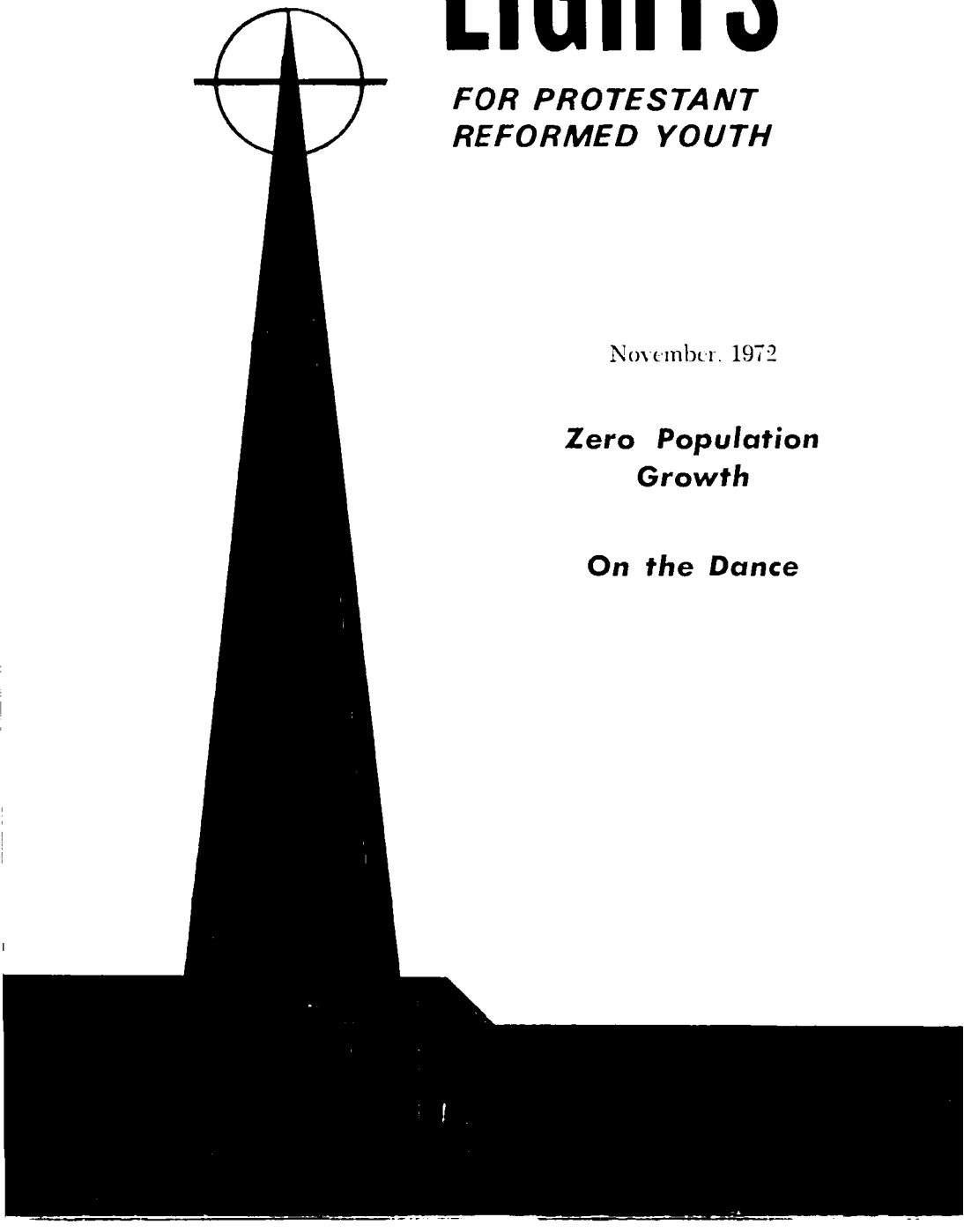
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



November, 1972

Zero Population Growth

On the Dance

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Editorial

A WONDERFUL THING

Every living thing fears death. An animal instinctively runs from the hunter, perhaps to live only briefly away from the final bullet. Reprobate man fears death as a termination of any conscious life at the least, or at most, a time of judgment. A child of God quite understandably fears death too. This is not wrong.

It is no sin to be fearful of the indignity, pain and loneliness of death. It is not wrong to be afraid of dying. What the child of God all too often fails to remember, though, is that while dying may be very difficult, death itself is glorious. While we must summon all our faith and courage to fail and die, even though it may be a brief thing, we must look beyond dying to death, that is, to the last gentle sigh of a life slipping from earth to heaven. To shut our eyes to earth and open them in glory is a wonderful thing.

To watch a dear one die, no matter what the age, is a sad and painful thing. We ache hourly with the loss that is ours, we grieve ceaselessly in our hearts because, for us, there are only memories to hold. There are a thousand "If I had onlies" . . . If I had only said once more that I loved him . . . . If I had only been there . . . . If I had only had one more chance. There are a hundred unsaid, undone things to torture mind and soul. There are no tomorrows to set things right, there is only yesterday and that is forever gone. Death is a very painful thing for those who are left behind.

Death is very painful, but greatly wonderful. It is a glorious thing to know a dear parent is rejoicing in heaven, with no pain or tears. It is a wonderful thing to know a close friend has joined the church victorious. It is a particularly wonderful thing to know a loved child has escaped this world of sorrow and sin to rest peacefully in the bosom of the Master. We grieve, not for the dead, but for ourselves and too easily we forget the special joy of life in glory.

How marvellous to simply shut our eyes to open them again in glory. How wonderful to put off all corruption and live in constant consciousness of the glory of the Father. How utterly enthralling to be in the presence of Christ and His Church victorious.

Lest we forget . . . . How wonderful to know that a loved one has such joy. How glorious to realize that you share in the hourly approach of such glory. For a parent, how wonderful to know that God in you has created a soul for the Church in glory. How wonderful.

Dying is not a wonderful thing. It is the final struggle between mortality and immortality. Often it is a thing of fear. Yet, beyond dying is the moment of death, the hour of victorious passing from sadness to joy inexpressible, and this is wonderful. In death we stand on the portal of life, but a breath away. We can hear the trumpet of the angel sound, and for those who have gone before we can but say: We grieve, but the angels rejoice, another saint is come home. Truly death is a wonderful thing, for the angels rejoice.

C. REITSMA

DOUGLAS E. MIEDEMA
Born: August 13, 1951
Died: October 7, 1972

So teach us to number our days, That we may get us a heart of wisdom.
PSALM 90:12

On the Dance

CAROL DE JONG

The topics our parents fought through and answered in their teenage years are not dead issues. Still with us today, perhaps magnified a thousand times in temptation power, are all the devilish lures which they fought: drink, television, drama, dancing, and so on.

Thats' why a blunt appraisal of the issues is still needed. That's why a 1935 sermon on one of these issues may still be of value. And that's why the booklet *What's Wrong With the Dance?* by John R Rice, although written 37 years ago, is still up-to-date on issues and exceedingly worth while for us Christians to read. *What's Wrong With the Dance?* Christian, do you know the answer? If not, it's time to start doing some solid research!

I

John R. Rice, in this highly readable pamphlet which was originally a sermon, develops and illustrates seven objections to the dance. He points out that Christians do not belong at the dance hall because:

1. He is in BAD COMPANY there;
2. It goes with DRINKING, GAMBLING, and CURSING;
3. It goes with NUDITY and LEWDNESS;
4. It goes with DIVORCE;
5. It goes with MURDER;
6. It goes with LUST; and
7. It is a pathway to HELL.

Although he has divided his argument into seven sections, the logic hinges on one statement which he makes under point six. There he asks the question, "Why DO people dance?" He responds that people dance because of inflammation of the sex passion! Quite forcefully he illustrates that although people may BEGIN dancing in a relatively "innocent" manner, yet the basic reason for their desire to dance is already the sex provocation which the dance builds, and that a person who attends the dance without exception in his experience is pulled more and more deeply into the sins which accompany the dance.

