

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE:

Meditation: Christ Entered Into Heaven Itself

Datestone — Milestone (see: News Feature)

Covenant Faithfulness and Joy (see: In His Fear)

Ecumenism on Good Friday

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MEDITATION—

Christ Entered Into Heaven Itself

by Rev. J. Kortering

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Hebrews 9:24

Heaven!
Little fingers point upward, it's up there.
Profound minds delve into its mystery, how supernatural.

The aged gaze upon the setting sun and as the darkness of the night enfolds them their thoughts instinctively turn heavenward and they ask, how long?
And sometimes on their death beds they tell us

that they see it in the distance. A blade of envy cuts deeply into our hearts, for when they fall asleep in peace they have all the answers.

We long for heaven!

Why?

It's interesting to walk slowly through the corridors of life and stop here and there and ask people, do you anticipate going to heaven? Usually the answer is in the affirmative. If we penetrate a little deeper and ask why, the answers are as variegated as the circumstances in life. The sick, groaning on the brink of death, sigh with expectation, for death shall bring relief from the sufferings of this present time. To the blind and deaf the thought of heaven means sight and hearing. The grieving anticipate the day of great reunion. To the poor brother and sister who struggle to stay alive with their meager bread, heaven means the streets of gold and pearly gates. The soldiers in the battlefield who know that death is but one blink of the eye away, see heaven as the dwelling place of perfect peace. To the burdened sinner who knows the meaning of a long-suffering Father, heaven speaks of perfection and perfect liberty wherewith Christ has set us free. The church in the midst of the battle of faith anticipates the day of perfect peace where righteousness shall dwell secure.

Entrance into heaven is a day of great salvation.

There must be, however, more. There is something wrong with us if we view the present as one long road of defeat that ends with the valley of the shadow of death and is replaced with the splendor of heaven. If this is so, then we will inevitably have a sour view of the present and a sickly attitude toward the future. If this attitude pervades our sojourn here below, we become dissatisfied with life, we long to die so that our future hope can be realized. We so want to get this pain over with, to get rid of this loneliness, to be relieved of the cares of this world that we almost rebel if God doesn't come soon and take us away. Death for such is an escape from the harsh realities of the present. And all of this is so selfish, so self-centered, that God is not in our thoughts.

If we have no joy in this life, even in the midst of trials, we can never expect to rejoice on the other side of the grave.

And what is the joy that the pilgrim experiences here below? In one word it is fellowship with God. The thought that causes ecstatic praise from the lips of the weary pilgrim is that already now through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ we have the victory. The marvelous love of God fills us to overflowing, we gaze upon His cross and our redemption, we meditate upon His resurrection and our justification, His Holy Spirit guides us in the way of sanctification. This makes life worth living. Here in the midst of evil, with pain and sorrow sweeping round about, we have the grace of God to acknowledge that God is our God and our only joy in this life is serving Him and dwelling in friendship with Him.

For such the thought of heaven is not an escape from the present, it is a fulfillment! What we most

desire here, namely, that God dwell with us and that we abide with Him, will be given us in the splendor of heaven. Freedom from sin and sorrow then will not be an end in itself, it will be a removal of all these obstacles in order that the purpose of our life may reach its fulness: the praise of our ever blessed God.

The reality of all of this is impressed upon us in the words of our text, "For Christ is entered...into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Heaven itself is contrasted to the holy places made with hands. You understand that the book of the Hebrews was written with the converted Jew in mind. The special emphasis throughout this book is to point out the close relationship between the Old Testament and New Testament. Here in our text, we are reminded that after the resurrection, Jesus did not ascend into the holy place of the temple, which was made with hands; rather He went directly into heaven itself.

The Old Testament most holy place, within the temple, was a specific type of heaven. It was there that God dwelt in the midst of His people and Israel congregated together with God. Throughout the generations, children and children's children had assembled there to worship and meditate and bring their offerings before the Lord. It was, however, typical. This indicates that it had limitations. Our text suggests three such limitations. It was made with hands, human hands had constructed this building according to the divine plan. The material used was earthly, subject to decay and a frequent object of the plundering nations round about. Besides these, the most holy place was not open to all Israel. A heavy veil separated it from the holy place and the outer courts.

Because Israel enjoyed a typical heaven within the temple, it must also be remembered that they enjoyed a typical ascension day as well. The importance and reality of heaven depends upon one's occupying it. Having a beautiful place, such as the most holy place certainly was, would mean little if no one could enter it. The thought of God dwelling without His people could bring little joy to Israel. God instituted the celebration of the Great Day of Atonement in which the High Priest would take the blood from the altar of burnt offering and take it inside the most holy place and sprinkle it on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. This was the Old Testament Ascension Day, it represented Christ entering into heaven, it pointed to the day when God and all His people would be gathered together in perfect peace. The Great Day of Atonement must have been a thrilling feast for Israel. The scape goat, burdened with the sins of Israel, was driven out into the wilderness, the people would bow before the Lord as the High Priest sprinkled the typical blood of Jesus before the Lord. Justice and mercy kissed each other there.

Into this typical heaven Jesus did not ascend when He completed His redemptive work. The fact is that He was not even allowed within the most holy place of Herod's temple. His priesthood was not according to Aaron, but Melchisedec. He had come to elevate the

priesthood to a higher order, namely, that through His work as priest He would also become King of Righteousness. Jesus was not determined to get inside that typical heaven, rather He had come to remove it from the scene. The rent veil at the time of His majestic death cried aloud that former things have passed away, behold all things have become new.

As our Great High Priest, Jesus did not intend to enter into the Holy Place and offer a sacrifice upon the altar of burnt offering. His altar was without the gate at the top of the hill of the skull. There the High Priest of God offered Himself a ransom for many. The time had come for the fulfillment of prophecy and types. Upon that hill He bore the wrath of God for which the blood of lambs and goats cried unto God. Life must be given as a payment for death. The blood of the Lamb must be shed as a perfect payment in love for the debt of so great hatred.

And this He did.

Where did He go when the work of the great High Priest was completed? Into the typical heaven? No, God rent the veil, for its purpose was completed. Since Jesus had gone into the real holy place and offered Himself upon the real altar of burnt offerings, the cross, there was no more need for a typical most holy place either, hence God ripped the covering.

He entered into heaven itself.

Did not the disciples witness this event? No, they didn't see Him enter into heaven for eye cannot see its wonders. They rather saw Him go into that direction. As they walked toward the Mount of Olives, gradually and deliberately He arose from the earth. With outstretched arms He blessed them, instructing them to go and preach and baptize. God's cloud received Him out of their sight. He went into the presence of God, into heaven itself.

It does us little good to speculate what heaven is like. It is a great mystery, it doesn't fall within the boundries of our human minds. It is a place, Scripture is abundantly clear on this. It is a place that is part of creation, though it is so different from the earthly part. Just as surely as angels and devils are round about us all the time, so close heaven may also be. We must not view it as if it is beyond the farthest star; that in itself would bring a conflict in our minds, for who knows the limit of space? Scripture places heaven very close to us, for in heaven God manifests His greatness and glory in the highest sense. Heaven has its own history, its great divide, its wars, its impatient cries, its

sounds of victory and praise. When Christ entered into heaven itself He brought about a change, for with His majestic entrance He also cast out all devils and evil spirits so that the voice of the four beasts and 24 elders could blend perfectly with the 144,000 singing the praises of God and looking forward to the creation of the new heaven and earth when all creation would once again be restored to perfect harmony.

Into that heaven Christ ascended *for us*.

Our perfectly righteous High Priest entered into the presence of the Holy God. Having attained the divine verdict that the benefits of His death were imputed to those for whom He died, Christ longed to be taken to heaven to once again dwell in the presence of His Father. God drew Him home. The righteous God placed Him upon His right hand and crowned Him with all glory and honor. The saints, angels, the representatives of creation sang their welcome song when He entered into heaven itself.

And Jesus did not forget His own that were yet upon the earth. As our great High Priest He prayed the Father for the Comforter whom He might send unto His brethren in the world that they might also be where He is.

Our Father answered that prayer. He crowned the faithful Christ with all the power to direct all things to serve the purpose of the salvation of the entire church for whom Christ died. He gave Him the Holy Spirit to draw them unto Himself.

For us He entered into heaven itself.

What a precious truth this is for us now.

Notice, because this is true we have every reason to be joyful *now*. All diseases, all suffering, loneliness, wars, burdens of sin, pressures of the battle of faith are directed our way because our Lord Jesus Christ is entered into heaven itself. No one else sends these things to us but He. That too, not to make life miserable for us, rather to draw us above the things of this world that we become and remain heavenly minded.

Our joy is in God through Jesus Christ already now.

And we long for heaven when this joy shall become even greater. Then all these burdens shall be taken away not simply for our sakes, but that we may then rejoice perfectly in the God of our salvation.

You long for heaven in a good sense of the word?

Christ is already there. He is working *now* in such a way that we shall certainly arrive there in safety.

Hope in the Lord! Wait patiently for Him!

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EDITORIALS—

Our Most Basic Immediate Need

-2-

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

SUGGESTIONS TOWARD SOLUTION

In the May 1 issue we called attention to the urgent need in our churches of men to serve in the work of the ministry. We noted that this is a need which very basically affects our communion of churches in more than one area of our ecclesiastical life. This last fact is important to remember. Too often, I think, we view the shortage of ministers only from a very short-range and very local point of view. Then, of course, vacant congregations can rightly say that they feel the shortage most keenly: after all, they are entirely without a pastor of their own and are dependent upon classical appointments for pulpit supply and dependent upon neighboring ministers or upon their elders for various labors in the congregation during the week. And then those congregations which must repeatedly loan their pastors to sister congregations for a Sunday, and in some cases for two or three weeks in succession, also begin to complain, perhaps, that their pastors are absent too often. All this is understandable. It is neither normal nor healthful for a congregation to be shepherdless, especially not when the vacancy becomes lengthy. Moreover, while an occasional absence for classical appointments is quite bearable, it is nevertheless true also in this regard that there can be "too much of a good thing." Yet there are, as was pointed out last time, other areas in our ecclesiastical life which are undoubtedly very seriously affected by this shortage of laborers. From this point of view, this shortage is indeed a problem for our churches in common. Besides, if we take a longer range point of view, we face an eventual replacement problem.

Summarizing our needs, therefore, it is not difficult to conclude that in the course of the next several years, as matters now stand, we will need ten or twelve ministers only to meet current needs, that is, to meet our present needs in the home churches and in our mission work, and to meet the need for replacements which we may normally expect. This leaves out of view any need created by possible growth. It also leaves out of view any possible need caused by unexpected loss of any of our ministers through sickness or accident. I am speaking only of reasonably foreseeable needs. Hence, I would classify the figure of ten or twelve ministers over the course of the next several years as a conservative estimate.

What can be said as to possible solutions of this problem?

