An Appeal

BEACON LIGHTS WAS BEGUN TO FILL A NEED AMONG OUR YOUNG PEOPLE. AN ORGAN FOR THEM TO EXPRESS THEIR SENTIMENTS AND A VEHICLE OF UNION; THE VOICE OF THE FEDERATION. WE ARE DIRECTING A SPECIAL APPEAL TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND TO ALL OUR PEOPLE NOT TO LET BEACON LIGHTS DOWN AT THIS TIME.

WE FEEL THAT BEACON LIGHTS FILLS A UNIQUE PLACE IN OUR CHURCH LIFE AMONG BOTH YOUNG AND OLD.

WE WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THAT PLACE. LET'S ALL HELP TO MAKE BEACON LIGHTS A BETTER MAGAZINE.

BOOST SUBSCRIPTIONS!
Freedom of Religion In Russia

By Mr. J. Van Weelden — Grand Rapids, Mich.

In this terrible and destructive war which is being waged between the Allied nations and the Axis powers, it is indeed strange that the great Russia is numbered among the Allies. Our President gave as the basis for the uniting of the Allies as war partners the "Four Freedoms". In this article, we are concerned merely with the "religious freedom", which as outlined by Mr. Roosevelt when he tried to form a Magna Charta for a new world order constituted: 1) liberty of conscience, 2) liberty of worship, 3) liberty of faith, 4) liberty of mission or evangelism, and 5) liberty to give children a religious education.

No doubt, all of us are to some extent acquainted with the atmospheric religious conditions existing in Russia the last few decades, and have at some time or other expressed great wonderment at our allying ourselves with Russia on the basis of the "Four Freedoms", and especially "religious freedom", as outlined by our own President.

We all know that the Bolshevistic government of Russia is purely atheistic, Godless: the U. S. hails herself a "christian nation".

The intention of this article is to picture the religious conditions in Russia, (which has thus far staged a noble fight against the Nazis mainly on her own soil), on the basis of authenticated information which has been attainable.

Bolshevism has been for Russia a great progress in social, hygienic and educational spheres, which she never enjoyed under the reign of the Czars. Lenin and Stalin have done all which has been humanly possible to give bread and health and a new national consciousness to a nation, nearly "down and out". However, while supplying their need's materialistically. Lenin and Stalin have at the same time attempted to purge out all the religious sentiment which her citizens had acquired during eight and one-half centuries. But inevitably must this question be raised: "Shall man live by bread alone?"
Shall he not live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Holy Spirit?"

Without a doubt, religion in Russia has since its beginning been polluted by corruption, superstition and moral depravity in certain spheres of society. In fact, many have wondered whether the souls of the Russian people have been christianized at all! Russia officially accepted christianity (or shall we say religion?) in 1085 when the ruler, Vladimir, was (supposedly) converted to the christian faith. In those times a nation became "christian" when her rulers accepted "christianity", because of the relation between Church and State. The faith of the Russian church was Greek Orthodoxy of the fourth and fifth centuries, the basis of which was surprisingly sound, at least for that time. However, almost immediately the religion became an equal mixture of christianity and Russian paganism. It was characterized by extreme superstition and sickly, mystical piety, with its worship of ikons or images, feasts for the dead, etc., which would make the superstition of the Catholic church seem insignificant. In fact, it was more paganism than christianity. Such a religion in its effects have pronounced the deathblow for any real Christianity, as may be seen in the happenings of recent years.

Very sudden was the rise of Bolshevism, with an atheistic, materialistic philosophy which should soon change the entire traditional political and social structure of the nation. Her leaders have attempted to change the religious faith of the people, desiring to build a mighty nation, which has no need for God or religion. Bolshevism has hated religion because its adopted Marxian philosophy is materialistic and declared atheism. Bolshevism is the belief in the omnipotence of science as opposed to christianity or religion. Thus it is more than a political, social structure, or an abstract idealology. It is the myth of the totalitarian autocracy of man who believes in himself, not in God. We notice, nevertheless, that since religious liberty belongs to the requisites of the modern state. Russia has also included in her constitution the right of "religious freedom".

Church and State were separated by a decree of Jan. 23, 1918. The constitution of July, 1918 promises in article 13: "To guarantee Real liberty of conscience to all workers", and "liberty of religious and anti-religious propaganda to all citizens". Article 3 said that "every citizen has the right to practice any religion or to practice none". Article 9, separating the school from the Church,
clares that "religious instruction is forbidden in all public schools of the state as well as in private institutions which give a general, cultural education". Articles 11 and 12 promulgated that "It is forbidden to raise taxes or contributions for ecclesiastical or religious associations", and that "no ecclesiastical or religious associations have the right to possess property. All property of the existing ecclesiastical and religious associations is declared public property".

Yes, indeed, Litvinov was partly right when he declared in Washington that the religious policy of Russia adopted the same position as other neutrals, France, for instance, where the Church continued to exist. HOWEVER, the liberal text of the law was not applied in a liberal spirit at all, but in a very unfriendly and hostile way. Gradually a series of decrees nullified what remained of "religious freedom" in Russia. For in Feb. 1918 they had abolished THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PROFESSORS OF RELIGION, and in Oct. of the same year a decree forbade RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION. A great many churches were destroyed, church schools and theological seminaries were closed, church dignitaries arrested, many of the clergy killed, banished, or imprisoned! The government excused itself for these things, on the basis that religion fostered political, anti-revolutionary, tendencies.

It was in 1925 that the "UNION OF MILITANT ATHEISTS" was founded, which stimulated persecution, seeking the destruction and utter annihilation of the Church. Article 124 of the constitution, promising "religious freedom" was completely ignored. Between the years 1928 and 1933 the highest authorities of the churches died in Siberia, or in the prison camp of Solovetsky.

In April of 1929, a law was passed restricting religious societies all the more. The constitution now allowed only anti-religious propaganda. Anti-religious teachings were compulsory for all schools. The Sabbath was abolished by the 5 and 6 day week. Any church building in a village might closed by only a majority of the inhabitants. Usually clubhouses, exhibition halls or reading rooms were the purposes for which the buildings were now used.

In October of 1929 there was a decree issued forbidding religious organizations to do any of the following: 1) to found mutual aid societies or Homes of Refuge for the poor and sick, 2) to grant material aid to members of the religious organizations (no administration of mercy), 3) to hold prayer meetings for children, young people and women. 4) to form
groups for religious instruction, 5) to arrange excursions and lectures for children, 6) to organize libraries and reading rooms, 7) to open sanatoriums and hospitals for children.

In May of 1929 the Soviet Congress adopted a five-year plan for the expulsion of religion. It stated: "BY MAY 1937 NO CHURCH IS TO BE LEFT IN THE SOVIET UNION. GOD WILL THEREFORE BE EXPELLED AS A MEDIEVAL RELIC FROM THE TERRITORY OF THE U.S.S.R. THE HIDDEN CORNERS OF RELIGION AND IDOLATRY ARE HEREBY TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO LIGHTHOUSES OF THE FUTURE CIVILIZATIONS"!

Isn't that terrible ridicule and blasphemy of the Omnipo- neat One? I think that if the two "sons of thunder" had been there, they would have wanted to call fire down from heaven!

A short while later the "KOMINTERN" or "Godless Movement" was organized, whose aim it was to destroy religion, so that the land should become a land "without God"!

At the 17th Congress in 1932, Stalin declared the struggle necessary: "Because religion hinders the worker from progressing, and serves as a camouflage for capitalistic ideology". He further stated that anti-religious propaganda was the first duty of atheists.