The kindest thing he finds to say about the dance, he says over and over, is that it is the WRONG COMPANIONSHIP for a Christian; but the destructive part of a dance, he illustrates, is that it destroys a Christian's sexual purity so that no Christian indulges and emerges as the untainted person he was before.

Now it is undeniably true that in doctrine we do not agree with every word of John R. Rice. On points concerning our salvation he registers clearly as an Arminian with all that goes with Arminianism. We do not agree with him there because there he does not agree with Scripture.

But one looks far to find a more lucid and Scriptural denouncement of the dance. On this point he may be, even SHOULD be, read with great profit by all of us who are confronted with the perennial question of "what's wrong with the dance?" John R. Rice gives us a part of the answer.

II

But only a part. His answer is sufficiently conclusive to make every true believer shudder and steer farther from this drawing point of hell. Therein lies his value. But when all of that is finished, Rice has given us an appraisal of only ONE sin, and he must make a totally new and equally conclusive proof of the sinfulness of each new sin he encounters. What Rice lacks is a basic structure which will alert the Christian to all forms of sin. Rice attacks what he considers the WORST sins but lets LESSER sins exist without an immediate recognition.

I believe Rice would himself agree to this appraisal of himself. In the article on the dance he virtually acknowledges a hierarchy of sin when he discusses a girl on her deathbed who had lived a life of harlotry. This girl asks of her nurse the question, "Am I any worse than the society girls who had their dances until after midnight?" Rice responds, "Yes, I think she was worse. That is, probably she knew she was doing more harm" (p. 38).

This hierarchy of sins, it seems to me, is a characteristic very natural to the Arminian

way of thought which Rice possesses. The Arminian is horrified by sin – as indeed we all should be – not so much because of what it does to God but because of what it does to man. The Arminian usage of the word "sin" more equates the word "wrong" or "evil" losing the truth that ANYTHING not out of FAITH is sin. An Arminian – and Rice – sees sin at its worst when man is hurt worst. That is why dancing is so evil and harlotry is worse. That, also, is why man must be saved – so that he will not get hurt by going to hell.

Although Rice's book is highly profitable to read, the Reformed Christian senses all the way that something is missing. He longs to hear the Sovereignty of God recognized, to hear God uplifted as the one who draws His own children to himself. When he closes the book, he feels convinced again that dancing is wrong but feels – rightly so – as if somehow the vital issue has still been missed.

III

This does not mean we may not write books entitled "What's Wrong With . . . ." Rice is right here, and so we must use and emulate him. God calls us as Christians to judge all things – knowing that we must judge to live but must judge right to live rightly. So we not only judge Rice's book, but we judge also the issues which he judges. In judging the issues we find ourselves in agreement, but in judging the book we conclude that more ought to be said. For our judgment ought always to rest on one key question: Does God receive completely the glory? That question Rice never asks. Yet because he honestly attempts to tackle the question BY THE WORD, we ought to buy, read, use, and distribute this helpful booklet on the dance, modern-day style. We use and profit from Rice, but acknowledge that the book could never be signed by a Reformed author.

Zero Population Growth

R. L. KREUZER, M.D.

Motherhood has, in certain circles, become a nasty state. Ten or so years ago the ideal American mother was one with two, three or several more children who enjoyed her family role. Today there is a paranoid element evident according to which the "Mother of the Year" is a woman who has been voluntarily sterilized and has adopted two children. Pregnant women with two or more children are made to feel unpatriotic if not as criminals about to perpetrate a horrible crime against society and nature. Who are these zealots responsible for this phenomenon? They are the population doomsdayers, many of whom have banded together in organized groups at various levels to promote what they rather fondly call "Z P G" – "Zero Population Growth." These wild sociologists and self-styled ecologists would lay most if not all the blame for society's many ills-crime, pollution, disease, child abuse, racial hatred, etc. – at the feet of overpopulation. Under the guise of "humanitarianism" they distribute literature and use the pages of prominent magazines to attack motherhood and the family unit. Pregnant mothers have been stopped on the streets by college students – many typically long-haired, slovenly dressed and sporting beads and the so-called peace symbol – and have been told they should join the ZPG movement. After all, babies are something evil now and ought to be stamped out, ripped out of the womb if need be, to prevent further population growth. How are we ever going to improve the "quality" of life if mothers keep having babies? Get with it! This is the age of women's liberation. Liberate yourself from the drudgery of the age-old female role of child-bearing and child-rearing – and from the guilt which you ought to feel for overpopulating this world and thus promoting its many revolting aspects.

Various figures and statistics are adduced to impress one with the scope of the population problem. On a world-wide scale, there were approximately three and one-half billion people living on this earth in 1966. While a figure like that does not mean much in itself, the accelerating rate of population growth is more readily apprehended. It required from the beginning of recorded history to 1830 for the world to get its first billion inhabitants. The second billion required only one hundred years,

from 1830 to 1930. The three billion level was reached after only thirty more years, i.e., by 1960. And in six short years another half billion was added. By the turn of the century there are supposed to be 7½ billion inhabitants on this earth – over twice the population of 1966. By the year 2050 there is supposed to be only a foot of land available for each person. And by 3050 or thereabouts the earth will no longer be able to support the weight of its human population! Are we concerned about this prospect, young people? As a child of God you certainly ought not be! You see, do you not, what a chaotic world with all manner of frightening possibilities this earth becomes when the Creator and Sustainer is left out of consideration? The fruits of Godless evolutionistic thought are horrible indeed.

On a more local level, overpopulation is often cited as the root of various social ills. Included in these are high perinatal and infant rates, illegitimacy, crime, venereal disease and dependency on welfare, to name a few. Also mentioned are the high incidents of bearing "unwanted" children and the "battered child syndrome." Now it is clearly true that a lower socioeconomic status is associated with a higher perinatal and infant death rate. This is attributed largely to nutritional and environmental factors. But it must also be recognized that often poor nutrition and unhealthy environmental factors, especially in our welfare society, are by choice. Funds for adequate nutrition and housing are squandered on alcohol, drugs and riotous living. There is also blatant exploitation of the poor and ignorant by unscrupulous entrepreneurs and landlords. Illegitimacy is and always has been a problem of all strata of society, yes, even in the church. Venereal disease is a social disease climbing to astronomical proportions. It has been recently reported that nationally one out of every five high school students will contract a venereal disease before he graduates. It is interesting that this is true even though (I am certain because of the fact that) fertility is so readily controlled in our time. Again this is found in all strata of society. The unwanted child and the battered child are tragically simply children "in the way" of selfish, self-centered, diabolically sinful parents. Any contention that limiting fertility and population expansion will alleviate these social problems must be vehemently challenged! Again the Christian perspective provides us with the true insight into this morass. No amount of population restriction will remove the totally corrupt nature of fallen man. This the reprobate will never understand.

Mention has been made of the emphasis some place on improving the "quality" of life. It is clear that what in most instances is meant by this is accumulation of worldly goods and freedom to come and go as one pleases without the restriction of parental responsibilities, including the freedom to enjoy "mind-expanding" drugs, alcohol and sex without limitation. After all, these are our bodies and we should have the right to gratify all our desires and lusts with all the abundance this earth has to offer – or would have to offer if there were not too many people. Obviously then, unless we use all means available to achieve ZPG, we are going to be cheated out of life's "quality." Is that the "quality" you envision, young Christian friend? God forbid.

What must we say then about ZPG? First of all we must recognize it as a hideously Godless movement, although, undoubtedly, there are many associated with it who would loudly attest that they are "just as Christian as you are." Many of you have heard that argument from the unregenerate humanitarian before. The Christian knows that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God, from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22. We know that our omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God created the earth and the heavens and all that they contain in six days and rested the seventh day. He did this not simply by providing a motivating force behind natural processes and then standing back to watch things evolve, perhaps over millions if not billions of years. No, God spoke and it was so, even as He planned it from eternity down to the minutest detail. Moreover, God not only created the earth and the universe and all that they contain but He directs and sustains them by His creative Word in every minute detail and moment by moment, according to His eternal counsel. Are we not told that even the sparrow is not forgotten

in the sight of God and that the very hairs of our head are numbered? (Luke 12:6, 7). Read Lord's Day IX-X, Q&A 26-28, along with the reference texts, concerning Creation and the providence of God. We surely are not living in a world where events happen by chance or accident and where the course of history is ultimately determined by the decisions of man.

