netherlands established the Reformed Churches. It does not imply that our church is aiming to be a church for **Hollanders alone**. We aim, rather, to be a church for Reformed Christians of any nation, and so for Australian Reformed fellow-Christians, as well. In some of our churches there are already Australian members, who joined them wholeheartedly. In New Zealand even a minister of the Presbyterian Church with many members of his congregation united with the Reformed Churches of that Country on the ground of conviction.

In a word, our churches do not want to be **Dutch churches but Reformed Churches**. And since the Lord, by His providence, has directed our way to this beautiful country with an English speaking population, we do not wish to adhere to our Dutch language either. The reason for the use of that language at the beginning is obvious. Many of our members are not able to follow a service in English during the first few years. Our aim, however, is to become real Australian and English speaking churches. In most of our churches part of the service such as Scripture-reading, the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Benediction is in English already. In addition to our Dutch Psalter we have accepted the Psalter Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church of America, one of our sister-denominations. In several of our churches the forms for Baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc., are read in English. Some

congregations have already introduced a complete English service once a month, and aim to hold such services more frequently in the future.

No, we do not wish to be a Dutch church for Dutch people. We want to be a Church of Reformed christian people, both new settlers and Australians.

2. Our separate existence as a church has also been wrongly attributed to the reason, that in our opinion there would be no true Christian ministers and members in existing Australian Churches. We are supposed to regard ourselves as the only true Christians, who can have no fellowship with members of Australian Churches.

Nothing, however, is further from the truth than this suggestion. We have serious objections to the Australian Churches, indeed, and we intend to render an account of these objections in the following pages. But that does not at all imply that we regard all Australian churches as unchristian and all their ministers and members likewise. We know that in every Australian Church there are true children of God, ministers, officers, members. And though we cannot possibly join their denominations, we are longing for personal Christian fellowship with them. All who believe the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God and trust in the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour, who alone can cleanse our sinful hearts by His blood and Spirit, they are our brethren and sisters in the Lord, and we feel one with them in His fellowship.

We recognize also, that by means of the faithful preaching of several true Bible-believing ministers the Lord is working with His saving power in the Australian Churches. We pray Him to strengthen those ministers and to render their ministry most blessed for their churches.

3. Some may also suggest that we want a **perfect church** and because there are some faults and defects in the Australian churches we would not be willing to join them.

This also is not the case. We know perfectly well,

that a perfect church is not to be found on earth, but only in heaven. Our own church-life is full of defects and faults, and so are the lives of our office-bearers and members. As churches and church-members we have to live by the grace of our Lord Jesus from day to day.

No, we did not look for a perfect church.

But we were looking, indeed, for a church that is being built up after the pattern of the Word of God, as it is interpreted by the old doctrinal Standards of the Great Reformation of the 16th century. We were looking for a really **Reformed** church, viz., a church that is attached to the Standards of the Reformation. And only because we were disappointed on that point we decided to establish our own Reformed Churches.

And we are very sad that we had to do so. We would esteem it above all else to be able to join an Australian church. Fellowship with other Australian Christians is much harder to obtain now that we have our own church-life. We are carrying a heavy financial and spiritual burden in building up our church-life from the very bottom.

Many drawbacks could be mentioned. So if it had been at all possible to join an Australian church, we should have done that with thankfulness. But for the sake of principles we could not do so, and only for that reason, as we are now ready to explain.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

When asked what are these principles, we may refer to the name of our denomination: "The Reformed Churches of Australia."

We mean the word "Reformed" in the same sense as it is used in the pamphlet "Your Church" to which attention has been drawn. We are children of the great Reformation of the 16th century, when God through such men as Martin Luther, John Calvin and other faithful ministers of the glorious Gospel purged His church of the Roman Catholic defilement in doctrine, worship and government.

Though we hold Martin Luther in high esteem, we are of the opinion that John Calvin had a clearer insight into the Word of God, and that he, through his writings and influence, has been a particular instrument of God to "re-form" His church, that is, to give her back the form, the way of faith and life, worship and government, which was ordered for her in God's Word, and which the Roman Catholic church had abandoned.

