BEACON LIGHTS
FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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The day of August 16 dawned bright and clear. To all outward appearances it was no different than any of the days preceding or those which followed. Yet, without a doubt this was an important date. It is true, the headlines of the papers made no special mention, in fact, no mention at all of this important day. The world little knew and cared less what was about to transpire in the small town of Hudsonville, Michigan. But for the Protestant Reformed young people, this day marked the beginning of one of the biggest events of the year. On the evening of August 16 was to be given the inspirational address by the Rev. H. Hoeksema at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. That inspirational address, the keynote speech, was the beginning of the fifteenth annual convention.

And although the papers of our day give the summaries and even the complete texts of all the important speeches delivered throughout the world, yet, not one word was written in summary or comment concerning those three speeches on August 16, 17, and 18 at Hudsonville. We did not expect that to be done either.

For who in this world is concerned with speeches about “The Gospel of the Promise?” But such was not the case as far as the Protestant Reformed young people were concerned. Those three speeches spoke to them in unmistakable language the truth in which they had been instructed from birth. It was the truth which they held dear and which was the guiding principle of their lives, for it was the truth of the Word of God.

For our young people August 16 marked the beginning of a memorable event. And as we look back on that convention which took place nearly two months ago already, we can still say, and all those who attended will agree, it was a most wonderful convention. That it was a success, there can be no doubt. One of Hudsonville’s ideals was an inspirational convention, and inspirational it was. How could it be otherwise with three speakers as the Revs. H. Hoeksema, G. M. Ophoff, and G. Vanden Berg? And what a wonderful theme was chosen! Our young people certainly were edified and inspired.

Another aim of Hudsonville for the
convention was Christian fellowship. This aim too was admirably realized. Many of the young people at the convention were there for the first time. They and those who have come many times before met many new friends and re-established old friendships. In my estimation, this is a very important part of the conventions. Our churches are small and some of them have but few young people. Possibly we could work things out so that there would be an even greater development of friendship between young people of our various churches. You who have met friends from the West or East could maintain those friendships by writing letters to them. It might also be possible to establish some sort of pen pal club. In this way more of our young people will become acquainted with one another even before the next convention takes place. If you like the idea, by all means contact our editor or one of the members of the Beacon Lights’ staff.

A third goal of our Hudsonville society for the convention was entertainment. I need make little comment here. I have but to remind you of the outing at Spring Lake. And what food we had! Rev. Vos claims that he lost a pound after that outing, but most of us must surely have added a little weight.

So you can see why everyone agrees that the fifteenth annual convention was one of the best. In this issue of Beacon Lights we review that convention. If you have not already done so, I would advise you to look carefully through the following pages and in a small way re-live the fun and enjoyment as well as Christian fellowship and edification we had there.

And what an appropriate thing it is to remind you of that convention now as we begin another year of society meetings. Let us begin our society season on the same note that was struck at this convention. How wonderful it was to hear of the glorious gospel of the promise. Now during this coming year we will be privileged to discuss that same gospel in our society.

Most of our societies begin a discussion of the book of Acts. As you have noticed, we have begun a new system of Bible outlines in this issue. We hope that it will better lend itself to discussion in your society. What a wonderful sense of fellowship we have too, knowing that most of our young people are discussing the same portion of Acts as we are. And if any problems arise in the discussion of this book, send them in. In that way we can all think about it, and our Bible Outline Editor can possibly give us some guidance as to its answer.

There is one other thing which could be mentioned in this place. The attendance at the convention was very good. By all means we should continue that practice during this coming year. Possibly I do not even have to mention this. Attendance at our societies is generally excellent. Yet, there are a few delinquents even in our churches. Such, of course, should not be the case. These delinquents I would divide into two groups, the first being the most serious. There are those who do not come at all to society. Sometimes there is a good reason, usually there is not. I know, society is not compulsory, but it does not speak well of one who refuses to use this opportunity to discuss the Word of God. Let’s all be at our society during this coming year.

The second type of delinquent is one who comes to society but refuses to take part in the program or in discussions. For this there can be very little excuse. Anyone can add something to a discussion. That is difficult to do at first, I know, but it becomes easier as one continues to do it. And so I say that if we continue the practice we began at the
convention, we will certainly have a spiritually profitable year before us as young people. The benefits of such society attendance was presented in the past series of Christian Living. Read it again. Think about it. Then you will be at society also during this coming year. You will also take part in singspirations and mass meetings. And you will make definite preparations to attend the sixteenth annual convention at Doon and Hull, Iowa.

