BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

Anniversary Issue

IN COMMEMORATION
OF THE
TWENTY-FIFTH YEAR

Protestant Reformed Churches in America

At Thy command man fades and dies
And new-born generations rise;
A thousand years are passed away,
And all to Thee are but a day;
Yea, like the watches of the night,
With Thee the ages wing their flight

—THE PSALTER

MAY - 1950

Prayer

To Thee, our father God, our refuge strong,
For rich inheritance of truth secure,
Of everlasting love and mercies sure,
Of Thy eternal bond of friendship, long
Before the world was formed, with Thine elect
In Jesus Christ our Lord, Thine only Son;—
To Thee our thanks we bring, and take upon
Our lips Thy praise; and from the heart direct,
On this occasion, Lord, our humble plea:
Preserve us, gracious God, that we may flee
From youthful lusts, from ways of false renown,
Forsake the world, and keep our garments pure,
May faithful be, e'en though the world allure,
And may hold fast, that no one take our crown.

H.

No issue such as this would be complete without special recognition of the devoted service rendered our churches by our friend and pastor, Reverend Herman Hoeksema

The Sonnet above was prepared expressly for publication in this Anniversary Issue and is a reproduction of Rev. Hoeksema's own hand.

THE PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

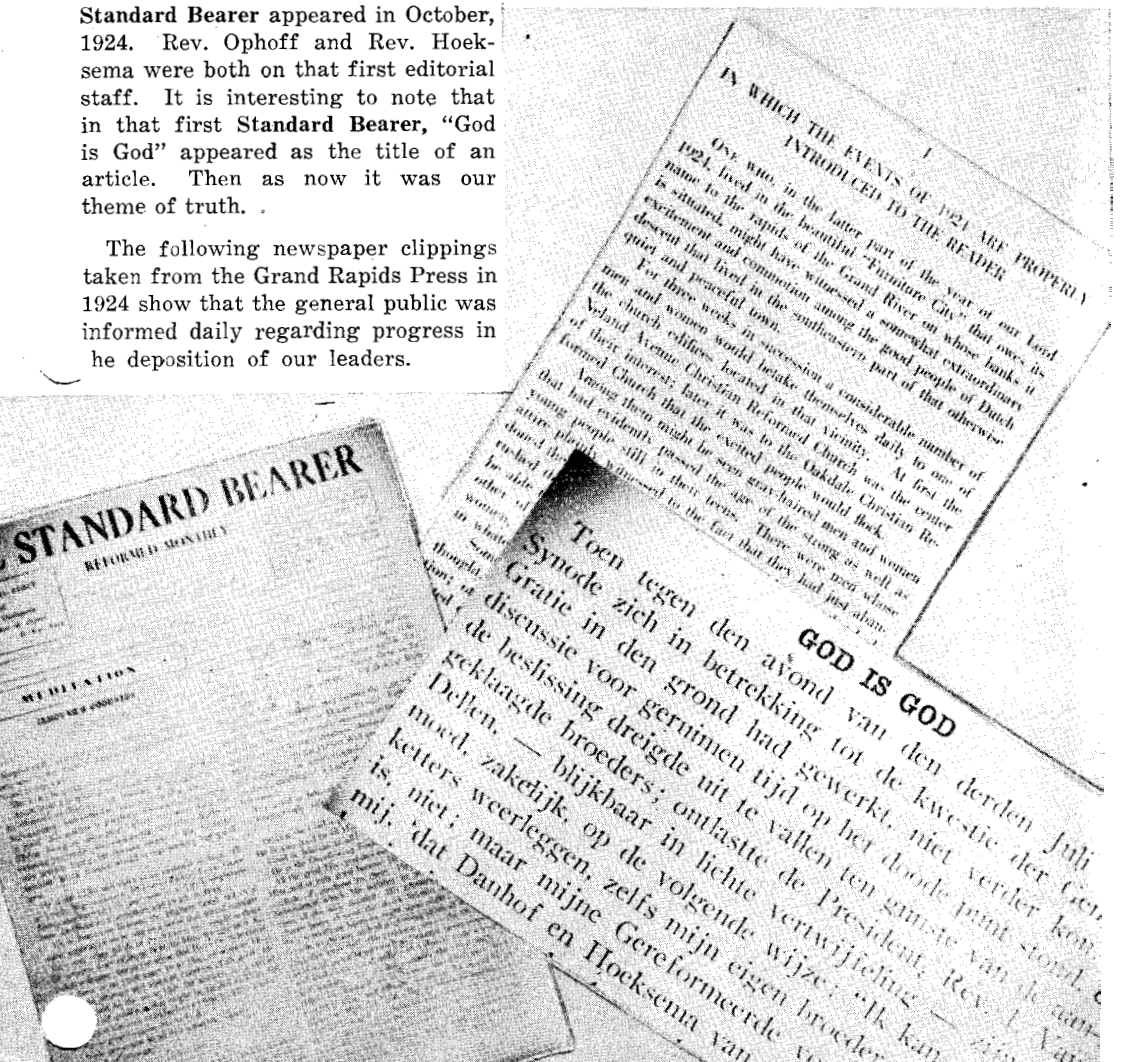
ANNIVERSARY STORY

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Protestant Reformed Churches we are pleased to present the story of our beginning and our development through these years as a Church of God.

Our denominational history is fully told in the book **History of the Protestant Reformed Churches,** the first page of which is here photographed for you.

The **Standard Bearer** also is an excellent source of historical data. The first **Standard Bearer** appeared in October, 1924. Rev. Ophoff and Rev. Hoeksema were both on that first editorial staff. It is interesting to note that in that first **Standard Bearer,** "God is God" appeared as the title of an article. Then as now it was our theme of truth.

The following newspaper clippings taken from the Grand Rapids Press in 1924 show that the general public was informed daily regarding progress in he deposition of our leaders.



...TO BE PLACED BEFORE FLOCK BY HOEKSEMA

Those Not in Accord with His Stand Free to Quit Allegiance, He says.

CHURCH PACKED TO HEAR SUSPENDED MINISTER

...clares He Will Continue ...eetings Until Pulpit Taken

CLASSIS HOLDS ... DECISION IN CASES OF TWO MINISTERS

Men Who Disagree with Common Grace Tenet Still Wait Action.

OPHOFF PREFERS DEATH

Local Pastor Tells Christia... Reformed Body He Will ... Not Subscribe.

...Hoeksema Suspen... ...istian Reformed C...

...of Eastern Ave. Church ...d Guilty of Insubordination; Case Not Yet Finally Disposed Of.

REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA.

...V. H. HOEKSEMA ADDRESSES LARGE AUDIENCES SUNDAY

Congregation Shows Good Will by Handclasping After Services.

"If the situation ... would rather have ... ...s than the truth, feel free to ... ...not dependent ...

CLASSIS DEPOS... ...REV. G. M. OPH... ...OF HOPE CHURC...

Christian Reformed Pastor Let Out of Meeting on Thursday.

Rev. George M. Ophoff, pastor of Hope Christian Reformed church, was deposed from his pulpit and was denied all privileges and prerogatives of pastoral position ... Christian Reformed ... sia Grand Rapids ... afternoon, the class ...

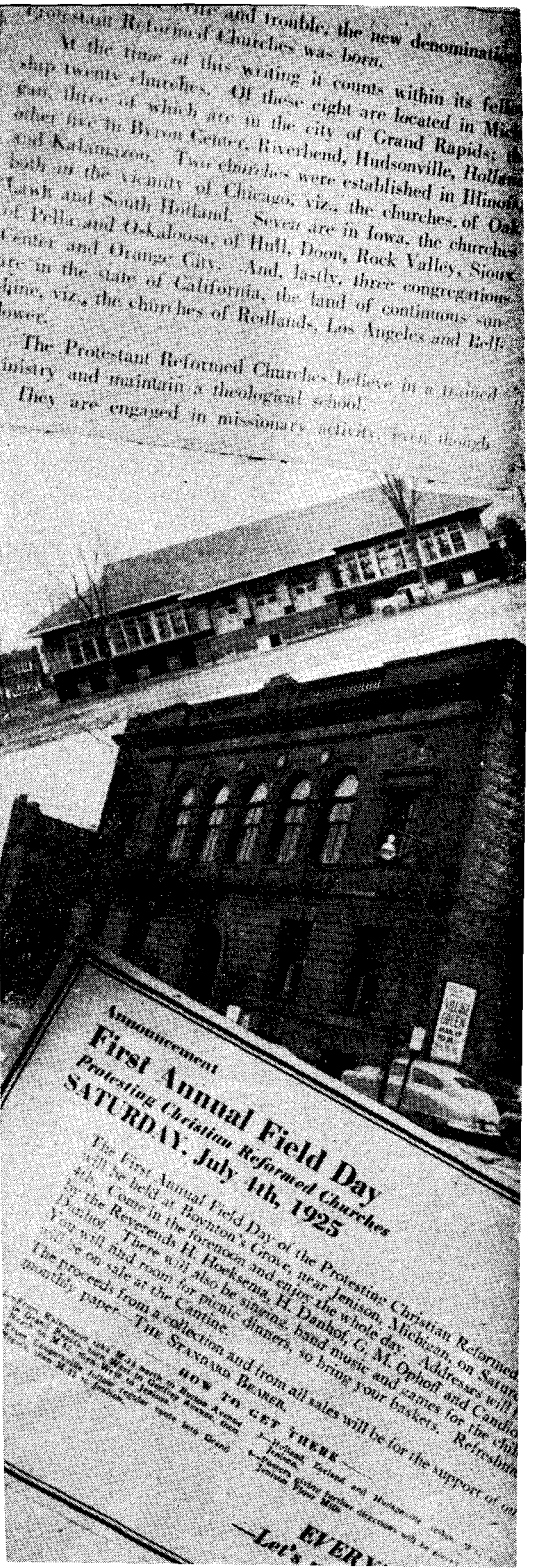
The doors of the Eastern Ave., Church ere closed to us just a day or two before Christmas. On Tuesday, December 22, 1925, hired deputies were stationed in the basement of that church to guard against an attempt to recapture the church by violence. No violence was planned, however, by the ejected congregation. The Lord provided them a temporary place of worship in the Community Hall of Franklin Park. "Hundreds of folding chairs were purchased and fetched from Ionia, Michigan; a platform and pulpit were quickly built in the Hall; and there the congregation held its first service after having been ejected, on Christmas morning, 1925."

Our Sunday School program was also given in the Franklin Community Hall. Of course the little tots couldn't figure it out but when they received their candy id orange as usual, they knew everything was all right.

For a time the congregation worshipped in the St. Cecelia Building which is located in the down-town district of Grand Rapids. Every Sunday the auditorium was crowded. Many stood through the entire service while others sat in window seats or on the platform.

"Thus amid strife and trouble the new denomination of Protestant Reformed Churches was born. . . ."

However, to go back just a little, on the evening of January 29, 1925, the various consistories of the expelled churches, namely, Coopersville, Eastern Ave., Hope, and Kalamazoo, met in the basement of the Eastern Ave. Church to discuss the possibility of establishing some bond of union among themselves. It was t their purpose at this meeting to or-



ganize into a new denomination, with a classis and synod. On the contrary it was only to seek a **Temporary Union** based on the common cause which they embraced. They had appealed to the synod, which was to convene in 1926, and it was their sincere desire that she would review the work which the classis had done and if possible show to the classis that she had erred in deposing these brethren. The synod of 1924 had declared the Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema "FUNDAMENTALLY REFORMED" yet they had also declared as reformed their theory of Common Grace. It was in the hope that the Synod of 1926 would clear up this inconsistency, that the above-named churches organized a Temporary Union. The very name which was chosen indicated their hope of uniting again with their Christian Reformed brethren if that would be at all possible in the light of the Word of God—**The Protesting Christian Reformed Churches.**

It was this organization of churches that planned our first annual Field Day on July 4, 1925, at Boynton Grove.