Scripture, however, tells us more than about God's Creation and providence. It tells us of Adam's disobedience and man's consequent fall. We have already stated that the totally corrupt nature of fallen men is the underlying cause of all of society's ugly problems. But there is still more, is there not? God provided His only-begotten Son to redeem His elect children from all ages. What has this got to do with ZPG? Everything! The assumption of the reprobate mind is that this world will continue endlessly, or at least as long as its destruction by the crush of humanity can be prevented. We, however, know better. God has revealed to us that at one point in time that last elect saint shall have come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). When His church is complete, and only then, our risen and ascended Lord shall return upon the clouds of heaven to claim His own (I Thess. 4:16-18; Matt. 25:34). All this corrupt world will be destroyed and all made new (Rev. 6:12-16; 11:15-19; 16:17-21; 18; 19:11-21; 20-22). Does not all this clamor about a population problem seem foolish in this light? Again we see what an awful darkness enshrouds those who live in rebellion against God.

Secondly, we might for information's sake ask whether there is indeed an overpopulation problem today. Have we outstripped our food supply or are we soon about to do so? The answer is no. Yes, there have been and will be famines in localized areas (occurring, you understand, in God's providence). At such times many do die of starvation, particularly in areas of high-density population. India is a country that comes to mind readily, where malnutrition and starvation have been serious problems. Is this not proof of the ZPG contentions? No. Again, the root of the problem lies in man's corrupt nature. Man has refused to be God's steward. Land has not been used wisely. This is especially evident in our own country, where agricultural production could be boosted many times over what it now is if farmers were not paid to not use their land. Also, valuable land is foolishly squandered on housing and industrial construction for the sake of convenience. In India, application of modern agricultural technology has to date already largely alleviated the food shortage problem. Failure to utilize an available meat supply remains for the obvious reason of pagan beliefs.

Finally, we should give some consideration to the means proposed to limit population. These are primarily periodic and temporary suspension of fertility, chiefly by means of oral contraceptive hormones or "birth control pills," permanent sterilization (male or female), and abortion. Abortion has been quite thoroughly discussed in several issues of *The Standard Bearer* during the past two years and I urge you, if you have not already done so, to carefully read these excellent articles. Except in that case where the mother's life is without question endangered by the continuation of a pregnancy (a very rare situation, indeed), abortion is murder, and is to be vehemently condemned by the Christian. With regard to fertility control, however, I believe we approach a matter that belongs in the realm of Christian liberty. Oh yes, motherhood (or parenthood) is a gift of God. Many couples there are from whom this gift is withheld. It is a rich blessing and privilege for covenant parents to bring forth covenant seed. We read that "children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them . . ." (Ps. 127:3-5). It is apparent, however, that not all parents are capable physically and, particularly, emotionally of coping with large families. Parental instruction and guidance of covenant offspring, yes, even provision of love, fall far short of what they should be. In this situation there is room, I believe for the exercise of responsible parenthood through the utilization of methods of conception prevention. This must be undertaken with much prayer and thought and only if one is honestly led to believe this is the proper course for a Christian to take. It may be,

and has been, argued that fertility control is an attempt by man to frustrate the will of God in our lives. I do not believe this argument is any more valid than one which would deny use of medication to treat a physical health problem, such as use of antibiotics to treat infection. There are limits to human physical and emotional endurance, even for the faithful, and I do not believe we are called upon to surpass these limits if means are available to prevent this. I bring this topic up mainly to emphasize a danger involved here. That danger is that the Christian falls prey to the reasoning of the sinner (which we all are) and argues that without limiting our family size we will not be able to provide adequately for our children's material needs. This argument is one of economics and follows closely that of those who express concern for the "quality" of life. I earlier stated what this all too often implies. We and our children do not need an abundance of this world's goods — fancy homes and cars, campers, swimming pools, trail bikes, snowmobiles, the latest in TV's and radios, the latest styles of clothing etc. We do not even need steaks. No, these things are not evils in themselves. They are, however, often associated with a lifestyle that is dangerous for the Christian. Consider how difficult it is for us to realize our complete dependence on God when we are so abundantly materially blessed. Perhaps you, too, have heard our ministers state that what the church needs to improve her spiritual health is an economic depression. This is no idle statement. Responsible parenthood for the Christian requires a thorough comprehension of Christian contentment. The recent "Meditation" by Rev. Schipper on the topic of Christian contentment fits in perfectly here (*The Standard Bearer*, Vol. XLVIII, pp. 485-487). Read this timely article thoroughly and digest it. May God grant us all, young people and parents, the grace of contentment.

CONTRIBUTION

Evangelism Thrust — Are We Called to Serve?

by KATHY FISHER

All denominations in the United States and Canada who call themselves Christian can participate. We can now do "missionary work" with those who deny the once-for-all completed sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We can now participate with those who openly deny the deity of Christ and the blood of atonement. If we participate with them in any degree we become part of all that is done by every church.

What about the doctrine of predestination? It does not seem to have much importance in the work of evangelism. If each one makes so many converts and this is multiplied, soon we will have a fabulous number. Do you think we can convert those whom God has not chosen? (Rom. 8:30)

Christ's commission to His Church was not to be "successful" but to be faithful. Faithful in proclaiming the gospel of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is the world out there dying to hear of Jesus Christ? No, the world out there is dead in trespasses and sins. None will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ except he that is made alive by the almighty power of the Spirit of God. The rest will remain at enmity with God and His Word.

God's command to the Church is to preach the Word. What must we preach? That there is no other way of salvation but the way of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. God will call to repentance and faith all those whom He chose before the foundations of the world.

That absolutely excludes our having part with anyone who proclaims the false gospel of salvation by works!

To ask a Reformed person to sign a pledge to be part of this program is to ask him to deny his public confession and to join hands with all shades of so-called religions.

"Only Fear the Lord"

"Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you." I Samuel 12:24

RON CAMMENGA

The surrounding nations and especially the Ammonites were beginning to trouble and oppress the people of Israel. Samuel's two sons, whom he had appointed judges at Beersheba, were proving themselves unworthy of their high calling. In the midst of these national calamities the children of Israel petitioned the aged Samuel for a king. We must not brush this evil of the Israelites aside or ignore it as having little significance. The people here committed a most terrible sin against God. The Lord God had ever been their King, He had ever sustained them and kept them safe. As their King He had given them a mighty victory over the Egyptians, had led them through the wilderness supplying them with their daily sustenance in His manna. As their Sovereign He had put to route all their enemies in order that they might inherit the Land of Promise. Walking in His paths and righteous in His eyes He had ever prospered and increased them as His chosen people. But now, hard pressed, Israel does not turn to her God but rather forsakes Him and foolishly places her trust in man. How rebellious, defiant, and unthankful, indeed. But God in His good pleasure sees fit to grant their sinful request and Samuel, by Divine command, anoints Saul to be king over Israel.

The above verse constitutes a dramatic climax to what served as both Samuel's farewell sermon and Saul's coronation sermon. Having reviewed for the people the great goodness of their God, showed to them the audacity and wickedness of their demand, Samuel proceeds to admonish and instruct them in the ways of continued favor with their God. To sum it all up, Samuel exhorts the people, "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: For consider how great things He hath done for you." And Samuel's words echo over the expanse of time, resounding their admonition to us as well as Israel of old.

Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart. This must be the governing principle in the life of the Christian pilgrim throughout his earthly journey. It must be the controlling force in every aspect of his life. His one desire must be that all the days of his life he walk uprightly before the Lord.

The fear of the Lord which Samuel speaks of is a feeling of deep reverence and love on the part of God's people towards God. It is a phrase used frequently throughout Scripture. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." Proverbs 14:27 speaks of the fear of the Lord in this way, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." And so we see that the fear of the Lord is an earnest activity in the heart and life of the regenerated child of God. For it is only the child of God who can hate evil and who comes to drink from the fountain of life, fleeing the snares of death.