In the first place, we should note that, even though the shortage might gradually be eased in the coming years, the problem will be with us to a degree for some time to come. Again, of course, I am speaking in terms of what we are wont to call the "normal." It is equally conceivable, of course, that the problem could become more acute, and that too, very suddenly. We do not know the details of the Lord's way for us in the future. Nor need we know them. Nor, — by all means, let it be emphasized, — must we be anxious about the future. To be anxious is wrong; it is sinful. And when we consider these needs and the provisions which we may attempt to alleviate those needs, we must certainly do so in the confidence that the Lord will provide for us even as He always has done in the past. He will also provide *in His own way and at His own time*. But the Lord uses means, and He uses His church to employ these means and thus to make provision for the work of the ministry. As I said last time, the Lord does not simply drop ready-made ministers from the sky. Hence, the churches are called to consider the means which the Lord provides and also to consider the best possible way of employing whatever means and whatever laborers the Lord does provide at any given time. From this point of view, we may speak of shorter range measures to meet this urgent need and of longer range measures. Let us consider both.

THE JAMAICA WORK

What can be done, first of all, with respect to our labors in Jamaica? on a rather immediate or short-range basis? Permit me to suggest a few possibilities in this regard and to point out the implications of these possibilities, without directly arguing for or against one or another course of action. They are as follows:

1) We can continue on our present course of maintaining as much contact as possible by correspondence and by material assistance in the form of funds and clothing and of annually sending a minister and an elder for a period of several weeks. Against this policy it may be argued that this method of labor is very inefficient. No one, I think, will challenge the assertion that attempting instruction by means of correspondence and tape-recordings is a most laborious method and but a poor substitute for on-the-spot labor. This is in no way intended as derogatory of the labors expended by our Mission Board and by the two ministers

who have done so much work in the preparation of these correspondence courses: under the circumstances, it was felt that this was the best we could do. But not only is the method of correspondence inefficient. The method of sending emissaries to the Jamaican churches on a short-term basis is also, it should be remembered, an inefficient method. Labors must be divided over a considerable territory and among several churches in a relatively short period of time. The result must needs be that with every visit time must be spent anew by our men to get their bearings, to survey the specific needs, to begin the labors anew. They must find a place of lodging. For their classes of instruction they must determine upon a meeting-place; they must make contacts with the ministers there. And to no little extent, when the work is nicely progressing, and when an idea is obtained of what must be done and how much must be done and could be done, the time to return to the States is almost at hand. Besides, the continuity of the labors is broken, the more so if the personnel for these visits is changed. It all comes down to this: we have been making *visits* to Jamaica rather than engaging in continued and extended labors. And it is the latter that is sorely needed, judging from the reports furnished us. This says nothing yet about the inefficiency of these visits from a financial point of view. Travel expense is a repeated item under this method; and even lodging expense must needs be greater on a short-term than on a long term basis. Let me add, however, that this financial aspect should not be a preponderant consideration: if this is the only method we are able to follow at present, then we will and can also meet the expenses. In favor of this method, of course, is the argument that under the circumstances this is the best we can do. We cannot afford, in view of our shortage of ministers, to miss a minister on the home front on any long-term basis. Whether or not this is actually true, of course, is a matter of the judgment of the churches. Perhaps the question should be phrased as follows: Does the Lord call us as churches in the present situation to sacrifice one of our ministers, and does He call one specific congregation and one specific minister to make this sacrifice, in order that the Jamaican field may be provided with a permanent laborer?

2) In the above I have already suggested the opposite extreme, namely, that our Synod appoint a calling church to call a missionary specifically for the Jamaican labors. This would solve many, if not all, of the difficulties already mentioned. But this would mean, as was suggested above, that our shortage at home would become just a little more severe. Personally, I would not hesitate to advise this course of action, were it not for our shortage: for I am surely convinced that there is a field of labor for us in Jamaica. But under the circumstances, this is indeed a question of very careful judgment. Even should Synod decide upon this course of action, eventually some congregation and some minister would face the problem perhaps much more concretely than Synod can face it. But I take it that Synod should not and would not

embark on this course unless it was deemed wise and necessary and feasible, unless Synod really intended that some minister should seriously consider leaving his home church to take up the Jamaican labors.

3) A third possibility lies somewhere between the first two, namely, that one of our ministers be given a lengthy leave of absence, as long as half year or even a year, and that he, accompanied by an elder, would then labor for an extended period. This would have the advantage of affording a considerable period of time for some continued and intensive on the spot labors; and this advantage is not to be discounted. The big question, again, is whether this is feasible at this time, and, of course, whether any congregation is willing to be deprived of its pastor for such an extended period. The only possibility of this which I can see would be in the Michigan area, where our churches are close together and where it would be possible for the sister churches to help the congregation which sacrifices its pastor. Pulpit supply is readily available in this area; and neighboring ministers could render assistance with various congregational labors. And I would emphasize that the only fair conditions under which this could be worked out, in my opinion, would be under a promise from the sister churches that the temporarily vacant congregation would have ample help. I would also suggest that the ideal way to accomplish this would not be for the Mission Board to "put the finger" on some consistory, but for some consistory to volunteer the services of its minister.

4) Another possibility which has been suggested is the sending of elder emissaries only. Now there is no doubt that the elders who have previously gone to Jamaica have done valuable work; nor is there any doubt about the fact that even should a minister be sent on a long-term basis, the presence and assistance of an elder would be helpful. The great drawback, however, lies in the fact that much of the work which needs doing in Jamaica is work that belongs to the office of minister of the Word; and unless the distinction between the offices is ignored, this work cannot properly be performed by elders, no matter how capable such elders may be. In the past Synod has frowned on the idea, exactly because of this soundly Reformed distinction between the offices; and I believe that it is a matter of principle that Synod should continue to frown on any proposal to assign the labors of the minister of the Word to elders. And if this principle is to be observed, then the sending of elder emissaries only would not be an adequate solution to the Jamaica problem.

5) Occasionally the suggestion has been made that perhaps some capable member of our churches (not necessarily an elder or deacon), a man with a combination of business acumen and a knowledge of the building trades, could profitably be sent to assist the Jamaicans with respect to some of their material problems, as, for example, the problems concerning their church buildings. Perhaps this suggestion is worthy of consideration; I do not know. It seems clear from reports given last year that there are consider-

able problems in this area. From that point of view, such a capable man, possibly even a volunteer, would be able to accomplish something. Whether the amount and nature of the work would justify such a step, I am not in a position to say; undoubtedly our Mission Board could furnish helpful information on this score. I would sound a word of caution in this connection, however: it is that if there is any suggestion of going in the direction of so-called lay-missionaries, then this is not the direction in which our churches must go. The idea of lay-missionaries is foreign to our Reformed view, popular though it has become in recent years.

6) Finally, I may mention a possibility which has sometimes been mentioned, that of a missionary-minister under Article 8 of the Church Order. This I consider a very remote possibility. In the first place, the initiative in the ordaining of such a minister under Article 8 can hardly come from the churches: it must come from such a man with exceptional gifts himself. But there are other weighty considerations. Is the need of our churches such that we must go in this direction? The ordaining of such ministers is by far the exception, not the rule, especially today. Moreover, it must be remembered that legally such a minister under Article 8 is eligible to be a minister anywhere in the denomination; he could not very well be limited to the Jamaica work, even though he might be called for this work originally. Hence, the churches must be cautious about a move of this nature.

These, then, are some of the possibilities. Perhaps other suggestions or a combination of some of these suggestions will be considered by the coming Synod.

It ought to be obvious, however, that the real solution to this problem on a long-range basis would be that our churches would have sufficient ministers that we could freely call a minister-missionary for the Jamaica work. In fact, it might be good if a young prospective minister, — should the Lord send us more students for the ministry, — would be trained and prepared specifically for this work. Such a student, if he were committed in advance to this work, could even receive on-the-scene training if he could accompany one of our ministers to Jamaica in the summer months.

OUR MISSIONS AT HOME

Meanwhile, we must not forget our mission calling here at home. There is possibly an inclination to do this simply out of pre-occupation with Jamaica. Besides, perhaps this work seems less attractive at present for lack of great results and by reason of the very difficulty of the work. It is to be hoped, however, that our churches do not neglect this aspect of our calling, either within or outside of the so-called Reformed community. Nor must our Mission Board allow itself to become so busy with the Jamaican work that they neglect supervision of and efforts toward activity in our home mission work, even with our present limitations.

But what can be done?

Again, our churches confront the question whether

at this particular time we can spare a man from the home front, that is, from our established congregations. As is well known, efforts to call a home missionary from time to time have in recent years met with repeated declines. It even appears that the efforts to call become increasingly sporadic. Apparently, some argue, it is not the Lord's will that we have a home missionary at present, and therefore we could better wait with calling until our shortage of ministers is alleviated. Perhaps this is correct reasoning. But I hasten to add that I would underscore the word *perhaps*. And I would add to this the suggestion that here also our churches should give very serious consideration to the question whether or not it is the Lord's will that we sacrifice the presence of a minister in one of our congregations in order to have a home missionary. That this would involve sacrifice, I do not doubt. That we can reach a point where the home churches are so weakened that it is indiscreet to give up yet another minister, I also do not doubt. I am not one of those who feels that our mission needs override all other considerations. Nevertheless, I would call attention to two items. In the first place, there is the reality of the dismaying and rapidly increasing apostasy everywhere evident in today's ecclesiastical scene. To me, while it may be true that there are not evident at present many actual fields in the sense of localities in which we could immediately perform home mission work, the very fact of this increasing apostasy points to a home mission calling for us. Besides, in this same connection, we must remember that things go hand in hand in this regard. It is not inconceivable that if we once had a home missionary, a field would be opened to him or that through the instrumentality of his labors a field of labor would be uncovered. And, in the second place, it seems to me that it is a patent fact that we must not pessimistically stagnate and that we may not say, as long as the Lord tarries, that we have no mission calling at home. Moreover, from a practical point of view we should also bear in mind that it is a fact of ecclesiastical life that where there is growth and where there is need of more ministers, there will also be young men who present themselves for the ministry in order to meet the need.

But as long as we can have no full-time missionary in the field, what must be done?

