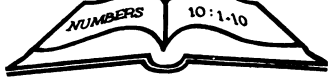


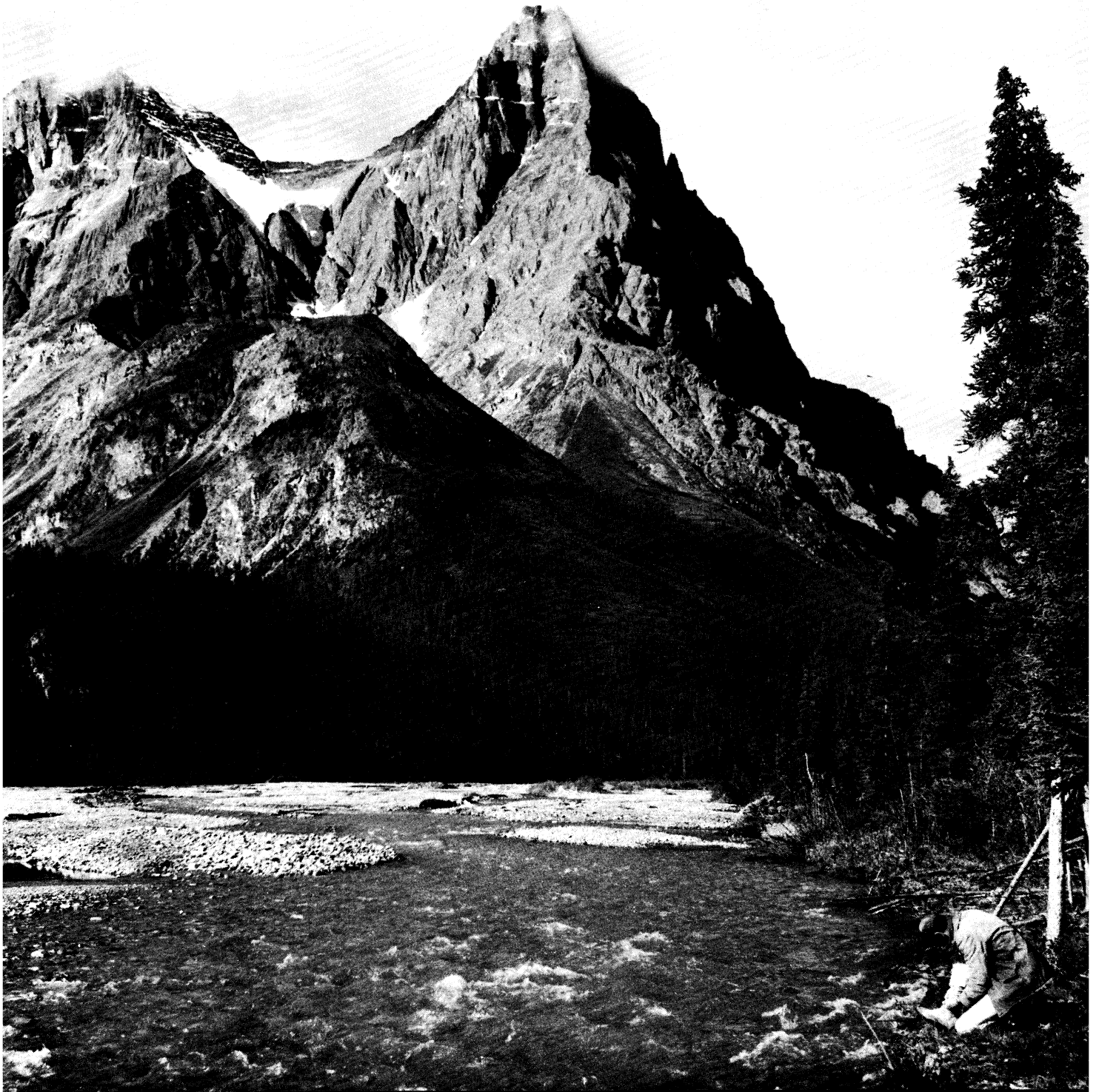
# Clarion

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# Living in the Covenant

I have been asked to speak to you about our life in the Covenant with the Lord God. Now we are not the first ones who are longing to fear God and to serve Him. Generations before us were already eager to serve Him and, moreover, they did so. And also in the Near-East (in Palestine) there lived for centuries on end generations who loved God and who found their gladness in a life with Him: the ancient people of Israel.

"How did those people do that?" so we may ask.

How did Abraham become a "friend of God" (James 2:23) and how did he hold his own all those long years of loneliness as an "alien"?

How did Moses, who in his "younger years" committed a murder in quickness of temper, become "the man of God" par excellence?

And what about David, the "man-after-God's-heart"?

And did the Apostle John not become the disciple whom Jesus loved most?

How did they get to such privileged positions with God - though they were people such as we are - so that they were in His good books in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19)?

Did it give them much trouble?

Did they have to exert themselves awfully for it?

How did they learn to do it? What attracted them to it?

How did David in fact become the man-after-God's-heart?

See, I should like to look for an answer to those and similar questions. An answer from Scripture.

How has the life of the believers in the Covenant with God been described for us? The first thing that always strikes us again in all those histories and adventures of the believers is: What a trouble not they in the first place but the Lord Himself has had to put up with in joining them to Himself and (as a consequence of it) how great the Lord God was in their eyes and more and more became.

Let us but think of David.

Then what will strike us is the "ordinary" way in which everything happened!

As a simple farmer's son in a little peasant-village he was growing up among six (I Chron. 2:13-15) or seven (I Sam. 16:10; 17:12) big brothers.

He was the youngest and, as it usually goes, he did not count.

He had "to stay at home" and had to "take care" of the sheep while his brothers were allowed to go with their father to the meal at the great prophet's.

But Samuel himself gave orders to fetch him and God pointed him out in his brothers' presence as the one who was to be king later on!

"It is in fact of no account what man sees; man judges by appearances, but the Lord judges by the heart," God said to Samuel on that occasion.

"And the Spirit of the Lord seized David *from that day onward*."

"But the Spirit of the Lord had forsaken Saul, and an evil spirit of the Lord seized and alarmed him" (I Sam. 16:13, 14).

David had spent his youth and adolescence under Saul's "terrorism", one of the darkest periods in Israel's history.

Let us not forget it.

When Saul (experiencing more and more the consequences of his rejection of the Lord) began to suffer from fits of frenzied rage, one of his servants called his attention to David: "He is a good harper, a brave hero, a warrior, wise in speech, handsome, and the Lord is with him."

In his younger years already David won favor with God and with men. It struck others that the Lord was with him.

So David came to the court, *without having looked for it himself*.

At "the court" ("with the general staff") he learned many things which were of much service to him later on.

When after that the war with the Philistines reached a culminating point and David (for what reason I don't know) was no longer in the army, the Lord Himself saw to it that David came to stand over against Goliath.

David himself did not win his position. The Lord brings him to the fore again and again.

And again, everything followed a quite ordinary course.

His father very much liked to know how "the boys at the front" were doing and he sent David to the theatre of war. David heard and saw how things went there: how fear paralyzed the men of Israel, for the Spirit of the Lord was in the process of leaving Saul and his people.

He heard how Goliath cursed the name of the Lord while nobody ventured to open a mouth against it.

David learned what great "rewards" Saul promised in order to make his men bold. He wanted to force a victory by rousing the military "spirit of resistance", by promising ever greater rewards: riches, his daughter in marriage (which is as much as joining the nobility), exemption from taxes . . . as if it were a question of his honour instead of the honour of God.

Everything was in vain! The rattling with promises left the mass untouched. The cause lay deeper than that it could be taken away by some "spunk". The *Name of the Lord* did not touch the heart of Israel in such a way that they couldn't bear the defiance of that *Name*.

But David couldn't. He esteemed that *Name*.

That *Name* he loved and he was "sensitive" to everything that affected the exaltedness of the name and cause of God. What Goliath did went through his whole being. "Must it go on like that?"

His eldest brother Eliab didn't comprehend what David did. He snarled at him and called it "presumption" of David to speak in such a way.

Characteristically, the "moved" spirit of David strikes against the apostate spirit of Israel, which is represented in the words of Eliab.

Eliab is living in a state of "spiritual withering". He has not "kept in his heart" the calling of David to the kingship, though he was one of the few people who had been present on that occasion.

David and Eliab: two children of the Covenant, brothers in the flesh, but not spiritual brothers.

They were both "in the Covenant" but David was *living in it* with his heart and soul.

David was living for the Lord and the Lord was with him.

The Spirit of the Lord made him unquiet and asked him again and again, now here, then there: "How is that now?" "Can this go on in such a way with that uncircumcised man?"

Thus the Lord led him to Saul.

