BEACON LIGHTS

for

PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

August-September, 1963

A Serviceman's Experiences
FRANK VAN BAREN

Convention Memories
BEACON LIGHTS
FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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WHAT SHALL WE DRINK?

The Book of Exodus, chapter 15, verses 22 through 26, records for us the history of Israel at Marah. This was Israel's first stop on their journey out of Egypt into the land of Canaan. It was here at Marah that Israel asked the question: "What shall we drink?" At first glance the question seems perfectly justified. We read in verse twenty-one that they journeyed three days in the Wilderness (Desert of Shur — elsewhere described in the Bible as "that great and terrible desert") and found no water. There can be no doubt about it, Israel was in desperate straits. They were in a burning, hot desert and had no water to drink. They were in desperate need of a drink of water lest presently they die of thirst. Thus for them to ask Moses: "What shall we drink?" does not seem strange at all.

Nevertheless that was a faithless question for Israel to ask. Consider Israel's previous history and it will become evident that Israel displayed a wicked lack of faith in asking that question. Jehovah had not only shown His power and faithfulness in the sending of the ten plagues, but also had indubitably demonstrated His Covenant faithfulness in the destruction of Pharaoh in the Red Sea and in the delivering of Israel through the sea on a dry path. Israel had just sung of that marvelous deliverance in the Song of Moses. "Who is like unto thee O Lord . . .," they sang just three days previous. Now in faithless unbelief they ask Moses: "What shall we drink?" How insulting that question must have been to God! Evidently they did not believe that the God Who had delivered them miraculously out of Egypt could provide water for them.

Much more could be written in explanation of this event in Israel's history. What has been said, however, suffices to establish the point that Israel's question certainly revealed a serious lack of faith. In the light of the clear revelation of Jehovah's covenant faithfulness Israel had no reason asking God through His servant Moses: "What shall we drink?"

How many times haven't we asked that same faithless question? Especially we young people are guilty of asking: "What shall we drink?" No, we don't literally ask that question, but the idea is the same. We ask, for example, such questions as: "Will the Prot. Ref. Churches continue to exist or will they gradually disintegrate?"; "What future is there for us in the little Prot. Ref. Churches?"; "What happens when Rev. Hoeksema is no longer with us?" So we could multiply examples.

At first glance these questions, just as Israel's question, seem justified. Have not our Churches been torn by division and strife twice since 1924? We refer, of course, to 1953 and 1962. Will this continue until our Churches no longer exist? Besides, certainly it is beyond doubt that God has been pleased to use Rev. Hoeksema mightily in the defense of the truth and in the leadership of our Churches. Who will take his place? More than that, we have a serious shortage of ministers and there is not a great deal of relief in prospect for the immediate future. Will not our Churches "die on the vine" without ministers?

From every human standpoint there can be little doubt that these questions are justified. We are a small, struggling denomination of churches. In comparison to other
denominations — even those closest to us in doctrine — we amount to next to nothing. Humanly speaking, the prospects of future growth in size and numbers are not very bright.

Yet to ask the above questions is no more justified for us than it was for Israel to ask at Marah: “What shall we drink?” The Lord has proved His faithfulness time and again to us. We have a glorious heritage to uphold. Let our reaction to these things never be: “What shall we drink?” But let us say with the apostle Paul, who in answer to the question: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation...distress...persecution...peril...sword?” said: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:35 and 37).

When we analyze our history and look to our future as Churches and individual Christians in that faith of Paul, we may be assured that our future is indeed bright. Jehovah, Who loved us in Christ from the beginning, will continue to love us and preserve us to the end when He will take us to be with Himself in eternal glory! Let us then beware lest we ask: “What shall we drink?”

R. D. Decker

A SERVICEMAN’S EXPERIENCES
FRANK VAN BAREN

Now that my tour in the military service is near completion, I would like to have a little space in the BEACON LIGHTS to give the readers a glimpse of the experiences of a serviceman. Although these experiences will not be new to everyone, perhaps they will be of some instruction to our readers.

After spending approximately two months in Kentucky and ten months in Georgia, military authorities decided to send me to Orleans, France, where I have been stationed for ten months. Although my wife and I have undergone some unusual living conditions in France, we have enjoyed our travels through much of Europe and these experiences will be long remembered.

As far as being attached to a military installation in a foreign country is concerned, it is a very unusual position for the child of God. He is faced with the problem of selecting associates who have had Christian instruction and who seek to walk a Christian life. This is often difficult if not impossible; nevertheless, the Christian must walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom. 8:1. It is necessary for a soldier to attend chapel services where a chaplain speaks for approximately fifteen minutes attempting to satisfy the spiritual needs of all military personnel representing all Protestant church organizations — something that is impossible. All efforts are made to increase the size of the audience. The result is that the distinctiveness of the Reformed truth is never proclaimed but morality issues which associate the individual to society are preached. More emphasis is put on the customs of the church rather than the defense and propagation of the truth of the Scriptures. These have been our experiences in military chapels.

The result is that the Protestant Reformed serviceman is entirely dependent upon the written pamphlets and church publications for spiritual edification. Although we have a broadcast on Trans World Radio, a short wave radio is necessary for reception.

Because of this unique position which a serviceman is forced to take, it is indeed the calling of the church to remember her servicemen and to pray for them, that the serviceman, by the operation of the Holy Spirit within his heart, may ever profess: Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. Psalm 40:11.

Editor’s Note:
We sincerely appreciate this contribution from Mr. VanBaren. May it be an encouragement to our young men in the service, not only to write such material which we gladly print, but also an encouragement to walk antithetically in the midst of an evil world.

