BEACON LIGHTS for PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

June - July 1967

Hull Protestant Reformed Church Site for 1967 PRYP Convention
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Ruth Bol
Editorial

We welcome Mr. Richard Moore to the staff of Beacon Lights as our new Associate Editor. He is presently a seminarian in our Protestant Reformed Seminary, and he and his family are members of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. May the Lord bless him as he writes for us throughout the coming months.

OH! TO GROW UP

Richard Moore

There is always a desire to grow up during the years of youth. This desire, at times, seems to be an all controlling factor in a youth’s life. This phenomenon begins very early in life.

Do you remember when you looked forward to the time when your parents would consider you old enough to have a bike? Or, perhaps, you have fond memories of the time when you were allowed to pick out your own shoes or dresses? How many of us impatiently waited to reach the age when our parents would let us drive the family car?

Yes, youth clamor to grow up in order to reach various goals in their lives. Further, as youth, we work hard at growing up. We study and try to learn all that we can in order to reach various levels of maturity. One example would be the limitless amount of time that is given to a driver’s education course to attain to the level of maturity necessary to drive.

Notice the goals we have mentioned are all secular goals. And very few of us have to be prodded to display our most mature characteristics in order to reach these goals. Now to grow up is not wrong, nor is it wrong to work hard at developing and using our God given talents. That is our calling. However, there is a question concerning the goal we would have in mind as we strive to grow up.

As covenant youth we confess that we are members of the body of Christ as we stand in the line of continued generations. However, as a youth, one must yet grow up and attain a certain level of spiritual maturity before he assumes the full responsibility of membership in Christ’s church. A state of maturity must be reached in virtue of which one can consciously take his position in the congregation in which he is a member, make confession of his faith consciously in the fellowship of that particular church and consciously take his place at the communion table. The covenant youth must come to conscious possession of all benefits God’s people have in Christ. These benefits he must come to know and appropriate. Further, he must come to a conscious conviction of his calling as a member of Christ’s body as he stands within the church and in antithesis to the world. This state of spiritual maturity is the goal towards which the covenant youth should set his sights as he grows up. We should look forward to that time when we can take our place in the congregation in conscious faith being actively engaged in the battle of faith. Spiritual maturity should be the goal of our desire to grow up. Toward that end we should put forth our best efforts! But do we?

God gives us the means for instruction in the things of the kingdom. He provides us with parents, ministers, catechism classes and Christian schools. The opportunity to study and to learn of the things of the kingdom is ours. Yet is our desire for this spiritual growth great? Can you remember the time when you spent only an hour in preparation for catechism or for Bible study in preparation for society? Do you remember the last worship service at which you fell asleep during the congregational prayer
or during the sermon? One cannot grow up spiritually, if he does not study nor hear God’s Word. It often appears that we don’t want to grow up at all! How often do you consciously prepare for the Sabbath Day on Saturday evening? Do you bow your head as you enter church to petition God for grace to hear and discern His Word? Perhaps you think that prayer before worship is only for adults? But God never told His children that they must be a certain age to pray. Prayer is necessary for spiritual growth! There are many other questions we could ask but let this suffice.

Our flesh and carnal nature often induce us to seek the wrong goals. Secular goals must not be the object of our desire to grow up. For the child of God cannot have both the treasures of earth and those of heaven. The devil wants you to grow up seeking him and his sphere. This does not make wrong the desire to grow up. Covenant youth, it is good to grow up and to want this, if what you seek is spiritual maturity and active participation in the church of Christ. Further, this is our calling as covenant seed. We can reach this maturity only as we seek it by the power of faith. May God grant us grace to exercise it.

RICHARD MOORE

FEATUERS

Preview of
The 1967 Young People’s Convention

JOHN HOEKSTRA

As the host society for the coming convention, Hull’s Young People’s Society wishes to present a short preview of the events to take place.

The convention dates are August 17, through, August 21. For the convention we have chosen the Theme “Soli Deo Gloria” taken from the text 1 Peter 5:8-11. The subtopics are: 1. “The Idea.” 2. “The Basis.” 3. “The Expression.” The theme song will be Psalter No. 197.

When you come to Hull, arrive at the church on the corner of third and Walnut. There will be a committee at the church to give you lodging assignments. Registration will take place Thursday evening at the church.

On Friday business meetings will be held. We will have the mass meeting Friday evening at the community building in Hull. Rev. G. Vanden Berg will be our speaker. Immediately following this meeting a get acquainted party is scheduled.

Saturday will be “Outing” day. The day will begin with an early bird tour of Iowa farms. We will spend part of the day in the Hull Park. This park features volleyball, tennis, and swimming. An outstanding feature of the day will be the “Greased Pig Contest.” Plan to take appropriate clothing for the occasion. The remainder of the day will be spent in Newton Hills, a park of a neighboring state. Seminarian Dale Kuiper will be our speaker.

On the Sabbath Day let us all gather in the House of God to Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness. In the evening we will have a “Convention Singspiration.” Special numbers will be rendered.

The final day of our convention will be no less eventful. We will begin the day with a pancake breakfast. In the afternoon the east-west ball game will be played. We will be privileged to listen to an interesting debate. The topic for the debate is Resolved that juvenile delinquency is the parents fault. The banquet will conclude our convention. Rev. R. Decker will give the final speech.

Our Hull Society is working hard to try and make our convention enjoyable and we urge all of our young people to attend.