In 1926, after all hope of uniting again under the one ecclesiastical roof with our Mother Church had faded, the **Protesting Christian Reformed Churches** were organized on a permanent basis as the **Protestant Reformed Churches.** The Lord's blessing rested on this newly organized denomination, and she enjoyed a steady growth. By 1936 the following churches were within her fold:

Fuller Ave. or First Church—1925
Hope — 1925
Doon — 1926
Hudsonville — 1926
Second — 1926
Sioux Center — 1926
South Holland — 1926
Hull — 1925-27
Kalamazoo — 1927
Oaklawn — 1927
Oskaloosa — 1928
Pella — 1928
Rock Valley — 1928
Holland — 1929
Creston — 1932
Redlands — 1932
Orange City
Bellflower — 1935
Grand Haven — 1936

Acknowledgement

We extend our grateful appreciation to our pastors and members of our various churches for the kind use of their albums to obtain the pictures published in this issue.

—The Publication Comm.

The Revs. R. Veldman, C. Hanko, L. Vermeer, B. Kok, J. De Jong, and A. Cammenga—is one of these men your pastor? If he is, did you know that your pastor was a member of the first graduating class of the Protestant Reformed Seminary?

"The evening of the sixth of June was for our churches a joyous evening"—thus writes the Rev. Hoeksema in **The Standard Bearer** of June 15, 1929. And so it was, for on that evening six young men graduated from our theological school. The field was "white unto harvest" and now the Lord was providing laborers. The Revs. G. Vos and W. Verhil could now come back from the West where they had been laboring with a view to this day, to finish their studies at the Seminary.

The school from which this first class graduated in 1929 had opened its doors in June of 1925. The Revs. H. Danhof, G. M. Ophoff, and H. Hoeksema were appointed instructors. Instruction was given in the courses most necessary to prepare young men for the ministry of the Word: four languages—Dutch, English, Greek, and Hebrew; Old Testament and New Testament Exegesis; and Dogmatics and Homiletics. A very humble beginning, indeed! But God's blessing rested upon this school. For here the Word of God was taught and expounded as in no other institution in the land—in the world!! Surely, "God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

It pleased the Lord to take unto His eternal rest on April 1, 1943,

the Rev. Wm. Verhil while he was pastor of the church at Edgerton, Minnesota

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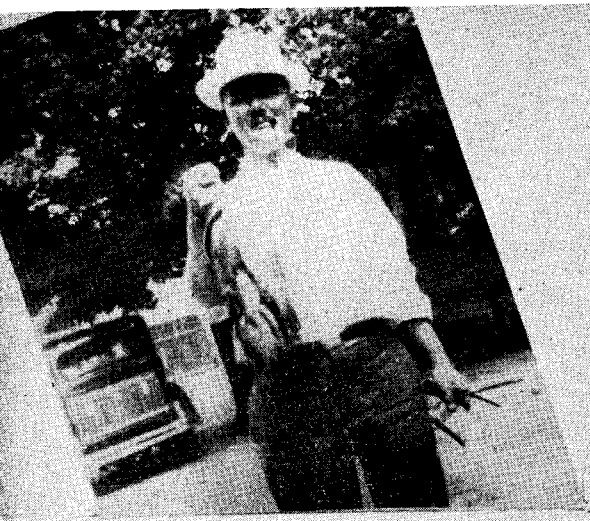


Our pastors also found time for a bit of relaxation now and then. Fishing seems to have been their favorite sport. "Van", our ever faithful janitor at Eastern Ave., as well as at Fuller Church, was right in there with the "Dominees". He attended a good many of our Young People's Outings.

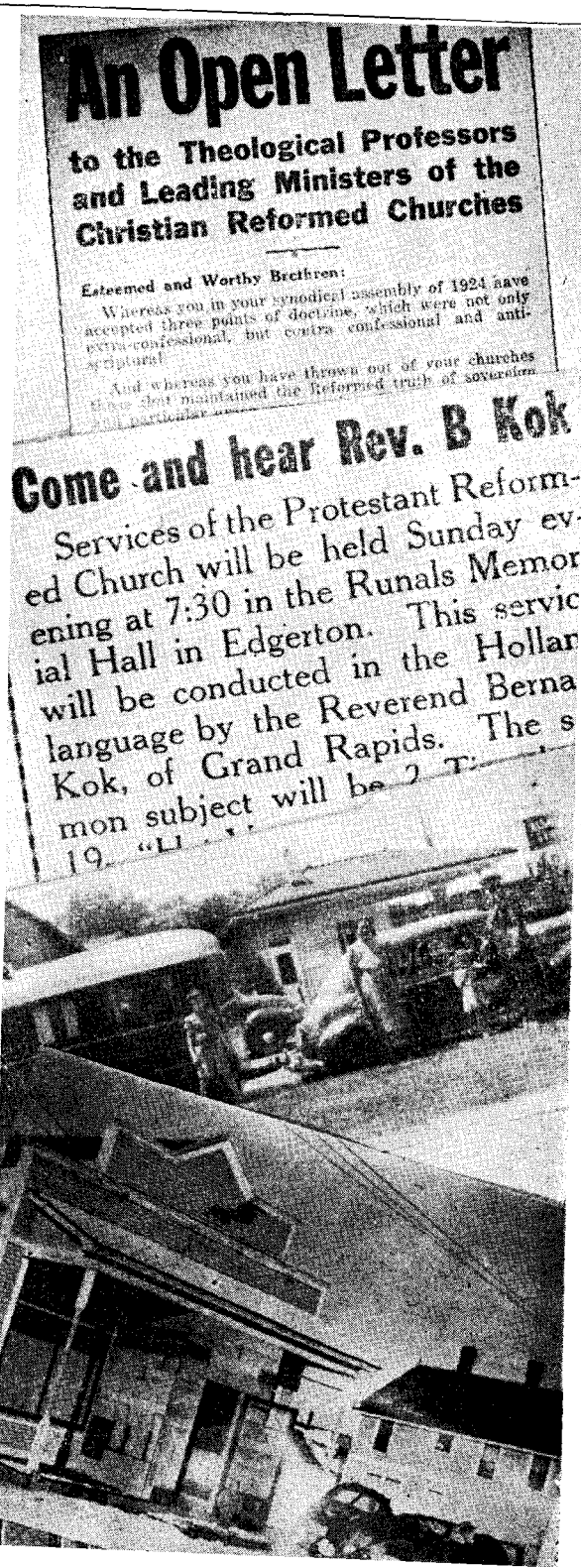
It was in February of 1937 that Rev. Bernard Kok was installed as the first Home Missionary of our churches.

'sionary endeavors began with work ne vicinity of Chicago and Highlands, Indiana, and later in Northern Michigan near Cadillac. It pleased the Lord to show us no positive fruits on these first efforts of our missionary but finding comfort and confidence in the fact that God always accomplishes His own good pleasure, Rev. Kok left these places to take up his labors in Edgerton, Minnesota. Rev. and Mrs. Kok and their two children lived in a house trailer as they travelled from place to place.

In September of 1937 he began his work at Edgerton, and there a congregation was organized in April of 1938. The first meeting was held in Runals Memorial Hall, pictured here.

In July Rev. Kok and his family travelled to Manhattan, Montana, which was the next field opened by the Lord to our sionary endeavors. Here the first meeting was held in the old store you see pictured on this page. In Manhattan also the Lord blessed the preaching of His Word unto the hearts of some, and kindled in their hearts a new love for the Reformed truth, so that in September of 1939 they organized into the Protestant Reformed Church of Manhattan.

From Manhattan, our missionary moved to Lynden, Washington, and spent the



months of June and July of 1940 investigating a possible field of labor there. Finding none, Rev. Kok moved to Zeeland, Michigan. Approximately nine months were spent in busy missionary activities in Zeeland and then once again our attention was drawn to the West and Reverend Kok and his family moved to Iowa. In November, 1941, Rev. Kok received and accepted the call from our congregation at Hudsonville.

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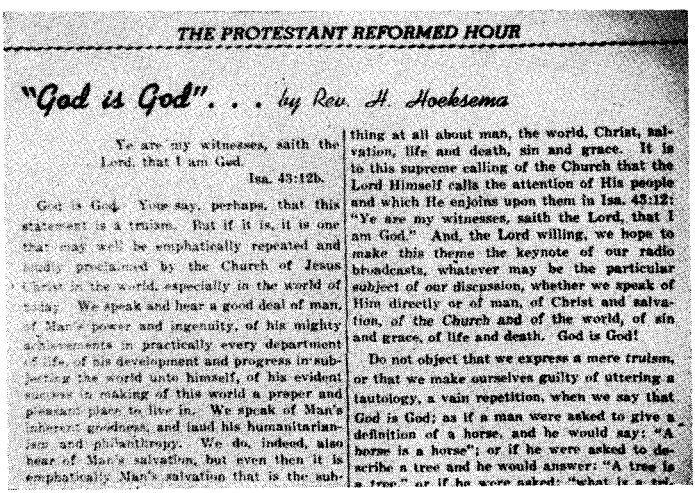
The ministry of the Word of God through the medium of radio represents a missionary endeavor in the Protestant Reformed churches. It is carried on at present, however, by individual churches rather than as a denominational function. The Truth, as only the Protestant Reformed Churches possess it, is heard over many thousands of square miles of America each Lord's Day throughout the year under the auspices of the Reformed Truth Hour, the Sovereign Grace Hour, and the Reformed Witness Hour.

The Reformed Witness Hour originates from Grand Rapids, Michigan and is heard throughout Western Michigan over a local station. At present a Chicago outlet broadcasts the Reformed Witness Hour to another considerable portion of the lower Great Lakes area. This program—now in its eighth continuous year on the air—was first known as the Protestant Reformed Hour and made its initial broadcast in October 1941 under the sponsorship of the Young Men's Society of Fuller Ave. Church. Since its inception the Reformed Witness Hour has distributed the weekly message in printed form to many interested listeners. A copy of this message appears on this page.

The Sovereign Grace Hour very similarly had its origination through the efforts of our western young people who managed its affairs for a considerable period of time. At present this program rests in the hands of a Radio Executive Committee representing the participating churches in the west. The Sovereign Grace Hour, which was first heard in 1942, also prints and distributes its weekly message.

The churches in Oaklawn and South Holland, Ill., jointly sponsor the Reformed Truth Hour which is heard each Sunday evening from Hammond, Indiana.



THE PROTESTANT REFORMED HOUR

"God is God". . . by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.
Isa. 43:12b.

God is God. You say, perhaps, that this statement is a truism. But if it is, it is one that may well be emphatically repeated and loudly proclaimed by the Church of Jesus Christ in the world, especially in the world of today. We speak and hear a good deal of man, of Man's power and ingenuity, of his mighty achievements in practically every department of life, of his development and progress in subjecting the world unto himself, of his evident success in making of this world a proper and pleasant place to live in. We speak of Man's inherent goodness, and laud his humanitarianism and philanthropy. We do, indeed, also hear of Man's salvation, but even then it is emphatically Man's salvation that is the subthing at all about man, the world, Christ, salvation, life and death, sin and grace. It is to this supreme calling of the Church that the Lord Himself calls the attention of His people and which He enjoins upon them in Isa. 43:12: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." And, the Lord willing, we hope to make this theme the keynote of our radio broadcasts, whatever may be the particular subject of our discussion, whether we speak of Him directly or of man, of Christ and salvation, of the Church and of the world, of sin and grace, of life and death. God is God!