In some sections the persecution was so great that many were refused food cards, much worse than should our ration books be taken from us. This reminds us of: "And he that had not the mark of the beast upon his forehead could neither buy nor sell". The government also forbade the importation of Bibles! It became illegal to give any religious instruction to children before they attained the age of 18. There was no education for the clergy.

Article 124 of the Constitution had become a "laugh". It had never been abolished, but it had never been practiced either.

In June of 1936 a new constitution had been published, permitting: "freedom of conscience, speech, press, meeting and association". But in spite of it, new persecutions broke out. It was at this time that Stalin said: "THE COMMUNIST PARTY CANNOT REMAIN NEUTRAL TOWARDS RELIGION. THE PARTY HAS TO START AN ANTIRELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA AGAINST ALL RELIGIOUS PREJUDICES BECAUSE IT BELIEVES IN SCIENCE". The leaders of the French Revolution had said: "No God and no master". Stalin says: "No God, but Science".

In many of the newly occupied countries such as Lithuanian, Lat-
via Esthonia, Bessarabia, and Poland the persecutions were most severe. The clergy, fortunate enough to have escaped death, were forced to flee. Taxes on churches were sky-high, so that many of them had to "fold up".

Much more could be said, but in order not to exceed my allotted space too greatly, I will be brief.

As concerns Stalin, (and the Russian Government), we might ask many, many questions, which time alone can answer. If his persecution of the Church has abated, it most likely is because of international political reasons are concerned, in as much as he has allied his country with the democracies. And then, too, he may be beginning to see that he cannot eradicate religion from the souls of the Russian People.

As concerns the Church, (for we believe that God also has His people in Russia), persecution has acted as a medicine. Once one of the persecutors of Christianity said: "Religion is like a nail; the harder you hit it, the deeper it goes into the wood". Although we realize that on a whole, the churches in Russia are (or were) entirely corrupt, as are also the Modern, Man-centered Churches of our country, and many other countries, yet we know that persecution purifies the Church, and draws His people closer to Him.

And finally, as concerns us, the history of the Church of Russia serves a warning to us that we be vigilant, marking the time, discerning the signs and the seasons. The persecution in Russia sprang up overnight, and it is easily conceivable that the same can very possibly happen here. We are being rushed faster and faster to the End: we have seen the beginning of sorrows. There are more and terrible sorrows to come, which our children, not at all impossible we ourselves, may experience. This is neither pessimism nor optimism. But we have a watch to keep! Let us keep it!

But let not your hearts be troubled! God will not leave us without comfort. Remember the words of Christ as they are recorded in Luke 21:28: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh". John writes in Rev. 22:20: "He which testifieth these things saith: Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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NOTICE

The Federation Plan for electing new officers is being discussed in this issue in "Editor's Desk", but in view of what appears in the Open Forum we invite the Societies to voice their opinions thru the Open Forum in our April Issue.

Ed.
We always knew that the Common Grace Bridge was not safe for travel.

When the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 hastily strung this trestle on the well-known “three points” in order to bridge the gap between the church and the world, they issued the warning: Danger. Go Slow!

The bridge had been constructed from such vague blue prints, and was strung in such a hurry, that the builders were instructed to continue laboring on it in order to improve its construction. An order which was quite well ignored, for the bridge was immediately opened for traffic.

The Synod even felt constrained to warn its wayfarers not to go the full length of it, for it would certainly lead them to worldly-mindedness and world-conformity. Anyone can still find these warnings in the Acts of the Synod. And the subsequent history has proven that those who have a “broadminded” view of “common grace” have already reached a point where they are ready to defend such worldly amusements as the movie and the like.

But now the editor of the Banner has issued a new warning concerning this bridge in the form: Danger. proceed at your own risk!

He informs his readers that this bridge is treacherous because it is so extremely narrow. Evidently it has never been furnished with guard-rails. Anyone who walks on this bridge must keep well to the center and maintain his equilibrium. If you are inclined to lay emphasis on the truth of God’s sovereign election and predestination, you are sure to fall off from the right side of the bridge. And if you have a tendency toward the Arminian theory of man’s free will, if you take delight in singing songs of Jesus knocking at the door of man’s heart and not being able to enter because the latch is on the inside, you are in danger of falling off. But you will fall from the left side. Essentially it must make very little difference whether you fall off on the right side or on the left. For in either case, it seems, you will drop into the chasm below.
either to be crushed against the rocks or swept along with the rushing current into the whirlpool of unbelief.

But to keep on the bridge you must be able to straddle the mysterious black line of Sovereign-Grace—free-will along the center of the lane. On the one hand, you must maintain that salvation is only for the elect, for whom Christ atoned on the cross, and who are drawn by the irresistible work of God's grace in their hearts. On the other hand, you must maintain that God wills that all men should be saved, that the sufficiency of the cross makes salvation possible for all men, and that God freely offers His salvation to all with the intention that all should accept and be saved. Yet in doing this you must always be sure to keep your balance perfectly, neither inclining toward the right nor to the left, for the bridge is narrow.

That makes the journey along this man-made bridge as perilous as walking a tight-robe across the raging torrents of the Niagara. If you side-step you are lost.

Many are already slipping off on the left side. What the outcome must be is not hard to predict.

We do well not to commit ourselves to the dangers of the narrow bridge, but to remain firmly founded on the immoveable rock of the Word of God, maintaining the truth of His sovereign grace.

The warning should read: Danger, keep off!

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**Current Events**

*By Rev. J. A. Heys*

*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

We live in an age of speed. So much occurs in a single day, to say nothing of a month, that one is at a loss to write a few lines under the heading *Current Events*. When finally what has been written is published, it seems like ancient history already. While writing the middle section of this article which deals with our capturing the Marshall Islands, a few words from the radio announcer that Japan's Island fortress of Truk is being attacked sweeps this seizure
of the Marshall Islands far into the background. Thus it is and shall be increasingly as we are swept along with this age.

With this in mind let us spend a few moments apart from war, politics and domestic problems and try to appreciate the period in which we live as we consider an event of significance which we might otherwise overlook.

A Significant Event.

A short second page news item published a few weeks ago informs us that the world's largest flying boat, "The Mars" has just completed a round trip flight to Hawaii in 27 hours and 26 minutes. The round trip is approximately 4700 miles. Just to appreciate what this means consider that the Union Pacific Railroad's fastest streamlined trains make a one way trip to Los Angeles from Chicago in 39 hours and 45 minutes. This distance between these cities according to their time table is 2299 miles. This train indeed makes many stops along the way, but do not overlook the fact that this plane makes a round trip in some 12 hours less time than the train takes to go one way. The plane by the way weighs a mere 148,800 pounds or over 74 tons.

The significance of this fact is that the world is getting smaller every day. No spot on this earth is more than 60 hours away from your home. The fact that the world is getting smaller in turn means two things for us to consider and remember. In the first place it means that the antichristian kingdom is nearer its realization. The smaller the world becomes the nearer the day draws nigh when the beast of Revelation 13 who has power over all nations, kindreds and tongues shall rule the world and afflict the Church. The world is still too large for this today. But rapidly is man making it smaller through his inventions. In the second place let us not forget that the smaller the earth becomes the more easily the Gospel shall be spread to the four corners of the earth. That must be accomplished before Christ returns. How clearly we can see this today when places formerly inaccessible now can be reached by plane.

We Capture Our First Japanese Territory.

