BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

February - 1957

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BEACON LIGHTS

For Protestant Reformed Youth

VOL. 17 FEBRUARY — 1957 No. 1

The Congregational Meeting

As I write these lines it is the seventh day of January, 1957; the busy but always interesting holiday season has once again come and gone; the annual congregational meetings were held in the various churches of our denomination; men were elected from previously announced nominations to serve as elders and deacons in their respective congregations, and only days ago these office-bearers-elect were inducted into their offices.

The matter that interests us at this time is the congregational meeting. We hear so much about them; perhaps we ourselves attend them at regular intervals. Really, what is a congregational meeting? What is its character? What do the members of God's church actually do at such a meeting? Do they merely render advice, voice their opinions, deliberate, express a preference for one thing or another, for one individual or another, while the decisions proper and their execution remain entirely with the consistory? Or is there something more binding, more authoritative about the congregational meeting and is there being exercised at least some measure of ecclesiastical authority? Is it so, perhaps, that we must think of the congregational meeting as being, really, the highest ecclesiastical assembly in the church of Christ, while the consistory is only the instrument of the congregation for the execution of its decrees?

About the last of these views we need say very little. According to the Congregational system of church government the congregational meeting is really the highest ecclesiastical body, the one and only authoritative church assembly. The government in the church is strictly of the people, by the people and for the people. Office-bearers are merely men, appointed and delegated by the congregation to carry out the will of the people and to execute the decisions of the congregational meeting. Rid yourself of every vestige of this erroneous notion. This view has no place at all in the Reformed system of church government. It really strips the consistory of all true authority and denies that the King of His Church rules His flock through the offices instituted for that purpose.

In all the articles of our Church Order, nothing is said about the congregational meeting. There is no mention of the same. The Article most pertinent to our

present discussion is Article 29, which reads, "Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, (the particular synod) and the general synod." In our churches, and the Christian Reformed as well, there are only three; we have no particular synod in distinction from the general synod. Our Reformed fathers, therefore, knew of no congregational meeting as a distinct ecclessiastical assembly. Somehow it will have to be included under one of the other three, and since the congregational meeting is strictly local in character it is the consistory under which it will have to be included. The other Article relevant to our discussion is Article 37, which, however, deals strictly and only with the consistory.

Accordingly, there are those Reformed leaders who see the character of the congregational meeting as being purely advisory, no more. There is nothing binding or authoritative about it at all. A congregational meeting is actually an open consistory meeting to which all members eligible to vote are invited and given opportunity to express themselves on such matters as are presented for discussion by the consistory. The consitory calls such a meeting for the sole purpose of "feeling out" the congregation before taking decisions vital to the welfare of the congregation. Of course, such advice of the congregation should not be easily disregarded, nevertheless, nothing becomes binding until acted upon by the consistory, which is the actual ruling body of the church.

The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands proceed very strongly in this direction. There the congregational meeting is even less binding and more advisory in character than it is here. No binding decisions are made, in fact, motions are not made and carried. The consistory merely calls the congregation together for the purpose of discusion. It will even happen that voting for office-bearers does not take place in a regular congregational meeting at all. At their own convenience people will simply go to certain designated places to vote. The consistory will then induct into office. Even so, it might well happen that not enough men have a majority. In that case the consistory might choose and induct into office one or more who actually fell short of having a majority. There is something very healthy about this position. The authority of the consistory is strictly and correctly maintained. That Van Dellen and Monsma, Christian Reformed authorities on Church government, propagate quite the same view, is evident from what they write on page 133 of their "Church Order Commentary," a book which I value and recommend highly, a book that to me has grown in stature even through our recent controversy. I would like to quote, but space forbids. If you are interested, read the passage in question for yourself.

Because it so well recognizes the authority of the consistory and the proper place of the congregational meeting, I too, in the main, concur in this position. However, there can be no danger in attributing to the congregational meeting a bit more decisiveness and authority, if only we maintain the proper relationship between it and the consistory. Never is the former above or even on a par with the consistory. Never does the congregation supervise the consistory. Whatever the former decides is always under the control and supervision of the latter. It is true, a congregational meeting is really a meeting of the consistory with the members of the congregation to consider specific matters. Never does the consistory relinquish its authority. It alone maintains control. It determines the material to be brought up. It guides and rules. The minutes of the congregational meeting are the mi

utes of the consistory and should be approved by it. However, in that scheme of things and under such consistorial supervision the decisions made on a congregational meeting are certainly binding and passed with the idea that, barring unforseen developments, they will certainly be executed.

This position is clearly reflected in the decisions made by our Prot. Reformed Churches re this matter and incorporated under Article 27 of our Church Order. These decisions read as follows: "1. The president and the secretary of the consistory shall function as such on the congregational meeting; the minutes shall be entered in the consistory's minute-book and confirmed by the consistory. 2. No matter shall be treated on the congregational meeting which are not brought there by the consistory. 3. When members desire to have a matter treated on the congregational meeting, they shall previously have requested of the consistory the right thereto, and it shall be the prerogative of the consistory to determine the extent and the manner in which their request shall be granted."

