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B. H. Ploeg Writes a Letter to the Editor of De Hollander

B. H. Ploeg

Nella Kennedy

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26 September 1860

Holland, Michigan

In his letter to the editor of *De Hollander* on this date, B. H. Ploeg continues his controversy over various religious matters. This letter was addressed specifically to G. Wakker.

In Dutch; translation by Nella Kennedy, April, 2006.

Original in the archives of the Holland Museum.

DE HOLLANDER, September 26, 1860

To G. Wakker

Although the public letter, printed in DE HOLLANDER of September 5, 1860, had not been addressed to me directly but to Rev. P. J. Oggel, nevertheless, it will not surprise anyone that I think that the contents themselves can be considered to have been addressed principally to me. And therefore I have obligations to the reading public, and hence *must* answer the various matters treated by you, because of the importance of the current affairs. It is regrettable that once again I will have to bear the slanderous name of fault-finder.

You had expressed, in very flattering words, your interest in the peace of God's Zion and the well-being of souls, writing whether "it would not be better not to continue correspondence any further against Ploeg in DE HOLLANDER." You continued by saying that "the path and the direction, which Ploeg had taken is much to be regretted, and for me unexplainable and incompatible with, and in, a godly heart." I will return to this sentence about me later, after I have put the actions and matters in clearer daylight, but will pass it for now.

You¹ continue with "how can a congregation be judged, which, at the invitation of the consistory, is gathered together in peace and community, while calling on the Lord's name, to elect elders and deacons, following in the footsteps of the old *Ger. Kerk*, according to Art. 27 of her Church Order. And a man (Ploeg) stands up, without having spoken one word with the brethren beforehand, who begins to read a piece in the midst of a peaceful meeting, in which he says, among other things, that this practice of our fathers is *against God's Word?*" I am glad to say that it is a publicly known truth that I had asked the president, respectfully and according to order, beforehand and that the reading of the aforementioned piece had been granted.

Well, this happened in the midst of a peaceful communal church gathering, having come together for the above mentioned purpose, without changing in the least the peacefulness of the gathering into a turbulent one. And that did not change even when a member of the congregation, who, with some others, had not heard my reading and had requested to have it repeated, but you, brother Wakker, as scribe of the meeting, rejected this for reasons of time restraints (or pretended limits). And it was this unreasonable rejection that led some members, in compensation, to request that I publish the piece in DE HOLLANDER. I did not want to do it, but I could not refuse either. See, Brother Wakker! You yourself were by your action the cause of an (if it can be called that) evil which continues, notwithstanding that those who combat this the most are servants of God's high and unsearchable governance. Very many are discovering what until now had been covered by the dark of night.

¹ Ploeg uses the abbreviation *UEd*, which stands for *U Edele*, which translates *Honorable*. It is likely he used this address facetiously. The plain *you* in used in this translation.

Brother Wakker states, that I (in the piece I read) had said "among other things, that this practice (election of elders and deacons) of our fathers is against God's word." This is a falsehood or twisting of words. So, Brother Wakker! Once again I must find fault. I had said (reread the piece in DE HOLLANDER of March 21, 1860): "Let it be sufficient for me to say that the aforementioned election of elders and deacons *for two years has not been grounded in God's Word.*" See, Brother Wakker, a totally other context, having to do with the service of two years. But much more objectionable to me is when I consider what is placed on the elected brethren, or the question which must be answered by them before proceeding to the installation, namely, "Whether you do not feel in your hearts that you are called lawfully by God's congregation and therefore by God himself to this holy ministry" (for two years, for that belongs to it). And after the response "yes" has been given, the installation follows with the laying on of hands "for two years."

I want to repeat here, what I have already expressed earlier in my letter (published in DE HOLLAND, June 13, 1860) to J. Bijlsma in Grand Rapids, for a more detailed or clearer explanation of my feelings concerning this point, and said therefore further: "I do not wish to infringe on our Church Order of Dort. This human writing can neither bind my mind to one, nor unbind from another." I will recognize the elected ones as such, but did not elect them for a set time (which has no basis in God's word), etc. This I refuse, and this is enough to be understood well, "and which I have wanted to impress." For this it is exactly what I had objected to, namely, answer to the question²

To Be Continued
B. H. Ploeg

[Translation: Nella Kennedy,
April 2006]

² A fold in the paper resulted in some illegibility in the last few lines in the photocopy.

... Wat toch, aldus vervolg...
... toonden, apden
... bijheid antewij
... konnend doen
... der Verrijgde
... lat hij volbrachten
... men in Europa
... en schiedh
... chaff en plant
... alver, eengang
... enz, enz.
... Mich.
... dien, als Kabi
... leaux, en Kabi
... Tafels met en
... van die dier
... onderscheiden
... nu.
... door zeer her
... kan beu
... in de oede
... stevens bij ver
... s zien krij
... de.
... Bond, voor
... es als alle
... dienst en
... met de beve
... de d'neer St
... de die van de
... en roeten, en
... gevelijkste
... te van St.
... R.
... Lande.
... wegeboel huis
... drukke
... yonhling een
... alscheldicij
... en, wolkij te
... Lande
... Zeelanden, bij
... OR.
... Ottawa
... ge, bij de
... n. Kapitein
... zongen de dr.
... H. Brouwer
... onderzocht
... en Maand
... Mich.
... or,
... hebbende,
... Scrum
... ezigheid, te
... ann.
... des werke.
... G.
... ndige
... nker.
... mulo Straat,
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... Solonke bekend,
... gevestigd, en
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... anders de gunt
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