America captures the Marshall Islands! For the first time in this war we have wrested from the Japanese what is considered their own territory and which they have been fortifying for some 20 years. Formerly we were only recapturing what Japan took from us and our Allies.

The weak showing Japan made
should not lead us into wishful thinking. Japan is not weakening rapidly. Let us appreciate the fact that when the fighting is closer to Japan, when we fight in her front yard and our supply lines are long and vulnerable, that the ships and planes which were not at the Marshall Islands will be there giving us all they have.

*Events Worth Serious Consideration.*

One has so many things to write about one hardly knows where to begin or stop. A few remarks for further thought and individual consideration can be listed with profit.

What must we think of Russia's last two moves? Russia accuses the Roman Catholic Church of supporting Fascism in Italy and Spain and of condoning many Fascist acts of aggression. She also grants autonomy to the 16 republics of the Soviet Union so that each state may deal directly with other countries and raise its own army as sovereign states have always done. What do these two moves mean?

On March 31, 1939 England and France pledged immediate military assistance to Poland in case of aggression. Germany invaded Poland and England and France declared war on Germany Sept. 3, 1939. January rolls around and England is unable to intervene in the Polish boundary dispute. Where are we? What have we done these five years? Why all this bloodshed and death? Did England enter the war for Poland's sake? Does a lasting peace seem possible?

The barbarous treatment of the Japanese to American prisoners of war has been made known. Does anyone still want to maintain that there is a common grace that restrains sin and enables man to do civic righteousness? It certainly should not be called a *common* grace that is sure, for it is not common to the Japanese. It is very foreign to them. Why did not the Spirit operate in the hearts of these Japanese if there is a *common* grace? And is it grace that God has given them the victory over these American prisoners? If grace consists in things, how much grace Japan must have received for she has most of the rubber of the world and all the riches of Burma, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippine Islands etc. etc. Does anyone still want to maintain that education will elevate men and make this world a heaven on earth? Pearl Harbor and these atrocities were planned by Japanese who were educated by America and Europe. Civic righteousness and peace are possible only when the heart is regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
A Light Upon Our Path.

Have you ever had to go out at night and walk down some dark street or road? Have you ever been out when the night was so dark that you actually couldn't see your hand when you held it up before you and therefore had to feel your way around? Or have you ever come home rather late and found the house dark so that you had to move very carefully not to stumble over something or bump into something as you felt for the light switch? If you have ever experienced anything like this you have some conception of just how horrible the darkness is and how it fills one with a feeling of uncertainty and danger. The darkness has a way of closing in about one and swallowing him up in its blackness. What a difference it makes then when one has a light with him. Even the small bright beam of a flashlight is very comforting to us. We feel much safer when we see the path exposed in the rays of that beam as it knifes its way through the thick darkness that clings to us. Naturally we prefer the daylight above anything else, but when it is necessary to walk at night we can be quite content if only we have a light to show us the path. That little light has the power to give us a sense of certainty and security.

Now herein is an allegory.

It is interesting to notice that Jesus repeatedly made use of allegory in His teaching. This explains the numerous parables which the Lord spoke. Have you ever noticed how time and again the Lord would make use of some earthly reality to express a heavenly, spiritual truth? The figures which the Lord employed are almost too numerous to mention. No matter where Jesus might be, He always seemed to find something in nature that served as a picture of the heavenly or afforded an occasion for a sermon. Now we should do the same thing. Earthly things have been made by God in such a way that they are pictures of the heavenly. And we must learn to see the heavenly, spiritual reali-
ties that are pictorially portrayed in the natural realities that constantly surround us in our daily life.

I believe we may safely say that the Psalmist also did this when he said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path". By these words he expresses in the first place, that the world in which he lives is from the spiritual point of view darkness. It is darkness because it has fallen away from the living God Who Alone is Light. It lies in the midst of sin and under the wrath of God. All its ways are ways of death and they go down to destruction. Now in that world of darkness the child of God is called to walk as a pilgrim and stranger: his life must, from the spiritual point of view, be the very opposite of that of the world and his way must be the way of life that leads to heaven above. And always he must walk in that way. He must be careful in order that he be not deceived and depart into some way of darkness that leads down to destruction. It is therefore highly essential for him that he have a light to show him that true way in which he must walk. He cannot possibly walk that way in darkness for that power of darkness will swallow him up. He needs a light. And that light the Psalmist has found in the Word of God. That is what he expresses in the second place when he says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path". It is indeed a beautiful picture that the Psalmist holds before us. We see him as he walks at night with a candle held close to the ground directly before him. And in the light of that candle he chooses his path and plods onward, slowly but surely, until he finally reaches his destination. Spiritually that means that the child of God finds his way through the world in the light of the Word of God. That Word shows him the right path and warns him against the evil ways which are always crossing his path. It leads him in the right direction and finally it leads him home where he longs to be. And all the way it leads him safely.

Are you consistently using that light, dear reader?

It's the only means there is to know the way of the Lord and only by searching God's Word and causing its light to shine before us can we walk in that way. Set your life with all its problems in the light of that Word and, doing so prayerfully, you will safely walk in the way that leads HOME!

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The Sovereign Grace Hour

When a chorus or singing-school renders a program, the singers usually feel quite well satisfied when they can do so for a large and attentive audience. I am sure a radio speaker would also greatly appreciate knowing exactly how many listeners he has and with how much interest his audience is listening.

One of the means of ascertaining who listens and where the program is heard is by the mail received from listeners. The Sovereign Grace Hour also solicits such response by making an announcement similar to the following: "You have been listening to the Sovereign Grace Hour, a presentation of the Western League of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. If you desire a copy of today's message or if you desire to have us send the message to some friend in the armed forces, kindly address your requests to this station."

You will take note of the fact that the above announcement brings in two types of requests: first for the listeners themselves and secondly for their sons or friends in the armed forces.

We receive several of these requests from week to week from listeners outside of our own denomination. In this report, I shall quote parts of some of the letters we have received. We have heard from listeners from Iowa, Minnesota, S. Dakota, and Nebraska.

From Mr. G. D. B., Nebraska, we received the following: "Please send me a copy of the sermon given on your program last Sunday afternoon. I was much impressed by it and would like to be able to read it again."

Mr. A. T. Dempster, S. D. writes: Please send me your last two radio sermons. I enjoy your programs very much and may the Lord bless your noble work."

Mrs. I. R., Burbank, Calif. writes: "Please send me a copy of the sermon given by Rev. . . . . I have just buried a dear one in Iowa and while there I heard this sermon. This sermon explains why we must suffer these sorrows."

Mr. N. H., Iowa writes: I enjoy your radio sermons very much. As appreciation I am sending you a check for $5.00. Would you please send copies of these sermons to my grandchildren in the service. . . . May the Lord bless your efforts."

And so we could go on quoting from letters we have received but the above will give you somewhat of an idea of the contents of most of them. We sincerely hope that this work may be greatly blessed by the King of His Church.
In our February Issue of Beacon Lights we informed our readers that the Federation Board had drawn up a plan by which new members are to be elected. This Board now consists of:

Rev. Walter Hofman, president
James Houwerzyl, vice-president
Helen Ezinga, secretary
Alice Reitsma, ass’t sec’y-treas.

These officers were elected at our 1940 and 1941 conventions to serve for 2 years, but since we have had no convention since 1941, these Board Members are still in office.

The Board has decided, with the approval of our advisors, to nominate candidates for the positions of vice-president, treasurer, and assistant-secretary-treasurer, since officers holding these positions were elected at our 1940 convention. The president and secretary, who were elected at the 1941 convention, will remain in office.

