

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE

Meditation:

The Joy of the Redeemed

Editorials:

Reunion or Merger?

As To Clerical Garb

Entering the Seventies

(see: All Around Us)

A Word To Covenant Youth

(see: In His Fear)

CONTENTS

Meditation —	
The Joy of the Redeemed	170
Editorials —	
A United Reformed Church? (2)	173
As To Clerical Garb	175
All Around Us —	
Entering the Seventies	176
From Holy Writ —	
The Book of Hebrews (10:5, 6)	179
Examining Ecumenicalism —	
“Towards Justice and Peace in International Affairs”	181
In His Fear —	
A Word To Covenant Youth	183
Contending for the Faith —	
Protestant Doctrine of Sin	185
A Cloud of Witnesses —	
Of Sacrifice and Mercy	187
Greetings from Jamaica	189
Pages from the Past —	
Believers and their Seed, Chapter VII	190
Church News	192

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Meditation

The Joy of the Redeemed

Rev. M. Schipper

“Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

Isaiah 51:11

A word of comfort to the abject mourners in the captivity!

Repeatedly the Lord through the prophet calls attention in the context to the approaching state of blessedness which awaits them. No less than three

times in the immediate context we hear the refrain: Harken unto me! Directed, you understand, unto His peculiar people, who follow after righteousness because they of all people only know wherein that righteousness consists. Reminding them of the covenant

promise made to Abraham their father and therefore also to them who constitute the seed of Abraham: the promise which shall be realized in the new heavens and new earth where righteousness shall dwell.

In response to this the prophet calls to the arm of the Lord to awaken!

“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?”

The arm of Jehovah alone shall bring all this blessedness to pass!

The mourners are reminded of the strength of that arm which cut Rahab (Egypt) in pieces, and wounded the dragon (the devil personified in Pharaoh, king of Egypt). By that arm a way was made through the sea, in order that the ransomed might pass over into the land which floweth with milk and honey. The abjects in Babylon had evidently believed that this arm of Jehovah had fallen asleep, and that apparently there was no deliverer. But as in the time when He made a dry path in the deep, a way for His ransomed to pass over, so He will arise to lift up the bowed mourners, dry up all their tears, and make their faces to glisten with joy when He makes His redeemed to return and come with singing to Zion.

Only the redeemed shall have this joy!

Redeemed and ransomed!

Both of these terms refer to the freedom they attain through the payment of a price, but with this difference: the latter looks more at the act of redemption itself, while the former looks at the completed action. The redeemed, therefore, are those who have been cut loose from the bondage of slavery, are emancipated and set free; and so completely that no shackles of bondage shall ever again enslave them.

The redeemed of Jehovah!

Not only do they belong to Him as His possession. That, too, of course. For it is only the people of Jehovah that are redeemed; and only the redeemed are His people, His particular inheritance. But the meaning is still richer.

They are redeemed by Jehovah! In themselves they would still be in bondage: for they had no strength to deliver themselves, and they had no price to pay the ransom. But Jehovah redeems them. He remembers His covenant, although they broke it and were righteously cast into bondage. Because He remains Jehovah their faithful God, He remembers His covenant and redeems them. His covenant friendship may not fail.

He redeems them by a price — the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son; Who in the way of His perfect obedience must lay down His life, shed the blood of atonement. Not through the blood of bulls and goats could the ransom be paid, but by the blood of the Son of God, of which animal blood was only a prefigurement. A ransom paid not to the devil, but to the living

God Who had been offended on account of their sins, and Whose justice must be satisfied. Their Redeemer must be not only a real righteous man, able to represent them; but at the same time very God to be able to endure the divine wrath over against their guilt. Such is the nature and the power of their redemption.

Note: the prophet says: The redeemed of the Lord shall return! But how can the prophet say this when as yet the promised Redeemer had not come? Several centuries would pass before He would make His appearance in the flesh. The answer is twofold. In the first place, the redeemed refer to those captives in Babylon who would return again after seventy years of captivity to Zion in literal Jerusalem; and they are the redeemed, therefore, typically, while they looked in hope to the Redeemer Who was to come. In the second place, the redeemed refer spiritually to all those who are justified in the blood of Christ and are ultimately returned unto Zion which is above, having been justified by faith.

And their joy rests in their redemption! While in captivity all is sorrow and grief. This was true when they were in the bondage of Egypt. Then they were depressed with grief and groaned under the cruel whip-lashes of Pharaoh and cried for deliverance. This was also true when they were in captivity in Babylon. Then they hanged their harps upon the willows. Then were they afflicted and drunken but not with wine. The dregs in the cup of trembling were bitter. Their wound was sore. And this is true also in the spiritual sense of the word, of all the redeemed who by nature are bound in the prisonhouse of sin and death. But from this bondage the redeemed of the Lord shall return.

With singing they shall come to Zion!

Beauteous Zion! Of Zion's beauty how often we sing:

Zion, founded on the mountains,
God, thy Maker, loves thee well;
He has chosen thee, most precious,
He delights in thee to dwell;
God's own city, who can all thy glory tell?

As the redeemed captives of Babylon saw it, and the psalmist sings of it, it was the temple hill in Jerusalem, where typically God dwelled in the midst of His people. But the antitype is in heaven, where all the redeemed shall ultimately come. And of this they begin to sing even now;

When the Lord shall count the nations,
Sons and daughters He shall see,
Born to endless life in Zion,
And their joyful song shall be,
“Blessed Zion, all our fountains are in thee.”

O, yes, singing they come to Zion! Their voices are vibrant with joy. But their joy is not complete until they enter Zion.

In Zion their joy shall be absolute!

Sorrow and sighing are fled away! Sorrow, all the anguish of the soul that is brought on by affliction, and which results in groaning and sighing, are left behind. And in Zion these can no longer be found. There they obtain gladness and joy.

Joy that is everlasting!

Now their joy, as they march to Zion, is so often interrupted. Though in principle redeemed, they are still in the world. Because of this they rejoice and mourn — mourn and rejoice. They rejoice when they pass through the cooling streams of divine grace. They mourn again when the afflictions of this present time descend upon them.

But in Zion everlasting joy is upon their heads! Their joy shall never cease. Nothing shall interrupt it. No one and nothing shall take it away from them. As certain as their salvation is eternal, so shall their joy be. As a crown that joy shall rest upon their heads.

Particular joy!

There shall in no wise enter into Zion any who love and make the lie. All the wicked shall be excluded from the place and state of eternal joy. For the wicked there is no peace. This joy is only for the redeemed of Jehovah — beloved and chosen of God — redeemed in and through Christ Jesus — glorified with heavenly glory.

Blessed comfort!

As we said at the beginning that it is the divine intention of this Word of God that it should bring comfort to the mourners in Babylon, so we must see that it is only through the Word of God that this comfort is given.

It is the common experience of God's people that His Word speaks to their heart more at one time than another. In times of distress and darkness it makes a deeper impression on them than in days when their way is plain. And how often these days occur in the life and experience of the child of God, when unrighteousness seems to have the upper hand, when we suffer rebuff and persecution at the hand of the wicked, when suffering in body and soul makes our way dark. It is then when the Word of God infrequently shines in its glorious light for the eye of faith. Although a period of darkness may precede, when faith appears at a low ebb and is almost dormant, when the soul mourns and complains that the way of the Lord is not right. Then God comes to drive away the darkness. And we hear His Word as never before. Truths, comforts come up out of the riches of that Word before our soul's eye which before we never understood. It is then that that Word appears to have been written just for you and me.

This phenomenon has its own spiritual - mystical cause. In the first place, the Word of God is in itself a light and lamp for our feet. It is your guide, leading you through the way of suffering to eternal glory.

When we get to heaven by and by, we won't need that Word anymore as we now possess it. But now it must bring us to heaven. And therefore, it speaks so directly to us when the way is dark. Secondly, we must remember that it is the Spirit of God in Christ Who applies that Word to the heart of the believer in times of darkness. Word and Spirit are inseparable. Never does the one operate without the other. The Word alone would have no comfort unless it were applied by the Holy Spirit to the individual need of the child of God.

Such is, indeed, the intention of the Word of God in our text!

The comfort of those to whom this word is directed rests, first of all, in the assurance of complete victory. O, indeed, if they to whom this assurance is given would for a moment doubt this, they might be like Israel in the wilderness. They doubted the promise of God to bring them into Canaan, desiring to turn back. And with many of them God was highly displeased and their carcasses fell on the sand of the desert. That assurance comes to them through the Word of God upon which they lay hold by a true and living faith. When they take God at His Word, they embrace the promise He gives that the redeemed shall enter Zion, and that they shall have everlasting joy.

Their comfort, in the second place, rests on the knowledge of the strength of Jehovah's arm, which is the revelation of His strength to redeem them and bring them into that everlasting joy. Never can they obtain comfort in looking to an arm of flesh to deliver them. Those who follow the Arminian gospel which insists that the redemption and glorification of man is to be realized through Jehovah with the help of man have a comfortless gospel, and can never come to the solid comfort of the one who rests on the arm of Jehovah alone. That arm of Jehovah which already in principle has vanquished all our foes, has overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion, he understands is able also to finish the work it has begun even unto perfection.

This comfort will dry up the tears of the captives of Babylon, and it will bring everlasting joy to all the redeemed in the church of all ages.



Editorials

A United Reformed Church? (2)

Reunion or Merger?

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

As reported in our December 15, 1969 issue, there is considerable discussion of closer relations between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church. Supposedly, the ideal realization of such closer relations would be a United Reformed Church, as *The Banner's* Editor Vander Ploeg suggested.

There are, of course, many questions involved in this discussion. It seems to me that the most basic question, one which underlies or ought to underly all thinking on this question, is the question which is the crucial one in every ecumenical effort, namely: what is the character and worth of that which is to be united, and what, therefore, will be the product of the union? Here the question is concretely: is the RCA a Reformed church? And is the CRC a Reformed church? And will the result of a union of the two, therefore, be a Reformed church? Certainly, if one is Reformed and the other is not Reformed, the result cannot be a Reformed church. And if neither the one nor the other is Reformed, the result might conceivably be a United Church, but could not possibly be a United Reformed Church. Any discussion of this matter, therefore, if it is to be truly fruitful for the cause of the church of Jesus Christ in the world, must face this most basic question, first of all. And thus far, apart from a little skirmishing in *Torch and Trumpet*, I have not seen much inclination to face this basic question in the various journals which have expressed themselves about the subject of RCA-CRC union.

But there are other questions involved. Some of these questions are very closely related to the fundamental question stated above. Others have to do with the historical background of this whole question, and thus also with the history of the two denominations involved. One such question, — a question which surely must be faced, — is this: what is the aim of these discussions, *reunion or merger*? It seems to this writer that there is at this point no great degree of clarity on this question. Some have spoken only of reunion. Others have spoken of reunion simply in terms of union. Others, among them *Torch and Trumpet*, almost seem to confuse reunion and merger, using the terms apparently interchangeably.

