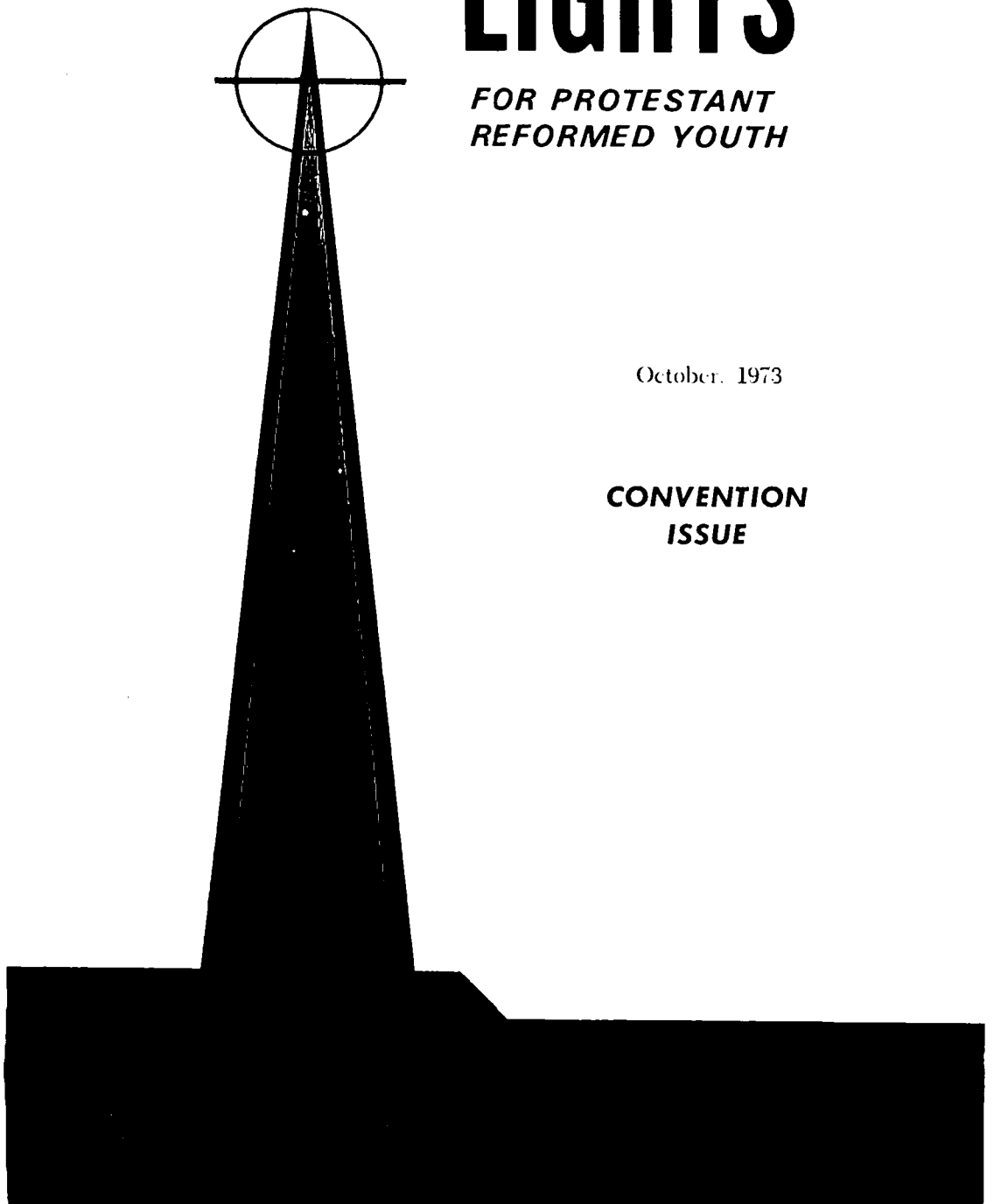
# BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH*



October, 1973

**CONVENTION ISSUE**

# BEACON LIGHTS

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# TOLERANCE

ED. NOTE: *The following is the text of an address given at the 1973 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention held in Hope, Grand Rapids. It was given as an introduction to one of the discussion sessions.*

A proper beginning for any topic of discussion would be, I think, a definition of the topic at hand. The topic under discussion this morning is tolerance. What, then, is tolerance? What does it mean to be tolerant? Rev. Kuiper in his article in the *Standard Bearer* gives us a very simple but correct definition: "Tolerance is allowance for error or deviation." This concept, as Rev. Kuiper points out, is used in various ways by various kinds of people. To a doctor it usually means how much the human body can bear of a particular kind of medication or treatment, to an engineer it has to do with gears and stress and strain. But we are not concerned with either of those right now. Tolerance is also a concept used in the whole area of social interaction. It is this latter usage which we, of course, have in mind.

But first, before we get into the subject *per se,* let me stress to you the importance of the subject at hand. And, that for two reasons. In the first place this topic is extremely important because of its pertinence to our age. I think that it is a fair judgment if we characterize our age as the Age of Tolerance anl the Age of Pluralism. That is generally the aim of our society today. We must strive to create a pluralistic atmosphere. What do I mean by that? This: every idea, every notion, every act must somehow be condoned. Each man must be left free to do his own thing, to believe his own thing without interference, without testimony of wrong-doing from another. This has been the age of situational ethics, situational morals, situational religion, situational everything. Key '73 is as good an example of our age as any. The basic question which motivated the whole Key '73 movement was not What is right? Or what is the Truth? But the question which Carl Henry asked was "How can we get together? How can we, in cold-war terminology, mutually coexist in peace and happiness and prosperity?" But Key '73 is an example among many. We hear the same message wherever we go – in the church world, in the secular world, in the press and every other conceivable medium. Let's get together, let's bury the hatchet and the theological hair-splitter, let's just sit down together with an ice-cold bottle of Coke and love one another. The Christian of course, wants nothing to do with this kind of talk and thus it is that when tolerance is mentioned, he shies away a bit. Quite naturally so. He doesn't like what he sees and hears done in the name of tolerance. Everybody's right, nobody's wrong. Isn't it ironical that in such an age of tolerance that our nation can be so righteously appalled at Watergate? One's own baby can not be recognized by its father and mother. It is well, then, that you talk about tolerance. It's pertinent to an understanding of our age.

Secondly, it is well that you talk about tolerance because of its peculiar pertinence to young people. If I may generalize for a moment, it would be my guess that young adults, more than any other age-group it seems, are constantly pestered by questions involving tolerance. What may we tolerate? That specific question is not often asked in that way, but it is essentially the same question as, "What may we do? Where may we go? How far may we go in this area or that?" These are questions not usually raised by older folks but by young people. So, you see, this question is especially pertinent because you are young.

In light of what we have just said then, what about the Christian? Given our definition of tolerance as the allowance for error or deviation, must the Christian be tolerant? May he be? Or must he be intolerant only? The answer which I will attempt to give is *Yes* to both questions. The Christian must be both tolerant and intolerant at the same time; and, if he *must* be tolerant, then he *may* be, too. But saying that means that we need to spell some things out.

Now I think that everyone can easily see that the Christian may not tolerate anything which is contrary to the Word of God and the confessions. The Christian certainly may not allow doctrinal heresy. He must constantly guard against any profanation of God's Word. And, neither may the Christian tolerate any action which is sin. Those doctrines, then, which are clearly contrary to God's Word and the confessions and those actions which are clearly contrary to the way of life prescribed in God's Word may not be tolerated. The Christian's witness here must be unequivocal: Put the heretic and his heresy out of the church and stop the sinful acts. Sin, all sin, whether of doctrinal heresy or practical walk may not and can not be tolerated. The Bible is very clear on this point. Galatians 1:8 says: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And John I chapters 1 and 2 clearly enjoin us to forsake the darkness and walk as children of the light.

But, there are areas in one's life, and this is true primarily in one's walk (although not exclusively – consider the infra and supra controversy, for example) where one must be tolerant. But, we must proceed carefully here. There are some important questions to consider: Does this mean that if we are at all tolerant, that we allow for error in doctrine and walk? Does this mean that we no longer insist that the Bible is an absolute standard, that the Bible is our only rule for faith and life? Certainly not. But, in order to understand what I am trying to say, we must place ourselves in an entirely different context. One's tolerance may be and must be exercised first of all in the area of the things indifferent, in the area what is called *adiophora*. These are the things about which the Scriptures do not specifically speak. We know for example, that adultery, and stealing and murder are wrong because the Scriptures explicitly instruct us that this is so; but, what about smoking, drinking of alcoholic beverages, the length of one's hair, the length of one's skirts or the tightness of one's pants? The Bible does not say how long or how tight one's clothes must be or whether or not we may drink whiskey or chew tobacco. These are areas in which one's Christian liberty must be exercised and these are areas, consequently, in which one may expect to find some diversity. There must be room for some variation in the church on these matters. Romans 14 teaches us this. We must, therefore, exercise tolerance, in the area of *adiophora*.

There is still another area in which one's tolerance must be exercised and that has to do with accepting our brother's character and disposition. The problem here, of course, is in doing exactly that – the problem of accepting one's fellow saints as they are and have been ordained and created by God. That's not easily done. Proud man, you see, wants to remake everything according to his own image and notions; he wants everyone to be as he himself is. Do you ever catch yourself thinking that way: Oh, if only so and so would be as bright and smart and good-looking and pleasant and cheerful as I am, then everything would be all right. But what a disaster that would be if everyone would be the same. God, you see, is much wiser than we proud people. Diversity in character is fundamental to the unity of the church. One can not build a building with just corner stones or just small pebbles. No, each child of God has been uniquely created with a unique character, with unique gifts, with a unique calling and with a unique place in God's kingdom. And, we must accept that. Don't try to change that. Diversity in character is a thing of divine beauty. It is striking, I think, that the Church Order in Article 85 recognizes that also: "Churches (could also read just as well "people of God") whose *usages* differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected." The problem, in this respect, is very real – among yourselves and among our churches. The Jamaican Christians, for example, may not be excluded from our fellowship and communion. I urge you, therefore, also in this area of character differences to exercise tolerance. In your relationships in school and in church, in the formation of your in-groups and out-groups exercise tolerance for in so doing you are exercising the love of Jesus Christ. That is the key. Tolerance is based upon love, the love of Christ Jesus.