Mind: David himself did not take it "in hand"; he was not "a man of action" nor "a man of slackness" but he was living with the Lord in the Covenant, in which *He was the first* and took the *lead* in a clear and especially practical way.

When David stood before Saul, his spirit rose higher and higher: "Let nobody lose heart because of him."

"I shall go and fight with this Philistine!"

Saul does not "awake" when hearing David.

As strangers they stand over against each other; the rejected king who is more and more being left by God - and the chosen young man who is really living in the Covenant with the Lord.

Once (years ago!) Saul himself was still driving the oxen - he, the anointed of the Lord, anointed to be king!

And when he heard about Nahash the Ammonite . . . then the Spirit of the Lord suddenly seized him and Saul got furious with that proud king Nahash (I Sam. 11:6).

Then he had cut the oxen into pieces and had sent them throughout Israel: any man who does not follow me will lose his stock in this way!

Then he did not soothe the people with promises. Then a shock had gone through Israel and Jabesh had been given relief in one blow.

Then Saul was still humble and he understood his place over against the Lord; then he was living in a Covenant relationship with God as yet and he acknowledged not only in theory but in practice that the Lord took the lead in it.

Saul over against Nahash the Ammonite and Saul over against Goliath the Philistine: what a difference!

Now he thinks only in military terms and will lend his weapons to David. The Spirit of the Lord lifts David above mere military considerations and makes him simply confess: "The Lord who has saved me from the claws of lions and bears, will also save me from the hand of that Philistine."

David does not boast of his former exploits, in order that Saul should not have a poor opinion of him; no, he spontaneously praises the Lord.

How great was God in his eyes and how many times had this young man noticed the saving hand of the Lord in his youthful years, when with the sheep in hours of great danger.

*That* is living with the Lord in the Covenant.

Saul said as yet: "The Lord be with you!" - a hollow sound from bygone times, for Saul had not been living with God anymore for a long time. But: "it is still the proper thing to say, isn't it?" A dead tradition.

Then David went to fight.

Not unarmed or untrained.

In the time of the Judges there already were Benjamites who could sling a stone and not miss by a hair's breadth (Judges 20:16). Those may also have been in Saul's army, but of what benefit are training and skill in a

time when the Covenant is forsaken? Mind: David didn't say to Goliath: this day the world shall know that *God is with Israel*, but he said: "All the world shall know that there is a (living) God in Israel" (I Sam. 17:46).

David had the reputation of the Lord at heart.

We all know how this exciting day ended.

Scripture takes us to Saul's headquarters, who could by no means comprehend how David was ever able to do this.

Saul, covenanter, circumcised on the eighth day, office-bearer, leader in "church" and "state", "Reformed" (compared with the time of Judges) and yet a stranger in view of the "purpose of the Lord". That is to say: he had not the faintest notion anymore of what it was to fear the Lord and to live with Him in the Covenant (Psalm 25:14). Of course, he did know the young harper.

But he gropes to the cause of this great victory and he seeks a "natural" explanation for the power of David: Whose son is this young man? From what family does he come anyhow? Saul searches "biologically" to find an explanation because he is blind to the deeds of the Lord.

David's awareness that the battle was the Lord's, did not find an echo in him.

The whole speech and action of David for the good Name of the Lord have remained mere "words" for him.

The people of the Covenant also remained "asleep" and did not "awake", though they rejoiced and fervently pursued the enemies of the Lord!

If we had been there, we would probably have said: what a glorious "enthusiasm" for the cause of the Lord.

But it wasn't a real "reformation" to God.

Else the girls would not have sung: "Among thousands Saul made havoc, but David among tens of thousands."

As if David personally was a greater hero than Saul.

*The Lord was not great in their eyes.*

They did not see the arm of the Lord (to their delivery) in the victory of David over Goliath (compare Isaiah 53).

They forgot *Him* in their glorification of the hero David.

One soul "had an ear to hear": Jonathan!

He became attached to David in true "communion of saints" (I Sam. 18:1).

Why did Saul's life take quite another course?

So the Lord God Himself led David even further, step by step, and gradually David kept the Lord in view.

In all sorts of events.

On every occasion.

So he learned to walk with God.

In the same way as Saul *unlearned* it and put the Lord God more and more aside. Also in every sort of events and on many occasions!

"Forgetting the Lord" doesn't come all *at once*!

A time ago the Lord had commanded Saul to await the coming of Samuel before he was allowed to begin with his military actions (I Sam. 13).

He did so in order to train and taste Saul's dependence and obedience.

But Saul was not "wont" to pay *attention* to God in his dealings, and seeing how the best military positions were occupied by the Philistines and how this waiting demoralized the army he (perhaps not even "intentionally" and "knowingly"! ) set aside the command of the Lord, following his own views, and he himself offered up the burnt offering for which he had to wait.

He was not irreligious but disobedient.

With the "best intentions", in order to defend "the fatherland".

He relied on his understanding and he didn't know the Lord in all his ways (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

Then Samuel said to Saul: "You have behaved foolishly, you have not kept the command of the Lord your God; if you had, He would have established your dynasty over Israel for all time. But now your line will not endure" (I Sam. 13:13).

No generation of Saul on the throne anymore!  
So Saul began to "lapse".

Some time later on it is evident, in spite of the "pious show", how rapidly he "got behind" in the favour with God.

In the face of the explicit command of God, he spares Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and he follows his own view and saves also the best cattle, to put under ban only the useless and sick cattle (that was sufficient for the Lord). Then Samuel said: "Have you not become (though you thought little of yourself) a head of the tribes of Israel? And has not the Lord anointed you king over Israel? Because you have rejected the Word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you as king and you shall no longer be king." (I Sam. 15:23)

Now Saul himself is thrust from the throne! And presently . . . rejected for ever!

"Does the Lord desire offerings and sacrifice, much religiousness and 'activity' as much as He has delight in listening to and obeying the voice of the Lord? See, obedience is better than sacrifice, and to listen attentively to God better than the fat of rams." (I Sam. 15:22)

That Saul was not "wont" to do: listen to God.

He had not trained himself in it!

And he totally unlearned it in the end.

Saul didn't always keep the Lord "in view" and therefore he forgot Him again and again.

Just as we sometimes forget something quiet unintentionally because other things absorb our attention.

That is a fundamental rule for the whole of life in the Covenant with God: obedience is better than sacrifice and to listen to Him better than the fat of rams!

That was the fundamental rule that David learned, not in the last place in the difficult years of his "youth".

Those years (from about 20 to 25) belong to the most difficult and darkest years of his whole life, but also to the richest of his life in the Covenant with God. How many psalms have not been born in those dark hours!

Psalms from which is evident how great the Lord was for him.

Psalms in which he awakens all the compassion of God.

In which he cries for help, not knowing where he must look for it other than with his God.

From the Historical Books (Samuel) we know how difficult those years have been for the young David. From the Psalms we know how he endured his hardships.

When he fought for his life and his situation was very critical many times: "Unto Thee, O Lord my God, I lift up my heart. In Thee I trust: do not put me to shame, let not my enemies exult over me" (Ps. 25:1).

How he was sometimes in confusion and in "nervous fits"!

Afterwards he was sometimes ashamed about it: In sudden alarm I thought: I am shut out from Thy sight. But

Thou didst hear my cry for mercy, when I called to Thee for help." (Ps. 31:22).

How much he as a young man has wept! He, accustomed to a royal court, had to live in caverns now and was forsaken by his father and mother for a long time and continually in peril of life (Ps. 27:2, 10).

Really, David was no "hero" with an "unbent neck" or with a "proudly raised head", with a so-called "unyielding will", with an indestructible this-and-that, with an "unbroken" six of one and half a dozen of the others, and more of those humanistic niceties.

Of the men who carefully lived with the Lord in the Covenant and by whose belief He oftentimes did great things in the history of His church, we have far too often formed a humanistic "hero" concept.

"Too little attention has been paid to the obedience, the patience, the passiveness of those Christians. Of most of them imposing figures of martial heroes have been made . . . Their *courage was humility*, their religious confidence accompanied by conscientious devotion," Groen van Prinsterer writes in *Unbelief and Revolution*, page 112.

We must stop with this worldly conception of the "heroes-in-faith".

David was a "religious hero"; that is to say, he was a hero (this word does not occur in this way in Scripture in relation to us) *in his religious expectation of the Lord*. For him the Lord was great, but he himself was oftentimes not "in a form we should have coveted" - just as our Saviour in His mortal agony in Gethsemane - the "religious hero".

How wretched David sometimes was, lean with hardships; his "bones were to be counted" (see the whole of Psalm 22).

But (and *that* was his life!) he kept God in view and again and again he clung to His unfallible word, by which He after all had proclaimed him a king! And the Lord, on His side, rose to the occasion.

Whenever He saw how David was but hoping on Him alone, He was present to help.