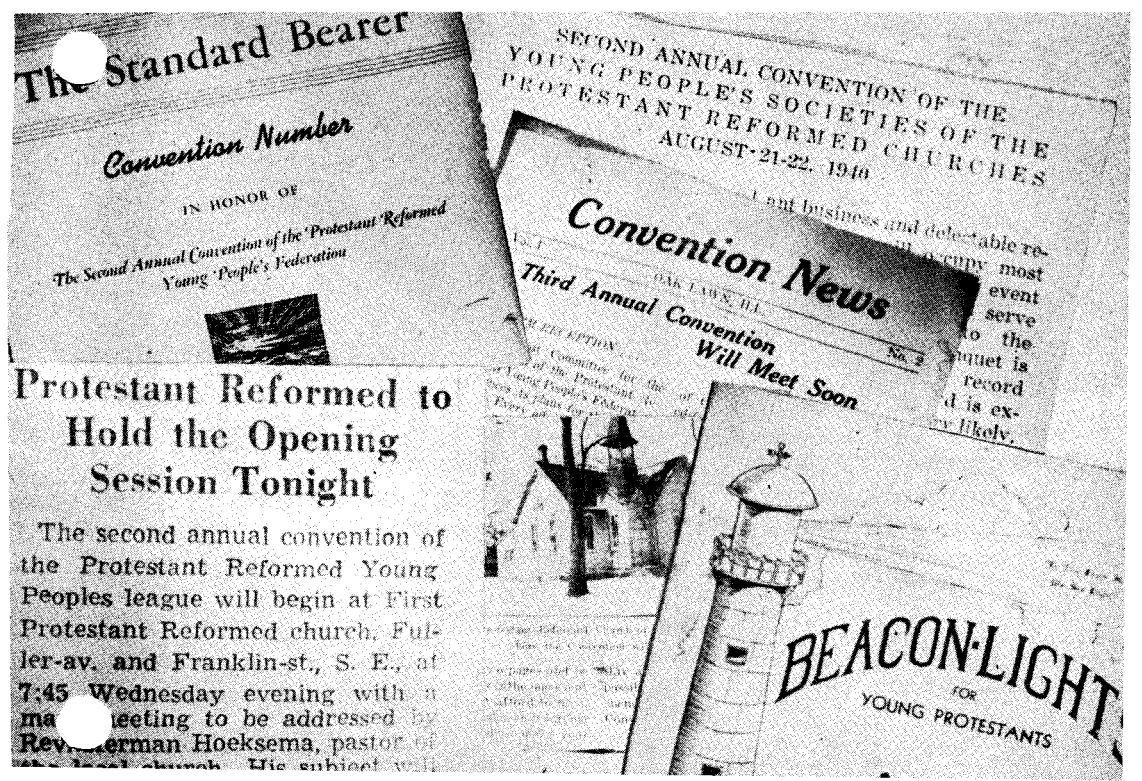
Do not object that we express a mere truism, or that we make ourselves guilty of uttering a tautology, a vain repetition, when we say that God is God; as if a man were asked to give a definition of a horse, and he would say: "A horse is a horse"; or if he were asked to describe a tree and he would answer: "A tree is a tree," or if he were asked: "what is a sol-

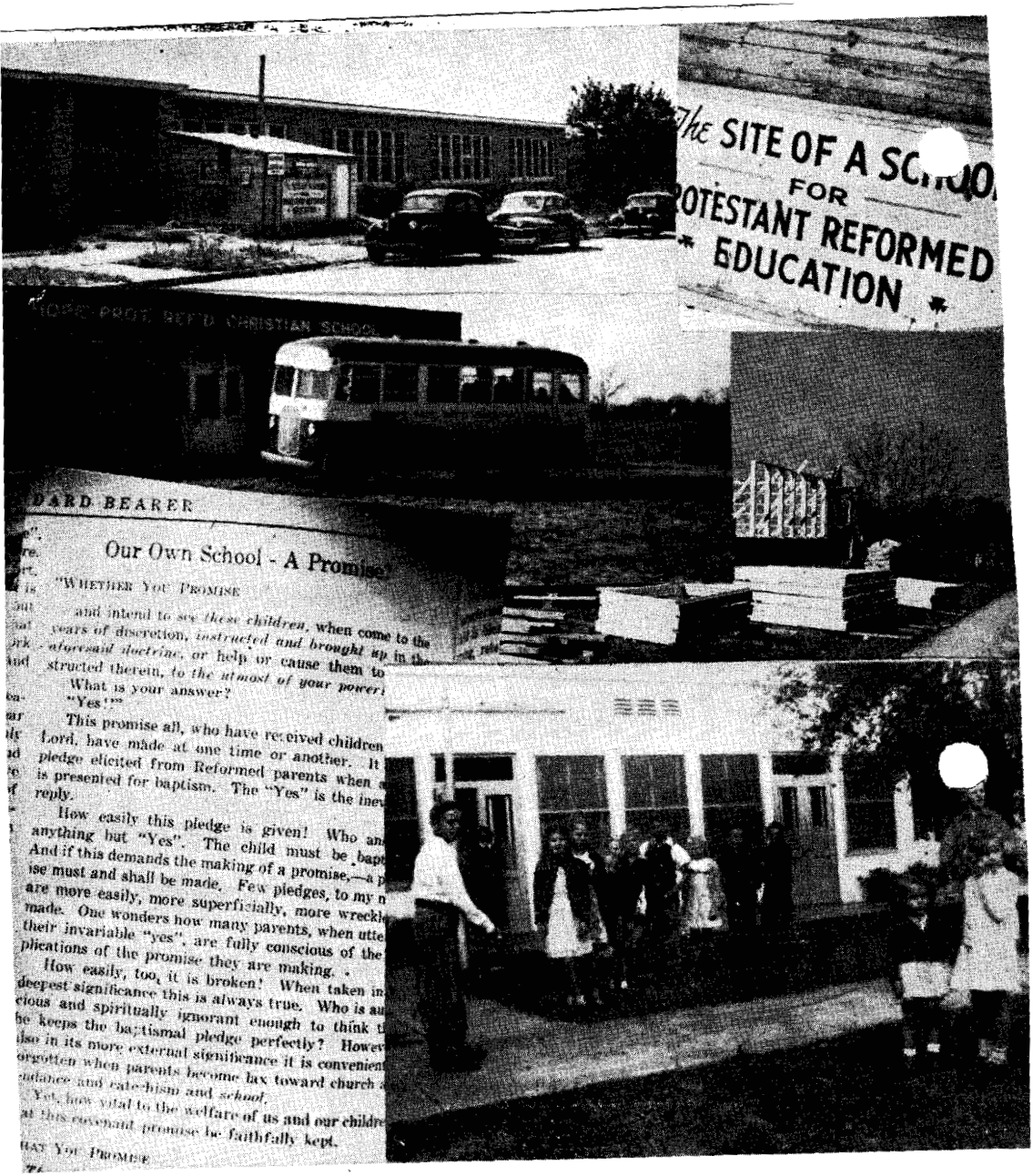
Through the efforts of our Young People in South Holland and their energetic pastor, the Rev. L. Vermeer, our First Young People's Convention was held in August, 1939, in South Holland, Illinois.

The speaker at this first Inspirational Mass Meeting was the Rev. G. Lubbers, who spoke on the theme, "The Days of our Youth". At this First Convention eight societies were represented. Here our Federation was organized with Mr. Homer Kuiper as president, and it was decided to hold annual conventions. Here, too, the Beacon Lights Publication Committee was organized. The first issue of Beacon Lights appeared in January of 1941.

Our Second Convention was held in First Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1940. It was at this Convention that the precedent was set of having Rev. Hoeksema as our Inspirational Speaker at the Opening Mass Meeting. All the activities of the 1940 Convention were recorded in the October issue of the Standard Bearer of that year which was dedicated to our Young People's Organization.

Our Third Convention met in Oaklawn, Illinois. It was at this time that we decided to change the format of Beacon Lights. The original size was too large, the young men said. They wanted this handy pocket size.





Another very important step in our development is the building of our own schools. From the very beginning some had visions of organizing our own schools, but it wasn't until recent years that most of our people realized that having our own schools is "A Promise" they make to God, and therefore, an absolute necessity.

The first grade-school for Protestant Reformed education opened its doors in the Fall of 1934. This was at Redlands,

California. After having classes in the church basement for several years, a little white, two-room school was built on a vacant lot next to the parsonage, and there all nine grades are taught by two teachers. About forty students are enrolled each year. The "California sun" makes it possible for Redlands' children to play jump-rope all years round.

The Hope School Society was organized on March 4, 1946, and two weeks later a decision was taken to build. After much red-tape with C.P.A., State Board of Education, etc., construction was begun in the Spring of 1947, and in September of that same year, after much financial sacrifice and hard work by the men of Hope church, the school was opened. This also is a two-room school, with two teachers and approximately sixty-five pupils. A school bus brings these children from surrounding rural districts. Eight pupils graduated from the ninth grade in 1948 and in 1949 there were four graduates.

On April 15, 1937, a society for Protestant Reformed education was organized by churches of the Grand Rapids area. It was decided at that time to work for a high school, but in 1941 this High School disbanded and a society was organized with the purpose of beginning a grade school. In the year 1944 the building site on Adams Street was purchased and on the suggestion of our architect, much of the work of building was done by our own people. The school building has eight rooms and will accomodate three hundred pupils. Bus service is being arranged for those pupils who live too far away to walk to school.

When the Adams St. School opens in September there will be classes from the kindergarten through the ninth grade and the Board has been authorized to make plans to add one grade each year so that pupils may continue at this school through the twelfth grade.

A Teachers' Club, under the capable leadership of Rev. Ophoff, has been meeting for the past five years in order to prepare prospective Prot. Ref. teachers.

The Free Christian School Society of Edgerton, Minnesota was organized during the pastorate of the late Rev. Wm. Verhil, about ten years ago. During the pastorate of Rev. Vos the society purchased three lots for a school site. In June 1948 the society decided to build. The original three lots were sold, and eight other lots bought, which will allow room for expansion. Here, too, much volunteer labor is being donated by members of the church, and very likely the entire building will be paid for when the doors open in September.

This school will be similar to that of Hope. It will be an eight-grade school. The prospective enrollment is 60 pupils. It is expected that all the school-going children in the Edgerton congregation will attend.

As our grade-schools are training our children in the Truths maintained by our churches, so also, our Theological School is training young men in these same Truths, preparing them to take their places as future ministers of the Word.

The Protestant Reformed Seminary which had such a lowly beginning in 1925

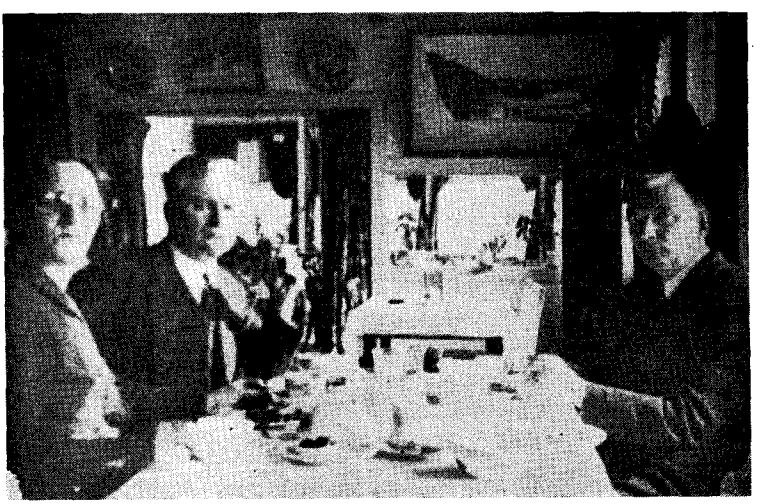
has expanded. The instructors now include the Revs H. Hoeksema, G. M. Ophof, R. Veldman, J. Heys, and G. Vos. The Rev. H. C. Hoeksema also works diligently in the interest of the school, preparing notes from material sent to him, by means of a wire-recorder, from his father's desk. We have at present three full-time students and four students who are attending classes both at Calvin and at our Seminary. In the very near future the school expects to receive some students from the Netherlands as well as some other brethren who, by the grace of God, have become very enthusiastic about the truth of the Word of God as He has entrusted it to our care.