Tolerance, then, may be and must be

exercised in the things indifferent and in our relationships with our fellow saints.

But I must finish. And, by way of conclusion, a few general remarks:

1) What I have been talking about so far – areas in which one must be intolerant and areas in which one must be tolerant – will make no sense whatsoever and will have no practical value whatsoever unless one is able to make sound judgments about what he must tolerate and of what he must needs be intolerant. You must be able to decide what is to be tolerated or not tolerated. And, I know that you clearly understand that these judgments must be based upon the Word of God and the confessions. The conclusion, then, is obvious: one cannot make sound judgments if he is ignorant of the basis upon which these judgments must be made. A thorough knowledge of both the Scriptures and the confessions is an absolute necessity if one is to exercise his tolerance or intolerance.

2) We talked about Christian liberty. I urge you to exercise some care here. Christian liberty is the freedom to serve God according to the law but without being under the bondage of the law. That liberty is never license; it must always be made to operate within the parameters of the law. Do not, therefore, abuse this precious doctrine by becoming licentious. But equally important, do not abuse this doctrine by becoming legalistic. Christian liberty requires responsible Christians, Christians who know the Scriptures and who act accordingly.

3) Finally, I would urge that you never identify tolerance with compromise. Compromise means that you sacrifice a little of your principle for the sake of peace and an amicable relationship. Don't ever do that. That kind of peace is without foundation. It seems to me that the theme of your convention fits here. The emphasis in Ephesians 6 is to put on the gospel of peace. That, in the final analysis, is the only thing that will prepare you to know when to tolerate and when to fight.

J. HUISKEN

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## *Convention Review*

DAWN DE JONG – LINDA VANDER VENNEN

The 33rd Annual Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention began as scheduled on Monday, August 13 at Hope Church. Here conventioneers registered and were given lodging assignments in the afternoon. After supper at "home," latecomers were registered and then all went to Johnson Park for a sports mixer. Here old friendships were renewed and new friends were made. After an evening of vigorous activity and Christian fellowship we returned to Hope for a roaring bonfire.

Tuesday morning after a busines meeting, Elder Jon Huisken of Hope Church gave an introductory talk on the subject, tolerance.° Discussion groups followed. The first in a series of hotdog lunches was then speedily devoured. We then boarded buses for Battle Creek's Kellogg's Plant. (Here our Iowans discovered what is being done to their harvested corn.) Upon our return we rushed to our "homes" for supper and a change of attire. At 7:00 with smiles on our faces, we returned to Hope Church for the evening.

Wednesday morning, bright and early,

°*See Editorial*

we managed to drag ourselves out of bed and headed for church. We proceeded to board buses for the White River and our canoe trip. After approximately a two hour ride, we reached our destination. Canoes were handed out; cushions and paddles were put in place. One shove and down the river we went. However troubles soon began. Unexpected logs and expected human water pests invaded the canoes. Few escaped the "cool, refreshing" feeling of a stimulating dip so early in the day. Although the river was reportedly shallow we soon found out otherwise. It wasn't exactly an easy task turning water-filled canoes upright in water over our heads. One by one our canoes reached the end of our journey. Tired but happy we managed to crawl out of the water and onto shore. After lunch along the river, we left for our next stop, Hoffmaster State Park. Following a swim in Lake Michigan, we gathered together to hear Elder John Kalsbeek speak to us on the topic, Witnessing. Upon his conclusion we once again divided into groups and discussed the topic further. A

delicious chicken dinner, fixed by some of our dedicated Hope hosts, topped off our stay at Hoffmaster. Our buses took us to Grand Haven's Water Thrill Show and Musical Fountain. However our enjoyable day soon came to an end as we headed back toward Hope Church and a night of rest.

Thursday morning opened with a filling pancake breakfast. After a short business meeting we had our last discussion group on the subject, Prayer. The discussions were proceded by an informative talk given by Elder David Meulenberg. The afternoon was spent at Lamar Park where the traditional East-West Ball Games were played. The Western guys were victorious over the East, while the Eastern girls evened the score by beating their Western rivals. The evening was once again spent at Hope Church. This time we heard Rev. M. Kamps speak on "The Armor of God." An unusual special number was given by four Hope girls called a Chalk Talk. Janet Hanko showed her artistic ability as she drew a beautiful chalk drawing of a chapel in the woods.

Friday morning, those that could bear to drag themselves out of bed headed for

North Shore Beach. However things didn't go quite as expected. A rainshower soon changed scheduled plans. Our lunch returned to Hope Church, so we too headed back in the Grand Rapids direction. After our meal we spent the early afternoon playing basketball and volleyball in Hope School's gym. The rest of the afternoon was spent preparing for the banquet at Grandville Christian. Before we knew it evening had come What a wonderful evening we shared together as covenant young people! Rev. C. Hanko gave the final speech on "The Victory of Faith." A flute duet by Judy Swart and Linda Vander Vennen provided the final special number for the convention. Our president, Ken Koole, made some final announcements, presented the new Federation Board members, and thanked all those that helped make the 1973 convention a success. The banquet ended with the song "God Be With You 'Till We Meet Again."

Thus another convention had come to an end. Although we had to part with friends and relatives we retained many happy memories of that week. We can be so thankful that our Lord even provided such an opportunity as this to meet as young people. Thus the Lord willing, we'll once again meet each other in covenant fellowship next year in the farmlands of Iowa and Minnesota.

## CONVENTION SPEECHES

*As in the past the* BEACON LIGHTS *staff and the Federation Board wish to share with all our readers the text of the speeches presented at the Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention of 1973.*

## *The Enemy In Battle*

PROF. H. C. HOEKSEMA

Beloved Protestant Reformed young people:

I count it a privilege that I may speak to you tonight. It has been several years since I have spoken at a convention. And to be perfectly honest, I am always a little bit jealous when someone else has this privilege, and I do not. The reason is not that I think myself to be such a topnotch speaker, but that I love you Protestant Reformed young people and welcome the opportunity to talk to you. So, thanks for the invitation.

I am particularly happy to speak on the theme which you have chosen for this year's convention. For the times in which we live, I think that the theme for this convention could hardly be better chosen. We live in an age when the tendency in Christianity at large is to be spiritually pacifist. And that is wrong, dead wrong! And therefore I am glad that your convention purposes to emphasize that we are militant, that we are at war, that we are soldiers of Christ.

And I want to begin right there with a direct question: Are you *of Christ?* That is, are you a Christian?

If so, then you are a *soldier.* Mind you, you are a soldier, not *for* Christ: because Christ has no need of anyone to fight for Him. But you are a soldier *of* Christ, a soldier in His cause, the cause of the victorious Son of God in the midst of the world. Those two are inseparable: Christian and soldier. If you are a Christian, you are a soldier of Christ. If you are not

a soldier, you are not a Christian. The two are inseparably connected.

Further, if you are a soldier, you have a *fight* on your hands. And I mean it just exactly in that way: not that you *may* have to fight, not that you must merely *prepare* to fight, not that you must look forward to fighting sometime in the future. But you do have a fight on your hands now, and all your life. It is a fight, further, in which there is no quarter, no truce, no cease-fire, until Christ comes again. And it is a fight, too, in which there is no neutral ground anywhere.

To be able to fight that fight you must know four things. First of all, you must know who the enemy is, and must be able to recognize him. In the second place, you must know what kind of battle you fight in. Thirdly, you must know where the enemy is. And, finally, you must know what your position in the battle and in the battle-line is. This is true in any worldly battle, any this-earthly battle. If you do not know the enemy, if you are not able to recognize the enemy, if you do not know his character, if you do not know the kind of battle you are fighting, and if you do not know where the enemy is, you cannot properly fight. And this is true for our battle, too. And so it falls to me tonight to introduce that aspect of the theme of your convention. And I speak to you on

## THE ENEMY IN BATTLE

I. THE IDENTITY OF THE ENEMY
II. THE NATURE OF THE BATTLE
III. YOUR POSITION IN THE BATTLE

### The Identity of the Enemy

We may very well be guided here by the passage of Scripture which is the theme-passage of this convention, Ephesians 6:11, ff. And then we ought to note, first of all, that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. The Bible talks about these things here not so much in order to tell us that we must *prepare* for the battle, but in order rather to show us wherein the proper battle-readiness consists. How must we prepare? And how must we be prepared? And in order to know this, we must understand for what we must be prepared. This is very important. If you are going to fight a battle against disease, you have to know that you do not fight disease with rat poison, but with antibiotics. If you are going to fight a battle against mosquitoes, you have to know the nature of that enemy, so that you may know that you do not fight mosquitoes with atomic bombs. Thus, in the spiritual sense, you have to know your enemy in order to know how to fight him. And you have to know, first of all, that you do not fight against flesh and blood. It is necessary to know this, and history shows this to be necessary. There have been people who took the position that we fight against flesh and blood. There have been people, for example, who have tried to fight the battle by forsaking the world physically: and they crawled into cloisters and monastaries, not realizing that they took the world right along with them. That kind of battle didn't help. It was actually world-flight, rather than world-fight. Others have tried to fight the battle with physical means, and they still do that. There have been those in past history who tried to compel men to be baptized at the point of a sword. That also was of no use. They were not fighting with the right weapons and in the right battle. Others have sought the way out in self-improvement and in their own strength. But that also was of no profit. Hence, we must point out the character of the enemy. We must know the enemy in order to be able to fight him. We must be able to recognize him, recognize his character, his strength, his weapons.