Two

BEACON LIGHTS
A Visit With The Amish

by RIENETTA KAMPS

During the week before Labor Day, four years ago, Mom and Dad decided to visit an Amish community in Indiana because they wanted to know why and how the Amish live as they do. Our family — eight children, our parents, and Grandmother — left after dinner and arrived in Shipshewanna as the sun was setting.

Shipshewanna was a small village with a few old-fashioned looking business places, an up-to-date gas station, and across the railroad tracks, a wooden grain mill. Rounding the corner of Main Street we saw our first Amish man. He was just ending a conversation with an Amish friend, and climbing back into his buggy when Dad pulled our Volkswagen bus up in back of him, introduced himself and inquired about camping sites.

A pair of surprised hazel eyes in a kindly face swung around to greet us. Our busful must have been quite a sight. His first words were, "How many kids you got in there?"

"Eight!" was my father's proud reply.

"Eight? Who is the oldest?"

"Me!" I said popping my head out the side window. Ten pair of blue eyes were staring back at him with the same surprise and interest. He was a tall, thick-set man, with greying eyebrows and beard, a generous, German nose and friendly, gentle, smile. We eyed him up and down — from his dusty black felt hat to his faded, hook fastened, blue-grey trousers to his black leather high-topped shoes.

Considering our request he suggested the wooded lot immediately north of his farm buildings. Mr. Miller drove his beautiful trotter and rig home to do his chores, while we bought groceries, following him later to pitch our tent by his farm and meet Mrs. Miller.

Minerva Martha Miller was a tall slender woman dressed plainly in a medium blue dress with three quarter length sleeves and mid calf length skirt, covered by a prim light blue apron. Her grey hair was caught in a tidy bun at the back of her neck. She welcomed us with a warm blue-eyed smile and a serene manner. While Mom and Grandma were preparing supper, we children explored Mr. Miller's farm and were shown his blacksmith shop. His main occupation was primarily horseshoeing and secondly making and repairing wheels, buggies, and other farm equipment.

The shop looked somewhat hap-hazard with tools and long reeds of wire hanging on the walls. On the floor in long strips by the back wall were the un-shaped tire rims. Scraps of metal and hand tools lay scattered around the anvil. It was a step backward fifty years.

Darkness fell. We spent a peaceful hour around our camp-fire enjoying the home grown popcorn Mr. Miller gave us. Eight children and three grown-ups slept serenely that night lulled to sleep by crickets and frogs.

Sunday morning we attended an Amish church service in the Yoder home. The Amish hold their services in a different home each Sunday. The service from 9:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The two shift noonday meal came after a two hour service; the men ate then the women.

The service began with singing in a slow chorale style led by a song leader. The sermon began when the bishop entered, kissed the elders and deacons, and embraced the men of the congregation. The women sat in an adjoining room, separate from the men. In preparing for the midday meal the women of the congregation got together at the home where the church was to be held and helped the lady of the home bake, cook, and prepare the food.

As the buggies arrived for the service the eldest sons of the congregation unhitched the horses, put them in the barn, and lined up the buggies in order; while the men congregated in the door-yard and the ladies went indoors, removed their wraps and talked indoors before the service. There was a special church wagon to convey the benches from house to house for the bi-weekly service.

We saw many children and young people at the service. They were a quaint miniature version of their parents in dress. They were quiet and very well behaved during the long
services. Around the home when there are visitors or when visiting children were “seen and not heard.”

Sunday evening we enjoyed a delicious meal with the Millers. We had potatoes, canned meat, raspberries, strawberries, celery, lettuce, two kinds of bread, honey, butter, peas, corn, beans, water, coffee, peppermint tea, and molasses cookies! Dessert was a custard pudding pie and fruit!

Mrs. Miller showed us her plain unpretentious large home with big simply furnished rooms. There were no curtains but shades only at the windows, varnished woodwork, no pictures on the walls and beautifully hand braided rugs on the gleaming hardwood floors. After a very full day we returned to our tent for another night’s sleep.

Monday morning the little ones were up with the cows and out to watch Mr. Miller at chores. After morning duties were finished Mr. Miller took us all for a ride in his buggy a few at a time. How we hated to leave that afternoon. We had made a true friendship that has been growing ever since.

A Personal Essay
MARK HOEKSEMA

Mark wrote this essay while attending East Christian High School in Grand Rapids. He permitted me to read it and publish it if I wished. I found it enlightening, and I hope you do too.

The Editor

My world extends in all directions, as far as the eye can see, and beyond the horizon; I am broad-minded. Webster defines this term as “tolerant of liberal views.” I feel that this is a rather narrow-minded definition because it does not include all possible facets or senses of broad-mindedness. Liberal is “not bound by orthodox tenets or established forms in political or religious philosophy.” I am not liberal in that sense. I do not mean to say that all liberal views are bad and harmful. All too often they are; but that is not my point. I am not liberal in the popular sense of the word, but I am broad-minded.

