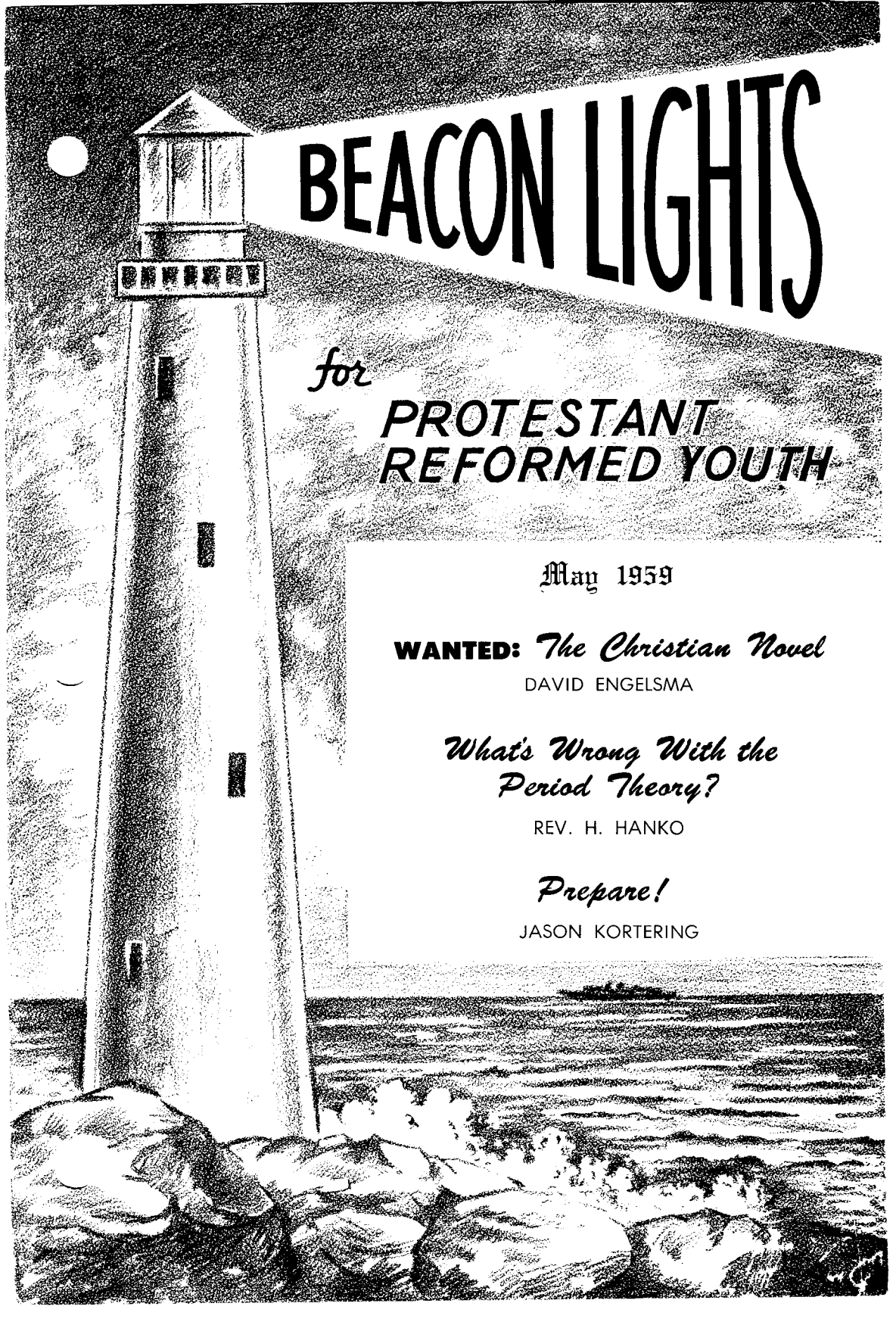
BEACON LIGHTS

for

PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



May 1959

WANTED: *The Christian Novel*
DAVID ENGELSMA

What's Wrong With the Period Theory?
REV. H. HANKO

Prepare!
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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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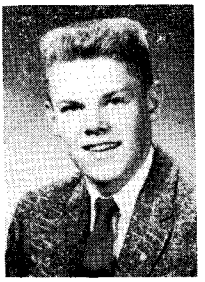
WANTED: *The Christian Novel*

DAVID ENGELSMA



The recent presence of Feike Feikema on the Calvin College Campus has brought to awareness again a very real problem, especially in Christian literary circles. This problem is the almost total lack of Christian fiction. The Christian faith as evidenced in our own Reformed faith has produced qualified, capable men in almost every possible field, but has left the vast expanse of Christian fiction void.

The reason for the renewed awareness of this problem is the visit of a gifted and renowned novelist to Calvin College a month ago. Frederich (Feike) Feikema is a graduate of Calvin College, an erstwhile member of the Christian Reformed Church, and the author of several widely recognized, but (in our circles) rather controversial novels. Among these is *The Primitive,* a thinly disguised account of the author's stay at Calvin, in which he gives positive evidence of his complete rejection of Christianity, as evinced in Calvinism, and everything it stands for.

The inability of the Reformed faith to produce, and if it did produce, to keep within the fold a good novelist has been theoretically solved in various ways. The most startling solution or attempt at solution has been that which demands a change in our Calvinistic Christian structure. Our outlook is too narrow, too strict, they say. We have to relax our rigid rules in order to allow such novelists, such artists as Feike Feikema to remain within the folds of the Church.

This, it seems to me, is an impossible solution to the problem at hand. Essentially, this would mean that we relax our Biblical Calvinistic principles so as to hold within our fellowship men who deny God. For while on Calvin campus, Mr. Feikema gave as the cause of an accident he once suffered "God or Fate or whatever you call it." Such novelists have no place within the Church and are not desired either. Such desire would merely be the result of a selfish pride, and the purpose of a Christian novelist, of Christian fiction is not to satisfy pride! If it were we would have no right to speak of our need for a Christian novel.

The most widely read form of writing is fiction. Fiction appeals to people of all ages and all stations of life. Fiction is interesting, oftentimes fascinating. It is a form of reading which is pleasureable. Because of its tremendous appeal, the field of fiction has great possibility of influence. Children especially are swayed by the fiction they read.