Thus, Dr. Harry Boer, who, I believe, was the first to write about the whole subject, in *The Reformed Journal*, appears definitely to have in mind *reunion*. Writes

he (and I quote him from the article by Dr. L. H. Benes which was reprinted in *The Banner*, Aug. 29, 1969):

We were organically one for some years more than a century ago. One wonders how much each Church has lost in the losing of the other. The Ninth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, stands as an abiding symbol both of a unity that has been broken and of a unity that ought to be restored. We are brothers — brothers as sharing a common Reformed tradition, brothers as sharing a common Dutch ancestry, and brothers as sharing a common Dutch-American history. Brothers, too, in so many localities in terms of close geographic proximity.

This already suggests the idea of reunion, that is, of a return of the CRC to the RCA. For *re*-union can be accomplished only where there once has been organic unity.

Besides, Dr. Boer suggests that the CRC has broadened its outlook, so that it has become like the RCA, and therefore is in a position to be one with the RCA again. I quote:

When the Reformed Church observer of the Christian Reformed Church scene pays more attention to fundamental ecclesiastical decisions than to the debates that precede them, he cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that there is developing in the Christian Reformed Church an openness to other than traditional viewpoints which augurs well for fruitful dialogue and fellowship, first between the two churches and later hopefully within the united Church.

In other words, while the CRC can have some apparently fierce debates about doctrinal issues, the outcome of those debates (as in the Dekker Case, for example) is that the heterodox views are not condemned. The CRC has become doctrinally broadminded, liberal; and it can therefore just as well be reunited with the RCA, which preceded the CRC in broadmindedness and lack of doctrinal discipline.

But Dr. Boer literally speaks of reunion (not merger) also, in the following question:

Can we not with good reason, and should we not under the pressure of scriptural and historical urgency, entertain the hope that what was severed in 1857 will be reunited well before the second century of separation shall have run its course?

In the case of Dr. Boer, therefore, the aim is definitely reunion, it would appear. And the reunion, it also

appears, has become possible and advisable not because the RCA has improved since 1857, but because the CRC has moved in the direction of the RCA, so that reasons for a separate existence — if they ever existed, in Boer's opinion — are now non-existent to any significant degree.

Dr. Benes is not as clear on this point as Boer appears to be. Occasionally in his article he speaks merely of "union," although this might be understood simply as a neutral term which does not necessarily exclude the possibility that this "union" should take place by way of reunion, a return of the CRC to and a being received into the RCA. At the same time there are indications that Benes also thinks in terms of reunion. For he emphasizes that "If we are to move in the direction of union with other denominations, we should certainly, it seems to us, give serious consideration to beginning at the place *where past division has taken place*" (emphasis added). He refers to the CRC as "the one church with which we are in a clearly ruptured relationship." And again, he writes that "The Christian Reformed Church is the only other denomination with which we were once *one*, and there is surely a primary biblical sanction resting upon us to do what we can to heal this breach." And once more, he writes:

If we as a Reformed Church are really concerned about unity in the body of Christ, is not the first biblical, natural, and logical step an approach to the Christian Reformed Church? It is an interesting and also a very disturbing fact, however, that we have initiated efforts toward merger with a number of other denominations in the course of our history, but never with this denomination with whom we were once one. However we may rationalize and excuse this avoidance, we must confess before God that we have not so much as made any real efforts to enter into serious conversations with this sister denomination, and thus to heal the one breach that is the most obvious denial of the unity which should be evident in the body of Christ.

Dr. Benes also recognizes that there are differences in viewpoint and in practice between the two denominations, and that these need to be talked about honestly and openly. At the same time, he also suggests that "the events of history are taking care of" some of these differences. And he urges that the two churches should look at each other again "in the light of the oneness we already have, not as we were a hundred or even fifty years ago, but as we are today." All this, paired with the fact that he quotes Boer extensively, appears to suggest that he, like Boer, thinks that the CRC has changed and has moved in the direction of the RCA, so that reunion, or at least serious discussion of reunion, is a viable option.

The Rev. Arnold Brink does not express himself very clearly in his brief article, "The Lord Has Watched Between Us," although he does speak of the possibility that the RCA and the CRC "reunite into one denomin-

ation." And Editor Vander Ploeg also does not make it clear whether he has reunion or merger in view; at least, he does not choose between the two. For while he mentions both past and present differences between the two denominations, he concludes with the sentence, "Only then dare we believe that *union or reunion* will be the leading of the Lord" (emphasis added).

As I already mentioned, *Torch and Trumpet* does not choose its language very carefully, although my general impression from the three articles in that magazine is that they think more about merger. Yet, while in the title of their symposium they ask, "What About CRC-RCA Merger?" in the introductory paragraph to this symposium they speak about reunion.

Now it ought to be evident that there is a great difference between reunion and merger. Reunion presupposes past union; merger does not. Reunion presupposes estrangement; merger does not. Reunion implies a return to a previous relationship, which in this case would mean that the CRC, which left the RCA in the mid-1800's, would now cease to be a separate denomination, but be again a part of the RCA. Merger implies that two movements or groups come together upon a commonly agreed basis, whether new or old, and form a united group, a new group, usually with a new name also, — perhaps in this case with the suggested name of United Reformed Church.

And this difference between reunion and merger also implies differences in approach to the whole question of closer relationships between the two denominations. In the case of reunion, examination would surely have to be made as to the nature of the former union, the reasons for the breaking of that organic unity, and the question whether those differences are still present, whether they are still important, and whether they can be resolved if they are still present. And it seems to me that some of those who are suggesting reunion are also assuming that those past differences are now non-existent for the most part, and that therefore formal reunion can be accomplished with little difficulty. Not only is this a begging of the question, but it also ignores another possibility, namely, that in the interim since estrangement new differences may have arisen which might make reunion both impossible and inadvisable. Merger, on the other hand, can really ignore the past. It can say, "We will be neither RCA nor CRC, but something new." It can examine the question whether *at present* there are sufficient similarities in doctrine, polity, and practice between the two denominations to make such merger possible. It can examine the question whether or not there are at present any significant obstacles in the path of such merger. It can examine the question whether the two groups have enough common interests to make merger beneficial. And it can examine the question whether there are any practical benefits to be

derived from such an organic union as might be formed by the coming together of the two groups. And then if the two favor such a union, they can agree on a new and acceptable basis of unity and a new name and new ecclesiastical machinery. And the question of merger involves both parties necessarily in the ethics of ignoring the past in the case of the two denominations which were formerly one. In other words, if in the past there were differences serious enough to produce separation, would it be right before the face of God to ignore that past and to arrive at some kind of union today which simply acts as though the past has not happened? It is a question, indeed, whether such ignoring of the past could ever successfully be accom-

plished. But the main question is whether it is right before the face of God. For if today such merger should be possible, then it follows that in the past one or both of the two groups erred grievously; and the blessing of God could not rest on a merger premised on unconfessed sin.

All of this does not mean that reunion is necessarily right, however. That question must be decided on its own merits. Nor does reunion in this case by any means guarantee a Reformed product. That is a far more basic question, and one which surely would have to be discussed in the light of the first two items which I mentioned in the December 15 issue.

As To Clerical Garb

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

It is not unlikely that in the near future one or more of our ministers will appear some Sunday in a robe, or toga. And lest this be misunderstood as either a move toward clericalism or even toward "modernism," or lest it be too great a shock to some, a couple of the brethren suggested that a few words of explanation might be helpful.

And then I would point out, in the first place, that the matter of one's particular style of clothing in the pulpit belongs in the sphere of the adiaphora, or so-called indifferent things. Reformed churches have never legislated about this subject. There is no law requiring that ministers have a certain garb peculiar to their office; neither is there any law forbidding a certain garb. This is simply a matter in which no principle is involved as such. In other words, within the limits of propriety, neatness, and good taste, it is simply a matter of individual choice. By the same token, the fact that a minister wears a special, or formal, garb does not mean that he associates his office with the idea of a priestly function in the Roman Catholic sense of the word. The latter is an altogether different notion. Each part of a priest's clothing (and that, too, at the various levels of the hierarchy) has its own liturgical and symbolical significance, just as the clothing of the priests in the old dispensation did; and it belongs to the office of the priest that he be clothed in his priestly garments, so that to function without them at the mass would be sin. This, of course, is not and never has been the idea when Reformed ministers, our own included, wore distinctive clothing in the pulpit.

In the second place, distinctive clothing in the pulpit is not something new, but very old in Reformed

churches, both here and in Europe. This has been true in our own churches, as well as in others. In years past our ministers all wore the long, black "Prince Albert" coat, black trousers, and usually the uncomfortable square-pointed collar which forced them to hold their chins high. Most of us probably are unacquainted with that style, except from pictures. Later, when styles changed, the cutaway, wing-collar, and striped trousers came into fashion. But that, too, has had its day; and at present it is seldom seen any more, probably mostly for reasons of style. In many churches the robe has come into style today; or perhaps I should say that it has come *back* into style. For actually the robe is the oldest type of pulpit-wear of those that I have mentioned. It dates back to the times of the Reformation. And as might be expected of Reformation times, the wearing of the robe certainly was not a left-over from the Roman Catholic custom of priestly garments: for such thoughts were anathema to the reformers. The fact of the matter is that the robe was simply the formal garb of academic people, of those who held positions among the educated and among educators. Thus, for example, pictures of Calvin show him clothed in such a toga.

What, then, might be the reasons for a minister to wear formal garb of any kind in the pulpit?

As I indicated, it is a matter of no principle. Whether it be a Prince Albert, a cutaway, a plain, dark business suit, or a robe that he wears cannot be decided as a matter of principle.

But there are, chiefly, the dictates of propriety, dignity, and formality.

That one's dress should be appropriate to the occasion, I think, no one will deny. One does not go to the

beach or to the golf course in his dress clothes; nor does he attend church in a bathing suit or in his greasy work clothes. Why not? Simply because it is inappropriate; it doesn't fit. So also, one does not expect a minister to ascend the pulpit garbed in a flamboyant sport coat, a flashy sport shirt, and a loud tie. Nor does he expect the minister to appear with muddy shoes which are sorely in need of a polishing and a suit which looks at though he slept in it; but he expects him to appear neat, clean, well-groomed, and soberly dressed. Why? Simply because this is in keeping with the occasion.

