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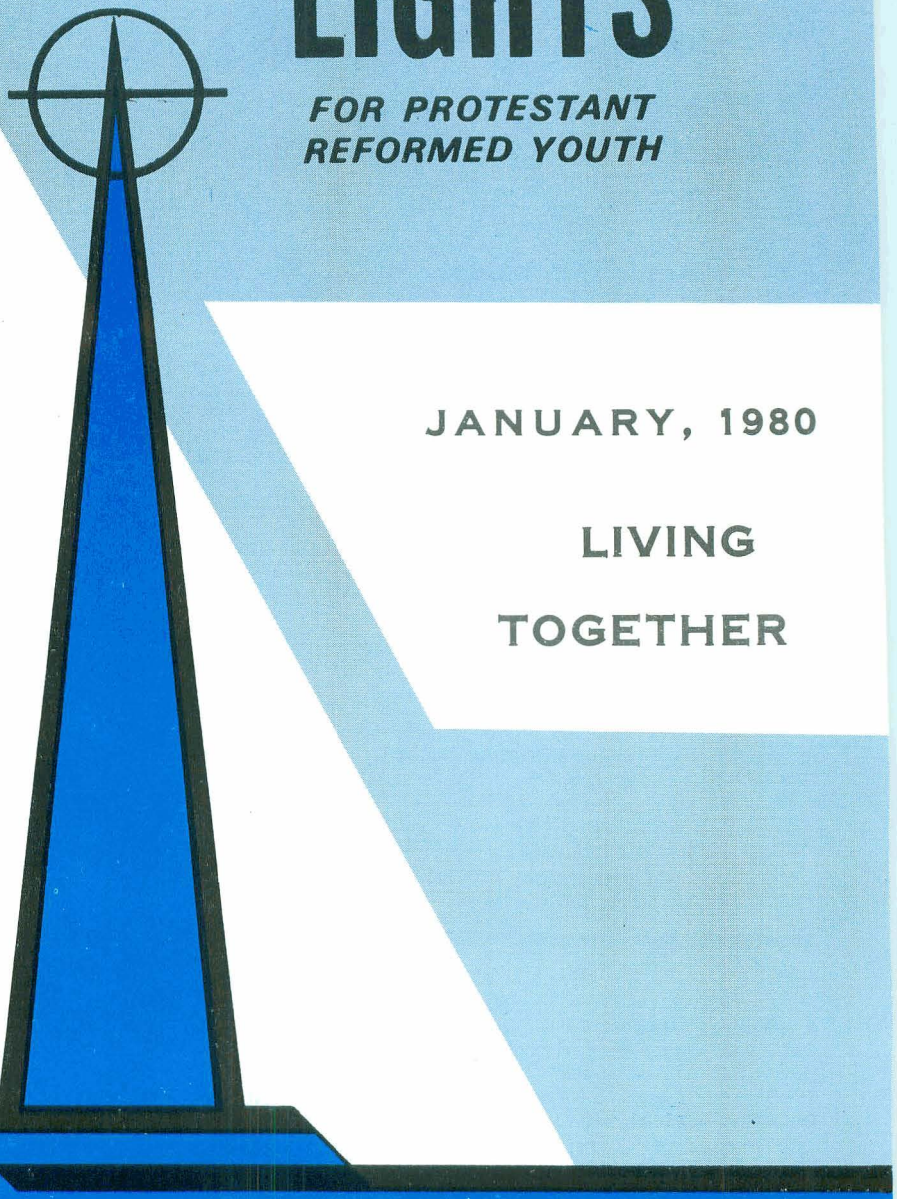

JANUARY, 1980

LIVING TOGETHER

VOLUME XXXVIII JANUARY, 1980 NUMBER 9

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

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P. O. Box 2289
Christchurch, New Zealand

If any material of **Beacon Lights** is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.

The articles of **Beacon Lights** do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

Contribution of general interest are very welcome.

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Beacon Lights
1401 Su-Lew S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Second Class Postage paid at
Jenison, Michigan (USPS 046-840)
Subscription Price $5.00

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Editorial

NEWNESS OF LIFE

By Dave Harbach

Right now there are thousands of seeds of various plants buried in the ground around your home. When spring arrives according to God's purpose these seeds will begin to grow, pushing their way up through the soil and developing into a beautiful seedling. Eventually some of the seedlings will reach maturity. I am always amazed at the wonder of any seed developing into a mature plant. First, because God directs the growth of such a seemingly insignificant part of His creation, and secondly, because now these seeds appear to be dead. It's as though there could be no life springing forth from such a small lifeless seed. In fact, this is true, except God so directs the life of that seed. Our thoughts seldom dwell on such matters until it is time to bring out the shovel and spade. Even then we do not pay much attention to the growth of that seed.

The above paragraph is not meant to exclude those who live in climates that are spring-like during the winter months. I am interested in the fact that the seed is buried which can take place at any time of the year. Nor is the above paragraph meant to arouse your curiosity . Perhaps your interest, but not your curiosity. The reason for this is that when we look upon God's creation we must not be curious about it but interested in knowing the truths that God has pictured for us in His creation. Faith demands we know the truth in all of its fulness and beauty. Indeed, the picture of the buried seed is full of rich meaning. In addition, the fact that this is the beginning of a new year also has a relation to the buried seed.

We will find this article profitable when we study the Scripture references to the words "seed" and "buried". Next, we will see the connection between the two and how this connection relates to the new year.

The word "seed" is used frequently in Scripture. Genesis 1:11 tells us "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; and it was so." God has therefore created plants

that yield seed. The process is God-directed so that we may expect plants to bring forth seed.