This true Scriptural doctrine, worship, government of the Church was clearly expressed in the Creeds, which the Reformed Churches of the 16th and 17th century adopted as their Standards. Some of these Creeds were drawn up by John Calvin himself, some were prepared by faithful disciples of the great Reformer who propagated his teachings.

Three of these Creeds are particularly known in The Netherlands: The Belgic Confession of Faith, The Heidelberg Catechism and The Canons of Dort. They are the doctrinal Standards of our Churches. They contain the same Scriptural doctrine as is expressed in the Creeds of Reformed Churches in other countries, e.g., The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the doctrinal Standards of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in English speaking countries.

Except for a few paragraphs on the relation of Church and State, these Standards of the Presbyterian Church are fully acceptable to us, because they express the truth, revealed in the Word of God, as faithfully as do our own Standards.

Some vital points in that body of truth may be mentioned here.

Together with all true Reformed and Presbyterian Churches all over the world we believe in:

1. The plenary, verbal and Divine inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life;

2. God the Triune One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These are not names of the same Person working in three different ways, but of three different Persons in the one and undivided Divine Being;

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the essential, absolute and eternal Son of the Father, God Himself with the Father and the Holy Spirit; Who adopted real and proper, but sinless, humanity by being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary;

4. The substitutionary, expiatory death of Jesus Christ, in that He gave his life a ransom for His Church;

5. His resurrection from among the dead in the same body in which He was crucified, and the second coming of the same Jesus in power and glory;

6. Salvation not by works but by grace only, through faith as the effect of election from all eternity and of regeneration by the Spirit and the Word;

7. The everlasting bliss of the saved, and the everlasting suffering of the lost;

8. The Church as the spiritual Body of Christ, consisting of true believers with their children, the latter by virtue of the Covenant of Grace which was established with Abraham and his seed;

9. Infant baptism, for children of believers only;

10. The necessity of maintaining, according to the Word of God, the purity of the Church, by practising discipline against office-bearers and church-members, whose doctrine or life are not in accordance with the Word of God, by debarring them from the Sacraments, and, if they harden their hearts against all admonitions, excluding them from the Church.

These are the main Biblical truths we believe as Reformed Churches, in fellowship with all true Reformed and Presbyterian Churches throughout the whole world.

WHY WE WERE DISAPPOINTED

When we came to this country and looked for an

Australian Church that held these truths, not only in theory but also by its actions, we were very disappointed.

It became apparent that many Churches adhere to doctrines or practices which are contrary to the Word of God. Some of them deny that the children of believers as infants already have a right to baptism, in virtue of the Covenant of Grace. Others deny Election and the grace-to-believe as a free gift of God to the elect only, maintaining that man is first with the choice of his free will, not the Lord, Who makes the corrupt will of His elect ready to accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour, that all honour and glory be to God alone. Others again, though in doctrine much related to us, allow members of oath-bound secret organisations, which are anti-christian, to be members of their church and partakers of the Lord's Supper.

In addition many of the Churches in this country are lacking in the practice of Biblical discipline against office-bearers and members, who do not teach or live in accordance with the Word of God.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

But, someone may ask why not join the Presbyterian Church of Australia? This Church assures you she is truly Reformed and Presbyterian. It has the Westminster Confession as its doctrinal Standard. It tells you in its pamphlet that it is, "making its witness to the glorious Gospel of our Saviour in the true succession of the Reformation fathers." It claims to be "a Confessional Church" and that "New Australians who come from European countries, where they belonged to the Reformed Church, will find their true spiritual home within the borders of the Presbyterian Church of Australia." That Church welcomes you "as brothers in the common faith." Why keep aloof from a Church that is just like the one you want?

We deeply regret that we cannot join that Church because the magnificent assurances inserted in the pamphlet have proved to be untrue.

A witness "in the true succession of the Reformation fathers?" "A confessional Church?" If that alone were true, how gladly we should join this church!

But the facts speak a different language. We know there are a number of ministers in this denomination, who are making their witness "in the true succession of the Reformation fathers" and whom we gladly recognize as "brethren in the common faith." There are also a number of such church-members.

But how are we to regard the denomination as a whole? The sad facts present a different picture. In "The Tasmanian Presbyterian," April, 1949, the Editor mentions three groups within the Presbyterian Church, one evangelical, one catholic, one liberal, each one of which groups "often strives to exalt its own prejudices."