G.V.B.

DID YOU KNOW . . . .

— That on January 29, 1925, the first combined meeting of our churches was held in the basement of the Eastern Avenue Church?

— That this year our seminary begins its 30th year of instruction?

— That Rev. C. Hanko was ordained September 1929?

— That before meeting in their new building in 1926, First Church met in the Community Hall of Franklin Park and later in the St. Cecilia building in downtown Grand Rapids?

— That Rev. G. Lubbers served the churches of Doon, Pella, Randolph, Creston, and now is missionary in our churches?

— That the seminary is meeting in one room of the Adams St. Protestant Reformed school?

— That South Holland and Oak Lawn broadcast the “Reformed Thruth Hour” every Sunday night at 9:30 over WJOB, Hammond, Indiana?
THE IDEA OF PREACHING

Speech delivered by Cand. H. Hanko at his graduation exercises in Fourth Church

In the American “church world” — and I put the term in quotation marks — there is a definite lack of emphasis on preaching. No longer does preaching occupy the place that it should in the church institute, and no longer is preaching understood as it really is in the light of God’s Word.

Everybody “preaches.” Every small group of people, every board, every society, every body thinks that they have a right to preach the gospel. I need only cite one outstanding example to prove this. The noted evangelist Billy Graham with his retinue of people who prepare the way for his revival meetings, and with the retinue who follow up his work seems to think that anyone who so desires to preach can do so. Though he is affiliated with the Baptist Church, yet he is not under their supervision control, and does about what he pleases.

Furthermore, even as it is true that anyone who feels like it preaches, so also it is true that no one knows any more what preaching is. A lecture on the need for better housing conditions, a sermon on the “get-out-and-vote” theme is considered preaching. And the more sensational one can move his audience to tears, or cause them to rush to the front to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, the better preacher he is.

And this not only is true in the American world, but it is often quite characteristic of that which calls itself reformed. In Calvin College, it has been my experience to hear a sermon on a difficult text, the theme of which sermon was, “The difficulty of understanding Scripture.”

It is the distinguishing mark of the Protestant Reformed Churches that they have and do lay the necessary emphasis on preaching. Preaching is the very heart and center of all the life of the church on this earth. All the life of the church stands subservient to it. By it Christ strengthens His people, feeding and nourishing them to life everlasting; through it Christ has determined to gather His church from all the nations of the earth, in order that the church may be completed and perfected; by means of it the saints are called to be saints in a world of sin and darkness. When a church no longer preaches, it ceases to be a church.

Let us discuss together this evening the Idea of Preaching.

I. What is preached.
II. Who preaches.
III. To whom is preaching directed.

I. WHAT IS PREACHED?
What is preached, and what always must be preached is the Word of God. What is not the Word of God is not preaching. A mere discourse on the social problems of the day, or a homily on the need for better politics is never and can never be preaching for the simple reason that it is not the Word of God. God’s Word alone must be the sole content of all preaching.

What is that Word? There are many ways in which we may speak of it. The Word of God is the Word which God speaks. God is eternally a speaking God. Apart from the creation, apart from the creature, God is a speaking God. Eternally in Himself, within the triune unity God speaks. And His speech is always about Himself to Himself. It is about Himself in the Son, for the Son is the eternal Word which God speaks and which is spoken. And it returns again to Himself in the Spirit. The Son through the Spirit is the perfect and eternally
spoken Word of God. He is the perfect image of the Father for He is the Word which God speaks of Himself.

But God speaks of Himself and to Himself also in relation to this present creation. He speaks and the creation comes into being. He says, "Let there be light!", and there is light. Furthermore, He speaks the Word that fits every man to his particular place in this world so that he may serve the purpose God has decreed for him in His counsel. God continually speaks the Word that causes each man to walk in the way and fulfill the calling that serves his purpose in this world. Furthermore God calls every man through the things that are made so that they stand before the obligation to serve God Who is God above all. And even though wicked man holds the truth of God under in unrighteousness, nevertheless God does not leave Himself without witness that He is the One that ought to be served. Also God calls efficaciously through the Spirit of Christ to the hearts of the elect whereby He speaks the powerful Word that brings them out of death into life, out of darkness into light.