Not against flesh and blood do we fight. "Flesh and blood" does not mean our corrupt, sinful nature. For this corrupt nature is exactly an ally of our enemy, and we do indeed have to fight against it all our life long. Nor does "flesh and blood" simply mean men. We may depend on it that then the Bible would simply use the word "men" in the text. Besides, we do sometimes have our battle with men, that is, in as far as they are in alliance with the devil. We fight them then, and we have to fight them. But by "flesh and blood," we must understand all that is of man, all that is visible, all that is earthly, all that is material. We do not have our fight with that as such. And we do not have our fight with natural powers as such. And therefore, we do not fight a merely natural, human battle; and we do not fight with

natural physical strength. It is not a fight of physical prowess against physical prowess. It is not a battle of numbers against numbers. It is not a battle merely of mind against mind, or of will against will. It may very well be that flesh and blood can serve and are used in the camp of the enemy. But the battle is not against flesh and blood as such.

Positively speaking, we do battle against the legions of the devil.

Our chief enemy is the devil himself, Satan.

We must not make the mistake, now, of denying the existence of the devil, or of making the existence of the devil something vague and abstract, something that is not real. This is done, you know. The devil is the power of evil in your own heart, according to some. Or the devil is the power of evil in your surroundings, the power of evil in your environment. That is a very serious mistake. There is not a mistake that is more fatal for an army or for a soldier than to think that the enemy does not exist. You surely will not fight then! It is a fatal mistake to think that the enemy is someone else or something else than he really is.

We must understand that the devil is real. He is a definite person. He is an individual who has a mind and a will. He is a spiritual person; but just because he is a spiritual person, he is not less real. Originally the devil was one of the greatest of the angels, if not the greatest. He was an angel ranking in power and glory with Michael, the archangel. And therefore the devil is a highly gifted creature, a highly gifted, very real individual. But that devil is fallen into a state of absolute enmity against God, so that the employs all his great powers and all his great gifts – which he has kept, even though he has fallen – against God. That enmity against God is the great principle of all the devil's actions. He hates God, and he hates all that is of the Lord our God. He is a liar. He speaks the lie of himself, and he is the father of the lie. He is Satan, God's adversary!

That devil is the prince of this world. He is prince, not in the sense that he owns the world: for he does not own it. He is prince, not in the sense that he is legally appointed and created head of this world. That is not his position; he has no right to be prince of this world. But he is prince thus, that in the spiritual sense he and his principle of enmity against God reign in all this created world. And his purpose is, remember, not to *destroy* this world. The devil does not want that. But he wants to *reign* over the world; and he wants to have all things in all creation and in all of mankind and in all of the activity of mankind develop apart from and over against God, and for himself. That came about because man, the created world-king, submitted to that devil at the time of the fall in Paradise.

That is our chief enemy.

That devil is not alone, but has a whole host of evil spirits with him. The devil needs such a host. For you must remember the devil is a creature. The devil is not omnipresent, as God is. And the devil is not almighty either, as God is. And so he cannot do things alone, but needs an entire host of evil spirits to help him and to do his bidding. That host of the devil is described here in the theme-passage of your convention: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world (or better: against the world rulers of this darkness), against spiritual wickedness in high places." You see, this passage is talking about the spiritual world: about wickedness "in high places," heavenly places, in the air. It is not speaking here of an enemy of this world and of this earth, but of an enemy who is of the spiritual world. And there is a vast number of devils under the prince of the devils. We do not know how many. We know that in one woman, Mary Magdalene, there were seven devils at one time. We know that in the man at the Sea of Galilee there was a *legion* of devils: just in one man. We do not know exactly how many devils there are under the prince of the devils. It is not impossible, I think, that there are more devils than there are men living on the earth at any given time. That is not impossible, I say, though I do not know. Not only that, but they are a battle-host: they are organized. There are differences of rank and power among the devils. There are principalities: chief demons. There are powers: leaders, rulers, princes among the devils. And that pre-

supposes, of course, that there is an entire host under them, the common foot soldiers – the infantry, if you will – of the devil. There is an entire host! And together all those devils constitute one tremendous power of opposition against God and all that is of God.

Further, they are the world-rulers of this darkness. As an organized host, under Satan, they rule over this world. They rule over the world in as far as the spiritual principle of darkness is concerned. And in spiritual darkness, in hatred against God, they aim at completing and maintaining the rule of their chief, Satan. Concretely speaking, when they have finally achieved their goal – that is, in as far as that is possible – then you will have the final manifestation of the Antichristian Kingdom.

That, in brief, is the enemy.

## The Nature of the Battle

That character of the enemy, as over against the character of the Christian soldier, determines to a large extent the nature of the battle. Also that nature of the battle you have to understand in order to fight. This is necessary. Our soldiers, for example, knew that when they had to go and fight in Vietnam. You could not go and fight in Vietnam in the jungles against the Viet Cong, who could do a disappearing act in just a little while, in the same way in which they could fight during World War II in Europe against the Panzer Divisions of Adolf Hitler. That was a different kind of battle. So it is spiritually, too. You have to understand the battle in order to be able to fight.

There are the following things which we ought to understand about the nature of that battle.

In the first place, we ought to understand very clearly the cause of the battle: its essential cause and its spiritual cause.

Essentially that battle takes place because, according to His counsel of predestination, God has His people in Christ: a people who are of His party, who are of the light, who have the love of God in them. And God has His people, and wants to have them, for a time in the midst of the world of sin and darkness, in the midst of the enemy. That is what God wants. That is why the battle takes place. God wants to have a people who are *in* the world, but not *of* the world, for His own glory.

From a spiritual point of view, that battle is caused, on the part of the enemy, the devil and his host, by the principle that I have already mentioned, the principle of hatred aaginst God. And, on the part of the Christian soldier, that battle has its cause in the fact that we are of the light and have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. And that means that the battle involves the sharpest conflict conceivable. There are two forces in that battle that are absolute opposites spiritually.

And therefore the battle is inevitable: it cannot be avoided. That is why I said in the very beginning of my speech that if you are a Christian, you are a soldier. And if you are a soldier, you fight. The spiritual host of wickedness and the church, the saints, are absolute antagonists. They cannot agree! They cannot bear the sight of one another! They are as opposite and as exclusive as light and darkness. Even then, of course, you would not have a fight yet, you would not have a conflict. You would not have a fight if only those two antagonists lived in entirely separate worlds, entirely separate spheres. But they do not! They live in the same world. They lead the same life of this world. They live in the same sphere. They come into contact with one another in that world. And because they necessarily come into contact with one another in this world, they come into conflict. Hence, they must necessarily clash.

The host of darkness and the soldiers of Christ demand the same things, you see. Both demand the glory of God: the devil does so, and we do so. The devil and his host demand the glory of God, in order to destroy it. We demand the glory of God, in order to maintain it and to stand for it. We both demand the same Word of God. The devil demands the Word of God, in order to gainsay it and to place his lie instead of it. We demand the Word of God, in order to defend it and to live by its light in doctrine and walk. They both demand the same righteousnes of God. The devil demands that righteousness of God, in order to trample it. We demand that righteousness of God, in order to glorify it. They

both demand the same world and all that it contains, all its life. The devil demands that world, in order to make that world and keep that world a world of darkness for himself. We demand that same world, in order to claim it for God and Christ, and in order to live all our life in it for Him.

That is the battle, the inevitable battle. The name, the glory, the righteousness, the holiness, the Word, the ordinances of God — all these are at stake in the battle. And the conflict is inevitable. The devil cannot leave God's people alone; neither can God's people leave the devil alone. That is the second aspect of the battle that we must understand.

And the third aspect is the purpose. The purpose of the enemy is to annihilate God, to get rid of God, to get rid of His Name. His cause, His honor, His people. His purpose is to subject everything to the power of darkness. That is what the enemy wants. He cannot get at God directly any more. He is not in heaven, and has no access to heaven. And He cannot get at Christ directly any more, because Christ has ascended to heaven. But God has His people in the world. And the purpose of the enemy is to get at God, to get at Christ, to get at God's Name and His honor and His glory through His people. Ultimately, you know, the devil is not after you and me. He is after you and me only because he is after God and Christ! That is his purpose.

The purpose of God with that battle is the revelation of His great power and majesty and holiness, the revelation of the tremendous power of His sovereign grace in and through His people. The purpose of God is the revelation of Christ as the invincible Lord of all and the maintenance of His covenant.

And remember, young people, principally the battle is not ours, but the Lord's. The battle is God's, and everything and everyone in that battle serve God. The army of Satan does that in spite of itself. The army of Satan does that in its wickedness, but it nevertheless serves God and His purpose. And we serve that purpose through divine grace in the light, in the love of God, in such a way that God's purpose becomes our purpose. But the battle is the Lord's, and He will achieve His purpose through that battle. Do not forget that.

In the fourth place, as far as the nature of that battle is concerned, you must remember that the battle is purely spiritual.

What does that mean?

I think that too often that idea of "spiritual" is vague among us. It comes to represent in our mind something that is far off, something that is "out there," something with which we do not have very much to do. And that is wrong. It does not mean that this battle is fought only in the realm of the spirits: angels against devils, for example. That would exactly put the battle far off from us. If we have that idea, we will never fight and never realize that we have a battle on our hands. Remember, the battle is fought not *against* flesh and blood. But that battle which is fought not against flesh and blood is nevertheless fought *in* flesh and blood. And it is fought here, right on the stage of this present world. It is fought in all of the life of this world, in every sphere of the life of this world. But that battle that is fought on the stage of this world is fought for *spiritual realities*. It is fought for righteousness, for truth, for light, for life, for the love of God, for the glory of God. It is fought for righteousness, for truth, for light, for life, for the love of God, for the glory of God. It is not fought for money, nor fought for worldly power, not fought for position, not fought for earthly glory and honor, but for things spiritual. Moreover, it is fought with *spiritual means*, spiritual weapons — centrally the Word and Testimony. I am not going to say any more about that because that is for your second speaker. But remember: the battle is spiritual. Remember, that even when the enemy uses material means! Remember, even when the devil uses the sword, and fire, and prison, and persecution: what is at stake in that battle is never your earthly life and possessions, or mine. The battle concerns God, concerns Christ, concerns the spiritual treasures which through God's grace we have in Christ. That is what the devil is after! Don't you ever forget that! Even when he persecutes, even when he kills, he is not after your earthly life and not after your money and not after your living. That is only the means. He is after

your life, after that new life that is in your heart and mine. He is after that life that is of God and that is for God's glory. And he wants, if at all possible, to snuff out that life, because he hates God.