This is a testimony quite different from that in the pamphlet mentioned previously that the Witness of the Presbyterian Church is "in the true succession of the Reformation fathers." The true Reformation fathers banished from the Church all catholic elements, that were opposite to the evangelical. All refused to suffer liberalism in any form, because it is opposite to evangelicalism. But in the Presbyterian Church today the evangelical trend of thought lives on a par with the catholic and liberal, and they are all called upon to tolerate each other. As the Editorial, mentioned above, puts it, "The Church needs a synthesis of all that is best in her many traditions—evangelical, catholic and liberal."

We do not wish to say much about the catholic trends in the Presbyterian Church, because much more wide spread in this church is doctrinal modernism.

Everywhere one can hear and read modern, anti-Scriptural ideas, which are contrary to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Many Radio-preachers and-speakers, instead of telling the people of a Saviour who died as a sacrifice for our sins, "to pay the price of sin" as the Substitute for His guilty people, speak of a non-Scriptural Jesus, whom we have only to

follow after, by living as He lived, so as to be saved. If we believe those preachers and speakers, Jesus Christ is only our great Example, not our only Saviour from the curse of sin, Satan and hell.

Doctrinal liberalism and modernism, are to be found in both official and semi-official documents. In "The Tasmanian Presbyterian," September, 1950, the Editor writes: "The primary task of the Presbyterian Church of Australia is to set its own house in order (to restore the years the locusts of doctrinal devaluation and emasculated traditions have eaten)."

Doctrinal devaluation! The Editor is right as appears from evidence that abounds.

THE DECLARATORY STATEMENT, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 1901

We are convinced that in the year 1901, when the Presbyterian Churches throughout Australia agreed to form one Presbyterian Church, this Church officially deviated from the right way and opened its doors to doctrines that are unscriptural and contrary to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In that year it was decided (we quote), "The Subordinate Standard of the United Church shall be the Westminster Confession of Faith, read in the light of the Declaratory Statement" It is evident that from the moment this decision was taken, the Westminster Confession of Faith ceased to be binding as such, but only "read in the light of the Declaratory Statement."

In 1901 Liberty of Opinion was allowed officially (we quote), "on matters in the Subordinate Standard non essential to the doctrine therein taught" Apparently the door is opened here to various "winds of doctrine." For every Minister or Professor may deem a false doctrine, taught by himself, a "matter non essential to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of

Faith." He may e.g., deny the infallibility of the Scriptures, the Virgin Birth of our Saviour, and he may teach that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are merely different names for three different ways of revelation and action of God, and then say, "these matters are non essential to the doctrine of the Subordinate Standard."

It is claimed that restriction has been placed on the Liberty of Opinion. We quote: ". . . the Church guarding against the abuse of this liberty to the injury of its unity and peace." But this restriction itself opens the door so much the wider. For no mention is made about the Church guarding against the abuse of this liberty in the corruption of the pure doctrine. Only the unity and peace of the Church are taken under protection!

The Declaratory Statement of 1901 contains a paragraph on Redemption. This paragraph mentions "certain objective supernatural historic facts" upon which the Christian faith rests. They are also called "cardinal facts." The virgin birth of the Lord Jesus and His conception by the Holy Spirit are not mentioned. Nor is the Resurrection of Christ indicated as a Bodily Resurrection. Not a word is said about the second coming of Christ, the great future event, when our Saviour will complete His redeeming work. So the door is opened to deny or to falsify these facts, and to say that they are not cardinal facts in the light of the Declaratory Statement.

Similar criticisms could be offered in connection with other paragraphs of the Statement.

Since 1901, every Minister has to sign a Formula at his ordination or induction. It begins as follows (we quote) "I own and accept the Subordinate Standard of this Church, with the explanations given in the Articles contained in the Declaratory Statement . . ." In the light of all that has been said it will be clear, that every minister, by signing this Formula, makes himself responsible for the official doctrinal devaluation in the Presbyterian Church of Australia. This is one of the

reasons why we could not possibly join that Church. Our ministers too would have been asked to sign the said Formula, and thus be compelled to assume a responsibility, which they may not take. They would have pledged themselves to compromise in doctrinal matters, which is contrary to their calling according to the Word of God.