And centrally that Word is always Christ. For Christ is the effulgence of the glory of the Father, the express image of His being. And since God always speaks of Himself through the Spirit to Himself, He always speaks through Christ; or to put it a little differently, God always speaks Christ.

That Word is preached. It is the Word that is historically realized in Jesus Christ, and thus the promise and the gospel. It is the Word that was communicated through revelation and inspiration. It is thus the Word that is contained in the Scriptures in all its fulness. That is the Word that is preached and must be preached. Any speech which does not have that exclusively for its contents cannot possibly be preaching.

Therefore no discourse on the need for better hospitals, nor a rousing oration on the need to accept Christ can ever be preaching. Nor may one who preaches preach his own Word. He may never say anything that is of himself; he must limit himself exclusively to the Word of God. Not even is it true that preaching constitutes a mere explanation of a certain passage of Scripture, if the commentator or expositor does not take into account the whole Word of God. Someone may talk at length about Samson the judge, but if he talks only of Samson, no matter how true it is what he is saying, he is not preaching. For preaching is preaching the whole Word of God. Or we may say, preaching is preaching the one Word of God. And that Word is centrally Christ.

The Word of God is the Word which is Jesus Christ as the full revelation of God, and that as the God of our salvation. All Scripture is that Word. A minister must not preach words therefore, but the Word, the Word of God—Christ as the revelation of God Who saves us in Christ. We may safely say that there is not one passage of the Bible which does not speak of that Word. As someone once expressed it, "Wherever the artery of Scripture is cut by the preaching of the Word, it flows with the blood of the Lamb of God."

That does not mean that the minister preaches in general about the Bible. No, rather he selects one passage and proclaims that one Word of God as conveyed upon the vehicle of that particular passage. All the passages of the Bible speak only of Christ, but speak about Him in many different ways, because He is the full revelation of God. But centrally it is always that one Word only that must be preached. If that is not present, there is no preaching.

And it is well to bear in mind in this connection that God alone can reveal Himself. The creature can never reach
out to God to learn of Him. God must reach down to the creature and reveal Himself if the creature is to know Him. That was true of Adam in Paradise and is therefore much more true of us who by nature are so dark in our understanding that we cannot even see the kingdom of heaven. And bear in mind that because of the perverseness of our will and the darkness of our understanding, we cannot see God in the creation about us, but neither can we see God in His Word in the Scriptures. In one word, we cannot see Christ even as He walked among us for 33 years, nor can we see Christ in the gospel except God reveal Himself to us and cause us to see Him in the face of His own dear Son.

And that takes me to the second question which we must answer.

II. WHO IS IT THAT PREACHES.

Everybody in our day claims to preach and to have the right to preach. Let it be a man who suddenly decides to go out, let it be a woman who claims to preach, let it even be as in some instances a small girl or youthful boy, let it be a group of people who band together or who are organized on their own, they all claim the right to preach.

But there is a syllogism based on Scripture that destroys all these false notions with relentless logic. We said a moment ago that preaching as to its content is always the revelation of God through Jesus Christ as the God of salvation. We also said that God alone can reveal Himself. It follows therefore that God alone can preach. That is true of all of Scripture.

It was God Who announced the pro-evangel in Paradise to Adam and Eve which was the seed of all the preaching in all the world in all ages. God it was Who preached through all the laws and types and shadows of the Old Dispensation, as our Heidelberg Catechism so beautifully expresses it. God it was Who preached through all the prophets, for it is striking that the very word for prophet in the Old Testament means that they received the Word which they spoke from another. And all the prophets culminated in John, that greatest of all prophets, who was the forerunner of Him Who was the content of all the preached Word, Who was the fulfillment of the Holy Gospel. And for three years Christ preached on this earth—preached about Himself as the full and complete revelation of God. And when His ministry on earth is climaxed and ended by His death and resurrection, He commits His Word to His apostles. But it is still God Who preaches. Only when Christ ascends into heaven, the Word of the Gospel is committed to Him and so He is the subject of the preaching in the name of the Father as the full revelation of the Father. That must be emphatically maintained. No one preaches except Christ. That is true in the first place, because Christ alone is the revelation of the Father, and the content of all the Word that is preached. In the second place that is true because it is Christ alone. Who can give to His people by His Spirit, ears to hear, hearts to understand, and an illumination of the mind in order to appropriate the fulness of the gospel. It is Christ alone Who can feed and nourish His people by the gospel unto everlasting life. It is Christ alone Who can call His church out of darkness into light by means of that preaching. And in the third place, this is the emphatic teaching of Scripture in Rom. 10:14, 15, where we read, “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe on Him Whom they have not heard . . . ?” They must not hear someone talk about Christ, they must hear Christ. They must not hear someone who claims to speak in Christ’s name alone, but they must hear the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto me.
and rest!" There is only preaching when Christ Himself preaches.
But Christ gives His Word to His Church. This also is emphatically taught in the passage of Rom. 10:14, 15. "... And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?"