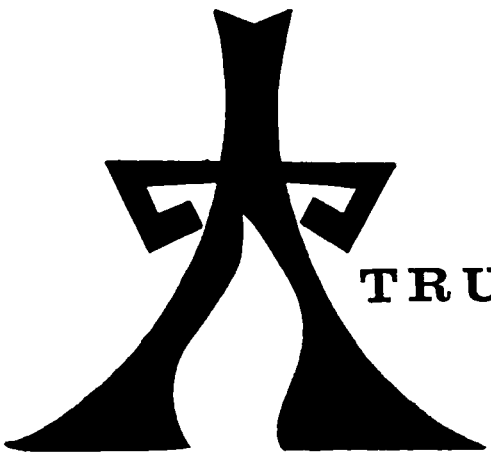
Very concrete and simple, isn't it, free from any abstract dellusion. This in the fear of the Lord, to hate evil. Certainly, it is hatred for the evil we see manifested in the world round about us. Absolutely, it is to vehemently oppose the iniquity within the church today. But first and foremost it is hatred, a loathing and abhoring of our own sins and our own selves. That's necessarily the first step. It is to cry out from the depths of our own soul, "Lord, be merciful to me the sinner." It is to have the firm conviction with David in Psalm 86 that apart from God's mercy we lie in the lowest hell. Do you grasp the force of that? Apart from God we lie in the LOWEST hell. Don't you see, then, how great a matter our salvation is? We are saved from the depths, the very depths of hell itself. To fear the Lord, then, is to have the assurance of our deliverance and salvation and thereby to strive against the sin which yet clings to us.

But this fear of the Lord is not simply negative in character. It is not only a fleeing from sin but a fleeing unto righteousness. It is a warm embrassing of the truth, an ardent love of God, and a fervent desire to walk stedfastly in all His precepts. That's the fear of the Lord which must, and by God's grace does, characterize the life of the Christian pilgrim.

And why is this fear of the Lord such a necessary part of the Christian life? Because, even as Samuel pointed out to Israel, ". . . consider how great things He hath done for you." Unto you He has applied the atoning blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. Unto you has He revealed Himself through the irresistible operation of His Holy Spirit, called you unto newness of life, given you a place in His church, and He it is who supplies you with strength from day to day. Why, then, fear the Lord? Out of hearts bubbling over with unsurpassable love and the deepest of gratitude.

Israel's history testifies that she did not heed the warning of Samuel. Her desire for a king had only been the first step toward ultimate worldliness. It did not take long for Israel to adopt the other sinful practices of her reprobate neighbors. And by the time God calls the prophet Isaiah, except for a small remnant, all of Israel had forsaken the Lord and established the worship of heathen idols. May we learn from Israel and may God give us His grace to walk in His fear, applying unto us the promises thereof. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2: "And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation." Luke 1:50.

Prayer: Oh God, we confess that thou hast done great and marvellous things for us. We pray keep us walking in Thy fear and serving Thee in truth. Give unto us also the confidence and assurance of Thy promise, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant" (Ps. 25:14). AMEN.



TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

Little-Faith

O Little-faith! for what (purpose) did you doubt? (Matt. 14:31, Gk.)

This man is from the town of Sincere, therefore a good man, and going on pilgrimage, just as Christian and Hopeful.

On the way down from Broadway Gate there is a very dark lane called Dead Man's Lane, because so many murders have been committed there. Unaware of the danger, Little-faith stopped for rest in this dark place and fell asleep. Soon, out from Broadway Gate three mean looking toughs hustled down the alley. Brothers they were: Faith-heart, Mistrust and Guilt. They almost fell over Little-faith. Hands in pockets they toed him awake and ordered him to

stand. As Faint-heart took him by the throat demanding his money, Mistrust forcibly rammed his hand into his pocket and dumped out his purse. That secured, Guilt let him have it in the head with his iron-wood club. This folded the poor boy to the ground. The thugs were scared off by what they thought were the footsteps of one, Great-grace. But no Good Samaritan was near. So there the good man lay, bleeding away. After awhile, he came to, got up and staggered on.

Little-faith's mind was on things above, not on earthly things. He was not an Esau. Esau's god was his belly. Little-faith's God was God. He had faith in God, saving faith, though but little of it. David as a child could not handle Goliath. A wren does not have the strength of an ox. "Some are strong, some are weak. Some have great faith, some little. This man was one of the weak; therefore he went to the wall."

The name of the man is distinctively of the New Testament, used only by our Lord, and that in reference to the disciples. They were Little-faiths! Peter was rebuked, "O Little-faith!" It is not a suspicious name, like Distrust. Jesus never called the disciples No-faith (Deut. 32:20), but repeatedly accused them of little faith. So it is more an encouraging name, recognizing little faith as true, though weak (Rom. 14:1). Great faith is always commended, but little faith is not rejected. Yet the Lord is not satisfied with a weak faith. He has a right to expect more. The disciples asked why they could not cast out a certain demon. Jesus answered, "Because of (not your unbelief, but) your little-faith!" Paul exhorts (I Thess. 5:14), "Comfort the feebleminded," which some have translated "fainthearted." The word literally means "the little souls."

The disciples had to face it; they were little-faiths. Wisely, then, they pressed Him with, "Lord, increase our faith!" Faith can be increased. Paul reminded the Corinthian church that they were in need of such an increase, and implied that "when your faith is increased" (II Cor. 10:15), he would thereby be enlarged. He was happy to say of the Thessalonian church that "your faith groweth exceedingly" (II Th. 1:3). Faith is like a grain of mustard seed, which is the *smaller* (not least!) of all seeds (Matt. 13: 32), but it grows and becomes the greater among herbs, like a tree. Faith then begins as a power. After awhile it begins to act. The act of faith begins with a *look*, "looking unto Jesus." When it increases a little more, it goes on from looking to Christ to *coming* to Him. But before he will come to Christ, a man has to be drawn, for he cannot so much as creep to Him, and even then when he does go to Christ, he does so with a limp. But then faith goes still farther, and he takes *hold* of Christ, because He is a real, only and complete Savior. When faith has done that much, it goes farther, to *lean* on Christ (Song 3:4; 8:5), to cast all cares on Him, and finds the great burden of sin swept away in the red sea of His blood. Next, faith goes on still farther, to lay sure claim to all that Christ is, to all the benefits purchased for His own. Then faith goes on to full assurance of salvation, to preservation in grace and perseverance in faith. Faith to begin with is small, and some never get beyond little faith.

Peter "walked on the water, *and came to* Jesus" (Matt. 14:29, Gk.). But then, when he saw the wind he began to sink. This brought forth the Lord's reproof. "O little-faith, for what did you doubt?" The trouble with little-faith is that faith is not in exercise, but crowded aside by doubt. The rebuke is intended to increase his faith. To the Lord's question there is simply and absolutely no answer. For there is no purpose or reason for doubt! Jesus' command to come to Him on the water was intended only for faith. That faith was in Peter, which he proved with his walk on the water actually *to* Jesus. But then suddenly he doubted! Why? There is no answer to that question. The wind and the waves? Ridiculous! *Jesus* was there beside him. True, there was a smattering of self-confident presumption or self-preference in Peter's, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee on the water." But the rebuke went not to that, but to his weakness of faith.

"As for a great heart, Little-faith had none." He could look up to Great-heart and pine, "O that I had the courage of Great-heart! With his sword I'd cut down old giant Grim, drive off the lion in the street, make Apollyon back down! But I stumble over a straw and jump at shadows." Per-

haps so, but Great-heart and Great-faith are no more God's children than Little-faith! There are, you know, little ones in God's family, other Little-faiths, like Mr. Fearing, Mr. Feeblemind, Mr. Despondency, Miss Much-afraid, Mr. Ready-to-halt (Ps. 38:17), but they are not little in God's sight. The Father gave them to Christ, a people for His own possession. They are all one in Christ.

This cov'nant stands secure,
Tho' earth's old pillars bow.
The strong, the feeble and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now.