I want to see all that I can. To explore our country and others is one of my goals. I have traveled to the Rocky Mountains, and a more majestic and awe-inspiring sight I have yet to see. To stand in the shadow of a towering purple peak makes one humble; it makes one realize that man, compared to nature, much less to God, is really quite insignificant, in spite of his boasts of achievement. It is impossible to forget a mountain sunset; the last rays of the sun are reflected from maroon faces and turn the snow fields a deep pink. When darkness descends, the hope of a new day makes one eagerly anticipate the sunrise. To lie at night beside a thundering mountain stream; to explore beaver ponds and creeks; to come face to face with three deer at a turn in the trail; to watch the tremendous black clouds heap up, to see lightnings play among them and lash out in fury at the mountaintop, to view the vengeance wreaked by wind and rain; and then to feel the warm rays of the sun when the storm is past. This is what I want—to go to new places and to see new wonders.

But this is not the only way I am broad-minded. I want to do anything I can to widen my perspective on life. Travel alone does not do this. I want learning. I want to learn all I can about past history and events because I believe that the past helps interpret the present. By studying what has been done in the past we can see why the things that take place happen as they do. We can learn to avoid making the same mistakes that have been made in the past. We can see the unfolding of God’s plan in the organic development of sin; we are able to see how God works everything together for his purpose, the salvation of his people.

I enjoy the study of the expressions of past cultures. I personally do not care much for poetry, although it is a legitimate art form, but I enjoy reading stories and essays that give an accurate picture of what life was like when the authors penned them. Literature shows methods of expression of
people who lived before me; I can learn to communicate better to others by studying past ways of doing this. Communication is vital in our world of today; without it our society would fall apart. Communication is the only way to spread the gospel, too. I would learn all I can about expressing myself clearly and forcefully, that I may spread the good news. I think that old methods of communication are valuable: there are certain laws and rules (e.g. those of grammar) that have stood the test of time. But there is also room for new development; this leads me to my next point.

I am somewhat of a traditionalist. I like old, warm, established forms and customs. They have value, partly because they have lasted a long time. Speaking specifically, the traditions of our Reformed heritage have been proven to be good; we have followed them because they are in harmony with Scripture. These forms are the expressions of past life telling me how people lived. The grandeur and majesty of the past fascinates me.

Although tradition has its benefits, there must also be progress. We cannot always use only past methods, because these are sometimes outdated and useless in a changing society. Progress must be improvement; if it is not, it becomes no longer progress, but digression and regression. I am a firm believer in trying new experiences. If they are beneficial, perhaps they can become part of tradition, if harmful, they should be discarded.

All too often, though, what passes for progress is not progress at all. In order to understand what progress is, we must first ask the question, "What is man’s highest purpose in life?", and answer it by saying, "To serve and glorify his Creator." Hence, anything that serves to enhance and advance this purpose is progress. There have been advances in technology, sociology and the intellectual fields. But is this progress? Have we really improved on Calvin’s Christian state at Geneva? Are not our advances merely incidental, mere conveniences? Have they furthered the cause of Christ to any appreciable degree? I think not. The only value these advances might conceivably have would be that they have provided slightly better means with which to tell the good news.

Not only have these "progresses" not helped much; they have had the opposite effect in that they have provided man with more tools to be used in the service of sin. Take, for example, the radio and its records, TV, and the movie. They have done little else but waste money and foster corruption. Before the radio and records, there was not nearly so much of the current wild, useless music craze. The movie, both in the theater and on television, has raised the crime rate by portraying adultery, killing, and other base sins. These are just two of the myriad examples that can be cited. We have not improved socially, either. Lord of the Flies, by William Golding, illustrates well what the darkness of man’s heart does to even a simple society.

It is quite evident, judging by the standard of true progress, that the world has regressed, an idea which is also Scriptural. Scripture tells us that man will become increasingly more evil as time goes on, and that we are to resist this trend. This involves the antithesis, the living over against the world by the Christian.

It is exactly because of my attempt to live the antithesis, weak though it may be, that I have been called narrow-minded. People who think of Christianity as a series of "don’ts" and "thou shalt nots" often say, "You mean that you don’t go to movies (or any other place where a Christian does not belong) because you think they’re wrong? Why everybody goes!" My response is often, "The whole world can and will run madly to hell, but that does not mean that I must run along with it." I have little use for most of the surrounding world because it is wicked.

Does this mean that I sit all alone in my little corner because I might be harmed by contact with the world (as I have also been accused of doing)? John Donne said that no man is an island. Scripture says that a Christian must be in the world but not of it. No, I meet people, and I like to meet new people; but I try to keep in mind who I am, why I am here, and when in contact with the world, how I am different. All of this would be nonsense to an unbeliever, who would scoff, "What a bigoted, conservative, narrow-minded, stiff-headed Dutchman!"

But indeed, there is no more narrow-minded or short-sighted view than that
of the world. It looks only to the here and the now; it gets all the pleasure that it can out of life, utilizing its modern inventions to produce more evil. How foolish! How inexpressably narrow and naive! Not only is it foolish, but also it is wrong, because that is not the purpose for which God created man.

In contrast to this bigotry, I consider myself broadminded, because I do not live with a view to only the past and the present, but to the future and the hereafter. My goal is the same as that of the heroes of faith who sought for a better country, "confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." I am a pilgrim here: this is not my home. I am attempting to prepare myself for the hereafter by learning all I can about God, doing this by studying past traditions and new developments, by exploring His creation, and by spreading the good news, in order that I may gain a better understanding of the kingdom to which I belong.

Dordt College - My College

RODNEY MIERSMA

Some time ago I was asked whether I would write an article on my impressions of Dordt College of which I am presently a student. In regard to this question I can say that, in general, Dordt has made a very favorable impression on me.