The truth that Christ gives His Word to His church implies three things. In the first place it implies that by His Spirit He guides His Church into the development of the truth of His Word contained in the Scriptures. In the second place it means that by that same Spirit He preserves that truth in the Church from generation to generation as we now have it in our creeds. And in the third place it means that He commands His church and authorizes His Church to proclaim that Word to the ends of the earth.

He commits His own Word to His church with the command to develop it, to preserve and keep it in all its purity, and to proclaim it. Directly to the apostles He gave this Word with that command. But no less to us and to the church of all ages, for He gave it to the apostles as representatives of that Church.

Therefore the church has the command to preach the Word. That means in the first place that it is only the church which can preach. Not everyone may preach, but only the church which is Christ's body. And in the second place that means that only when the church preaches that Word will Christ preach through that church to the hearts of His own people.

But the church preaches that Word through the teaching ministry. Therefore in the name of Christ the individual minister must be called by the church, officially commissioned by the church, and sent by the church with the church guarding that Word which he preaches. For only then does Christ call, does Christ commission, does Christ send, and will Christ Himself speak to His people. The minister must be an ambassador of Jesus Christ Who is the official qualified and ordained to proclaim Christ's Word, and under the direction and control of Christ to preach when he will and where he will.

Thus through the official ministry of the gospel, and only through that official ministry does Christ speak His Word to the hearts of His own elect. And then His promise is that He will minister His Word and give His Spirit to feed the hungry and thirsty souls of the saints.

Thus the minister must never try to persuade his audience that what he says is better for them to do. Nor must he ask them please to do what he says. But rather he must definitely leave the impression that the audience is under the necessity of doing what he says for it is not he that is speaking, but it is Christ Himself. Christ Who through Him authoritatively demands that they keep His Word. He must always say, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Then the preaching will be distinctive and upbuilding.

That brings me to the third question.

III. TO WHOM IS THE PREACHING DIRECTED?

We may say first of all negatively that the gospel is therefore not a mere invitation. For an invitation implies that the one who hears has the right and the power to decline.

And also it is true that not even the external preaching is an invitation, for all who hear are placed under the obligation to heed the demands of the Word; and besides that they have by nature no ability to hearken to it.

In the same sense therefore we may say that the preaching of the gospel can never be grace to all that hear, nor can be an objective promise to all that hear.

It is certainly true that the outward
preaching of the gospel is heard by all who come under its administration. For the gospel comes in the organic development of the covenant, and all therefore hear the command to repent and forsake their wicked ways. And all hear that God saves those whom He has chosen eternally in the blood of the cross of His Son.

Yet even that hearing is a hearing in a limited sense of the word. For we can never separate the external and internal call of the gospel. Only in connection with the external preaching of the gospel does the Spirit of Jesus Christ operate. Never separately from it. And the contents of the promise even in the external call are always particular. That does not mean that the minister has to be able to distinguish when he preaches between the elect and reprobate. For all must repent, and must obey the Word of God. All hear the truth that God saves His own elect. But because the Spirit never operates separately from the preaching of the gospel, that same Spirit seals condemnation to the reprobate who refuse to hear that Word and who insist that they will walk in their own way.

And so also the Spirit seals to the hearts of the elect the promises contained in the Gospel. He gives them hearts that understand the Word in a different way than the wicked understand it. For the wicked understand only its truth and its obligation, but refuse. But the Spirit of Jesus Christ gives to those that belong to Christ hearts that can appropriate that Word as their own so that their souls are nourished. They hear the voice of Jesus, they see the revelation of God in the face of His own Son as the God Who saves them. They are called by that Word from death into life, from darkness into light, and eat and drink that Word unto life everlasting as the Spirit within them seals the faithful and sure promise of God to their hearts.