The word "seed" is also used to refer to the offspring of man. There is a similarity in that as seeds are the offspring of plants, children are the offspring of parents. Galatians 3:16 "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ." Here the reference is to the Spiritual seed of Abraham, who are the elect children of God in Christ. There is reference to the wicked seed of man as found in Psalm 37:28 "For the Lord loveth judgment and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved forever; but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off." Another reference to the seed of the promise is found in Romans 9:8 "That is they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Although Scripture uses the word seed to refer to the children or offspring of man, Scripture also distinguishes two seeds. This distinction is crucial to a proper understanding of the seed buried in the ground. The seed Scripture will emphasize is the seed of the promise. Genesis 17:7 which is used in our Form for Baptism is well known to us. There, God expresses His everlasting love and faithfulness for the covenant seed.

Scripture uses the word seed to refer to the accomplishment of God's word. Isaiah 55:10-11 "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Luke 8:11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God." The Luke account is found where Jesus gives the parable of the sower. In verse 11, Jesus begins to explain the parable of the sower to His disciples. Here the word seed refers to God's Word directly

Many more references could be given, but these will do for the purpose of the article. The next word, buried, is also used frequently in Scripture. I will quote two references in order to keep this article of moderate length.

The first reference speaks of the fact that Jesus Christ was buried after He died for our sins according to the Scriptures. I Corinthians 15:4 "And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures;" The other reference concerns the children of God being buried with Christ by baptism into death. Romans 6:4-6 "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as

Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

The connection between the seed and its being buried can be known from the references given above. God's covenant children are the seed. The seed buried in the ground signifies our being buried with Christ into His death. You also realize that the Scriptures are talking about baptism, spiritual baptism. The seed buried in the ground is a picture of baptism itself as it finds its full meaning in Christ.

The connection as it relates to the New Year is not clearly shown in the references presented. For the purpose of the article I will take the idea of the new year to refer to something other than the beginning of another year. The new year or beginning of something new, I will take to mean that which happens *within* us and not to us. The connection then is this. Our being buried with Christ into His death is the very beginning of our new life in Christ. Yet, just as the buried seed grows into a seedling by God's will, so we, as seed of the covenant buried with Christ into His death, are also made alive in Christ; that is, we are raised with Christ in newness of life.

As God directs our life here below, we must also realize that He has buried something, not in the ground, but in us. God has buried His word in our hearts. That is, Christ dwells within us by His Spirit. We are assured of the fact that we shall inherit a new life—eternal life.

OUR JOY IS IN JESUS FIRST

by Rachel Jansma

During the month of December, our family received many Christmas cards bearing merry greetings, glad tidings, and blessed wishes. I noticed that many of the captions in the cards spoke of one

topic:

"Wishing you JOY of the Christmas season."

"May the JOYS of the season be yours all year through."

"We pray unmeasured JOY be yours in the coming year."

What is JOY?

The World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary states that it is "a strong feeling of pleasure; gladness; happiness." I can remember a Christmas bulletin board theme depicting JOY when I was in grade school: J - Jesus first; O - Others next; Y - Yourself last.

"What, then, (we must ask ourselves personally) as a child of God, makes me truly glad and happy; that is, truly JOYFUL?" One can only confess that putting Jesus first in our lives and that alone gives us true joy, isn't that right? Joy comes at Christmas (Christmas is Jesus and Jesus is our joy), but Christmas is not only December 25 but all year through! Therefore, it is appropriate that we speak of joy, even after the Christmas holidays are over and we are well into another new year.

It is this confession, "our joy is in Jesus first", that I'd like to deal with.

First, joy comes through tribulation as sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. Sounds contradictory, doesn't it? We cry, "Tribulation brings sorrow to my heart and grief to my soul—not joy!" Often there are trying moments as parents rear their children. It is so difficult to say "no" when their children and their friends say "yes". They must say "no" to the attendance of plays, drama, and T.V. programs; say "no" to Sunday afternoon outings and pleasures; say "no" when their teenagers date unbelievers; to name just a few. To say "no" when their children say "yes" creates a division in the home; it makes "war in the camp". I heard one of our minister's sermons from a Christmas series about a month or so ago. He said if parents do not correct and reprimand their children, they are not bringing Christmas to them. Christmas is Jesus and Jesus is our only salvation from our sins. We, too, as young people struggle as we are called to walk in this world as a light in the midst of a dark place. The temptations and pleasures of the world encircle us every hour of the day. There is a theater in most every town; that old idiot box, the T.V.; the amusement centers and dance halls; the easy possession of alcohol and drugs; the sports craze; the popularity contests; the new "Bibles" which so easily replace our favorite King James Version (how slyly that old Devil rids the truth!); and all the other treasures and pleasures of this world.

And, whether we be young or old, the Word of God commands us all to constantly put off that old man of sin and put on the new man of righteousness. We are called to live in this world (not to sythesize with

it), but to live apart from it. We are to live antithetically; that is, to say "yes" when God says "yes" and to say "no" when God says "no". Doesn't it seem to you, too, that the harder we try to put Jesus and the treasures of HIS kingdom first, the harder Satan tries to lead us on his wide and crooked road? When we do stray from that straight and narrow road which leads to heaven, we cry with the apostle Paul, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:19 & 24)

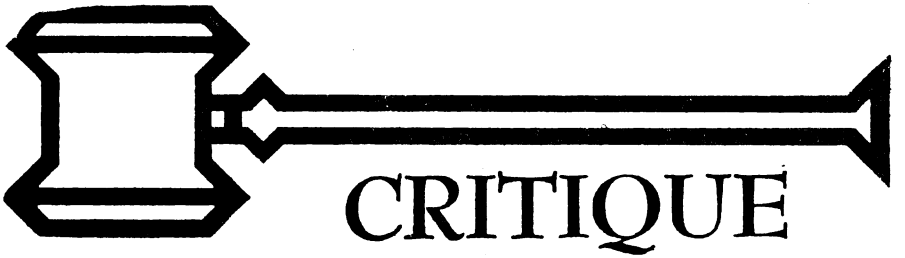
Tribulation brings joy? Yes! The same Word of God which speaks of our tribulation also brings us our comfort and joy. Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 instructs us that "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting"; that "sorrow is better than laughter (for by sadness the heart is made better). We must count it all joy when men shall revile and persecute us and say all manner of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake, for great is our reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:11-12)

Now, positively and on the other hand, the knowledge of our salvation through Jesus also brings us joy. We sing, "Joy to the world, THE LORD IS COME!" and "Joy to the earth, THE SAVIOR REIGNS!" The birth and reign of the divine and only Son of God is our salvation. Christ, being divine, took on a human nature that we might be saved. Man sinned, man had to be punished. But no man could bear the horrible wrath of God! Only Someone, being very God and yet very man, could bring salvation to His people through His own suffering and death. Through Him, even though our sins are as scarlet, we are made as white as snow. Someday we will inherit those mansions which Christ has prepared for us. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and JOY in the Holy Ghost." What joy!