First, and most important is the fact that Dordt has not strayed from the basic Reformed doctrines which we cherish. Each instructor must undergo a rigorous examination prior to his receiving a contract in order that the Reformed faith may be maintained.

Presently, Dordt has an enrollment of approximately six hundred students coming from twenty-two states and four Canadian provinces and a roster of thirty-four instructors. As a result there is a relatively small student-to-teacher ratio. Personal conferences are held between the student and his advisor or the dean of the college for both matters of academic and of spiritual nature.

The students have a choice of nine majors: Biology, Chemistry, Classical Languages, English, German, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, and Music. Minors in speech, physics, and physical education are also offered. Upon graduation, provided he has fulfilled all the requirements, a student in teachers education receives a professional teachers certificate which is valid for ten years. Dordt is now a candidate for membership in the North Central Association of Accreditation.

As far as tuition is concerned, I think that it might be of interest to you to know that students of the Protestant Reformed denomination pay on the same scale as those students of the Christian Reformed denomination. Several types of government loans and grants are also available to students. In addition, there is a work-study program for needy students.

Dordt's campus is rapidly expanding. Besides the boys' dormitory, a new dormitory for girls was constructed last year along with a new expansive library and an addition to the Commons. This year, construction is underway on a new science building, with work on a physical education building to be started soon. Also this year, in cooperation with the city of Sioux Center, construction is soon to be started on a Fine Arts building. In this same project a football field, baseball field, track, and possibly an indoor swimming pool are to be made.

Dordt is an excellent school especially for anyone who plans to enter the teaching profession, ministry, or music.

In conclusion, I might also add that for Protestant Reformed students, church attendance would not be a great problem, for the Doon and Hull Protestant Reformed churches are only a short distance from Sioux Center, twelve and nine miles respectively. There are members of both congregations living in Sioux Center who I am sure would aid anyone who has no other means of transportation.

Let's see some of you Easterners come this way. Come and look the campus over when you attend the Convention in Hull.
ASSURANCE: GROUNDED AND EXPERIENCED

It is not the thrust of the doctrine of assurance to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs, nor to put a stumbling-block before God's little ones, but to expose empty profession resting in carnal confidence on promises divine given only to those in Christ (II Cor. 1:20), and to so present the truth that the weak in faith will not conclude that they are unregenerate.

Assurance is not reached by a mere bare simple faith in Christ. That never did save. For from a true faith there issues the fruit of repentance. That, too, is as essential to salvation as faith. Another fruit of true faith is that of good works (James 2:20). Faith which remains alone, which neither purifies the heart (Acts 15:9), nor works by love (Gal. 5:6), nor overcomes the world (I John 5:4) will not save for time and eternity.

That we are saved by Christ means that we are saved from something, and more than from the punishment of hell. That which condemns to hell is wickedness and sin (Psalm 9:17). At the very beginning of the New Testament we read that the Son of God was called Jesus because He Himself shall save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). This fact which God puts to the front of the Gospel revelation, modern psychologists and psychiatrists shunt to the rear. But the Word of God first reveals from what we are saved, then for what!

From your upbringing on the Heidelberg Catechism, you have learned in the preaching that the Christian has been saved from sin. You have undoubtedly learned that this means to be saved from the love of sin. The heart of the natural man is in love with everything opposed to God. He may not confess this act, admit it or be conscious of it, but it is true nevertheless. With his whole nature in opposition to God (Rom. 8:7), and having been shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin, he cannot help but be entranced with that which is part of his moral being. Therefore he is condemned in the judgment of God not only because of his unbelief (John 3:18), but also because he loves darkness rather than light (v. 19). Unless he is given a new heart (Ezek. 36:26) from above (John 3:27) he will never remove from that natural condition of spiritual death to one of life. It will take the might of the risen Mediator to make him abhor himself (Job 42:6) and to hate sin sufficiently to forsake it. Then he will bear the mark of one saved. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8:13).

To be saved from sin also means to be saved from the allance of it. The natural tendency is to excuse all wrong-doing, to ignore it, or throw the onus onto someone else. In Paradise, Adam, to begin with, would not confess his guilt, but blamed his wife. Eve was no different; she would not admit her sin, but attempted to blame
the serpent. But he that is spiritual has a different view of sin committed. "That which I do (amiss, RCH), I allow not" (Rom. 7:15). The Christian does commit sin, because in him there is still the flesh, and in the flesh is no good thing (v. 18), but he does not condone it, nor defend it. He confesses it to God, mourns on account of it, repents of it, and prays to be kept from temptation in the future.

To be saved from the dominion of sin, or the slavish mastery of sin is also meant. Always the Christian is plagued with indwelling sin, so that he is constantly tempted, annoyed, wounded and daily tripped up by sin. "In many things we all offend" (James 3:2). But the Christian is not a bondsman to sin, so that the difference between him and one who is lies in the fact that he puts up a line of resistance to sin, opposing it. He may be hardly more than a Mr. Little-faith or a Much-afraid in his fight, yet he is no vassal of Satan. Sin does not have dominion over the one whose life is characterized by repentance, prayer, desire for righteousness and holiness, and a pressing toward the mark of perfect obedience. Although there are no degrees of regeneration among God's people, there are degrees of spiritual growth. Some have more knowledge than others. One has more wisdom than another. Where one escapes sins of commission, he is at fault with sins of omission. Yet no child of God has sin for his master.