H. Hanko

DID YOU KNOW . . . .
— That the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids has been meeting in Christian High auditorium since June 1953?
— That the “Reformed Witness Hour” is broadcast over WFUR Grand Rapids every Sunday afternoon at 4:00 P. M.?
— That bickerings among Christians requires much time and energy—all of it wasted?

Upright and faithful Christians ever think they are not faithful, nor believe as they ought; and therefore they constantly strive, wrestle, and are diligent to keep and increase faith, as good workmen always see that something is wanting in their workmanship. But the butchers think that nothing is wanting in what they do, but that everything is well and complete. Like as the Jews conceive they have the ten commandments at their fingers' end, whereas in truth, they neither learn nor regard them.

— Martin Luther

HUMILITY

Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is for me to have no trouble; never to be fretted or vexed or irritated or sore or disappointed. It is to expect nothing to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and be at peace as in a deep sea of calmness when all around and above is trouble. It is the fruit of the Lord Jesus Christ’s redemptive work on Calvary’s Cross, manifest in those of His own who are definitely subjected to the Holy Spirit.

— Andrew Murray
Introduction

With this article we will begin what, according to our present intentions, will be a lengthy series of articles based on the thirty-seven articles of our Belgic or Netherlands Confession of Faith. Whether this intention will be fully realized or not, we, of course, do not now know. The Board may have altogether different intentions. It may choose to discontinue the department, “Truth vs. Error” and replace it with another. Or, it may feel that the present writer has bored the reading public long enough, and replace him with another!

However, I am not going by the unknown plans of the Board. I am outlining the course which I aim to follow in this department, and according to it, the Lord willing, I will discuss with you the thirty-seven articles of our faith for the purpose of clearly ascertaining the truth, and refuting the countless errors, which, also in our day, are continually multiplying. In pursuing this task it is fitting that we make a few introductory remarks.

First of all, we are aware that our principal readers are young people. For them we shall write, considering their peculiar circumstances and unique problems and temptations as Youth! All of these things covenant youth faces in faith, and seeks the solution of the Word of God. To help them in this, the Confession is an invaluable aid. It sheds the light of the Word of God upon the path of youth, and as such it will also be our guide. We shall, therefore, attempt to refrain from an academic discussion, and aim solely at the goal to present, as interestingly as possible, the truth in its practical and salutary effect upon our lives. And we shall not mince to convey a solemn warning as we demonstrate the devastating effects that Error has upon those who embrace her and walk with her in her treacherous way, that ultimately leads to eternal death. Youth must know that just as positively as “the truth makes us free” (John 8:32); so surely does “error bring us into bondage!” Truth is wisdom! Error is folly! Truth is life! Error is death! We aim then, to so know the truth from our Confession that we may live wisely in the freedom of Christ, our Lord. That is both, our prayer and goal!

In the second place, we consider this a necessary undertaking because you, young people, are being reared with a generation that more than any in the past, detests Confessions, and hates the very sound of the word “Creeds.” You are living in an age that is ecumenically minded and, therefore, is especially averse to those confessions that are definite; that distinctly announce the Truth as your Confessions do; and that do not call the people of God into union with the false and apostate church, but insist upon spiritual isolation with distinctive witnessing as the sole means of security and spiritual blessedness. (Deut. 33:28) From some, you will, and do hear the pious but, nonetheless, deceptive clamour for more of the Bible and less of the Confessions. Many will be deceived by this. What this cry amounts to is a demand for less of the clearly defined, distinctive Truth! Beware! Others will demand the obliteration of
all creeds and will insist that all christians rally after a creedless Christ. Obviously the reason for this clamour is that the Christ of the creeds of the church is not THE CHRIST that is desired. A creedless Christ is not the Christ of the Scripture. (See Matt. 24:4, 5) To such babblings you must pay no heed, but knowing the truth as it has been handed down to you through the church of the past, you are to lay a good foundation for the time to come, in order that, in the evil day, you may stand, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in Him is never in vain! (Eph. 6:13, I Cor. 15:58) That, too, is our goal!

Then, too, you must be on your guard against what is perhaps the most subtle and misleading of all deceptions. I refer to those who do not oppose the Confessions but consider them useful only as dust-collectors. That's bad, very bad! Watch out!