R. Veldman

Recent Contributions Gratefully Acknowledged

Senior Young People's Society First Church	$ 41.62
Singspiration Hudsonville Church	44.27
Federation Board	25.20
Hull and Doon Young People's Society Reformation Day Service	25.22
Mr. and Mrs. Ed Kooienga	10.00
Ladies Aid Society First Church	50.00
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EDITORIALS

Speak Lord, for Thy Servant Heareth

Each succeeding generation, at thy mighty word appears;
Thou dost count in times duration, one day as a thousand years.
Death with swift and sudden warning, calls us from life's dream away,
Like the grass green in the morning, withered ere the close of day.

Such is the reality of human existence. Is it not difficult to live at all times in the light of this reality? Especially we young people so easily forget this theme. Hence it is good for us to contemplate concerning the use of our short lives for God.

For what do you live? Perhaps you have a job and every day you trudge the same path to work, punch a clock, perform your task, and say, "good deal, another day in, and a whole evening ahead." Maybe you go to work cheerfully and work diligently and are content with your work, but not overly enthused, or are you the person who feels that you have a vocation which you sincerely love and you earnestly seek to develop yourself in that particular field? Your goals are ever higher and daily you apply yourself to your task and work for promotion. We ask you, for what is all this exertion of energy and consumption of time? Why don't you live as the whiskered hobo over by the tracks?

Some of us may reply, "Everybody works, and if you don't work you are considered lazy." Others may say that you want to earn money, perhaps for a new car, or that certain suit you saw in the store window, or perhaps you want to save money and get married or build up a reserve for a "rainy day." Many of the conveniences of our modern twentieth century living have their place in our lives. Our daily labor has its place also, and therefore since life is so short we must necessarily clearly understand why we perform our daily task in the manner in which we do.

If you should answer our proposed question in any of the suggested ways, you had better think again and investigate whether that basically is your answer. We must as christians, followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, propse a unique an radically different answer. We must feel within our hearts that we are **called of God** to our specific job. You may say, "Oh yes, that's taken for granted," but is it? Have you prayed to God about your work when you left the factory and entered the sales profession, or when you left the one garage to work in another. Did you ask God to lead you in your decision? Not only does this hold true for the changing of employment, but also for your present job. Unless you can say that God has called you to tighten the bolts, to sort the mail, to swing the brush, to preach the Word, to teach the children, to wash the dishes or to sell the product you have no business in doing the type of work you are now doing.

There are many things to consider when we select vocations, and our selection will not be correct unless we go beyond our own limited sight unto the All Seeing and Omniscient Heavenly Father. He will help us to choose wisely

and with consecrated study of His Word we will feel the necessity of the consideration of our employer, fellow employees, wages, and all that is envolved in employment when we seek a job, He will so work within us that our eyes will be fixed on Him and our life will not be our own, but He will live in us. We therefore must not consider the dollar as the standard of our occupation, but we must determine our specific job by higher eternal standards. You can far better work for less money and work among fellow believers than enjoy higher wages and be influenced, perhaps unknowingly, by constant contact with wicked and profane men. Greater blessing is to the man that puts less hours in at work, but faithfully attends divine service and society, and seeks to increase his knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, than the man who works so many hours a week that he is too tired to drag his legs into a church.

Not only are we to consider our job and vocation in the light of our calling of God, but also our recreation. This is certainly an age when we work less and get more done and have greater leisure time, yet sad to say it often seems the most ignorant. Paradoxical? Yes, but we can very well overcome it. When Robert Maynard Hutshin heard of T.V. he exclaimed, "The jig is up on learning." Few men actually hear the voices of a great teacher, but his word can be read by all. Even Confucius, pagan and vile, exclaimed, "Learning without thought is labor lost, thought without learning is perilous." How much more should we as young people, progeny of the heritage of a most certain knowledge, read and study to understand what and why we act and believe as we do. Certainly our spare time will no longer remain spare, but we will eagerly engage ourselves in developing our minds and hearts to the glory of our God for whom alone we live.

So often we hear the truth that the only things of life wich are of value are spiritual, and that all of our life must be centered around the things of the kingdom. Our purpose is to reiterate that all things for the Christian **are** spiritual. Whether at work or during recreation we are spiritual. We never can separate a thing we do from our relation to God. This means that when we are with our friends we conduct ourselves as children of the King. Everywhere we go we must conduct ourselves with the realization that Christ is beside us. We cannot see Him, but he is there and as His children we want to be bearers of the light that is in us. If Christ cannot go with us everywhere we go, we had better question whether he goes with us at all. He is the All Seeing and All Knowing One and we are His Children living to His glory here below. For us who are the called according to his purpose, may God ever impress upon our minds that life is short and that we are to use our few short moments to the glory of His name and the well being of His Church.