This experience makes living in the Covenant with such a mighty and ready Helper a source of surprising gladness.

Read that simple, spontaneous joy which in the psalms meets our ears again and again, that grateful praise for the God of his salvation.

"O glorify the Lord with me and let us exalt His Name together. (For) I sought the Lord's help and He answered me and He set me free from all my terrors."

What had happened then?

"This poor wretch here cried to the Lord and He heard him and saved him from all his troubles: when I behaved like a lunatic (out of anxiety) with the King of Gath, so that he drove me away." (Ps. 34)

"Come, boys and girls, listen to me: I will teach you how we have to fear the Lord." (Verse 11)

So the Lord made him walk in the Covenant with Him in all moments of life.

He brought pressure to bear upon him.

He intentionally brought him in danger of temptation and seduction - in order to train David to such a great thing as God had reserved for him.

All those years God had "designed" for him (II Chronicles 29:36; Eph. 2:10) to walk in them.

Just as a mother makes a little frock for her daughter: What a disappointment if she doesn't like to put it on, but in self-conceit prefers to walk in her "old rags" . . . !

## Alberta Women's Rally

Wednesday, June 18, was the day chosen for the Women's Rally in Alberta. Calgary was hosting it this year. We had a telephone call from Ontario, congratulating us on having the Rally the day they were. Our guest speaker was pastor R. Boersema and he chose as his very informative topic "The role of the Christian Women in the home."

It made us realize how important the role of mother and homemaker really is. Of course, as is often said, "Mothers are the backbone of a nation." A question period followed and some interesting points were

touched upon; due to lack of time, this period had to be cut rather short.

Dinner followed and then a trip to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Research Institute. Here we witnessed the training of mentally handicapped young adults.

For quite a few ladies, this was one of the highlights of the day. It was marvelous to see the time and patience spent with each student, so he or she can take part, feel happy and useful in our everyday society. So often we take our existence and surroundings, our every-day life, for granted. We are healthy, have our

jobs and families, go to church on Sundays, and never give it a second thought. And to think that only a few years back the mentally handicapped were just shut away in some corner, to deteriorate. No one could be bothered with them. And then to walk through a building like this, the V.R.R.I. There was a greater awareness of the things around us. And not to forget the staff working there; they have to be very special and dedicated.

At 4 p.m. we were back at the church building for refreshments. The day was closed with the singing of the league song. After that it was time to depart for home.

MRS. ANN LUHOFF

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When his men incited him to make an attempt on Saul (which would certainly have been successful) and in that way remove all troubles in one blow (what a "patriotic" deed), and when they said "piously": "The Lord has put him into your hand today", then David says: "Should I lift up my hand against the Lord's anointed? May the Lord keep that for me!"

When Nabal treats him grievously and unscrupulous anger arises in him and he sets about to avenge himself, so that nothing is left for the revenging wrath of the Lord ("no place is left anymore", Rom. 12:19), then God sends Abigail and through her holds him back in good time.

How overjoyed David is after that occurrence not to have stained his throne with blood.

And when then presently the wrath of God's Covenant breaks loose about Gilboa and the godless Saul at the same time as the righteous Jonathan perishes (compare Ezekiel 21:3) and the way to the throne is thus free (we would say), then the young David does not "reason" with himself how he will manage things, but then he shows that he has *learned how he has to live with the Lord* and he asks step by step: "Shall I go up?" . . . "To where shall I go up?" . . . (II Sam. 2:1). And the Lord has "taught him the path that he should choose", in his own freedom and responsibility. (Ps. 25:12)

Look, in this way David became more and more the man-after-God's-heart.

And thus the Lord *became* for David (which He indeed was!) the Rock of his heart.

Also later on when the dark night of sins (through his own fault) falls about the life of David, the Lord does not let him merely go. The Lord is not disloyal and "quick tempered".

When David's conscience "moaned", for the hand of the Lord was then day and night heavy on him and he could not yet come to repentance (because of the pride of his heart), in the end shame got the upper hand and the Lord "bent" his spirit and it burst out: "Be gracious O God; in thy mercy hear my prayer." (Ps. 32; Ps. 51)

Though he did taste the sweetness of forgiveness, he after that did not act as if everything had also been "forgotten" now.

When the Lord was punishing him and the sword of God struck in his family circle, David didn't look up in astonishment but he knew *his place before the Lord* in the *humiliation* that followed.

He knew when he was forced to flee before Absalom and when his kingship was at stake that then it was not becoming for him to punish Shimei (who had offended him as king).

David knew: "The Lord has said: 'Curse David,'" and he bore it then.

He had learned that in the life of the Covenant with God, there are also times and moments that we have to bear humiliation and punishment because then the Lord is humiliating and punishing us.

"Pray and work" is a proverb containing some truth, though it is nowhere so to be found in Scripture, but when we fear the Lord and in our life continually pay attention to Him and when He is great in our eyes, then we also know that there are times not only of "praying and working" but also of "praying and *waiting*", "praying and *bearing*", "praying and *suffering*".

There was often such a time for David in the desert, when he continually looked out for the way in which the Lord would fulfil His promises.

Such a time, in which he expected that the Lord would elevate him, was there, too, when he on his flight from Absalom sent the Ark back to Jerusalem (was that which the godless Hophni and Phinehas did, taking the Ark with them on the campaign, not much more "pious"?) and bare-footed climbed the slope of the mount of Olives and forbade his officers to punish the *lese-majeste* of Shimei *then*.

That demands the greatest activity of faith, and then we also experience *in practice* that the Lord does not keep us waiting for Him in vain.

That He is "early on the watch to carry out His Word" (Jer. 1:12). Within ten days Nabal was dead! Killed by an apoplectic stroke. By the Lord Himself! Within a short time David was lifted out of his humiliation and he sat again on the throne in Jerusalem.

When we learn to pay attention to the Lord in a *practical-concrete* way in all sorts of events, only then do we experience how exactly the Lord does pay attention to us and how much He is always intent on doing good to us.

Then it is oftentimes a "revelation" to us how very near the Lord is to us and how quick He is to hold out His hand to our help.

That gives the real gladness which so much enriches life in the Covenant with Him.

[To be concluded in the next issue]

P.K. KEIZER

# Israel - Its Past, Present, And Future

## 12. PROPHECY REGARDING ISRAEL'S FUTURE: EZEKIEL.

Particularly a prophet like Ezekiel, though he has the name of being hard to understand, is worth being studied with a view to what God says through His prophets regarding Israel's future.

To be sure, the prophet Ezekiel is a figure apart among the other prophets, but that is no reason for not considering him an equally useful instrument of the Holy Spirit. "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit," Paul says with regard to the N.T. congregation. This holds good for the O.T. prophets as well. With each prophet we have to ask: Who is it who says this, in what place and in what time?

He comes after Isaiah - also in this respect, that he ranks after Isaiah; he takes a narrower view of things. He was not an Isaiah, taking in the whole scene in a glance, it is said. Is that right? However gifted and talented the former has been, that does not remove the fact that it was the latter who was to experience that which the former had seen in a bird's eye view and put into words in an unequalled way.

He is a contemporary of Jeremiah and, like him, Ezekiel describes the future first of all as a restoration of Israel on its native soil, in the land of the fathers. Besides, in his visions of the future the temple and its service is to occupy a large place, as we learn from the first and the last chapters. So, the prophecy presents itself in the setting of the cult. The restoration of the cult is of great importance to him.

The message is meant for Israel's remnant. First of all the exiles by the river Chebar, in whose midst he was (ch. 1:1). In ch. 11:15 they are called: "Your brethren, the men of your kindred". Those are the people led into captivity already in 597 B.C., featured in Jer. 24 as the basket with good figs. But also in Jerusalem, where in the time of the prophecy of ch. 11, (so years before the destruction) people fancied themselves quite a bit and looked down upon those who had gone already into exile, there was a remnant. Though it is featured as the basket with bad, very bad figs - and rightly so, because of all the abomi-

nations in the sanctuary - there, too, were men who sighed and groaned over all the abominations that were committed in it (ch. 9:4). The latter were to go into exile as well.

Ezekiel had to experience as an eye witness things prophesied long before by an Isaiah, and he found out to the cost of his wife's life what it meant to the LORD that His sanctuary was profaned (ch. 24:15). In this respect Ezekiel resembles Hosea, whose married life was affected on account of Israel's breach of the covenant. Yet his message is a message of salvation!

First, the LORD will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them. He will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh (ch. 11:19; 36:25, 26, 27). This He will do after having taken them from the nations and gathered them from all the countries into their own land. And the LORD says that He does so "not for your sake, O house of Israel . . . but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came." "I will vindicate the holiness of my great name . . . and the nations will know that I am the LORD."