R.D.D.
Convention Memories

Late Sunday night, Aug. 18, was a busy time for the thirty young people who were preparing to leave Grand Rapids on the Edgerton bus. Last minute activities included collection of bus fare, well wishes (and admonitions) from parents, and a short talk by Rev. C. Hanko. Amidst the waves and noise of the onlookers the bus left for its twenty-hour ride to the 23rd annual convention of Protestant Reformed Young People. Others went by car and about five o’clock Monday afternoon conventioners began to arrive in Edgerton.

Tuesday was taken up with registration and assignment of lodging. At 7:30 we all met at the high school gym and had our picture taken on the bleachers. (The next day the pictures were ready. Fast!) Afterwards we went inside the warm gym and heard Rev. Hoeksema speak on the theme, More than Conquerors: In the Church. During the get-acquainted hour each of us was handed a slip of paper on which was part of what Rev. Woudenberg said were the current top hits in Edgerton. They included such favorites as “Little Jack Horner” and “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” The idea was to find everybody in your song and then sing it. The only one who remained confused was Rev. H. Hanko who located neither the person he was to sing with nor the melody. After we got acquainted we all went home.

Wednesday morning we hopped out of bed after a long night’s sleep and attended the short business meeting. Afterwards we were herded into the bus and cars and left for the outing. The first stop was the pipestone quarry where we met Standing Eagle. He is one of the few Indians who still

Something should be said about the city of Edgerton. When the bus committee first contacted the bus company about transporting the Grand Rapids delegation, the man in charge laughed and said, “You can’t shove all those kids into Edgerton; it’s hardly a broad spot on the highway.” And many people we talked to seemed to think that it was a tiny place in the middle of nowhere. Having mentally conditioned ourselves to this situation, we were rather pleasantly surprised. As far as farm communities go, Edgerton is good-sized. It is clean, friendly, and even has a brand new swimming pool.
work the quarry for pipestone from which he makes pipes. After his little speech we broke up into groups and toured the quarry. We saw two cliffs about thirty feet apart where legend has it that the braves had to jump across this gap before they could be married. The remark was made that they had little divorce problem.

We went to the Three Maidens (rocks) for lunch. Here Rev. Hanko again distinguished himself, first, by courageously walking through the lawn sprinkler, and then by his expert piloting of the toy airplanes that came in the potato chip bags. Rev. Woudenberg engaged in a heated debate with our treasurer. Topic: "Who should pay for his parking violation."

The remainder of the afternoon was spent at the Blue Mounds Park. Here we held the annual East-West ball game. Under the strong pitching of Dale Kuiper the East had just pulled ahead of Henry Bleyenberq and the West, when Rev. Woudenberg sent everyone to the showers (swimming). Before supper we played games involving such
diverse things as human croquet balls, pancakes, and elephants. Supper included a hot-dog roast and more of the exceptional punch served by the Edgerton ladies throughout the convention.

For the evening program we traveled several dusty roads to Blue Mounds. Here the Indians drove buffalo over the cliffs which surrounded us to kill them. But Wednesday evening it was used for tamer purposes as Rev. R. Harbach delivered his address. More than Conquerors: Over Against an Evil World. Rev. Lubbers then led us in singing some well known psalms. Many conventioners agreed that this was the most inspiring part of the convention. After singing we had watermelon and pop around a blazing bonfire.

Later that night some of us were introduced to one of the natural wonders of the Edgerton area — the River Road. After being told that this road was not as dusty as the others, we agreed to try it. The "road" was at the other extreme. Supposing that it was called River Road because it ran along side of a river, we were somewhat frustrated to discover that it ran through the river. And not all of us had jeeps (e.g. Irvan Velthouse's wide-track, low-slung Pontiac).

Thursday morning everybody had to rush to get to the pancake breakfast. It was very good and we were prepared for the long business meeting. The new officers elected were Calvin Reitsma (First), James Huizenga (Randolph), and Joyce Kuiper (Hudsonville).

During the afternoon some of us went to Pipestone, some went swimming, and most slept. Thursday evening climaxed the convention with the banquet. The theme was "Buffalo and Indians." It was very warm in Indian territory but the food was again delicious and everyone enjoyed it. Later Rev. Lubbers spoke to us on "More than Conquerors: In the Last Days." After closing remarks, during which it was announced that next year's convention would be held at Hope, we sang, "God be with you 'till we meet again" and the 1963 Convention passed into memory.

Editor's Note:
The person who was to write the convention article was suddenly taken sick and submitted to an emergency appendectomy. Another of our young people graciously consented to write the above article.
The history of the Church of Christ here on earth is the history of men.

Foremost in the controversy that raged in the defense of the Reformed faith over against the heresy of Arminianism appears the figure of Jacobus Arminius. He more than any other is associated with the error that was condemned by the national Synod of Dort.

This does not mean that he appeared as an isolated individual on the stage of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and that he single-handedly threatened the existence of Calvinism in the Low Countries. There were others like him.

When the Calvinistic Reformation came to the Netherlands, there were many priests and monks who left the Romish Church and were given ministerial status in the Reformed Church. Some of these were good men who broke with Rome under deep convictions of the truth. Many were evil men who, with wet fingers held high in the ecclesiastical winds that blew, saw that the power of Rome was broken in the Netherlands. They were determined to abandon a sinking ship. For personal reasons they came to the side of the Reformation. But they carried with them the errors of Rome—the doctrine of work righteousness and the heresy of semi-pelagianism. They proved fertile soil for the seeds of Arminianism.

Besides there were leaders in the Church (Coornhert, for example) who opposed the doctrine of predestination and who wanted only a very general creed such as the Apostolic Confession to serve as the confessional basis of the Church.

It was Arminius though who united all the erring elements in the Church into one party which became a power to reckon with in the defense of the faith.