Every day we read of the lives of young and old snatched from them. Some suddenly while others must endure pain for a long duration. All men realize the inevitability of death. Throughout the centuries, men have expressed their philosophy of life. Shakespere once wrote, "Tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day, till the last sylable of recorded time, and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death . . . life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more." Vain and contemptible, we contrast it with a verse of the song, George S. Schuler wrote in memory of John and Bety Stam, martyrs of the faith, "In life or death, — and life is surely flying — the crib and coffin carved from

(Continued on page 11)

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Unions

(VI)

In articles that have appeared in this magazine in the past, I have shown that membership in an organization necessarily implies responsibility for the principles and actions of such an organization. This is because of what is called corporate responsibility. The members of a corporation are answerable for the principles and deeds of such an organized group. In the last article, I wrote concerning the oath. And we noticed that although all unions do not insist any longer on the formal swearing of an oath, there are some unions which still make the oath binding upon its membership. But we concluded the article by saying that the swearing of the oath was not necessary to be responsible for the principles of a union. To swear an oath is sin except it be done to defend the truth of God's Word and to further the cause of Christ's kingdom. It is only on rare occasions that a Christian should take an oath upon his lips.

But the formal swearing of an oath is not always necessary to become a member of a union. Sometimes it happens that when a prospective member of a union signs a membership card, the swearing of an oath is implied. Sometimes, no oath may be included at all. But the fact stands that essentially it makes very little difference.

The point I wish to make is that any union which does still demand an oath, whether that be by formal swearing, or whether that is merely implied in signing one's name, does that in order to receive from the prospective member a guarantee of allegiance to the union. And this allegiance to the union is an absolute allegiance. It is more important than any other allegiance a person may have. If there is a conflict between his allegiance to the union or to his family, the union comes first. If there are demands of his faith to His God which are contrary to the demands required by his faithfulness to the union, then the union comes first. In every sphere of life, in every phase of existence, his allegiance to the union is paramount. As long as there are no conflicting allegiances, everything goes smoothly. But if a conflict arises, then the union comes first, and an individual must abrogate any other allegiance in favor of the union. It stands to reason that the union would have no other purpose in demanding an oath than that. You cannot find any other motive for such a demand on the part of a labor organization then that by means of such a demand the union is assured of your complete absorption into its fold, so that it becomes of utmost importance in your life. This is also comfirmed by experience. The union will tolerate no division of your loyalties. If you set other loyalties above that of the union, then there is no place for you in their commune. They have no room for anyone who is not completely devoted to them.

But perhaps you say, What about the unions where no oath is even implied? The same is principally true. It stands to reason that if you become a member of an organization, you are duty bound to be loyal to that organization. That goes without saying. It is your calling to be the best possible member of any organiza-

to which you belong. You may not be a half member, or a poor member. You must be a whole hearted supporter or be none at all. And so your membership in the union should also be governed by that principle.

But again I wish to stress that as such you are also responsible for the principles upon which such an organization is founded. You agree to the basis of an organization, or you cannot join. And your signature is an explicit guarantee on your part that you are in favor of the principles of that organization. And all the actions of such a body whether or not they are in conformity to the principles, are your responsibility. You give your tacit approval as member. Even your negative vote will not change that. You may not agree with the majority, but by retaining membership you signify your willingness to abide by the decision of the majority. If that question is a question of principle, then you are duty bound to uphold it. And you stand responsible for all that your organization does.

Therefore it becomes a very important question, What are the underlying principles of the labor unions in our country?

And to that question we must now turn.

I do not claim to be an authority on the entire labor question. Nor is that necessary. It is sufficient to read the constitutions and observe the unions in action to determine their aims. And on that basis they certainly stand condemned.

The union movement was inaugurated in our country as a protest against the severe working conditions under which labor was forced to work. The situation was intolerable. Long hours, hard work, poor conditions, child labor, threat to health — each had its place in the long list of grievances that the working man held against the management of factories. And many of these grievances were undoubtedly valid; for management was dictatorial and tyrannical. Greedy men wrung the last drop of life blood from their help and were little better than dignified gangsters. The working man could barely earn enough to survive with his family and never received the just due for the effort of his body.

And so men organized into groups committed to loyalty to their unions in order to change their plight by mass protest. They were of the opinion that they could force radical changes by uniting and forcing their demands to be considered by those in authority over them. They marched forth under the slogan "United we stand;" they waved the banner of freedom for labor; and they brandished their potent weapon of the strike. And in their efforts they were eminently successful. One need only compare the working conditions of the average man today with those of a half century ago to see how successful they really were. They succeeded in forcing management to erect new and modern plants; to increase their wages; to lower their hours of work; to give them benefits of hospitalization, guaranteeed wages, insurance and sundry other delightful things to the carnal satisfaction of the man who gropes and strives for power and possessions. They were instrumental in gaining legislation to do away with sordid conditions and evil practices, to protect them in the attainment of their goals, and to make them the ruling class in the economic struggle in our country.

Indeed they have achieved their purpose.