That this restoration of the people into its former state is no less than a miracle is portrayed in an unforgettable way in the vision of ch. 37, the valley full of dry bones. This vision is related to the prophecy of Hosea 6:1-3. In both, Israel's restoration is depicted as a resurrection of the dead. It is the misery of the people in exile that is brought out here clearly: they were dead through their trespasses and sins. And so it is the power of God's Spirit that comes to light, He being the only One able to restore them to life. The vivification of the dead, dry bones is the image of the restoration of the people of Israel, and the restoration of the people in its turn is an image of the great restoration at the close of the centuries. The line drawn in the history of Israel is extended into the future in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is His work and the fruits and effects thereof which come into the picture.

Elaborating on this theme we learn that Judah is to return to its own land. "And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the moun-

tains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all: and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms," says the LORD (ch. 37:22; cp. Hos. 1:11). The mountains of Israel shall shoot forth their branches and yield their fruit to the people of Israel, for they will soon come home (36:8). The Lord will provide for them prosperous plantations (34:29). The land that was desolate will become like the garden of Eden (36:35). The people will dwell securely in the land (34:28) and none shall make them afraid. There is no need of fortifications. On the other hand it reads (36:35) that the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now inhabited and *fortified*. A contradiction? If you take prophecy as having to be fulfilled to the letter, it certainly is and we are getting into serious trouble. But if understood in the proper way as figurative language, to be explained according to its own standards, there is no problem: No fortification implies sufficient fortification.

This comfort has its solid foundation in that which the LORD says (ch. 16:62): "I will establish my covenant with you." "*Establish*", not make, as some translate here, which translation is not correct, however. The covenant of the future is the *establishing* of that concluded in days of old. Israel's God remains the same. In token of it the LORD will set His sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore (ch. 36:26). This is a continuous thread in the book, as I said already. We'll come back to the subject in respect to ch. 40-48. And as it is with a real covenant: "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (36:27). "And I will not hide my face anymore from them when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel," says to LORD GOD (39:29).

It is concerning a remnant that these words are spoken. In ch. 20:35 the LORD says: "I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face . . . I will make you pass under the rod, and I will let you go in by number. I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the



land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD." The last words are the steady refrain of the book.

However, what about the Messiah? What do we read about Him in this book? Although not so often as in the book of Isaiah, we meet Him (ch. 17:22) in the sprig from the lofty top of the cedar, a tender one among the twigs which the LORD will plant upon a high and lofty mountain; "on the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar." The cedar definitely means the Davidic dynasty, and the twig stands for the Messianic king of the future. Again we meet Him in 21:27, where it is He who must be meant with the words: "Until he comes whose right it is; and to him I will give it." Furthermore we see Him introduced in 34:23 and 37:24 as "My servant David". An example of Pre-millennialist exegesis of the passages concerned is given by John Walvoord p. 121 of his book *Israel in Prophecy* where it reads: "One of the interesting aspects of the millennial government is the fact that *resurrected David* will apparently be a prince under Christ in administering the millennial kingdom in so far as it relates to Israel. According to Ezekiel, David will act as a shepherd over the people of Israel . . . Some have interpreted this mention of David as a reference to Christ. However, there is no good reason for not taking it in its ordinary literal sense inasmuch as David will certainly be raised from the dead and will be on the scene. What would be more natural than to assign him a responsible place in the government of Christ in relation to the people of Israel? The concept that David will rule under Christ is found not only here, but also in Jer. 30:9, 33:15-17; Hosea 3:5." In my article on Hosea I pointed out already that the reappearance of the "old" David would be of little avail to Israel, that is, the Church of the future, since the King that restored Israel is in need of has to surpass and to outshine David in every respect. It is sad that Premillennialism ties itself down to the earth and the past in such a way as to lose sight of the unique significance of our only King and Mediator Jesus Christ, who was obviously indicated by the name David. Yes indeed, David, not to present a mere repetition but to show that the LORD GOD is faithful to His promises made to David in providing

his people with the Shepherd who will be completely in the line of what in God's view a king should be.

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A special and also enigmatic place in the book is occupied by the prophecy against GOG, of the land of Magog.

We learn in the ch. 38 and 39 that, returned from the exile in the future, Israel will have to face a hard time again. The reason is the evil scheme of Gog. Ch. 38:14 reads: "Therefore, son of man, prophesy, and say to Gog, Thus says the LORD GOD: On that day when my people Israel are dwelling securely, you will bestir yourself and come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army; you will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land." That is Gog's scheme. Behind it, however, is the LORD, who will bring him against his very land, that the nations may know Him "when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."

The big point is: Does it refer to concrete facts and persons who have appeared on the stage of history already or are to appear, be it under the real name Gog or rather under Gog as pseudonym? I ask so not without reason. Unlike in Revelation 20:7-10, where, immediately upon their appearance, Satan, who stirred them up, will be bound and the last judgment will have come, in Ezekiel the whole scene is laid somewhere in the course of the ages. After the defeat of Gog, life on earth returns to normal for Israel; the burial of Gog by the people of Israel is pictured in detail. So, many attempts were made to identify this GOG with some famous king of ancient history: the Persian king Cambyses, Alexander the Great, or Antiochus Epiphanes. But it was not satisfactory. Which was to be expected. What otherwise can we expect from "historiography" in O.T. prophecy? In portraying the great future, the prophets had to take recourse over and over to life and circumstances as known to them in their own time and to what was fitting somehow or other in this framework. That is why the idea of some historical person naturally suggests itself. However, he who insists on it in seeking a subject of identification, will get into difficulties and easily go

astray. Pre-millennialism gives evidence of it. O. Allis writes in his book *Prophecy and the Church* (p. 27): "Ezekiel's picture of the destruction of Gog is one of complete annihilation; and this destruction *precedes* the kingdom age. Yet in the *Apocalypse* the destruction of Gog *follows* the thousand years. Is Gog to be destroyed for ever and then brought to life again to fight a last great battle against Messiah and the saints? Or, are there two Gogs? Or, are we to reverse the sequence of events in Ezekiel? Or in Revelation?" And again (p. 239): "Premillennialists insist that the establishing of the millennium is to *follow* God's judgment upon evil. One of the signal proofs of this to which they appeal is the fact that the overthrow of Gog and Magog described in Ezek. 38-39 immediately *precedes* the description of the establishment of a kingdom which apparently is to have no end. Yet in Rev. 20 the millennium is *followed* by a worldwide revolt of which Gog is definitely declared to be the leader. This difficulty has been always referred to as a crux of literal interpretation."

So I wonder: Isn't it rather a mysterious name indicating some so far unidentifiable power in the future, and does not the composition of his army suggest the four corners of the earth? The prophecy obviously has eschatological features. The expres-

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# news medley

When, many years ago, I started to mention in the local bulletin various particulars about the Congregation, for instance, when someone was ill or went for a trip to the old country, or was the center of attention for some other reason, I was afraid that one day I would make a big mistake by omitting the name of someone who should have been mentioned but about whom I simply forgot to say anything. Thus far things have not gone too badly.

The same hesitation was there with me when I started to mention also in the News Medley the names of brethren and sisters who celebrated their fortieth and forty-fifth wedding anniversary. I was bound one day or another to forget one. The danger even increased when I began to mention names of couples about whom I read in local bulletins.

And now there are some of those "cases".

A few issues back you could see the picture of brother and sister K. Orsel, who celebrated their forty-fifth wedding anniversary on June 14th; and a brother who does not like to see me make mistakes wrote, "If it is your policy to mention the wedding anniversaries referred to in the church bulletins, you seem to have overlooked the 50th one of Mr. and Mrs. H.J. Prins of Grand Rapids." As for the latter, I looked again through the magazines received from Grand Rapids, but I seem not yet to have received the one in which this was mentioned. On the authority of the above-quoted note, I do insert the names of this brother and sister here, too. And offer our heartfelt congratulations as yet to both these couples. I could tell you more about the former than about the latter, but shall just confine myself to the words of congratulation which I wrote.

In all likelihood, this issue of **Clarion** will contain a picture and some information about brother and sister C. Lindhout Sr., of London, Ont. On July 25th it will be forty years ago that they became husband and wife. I met them first in Orangeville, where they were living at that time, and we had our first proof of Orangeville hospitality at their place when we arrived for the 1968 Synod. They both have been active in Church life, and we do not doubt that they will experience the communion of saints also in this that they will receive congratulatory messages from several Congregations. We add hereby our congratulations to those they may receive from others.

Now we go to the news about Congregations.

Starting in the "Far West", we mention that Abbotsford decided to discontinue the Dutch services as of September 1, 1975. "Meanwhile ways and means will be explored in order that those members who have great difficulties with the English language may have something to replace what they have lost by that decision." There are not many Churches left that still maintain the Dutch services as a regular part of the worship; wherever the Dutch services have disappeared, there usually is an extra service to be conducted in Dutch at regular intervals.