DOCTRINAL DECLINE IN THE COLLEGES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

How much the doctrinal devaluation through the liberty officially granted in 1901, has become a practical fact in the Presbyterian Church of Australia, appears first of all from the teachings by Theological Professors and Lecturers at the Presbyterian Colleges. We find some of those teachings in the booklet "I Believe," second edition, published by Board of Religious Education, Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Study 4 is from the hand of Rev. David W. Albert, M.A., B.D., Lecturer in Old Testament and Systematic Theology, Emmanuel College, Queensland. This study deals with Jesus Christ, and answers the question "Who is Jesus Christ?" It is the same question, that is dealt with in Chapter VIII of the Westminster Confession of Faith. About the Person of Jesus Christ it is stated there: "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man."

Does Study 4 in the booklet "I Believe" preach the

Lord Jesus Christ so? It does not. Contrary to the Westminster Confession of Faith Jesus Christ is pictured first of all as The Perfect Man. Then in very vague phraseology He is pictured as The Son of God, and very nice things about Christ as the Son of God are said. But not a word is to be found about Christ as Himself "very and eternal God."

As to the question how the Son of God could become the perfect Man, we do not hear anything of the Virgin Birth. Instead it is suggested that it was similar to the creation of man in God's own image and likeness.

Jesus Christ is also pictured as The Saviour of the World. It is stated that our sins brought Him to the death of the Cross. But the writer is silent about His death as an atoning death, a death in our place as our Substitute, Mediator and Surety.

No, the Jesus Christ of Study 4 is not the Jesus Christ of the Scriptures and of the Westminster Confession of Faith!

Study 5 is from the hand of the late Rev. Norman MacLeish, M.A., B.Phil., who at the time was Professor of Systematic Theology, Ormond College, Melbourne. This Study deals with The Holy Spirit.

In the Westminster Confession of Faith the Holy Spirit is called one of the three persons in the unity of the Godhead, "of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

In contrast to that in Study 5 we read "The Holy Spirit is God Himself, so far as God is a living God, who ceaselessly rules over all things and comes into contact with men, enlightening their minds, purifying their hearts, and strengthening their wills."

It is evident that the Holy Spirit according to this teaching, is only a name for God, not a Divine Person in the Divine triune Being. It is only a name to describe God as a living God. A name, given to Him by men, as appears from the following quotations: ". . . . when we

wish to describe God as living or active, we call Him the Holy Spirit . . .," and further "the Israelites came to regard all activity in the world as due to the living God, and when they wished to refer to Him as being active, they spoke of "the spirit of God" or of "the Spirit." No wonder that the writer on page 26, speaking of the Holy Spirit, uses quotation marks: "the Holy Spirit"! In reality the Scriptural doctrine of the Holy Spirit is explained away. The writer of Study 5 does not believe in a triune God, as He reveals Himself in the Word and as the truly Reformed Churches throughout the world for centuries believed in Him. The teaching here is mere Unitarianism, the old heresy of Sabellius, condemned already in the early centuries of the Christian Church!

That we are not mistaken in our opinion on the teachings of the late Professor Norman MacLeish, appears clearer than daylight from Study 6 on "The Trinity." Here Unitarianism reveals itself to the full. Here it is stated that (we quote) ". . . just as an actor may play three different parts in a play, and yet remain one man, so the one and only God is at one and the same time a creative or self-existent Being (whom we call the Father), a self-revealing Being (whom we call the Son), and a self-imparting or self-communicating Being (whom we call the Holy Spirit)." And a little further: ". . . . God is three Persons in a sense which is no more absurd than that of the plain assertion that John Brown is at one and the same time a son, a brother, and a father—the son of his father, the brother of his brother, and the father of his son, yet the one John Brown."

According to such teaching there is in reality only one Divine Person, Who is working and revealing Himself in three different ways and to whom we (we!) merely give three different names.

We could draw attention to many more examples of unbiblical and unreformed teaching by Professors and Lecturers of the Presbyterian Church. Suffice it to say

that we also for that reason cannot join the Presbyterian Church of Australia. That Church is fully responsible for the views expressed, because the Professors are appointed by the General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church. We too would have become responsible by joining this Church. And if then some of our young men desired to be ministers they would be expected to seek training in Colleges where heresies and error are taught, instead of the revealed truth of the Word of God and the Westminster Confession.