H. Hanko

TRUTH VS. ERROR

The Sufficiency of the Word

Tim was a sensible young man of twenty-three years of age who had recently returned home after serving two years in the army. Prior to his tenure of military service he had led a very active life in the sphere of the church. In catechism he often raised good questions that were indicative of profound concentration and deep interest in the things of God. He always took a leading part in the discussions of the Young People's Society and when he was expected to furnish an introduction, essay or the like, he without fail produced that which spoke for itself of hard and diligent labor. Tim was well versed in the truth of Scripture and the sincerity of his interest in the truth was not questioned. To many youth of the church Tim might be called an excellent example, worthy of emulation.

On the occasion of our writing, we find Tim with a saddened and perplexed heart. For a few months now he had been keeping rather steady company with a young lady named Roberta and, although he hadn't as yet told even his parents, he was seriously considering marriage. Ordinarily that would be a reason for joy rather than sorrow but in this case Tim was not sure that he was following the right course. Roberta, whom he had known only a short while, was at one time a member of the Roman Catholic Church. In that church she had been baptized and reared. A few years ago she left that church and became affiliated with a group that called themselves "Undenominational." She had said that she was now converted from Catholicism but Tim knew from conversation with her that there were still some tenets of that faith in her that had not been uprooted. What bothered Tim still more, however, was her peculiar conception of and attitude toward the Bible. They had often talked about that and although Roberta had told him that she believed the Bible was the Word of God, he did not feel quite satisfied with this. To him there were various things that left the impression that she really did not mean this and that she actually believed that the teaching of men and the church stood above the Word of God. He was strengthened in this opinion when upon several occasions he atempted to correct her doctrine by pointing to the Scriptures and she would invariably reply, "The minister that I heard or my church doesn't interpret that the way you do."

Otherwise Tim thought very much of Roberta. In fact, he thought that he loved her enough to ask her to marry him. She was a nice looking girl, had a jovial personality, was above average in intelligence, very industrious and not one who was especially attached to "worldly things." In many respects he admired her but it was this church thing that bothered him. That stood in the way. He turned it over and over in his mind.

Would she go along with him? Would she join his church? Oh, yes, she had once told him that she would go along with him but that not until "after" they were married would she join his church because she had many friends in her church with whom she was not yet ready to part and, as she put it, "the people in your church are so bigoted." That hurt Tim somewhat but not enough to brea

off his relation with her. Down deep Tim felt that the main thing was really not whether she would join his church but rather whether she believed as he did, confessed the same God, loved the same Jesus and lived the same truth! That must be determined first and then the matter of church affiliation would create no problem.

Tim wondered if he could probably instruct Roberta in the truth of the Confession. If only he could get her to come to catechism with him but then, he had tried this once and when she learned that in catechism they study Confessions, she turned stone cold for her undenominational friends had told her that churches with Confessions are false, "man-made" churches and she believed them. She had been indoctrinated with the lie that the true church has "no creed but Christ." Then again she really didn't care too much because she had heard that in many churches the so-called "Confessions" are just dead letters anyway that really didn't mean anything. She thought it was a waste of time to be instructed in "dead letters" and therefore was not interested in persuing a catechism course. She had told Tim that although she thought she could join his church, she did not feel that she would bind herself, by doing so, to anything like Confessions. Everyone is free to think and believe as they wish and she intended to do so regardless of what church she joined.

Tim thought about it and the more he did the more he concluded that Roberta was all confused. He tried to convince himself that she was really a good girl who was all mixed up about this "religious" thing and he attributed it to her mixed background. First her Romish belief that the authority of the church is over and above that of Scripture projected itself to the fore and then the spirit of undenominationalism that really ignores the doctrine of the church altogether seemed to gain precedence. If he would present her with the truth from the Bible, she would appeal to the contrary teachings of the "church" to defend her error and if he would cite the truth from the Confessions, she would become evasive and claim that that was not the Bible. Truly she was all mixed up and Tim felt that was error too!

Just then a thought came into Tim's mind. He knew that **he** could not set her straight but then he remembered that one time he had asked a question in catechism to which the minister replied among other things that "the revelation of the truth in the Bible is sufficiently clear for any and every believer to obtain the necessary knowledge unto salvation." To him that meant that she would have to be convinced of the truth from the Scriptures or therwise . . . well —.

Hurriedly he looked up the Article from the Confession in connection with which this had been said and he found it to be Article 7 of the Netherlands Confession. He read it carefully and we are not going to quote it here but will, D.V., comment on its content the next time but the thing that drew Tim's attention and that we are concerned with now is found at the very end of the article. There two passages are quoted from Scripture. They read: "Try the spirits whether they be of God. Likewise if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house."