From Abbotsford to Cloverdale is not very far. Now that there are four services a Sunday for that Church, it becomes more difficult to have the election for office-bearers at a meeting right after one of the services. Thus it

was decided to have a special meeting convened for that purpose during the week. Anticipating that the attendance might be influenced by this, the Congregation was exhorted to be faithful in this manner: "Don't say that it is not worthwhile to make a special trip for this purpose. It concerns the election of office-bearers in the church. When we have civic elections, we make a special trip for it; should we then not do it now that officers have to be chosen for the Church of God?" That, indeed, is an argument worth being seriously taken to heart. When the Consistory calls the meeting on an evening during the week, there is no excuse to stay away unless one is legitimately prevented from attending.

Yet I question whether it is absolutely necessary to have a meeting for this purpose. I know several larger Churches where the members are voting after the services on a designated Sunday, where a committee comes together on Monday evening to count the ballots and to make up a report about the results. That saves time and is just as effective, maybe even more effective than convening a special meeting for it. Especially when the Congregation has become rather large, it can be quite boring for those present when the ballots are being read. I recall that I did that the first time I had to chair a meeting in Schiedam, not being aware of it that they were there used to appointing a committee for the examination of the ballots. From the attitude of the brethren and sisters present I could learn very clearly that they resented this way of dealing with the matter, a way to which I had been used in a much smaller Congregation. Enough about this for now.

Another item in Cloverdale's part of the **Church News** made me exclaim, "What a luxury!" Is it not a luxury that they can write, when speaking about the dedication of their organ, "If possible all our four organists will play and also Mr. S. VanderPloeg from New Westminster." Imagine: "all our four organists". Can't they spare one for Congregations where there is no one who would even think of laying claim to the title "organist"? Recently we had a "talent evening" here in Fergus, and there we discovered to our joy that there are young people who are studying organ and thus we do not have much to worry about for the future in this respect. Visits by well-known or even famous organists may be very helpful in awakening in our young members the desire to learn how to play this instrument. Let's encourage it by any means.

We leave the Valley and thus also British Columbia. It is Alberta which demands our attention next.

The Barrhead bulletin mentioned that brother and sister Vogelzang were married for forty years. To them, too, we offer our congratulations. As far as I know, they have lived in Barrhead all the time of their life in Canada and thus have contributed to Church life there. If I recall well, the bulletin mentioned some time ago that brother Vogelzang retired recently, and we wish them both a blessed and fruitful retirement. So much can still be done for the kingdom of God!

Edmonton struggled with the "problem" of guests from the Netherlands or from other Congregations here in Canada, requesting permission to partake in the celebration of the holy supper without being able to show an attestation taken along for the purpose. Only two guests had an attestation at the last celebration, we read. And the Consistory, discussing this matter, came to the following conclusion: "It was resolved to write to the Synod



Committee for contact with Churches abroad to bring this to the attention of our Dutch Sister Churches. Also it was resolved to write to **Clarion** about this same matter to inform the Churches in our Federation." We shall wait for this communication from Edmonton. I will just mention that here in Fergus we have taken this position: if someone does not have an attestation, he cannot partake of the holy supper here. Members who would wish to partake somewhere else should ask their Consistory for an attestation. Maybe we'll hear more about this point when the communication referred to above is published.

The "Silver Committee" is still busy gathering money for a fitting present. In case someone should be afraid that the asking for donations is a permanent job, he is assured in this manner: we "won't bother you again till the year 2000." That's right. The other time I mentioned that the vote for chandeliers won out over the vote for other suggestions made. Now we are told that chandeliers are not the right type of fixture for the Edmonton auditorium. Clusters of five or six lights, hanging about ten feet from the ceiling seem to be proper arrangement. A sample will be made up and hung from the ceiling so that everyone can judge.

The Calgary bulletin has abandoned its own identity and they are now using covers with pictures and with some "meditation" on the back. I was sorry to see that the special design has been exchanged for something which will be used by many others and thus more or less promotes the obscuring in the mind of the reader of the specific character of the Churches. Now the reader will consider this Church to be one of the many.

The date originally set for the arrival of the Stam family in Burlington (Rehoboth) will most likely have to be changed. The eldest son of Rev. and Mrs. Stam is in the hospital and may have to stay there for several weeks. It will be a disappointment both for minister and for Congregation if it should be necessary to postpone the tentatively set date for the installation, but "we know: it is the Lord Who rules every happening." Thus we read in the Rehoboth bulletin. We express the wish that the Lord will make everything well and direct all things so that Minister and Congregation may soon be united. Rehoboth has been vacant for approximately four-and-a-half years by now. We can understand it that they long for the moment when they can have their own minister again.

From the Hamilton bulletin we learned that Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff has arrived from Winnipeg, and she appears to have already started with elaborate preparations for the opening of the Guido de Bres Highschool this fall. We wish her and her colleagues much wisdom and extra strength needed for the groundwork which they have to lay. It is a comforting knowledge that all this may be done on the foundation which has already been laid, which was laid long ago by our Covenant God.

In one bulletin I read a complaint by a parent who was rather upset by the lack of participation by parents. This parent wrote about an annual meeting. Here it comes: "During the coffee break several young people wondered where the parents and other interested older ones were; it was mentioned that they had not shown any interest during the regular meetings, with only a few parents at the annual meeting. It was stated and I quote: 'Only if something goes wrong, the older ones get very upset with us, but they should really be upset with themselves because they never were around to get us back on the

## 40th Wedding Anniversary



*Mr. and Mrs. Cornelis Lindhout will celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary with family and friends D.V. on July 25, 1975. They were married at Eindhoven from where they emigrated to Canada in January 1954. They belonged to the congregation of Orangeville until they moved to London, Ont., on the weekend of their 35th Wedding Anniversary. Br. Lindhout was in Real Estate for a number of years until he retired early last year. Good health allows both to enjoy their gardening and visiting their 6 children and 22 grandchildren.*

track once we got off on a tangent'."

Above I expressed regret about the loss of identity by the Calgary bulletin. Meanwhile I received the Smithers bulletin, and this has acquired its own identity with the new cover. I was not too certain whether the mountains shown on it were the Hudson Bay Mountains near Smithers or the Vancouver Lions. I gather that the former are meant, with the glacier. I was strengthened in this assumption by the remarks which were made in the bulletin about the new front cover.

The Smithers Consistory "discussed a petition which is being draughted with respect to the many strikes which paralyze our country. As being the duty of the church also to point out to our government where they are straying away from the Word of God." As a whole, this part is not completely clear to me. I also think that it is dangerous ground on which this discussion was going on. The Church is tempted so soon to interfere in practical politics, which is not her duty at all.

We spoke of a specific identity. We have tried to maintain that also with the work for the Book of Praise. But one Church apparently has received "a statement from the Committee for the Anglican Genevan Psalter." Maybe I can get a copy of that, for I did not know that there was such a committee. Terms are difficult, aren't they? In another place the Congregation was invited to a meeting for "The official closing of the school".

The last two remarks were not important at all, I admit. But I'm trying to get into a holiday mood. Bad way of doing it, someone might say. You certainly need it, another member may snarl. You really deserve it, a third one may state. In any case: I am getting it. And I wish you all happy holidays. At Premier Printing they will keep on working. Sterkte!

vO

## ISRAEL - continued from page 7

sion "in the latter days" also points in this direction, and so does the earthquake of vs. 19. So the prophet Ezekiel is taking very very long views here. Coming back to what I said in the beginning, we see that compared to Isaiah his horizon is not so restricted. Otherwise than Isaiah, whose prophecy leads to the future in successive stages, Ezekiel's prophecy points at the future directly. With an Isaiah it is first the Assyrian Empire of his days and then subsequent kingdoms of a more distant future looming up behind it. Assyria is featured first as the rod of God's anger against Israel and then as the object of the same anger. With Gog, on the other hand, the first stage, that of being the rod of God's anger and the staff of his fury, is skipped, and this enemy of the distant future is featured right away as object of God's anger.

It is the redemption of God's people Israel that is in the centre. The prophecy against Gog is a prophecy of salvation of Israel. It is the LORD GOD whom Gog intends to attack. For that purpose he gathers the peoples from the four corners of the earth, most of all from the far north and east (38:6): Meshech, Tubal, Gomer - names referring to Asia Minor, the Caucasus, and the area north of this mountain. But the south, Cush and Put, is not absent from the roll-call.

Enemy of God and his people: so we meet him again in the N.T. book of Revelation as the one taking the lead among those who are gathered for battle by Satan in an ultimate attempt to bring down the kingdom of God. Whatever the difference, or distinction I better say, between Ezekiel, where Gog is to appear during the course of history on earth, and Revelation, where his appearance is the beginning of the end, the message worded in both O.T. and N.T. language is the same: God's enemy has suffered crushing defeat. And the life of God's people that according to Ezekiel's picture continues here on earth in a glorious way must be the same as the vision of glory and resurrection of Rev. 20:11f.