Instead of the few courses with which we began, the school now has a full seminary course and also a pre-seminary course. As of July 14, 1948, the school has been recognized by the Michigan Department of Public instruction, thus enabling the veterans of World War II to receive the benefits they are entitled to under the law.

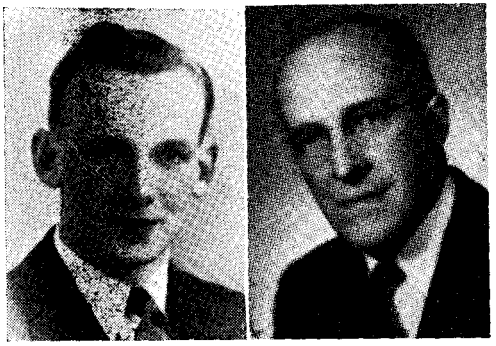
In May, 1940, after fifteen years of existence, our churches met for the first time in synodical gathering. In the June, 1940 issue of the **Standard bearer,** Rev. Hoeksema wrote: "We have good reason to rejoice, because we may look upon all that has thus far been accomplished as the work of God, as a sure token of His grace to usward. Only in the confidence that our churches are the work of God in Christ, that our privilege to institute a synod is the gift of His grace to us, can we really be glad. . . ."

Another interesting development in our Church History was a conference held in 1944 between members of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and the Synodical committee from our Churches.

Dr. K. Schilder visited our country and our churches in October and November of 1947. A conference was held to discuss views held by the Liberated Churches of the Netherlands, and to compare them with the views held by our own churches. A spirit of harmony and brotherly fellowship prevailed at our meetings with Dr Schilder and since his return to the Netherlands, our churches have exchanged Church papers and are now planning to carry on correspondence.



Rev. Walter Hofman and Rev. Edward Knott were installed as Home Missionaries in October, 1947, being called to this work by First Church. After working for some time in Byron Center, they left for Lynden, Washington. Rev.



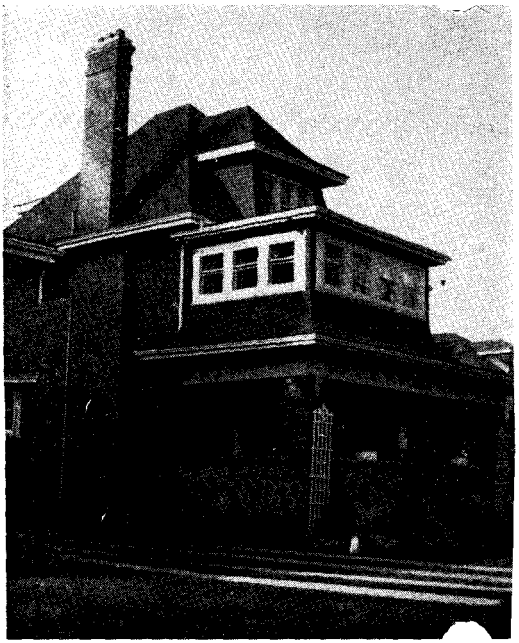
Knott left Lynden in February, 1949 to help in our vacant churches. A few weeks ago he accepted a call to our Kalamazoo Church.

Rev Hofman continued in Lynden until November 1949. Since that time he has been working with Rev. A. Cammenga in our Canadian Mission Field. Our Mission work in Canada has resulted in the organization of two churches, one at Hamilton and one at Chatham.

Our church in Hamilton was organized with eighteen families. Services are held in the Labor Temple, where Rev. H. Veldman preaches from Sunday to Sunday. The parsonage, the home of Rev. Veldman, is pictured here. An English-speaking Young People's Society, with eighteen members, has already applied for membership in our Young Peoples' Federation.

Our congregation at Chatham was organized this past week with fifteen families. More families are expected to join in the near future. Other congregations are trying to help Chatham buy a station wagon or bus in which distant families can be brought to and from church for service . Rev. Hofman is at present working in Chatham while Rev. Cammenga is working in and around Alberta. The families of both missionaries are living in Grand Rapids.

We have tried to tell the story of the beginning and of the development of our churches—the story of growth in grace and knowledge; — a story of growth through grace and knowledge.



EDITORIALS

Twenty-five Years Hence

At this occasion much has been said and much has been written about the development of the Protestant Reformed Churches during the last twenty-five years. We feel that this is proper especially if we look at our history as the work of God and view the events connected with the growth of our churches in the light of that which Scripture teaches us concerning the church.

However, much of this history is for us as young people little more than a heritage. The present generation of young people is placed in a peculiar position. The struggle of our parents to witness a good confession is ours only in as far as we are acquainted with it by instruction and study. In a sense we experience the struggle vicariously and for that reason I want to cast your thoughts into the future.

What shall this generation of Protestant Reformed young people say twenty-five years hence? Shall we be able to say what our parents say today, that God has purged His church, that He is still using us as His witnesses? Shall we also experience a struggle even as our parents have in the past?

It is my conviction that we must so evaluate the future that we can expect little but struggle and difficult experiences. As youth we are not naturally inclined to this view of the matter. As youth we are idealistic and optimistic. We look for "big things" and often are disappointed if "big things" fail to materialize.

I believe that we must cultivate realistic attitudes toward the future. And I hasten to add that a realistic attitude toward the future means that we take a Scriptural attitude. The most powerful figure in Scripture is the figure of the Christian when he is portrayed as a military man, a soldier, a stalwart and a guard of the citadel of the church. A classic passage from the Bible illustrating this attitude is found in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, from the eleventh to eighteenth verses.

The necessity for developing this attitude is affirmed by the history of the church in the past. The true church and the truth is under attack always. And in the next twenty-five years we have no reason whatsoever to think that it shall be any different, in fact, we can expect the attack to be stepped up in intensity. For this reason I hold that we may not rest on the laurels of the past but we must anticipate the battle for the truth in the future.

As churches we have, up to this time,

been remarkably free from defection within our ranks. Other church groups of a reformatory character cannot speak in this way. I am aware of one group of churches in the American church world which has experienced gross defection and apostacy repeatedly in the past twenty-five years. That can also happen to us and if this editorial does nothing more than open the eyes of our youth to the fact that we can expect an enemy "within the gates", I shall be satisfied.

If we should find such an enemy, we ought to have the courage of our convictions and root him out. Thus we shall continue the heritage of our parents given us by our covenant God and His blessing will be ours.

WHAT? WHERE? WHEN?

9th Annual Young People's Convention!

Second Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

August 22, 23, 24

Don't Forget! — Plan Now!

Theme: "The Power of Godliness." II Tim. 3:5.

1. The Significance of this power.
2. The Danger of denying this power.
3. The Possibility of possessing this power.

ENJOY

Instrumental Numbers—Vocals—an Essay—a Debate

PLUS

The Mass Meeting—the Outing—the Banquet!

Meet new friends and old!

Attend—For Christian Fellowship and Inspiration!

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Abiding In The Truth

Rev. Gerald Vanden Berg
Oak Lawn, Illinois

It is by the grace of our God that we may mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the existence of our denomination of churches and in doing so we may humbly say with Jeremiah, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed for His compassions, they fail not. Great Is Thy Faithfulness". We are asked to convey in this department of Christian Living a few thoughts that are also appropriate to this commemoration and with you Protestant Reformed Young People especially in mind we will attempt to do this by directing your attention to the very important phase of your christian living that always enjoins you "to abide in the truth".

That is a **great challenge**, youth!

It is also a **very high calling!**

It is the very essence of **your christian living!**

And, moreover, it is the **"jubilee"** of the church. Without it a church may institutionally exist and may even succeed in making an impressive outward appearance but that in itself is vanity. Genuine christian living which is practiced only as we abide in the truth can and does inspire the church to celebrate her anniversary. "For I rejoice greatly", writes John, "when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth". We will no doubt agree that the measure of our actual christian living will then also determine the measure of our actual joy in this commemoration of our churches' twenty-fifth birthday.

Imperative it is, therefore, that we ask ourselves the question, "To what extent are we walking in the truth"? Put differently we might say, "How orthodox is our christian living?"

There is a danger that we take this matter lightly and then just brush it aside with a "pshaw and piffle", to go on in the way of our own pleasure. If that be our attitude we have no place in the jubilee of the church of Jesus. Those who "pooh-pooh" christian living are simply wicked and for all this they shall be brought to judgment. Repent and be transformed in your mind or your's shall be the double stripes.

But even among those of us who will sincerely weigh the question there may be a danger that we become enthusiastic in the wrong way. Talking about "walk-

ing in the truth", we cannot help but feel that in our circles that word "truth" has become stereotyped and so lost its full power and meaning. The "word" is emphasized at the expense of the "content". Many will jubilantly cry, "We have the truth", but when one stops and challenges that statement and inquires more specifically after that which those folks have and call "the truth", it is found that it amounts to only a vague conception of religious beliefs, and the conclusion is drawn that these cries are inspired by "pa and ma" who untiringly taught the children to say "we have the truth", without bothering to tell them what it was. An abstract term is empty and even if it is "truth" you cannot possibly walk in it. Wouldn't it be far better to teach our children the whole concept and then label it "the truth"?

Others there are who have a beautiful intellectual understanding of truth but who fail to walk in it. Having been catechized thoroughly they know and are able to define all the truths of the Word of God. A wonderful virtue this is but it must be exercised. The truth may not lay dormant in our heads but must daily be applied to our lives. The truth is not a thing to be taken up exclusively in the church service and catechism class but rather it is a power (intellectual, moral and spiritual) to be seen in every word, gesture and deed. The truth must live or we soon have a state of "cold orthodoxy" in which there is no spiritual joy.

Still another group seem to be of the opinion that "truth" is something that the minister alone is to ponder and preach. I that were true, why preach to humans? Wouldn't animals be as receptive? To reason thus is to seek a reason to shirk our responsibility.

Protestant Reformed Youth, what are you?

Carelessly indifferent?. . . . Do you know the "word", having heard it often but fail to have any solid conception of its meaning?

Coldly orthodox? Do you know "truth" and cram it into your heads because you "must" and then leave it there?

A shirker? Don't know it and don't care to perhaps? Assume the attitude that it is easier to leave such "profound things" to others, do you?

Or, do you walk in the truth?

To do this is our life. Yes, it is the future life of our Protestant Reformed Churches. Just as twenty-five years ago our leaders and parents were compelled to bring our churches into existence because they, by the help of God, insisted that they MUST walk in the truth, so you and I of the present generation, by the same Divine aid, will be compelled to perpetuate them only as we walk in truth. God calls you to no other task that is more important than this, and it makes no difference what your position in life may be. Further God never gives you the "green light" to leave the way of truth regardless how preponderant the reason for such a departure may appear to you. Now it may be a job; then a wife or husband; again, more friends, money, honor, etc., but don't we realize that Jesus in plain words tells us that "to love these things more than to love

Him reveals that we are not worthy of HIM?"

Walk in the truth!