That means, too, that as far as we are concerned the aim in that battle is not to make the world better. You cannot do that any way. But that is not the aim, not our calling. We do not fight for that. The aim is not to gain the world for Christ either. Christ does not want this world. The aim is not even to overcome the world. We do not have to do that: Christ has overcome it. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," Christ said. "But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." But the aim is simply to be and to live to the glory of God's grace by representing the cause of God's Son, the cause of the light, in this world.

That brings me to the next phase of my subject: the manner of the enemy. It is very striking that the Bible here stresses the fact that the devil uses *wiles*. He is wily! The devil has a whole bag of tricks. He fights with wiles, sometimes directly anl sometimes indirectly. You know, because of our sinful nature, the devil can make a direct attack. He can tempt us from within. He can have direct spiritual influence on our spirit. And that also means, by the way, that *we* can fight directly with a counter attack! He comes in different ways. He comes to a young man differently than he comes to an old man. He comes to a young woman differently than to a young man. He has all kinds of methods and all kinds of tricks. He knows how to judge character and time and circumstances, and to tempt accordingly. He can come with influence on your mind and on your will. He can sow in your soul or mine the lie. He can sow unbelief. He can sow doubt. He can sow in us a strong desire for the world. He can sow in us rebellion. He can sow in us all kinds of evil lusts. And thus he can influence us directly with his wiles. When you and I realize that things of this kind are welling up in us from within, we must realize that the devil is at work! We must fight it!

But the devil can also come indirectly. He has his kingdom of darkness in the world of wicked men. And through that world of wicked men he can exert his influence through many a human servant. He can fight for his cause through all kinds of means. He can fight through the means of novels and romances and periodicals and newspapers. He can fight his cause through speeches and sermons He can fight his battle through class-lectures and human philosophy. He can fight his warfare through glittering temptations of money and power and honor and glory. Or, he can fight his battle also through the threat of the fearful sword, through persecution, through death.

But I want to emphasize that the devil, however he comes, always come with *wiles!* He is the deceiver, you know: that is his name. He lies in wait to deceive! His method is always to try to make the lie look true and beautiful. He always wants to make the wrong look right. He wants to make the way of sin look attractive and easy and good. He comes with deceit!

There is a further point which must be emphasized in connection with the nature of the battle in which we fight. That point is this: the scope of the battle is *universal*. There is no neutral ground anywhere. There is not any ground in this world, any part, any sphere, of your life and mine which does not involve the battle. In the deepest sense, even when we sleep, we are involved in the battle. Your home, your family, your dating and your courtship, your education, your job, your church, your life in society, industry, labor, the arts, entertainment — every conceivable sphere of life belongs to the battleground. And there is no ground where we and the enemy may meet in peace. There is no ground where we and the enemy may have fellowship together. What fellowship hath light with darkness? There is no area in all the world where we and the enemy may cooperate together. The battle involves every segment of our life, right down the line. Through all the departments of life there runs an absolute line of separation between friend and foe, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, righteousness and unrighteousness, God and the devil!

I want to emphasize this. For it is just exactly at this point that the devil has concocted one of his most crafty wiles: the neutrality myth. That is the myth that

there is neutral ground, that there is common territory for believer and unbeliever. That is one of the choicest wiles of the devil, I say. Beware of that! There are neutral labor unions, neutral business organizations, neutral movies, neutral entertainments, neutral athletics and athletic associations – neutral this and neutral that! That is one of the choicest wiles of the devil. And Protestant Reformed soldiers of Christ, that is what being Protestant Reformed is all about. Do you understand? That is what denying common grace is all about. There is no neutrality. You are either a soldier of Christ, or you are of the enemy. There is no third possibility. I want to warn you on that score! I dare say that all of you young people are of the third or of the fourth generation away from 1924 and the common grace controversy as it was fought at that time. You are rather far away from it historically. But that is no sufficient reason to forget it. And I want to warn you particularly against the danger – and that is another wile of the devil – the danger that we deny common grace in theory, but embrace it in practice. Oh, yes, we say in theory: there is no common grace. God's grace is particular. There is no common ground; we hold to the absolute antithesis. But when it comes to the application of that principle, we can find more reasons than Carter has pills to maintain that after all there is some ground. Be careful! Be on guard! Beware lest the devil succeed in smuggling into the camp of the saints through practice what he cannot succeed in smuggling in as far as doctrine and theory are concerned. It has always been one of the tricks of the evil one to move the church from a strong doctrinal position by attacking that position in practice.

Closely related is the myth that we must gain the world for Christ, or the myth that we must bring about improvement in the world. That is very common in this day of the social gospel. We must overcome immorality. We must overcome discrimination. Such is the battle cry of these social gospellers. That is another wile of the devil. And it is particularly subtle and crafty because it has the sound of a very idealistic battle cry. But the danger is that by his crafty guile the devil takes us away from the real battle! For if we become deeply involved in the ideals of the social gospel philosophy, we are not going to fight the true battle. For the fact of the matter is that at the basis of this philosophy is the denial of the antithesis, the theory that this world actually can be improved, let alone ought to be improved. And the result of this philosophy, if we heed it, is exactly that we begin to fight on the side of the antichristian kingdom of darkness.

There is still another wile of the devil, a ruse which has a particular appeal, I think, to youth. That is the ruse that we must not always fight, that we do not have to fight *always*. We must also have our fun, our good times, our recreation. This is a favorite wile of the devil which he uses on Christian youth. It is the theory, you see, that there is after all, some area of our life which does not belong to the battle ground. And the appeal of this wile of the devil, is, of course, to the fact that youth is the time of joy and exuberance and vitality. And indeed, there is no doubt about that. But remember that even the joy and the exuberance and the vitality of Christian youth are not the same as the frivolous and vain and materialistic joy of the world's youth. Remember that even underneath your youthful exuberance and joy must be the underlying seriousness of the battle-awareness! Indeed, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in 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" (Eccl. 11:9).

Such, therefore, is the battle.

### Your Position in the Battle

That battle you must fight as Christian youth.

Your calling is not to have a place in the battle as little children. Nor is your position in the battle the same as that of fully mature soldiers. Nor is your position that of seasoned veterans in the battle of faith. No, your position is peculiarly that of Christian youth.

This implies many things: for the period of youth, or adolescence, is a unique period in your life. It is a period which has its own peculiar characteristic in many respects.

But if I were to mention the one, all-important aspect of your youth in connection with our subject tonight, I would stress that youth is above all the period of training, of preparation. And for you as Christian youth it is preeminently the period, therefore, of training and preparation as Christian soldiers, soldiers of Christ. It is the period in which you train to put on the whole armor of God, to wear that armor, and to use that armor in the battle of faith.

You must remember this, remember this especially with respect to your church life: your sitting under the preaching of the Word, your instruction in the catechism class, and with respect to the opportunity for training in your young people's societies. Yours is not the position of mature and seasoned soldiers, and you must certainly not attempt to occupy that position as yet, nor act as though you have no more need of training. You must, as Christian youth, above all take advantage of this period of preparation, so that you may become thoroughly prepared, well trained, spiritually battle-ready soldiers of Christ. Then, and then only, will you be ready, when the time comes, to take your place as mature soldiers in the battle line. If you fail to do this, it can only have dire results spiritually. It will only mean that you cannot recognize the enemy, that you do not know what to do with your armor, and that you will be at a loss as to how to fight.

But the peculiar thing is that the Christian soldier must fight at the same time that he trains. He must fight from the first moment of his conscious life to the last breath of his earthly pilgrimage. He must fight even when he is in training. And the peculiar aspect of the battle for the youthful Christian soldier is exactly this that the enemy tries to prevent you from becoming trained. He tries to deter you from training. And also in this connection the devil uses wiles, and by those wiles seeks to tempt you to neglect your training, or to forsake your training, or to be wrongly trained. He has the guile of the amusement craze. He has the guile of bad literature. He uses the wiles of bad education, whereby he seeks to lead you astray from the truth and to prevent you from putting on and learning to put on the girdle of the truth. And he has the trick of leading you into bad friendships and bad associations with others. And therefore, remember: youth is above all the time of preparation, the time to train for the warfare. And in order to be properly trained in the midst of the church, whether in catechism or in your young people's societies — which are voluntary training grounds — you must *fight* to be trained.

My concluding word is this. The battle is a very one-sided battle. On the one hand, it is one-sided from a physical point of view. If you look at it from that point of view, from the point of view of flesh and blood, the tide of the battle is decidedly in favor of the enemy. The majority, the power, the means, the money — all these are on the side of the enemy. And yet, on the other hand, in the deepest sense of the word — and that is what your third speaker is going to talk to you about — the tide of the battle is decidedly against the world. Christ eternally had the victory. He obtained that victory and realized that victory through His cross and resurrection. And He now has all power in heaven and on earth. We are soldiers of that Christ. And through faith we are victorious in that Christ!

## *The Armor of God*

REV. MARVIN KAMPS

With thankfulness to God and appreciation for young people of God, I am happy that I am able to speak to you this evening on the subject which the host society assigned me. The subject assigned to me is: The Armor of God. Our venerable Professor H. C. Hoeksema, has spoken to you on the subject of The Battle of Faith. The battle is spiritual. The enemy is a spiritual foe. We fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Our enemy is Satan, who is that old serpent.

A subtle and deceitful enemy for his name is the "Devil." A powerful enemy he is too. He goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He fights not only subtly and deceitfully but also tenaciously and viciously, for he knows his time is short (Rev. 12:12). Over against this enemy we are to stand. How is that possible? Listen to the Spirit of Christ speaking through the apostle Paul. "Wherefore," the apostle writes, "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand" (Eph. 6:13).

We are going to treat this subject, "The Armor of God" by considering it from three different viewpoints. First, we will ask, what constitutes that armor? Secondly, we must consider, how do I put on this armor? And finally, we must consider, what is the skillful use of the armor of God?

What constitutes this armor? The apostle Paul when speaking of the armor of God expounds upon that idea by using a figure. The figure is the armor of a Roman soldier. The sight of an armor-clad Roman soldier was common to Paul and his readers in Ephesus. The Roman emperor had his soldiers stationed throughout the Roman empire, which nearly spanned all of the then civilized world. The saints of the apostolic church could, therefore, readily identify with this figure of the apostle Paul.