The answer is not that we must sit back and wait. It is rather that we do what can be done with the means and the men available. And there are several things that can be done. There is, in the first place, the church extension activities of the local consistories and congregations. These must continue; and ways and means of improving these activities must ever be sought. In the busy internal life of our congregations this work must not be overlooked and shunted aside until that elusive less busy time comes. In the second place, there is our radio work. In the nature of the case, it is frequently difficult to determine exactly how effective this work is and how many are reached by our Reformed Witness Hour. But that our radio voice is heard, and sometimes by more listeners than

we imagine, is an established fact. This work also must continue, be improved, and, if possible, be judiciously expanded. I would also like to suggest in this connection that some of the efforts toward expansion and the investigation of possible new outlets and replacement of old outlets could be followed through more consistently. As an example, I may mention recent investigations of a possible eastern outlet and a southern outlet which have never been followed through: at least, to date we have no such outlets. It is not my purpose in this connection to assess blame. It is my purpose to urge action. In the third place, as far as actual in-the-field mission work is concerned, this can only be conducted (as it was also in our early history) by releasing a minister from his congregation for several weeks at a time in order that he may labor outside the pale of our churches. Also this requires a degree of sacrifice and cooperation on the part of congregations who have ministers. But this is the least that can be done, and we should be willing to do it. In this connection, I believe a suggestion is in order that if at all possible a more consistent effort be put forth to implement some of the plans drawn up a few years ago and approved by synod. I am afraid that we sometimes do too much planning and not enough acting. And even though we are beset by the problems accompanying a shortage of ministers, and though our available man-power must sometimes be spread rather thinly, I would urge nevertheless that we put forth a more concerted effort to get our testimony out and to let our voice be heard to the utmost of our ability and energy outside the pale of our churches. If we indeed appreciate the heritage which the Lord has given us and in which He has preserved us hitherto, then we should also be genuinely concerned about reaching others with the message of that heritage, and that too, with unflagging zeal.

But again, the long-range answer to our home mission need is a greater supply of ministers. I am not by any means saying that we must wait with calling a missionary until all the home churches have been supplied. But undoubtedly if the shortage were somewhat eased, it would be and should be easier to obtain a man to take up this task. And when that time comes, our churches must not be slothful in their efforts to put a man or men in the field.

OUR HOME CHURCHES

Finally, of course, the shortage of ministers is in a concrete way felt most acutely right at home, and not only by pastorless churches but also by the churches whose ministers must frequently be absent for classical appointments.

What does this entail?

It certainly means that we must not accept our present lot with grumbling and complaining, nor with pessimism and discouragement. The basic reason for this is that our lot is from the Lord — the Lord Who makes no mistake in caring for His church. And I mean this reference to grumbling in a very concrete sense. Sometimes sounds of it are heard, and the

complaint is voiced that it is hardly fair to expect the minister of a larger congregation to leave in the midst of the busy season in order to help a much smaller congregation. This is not a good sound. We must bear one another's burdens in this regard. We must also keep in mind that the Lord has indeed abundantly provided for us, and that, all things considered, our churches are being rather well cared for as far as supply of their pulpits is concerned, in view of the shortage. We ought not to be loathe to share our ministers with our vacant churches, and I mean generously. This holds true for the East, where pulpit supply is usually readily available from the seminary; but it also holds true for the West, where distances are greater and where most of our vacant churches are at present. We all, churches and ministers, must be willing to be spread a little thinly for the sake of our sister churches.

It also means that we must continue in prayer to the Lord, "Lord, send us men!" And not only must we pray, but we must as consistories and pastors and also as parents continue to hold this need before our young men for their earnest consideration. The need is there, and to all appearances that need will continue to be with us for some years to come.

Meanwhile, let me call attention to the fact, in conclusion, that the outlook at present is brighter than it has been for some years as far as students for our seminary are concerned. True, it will at best be a few years before we see these young men as seminary graduates, the Lord willing. But there are several young men who are engaged in their pre-seminary studies and who within a few years hope to be busily engaged in their seminary studies. Moreover, our Theological School Committee is at present making a thorough study of possible ways and means of hastening the preparation of these young men without harming their education. Perhaps by the time our Synod convenes the committee will have something definite to report. But this, I believe, is surely a step in the right direction and a hopeful sign.

All of which does not mean that we are by any means in danger of having an over-supply of students. The fact that we have expectations of a few new students must not deter us from prayer and from consecrated efforts to obtain more students. The need is great!

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of Doon Protestant Reformed Church extends Christian sympathy to Mrs. James J. Blankespoor in the recent passing of her father:

HENRY ALTENA

at the age of 75 years. May those who sorrow be comforted in the truth of I Cor. 15:55: ("O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?")

Rev. Robert D. Decker, President
Mrs. Henry Bleyenbergh, Secretary

The Church, the Christian, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The purpose of this editorial is not to justify murder. The murder of Dr. Martin Luther King was just exactly that: murder. And murder is contrary to the law of God. But let it be added at once: what else do you expect of the world than murder? Can a depraved world walk in love toward the neighbor and seek his well-being? Let it be added, too, that a judgment of God was executed in this event, the judgment that is embodied in the words, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." For do not forget: Dr. King took the sword, just as really as if he had gone up and down our country with a sword of steel in his hand. And he perished by the sword. All of which does not justify his assassin, who also took the sword and must needs perish by the sword.

Nor is the purpose of this editorial to justify so-called racist tenets. For the purposes of this article it makes absolutely no difference whether Dr. King was black or white, red or yellow. It makes a world of difference, however, whether he and the things for which he stood were Christian or anti-Christian, of Christ or of Belial, according to Scripture or opposed to Scripture.

Nor is the purpose of this editorial to plead either for segregation or desegregation. From a Christian viewpoint, one can only conclude that no real problems will be solved by either policy. From that same viewpoint, one can at best expect that any policy which is adopted and followed by this world in an attempt to solve its incalculably great problems can only be in the nature of an accommodation and a temporizing as the world rushes toward the ultimate manifestation of the Antichrist, and by the same token rushes madly and willfully toward its own destruction.

This editorial is not concerned with the world and its problems. "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Apart from that gospel of the kingdom, of the kingdom, mark you, which stands antithetically over against the kingdom of this world, there is no solution for any problem. And that gospel of the kingdom cuts across, cuts through, cuts to pieces any and every gospel and philosophy of man, whether that be a philosophy of racism or of desegregation, whether it be a philosophy of so-called non-violent resistance or of violent resistance. What we should be concerned about, therefore, in this present situation is the church and her stance and the child of God and his attitude in the midst of and over against all the social upheaval and turmoil of our times, particularly as the latter were brought into sharp focus

in the events surrounding the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

And this editorial is intended as a solemn warning and a protest and a call to reformation.

THE SPECTACLE OF A PROSTITUTED CHURCH

It was neither surprising nor disturbing to see all kinds of churches and religious leaders of modernist ilk worship at the feet of one of their idols, extol the praises of one of their own kind, pay homage at the casket of one of their slain comrades, and memorialize one of their great leaders with numerous exhortations to be faithful to his philosophy and especially to his principle of non-violence. This sort of thing one has come to expect from those who have long ago forsaken the truth of God's Word and who for many years already have co-labored with liberals of every brand in the cause of a social gospel and of social revolution.

What is surprising and disturbing is to behold the spectacle of churches and leaders who are still supposed to represent the church of Jesus Christ prostituting themselves in this cause of a God-defying, Christ-denying social gospel. What is surprising and disturbing is to behold the spectre of such spiritual prostitution raising its ugly head among those who name themselves by the name of Reformed Christians, even as historically close to us as the Christian Reformed denomination.

I do not know very much about reactions elsewhere among those of Reformed background. But here in "Jerusalem," in the fair city of Grand Rapids, we have witnessed some strange, some sad, some hair-raising, some spine-chilling phenomena.

We have witnessed the depressing spectacle of a college bearing John Calvin's name holding memorial services on both campuses in memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. We have witnessed the spectacle of a very religious-sounding "Open Letter to the People of Grand Rapids" signed by the "Student Body of Calvin Theological Seminary" being published in the *Grand Rapids Press*, a letter in which there is not so much as a breath of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of sin and of grace, the gospel of the antithesis. Here is the text of that letter:

We have often heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King calling us to cut the cancer of prejudice from our souls and from our land. But we have never heard his voice so eloquently as in his death. We have never heard his voice so eloquently as in our grief at his assassination.

We have witnessed oppression, exploitation, corruption and have not spoken or done God's Word. Our hate, our prejudice, our indifference, our silence must bear the responsibility for this tragic event. Our prejudice and indifference demands shame, and shame demands action. The death of Dr. Martin Luther King cries for us to speak the word of justice, to speak the word of love, to speak the word of righteousness, and then to do that word. To do that word is to achieve the right of every man to be a man. Let us all, therefore, fight hate with love, prejudice with brotherhood, and indifference with concrete action. That concrete action must be expressed in low-cost housing, equality of job opportunities, equality of educational opportunities. "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-rolling stream."

We have witnessed the spectacle of all the Christian Schools (that is, the Christian Reformed Christian schools) in this city closing in observance of the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

More tragic yet, we have witnessed the spectacle of a sabbath-desecrating memorial march from Franklin Park (just across the street from our First Protestant Reformed Church) to the Grand Rapids City Hall, reportedly participated in by some 4,000 people and climaxed by a memorial service, on the Sunday afternoon following King's assassination. Who was it initiated by? By two Christian Reformed ministers and a Calvin College professor, among others. Who acted as parade marshals? Many (more than 50) Calvin seminary students. Who lent moral and material support? Calvin College, by furnishing transportation from City Hall for the marchers. Who were associated in this march? Liberal ministers of the area Council of Churches and various civil rights leaders of this city, Grace Christian Reformed Church (Rev. Peter Huiner) and First Christian Reformed Church (Rev. Marvin Beelen) and, "in effect, Calvin College and Seminary," according to the *Grand Rapids Press*. What kind of things were done and said at the memorial service? They prayed together and together sang "We Shall Overcome." The Rev. Peter Huiner drew the applause of the crowd for the following reported remarks in tribute to the slain civil rights leader:

This has been called a day of defeat. There are those who despair. But Martin Luther King did not despair. And it is us who must turn this day of defeat into a day of victory. Let this be the beginning of a resurrection movement in Grand Rapids.

Yes, it was a sad time in Grand Rapids, — sad not because of King's death, but sad because many who were supposed to represent the church, and, more specifically, the Reformed faith, made a public spectacle of themselves and of the church, a caricature of the church of Jesus Christ, seemingly taking complete leave of their senses in their haste to pay tribute to this false prophet, Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHO WAS DR. KING?

For who was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?

That he had become a great man in this world, no one will deny. The great and prominent of this world

gave ample testimony of this by going to Atlanta to pay their respects at his funeral.

That he had been catapulted into prominence and fame through his activities as head of an influential civil rights movement, everyone will have to acknowledge. Somehow he even seemed to have achieved greater fame than that other victim of an assassin's bullet, President Kennedy.

That he was an eloquent demagogue, who knew the power of rhetoric and who knew even how to employ Scriptural language and Scriptural references as his tools, to this the almost electric response to his speeches gave testimony.

But who was he really? That is, what did he stand for? What were his principles?

It is not my purpose to rehearse the personal history and philosophy of this man in detail. But permit me to mention a few telling facts. Some of these I learned from an NBC documentary on the radio; some of these I read in various publications.

King was a man who once said: "I happen to believe that God reveals Himself in all the great religions of the world." He was a man who claimed to have gained his inspiration for non-violent resistance from Jesus of Nazareth, and the technique from Mahatma Gandhi. I heard him say this in a tape-recorded interview broadcast after his death. In his last address he boldly said, in defiance of the God-ordained powers that be: "We aren't going to let any injunction turn us around," — referring to the proposed march in Memphis in which he never took part.