That is a tremendous thing. The implications of it are far reaching and we have not space to begin to discuss them. Yet, we may say a few things hoping that we may inspire you to persue them further. The truth demands that you are not conformed to this world but are a separate people unto God. Your dress, appearance, speech, interests, activities, joys, pleasures, hopes, and a thousand more things are not patterned after the children of Satan. You, who are recreated in Christ, look like Him, act like Him, speak like Him, and in **all of your life seek the things that you know He would seek if He were here with you in the flesh.**

The truth further assures you that your lot according to your flesh will not be pleasant in this world. The world of unrighteousness hates any semblance of truth and you may be sure it will hate you. The more you live your truth, the more you will experience this. It is not because the world is getting better that the church at present experiences no oppression but rather may it be said that her light is diminishing. Through tribulation we enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Your confession expresses what it is to live in the truth. It states in questions 89 and 90 of the catechism that "it is a sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more hate and flee from them and it is a sincere joy of heart in God through Christ, with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works." "Show me your faith by your works," says James.

The truth then is not a cold dogmatic system written for the intellectuals to dicipher. Rather it is the practical, living application of the principles of God's word to our daily life. Do not misunderstand this, for it does not mean that purity of doctrine is not important. Rather, the contrary is true. It is of utmost importance, for doctrine and life are a unity. They go together. Where the one is qualified the other is corrupt. To walk in the truth demands that you keep your doctrine pure and "if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the pure doctrine of Christ), receive him not into your house" (II John 10), and live in every sphere of life according to it.

Walking in the truth is humanly impossible. We, who are so much of this world, will never do it. That we are what we are is not of us that we should now boast but rather let us give God all glory. His grace alone has led us thus far. May it please Him to continue with us and may we earnestly implore His blessing "in the way of truth".

If you have started out in the way
you know
To be right and the only way to go,
Then, with a soldier-tread,
March boldly straight ahead
Aud suffer, yea, perish! but never turn back.

Our Distinctive Heritage

Summary of the address of Rev. H. Hoeksema given at the 25th Anniversary Mass Meeting, Grand Rapids area.

The topic of Reverend Hoeksema's address was "Our Distinctive Heritage". He defined our heritage as the truths and doctrine handed down to us from the fathers of the church. Our heritage is distinctive because of four characteristics. First, it is distinctive because it consists of the teachings of **Reformed** church fathers That quality distinguishes it from Roman Catholicism. Second, it is distinctive because it is contained in our Three Forms of Unity. Third, it is distinctive because that distinction was accentuated in the doctrinal controversy with the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. Fourth, our heritage is distinctive because its teachings have been developed and clarified since 1924.

Expressed briefly, our heritage is this: **"The organic development of the covenant of God in connection with the organic development of all things in the world—in the line of Sovereign election and reprobation."**

This "organic development must be divided into three stages. The first step was the creation of all things by the Word of God. God created all things as a cosmos: that is, a unified, harmonious, complete whole. There was a gradually ascending scale of creatures from the most elementary forms of inorganic matter, through plants and animals, to man, who stood at the head of creation. Man's heart was the center of creation, and through man God had fellowship with all His creatures.

Sin, however, caused a breach in that fellowship—the second step. Creation did not become a chaos; it remained a cosmos with man at its head, the whole upheld by the Providence of God. The breach took place in man's heart: it was a spiritual, ethical breach. Before, there had been a continuous chain from the universe through man to God, but now the link between man and God was broken. Man became consecrated to the devil and was placed under the curse and all creation was placed under the curse with him. The speaker there emphasized that the cosmos continued to exist not because of the common grace of God, but because God had so determined the development of His covenant that **the continued existence of the universe was necessary to that development.**

After the fall of man a third change took place. God established His covenant with the elect. His purpose throughout the previous steps was the establishment of fellowship with a nucleus of the fallen human race. This covenant was established in the line of election and reprobation: that is, God saved the **kernel** of the human race and cast away the hull. He caused emnity between Satan and the seed of the woman, thereby sep-

* * * **This summary of Rev. Hoeksema's message was prepared for Beacon Lights by Roger Faber, Fuller. Ave.**

arating the elect from the reprobate by an antithesis. And, because man had retained his office as head of creation, God also renewed his fellowship with the cosmos through the heart of his regenerate elect. Hence, today the elect and the reprobate live side by side, both with their purpose in God's eternal plan. They live together and have **everything in common—except grace.**

The conclusion of this, Rev. Hoeksema stated, is that we as elect of God are called to maintain the antithesis, that distinction whereunto we are called by our heritage. We must actively support our beliefs and never lose the distinction between us and the rest that is called church. We are distinct from the whole church in general, from the Reformed church in particular, and even from the Christian Reformed church. If we should fail to maintain that distinction we should cease to exist as Protestant Reformed; therefore we must maintain it, both doctrinally and practically, against all the powers of darkness.

Following

by Prof. G. M. Ophoff

As you have been informed, my subject is "Following". But I want to make this subject very definite, which I do by making it read, "Believers as followers of their God-given leaders. I have arranged my material under three points:

Believers as followers of their God-given leaders.

1. The fact of it.
2. The idea of it.
3. The glory of it.

The Lord has given to His people leaders and it is His will that they be followed. The apostle Paul was such a leader in the church, as were all the apostles and the prophets of the Scriptures. In the full awareness of this, Paul over and over admonishes the churches—God's believing people—to follow him. To the Christian brotherhood in Corinth he wrote, "I exhort you, therefore, become followers of me. . . ." And again in this same epistle to this same church, "Be ye followers of me. . . ." And so also to the church in Philippi. Says the apostle to the saints in this place "Brethren be followers, imitators, of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example" (Phil. 3:17). And the saints of the church in Thessalonica receive praise from Paul for their following him.

Paul, then, was a God-given leader in the church and accordingly exhorts the churches to follow him.

Besides the college of apostle, the apostolic churches possessed still other classes of leaders, given them of God.

* * * **This address was given at the 25th Anniversary Mass Meeting of all Michigan Protestant Reformed Young People, held in Hudsonville, April 11, 1950. Transcript prepared by Miss Mae Bylsma, Fuller Ave.**

Paul makes mention of them in Eph. 4:11.

Mention is here made also of pastors and teachers. The office they bore was alone permanent. As long as the earth endureth, the church will be in the possession of pastors and teachers. They, too, are given of Christ to the church for the work of the ministry, and thus for spiritual leadership with the saints as their followers.

Yet it must not be supposed that in following their God-given leaders, the saints follow men. Certainly, what the saints follow is the truth. This is the idea of the thing with which we here have to do

Paul, to be sure, had clear understanding of this as appears from his words of approval which he directs to Timothy, —these words, "But thou hast closely followed my teaching. . . ." It's Paul's teaching that Timothy followed and thus also Paul's conduct, purpose, faith, love, and endurance. But Paul's teaching is first. For it is basic to the other graces here mentioned. There can be no right conduct without teaching, no purpose, faith, love and endurance without teaching, doctrine. And by teaching is to be understood, certainly, the truth by which the saints are saved. And the truth is God as revealed in in the face of Christ.

Accordingly, Paul's epistle to the Ephesians contains also this exhortation, "Be ye therefore followers, imitators, of God as children beloved." It is God whom the saints must follow, and God only. Christ's God.

If so, how then could Paul lay it upon the hearts of the saints to follow, imitate him? How can it be right for the saints to follow leaders who are but mere men, and sinful men at that? There is no conflict here. Paul was a man who by the grace of God was identified with the truth in his thinking, willing, desiring, and in his entire walk of life. And the same is true of every God-given leader in the church. If given and sent of God, he is a man identified with the truth, so that in following him, the saints follow the truth; they imitate God as manifested in the leader through Christ in His Spirit.

And this brings me to the consideration of the glory of this thing. Following the leader identified with the truth is to be following the truth; it is to imitate God. That is the glory of it. I need add nothing to this statement. It is complete as it stands.

People will and do criticize us Protestant Reformed. This can be expected since by the grace of God we as Prot. Ref. with such consistency confess that God's grace is sovereign. We have repudiated every thought-element in conflict with the truth and fact that God's grace is sovereign. And I think now of the theory of common grace and of the Heynsian view of the covenant. I think of that conditional theology of Heyns; of his promise-of-God-given-unto-all philosophy. We want nothing of these theories. We learned to know them in the light of the Scriptures for what they are—false doctrine. And for that, of course, we are criticized.

But we should not allow ourselves to be dismayed and confused by all such

prattle. We may suppose that things like this were being said to Timothy, too, —Timothy, the follower of Paul's doctrine—said to him by the heretics. This is indicated by the way Paul's counsel to this youthful pastor in the church reads. Read with thought 2 Tim. 3:1-12.

Are we Protestant Reformed followers? Indeed we are. How could it be otherwise if man is so created that he must follow and does follow either God or Satan, the truth or the lie. So it is not a question whether a man is a follower; he is. Every man is, no matter how great a leader he may imagine himself to be. The sole question is whom he follows. There is but one who does not follow, and that One is God. He only leads.

And certainly we do have our leaders, our pastors and teachers. We have our leader. But this, again is not in itself strange, and it will not strike us as strange either, if we only consider that God has increated in man the need of a leader. Accordingly, every man has his spiritual leader who is either God or Satan, the leader identified either with the truth or with the lie. So here, too, it is not a question whether a man has a leader. He has. Every man has. The sole question is who that leader may be.

And, certainly, we repeat the thoughts and ideas of our leaders, pastors and teachers, of our leader; and of every one appointed by the Lord God to lead us. Included are also our parents, of course. We repeat the thoughts, the instructions of our leader. We are nor original. No man is. Not even our human leaders. There is but one who is original, and that One is God. He speaks of Himself the truth. The lie was originated by Satan. God's believing people repeat what they hear God say; they repeat the truth that God by Christ's Spirit speaks in them to the salvation of their souls. The very word contained in the Scriptures for "confessing" means to repeat in love the truth by which we are saved, that God through the human leader identified with the truth proclaims and that God by His Spirit speaks in our hearts.

But we do not follow our human leaders blindly and uncritically as our opponents insist we do. There is but one whom we follow uncritically and that One is God. And we follow Paul uncritically and the other apostles. We follow the prophets of the Scriptures uncritically. We follow them all uncritically as believing and knowing that under the impulse and infallible guidance of Christ's Spirit they spake to us God's Word. But our pastors and teachers, our leaders or leader among us, we do not follow blindly and uncritically but critically in the sense in which we must be critical of them. We follow our leaders, only because, as enlightened people of God in the right sense doing our own thinking, we discern by His mercy that they, that he, is identified with the truth. Only such leaders do we follow, may we follow and may we want to follow. For we follow not men or a man. By God's grace we follow the truth; we are imitators of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ. So let us not be confused by the idle prattle of our opponents. Let us know how to answer

Why?

by John Hofman Jr. Grand Rapids, Michigan

Young people, I feel extremely out of place, speaking to you this evening. I do not speak to you tonight as an authority, but it is my sincere hope that what is said is not an authoritative dictational, popish presentation of certain facts which you MUST accept by virtue of the fact that they come from the lips of a supreme authority, but rather that it is a presentation of the sincere and most earnest convictions of us all! Still more disturbing to me, however, is the fact that I speak to you on the same evening in which you have been privileged to hear two most inspiring addresses by two men who, by the Grace of God, have such a clear insight into the truth of the Gospel, by two men whom God has used in such a striking and evident way to defend and maintain His church here on earth—the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff. It is, therefore, in all humility, with fear and trembling that I speak tonight on the subject "Why?"—**"Why are you and why am I a member of the Protestant Reformed denomination?"**

Superficially, there are many reasons one could propose for his membership in this particular denomination. One might be a member merely out of tradition. We are now removed from 1924 a sufficient distance that this reason for denominational membership is very real and possible from a historical standpoint. Of course, in the years immediately following 1924 purely traditional membership was not possible—that stands to reason, there was no tradition to follow. However, things are much different now. Those of us who have matured during these past 25 years might possibly join that church to which our fathers belonged. We are used to going to that church; we have our friends there. Furthermore, we have attended the Sunday School there since we were very little; we have gone to catechism classes there, beginning with the youngest class and each year graduating to the next higher class until finally we are face to face with the so-called pre-confession class, and it is but natural that we follow the ordinary course of history and that we also attend that class and finally make our public confession of faith in the midst of the congregation and thereby receive the blessings and obligations of a member in full communion. If this is the case, you realize that the individual is merely passive and is simply being pushed along by the rushing stream of traditionalism.