EVIDENCE FROM PRESBYTERIAN PUBLICATIONS

It is natural to conclude that many ministers of the Presbyterian Church, instructed by heretical Professors, pass on this false teaching to church-members.

In the booklet "I Believe", written by 23 authors, there is scarcely to be found one chapter, that is in accordance with the Scriptures and the Subordinate Standard of the Presbyterian Church.

Some years ago the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church approved of a new catechism, that may be used instead of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. In this booklet the clear exposition of the Reformed Doctrine, as found in the Westminster Catechisms, has been replaced by a form of words, that provides a wide opening for liberal, non-Scriptural explanation. In the answer to question 2 we read, that God makes Himself known to us by "the Scriptures, and especially in Jesus Christ." Here God's revelation in Christ is more or less separated from that in the Scriptures, while our Lord Himself teaches us in John 5: 39 that God reveals himself to us in Jesus Christ **through the Scriptures**. In the answer to question II, 3 God is called the "loving Father of us all." But Scripture teaches us that a great part of mankind have not God but the devil as their father (John 8: 38, 44; 1 John 3: 10). In the answers to questions 11, 4-7 the Persons of the Trinity are spoken

of in the same way as we found in the teachings of the late Professor MacLeish.

Various other non-Scriptural tendencies in the Intermediate Catechism could be pointed out.

In 1953 there was published a "Handbook for Faith and Life," with the sub-title "Formerly known as the Intermediate Catechism." This booklet was published by The Board of Religious Education and shows on the cover the words "Presbyterian Church of Australia."

In several places, this volume furnishes clear evidence of modernistic teaching. On page 11 Jesus is called the reconciler, but how? It reads "God was in Christ, enduring all that human sin could do to Him, paying the full price of mortal agony, to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt His Fatherly longing for restored fellowship with us." But Scriptures and the Westminster Standards teach us that by the suffering and death of Christ God not only "proved His longing for restored fellowship with us," but really and actually **restored** that fellowship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as a God-given Substitute, suffered and died in the place of those whom the Father had given Him, taking the wrath of God, which they deserve, upon Himself. On page 14 the true Trinity, though the word is used, is denied, in the same way we saw before.

On page 16 we read: "without our personal victories in that matter (daily victories over sin are meant) the re-conquest of the world for Christ, the defeat of evil within national and international realms, may forever be a dream. Listen to the trumpet proclamation of Rev. 11: 15, and then ask yourself, "Can it take place, if He is not King in my heart?" But Revelation Ch. 11 itself teaches us that the victory of Christ does not depend in the least upon our personal victories over sin. That it can take place and shall take place even if He is not King in "my heart." Not our personal victories over sin will make the kingdoms of this world to be submitted to Christ, but the great power of God, which will be re-

vealed particularly in the second coming of Christ (Rev. 11: 17-19).

On page 26 we find the words "The Bible contains God's message to mankind." On page 27, however, proof is clearly given that the Scriptures are not deemed to be without error. Here "many parts of the Bible which appear cruel and contrary to what we know of God today" are referred to. The Inspiration of the Scriptures is said to be "a great mystery, but not greater than the way in which our minds affect and influence other minds." So the Inspiration by the Holy Spirit, though a quite unique and divine work, is placed on a par with mere human affections and influences. Not a word about infallibility and inerrancy, though they are strongly stressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

On pages 56/7 we read the astonishing words about the coming of God's Kingdom in its fulness: "The Kingdom of God will fully come in God's own time and way, when Christ will reveal Himself in power and glory, by the complete triumph of good over evil." And in the explanation: "It will come in God's own time and way, when men shall have yielded to Him the throne of their lives. There will be no mistaking it, because the present order, with all its wars, wrongs, pains, diseases—its strange mixture of good and evil, joy and sorrow, love and hate—will have given place to such a transformed environment and state of society as is pictured in Revelation 21: 4, when God Himself "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Here we have the so-called "Social gospel" to the full, but not the Gospel in accordance to the Word of God and the Reformed and Presbyterian Standards. Not a word here of the second coming of Jesus Christ Himself personally to judge the living and the dead, to destroy the kingdom of Satan and his servant the Antichrist, to make a new heaven and a new earth. By such means the Lord Jesus Himself will make the Kingdom of God fully come. But the booklet reads: "men shall have yielded to God the throne of their lives"

and there will be "a transformed environment and state of society," grown apparently through the ages, by degrees, till it will reach its fulness "in God's own way and time." The impression is even made, that all mankind will "yield the throne of their lives to God," because it reads: "when men shall have yielded," etc.