And what a comfort! Even in tribulation we know that when we put Jesus first, there is joy. (Isn't it true that J-O-Y cannot be spelled unless JESUS is put first?) The joy of the Lord is our strength. (Nehemiah 8:10) We can do all things in Christ who strengtheneth us. For with God, all things are possible. "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in His salvation." (Psalm 35:9)

May we be blessed with the grace to put Jesus first in everything, whether in time of tribulation or prosperity. Then real JOY will be ours this entire new year.

YOUNG PEOPLE!! — Send your questions to Rev. Moore's Mailbox.



LIVING TOGETHER

by Ben Wigger

The facts are becoming more and more evident as I grow older that this world is a very wicked place to live. I am afraid that we quite often tend to regard our part of this world as just a little bit better than anywhere else. You can read about all kinds of problems and difficulties everywhere else but in your own back yard. But you and I both know that this is not a fair representation of the situation. The world is just as wicked right where you live as it is anywhere else. People are not any better just because they happen to live in a rural area rather than an urban one. Men take their sinful natures with them no matter where they go.

I was brought face to face with this reality not too long ago. You can read about the growing number of couples that are living together without the benefit of the marriage vow. And you can say to yourself: What is this world coming to? But when you meet a person who is doing just that, it puts quite a different light on the whole idea.

This was my experience: I began working with a young person who was sharing an apartment with his girlfriend. And over the few months that we worked together, we got to be pretty well acquainted. And quite honestly, his living in sin was soon forgotten. It just didn't seem to be that important. Here lies a danger. Over a period of time, we tend to mold our views of the world to parallel those of everyone else.

Living together outside of the marriage bond is a terrible sin against the seventh commandment. But our world places no importance anymore on God's Law. It says we will do what is right in our own eyes. And I am afraid that we become conditioned just like the world to not think of sin as sin anymore.

Man sees marriage not as a divine institution of God, but as a human institution. From this it follows that since man designed the marriage state he can also do with it what he pleases. The result is that marriage is destroyed.

I do not have any fear that this whole issue of living together outside the marriage state will pose any problem for us as Christians, or specifically for you as Christian young people. We can indeed be thankful for that very fact.

However, the danger that this does hold for us is our gradual acceptance of it. If we were faced with a sudden change from marriage to cohabitation, we would all see it for what it is, a terrible violation of God's Law.

But if the change is gradual, so that it takes place over a period of years, the change does not seem so serious. And if we are conditioned to the fact that just maybe there are benefits and advantages to live-in arrangements before marriage or instead of marriage, then what is the next generation going to be faced with? It is our responsibility to recognize sin as sin.

We all know that such arrangements are wrong because of the testimony of God's Word and the Christian instruction provided by our parents. Can you imagine what could happen to your children when and if you take the attitude: So what, what difference does it make anyway?

No matter how attractive the world paints the picture of the live-in arrangement, the facts are just not there to back it up.

Surveys show that couples who live together before marriage quite often experience more difficulty afterward than those who don't.

One argument for living together minus legal ties is: If it doesn't work, no one will get hurt. That sounds pious. The only thing wrong with it is studies show that the emotional impact that the breakup of a living-together arrangement causes is similar to that of divorce. How can it be otherwise? Anytime two people who love each other break up, emotional devastation is bound to occur. And by the very nature of things, the remorse, the regret, the feeling of betrayal is going to be greater for those who have lived together than for those who have not.

A girl may move in with her boyfriend hoping that the relationship will grow and last. If the boy is only interested in a short-term arrangement, she may be in for a major heartbreak; and in the process may spoil her chance of having the love, security, and family of her dreams.

Another commonly used argument for living together goes something like this: "We're in love with each other, we're committed to each other, and we don't need a piece of paper to prove it." The

argument is a poor one, but still attractive to those seeking justification for what they're doing. The other side of the argument is: If there's no difference in your relationship, what's wrong with adding a marriage license to prove your commitment?

Isn't it true that the primary reason why couples choose to live together rather than marry is to avoid the commitment and responsibility which marriage requires. Unwilling to make a life long commitment, they tailor their relationship to suit their convenience. Where is the "for better or for worse...for richer or for poorer...in sickness and in health?" What happens when someone else more attractive comes along? What happens when one partner gets sick and after months of struggle the other partner doesn't feel so good about the arrangement anymore?

You can say what you will, but the case against the live-in arrangement is a strong one. So strong, in fact, that there can be no doubt as to its wrongness.

Living together isn't the great adventure it has been acclaimed to be: first, because God prohibits it; second, because when you demand nothing from a relationship, that is exactly what you will get; third, because it is entered into out of weakness rather than strength, doubt rather than conviction, drift rather than direction. It is an open-ended covenant designed for those who are wanting to escape responsibility rather than accept it.

To sacrifice long-range goals for short-term pleasure can only lead to moral and spiritual corruption. It seems logical to me that the Christian young person who loves should be willing to commit himself to that love. These questionable life styles we are encountering today are only a means of running from love and responsibility, not to them.