And so each member society of our Federation has the privilege of casting its ballot, making its selection from the following nominees:

Vice-President
Edw. Knott—Fuller Ave. Church
Melvin Engelsma—Hope Church

Treasurer
James Houwerzyl—Roosevelt Church
Ann Alphenaar—Kalamazoo Church

Vice-Secretary-Treasurer
Wilma Pastoor—Fuller Ave. Church
Erma Kortering—Holland Church

Although, of course, we would have liked to place on this list of nominees a few names of faithful society members from churches located in Illinois or Iowa or Montana, it is quite necessary that Board members be located so that they can work together and meet together as often as is necessary.

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Approximately 250 Servicemen are receiving Beacon Lights each month, bringing the cost of this Federation project to more than $300 per year. This amount must be met through our Service-men’s Fund, donations received from individuals and societies. Many donations have been received, for which we are very grateful. However, $300 is a lot of money and we are depending largely upon our Young People’s Societies to back us up.

Recent donations were received from:

Mr. & and Mrs. J. Verwys, G.R. ....$ 1.75
Mr. & Mrs. J. Bouwman, G. R. .... 3.75
Miss Gertrude Timmer, G. R. ...... 3.00
Holland Prot. Ref. Sunday School .. 10.00
Pella Young People’s Society ...... 5.00
Miss Gertrude Buma, California ... 3.75
Miss Sybil Engelsma .................. 5.00
S.2/c Owen Peterson ................. 1.25
Mr. & Mrs. G. Stonehouse, G. R. ... 5.00
Fuller Ave. Ladies’ Aid, G. R. ..... 20.00
Pvt. George Slopsema, G. R. ....... 1.25
Corp. Harmon Slopsema, G. R. .. 1.25

(Mail all donations to Miss A. Reitsma, 706 Franklin E.E. Grand Rapids, Mich.)
News from Holland

In these days of turmoil and strife, worldly mindedness and sin, the Christian realizes more and more the urgent need to Christian fellowship.

We cannot expect to find this type of fellowship in the world. This is alone found where God's people are gathered together. Our church and societies are the means God uses to develop this fellowship. In Matthew 18:20 we read, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

God's Spirit dwelling in our midst brings a fellowship which gives peace and rest to our weary souls. Realizing this, one will more readily understand the obligations we have in regard to our society life.

In Holland we also have a Young People's Society which has as its purpose the edification and building up of God's children through the study of His Word.

Our Society consists of twelve active members ranging from the ages of fourteen and above. Our meetings are held on Wednesday evening in the basement of our church beginning at 7:45. It is opened with a short song service and prayer. This is followed by an hour of Bible Study led by our president, Rev. Hofman. The lessons as outlined in the "Beacon Lights" are studied. After a short recess of approximately ten minutes, our after recess program consists of essays, readings, musical numbers, round table discussions, lectures, questions, etc.

This program is arranged by a committee consisting of our president, Rev. Hofman and two society members. A schedule of the program as arranged by them is posted in our meeting room so that all may have ample time for preparation. The last meeting of the month is left open for refreshments.

As there are six of our young people in the service, every two weeks each member is required to write a letter to one of them in the service. All letters received by our members, from these young people, which are of interest to the society are reserved until "letter night" at which time they are all read.

Our society has meetings from October thru April. We hope, the Lord willing, to bring our meetings to a close this year with a banquet to which all the young people of the congregation will be invited.

Sioux Center Reports

Our Society meets on Sunday evening from 7:30 to 8:30 and about 25 young people are present, of which 17 are members. We have two boys of our group in the service. Our Society is by no
SOCiEIES REPORT

means a Girls' Society for there are about as many boys as girls at our meetings.

Our meeting is opened by singing a few Psalter numbers. Then we have prayer by our president, Rev. Gritters. We have Bible study taken from Beacon Lights from 7:40 to 8:10. Following this, collection is taken and the minutes are read by our secretary. Immediately after this we have a short program of about three numbers. Lastly, we sing a Psalter number and the meeting is closed by our president.

At present we have a committee to decide who is to write the boys, and

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what numbers to have and who are to give the numbers on our program. Our numbers include current events, literary criticism, musical numbers, recitations, a Bible quiz, essays and debates. Every week we appoint members of our society to write our boys in the service.

Youth-Age Meet at Hol. Home

Instead of its regular meeting on Tuesday evening, Feb. 22, the Talitha Girls' Society spent the evening with the old folks at the Holland Home, entertaining them with musical numbers, songs and readings, some Holland, some English.

At the close of the program, Mr. Leestma, Superintendent of the Home, remarked that these old people look forward to our coming, and our enthusiasm and buoyancy remind them of their own younger days and the activities in which they then took part.

And then, as we looked into their faces, they were not just old people with wrinkled hands and gray heads, but they were our forerunners, the passing generation, men and women who had worked and suffered and studied and fought so that we might have a foundation on which to build.

Flashes from Hope!

Our Society meets every Sunday evening. We have thirteen members, eight girls and five boys. One member is in the armed forces. Rev. Heys is our president and Mr. D. Engelsma our vice-president. Every month we have one member select two books from a catalogue which our minister obtained for us. The money is taken from our treasury. We purchased a library several years ago, and by now we have a good selection of books. Several weeks ago we entertained the Hudsonville Society. We had a very interesting discussion. Our Society finds the Book of Acts a very interesting source of Bible study. We, as a Society, are very thankful to God for keeping us together, and we sincerely hope and pray that we may continue as a Society in the future.
The harp at Nature's advent strung
   Has never ceased to play;
The song the stars of morning sung
   Has never died away.

* * *

And prayer is made, and praise is given,
By all things near and far.

John Greenleaf Whittier.

Once again we eagerly look for signs of Spring—perhaps, the most welcome of all seasons. One of the first harbingers, the frog, awakens us in early morn and lulls us to nocturnal rest. At the edge of ponds, among the swamps, or on banks of streams we find him vibrating with his cheerful message—a new season has begun! After a winter of complacent hibernation he resumes his spring activities.

Why not stroll to some nearby pond from which you hear the familiar song of this amphibious creature. After stepping to the brink carefully examine the weeds which border the water and endeavor to locate one of the jelly-like masses of eggs, recently deposited by a frog. Upon removing one of these masses, you will observe that each egg is spherical in shape and about the size of a pin-head. Each tiny white egg is marked with a black spot. All of the eggs are held together by a gelatinous substance. After the eggs have been fertilized the cells divide, and this process continues until eventually the tadpole is formed. At first this small black jelly-like bead is marked by two branched feather gills which enable it to breathe in its watery habitat. Its long tail makes it possible for it to swim freely. Some maintain that it has a small mouth equipped with several minute teeth; while others believe that the mouth appears later in its development. Gradually, as the tadpole grows, the external gills are absorbed while new internal gills are formed. In the meantime, the tail, also, is being absorbed and small hind legs are making their appearance. Soon the front legs develop. Thus far the animal is restricted to water, but now a very important change
is going on within its body namely, the development of lungs.

At last this period of transformation is over. It is no longer a tadpole but a frog. Finding its way from among the weeds it climbs to the sunny banks of the pond. Immediately, the lungs replace the gills as organs of breathing, while the feet function as a means of locomotion rather than the tail (which in time becomes completely absorbed).