These pasages also we wish to discuss later. To Tim they meant that it was impossible for him to propose marriage. Roberta's doctrine was not of God but of the spirit of error. He could not receive her into his house. God forbade it and he must marry "in the Lord." There must be a spiritual unity, a oneness of faith and doctrine or there cannot be a

(Continued on page 11)

BIBLE OUTLINE

Concerning Bible Outlines

The Federation Board has suggested to your Bible Outlines editor that he suspend writing any outlines for some months, due to the fact that most of the societies were far behind in their treatment of the Book of Acts. The Board also suggested that an article be written to suggest a remedy for this situation. The undersigned acquiesced in both matters. Here is the article.

First of all, let me inform you that it is now up to the Board to decide when Bible Outlines shall again appear in **Beacon Lights.** Hence, it is up to the various societies to inform the Board when they are getting caught up on the outlines. Otherwise the latter end may be worse than the former, and the societies will be getting ahead of the outlines. Hence, when you get within a chapter of being caught up, you had better let the Board know.

Secondly, the societies should also know that your Bible Outlines editor has informed the Board that he can no longer be held to the time limit of three years in finishing the Book of Acts. We were already progressing slowly this year,— and had, in fact, eliminated the January outlines without word from the Board,— because the societies were behind. But with this added delay, it will, of course, be impossible to be two-thirds finished with the Book of Acts this year, and will also be impossible to finish the Book next year, D.V. I wish to make special note of this because of the criticism that was voiced on this very matter at the last convention.

Now what about a remedy?

Personally, I think the easiest remedy, and perhaps the best, is the one which the Board suggests, namely, to publish the outlines at a slower pace. I can see no good reason why a certain book must be finished in three years if it can profitably be discussed in four years. And I take it for granted that when a society goes slowly, it does so for the reason that it considers its discussions profitable. And why rush through a book and perhaps skim the surface? And therefore I would earnestly suggest to all societies that they take their time in Bible discussion.

If, however, you desire to make faster progress than you have been making, I would suggest the following:

1. The speed of your progress is to large extent up to yourselves. If you desire to go into less detail than the **Beacon Lights** outlines do, you yourselves can control that. If you want more detail, you can add as many questions as you wish. However, I believe,— and I think I speak from experience,— the amount of preparation which you make before you come to society has much to do with the speed of your discussion. I can well understand that if you have answered none of the questions raised by the outlines for yourselves, in your private study and preparation, your discussions will be slow, yea, well-nigh dead. But if you prepare thoroughly, the relatively simple and leading questions and the questions that have to do with mere fact, you will have answered before you come to society. And then in your society meetings you can busy yourselves with questions as to the significance of the facts and with more difficult questions and problems of a given passage.

2. The chairman of the meeting has much to do with controlling the speed of the discussion. He can speed it up or slow it down. He can guide the discussion, formulate the question under discussion, limit and define a question, keep the discussion to the point, etc.

3. If you really want to make progress, — probably even at the expense of benefit, — you may decide that the discussion on a certain passage will be limited to one society meeting, regardless of whether you finish the passage or not. But as I say, this may force you to make haste at the risk of not receiving the full benefit of the passage discussed.

This is all I can suggest. I may probably add that in our South Holland Society we are less than two chapters behind the **Beacon Lights.** It is true, of course, that we meet almost all summer. But it must also be remembered that our discussion period is usually limited to about thirty minutes.

Perhaps others have more suggestions.

H.C.H.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 5)

the self same tree. In life or death — and death so soon is coming — escape, I cannot there's no place to flee. But thou, Oh God, hast life that is eternal, that life is mine, a gift from thy dear Son. Help me to feel its flush and pulse supernal assurance of the morn when life is done." May we by God's grace so live all of our life in the expectation of the joy that awaits us, and may our prayer be that whether in life or in death, for time and for eternity, we are not our own but belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. With His help we shall do valiantly.

J. K.

TRUTH vs. ERROR

(Continued from page 9)

yoking together. To be unequally yoked is error!

We are glad Tim saw it. It spared him immeasurable grief and misery that is always consequent to error and which not a few who refused to "head the warning of the Word" have reaped.

"How shall the young direct their way?
What light shall be their perfect guide?
Thy Word, O Lord, will safely lead
If in its wisdom they confide."

G. Vanden Berg

PENITENTIAL PRAYERS

God be merciful to me,
On Thy grace I rest my plea;
Plenteous in compassion Thou,
Blot out my transgressions now;
Wash me, make me pure within,
Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

My transgressions I confess,
Grief and guilt my soul oppress;
I have sinned against Thy grace
And provoked Thee to Thy face;
I confess Thy judgment just,
Speechless, I Thy mercy trust.

I am evil, born in sin;
Thou desirest truth within.
Thou alone my Saviour art,
Teach Thy wisdom to my heart;
Make me pure, Thy grace bestow,
Wash me whiter than the snow.

Broken, humbled to the dust
By Thy wrath and judgment just,
Let my contrite heart rejoice
And in gladness hear Thy voice;
From my sins O hide Thy face,
Blot them out in boundless grace.

Psalm 51

Should We Have Choirs in Our Protestant Reformed Church Services?