\* \* \* \* \*

The book of Ezekiel ends with the vision of the Temple. A vision which has raised quite a few questions among scholars. They have wondered, for example: Is it indeed a

vision? Does a vision go into details so far as is done here?

Furthermore: What does it refer to? To the restoration of Israel as people? That is what those say who are in favour of a literal explication. Since it did not come true immediately after the return from the Babylonian exile, Premillennialists project it in the millennial kingdom. John F. Walvoord writes: "A number of Scriptures also describe the temple worship which will characterize the millennial kingdom. According to Ezekiel, a magnificent temple will be built, and a system of priesthood and memorial sacrifices will be set up. Scholars have not all agreed as to the interpretation of this difficult portion of Ezekiel. Some have felt it impossible to have a system of animal sacrifices subsequent to the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross in the light of N.T. passages stating that the sacrifice of Christ makes other sacrifices unnecessary. Though varied explanations have been given for Ezekiel 40 - 48, which unfolds these details, no satisfactory explanation has been made other than that it is a description of millennial worship. In any case, it is clear that the sacrifices are not expiatory, but merely memorials of the one complete sacrifice of Christ. If in the wisdom and sovereign pleasure of God the detailed system of sacrifices in the O.T. were a suitable foreshadowing of that which would be accomplished by the death of his Son, and if a memorial of Christ's death is to be enacted, it would seem not unfitting that some sort of sacrificial system would be used. While problems remain, it seems clear that Israel will have an ordered worship with Jerusalem once again the centre of their religious as well as political life."

Others, also sticking to a literal interpretation, see Ezekiel appear here as legislator more than as prophet. He does not tell how it will be, but rather how it *should* be in the future. Ez. 40ff. is a projected design.

Over against the literal interpretation there is a symbolic one. Others try a combination of the two.

Whatever the suggested solution, I freely admit that this part of the Bible raises several problems. E.g. what does the second group of interpreters mean by symbolic? That a visible terrestrial temple cannot be meant at all? In Solomon's temple, built by man's hand and as palpable as possible, the various parts had a

symbolic meaning. So in spite of symbolism, Ezekiel's vision can point at a material structure, as far as that goes. Taking into consideration so many details, e.g. the measures, it is hard to discover any symbolism, unless one is going to allegorize, but that is not the intention of this part of the book.

I hear somebody ask: So you would say that the temple shown in the vision like a blueprint was to be constructed after the exile in accordance with the measures given by the LORD, just like the tabernacle of Moses: "See that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain"?

Prof. J. Ridderbos wonders whether it might not have been the intention of the LORD by means of those concrete data and measures to create the impression of some structure to be erected in reality; a vision that was to materialize.

This way there are two elements in the vision, the first being the encouragement of exiles cherishing hopes for a new temple, to whom a new hope is held out by the prophet.

A temple was built, by Zerubabel, but not according to the "blueprint" of the last chapters of Ezekiel. However, so the reader wonders, isn't prophecy deceiving? Well, here the word applies that we shall love the LORD "with all our mind". For he who gives the matter a thought, will find out that the "project" is impracticable, unworkable.

Questions arise. For example, is it feasible that the city lies at a distance from the sanctuary? How is the land to be divided among the tribes in equal portions? What about the scenery? One really wonders: "Are we still in the land of Canaan or is the scene laid someplace else? And what about the very high mountain on which the temple is located? This cannot be Mount Sion, which in reality was not so high. What we read in ch. 47 about the river of life issuing from below the threshold of the temple cannot possibly have been fulfilled in such a literal way.

In conclusion we must say that, taking it all in all, the scenery of the last chapters of the book exceeds the bounds of what is possible and feasible on this earth in this dispensation, in preparation for a better life on an ideal earth where everything is to be seen in its correct proportions.

H.M. OHMANN

# YOUTH COLUMN

## "DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH"

Recently I received a letter. If it was not from the youth, it certainly was meant for the youth. We will quote the letter in full:

What about writing in Youth Column about Church discipline in connection with the following:

It happens in our church that young people get married, the husband unfaithful in celebrating the Lord's Supper and the wife is no confessing member. When their first child was born, it was baptized. They made the promise that they will instruct this child in the aforesaid doctrine which they do not even understand themselves.

Another example: a confessing member of the Canadian Reformed Church marries a member of the Anglican Church. Her children (2) are baptized in the Anglican Church. She herself does not attend the worship services in the Canadian Reformed Church, and she is still a member of our (Can. Ref.) church.

Does the church not show signs of the false church as far as church discipline is concerned if these things can happen?

Yours truly, Concerned

Before we begin to answer our concerned brother or sister, let us retrace and ask some preliminary questions. What does the writer want? Does he want an article on church-discipline or a condemnation of the church who tolerates these apparent sinful conditions in "our church"? If we are to enter a discussion of these two specific cases, then all I am asked to do is to answer the concluding question of the writer in the affirmative. For the writer in his/her own mind has already answered his/her own questions. Supposedly, I must reinforce that.

However much we would agree with the writer, we must be careful at this point. It is difficult to discuss specific cases. One usually needs to know more than a few facts. For example, a consistory can approach a classis for advice in a disciplinary matter. Before such advice is given the members of the classis usually bombard the delegates from the consistory for more information - how many times did you bring visits? has he hardened in sin? is this a public sin? and so on. Very often one also needs to know the motives behind a certain action or words. Hopefully the readers appreciate the fact that the questioner poses us with a problem which is strange and difficult for us.

Moreover, not only is it difficult but is it proper to discuss or to debate specific problems of a congregation in the public press? Our questioner uses the phrase "in our church" and "a member of our church". We can take it for granted that he/she knows the persons involved. As a concerned member should we then not approach the parties whom we think are on the wrong track? Are we not our brother's keeper? If this does not produce the desired results, we should take along witnesses to confirm every word. If this still does not help, tell it to the consistory as a concerned member. They are the appointed shepherds who must watch over the souls of the members. If the consistory pays no heed but tolerates this (evil) condition, we may address ourselves to the classis, regional synod and

even general synod if necessary. That is the route our Lord taught us to walk in such cases.

Hopefully you understand why we do not want to meddle in something that is not our affair. Besides doing possible damage to the parties involved, we run the danger of lording it over a consistory. Therefore, we leave the specific cases aside.

But maybe Concerned would like a general article about church discipline as it relates to marriages. In the opening paragraph Concerned asks for discussion of "church discipline in connection with the following" and then follow the two cases. If his examples were meant to stimulate discussion on the general topic of mixed marriages and the church's view of them, then we can be short and to the point. We will ask Concerned to turn back to our previous "Youth Column" articles in CLARION, entitled "Fair or Faithful?" and "The Two Covenants" dealing with this very subject.

In order to review our standpoint let me refer you to the concluding words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Jesus has just come to the end of summing up important matters of God's covenant with His people. He pointed them to the blessings (beatitudes) of the covenant as well as the curses (woes, Luke 6); the position of the covenant people in the world (as light and salt); the laws of the covenant (killing and adultery); alms, fasting, and prayer as part of the covenant service; and the care of the covenant God over His loved ones, and so on. Then Jesus concludes by saying that the man (and woman) who hear and do these words build their "home" on solid rock. All other ground (even listening but not doing) is shifting sand. What marriage partners need as a foundation for marriage therefore is to profess (publicly) that they not only believe the words of the covenant but that they will by God's grace also do them. Then they build on a solid-rock foundation. That "home", says Jesus, will never fall.

Hopefully this will answer our "concerned" reader. If not, please write again. And if anyone else wants to contribute to this subject (general subject of church discipline and marriage), please write.

W. HUIZINGA

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## Letters-to-the-Editor

Dear Editor:

After reading the "Communication" of the Canadian Reformed Church in Smithers to the congregation, concerning television and believers I felt obliged to respond:

1. I seriously question whether this article should have gained prominence in *Clarion* unless it can be proved to be of edification of the churches in the whole confederation. I am of the opinion that this is not the case, as I'll try to make clear.

2. There is I think a serious conflict in the statements, "Television as a means of communication is a gift from God" and, "T.V. cannot have a place in a christian home." Though the statement went to considerable lengths to show that television in the hands of sinful man is a dangerous tool it gave no place or attention to the fact that T.V. is and still may be used as a gift of God. It is unjustified to condemn the use of T.V. when we have the duty and calling to use it as one of God's gifts. We do not deny the gifts of the Lord do we?

3. There was nothing in the Communication which urges to congregation to be Reformationally active in e.g.

a. confronting the producers and governing agencies responsible for T.V. programming with a Reformed witness concerning the "produce" they present (not doing so is in conflict with being a "salt of the earth" (Mat. 5:13a).

b. using the opportunities available in many places to get a Reformed evangelism program into many people's homes via cable T.V.