While the tadpole lives on aquatic vegetation, the mature frog relishes insects, snails, and worms. The mouth of the frog forms a unique trap in catching insects. The tongue is of primary importance and wondrously adapted to this task; for rather than being attached to the posterior end (as ours is) it is attached at the front of the jaw so that it can be thrown out of the mouth like a whip. The end of the tongue is divided into two finger-like parts resembling tines in a fork which catch and hold the insect. Small glands on the tip of the tongue secrete a sticky fluid which helps to hold the insect. Quickly the tongue then flips the hapless captive back into the mouth crushing it against two large conical teeth, located in the center of the roof of the mouth. An inescapable snare, indeed!

Have you ever noticed how large the eye of the frog is in proportion to its body? However, stationary objects are very difficult for this creature to observe, while moving things are readily noticed. It might also be of interest to note that the frog’s eyes are retractable: that is, they can be extended from their sockets to improve their vision. Furthermore they are protected by three eyelids—the outer two functioning as a pair of moveable curtains meeting in the center, while the inner lid, known as the nictitating membrane, acts like a pair of colored glasses, filtering out the sun’s glare and offering protection against dust and foreign particles.

Posterior to each eye we observe a dark circular area known as the tympanic membrane. The tough eardrum lies on the surface and readily transmits the sound and water vibrations. In a small hollow cavity just beneath the eardrum one finds three tiny bones called the hammer, anvil, and stirrup, (so named because of their similarity in shape to these objects). These bones carry the vibrations from the eardrum to the auditory nerve.

Very interesting is the frog’s method of breathing. It has only two nostrils in contrast to the four nasal openings of the fish. However, they are useful in both smelling and breathing and are closed by means of flaps. In order to breathe the mouth must be tightly
closed. Then the nasal flaps are opened and the air enters the oral cavity. As soon as it is filled the flaps close and the tongue rises from the floor of the mouth, thus, increasing the air pressure which forces the muscles guarding the windpipe to relax. The air is allowed to rush into the lungs. As usual, oxygen is removed from this air and the waste carbon dioxide is given off by the lungs. The muscles in the body walls contract, squeezing the thin-walled lungs, resulting in the forcing of the air back into the mouth, and then out of the nostrils. Even though a frog is surrounded by air, it may die for lack of it, if for some reason an object prevents it from tightly closing its mouth.

Seemingly, then, the frog is perfectly adapted to life on land, but, we must not forget that this animal was created as an amphibian, which implies living on both land and water. Tragic, indeed, would be the plight of the frog, if he were forced to maintain a terrestrial existence! Should a frog be prevented from refreshing itself in the water after more than an hour's interval under ordinary conditions, its skin would dry out. For not only does a frog breathe through its nostrils but also through the skin. However, to make this possible, the skin must constantly be kept moist. Therefore it is important that the frog be near water so that it can frequently immerse itself, for as soon as the skin dries out the entrance of oxygen is impossible and the frog will die, for the lungs are unable to furnish a sufficient supply. Hence, the amphibious life is essential for its very existence.

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**A Reformation in Randolph**

On August 9, 1944, Rev. C. Hanko, pastor of the Oak Lawn, Ill. Protestant Reformed Church preached his first sermon expounding the Protestant Reformed truth in the pavilion of the Randolph, Wisconsin village park. Previous to that Sunday evening Rev. Hanko had visited several families who were known to be interested in our doctrine, and who had promised to attend should he conduct services. Others, too, hearing about this new movement, came to hear, and some requested Rev. Hanko to pay them a visit.

In September, we were able to rent the very attractive Congregational church building. The Congregationalists hold services only in the morning, leaving the building vacant for us afternoon and evenings.

That winter we began to hold Monday
evening meetings at the homes of various families. The minister, who had occupied the pulpit on Sunday would lead an hour of Bible study, and after a short recess, there would be an hour of general discussion, and refreshments. They were pleasant and instructive evenings. It was at one of these meetings in the early spring of 1943 that the subject of organizing was brought up. All those who were interested in organizing were asked to sign a petition. There were only six signatures that evening, and it was decided it would be best not to do anything at present.

However, the Mission Committee apparently did not feel that they could leave those of us who were truly interested in the truth, "high and dry" and they continued to send ministers.

On July 27, 1943 another meeting was held for all those who were interested in organizing. This time there were eight families, and although the group was still very small, and in spite of all the problems we knew we would have to face, it was decided that we would organize on August 17, 1943. On the evening the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church was organized, three young men, who had expressed a desire to organize, but who were not communicant members of the church from which they came, made public confession of faith. After the business of the evening was finished the ladies of the newly organized church served refreshments.

In November a congregational meeting was held, at which time a call was extended to Rev. G. Lubbers of Pella, Iowa. In December we were gladdened by the news that Rev. Lubbers had accepted the call. On January 27, he and his family arrived in Randolph. On Friday evening we welcomed them into our midst, with a reception. Rev. Hanko was also present at this reception, and on Sunday, January 30, he installed Rev. Lubbers into office. He spoke on the subject: "Keeping the Ministry of the Lord", basing his sermon on Col. 4:11. In the evening our newly installed pastor had charge of the services, addressing us on the subject: "Giving Heed to the Prophetic Word", based on 2 Peter 1:19.

There are many who predict that "we won't last long," but we are convinced that this is a work of God and not of man. So our prayer is that our God, Who has revealed to us this rich and wonderful doctrine of salvation will bless us and our new pastor, and that we may not lose this first love that we now enjoy. We have ten families now, and number forty-one souls.

* * *

SERVICEMEN:—

Are you too busy to write us a letter? If not, then sit down and write us tonight. All our readers are interested in hearing from YOU! Address your letter too:

BEACON LIGHTS. 602 Alexander, S. F.
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.
Open Forum

In the February issue of our magazine I noted with interest that the Executive Board is to submit "a plan by which we hope to elect new officers to carry on the work of the Federation". I will admit that I do not know what this plan is, but I dare say that my suggestion which I am herewith submitting is quite a different plan.

Let's have a CONVENTION!!!

The conventions which we have had have been stimulating and uplifting: they have been conducive to a spirit of unity; they have afforded our Covenant young people hearty and joyful fellowship; they have strengthened the bond which exists between our societies, the tie of christian friendship.

I can think of no reason why we cannot have a convention, and abundant reasons for having one. I am sure that many of our societies feel the same way about this.

Is it unpatriotic to have a Convention? Nonsense! If that were so, there would be more ways than one to choose candidates for the presidency other than by Democratic and Republican National Conventions, to say nothing of the conventions of minor political parties. Conventions have not been abandoned or stopped because of the war!

I am also confident that our servicemen will be encouraged to know that we at home are bravely carrying on while they are away. It will also mean much to them, tho' absent from us.

Nor will a convention be exclusively a girls' convention. There are many of our boys home in nearly every congregation.

I suggest that our societies, one and all, express themselves on this score immediately. I also suggest that one of our Grand Rapids Societies, perhaps Talitha Society of Fuller Ave. act as host to the Convention, for then will we not only have time to prepare elaborately for the Convention, but time to spare!

This plan will erase the problem of choosing new officers for our Federation Executive Board.

Let us as young people be patriotic to our Protestant Reformed Churches. We owe it to ourselves and our service men and women to have a Convention this summer!

Fraternally submitted.

Jim Van Weelden.
To Our Boys In Service

Grand Rapids, Feb. 29, 1944

Dear Fellows:—

Lenten Season!
The season when the Church of Christ in the world is accustomed to concentrate her attention in a special manner upon the sufferings of our Lord and Redeemer, and His death on the accursed tree.