Similarly, the occasion of the meeting for public worship demands a dignity and formality which is appropriate to its nature. That occasion is the occasion of the assembling together of God's people, His church. It is the occasion when God meets with His people, particularly through the means of the preaching of the Word and the sacraments. It is a sacred and solemn occasion. It is an occasion of solemnity and dignity, not an occasion of frivolity and commonness. It is something special, very special. And at that occasion the form also must be appropriate to the occasion. The reason is not that form and formality amount to anything in themselves; on the contrary, taken only in themselves they are utterly empty, and as empty form are an abomination to the Lord. All of this does not mean, however, that form and formality which give expression to one's inner attitude and to the essence and idea of the occasion must be discarded. On the contrary, they are appropriate. I sometimes feel that there is a tendency in this regard to throw out the baby with the bath, so to speak; out of a spirit of debunking formality and a desire to be informal, or

out of a fear of *empty* form, we tend to throw out *all* form and dignity, even when the occasion calls for dignity and solemnity. Well, this holds true also, and especially, for the minister of the Word. The point is not that he is anything special in himself. But he is an ambassador, an ambassador of the Lord. He functions in a high office, in the name of a high and holy Sender. And he brings the message of his Sender, God's holy Word. And he appears before a very special people, the church of God. And all that belongs to the form of that occasion should bespeak the solemnity and the dignity of that occasion. To that form belongs his appearance and his garb. I well remember that in our old Dutch Homiletics notes in seminary there was sounded the caution that "the minister must not be too quick to take off his dress coat." And I agree. And while there may be room for difference of opinion and of taste as to the particular form which the minister's appropriate and dignified and formal garb should take (and styles and tastes differ and change), because within limits these things are relative, the toga certainly qualifies on these counts. Besides, it is comfortable and practical, far more comfortable than the old Prince Albert or the cutaway.

That it would represent a change in the direction of modernism is, of course, nonsense. Modernism is not in the clothes, but in the message. Besides, the modernistic tendency is more and more in the direction of the informal, not the formal. Besides that, as I indicated above, a toga in the pulpit is no more modern than John Calvin.

So . . . if you see your minister in a robe one of these days, don't be too surprised!

All Around Us

Entering the Seventies

Prof. H. Hanko

It was but ten short years ago that we entered a new decade. We were about to leave the "fifties" behind and proceed into the "sixties". The fifties, in their own way, had been bad years. They had begun with the terrible and bloody Korean War. They were the years when the Cold War reached its heights and America and Russia stood on the brink of plunging the world into a nuclear holocaust. The country was just beginning to realize the extent of its social problems. Especially was the issue of race and racial integration an important element in the news that made the fifties. It was, now some ten years ago, with an audible sigh of relief that the nation (and the world) left the fifties

behind and entered into a new era of hope.

Really, the sixties began with the inauguration of John F. Kennedy. He stirred hopes in the hearts of millions when he eloquently spoke of the fact that the torch is history had passed into the hands of a new generation. People were led to believe, and the news media echoed this faith, that the sixties were to be the age when the problems of the times would be solved at last. The nation was committed to a solution of its race problems. People were coming to grips with the social ills that plagued the land. We stood on the edge of an era of space exploration dedicated to reach the moon by the end of the decade. Peace was sure to come

through a resolution of the Cold War and a lessening of tensions through continued detente.

Now we are at the end of the sixties and how embarked on another decade. Have the dreams of men materialized? Hardly. Not too strangely the boasts of our leaders are very much muted these days. For the country is in a mess such as the world has seldom, if ever, seen. The pages of the history of the sixties were written in blood. The eloquent words of John F. Kennedy were silenced by the ringing shots of the assassin in the streets of Dallas. His brother died the same cruel death in California. And violence struck down the voice of the negroes: Martin Luther King Jr. The racial problems were not solved; they became more vexing and terrifying. Racial rioting plagued the land and integration faded in the wake of racial polarization and the rise of militant black movements. The hopes of peace between black and white went up in the smoke of burning ghettos from Newark to Detroit. But the violence between the races was a part of violence that struck every part of the country. Crime increased as law broke down and the criminal became the protected one by the courts while the innocent were left to suffer at the hands of the armed robber, the rapist, the murderer. It was the decade of war on the campuses; of crime among the youth; of hippies, yippies, drugs, immorality, obscenity, nudity; in short it was the decade of moral anarchy. The Korean War which began and ended in the fifties was replaced with the bloodier and hated war in Viet Nam. And still, as we drag our weary feet into the seventies, the war goes on.

The fault of the crime and anarchy which has all but brought this country to its knees does not lie alone with those who violate the law. The fault lies with those who are called to make the law and enforce it. The root of the trouble lies in the fact that the law of God was ignored and despised. And here the churches led the way. A "situation ethics" was preached from the pulpits of the land. And it is a situation ethics which destroyed the standard of God's will for men. The result was that the courts (especially the Supreme Court) destroyed the possibility of enforcing the law and curbing the excesses of crime.

It is in this situation that we stand at the beginning of the seventies. Few dare to speak of a new age of hope. *Newsweek* spoke for most when it said: "We . . . have set too much in motion, have disturbed our institutions and ourselves too greatly to have any very clear ideas about how things will turn out. It has become chic to say that the decade began in great hope and ended in deep despair."

The fact that the sixties did not live up to the great hopes of those who spoke so glowingly of a new age did not surprise the people of God. It was evident then as it is evident now that the Word of God holds out no such vain dreams for the children of men. This does

not mean that the Scriptures make prophets who are able to predict the future out of the people of God. The Scriptures are not a kind of Jeanne Dixon crystal ball from which one may catch visions of events yet to take place. It is true that many have tried and many still try to predict events. But the Scriptures are not interested in enabling us to do this. And we must not be tempted into doing it either. As far as specific events are concerned, we ought to wait for God and not rush ahead of Him. God always has a way of surprising us anyway. Psalm 77 expresses it correctly:

"Thy way was in the sea, O God,
Through mighty waters, deep and broad;
None understood but God alone;
To man Thy footsteps were unknown."

But the Scriptures do tell us that Christ is exalted at God's right hand, and that to Him is given the sovereign rule over all things that He may execute with precision and in all its details the counsel of God. And the Scriptures surely make known to us "the things which must be hereafter" as Christ works all things to accomplish God's purpose and to establish His own everlasting kingdom at His coming.

Thus Scripture gives us the main lines of history in order that we may interpret them and see in them the sovereign rule of Christ. It is, after all, because of this that we see in the unfolding of history the signs of Christ's coming.

It is well that we pause to review the main events of the sixties momentarily to be reminded of all this.

One remarkable development of the sixties has been, no doubt, the lessening of the cold war. Russia and the United States are able to get along in many respects and have toned down their belligerence. They are sitting in comparative harmony in Helsinki discussing arms-limitations. They are able to cooperate in trying to find a solution to the troubles which plague the Mid-East. They are increasing their cultural and economic ties. They are exploring the possibilities of cooperation in various areas of scientific investigation. To this belongs the growing international consciousness of Europe and the continued desire to form a United States of Europe with ties to the satellites on the Eastern side of the iron curtain. All these things point to the gradual development of a one-world kingdom. It will not do to shout with the men of the right-wing that Communism is about to inundate the world. We cannot tell. But this is not the point. Whatever precise form a one-world government takes, it makes no essential difference. Such a one-world government will certainly emerge. But it will be the kingdom of Anti-christ which lives in bitter opposition to Christ and to His Church. Surely the seventies will bring this goal much nearer than it is now.

The rise of lawlessness to staggering proportions is in itself a sign of Christ's return. The Lord makes this

clear in His discourse on Mount Olivet recorded in Matthew 24. But it is, I think, important to remember that lawlessness breeds lawlessness, and that the end is anarchy. The solution to anarchy is martial law – the suspension of all civil liberties. And martial law is but a step away from a dictatorship. This is precisely the way Hitler came to power. It is not difficult to see all this as an aid to the dictatorship of Antichrist himself.

Already the government has unbelievable powers. Stored away in its computers is a mass of material concerning every citizen of this country which gives the government information concerning some of the most personal and intimate details of our life. I sometimes think the government knows as much about us as we do ourselves. The census questionnaires which will have to be filled in this year will add to this information. It all gives the government the wherewithal to interfere in the personal lives of its citizens. There is a benevolent face of the government as it doles out its millions through welfare and social security. But even this kindly face of the government is hiding the grim power of government control. If the government holds its hands on our purse-strings, the government holds its hands on our life.

There is a fierce and impersonal face of the government, which is heartless and cruel, immune to human suffering. The government has within its power (and makes use of this power through its vast bureaucracy) to seize under certain conditions all the assets of its citizens, to confine to mental institutions, to close down businesses – all without any kind of trial. With every form of electronic eavesdropping the government can tune in on the lives of anyone. All this, too, shall increase the power of government in the years ahead.

The church has played a major role in all this. Not only were the sixties the years of the continued growth of false and evil ecumenism, but the movement towards a world-wide church, embracing every religion, grew mightily. There was one striking feature of all this. Nothing characterized the church so much as that much-abused word “tolerance”. Everyone is tolerant. Every religion is asked to be tolerant of every other religion. We are all, so it is said, on the road to the same heaven, though the road we may be travelling is somewhat different from that of our brother. The goal is religion so broad and so tolerant that it embraces not only the different faiths within Protestantism, nor even merely the differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, but also the differences which separate “Christianity” from pagan religions. All must be brought into a general brotherhood of man. There is, however, one important exception to this general spirit of tolerance: there is no tolerance for the truth. Without those churches where the battle rages between liberals and conservatives, the conservatives must constantly listen to the contradictory appeals of the liberals: tolerate us. But when the liberals are in power

and the conservatives make every effort to preserve the historic Christian faith, the mighty guns of liberal churchmen are trained against them and they are the objects even of persecution. A world-wide religion is indeed tolerant. But there is to be no toleration of the truth of Scripture. There is no room for the true church of God.

This kind of church is intent on joining hands with the secular government. Through the liberal church pour millions of dollars of government funds. To the government the liberal church speaks with a voice of politics, of earthly concern, of social solutions to social problems. The voice of the gospel is silenced as the church addresses herself to matters assigned by God to the sphere of those who exercise authority in the state. It ought not to surprise us then that the false church joins with the government in this aim of achieving a one-world government. No wonder that the W.C.C. and the N.C.C. are intent on doing just this.

The key to success is always the indoctrination of the youth. So the government has taken over education in this country. The public school system is fast becoming the organ for the propagation of atheism and evolution. The school is the pulpit for the government's program. Shall the Christian Schools become a part of this? It seems as if this shall happen. If aid to private schools becomes a reality in the Seventies, then surely the private schools will also become agents to promote the government's goals. Government aid, it is demonstrated in every area of life, means government control. Perhaps it can be argued convincingly that at this moment the government has no intentions consciously to take over the Christian schools. Maybe no concrete plans have been laid to do this. Maybe those who will presently dole out aid to the Christian and Parochial schools are not consciously intending to impose the government on these schools. But this does not mean that Satan is not intent on doing this. He is the implacable foe of the cause of Christ. He will do anything to destroy the witness and testimony of the people of God. And if the schools succumb now to this subtle temptation, they have opened the door to government control and they shall never be able to shut it again.