Arminius was born in the town of Oude-water in 1560. Very early in life he was left fatherless; but two Reformed ministers sponsored his education in the Academy of Leiden. Finishing his education here at the age of 21, he was sent to study in the University of Geneva, sponsored by a merchant's guild from Amsterdam. The University of Geneva was famous throughout the continent of Europe as the center of Reformed studies. It was founded by John Calvin himself, and was, after the death of Calvin, under the administration of Theodoore Beza, a staunch defender of Calvin's views.

It was at Geneva that Arminius met Uitenbogaert who became his close friend and who was destined to play such a large
role in the Arminian struggle back in the Netherlands. We shall meet him again.

After a brief trip to Italy, Arminius returned to Geneva for a short time, then came back to his homeland where he passed his classical examination and was admitted to the ministry of the gospel by unanimous vote.

Under the wise and inscrutable providence of God, three events took place which soon brought the views of Arminius into the open.

The first of these events really served to strengthen Arminius in heretical views that he had begun to develop already while in Geneva. Coornhert had engaged for some time in agitation against the doctrine of election, and Arminius was asked to refute these views for the benefit of the churches. In his studies which he made prior to his refutation he came to the conclusion that he was unable to refute the views of Coornhert because he was himself becoming more and more convinced that they were true. This startling fact he did not make public.

The second of these events was the fruit of the preaching of Arminius in his congregation in Amsterdam. He was busy with a series of sermons on the book of Romans. From the beginning of the book, his heretical views occasionally cropped up; but it was emphatically in his sermons on Romans 9 that his congregation noticed his denial of the Reformed and Scriptural view of sovereign predestination. His congregation was alarmed. And especially his fellow minister, Panchius, opposed his views and combatted the evil doctrines he was developing.

The third of these events is very strange. In the midst of all the troubles in Amsterdam, Arminius was appointed professor of theology in the University of Leiden. How it was ever possible for Reformed men to agree to the appointment of this man who was under suspicion in Amsterdam remains partly a mystery.

However, there were two factors that had bearing on the matter. On the one hand, the university was not under the control of the Church, but rather under the control of the State. The relation between the Church and the State was (and is today) different in the Netherlands than it is in our own country. Strictly speaking, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands were not a "State Church." Nevertheless, the State did have a certain amount of control over the Church. The Reformed Churches existed under the favor and blessing of the State; the State supported the Church financially; and the State had much to say about such questions of Church polity as the calling of ministers, the appointment of professors, the convening of broader ecclesiastical assemblies, etc. At the time when (and up to the time of the meeting of the Synod of Dordt) the State was in the hands of men who favored Arminianism, or, at least, did not think the entire matter of Arminius' heresy was sufficiently important to create trouble about it in the Church.

The result was that Arminius was appointed with the blessing of the State.

On the other hand, Arminius himself was a very crafty man. While he was teaching his views whenever the opportunity presented itself, he was also covering up his views and staunchly insisting that he was indeed Reformed. He succeeded for the most part in quieting the fears of those who did not trust him.

And so the heretic from Amsterdam gained the important chair of theology in the University of Leiden. The year was 1602.

It is not difficult to imagine what a splendid opportunity this furnished Arminius for the spreading of his views throughout the Church. There is no more strategic place to influence others than a school. Here were instructed the ministers of the gospel, the teachers of the schools, the leaders of the Church. Here in the classroom of theology came those who were to carry on the defense of the faith in the years ahead. Here Arminius made good use of his opportunities and his position to spread the leaven of heresy throughout the Church.

He had one strong and tireless opponent. Comar was his name. He also taught in the University. And this staunch and outspoken man never ceased to combat the evil which Arminius developed and taught. But Arminius had the protection and blessing of the State that favored him. He had a way that left others with the impression that he was earnestly seeking the truth. He again and again persuaded the authorities (when he was called on the carpet for his views) that there was no cause for alarm. And his disciples went forth thor-
oughly imbibed with his views to preach and teach them over the whole land.

If he could not with safety teach his views in the University, he retired to the seclusion of his home. Here he gathered select groups of his students to discuss with them what he believed. Here he used his charming ways to make them into his ardent defenders.

In 1609 Arminius became sick and died. But his cause continued. Especially his good friend Uitendagaert carried on the heresies which Arminius developed. And a party was organized within the Reformed Churches called the Remonstrants, and dedicated to the cause of establishing the heresy of Arminianism as the official doctrine of the Church.

It is difficult to write an obituary of Arminius—except that there have always been many like him in the history of the Church.

Arminius was a brilliant scholar, a thoroughly educated man, a student who pursued his studies even in the parsonage. He was a man of pleasing personality, not difficult to get along with, easily making friends, refined in manners, elegant in appearance, a popular teacher who could make a lasting impression on the minds and hearts of his students. He was a gifted preacher, a good pastor, easily insuring the favor of those to whom he ministered. Especially this was true if we compare him with Comar—his opponent in the University. Comar was everything that Arminius was not. He was a stern man, not given to smiling, often crude and gruff, holding people at arm's length, not easy to know, difficult to "come close to," not always able to hold his temper. When he opposed Arminius his voice thundered with wrath, his language was the language of a man who was solely interested in the truth without any concern for what people thought of him or what the reactions would be in the minds of his audience. Yet he was fearless and unbounding, wholly dedicated to the cause of the Church of Christ.

Besides, Arminius was crafty. He could play with words, speak out of both sides of his mouth, promote his views with subtlety and in an all but unnoticed way. He always tried to leave the impression that he stood for the Reformed faith and on the basis of the Reformed Confessions, while all the time he carried his views in his pocket. He tried to smuggle his heresy into the Church under the guise of developing the Reformed faith. He tried to tell the people into spiritual slumber the better to feed them the poison of his errors. He worked under the table, behind people's backs, dealing in treachery and deceit to accomplish his ends.