THE JOYS OF WINTER FOR A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

by Kathi Vander Wiel

Christian teachers share with parents the joys that accompany the task of training God's covenant children. Because the school is an extension of the home the

Christian teacher seeks to continue what the parents have begun. The kindergarten teacher is particularly privileged to receive the child at an age when he is very impressionable and eager to learn. She lays the foundation stones for the school years that follow. The attitudes toward school that are begun in early life can set the pattern for future years.

The arrival and passing of each season gives opportunity to point out our Heavenly Father's providential care for all His creatures. In winter many of the trees and plants rest prior to a new season of growth and production. Some animals experience a time of lessened activity or go into hibernation. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all." Psalm 104, verse 24.

The first snowfall of the season is a delight to every small child. When God sends pure whiteness to cover the landscape, the Christian teacher can use the occasion to present the truth that God covers the blackness of our sin and makes us white and pure in His sight because of the sacrifice of His Son. She helps the students observe individual snowflakes, calling attention to their beauty and design. It's a joy to see the wonder in children's eyes when they are told that God has given each snowflake its own pattern. We follow this with the experience of cutting six-pointed snowflakes from folded paper. As each child opens his paper after having cut out small pieces from the edges, the teacher sees a smile of satisfaction and surprise spread across each face. We compare our paper snowflakes and find each one is different from the other. "Just so," we tell them, "God makes the many people in His great world so that no two are alike. He not only has made us, He cares for each one individually. He even knows the number of hairs we have on our head." What a great God we have!

Winter's cold means teaching proper care of our bodies by wearing clothing suited to the weather. We ask, "But how does God protect animals from the cold?" He causes them to grow warmer coats of hair. The ground and plants receive a "blanket" of snow for protection.

When the kindergarten teacher helps a child with an uncooperative zipper on his coat, she may use the occasion to show the apprehensive child that the teacher loves him and tries to understand his needs. She may use kind words of assurance or ask questions about his family to divert his thoughts. While tying the strings of a rowdy child's hood there may be opportunity to ask whether he remembers the rules for being kind by taking turns on the slide. The request for help with a tight boot may be just the moment to reinforce the consonant sound of the letter "b" by asking, "I wonder what letter is at the beginning of the word "boot"? The Christian teacher knows that God would have her use every opportunity to aid the development of the minds and lives of His little ones.

The teacher is happy to see the children's rosy cheeks as they come in from their play in the cold air. She uses the classroom prayer to give thanks to our Father in heaven Who gives strong, healthy bodies for work and play, sound minds for thinking and studying, and abundantly supplies our needs for food and warm clothing.

In spite of many joys, the teacher is also aware of her many shortcomings. Again and again she turns to God in prayer to ask for guidance in doing the work to which she feels God has called her. The rich promises of His Word also assure her. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I Corinthians 15, verse 58.

Untouched

by Sue Looyenga
1979

The nations tremble and are shaken
As rulers overthrow and then are overthrown.
And lust runs rampant through the streets; no shame
Does halt the sin to which man's evil heart is prone.
The rich man hoards his gold; the poor cry out for bread,
And hearts are turned to stone. None cares to part
With bread lest he be found without tomorrow.
They speak of death and dread disease with terror in their heart,
And live for pleasures' sake, lest on the morrow they be taken.
They grasp for comforts, but in vain; they all have slipped away
To leave them with empty, wringing hands.
There is no peace, no comfort for them in this evil day.

* * *

O blessed comfort, only comfort! I belong to Him
Who fully satisfied for all my sins at Calvary.
Though all the world be shaken, I have His promise sure,
All things now and to come shall work for good to me
And nothing that befalls can sever me from Him.
He turns all things to work for my salvation,
Assures me of eternal life forevermore.
He is my only Hope and Strength and Consolation!
I need not take a thought about tomorrow,
For by His grace His Own shall persevere.
Though times may change and change again, He is the same
Each day, each month and every passing year.

Leaving Father and Mother by Rev. Cornelius Hanko, a guide for youth who seek a holy marriage in the Lord, may be obtained for 1.50 (plus 10% for mailing outside greater Grand Rapids). Mail orders to *Leaving Father and Mother*, 4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

Christ's Command to ASK, SEEK AND KNOCK

Under this title we consider the text of Matthew 7:7-8 and the propositional truth that Christ's promises are spiritual and sure, not materialistic and conditional.

Very fittingly, on a mountain, which symbolizes a kingdom, Jesus gave His disciples the constitution of the Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. There we read Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." These words are spoken, not to all men in the world, but to the children of the kingdom. The law of Christ's kingdom is in this Sermon on the Mount. In the utmost certainty He promises, Ask, and it **shall** be given; seek, and ye **shall** find; knock, and it **shall** be opened. Who could possibly speak like this, assuring absolutely, such complete gratification and fulfilment? No other than Jesus, God in the flesh!

But these words have no place in modern thinking. Modern man will tell you that to ask, seek and knock is useless, all in vain. Humanity suffers too many miseries: poverty, hunger, disease, death! The human race strains outstretched hands and never receives; yearns for food and drink with throats blackened with thirst unutterable, but is never satisfied. Man seeks but falls so fatally from God as to find Him nevermore. Men in their abject misery and horrible despair **are** asking, yet not receiving. Nations and tribes, like the Bangladesh, are robbed, raped, left destitute, every ten years, it seems. Pleadingly they cry, seek relief and peace. But they do not find! There is a whole world of poor and suffering, knocking at the door of human rights, but no one opens to them. The whole universe groans and travails in the pain of bondage of corruption and is subjected to vanity and emptiness.

Maybe some, their minds full of the philosophy of evolution, would think this

an atavistic throwback to man's animal ancestry. Man originates from a sea-worm, slithering its slimy way out of the saline ooze. Not so! Our first ancestors were not amoeba cells, sea-worms, tarsiers or apes. Man was created in the image of God, good, in perfect knowledge of God and His creation. He lived in righteousness and holiness as a prophet, priest and king, who heartily loved God and lived with Him in covenant friendship. Man asked and received the fruits of the mountains, valleys, streams and fields. Man sought with all His heart, and found abundance, peace, joy and happiness. Man knocked at the door of the kingdom and a royal realm was opened to earth's first king in all its unpolluted riches, beauty and splendor.