Is there a bright light shining in the darkness of the sixties? Some will say that this bright light is the fantastic achievements of science. We have entered a new age of technology. The boast to reach the moon in the sixties has been realized. Science has brought release from suffering in bold advances in medicine. Science has opened the doors to a new age of affluence and freedom from the drudgery of work. Perhaps it is science that will lead us into a new age – into a heaven on earth.

But this same science has denied the Scriptures and has the avowed goal of making man into God. Science has dedicated itself to all that is opposed to the will of

God. Science has, if anything at all, held before the minds of sinful man the prospect of sinning as much as man pleases while escaping the awful consequences of sin's destructive power. Science destroys the very planet that it wants to make a heaven. Science pollutes the atmosphere, the oceans, lakes and streams. Science litters space with junk and makes the moon a dump. Science, with all its powers, is pretty much capable of doing little else than destroying everything with which it comes into contact. And if technology makes freedom from work a distinct possibility, it only gives man more time to indulge in all the lusts of the flesh. This is the age of entertainment and pleasure. In his leisure man must be entertained. And his entertainment, to tickle his sensibilities, must become ever more brutal, ever more obscene, ever more violent. Man becomes satiated with pleasure and weary of life.

But the point – the awful point – is that man has

reached that segment of his development in sin where he will sell his soul for financial security and make himself a servant of Satan to gain to himself the things his wicked heart craves. How easy for one who is Antichrist to gain the world to himself and gather the loyalty of all men to his foul image. All he needs do is satisfy man's lust for security and pleasure.

The sixties brought us far in this direction. The seventies shall bring us farther yet. Of this we may be sure. How close to the end do we live? We cannot tell. God only knows. But embarking on a new decade the child of God has this firm assurance: Christ rules over all. Nothing can happen without His will. And He will rule till all His enemies are put under His feet and until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. Lift up your heads; your redemption draweth nigh.

From Holy Writ

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE ALL-DETERMINING WILL OF GOD CONCERNING THE ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE (Hebrews 10:5, 6)

The laws of the ceremonial shadows of the Old Testament were really profitless as far as actually removing our sins and cleansing our conscience from sin. The law could never make perfect the entire class of worshippers, throughout the entire Old Testament dispensation. When the great day of atonement was ended and the feast was concluded, the only thing that Israel could look forward to, under these shadows, was another typical day of atonement. Had it been possible to remove sin, to cleanse the conscience from guilt by these sacrifices, these sacrifices would have ceased by their inherent power and virtue. They would have accomplished very really what they ob signated and portrayed. The term in the Greek text is "*epausanto*," which is middle voice, aorist tense. The aorist is point action. It is action completed once and for all. The middle voice really says "they would have *ceased themselves*." They would have done so by their own inherent virtue and operation. No one else would have stopped it. The divine justice would have been satisfied, the law fulfilled and grace would have been procured. We would then have had the "very image of the things themselves." But now they were a shadow, a faint promissory outline of things to come.

It all availed nothing to the sinner!

Besides, this all was not well-pleasing to God. Yes,

those who came to offer continued to do so. They did so because they had conscience of sin and guilt which was not removed. They are the transgressions of the "first covenant" which must be removed by the blood of the New Covenant. (Heb. 9:15)

In view of all this weakness and imperfection of the law and the shadows Christ stands here with His Word, He stands, he is coming into the world, and he casts his shadow of good things to come. He is the High Priest of good things to come.

Yes, when all of the shadows and all that man can do has proven its utter worthlessness and desperate helplessness – then the Arm of the Lord is revealed to save in grace and mercy. Then we see the truth that "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son a propitiation for our sins." (I John 4:10) Such is the force of the "Wherefore" in verse 5. The Greek "*dio*" means: on account of which. On account of the weakness of the law the Christ Himself comes into the world to seek and to save that which is lost. This coming into the world is very significant. He who comes is the Son in these last days. God spoke in sundry times and divers manners unto the fathers through the prophets. But, finally, the time came known as the fulness of times. Then Christ was born from a woman and under law. (Hebrews 1:1; Galatians 4:4, 5.) It was then that God sent forth his Son to do His will. For this is the beloved and elected Son in whom is all His good pleasure.

Hence, his coming into the world refers centrally to His incarnation. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). And of His fulness we all receive, even grace for grace! (Idem 16) These are not simply some isolated texts, but they are the pillars of truth, representative of all the great lines of teaching of all the Scriptures. Wherefore Jesus could instruct the travelers to Emmaus in the things concerning Himself, beginning with Moses, passing on through the Psalms and culminating in all the prophets. And the sum of it all was: must not the Christ suffer all these things and thus enter into His glory (Luke 24:27)?

The writer to the Hebrews introduces the Messiah as coming into the world. He comes into the "*Kosmos*." He does not merely come to this earth. He truly comes into the inhabited world of men and angels, but he is exalted above both (Hebrews 1). For God never said to the angels: Sit on my right hand. But he the Christ who centrally comes into the World, born from Mary. However, he was coming by His Spirit in the prophets before this. Before Abraham was, I am, he says to the unbelieving Jews in John 8. And, therefore, he was coming into the world under the shadows and types. Dimly in the promissory shadows walked the Messiah between the candlesticks in the glory of the Old Testament shadows, and the pillar of cloud. And He has now passed through the heavens.

However, here the text indicates that this coming into the world refers to Christ coming to suffer and die. He is the *obedient* Servant who has dealt prudently. To make this clear the writer here cites from Psalm 40:1-9. The text is as follows:

"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared (fitted) me; In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God . . ."

How the Old Testament saint must have often felt that the Lord was not really pleased with sacrifice and offerings! They must have felt this particularly on the great day of atonement. On this day it was really the yearly purification of all things, priesthood, temple, altar. The difficulty was that even on this best day, when the victim was wholly burnt as a freewill offering to the Lord, and that, too, outside of the camp — everything was cleansed except the conscience. The worshipper knew that this was all but a parable of good things to come.

Such it was at its best!

But there were times too when it was so emphatically clear that God did "not desire" these sacrifices, but when Israel simply brought sacrifice and did not shew mercy, did not serve the Lord in spirit and in truth, then the Lord tells Israel through Isaiah, the prophet, that they are nothing but a spiritual Sodom, when we read,

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and of the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs or of great he goats . . . Bring no more oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with it; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting . . ." (Isaiah 1:11-15).

We must not think that God ever desired a goat to expiate the guilt of His people. God forbid! God would only have the perfect sacrifice of obedience to His will by man himself. And that no flesh can do; no flesh is justified by works of law. Hence, we need a Mediator, a Messiah, who wholly recognizes the imperfection of the *law* as well as the imperfection and sinfulness of His people. Such a high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.

In Psalm 40 we see this truth of the cleansing of the conscience by a better sacrifice set forth in bold relief. We do well to take a careful look at this Psalm. A brief analysis of this Psalm indicates that we are here dealing with what Leslie S. McCaw in the "New Bible Commentary" calls, "The Liturgy Of A Full Heart." The keynote of this Psalm is of joyful thanksgiving that the Lord has given the Psalmist deliverance from the horrible pit and from the miry clay. Now he is standing on the firm ground, upon the solid rock of completed redemption from sin and guilt. How different is this Psalm from the experience of one who has nothing but a "shadow of good things" without the corresponding "image of the things themselves." The Psalmist is come into possession of this great salvation. The Lord has heard his prayer; it was well-pleasing to Him; The Lord accepted it. It is now a new song of one who is thankful that the Lord has redeemed him from so great a death by redemption blood. It was not the blood of goats, but the blood of the Son of God, the Messiah who entered the Most Holy place through His own blood, in perfect obedience.

That is the "key of knowledge" (Luke 11:59). The "key" to unlock this Mystery of godliness is here given in Psalm 40:1-9. Sacrifices did not bring about peace of heart and mind, it is true. However, that was never the way of the Mystery of godliness that is great. Such were never the "thoughts" of God for our redemption. God's thoughts are His eternal plans and purposes in Christ Jesus. Of this the Psalmist speaks in Psalm 40. They are "thy thoughts to usward." The Psalmist breaks forth into joyful praise, with a full and humble confession which is at once also divine revelation, as follows:

"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are

more than can be numbered." Verse 5.

It is in the midst of these wonderful works that we find Christ standing in the focal point. All these works are summed up in His sacrificial obedience. There is no numbering of the works of God possible except we are able to read the "volume of the book," the Holy Scriptures. There is no Alpha and there can be no Omega — without the Messiah coming into the world and saying: Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but the body hast thou prepared me! That is the "key" to understanding the works of God" (the *Magnalia Dei*) of Acts 2:11 here in Psalm 40:5.

When viewed in this light it makes very little or no difference whether David says this in Psalm 40 of the writer of the Hebrews in our Scripture passage under discussion. For David speaks by the Spirit of Christ, which was in him, and which did testify of the sufferings to come upon the Christ and the glory to follow (I Peter 1:10, 11). And we may add that the very

angels stooped with earnest desire to look into these mysteries. That is the mystery of the singing of the angels in Bethlehem-Ephratha. Only here the Spirit makes Christ so prominent in Psalm 40:6-8, that David is enshrouded in the light of the glory of the Messiah Himself. It is the obedient answer of the Servant of God, the Son in our human nature, to the *will* of God.

This *will* is the all-determining will of God. It is the Divine delight of God in His own glorious perfections to be manifested and maintained in our salvation! Christ is come to perform that determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Here we see what Isaiah writes concerning the "thoughts" of God. Writes he "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Yea, now the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands for joy!

Behold, I am come to do thy will, O God!

Examining Ecumenicalism

"Towards Justice and Peace in International Affairs"

Rev. G. Van Baren

The fourth report adopted by the World Council of Churches in its meeting at Uppsala in 1968 is given the title which is placed above this article. The title itself suggests again a concern with a "social" gospel — especially in distinction from the gospel of Scripture.

Now it is true that the church of Jesus Christ can be, nay, should be, interested in justice and peace. For God is called the God of peace (I Thess. 5:23). Peace is of God and surpasseth understanding (Phil. 4:7). Peace must be preached (Eph. 2:17). But peace is specifically identified in Scripture as the fruit of the work of atonement, which is enjoyed by the individual ONLY in the way of regeneration (Eph. 2:14-17).