He was a man who was captivated by Henry David Thoreau's writings on "Civil Disobedience." And who was Thoreau? An unbelieving, transcendentalist, individualist, early American philosopher-author, who in applying his philosophy to the concept of government wrote among other things, "There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly." Or this: "The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to, — for I will cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I, and in many things even those who neither know nor can do so well, — is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. It can have no pure right over my person and property but what I concede to it."

King was a man who rejected the truth of original sin. He taught that Jesus was divine in the sense that "he was one with God in purpose. He so submitted his will to God's will that God revealed his divine plan to man through Jesus." He rejected the virgin birth as a mythological story.

King's great tenet was so-called non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. I will pass by the practical fact that physical violence followed almost everywhere he went; and I will pass by the fact that by his constant reference to the possibility that violence might arise if his demands were not met he virtually

fomented violence and rioting. I will pass these by in order to emphasize that this non-violent resistance is a contradiction in terms. There is other violence, you know, than physical violence. The latter King reputedly rejected, in order to resort to a coercion that frequently proved to be more effectual than the violence of the gun and the firebomb. The principle of that violence was that he exalted the individual above the law. The principle of it was lawlessness. The principle of it was that the individual has the moral right to flout the law if that law does not please him and coincide with his individual conscience. The principle of it was that Martin Luther King did not acknowledge the Word of God: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God..." Romans 13:1, ff. Remember, please, that these words were penned in the days of the persecuting Roman emperors, when there were no "civil rights" except for Roman citizens and when the government used its vast powers to persecute the people of God. Even then the church was admonished, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

What Martin Luther King refused to recognize was that there is no principal difference between the man

who defies the powers that be in little things like parade permits and the man who defies the powers that be in big things like assassin's bullets and looting and firebombing. Both, principally, are anarchists, rebels, revolutionaries.

It is in this light that I can only conclude that those who paid homage to King paid homage to a false prophet, to a social gospeller of the most radical kind, to an enemy of the cause of Christ, to a man who in his basic philosophy stands condemned by the Word of God, to a man who neither knew nor preached the gospel of sin and of grace, to a man who in his own eyes and the eyes of the world posed as a Messiah, whose death even would have "redemptive value," to a man to whom the "promised land" and "the coming of the Lord" were identical with the achievement of civil rights and economic equality.

It is in this light that I can only characterize such homage on the part of those who call themselves Reformed Christians as spiritual prostitution, homage to the great whore!

It is in this light that I must raise my voice in solemn warning and protest, and cry, "For shame! For shame that such things go on and are allowed to go on unrequited in the church of Christ!"

It is in this light that I must needs call, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate!"

ALL AROUND US—

The End of the Institute

The Haves and the Have-Nots

Ecumenism

by Prof. H. Hanko

Those who, in our day, favor a social gospel are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the church institute. To the extent that they see the church's calling in terms of social action, they plead that the institute be abandoned. This is easily understandable. It is not enough, quite obviously, to preach social reform from the pulpits of the churches. Words without deeds mean very little. In fact, the preaching of social action from the pulpit can do very little else but continue to insulate the lives of church members from the world about them and keep them safely protected within the walls of the established church far removed from the hurly-burly of life. And so, to accomplish the ends of social action, the leaders in the church world are more openly advocating a complete and radical change in the structure of the church. They are advocating that the church no longer have the institutional form which it now takes:

congregations with preaching and sacraments; membership rolls; ecclesiastical assemblies on a local, regional and national level; etc. They are advocating that the church be restructured so that its life is moved from the pulpit to the streets, from the church edifices to the market places, from the smoke-filled committee rooms to the ghettos. They envision organizations working together for social justice instead of congregations established to meet Sunday after Sunday. They prefer small bands of people united to meet the real problems of poverty, race troubles, crime, etc. rather than, in their opinion, the traditional meeting of people to hear an orator address himself on various subjects to half-filled churches. To turn church buildings into headquarters for demonstrations is their aim. To break up isolated and insulated congregations into squads and action groups is their goal. All the hallowed structures of the

church must make room for real action on the social level. A Christian is such only to the extent that he bends his time and energies to solving this world's problems.

We are not, at this point, interested in the pros and cons of the social calling of the church. We are interested particularly in the implications all this has for the institute of the church. It is really not surprising that modern liberalism has gone in this direction. It has no gospel to preach any longer. It has no sacraments to administer. It has forgotten the rudiments of christian discipline. All this is true because it has no Word of God to bring in the preaching of the gospel, for it has been sacrificed on the altar of universalism. Perhaps it is better that it ceases its sham and gets on with whatever it considers so important.

But the fact of the matter is that this distrust of the institute is more wide-spread than we often imagine. It is becoming increasingly clear that, among some conservatives in the church world, there is also this deep-seated distrust of the institute. It appears on occasion especially among those who argue that the Christian's calling is to be defined in terms of separate christian organizations. The argument is somewhat different. Perhaps the distrust of the church institute arises out of some disillusionment with the state of the institute in our day. However that may be, the idea is that the institute of the church has become hopelessly apostate and is, in fact, beyond the possibility of reformation. This is explained in terms of the institute having lost its real reason for existence. The times demand more than the institute of the church can accomplish. The times demand a distinctive witness of the church in every sphere of life. This witness must be clear and vocal. It must set forth the principles of Scripture as these principles bear on all life's problems. With this latter we have, of course, no quarrel. But accompanying it in some instances is a desire to abandon the institute and reform the church along the lines of separate organizations which can speak in every area from education to politics.

I am afraid of this growing distrust of the institute. I am afraid of the tendency to substitute for the institute various forms of "christian" action and forsake the official preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments for making one's voice heard in life's arena.

It seems apparent that all movements of this type have at least this much in common that they have substituted some kind of emphasis on action in the world for the church's calling to be busily engaged in preaching the gospel of Christ. Whether that social action becomes the crass social gospel of modern liberalism or whether it be some kind of "Reformed" emphasis on the Christian's calling in the social sphere, it shows its distrust of the power of the gospel to save God's elect. The institute has outlived its usefulness.

It is at this juncture that we must take issue with

all those who plead for more social emphasis by the church.

The ascended and glorified Christ has been exalted in heaven for the purpose of gathering His Church so that He may take His elect to Himself in everlasting glory. He has ordained the institute of the church for that very purpose — to accomplish that end. He has decreed that these people of His shall be saved from darkness and brought into light, shall be preserved in the midst of the world as His people, shall be prepared for their place in glory, through the preaching of the gospel. This preaching of the gospel is the very heart of the institute. The church in its organizational form — whether in consistory, in the office of believers, in broader assemblies of the church — has no other purpose than to engage in this work. The church must therefore set her eyes on this one objective: the goal of bringing God's people into the fellowship of Christ. The church must busy herself with no other work than to nourish and feed God's people while they continue their pilgrimage. The church must be the means whereby the saints are kept in this present time until they are prepared for their place in heaven.

It is, no doubt, true that the end of our present dispensation shall be marked by a disappearance of the institute of the church — i.e., of the true institute of the church of Jesus Christ. But Scripture teaches in this connection that this shall come about under the pressures of persecution and the great tribulation of the era of Antichrist rather than the mere fact that the institute has become useless in the light of the church's calling to speak a christian word in the various spheres of life.

The preservation of the institute is above all important to the end that the church may be continuously gathered. If the time comes when, under the pressures of persecution, the institute ceases to exist, it can only mean that the church has fulfilled her calling, that Christ has saved His people, and that the coming of Christ is imminent. For the rest, we must put our trust in the preaching and believe, though all the evidence that comes to us seems to speak a contrary language, that Christ will still accomplish His purpose in the preaching of the gospel.

THE HAVES AND THE HAVE-NOTS

It is generally agreed that the black horse of Revelation 6 speaks of the great difference between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in this world with respect to material things. In fact, this important difference — that some are rich and some are poor — is one of the signs of the coming of Christ and is one of the factors in many other signs which arise to point the church to Christ's return.

An interesting article recently appeared in *News-week* which dealt with this problem. It pointed out in the first place, that there has always been this great difference between the haves and the have-nots. But it pointed out with many figures and graphs that the

difference is steadily becoming greater. The rich are becoming richer, and the poor are becoming poorer. The article was discussing this on a national level. It was demonstrating that, for the most part, the rich nations live in the northern half of the globe while the poor nations live in the southern half. In the northern half, a computer-age technology has allowed the United States, Soviet Russia, Western Europe and the industrialized northern hemisphere to grow rapidly in wealth. But in the countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa, while the population increases at a frightening rate, the economic lot of these people rather than improving is getting steadily worse.

The article made mention of the fact that various efforts have been made to reverse this trend and balance the wealth of the world somewhat. But all these efforts have thus far ended in almost complete failure.

In viewing the future, one noted student of the problem made the gloomy prediction:

If we do not succeed in effective and vigorous economic development, the alternatives are clear. The deteriorating situation in the have-not countries will demonstrate that the extremists are right. Black power — now merely a U.S. phenomenon — will become brown, yellow and black power on a global scale.

This prediction also bears out what Scripture has to say about those things which shall be hereafter before our Lord comes back.

ECUMENISM

Ecumenical activity in Great Britain is increasing once again. For some time there has been talk among the Anglicans and the Methodists in that island about the desirability of merging. Now concrete work is being done to realize this goal. Commissions from both churches approved a blueprint for reunion, which, if

accepted, will give England a united church by 1980.

Newsweek, in commenting on this, showed somewhat the compromises which characterize many merger movements.

The abstinence-minded Methodists, for instance, will not insist that Anglicans use grape juice at their services, nor will Anglicans demand that Methodists use wine. Unlike the Church of England, where the appointment of bishops comes within the crown's prerogative, Methodist leaders would be chosen by conference and then consecrated as bishops by their Anglican colleagues. The ceremony will contain a "deliberate ambiguity": Episcopal bishops and Methodist Church officials will solemnly lay hands upon each other in a "ceremony of reconciliation," and it will be left to the participants themselves to find great or little theological significance in the ritual.

It was almost two centuries ago that Methodism separated from the State Church of England in the Wesleyan revivals.

* * *

Episcopal Bishop C. Kilmer Myers of California suggested a broader ecumenical movement. He suggested that this summer's Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in London and the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, be reconvened in Rome in union with the world's Roman Catholic bishops under the leadership of Pope Paul VI.

He proposed that the meeting take place under the leadership of Pope Paul by acknowledging the pope as "first among equals of the Christian church on earth." But even this was not sufficient to satisfy him. He also proposed a "World Congress of the Great Religions of Man". This Congress would include every religion on the earth including humanism and would give the whole population of the world an opportunity to speak for "human dignity and worth."

FROM HOLY WRIT—

The Book Of Hebrews

by Rev. G. Lubbers

ENLIGHTENED — YET FALL AWAY (Hebrews 6:4-6) (continued)

There are a couple of aspects of this term "fall away" which we ought to notice carefully, lest we fall into error. Surely the text here does not teach a falling away of saints, or even the possibility of the elect to perish. That is, of course, quite certain. Such is our dogmatical and confessional bias. However, we ought to notice the text and demonstrate exegetically that we have here no such a figment as the falling away of the saints — an utter falling away

from the grace in Christ into utter and everlasting destruction.