But a horrible change occurred. One sin man committed, and because of it lost his original righteousness and holiness. Man rebelled against and disobeyed God. Man, the guilty malefactor, is the cause that the whole creation groans and weeps. God cursed the ground, the animals and man, with thorns, thistles, the bondage of corruption and death. So man became estranged from God. This is why man longs, begs and obtains nothing; why he seeks himself blind and never finds; why he feebly yet pleadingly knocks but remains the outcast and outlaw of Paradise. Solomon rightly summed it all: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!

The earth is full of God's riches, the ocean being probably a hundred times greater source of wealth. Yet when man asks, seeks and knocks, he rapes the world, corrupts the earth and pollutes the seas close to cess-pool filthiness, making life delusive, idle, worthless and empty. Man does not direct his asking, seeking, yearning toward God. He's become an enemy of God. He hates God intellectually, spiritually and fundamentally. There is no creature-power-legislation, United Nations forces, Nato or legions of angels—which can return man to God, the eternal, overflowing fountain of all good and the fulness of every blessing. Without God, man is dead. His asking and seeking are never heavenward. He seeks and sows sin, receiving more sin and reaps the crop of death. So man developed in himself the disease and atavism of eternal death.

But God did not leave man in the ruin of the fall and curse. God maintains His covenant. In the covenant's decree, in His sovereign, eternal good pleasure, He willed a family of children under the headship of His Son. He ordained them to eternal life and to believe on the Son. In the world of time, they became, like the others, children of wrath. But their Elder Brother and Head came down from the ivory palaces of glory, took the flesh of the children, took their wrath, their death, their sin and gave them His righteousness. On the stage of history, the Son of God will lead all His children through the way of sin and grace to a glory and blessedness far above that of the Edenic prophet, highpriest and earth-ruler, Adam! He makes them new creatures, with old things passed away, and all things to them become new. Then His children sing, O how love I Thy law; it is my meditation all the day! Then they ask, seek and knock, for God opens His heart and His heaven to them. For His Son on the Cross paid the price for their redemption. They are reconciled to God through the death of His Son. They are saved in His life. He has all authority in heaven and earth. He has the nations for His inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Then ask, and, unconditionally, you shall receive!

But the earth-bound miser and the mocking materialist say, If that is the case, then ask for wealth, health, lands, houses, all your heart could wish. Why is it you Christians don't own the whole world? There is no limit to your ask-and-seek principle. Why don't you all have gold-plated Cadillacs, silvery yachts, mansions with Persian rugs and family

rooms prepared with hundred dollar bills? Ask, and it shall be **given** you! Why have you saints always gone staggering along in rags, destitute, afflicted, tormented? You are beaten, stoned, mocked, driven out to wander in deserts, mountains, dens and caves of the earth. Why not ask shelter? You **shall** receive it! Why not seek protection from harm, if you shall find it? Why not knock and have comfort and ease opened to you? So modern mockers taunt God's people with a problem that appears to be our own absurdity.

But the solution lies in reading further, beyond the command to seek and promise of finding. Jesus there says, "Or what man is there of you, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" Such an earthly father is rare. Earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children. Then says Jesus, "How much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them who ask Him! Now do you see the solution? We are to ask for good things. If I ask for a fortune, to make me a millionaire, I'd probably be asking for a stone or a serpent. It wouldn't be right or good for me. It would do me more harm than good. If a hungry child should ask for a scorpion to eat, would the father give it? Or if a starving child in its weakened, dazed condition, ask for stones to eat, would any father give them?

So we ask for good things. We let our Father in heaven decide what is good for us. Our heavenly Father knows best. We are, by nature, foolish enough to desire to be fed on stones and serpents. Many things have been denied us because we asked for vipers instead of bread. Much we never found because we searched for gravel and gila monsters.

Even after we are regenerated, we must depend on His wisdom, rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Often our warped judgment would decide on things positively evil, and, consequently, the very worst for us. We want our Father to decide what is best for us. He is omniscient, all-wise, and never makes a mistake. The Lord sees that the riches of Solomon would hurt poor Lazarus, so He does not make him a millionaire. He sees that boils and sores are good for Job and Lazarus, so He sends them these diseases. What then should we ask of our Father? The things He indicates in His Word: daily bread, daily forgiveness, strength for the day and for all the spiritual riches and blessings in Christ Jesus. Of these you cannot ask too much. They're all good, good for you, good for those who love the Lord and all His ways. Amen.

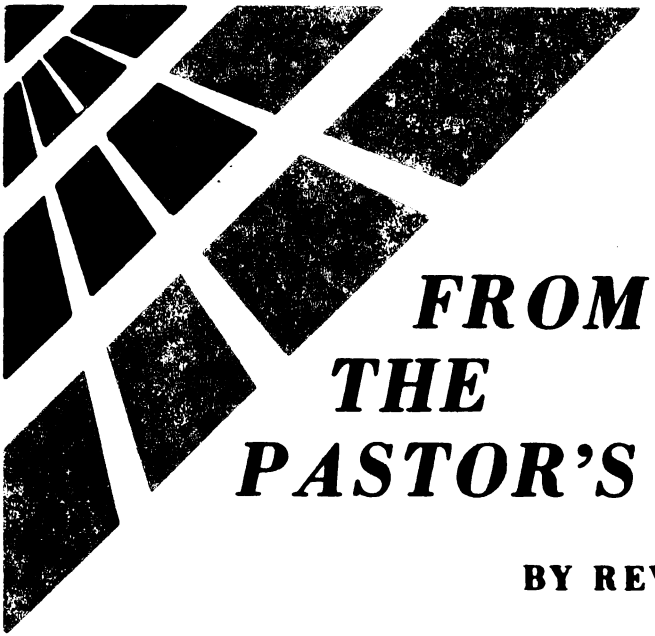
(Prayer) Lord, our covenant God and Father, give us to ask of Thee and pray according to Thy holy will. May we come to Thy Son, Jesus Christ, in true faith, knowing in full assurance that whoever seeks in Him everlasting life, shall surely find it, and never perish. Amen.