One cannot help making a comparison for a moment between His suffering and the suffering man endures in and on account of this war. And one is tempted to make this comparison especially because in some circles these two kinds of suffering are often placed on a par. Just as Christ died for us, so a man is willing to lay down his life for his country! Just as Christ died to make us free, so man fights and is willing to die for freedom!

But how absurd is such a comparison, no matter from what aspect you look at it.

How absolutely alone stands Christ in His suffering! And how strictly incomparable it is! He did, indirely, lay down His life, willingly, voluntarily, out of love to the Father and love to His own; man's life is always taken from him, even though He should willingly enlist in the armed forces of his country to fight in its behalf. Christ died without even an attempt to save His life. No man took it from Him, but He laid it down of Himself, and even refused the help of those that were willing to fight for Him. If man dies for his country, he does so only after he has fought and tried to keep his life to the bitter end. Christ died with a prayer for His own that were still His enemies on His lips. Man tries to make the enemy pay for his life as dearly as possible. Our Lord died, not for the things of the world, but for the salvation of His people, and unto the realization of a kingdom that is not of this world: man fights and dies for the world, and for the things that are in the world.

May you, too, wherever you are, contemplate in true faith the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His glorious resurrection! May it be the ground of your faith, your righteousness, your life. And may it be the only source of your comfort in these days of sore trouble according to the flesh! For in that faith, you may have peace no matter what betide. Looking upon our Christ, crucified and raised, we know that God was in Him reconciling us unto Himself, that He is for us, that He always was, and always will be for us, that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon those that fear Him. And if God be for us, who shall be against us? Shall He, Who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, not freely give us all things with Him?

May the God of our salvation keep and bless you! Rev. H. Hoeksema.
BEACON LIGHTS

Letters From Our Boys

Chicago, Ill., Feb. 13, 1944
A letter from an Ex-Serviceman.

Dear friends:

During the past year and a half I have been in the Navy, and for quite some time have received the Beacon Lights.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all who have made this magazine possible.

I assure you many happy and profitable hours were obtained by having Beacon Lights handy especially when one doesn't come in contact with the church and those of it.

In December I received a medical discharge from the service and now I'm home again. My wife and I are moving to Denver, Colo. soon and we will give your our new address as soon as possible because we wish to continue our subscription to Beacon Lights.

Yours truly,
Peter James Knoll.

* * * *

Jan. 9, 1944

Dear Friends:

Have been receiving the Beacon Lights issues regularly and find them very interesting. Keep the good work up, as it seems this type of reading material is kind of hard to find at times.

Pvt. John P. Hazenberg-36411136,
Co. C, 46th Tank Bn., 18th Arm'd Div., APO 263, Camp Bowie,
Brownwood, Texas.

Somewhere in India
January 24, 1944

Dear Friends:

Here it is a perfect Monday morning and the first opportunity I have had to write. I didn't lack for time but when we first came here there were no mailing facilities. Everything is fixed up now, however, so I hope to be able to write regularly again.

I wish I could tell you what we are doing here. I can say, however, that we are in a very interesting place and I like it very much. I had pictured India as a steaming jungle with tigers lurking in the brush and cobras all around. It is much different than that, however. There are plenty of wild animals here but they consist of monkeys, baboons, jackals and hyenas—nothing dangerous; and these combined with vultures and huge crows make up our wild-life companions. The vultures are very bold, and at mealtimes they circle over the spot where we are eating and sometimes swoop down and grab food right out of our mess kits. I saw eleven jackals the other night, and although I have heard the monkeys several times I have seen only two of them. I also saw only one snake—he was harmless; and the only cobras I saw were in the streets with the snake charmers.

I'll try to give you a few of my impressions here in the following paragraphs.

First of all, there are the natives. The
Indian people are mostly small in size and in the district where we are at present, bear a resemblance to the Syrian race. Some of the men are very good looking, but as the women aren't seen very much I haven't seen any that are very good looking. The people are friendly and have a fine sense of humor. Their dress is much different than ours. Some wear turbans, some go bare-headed, and others wear little caps. Very few men wear trousers; their garments consisting of long dresses that come to their ankles or else cloth wrapped up in some way so that it forms a sort of baggy looking trousers. The women that are married have a red dot in the middle of their foreheads and the soles of their feet are painted red also. The natives around here are a better class of people than the ones we at first ran into. They don't understand much English but at least they don't pester a person to death with their eternal "bak-seesh" (a word meaning gift or present). They would run alongside of us with one hand outstretched, crying, "Bakseesh Sahib! Bakseesh Sahib!" and it was almost impossible to get rid of them.

In the country villages the small children run around naked and even in the big cities the mothers carry their babies around naked. The villagers are very shy, and the women run and hide when a man is seen approaching.

Everywhere one goes one sees the sacred cow. In the cities, in the villages, in the country, on the roads—everywhere there are sacred cows. They are certainly poor looking creatures, being small and underdeveloped. There seem to be two kinds of them—one the Brahma, having a hump in its back, and the other looking like our Guernsey. They have the run of the country and go anywhere they like, even in the cities.

The natives carry everythign on their heads from baskets of chickens to loads of sand and rock from the roads. They aren't very strong—I mean it takes two men to lift something that one of us could easily lift and carry; but they carry huge loads on their heads and for long distances too. Cars are scarce here and bicycles are very common. Ox carts are to be seen on any road, but horses are not very numerous.

When we first came here we were living on English rations and smoking English cigarettes. Our own supplies have arrived now, however, and we have a PX of our own. We can get three cartons of cigarettes per month, five candy bars, three packs of gum, six cans of beer, some pipe tobacco and cigars, and a big can of fruit juice. Our meals are better now that we have American rations again. We have fried eggs almost every morning for breakfast, oatmeal. French toast, pancakes, bread and butter and coffee. At night we build little fires and sit around them and talk. Sometimes we buy eggs and fry them ourselves for a midnight snack.

This is all for this time.

Pfc. Kenneth Ezinga
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Outline XX

THE GREAT PERSECUTION IN JERUSALEM
Acts 8:1-4

Its Chief Instigator. 1. While there was a prayer on the lips of the dying Stephen in behalf of his malefactors, Saul, a young theological student of professor Gamaliel, is consenting unto his death. Saul is here introduced: a. Not because he is the focus point of interest in this chapter. So little is this the case that it is hardly worthy of refutation. This is evident not only from the entire plan and purpose of the books of Acts (see Outline I), but also from a close and careful study of this chapter. b. He is here merely introduced to show why at this time a great persecution suddenly broke loose against the church of God in Jerusalem.

2. Saul does not merely subjectively fume against the cause of Christ, but he actively persecutes her. He is a man of action. All the energy of his being is put into it. Such a man as he is can get things accomplished. But why? a. He has a great zeal for the law. The same zeal as that of the Libertines who resisted Stephen. b. And he is going to do something about it. This “heresy” of the sect of the Nazarenes must be wiped out. Compare what we read of this in Acts 9:1-3. 14, 21; 22:4-6. 8, 19. 20; 26:9-11. Also 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:11-15; Phil. 3:4-7.