First of all, we ought to notice the fact that the term in the Greek for *to fall away*, "parapiptein," does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The idea of the verb is seen in the noun "paraptooma." It is a noun referring to transgression. The idea is of a falling aside from the right path, as the idea of "hamartanein" is that of missing the mark, (See Westcott *in loco*). Here, however, contextually the falling aside is not the sin of common weaknesses of the

saints, but is a falling away from the instruction given and the influences tasted in the church. They did not fall out of grace of justification. They never stood in it. They simply fell by the wayside. Thus we read in 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." No, the elect cannot be deceived to deny the Christ, the Son of God. All the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church (Matt. 24:24). No one can pluck the elect sheep out of the hand of the Father. He is greater than all (John 10:28).

Secondly, we ought to notice that the tense here is such that it indicates complete action in the past. The fall has occurred irrevocably. They have been enlightened and they have fallen away. It is the stark reality of wilful rejection of the chief cornerstone of the faith. They hate God; they hate His Son. They hate God as He comes to stand before them in the Christ, His Son in the flesh. They will not that Immanuel rule over them. They count the blood of Christ a common thing. They want man and not God. God is not in all their thoughts, except to reject Him.

O, to be sure, this is no mere sinning in the weaknesses of the flesh, which sins we daily confess before the Lord. This is the sin not even of grieving the Holy Spirit by our sins and lovelessness (Ephesians 4:30) No, here is the sin of unbelief. The sin of unbelief may reveal itself in many forms. It will deny the infallibility of the Scriptures; it will deny certain cardinal truths. But nowhere is unbelief so pronounced and standing in bold relief as it is in those who reject the Son of God. He that does this is not only unbelieving. He is antichrist. There are many of such in our day. Such is all modernism, all preachers of the utopia of the so-called "social-gospel"! These do not preach Christ. They preach another gospel, which is not another. And all false preachers and those having itching ears to hear them are those who deny the faith. These are unbelievers, who wilfully and knowingly reject the Son of God. And the sects which fall into this category are legion!

For when such have fallen away, they are not neutral, nor are they silent. In their heart they hate God; they "learned" to hate God at the very place where the saints learned to love him. Where the saints were received in their worship, there these were rejected as was Cain who slew Abel. And in their hatred for God and His Son they are ever busy doing two things.

These two things are mentioned in the text.

The text speaks of such as "crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh." Let it be observed that it is emphatically the "Son of God" who is attacked. That is the point of denial. This is the all-important matter. Our faith is not in the man Jesus, but in God, the Son. This is the great matter here in Hebrews. That is what makes the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek what it is. Such is the key-note of the book of Hebrews. God has spoken unto us in these last days in His Son. The Son is made to have

a place above the angels. He is appointed heir of all things. In the decree God said: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." (Hebrews 1:2, 5, 8) It is exactly as the Son that Christ is greater than Moses in the house of God. He is the Builder and not merely a faithful, human servant. (Hebrews 3:6) It is as the Son of God that Jesus passed through the heavens and sits down at the right hand of God. This one is the same Son who learned obedience from that which He suffered. (Hebrews 4:14; 5:5) It is exactly as the Son of God that Jesus can have a priesthood that abides forever, in contrast with the priesthood of Aaron. (Hebrews 7:3) And the word of oath can only pertain to Christ, since he is a Son forever, the eternal and only begotten Son of God. And he who denies the gospel, therefore, treads under foot and desecrates the Son of God. (Hebrews 10:29) Let us not overlook this great and pivotal matter that these unbelievers crucify the *Son of God!*

No, they cannot really crucify Christ, the Son of God. They cannot do so literally. The Son of God is at the right hand of the Majesty of God. He lives forever more! But unbelief does to Christ what unbelief did at the Cross of Christ. They rejected Christ. "His blood be upon us and upon our children," unbelief cried and shouted! Crucify him, crucify him! Let Him be anathema! And in thus rejecting Him they crucify him once more in relation to *themselves*. They reject the Christ and oppose themselves. They stand in their own way, wilfully. This is a terribly reality. It is wilful disobedience!

Wilful disobedience to the Son of God. Upon such the wrath of God abides — in intensified form and degree!

For such openly reject the Christ in all the world. In their lives, their words, as well as in books and periodicals, in novels and essays they can only put Christ to an open shame. Such is the very opposite of confessing his name in all the earth, and that, too, in our lives, words, deeds, in the written page, in preaching, in song and litany! There is no greater hatred that can be manifested than to go out of one's way to make an open shame of one. This Joseph refused to do in his love for the Virgin to whom he was betrothed!

THE SPEECH FROM GOOD AND EVIL SOIL (Hebrews 6:7, 8)

There is a speech of God in nature. The kingdom of heaven happens in parables. Everywhere in all the world this truth of the twofold attitude of faith and unbelief, and the appended blessing and curse is exemplified. This we see also in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, which perhaps could better be called the parable of the bad and good ground.

There is a part of the earth which receives blessing. This is the part which yields abundant fruits to him that tilleth the soil. Here the wheat is gathered into the garner. Yes, here the rain is often drunk by the earth. And the good earth thus brings forth much fruit. Thus is he who receives the word and in whose

life there is abundance of faith, hope, and patience. He that endures to the end shall be saved. For this is the infallible proof of true faith.

There is also the part of the earth which is cursed. The entire earth is cursed for man's sake. But there is also a relative difference between the good ground now and the bad. And this bad brings forth weeds and thorns and thistles. One thinks here of the desert lands. Much rain, but to no avail. And all that grows on the same is useless. It is fit to be burned. It is nigh unto a curse. Thus it is with those who have tasted the good word of God and have fallen away. They deny the Son of God, crucify him to themselves, and put him to an open shame, and thus are cursed forever. Nothing can refresh them. One cannot even bring them back to their natural enthusiasm. No amount of mission work is of any avail.

Did it ever occur to you that that is the reason why missionaries sent to the land of Mohammed have no positive fruits upon their labors? Those who swear by Allah have crucified to themselves the Son of God. That Christ is God is the one thing which a Mohammedan will not accept. That is the barrenness too of all Modernism and humanism. It leaves man reaching out and searching beyond the sea in his lostness since he does not believe that God has come to man, God-with-us, Immanuel!

What a horrible end of unbelief over against the gospel of Christ!

Hebrews 6:9-12 (read from own Bible)

BETTER THINGS CHARACTERIZING THE HEBREWS (Hebrews 6:0)

The term "better" (*kreissoon*) is a very commonly used term in the book of Hebrews. In fact, in many ways, it characterizes the entire book. It is the book

of "better things." These better things are connected with Christ. *He* is better! A simple survey of the entire book of Hebrews shows that the term is used some thirteen times; and each time it is used to designate the superiority of the heavenly realities over the temporal typical shadows of the Old Testament in one way or another.

Thus we read in Hebrews 1:4, "...being made so much better than the angels, as he hath y inheritance obtained a *more excellent* name than they." Here the KJV characterizes the term "kreissoon" not by the term "better" but by the phrase "more excellent." The kingship and glory of the Son is "better," that is: more excellent than that of the angels. God never said to the angels: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Here we see that the basic usage of the term "better" in the book of Hebrews is, to say the least, very noteworthy.

Let us then pursue this further.

In Hebrews 7:7 we read of Melchizedec blessing Abraham when the latter returned from the battle with the nations, and when he had rescued Lot. At this time Melchizedec blessed Abraham. He did this as a priest of the Most High God. He was "better" than Abraham. He was greater in power and in Majesty. His dignity was greater. Hence, the writer can write here in Hebrews 7:7, "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." This shows that the term *better* here too is not a mere comparison on an earthly level, but that it comprises the comparison of heavenly verities in the order of majesty and greatness. It is connected with the better things which the Son has brought with His coming, and through His death and resurrection. Wherefore the writer can say in Hebrews 7:19, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a *better* hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God."

SPECIAL FEATURE—

Covenant Faithfulness and Joy

by Rev. J. A. Heys

Speech delivered at the "date-stone" laying ceremony of Covenant Christian High School, April 20, 1968.

This afternoon we are gathered to witness the laying of the stone that will from this day onward record the date that the first Protestant Reformed Christian high school was erected and its doors were opened to give that distinctive instruction which the Word of God demands of us as His covenant people.

We are gathered here because within six months we hope to see *covenant* young men and young women,

through the *covenant* faithfulness of their parents and friends, enter through the doors of *Covenant* Christian High to be taught the matters of their natural life by *covenant* teachers, in the light of and from the viewpoint of the *covenant* promises given us, expecting *covenant* blessings to be bestowed upon them, through this instruction, by our *covenant* God. The discerning listener will have noted that I used the word *covenant* seven times in the preceding sentence, even as in Scripture the number seven is the symbol of God's covenant. And, indeed, the word *covenant* belongs there in each instance, if this high school is truly to

be a Christian high school and worthy of its existence amid countless numbers of existing high schools.

Without covenant parents, pupils and teachers this school will be a Christian school and a covenant Christian school only in name. Without a covenant God giving covenant promises there are no covenant blessings; and we might just as well go home and forget about it all, admitting that we foolishly duplicated the efforts of others to build schools to perpetuate their philosophies.

But, since we do, as covenant parents, pupils and teachers have a covenant God Who promises covenant blessings, I would like to see engraven over the doors of our high school for pupils and teachers, for parents and board members, yea for all who enter, to read and consider, those beautiful words of Psalm 103:17 and 18 as they are versified in our Psalter number 281, the last stanza. The words are these:

All the faithful to His covenant
Shall behold His (God's) righteousness;
He will be their strength and refuge,
And their children's children bless.

We have in these words a wonderful promise, whether we hold to the versification or to the literal text in Psalm 103. But let me read to you the text, since the versification is rather free, "but the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children; To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them."

In the light of the teaching of the text and its versification let me call your attention briefly to three matters concerning our new high school. Let me point out that Covenant Christian High represents covenant faithfulness; that Covenant Christian High holds promise of covenant blessings; and that Covenant Christian High is possible because of covenant mercy.

You may be sure that building and maintaining a Protestant Reformed Christian high school is our covenant calling. Psalm 103 declares that when it equates keeping God's covenant with remembering to do His commandments. Let us remember that keeping God's commandments is keeping His covenant. And the commandment is spelled out for you and me more specifically in Deuteronomy 6:1, 6 and 7, where we read, "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded to teach you....and these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." Here we have a calling in regard to our children. And here also we have plainly enough the law of the ten commandments. The whole idea in this command of Deuteronomy 6 is that which is expressed in the first two commandments. Our children may have no other gods before Jehovah. And they may have no mental images of Him that corrupt the truth concerning Him. Therefore as far as the matters in the house of our natural life, the things by

the way in business life, in every department of life, from early morning till late at night, in all that which the child contacts, he must see God, and He must see Him as God has revealed Himself in His word, and not out of the eyes of the unbelieving philosopher and false teacher.