Nevertheless, if your experience is anything like mine, there are times when you think that sin rules you completely. To be honest with yourself, there is little that you can see in yourself but sin and constantly repeated sin which seems to characterize your existence. When you would do good, evil is present with you. There is so much of unbelief in your faith. Your surrender to the Lord is not without a lurking element of rebellion. Your attainment to a degree of humility is not without a surging of pride. You cannot meditate a quarter of an hour on holy things without the intrusion of evil imaginations; or pray for five minutes without the mind wandering. The more mature effort you make to conquer these sins, the farther you seem to be from victory.

If this somewhat accurately describes your condition, take comfort in this that such concern over sin is a sign that you are not one of those completely under the power of sin. The mark of the Christian is not that he is without sin, but that he grieves over sin. The spiritually dead neither feel nor care about sin. Perhaps father or mother (or grandparents) can tell you that in some respects they are not as happy in the Lord as in younger days. For "he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow" (Ecc. 1:18). But do not let that discourage you. The more you learn of sin and self, the more you will be dissatisfied with self, and learn to find your joy in Christ alone. As we advance in years, we grow in grace, that is, we grow in the knowledge of our sinfulness. Spiritual sight is increasingly restored to us. We see in ourselves distressing miseries to which "worldlings" and "religionists" are blind.

Another fact which should comfort you as a child of the covenant is that although there is in you as a Christian inborn sin, there is also alongside it true grace. The principle of sin operates in your members. But so does the principle of grace. As a child of God, grace is also active within you. It is not true that with you it is nothing but sin. Of course, you will admit and confess that nothing good can come from ourselves. that is, from the old, natural self. But there is in you that miracle of the Holy Spirit which the Scripture calls regeneration, and that influences your life and conduct for good. Though it be but a new beginning of righteousness, it is an undeniable work of grace in you. For it is this wonder of grace which makes you desire to be conformed to the image of the Son, to trust Him with all your heart, to love him with a pure heart fervently and to serve Him with unstinted diligence. Such aspirations come not from the flesh. That being true, sin does not have ruling power over you; grace does! The natural man is under the dominion of sin. He proves it by banishing from his life a praying without ceasing and a constant seeking of fellowship with the Lord. The reading of Holy Writ is never his desire. He never reads this magazine. He never reads one article in The Standard Bearer unless nagged into it. In the natural man there is no resistance to sin. Spiritually, he is a dead fish who floats along with the current—the current fads, fashions, foibles

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and effeminate idols so widely and wildly adulated. That man has not been saved from the penalty of sin, is not being saved from the power of sin and has not the daily longing to be saved from the presence of sin.

Now, relative to this matter of assurance of salvation, the blessed possession of such cannot come by any pretence to it, nor by the boast of pardon, nor by assumed possession of eternal life. This avails nothing where there is no deep and godly sorrow for sin, no regret over and indignation against it, and no self-detestation because of frequent falls into sin. For where these spiritual qualifications are lacking there is no knowledge at all of what genuine assurance is.

As to the basis of Christian assurance, it has not only to do with the ground of one's acceptance before God, but also with one's own knowledge of that acceptance. In the sight of the highest court of appeal, that of God Almighty, I am accepted in the Beloved One only because of the righteousness of Christ, which He earned and purchased by His perfect, spotless life and vicarious death. In that righteousness, I have a legal standing before God which is as acceptable and perfect as Christ's at the right hand of God. What, however, will enable me to see and firmly believe that that righteousness has been put to my account? Nothing but that new regenerated life created in me by the Spirit of God! He who has such a perfect position before God will also come to know by experience that the Lord justifies, saves and sanctifies. He will not only believe the imputed righteousness of Christ, but he will know the imparted righteousness of Christ which makes him a new creature in Christ. Only as the latter can he know the former.

That ground goes deeper. The ground of assurance goes back to election. It stands on that basis. The matter of election is not one of the secret things that belongs exclusively to God. It is revealed, and belongs to us. It is intended for our knowledge. "Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God" (I Thess. 1:4). How may we know and be assured of our election? Thus: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10). Why does Peter employ this order of calling before election? Because he intends not so much the fact of election as the knowledge of election. The fact of it is taken up in Rom. 8:29, 30. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called." In the reference, "your calling and election," the experience of it is in view. In Romans, Paul writes of the elect's position as viewed in the eternal counsel of God. Peter writes of the elect's knowledge of this in Christian experience.

The Christian is directed along Assurance Road with evidence that he is effectually called and elect of God. To make this sure to himself, something more than resting upon John 3:16 or John 5:24 or Acts 16:31 is needed. He professes to be a child of God, but he also has the mark and character of such which he will learn to detect. That character is identified to us in II Peter 1:5-7. Possessing, cultivating and practicing those virtues is the way in which we make our calling and election sure, through His divine power granted unto us (v. 3).

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**CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS**

Have you heard? An index covering all past issues of Beacon Lights is going to be published! The proposal was recently approved by the Federation Board and work is about to begin.

The index will include both a textual and a subject index. In the textual index we plan to list all the texts quoted in articles or mentioned as references. Hence, if you ever want to know in what connection a text can be used, you have only to turn to the index, and chances are you will find the text.