In the third place, you must be fortified in order that you may be able to give answer to the devilish insinuations and lying charges that are frequently made by the enemies of the Confessions upon you who steadfastly maintain them. In order to do this, it will be necessary that we take a little additional space to ask and answer, for ourselves, a few pertinent questions. We will number them for convenience and reference:

(1) What are our Confessions?

Briefly stated, a Confession may be defined as a comprehensive summary, formulated under the authority of the church, officially adopted and approved by her, to express what she believes to be the truth of the Word of God. It may be further pointed out that Confessions are also called Creeds or Standards. This is important because the term "Standard" denotes that which is the criteria of what is taught and confessed in a particular church or group of churches. They are called "Creeds", from the Latin "credo" which means, "I believe," because from the viewpoint of their contents they are the object of the faith of the church.

In this light you, young people, must understand that even those undenominationals, etc., who frown upon creeds actually have them. Not in written form, of course! But they have them nevertheless. The moment they express what they believe to be the truth of the Word of God, they give expression and content to their "Standard." The difference is that they do not want to be bound by the specific labors of the church in the past; hence, they deny in practice the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the church throughout the ages, and they want to be 'individualistically free' to say of the Word of God what they please, apart from and in contradiction to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the church of the past. They can then 'babble to itching ears' the errors that please the carnal flesh. You always find these views among those who are rebels to the binding power of the truth! Is it any wonder, then, that there is so much false doctrine —error?

You should also take note of the fact that Creeds contain the official content of the faith of the church. What any church believes is expressed in her creed! Frequently, young people of different churches strike up an acquaintance that develops into matrimony before the matter of church affiliation is seriously considered. They will, perhaps, attend one another's church intermittently. When the matter is to be decided, one will give in with the lame excuse that there is no difference in the preaching anyway. This is a serious error for:

(a) if this claim is true, one preacher or the other, is a liar who fails to proclaim the truth as it is confessed by his

(Continued on page 16)
A Word of Explanation

It is not without some misgivings that the undersigned takes up this assignment of filling the Bible Outlines department for “Beacon Lights.”

Allow me to explain.

Some months ago the Federation Board wrote and asked me to furnish the outlines for this year on the Book of Acts. I did not feel ready to accept immediately, mainly because I personally have never been very satisfied with the usual system of helps for Bible study. My criticism was not that the content of the Bible Outlines was not sound and Scriptural and Reformed, but rather, if I may put it that way: the content was too good. You ask: how could the outlines be too good? My answer is, first of all, that these outlines usually furnish a ready-made and rather complete commentary, which was, in my experience both as a member of society and later as a society president, detrimental to lively discussion. Because the discussion was all too frequently finished in “Beacon Lights,” actual discussion in society meetings was killed, rather than fostered. Often the only discussion held was not on the content of the Scripture passage itself, but about certain practical questions and problems that arose in connection with the significance and the application of the passage under discussion. In close connection with the previous reason for my criticism, I objected too, because in my opinion, the Bible Outlines did not succeed in fostering study of the Scripture themselves. If anyone studied before he came to society, he studied “Beacon Lights,” not the Bible. The result was that a question might be raised possibly by one who had not read “Beacon Lights”), and the answer might be given by another member: “Well, ‘Beacon Lights’ says so and so and so . . .” And usually this constituted a stopper for all discussion, unless someone happened to disagree with the given explanation. Now, personally, I consider one of the chief benefits of Bible discussion in our societies to be that which is derived from our personal study of the Scripture passage before we ever come to our society meetings. To become acquainted with the Scriptures, to study them, to wrestle with them, and to attempt seriously to understand them, and not merely hastily to read over a chapter,—these things I consider of great benefit in themselves. And the same is true of the society meetings. To have a meeting of minds; to get a good healthy clash of opinions; to iron out a difficult question; or even a simple one; and thus, together, to be edified in the Scriptures, and to become practiced in explaining and understanding them,—this is certainly a goal to set for ourselves in our Bible discussions in societies. And in the third place, I was critical of the usual system of Bible outlines because it was, in my experience, often difficult to keep pace with them. The result was that a society would gradually fall far behind; old copies of “Beacon Lights” would be misplaced; so that they could not be referred to for explanatory material; and finally a society would still be involved in discussion of a given book long after “Beacon Lights” was finished with it. It may be granted, of course, that one society differs from another, and that a happy
medium must be found as to how much ground to cover, etc. And perhaps this is a difficulty not easily to be overcome to the satisfaction of all. But an effort will be made in this direction, partly by a change in method.