(Note: This article presents the affirmative side of the question in what was originally planned as pro and con discussion. These articles are not intended to be a critique of our church services, but only to serve as an aid for possible debates, round table discussions etc. in our Young People's Societies. The negative appeared last month. — Ed.)

(AFFIRMATIVE)

As Protestant Reformed Churches, we have not introduced the choir into our church services for various sound reasons (see **Beacon Lights,** Jan. 1957). However, for the sake of argument (see note above) we would like to present a few ideas which could be used to uphold the opposite view.

Throughout Scripture, the choir-audience relationship has been established as a desirable method of education, inspiration, and testimony.

A significantly large percentage of David's Psalms were written for various singing groups, through which he passed to Israel the messages God had inspired him to write.

The choir of angels which sang praises to God at the time of the announcement of Christ's birth, clearly indicated that the choir was a desirable, effective, God-approved means of worshipping Him.

Congregational singing is an important part of the Reformed heritage, due to the personal nature of our concept of salvation. In our singing we often substitute sheer volume for skill as an indication of our sincerity, and forget that congregational singing, being both testimony and praise, is worthy of preparation and education. The function of teaching the congregation could become an important part of the choir's duties, for not only does the Psalter grow in beauty when sung by trained voices, but the congregation could learn many of the now unfamiliar or incorrectly sung songs in our Psalter.

Just as some are given the talent of teaching to exercise in the church, so others are given the gift of singing to develop in the service of Christ's church. What more fitting use of such a talent could there be than to use this developed gift of singing as a part of the church services; never as a substitute for the congregational singing, but as a compliment to it.

Often objection is made to the performer-audience relationship into which a choir falls when introduced into the church services. However, this relationship is not as foreign to our services as we sometimes assume. The organist who plays the prelude, which serves to encourage a reverent atmosphere, also comes into this relationship and with definite beneficial results.

The choir, then, could benefit our churches as the highest exercise of a God-given talent; could serve to teach by example, how the Psalter should be sung and also teach us how to sing many presently neglected, but desirable numbers.

C. West

The Relationship of the Deacon to the Church

Oh, what a joy to be called to be a child of God! Still greater is the joy to be called to the office of deacon!

To begin with, this office is an office to which the men of the church might well hope, some day, to attain. This office along with the office of elder is really the highest office that one can hope to attain. Even the president of this country with all of his responsibilities does not hold a higher office. After all, his office is only temporal, and concerns the physical needs of the people. The deacon is called to his office by Christ Himself through the church. Christ is the only power and authority in His Church and He exercises that authority through the men whom He calls to the different offices in the Church. He not only calls men to their offices, but He also ordains them, and as the Form of Ordination assures them and the congregation, He will also qualify them by His Spirit so they may be able to use their God-given gifts and talents in the Kingdom Work to which they have been called. There is often the misconception among Reformed people, that one has to be a deacon before he can be considered as material for the eldership. This of course is not true. The deacon as well as the elder can only labor in God's vineyard in the fear of the Lord and with the Holy Scripture as their guide. They must both be well versed in the Scriptures and be able to come to God's people with "Thus saith the Lord." Without the knowledge of the Scriptures neither the elder nor the deacon can come to His people with a word of comfort or admonition, for where is there any comfort apart from the Word of God? Both not be placed on a higher level than the other.

The word "deacon" is derived from the Greek "diakonos" which in the New Testament is most often translated "minister" or "servant" or one who serves. The deacon is then actually a minister — a minister of mercy, since they are called to minister the mercies of Jesus Christ unto His people.

What are the mercies of Christ? They can be identified in the following — Love, Goodness, Long-suffering, Grace, Compassion, etc. Even as Christ bestows all of these attributes unto His people from eternity to eternity so these attributes should be evident in the church upon earth through the office of the deaconate. The power of deliverance from the awful oppression of sin and death, (to which we are all in subjection by nature), is the true mercy which God through Christ Jesus bestows upon His People.

True mercy is also that affection of one toward another whereby the one desires to lead the other in the way of truth, which leads to the attainment of the only blessedness.

The office of deacon was instituted because of the complaints of the Grecian widows who were being neglected in the daily ministration, so the Apostles could "give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word," Acts 6:4. The first deacons who were called to the office preached as well as cared for the poor and needy, as in the case of Stephen and Phillip. Later on they were called to function only in the High Priestly office of Christ.

Calvin finally, after various duties had been given to and taken away from the deacons, succeeded in restoring the deaconate to its proper duties and labors. From that time on men were called to devote their labors to the care of the

poor. Their labors in caring for the poor did not only consist in seeing to it that only their material needs were being supplied, but their highest calling in caring for the poor was to administer the Mercies of Christ unto His people in comforting and sometimes even admonishing them with the Word of Scripture. In reflecting the Priestly function of Christ in the care of the poor and needy, they are called to dress the sore wounds of this present world with the ointment of Christ's Mercy. It is through much prayer and only by God's Grace that this can be accomplished in the fear of His Name.