However, fiction, although it is not history, although it never actually happened, deals with life. Fiction is a presentation of reality. It is the sphere of experience. That is why it is so important who the writer of a novel is. For the author of a novel will disseminate within his work whatever he thinks life to be. It simply is an impossibility that an author will not project his view of life, his view of reality in his novel. In every case the personality of the author and his basic assumption or beliefs about life will color his work of art (in this case the novel). That is why many of today's best sellers are pornographic obscenities. The worldly author today glorifies sexual filth for the sake of the filth itself. He presents abnormalities and aberration as being the common thing and as things to be copied by the reader. The youth under the influence of *Peyton Place,* places himself in a precarious position. He cannot but be affected, and adversely so by the "garbage" spread inside. Such best sellers parade under the name of naturalism.

There are of course other novels, written by worldly men, which can be read profit-

ably and entertainingly by the children of God. Perhaps the author's loftier purpose outshines his basic ungodly convictions or perhaps his anti-Christian attitudes are not so apparent as in some other novels. The child of God can read with discretion and a critical eye even some novels which do openly proclaim an anti-Christian view of life. The child of God does live in a non-Christian world and must be aware of things as they really exist. The Christian need not enclose himself in an aura of theological works.

None of this mitigates the pressing need for the Christian novel. The present-day output of Protestant fiction is pathetically small and most of what is put out is pathetically poor. Almost all of that which masquerades under the name of Christian novel is neither Christian nor good. Its Christianity is a sloppy, sentimental cure-all for a man's physical ills and emotional worries, and its contents are those in which a handsome, athletic young "Christian" man sees, loves, and converts a beautiful, worldly girl. Such a novel ends with the customary kiss in an atmosphere of radiant sunshine and caroling birds.

Such a novel is merely romantic, unreal nonsense. Christian fiction, as well as worldly fiction, must be real, not in the sense of biographical, but rather in the sense that it is true to life, true to experience. The Christian must present the real, the Biblical view of life, within his novel. He may not produce fiction for art's sake alone, but must always work to disclose God's glory, in the aesthetic sphere. Fiction with all its popularity and possibility can and must be used by the Christian novelist to aid men in finding out the truth of the creation and its Creator. A Christian, a Calvinistic Christian can write fiction because a Christian does have the proper view of life and reality, but for this reason als a qualified Christian must write fiction. One who has the ability to author fiction may never suppress this talent. Certainly this talent as well as any other is a gift of God to be used in His service. Really, the purpose of this article can never be to urge everyone to write novels. "There is a creative impulse in a select few which drives them to write," says Feikema. (He called it "the old man.") Although this mystical urge may be overexaggerated, there can be no doubt that only a few men are qualified to write. But the purpose of this article can be to urge the cultivation of this talent, to make it an "honorable" talent, and to demand of its possessors that they do use it in our own church sphere.

Christianity, Calvinism, the Protestant Reformed doctrine is not incompatible with fiction. A proper fusion of real, actual experience with the Christian ideal must characterize pure Christian fiction. But there can be none without a Christian novelist so I would urge each of you seriously to consider and weigh your talents. The tremendous possibilities and potentialities of Christian fiction can be tapped and used, perhaps through your efforts.

I think the late Henry Zylstra summed up the essence of fiction, Christian fiction: "To see God's reality in the real world and beyond it, to see the ideal in and behind the actual, and so to reproduce it that all may look and enjoy, that is what happens in art."*

*"What Is Fiction For," *The Banner*, 83 (Dec. 17, 1948), p. 1511.

EDITORIAL

Prepare!

JASON KORTERING

Of all the years of our life's span, the years of our youth receive the most emphasis in regard to preparation. One hears it constantly. The teacher in the class room, the speakers for chapel, the minister in the church, the elders on family visitation, all emphasize this one main theme: prepare!

Youth is a time of preparation. In one all-inclusive statement, youth prepares fc life. All education in church, home, and school has one objective: to prepare the

child for his covenant place in all of life. However, we do not wish to make reference to this preparation as such, but rather to the preparation for meeting our God in divine worship on the Sabbath day.

A moment's reflection on the beauty of the church service will enable us to see the necessity of preparation. As we gather in church, God by His Spirit communes with us, and we with Him. He fellowships with us through the means of grace. Mind you, the holy sovereign God of heaven and earth who speaks and it comes to pass, who is all infinite perfection and glory, who is eternal and unchangeable, who is all power in heaven and earth, that God also speaks with us as we assemble together on Sunday. He condescends from His throne of holiness and speaks to us through the Word. He turns His ear to us and hears our prayers, our songs of praise. He beholds us as we place our offering in the collection plate. Jehovah, our God, fellowships with us and we with Him. A fellowship though so beautiful, yet only a little glimmer of the eternal fellowship in glory.

The more we are conscious of the real significance of the church service the greater our preparation will be. We are such poor miserable sinners. Just think, God in His wisdom gives us the privilege every week to sit at His spiritual table and feeds us with the bounty of His promise. Even the sick in the homes and hospitals, though they are not able to meet in physical presence, yet they also eat the same spiritual food and thus partake of the "banquet of heaven."

Sober reflection causes us to confess we are not worthy of such an honor. We are like the "hobo" and "bum" assembled at the wedding of the president's daughter. All is beautifully arrayed in the most luxurious decor. The candles are lit and the organ plays. In come the guests. You look once, twice. They are beggars, crippled, filthy, perfumed with liquor and nicotine. What a sight you say? That really is the picture of church service. By nature we are so corrupt, unworthy. Everything God has ordained in the "wedding" is beautiful and lovely, yea, heavenly, but we are so earthly. Our thoughts are upon the cares of life: the date we had the past week, the new hat Mary bought, the couple that just entered, how sleepy you feel, that sleek car you are thinking of buying. How unworthy! We commune with the God of heaven and earth – what a way.

Apart from Christ we would not even come to church. In ourselves we do not see the need. We are no better than the neighbor who seems so unconcerned about church and enjoys spending his "sabbath" to the satisfaction of his own wants. However, when Christ calls us to Himself, and we hear that call and come, following Him, then we gather in the service, and though by nature unworthy, in Christ we are shining jewels in the crown of glory. Christ's glory is our glory, because he is Immanuel.