Mr. Fearing took a month getting up his courage to cross over the Slough of Despond. But crossing he went right over with less difficulty than any other, so that he could hardly believe it when he got to the other side. Mr. Ready-to-halt went all the way of his pilgrim journey to the heavenly city on crutches, but he left them behind when he went into the river Jordan. Feeblemind carried his feeble mind with him all the way to the river banks, were he left it, ordering it to be buried in a dunghill that no other inherit it. Little-faith will get to heaven because the name of Little-faith is in the Book of Life. Little-faith was chosen before the foundation of the world, and was bought with the blood of Gods' Lamb. He cost just as much as Great-faith! Little-faith is always safe, but is seldom aware of it. He is sometimes afraid of hell, sometimes afraid he is not elect, sometimes afraid he is not called out of darkness into Marvelous Light. Sometimes he fears he shall not persevere to that happy end of salvation in Glory. Little-faith really is always sure of heaven, for God who has begun the good work in him will finish it to heavenly perfection. He is safe all the time, but thinks himself unsafe. That is the disadvantage, and sin, of Little-faith.

"I myself have been engaged as this Little-faith was, and I found it a terrible thing. These three hoods attacked me; and I beginning like a Christian to resist, they gave but a whistle, and in came their master. No one can tell what in that combat is suffered but he that has been in the battle himself." For many cannot understand the sighs and beatings of Little-faith, nor the limpings of Ready-to-halt, nor the fainting spells of Faintheart. They go everywhere with exuberance, exclaiming, "I can do all things. I can run and not be weary. I can walk and not faint. I cannot understand all this disquiet within. I always enjoy peace and quiet." Is it so with you? Then beware! Is it such a good sign that you never have to search your heart with anxiety lest you be deceived? You may have a strong faith which never wavers. That is one thing. But to be filled with such a strong presumption as never to examine yourself is another thing. The better way is to have early discoveries of your sin and misery, the innate evil of your heart, desperately wicked, full of Mistrust and Guilt, that you may know deeply and truly your need of the only perfect Mediator and Savior and His deliverance from such damnable miseries. Then those miseries will not waste your life, but delivered from them you will go from (little) faith to (deeper) faith. One of my old seminary professors used to say, and still does say, "Brethren, unless you are heavenly-minded, you are no earthly good!" Then you must be often "out of this world" and up in heaven, if you would be the kind of Christian who is "down to earth." It is indeed good to be on the mountain top, but, in this world, not all the time. Down below, in the thick of things, where men are in sin and misery, there is work to be done. Consider: Why could not we cast him out? "Because of your little-faith!" Remember: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

A LOOK AT THE CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST

KATHY BYLSMA

"For a number of years Christian Science was presented to me, and I was opposed to it and very strong in my opposition. Then came a time when I was left with three small children. I felt very much alone and lost. I turned to a friend who asked me if I would talk to a Christian Science practitioner. I said Yes, and this was the turning point in my life. I do not remember much of the conversation but I do remember that I was loaned a copy of *Science and Health* by Mrs. Eddy (founder of C.S.). I was given citations to study that gave me a new awareness of God's government in my life.

The need at the moment was for someone to take care of the children. Soon I met a young woman who was a student of Christian Science. She and her mother were willing to take the children. This was the beginning. The young woman later became my wife.

Through the years there have been many other evidences of God's care. I was healed of smoking through the desire for church membership. I have been healed of burns on my hands and the effects of having the end of my finger caught in a grinding wheel. In the later instance, through treatment by a practitioner and my own prayerful efforts, there never was any pain, and there is no evidence of an injury to my hand.

I am most grateful for membership in a branch church and The Mother Church.

Class instruction has meant much to me, and is always a source of inspiration.

William Howard Clark"[1]

The above is one of the millions of testimonies that attest to Christian Science healing. Others have been cured from pneumonia, pleurisy, tonsillitis, nosebleeds, and numerous other physical ailments. Christian Science healing has even worked for a farmer who was having problems with milk fever in his dairy cows. Sound a little strange and unbelievable?

The first time I ever really became aware of a cult called Christian Science was during our last convention in Colorado. The first day of the convention was spent in Loveland and we were given quite a bit of the afternoon to do what we pleased. A group of us went for a walk and came upon a small house with the door open. A sign said that all were welcome to come in, so we did. There were racks full of books and pamphlets written by Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science, and books by many other Christian Scientists covering the walls of the rooms. We had a good discussion with the lady in charge, but we all went away laughing inside. The Christian Science beliefs were so completely different from ours and were to the point of being ridiculous. I have always been interested in finding out more about other religions, so I decided to do a little research on Christian Science and pass my knowledge on to you.

I found that Christian Science is a religion based on the words and works of Christ and that it draws all its authority from the Bible. Christian Scientists believe in one supreme and infinite God and acknowledge His Son, Christ; The Holy Spirit; and man in God's likeness and image. They acknowledge the atonement of Christ as the revelation of God to man to show the way of man's unity to God. They also believe that Christ's crucifixion and resurrection help man to understand eternal life, the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.

The purpose of the Christian Science religion is to bring salvation to all. This salvation includes breaking away from the bonds of evil which deny the perfection of God and of man in His likeness and image. Therefore, they conclude, sin, sickness sorrow, selfishness, ignorance, fear, and all material-mindedness are all mortal errors and should be corrected and overcome by a scientific understanding of God.[2]

The Christian Scientists say that God is divine, perfect, and immortal. He created a true, spiritual universe, including man. God's universe cannot change from good to bad, therefore, there can be no sin. It is God's will that man be a perfect image of God Himself and to live forever in har-

mony and perfection. They say that death is only the wearing out of the material body but the soul remains to roam on this earth after physical death. Sickness and all the problems of the world come when man loses sight of his identity with God and Truth and Love. Mrs. Eddy says about this, "If the body is diseased, this is but one of the beliefs of mortal mind. Mortal man will be less mortal when he learns that matter never sustained existence and can never destroy God, who is man's Life."[3] Doctors, drugs, and operations will never be necessary if man keeps this in mind. This fact was illustrated in *The Christian Sentinel*, one of the periodicals printed by the Christian Science churches. The article tells of a young man who had acute appendicitis and was scheduled to enter the hospital for surgery. The young man's mother, who was a Christian Scientist, was informed of her son's illness and immediately asked a Christian Science practitioner to help him through prayer. The practitioner went and talked to her son and finding that he desired Christian Science help began treatment at once. The practitioner knew that matter and its so-called laws could not cause inflammation or pain, and that no material surgery was necessary. A doctor later examined the young man and found his condition had improved so he postponed the operation. The following day he was released from the hospital, completely well.[4]

I do not feel that I can rightfully say that all the testimonies of healing by the Christian Scientists are fake, but I also cannot say that they occurred because the patients concentrated on God and truth and that made them well. I know God would not work in that way. I often think that many sicknesses are psychological and maybe this is how some of the people became well. I am sure a Christian Scientist would vehemently object to this.

But leaving that aspect of Christian Science, and looking at the basic beliefs of the religion, I feel that they are entirely wrong. They claim to use the Bible as authority but it seems to me that they take out bits here and there to support their beliefs and then just close their eyes to the rest. Otherwise, how could they possibly say that there is no sin, that man is perfect? They take away the beauty of the death of Christ on the cross and the whole revelation of God's Word. How do they explain what God did to His servant Job?

Getting acquainted with another religion and its beliefs always makes me thankful for the church I belong to and the truths that it teaches. I think all of us should become a little more educated in other religions. Through this learning, our own faith is strengthened.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Christian Science Sentinel,* Volume 74, Number 3, Christian Science Publishing Society, pp. 1309-1310, July 22, 1972.
2. *Facts About Christian Science,* Christian Science Publishing Society, 1959, pp. 2, 3, and 6.
3. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures,* Eddy, Mary Baker, pg. 425.
4. *Christian Science Sentinel,* Volume 74, Number 30, pp. 1292-1293.

OPEN FORUM

Dear Ammie,

I have been reading about your frustrations and your painful predicament in the August-September, 1972, issue of the BEACON LIGHTS.