4. The course recommended is essentially one of withdrawal from the world. It is a course which is being followed (no doubt very sincerely) by Pietistic Christians. Reformed people have in the past been urged to be active as prophets, priests, and kings, in every sphere of life. The consistory, by their admonition abdicates responsibility in the area of mass media to the Devil. Is this Scriptural?

5. Responsible *stewardship* means that when our eyes offend us or we are "turned on" by some godless program whether it is on T.V., in our bank accounts or your cottage by the lake, we pray for daily *renewal* (as in putting on a new garment) and we make a joyful, Reformed noise to the Lord whenever and wherever that opportunity is still available in this country. We watch good programs with our children and we thank the Lord for them.

Let us not, even not in the best intentioned way, start smashing idols unless it is clear that they are truly idols. Let us use T.V. "soberly, watchfully", "searching out the

spirits". Resisting the devil, publicly as well as individually.

"For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer."

C. BOSCH, Edmonton  
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Dear Editor:

Not all readers of *Clarion* will appreciate your full page of Church News from Smithers in your May 31 issue. I for one would like to congratulate Smithers. They are at least willing to tackle the issue. This letter is then not intended as criticism of their decision, but more as a contribution to the discussion.

In the arguments against television Smithers could have mentioned many other factors as well, of course; I would just like to add another three, and I am sure there are many more: 1. Stewardship: is \$500.00 to \$1,000.00 of the Lord's money spent on a colour T.V. good stewardship? 2. Health: think of eyes and posture and lack of exercise. 3. Quarrels: Members of a family often disagree on the program to be selected, and the disagreements often deteriorate into quarrels.

Still I am not happy with the final conclusion of Smithers. It is negative. Television-watching is only part of the much larger leisure-problem. Leisure, to be sure, is one of God's Gifts to His People in our times. But are we as Reformed people mature enough to use the liberty which we have in Christ, to use our leisure time, responsibly? Do parents spend more time with their children? Do families spend more time together to discover the wonderful world of nature, and the wonderful world of the written word, both the Word of God, and the rich heritage of literature available for all ages? When television becomes a problem in a family, then there is a problem of life-style. The Christian quality is lacking, and doing away with the T.V. set will only create a vacuum that is not necessarily filled to the honour of our Lord. In a well-disciplined Reformed home, where a positive Christian life-style is practised, there may be (small) room for a T.V. set, but the members will have no time to waste on trash. In such a family the cheap entertainment offered on most T.V. programs will not even be appreciated. Such a family needs a lot of time for reading, both individually and together, for music, and for a host of other activities, far more important than the tube.

In closing, dear editor, I would just like to offer a few suggestions for those who would like to attempt to use a television set responsibly and to the honour of our God:

1. Don't waste money on a large and expensive set.
2. Place your set where father and mother can control it: *not* in the

familyroom in the basement.

3. Use your T.V. guide at all times before switching your T.V. on. Never turn it on just to see what there might be.
4. Expand your program choice with a good antenna, or perhaps even cable T.V., depending on where you live.
5. Turn your T.V. off immediately after the chosen program has been viewed.
6. Set a definite weekly time limit on T.V. watching. I suggest 1-2 hours.
7. Don't let ANY program interfere with your normal family-togethertimes, such as mealtime, reading of the Bible.
8. Do not let children watch T.V. beyond their normal bed-time.
9. NEVER, NEVER, use your T.V. as a convenient baby-sitter for preschool children.
10. Last, but not least a positive suggestion: read Gladys Hunt's book *Honey for a child's heart*, with the subtitle: "The imaginative use of books in family life". A Reformed family following the advice given in this book will not need the previous nine negative suggestions, nor the negative advice given by the Smithers consistory, and will never have a television problem.

Thank you, editor, for placing this letter,

GERRY DENBOK  
Burlington

## Church News

Accepted:

S. DEBRUIN

of Waterdown has accepted the call extended to him by the Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg.

\*\*\*\*\*

Declined:

REV. M.J. WERKMAN

of Chatham declined the call extended to him by the Church at Neerlandia in combination with the Church at Barrhead.

\*\*\*\*\*

New Address:

CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCH  
AT LONDON

Clerk: C. Lindhout Jr.

875 Waterloo Street, London, Ont.

N6A 3W7

\*\*\*\*\*

As per June 29th the worship services of the Church at New Westminster will be held in the building of the Presbyterian Church, 335 - 7th Street, New Westminster, at 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

## *Dutch Church Activities on Taiwan* (5)

SAD END

All together 32 ministers served on Taiwan between the years 1627 and 1662. Some of them for a long period of time, others having only one single year mentioned behind their names in the list of honour.

It is a strange thing to suddenly read the name of "Joannes Cruyff"! His ministry in the years 1649 to 1662 was undoubtedly not as lucrative as the profession of his namesake of today, the famous soccer-player! He was one of the survivors of the siege of the fortress "Zeelandia".

This brings us to the final stages of the story of the Dutch Church activities on Taiwan.

One of the governors had a tailor among his employees. That man was called Coxinga, although his real name was Tcheng Tch'eng Koung, nicknamed - after the pronunciation in the province Fou-kien-Kok sen ya. He was a Chinese whose father was a powerful man somewhere in the coastal regions of the mainland.

His blood would show. He carefully observed the way of life of the Dutch and their war-tactics. This was of great help to him when he succeeded his father.

In the year 1644 one of the successive Chinese dynasties was expelled and replaced by another imperial house. Coxinga, however, did not submit himself to the new ruler. This made him very popular. But he could not hold his ground and consequently went to the high seas as a pirate.

As a matter of course he had to have a home port. This is why he put his eyes on Taiwan. Perhaps he would be able to free from there his own territory, the province of Fou-kien.

In this respect he was a sort of early precursor and model of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek!

In 1660 the governor of Taiwan expected Coxinga to open the attack and therefore asked the Governor-General in Batavia, Maetsuyker, to send him money and more troops. The latter, however, deemed this unnecessary; he was not so pessimistic.

But in the meantime Coxinga invaded Formosa with an army of 25,000 well-trained Chinese.

Many of the Dutch were taken

prisoner. Many of the men were crucified, the women maltreated.

The last stronghold was the fortress "Zeelandia". Coxinga's army laid siege to it in the beginning of May 1661. An urgent cry of distress was sent to Batavia, but with no result. The fleet that had to come to the help of the besieged settlers met with bad weather and went to Japan under its weak commander.

Coxinga used one of the ministers, the Rev. Hambroek, to send an ultimatum to the fortress. Two of the latter's daughters were inside and urged their father not to go back. However, he did so because he feared that otherwise his wife and three others of his children would be instantly killed. The besieged refused to surrender.

It cost the Rev. Hambroek his life. On the list of ministers who served on Formosa we find the word "decapitated" behind five names, that of Hambroek included.

For nine months the people in the fortress could hold out. Then at last they had to surrender. However, they were successful in negotiating free retreat.

This was the end of the Dutch colony on Taiwan, the end of the Dutch Church activities at the same time.

This island was no longer of any value in political respect and to the Dutch trading activities.

"As tender plants fall before a hurricane, so the young and promising Christian Churches of Formosa fell before the sword and power of the Chinese pirate Koxinga. The fact that this could happen should be considered first of all as a judgment of God," wrote a wellknown author of missionary literature (7).

### TAIWAN MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER NAME: A SIGN!

Only at the beginning of this century the Gospel was again proclaimed on Taiwan. In particular English and Canadian Presbyterians were active in this respect.

As for the Dutch Church activities, there are hardly any remnants left. The worst of all things is this that, when the island had no longer any value for the Dutch trade, Formosa and its Churches were

abandoned and left in the hands of heathendom. Here the Dutch failed in the fulfilling of their historic calling.

Someone wrote: "For us Formosa is no more than just another name . . . The opportunity is gone, irrevocably gone. However, elsewhere we have still to fulfil an important calling. We will feel blessed when one day the millions of souls of the Netherlands Indies will testify that the Dutch rule was a blessing to them" (8).

This was written in the year 1914. The author could not know that even this calling would be neglected after the Second World War, and under, among others, American influence these millions would be left to the powers of revolution by a nation that itself fell more and more away from God and His service. He could not know that even Ambon and the Moluccas - in certain respects an encouraging example in the history of the Church and of Mission - would be abandoned and consequently the Christian Church there would have to face all sorts of difficulties.

For this reason we cannot agree with him that Formosa or Taiwan is to us just another name. It should be more than that. This name, which every now and then returns in the news, as it recently happened on the occasion of the death and funeral of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, should be a sign for us, a call to obedience and faithfulness, also in spreading the Gospel and, under God's blessing, establishing the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ wherever there are any possibilities left!