We are not perfect. We only have a small beginning. If we were perfect, we would not have to prepare for church, but since we are yet in sin, so earthy, we must prepare. You do not think of going to a banquet without spending hours on preparation. You need the most petite dress, most fragrant perfume, the cleanest shave, and neatest suit. Yet all that is earthy. It's only temporal. Think what preparation we must do for our spiritual banquet. That takes deliberate effort. It is not natural to prepare for church. The most desirable thing according to our nature is to get out of bed 3/4 of an hour before church, clean up a bit, eat a drop, and be off, come into church 10 minutes before the service sleepy eyed and thus expect to be blessed with spiritual food. It just does not work. To eat spiritual food demands hard work. You must be hungry, and before you realize hunger you must work up an appetite. To eat spiritual food demands spiritual labor which causes the spiritual hunger.

In speaking of preparation, there must first of all be the sincere desire to do so. There must be an attitude of consecration. We must prayerfully set our minds to the task. It is so easy to slip, but by the power of the Spirit which God will give to us we shall be victorious.

Preparation begins already Saturday night. Late dates are not conducive to spiritual meditation on the Sabbath. Not only is one "starry eyed," but so besieged by slumber that it is virtually impossible to think on the sermon. The battle in such a case is to stay awake much less to derive benefit from the message.

There are many things a young person can do to place himself in the right spiritual "mood" for the service. Mandatory is arising

at the right time. Really late sleepers can't prepare spiritually, because their time is occupied caring for their physical needs. An ideal situation presents itself when a family has a piano or organ. A little song service in the home will pay its spiritual dividends. One can listen to the hi-fi or radio and be strengthened by spiritual singing. Reading and meditating are excellent ways to prepare, but whatever it be, a definite preparation will help you greatly in deriving spiritual strength from the service for the battle of faith.

Upon entering the church you acknowledge your own weakness and pray that God bless you and strengthen you in communing with Him. You pray that God use the minister as a means of the Spirit to edify the church. Before the service begins you have an excellent opportunity to meditate. Think upon a favorite text, or better yet the text the minister chose for the sermon. Sing in your soul the songs the organ plays. All these things help one to receive spiritual nurture. The more effort one exerts in preparing for the service, the more beneficial that service will be for that person.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

In the editorial in the April issue of **Beacon Lights**, I treated the problem of apparent conflicts between God's general revelation and His special revelation and the ultimate impossibility of this situation. I further mentioned that this is but another trial of our faith and as such serves to strengthen the bond that connects the church with God.

Although I had no intention of treating the theories of Carbon-14 and the "Period Creation Theory" **per se** they were cited as examples of ostensible conflicts between general and special revelation. Since these concepts were secondary to the theme of the editorial, little was said to validate or condemn them relative to Scripture.

This lack of further comment on this explosive topic, meant to some readers that I might be paving the way (either intentionally or unintentionally) for the introduction of these theories into our churches or at the best, pleading for their co-existence.

Rather than allow this idea to continue in the minds of any reader may I make it very plain and positive: Although we cannot at the moment disprove the theory of Carbon-14 on a scientific basis, I nevertheless feel that ultimately this theory will be disproved since it conflicts with God's special revelation.

For a more comprehensive and learned treatment of this matter than I could ever hope to produce, I would like to refer the reader to Rev. H. Hanko's article in this month's "Christian Living" section beginning on page 5.

CHARLES H. WESTRA

LETTERS —

Dear Editor:

In regard to the editorial, Proof Positive — The Earth is Flat by C. H. Westra, may I first say I read it with interest. From the article I gained the viewpoint that science is to prove Scripture, this is not true, Scripture is to prove science; by this I mean to say Scripture is first and that we should trust in it and have no need of science to prove it.

Science's purpose is to assure us all the more fully the truth of Scripture. There is a big difference between proof which means that first of all you doubt it and that you must have evidence (Is not Scripture enough evidence?) and assurance, which presumes that you believe it but want to be made more confident (This is needed because we are moral creatures).

When we make a statement about science (or anything which is of spiritual significance) we should give, if possible, references from the Bible. There is a dire need for references in the above said article.

In closing may I quote from Genesis 1 verses 8, 9, and 10 ". . . And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the Heaven be gather together into one place and let the dry land appear and it was so. And God called the dry land earth . . . and God saw that it was good." It seems to me the purpose of all these evolutionistic ideas is to say God couldn't create the earth in six days. Is not our God all powerful, even to creating the earth in six days?

Thank you,

ILEEN GRIESS

What is Wrong with the Period Theory?

REV. H. HANKO

It is perhaps time that an article in this paper be devoted to the so-called "Period Theory." I am prompted to write this article because of the fact that this theory is having its influence upon our young people, especially if they come into contact with this theory in their schooling in the existing Christian High Schools and Colleges. *Beacon Lights* has a unique calling to maintain the truth overagainst this pernicious error, for it is a paper dedicated to the instruction and encouragement of the youth of the covenant in the knowledge of the truth. It is this which prompts me to reprint, in slightly altered form a speech I made to three of our Mr. and Mrs. Societies on this subject.

That this theory offers no slight danger to our maintenance of the truth is evidenced by the fact that it is gaining in adherents almost daily and has already penetrated the schools and the pulpit in churches other than our own. That it is indeed a danger I hope to make clear. A positive statement of the truth is clearly needed overagainst these unsettling lies which throw doubt into the minds of the young people, and which threaten our precious truth of the inspiration of Scripture itself. *Beacon Lights* ought to be loud and clear giving leadership and direction lest we too be led in these devious and labyrinthian paths of heresy.

THE THEORY

The theory itself is not complicated and can be stated in a few words. It was developed in connection with questions concerning the age of the earth. On the basis of Scripture, students of the Bible have usually maintained that the earth is very close to six thousand years old. The genealogies of Scripture are clear enough to arrive at an approximate figure. However, there were those scientists who claimed also to be students of Scripture, and believers in the Word of God who needed a much older earth than was generally accepted. They needed an earth of from two to five billion years old. In as much as it was impossible to put such a large number of years into the general structure of the chronologies, they took a second look at Genesis 1 and came to the conclusion that it was quite possible to interpret the days of Genesis 1 as being days of many millions of years instead of days of twenty-four hours. By making days of creation almost inconceivably long periods of time, they were able to conclude that the earth is from two to five billion years old. This is the period theory.