You have a problem which many Christian boys and girls have had. I can remember there were times when I didn't want to go to school either. It wasn't always because I was afraid of the kids at the bus stop. I can't remember that I was ever afraid of the kids at the bus stop, but I can remember the times when I was teased because I went to a Christian School. I was human enough to be sensitive. I wasn't always very proud of my little school either. I can even remember the times that I was ashamed of the school to which I had to go. I was ashamed to be called a Christian. I still have to fight against that every day. That reminds me of the words of Christ. He said:

> "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven." Matthew 10:32.

I didn't think about this when I was a child nor was I able to understand everything when I was a child, Ammie, but I could understand the Bible, and I had

Christian parents who could explain the meaning of my life to me, because they knew and understood the Bible. I know, Ammie, that you have covenant parents, and they understand the Bible and they can explain it to you. The apostle John says: "I write unto you little children, because ye have known the Father," I John 2:13b. Jesus said: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven," Matthew 18:4. That's the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.

Ammie, men, women, and children of God have always had to suffer because of their faith. The Christian can almost always tell when he is on the wrong road. The road, which is easy and smooth, is one without sufferings. That's not the right road for the Christian. The Apostle Paul tells us all:

> "And in nothing (be) terrified by your adversaries: . . . For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake; . . ." Philippians 2:28-29.

The Apostle Peter also was once very ashamed of Christ; he even denied Christ—not once, but three times. He tells the Christians of the early Church, and us too, some important things a Christian must know.

> "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf," I Peter 4:16.

James, the brother of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, tells us something else about our life as Christian children, Christian young people, and Christian parents.

> "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience," James 1:2-3.

The Holy Bible is our only rod and staff. It is light on our pathway in this sin-darkened world. That Holy Bible will comfort and instruct you, as it has helped many Christian boys, girls, young men, young women, mothers, and fathers of the past. God will teach us in His Word, when we discover that life is not always filled with daisied fields.

Because you have Covenant parents, you go to the Christian School. I think it's a Protestant Reformed Christian School and therefore I suggest that you ask your teacher to sing Psalter No. 201 with you when you go to school tomorrow. I especially like these stanzas. You will too.

The wicked grown wealthy, have comfort and peace,
While I, daily chastened, see troubles increase,
And, wronging God's children, I cried in my pain,
That clean hands are worthless and pure hearts are vain.

I went to God's temple: my doubts were dispelled,
The end of life's journey I clearly beheld;
I saw in what peril ungodly men stand
With sudden destruction and ruin at hand.

As when one awaking forgetteth his dream,
So God will despise them, though great they may seem;
My envy was senseless, my grief was for nought,
Because I was faithless and foolish my thought.

God loveth the righteous and his goodness is sure. Our Covenant-keeping God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Covenant parents, and our Covenant teachers know the fears of Covenant children. They also teach the way to Covenant children. Jesus, our Saviour, knows best of all. Read Hebrews 12 sometime.

Before I close, Ammie, I want you to know that I sympathize with you. I probably cannot experience all the turmoil that goes through your soul and heart, but I know there is One who does know, and who sympathizes in a way, that you cannot even completely understand, for He cares for you.

> "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:15-16.

A concerned Covenant teacher,
AGATHA LUBBERS

The staff wishes to thank the author of this "Open Forum" article for her concern and willingness to make her remarks. The staff and authors are encouraged by the remarks of readers and we hope to hear from more of you in the future.

CRITIQUE

AGATHA LUBBERS

RCA AND CRC MEET FOR "UNITY" TALKS

The celebration of the Protestant Reformation took an unusual turn this year in the city of windmills and tulips. Holland, Michigan, was the scene of the recent talks between the representatives of the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church. This significant meeting, which intends to initiate future talks and cooperation between these two major denominations, is singularly ironic because the meetings which caused the split in the "Dutch Reformed Church" and led to the development of these denominations were also held in the same general vicinity 115 years ago.

The *Grand Rapids Press* included several informative articles concerning these talks which will serve as the basis for the information and comments of this article.

October 31, November 1, and 2, were days when the delegates of the RCA and the CRC gathered in the Ninth Street Christian Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan. The one hundred or more delegates included such eminent men as Dr. John H. Kromminga, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, the breeding place of ministers for the Christian Reformed Churches, Rev. C. Boomsma, minister of the Calvin Christian Reformed Church, Rev. Jacob Eppinga, pastor of the LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, and Dr. Herman (Bud) Ridder, a conference organizer and pastor of the Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids.

Bruce Buursma, reporter for the Press writes,

> "Wednesday, November 1, the representatives of those Dutch-Calvinist churches gathered . . . to discuss their differences and similarities, something they have not done since the Christian Reformed group split from the RCA 115 years ago."

Dr. John H. Kromminga described the relationship between the two denominations in the following sample phrases:

> "The relationship between the two denominations has been at least peculiar if not unique . . . .
> "One struggles to find images to illumine it. Perhaps the most useful image is that of a divorced couple who keep seeing each other. No matter how many people are in the crowd, the estranged mate is the first person they recognize.
> "In a sense we have studiously avoided each other. The Christian Reformed Church has ecumenical relations of one sort or another with churches in Europe, South Africa, South America and even North America, but not with the Reformed Church in America.
> "This posture is a sham. Whether one judges by the criterion of geographical location or by that of theological interest, it remains true that we live together separately."

Dr. Kromminga is reported by Bruce Buursma as making a twenty-five minute presentation which included his interpretation of the split in 1857. He claimed the major factor was and to a certain extent still is the fact that "the RCA has lived closer to its American ecclesiastical counterparts and the CRC has been in closer touch with ecclesiastical and theological developments in the Netherlands."

Kromminga concluded:

> "The character and expression of both (our) differences and similarities have changed. Also, I would hope, has our maturity in evaluating them. We must be asking ourselves, 'Are these (differences) any greater than the differences within our respective denominations? Is our unity so much greater than our differences as to make the latter ridiculous?
> "And, in short, where and how do we proceed from here to serve our Lord Jesus Christ as the one people which — whether we like it or not — we really are?"

The questions which were hashed out in the late Wednesday afternoon caucuses of the denominational delegations were intended to evaluate the feelings of the group toward each other and to make recommendations on possible denominational unity. The positive proposals unofficially released on November 1 which would be considered at the complete session were as follows:

> "The CRC contingent said because of the confessional and cultural similarities between the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church, we should seek closer denominational unity, and our respective Inter-Church Relations Committees should be instructed to continue discussions toward that goal."
>
> "The RCA caucus produced more specific goals: Explore the possibility of such common works as federated churches, united campus ministries, church teacher training, educational materials, women's work, combined church festivals, and others."

Rev. William Brink, stated clerk of the CRC, said,

> "Every effort has been made here to understand and love each other. God help us to walk hand in hand with Christ."

Henry Ten Clay, an RCA delegate from Milwaukee, told the conference that the gathering changed his entire view of the CRC people. "I have always held at an arm's length my Christian Reformed neighbor. Now, after these three days, I feel that I can take them to my bosom."

Common statements of admiration were uttered and made official because of a unanimous adoption of a set of recommendations to each congregation of the RCA and the CRC. The preamble of this set of recommendations said:

> "We, the delegates of the CRC and RCA thank God for the unity He gave us during our deliberations. Our prayer is that all members of our two denominations may experience like unity, and to that end we heartily endorse these recommendations and covenant together to implement them."

The recommendations were to set up joint commissions in nearly all phases of church work and to hold special worship services in each church on or about April 8, 1973, for "the promotion of fellowship and denominational unity."

Unity not union was that toward which delegates were clearly working said Buursma.

Delegates were surprised by the similar characteristics between the two denominations but noticed several "sticky" differences. The most obvious difference centers around the membership of the RCA in the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. The CRC has not joined these organizations and has only allied itself with the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. A second obstacle to merger is the power structure of the denominations. The RCA allows the local church a great deal of autonomy while the CRC is a corporation with a strictly developed hierarchy of priorities in a federated system.

Delegates determined to work together, however, to produce church educational materials, teacher training, family festivals, youth organizations, evangelism and women's work.