And thus it is with many a heretic. They are not satisfied with merely defending their views and, if they are found not to be in harmony with the views of the Church to which they belong, to leave for other places. They are always insistent on dragging with them as many people as they can, making every effort to destroy the Church before finally they are cast out. This had happened before when Pelagius fought with Augustine in the history of the early Church. This has happened since the time of Dordt. This will happen again. And the reason is that behind heresy is the devil who uses heresy to try, if possible, to destroy the Church of Christ.

Arminius was dead. But his views continued to plague the Church. The split was widening; the battle lines were sharpening; the entire Church was thrown into turmoil; something had to be done.

We believe, maintain and faithfully teach that the Father begot the Word, that is the only-begotten Son who is the Wisdom by which all things were created. He is one as the Father is one, eternal as the Father is eternal, and, equally with the Father, is supremely good. The Holy Spirit is, likewise, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, consubstantial and co-eternal with both. And this whole is a Trinity because of the individuality of the Persons and, yet, a single God because of indivisible divinity and a single Almighty because of indivisible omnipotence. Yet, when we ask concerning each Person individually, the answer must be that each one is God and each is Almighty; and when we inquire concerning the three together, the reply must be that there are not three Gods or three Almighties, but a single God Almighty. Such is the indivisible unity in the Three and such is the way it should be stated.

—St. Augustine
“For none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living. For it is written, ‘As I live,’ saith the Lord, ‘Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge his rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Rom. 14:7-9, 11-13).

Christian liberty is not freedom to live exactly and always as we please, even in matters adiaphora, under the plea that we individually stand on our own before the Lord, have no judge but Him, that what we do affects only ourselves. It cannot legitimately be said that exercise of our rights cannot hurt anyone else. For the flaunting of a right which is plainly ours may “put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in our brother’s way.” Living to himself is the selfish practice of a man who disregards the interests of his brother. Neither our liberty nor our rights are the standard according to which nor the end for which we live. Living to himself the Christian would lose sight of his Lord, would cease living coram Deo, before God’s face, and would integrate his life with a purpose other than God’s glory and his neighbor’s good. If we live to the Lord, we shall seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; we shall seek not our own, but the things which are Jesus Christ’s (Phil. 2:21); we shall look not on our own things, but every man on the things of others (2:4); seeking every man the other’s interests (I Cor. 10:24).

Every Christian is living or dying unto the Lord. He alone is our absolute Lord. We are not lords to one another. Some may think so, as one Arminian I met who in the interest of maintaining his precious dream of Free Will (capitalized because it is conceived of as a god, a power over against God) contended that “we are all sovereigns—men are all little sovereigns.” It seemed a comfort to him that in the Lord’s army we are all generals. This generalship is founded upon the confession, “I believe in Almighty Man” (capitalized because he is a sovereign over against the sovereign God). Against God man says, “We are lords; we will come no more unto Thee!” (Jer. 2:31). Or as the margin has it, “We have dominion!” Or as the ASV, “We are broken loose,” i.e., from subjection or submission to
any power or authority. Man makes himself a lord, so rejecting the sovereignty of God. This is man’s boastful confidence. But the alone sovereign God rejects such confidences and no man shall prosper in them (2:37).

“For to this end Christ died and lived, that He might rule as Lord both the dead and living.” Through death and resurrection Jesus became “both Lord and Christ.” He alone has the power of life and death, claiming “all souls are Mine,” “I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and make alive . . . neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand,” “I am He that liveth and became dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hades and of death.” We are not our own, but belong to Him that we may be His own, to live under Him and unto Him, to die in Him and unto Him, so that to live is Christ and to die is gain. Living to the Lord the Christian is aware that the Lord Who has the power of life and death calls us to live unto Him and to die unto Him. The Christian must be willing to live unto Him for as long as He decides. He must be willing to die unto Him, and willingly relinquish the lawful delights of this world. For the Christian prepared by God’s grace, it is not difficult to leave the rain barrel for the Fountain of living waters. The adiaphora perish with the using and are to be held lightly (1 Cor. 7:30f.), are good gifts in the kingdom, but are not the determining elements in the kingdom.

Whether we observe or not observe a day, it is to the Lord. Whether we eat or not eat things formerly forbidden, it is to Him. Whether we drive a car or horse and buggy (cf. the Amish), it is to the Lord. Whether we wear that which was once regarded as worldly (neckties, coat buttons), or not, it is to Him. We do not live according to our own whims, nor for our own personal interests. Mind, soul, spirit and body are presented to Him, and all material things may be used for and unto Him. The use of material things, of any material thing is not necessarily harmful if used in harmony with the Lord’s statutes and the dictates of love to one another. Then living unto Him is no deprivation, but the greatest freedom. Dying unto Him is no loss for He, the Resurrection and the Life, is the Possessor of heaven and earth and our Father. Then living and dying is all in God’s service, and in God’s sight a good work.

There are times when we may freely assert our liberty. At other times we are to forego it, rather than to use it in opposition to a weak brother. When necessary our liberty must be defended against false prophets who would endanger it. Never is it to be relinquished to self-righteous Pharisees. Use it when it will prove to be to your good and your brother’s advantage. Refrain from it when it would not prove beneficial to all concerned. When it comes to matters neither commanded nor forbidden by the Word of God, but matters left to the decisions of love led by faith, do not be judging one another any more. Don’t be censorious and don’t condemn others who differ with you in such matters. There is room for judging, then, you see, but it is really judging not our brother, but ourselves. Make a judgment in this sense, that you count it proper that no man put a stumbling-block or occasion of falling in the brother’s way. The Christian who does not judge others, but who judges himself must be mature and fruitful.