BASED ON SCIENTIFIC PROBLEMS

It might be well for us to note briefly what these problems were which science faced and which forced them to seek for a means of establishing an older earth on the basis of Scripture.

One problem, which is usually considered the chief, is the problem of the disintegration of radioactive elements. Radioactive elements are elements found in creation which emit certain charged particles which we are accustomed to call radioactivity. In the explosion of nuclear weapons, a great deal of this radioactivity is emitted; and it is a cause of great concern to the world today that there is so much of it in the atmosphere that it may do irreparable harm to the earth's peoples and perhaps eventually destroy them. When these radioactive elements emit their particles, they change to

another element which is not radioactive. But they do so at a fixed rate which can be scientifically determined. This is called the "half-life period" of a radioactive element. This means that such an element loses half its mass in a fixed time. It is perhaps best to give an illustration or two of this in order to make it clear. Some of these radioactive elements are Uranium, the Radium on the luminous dialed watch, Carbon-14. If there is a pound of Uranium in the ground it will gradually change to lead which is stable and will not disintegrate. The "half-life period" of Uranium is 4.5 billion years. If therefore, this pound of Uranium remains in the ground for 4.5 billion years, it will become ½ pound of Uranium and ½ pound of lead. If another 4.5 billion years passes, this ½ pound of Uranium will become ¼. This process will continue until all the Uranium has changed into another element. The same thing happens with other radioactive elements, although at different rates of disintegration. The half-life period of Radium is 1,620 years; the half-life period of an element by the name of Polonium is .0009 seconds.

To establish a hypothetical case in order to understand why scientists face this problem, let us say that a scientist finds in the ground one half pound of lead, and lying immediately next to it, one half pound of Uranium-238 which is still radioactive. They will therefore have to conclude that the Uranium has been there for 4.5 billion years; and therefore the world also must be 4.5 billion years old. No other explanation is possible.

Another problem is the problem of the light of stars which has recently reached the earth. Light travels at a rate of 186,000 miles per second. It is estimated that the light of the most distant stars has traveled through the far reaches of space for 5 billion years in order to reach the earth – it is so extremely far away. Thus the star was created five billion years ago.

Another problem which is perhaps better known is the problem of the strata of rock which have been opened up for scientific investigation in such places as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and which, with their flora and fauna found in each stratum indicate an earth which is many, many millions of years older than it was previously thought.

These problems scientists have run across in the course of their scientific investigations, and have concluded therefore that we need a much older earth than the Bible would seem to indicate. There is no other place in the whole Biblical narrative to fit such a great span of time, and therefore the days of Genesis 1 are made long, almost endless periods of time.

DEVELOPMENT IN CREATION

But, of course, the scientist cannot possibly rest by simply making the days of Genesis 1 long periods; he has to say something about the nature of creation itself. He has to make some comment about the character of the work of creation in order to explain his theories. It will not do, and this is the height of folly anyway, to say that at the beginning of the first period God created light, and then did nothing for perhaps 900,000,000 years. Then at the beginning of the second period, God created the firmament in a moment of time, only to allow the creation to lie stagnant for another 900,000,000 years. And so on through the creation week. This is foolishness at its peak. And so these same scientists must necessarily conclude that the whole act of creation is a process. All during these periods there was creation going on in a process from lower to higher forms of life. So, in part at least, lower forms of life evolved into higher forms. There is development and constant progress and process until the creation is completed after an amazingly long period of billions of years.

It does not take much study to see that this theory is precisely like evolutionism as it is taught in all the schools of the country with but few exceptions. And the mere fact that God is introduced into the picture and given a hand in the entire matter does not alter its evolutionism in the least. Evolutionism it is; it cannot be any different; why not be honest and admit it?

OBJECTIONS

Against this theory there are all kinds of objections that can be raised. But rather than mention them all at this time, it is perhaps sufficient to speak of one fundamental objection which is so serious that it threatens the very life of the church.

THE RELATION BETWEEN SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE

This objection has to do with the relation between Scripture and science. When the period theory was formulated, the problem was presented in such a way that it became necessary to interpret Scripture in the light of science. Science presented certain problems concerning the age of the earth. On the basis of science it was discovered that what was needed was a much longer earth than could possibly be found in a Scriptural account which spoke of days of twenty-four hours when the work of creation was discussed. And so these scientists attempted to explain Scripture in the light of their scientific problems. Just as soon as the problem is formulated in this way, it is not difficult to find a solution. The rest is easy enough. It is only a matter of finding the best place to do this. And so to reinterpret the Genesis 1 narrative of creation becomes the best place. The result is the period theory.

I am fully aware of the fact that those who maintain this theory vehemently deny that this is done. And yet it is so true that it almost seems foolish to speak of it. It is certainly obvious in the first place that such a reinterpretation of Genesis 1 was only deemed necessary after these various scientific problems were discovered. Nobody thought of it before. In the second place, it seems incredible that anyone who would read the account of creation with its strong emphasis on the evening and the morning beginning and ending each day could come to any other conclusion than that days of twenty-four hours were meant. If someone had not the slightest idea of the problems of science, as a child, e.g., he would certainly never conclude that long periods of time were spoken of in these Scripture passages. And so science with its problems comes first; and then follows a re-examination and re-interpretation of Scripture.

This is terribly wrong.

This means that science is a greater authority than Scripture. Science is placed as the supreme authority, while Scripture is made subservient to it. No matter how vehemently this is denied, this remains the simple and irrefutable fact. There is no ultimate authority in Scripture except as it is subservient to the cause of scientific endeavor. Scripture and the abiding Word of God must be made to conform to science and is not allowed to speak for itself. I am also fully aware of the fact that those who profess this theory emphasize very strongly the point that there is no disharmony between what is called general and special revelation, and that therefore they must be made to fit. But it remains a fact that even this is a wrong statement of the problem and a wrong approach to the matter. It is not true that special and general revelation must be made to harmonize. It is rather a fact that special revelation stands no matter what, and general revelation must be interpreted in the light of it. Scripture stands. If there are problems in the field of scientific research, they must be solved in the light of Scripture. And if they cannot be solved, then it simply remains a fact that Scripture stands, and science must submit its problems to the final tribunal of the Word of God.