God is likewise the God of justice (I John 1:9). He is the God Who does not justify man as he is born in Adam, for in His sight shall no man living be justified (Ps. 143:2). But God justifies His elect (Rom. 8:33). It is this justification through the blood of the Lamb which is the basis of true peace (Rom. 5:1). The truly just are those who live by faith (Rom. 1:17). And these justified ones walk in justice towards others (James 2 and other passages).

Therefore, it is striking that when the paper adopted by the W.C.C. speaks of justice and peace, it speaks of a justice and peace which Scripture does not know, nor does it really seek to relate its own idea of justice and peace with that justice and peace accomplished by Christ on the cross of atonement. I would like to

point out how this is true.

First, the paper speaks, by way of introduction, of certain "Christian Insights." These "insights," however, are "Christian" in name only. Among other things, it is stated,

The Word of God testifies to the unity of creation, and to the unity of all men in Christ. . . . This calls us to action oriented to the brotherhood of all men. . . .

The Word of God bears witness to Christ who sacrificed himself for his brethren. . . . By this we are challenged not only to ask sacrifices of others, but to make them ourselves. . . .

The Word of God testifies that in Jesus Christ, God makes the world new. . . . We are called at the same time to critical examination and to unhesitating involvement. . . .

The Word of God testifies that the reconciling work of God makes an end to all division and enmity. . . . This drives us to seek to open and to keep open the lines of communication between races, age-groups, nations and blocs, in order to bring about reconciliation. . . .

Though of necessity I quote only part of the "Christian Insights," it should be obvious that these "insights" suggest a certain "Universalism." The work of Christ is applied to all men on this earth — these all are beneficiaries of it. Secondly, these "insights" suggest that the purpose of Christ's work was to establish a certain Utopia on this earth — that Christ's work brings

the elect to glory is not even mentioned. Thirdly, these "insights" speak of reconciliation — not in the sense of reconciliation of God with the sinner, but only in the sense of reconciliation of the sinner with the sinner. These "Christian Insights," therefore, represent pure, unadulterated modernism — insights to which no true child of God could subscribe. Yet these "insights" are the basis for the judgments and conclusions which follow in the position paper.

Several problems are presented and briefly discussed in this paper. First, there is a brief summary of the problem of peace and war. Simply stated, one could say: the W.C.C. is against war. The W.C.C. does not recognize war as the fruit of sin; nor will they admit that the only possible way of removal of war is through the atonement of Christ and regeneration by His Spirit. No; they are rather opposed to war because it is the "gravest affront to the conscience of man;" the "encouragement of wars by proxy" is an "international scandal which governments must no longer tolerate or permit." Their position towards war and peace must be hardly different from that of many non-Christian sects that presently exist.

The article continues by emphasizing the need of "protection of individuals and groups in the political world." The section is divided into parts: one treating the subject of human rights, the next speaks of majorities and minorities, then follows a section on race relations, and finally the question of refugees and displaced persons is covered. All of these subjects are treated only briefly. Striking it is here too, that improvement is suggested along lines which have nothing to do with the gospel, nothing to do with the idea of sin and grace. Men are encouraged, and the church must actively encourage, to establish an earthly kingdom without injustice. Among other statements, are found these:

Churches should strive to make their congregations feel that in the modern world-wide community the rights of the individual are inevitably bound up with the struggle for a better standard of living for the underprivileged of all nations

. . . Protection of conscience demands that the churches should give spiritual care and support not only to those serving in armed forces but also those who, especially in the light of the nature of modern warfare, object to participation in particular wars they feel bound in conscience to oppose

The churches must be actively concerned for the economic and political wellbeing of exploited groups so that their statements and actions may be relevant.

Then follows a division treating "economic justice and world order." There are presented several suggestions to accomplish this:

The full development and use of a wide variety of national, regional and world instruments, with the United Nations acting to review and correlate them in an overall strategy of world economic and social

development

Express in their own life the truth that all men are created equal in God's sight, and share a common humanity

. . . They should also stress that economic justice cannot be achieved without sacrifice and support the establishment of an international development tax. . . .

Give greater priority and more money to ministries of reconciliation and service on an international scale, and especially where the most explosive forms of injustice are to be found

There is presented finally a very revealing discussion of "international structures." This section shows how that the majority within the W.C.C. are striving for a united world community. One can compare what is stated with what Scripture reveals in Revelation 13 — and he must be struck by the similarity. The W.C.C. states:

But today the national unity has become too small, particularly among the weaker nations. Both the need for self-protection against economic domination by more powerful nations and the mutual assistance in development afforded by economic cooperation suggest the desirability of regional organizations. These can contribute to peace both internally as an instrument of reconciliation between their members, and externally as a form of cooperative security. They offer a practical intermediate step towards the goal of one world community

It is imperative that the churches support the building of strong agencies of regional cooperation and concern themselves closely with political developments at the regional level. The churches also should cooperate together regionally

Christians should urge their governments to accept the rulings of the International Court of Justice without reservation. Christians should also give unrelenting support to the development of an international ethos. We are convinced that there is a moral sense in all men to which appeal can be made, but which still needs to be publicly articulated. The UN is essential to the pursuit of justice and peace in the world

The overcoming of the present inadequacies of the UN depends chiefly on the extent to which men will accord to the essential authority. We therefore reaffirm the strong support of it stated by the preceding assemblies of the World Council of Churches.

It ought to be evident that this document advocates the establishment of peace and justice through a one-world community which has gained the support of a united church. The peace and justice sought will doubtlessly then be the peace and justice of the kingdom of the antichrist. This peace and justice does not proceed out of the cross. It is not based upon atonement. It follows rather out of a willingness of all men to cooperate.

The position of this paper is summarized in its conclusion. Notice again how the emphasis is upon the possibility of working together — not only working together with other churches, but working together

with those of other "religions and all men of good-will" everywhere. The W.C.C. works for a united church and a united world; it actively works for the establishment of the kingdom of the antichrist. They conclude by stating:

The growing dimensions of the ecumenical movement offer new possibilities for concerted contributions to international relations. There is an increasing demand for common action by all Christians in the international field, and new possibilities in many sectors of the international situation for joint or parallel action by Christians. Even if differences in historical ecclesiastical structures, cultural back-

grounds, political systems and styles of action present substantial obstacles to cooperation, these possibilities must be fully explored. More serious efforts at dialogue with the adherents of other religions and all men of good-will provide a potential resource on a wider scale. At the same time, responsive Christian witness to the world of nations should be expressed at the parish level. There is no parish so small or isolated that it should feel free of involvement in this common responsibility through prayer, education, consultation with the Christians of the nations concerned and through ecumenical service and action at local level.

But there is no room for Christ!

In His Fear

A WORD TO COVENANT YOUTH

Rev. John A. Heys

At the moment, Covenant Youth, you are strong.
And life is so sweet.

The years of preparation and of growing up are behind you. Physically you are now fully developed. You have arrived at full strength of body. And now the world, the whole world, with all that which it contains is ahead of you. What it offers and what opportunities are in it far exceeds anything that any former generation knew. The little things are behind you. Big things are ahead. Childish things are no more the lot of your life. You have arrived!

In the enjoyment of your new freedom and powers you are often too busy to stop and consider that, even as you gradually came from these little things and weaknesses of childhood to your present strength and freedom, so all this will wear off, and, as Solomon said in his wisdom, "Man goeth to his long home." The strength you now have seems to be so durable. Within you, you have no conscious experience to tell you that all this could end, and that there will also be a slide downhill as there was this steady climb uphill.

But you are covenant youth. And there is a measure of spiritual growth within you as well as physical and mental development. Therefore these lines are written by one interested in your spiritual well-being with the assurance that you can and will receive it. May these lines serve to assist you in your spiritual growth so that in it you are not behind the physical and mental growth.

Consider, then, that although life is sweet today and your strength is great, the days will come wherein you will say, "I have no pleasure in them." That is right. Days lie ahead which will produce no pleasure for you.

Days there will be when aches and pains instead of pleasure will be your experience. You may even speak then of "the good old days."

Listen once to what Solomon wrote, and what God moved Him to pen down for you, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Ecclesiastes 12:1 And he knew what he was talking about. He was telling it as it is. In fact, in very beautiful language he points out to you what is going to happen in your life. He tells you to remember your Creator "While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain." By this he points out to you that sicknesses, sorrows and miseries are before you in spite of the strength you now feel and the health that you now enjoy. Dark days are coming. Days when the shadow of death will be very evident to you. The light will become dim, because the sun, the moon, the stars are darkened *for you*. The sun may shine brightly in the sky for your children, who now have arrived at your present age; but for you it is grief upon grief, disappointment after disappointment, one sickness and ailment upon another, and, perhaps, recovery from one type of surgery only to have to submit to the knife for another. That is what Solomon means when he says that the clouds return after the rain. You expect a few years of sunshine now because you are beginning to recover from an ailment. But, no, the clouds return to pour out more rain and trouble.

He continues, "In the days when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are

few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened." Plainly here we have a picture of old age creeping up — and at times rushing up — at us. With the weakness of old age the legs tremble and the knees smite one against the other, often so uncontrollably. The arms, which symbolize the strength of man bow themselves in weakness, not able to do the work they formerly enjoyed. There we sit with arms folded (bowed) instead of reaching out to the work and flexing with visible power of rippling muscles. The teeth, or grinders, are few and we resort to soft foods. That steak we pass up; and those nuts and crunchy fruits we reluctantly refuse. At the same time the eyes, those that look out of the windows, need more and more light, if we are to read. We try to open them one lens stop or two, and find that they do not print Bibles and books as clearly as they did when we were your present age.

So it is also that your mouth also slows down, for "The doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low." Well, your appetite just is not what it used to be; and what you eat does not agree with you, so you let it go, refuse it, leave it on the plate and you nibble here and there, because you have to cope with a slowed-down digestive system; and perhaps a set of ulcers as well. With the decaying of the teeth — and in Solomon's days they did not have the advantages and marvels of modern dentistry — come doctor's orders to cut down on those rich foods, on foods high in cholesterol, on fatty foods, and those pesky calories. Pretty soon you get almost on a milk and toast diet, which you eat because it is time to eat and not because you are actually hungry and look forward to eating.

Deafness sets in and sleep escapes you. You are up with the birds and not because the slightest noise awakens you. No, although, "He shall rise up at the voice of the bird", Solomon continues, "and the daughters of music shall be brought low", you shall rise up at the time when the bird's voice is heard by others, by your children. You yourself will only faintly hear — unless modern electronics has supplied you with an hearing aid which also magnifies the noises you do not want to hear — your daughter's and granddaughter's singing. You shout and wonder why people talk so softly. Is this also due to the "generation gap?" You turn the radio way up and cannot understand that others quickly set it so that you cannot hear it. They must have it in for the old fogies and do not want them to enjoy these things along with them. That new preacher is really no improvement either. He speaks so softly! And that new amplification system was not really worth those hundreds of dollars spent. They just do not make things the way they used to do!