A “stumbling-block” is a figure of speech which refers to the action of stumbling against a block which upsets, brings a fall and causes hurt. But the “occasion to fall” is much worse. This expression is often translated “offence” (cf. Gal. 5:11), which is a word from which we get our word “scandal.” It contains the idea of luring and enticing to sin so as to cause one’s fall and destruction. The occasion to fall is therefore a trap which kills its prisoners, a death-trap, a fatal, deadly thing. For the word means trap-trigger, a “tricker” or bait-stick in a death-trap. From such a fall one does not rise, but falls against the trap-trigger, springing the trap to become fatally ensnared. It is a death-dealing fall. Then exercise no liberty or stand on no right which may hurt spiritually or kill spiritually.

You have the right to eat and drink what you please, to enjoy every creature of God, but don’t let your participation in these things become an occasion for causing a weak brother to sin. The stronger and better
informed Christian should avoid inducing the weaker brother by influence and example to do anything contrary to conscience. To stumble a brother is to lead him to sin against his own judgment and to weigh his conscience down with grief and guilt. We wound against a brother when we wound his weak conscience (1 Cor. 8:12). Wounding a man's spirit is about the worst evil we could do to him, worse than wounding his body. "For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou art no longer walking according to love. Do not with thy meat destroy that one for whom Christ died" (8:15, ASV). Not that one for whom Christ died would or can actually perish, but the conduct of the strong may tend to his ruin: the love of Christ for the weak is evidenced in His dying for him; whereas the lack of love in the stronger is evident in his failure to abridge the exercise of his liberties, which proves an occasion of sin to one he ought to hope is a believer. Do nothing to hinder a brother's Christian progress. "It is noble not to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor (to do) anything whereby thy brother is made to stumble, or is ensnared, or is (made) weak" (v. 21, ASV). In matters adiaphora let your aim always be, not self-indulgence, but mutual edification. Then use not your liberty in such a way as to destroy. Contend for the faith, but neglect not to build up in the faith. A strong Christian is a reformer, and a real reformer is also a builder. A reformer not only roots out, pulls down and destroys, but after he has done that he then plants and builds (Jer. 1:10).

It is no putting of a stumbling-block in another's way, nor lack of love or faith when I refuse to live according to his rules. We once lived near a "holiness" sect which regarded our mutual wearing of wedding rings as "worldly," which considered only the woman wearing black stockings as truly spiritually minded, and use of lip-stick immediately classified a woman with Delilah, Jezebel and Salome. They had standing rules, for example, against "cosmetics," and although it would seem that we could just as well do without the shocking effects of rouge, eyebrow pencil and mascara, it would also seem that the use of toothpaste, soap, mouth-wash and deodorant are absolute necessities. Use of cosmetics may be carried to such an extreme that one wonders where the deceit ends and the woman begins. But often criticism of moderate use of powder and perfume comes from those who have that wrong with them that "even their best friends won't tell them." Certainly we want to profit our brother in preference to pleasing ourselves. But this does not mean we must put up with the whims of more narrowminded brethren. It is not possible to please everybody. To attempt it would mean the depriving of ourselves of every privilege down to the drinking of tea and coffee. "Touch not, taste not, handle not" are no rules for the Lord's freemen, but are "the commandments and doctrines of men" (Col. 2:21f.).

"It is true that food will not bring us near to God; we neither lose if we abstain, nor gain if we eat. But take care lest this liberty of yours should prove any obstacle to the weak. For if any one sees you, who have that knowledge, reclining at table in an idol's temple, will not his conscience (supposing him to be weak) be emboldened to eat the food which has been sacrificed to the idol? Why, your knowledge is the ruin of the weak believer—your brother for whom Christ died! Besides, when you thus sin against the brethren and wound their weak consciences, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore if food trips up my brother, I will eat no flesh as long as I live, for fear I should trip up my brother" (1 Cor. 8:8-13, Weymouth).

To be continued

"Home should be something more than a filling station."

"He never rises high who knows not how to kneel."

"When men speak ill of thee, so live that nobody will believe it."
Everyone has problems. Some are large and important since they are of far-reaching consequence; others are relatively trivial. Such are also the problems of your missionary. It is not really a matter of anxious concern that we have such problems, nor should we feel that something strange has befallen us. Above all, we should not feel that when we are beset by difficulties that we are left in the lurch, for when we look all about us and all seems to fail we have but to look up at the rising and setting sun, the faithful appearance of the moon, which each in its own way bespeaks the faithfulness of the almighty God! Paul writes to the Philippians, “The Lord is at hand.” He is very nigh unto those who call upon him. Ere we call he will answer!

There is ever the problem for the missionary of finding a field of labor and of determining whether it is a truly fruitful field. Truthfully this matter is generally easily solved in the way of patient and dedicated labor. One can only determine whether the field is fruitful by preaching the Word and the full counsel of God, and by teaching the truth in Christ. Thus it is stated in the parable of the sower “who went forth to sow.” And, if only the seed of the Word is faithfully sown, then it will become manifest rather soon whether the seed fell in part by the wayside and was plucked up by Satan’s birds or not. It will also surely become evident by and by whether the seed fell into stony ground, where there is no depth of earth, in that the Word being received straightway, it is rejected when persecution cometh for the Word’s sake. And, again, the nature of the hearers will come to manifestation, when the cares of life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word and it does not become fruitful in godliness and patience. And since the nature of the hearers becomes evident by means of the sowing of the good seed, it too will be seen whether the seed has fallen into good ground and bears fruit in patience, some hundredfold, some sixtyfold and some thirtyfold.

It is rather unrealistic and an oversimplification of the matter to assume that when a missionary begins in a certain “field” that he goes there to reap the harvest, a kind of ecclesiastical “landslide,” a luscious plum to pick. It is sometimes depicted by those who ought to know better as if one would find a church made to order like a prefabricated house. The fallacious thought is often that one finds a “group”; all the missionary needs to do is sell his Protestant Reformed theology and life and world view, and be on his way to the next client. That is rather far from the actual facts. Those, in whose midst we have labored, know this as well as your missionary, my dear youthful reader!