We stand amazed at what mature men who are charged with the responsibility of fulfilling a God-ordained calling in the church will do, and at the same time we are not at all surprised. It has been difficult to discern any real difference between the RCA and the CRC.

Merger talks and merger proposals of the kind that have come from the conference in Holland, Michigan, are understandable too when one considers the commitment of the churches in the two denominations. Arminianism is an insipient and prevalent error in both denominations. Even though both denominations nominally cling to the Reformed Confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort, there are many obvious departures from these confessions.

The head of the Camel is in the tent when churches begin to work together in the areas which the conference has covenanted to do: United campus ministries (this has already happened at Grand Valley State College to the chagrin of conservative and Reformed men within the Christian Reformed Church), church teacher training, educational materials, women's work, and combined church festivals. When men and women begin to work so closely together, the actual merger cannot be far away.

It is remarkable and sad that all of these

cooperative efforts are of the social kind. All this lends credence to the charge that these churches are becoming more and more concerned with the social functions of the church and becoming less and less concerned with doctrinal purity and doctrinal distinctiveness. The leaders of these churches obviously did not spend time discussing the doctrinal implications of such cooperative activities. Purity of doctrine, proper administration of the sacraments and Christian discipline were obviously not the concern of this conference.

That to which Reformed officebearers commit themselves when they sign the formula of subscription in their individual denominations was not uppermost in their minds.

The paucity of concern for doctrinal purity and no mention of further work in explicating the doctrinal distinctiveness for which the churches must work is sadly lacking in the proposal of the conference.

The fact that two churches will agree to work together and ignore the historic reasons for their separateness indicates that they are not distinctive. It is tragic when leaders of the CRC can disregard the ecumenical movements such as the WCC and the NCC which are thoroughly Modernistic. They are organizations which tend to make a least common denominator religion of all religious groups. This is contrary to all the principles of Reformed denominational unity and contrary to the Formula of Subscription signed by each minister in the Reformed community.

In 1561 Guido de Bres suffered for the faith. His definition of ecclesiastical purity and distinctiveness is still regulative.

> We believe, that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true Church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of Church . . . . The marks by which the true Church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing sin: . . . Confession of Faith, Article XXIX.

God forbid that such ecumenicism as was propounded and followed by the conference will ever happen to the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Thanks be to God for ministers and elders who are concerned with unity which is based upon the confessional purity of the church.

We pray for young people who will do this too.

CONTRIBUTION

War

GARY VAN DER SCHAAF

"And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought with his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:7-9).

And so from the beginning of time, there was war. Michael was victorious over the proud and rebellious Beelzebub. However, the devil was cast to earth and from that moment the red horseman of war began his ride. From the first battle of Cain and Abel to that final battle of Armageddon there was, is, and always shall be war.

Why is there war? Why do nations rage? Worldly philosophers have given us many reasons: competition, acquisitiveness, pugnacity pride. Man's greed, his desires, are always the major causes for war. If one digs through the immediate causes of war, the insults, the assasinations, a basic desire for food, land, materials and mastery is always present. There is always the desire to rule.

For appearances, the world has to say it doesn't want war. "War is hell" said Sherman. The wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were gentlemen's affairs —something to keep the armies occupied. However, the past two centuries have witnessed the rise of a new total war: a holocaust of unspeakable horrors to be avoided at all cost. Eliminations of these horrors was the peace of the League of Nations;

this is the peace of the United Nations. But is this the peace of the Christian, the peace which passeth all understanding? No, I think not, for "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1), and ". . . he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14). What does the world do but make the wall between itself and God only greater. They are enamored with their dreams and ideals. Their hopes are vain. "Let us try a new understanding, a new enlightenment. Let us put a restrain on our fears; let us reduce armanents, cease hostilities and subversion. We must join hands in a defiance of history. Let us be one. However, labor, which is not in the Lord is labor lost. If only the world would believe the inevitability of war. Some men do realize this, but again their beliefs are world based. "Look," they say, "3,153 of the last 3,421 years have seen war. A prolonged peace weakens the country; some conflicts are too fundamental to negotiate." They argue: "War is the final arbitrator of all things." Finally they admit that to deny war is to deny man's nature. This is the closest the world comes to admitting the natural depravity of man. It is because man is evil that there are wars.

Should we concern ourselves with war? with peace? As waiting, watching Christians it is our duty to look for the second coming of our Lord, for the coming of the last days. "And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? . . . and when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be" (Mark 13:4-7). Rather we should concern ourselves with "the good fight." "For though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." And peace, what do we do about peace. We have our answer for ". . . Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace" (Luke 7:30). But for the world's peace — the cessation of hostilities — what do we do. Surely we must realize that when the world finds peace it will be the peace of antichrist. "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him . . . and it was given him to make war . . . and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues and nations. And all that [the wicked] dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (Rev. 13:4-7). Great suffering and tribulation will be the lot of those without the mark of the beast. Our human nature cringes at the terrible thought. But this awful peace must come before our Christ can, so it has been prophesied. In this light I think we should pray for earthly peace in the world.

Finally there is the last battle — the great war. "Satan . . . shall go out to deceive the nations . . . . Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle . . . and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever" (Rev. 20:7-9). Then Christ will come with the book of life and gather his people unto Him to take them to the eternal peace of the new Jerusalem. This weary night shall be passed and the swords shall be beat into plowshares: neither shall we learn war anymore. "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

*"Reading . . . A Lost Art"**

(author unknown)

Never before has a generation of young people gone out to face life as well versed in the three R's as in our day. Practically every one has toiled and worried over his "reading, riting, and rithmetic" for at least eight years, if not longer. The man who signs his name with an X and stares at a newspaper as if it were a set of hieroglyphics is a thing of the past.

Never before have the printing presses poured out so much material for general consumption as in our age.

*Taken from the November 1942 issue.

And yet, in spite of all that, reading has fallen into the category of lost arts.

Too often when the school days are past the school books are thrown into a corner and forgotten. A small amount of what has been learned at school is brought into practical use in daily life, the rest is swept into oblivion by the rush and bustle of our busy existence. Reading is one of the things that is soon forgotten.

That does not mean that most of us cannot distinguish one word from another, especially when the occasion demands. But it certainly is true that very few young men and women take time to sit down at regular intervals and actually enjoy some valuable reading matter. The newspaper, and then chiefly the comics, is about all the reading material that falls into the hands of some people.

The question is quite timely: do you read? If not, it is a habit worth developing, for the printed page contains a world of information worth knowing.

But I can also conceive of some who are not exactly book-worms and yet do indulge in a certain amount of reading. You may not belong to those who literally devour page after page of printed matter and drink in its contents as if their very life depended on it, and yet you might relish the thought of spending a quiet evening with a book.

For you the question would be: what do you read?

A questionnaire sent out and frankly answered by all our young people might prove very enlightening on that point. It would be interesting to note just what kind of books our young people read; what stands at the head and what is found at the bottom of their preferred list. I have no intention of sending out such a questionnaire, but it would be very beneficial for each one of us to make our own list in its proper order from the following suggestions: magazines of romance and adventure, fictions of various kinds, timely periodicals on current events, educational books, church papers and the Bible.

Particularly we should ask, how large a place does the Bible have in our lives?

But even so, there still remains the question: how do you read?

We are interested now particularly in the question how we should read those things that are definitely for our spiritual welfare.

Do we read them haphazardly, just skimming over the surface in a sort of hit-and-miss manner? Or do we put forth a serious effort to grasp what we read, to think into the subject under discussion and try to formulate our own opinion on it? Do we use this material in preparation for our society?

Do we read the Bible simply as another book, or do we approach it as the Word of God, the divine revelation of things heavenly and spiritual which abide forever? Do we read it prayerfully, filled with the desire to know God as He has revealed Himself to us in the face of Christ Jesus in His Word? Do we daily receive that Word into our hearts as the power of God unto salvation, the Bread of life for our souls?

The answers to these questions must be left to you. Think it over.

NEWS from, for, and about our churches

JEANNE GRITTERS

From our South Holland Church:

Mr. James Hanemaayer was received as a member in full communion from the Palos Heights Christian Reformed Church.