But we will have to look a little more closely at Paul's figure in order that we may gain a full appreciation of its spiritual reality, which is the armor of God.

The apostle mentions separately various elements of this armor. In Ephesians 6:14-17 he mentions a girdle, a breastplate, special shoes, a shield, helmet and a sword.

The girdle was a leather apron or belt studded with brass which protected the mid-section or the abdominal area of the body. It was strong and yet flexible allowing for quick movement of the body. The breast-plate was of two pieces. It covered the back and chest of the soldier protecting the vital organs of the body, especially the heart. A chance arrow either from the front or back would be deflected by this breastplate. A wound in the arm or leg would not prove fatal as would undoubtedly a wound to the heart. The head was protected by the helmet, which also served as an ornamental mark of distinction, showing to comrade and foe alike under whose banner he fought and to whom he gave allegiance. On his feet the Roman soldier wore a special shoe, i.e., a low half-boot with strong sole and open leather work above. This shoe was a spiked shoe, so that it provided sure footing and allowed for quick movement.

In his left hand the Roman legionary carried a large shield with which he was able to ward off the burning arrows and spear thrusts of the enemy. This shield was approximately four feet long and two feet wide. In his right hand the soldier wielded a sword with which he was to press the attack. This sword was his only offensive weapon. Therefore, if we use our imagination for a moment, we can visualize a Roman legion standing on the battle-field presenting to the enemy a well armored foe. Holding their shields up in front of them they had a wall of metal for their protection . Such is Paul's figure of the armor of a Roman soldier.

Now we inquire briefly, of what does our spiritual armor consist? Truth is our girdle. The truth of the Word of God as God has revealed Himself to us through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the truth. That truth as a girdle surrounds us. Our spiritual breastplate is righteousness. The believer must put on righteousness as a soldier puts on a breastplate. In Isaiah 59:17 we read that God has put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation. Paul obviously draws upon this text of Isaiah and applies it to the believer. But a question confronts us: What is meant by the term righteousness? Is it forensic, legal righteousness? Or subjective righteousness? Our moral rectitude is hardly sufficient to protect the saint. All our good works, our walk is all polluted with sin and corruption. All our good works (subjective righteousness) are so polluted with sin the imperfect saint is betrayed and made vulnerable by the sin which still remains in us, though it be in us against our will. The basic idea is, therefore, that the saint must have on the breastplate of legal righteousness. A righteousness which is the forgiveness of sins of the past as well as of those of the future. Before God the saint is legally righteous in Christ. God has imputed to the

believer the righteousness of Christ. A righteousness which Christ has merited by His suffering and death. Christ satisfied completely the justice of God. Christ removed all our sin and guilt. And God declares us, who by nature are ungodly, righteous! God the judge declares that the believer is legally righteous in Christ. Only that righteousness of Christ, which is ours by faith in Him, cannot be pierced by the sword of the devil. A righteousness which is an impenitrable breastplate.

The saint is to put on his spiritual feet the preparedness which the gospel of peace gives him. It is a gospel of peace for by the gospel is made known to us that God has reconciled us to Himself by His Son. And it is a gospel of peace, because through faith in the Christ of the gospel the believer has the assurance that he is justified before God. In the knowledge that he is reconciled to God by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the believer, standing in the peace that surpasses all understanding, is abundantly prepared to fight the battle of faith. For a spiritual helmet God has given us the knowledge and the consciousness of our salvation in Christ. Salvation is our helmet; but it can only serve as an helmet when we are consciously certain of our salvation.

Then, finally, our spiritual shield is faith and our sword is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. I want to talk more at length about this shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit a little later. But let me point out that when the apostle describes this armor there are really two elements that stand out. One element is the faith of the believer. The other element is the Word of God. The girdle of truth is the truth of the Scriptures, the Word of God. The shoes of the preparedness of the gospel of peace is again the gospel as it is the Word of God recorded as the Holy Scriptures. The breastplate of rightousness is a righteousness merited for us by Him who is the Word of God in the flesh. And the sword is indeed the Word of God. So we have, therefore, basically two elements; one is the Word of God and the other is the faith of the believer.

All this is the "Armor of God." An armor which God places before us as young people and which he commands us to put on in order that we may stand in the evil day.

Don't overlook the fact that this armor is *of God*. An armor which God according to his wisdom eternally designed for you and me. God knew with what power, subtlety, and tenaciousness the devil and his hordes would fight us. He designed, therefore, an armor for His people that, though His people would constantly be assaulted by spiritual enemies with deadly weapons of temptation and deceit, they nevertheless would be protected. Not only did the God of all wisdom design this armor; but he also actually produced it, or brought it to realization, through His suffering Son. It is therefore, God's armor; His truth, His righteousness in Christ freely bestowed, His word and His gospel which is a power unto salvation.

There is not one element of this armor which the believer provides. Even the shield of faith is of God, for faith is the gift of God. The Christian can provide no armor for himself. His good works, his religiosity, his piety, his determination to do the right, are so completely tainted with sin that they cannot serve as a protective armor. The believer must put on the armor of God. It alone gives sure protection.

Now, young people of God, you who are sitting before me, God says to you and me by the Spirit of Christ and through the apostle Paul "Put on the whole armor of God!" You and I must put it on. You and I are to know that we cannot stand without being clad with this spiritual armor of God. If one tries to do without this armor, he will surely be destroyed! No other armor but God's armor will do!

You ask: How do I put on this armor of God? How do I do it? I will answer that question first of all negatively. Let me point out that though you and I must put this armor on, we do not then become coworkers with God in the accomplishment of our salvation. It is not so that our "standing" as Paul commands us to do is a joint project between God and us. It isn't so that God places the armor, so-to-speak, before us on the ground and says: "Now it is up to you to do the rest; I need your help and cooperation: I can't do any more." Nor does God, in the second place, just make of us armor-clad robots to fight on

the battlefield of faith. Mechanized and automated robots we are not!

Rather, and now positively, we must understand this command of God to put on His armor this way: God commands us for He deals with us as rational moral creatures who are saved in the way of obedience to His command. In the obedience of faith we put on this armor of God.

But there is another problem. We will walk in the obedience to this command only if we understand our desperate need of this armor of God. If we put our confidence in ourselves, or anywhere else than in Christ, we will claim no need for the armor of God. Only in the consciousness of our spiritual need will we heed this command of God, to put on His armor in order that we may stand in this evil day. We must be conscious of two things to know our spiritual need of this armor. They are the devastating power of the devil, and the weakness of our sinful flesh. Do you experientially know how prone by nature you are to every form of sin? Do you know that the devil has an ally in you – the old man of sin? If you and I know these things of ourselves and about the devil, we will want desperately to have on the armor of God.

But the question still confronts us, how do I put on this armor? How does the armor of God become that which will protect me? The answer is I must put on this armor by faith. By faith, I must, consciously appropriate the whole of the Word of God. To put on the armor of God is an act of faith. Only faith is aware of the need of this armor. The unbeliever cannot put this armor on. Not only is the unbeliever not aware of any need for the armor of God, but he would be uncomfortable in it. To consciously appropriate the whole of the Word of God, putting on the armor, is solely an act of faith. What does that mean to "consciously appropriate the whole Word of God?" To appropriate consciously the whole Word of God means that the Word of God becomes part of you, it runs in your spiritual veins and is the marrow of your bones. Young people have said to me that the Word of God isn't really so very much a part of their life. They don't take the Word of God with them throughout the week, to work with them, to college, and wherever they may go. The Word of God doesn't live in their mind and heart. It is, rather, just a book in the rack in church and merely the book that Dads reads at the supper table. But wherever one may find the Bible and to whomever it may belong, the Word of God isn't consciously theirs. No wonder then that drugs and fornication and getting drunk on beer and movie-going are for us oftentimes pitfalls into which we frequently fall. You see, without the conscious appropriation of the Word of God, we do not have on the armor of God, which would be a sure defense against every temptation no matter what it might be. Put on therefore the whole armor of God by faith.

We are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. The armor of God was the strength of Christ. Christ, who is the truth, and who was assured that he was well pleasing unto God in the way of obedience, was invincible having consciously appropriated to Himself the Word of God. The Word of God was His sure protection. When the wily devil tempting Him said: "Command these stones to be made bread," Christ answered with the Word of God. "It is written," Christ said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Two more times the Devil came to tempt Jesus. Once the Devil himself quoted even a little scripture in order to make sin look like it was the right. Both times, however, Christ answers the Devil with the Word of God. Then the Devil left Christ and Christ was assured of the final victory. Christ had put on the armor of God which is the Word of God. You and I must emulate the Captain of our salvation! Put on, young Christian, the whole armor of God.

That armor is not only for your protection, but it is also given you in order that by it you may be able to put to rout the enemy. You must make skillful use of this armor of God, especially the sword of the Spirit. You must wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. You must use the Word of God to defend the truth over against every lie. By the Word of God you are to silence the clamorous noise of many present day heretics. Many there are who, as cohorts of Satan, seek to destroy the truth of Scripture. Many imposters, calling themselves the ambassadors of Christ, are tearing to pieces the Scriptures,

which are the love letter of Christ to His Bride, the Church. I ask you: how are you going to preserve the truth of the Word of God; defend the truth; silence the heretic – if you have not consciously appropriated the Word of God so that it serves as a sword for you?

I would warn you that you are to make skillful use of that sword of the Spirit. Prepare yourself, therefore, by the faithful study of the Word of God in catechism class and in young people's society. Many so-called Christian youth of apostatizing churches have not learned the truth of the Word of God. They have not the Word and therefore have no sword. Defenseless they are carried away by every wind of doctrine. Let's not allow that to happen to us. Make good use of your opportunities as catechumens and society members.