According to the Form of Ordination, the deacons office is, in the first place, to collect and preserve with the greatest fidelity and diligence, the alms and goods given to the poor. The second calling is to distribute these alms with discretion and prudence only on objects of charity, and to do this with cheerfulness and simplicity, assisting poor with compassion and hearty affection as the Apostle requires in Rom. 12 and II Cor. 9. They are here required to come to the poor with comfortable words from Scripture as well as with external gifts.

There is also a calling on the part of the individual believer to provide the deacons with the means with which to support the needy, and to do this with cheerfulness and intelligence. As Rom. 12:8 states, "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; . . . . he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." The Heidelberg Catechism also exhorts the believer "to contribute to the poor as becomes a Christian."

In connection with the distribution of the alms the "Form" has this to say, "Ye deacons, be diligent in collecting alms, prudent and cheerful in distribution of the same, assist the oppressed, provide for the true widows and orphans, show liberality unto all men, but especially to the household of faith." With this in mind, should an occasion arise where a family, who is not affiliated with our churches, is known to be in need, I can see no reason why the deaconate cannot render them aid as they see fit; provided, of course, that it would not in any way interfere with providing for the needy of our own churches. Who is to say that means the Lord will use to gather His church?

To summarize, the deacon is to the church what a hand or foot is to the body. Since the body is not complete if a single member is missing, so the Church of Christ is not complete without all its representatives of Christ present, namely the three-fold office of Christ — Prophet, Priest and King.

G. E. Bylsma

Evangelism

Evangelism means different things to people of the present era of the church. To the Roman Catholic, evangelism means the extension of the Romish church to many lands and has as its objective the aggrandizement of the hierarchy and the enlargement of the number of "the faithful." The means used to accomplish this end may vary widely and include the use of military force as in Middle Ages when whole armies and populations were baptized into the Church. Included also as a means to evangelism was the forming of priestly orders within the church such as the Jesuits who traveled far and wide on every continent making converts to the Roman church.

In our country, the popular idea of evangelism in Protestant churches is very different. The objective is not always th

same. In some cases it is a movement to bring children into the established church and accomplish their baptism. This type of evangelism is very common in the slum areas of our large cities and is fostered particularly by the Protestant churches of English origin, notably the Episcopal Church. This practice finds its doctrinal basis in the view of that church concerning the baptism of children and the efficacy of that baptism.

Another objective of evangelism sometimes takes on the appearance of a "pep rally." A certain church and its pastor may decide that the life of the church is such that it needs to be stirred up and made more active. Arrangements are made for some itinerant "evangelist" to speak for a series of meetings. The speaker arrives at the church, his coming having received the widest publicity from the pulpit, in the church bulletin, in the public press and often including radio and TV announcements. He is often accompanied by a group of musicians to support his meetings. The actual message at the meetings is often accompanied by a song service which serves to "warm up" the crowd. The songs are buoyant in character but superficial in content and often are very sentimental and emotional in quality. The "evangelist" speaks and as often as not, his message is primarily an appeal to "get saved." He may embellish the message with a discourse on hell or heaven and he may tell some funny stories which border on the sacrilegious, or he may hold forth on some favorite views of his particular brand of dispensationalism. The idea of this type of so-called evangelism is to "win souls for Christ" and pep up the local church, and its success is reckoned in the number of converts and the degree of emotion evoked in the members.

To us who hold the Reformed faith, evangelism means the Scriptural preaching of the Gospel. That implies, first of all, that the preaching is done by ordained ministers of the Word of God. It is the calling of the church to see to it that only the truth is preached through faithful ministers. Secondly, the content of the preaching is the message from God that He fully and completely saves to the uttermost those whom He has chosen in Christ. Thus the true evangelist brings the message of the mercy and love of God for a people who are saved by the way of the Cross and the resurrection of our Lord. We then hear from the true evangelist a God-centered message of salvation. This preaching is not man centered and its effectiveness is not measured by the number of converts. Its effectiveness is really gauged by its conformity to the teaching of Scripture.

The reaction of the hearers to the preaching of the Gospel is an indication of the purity of the preaching. The reaction is two-fold: the believers are quickened and rejoice and the unbelievers reject the Word and hate the preacher and his message. A notable example is the ministry of our Lord Himself. In Luke 4 we find Jesus preaching in his home town of Nazareth and the literally quoted the Gospel as it is found in Isaiah in authoritative fashion, and the net result was that this townsfolk wanted to throw him from a cliff.

Also in modern times we see the fulfilment of the word of Christ, "They have hated Me and they will also hate you." It is only about one hundred years ago that the first Christian missionaries who were of Reformed persuasion came to Korea to preach the Gospel. They were three in number and in a short time all were martyred in a brutal slaughter. Yet the true believers were there also and the fruit of these evangelists is that today the Presbyterian church has flourished in Korea as nowhere else in Asia.