The fact of the matter is that as little as a minister can indoctrinate his catechism class sufficiently to make confession of faith in a few short months, so little can your missionary indoctrinate those who have not been under either sound Reformed preaching, or even Arminian and liberal preaching, in a few short months. The kingdom of heaven is like “leaven which a woman took
and hid in three measures of meal till the whole is leavened." Gradually men and women come to a certain settled conviction that God calls them to seek official fellowship with our churches. It takes time for them to thus be sufficiently rooted because God gives such time and thus works according to the nature of man.

As long as the situation has not sufficiently stabilized in a certain group one cannot advise them to organize into a church-institute with elders and deacons. One cannot run ahead of the Lord with impurity. Often the situation is such that those who seemed to be men of character and faith are not; they soon or eventually leave the "group." A certain central nucleus of faith members comes to evidence, and others are gradually added by the Lord. Now those who are added by the Lord later are not as far advanced in knowledge and understanding as those who were under the preaching and teaching throughout the entire ministry of the missionary. And the problem is to come to the realization that we cannot ever simply hold meetings and preaching services, but that we must press forward to permanent organization. And this requires much faith, especially if the group is relatively small.

It is here at this point that it is rather easy to say when not personally involved in the situation, "If the situation is such that there is no immediately visible and humanly foreseeable group, numerically strong—well simply pull out." It is also rather unethical and not consonant with the mandate of Christ. When the people reject the Word and do not care to hear the Word, then one does not even just "simply" leave, but then there is an awesome act of "shaking the dust from one's feet" against them for a testimony. That is then an act of "judgment" and not merely a "pulling of stakes." For then an ambassador of Christ has been rejected, and Christ Himself has been sent away. With less than this we may not preach the Word as Christ's ambassador, and with less than this we may not leave a "field."

I saw an interesting little sign recently. It said, "Every one has twenty-twenty hindsight." After the seed has been sown, yes, then we know the situation. However, let it be remembered that a "field" is never simply all good but the seed is ever so sown that it will be both unfruitful and fruitful. The outcome is of the Lord. When your missionary was installed in office now some nine years ago it was emphasized in the official preaching of the Word that when the Word is truly preached it is not preached in vain. We are always conquerors both in those being saved and in those who perish.

Now a missionary, at least this missionary, has his "ups" and "downs." It is often difficult to keep a good equilibrium and to adjudge properly of a given situation. He often learns in a given particular situation by trial and error, or by testing a certain situation. Thus did Jesus Himself when many left Him and heard Him no more, and when He said to His disciples, "Will ye not also go." It was then that Peter as spokesman for the rest said, "Lord to whom shall we go; thou hast the Words of life, and we have believed and confessed that thou art the Christ of God." This latter is what, in effect, happened recently in Houston. When the Mission Committee went on record that we should cease our labors "at once," it was an outcry of the small group, in this large city with many and manifold churches, to whom shall we go. We have learned to believe that you are preaching to us the Words of life. Where shall we go in this large city. They hastened to write to the Committee, "Do rescind your decision, and let Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers return." In fact, they telephoned to the Committee directly from Texas while the Committee was in session in the Consistory room of First Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A committee of one minister and one elder plan to visit Houston for three Sundays in the near future. After a visit of investigation to the "east" Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers hope to return.

The Mission Committee rescinded its decision that we cease our labors at Houston. Will there be a church there? We have reasons to hope that this will be realized. Let us remember this cause and these brethren and sisters too before the throne of grace.

Remember also the Mission Committee, and do not forget to pray for your missionary.

BEACON LIGHTS

Thirteen
God's Covenant with Noah

God had performed a mighty, earth-shaking act in destroying the world with the flood. The fountains of the deep were broken and the windows of heaven were opened. Cresting the heaving sea was an ark adorned with God’s precious creatures. With waters abated, Noah offered the clean animals as a sacrifice of thanksgiving and God smelled a sweet savor. Therewith God established His covenant with Noah and all creation.

We will divide our material into 2 parts. This division is very appropriate because every covenant contains two parts. The first part (vss. 8-17) deals with God’s part in the covenant which is not only logically first, but is the deep source of the second part (vss. 1-7) which is man’s part in the covenant. When God establishes His covenant with man then man has an obligation to perform what God demands of him.

God established His covenant. Noah did not reach out to God, but God reached down to Noah. It was in the sphere of this covenant that God moved to save Noah and his family in the ark. God knew Noah in His own infinite love, and dealt with him accordingly. As a result Noah is not to be considered a party in this “covenantal contract,” but a receiver of covenantal blessings. There was no bargain session between God and Noah. God took the initiative and Noah was called upon to pay attention. God now approached Noah and announced to him what must have been obvious to him long before. Notice that Elohim (God) came to Noah. Why that name? Consider that in verse 1 of Gen. 15 Jehovah is used. What about Exodus 6:3? God now came and revealed the essence of His covenant, viz. His friendship with Noah. He who spoke to Noah and his sons was the same God who had announced to Adam that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent. Noah had witnessed the truth of those words graphically in the waters of the flood. By water God saved eight souls from the raging seed of the serpent (1 Peter 3:20). Now God confirmed this same covenant with the generations after the flood. In clear and understandable language God told Noah that He would cut His covenant (Berith) and eat at the table of friendship with him.