But the day will also come when your present bravery will disappear. You will be "afraid of that which is high, and fear shall be in the way." You will probably

turn in your driver's license. These young fellows drive so fast! It makes you so nervous. How can you ever cross that busy highway; and why do they have to put up so many stop signs? You take the old roads and shun the super-super-highways and free-wheeling freeways. You are not so sure of yourself anymore, and it is a relief when someone else drives. And icy roads ...???

Your lawn does not get cut so often and the leaves are not raked up so quickly. The snow stays on your sidewalk in the hope that maybe the sun will take care of that. The flowers you planted and cared for so faithfully are choked by weeds. Your vegetable garden is the easy prey of insects and bugs. It is either too hot or too cold, or you are too tired to be at it and to keep the yard and garden as it once was. Besides your ambition, your force and drive has slowed up and weakened so much that all this does not bother you, even though at one time this all was your pride and joy. As Solomon says, "The almond tree shall flourish and the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall fail."

You may, therefore, expect that dark and carefully groomed head of hair to become snow white like the blossoms of the almond tree before they fall to the ground; or even see that almond tree bare and without even as much as one white blossom on it. And around this time you may be heard saying, "O, my aching back!" You will look for a straight hard chair for fear that you will never be able of yourself to get out of that soft, reclining chair which you used to enjoy so much. Or perhaps you want to tell your grandchildren about your slipped disc operation upon your back.

And why is all this? Solomon points out correctly that man goeth to his long home. And all around you in house after house the mourners will gather, as those who grew up with you will have already gone to their long, everlasting home. We climb to a point of physical strength and development; and then with each year in gaining momentum we rush down hill to the end! The Psalmist says in Psalm 90:10 that "We fly away."

It may not seem that way to you now. This may look like it is for others. But be sure that this is fact for all of us. "It is appointed unto men once to die". Hebrews 9:27. And this text adds, "But after this the judgment." Of this Solomon also speaks in the connection of the verses which we treated above. Not only does he tell you, with a view to the fact that you will appear in judgment before Him at the end of that way, to remember your Creator in these days of your youth; but in the concluding verses of the preceding chapter he stated, "Rejoice, O young man (and of course also young woman) in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in all the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart,

and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity."

Solomon said that. And he said it in God's name. He, Solomon, had also been a youth. Having passed through childhood and youth and not yet having his silver cord loosed, or golden bowl broken, nor his pitcher broken at the fountain or wheel broken at the cistern, going toward the dust, but not yet having returned to it, Solomon from that vantage point and with an accumulated wisdom speaks from the pages of Holy Writ to you today. And being interested in your spiritual well-being, we wish to write a few lines more about this matter next time, the Lord willing.

Now, you are in the prime of your life and still advancing to more strength. Now your strength seems

unlimited and your recuperative powers very great. Now, therefore, is also the time for you to remember your Creator. This is the time when you are so apt to push Him out of your mind and life. Yea, now is the time when it seems as though you have little or no need of Him. Fall not into that error! The old must die, Solomon has pointed out, but the young can die and often do. Besides, youth is the time that God demands service and love as well as in the declining years of life. Remember Him in His fear. And remember that *He remembers* perfectly all your deeds, long after you have dismissed them from mind and forgotten them completely. But, as we said, more of this, the Lord willing, next time.

Contending for the Faith

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

THE THIRD PERIOD – 730-1517 A.D.

PROTESTANT DOCTRINE OF SIN

ACCORDING TO CALVIN

Rev. H. Veldman

In chapter 2 of Book II of his Institutes Calvin discusses the freedom of the will. He begins this chapter with the remark:

Since we have seen that the domination of sin, from the time of its subjugation of the first man, not only extends over the whole race, but also exclusively possesses every soul, it now remains to be more closely investigated, whether we are despoiled of all freedom, and, if any particle of it yet remain, how far its power extends.

Of the early ecclesiastical writers he observes that, though there has not been one who would not acknowledge both that human reason is grievously wounded by sin, and that the will is very much embarrassed by corrupt affections, yet many of them have followed the philosophers far beyond what is right. And the early fathers appear to Calvin to have thus extolled human power (see II, 2, 4) from fear lest, if they openly confessed its impotence, they might, in the first place, incur the derision of the philosophers, with whom they were contending, and, in the second place, might administer to the flesh, of itself naturally too torpid to all that is good, a fresh occasion of slothfulness. And it appears to Calvin that they principally regarded the latter consideration, that they might leave no room for slothfulness. So, the early fathers were very afraid to give to the sinner any excuse for continuing in sin. In support of this contention, Calvin quotes several quotations from Chrysostom:

"Since God has placed good and evil things in our

power, He has given us freedom of choice; and He constrains not the unwilling, but embraces the willing." Again: "Oftentimes a bad man, if he will, is changed into a good one; and a good one falls into inactivity, and becomes bad; because God has given us naturally a free will, and imposes no necessity upon us, but, having provided suitable remedies, permits the event to depend entirely on the mind of the patient." Again: "As without the assistance of Divine grace, we can never do any thing aright, so unless we bring what is our own, we shall never be able to gain the favour of heaven. Again: "Let us bring what is ours; God will supply the rest (an expression very familiar with Chrysostom)." Agreeably to which Jerome says: "That it belongs to us to begin, and to God to complete; that it is ours to offer what we can, but His to supply our deficiencies."

Of these expressions Calvin writes, in the same paragraph:

"In these sentences you see they certainly attributed to man more than could justly be attributed to him towards the pursuit of virtue; because they supposed it impossible to awaken our innate torpor, otherwise than by arguing that this alone constitutes our guilt; but with what great dexterity they did it, we shall see in the course of our work. That the passages which we have recited are exceedingly erroneous, will be shortly proved."

Man, according to Calvin, is not possessed of free

will for good works, unless he be assisted by grace, and that special grace which is bestowed on the elect alone in regeneration. And when the reformer speaks of being assisted by Divine grace, we must remember that he is opposed to every presentation as if man has of his own nature antecedent, though ineffectual, desires after what is good. Calvin states emphatically that the view is offensive to him that man has it in his power either to frustrate the grace of God by rejecting it or to confirm it by our obedience to it. Now notice what Calvin writes in the following passage, II, 2, 7:

Then man will be said to possess free will in this sense, not that he has an equally free election of good and evil, but because he does evil voluntarily, and not by constraint. That, indeed, is very true; but what end could it answer to decorate a thing so diminutive with a title so superb? Egregious (outstanding, notable, H.V.) liberty indeed, if man be not compelled to serve sin, but yet is such a willing slave, that his will is held in bondage by the fetters of sin. I really abominate contentions about words, which disturb the Church without producing any good effect; but I think that we ought religiously to avoid words which signify any absurdity, particularly when they lead to a pernicious error. How few are there, who, when they hear free will attributed to men, do not immediately conceive, that he has the sovereignty over his own mind and will, and is able by his innate power to incline himself to whatever he pleases. But it will be said, all danger from these expressions will be removed, if the people are carefully apprized of their signification. But, on the contrary, the human mind is naturally so prone to falsehood, that it will sooner imbibe error from one single expression, than truth from a prolix oration; of which we have a more certain experiment than could be wished in this very word.

How true are these words of Calvin. Calvin does not object, principally, to the use of the expression: "freedom of the will." He states very plainly what he means with the expression. The freedom of the will does not mean that man has an equally free election of good and evil, but that he does evil voluntarily and not by constraint. But, this is not meant by many who speak of man's freedom of the will. Besides, why decorate a thing so diminutive with a title so superb? How few there are, according to Calvin, who use this expression properly? This observation of Calvin was also verified in the sad history of our churches at the time of 1953. Will not all danger be removed, so it is asked, when the people are carefully informed of their significance? And the answer of Calvin is that the human mind is so prone to falsehood, that it will sooner imbibe error from one single expression than truth from a long, verbose oration. We may well take this advice of Calvin to heart.

We also do well to call attention to the following of Calvin in which, commenting upon a common observation borrowed from Augustine, he reiterates that

which is also found in our Canons of Dordt, III and IV, Art. IV (II, 2, 12):

And, indeed, I much approve of that common observation which has been borrowed from Augustine, that the natural talents in man have been corrupted by sin, but that of the supernatural ones he has been wholly deprived. For by the latter are intended, both the light of faith and righteousness, which would be sufficient for the attainment of a heavenly life and eternal felicity . . . Hence it follows, that he is exiled from the kingdom of God, in such a manner, that all the affections relating to the happy life of the soul, are also extinguished in him, till he recovers them by the grace of regeneration . . . Again, soundness of mind and rectitude of heart were also destroyed; and this is the corruption of the natural talents. For although we retain some portion of understanding and judgment together with the will, yet we cannot say that our mind is perfect and sound, which is oppressed with debility and immersed in profound darkness; and the depravity of our will is sufficiently known.

And then, Calvin, although maintaining that man, although not having completely lost his natural talents, did retain them but as corrupted by sin, sets forth very clearly the utter corruption of the sinner, II, 2, 12:

Reason, therefore, by which man distinguished between good and evil, by which he understands and judges, being a natural talent, could not be totally destroyed, but is partly debilitated, partly vitiated, so that it exhibits nothing but deformity and ruin. In this sense John says, that "the light" still "shineth in darkness," but that "the darkness comprehendeth it not." In this passage both these ideas are clearly expressed — that some sparks continue to shine in the nature of man, even in its corrupt and degenerate state, which prove him to be a rational creature, and different from the brutes, because he is endued with understanding; and yet that this light is smothered by so much ignorance, that it cannot act with any degree of efficacy. So the will, being inseparable from the nature of man, is not annihilated; but it is fettered by depraved and inordinate desires, so that it cannot aspire after any thing that is good. This, indeed, is a complete definition, but requires more diffuse explication.