However, the subject index will prove of even greater value. Just think of the wealth of material that has been written in many different fields by our ministers and young people. All of the details have not
yet been worked out, but the index will probably list the subjects with which the articles deal in alphabetical order, followed by the title, date, and author of the article. We feel that since the titles alone often do not reveal the contents of the articles, classifying them by subject material will be more beneficial.

Why publish such an index? In all of its 25 years of existence, Beacon Lights has never been indexed. There is a card catalogue, but it is not very complete and is of little use. It does nobody who lives outside of the immediate Grand Rapids area any good. In fact, most people are not even aware that such a catalogue exists. All of this valuable writing has no value for many. By publishing an index, we will give everyone access to this material which can be put to many good uses. The articles can be used for society discussions, for references for papers and debates, for just plain reading to get a picture of past life in our churches (it's interesting! Just pick up a copy from back in the 1940's and see what you find!), or for any purpose the reader desires.

If the reader wants an article, all he has to do is send the title, volume, and issue in to Beacon Lights and he will be sent the issue to use for a couple of weeks. Many details have yet to be worked out, and a great deal of hard work lies ahead. But we hope to have the index out by early next fall. More information will be published at that time, D.V. Keep watching!

MARK HOEKSEMA

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OPEN FORUM

Conclusion

"What is wrong with our singspirations?" This was the question asked several months ago in Open Forum, and it resulted in some very interesting and well-written ideas. These responses show that there are many who care about our church life and are willing to give ideas for its improvement. Allow me to briefly summarize the suggestions given.

First, more publicity should be given further in advance, one writer says. This is a wise suggestion, and has already been followed by the setting up of a schedule for singspirations. More and different special numbers should be provided from the great amount of talent available; the committee is also working on this. The Psalter numbers should occasionally be varied with a couple of well-chosen hymns. A theme for each singspiration would produce much more unification and would enable a director to enlarge on it by means of Bible verses or readings instead of making him just announce the next number. It is true, the committee could improve the singspirations, and it is already attempting to do this.

But, as one contributor says, "Don't look around and blame it on someone else! Why can't you come?" Indeed, much of the fault lies with the audience, with us as individuals. When our song services are improved along the lines suggested in these replies, there certainly will be no excuse (there isn't now either) to stay away from an evening of enjoyment and praise.

A New Topic

How should a Christian view the political, legal, and moral aspects of the war in Vietnam? Since the subject has been much discussed and written about, there is a wealth of information that can be used as background for an article. In connection with this, it would be wise to re-read Tim Pipe's fine article, "Is the War in Vietnam a Just War?" (December, 1966)

The Bible speaks of wars and rumors of wars that will occur in the last days. Is this a sign of the times? Must we, as Protestant Reformed people, support our country's endeavors in Vietnam? This topic concerns everyone, so let's hear a lot of opinions, from our Western churches, too. What do you think?

MARK HOEKSEMA
I don't see it happen too often, but now and then it does. This is what I'm talking about: it's about our Protestant Reformed men who face the military service, whether Army, Marines, or other. I feel our men should watch what they decide when the time comes for them to leave home and church life. For if we are called, it is one thing, for then it is the call from the Government, and God puts that Government there for a ruling body. So then we must obey the call when it comes.

But some don't care to wait, so they enlist for a three or four-year term. Now I feel that this is wrong for us who are Protestant Reformed young men because we must put the question of whether it is right or wrong before the Lord God in the form of prayer. I'm sure that if we do that, we wouldn't have many who sign up for a three or four-year term. We Protestant Reformed people should be thankful that we don't have many enlist, at least I haven't heard of too many. I feel that those who face the military service ought to think this over, and take this matter to the Lord and ask the Lord, "Is it right for me to enlist?"

I myself feel it is wrong because we as Protestant Reformed young men are putting ourselves out of the Protestant Reformed Church. May we sign up for the Service and put ourselves away from the church? Maybe some men who sign up don't think of it this way, but it stands to reason. That is what we are doing, right? I say again, it is wrong for us to sign up, because we must never want to put ourselves outside of the church. For if we do, we only put ourselves in trouble. Some may want to do it because they feel that is the only way to get what they want. Well, I have now been in the Service about 19 months, and I have seen many times that that didn't happen. I have heard of quite a few men who told me they signed up because they wanted this job or that job. But the Army puts a man where he is needed the most; it doesn't go along with what the individual wants all the time. Now and then it happens that way, but not very often. In this day and age they need more men in certain fields. The young man, when he is about to go into the Service, signs up for one certain item; if they don't need more men in that field, they won't put him into it, but where they want him, or where he would do the best for the government. Some might get put in a much different field from what they wanted. I heard of quite a few who wanted to be put into the Artillery branch of the Service, but wound up in the infantry. Therefore, the man doesn't usually get what he signs up for. It's the Army, or any other branch of the Service, who decides for him. When I came in, I thought sure they would put me where I didn't want to go. It turned out they wanted me to be a part of the artillery, so that's where I am today, whether I like it or not. I was called, so they had the right to put me wherever they wanted.

But let this be a warning to those who believe they will soon face the military service. It is something we should give considerable thought to in the form of prayer before we come to our conclusion. Let us think about it, young men.

Yours in Christ,

Sp/4 ROGER A. KAMPHUIS

THE 1966-67 FEDERATION BOARD REPORT

As a result of elections at the 1966 Convention held at Southeast, Don Jonker has taken over the office of President which had been held by Clare Kuiper. The new officers for the following positions on the Federation Board are, Wilma Haveman, Librarian and Secretary of the Scholarship Board; Ron Van Overloop, Vice-Treasurer; Ruthellen Bol, Secretary; and Rev. Van Baren, Advisor.