The skillful use of this armor of God also implies that you will be soldiers of Christ who are watching and praying with all supplication. A believer who has by faith consciously appropriated the Word of God, i.e., has put on the whole armor of God, is one that discerns spiritually. He is alert on the battlefield of faith. There are people in the church who sleepily, without spiritual discernment, play around with the old serpent the Devil through the radio, magazines, T.V. and various social contacts. They allow Satan, the old serpent, to slither and wind himself around their arms and neck. They play with sin. They play with sin! They are not on their guard. The result is that you usually find these people in time strewn along the pathway of life spiritually decapitated – they and their children.

Take warning! Watch and pray! Live the life of prayer. Bring all your needs before God in order that you may receive of Him the strength, the might of the Lord.

Put on the whole armor of God! Be alert on the battlefield! Praying always!

Then go forth into war as confident soldiers of Christ. Confident you may be, first of all, because God hath given to you an impenetrable armor. Confident you may be, secondly, because the Captain of Salvation, who leads you into battle, is the Lord of Lords, to whom hath been given all power in heaven and on earth!

Put on by faith the whole armor of God!

I thank you.

## *The Victory of Faith*

REV. C. HANKO

Why are you, the covenant youth of the church different, definitely different from the world?

Why do you faithfully attend church on Sunday, while others enjoy sports and relaxation? Why do you attend catechism, young people's meetings of the church? Why do you choose your friends and companions from your own church people?

Why? Is your background the reason? Is it because of your Christian parents, your covenant training in our schools? Your home life? Your environment? These things undoubtedly make a deep impression on you, but is that the reason?

Or is it your will power? Are you naturally more adept to that kind of life? Or is it, as some would slander you, because of your cowardice or fanaticism?

To all that the obvious answer is an emphatic: NO!

The secret in your lives that makes you definitely different, with a difference that also became evident at this convention is YOUR FAITH. You confess from the heart and with your lips: I believe! That makes all the difference. That is in one word, the victory of faith!

As you were reminded during this convention, you have a battle, the worst battle against the most deceptive and powerful enemy that anyone can meet. But you are also equipped, thoroughly equipped as men and women of God with an armour which alone can withstand and overcome all the cunning deception and fiendish plots of the wicked. Yours is the victory, the victory of faith.

It is my privilege to call your attention to this Victory of Faith, considering for a few moments: A Glorious Reality: A Blessed Hope; A Powerful Incentive.

## A Glorious Reality

The first point I wish to make is, that covenant youth has the victory already now in this present time, even today.

Generally when we speak of the victory of the saints we are thinking of the ultimate victory in eternity. Scripture also speaks to us very often of our spiritual battle, even encouraging us to strive for that victory that is attained when all this weary night is spent. The Word of God reminds us that there is a crown of glory awaiting us, so that when the battle is fought, the faith is kept, our Lord stands waiting to exchange our helmet of salvation for a crown of glory that we keep forever.

But the fact remains, that right now, while the enemy still rages round about us, and the hue and cry of battle is heard wherever we turn, we nevertheless are victors. Not as if we have a partial victory now, but we are completely victorious over all our foes. In that confidence we fight from day to day!

Let me show you in a moment that this is the plain teaching of the Scriptures. Already in the Old Testament, Psalm 98, verse 1 declares: "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things; His right hand hath (not, will, but, *hath*) gotten Him the victory." In I Corinthians 15, verse 57 Paul even includes us in that victory when he states: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And the apostle John writes (I John 5:4): "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world [in the present]: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth in the Son of God?" And, to mention just one more passage of Scripture, Paul concludes his glorious triumph song of Romans 8 with the confident challenge: "Nay, but in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Victors, yes: even more, conquerors. Still more: More than conquerors are we!

Now what may sound like a vain boast to your enemies and no less to yourselves. In the previous speeches that were given you were reminded of the powerful enemy that you face and the bitter battle that you wage. Your battle is not against mere flesh and blood, but against the very devil and his host that attack you like clouds of monstrous locusts out of hell. What a horrible picture, yet how real! This chief devil even has the entire world, which he calls his kingdom, at his beck and call. The world lures and attracts, but can also suddenly turn about and make your life impossible on the earth. The third enemy is the apostate church which has such great power because it speaks the language of Scripture, and yet corrupts it with new translations and subtle lies. Last, but not least, you and I have our own flesh against us. Our worst enemy lurks right within our sinful nature. All the other enemies could never threaten us, if it were not for that cowardly, susceptible, carnal nature.

The battle carries on relentlessly, day and night. You meet the enemy while you are sitting here, on Sunday when you are in church, even in moments of prayer. What sinful thoughts, what evil desires can ravage our souls! And then we have said nothing about the sinful words and acts and deeds that crowd upon us to condemn us!

And our weapon? The world sneers at the mention of it. What can that Bible, that Word of God do to ward off the arrows of Satan? What good does it do to wave a sword of the Scriptures? So persistent is the slander against the Bible, that even we are sometimes led to wonder whether human philosophies, man's word, is not more powerful than that.

Yet, in spite of all these objections, Scripture maintains and we maintain that we are victors, not will be, but *are* victors even now.

This is true, in the first place, because the battle is the Lord's. The history of the world is not a contest between God and the devil as two equal powers, so that the outcome is still doubtful. God is God, the devil is a creature of God. God is eternal, the devil is bound to time and place, even obtaining his power from God. In the counsel of God Jesus Christ stands eternally as the great Champion of the cause of the living God. He is appointed to overcome and destroy all the powers of darkness to establish the throne of God eternally in the heavens. The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ forever.

This victory is attained through the death of our Lord on the cross. The great Champion of God, Who is God Himself, came into the likeness of sinful flesh to meet in person our arch-enemy, the devil. He went into the very citadel of Satan, into the depths of hell to storm that citadel, to crush the head of the serpent and to take captivity captive. Triumphantly He cried out on the cross, "It is finished," and from then on made His victory march through death and the grave to be exalted as Lord over all in the highest heavens. Right now, Christ has dominion over land and sea, so that earth's remotest regions are already His empire, over which He rules unto the gathering of His church and the final coming of His kingdom in the heavens.

Christ is Lord over all, but in a very special sense Lord in our lives. The Spirit of Jesus Christ has taken over in our hearts. Sin's dominion is broken, so that grace abounds. We are assured of the forgiveness of sins, the right to eternal life as heirs of salvation. We are new creatures in Christ, so that the power of Christ rules in our hearts. Slaves of sin have become devoted children of the living God.

This leaves the question: How do I know? How can I be sure that this is true in my life? There are many voices raised today of "Lord, Lord," boasting of the mighty works that they do for Jesus, only to be told in that great day of days in no uncertain terms, "I never knew you." How do I know that this is not true of me? How can I be sure my faith is not mere fanaticism? The answer is: Faith itself is assurance. That is not our work, but the work of the Holy Spirit in us. He assures us that we are sons of God, heirs of salvation. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world even now.

## A Blessed Hope

But our faith means much more to us than that. Faith reaches out even unto the glorious blessedness of eternity. Faith is an eternal victory!

Let me remind you a moment that this is far more than any of the vain idols of this world even dare to offer.

The world today worships many gods, just as vain as the gods of wood and stone which the pagans worship. Some bow before the god of science. Science has done great things, especially in recent years. Think of all the progress that has been made in the fields of electronics, in machinery, in medicine, in surgery, in agriculture. Yes, you name it – progress everywhere, so that man seems to think that he can do anything that he sets his mind to do. Even many that still call themselves Christians bow before the throne of science. Science knows! Science rules. We believe science before we believe the Bible. We put our trust in science rather than in God. God has failed, science will show the solution to all our problems. That is the philosophy of many in our day. But science has not overcome death!

Then there is the god of Mammon. Money talks, shouts aloud. The multi-millionaire is the man who is esteemed. He has power to do things. The whole world clamors to enjoy his luxuries with him. Yet his money cannot rescue him from the grave nor from hell!

Sports is another god. When kept in its place sports have their value in our lives. But so readily they become the all-important thing that adds zest and vim to our drab existence. Soon outstanding players become the heroes of the day, whose names are on every lip. People will slavishly bind themselves to the TV set in adoration of these great heroes. Worshipfully they watch them, talk about them, admire them. But these also are idols of clay, as are all that worship them.

But our God is in the heavens. His throne is from everlasting to everlasting. His is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever and ever.

How do I know? The Bible tells me so. God has promised eternal life to all those who serve Him. Even the Psalmist of old declared: "When I in righteousness at last, Thy glorious face shall see. When all the weary night is past and I awake in thee ... to view the glories that abide Then, then I shall be satisfied."

The apostle Paul could say at the end of His burdensome life: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me at that day: and not only me, but unto all those also that love His ap-

pearing." Therefore Jesus encourages us from heaven: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The emphasis is repeatedly on the *crown*. That crown is the victor's crown, the laurel that the soldier received when he returned safely and victoriously from battle. Without a battle there is no crown. You can be sure of that.

Your battle as covenant youth today is far more intense than any before. The devil is exerting his last efforts to destroy you. Temptations multiply, such as we never knew in our day. Liquor, drugs, and the like were foreign to us when we were your age. At least, they were not readily available. The world creeps in much closer. The apostacy in the church is worse, even more open than ever. And you need not expect that it will get better in the future, for example, after you are married and settled down. Jesus forewarns us: "In the world ye shall have tribulation," yet he also adds: "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Paul assures us, even speaking for us: "Nay, but in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

We are victorious. No, we are conquerors.

An army can be victorious and still not have conquered the enemy completely. Or an army may have subdued the foe, yet at such a loss of property, life and limb that the victory carries with it a lot of grief. Think of a torn and ruined battlefield after bombing raids. Think of the many injured, who may carry their crippling wounds through life. Think of the number of casualties, broken families, mourning parents, wives and children. Sometimes a victory can be of such a nature that another of its kind would spell complete defeat.

That is never the case with us. Scripture assures us that we are more than conquerors. The losess are only with the enemy. Ours is purest gain. Even the ear we might have thought to have lost is replaced without a scar. In fact, ALL THINGS work together for good for those who love God, the called according to His purpose. Christ Who died for us and attained the victory through that great love whereby He loved us, loves us still. He is for us, nothing can be against us. No height, no depth, no devil, no demon of hell, no world of sin, no temptation, no sickness, no pain ,no death – With a mighty "NO" we brush them all aside. In all these things we are conquerors. even far more than conquerors, because the helmet of salvation is exchanged at death for a crown of glory! Life we attain through death!