A DESTRUCTIVE THEORY

If however, science must have the first and the last word, the inevitable result of the period theory is that Scripture is no longer a reliable source of truth. It is strikingly enough the case that already there are clear rumblings in the Christian Reformed Churches concerning the fallibility of Scripture. Scripture has mistakes it is said. Scripture is not a scientific text book, and therefore with regard to matters of science we can expect to find mistakes there. There are errors in the Word of God when it faces the problems of science, and it is not too much to expect that we will find errors in the account of creation. After all, science has definitely established that there are billions of years of history, that creation is not the act of a moment, that therefore the account of creation is not to be trusted in as far as it deals in these scientific matters.

But the simple fact of the matter is that if there is just one little error in Scripture, Scripture is destroyed. If there is one mistake on all the pages of Holy Writ, then Scripture is no longer the final authority of all truth, and then there is no authority of truth at all. If this is the case, we might just as well nail shut the doors of our churches and close the windows, for there is no purpose in preaching from a book as

if it is truth when we know for a fact that errors persist. But this is the inevitable result of the period theory. Believe the period theory, and this will be the end of the matter. It is ultimately a choice between this theory and God's Word. One or the other has to be taken, and one or the other has to be left. There is no room for both!

SCRIPTURE STANDS

But, thank God, such is not the case.

Scripture is the supreme authority of all truth. Another authority and standard there is not. It is the infallibly inspired Word of God so that there is not the faintest possibility of any error at all in all its pages and books. It speaks plainly; it speaks the truth, because it is the Word of our God.

And because this is the case, it is the only criterion of truth in this whole vast world. It stands absolutely apart.

On the basis of Scripture, it is clear enough and evident from every part of it that creation took place in six days of twenty-four hours. To this creation many things happened. The curse came upon it doing untold damage and causing drastic change. It was but a short time after that the flood came in all its fury as a great catastrophe changing again the entire creation. I would almost be inclined to say that the drastic changes wrought by the curse and by the flood were comparable in a measure to the drastic change that shall take place at the end of time when the new heavens and the new earth are formed. Certainly the flood is a picture and a type of the final catastrophe which shall befall the present creation before the new heavens and the new earth are ushered it. It is therefore absolutely impossible to reason back to the creation as it existed before the flood and before the curse on the basis of the creation as we now know it. We cannot even form a conception of how things were before the flood came and before the earth was devastated by the curse. But faith accepts these things and explains all of science in their light.

Science can never discover the why of creation. That is simply a fact revealed in Scripture. How then can science possibly come to any conclusions on the how of creation? I deny the men of science the right to try. Their scientific pursuits may be legitimate as long as they stay within their own proper sphere. But they violate their borders and transgress their limits and attempt to explain things which are revealed only in Scripture. Creation is a miracle superb and glorious. It is by faith alone that we can understand it and know anything about it. And this faith must be firmly rooted in the Word of our God whose Word cannot pass away. When science attempts to answer these questions, it will naturally fall into error and insist that Scripture must be reinterpreted. But the next step is inevitable. Science is truth, the only legitimate means of discovering truth. And the Bible falls by the board.

CONCLUSIONS

Science is becoming in our day a fetish. It is considered in our world as the one grand power which men possess to solve all the problems of life. It is the power to heal sicknesses, to relieve pain, to cure diseases, to bring peace on earth, to make life worth its while, to give to man resources to enjoy life and have heaven on earth, to destroy the power of death. Science is the answer to men's hopes and dreams, the key to utopia, the foundation of a glorious and sin-freed creation. And so the scientist is the man of the hour, the man who holds the future of the world in his hands, the man who can bring to earth what countless generations have longed for and sought after. Science is truth. Scientists cannot fail. Our glorious future is about to dawn. So the world speaks and reasons and hopes. And it appears as if this is becoming rapidly the prevailing opinion of men in the Reformed Churches. There is then no need for the Bible any more. We have the key in our research and development. Even the Bible must become subservient to the truth in the hands of the man with a test tube and geiger counter.

But this must not happen to us. The simple believer in the Word of God has a more profound understanding of creation than the most brilliant scientist. He is among the heroes of faith who by faith understands that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that things which are seen were not made from things which do appear.

Let us, young people, by all means stand

fast. There is no room for the period theory in the confession of the truth. It is our heritage to believe in creation, not some watered down theory of evolution. It is our glorious heritage to maintain the ultimate and final authority of the Word of God. This year we commemorate the Reformation. This was the grand heritage and sublime principle of the Reformation that God's Word was the final authority. For this Luther stood and fought and died. For this Calvin spent his life. For this the church has given the blood of the martyrs. The Word of our God must stand. Let us not sacrifice this principle glorious and sublime on the altar of science. Let us not prostitute our heritage in the service of the period theory. Scripture is our hope and comfort, our strength and life. Without it we are hopeless. With it we have all things!

TRUTH VS. ERROR

The Duty of All

REV. G. VANDEN BERG

It requires the diligent and cooperative effort of all concerned to make a convention what it ought to be. Those concerned in this endeavor involve many more than those who actually participate in the planning and activities of these festive days. In regard to the task of eradicating all error from convention, the home, the society and the church are reciprocally involved. If it is a matter of combatting errors of misbehavior, this task must be mainly the concern of the home. Should the necessity arise that errors in doctrine must be expelled from the convention scene, the church must spring into action in order that the mouths of vain talkers and deceivers may be stopped lest they subvert the youth (Titus 1:10, 11). Or when it becomes a matter of wilful neglect and indifference on the part of the conventioners, which is also error, it follows that the society such members represent will be compelled to treat such members lest the name of that society be impugned. No society, we take it, wishes to have its standing in the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies debased through the misconduct of one or two of its members. Every society has its own constitution stipulating, among other things, that which is required of its membership. Repeated failure to meet these requirements can only result in action by the membership depriving such offenders of the privilege of membership.

Enforcement, therefore, of proper and necessary discipline is another key to a successful convention. By this is not meant discipline in the official, ecclesiastical sense of the word as involving the administration of the keys of the kingdom of heaven but rather a general discipline resulting from the application of proper authority to the various relationships ensuing from the creation of a convention of federated societies. These societies are bound by the Word of God and the authority of that Word must be respected and obeyed, beginning in the sphere of the home and following all the way through to the actual activities of the convention proper. Only in this way can success be attained and any neglect along this line is bound to be reflected in damaging errors.