On pages 58-61 we read about the life after death. Man is called "a child of God," "made in the image of God" and the impression is given that every man, living on earth is a child of God, still bearing the image of God, an idea which is contrary to the Scriptures and the Reformed and Presbyterian Standards. Of the Lord Jesus Christ it states: "Jesus comes as the Redeemer from sin. He comes to open a way whereby we can realise our high estate as children of God . . ." and: "He came to make it possible for us to achieve our high destiny as sons and daughters of God." This also is in blatant contrast to the Word of God and the Reformed and Presbyterian Standards, which teach us that it is not we who realise our high estate as children of God nor achieve our high destiny as sons and daughters of God, but that we all by nature are the children of wrath, in the power of Satan, lost children of God, not worthy of the name, and that Jesus Christ came to **make** the elect children of God, through His blood and Spirit.

Thus we can see how modernistic and unreformed is the teaching of the Handbook for Faith and Life, and with the booklet "Christianity in a changing World (published by the Board of Religious Education of the Presbyterian Church) it is quite the same.

Un-biblical teaching abounds, indeed, in the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It abounds everywhere. One need only read the official organs of the Presbyterian Church in the States of Australia to find more evidence.

In "The Tasmanian Presbyterian," April 1950, one can read "a reassuring conviction" in connection with the sad facts that "Christendom has come to an end," that "Man has become a material creature," etc. What

kind of reassuring conviction is to be found in words such as these: "It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not either Hitler or Russia, who has rolled up the map of Christendom before our eyes. It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not Darwin or Freud or the Industrial Revolution that has made modern man a materialistic creature?" Does it not border on blasphemy? The Scriptures teach us differently and tell us "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. 4: 4). It is Satan, and not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who would cast the children of God into prison, (Rev. 2: 10) and who "taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved," St. Luke 8: 12.

In "The Messenger," official organ of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, April 2, 1954, appears an article entitled "EVERYDAY RELIGION" by Barnabas. In this article the writer tells us about the funeral services he conducted in former country parishes. He says, "I assured them that in that next life moral and spiritual growth would still go on" But the Word of God teaches us differently, viz., that there will be no growth going on in the life to come, but only reaping of the fruit of the seed, sown in this life, either eternal joy or eternal punishment (Gal. 6: 7, 8; St. Luke 16: 19-31).

It would not be difficult to provide similar evidence from the official Presbyterian Church-organs in other States too.

THE INEVITABLE RESULT

No, it is not true what the pamphlet, mentioned before, says, that the Presbyterian Church of Australia is a witness "in the true succession of the Reformation-fathers" and that it is "a confessional Church." The facts speak clearly a different language. This Church is deviating from the Gospel and from the doctrines of the Reformation-fathers. It is deviating from them not only

by allowing unbiblical doctrines to be preached and taught everywhere and by failure to take disciplinary action against the culprits, but also by failure to exercise church discipline in general, e.g., against church members who live an ungodly life, and against ministers and members, who belong to antichristian organisations under the oath of secrecy.

Too often ungodly church-members are allowed to have their children baptised and, if they wish so, to come to the Lord's table.

That is why we could not join the Presbyterian Church of Australia. If we had done so, we should have become accessory to her great sins. If we had done so, we should have been unfaithful parents to our children, whom we promised to nurture in the fear of the Lord and whom we therefore may not entrust to a Church, that is not faithful to the Lord and His Word, lest they perish for ever.

"Necessity was laid upon us" to establish our own denomination.

OUR HOPE AND PRAYER FOR THE FUTURE

We feel unspeakably sorry that we had to write such sad things about the Presbyterian Church. But we had to write them, to make it perfectly clear why we could not possibly join this Church.

Will it be possible to join an Australian Church in the future?