Or one might possibly become a member by virtue of the bonds of holy wedlock. After a reasonable amount of time has been spent in courtship, a young couple decide to become man and wife. (The young man and young woman, you understand, are members of different

* * * **This address was given at the 25th Anniversary Mass Meeting of all Michigan Protestant Reformed Young People, held in Hudsonville, April 11, 1950.**

denominations). After many of the problems are solved, such as whether or not they should build immediately, whether or not she should work after the marriage, and a host of others, then they finally begin to discuss the question: To which denomination shall we belong. The different angles, as it were, are discussed and finally it is agreed upon who should have his or her denomination. Piously they contend that certainly for the peace and harmony of the home, one person must **give up** his or her church. Peace and harmony for the home apparently is the essential thing, and it makes little or no difference whether the church of God dwells in unity! The question whether or not, in view of their religious convictions, they should marry at all is not even considered. And so for some, possibly, we have as a reason for denominational membership, the fact that they married into it—much the same as one marries into another family.

Another possible reason for our membership in the Protestant Reformed denomination might be that we are following a man. Many of our parents were members of the Eastern Ave. Christian Reformed Church in 1924 when the Rev. Hoeksema was deposed. They undoubtedly loved their pastor, which in itself is certainly as it should be. However, it is possible that because of their admiration of their pastor they naturally "sided with him". When they saw him ridiculed and condemned, they felt a personal hurt. And finally when he was deposed, they expressed their disapproval to the Classis, disapproval of the unfair classical treatment to the **man**, by going with their pastor. This fanatic love of the **man**, rather than love for the **truth** which this man, by the grace of God, has so courageously maintained in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds, becomes the basis for their membership in the denomination in which he has such a prominent place. This reason, I realize, was possibly more prevalent in the years immediately following 1924: However, it is very well possible that through well intended, but certainly highly erroneous indoctrination, this same attitude may be given to us who are a generation removed.

We may not be a member of a church merely because our fathers were. Such a condition inevitably leads to dead orthodoxy which is an abomination to the Lord. When we live out of tradition, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of the Lord.

Neither should we marry into a denomination as we do into a certain family. For if one joins a denomination merely to maintain peace and harmony in a family, that person will never completely divorce himself from his first love and though there be peace and harmony in the family (which is, by the way, very doubtful when one joins another church on such flimsy grounds), there certainly will not be peace and harmony in the church. When because of a close contact between two persons of different denominations, one joins the denomination to which the other belongs, that person must not feel that he or she

is **giving up**—that is giving up with a feeling of sorrow or regret—the church to which he or she formerly belonged, but on the contrary that person rejoices that God through this courtship has brought him or her to a purer light. There is here, you realize, a warning especially to our young women.

It seems from past history that usually in a case where young men and young women are of different denominations are united in marriage, the young woman is the one who forsakes her church. Woe! unto you, young ladies—you who leave at marriage—unless you can honestly say you have been brought to a purer light. But the warning comes also to the young men. Essentially the sin is **just** as great if you induce your wives to join the church of your choosing knowing that they cannot confess that truth from conviction.

Why are we members of the Protestant Reformed denomination? The only answer we can give to that question is that we believe that the Prot. Reformed truth is the **purest manifestation of the Word** on earth. Reflect on that for a moment —the Protestant Reformed denomination is the purest manifestation of the word on earth. What a tremendous statement!! It is the chief calling of the church of God to maintain the Word of God purely. It is not the calling of the church to save souls; it is not the calling of the church to provide entertainment for its young people; it is not the calling of the church to be a society which provided for its members financial benefits. The call of the church is to preach the Word. Throughout the ages the church church has departed to a lesser or greater degree from this calling.

Each time—that His truth might be preserved—the Lord has raised up unto Himself men through whom He might call back His church, or more correctly through whom He might call **out** His church from the midst of the apostatizing church. This happened in 1924. 1924 was not a battle of personalities as some would have us believe—God was working then and God has given to us young people, that we might defend and preserve it, the purest manifestation of His word on earth. If the saints of the Old and New Testaments were living today, Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the rest, they would be members of the Protestant Reformed denomination. Such should be our subjective convictions, —based upon an objective standard—the Word of God. As the Rev. Vos said, when the local congregation here in Hudsonville celebrated the 25th anniversary of our churches, "The Protestant Reformed denomination is the easiest denomination in which to preach; there is not a text that stands in our way from Genesis to Revelation—we're standing on the Word of God. The almighty God has given unto us that purest manifestation of His truth which He has preserved throughout all the ages, so that in 1950 the Protestant Reformed denomination has the guardianship of that particular truth."

Do you, dear friends, believe this? If not, and you are a member of the Pro-

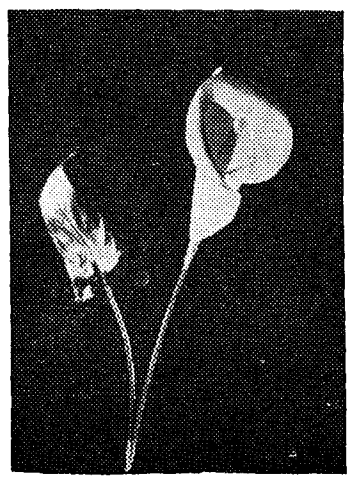
testant Reformed denomination, **it is better that you leave**—for even as it is the calling of the Church to maintain the truth, so it is the calling of the believer to affiliate with the church where the truth is maintained in its purest form, and if being a member of the Protestant Reformed denomination it is not your conviction that she is the purest church, then you have no business in her fellowship. But if that is your conviction KNOW that truth. Study that truth as it is developed and love it.

And loving that truth, let us defend it against all heresies repugnant thereto. And when doctrinal controversies arise in the church, let us study these controversies. Study them on the basis of the Word of God and our Reformed confessions and not take the attitude that after all these controversies are for our ministers and leaders to "fight out". But having studied them, let us also join the struggle for the maintainance of the truth. Let us defend that truth in our every walk of life.

Let us maintain that truth as it goes out from Sabbath to Sabbath through the medium of the radio; let us maintain it by **active** membership in various societies—by supporting the efforts which your Federation Board makes to propogate, preserve and proclaim it by means of the "Beacon Lights"; mass meetings and singspirations. The auditoriums of our churches should be filled and overflowing when our young people gather to sing the praise of their Makeer!

Finally, if it is your conviction that the Protestant Reformed denomination is the purest manifestation of the Word on earth, you will never, never leave her. Church membership is not something that can be lightly considered.

"Therefore, ... be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. . ." that at the last day it might be said of us, as it was of the church at Philadelphia—"I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee, an open door and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."



CURRENT COMMENTS

REV. L. DOEZEMA
Bellflower, Calif.

A Basic Problem

Some time ago we called your attention to the food problem and again we wish to call attention to a related problem, which is facing us all, and which we wish to call a basic problem. It is our agricultural problem. From the following quotations you will all agree that we must do something about this and severely criticize the government policies.

In the **Reader's Digest** of April, in an article condensed from **Fortune,** entitled **Farm Politics vs. The People,** we find some important statements. For example, "The time has come for a sensible, honest, radically new agricultural act. The Government's farm price-support program, after 17 years, is coming full circle to its logical, preposterous conclusion. It has erected a false work of bogus values under the whole farm economy, which would collapse into ruin if the support were suddenly removed. It is forcing farmers to produce wildly in excess of any reasonable American capacity to consume. It is responsible for most of the $1,800,000,000 deficit in the last fiscal year and at least one fourth of the larger current deficits. It is one of the most potent of inflationary influences."

For the statistics of the surplus commodities I refer you to the **Reader's Digest.** They are astounding. Then the article goes on to explain that the planners talk of selling surplus cheap, that is, dumping it abroad. An other solution is to limit output.

In a concluding statement we read, "For the best part of 15 years the injustices and absurdities of price supports were expounded and criticized by the experts and the press. The average taxpayer, far from being alarmed, was bored if not mystified by the intricacies of the arguments. He also suffered from the notion that all farmers were as poor as a few were once. Thus the only real pressure on Congress was the pressure of the farmers, who knew what they wanted."

In **Time** of April 10th there is also an article about the Agricultural problem with an example of farmer Kennedy in Iowa. Kennedy made a mistake in onions. Yet he is quoted as saying that "a lot of these crops are not grown for the market at all, but just for the support price."

From this we can all agree that there is something radically wrong with our farm policies and for that matter with other policies.

Whether the mistakes will be corrected is doubtful. The program has been ap-

proved by the majority in the ballot for so long that to change now would mean sacrifice which few are willing to take. The natural way is to drift down the stream until the final disaster.

It is plain however, that these things are not only not sensible but they are against God's natural laws. It is sinful to disturb the balances in the way that has been done and so to encourage production for false purposes, only to destroy them.

Yet we can see how foolish wise men, planners, can become. We must also include ourselves and all men. We can easily see our foolishness after the plan is not working. The Christian, however, must have more wisdom than that. He must see the impossibility of ever planing for a "normal granary". These mistakes cause the blind even to see. Thereupon, the blind, introduce another plan, reverse the policy and think that success is around the corner. But the Christian ought to see that God is showing man his foolishness, by giving an abundance. Sinful man then in his pride dreams of building his world with the abundance of natural resources. His greed, however, causes him to come to complete ruin. The laws of God work inevitably to man's ruin, and so the judgments of hunger and pestilence come upon man for his immorality.

We can see how that this is a basic problem. If something goes wrong with our agricultural program, it is as serious as having something go wrong with our military program. It is an important part of our military strategy.

But is it Christian to warn of such a catastrophy and advise ways and means to remedy and avoid it? Certainly a Christian would warn, but is that particularly Christian? Is that Christian politics? Is that distinctively Christian to advise to go to the polls and vote? It may be Dutch or American, or any other nationalism, but Christianity demands that our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

There is much more to think about and to discuss to arrive at some Christian principles. But maybe the above will provoke us to be more thoughtful than we are. * * *

— GIFTS —

Singspiration (Hope Church)	$28.22
Singspiration (Fuller Ave.)	22.80
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BIBLE OUTLINE

Rev. John Blankespoor
Grand Rapids, Michigan

LESSON LXIV.

"Jesus Appears To His Disciples"

(John 20:19-23)

The Appearance, vss. 19, 20.

John mentions only four of Jesus' appearances. These He evidently considers sufficient for his purpose in writing about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Last time we noticed how Christ manifested Himself to Mary Magdalene. Here He appears to the disciples as a body, Judas Iscariot naturally being excluded. Thomas is also absent. Much has transpired during this day, the one on which Jesus arose. The ten were gathered together with a number of other disciples, Luke 24:33. The women had met the angels and then had seen Jesus. They had also brought the news to the disciples. Peter and John had seen the strange sight in the tomb. Mary Magdalene had seen Jesus at the tomb. Then came the appearance of Jesus to Peter, Luke 24:34, I Cor. 15:5, of which we know the fact but no details. But all this did not produce faith among the disciples, Luke 24:11, Mark 16:14. Now, as they are gathered together, also having eaten together, the Emmaus travelers suddenly appear on the scene and narrate their experiences. Then Jesus came and showed Himself unto them.