Today we hear so much in the world about the delinquency of juveniles. The daily papers give indisputable evidence of the magnitude of this problem. It is not our purpose to dispute this testimony or in any way to belittle the problem. Especially in and around the larger cities the situation is appalling but the reality is plainly no longer confined to such areas. That such circumstances exist in the world is not especially surprising but when evidences of the same disrespect for authority appear in the sphere of the church among covenant youth, we become shocked and alarmed. And when misbehavior in convention becomes the practice of a few, we believe the time for action is immediate, before the thing is out of hand.

A number of worldly sociologists trace

the origin of the delinquent problem to the home. In part this judgment is undoubtedly correct. At least we shall make it our starting point in offering a prescription for the cure of some convention errors for the cooperation of the home is indispensable in realizing a good convention.

We believe that when one makes himself guilty of conduct that is defamatory to the whole convention, he should be reported first of all to his parents and, if necessary, even dismissed immediately from the convention and sent by the first bus or train to his home. If such measures were enacted, the good name of the convention would not be so easily jeopardized. And, yet, this is no cure for when the thing has reached this proportion, it has already gone too far. This parental discipline must begin in relation to the youth's active participation in the society of the local church. Too much credence has been and is being given by parents to youth's clamour and craze for pleasure in our day and not enough attention is devoted by parents to their spiritual interests. To attend young people's society is an excuse for an evening out. How many parents know what is being done in society? How many concern themselves with the preparation of their children for society and see to it that they are required to prepare before they may have this privilege? Is it duly impressed upon them that as covenant children their *first and, principally only,* interest is the Kingdom of Christ and that to pursue diligently those interests will involve the lion's share of their so-called idle time? "There's nothing to do," is a cry repeatedly heard among youth today. How untrue! That is only because we have been carried further than we realize along the stream of the spirit of the age and then when this and that is forbidden us, we find only idleness left. When we have realized the meaning of *"Seek ye first the Kingdom . . ."* and diligently applied ourselves to do it, we will find ourselves looking for more of that precious time that has suddenly become so extremely scarce.

But all this presupposes *interest!* Interest must be cultivated and that must begin in the home. Still this cannot be the end of the matter. The societies have a responsibility too. It must be understood that membership in them is a privilege accompanied with duties. When these duties are wilfully neglected, the privileges will have to be withdrawn. And duties involve more than physical presence in the weekly meetings. Most societies, we presume, exercise care that the members are present and if they are absent for an extended time without just reason, they are visited by a delinquent committee. This is proper but it might be much more advantageous to the society if these delinquent committees would call upon those who are ill-prepared, non-contributing toward the attainment of the spiritual objective of the society. Though it may be difficult to enact, it would no doubt stimulate interest in some and weed out others who are only a drag to the society and a hindrance to conventions.

And, finally, we might mention in brief the duty of the church. This is not as more and more becoming the practice of the churches of today that the church construct bowling alleys, roller rinks, swimming pools, ball diamonds, etc. to amuse youth. If such things are to be the standard by which the success of the church is to be measured or the power by which youth is to be retained in the church, the case is hopeless. Rather, let the church be conscious of her high calling to bring the Word, to instruct, to indoctrinate, unfold all the riches of her glorious heritage before the mind of youth in order that by the means of sound instruction they may be prepared and equipped in the best possible way to make their contribution to the societies and convention.

DON'T FORGET-

AUGUST 18, 19, 20 ARE CONVENTION DAYS

CONVENTION TIME IS VACATION TIME

The Book of Acts

Paul at Caesarea, continued

REV. H. C. HOEKSEMA

III. Paul Before Festus and Agrippa, 25:13 to 26:32

A. Occasion, 25:13-22

1. Who came to visit Caesar's new representative, Festus, at Caesarea?
   a. Who was Agrippa? Where was he king? What was his character and reputation?
   b. Who was Bernice? What relation was she to Agrippa? What was her character and reputation?
   c. What was the attitude of Agrippa towards the Jews and the Jewish religion? Did this have anything to do with Festus' subsequently seeking his advice?
2. Whose case does Festus broach to Agrippa?
   a. Why was Festus concerned about this case? Was he truly interested in justice?
   b. Does he give a true account of his part in the case of Paul?
      1) Does the account of vss. 15 and 16 agree with that of vss. 3, 4?
      2) Does Festus' account in vss. 19 and 20 agree with vs. 9?
   c. What evidently troubled Festus the most, even though he referred to it as a matter of Jewish superstition? vs. 19.
3. What is Agrippa's reaction? vs. 22
   a. Was this a matter of curiosity?
   b. Was Agrippa intending merely to help Festus?
   c. Did Agrippa see a possibility of ingratiating himself with the Jews?

B. The Hearing Begins, 25:23 to 26:1

1. Who were present at this hearing?
2. Why is the "great pomp" mentioned by Luke?
3. Festus' introduction:
   a. Had all the multitude of the Jews dealt with Festus about Paul?
   b. Does Festus give a correct account in vs. 25?
   c. With what problem is Festus confronted, vs. 26?
   d. How does Festus condemn himself in vs. 27?
4. After this introduction, who become the chief characters in this scene?

C. Paul's Defense, 26:1-32

1. Introduction, 1-3:
   a. What is meant by "Paul stretched forth the hand"?
   b. Why is Paul glad to answer before Agrippa?
   c. Did Paul really expect justice from Agrippa?
   d. What is the difference between Paul's speech here and his earlier defense before Felix and Festus?
2. Paul's reference to his early life:
   a. Why does Paul begin here?
   b. Why does he want to connect his present circumstances with his earlier life and religion?
      1) Would it make any difference whether Paul was a Pharisee or a Sadducee?
      2) Did the Pharisees have, or claim to have, the hope of the promise made unto the fathers?
      3) What was that hope of the promise?
   c. In what sense is it true that Paul is accused by the Jews for the sake of that hope?

d. Why does Paul follow this claim by a reference to the resurrection of the dead?