Public confession of faith was made by Homer De Jong, Jann Poortenga, Randall Poortinga, Ryan Regnerus and Debra Van Baren on October 1.

The Ladies' Auxiliary sponsored a Barbecued Ribs dinner on October 13, in the church basement.

An Open House was held at the school on Thursday, October 12. There were presentations in each room which were enjoyed by many parents and friends who attended.

The membership papers of Miss Carol De Jong have been received from our First Church in Grand Rapids.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Poortenga, Jr. rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Joanne Ruth, born on October 12.

Mr. and Mrs. James Lanting were received into the fellowship from our Southeast Church.

Jerrold Bruinsma made public profession of faith during the evening service of October 29.

Our school in South Holland was host to the 1972 Teacher's Convention, held on Thursday and Friday, October 26 and 27. Rev. Decker spoke on "The Calling of a Christian School Teacher," Prof. H. Hanko spoke on "The Teacher as Counselor," and there were several discussion groups.

From our Kalamazoo Church:

The pastor and elders chose the theme "To Know Him is Eternal Life" as they began their schedule of house visitation this season.

From our Holland Church:

Public confession of faith was made by Miss Jane Woltjer on September 23.

The membership papers of Mr. Calvin J. Jonker have been received from the Bentheim Reformed Church.

From our Randolph Church:

Mr. and Mrs. Jake Soodsma became the parents of a baby girl, Rebecca Jeannette, born on July 1.

The ordination and installation of Pastor-elect Wayne Bekkering took place on Friday, October 13. Also participating in this solemn occasion were Rev. R. Decker and Prof. H. Hoeksema. A lunch was served after the service in the church.

From our Southwest Church:

On Friday, September 15, a farewell program on the theme "God bless both of you" was given by the congregation for Cand. and Mrs. Wayne Bekkering; refreshments were served afterwards.

Dismissal papers were sent to Miss Karyn Kuiper at her request.

A program was sponsored by the Consistory on October 6 to celebrate Rev. H. Veldman's forty years of faithful service in the ministry of God's Word. Mr. A. Bleyenberg and Mr. Gerald De Witt were received as new members in the congregation.

From our Loveland Church:

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Griess were blessed with a son.

Mr. and Mrs. Dave Poortenga rejoice in the birth of a daughter.

The Ladies' Circle sponsored a casserole supper on October 27 at the Loveland Community Building.

Our Church Extension Committee sponsored a public Reformation Day lecture on Thursday, November 2, held at the Denver Christian High School in Denver. Rev. Engelsma spoke on "The Importance of the Preaching of God's Word."

From our Hull Church:

A singspiration was held in the church on October 29. Special numbers were provided and a collection was taken for the young people's Scholarship Fund. A public Reformation Day speech was given by Rev. Kortering on November 1 in our church. The topic was "Reformation Today."

The papers of Mrs. Ken Hoksbergen (nee, Doris Decker) were received from our First Church.

The baptism certificates of Eugene De Boer and Ed Hoekstra were transferred to our Southeast Church at their request.

A special worship service was conducted on Tuesday, October 10, at which time Cand. Wayne Bekkering led the service. This served as part of his examination and

was also an opportunity for the congregation to worship before classis met.

The membership papers of Mrs. Rod Brunsting have been received from the First Christian Reformed Church of Rock Valley.

From our Hope, Walker Church:

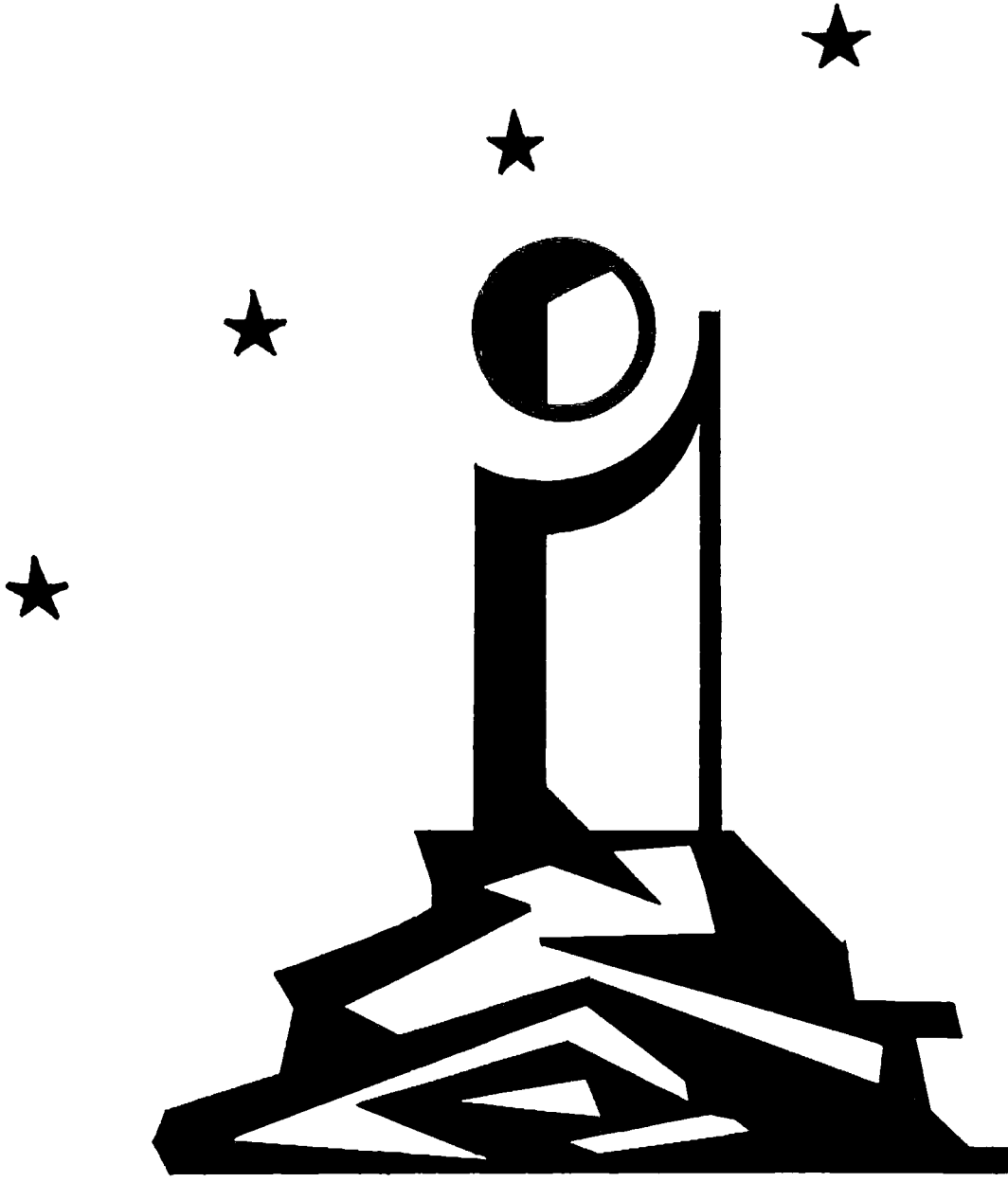
The ordination service of Pastor-elect Ronald Van Overloop was held on Thursday evening, October 5, with Rev. Veldman conducting the service. On October 18 a welcome program for him and his family was given by the congregation.

New Address:
Pvt. I Jack Huizenga, 362-60-3282
Co. C. 8th Bn. 4th Bde.
Fort Knox, Kentucky 40121, 3rd Platoon

John R. Cleveland and Carolyn Kamps were united in marriage on Friday, September 29, in our church.

The membership papers of Rev. and Mrs. Ronald Overloop and their baptized children, Kevin Lee and Ronda Sue, have been received from our First Church.

Marriage vows were spoken by Jerry Schipper and Pat Karsemeyer on October 20, in our church.

The Beacon Lights expresses their appreciation to the following congregations and individuals for their gifts:

Southeast	$ 37.64
Edgerton	15.67
Randolf	17.39
Hope (Walker)	102.25
Roger King	7.00
Roger Dykstra	7.00
Kalamazoo	17.75