What is more, Deuteronomy 6 shows that this is the duty of parents and therefore of the extension of the home, the school. And it means that we must provide *positive* teaching — which is possible only in a school which we control ourselves — and not merely protect our children from these mental, rather than graven, images which plague us and our children today. We must shield them from the perversion of the truth which denies a total depravity that makes man spiritually dead; that, therefore, produces a world and life view that erases the antithesis and has no room for eternal and unchangeable election of individuals; and that proclaims a universal atonement which presents a god who is not able to save all whom he loves.

And now that you have begun the work of building and of operating a high school where your children may receive the positive truth of God as revealed in His Word, may I congratulate the Society for P. R. Secondary Education as the first graduates of that high school? No, not in the sense that you have graduated *from* it but *unto* it. For years we have had elementary schools where we could present to our children positively the truth concerning God in all the matters of their natural life. You have graduated from this stage to begin a high school in covenant faithfulness. And Covenant Christian High represents another step in covenant faithfulness before our God.

There will be, you may be sure, a covenant blessing also in Covenant Christian High. There will be a blessing upon the children. The graduates from our high school will not become famous and prosperous according to worldly standards. They will not become men and women to whom the world will go for advice and for their opinions. Rather we may expect that they will be hated and despised for their belief and for their world and life view. But they shall behold God's righteousness in the sense that they shall enjoy that righteousness. They shall know that God *is* righteous. But they shall also know that they themselves are righteous in Christ. They shall know God's righteousness in the sense that they shall know that which His righteousness has prepared for them: salvation full and free. And that is what counts. All their knowledge of science and of literature, of mathematics and history will do them no good on their death beds and before the judgment seat of God and in the new Jerusalem. But knowing God's righteousness will give them peace and comfort and go with them into the new Jerusalem. Parents, have their everlasting good in mind, and through Covenant Christian High teach them by the way and in all their lives to see this righteous God. Give them knowledge they can take along into the new Jerusalem.

And then the apostle John says it for us all, "I have no greater joy than to behold that my children

walk in truth." II John 4. There is a blessing for the faithful parent as well. And a joy that these parents can take with them into death and the grave. There is a reward and blessing also for the church. For although the church instructs the school and the school is dependent upon the church, the vine bears its fruit on the branches; and the church shall see fruit in the school. Out of Covenant Christian High will come future ministers, elders, deacons, school teachers, covenant fathers and mothers who know God in His righteousness, will maintain the truth vigorously, sacrifice and work for the kingdom.

But this is no time to boast either of our faithfulness in building this school or of what we intend to do in the future through this school. Boasting is not keeping God's commandments and is not teaching our children in the home, by the way, from morn till night that Jehovah is God. It is denying Him and attempting to steal His glory. Once again let us return to the versification. "All the faithful to His covenant Shall behold His righteousness." It is in the way of faithfulness to His covenant that God blesses us, our children and our children's children. But let us not overlook the next line, "He will be their strength and refuge, and their children's children bless." God will bless us and our children and children's children with His righteousness in the way of a faithfulness which He will work in us. He will be our strength and refuge in the battle and when we seem ready to faint and cannot go on in the struggle. "His saints shall not fail but over the earth their strength shall prevail."

Because He is a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God; because He is faithful to all His promises

He will give us the strength and will to keep our part of the covenant. He established that covenant with us, and we did not with Him. He moved us by His Word and Spirit to build Covenant Christian High; and He will keep us faithful. Otherwise this cause is sure to fail.

But you may say, The versification promises this, but does the text? Dare we take man's versification as a promise of God? Indeed we may in this instance, for although the versification is rather free, Psalm 103:17 also declares that the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children. That mercy of God never leaves His covenant people. They are never without it. And it does not depend upon our faithfulness to that covenant, for then it must surely come to an end. It began in eternity before we knew of the covenant, and it caused us to know it and to begin to be faithful. It will abide on God's people everlastingly to keep God's church for the day of Christ.

When the way gets rough, when problems arise and sacrifices are demanded, when the enemy ridicules and even takes away our schools pretty soon, rest in that assurance that God is faithful to His covenant promise and that His mercy is upon us to cause us one day to see in the new Jerusalem the fruit of the labours wrought in Covenant Christian High. And if we cannot have those beautiful words engraven in stone over the door of our school, may God grant that they be written in that mercy in the hearts and lives of the pupils of Covenant Christian High by the covenant instruction given unto them.

TRYING THE SPIRITS—

The Lordship of Christ

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

The truth before us as a topic is rare. It is by no means found everywhere in the theological *Bibliothek*. One may scan many volumes before place is found where the subject is treated, or taken up with more than passing notice. Nor where the name *Lord* is explained is lordship necessarily elucidated. The subject is to be distinguished from the deity of Christ. In His person He is God of God, true God of true God. But that divine person took into everlasting union with himself true manhood, in which He was invested with the sovereign position of absolute, universal sway. The subject is also to be distinguished from the royal office of Christ. The former is a finer aspect of the latter. Christ as King governs, defends and preserves us in

the salvation He has purchased for us. As Lord He has purchased us, soul and body, delivered us from all our sins with His own blood, and made us His own property (HC, 31, 34). As King He has right over us by creation. As Lord He has right over us by redemption. As King, His office is creative and providential. As Lord it is restorative. By His lordship He makes peace between God and man: "preaching peace by Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36)." He was "exalted to be a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins (5:31)." As King He lays down His law. As Lord He writes it in the hearts of His people.

Two eminent defenders of the lordship of Christ

were Geerhardus Vos and J. Gresham Machen, the former in his *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, and the latter in his *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. Both of these works make very difficult reading. Nevertheless, the following is of interest from Machen. He points out that the idea of lordship was common among the heathen. For the title *lord* was current in pagan religion. "But that does not necessarily mean that the title was applied to Jesus in the first place because of the pagan usage... Pagan cults were entirely tolerant; worship of one Lord did not mean the relinquishment of another. But to the Christians there was one Lord and one only... Paul himself refers plainly to the currency of the title. 'For though there be,' he says, 'that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth; as there are gods many, and lords many; yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and we in Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him' (I Cor. 8:5,6)... The mere fact that the Christians used a title which was also used in the pagan cults does not establish any dependence upon paganism. For the title 'Lord' was almost as well established as a designation of divinity as was the term 'God'" (pp. 306, 305, 307). Christ's lordship is therefore unique, exalted as He is "far above all principalities and powers and might and dominion."

The title *Lord* is a covenant term since it has to do with the guiding and governing of a family, denoting headship over wife and children. The *Lord* is *Master* of a family, and the covenant idea is further brought out in the O.T. form of the word, *My-Lord*. Many of the people of God used this form of the name, *Adonai*, calling Him from the heart, "my Lord." David wrote, "Jehovah said unto my Lord..." Elisabeth spoke of "the mother of my Lord." Mary Magdalene cried, "they have taken away my Lord." Thomas exclaimed, "my Lord and my God!" Paul coveted "the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." The title signifies the Owner of the entire human family and the One to whom unrestricted obedience is due. This lordship belonging to Him by nature as the only begotten Son, the second person of the trinity, is absolute and underived. It also belongs to Him by decree as the Mediator, and is delegated and derived. "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18)." "Thou hast given Him authority over all flesh (John 17:2)." God "hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man (5:27)." It is not the inherent, underived lordship of the Son of God, but the delegated lordship of Christ which we now consider. Peter had this in mind when he said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36)."

Not only does He have title to His lordship, but right to it, as well. It is His right by redemption. "For to this end Christ both died and rose again, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living (Rom. 14:9)." As Lord the right of worship is due him. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him" (Ps. 45:11). Not only was He "born King of the Jews,"

but He was also born Lord (Luke 2:11). All creatures are subject to Him, some against their wills, as the devil, his cohorts and all revolvers. They say, "Who is Lord over us? (Ps. 12:4)." Or they claim, "We are lords, we will come no more unto Thee (Jer. 2:31)." They live in the spirit of, "we will not have this Man to reign over us (Luke 19:14)." When Christ came, men would have Him no more when they learned that He was not a bread-king with socialist platform. Nevertheless He imposes a ministry and service upon rebels which they perform, as He appoints, although they neither realize they are nor intend they should be instruments under His complete control (Isa. 10:7). It is as Spurgeon put it. "The world has not gone to confusion; Chance is not God; God is still Master, and let men do what they will, and hate the truth we now prize, they shall after all do what God wills, and their direst rebellion shall prove but a species of obedience, though they know it not." Others are subject to Him willingly. They are His own people. "They gave their ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5)." The rest, who do not own Him, have no part with Him. "Not every one that saith unto Me, 'Lord! Lord!' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but He that doeth the will of My Father (Matt. 7:21)." We willing subjects renounce the devil and all his works, the world and all its allurements, the flesh and all its dictates, which were once our lords and, at the same time, our enemies. For "other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us (Isa. 26:13)," but they have all been dispossessed, like the five kings Joshua trapped in the Cave of Makkedah, there to destroy and bury them (Josh. 10:1-27). We cast down the weapons of our warfare against Him, bow under His sceptre, and acknowledge Him as Sovereign Lord "to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing (Col. 1:10)." It is our desire to follow the injunction, "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him (2:6)."

Jesus, always conscious of His Godhood and Messiahship, thought and spoke of himself as Lord. He commanded His church, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest (Matt. 9:38)." That He here meant not God the Father, but himself is plain not only from what He said but what He did (9:33; 10:1). If Jesus *did* no miracle, what He *said* cannot be understood. But Jesus will not be misunderstood. He plainly directed His apostles to speak of Him as Lord. "Ye shall say, 'The Lord hath need of them (Matt. 21:3).'" Then He commended them for owning Him as such. "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am (John 13:13)."

What Jesus did proves Him Lord. He touched and cleansed the lepers; He cursed the fig tree (only the Maker and Lord of every creature could justifiably do so); He made wind and waves cease their raging; cast out demons, dispelled diseases, commanded dead to rise, and where faithful preachers said, "Thus saith the Lord," He said, "I say unto you!" Lordship was also demonstrated in commissioning His church, holding the keys of hades and of death, His rule over the

churches, His opening and shutting of the doors of providence. In the future He will display His lordship in rewarding His saints and destroying His enemies.

The extent of His lordship is revealed in the teaching of His apostles. "He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36)," "Lord over all (Rom. 10:12)." All other lords are subject to Him, for He is the "only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (I Tim. 6:15)." Before His birth, while conceived in the womb, He was confessed as Lord (Luke 1:43). All His life He was Lord, and continues so in heaven to all eternity, for He receives worship coequally with the Father on the throne (Rev. 5:13). It is the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1). The great Spurgeon said, "He is God — know that, ye inhabitants of the land — and all things, after all, shall serve His will. I like what Luther says in his bold hymn, where, notwithstanding all that those who are haters of predestination choose to affirm, he knew and boldly declared, 'He everywhere hath sway, and all things serve His might!'"