3. Paul's former persecutions, vss. 9-11
   a. Why does Paul mention his persecution of the church?
      1) Is this merely to lead up to his conversion?
      2) Is it to show that he understands the attitude of his accusers, since he was once one of them?
      3) Is it in order to show that his doctrine is not of his own making?
   b. Do you think it was difficult for Paul to refer to this part of his life?
   c. What was his purpose in persecuting the disciples?
4. His conversion on the way to Damascus, 12-18:
   a. Where else do you find an account of his conversion?
   b. What differences can you point out between this and other accounts?
   c. Upon what especially does Paul enlarge in this account of his conversion? vss. 16-18
   d. Explain the details in this commission of vss. 16-18. What do the various expressions mean?
5. Paul's obedience to this commission, 19-21:
   a. What is the main point in this section?
   b. Had Paul forsaken and opposed his own people, or had he preached to them first?
   c. In connection with his gospel had Paul opposed the law, or had he preached the law in the true sense?
   d. What does Paul state as the cause of the Jews' opposition to him?
6. Summary of his gospel, 22-23:
   a. What is the main thrust of Paul's contention in this section? Why does he emphasize this?
   b. Does this stand in connection with the fact that he is speaking before Agrippa?
   c. Is this probably only a summary of Paul's defense, so that we may assume that especially this last part was filled in with detailed quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures?
7. Outcome of the hearing, 24-32:
   a. What is Festus' reaction? Was Paul charged with madness by others too? Cf. II Cor. 5:13.
   b. How does Paul reply to Festus? What is meant by "truth and soberness"?
   c. To whom does Paul especially appeal now?
      1) Did Agrippa believe the prophets? What is meant here?
      2) To what knowledge of Agrippa, in connection with the knowledge of the prophets, does Paul here appeal?
      3) What is Agrippa's reaction?
         a) Was he almost convinced?
         b) Is his reaction correctly expressed in the hymn, "Almost Persuaded"?
         c) Was this a piece of cynical sarcasm by Agrippa?
         d) Was it his way of saying he would not be maneuvered into expressing himself by Paul?
   d. How does Paul close his defense, vs. 29?
      1) What does this show of Paul's motivation?
      2) Is he interested merely in his personal liberty, or was he all this time concerned about preaching the gospel?
   e. Agrippa's private conclusion:
      1) What is the conclusion of both Agrippa and Festus? Is Paul guilty of anything at all?
      2) Did Festus now have anything to write to Rome?
      3) What then is the conclusion as to the whole matter of Paul's case, according to the testimony of all who heard him?

The Importance of English Grammar

HULDA J. KUIPER

"Why must we study grammar? I don't want to go to college anyway; what good will it ever do me?" We, as teachers, sometimes hear these voiced questions either directly to us or in conversations the pupils carry on with each other. Is English grammar a "necessary evil" with which we can do without? Is it something only for the higher-educated individual? Is it a subject placed in the curriculum to challenge the brighter student and leave the slower learner completely in the dark? Or is it truly essential to all communication, written and oral? Is there a deeper purpose and reason to study this phase of learning?

According to Rev. H. Hanko in his paper prepared for several of our Teachers' Institute meetings, grammar is "the ability to formulate sentences in harmony with the rules inherent in a language in order to communicate thoughts." English grammar then, is based on rules which are essential to the English language; Latin, French and other languages have each its own set of rules – necessary to adhere to, if true communication is to take place.

Scripture itself reveals the truest means of communication: the Word. John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" shows us that even in the beginning, the WORD was manifest, in that, through Him, all creation was called into being. That perfection, that holiness, that power of speech belongs to God alone. Man's speech before the fall was a glorifying, God-centered speech. When he fell, his entire person, including the faculty of speech, became corrupt. His speech before the fall was perfect: Adam did not split infinitives, dangle participles, use incorrect grammar in any way: his speech was *perfect.* After the fall, all changed and man used his speech in the service of the devil. We, too, by nature, want nothing of God's "regenerating" speech. But, sinners though we are, we are nevertheless called to walk in perfection before Him . . . in ALL things. Consider the numerous passages of Holy Writ which enjoin us to be perfect in God's sight. This means, too, in our language, oral and written. "Study to shew thyself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). This applies to each of God's people, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, young and old.

A person's first contact with grammar is made in his early years of life. "Baby talk" often violates the rules of good grammar more often than teen-age slang. Because it is all the child hears and is directly spoken to him, it is the phase of language learned. Children mimic their elders: customs, way of walk, mannerisms and language. Choice of vocabulary impresses a child greatly. An older person may inadvertently say some things which, to his way of thinking, is permissible; for the youngster to repeat the same words would not be tolerated. Too, the child wishes to be "big" and will repeat words which he doesn't understand . . . the larger the word, the greater the sense of achievement to the challenged youngster!

(cont. on next page)

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Mr. Walter Wybenga	$ 2.00
Hope Protestant Ref. Ladies' Aid	33.33
Mr. John Faber	2.00
Singspiration - SouthWest	34.99
Hull Protestant Ref. Church	15.55
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Often members of a household know better than to speak in a certain form, but either because they want to be "funny" for the moment or do not wish to be outstandingly correct, will lapse into incorrect grammar. This becomes increasingly easier and less noticeable to everyone. The result, of course, is that it soon becomes the rule rather than the exception and another bad habit is formed.

Soon after a child begins to make known his desires and thoughts verbally, his parents emphasize certain forms. Instead of "Me go with daddy," he is told to say "I go with daddy." Instead of using his name first in a sentence, such as "Billy wants the puppy," he is told to say "I want the puppy." He is learning, unconsciously, the use of the subjective rather than the objective case for the subject of a sentence in the first example and a form of the pronoun in the second. Of course, he doesn't know WHY they are correct, nor do his parents tell him at the time . . . but at the same time, he is learning the very fundamentals of English grammar!

As the child develops a greater vocabulary and literary sense, he is ready for the more intricate, formal phases of grammar. He must know the parts of speech — the differences between nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, conjunctions and prepositions — their definitions and how they are to be recognized. He then puts this knowledge to use in constructing sentences, thereby following the rules governing subjects and predicates. With an ever-increasing vocabulary, he becomes more and more adept at putting his thoughts into writing or oral expression. He becomes skilled in writing various kinds of sentences, inverting the order of a sentence to avoid monotony, making colorful, interesting descriptions, attempting logical comparisons and presenting convincing arguments.