The retiring officers are Clare Kuiper, Joann Flikkema Bult, Ruth Kuiper Nobel, and Beth Van Baren from the respective offices of President, Secretary of the Scholarship Board and Vice-Treasurer, Clerk and Librarian, and Secretary of the Federation Board.

The Federation Board this year has also made new appointments to the following offices: Mr. R. Moore, Assistant Editor to the
BOOK REVIEWS

Peace Shall Destroy Many
by Rudy Wiebe. W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. $1.95 (paperback)

The Mennonite community of Wapiti lived in peace. The people had all of their farms close together and tried their best to remain separate from the outside wicked world. But many threats arose to imperil this seclusion, by the wartime recruiters of the Canadian government, by outsiders, and by the people themselves.

Thorn Wiens, the central character, comes to realize that outward separation does not necessarily solve all problems, nor does tradition always have the answers. He begins to question some Mennonite practices largely because of the influence of his school teacher. However, he remains true to the faith, although believing that the church receives its direction from Scripture and not...
from rules. Thom disagreed strongly with Deacon Block, the leader of the church, who set up tradition as the absolute standard of right and wrong and who believed that no one should ever deviate from what he has been taught.

His theory is proved wrong when suppressed violence always lurking just beneath the surface, flares up and into the open to create discord in the church community. Indeed, the passing of time and events affected these people no matter how hard they tried to live the old, staid way.

An interesting, lively story well written, the book shows that the church must always leave room for development in its doctrine and practice.

MARK HOEKSEMA

A Handbook of Contemporary Theology

Dr. Ramm is a Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Apologetics at California Baptist Theological Seminary. He has studied abroad at the University of Basel, Switzerland, under Karl Barth.

In the preface of his book Dr. Ramm states the purpose of this Handbook:

The purpose of this handbook is to provide the minister with a ready guide to leading concepts of the major contemporary thinkers in theology. The center of attention is focused upon Kierkegaard, Barth, Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr, Tillich and Bultmann. Although Kierkegaard lived in the nineteenth century, his thought did not catch fire until the twentieth. As a Reformed and biblically oriented Christian reads the various entries in this book, he will realize most clearly that the so-called great theologians in our century have perverted, corrupted, and blasphemed the truth of the Word of God. It is stated very clearly from representative works of these neo-orthodox theologians that Genesis 1-3 is a myth, a saga, or a legend (take your pick; it has no bearing on modern man anyway, they contend). The cardinal truths of inspiration, infallibility, election, and reprobation are drained of their Reformed contents and are left empty of meaning. These entries are not vague and general but are filled almost entirely with quotations from the most representative works of the modern theologians.

Although this book would be extremely valuable for a minister, it can easily be used by high school and college students, especially those studying philosophy, history, and literature. Read and use this book with discretion, young people, and learn how far the theology of the modern era has departed from the truth of God.

D.H.

Since the Bible Outlines for James 4:11-17 were not in the hands of the editor on time for the May issue, they appear in this issue.

The Editor

HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE

JAMES 4

by REV. DAVID ENGELSMAN

B. Verses 11, 12: Carping criticism in the Church.

1. Explanation:

The devilry in the churches which James exposes and condemns in these verses is part of the internal strife racking the churches which James has been opposing throughout the fourth chapter. It is the evil of running down one's brother to others, what the Bible elsewhere calls "backbiting" (see II Corinthians 12:20 and Romans 1:30). The sinfulness of such behavior is that the one who disparages his brother "speaketh evil of the law." The "law" here is that which James
referred to as “the royal law” in 2:8: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The “law” is the entire will of God for man, expressed in the ten commandments. As far as our relationships with one another are concerned, that law is just this: “Love thy neighbor as thyself” (see also Gal. 5:14, 15). One who backbites his brother (his neighbor in the holy city of Jesus Christ) speaks evil of this law. That is, he not only disobeys it but he also implicitly declares that the law is no good. He declares this by virtue of the fact that, knowing the law to demand love, he engages in an act of hatred, namely, backbiting.

We have seen that James traces all the troubles of strife-ridden churches to pride. In verses 11 and 12, he points out that the sin of backbiting is also rooted in pride. When we who are ready always to backbite understand what overweening pride is implied by backbiting, we will avoid this sin like the plague. And we are prepared to fight against this “evil speaking” by attacking its root, pride. The backbiter is someone who sets himself up as a judge over his brothers in the church. Then, he gets busy, scrutinizing his brothers, their lives and their spiritual strength. Haughtily he puts his brothers to the test and then passes the verdict on them. Unsurprisingly, the verdict is that they abound with faults. Ultimately, James does not so much condemn backbiting in the church as he does a carping, critical attitude in the church. The arrogance and sin of this self-appointed critic in the congregation is that he judges the law. The law does not say: "he is a critic of your brother," the law says: “Love your brother.” By ignoring what the law demands of him, as far as his relationship to his brothers is concerned, and by determining for himself his behavior towards his brothers, namely, criticizing, this fellow shows that he regards himself as superior to the law. He exults himself over his brothers outright, acting as their judge. But his horrible sin is that he claims equality with and really superiority over God. For he sets himself forth as a judge rather than a doer of God’s law. Over against this carping critic, James asserts the sole Godhead of God. In verse 12, he reminds us that “One is the Lawgiver and Judge (in the original Greek, the words, “and Judge” appear). It is as if James says, “You are no lawgiver; you may not determine for yourself your relationship and behavior to your brothers. God gives the law and He alone. What you should do is obey it, that is, be a lover of your neighbor. And the only Lawgiver is the sole Judge; you are not and cannot be judge. You who set yourself up as a god in the church: Who are you anyway and what do you think you are?”