What shall we say to these things? Let us by grace, in faith, from the heart, say, "My Lord, and my God" (John 20:28). He must have our worship. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou

serve (Matt. 4:10)." He must be served enthusiastically: "whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord (Col. 3:23)." He must be served with all our powers: "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Rom. 12:11)." Anyone who is a true Christian always serves Him and always belongs to Him. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's (14:8)." Many of our loved ones, aged, with long years of knowing and loving the Sovereign Lord behind them, come to their last and dying days with memory gone. With respect to those they love best, their mind is often a complete blank. This sometimes occurs in ministers of the Gospel during the last days of their pilgrimage. One aged minister, dying, suffering this loss of memory, no longer recognized loved ones. But when one spoke softly into his ear, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" he responded in rapturous voice,

"Jesus, my Lord! I know His name;
His name is all my trust;
Nor will He put my hope to shame,
Nor let my soul be lost."

WHAT OTHERS THINK—

A Presbyterian Review

In *The Presbyterian Journal* of April 17, 1968 there appeared the following review of "Reformed Dogmatics" which we quote in full. For the information of our readers, *The Presbyterian Journal* is a weekly magazine which represents the conservative wing in the Southern Presbyterian Church, a denomination currently working toward a possible merger with the Reformed Church in America. We hereby express our thanks for this review.

REFORMED DOGMATICS, by Herman Hoeksema. Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grand Rapids, Mich. 917 pp. \$14.95. Reviewed by the Rev. Adrian DeYoung, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Prattville, Ala.

This volume, published posthumously, is the work of a controversial figure familiar to Calvinists of the Dutch tradition, those of the Christian Reformed Church in particular. In brief, Hoeksema was judged to differ from Reformed standards in the area of common grace.

The dispute, which occurred about forty years ago, resulted in the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches. *Reformed Dogmatics* represents Hoeksema's lectures to their theological students.

The usual loci of theology form the book's outline, while the confessional materials of the Dutch Calvinists influence the development. Presbyterians will miss a treatment of the Word of God. Special emphasis is given to the covenant of grace, the Church, the sacraments, and the last things.

An unashamed dogmatician, Hoeksema took strong positions. His rare stance as a supralapsarian makes his treatment of election and related matters interesting to the student. Little space is devoted to defense. The Scriptures and Reformed confessional statements, extensively quoted, settle matters. Frequent appeals to the divine sovereignty buttress views.

Some peculiar features of this large work may be mentioned. There are lengthy expositions of the six days of creation in Genesis, and of the seven seals in Revelation.

Contemporary theology is all but ignored, with Barth quoted four times. Theologians Kuyper and Bavinck come in for most of the author's attention.

Paragraphs of extreme length, an absence of any visible outline within the chapters, and a rather heavy style are distracting. There is a frequent eloquence, however, that will make the student want to go further.

EXAMINING ECUMENICALISM—

Ecumenism on Good Friday

by Rev. G. Van Baren

Ecumenism assumes many forms and shapes. The subject does not necessarily involve immediate merger of churches, but "ecumenism" is concerned with anything which would *lead* to unity. We may be reminded, too, that there can be both a good and bad ecumenism. It is true, as far as our churches are concerned, that the ecumenism of our day is for the most part evil. Churches are seeking unity not in true faith nor properly based upon the work of Christ on the cross.

On "Good Friday" of this year (and past years) there was evident also a form of ecumenism. On this church holiday, more than on any other, churches and ministers find occasion to worship and pray together. It would appear that the commemoration of the suffering and death of Christ is one fact upon which most denominations and churches can agree. Therefore it becomes also the occasion for divergent groups to meet in a combined commemoration service — a sort of foretaste of what complete unity will *ally* be.

GOOD FRIDAY'S ECUMENISM

This writer can produce at this time certain indications of ecumenism on Good Friday only as these were evident in the city of Grand Rapids, Mich. Doubtlessly, the reader can himself furnish evidence in his own locality of similar "ecumenism."

The *Grand Rapids Press* contained various ads on Wednesday and Thursday preceding Good Friday inviting the public to various commemorative services to be held within certain specified church sanctuaries. An article was also included in the same *Press* giving information on an interdenominational "peace vigil" to be held on Good Friday.

There were at least three advertised interdenominational Good Friday services. One was held at the Trinity Reformed Church with seven speakers from the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches, each speaker addressing the audience with an exposition of one of the seven "cross-words." The service was held from 1 to 3 p.m. on Good Friday. I have no further comment on this particular service.

Two others, however, are more worthy of note in this article. The one was the "Forty-ninth Annual Good Friday Service" held at Central Reformed Church. There were eight speakers presenting meditations on the "Seven Words" of the cross. The speakers were: two from the Christian Reformed

Church, three from the Reformed Church, one from the Presbyterian Church, one from the Roman Catholic Church.

Even more striking was another service held at the Park Congregational Church during this same time span. At this service spake one from the Fountain Street Church, one from the Methodist Church, one from the Presbyterian Church, one from the Baptist Church, one from the Congregational Church, one from the Roman Catholic Church, and one from the Christian Reformed Church. The first speaker, Dr. Duncan Littlefair of the Fountain Street Church, is not truly Christian at all. He denies the atonement, the resurrection, the infallible inspiration of Scripture. He is a "liberal" in the broadest sense of the term.

The fourth instance of "ecumenism" was a "vigil for Peace." The article stated:

Seven local ministers...will take part in a Good Friday peace vigil which will get under way at noon Friday at the Pearl St. entrance of the Federal Building.

Sponsors will be the Kent County Chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the 5th District Chapter of the Michigan Conference of Concerned Democrats.

Each minister will lead the group in a three-minute prayer at half-hour intervals, beginning at noon....

The speakers at the above "Vigil for Peace" included three from Methodist churches, two from the Christian Reformed Church, and one from the Roman Catholic Church.

EVALUATION

What must one say of the above "ecumenism"? I would state that I hesitate to draw too many conclusions on the basis only of advertisements. I was not personally present at any of the above "services," therefore I can not judge concerning the content of the messages presented. Possibly many of them were entirely in harmony with God's Word — this I could not either deny or verify. I am not certain, either, who were the sponsors of the "services" advertised. The location of the services was identified, the church affiliation of the speakers was identified-- but I do not know if the church where the service was held sponsored the affair, or if it were a joint venture of the churches whose ministers spake, or if it rep-

resented a venture sponsored by the ministers who spake.

However, certain points can be noted. First, I believe that a trend can be observed over the past years. Joint Good Friday services were rather common for a number of years. But these services have come to include more and more diverse denominations in recent years. The advertisements which I quoted above reveal that even a minister from a completely modernistic church can speak from the same pulpit as does a minister from the Christian Reformed Church. A Roman Catholic priest can speak at the same service with ministers from Reformed churches. One can expect to hear of more of this in days to come.

Secondly, the ministers and their church affiliation are identified by name. Now it is conceivable that a minister could have agreed to speak at these "ecumenical" services without the consent of his consistory and without reflecting any definite position of his denomination. A minister might conceivably claim that he speaks only as an individual apart from his office or position in a denomination. Nevertheless, it is strictly not possible to separate a minister's office from his extra-curricular activities. His name and his title are inevitably presented together. And if his church affiliation is not identified in print (though in the above quoted instances this affiliation WAS identified), a man and his denomination are nevertheless linked together in the minds of the readers. Though it may not have been the speaker's intent, his action affects both his office and his denomination.

Men, ordained in specific offices, identified with specific denominations, revealed their desire for the unity of the church. Men, participating in these Good Friday services, have revealed the type of unity they seek. And the unity sought is not good — for this is not the unity of which Scripture speaks. The unity sought is evident in that seven or eight men speak on aspects of ONE SUBJECT. That one subject was the Word of the Cross. How can a Christian Reformed minister and a Reformed minister and a Presbyterian minister and a Roman Catholic priest and a Modernist minister speak forth from one pulpit on such a theme? Though each spoke according to his own convictions, there was the attempt to unite light and darkness together to sing forth the praises of the Cross. Such is wicked unity.

The unity was manifest also in that all were invited to hear each of these speakers. Whether the speaker was Littlefair (modernist) or Beahan (Roman Catholic) or Eppinga (Christian Reformed), the program was commended to all. Whether a speaker had always denied the atonement of the cross or another speaker supposedly had maintained that cross as Scripture sets it forth, the community was invited to hear both. That is ecumenism in action.

All this is but a foretaste of that unity which can be had under the direction of ecumenists. The idea of speaking together and listening together is being implanted in the minds of all peoples of all sorts of

denominations. If a Littlefair and an Eppinga can speak from the same pulpit on Good Friday, then later on some Sunday they can also exchange pulpits. Why not?

A child of God ought to promote true Scriptural unity. On the other hand, he ought to oppose that which is not the fruit of the unity of which Christ speaks. Though the men involved probably agreed to speak for the united services on Good Friday without being delegated or sent by their local church or their denomination, yet the local church and the denomination were identified in connection with the introduction of each speaker. To this a faithful Christian of a denomination so involved, ought to object. Why should the public receive in any way the impression that the actions of a few men within a denomination are representative of that of the entire denomination?

Secondly, one should object particularly when a *minister of the gospel* is engaged in such united services. Though a man agrees to speak as an individual rather than as a minister, the fact is that a man and his office are not so easily divorced. As long as one would remain in the office of minister of the Word of God, he must remember that his every action reflects upon the office itself. In the minds of others it is not that *Mr.* So-and-so speaks, but *Rev.* So-and-so that does. Certainly one in this office reflects also upon his office when he agrees to speak with others in the commemoration of Christ's death.

Finally, a strong warning must be uttered. As the rain upon the rocks, as the waves on the seashore, so too ecumenism: there is not sudden transformation and change, but the change comes little by little. The waves erode the seashore little by little. Ecumenism also does not suggest that denominations unite tomorrow, but seeks to introduce their own misconception of unity a little at a time. When man has become accustomed to united Good Friday services, then other united services will be introduced. So will the idea of false unity develop and grow. Beware, therefore, for ourselves and for our covenant seed. Be aware of the erosion that is in progress. Point it out to your children. Unity must be sought, but there must be no form of unity with a Littlefair or with the Roman Catholic Church from which we were once rightly separated. Light and darkness may not unite. Hold fast, then, to the truth.