And then Calvin proceeds, in this section of his Institutes, to discuss the mind and the will of man. Having set forth what the human mind is able to do, notice what Calvin has to say about the spiritual ability of that mind of the natural mind, II, 2, 19:

But because, from our being intoxicated with a false opinion of our won perspicacity, we do not without great difficulty suffer ourselves to be persuaded, that in Divine things our reason is totally blind and stupid (here Calvin writes that, because we are inflated with a false opinion of what we are able to do, it is very difficult for us to be persuaded that, in Divine things, our reason is totally blind and stupid, H.V.), it will be better, I think, to confirm it by testimonies of Scripture, than to support it by

arguments. This is beautifully taught by John, in that passage which I lately cited, where he says that, from the beginning, "in God was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. He indicates, indeed, that the soul of man is irradiated with a beam of Divine light, so that it is never wholly destitute either of some little flame, or at least of a spark of it; but he likewise suggests that it cannot comprehend God by that illumination. And this because all his sagacity, as far as respects the knowledge of God, is mere blindness. For when the Spirit calls men "darkness" He at once totally despoils them of the faculty of spiritual understanding. Wherefore he asserts that believers, who receive Christ, are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

And please notice this statement of Calvin, II, 2, 25:

Are all our industry, perspicacity, understanding, and care so depraved, that we cannot conceive or

meditate anything that is right in the sight of God? To us, who do not contentedly submit to be stripped of the acuteness of our reason, which we esteem our most valuable endowment, this appears too harsh; but in the estimation of the Holy Spirit, Who knows that all the thoughts of the wisest of men are vain, and who plainly pronounces every imagination of the human heart to be only evil, such a representation is consistent with the strictest truth. If whatever our mind conceives, agitates, undertakes, and performs, be invariably evil, how can we entertain a thought of undertaking any thing acceptable to God, by whom nothing is accepted but holiness and righteousness? Thus it is evident that the reason of our mind, whithersoever it turns, is unhappily obnoxious to vanity. David was conscious to himself of this imbecility, when he prayed that understanding might be given him, to enable him rightly to learn the commandments of the Lord.

A Cloud of Witnesses

Of Sacrifice and Mercy

Rev. B. Woudenberg

And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

II Samuel 24:25

The angel of the Lord was marching across the land of Israel with the sword of judgment in his hand spreading pestilence and death wherever it went. In one day no fewer than 70,000 had died, and there were yet two days to go. It was the result of the sins of Israel and of its king: of Israel because it had so often rebelled against the anointed of the Lord, and of its king because David in his pride had thought to number his people so that he might boast of his earthly strength. All across the land the angel proceeded until at last it stood with its sword extended over the very walls of Jerusalem itself. It was there that David's eyes were opened so that he also saw the angel with its sword extended over the city. Within him the heart of the king smote him heavily so that he fell to the ground with all of the elders of the people about him, and he cried out in prayer, "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued." It was the cry of a faithful shepherd for his sheep, and the Lord heard him. That same hour the plague was stayed.

Such is the judgment of God, however, that it could not be merely ignored, canceled out, or neglected. Sin had been committed and righteousness had decreed that it had to be expiated. For the moment it was being held in abeyance, but the angel still continued to hover there between heaven and earth over the crest of Mt. Moriah with his sword extended over the city, a grim warning that satisfaction was yet to be made.

Actually the place over which the angel of judgment hovered was of considerable significance. It was Mt. Moriah, the very mountain which many ages before, Abraham had climbed with Isaac his son in order to offer him as a sacrifice in obedience to the command of God. Then, too, when the moment of ultimate judgment had seemed to arrive, God had had mercy upon the children of His covenant and had intervened. He had provided a ram caught in the thicket to take Isaac's place in symbolic atonement. It foreshadowed that ultimate atonement which someday would be made in that same city, when God's own Son would truly take away the guilt of all of His people.

Now what was about to take place was another chapter in that same symbolic revelation. To David God sent His prophet, Gad, to instruct him as to the

substitution that might be made for the sake of the preservation of the people. Mt. Moriah was not yet a part of the royal city. Located just outside of the walls of the city, it was the possession of one of the Jebusites that still resided in the district, a man named Ornan. Upon the crest of the hill he had located his threshing floor where it could catch the winds that did not blow within the valley. Gad's directions to David were that he should go and offer a sacrifice to the Lord there within that threshing floor.

A more solemn procession than that which made its way out of the old city of Jerusalem, down through the valley and up to the crest of Mt. Moriah can hardly be imagined. The prime figure in the procession, of course, was the king himself, but dressed not as a king, he was clothed in crude sackcloth with the ashes of mourning upon his head. It was no mere form. There before their very eyes hovered the angel of the Lord with that terrible sword of judgment in his hand. It was a terrifying thing even to look upon the angel, much less to actually make one's way closer and closer to the place over which it stood. However, there was nothing else to be done. The survival of the nation depended upon the courage and faithfulness of the king and his elders. Only they could make the sacrifice needed to pay for the sins which they had committed. Of this at that moment there could be no serious doubt.

Ornan, or Araunah, the Jebusite had been working at his threshing floor at the time that the angel appeared and began to hover above it. The man himself is for us an interesting figure. After all, the Jebusites were one of Israel's most recent enemies. It was from them that David had had to capture Jerusalem at the beginning of his reign. And yet here was one of the men of that tribe living and allowed to live upon one of the prime peaks overlooking what had become Israel's capital city. The indication is that Israel was not as completely as closed a society as we might think, at least, not when measured by earthly standards. It is true, of course, the Scripture warned the people of God continually against intermingling with the heathen nations; and yet there are repeated instances in Scripture of non-Israelites who lived openly within the nation and with apparent approval also of God. The indication is that already in Old Testament times the distinction which God wished his people to make was much more a spiritual distinction than generic. One was a heathen not just by reason of his birth but because of his spiritual life and convictions. Those who were of heathen birth but who feared and bowed before the God of Israel might freely be received within the nation.

Surely no one could have conducted himself more properly than did Ornan under the most demanding circumstances which suddenly descended upon him. To begin with there was the reality of the pestilence

sweeping across the land which no one could ignore for its awful terribleness. But Ornan had gone quietly and patiently about his work, nonetheless. And then there came that appearance of the angel of the Lord to stretch out his sword in judgment over the city Jerusalem. But the terrifying thing was that the angel stood between heaven and earth directly over his threshing floor. Truly, here was sufficient cause to turn anyone to flee in utter terror as fast as he possibly could. But not Ornan. Although he was a Jebusite, and although he did not dare to presume to claim Israel's God for his own, nevertheless he recognized and revered Israel's God sufficiently to realize that there was no fleeing from him. In humble patience he merely bowed and waited to see what the meaning of this might be.

It was not long, either, before it became apparent to him just as he had expected. As he looked from his advantage point on the peak of the hill, he saw the royal but solemn procession making its way from the city directly to the place where he was standing. Neither did the man fail to give proper recognition when the king himself left the company of people and approached him directly. As he bowed the king spoke, "Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague be stayed from the people."

The true nature of Ornan's spiritual depths came out fully in his answer. In response to the king, he answered, "Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all." Not only did the man have no desire whatsoever to make himself rich because of the extremity of the situation, but he proved himself to be a man who had used his days of living among the Israelites to examine and become familiar with the proper worship of Israel's God so that he was able to provide for the every requirement of His proper service. This to him was the opportunity and privilege of his life. Without a moment's hesitation he was willing to give to it all that he possessed, his property, his beasts of burden, the very tools and instruments with which he made his living. It mattered not, as long as they could be given to the worship of the God in whom he believed and it would serve the preservation of Jehovah's covenant people. Here was a dedication and love such as surely could not have been surpassed by anyone within that nation. In name Ornan was a heathen, but in heart he was a truest worshipper of Jehovah.

For David, however, it was quite impossible for him to accept the generosity of Ornan. He was the one who had been commanded to present an offering unto the Lord, and surely he could do no less than to make such an offering from that which he himself possessed. So he explained to Ornan, "Nay; but I will verily buy it

for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost."

Ornan immediately saw also the propriety of this, and without further debate he set the price of six hundred shekels of gold, which David paid.

Was there ever a more dedicated and concerned group of worshippers gathered about an altar than those who stood there on the threshingfloor of Ornan? Quickly but properly the altar was built and the oxen which so shortly before had been laboring for man in the threshing of wheat now were required to sacrifice even their blood. For those who engaged in the work there could be no question as to its importance, for always before their eyes there was that angel of judgment holding forth his sword directly over their heads. The climax came, however, when the sacrifice was made fully ready for offering, for then no fire was needed. It fell by itself directly from heaven consuming the sacrifice completely.

It remained, however, for the sacrifice to be completed, for the most wonderful thing of all to transpire. While the eyes of the worshippers watched, the sword of the angel was lowered and placed into its sheath before the appearance of it disappeared, never to be seen again — not at least until many, many years later when once again judgment should fall on a hill immediately outside of the walls of that same city. Only that

time it would be even more wonderfully terrible than this. Here the judgment was, as it were, postponed to a later day; there it would be finally taken up and paid for to the finish. In fact, that would be the final fulfillment of that which the burning oxen so dimly reflected to the eyes of David.

Neither was the true importance of that moment lost to the eyes of the repentant king. In fact, it was to his eyes beyond question the most significant revelation of all his earthly experience. It was not finally the great and wonderful victories which God had given him over others; it was not the great size to which his kingdom was extended and the wealth which had been brought to him by it. To David the wonder of his life was that here, when he and his people deserved to perish, their God Jehovah had had mercy and received the sacrifice on Ornan's floor in place of the life of the nation. To see that truth so amazingly set forth before his eyes was the closest that he ever came to beholding the true wonder of His God and His glory. From that day forth David's life was dedicated to but one thing: gathering together proper and sufficient materials that upon that very spot a temple might be raised in recognition of Jehovah's gracious presence among his people, if not by his own hands, at least by those of his children.

Greetings from Jamaica

OPEN LETTERS OF THANKS

Montego Bay, Jamaica, West Indies
December 28, 1969

Dear brethren and sisters in the Lord:

The joy we experienced as we received the many letters and greeting cards is difficult to relate to you. Mrs. Lubbers and I experienced the love of the saints in your letters, in the numerous well-wishes and the assurances of being remembered in your prayers. For this all we are profoundly thankful to our covenant God.

We would like so very much to sit down and write each one of you a personal note of thanks, and also relate to each one of you a bit of our experiences here on the island of Jamaica. That is, however, physically impossible for us. We are constantly engaged in the work, have a busy schedule, and when the day is ended, there is hardly time nor strength left to sit down and write. So we are asking the Editor of the *Standard Bearer* to make an exception to the rule and to place this little letter of thanks somewhere in his "bladvulling".

Christmas was very different for us this year. It seemed to us as if it came in August. Of course, that is not so bad. It is better to think of the reality of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh than to think of the "red-nosed Rudolph, the reindeer." We did not have any church service. However, we drove into the mountains in the afternoon to Porters Mountain and found that Rev. Ruddock had been up at 4 A.M. with his family to sing Christmas carols and to read Luke 2 and Matthew 1. That afternoon we joined the family on their high, rocky hill and sat in their little house. Here we sang with them. Rev. Elliott had conducted a similar service from 4-6 A.M. on Christmas morning in Cambridge. The Friday after Christmas we preached in Shrewsbury. Before the service Rev. Frame led the singing of Christmas carols.