Its Seeming Success. 1. As is always the case the church has no counter-sword power. Her’s is the key-power of the Word of God. Powerfully this key had been wielded by the apostles. We might see this in our former outlines. But as soon as the key-power has thru the “sword of division” excommunicated Israel according to the flesh, the latter in turn uses the worldly sword-power against the believers instead of for their protection. Such is history. And in this they always have a measure of success”. For notice: a. Success is a term that is always employed by unbelievers. They do not speak of blessing. b. Success need not take God, His law, His kingdom, His favor into the picture. But: blessing places one in the holy place before the Ark of the Testimony. To be sure none can escape this Holy Place of God’s justice, for those who are not
blessed out of the temple they fall under its curse. For the latter is the opposite of blessing. c. And whereas success is relative, one can speak of a measure of success, as long as the entire picture is not seen, when all the factors of God’s dealings with the sons of men are not closely observed. Thus is also the case here with the persecution of the church. Is such not the teaching of Rev. 12:13-18 which speaks of the dragon’s persecution of the woman. But its success is only up to a certain limit determined by God. Rev. 20:1ff. But even this success vanished from the picture when we go into the sanctuary with Asaf in Ps 73:1-17.

2. Even though the above is true, yet we observe the devastating results of this persecution in Jerusalem. a. Suddenly the storm breaks loose. Those in power use it against the church. Men and women are ruthlessly thrown into prison for the faith of Jesus. b. “All” left Jerusalem for the surrounding parts in Judea and Samaria. It is hardly likely that this “all” must be taken in the literal sense. But none of the apostles leave the city of Jerusalem as yet. They know no fear. They await God’s direction! John 21:18, 19.

Its Divine Blessedness. 1. As we have stated above, “blessing” is not to be identified with “success”. This does not mean that they are mutually exclusive necessarily. For in the sphere of God’s blessing there is real and true success. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. For all things work together for good to those who love God. Rom. 8:28. a. That this is the case also with persecution we have abundant testimony in the Scriptures. Compare Rom. 5:3-5 with II Cor. 4:7-18 and many other passages. b. Did God not say to Abraham that He would bless those blessing Abraham and that He would curse those cursing this father of believers? And is also this persecution in Jerusalem not in the hand of the God of Abraham.

Questions: Does Scripture teach that God’s decree supercedes the will of man? Does this make God the “Author of sin”? What does Calvin teach on this point in his Institutes? See Book I, Chap. XVIII. Is this doctrine a great comfort for the believer?

Outline XXI
GOD’S WORD OF GRACE IN SAMARIA
Acts 8:5-13

Preached by Phillip, vss. 5, 6. 1. Phillip is one of the seven deacons. He is the only one mentioned by the book of Acts beside Stephen. The reason is undoubtedly the large place that he occupies as Evangelist. But what caused him to go to Samaria? We believe the following is worthy of notation: a. The great persecution had driven the saints out of
Jerusalem, and had virtually made his labors as deacon there unnecessary. 
b. Being an earnest deacon and a dispenser of the mercy of Christ, he must have felt that there was ample work for him in following the saints who had been dispersed. 
c. He was also a man full of wisdom and the Spirit. Such a man also comforted the saints. And it is not improbable that the Holy Spirit directed him to preach in Samaria. Did He not direct Phillip to go to Gaza? vs. 26. Was this spreading of the Gospel not all under His direction? Think of what we read in Acts 16:6-10.

2. In Samaria he preaches Christ. 

a. This is indeed epoch making history in the covenant of God. Since the days of the deportation of the ten tribes, communication between Samaria and Judea had been non-existent. But now Samaria will also flow to Zion's holy hill. And they shall serve God in spirit and in truth. John 4:10. 21-25. The fields are white. Not because the world is seeking for the Christ, but because it is true what was written: "I was found of them that sought me not." Rom. 10:20; Is. 65:1. 
b. For indeed the wheels of God's kingdom are not set in motion from below but from above. John 3:1-16. That is the power of God to salvation in the Son of God's love. 
c. And this kingdom as revealed in the entire revelation of God in Christ Phillip preaches here in Samaria. It was water for the thirsty, balm for the wounds, beauty for ashes. Not worship on Samaria's hill, neither in the earthly mount Zion, but in the kingdom of Christ. 

Confirmed by Signs and Wonders. 1. The signs here performed by Phillip are of great magnitude. Those who had infantile paralysis walked and the very demons obeyed Phillip and left their victims with great wailing. This was more than the cunning arts of magicians and sooth-sayers; it is indeed what is impossible with man and possible with God.

2. There is a reason for these wonders. 

a. Of this we are convinced when we studied of the great miracles performed by the apostles in Jerusalem. Acts 2:43; 5:12-16. 
b. Not only does Jesus point to the purpose of his miracles in John 7:22: 14:11, but Luke also tells us the general purpose of the signs in Acts 14:3. "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the Word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hand." 
c. Especially is this necessary here in the very stronghold of Satan where false signs and wonders are performed before a gullible and superstitious people. The God of the burning bush will indeed put to nought the arts of Jannes and Jambres. Simon and all his sort must be overcome. The temple of God does not condone anyone to serve God otherwise than according to its own ordinances. When the lamp of Israel is set up in heathendom, the law also is present and makes its demands felt in all its depth and force! God is still a jealous God. His great power and grace must be highly honored alone! God must be served in spirit and in truth!
For Christ did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it!

Liberating from Superstitious Unbelief.
1. What was this superstitious unbelief?
   a. In a general way it can be affirmed that superstition is serving a god wholly contrary to the God of the Scriptures. It is the attempt of man, who has turned his back to God, being foolish in his understanding, and now attempting to find comfort, strength, solace in his own way. Rom. 1:18ff. It is rooted in the need of man: in the dependence on God. In the deepest sense it is idolatry. It is not man seeking for the true God, but for the god of his own imagination.

   b. Now in this city of Samaria this superstitious worship centered about the person of Simon. He said of himself to be some great one. He amazed the populace with his magical arts and deception. And they, the people, called him: The power of God, the great. This pretense the real Power of God unto salvation will break! Rom. 1:17. For this is a manifestation of the lie of Satan's temple. And this does not bring a man to liberty, but only places man more in the fetters of sin.

2. The truth as it is in Jesus (Eph. 4:21) will make free indeed. Free from sin and from the fear of guilt and damnation, and afford joy forevermore. That is the result here in Samaria. There was "great joy in this city". vs. 8. This joy:
   a. Must not be confused with the superficial, self deceiving joy of the natural man. Neither a joy merely of a moment that must soon pass away. b. But it must be understood to be: 1) Joy of the sanctuary, the joy of the feast of harvest, of the year of liberation, of the year of jubilee! It was a foretaste of heaven's joy on earth. 2) It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Such it was here evidently, and such "joy" it is said to be in Gal. 5:22. A foretaste of Rev. 21:4: Is. 25:8: 35:10: 65:17-19, this was.

Questions: What is the attitude of God toward magicians, sooth-sayers, wizards etc.? Isa. 8:19-22. Does this have significance for us today too? See Lord's Day 35, Ques. 96.

Outline XXII
THE LAYING ON OF THE APOSTOLIC HANDS
Acts 8:14-25

The Occasion. 1. Word had reached Jerusalem that Samaria "had received the Word of God". This news must have have made a profound impression in that city—the desolate city where the Lord had been crucified. Rev. 11:8. The power of the cross was beginning to reveal itself as the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham. a. Indeed this must have afforded great joy also in that city. the church in Jerusalem and that in Samaria have a common joy in the fellowship of the Son. And had not the circumstances been dire. The church dispersed. Was it not a dark hour which causes the saints under the altar (Rev. 6:10, 11) to cry to the Lord Sabaoth? And now out of the blood and tears of the church is born the victory her cause! b. Were the apostles not beginning to see the word of Christ which He had
spoken to them at Mt. Olivet? Jerusalem, Samaria and unto the ends of the earth. . . . The red horse of persecution here had merely been the servant of the White Horse with its Rider. (Rev. 6:1-9). The kingdom was being restored to Israel in the way of the God who dwells in the sanctuary! Indeed this is not an “everyday” matter that Samaria has received the word. Prophets and bards of old have longed to see it. . . .