Having the doors locked was a measure of precaution against the hostile Jews. But here it is mentioned with reference to the appearance of Jesus. About Jesus' entrance into the house there are all kinds of strange ideas. Some think that He climbed up a ladder and through a window, others that He descended from the roof down a stairway, etc. All these naturally deny the miracle and the risen Lord. Remember, Jesus arose on the other side of the grave, the spiritual. Lazarus and others that were raised came back to this side, the earthly and temporal. But Jesus, being on the other side, is no longer hindered by doors and walls. The spiritual is different than the natural, the heavenly than the earthy. Hence, the disciples do not see Him **walking** into their midst; suddenly He was in their midst, that is all.

Two times Jesus greets them with the customary greeting: Peace be unto you. This greeting occurs in Scripture as a greeting on arrival, as a farewell greeting, and also as a gracious form of dismissal.

Here it is the risen Lord who so greets them. This is a most blessed thing in itself, for when Jesus says "peace" He actually gives what the word says, and shows that now as the risen Saviour. Through His cross, death, and resurrec-

tion, He has established peace with God for them; now He will give it unto them in their hearts.

Therefore they must first be convinvinced of His identity, for Luke tells us that they supposed that they had seen a spirit. Hence, He shows them His hands, His feet, and His side. He also eats a piece of broiled fish before their very eyes. Now they are sure that He is the risen Lord.

Questions: How do you explain the unbelief of the disciples, even after they are told that He had risen? If Jesus arose with a spiritual body, how could these earthly people see Him?

Their Commission, vss. 21-23.

Here we have the second part of this manifestation. He sends them out into the world. As possessors of the Lord's blessed peace they must dispense this priceless treasure unto others in a peaceless world. From this we can conclude that the gospel certainly is a message of peace, peace for sinners through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the grave. At one time it appeared as if Christ's work was all in vain, now as the risen Lord He gives peace, the peace with God which surpasses all understanding, and instructs the disciples to give it unto millions of others. Unto that, however, they must receive the Holy Spirit. This Jesus does at this time, vs. 22. He enables those whom He sends. Notice that we read that He breathed on them the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is often spoken of with such terms. The Old Testament word for Spirit literally means wind. Here Jesus' breathing is symbolical, showing that the Holy Spirit now given unto them is His very life and power.

So the disciples receive the gift of remitting and retaining sins. This is the power of the Keys. The disciples will be vested with special powers regarding sins. Think of Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon the Sorcerer.

One question remains to be answered. How must we explain this giving of the Holy Spirit in connection with Pentecost? Also there we read that these disciples received the Spirit. Some say that this is a kind of first-fruit of Pentecost, others that John "telescopes" the resurrection, ascension and Pentecost, i.e., that He speaks of all of them here. We would explain it this way: First of all the Spirit is always given in connection with the Word; the more complete and blessed the Word is, the more blessed is the operation of the Spirit through that particular Word. In the Old Testament the saints also had the Spirit but only in connection with the "imperfect" types and shadows. No doubt the disciples also had the Spirit during the time that they followed Jesus. However, Jesus had not yet been crucified, etc. At that time the Holy Spirit worked only through the "earthly" Jesus. But now He is risen, and as the risen one He gives them peace by the Spirit, and also the commission to bring this peace unto others. What the disciples receive here is: 1. The conviction of faith that Jesus is risen. 2. The peace of God, which is in Christ Jesus, in their hearts. 3. The external and internal calling to bring this word

of peace unto others. This does not yet mean that they now understood everything. This is plain from Acts 1:6 and other passages. On Pentecost all would be made plain to them, receiving the Spirit of the **risen and glorified** Christ

Questions: What do the Catholics teach regarding the popes and this commission to the disciples? How could the disciples forgive and retain sins, since Christ only can do this?

* * * *

LESSON LXV.

"The Risen Lord and Thomas"

(John 20:24-32)

Thomas Refuses to Believe, vss. 24, 25.

Thomas had not been with the other disciples with the first appearance of Jesus. We immediately ask: Why not? Thomas undoubtedly was a singular man in many ways. He certainly was no superficial thinker, not easily convinced, but on the other hand stable and dependable. Cf. John 11:16 and 14:5. To him it now seemed useless to meet as a body of disciples. It had been on account of Jesus that they had become one group. Now Jesus was gone. What did they further have in common with each other? Really nothing. True, he heard the reports. Undoubtedly all the other disciples and the women as well did their utmost to convince him, but all was in vain. He simply could not conceive of Jesus being risen from the dead. He would not believe except he should see His hands, etc. Now there were many more that did not believe for some time; fact is that the disciples didn't even believe at first. But the difference between them and Thomas is that he **would** not believe except he saw the print of the nails in His hands, etc. He wouldn't believe even though there would be a thousand witnesses. He had to see Jesus.

Questions: What else can you say about Thomas' character in the light of John 11:16 and 14:5? Is it right to use the expression "Unbelieving Thomas"?

Jesus Appears to Him, vss. 26-28.

It is for his sake that Jesus comes to them for the second time; yet what transpires between Jesus and Thomas is for all to hear and to see. The three statements of Jesus correspond exactly to the three that Thomas had made in vs. 25. He will give them another sign that He is indeed the risen Lord. Without asking any Questions He immediately approaches Thomas, showing that He acquainted with His unbelief. "Come Thomas", says Jesus, very likely at the same time pointing to His body, "Put your finger into my hands and thrust your hand into my side". But this is too much for the unbelieving disciple. He sees before him the crucified One as risen, the Lamb as having been slaughtered.

Seeing is enough. The risen Lord drives away the unbelief of man. Thomas wilts and as it were sinks away. And what a confession he utters: My Lord and My God. The crucified One is Lord and God, yes, but also his Lord and his God. How blessed to see before him his Master, but now the one who had conquered death, as the Son of God.

The More Blessed Ones, vs. 29.

To us it always seems blessed to have been privileged to see Jesus. Who would not like to see Him? But then to see the risen Jesus ! Surely this must have been blessed for the disciples after these dark days of hopelessness and despair. But notice what Jesus says in vs. 29. The idea is that they who have not seen Him and yet have believed are much more blessed. In other words, their blessedness is much greater than that of Thomas. Much more blessed it is for them, even now. Why? Because by faith the invisible things are even more sure than the visible. The Christian does not live by sight, but by faith, believing the unseen things. First of all this is a greater blessedness because it is spiritual and therefore deeper. The faith of a Thomas is worked by a seeing of Jesus, he more blessed faith is wrought in our hearts by the Spirit of the risen Lord Himself. And that Spirit convinces us of the truth. Hence they are blessed because it is the Spirit working in their hearts whereby they are convinced, and whose fellowship they experience. Therefore Thomas and the other disciples certainly need more than the mere seeing of the risen Jesus.

Besides, all they knew is the fact of the resurrection. Soon He would leave them and they would have the mere knowledge that He had risen, and ascended to heaven. But of what benefit would that be to them? No, they must know Who He is as the risen One, know Him as the Saviour from sin and death, as the Saviour who establishes His spiritual kingdom even now. Undoubtedly they did receive this through the Holy Spirit.

Questions: Why must all the disciples see the risen Jesus, if faith in Him, without seeing, is more blessed? How many appearances were there in all? Who saw Jesus after He ascended to heaven?

Conclusion, vss. 30, 31.

These two verses constitute the formal conclusion of the Gospel as composed by John. What he actually traces is the Person of the Son of God in the attestation of His ministry and His passion and His resurrection. That attestation we have in his Gospel, and certainly comes to a climax in the incident of Thomas. To be sure, all is not written here. Many other signs there were, but these John considers sufficient for us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in His name.

* * * *

LESSON LXVI.

"Jesus' Manifestation to the Seven"

(John 21:1-14)

The Manifestation.

To understand this work of Jesus it is best to first read all fourteen verses, getting a completee picture of all that takes place.

We now find the disciples at the sea of Tiberias, also called the sea of Galilee. Look this up on your map. Thither they (also Thomas) had gone according to the command of Jesus. "Go to Galilee, there ye shall see Me." But how perplexed they were! In fact, everything very likely confused them. Jesus' suffering, death and burial, as well as the resur-

rection were tremendous problems for them. Why? Now they are by the sea of Galilee, but why? And why doesn't He come? It all seemed so strange, so much different than when He sojourned with them. Then they were with Him day and night, but now they would see Him for a few moments and then He would disappear again. Where to no one knew, neither did they know when they would see Him again.

Apparent it is that they waited for Him here for several days. Will He come at all? That question possibly arose in their minds. But Peter is tired of it and decides to go fishing. Notice first of all that he doesn't ask any of the others about their opinion. Let them do as they please, he's going fishing. Secondly, this does not mean that he will fish while he's waiting for Jesus, but that he will again take up his former work, that of fishing.

The others join him. But they catch no fish, though they toiled for hours. Now Jesus appears on the scene, but He will manifest Himself only in actions, not in words. Notice how abruptly the disciples answer Him when He asks if they have any meat. It is remarkable that when this "stranger" ordered the disciples to throw their net on the other side of the boat they at once do so. Phychologically they are ready to try anything, if only they can catch a few fish. We get the impression that the net was filled immediately. This must have made a tremendous impression on the disciples. No wonder that John says to Peter: "It is the Lord". John recognizes Jesus in His actions. Peter abandons everything and jumps out of the boat to meet Jesus. He is in such haste that he cannot wait until they get to shore, possibly some 300 feet away. The rest not being able to haul the net into the boat, dragged it to shore. Richly laden they came to shore. John remembers the exact number, 153.

A special note is made of the fact that the net did not break. Then Jesus bids them to have breakfast which He has prepared for them. But still Jesus does not identify Himself. From beginning to end everything is action, and every word spoken by Jesus pertains only to the action, omitting to add even the slightest reason for, or explanation of, the action. And what a tremendous effect this has upon them! They know it is Jesus and yet they don't dare ask Him. There is no doubt in their minds and yet they would like to have Him tell them outright that He is the Lord. But couldn't they recognize Him, for they had seen Him before? Possible it is that none of the appearances during these forty days were similar. Neither must they know Him in His physical appearance, but in His work. They must learn to know Him spiritually as their Lord. Hence, with the first appearance Jesus shows His hands and feet, but now they must learn to know Him in action.

The Significance of the Event.

First of all read Luke 5:1-11. The disciples are to be fishers of men. That was their calling. But their success would be sure only when and if they would obey His command and rely on

His Word, no matter what their own skill and reason might advise. How foolish it must have seemed to merely place the net on the other side of the boat! In Luke they are told to go into the deep, the poorest place for fishing; moreover, now the heat of the day has come, the poorest time for fishing, while they had fished for hours during the best time but caught nothing. But no, they must always cast the net at the word of the Lord. According to God's Word and with God's Word they must be fishers of men. And if they go out of their own accord, they will catch nothing, not even one little fish. Without Jesus they can do nothing. He alone gathers His people, through the God-given means.

The first time the net brake, not so now. In the New Testament after the day of Pentecost they will lose none of those given unto Jesus by the Father. Not one of God's elect, gathered by Christ through the word of the apostles will go lost.

Finally, they must sit down to eat. Jesus has prepared breakfast for them.

The apostles must see and learn that the Lord Himself will feed and care for them as His own chosen and called servants. Their one thought is to do His will and work according to His Word; all bodily and temporal cares belong in the Lord's hands.

Questions: In the light of this miracle what one thing does the Church of Christ need above everything else? Do such fishers of men ever experience that fishing is no good?

* * * *

LESSON LXVII.

"Peter's Restoration"

(John 21:15-25)

The Restoration as Such, vss. 15-17.