Yesterday we witnessed a heart-warming Sunday School Session. In their ultra simple, yet heart-warming way they were studying the account in Luke 2 concerning the birth of Jesus. That was at Latium. The elder here is a very lovable, firm and kind man. The children were very orderly and obedient. They

were told when they could not find an answer to his question to "keep their face in the Bible and they would find the answer in verse 13."

I do wish you could all have witnessed that Sunday School Class. It was an attentive and quiet audience that listened to the sermon on I Corinthians 1:26-31. Here I was impressed with the thought that God had called and chosen that which is nothing to put to shame that which is something, so that no flesh should glory in His presence; but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord.

Soon the time is coming that we must make a decision about becoming a missionary here on the Island of Jamaica. There are many matters to consider here. May you remember me in your prayers, that I make a decision which is to the glory of God, and the salvation of God's people.

May we continue to hear from you all?

Greetings in Christ's Name to you all and may you experience the blessings of Jehovah in the New Year.

Your brother and sister in the Lord,
Rev. and Mrs. G. Lubbers

Pages from the Past

Believers and Their Seed

Chapter VII
In The Line Of Continued Generations

Rev. Herman Hoeksema

That the Lord establishes His covenant with believers and their seed in the line of continued generations, and that therefore the little children of believers, as well as the adults, are comprehended in the covenant and church of God and ought to receive the sign of the covenant; that, moreover, this sign of the covenant under the Old Testament was circumcision, but that this sign has been replaced in the new dispensation by that of holy baptism, — all this is confessed by the Reformed churches and constitutes one of the fundamentals of the Reformed faith.

We may add to this at once that this truth is so plainly revealed to us in God's Word that it is a cause of wonderment that so many are blind for this fundamental thought of God's revelation. And it is then, when men begin to understand less and less of God's Word as an organic whole and become an easy prey of those who quote Scripture at random and seek their strength in the citation of a few isolated texts, without regard to the great controlling idea of Holy Scripture, that they also become blind for this truth. For a time they may still present their little children for baptism out of the strength of tradition; but they no longer live from the covenant idea. And the more serious souls, who find it impossible to live out of dead tradition, but who nevertheless do not understand the rightness of infant baptism, then very readily turn toward all those movements which acknowledge only the baptism of adults. Those, however, who understand God's Word and see the great line of the development of God's covenant in history as it is drawn for us in that Word cannot hesitate for a moment with respect to the confession that believers ought to baptize their seed. Infant baptism is not a matter of lesser importance,

but of the greatest moment. He who does not acknowledge it or who belittles it shows thereby at the same time that he does not understand the great and basic idea of God's Word.

That also infants of believers are comprehended in the covenant and church of God is taught us, first of all, by the history of that covenant of God as it is recorded for us by the Lord Himself in His Word. For that history demonstrates repeatedly that God caused His covenant to develop in the line of successive generations. This holds true with respect to the period of the new dispensation as well as of the old dispensation; and in the latter, it is true of the period before Abraham and Israel as well as of the period during which Israel as a nation was God's covenant people. This is simply a fact of history.

Those who do not want infant baptism and who have no eye for this continuity of God's work in generations and who separate the new dispensation from the old like to limit themselves, as far as this question is concerned, with respect to the entire period before Christ to Israel alone. It is true, so they will concede, that in the case of Israel (or, taken more broadly, with Abraham's seed) God established His covenant in the line of fleshly generations. That was then also a national covenant. Israel was, and still is, a privileged nation, with whom also in the future the Lord will again deal in a special manner. But at the dawn of the new dispensation, such is their presentation, the historical line of that old covenant was broken off; and what held true of that covenant with a view to the seed of believers now no longer holds true in the new dispensation of the church of Christ and her seed. Then the rule was that whoever was out of Israel

was in God's covenant and had to be circumcised. Now the rule is: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

Meanwhile, they forget that the line which they take up out of Scripture at Abraham and Israel nevertheless did not have its beginning at that point, but goes back to Adam. Back of Abraham stands Shem, and back of Shem stands Noah, who by way of the line of Seth

takes us back to the very first beginning of the history of God's covenant in the world. Israel is not a mere drop of oil on the waters of history. The line of God's covenant in the old dispensation is *one*. There is difference in dispensation because there is progress in God's work; but it is always the same covenant that God establishes with His people throughout the old dispensation. (To be continued)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. John Mantel, Jr., in the passing of her father

MR. JOE HOOGENDOORN.

"He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Psalms 91:11.

Mr. Ed. Van Egdom, Pres.
Mrs. C. E. Klein, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. Herman Veldman and their family in the passing of Mrs. Veldman's brother

MR. KENNETH EZINGA.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Psalms 116:15. K. Lanning, Vice Pres.

H. Kuiper, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

Covenant Christian High School has a limited number of their 1969 yearbook, THE HERITAGE, for sale to the general public. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy may order from the High School. Please address your request to: Covenant Christian High, 1401 Ferndale Ave., Walker, Mich. 49504. The price is only \$2.50 per copy. The book contains the story of our High School's beginning and the activities during the first year of operation. The HERITAGE Staff

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, California expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mr. Albert Karsemeyer, in the loss of his father,

MR. JOHN KARSEMEYER

who was taken into the eternal Rest on Friday, November 28, 1969.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

Rev. C. Hanko, Pres.
Mr. J. Jabaay, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Gordon Van Overloop in the passing of her father,

MR. HARM WUSTMAN.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." II Cor. 2:1.

Rev. Herman Veldman, Pres.
Mrs. Gerrit Holstege, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California, wishes to express its sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Marian Karsemeyer and family, in the loss of her father-in-law,

MR. JOHN KARSEMEYER.

May our covenant God, Whose ways are higher than our ways, comfort the bereaved with His Word and Spirit.

Rev. C. Hanko, Pres.
Mrs. Wm. Feenstra, Vice-All.

ATTENTION!

Effective immediately, the deadline for all announcements will be the 15th of the month (for publication the 1st of the following month) and the 1st of the month (for publication the 15th of the month). This change is made necessary in order to conform with some new printing arrangements made by the Board. As previously, all announcements should be sent, accompanied by the \$3.00 fee, to the Business Office.

NOTICE!

A public lecture will be held Feb. 6, 1970 at 8:00 P.M. in the Calvin Christian High School Auditorium, located at 3750 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Mich. Rev. H. Veldman, Pastor of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church will speak on the topic *"God's Love, Not Common, But Particular."* Make your plans now to attend! Enjoy a profitable evening listening to the Word of God!

Prot. Ref. Lecture Comm.
Otto Kamminga, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

We have, to begin with, a news item that's considerably later than usual. Through an oversight, we passed by Oct. 31, which was a date of considerable importance to the congregation of South Holland. That was the date of the installation of their new pastor, Rev. R. Decker. Rev. Kuiper was on hand to read the form, and Prof. Hoeksema preached the sermon. Rev. Decker preached his inaugural sermon the following Sunday, Nov. 2.

Then, to get into 1970 (but just barely), Hull was scheduled to hold a Congregational meeting immediately after the New Year's morning service to call a minister from a trio consisting of Revs. Schipper, Lubbers, and C. Hanko.

And from our ever-active Lynden congregation's bulletin, we find this letter from an Alabama reader: "I have just read one of your Studies in Biblical Doctrine, number 135, 'The Covenant Fulfilled'. I enjoyed it thoroughly and would like to be on your mailing list. I have a small tape recorder and would like to join your weekly taped study class."

Other congregations are busy with a different kind of work, too. This from Hull's bulletin — "The Consistory, in behalf of our congregation, wishes to express a word of thanks to the Building Committee who made all the arrangements for the remodeling of our church entrance and to all those who volunteered their time or helped in any way. A job well done!" And, we understand that our Isabel people have erected a small building (10'x10') to be used as storage space. Two men of the congregation bought an old barn for its lumber. They furnished the lumber, while the rest of the congregation took care of nails, paint, roofing materials, etc. The result, according to Rev. Moore — "a nice storage facility for about \$40 expense."

Another congregation engaged in a still different type of activity, for which Southwest's seminary student was very thankful. We quote, "Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Bekkering wish to thank all the members of the congregation for the wonderful show of love extended to them in the recent grocery-shower. And to those who so generously gave, surely the Spirit has once again shown that it is more blessed to give than to receive."

These excerpts from a letter to Southwest Church from Rev. C. J. Elliott of Jamaica: "We as sister Protestant Reformed Churches of Jamaica are wonderfully thankful to our Covenant God for the clothing we received — that has been sent to us as poor brothers and sisters . . . these boxes so neatly packed, the clothing is so clean, smells so nice. . . . Next we are wonder-

fully thankful to God for sending Rev. Lubbers and his dear wife to us again to strengthen us with the Gospel — The Reformed faith that is so dear to our hearts."

Rev. Lubbers is due back from Jamaica, shortly. Rev. Heys intends to replace him, serving in Jamaica from February through April. May we remember him with our prayers and letters. He asks also that area church groups who have announcements to place in Holland's bulletin, send them, for those three months, to Mr. J. H. Kortering, 130 East 24th St., Holland, Mich. 49423.

Rev. Kuiper has spent a rather eventful last couple of months. While on a two-week classical appointment to Forbes in December, he showed Mr. Meulenberg's slides of Jamaica, and conducted family visitation with the elders in Forbes. Rev. Kuiper is, as you know, leaving Randolph. He planned to preach his farewell sermon on Jan. 4., move on the 5th, unpack on the 6th, and be installed in Pella on the 8th.

The congregation of Southeast started, as of the first Sunday in January, to hold their evening service at 5 o'clock. The consistory of First Church of Grand Rapids has recently decided against the same plan.

The young people's annual Christmas Mass Meeting, sponsored this year by First Junior Young People's Society, was held on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 28. Prof. H. Hanko spoke on "The Manifestation of Christ's Return in 1969." The young people of Randolph planned a "snow party" as a welcome home for two of their servicemen.

A little about Christmas programs yet — Hope Choral Society presented theirs on Dec. 14. Special numbers included a trumpet solo by John Hoekstra and a piano-organ duet by Mrs. I. Veenstra and Mr. C. Kuiper. The choir was accompanied by Mrs. G. Kuiper and directed by Mr. G. Kuiper, who also, incidentally, directs Hudsonville's Choral Society.

On Sunday, Dec. 21, there was a Christmas singspiration at First Church of Grand Rapids. This singspiration was sponsored jointly by the Young People's Federation and the Covenant High School choir. During the first half of the program, Randy Meyer directed the enthusiastic singing of those in the "audience". Then the choir performed, in what their director, Mr. Roland Petersen, called the first public appearance of the complete choir. The evening was, as Rev. Van Baren mentioned in his remarks at the close of the program, "marvelous". This must have been true for all those who love to sing the songs of Zion, in anticipation of that time when we will sing them in perfection on the other side of the grave.

D.R.D.