Indeed, we believe in evangelism, true

(Continued on page 17)

Aggressive Charity

Coming from Hollnad, Mich., one evening this winter, the roads were very slippery. A friend and I noticed a lady who had very nicely maniplated her Ford into the ditch. At first, I laughed a little and was ready to continue on my merry way home. My buddy said, instead, "Let's help her out Jim."

Immediately I pulled the car off the road and then backed up to the car in the ditch. Soon, when people spotted my stopped car, we had sufficient help to push the lady's car back on to the road.

Is your **charity** aggresive or do you wait until you are called upon to show your charity? Would you have driven on like I wold have. or, would you be the first to suggest giving aid to a person in distress.

If your neighbor was sick, (let's say you had a neighbor of another nationality; maybe one who is not quite as clean a housekeeper as you are) would you volunteer your help, first of all to make the sick person comfortable and then to help clean the house? Maybe your neighbor is not the nicest person to get along with — using foul language or having an evil temper. There could be many reasons for not getting along very well with your neighbor, but would you offer your help? Or would you wait until you were asked. Would you purposely stay out of their way, so they can't ask you for any help?

I ask again: is your charity aggresive or do you wait until you are called on to give help?

Charity brings to mind the story of the Good Samaritan. Putting the story in a modern situation, wouldn't this be the idea of the parable?

A man and his wife were riding along in their car when suddenly a tire blew out, throwing the car out of control and into a large tree — at approximately 45 miles per hour. The crash injured both very seriously. The first car at the scene of the crash contained some very rich people, riding in an expensive car and dressed in their best clothes. Seeing the accident, they stopped and looked at it from the car and quickly drove on. Immediately another car pulled up, which contained a lawyer and his wife. They too stayed right in the car, because they did not want to become involved in any questions. After all, they had a dinner engagement with the judge of the circuit court of that district, and they certainly could not detain themselves long enough to help some poor stranger who got hurt in an accident.

Just as quickly another car pulled up. This happened to be a Negro couple with their children. As soon as the car is stopped, the door swung open, and the man ran over to the smashed car. H took one look and riped open the smashed door on the driver's side. Very carefully he lifted the man out from behind the bent steering wheel. His wife quickly unfolded a blanket and wrapped the injured man in it.

Quickly the colored man returned to the wreck and painlessly removed the unconscious lady lying in a heap on the floor of the smashed car.

As soon as the injured couple was taken care of properly, the colored man ran back to his car and immediately raced away to contact medical authorities. Quite naturally other cars and people had stopped, some directing traffic, others just standing around and talking about the accident. The first two cars had left some minutes before, saying and doing nothing.

Minutes later the negro returned, having called an ambulance, and having spent his last bit of money to buy bandages for the injured. His wife quickly bandage

the wounds to stop the flow of blood and to keep infection from setting in.

Soon the ambulance arrived to aid the injured people. The police too had arrived and began directing traffic and moving the people on.

Quietly the colored family entered their car and drove away, receiving no compliment nor expecting any.

Would you have given unselfishly of yourself to help those people, or would you have stood around and waited till you were called on to help? "Sure," you say, "I would help." I ask, "Even if you had god clothes on, or it meant that you would be late for a date or basketball game?" Wouldn't it be much easier to say, "Come on or we will be late?"

Another thing! Where were we as Protestant Reformed Churches when the tornado struck Hudsonville and the surrounding area of Grand Rapids? Did we have first aid service and canteens in the stricken area? Did we have clothing centers and places where the stricken people could live when their own houses were demolished?

Instead, we find that the Salvation Army and a little known religious group from as far away as Indiana came and stayed, till long after they were needed, to give help.

What is the idea of charity?

First of all it is God's love to man. This is perfect charity. Secondly it is man's love to God and his neighbor. With this charity we deal in this article. Charity means more than giving alms, it also means giving service. It means more than merely setting up services for the poor or for those involved in accidents or storms.

Charity is in itself a testimony. Not just a testimony of our compassion, but of our faith and love of God. We don't show charity by our compassion, but by showing that the new life of Christ exists in us. It is giving service instead of just funds.

This is not only true **after** someone is in trouble, but we should seek to be charitable to our neighbor before he is in trouble. Show the person what his actions or deeds lead to and point the way that he should go. Then you show true charity. Then you show the person the way of peace and truth and do more than if you should try and help after the person is in trouble.

Take heed! Is your charity aggressive or do you wait till you are called on? Do you seek to give a testimony to your neighbors, and associates? If you don't, you do not show true charity. Do you listen to evil tales and rumors about others? If you do, you are guilty of backbiting and do not show true charity. From now on let us show that we not only have the truth as far as doctrine is concerned, but also show it in our lives with true charity.

Jim Schipper

EVANGELISM

(Continued from page 15)

evangelism. For we know that Christ gathers His church out of all nations, kindreds and tongues and from the four corners of the earth. That is His work. The duty which He has laid upon us as church institute in the world is to be faithful to the message which we have heard from the beginning. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," I John 5:1. This is true evangelism. May we be faithful to proclaim it in word and in deed.

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