Jesus has broken the bread for Peter as He had done for the rest. He treats Peter as one who belongs to the rest. But that is the very reason for what Jesus now does with Peter. He restores him as an apostle. This was necessary because Peter with his denial of Jesus had publicly severed all connections with Jesus. In doing so Jesus uses the old name of the apostle, Simon, borne by him before he joined Jesus, in order to remind him of his natural descent and all that had clung to him in the way of weakness because of this descent.

In this restoration Jesus opens up that old wound, and lays His finger on the most tender spot. He does not ask him merely to renounce all that he has done, but whether he loves Him. Does He **love** Jesus? This was the root of the whole matter. With the denial he has shown that he loved himself more than Jesus.

It is rather difficult to explain the various questions and answers according to the original language and so convey the thoughts of Jesus as well as those of Peter. First of all the Greek uses two words for love here, the first one denotes a true, strong, genuine love. The same word is used in John 3:16. The second one, though also a work of the Holy Spirit when wrought in the hearts of God's people, is not as strong and the former one, denoting an affection, being attracted to someone. For the first one we will use the ordinary word love and

for the second the word like. First of all Jesus asks Peter whether he **loves** *Him* **more than these,** i.e., more than the other disciples. Once he had boasted that his love was stronger than that of the others, for though they would forsake Him, he would never do so. But how is it now, Peter? And Peter answers: "Lord, Thou knowest that I **like** you." Notice, he doesn't even dare use the word love.

The second question is as important as the first one, perhaps even more important. "Simon, son of Jonas, do you **love** Me"? Does he really have any love for Jesus? And again Peter answers: "Lord, Thou knowest that I **like** you." But Jesus isn't finished yet. In the third question He asks: "Simon, son of Jonas, do you **like** me?" In other words, do you have any affection for me at all?

Most beautiful is the confession that Peter makes. No, he has no excuses to offer. That is the beauty of a David, a Peter and of all those who make true confessions. By nature we are always inclined to come with alibis. Couldn't Peter have appealed to the circumstances in which he found himself, to his tired, physical body, etc.? But nothing of the kind. He is humble, all pride has vanished. In the light of his past actions he doesn't even dare to say that he loves Jesus. Neither does he boast that he will never again deny Jesus. All he can say is that he likes Jesus. And what proof does he have for this? None at all, for he surely cannot point to his deeds. They would certainly testify against him. He can appeal to only one thing: "Thou knowest that I love Thee." He means to say to the Lord that He knows his heart and the recesses within. And there that affection, or liking is certainly found. Other proof Peter does not have. Is there one saint that has any other proof? What a beautiful confession!

We must not overlook the fact that Peter has learned to know that Christ saved him and Christ alone. Where was Judas Iscariot now? And Peter here? Why the difference? The only answer is the work of Jesus, having prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail. Further, it is Jesus who appears to Peter after His resurrection. He is indeed the Saviour who seeks and saves the lost. In the light of these deeds of marvelous love Peter must have been overwhelmed with the love of Jesus for him. Now he certainly was fit material for the apostleship.

Therefore he now receives his commission. With each answer of Peter the Lord gives him a command. Also here again the beauty of the text is lost in the translation. In the Greek three different words are used, that of sheep, little sheep and lambs. Applied to God's people the distinction is not merely one of age or size, but of spiritual strength and development. A young man may be a lamb, while an older one may be a little sheep. Some need milk, others a heavier diet, and still others meat. Some are weak and others strong. But they are all Jesus' flock. In the name of Jesus Peter must feed them, according to their needs. He must be a good shep-

herd for all of them, for the little sheep, the weak little lambs and for the stronger ones. Naturally, this is the calling of all the apostles.

Questions: Why must Peter be restored into his office? Why must this be a public restoration? Why do you think Jesus asked him three questions? Why, in the light of good works of God's people, is in the final analysis the only proof for our love to be found in our hearts, as was the case with Peter?

How Peter will Manifest his Love, vss. 18-23.

Having been fully restored the Lord amplifies the word spoken before Peter's denial, the word about dying for his Lord. He prophesies that he will have to give the highest proof of love, be a martyr for the faith. And knowing this in advance, he must not only go forward joyfully to meet it, but must also, while his life lasts, devote himself most zealously to the flock entrusted to him. "And when He had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." And Peter does so literally indicating that this he will do. Having gone a few steps, Peter looked around and saw that his friend John was also starting to follow. Where Jesus was going we don't know. Possibly He walked away and then suddenly disappeared. But before this happens Peter asks a question, vs. 21. From these words it is often supposed that Peter is jealous of John, Peter having drawn the harder lot.

But this is not true. Peter is wondering what the Lord has in store for his friend, John, having been told what is awaiting him. Does martyrdom also await John? The answer Peter receives is wholly indefinite. He must leave John's future in the hands of the Lord. Even if Jesus would want John to remain on this earth until He returns, let his care be for himself, to follow the Lord. These things belong to the Lord. The disciples, however, failed to understand these words, the result of which was the rumor that John would not die. Therefore John gives his commentary on these words in vs. 23, stating that Jesus did not say that, but if he would so will, what would that be to them.

Conclusion, vss. 24, 25.

Here we have the final words of the apostle who wrote these words that we may know that Jesus is the Son of God. Oh no, he does not write about all the signs Jesus did. If this were done the world itself could not contain the written books. This is hyperbole, but it does show the feeling of the author. He is simply overwhelmed with all that Jesus did to give infallible proofs of the Word having become flesh. What we have is sufficient.

THE END.

FOR A DUTCH PEN PAL

Write:

Miss Adri Veldman
a/b Philosofenallee
Zwolle, Nederland.

Schuiler Writes

We invite all our readers to send in your questions and problems to: SCHUILER, c/o Doorn Printing Co., 705 Eastern Ave., Grand Rapids.

Dear Schuiler:

There seems to be an opinion among some people that the church building is to be used exclusively for religious purposes. According to this opinion any form of "eating or drinking" in the church itself is positively sinful. Can you find any Scriptural support for this contention? Will you also express your opinion in respect to this matter? Also, what do you think of smoking in church parlors?

Sincerely,

G. V.

Yes, indeed, there are people who have a notion that eating and drinking in church are positively sinful. Where they get that notion I don't know. I cannot find any Scriptural support for this contention.

Does the foregoing mean that I would use the church building for just anything and everything? Not at all! I think we should use our church building primarily for divine worship and for religious purposes. That is self-evident. That's the purpose of our church buildings. However, that does not exclude that we sometimes eat or drink in church. For example at the occasion of a social gathering of the societies, a classical meeting, a wedding, etc. etc. That is not desecrating anything.

I am afraid that this over-zealous attitude you mention in your question is similar to the attitude of those of whom we read in Scripture, that they were worried about outward things, about days, meats, vessels, etc. Actually that is still a little of the old leaven of Judaism. And Scripture must have nothing of it. Read e.g. Romans 14 on the question of "indifferent" things. Paul certainly could eat and drink to the glory of God, as a matter of faith, and I am sure he could do that in church too.

What I think about smoking in church parlors? I don't think much of it. Not because it is sin as such, but I think it is filthy and messes up the church auditorium. We have to draw the limit somewhere, and we certainly do not want to make a pig-pen of the church. Let's by all means keep the church auditorium a clean, neat-looking place.

How about smoking in the "basement" rooms? No principle objections. Also here it seems to me you'd have a hard time to prove from Scripture that you may not smoke in these meeting rooms. However, of late I have been in a few churches where they have signs all over the basement: "No Smoking". Had we such a rule in our church I would not object, in fact I'd favor it. (I think all the janitors would too). It makes for neat, clean-looking rooms, floors, atmos-

phere. Yes, I know there is an old saying: "The thicker the tobacco smoke the more Reformed the atmosphere". I don't believe that. And I wouldn't be against smoking in church parlors because I believe it to be sin, but as a matter of cleanliness, neatness, as something we can easily do without, at least while we have our meetings. On the other hand, I am very much afraid of an outward cleanliness and nicety, while spiritually we would decay and lose our precious Reformed heritage and the **living** Word of God as an **actuality** and a **vital force** in our life.

SCHUILER.

"What have manners to do with Christianity? Is there any relationship between the two?"

We first better ask: "What are manners?" A manner is a mode of action, or distinctive style. Manners can be bad or they can be good, for the word "manner" means a way of acting, mode of procedure. A mannerly person is a person who shows good style, is polite. On the other hand a mannerless person is a person without proper style, behaviour, conduct, a person of rude manners.

It stands to reason one is taught manners, can cultivate manners. By way of training, habit, partly depending upon one's native character and personality, one can and does acquire a customary way of acting, of normal behavior, habitual deportment. Training and environment have a lot to do with manners, whether they are good or bad. You don't need to be a Christian to be mannerly.

Is there any relationship between manners and Christianity? There most definitely is. In the first place a Christian should cultivate good manners. Bad manners are definitely a sign and manifestation of sin, of the old man. And we must try to overcome bad manners in speech, action, conduct, behavior, etc.

However, I think with the Christian "manners" come under the rubric "sanctification". In other words a Christian should not merely be mannerly because it is fitting, becoming, polite in Society, the Home, School, Church, etc., but the Christian must cultivate good manners as a matter of sanctification. He must also with respect to his manners fight the battle of faith. Says Scripture: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22, 23). If a Christian lives that way his manners are good. That does not necessarily mean that he is refined in all his actions (some people are naturally clumsy and awkward). But fundamentally he has good manners because he is a regenerated person, a spiritually sensitive soul. And as covenant young people we should cultivate good manners and become ever more gracious and proficient in them. Really **good** manners are more than a superficial politeness, which is sheer hypocrisy. Good, God-pleasing manners, are the fruits and manifestation of sanctification. —SCHUILER.

BOOK REVIEWS

Mrs. M. Kroondyk
Grand Rapids, Michigan

NEARBY — by Elizabeth Yates.
Coward MaCann Inc., Publisher.

It was during the recent war that the story depicted in this novel was supposed to have taken place. Nearby was a little New England town, whose inhabitants were nearly all of Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Irish stock. The swamplands with beauty in nature, but ugliness in human habitation made up the slums of this nice, respectable town that had been considered near by to the rest of the world because it was near by two well-traveled turnpikes in the olden days, but was now in reality just an isolated village.

Mary Rowan came to Nearby to teach in the rural school there, and during the first week she realized that instead of a small undertaking it was a vastly important work. Some of the children "were simple inheritors of all that was the birthright of childhood; others were like bits of flotsam in a muddy stream, tossed about by no wish of their own, victimized by the swirling of strange dark waters."

The story of her work with Gwen Hazen, the ward of the welfare agency, Nezar and Renny Smith, the children of a squatter in the Swamplands, and the other children of the citizens of Nearby, amidst misunderstanding and malicious rumors proves to be a very interesting story. It is spiced by Mary's memories of Ben Allenton, one-armed Dan Bixby's love for Mary, and Mary's victory over the unreasoning prejudice and gossip of the village.

The philosophy in this book is definitely not Christian from a Reformed or even a Fundamentalist viewpoint. God is presented as a presence in the world, or a power in man's mind. Prejudice, intolerance and hatred are the main evils of this world. Democracy with all it stands for of tolerance, equality, and freedom is the good to be striven for and attained that this world may be a worthwhile place in which to live.

There is much in this book that is not for the immature reader. The sordid side of life is dealt with rather realistically although not indecently. The modern, un-christian philosophy of the story is subtly pictured in all its beautiful and appealing idealism. However there is much that would be worthwhile if it were transplanted from its worldly, man-centered setting into a God-centered, Christian view of life.

Mature and discriminating readers may read this book with profit; school teachers especially may find much that is helpful in its pages; but it cannot be recommended to our young people without reservation.

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