## A Powerful Incentive

But does that not make us careless and profane? If we boast in the confidence that we triumph even now, won't we turn more readily to sin and its temptations?

Scripture answers that question too, by saying: "God forbid!" In fact, that is the answer of every sincere child of God: "God forbid." How can the Spirit of Christ within me make me careless and indifferent? How can I who have the love of God in my heart turn against my God? How can I, a soldier of Jesus Christ, be a coward, a traitor, unfaithful to my God?

That does not mean that temptations never befall us. Nor does it mean that we are always equally strong and never fall into sin. But sin brings sorrow and repentance, and repentance brings us back to the ranks as faithful soldiers of the cross.

Therefore we also realize in our own hearts the seriousness of our calling. Let me mention, in conclusion, what is included in our calling in this battle of faith.

First, we must be in constant training. We may be thankful to our God that He began his training already as soon as we were born by entrusting us to Christian parents, and by giving us a place in His church, as well as providing for us our Christian schools. But a soldier must always be in training, just as an athlete prepares himself for each contest. Hours of training are required that we may be fit soldiers, ready at all times to fight the battle that is always waging round about us and in us.

Second, we must be equipped. That is an essential part of our training. We must have the best armor, the best weapons, both for defensive and offensive warfare. God provides these for us, but only in the way of searching Scriptures, prayerfully applying ourselves to His fear. Our

societies are most essential to show us the use of our helmet of salvation, the proper adjustment of the breastplate of righteousness, the tying of the girdle of truth to keep that breastplate in place, the proper footwear of the shoes of preparedness, the maneuvering of the shield of faith, the powerful thrust of the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Third, we must always be alert, watching. Careless indifference is disastrous. The watchmen upon the walls of Zion must watch day and night in order that no surprise attack takes them unawares. Still more, never compromise with the enemy. Never play with temptation. Never yield an inch. There is an old saying: "Never aim a gun at anything unless you intend to shoot." Never play with fire.

Finally, our Lord from heaven Himself instructs you: "Be faithful." Faithful to Him Who is always faithful to you. Faithful in the face of all opposition, even until you die, yes, even if it means your life. Be ready in the cause of Christ, not only to suffer, but even to die for the truth.

The promise rings true: "I will give you a crown of life." Life through death from our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. More than conquerors are we! To God be the glory!

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## OPEN FORUM

### "BIRTH CONTROL — A CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE"

October 2, 1973

BEACON LIGHTS
Mr. C. Reitsma, *Editor*

Dear Mr. Reitsma:

I write with reference to the article "Birth Control — A Christian Alternative?" written by Mrs. Karen Karsten in the June-July 1973 issue of BEACON LIGHTS. It is my feeling that she has given our young people some very bad advice and it is my intention to try to counter that advice and to show that the arguments given by Mrs. Karsten in support of her position are not sound.

I believe that I correctly summarize her argument (and I stand to be corrected) when I say that it appears that Mrs. Karsten argues from a specific observation, that of neglected children in her classroom, to the general conclusion that the cause of all neglected children is the fact that their parents were not "ready" to have them. Hence, her advice is that until young people are "ready" to have children, birth control is not only a choice but one's Christian duty. This, she believes, will eliminate the problem of neglected children. If I summarize correctly, then I certainly cannot agree with the emphasis and advice of her article. And that, for several reasons.

Before I give my reasons, however, I would point out that even though it is not clear from Mrs. Karsten's article, since she does at one point talk of later children, I assume that the article is directed to newly married Christian young people who are trying to decide if they should have their first child. I assume that this is true and my arguments follow those lines.

In the first place, while I agree with Mrs. Karsten that producing children is not the only reason for marriage, I would insist that those "other reasons" had better not be used as an excuse not to have children or for waiting until one is "ready" to have children. While marriage does indeed have other purposes, it certainly is true that the Lord instituted marriage for the *primary* purpose of realizing his covenant. And, if this is the primary purpose of marriage, then the desire to marry is almost synonymous with the desire to see God's covenant realized through the producing of covenant seed, through producing and raising children. This should not be some "vague" desire on the part of young married people as they plan for marriage but ought to be one's primary concern. Not to give this one's primary concern, you see, is to despise the covenant. Young people, then, as they discuss marriage had better be "ready" to have children when they marry or they had better wait to marry. To marry for any other reason — when one is young, of course, and able to have children — is to marry for the wrong reason. This may be idealistic and not at all practical

but that really is not the issue. The issue is whether it is proper and right to marry knowing full well that there is as of yet no desire for at best a "vague" desire to produce covenant seed. My advice would be that if there is only a "vague" desire to raise children, then you had better wait to marry lest you marry for the wrong reasons and thus fall into the grievous sin of despising God's covenant.

Secondly, I have several comments about Mrs. Karsten's concept of "being ready." I find, in the first place, that even with all the emphasis attached by Mrs. Karsten to being "ready," I find no definition, no articulation of what it means to be "ready" to have children. In addition, I find no standard delineated by which one may know whether he is indeed "ready" to have children. Her failure to do this, I believe, results really in a failure to make her point. If being "ready" is so vital, then by all means one should define exactly what is being talked about. But, in the second place, how about that whole idea of being ready? (I assume now that Mrs. Karsten is talking about being psychologically and spiritually ready since she discounts the materialistic argument.) How about that? Do we not sell God short when we speak of such things? Does not God supply grace for every need? Do we not fall into the danger of evaluating our life's situations from a selfish, subjective viewpoint when we speak of such things? That danger is certainly there, I believe, if we allow Mrs. Karsten's arguments to stand. My suggestion would be that, given a young couple marries with the intention of having children, rather than worry about being "ready" to have children, these young people should be directed to seek God in prayer to ask that He supply them with all things necessary to be covenant parents and to search the Scriptures for guidance in their life's problems and, if need be, to seek their pastor's counsel when problems too difficult for them arise. (The feeling of inadequacy as parents to raise covenant children is not unique, by the way, to newly married young people. All Christian parents who are deeply conscious of their sins have this same feeling. The solution, however, is always the same: seek God in prayer and search the Scriptures.) When Christian young people marry in the Lord and are conscious of the beauty of God's covenant (read Psalm 127 and Psalm 128 if there is doubt about the beauty and happiness of the covenant), then their response should not be, "Birth control until we are 'ready,'" but rather, "If it is thy will, Lord, give us children and in giving us children give us the desire to seek thee in prayer for all our needs and a desire to search the Scriptures for guidance in our problems so that we may function as responsible covenant parents."

Finally, I believe that Mrs. Karsten errs when she argues from her observation of neglected children to her position on birth control as a Christian alternative. This is not possible logically, first of all. Neglected children are not always the result of unwanted pregnancies and unwanted births. I, too, have seen neglected children but I am quite sure that they were not the result of unwanted pregnancies. There are other possible reasons: mothers working, separated families, fathers too busy in their work. But the logic is not what particularly bothers me. To me, the conclusion is not any option to the Christian. Even if her logic were sound, she may not make the conclusion that she offers. Who is to say that these neglected children must be eliminated? Are they unacceptable in the covenant? Is there no place for them in the church? Who are we to say that in order to alleviate the problem of neglected children, we should introduce birth control in the church for this purpose? Will not the church also care for these? The poor, Jesus says, you have with you always and that "being poor" has a far broader connotation than being penniless. We must not sell the church with its communion of saints short either.

My conclusion, then, would be that while Mrs. Karsten may have put her finger on a problem, she certainly has given a wrong solution. To my mind, her advice should rather have been as follows: Young people, if you desire to marry, do not despise the covenant by refusing to have children until you are ready. Rather, marry with covenant responsibilities in mind and, when God gives you children, seek Him for your needs. Dare we say to neglected children that it would have been better that they

had not been born? Hardly. Rather, covenant parents in these cases must be reminded of their parental responsibilities and, if extreme cases of neglect do arise – and they have, the church stands ready to care for these covenant children as well.

My answer to Mrs. Karsten's title question, then, would be, "No, Mrs. Karsten, given your arguments, I would have to say that birth control in the situation which you describe is not a Christian alternative and certainly cannot be one's Christian duty."

Fraternally,

JON HUISKEN

My purpose for writing and my concern is the article "Birth Control – A Christian Alternative" in the June-July issue of the BEACON LIGHTS.

It is not my purpose in this article to criticize the contents or conclusions so much as its basic approach. The contents are certainly not above criticism, but I feel that a faulty approach is the basic error of the above-mentioned article. If the right approach is used then the wrong conclusions cannot and will not be reached.

The first basic error of this article, in my opinion, is that it purports to give guidance to Christians, especially young Christians, and yet it is not well founded on the *only* guide for a Christian's faith and life, God's Holy Word. Not once in the article is the Word of God quoted or referred to. Besides that, the element of faith is not evident. That is very serious because the approach of faith is the only approach that the Christian may follow in considering and solving the problems that he faces. The article under consideration approaches the matter of birth control more from the point of view of human philosophy and human psychology than from the point of view of faith. For example the article states, "Until a couple feels that their relationship has reached that point (when they feel ready for the responsibility of having children), it is not only advisable but also Christian to use some form of birth control." Where does the Christian's Only Guide ever give an inkling of support for such a statement? Does that statement manifest the faith without which it is impossible to please God? What Christian couple would be so presumptuous as to determine for God whether or not their relationship has reached the point that they feel ready for the responsibility of bringing forth children? The Christian couple must proceed by faith and trust that if God is pleased to give them children then He will also equip them with all that is necessary to rear them in the fear of His name.

The second basic error of this article is very closely connected with the first. It is that the main thesis of the article is not adequately nor properly supported. The thesis – birth control *is* a Christian alternative – from its very statement demands the infallible support of the Christian's Only Guide. The thesis does not have that support of Scripture, rather it is merely posited on the word of the author; it assumes what *must* be proved from God's Word. Take for example the statement, "If a Christian couple is not willing to sacrifice an immense amount of time, money, and recreation today, they are not ready to bring up children and they have no business doing so either!" Where in God's Word can you find support for such a rationalistic shirk of responsibility? That statement is sheer hedonistic philosophy and not Scripture!