G. VAN RONGEN

(7) Lion Cachet, *Acta van het Zendingscongres 1890*, page 78.

(8) H. Kern, *De Gids*, 1914, Volume I, page 378.

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## Ministers' Conference

On May 27, 1975, ministers of our churches gathered together at the Theological College for a workshop. As you may know, these are held twice a year. At this workshop ministers from east and west came together. East and west! Yes, Rev. J. VanRietschoten from Smithers, B.C., also managed to attend. And for the benefit of our other colleagues in the West, the college tape-recorder was put to good use.

Since our convener could not attend, Prof. L. Selles chaired the workshop. In the morning Prof. H.M. Ohmann treated us with an introduction on "Form Criticism" of the prophetic literature of the O.T. He explained how form criticism followed what is called the "literary criticism" of the O.T. The literary critics only wanted to deal with the literary documents at hand. Mind you, they theorized that behind the O.T. books as we have them were earlier sources. Various collectors, compilers and redactors took these sources and put them together into what we have today. What the critics try to do is to discern these various strands from the earlier sources. In doing so they of course jeopardize the unity of the Scriptures.

Concerning prophecy, the literary critics had tried to eliminate the predictive element from prophecy. The prophets, so said the critics, intended to say what the people should do and not what God would do according to His counsel. The people and not God formed the pivot for prophecy.

Form criticism does not replace but adds to literary criticism. Instead of literary criticism of the documents they however stress that oral (spoken) traditions stand behind the prophetic utterances. The prophets were not writers but orators. If we only look at the written documents we miss much. We do not see the life situation of the prophet and the audience then.

These critics see the shortest prophetic utterances to be the oldest. In fact the oldest passages are the short oracles of God against the nations. God uttered these. Afterwards the prophets expanded them, explaining the reason for God's judgment. There is therefore a difference between what God said and what the prophet adds. The critics see another "form", namely the development of the prophet's religious ideas and opinions. Since the people often opposed these ideas, disputes resulted (eg. Haggai). Finally, they discern the form which we can call the long theological discourse which we find in Jeremiah for instance. Notice how the accent is on the

prophet's words. Our professor gave examples of the different forms of disaster and salvation prophecy, as the critics saw them. He impressed on us that we believe in a God who not only threatens but who also explains His motives.

A lively discussion followed. Did Job and his "comforters" speak in the poetical way in which we read it in our Bible? What is the relation between the written record and original spoken message? These and other questions engrossed us. We were reminded that "all Scripture (all what is written as we have it) is inspired by God . . ." (2 Tim. 3:16). We cannot and need not look behind the written documents.

Our discussion was interrupted by a delicious lunch served by the wives of some ministers. Too bad the table-talk is not recorded!

In the afternoon we continued the discussion of the morning's topic. Afterwards a general discussion on pastoral subjects followed. One question raised concerned non-communicant members. Can a non-communicant member withdraw and break from the church on his/her own or must the procedure outlined in the form always be used? Also, how must we view children of excommunicated members? These and related questions came up.

For our next meeting it was decided to ask Rev. VanderBoom to introduce the subject of "Sunday-Sabbath" and to ask Dr. Faber to introduce the ethical question of "marriage and divorce", especially the question if there are more grounds than adultery for dissolving a marriage. This workshop will be held on Jan. 4, 1976, D.V. At four o'clock we closed with singing and prayer.

For the conference,  
W. HUIZINGA

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## Canadian Reformed Senior Citizens' Home Society Inc.

The above-named society consists of over 100 members of our churches in the Fraser Valley, B.C. No doubt you have read something about it in the News Medley. Our thanks for including our activities!

Our aim is the establishment of a Senior Citizens' Home for our elderly brothers and sisters. The necessity of such a home becomes more and more apparent, for which reason we now have societies in the East and the West. We have cooperation with each other as societies and try to be of some help to each other wherever possible. Since it would not be feasible to build one central Home for Canada, both "East" and "West" aim to build a Home in their own region.

Our society in the West came into existence in 1967, and, ever since, our boards have been working to find ways and means to realize its aims. In 1974 we bought a property of 7 acres located in the centre of the Fraser Valley, near Langley. This property was bought for the price of \$60,000, of which \$45,000 has been gathered by selling bonds. There were also some donations.

At the last membership meeting a proposal was adopted to have a start made on the building program. A questionnaire was sent out and the results were that some were interested in self-contained units. This does not mean that a central home with full care would be out of the picture. On the contrary, the board feels this is a necessity and it is our

prime concern. At one of our last membership meetings it was decided to find out if support could be obtained from other churches in the West. Some years ago the churches had been contacted, but with meagre results. Now, however, we appeal to our brothers and sisters in the West to let us know whether they are interested and also willing to help. If so, please get in touch with us.

We plan to start building in the near future. Our first start will be approximately 8 self-contained units, which number could change if more apply. For our plans as outlined above some financing has been pledged. But to realize our plans more money is needed. The board feels that before we start to build, our property has to be paid off. That means that the approx. \$15,000 has to come first. Over and above the pledges, we need another \$100,000 which we hope to obtain by selling bonds of \$1,000 at a rate of 7% paid annually. This is a safe investment and we as board appeal to all who can help, to do so.

We do emphasize that applications from brothers and sisters outside the Fraser Valley are also welcome.

If you wish more information, please contact us. See also the ad which you will find in this issue.

For the board,  
J. VANDERMOLEN, Secr.  
Suite 205, 707 Hamilton Street  
New Westminster, B.C.



# The Book of Praise

## A BOOK OF THE WHOLE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee for the Book of Praise, to put it simply, recently held a meeting to discuss what should be done to execute the Synodical mandate. You know that this Committee was continued by the Toronto Synod.

Thus far, this Committee has received *very few* direct reactions from the membership. Synod 1974 decided to pass on to the Committee some documents with criticism and suggestions which had been received from the Churches. But this is about all the Committee ever received to help it in its work.

At this latest meeting it was decided to ask the membership again for criticism, suggestions, eventual rhymings, and for everything by which the work might become more fruitful for the Churches.

Hence we come with the request to bring to the attention of the Committee eventual printing errors which you have found, errors in rhythm, music, etc.

You may also have in mind certain passages from Scripture which you consider to be suited for rhyming: write them down and tell the Committee.

Maybe you have a rhyming yourself: send it in!

Perhaps you have some criticism on thoughts expressed in certain hymns, or are convinced that specific hymns should be deleted: write your thoughts and opinion down and inform the Committee.

Maybe you have a tune which you think is very beautiful and fit for use in the worship of the Lord: let the Committee have it, but do not forget to also mention the name of the composer and the source from which you took it: there may be copyright or it.

The Committee does not expect that it can come with a completely revised edition of the Book of Praise before 1980; but on the other hand, we should not act as if we have all the time in the world! We cannot go on printing slightly changed versions every two or three years: we are striving to have a definite Book of Praise ready before the 1980 Synod. For this work we need the cooper-

ation of the whole membership. The Committee is convinced that, if another printing of the Book of Praise is needed shortly, the changes should be confined to printing errors, etc. Otherwise we could get the situation that three or four different versions are in circulation, each with a different numbering of the songs. That should be prevented. If we come out with a "new" Book of Praise, this should be the one to be used by the membership for many years. We do not think that the members should have to buy another book because the songs have been changed so much that the old book, although still in very good shape, becomes unusable.

In order to achieve that, the Committee solicits the help of the membership, so that "new" songs can be presented for scrutiny to the 1977 Synod and, possibly, be incorporated in what the Committee hopes will be the definite Book of Praise.

We request you to send your suggestions and/or corrections to:

*Dr. W. Helder,*

306 Queen Street South,  
Hamilton, Ont. L8P 3T5

May we experience this time that this undertaking is not a matter of a few persons but has the interest of the whole membership?

For the Committee,  
W.W.J. VANOENE

### FOR YOUR INFORMATION

This issue of Clarion was mailed from Winnipeg Central Post Office on July 4, 1975.

### OUR COVER

*Roosevelt Peak, south of Toad River, B.C., on the Alaska Highway. British Columbia Gov't Photograph.*



For information please contact:

*Arie J. Hordyk* 3386 Regal Rd., Burlington, Ont.

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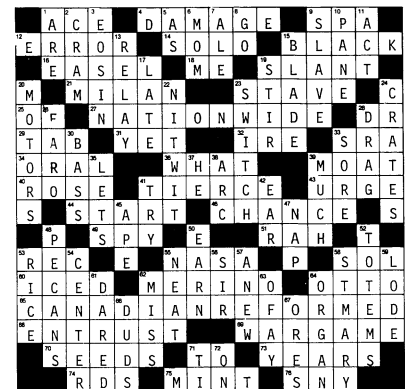
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