It will be possible only if there will be a true Reformation, viz., a faithful return to the Word of God and to the Confessions of Faith of the great Reformation. We pray for such a reformation, particularly in the Presbyterian Church, whose official Confession we love. There is a committee of the General Assembly of this Church to investigate the theories of the booklet "I Believe." May the Lord grant the Presbyterian Church the grace openly and decidedly to condemn and take back this booklet, and not only this, but also the other booklets

mentioned; the grace also to return officially to the pure doctrine of the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith. May this Church, instead of allowing its office bearers to disseminate un-scriptural doctrines, admonish them and call them back to the Reformed and Presbyterian Standards, and, if they refuse to abandon their false doctrines, execute the Church-discipline against them in accordance with the Standards of the Church, deposing them if need be, in the end.

And if the Lord will be pleased to grant our prayer for a true Reformation in an Australian Church, our Churches will not hesitate to associate themselves with such a Church. If this should happen it would be a day most glorious in our history.

AN APPEAL TO OUR BRETHREN IN THE LORD

We shall particularly pray for our Evangelical, truly Reformed brethren in the Presbyterian Church, ministers and members. We know, from discussions and letters, that many of them are very concerned and uneasy about the sad plight of their Church. They are constantly worrying, because on the one hand they are reluctant to leave their Church, and on the other hand they feel that things, as they are, cannot go on in their Church. We sympathise in their inward struggle. And we pray for them, that the Lord may grant them to do His will and His will only. When we look at the example of the prophets, of Christ, of the Apostles and of the great Reformation-fathers, the will of God is sufficiently clear. They have to lift up their voices, openly and decidedly, against all deviation from the Word of God and from the doctrine, worship and church government according to that Word. They have to appeal to the General Assembly to do away with all doctrinal devaluation and all indiscipline of the Church. No doubt they are praying for it. But they have also to work that way. And if their Church should prove to be decidedly apostate by refusing true Reformation, the Word of God leaves only one way open to them: to

break away from such a Church, 2 Cor. 6: 14-18; 2 John: 10, 11; Rev. 18: 4. That would be a solemn and serious step, as our fathers in The Netherlands experienced, when they had to break away from their beloved Church.

But it is much more serious to sin against God by staying in a Church, that has lost and consciously abandoned her obedience to God's holy Word and to the only Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, the Christ of the Scriptures. May our faithful Covenant God lead our Evangelical brethren on His paths and make them faithful.

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." Psalm 60: 4.

REFORMED CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA

QUEENSLAND—

Brisbane—Minister: Rev. J. J. C. Westera, B.D. 62 Abbot Street, New Farm, Qld. *50 fam.*

NEW SOUTH WALES—

Sydney—Minister: Rev. J. F. H. Van der Bom, B.D. 78 Mill Street, Carlton, N.S.W. *50 fam.*

Wollongong—Minister: Rev. A. I. De Graaf, B.D. 19 Park Road, Woonona, N.S.W. *50 fam.*

Orange—Clerk: E. C. van Leeuwen, 31 Pinnacle Road, Orange. *20 fam.*

Dee Why—Clerk: W. J. Rutgers, 2 Park Street, Collaroy, Phone XW8374. *30 fam.*

Blacktown—Rev. J. H. Kappers, Fifth Avenue Corner Prince Street, Blacktown (as from November, 1954). *43 fam.*
Clerk: L. J. Huisjes, Clifton Street, Blacktown.

VICTORIA—

Melbourne—Minister: Rev. P. H. Pellicaan, B.D. 88 Alma Road, St. Kilda.

Clerk: F. Tuinenga, 75 McMahon Road, Reservoir.

Moe—Clerk: S. Belgraver, 123 Princes Highway, Moe.

Creswick—Clerk: M. Haartsen, Melbourne Road, Creswick.

Dandenong—Rev. W. B. den Brave, Ferntree Gully.
Clerk: W. V. D. Kruk, 141 Cleeland Street, Dandenong.

Mount Evelyn—Rev. W. B. den Brave, Ferntree Gully.
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Secretary: Mr. M. Van der Wal, 116 Nilpena Avenue, Morphettville, Adelaide, S.A.

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Penguin—Minister: Rev. J. A. Schep, B.D. Penguin, Tas.

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