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A Letter of the Classis of Amsterdam to the Committee of the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church.

The Classis of Amsterdam

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The Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in North America from September, 1841, to June, 1845, Inclusive. With Copious Index. Vol. VI, New York, 1846.

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October, 1844

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

A letter of the Classis of Amsterdam to the Committee of the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church.

A friendly exchange of greetings possibly encouraged by the Rev. Dr. Thomas De Witt of New York who is mentioned in the body of the letter as well as John Romeyn Brodhead who had searched for colonial documents in the Netherlands and which he published.

Two quotes: "In consequence of the revolution of 1795, our church ceased to be the ruling church, and over other church organization favored with exclusive privileges." (p. 520); and a comment on the Afscheidenen, "On the other hand, there are a number acting rashly, and without consideration have inclined to separation, and promoted the same, so that in several places separate churches have been formed, and are acknowledged by the government." (p. 521).

The Acts and Proceedings of the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in North America from September, 1841, to June, 1845, Inclusive. With Copious Index. Vol. VI, New York, 1846.

A handwritten signature or set of initials, possibly 'N. J.', written in dark ink.

10/10/96

THE
ACTS AND PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

GENERAL SYNOD

OF THE

Reformed Protestant Dutch Church

IN

NORTH AMERICA,

FROM

SEPTEMBER, 1841, TO JUNE, 1845, INCLUSIVE.

WITH

A COPIOUS INDEX.

VOL. VI.

New-York:

PRINTED FOR GENERAL SYNOD BY JOHN A. GRAY,

No. 111, Nassau Street.

1846.

APPENDIX.

Translation of a letter received from the Classis of Amsterdam :

AMSTERDAM, October, 1844.

To the Committee of the Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church in North America.

Reverend and dearly beloved brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ—

At the last annual session of our Classis on the last Wednesday in June of this year, the letter addressed to them by you in the name of the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church in North America, dated the ninth of March last, was placed on their table. The Classis were gratified with the letter, and directed us to prepare an answer.

First above all, we would express the delightful impression which your correspondence has produced in us and in the members of the Classis. Your letters bear testimony of the continued and lively acknowledgment of the services which our predecessors extended to your ancestors more than two hundred years since, and which they renewed from time to time, until the circumstances which transpired in the year 1771 ended them. This cessation of direct connection did not, however, prevent continued feelings of affection to the Netherlands Reformed Church in general, and our Classis in particular, among you prompting a cordial esteem for, and remembrance of us. The consequence of this is, that the year before last, on the presence here of Mr. Brodhead, we were brought into a nearer correspondence with you, and an opportunity occurred to aid you in the prosecution of an important undertaking, the preparation of a history of the origin and progress of the Reformed Dutch Church

in North America. For the successful prosecution and happy completion of this work, commenced by Rev. Thomas De Witt, we heartily supplicate the special direction and rich blessing of the God of Grace.

Important events have transpired in the period which has elapsed since your church was established in greater independence. These have exerted an influence on our Netherlands Reformed Church, both for her benefit and for her injury. In consequence of the revolution in 1795, our church ceased to be the ruling church, and over other church organization favored with exclusive privileges. Especially was this the case when Holland was incorporated with the French empire. Our church then wanted nearly altogether those guards which were necessary for her continued existence. At the critical revolution in 1813, there was, therefore, a thorough necessity that there should be formed an entire new organization of church government, of such a character as should best comport with the union of the seven Provinces as a kingdom. From that time there has been an annual General Synod, in the place of the former Provincial Synods, which have been succeeded by established provincial judicatories (*Kerk Oestemren*). The different Classes have each a defined organization, by a president, adessor and clerk, and composed, at most, of four ministers and one elder, to whom the direction and management of matters are entrusted, and to whom the consistories of the different churches are subordinated. At the same the members of the Classis are divided into different circles or rings, (*ringen*), through which they have the opportunity to hold brotherly conference and intercourse with each other, in relation to their official duties, and the interests of their congregations.

Remarkable have been the advances made in the first half of this century, especially in our fatherland, in the knowledge of the languages, biblical interpretation, mode of sermonizing, and the clearer and more evangelical representation of the doctrines and duties of our faith. A natural consequence of this has been, that although fundamental doctrines expressed in our confession remain the same,

for the truth is surely unchangeable, nevertheless less use is at present made of the terms (*terminologie*), and many illustrations, which, in former times, were deemed valuable. But Jesus Christ and him crucified and glorified remains the only basis of our preaching. The churches, and their ministers, direct the eye of faith to Him alone as the only mediator and intercessor with the Father. In His faithful care for them, and for all those who sincerely honor Him, they find their only comfort and perfect security. In following his example and instructions, consists their unfading glory. We hope to be saved through grace alone, by faith which worketh by love.

We have, however, reason to lament, that, on one side, the civil revolutions which have occurred have taken away in their course much of that pure morality and godliness which, in former times, characterized our forefathers, and left in their place an increasing dissoluteness and less attachment to religious ordinances. On the other hand, there are a number acting rashly, and without consideration have inclined to separation, and promoted the same, so that in several places separate churches have been formed, and are acknowledged by the government. And also, finally, in these last times, Jesuitism has exercised its deceitful arts among us, and threatened Protestantism with her fiercest attacks. Amidst all, our faith remains firm, that the truth shall prevail, and in the Lord's time it will brightly manifest its influence. May God aid us and our brethren, and also you and your churches, that we may be "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," and prepare us and our churches for that union never impaired and disturbed, enjoyed eternally with Him in that better Fatherland.

Many things must take place, brethren, before the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord—many things before the church shall be so cleansed that the Redeemer shall present it before his Father without spot.

The efforts employed by you for the spread of the kingdom of our Lord among the heathen, have met with many hindrances, difficulties and opposition, as has also been experienced by our Neth-

erlands Missionary Society. But we should not, amid these, cherish dejection. The Lord will, in his own time, level every mountain and fill every valley. Let us do what faith and duty place before us. Surely the Lord will not fail in the fulfilment of his promises.

We thank you, brethren, that you have thus furnished to us the opportunity to preserve alive our relationship to you, and to renew and confirm our bond of union in the faith. We beseech you that this brotherly affection and love may abide; and may the God of peace and all grace so bind you and us together in faith, hope and love, that we may stand in one mind and spirit together, striving for the faith of the Gospel.

With these feelings, and with prayer for God's best blessings in Christ Jesus on your persons, ministries and churches, we subscribe ourselves, with true esteem and brotherly affection,

Your brethren in Christ Jesus,

THE CLASSIS OF AMSTERDAM.

In their name,

A. H. TER HOEVEN, *Præses.*

JS. PRINS, *Scriber.*