Positively now, Young people, we must be governed in our thinking and writing by the principles of the Word of God. Faith must be our only approach to the questions we face. When that is the case we will never stray from the path of the Truth. Then all of our conclusions will be in harmony with the Word of God.

REV. WAYNE BEKKERING

## REPLY

Dear Editor,

I have only a few brief comments in respect to the articles of Mr. Huisken and Rev. Bekkering. I am forced to conclude from your articles that your contentions are that birth control is wrong for newlyweds except conceivably in cases of endangered health. I do not intend to further argue that point. However, I would like to draw that conclusion to its logical end. Truly we cannot say that birth control is wrong uniquely for the newly-wed. This would be a grossly inconsistent stand. Then, of

course, birth control is wrong for *all* married couples, parents or non-parents. And now, of course, we find ourselves in an extremely awkward situation, for we have no Scriptural proof for our controlled, three-and-four child families. If we truly live by faith, if we truly believe our churches stand ready to help us, if we truly have a Scriptural view of the covenant, and if we truly believe that the primary purpose of marriage is to bring forth children, then we may not control our families at three or four or five and we may not so nicely decide how many years must space our children.

And if we can truly say all this, then we must look around and at ourselves and say, "God, forgive our gross inconsistencies!!"

Yours in Christ,
KAREN KARSTEN

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# NEWS from, for, and about our churches

JEANNE KARSEMEYER

**From our Holland Church:**

Cheryl Elzinga and Tom Schipper made public confession of faith during the evening service of September 23.

Mr. Robert Ornek and Miss Anne Woltjer were united in marriage in the Western Theological Chapel on August 24. Rev. Heys performed the ceremony.

**From our South Holland Church:**

Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Vander Noord were blessed with a daughter on August 16.

Convocation exercises of our school were held on Thursday, August 30. Rev. Decker spoke on the subject, "Peace, The Sword and Christian Education," based on Matthew 10:34.

On October 15, the Men's Society sponsored a lecture by Rev. Kortering on "Biblical Evangelism."

The membership papers of Rev. and Mrs. R. Decker and four baptized children have been transferred to First Church, Grand Rapids.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Koontz rejoice in the birth of a son on September 17.

Upon their request, the membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. R. Hoving and seven baptized children have been sent to our Hudsonville Church.

The wedding ceremony of Robert Hoving and Cheryl Siedal took place on Saturday, September 22, in the Immanuel United Church of Christ and Bethel United Church of Christ, Dolton.

The marriage vows of Kenneth De Jong and Marilyn Haak were spoken on September 28 in our church.

**From our Hudsonville Church:**

The Lord has entrusted to the love and care of Mr. and Mrs. Chet Haveman a daughter, Janna Lee.

**From our First Church:**

Mr. Joe Brummel and Miss Mary Looyenga were joined in holy matrimony on Friday, August 10.

The membership papers of Mrs. Jim Schimmel (nee, Carol Dykstra) were transferred to our Hope, Walker Church.

**From our Hull Church:**

Friday, September 28 was the date for a Pot-Luck Supper at Rock Valley East Shelter House, sponsored by the Protestant Reformed School Circle. Everyone brought Psalters and enjoyed an evening of Christian fellowship.

**From our Hope, Walker Church:**

New serviceman's address:
Robert Kamphuis 371-70-0120
Co. 238 RTC USNTC
San Diego, California 92133.

A certificate of dismissal was sent to Mr. Dick Eerdmans, Jr. at his request.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederic Haney have been received by the consistory in their fellowship. They come to us from the Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Glenside, Penn.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Orme and their son Christopher have been transferred to our Faith, Jenison Church.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs.

Mart Wustman have been transferred to our Holland Church.

**From our Faith Church:**

The ordination and installation of Candidate Joostens was held on Friday, October 5, in the Jenison Christian Junior High School. Rev. C. Hanko conducted the service.

Mr. and Mrs. James Van Overloop were blessed with the birth of a son, Matthew James, on September 7.

A welcome program for Rev. and Mrs. Joostens was given by the congregation on Tuesday, October 9 at the school. Many special numbers were given, including some by the newly formed Sunday School. A gift was given to Rev. and Mrs. Joostens, and refreshments were enjoyed after the program.

On October 14 Mr. and Mrs. Don Offringa received a baby daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Dave Ondersma are the grateful parents of a daughter, Holly Sue, born July 27.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Brands were received into the fellowship as members in full communion.

**From our Southwest Church:**

Mr. and Mrs. James Slopsema are the grateful parents of a daughter, born July 5.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Timmerman rejoice in the birth of a son, born July 4.

Mr. Larry Looyenga and Miss Kathy Clawson were united in marriage on Friday, July 27. The Reverends G. Van Baren and H. Veldman officiated at the ceremony that took place in Hope Church.

The membership papers of Candidate and Mrs. M. Joostens and their baptized daughter have been transferred to our Faith Church.

On Tuesday evening, August 7, a divine worship service was held in First Church to solemnize the wedding of Mr. Kenneth Kuiper and Miss Eunice Hoeksema.

The membership papers of Mrs. Kenneth Kuiper were received from our First Church.

Mr. Carl Haak was received as a member in full communion from our South Holland Church.

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The Federation Board and BEACON LIGHTS Staff extends to one of our members, Dawn DeJong and to her sister Rhonda and her father our deepest sympathy in the loss of their mother and wife

MRS. RUTH DEJONG

As we remember them in their sorrow, our thoughts turn to the words of Paul in Romans 8:

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose . . . For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

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**ATTENTION:** The Easter Mass Choral Program is now available on record. The Choirs of First, Hope, Hudsonville, and South West Prot. Reformed churches combined on a Sunday night in April to give a concert of sacred music. This 110 voice choir was recorded live, which tape was made into a stereo record under the sponsorship of the Federation Board of Prot. Reformed Young People. To purchase one of these high quality records fill out the order blank and send it with cash, check, or money order to:

KEN KOOLE
2655 Anita, S. W.
Grandville, Mich. 49418

OR contact the secretary of your Protestant Reformed Young People Society.

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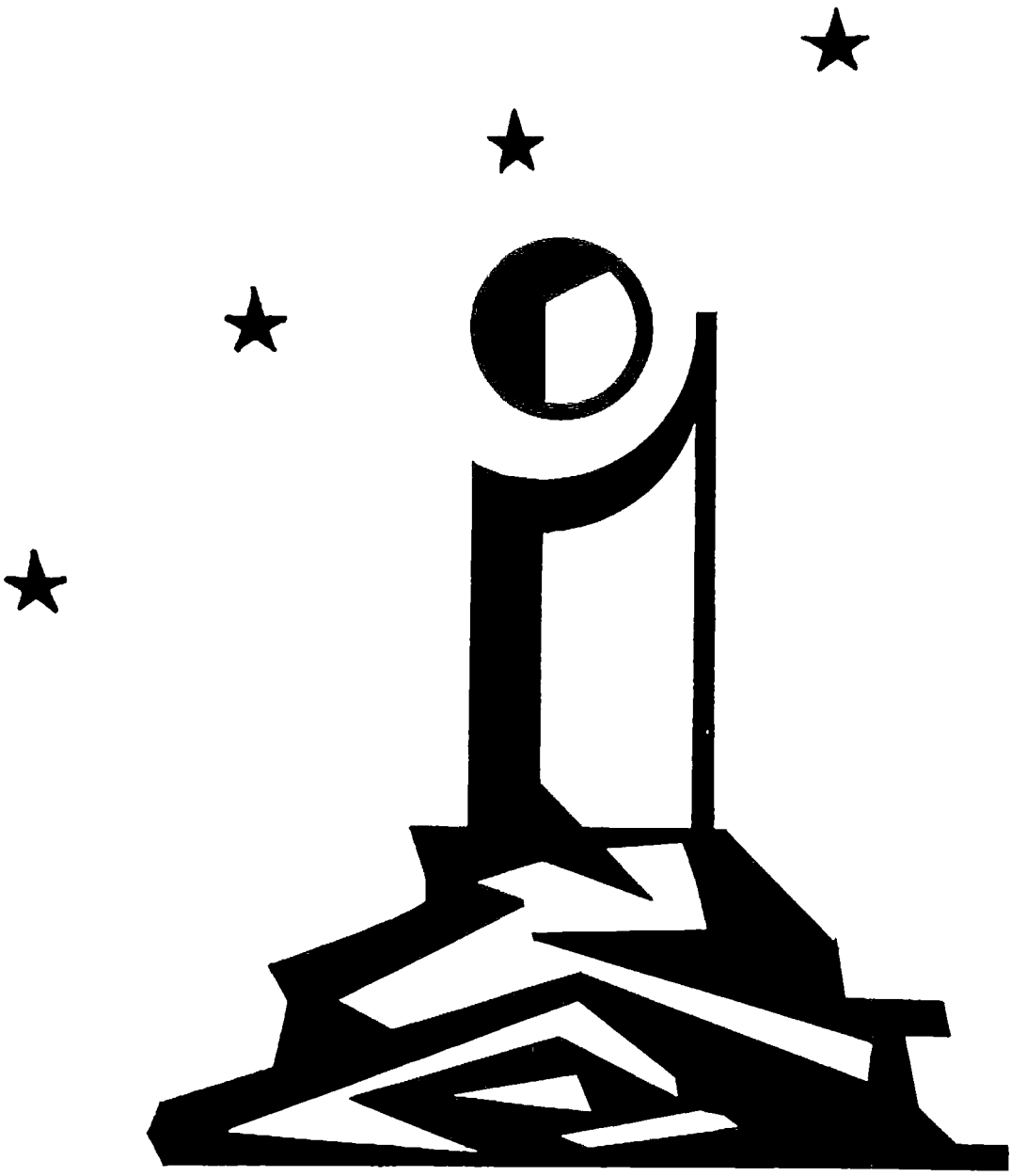
Name _____ Quantity _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Allow 3 weeks for delivery

MR & MRS JOHN
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