As he reaches junior high school age, the student becomes familiar with direct and indirect objects, prepositional phrases, clauses and phrases and other grammatical structures. Grammar becomes an integral part of reading, writing and speaking. After much practice, he is no longer aware of the rule demanding that "a plural subject requires a plural verb" but automatically follows the rule. From being a hesitant, unsure individual groping about for words (as a child), he has reached the stage of selecting from a wide vocabulary and ways of speaking, so that he can think ahead of his speaking, choosing carefully and knowing that in the end, he will be understood. A knowledge of these fundamentals makes his reading clearer — and his other subjects certainly more understandable. His writing, too, should gradually show more fluency of thought, accurate accounting and description and concise analysis.

By the time young people enter high school, they should be able to speak and write correctly and fluently. Book reports, term papers and essay questions provide excellent opportunities for growth in written expression. And woe to the student who says, "I know the answer but don't know how to put it down!"

A fundamental knowledge of English grammar is essential to understand everything read — this everyone will readily agree to. How much one should apply himself then, when, in order to know God's revelation, he is to read the Holy Scriptures! Time and again, one finds a passage difficult to understand only because he skipped the key word or failed to interpret a mark of punctuation! Perhaps if there were more diligence in studying God's Word, more time spent in daily reading (from the day a child learns to read . . . yes, even from the time he memorizes the 23rd Psalm), one would not hear the cry that things pertaining to God's kingdom are too difficult to comprehend in our day and age; that the church papers are too doctrinal; that even the Bible is too difficult to understand and should be written in modern day terminology. True, more words are being made every day in industry, business, science and every day living. But should it be necessary to adapt Scripture to our every day vocabulary because it makes it "clearer and more meaningful" — substituting *you* and *your* for *thee*, *thou* and *thine*? For making *virgin* mere *maiden*? Some are inclined to think this is necessary. Others are in favor of changing our confessions as well (see Editorial of *The Church Herald*, March 27, 1959). And all can be traced to the fact that reading in the Biblical "terminology" is too difficult or irrelevant. But what say WE? Let us be aroused to the danger

at hand! By the grace of God, may we be filled with a longing to seek Jesus, overcome with a sense of our inadequacies and sinfulness, assured of His faithfulness and love for His people – and go to His wonderful Word! Let us go to our confessions and His Word and read them regularly; let us study the means whereby our ministers teach us that Word: our periodicals; let us delve into the arguments of the apostle Paul and follow them step by step! Only through frequent repetitious study can we know our distinctive truth and be able to defend it. Only by a thorough knowledge can we witness of God's marvelous works, whether it be orally or by the written word. Oh, God, grant us the faith and strength that we too may study to show ourselves approved of Thee, workmen "that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth!"

News From, For, and About Our Churches

by ALICE REITSMA

Our regular news writer, Miss Alice Reitsma, is unable to perform her duties this month, as she is in Butterworth Hospital under observation.

Lynden – Rev. Robert C. Harbach is considering a call received from our Redlands congregation.

Holland – The Young People's Society has recently had a couple of interesting topics: Ron Elzinga talked on "Stock-Car Racing" and Tommy Elzinga gave an essay on "Communism and Democracy."

Both **Southeast** and **Loveland** Young People's Societies canvassed their congregations for donations to the convention fund. Loveland's young people also conducted a subscription drive for **Beacon Lights.**

Loveland – A Christian School Society was organized and a committee appointed to draw up a constitution and gather data pertinent to the organization of such a school. We are all certainly happy with them in this venture and pray that the Lord will grant grace and courage to these brethren as they strive to have their children instructed in His fear.

Each Spring and Fall in the Grand Rapids area we find the similar societies in each congregation banding together for Mass Meetings. "How pleasant and how good it is, when brethren in the Lord in one another's joy delight, and dwell in sweet accord." This Spring we find the following gatherings:

On April 10th at Creston Church our young people joined in a Mass Meeting commemorating the 450th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. Rev. George Lubbers spoke on the theme: "Our legacy from Calvin – have we done justice to it?"

The league meeting for our Mr. and Mrs. Societies is scheduled for April 30th at

First Church. Rev. George Lanting has been asked to speak on the topic, "Is it possible to be too busy in church work?"

The Eastern Men's League was held March 30th at our Hudsonville church. Student J. Kortering spoke on "Preaching to the Spirits in Prison."

Rev. G. Vanden Berg addressed the Ladies' League on April 16th at First Church. His topic was "How to Teach Our Children to Pray."

Again for most of us another society season has passed. After a refreshing summer of rest and relaxation, may we be ready to begin our fall season with renewed zeal.

Congratulations! Mr. and Mrs. Don Hoekstra of **Hull** are the parents of a new baby boy.

A Get-Together-Nite, featuring a band concert, basketball game, and a tumbling exhibition was held April 17th at Sylvan School Gym. The event was co-sponsored by organizations from both Hope and Adams St. Schools.

Oak Lawn's bulletin says "Remember and tell abroad the program that the Male Chorus of First Church is to render in Illiana on the first day of May at 8:00 P. M

Congratulations! Mr. and Mrs. H. Helmholdt celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on March 22nd. They are members of our **Southeast** congregation.

The **Hope** Choral Society gave our **Beacon Lights** budget a boost with the collection taken at their Easter Program which was given in Hope Church on April 5th.

The third Sunday in each month is Singspiration Day in the Grand Rapids area. However, from other bulletins we glean the fact that there are also Singspirations held in their churches. **Hull** used this method to raise money for their society expenses in connection with the coming convention an' their society's Federation dues.

The next issue of BEACON LIGHTS *will feature our two newest young people's societies, Kalamazoo and Loveland. Both societies have applied for membership.*

CRESTON LOOKS FORWARD TO A RADIO PROJECT

At a recent congregational meeting the congregation at Creston unanimously voted to sponsor and support a radio program in the South. Although a lot of work has yet to be done before the broadcasting can begin, the first step has been taken.

Watch BEACON LIGHTS for more deta' on our churches latest radio endeavor.

MR TED LOVENGA
1125 ADAMS S E
CITY 6

WE GIVE

A Mothers' Day Bouquet

TO

All
Our
Christian
Mothers