Man may baptize, but 'tis the Lord
Regenerates the heart;
None but the Spirit, by His Word,
That blessing can impart.

But not the waters of a flood
Can make my flesh so clean,
As, by His Spirit and His blood,
He'll wash my soul from sin.

author unknown

Pictures of the retreat held September 14, 15 at Camp Manitou-Lin



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

THE PASSOVER BOTH SACRIFICE AND SACRAMENT

"and ye shall keep it unto the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it at even." (between the two evenings) Exodus 12:6

"This is the ordinance of the Passover"..."in one house shall it be eaten". Exodus 12:43, 46

This time I would like to ask of you to carefully read this little essay on a very interesting and important subject. The subject is not new; others have written on it better than I can. But it is quite important for the proper understanding of the God-instituted "sacraments" that it be understood that the Passover is **both** a sacrifice and a sacrament, and that it was thus kept in Israel. It was not merely a "memorial feast" but as a feast of commemoration it was an Old Testament Sacrament on a par with the Sacrament of Circumcision, which was a "sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith". (Romans 4:11)

There have ever been Protestants, who maintained overagainst the teaching of Roman Catholicism that the Passover in Israel was not a sacrifice, but **merely** a feast of remembrance. As Israel later kept the feast, when they had entered the land of Canaan, it was not a sacrifice. Others have said that the Passover was not a

"sacrament". Of course, it was not a Sacrament in the New Testament sense. Nor for that matter, was the Old Testament rite of Circumcision a Sacrament as is our New Testament baptism. But we do hold that both Circumcision and the Passover were the Old Testament, typical sacraments, holy signs and seals, instituted by God as the Jehovah of His people.

It is the Reformed position that Baptism has taken the place of the O.T. Circumcision. (Baptism Form) In the Form we read "Since Baptism has come in the place of circumcision...." The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 74 says, "....they must therefore be...distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant of testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism was instituted in the new covenant." Both are signs and seals of the righteousness which is by faith. That is the Reformed position in contradistinction from the position of the Baptists!

Such is the clear teaching of Scripture in many passages. Paul teaches in Colossians 2:11, 12 that the circumcision of Christ is tantamount to being buried with Christ in baptism. Paul says in Philippians 3:3, "for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Circumcision, as a sign of the righteousness by faith, prefigured the circumcision not by hands, which is of Christ. It is a sign that the ungodly are justified by faith. (Romans 4:5)

Now what was true of the sign of circumcision is equally true of the "sign and seal" in the Passover feast as a **sacrifice** and **Sacrament.** It is a sign and seal of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of the Paschal lamb, pointing to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Just as Baptism took the place of the O.T. circumcision, so the Lord's Supper took the place of the O.T. Passover. The last Passover feast was translated by Jesus himself into the New Testament Supper of the Lord in *the night* in which He was betrayed.

* * * * *

It is quite evident that the sacrifice in the Passover was very unique. There was no other sacrifice in Israel like it. This should be clearly seen and we shall attempt to point this out now.

First of all, it should be noted that the Passover feast was arranged and instituted by the LORD on a very special occasion. It was not instituted by God on Mount Sinai at the time when Moses received the law from God by the hands of angels. It really was not at all a part of the law-giving. Jesus makes a point of it, according to John 7:22, that circumcision was not really given by Moses in the law-giving, but that it was "of the fathers", Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So also the institution of the Passover was prior to Moses giving of the law. It belongs not to the law-giving, but it belongs to the very warp and woof of the fulfilment of the promise, to wit, Israel's redemption from Egypt, the land of spiritual bondage. Israel was a picture of sin's dominion! The sacrifice here ordered of the Lamb is one which is in a class all by itself. It is not a sacrifice order in Sinai, but in the very land of Egypt, in the night of the death of the firstborn of Egypt. Here the Lord brings forth His Firstborn Son out of Egypt. Harking back to this Hosea says "out of Egypt have I called my Son." (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15)

It seems to me that this places this matter a bit in the light of the prophetic word as fulfilled in Jesus. This shows that the sacrifice of the Passover has a character and nature all of its own.

It was most definitely a sacrifice. Rome has perpetuated this sacrifice in their popish mass, which is a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ. But the Passover

must needs remain a sacrifice until the Seed should come to whose death on the cross it pointed. When Israel entered into the land of Canaan the Passover Lamb was no longer slain by the head of the house, but it was now the duty of the Levites in the temple. (II Chronicles 30:16; 35:11; Ezra 6:19) Afterwards the blood was sprinkled by the priest on the altar and the Passover mealtime was held in the temple (Deuteronomy 16:2) where God had placed his name.

So the Passover was, first of all, very definitely a sacrifice.