2. Questions:
   a. Is there any room in the church for judging and even criticizing one another?
      Distinguish a proper “judging” from an improper “judging” (for more light on improper judging, see Matthew 7:1-5 and Romans 14).
   b. Why does James add that the One Who is Lawgiver and Judge is able to save and to destroy?

C. Verses 13-17: “The pride of life.”

1. Explanation:

Those rebuked in these verses are guilty of setting themselves up as independent, self-sufficient gods of their earthly life. Their sin is not that they make plans for the future. To plan ahead is not in itself wrong, as James shows when he admonishes men to say, “If the Lord wills, we will both live and do this or that” (vs. 15). Neither is it their sin that they “buy and sell and get gain” (vs. 13). No doubt, the desire for profit in the men addressed by James was corrupt. They made the treasure of this world an end in itself. However, making money is not wrong in itself and James does not castigate the evil of materialism or covetousness. What James finds obnoxious is the notion that man’s earthly life is strictly under man’s control, that man himself is the god of his daily, earthly existence. This notion is manifested in the detailed and confident plans man makes for his
life in complete independency of the Lord. In this cool and precise mapping out of the distant future, a practical atheism is revealed.

James first attacks this notion as a piece of foolishness. The man who so confidently decrees what shall happen for a year does not even know what will take place tomorrow. And the human life, which is really the basis in these men's minds of their confidence to control their existence and activities, is nothing but a vapor. According to a better reading of verse 14, James says to such men, "You are a vapor." Man in his physical life is frail and fleeting. Any puff of wind blows him away. Man depends entirely upon the Lord's will, not only for his activities but for his very life and existence (vs. 15). This, he should acknowledge. Not to do so is to boast in empty presumptions (vs. 16. The A.V. has "rejoice in your boastings." What the original refers to is this: A man makes great but wholly false claims for himself and then boasts in these false claims - sheer foolishness!)

Secondly, James attacks the notion as wickedness (vss. 16, 17). The wickedness is that men attempt to dethrone God by claiming for themselves the control over their earthly lives that belongs alone to God. Ignoring their total dependency upon God, they do not boast in Him, as far as their daily existence and activities are concerned. They rob God of His honor. It follows as a matter of course that such men do not live their earthly lives or use their earthly goods thankfully.

2. Questions:
   a. Is youth especially prone to the notion condemned in these verses?
   b. Why is a genuine knowledge of sin necessary for a true appreciation of our "vapor-ness"?

NEWS

from, for, and about our churches

RUTH BOL

ODDS AND ENDS

Mr. C. Woudwyk (Hudsonville) celebrated his 94th birthday on May 1.

The Young People's Society had a Clue Hunt. Prizes were given to the first car in and there were entertainment and refreshments afterwards.

The Holland Church had a welcome program and reception for Rev. and Mrs. Heys.

Mr. B. Windemuller (Holland) has submitted to open-heart surgery and has been reported as a successful operation.

Rev. G. Van Baren gave the last speech which was a series of five on The Perseverance of the Saints.

A very enjoyable evening and a delicious meal was had by all who attended the Young People's Spring Banquet. Rev. Kortering spoke on the banquet theme "Guidance for Youth."

Rev. D. Engelsma has declined the calls extended to him from the churches in Randolph, Wis. and South Holland, Ill.

The Beacon Lights Board sponsored a Singspiration and featured the Radio Choir.

SAY Young People it has been set! The Prot. Ref. Young People's Convention will be held August 17-21 at Hull, Iowa. The theme will be "Soli Deo Gloria." Begin thinking about it, the time flies by and is here before you know it DO ATTEND!

NEWLY WEDS

Mr. Harlow Kuiper and Miss Judy De Beer were united in holy matrimony by Rev. Schipper on April 28, 1967.
MEMBERSHIP

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Kamp and their three baptized children (Hudsonville) have been transferred to our Hope Church.

Upon their request, certificates of dismissal were sent to Mr. and Mrs. F. Latsch, Sue and Robert, and three baptized children. (Oak Lawn)

This coming month our Oak Lawn Church will be celebrating their 40th Anniversary for the existence as the Oak Lawn Prot. Ref. Church. We wish you our congratulations.

OUR SERVICEMEN
Address of Bob Miedema (Hope)
Pvt. R. Miedema RA 16330107
13th BN, 4th BDE
USATCA E-13-4
Fort Knox, Kentucky 40120

Mike Engelsma (Hope) has left for duty in Vietnam.

Neal Buiter (Oak Lawn) will complete his training in Arizona in June. He then may get a furlough and have to leave for Vietnam.

REMEMBER our servicemen. Have you written lately?

OUR NEW COMERS
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Nobel (Southeast) were blessed with the birth of a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. James Laugerak (Hope) were blessed with the birth of a son.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Boer (Hudsonville) were blessed with an infant daughter.