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a principal for the 1968-69 school year. If you wish to be considered for this position, please contact:

Mr. Clare Kuiper
2450 Boulevard Dr., S.W.
Wyoming, Michigan 49509
Phone: 534-0098

PAGES FROM THE PAST—

Believers and Their Seed

by Rev. Herman Hoeksema

Right here we must immediately remark that there has never been any unanimity about this subject among Reformed people. In fact, it cannot even be said that there is a single covenant conception which has won for itself the exclusive name of Reformed in distinction from all other views. In the first place, there is wide difference of opinion with respect to the idea of the covenant itself, apart now from the question concerning the place of the children of believers in the covenant. First of all, there are those who seek the essence of the covenant in the promise of God: "I will be to thee a God." Thus writes Prof. W. Heyns in his "Essays on the Covenant of Grace," (*Verhandelingen over het Genadeverbond*, a mimeographed booklet containing a series of essays which originally appeared in *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan*. The booklet was published in 1914.) On pages 11 and 12 he writes as follows:

"The essence of the covenant, whereby it is what it is — a covenant of grace, lies herein, that it is the promise 'to be to thee a God' given in the form of a covenant, a contract. Every covenant of God with men was a promise given in the form of a covenant. The covenant of works was a promise, the promise of life in the way of obedience, given in the form of a covenant. The covenant with Noah was a promise, the promise not again to destroy the earth by water, given in the form of a covenant. When Peter on the day of Pentecost admonishes the multitude to be baptized with the words, 'To you is the promise and to your children,' he means more particularly the promise as it was interpreted by Joel, but then that promise as it formed the essence of the covenant: for only as such could participation in that promise furnish the right to the seal of the covenant. When the Catechism in Question 74 describes what it implies for children that they, as well as the adults, are comprehended in the covenant of God, then it says that 'redemption from sin by the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult.' And when it is confessed in Question 66 that the sacraments are instituted by God 'that by the use thereof he may more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel,' then it is clear that 'gospel' is here intended as identical with *covenant*, and that 'promise of the gospel' must mean the same as *essence of the covenant*.

"To have a part in the essence of the covenant, therefore, means to have a part in the promise of the covenant; when God by baptism seals unto us His covenant, this means that participation in the promise of the covenant is sealed unto us, and that as a promise to the fulfillment of which God has *obligated* Himself

in the way of *abiding* in the covenant (the same as abiding in Christ, John 15:4). And if, for example, the Lord could make a personal covenant with Jeroboam like that of I Kings 11:38, in spite of what He had determined concerning him in His counsel, then certainly there can be no objection raised against the position that also those who are not elected have a part in the essence, that is, in the promise of the covenant, as a promise to the fulfillment of which the Lord has formally obligated Himself in the way of abiding in the covenant.

"With regard to the question what this participation in the essence of the covenant means, what benefit is the portion of the covenant-member (*bondeling*), it must be noted that we must distinguish a *two-fold application of salvation*. Both are mentioned in the prayer of thanksgiving in the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, as follows: '...that Thou hast of thy infinite mercy, *given us* thine only begotten Son, for a Mediator and a sacrifice for our sins, and to be our meat and drink unto life eternal, and that Thou givest us lively faith, whereby we are *made partakers* of such great benefits.' Hence, the 'becoming partakers' (or, 'being made partakers') takes place through faith and is something different than the being 'given.' (Translator's note: In the Dutch version of the above quotation from the Form for the Lord's Supper, the verbs are respectively *geschonken hebben* and *deelachtig worden*.) Similarly in Question 74 (of the Heidelberg Catechism) the two elements of the promise mentioned are 'the redemption from sins by the blood of Christ' and 'the Holy Spirit, the Author of faith.' The application of salvation must first of all be that of an *objective gift* (Dutch: *eene objectieve schenking*), whereby there is *given us a divine right* to salvation; and this takes place in and through the covenant. And, secondly, there must be a *subjective being made partaker* (Dutch: *een subjectieve deelachtigmaking*), and this takes place through faith, or rather through the Holy Spirit, Who works faith. The first every covenant-member receives, as covenant-member in the full sense. Baptism is a divine seal, 'an undoubted testimony,' of this to all who are baptized. What this includes is so pointedly set forth in the Baptism Form when it explains what it means to be baptized in the name of the Father and in the name of the Son. As to the second element, the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, or the subjective being made partaker, the situation is the same for the covenant-member, and yet it is not the same. It is the same, for even as in the covenant the forgiveness of sins and everlasting righteousness and salvation

NEWS FEATURE—

Datestone - Milestone



The above picture (courtesy of Mr. Charles Westra) features the climactic moment at the datestone-laying ceremony of Covenant Christian High School, our projected new Protestant Reformed high school in the Grand Rapids area. Featured in the picture are Mr. Harry Zwak, member of our Hudsonville Church and chairman of the Building Committee, and Dr. Dwight Monsma, member of First Church and president of the Board. If you look carefully, perhaps you can make out the date, 1968, on the stone. The school is fast going up on a large piece of property situated on Wilson Avenue, just north of our Hope Church and Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, in the city of Walker. Plans are to open the school with grades 10 and 11 in

the fall of this year, D.V.; and, judging from the progress being made, the builders, Newhof Associates, should have the building ready in time.

The brief ceremony of this datestone-laying was held on Saturday, April 20, on a wind-whipped afternoon with the threat of showers in the air; but the threatening weather did not prevent a goodly audience from turning out for the occasion. The program featured a very pertinent address by the Rev. John A. Heys, which I will not attempt to summarize here because the text of his address appears in full in the department IN HIS FEAR, plus some lusty a capella singing by the audience.

This is indeed a milestone in our efforts toward Protestant Reformed education in the Grand Rapids area. For in a way the formative years of adolescence are even more critical in the process of educating covenant youth than the years of their childhood in grades one to nine. It was undoubtedly for this reason, too, that our school movement in the Grand Rapids area began some thirty years ago with a society which originally purposed to establish a high school. And now the Lord has given us to realize this purpose, and has made it possible to furnish our children with the so sorely needed distinctive, covenant education throughout their first twelve years of schooling. This is indeed reason for thanksgiving and rejoicing and renewed dedication. May this thanksgiving and renewed dedication be concretely manifested in the support of this vital project by our people!

I had hoped to include with this news report a report of the recent drive for capitalization and operational funds, but this was not available as yet. Preliminary reports, however, indicate that the goal of some \$38,000 will very nearly be reached. This is heartening news.

—H.C.H.

ATTENTION, STAFF MEMBERS!

The Standard Bearer Staff will hold its annual meeting, D.V., on Wednesday evening, June 12, at 8 o'clock in the Seminary Room. All department editors please take note of this meeting and reserve the evening.

Rev. J. Kortering, Sec'y

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a teacher for grades one through four for the 1968-1969 school year. Anyone interested in this position, please apply to:

Mr. Gerald Van Den Top
R.R. 1
Rock Rapids, Iowa, 51246

CALL TO SYNOD

By decision of the last Synod, the Consistory of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan notifies the churches that the 1968 Synod will convene on Wednesday, June 5, 9:00 A.M., in the above mentioned church, D.V.

The pre-synodical service will be held on Tuesday, June 4, at 8:00 P.M., at First Church. Rev. C. Hanko is scheduled to deliver the sermon.

Synodical delegates are requested to gather with the consistory before the service.

Those in need of lodging are asked to contact James Heys, 1432 Giddings Ave., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49507, telephone GL 2-5781.

Consistory of First Protestant Reformed Church
Rev. G. Van Baren, President
James Heys, Clerk

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES—

The Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School rendered an excellent Easter Program in the auditorium of First Church on the evening of April 11. The program consisted of selections from Scripture and songs chosen for the support of the theme which was, "Rejoice, for the Lamb Reigneth." The entire program was produced by the Principal, Miss A. Lubbers, and was one of their finest renditions. The choir music was faultlessly rendered and the narration was plain and clearly understood. The evening drew to a moving finale with the choir singing, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever," from Handel's "Messiah." Mrs. C. Lubbers, at a rented organ, played the prelude, the processional, the recessional and the postlude. Prof. H. Hanko led in the opening devotions and Rev. Lubbers led in closing prayer.

* * *

"Seminary Day" was held Tuesday, April 16, the second of such annual events in the history of our Theological School. Representatives from the Theological School Committee, the area ministers and prospective students received a special invitation to attend this morning session. Student Moore preached a sermon which was then academically criticized by Rev. Kortering of the School Committee, and by both of the professors. Three of the area ministers and nine interested young men were in attendance. After recess Prof. Hoeksema lectured on Old Testament History, specifically that which is recorded in Lev. 10; and Prof. Hanko held his New Testament "Iso-gogics" class. The young men were invited to visit often, and to try to schedule their college classes to include time to share with our student a course of their choice. Rev. Lubbers, president of the Committee, made a few closing remarks and led in prayer, bringing to an end a very pleasurable and inspiring session of school. It is to be hoped that the interest of those interested nine young men will increase and continue until they will also be ready to demonstrate a "practice preaching" sermon to other visitors.

* * *

From Mrs. John Hoekstra, member of Hull's Ladies' Society, we received this report of the meeting of the Western Ladies' League held in Hull April 15. Rev. G. Lanting, of Edgerton, Minn. was the scheduled speaker and his topic was, "Guiding Our Youth," answering the questions, "In What?, By Whom? and, How?" The speaker emphasized the calling of covenant parents to be that of leading, guiding, disciplining, and instructing their youth in the upright way. This duty he found placed upon them when they made their baptismal vows. He said that the youth must be led to the

point that they ask the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word," Ps. 119:9. The speaker also stressed the importance of covenant youth receiving catechetical education and their faithful attendance at Church Services. Rev. Lanting delineated the Word of God to be the only principal guide for covenant parents and their youth. Special numbers were presented by the societies of Doon, Edgerton and Hull. The Reformed Witness Hour was the recipient of the offering taken. After the meeting the ladies enjoyed an hour of fellowship while refreshments were served by the host society.

* * *

Lynden's Radio Station KLYN presented a series of Passion Week Meditations Monday through Thursday. Rev. B. Woudenberg was in charge of the Wednesday program.

* * *

Redlands' Sunday School presented a special program on Resurrection Day. Mr. T. Feenstra led in the opening devotions and taught the story to the children. A quartet sang, the children sang two numbers, and the Misses Shirley Gritters and Donna Van Uffelen gave a piano-organ duet. Their pastor, Rev. Hanko, made some closing remarks and led in the prayer of thanksgiving.

* * *

Loveland's Young People's Society sponsored a Hymnsing April 14 and took an offering towards the purchase of new pews for their church. In an April 7 announcement the consistory, in behalf of the congregation, thanked the Ladies Circle for the gift of three tables for the church.

* * *

The April Beacon Lights Hymnsing was held in Hope Church April 21 with Harry Langerak leading the spirited singing. Lois Engelsma was at the piano and Mrs. Gerald Kuiper was at the organ. Young Bruce Lubbers rendered a saxophone solo featuring some very intricate fingering of the keys of his instrument, with his mother accompanying him on the piano. Arnold Dykstra sang two solos, again with the result that his listener's thoughts reached out to the "timeless" time when we shall all sing with perfection the praises of our God. Jim Lanting led in the opening prayer and Rev. Kortering closed the hymnsing with thanksgiving. The theme of the evening was the death and resurrection of Christ as predicted in the Psalms and rejoiced over in many hymns.

* * *

.. See you in church.

J.M.F.