It is, furthermore, very interesting and instructive to notice that the Passover was not limited to being a sacrifice, but that it was a sacrifice that ended in a meal-time, a sacramental eating of the slain lamb. After the lamb, without spot or blemish, had been chosen and slain, the blood was taken and put on the door posts of the houses on that first passover feast in Egypt. In later times, however, after Israel had entered into the land, the blood was sprinkled on the altar. After this the lamb was eaten **whole**. Not a bone of it was to be broken. It was not to be prepared like our lamb chops, but the "body" of the lamb was to be eaten. Hence, no uncircumcized person might partake of it. (Exodus 12:48b) It was a Jehovah-supper with his people between the two evenings. Also the women and children might partake of it, even though the women were not circumcized. It was a partaking of the blood of the covenant sacramentally, a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith, be such a believer male or female, adult or child. In hope it was an eating of the "body" of Christ. It looked to the fulfilment of the Word made flesh, who said: "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a **body** didst thou prepare me." (Hebrews 10:5; Psalm 40:6-8) Israel was saved in the "surety" which Christ presents in the Old Testament sacrament. In faith Israel looked to the great Passover to come, which Passover is now slain. (I Corinthians 5:7b)

There is still another matter which must not escape our notice. We refer to the fact that the sacrifice in the Passover must be clearly distinguished from both the sin-offerings and the thank-offerings which were prescribed on Sinai. The Passover sacrifice was not such a sin-offering. Notice particularly, that the sin-offering might **not be eaten** as was the Passover sacrifice of the perfect lamb. The sin-offering must be burned without the camp, outside of the gate. (Deuteronomy 4:20, 21) Not so the lamb of the Passover. This must be eaten whole; it must be eaten as a "body" of the lamb. Then too the Passover was not a sacrifice like the thank-offerings prescribed on Sinai. The latter followed the bringing of the sin-offerings and they presupposed that reconciliation had been brought already. Not so the Paschal offering. This was brought to bring about reconciliation. Here in the Passover we have a meal-time which represented the perfect sacrifice which must be eaten. Except ye eat my flesh ye have no life in you. This Passover feast was both sacrifice and sacrament as it pointed back to the deliverance in the night of the death of the firstborn of Egypt, and as it pointed forward to the night in which Jesus would be betrayed, and would die as the Firstborn Son of God, and would by His death and resurrection grant us to eat the bread and wine new in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Yes, it was definitely a sacrament in Old Testament Form. It was not the "law" which said do this and thou shalt live, but it was the gift of God which is eternal life: redemption from sin and death. It was a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith.

Now the sacrifice is no more. To revive it is the horrible error of Rome. Christ died once in the end of the ages. He fulfilled His "exodus" at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Now we have the fulfilment of

the communion sacrament of the Old Testament, the supper of Jehovah God with His redeemed people. The great antitype has become reality in Christ's blood on the cross.

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY [Reprint]

by Rev. G. Van Baren

Proverbs 22:13 "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets."

There is an interesting little story which tells of a man who incessantly snapped his fingers. No matter where he went, no matter what he did, he constantly snapped his fingers. One observer, watching this strange habit, was bold enough to question the man concerning it. "My dear sir," he replied, "I snap my fingers to keep the lions away." "But," countered the first man, "there are no lions within a thousand miles of here." "You see," replied the man as he continued snapping his fingers, "it's pretty effective, isn't it?"

We read in Proverbs of another man who intended to stay safely away from lions. He remained in his house, and presumably in bed, under the pretence of protecting himself from the lion which was supposedly roaming the streets. This was the slothful man; the man who sought excuses which would free him from the necessity of labor.

This brief proverb is one which we also could well keep in mind. Young people too will often seek all kinds of excuses in order to escape necessary labors. They also had better examine carefuly those "lions" to see whether they are real or imaginary.

A real lion is a terrible animal. He is called the king of the beasts. Both man and animal would cower in terror before him. And surely man must find defense against that lion. Either he must be well equipped with arms in order to shoot him on sight, or he must be able to retire to a safe retreat that he may hide from that lion. Only if one of these two alternatives is followed, would one be reasonably secure from the threatenings of this beast.

The "lion" in this proverb suggests an insurmountable obstacle which would prevent one from performing his duties. The man of the proverb had heard of a lion roaming the streets, therefore his conclusion was that he had better go out to perform his daily labors, but more safely could he stay home in his warm bed. He was slothful and wanted to find an excuse to stay at home. At the same time it is possible to apply the proverb to a wide variety of circumstances.

And real lions, then, would not be difficult to find. It may be that on occasion I am too sick to rise from my bed and

perform the chores required of me. Or a real and terrible storm may threaten outside preventing me from doing that which otherwise must be done. I am sure that you yourself can recall many other similar and real "lions".

The trouble is that the terrible lions are often simply conjured by slothful men. A man may see all kinds of difficulties which stand in the way of his performing his duties. And if these difficulties are true, then his subsequent actions appear to be rational too. Such was the case with the man in our text. He maintained that there was a lion roaming the streets. Now if that were true, then his action in staying within his home was wise indeed. No man would blame him then for what he did (or didn't do). But the fact of the matter was that there was no lion in the street. The lion was but a figment of this man's imagination. He simply fell upon a good excuse for his own idleness or laziness.

And you, young people, do you have any of these lions roaming about in your streets? You too are bound to use faithfully the means of grace, particularly the preaching of the Word (which includes also catechism instruction). Do you not only attend but also listen attentively to the preaching of the Word? Or do you discover "lions" which prevent the performance of your duties? Maybe you have too much school work or too many hours of manual labor so that there is no time to perform these other things. And which "lion" prevents you often times from coming prepared to Young People's Society? How often do we not try to excuse spiritual slothfulness by pointing to all kinds of lions? Better take a peek out that window again and discover whether that was actually a lion you saw there on the streets—or a ray of yellow sunlight which you deliberately mistook for a lion.

You as young people have doubtlessly many obligations (chores) about the homes too. It is often presented as something humorous how that young people will seek to escape their regular duties and tasks. And seldom will one be found who does not have a good reason for being unable to fulfill the obligations placed on him. He finds all kinds of lions which stand in the way—anything to evade the required work.