2. Peter and John are commissioned to leave Jerusalem and go to this new branch of the church. They are commissioned: a. Not by the church. Such was the case when Paul and Barnabas left Antioch on their first missionary journey. Acts 13:1. b. But they were sent by the apostles in Jerusalem. The work that was to be done there by these two delegates was a question touching their apostleship and the apostolicity of the church. To this latter we shall pay closer heed presently.

The Reason for the Laying On of Hands.
1. The problem here in this passage: a. Briefly stated, it is whether the church did not have the Holy Spirit in their hearts before Peter and John laid their hands on them. b. The following answers have been given: 1) That of the Roman Catholics who say that this was a work of the conformation of the faith of the believers. And that this happened by the Holy Spirit who came through the laying on of hands. And thus this was a special sacrament. Upon this the sacrament of confirmation by Rome is based. 2) That we have here an extra-ordinary case. The congregation believed, was baptized but had not yet received the Holy Spirit in their life. This is virtually the same as that of Rome only the “Sacrament” is not included. 3) That the congregation had received the Holy Spirit in its operation in regeneration, calling, conversion, sanctification, but that this branch of the church had not yet received special gifts of the Spirit, the so-called Charismatic Gifts. Under the latter we have such gifts as speaking of tongues, prophesying, etc. See I Cor. 12. We prefer this latter view.

2. We have spoken of the apostolicity of the church. What does this mean? It refers to the fact that the entire church in its doctrine and life must be and is built upon the foundation laid down by the apostles and prophets. Eph. 3:20. These were led into the truth by the Spirit of Christ. a. Phillip could not ever remain in Samaria. After his departure others must teach the congregation. There were “prophets”. Their office was special and was dependent on that of the apostolate. And the Lord pointed these prophets and special gifts out through the Spirit in the apostolate.

b. Such had not yet happened when Peter and John arrived. How could it. The operation of the Spirit in regeneration they possessed, but not their own teachers, etc.

The Sanctity of this Apostolic Authority.
1. Desecrated by Simon. He offered money to also have this power. What could have moved him to do this? We suggest the following: a. Simon’s heart
was not right in him. He is in the bond of iniquity. He had not truly repented. He must have looked at the "signs and powers" performed by Phillip as belonging to a higher order of the occult arts. It is quite probable that he made large sums of money with his feats of magical demonstrations and had had to pay money to learn those feats. That magicians made gain is evident from Acts 16:16. Beholding only the "laying on of hands" and not the power and authority of God in its holy and exalted character, he wishes also to buy this power. Indeed then he would be the master magician.

2. Over against this Peter defends the sanctity of their authority by severely rebuking Simon. In doing so he applied to Simon three passages of Scripture from the O. T. Ps. 78:37; Deut. 29:19; Is. 58:6. Each of these passages should be studied in their context to see the severity of Peter's rebuke.

Questions: In what way do Protestants and Catholics differ in their conception of the apostolicity of the church? Why is there today no speaking with tongues? What bearing does the established Canon of Scripture have on this matter? Have you ever carefully read Articles 2-7 of the Belgic Confession? What is 'simony'? Is the question whether Simon was saved or not the important question here?

Outline XXIII

EUNUCHS AND STRANGERS ADMITTED INTO THE TEMPLE
Acts 8:26-43

The Mosaic Ordinances and the Eunuch.

1. Who this particular Eunuch is in this passage. We are told the following:
   a. As far as his office in life is concerned he is said to be "a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure." This office was possibly somewhat related to that of Joseph in the house of Potiphar. b. That he was a religious man who served the God of Israel. He went to Jerusalem for to worship. He was interested in the hope of Israel. He was not an unbelieving man. He does not need to be rebuked, but he needs instruction in the truth as it is in Jesus.

2. The Mosaic Ordinance and the Eunuch.
   a. In general it can be said that all eunuchs were barred from the temple. They were men unfit for marriage being unable to raise seed. As such they were "baren trees". Confer Jer. 23:1 and Matt. 19:11. 12. In the latter passage a distinction is made between three manner of eunuchs. b. Reference is made to this Mosaic ordinance and its future abolition in Is. 56:3-7. That will be the day of better things, when the law of ordinances shall be abolished and the "middle-wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14) shall be broken down in the blood of Christ. For the eunuch's place in the O. T. temple is no better than that of the "stranger". Be he ever so humble, pious, God-fearing, because he is a eunuch, he has no place in the temple. c. Now this particular eunuch was also excluded from the temple by two walls. The wall barring strangers, the middle-wall of parti-
tion, and the wall excluding the eunuch. Indeed his plight, as one interested in the kingdom, was great. He met two gates in Jerusalem above which were written, "No Admittance"! Indeed the "first covenant" is not "faultless": now the eunuch seeks for a second. Heb. 8:7.

Isaiah 53 and the Mosaic Ordinances.

1. Did not the prophets "search out what time or the manner of the time...the sufferings of the Christ and the glories that should follow them"? 1 Pet. 1:11.

And in what chapter of the prophetic writings is this more strikingly brought out than in Is. 53? For notice: a. That it is not mere chance that this Eunuch is reading in Is. 53:7. That was the Word written by the Spirit of the Christ. And the same Spirit of the glorious Christ now also sends Phillip to explain this Scripture to this seeking Eunuch. This is a marvelous work of God's harmony! b. And in this "dark place" the day-star shall rise in the heart of this Eunuch and all the other Eunuchs and Strangers by giving heed to the prophetic Word. II Pet. 1:19. For in this passage the prophet (Is. 53:7) is speaking of the "Silent Obedience" of the Servant of Jehovah. Upon Him the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all.

2. For through this obedience Christ has fulfilled the ordinances and has nailed the handwriting that was against us to the cross. Eph. 2:13 and Col. 2:13, 14. a. Nailed to the cross! All these ordinances of Eunuchs and Strangers. b. The "No Admittance" sign torn down from the temple door. Is. 56:3-7 ful-

filled!

Salvations Universality Proclaimed.

1. We may feel quite certain that the chief point in recording this event in Acts is not to show that a certain man was converted. The Eunuch is not the chief point of interest! He must serve as the "proof material" that the law of Eunuchs and Strangers is abolished in the "blood of Jesus". Such is briefly the purpose of this passage.

2. Rehold water! What hindereth me to be baptized? There are no signs in the heavenly Jerusalem, in the congregation of the first-begotten, where the blood is that speaketh better things than Abel, that excludes me from the commonwealth of Israel and from the communion of God's tabernacle! Nothing hindering me to be baptized! Oh, the joy of it! What marvel of beauteous grace in the suffering Servant!

3. Both Jew and Gentile one in hope, joint-heirs of the same promise. Now this is proclaimed loud and clear as unto other generations it had not been known. Eph. 3:1-13. Such is the Word of God not merely about this passage and the experience of this Eunuch but it is the Word of God in this event with us! If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. That was not true in the O. T. temple. But now it is blessed reality. The powers of heaven have been set in motion in Jesus and now the MYSTERY hid from the ages in God is unveiled! Christ the hope of glory—admitting Eunuchs and Strangers—such as we!