What had moved God to establish this covenant? Was it so that God beheld in Noah a righteousness that was well pleasing to Him and on the basis of that which He saw, God condescended to Noah and established His covenant with him? Noah was a preacher of righteousness. Was it on account of this that God remembered Noah in mercy? What was the ground of the covenant? No, God established His covenant with Noah and his sons, not on the basis of their works, but only because of the coming of Jesus Christ. Certainly the occasion for this covenant was the offering of the sacrifice of thanksgiving at the conclusion of the flood. God beheld in that act a sweet savor. Yet, the only basis was not the act itself, but the offering—the clean animals on the altar, the great type of Jesus Christ. Christ is forever the only meritorious ground of the covenant favor with God. Noah’s righteousness was the external proof of the internal work of God Himself.

The covenant was established with Noah, his sons, and all brute creation. It is apparent from this section, that Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their wives were recipients of this covenant. They personally were friends of God and entered into conscious fellowship with God. This also per-
tained to Ham. The words were addressed to him as well as the rest. God blessed him according to verse 1. He too was saved by water, the picture of Christ’s blood (1 Peter 3:20). This explains somewhat the curse on his son, not on himself (Gen. 9:25).

What is more, however, this covenant was established with their children, “your seed after you.” Here we find God’s covenant is with the human race. It becomes apparent from all Scripture that this seed does not include all men, all the natural seed, but the seed according to the promise. In light of Gen. 3:15, it is the seed of the woman extended throughout the generations of Noah. This eventually was extended through the family of Abraham and the patriarchs even to Christ the one seed (Gal. 3:16). Romans 9:8 explains, “they which are the children of the flesh are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

The one outstanding feature of this covenant with Noah is the fact that it also included brute creation. It is this fact that distinguishes, not separates, it from the covenant with Adam and Abraham. By brute creation we mean plants and animals (cf. vs. 10). Even nature was comprehended in this covenant. This brute creation was subject to the slavery of sin by man’s transgressions. Romans 8:20: “For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.” The sting of death was also extended to creation causing it to groan (Rom. 8:22). The flood was God’s hand of judgment not only on sinful man, but also on creation and therefore served as a type of the last judgment when creation will be destroyed by fire (II Peter 3:6,7). In this covenant with Noah, nature is also comprehended. The question arises as to how that was possible. God does not love a cow or a tree. How can such creatures be part of God’s friendship? First, we must remember that man was made king of creation. After the fall, the believer is king over all which God had made. All creatures are subject to man and must serve man. Secondly, the king of creation is a rational and moral creature. When the children of God look upon the creation of God and behold His handiwork, they sing, “How great thou art.” Through this adoration of God by the king of creation (the believer), all brute creatures really praise God. God’s heart is joined to the creature’s through the heart of man. All creation sings to God a glorious song through the praise the believer brings to God and God loves and cherishes the creature and promises to deliver her through Jesus Christ, the King of kings. Here then we see that the object of all God’s covenant friendship through Jesus Christ is extended to the believer and all creation, a friendship which shall be perfected in the New Jerusalem.

From the above, it should be apparent that this covenant with Noah was not one of common grace. It would be a good idea to consider why this covenant was not established with all men, all the generations of Noah head for head. Does the fact that God’s covenant is with creation prove that the rain and sunshine are God’s gift of favor upon the wicked? When God promised to withhold destruction of the world with a flood, was that favor to the wicked? For whom really were all these things and what do they do for the wicked?

The sign of the rainbow is the beautiful token of this covenant. One may ask, why a rainbow? Was it merely coincidental that God chose the rainbow as the sign of His covenant with creation? Verse 14 indicates something of the true meaning of the bow and its proper interpretation. The cloud is rain that is still in vapor form. Upon right atmospheric conditions this vapor will change into liquid drops of rain. Every time God’s people from every generation see the sunlight bounce upon the rain bearing clouds, they bear witness that God will not destroy the world with a flood of great waters. There is that immediate connection, first of all.

But there also is a deeper meaning. The cloud also is symbolic of God’s presence. Cf. Rev. 4:3. God’s presence is always twofold, either in love or wrath. That was true for Israel when the cloud condescended upon the tabernacle. It is particularly true when one looks into the churning, wind-driven cloud and beholding the angry face of the heavens, sees the picture of the presence of God’s wrath. He looks with anger against sin. Upon that angry face,

BEACON LIGHTS

Fifteen
the sun shines, the presence of light that covers the angry clouds and we see reflected the rainbow, the multi-colored spray of radiance that tells us for Christ's sake God will not spew forth his anger upon us. God looks at the bow and remembers His promises for the sake of Calvary; we look at the bow and remember the faithful word of God. That makes the bow a precious sign. It speaks in visible language what God has written in His Word. God is faithful and will not consume His people in anger, but will lead them to glory.

Connected with the establishment of this covenant also rests the sincere obligation for Noah and all God's people to do their part. The believer has certain duties that he must perform within the covenant.

Immediately after blessing Noah and his sons, God commanded them to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth (verse 7 adds the adverb abundantly). This was not the first time such a command was given. An identical commandment was expressed to Adam and Eve when creation was finished. Gen. 1:28. God had now destroyed the world with the flood and there was need now for a repetition of the original injunction. Well might Adam and his sons fear to bring forth children. They undoubtedly began to reason, since the generations of man became wicked in their children, would it be wise to bring forth a seed and arouse the anger of God again. Wasn't it vain to bring forth children, if they would be destroyed? To allay this fear, God now gave them expressed orders to reproduce and replenish the earth. They were not to stay in one little isle and arrange some utopia, but spread over the earth. Only in this way could The Seed, Christ Himself be born.

There is one obvious difference between this context and Gen. 1:28. In the latter the food for man and beast was plants. Here, however, in addition to plants, animals were given to men for food. Sin had left its mark upon the brute creation. Now the animals were no longer gentle and companions for man. Sin affected the nature of the beast and made him fear man (vs. 2). Now there must have been changes in nature that made it more difficult for man to live. The life span of man was greatly diminished. Besides the nutrition of vegetables he now needs meat and God provides that by direct command. All creation stood in the service of man.