This whole article isn't meant to be a humorous presentation of the delinquencies of youth. Quite the contrary. There is a sound, Scriptural reason why we must perform faithfully the duties given us. We may never seek to escape them. We confess and believe that we are children of God, members of the body of Jesus Christ. And these cannot simply do as they please. They err greatly who simply seek to escape the performance of their obligations. Youthful children of God, for instance, surely observe the fifth commandment: honoring and obeying those in authority over them. They cannot simply walk in disobedience to their parents or teachers. They perform the task parents or teachers. They perform the tasks which those in authority give to them. Because the Spirit of Christ dwells in His people, therefore, they observe the Word and shun sloth in all of its many forms. They will not then try to escape learning faithfully their catechism. They will not avoid at all costs diligent study of society lessons. It is man, natural man, who is slothful. It is he who evades and avoids the Word of the Lord. But with the child of God it is not so. He is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. He is turned from darkness to light. He is led by the spirit in all holiness. Then he does not seek to find all kinds of "lions" in order to escape his work.

What must we do with all those "lions" which constantly seem to arise? Examine each one once to see whether it is real or imaginary. Do you give legitimate objections which prevent certain actions—or do you simply give excuses to avoid as much possible doing those things required of you?

There is so often seen the "lion" of lack of time. There is no time to prepare adequately for catechism; no time to prepare for society. Yet far more often than not this is simply an imaginary "lion". I have read that on an average children and teenagers watch television twenty-two hours a week. (And I surely hope that such is not the case in Protestant Reformed homes.) The point is, if young people can find that many and more hours to waste in a week, then never can there arise the excuse, "I didn't have time."

Young people who have jobs often find "lions" preventing them from supporting faithfully the cause and kingdom of God financially on this earth. Their parents pay the share for their "family"; their cars require too much of their income and there is none left over; their other hobbies are so expensive that support of Kingdom causes is impossible. Imaginary lions these are and must be seen as such. Recognize these lions for what they are—and then do not drag your feet in performing necessary tasks.

To be not slothful implies positively: walk by faith. This is not the same as carelessness. When real lions exist, we cannot simply rush out despite them. But faith knows and believes the Word of God. That Word directs us in the way we must go: it points out the duties and obligations of the child of God. And by faith the child of God will walk in that way despite many "lions". Because God directs in this way, therefore, we believe that He will preserve and keep us in that way too. Walk, young people, in obedience. In the way of obedience, the child of God continues to experience the richest blessings of our covenant God. Be not slothful, but diligent.

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Linda Kaiser

BIRTHS

Mr. and Mrs. Cal Kalsbeek of Hope were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Elizabeth Ruth, on November 26.

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Kaptein of Faith rejoice in the birth of a daughter, Cathleen Suzanne, on November 9.

Terry & Lavonne Kooienga of Faith were blessed with the birth of an infant, girl, Tera Lynn.

Mr. and Mrs. Don Van Dyke of Faith are the thankful parents of an infant son, Bryan Jay, born on November 20.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Bodbyl of Holland were blessed with the birth of a son on October 27.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Haveman of Holland rejoice in the birth of a son.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Hope Church in Grand Rapids has sent the membership papers of Mrs. Don De Jong (nee Cindi Dykstra) to South Holland.

South Holland has received the papers of Mrs. Julie Wories from the Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Lansing.

Faith has received as members Mrs. Harold Veldman from Lamont Christian Reformed Church, Mrs. Gerald Koning from Seymour Christian Reformed Church, and Mr. James Mol from the First Netherlands Reformed Church.

First Church of Grand Rapids has received the membership of Mr. Daniel Key from Community Reformed Church of

Charlevoix, MI, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Kamphuis and Mrs. Daniel Pastoor (nee Lori Dykstra) from Hope Church.

The membership of Mrs. Roger Veldman, nee Anne Doezema, has been transferred from First to Hudsonville.

The membership of Mr. and Mrs. D. Dykstra have been sent by Holland to Faith Church.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

In First Church on December 9, William Bos, Dorothy Doezema, Joseph Dykstra, Nancy Looyenga, Randall Looyenga, Laurel Mulder, Linda Newhof, Debbie Peters, and Phyllis Veltman made public confession of their faith.

Miss Amy Mensch, Mr. James Mol, and Mr. David Griffioen made public confession of faith in Faith Church on November 4.

MARRIAGES

Ron Van Voorthuysen and Laura Van Uffelen were united in marriage on November 20 at Highland Ave. Christian Reformed Church in Redlands.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

A Thanksgiving Mass Meeting was held at Holland for area young people on November 18.

A Thanksgiving Singspiration was held at Hope Church on November 18.

Hope's Young People sponsored a Pancake Breakfast at Hope School on November 17. Proceeds were for the convention.

First Church's Young People sponsored a Thanksgiving Breakfast on November 24.

A Rollerskating Party was held at Terry Hall in Grandville on November 29.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Hudsonville Choral Society rendered a Thanksgiving and Christmas Program on December 2 in their church.

South Holland held a Smorgasbord on November 9 in their church basement.

Holland's choir presented a concert in their church on November 4.

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. Who was the father of John the Baptist? Luke 1:59-60
2. At whose well did Jesus speak to a woman of Samaria? John 4:6-7
3. How had Jesus healed Mary Magdalene? Luke 8:2
4. How much did five sparrows cost? Luke 12:6
5. What did some of the disciples think Judas was going to do when he left the last supper? John 13:29
6. What nationality was the one leper who alone, out of the ten cleansed lepers, returned to glorify God? Luke 17:15-16
7. When Jesus said, "I thirst," what was He given to drink? John 19:28-29
8. Where were two men going when Jesus appeared to them after the resurrection? Luke 24:13-15
9. Name a woman who saw the Baby Jesus in the temple. Luke 2:36-38
10. Was the prodigal son the older or younger in his family? Luke 15:12

Karl VanOostenbrugge

presents

"WELCOME TO HOLLAND"

AT

GRANDVILLE
JR. HIGH SCHOOL GYM

THURSDAY
MARCH 27
8:00 P.M.

	TICKETS IN ADVANCE	AT THE DOOR
ADULTS	2.00	2.50
STUDENTS	1.50	2.00

CHILDREN UNDER 5 FREE

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT HOPE ADAMS & COVENANT'S OFFICES

PROCEEDS FOR THE 1980 P.R.Y.P. CONVENTION