Men were not to eat meat without first preparing it properly . . . They had to drain out the blood before preparing it for consumption. These words anticipated Lev. 17:10-14 where we are explicitly informed that the soul of an animal is in its blood and since these animals were offered as O. T. sacrificial types of Jesus on the cross, the blood was symbolic of the soul offered for others and thus considered sacred. Hence, we find the direct prohibition of eating flesh without first draining out the blood. At the same time this prevented brutality upon the animals, for it was common among the heathen to ravishly eat flesh without properly killing the animal (cf. 1 Sam. 14:32).

In addition God now gave the commandment as to the respecting of the life of our fellow human beings. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." Obviously this instituted the bearing of the sword power over the offender. The reason given was, "For in the image of God made he man." This means that in the formal sense, man was made an image bearer and thus should be treated with proper respect. This can hardly be considered the beginning of government, since in that time it would be the duty of the next of kin to seek the "revenge blood." Nevertheless, when family became clan and clan grew into tribe and eventually nations were born, this responsibility for the execution of the murderers now rests with the government (Rom. 13:1-4). There appears to be no reason why the principle of punishing the murderer with death should be abrogated today.

NOTE:

Results of the Beacon Lights Literary Contest will appear in the November issue.

Editor
School News:
Adams St. School began classes on September 5. In the evening of the same day the first Mothers' Club meeting of the current season was held. Rev. C. Hanko spoke at that meeting about his experiences in Jamaica, while Mr. Meulenberg showed slides. Rev. Hanko hopes to tell more of his trip and show more pictures at a public meeting in the future.

The Society for Protestant Reformed Secondary Education met Friday, Sept. 6, at Southwest Church and decided to purchase lots near Hope School; these lots are to be paid for over a period of four years.

Hope School opened its doors on Wednesday, Sept. 4, for a half day of school; the following day regular classes began.

Confession of Faith
was made recently by the following young people:
From Hope Church: Linda Kuzma, who came from the Roman Catholic Church, Calvin Kalsbeck, Roger Kamphuis, and Timothy Orme.
From Loveland: Jane Huber, Don Schwarz, and Joe Griess.
From Oak Lawn: Mr. Neal Butler.

Our Future Conventioneers number quite a few:
A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. John Vander Woude (First)
A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Bleyenberg (Hull)
A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Koerner (First)
A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Holstege (Hudsonville)
A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. R. Hoven (Southeast)
A son born to Mr. and Mrs. H. Ophoff (Southeast)
A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Dan Meulenberg (Southeast)
A son born to Mr. and Mrs. James Pastor (Southeast)
A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Kuiper (Oak Lawn)
A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. I. Kohn (First)
A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Dempsey (First)

Congratulations
to Mrs. H. Nieuwenhout (First), who celebrated her 88th birthday on August 29; to Mrs. Sarali Zylstra (Doon), who celebrated her 90th birthday on July 18; and to Mr. Cornelius Lubbers, who celebrated his 80th birthday on July 21.

Missions and Church Extension
Rev. Lubbers, accompanied by Rev. Harbach, planned to leave Sept. 10 to investigate the Paterson, N. J. area. The Mission Committee has decided to discontinue the work in Houston.

Pamphlet 12, the last in the series on the Lord's Prayer, was published by the Church Extension Committee of South Holland and Oak Lawn. It is entitled "Leaving With Confidence."

The lecture on "Total Depravity" by the Rev. G. Van Baren was mimeographed and placed in the bulletin rack of Randolph Church for distribution; Rev. Van Baren plans to lecture the first part of October on "Unconditional Election."
Wedding Bells
rang for Jon Huiskken and Joan Veldman (Edgerton) on August 8; for Ronald Boelma and Clarice Newhof (First) on August 23; for Kenneth Schipper and Marilyn Poll (Southeast) on August 15; for Richard Dykstra and Faye Kuiper (Hudsonville) on August 8; and for Jane Ann Ieys and Stephen Allen Lee (First) on July 2.

Calls
Candidate David Engelsma has accepted the call to Loveland. We rejoice with them that God has provided a pastor for them after so long a time.
Rev. C. Hanko has declined the call to Southwest.

Membership changes:
Hudsonville welcomed Mr. Robert Allen De Young from Hope Chr. Ref. Church of Grandville. Miss Evelyn Huizenga transferred to Randolph from Edgerton.
Membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Martin De Vries and two baptized children were received from Oak Lawn by Randolph.
First Church welcomed Miss Rosalynn Tryon from Sherman St. Christian Reformed Church as a member by baptism.

A good man is neither puffed up by fleeting success nor broken by adversity; whereas, a bad man is chastised by failure of this sort because he is corrupted by success.
—ST. AUGUSTINE

Mrs. Gerrit Holleman joined South Holland Church, coming from the Second Christian Reformed Church of Highland, Indiana.
Mr. Neal Buiter was received as a member by baptism by Oak Lawn Church, from the Oak Lawn Christian Reformed Church.

Our Servicemen:
Two servicemen from South Holland are in our news this month. Henry Lenting was home for a brief leave in August and returned to camp at Presidio in California. Mr. Frank Van Baren was to leave France and be discharged from the service around the last part of August. Mrs. Van Baren returned home August 9 from France.

Bill Huber (Loveland) has been transferred from Paris to Germany. Here is his new address:
PFC William D. Huber
RA17606781
Btr. C, 6 Mal. Bn., 52 Arty.
APO 321, Box No. 1052
New York, N. Y.

A quotation from Doon's bulletin:
"That will be a wretched day for the church of God when she begins to think any aberration from the truth of little consequence."

LOIS E. KREGEL

THREE WEEKS IS REQUIRED TO CHANGE YOUR MAGAZINE ADDRESS
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