About the above thoughts, I corresponded with the Board, and suggested that a different method be followed, a method which would consist mostly in furnishing questions, which, if answered, will result in a profitable discussion, and in a satisfactory explanation of the Scripture passage under discussion. This does not mean that all explanation will be eliminated in this department, and certainly not that there will be no outline of the Book of Acts to guide us. It does mean, however, that, if this effort is successful on my part and yours, the discussion will from now on be yours, not mine. For the most part I will simply ask questions that are designed to make you study and designed to draw you into discussion. It is very well possible that my questions will cause you to raise more questions. And it may also be that you will have to turn to your minister or your Bible-discussion leader for a final settlement of your questions. Very well; there will be discussion at any rate. And I hope it will be profitable. As you may gather, the Board concurred with my suggestions for possible improvement, and asked me to carry on. And that explains my misgivings also: this venture is somewhat new for all concerned.

Concerning Helps for Study

That we prepare for Bible discussion I take for granted, even at the risk of being called an idealist. Certainly, we get out of Bible discussion just exactly what we put into it. And the results will surely be meager if we do no more than hastily read the chapter to be discussed, or possibly not even that. And make no mistake: you fool no one when that is the extent of your study. You only rob yourself.

Frequently society members inquire as to how to go about the work of preparing for Bible discussion. I will, briefly make some suggestions:

1. Do not turn to a commentary immediately, but turn to the Scriptures themselves. Read the passage slowly and carefully; once, twice, or thrice. Let the Scriptures speak to you. Ask whether you understand the simple meaning of the words. Inquire as to the relationship of various ideas and events, and the significance of them. Look not, immediately, for the deep and difficult questions, but for the simple ones, that are right on the surface. These are too frequently bypassed.

2. Make discreet use of a good reference Bible, in order to compare various words and ideas as they occur elsewhere in Scripture. Or use a good concordance for the same purpose.


With these introductory remarks out of the way, I ask you to turn with me to the Book of Acts.

* * * *

This fifth book of the New Testament, like the preceding four, is historical in character. It is called frequently by an abbreviated name, “The Acts,” by which is understood, of course, the full name of the book, “The Acts of the Apostles.” At this point, in order to be-
come acquainted, first of all, with the contents of the book in general, we may ask the following questions:

1. Do you think that the title, “The Acts of the Apostles,” is an accurate one?
   b. Is the work of any of the apostles traced in this book to the time of his death?
   c. Is the book of Acts, then, an historical book; a history book, in the usual sense of the term?
   d. What outstanding events, besides the ascension of the Lord, are to be included in New Testament history?
   e. To whose “acts” as an apostle does the Book of Acts give the greater part of its attention?
   f. In close connection with “e,” are there any of the apostles whose work is not mentioned at all?
   g. Can you furnish an explanation of the fact that the work of some is apparently ignored, while the work of one receives the lion’s share of the attention?

2. How, then, would you sum up the contents of the Book of Acts?
   * * *

CHAPTER I

This first chapter, in a sense, is introductory to the entire book. It takes up the thread of New Testament history where the gospel narratives drop it; namely, at the point of the ascension of Jesus. And it covers the period of time which elapsed between the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Undoubtedly we may say that the acts of the apostles in their capacity of apostles begin with the events of Pentecost Day, as recorded in chapter 2. This does not mean, of course, that the contents of chapter 1 is not important. For not only does this first chapter fill in the history between the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, but it also gives us a detailed account of the ascension. And not only does the chapter furnish an historical introduction, and establish the connection between the gospel narratives and the history that is here recorded; but it also, in a way, gives us the key to the contents of the entire Book of Acts. We may conveniently divide this chapter as follows: 1) Introduction, vss. 1-8. 2) The Ascension, vss. 9-11. 3) Record of the 10 days between the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, with special attention to the choosing of Matthias, vss. 12-26.
   * * *

I. Introductory Section, vss. 1-8.

**General Comment**: This book does not have a very formal introduction. The author offers no greeting to “Theophilus,” but plunges immediately into his message, as it were. Nevertheless, in these first eight verses, he sets forth, at least by implication, the subject matter of his entire treatise. At the same time, continuing his introduction, he leads up to Jesus’ conversation with His disciples immediately before His ascension, beginning in vs. 4, to quote Jesus’ words to them. We may arrive at an understanding of these verses by giving our attention to the following questions:

1. Concerning the author and addressee of this book:
   a. Who is the addressee?
      1) What is the meaning of his name? Is this of any significance?
      2) Is there any reason to believe that this is not the name of a real individual; but rather a symbolic name, referring, perhaps, symbolically to all Greek, or Gentile, believers?
   b. What is meant by “the former treatise”? Cf. Luke 1:3.
   c. It is generally conceded in the light
of “b” that Luke is the author of the Book of Acts. Do you think this is correct? Can you find any evidence in the journal of Paul’s activities, recorded in chapters 13 to 28, which further establishes Luke as the author?
d. Since these questions also have something to do with the contents of the Book of Acts, we may ask:
   1) Was Theophilus a Jewish or Gentile addresssee?
   2) Was he acquainted with the gospel before the Book of Acts was written?
   5) Do we know more of him than is told here in Acts 1 and in Luke 1:1-4?

2. Concerning “the former treatise” and the forty days after the resurrection: (vss. 1-3)
   a. What was the content of the former treatise, according to vs. 1, 2a?
   b. If this was the content of the former treatise, and if the Book of Acts, being the “latter treatise,” is a continuation of that former treatise, would it be correct also to say that the Book of Acts concerns what Jesus continued to do and to teach?
   1) In the real sense of the word, does the Book of Acts concern works and words of Jesus?
   2) Through what means did Jesus continue to work and to teach?
   3) Did the apostles testify that their speech and works were of Jesus? Confer, for example, Acts 2:33; Acts 3:16, 26; Acts 4:10, 29-31.
   4) Does this also harmonize with the function of the apostles? Cf. Acts 1:8.
   5) Does the period in which Jesus continues to work and to teach continue beyond the record of the Book of Acts? How far?
   6) Is there a connection between what Jesus began and what He continues? If so, what is that connection? Would it be justified to understand the term “began” as denoting more than a time element? Could it also mean beginning in the sense of “principle,” beginning in the sense that the acorn is the beginning of the oak tree? Cf. also John 12:24.
   c. What three-fold purpose is attached in vss. 2 and 3 to the forty days after the resurrection?
      1) Is it possible in the light of vs. 3 that there were other appearances of the risen Lord than the 10 that are mentioned in Scripture?
      2) What is meant by infallible proofs? Why, if these proofs are infallible, is the resurrection still denied? Can you point out any elements which show the infallibility of these proofs?
      3) Is there any significance in the fact that this period was forty days in duration? Is the number forty significant in Scripture? Where else does it occur?
      4) Why does Luke emphasize the resurrections so strongly?

3. Concerning Jesus’ parting words to His disciples:
   a. Where were they assembled? vs. 4 (cf. vs. 12)
   b. What was the promise of the Father? vs. 4. When, especially, had they heard that promise of the Father from Jesus? Cf. John 14, 15, 16.
   c. Why were they not to depart from Jerusalem? vs. 4.
   d. What was the difference between John’s baptism and the baptism with the Holy Ghost? vs. 5. Why does Jesus here refer to John’s baptism? Is there ground here for a rejection of “water baptism” in favor of “Spirit baptism”? Is there a fundamental difference between the baptism of John
e. What does the question of the disciples in vs. 6 indicate concerning their understanding of Jesus and His kingdom? Would they still ask such a question ten days later, do you think?
f. What is the significance of Jesus’ answer in vs. 7? Does it constitute a direct answer to their question? Why does Jesus answer in this way? Note: The word for power in vs. 7 could probably better be translated by authority. Does Jesus mean to say that after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost they will have power to know the times and the seasons, or not?
g. The word “but” indicates a contrast in vs. 8. What is the contrast between?
h. What kind of power would they receive? vs. 8. What would be the source of that power? What would be the result of that power? What is the meaning of “my witnesses,” or “witnesses unto me?” Were the apostles witnesses in a special way? If so, how?
i. Concerning the geographical order mentioned in vs. 8:

1) Is this a prophecy or a commandment? Did the witnessing follow this order?
2) Why was the spread of the gospel to follow this order?
3) Did the apostles mechanically follow this order in their work, or did the Lord so arrange events that this order was followed spontaneously?
4) Does this order — Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost part of the earth — have any significance for mission work today? If so, what? Does it, for example, mean that our churches must begin their mission work at home, before engaging in foreign mission work?
j. Finally, one question concerning the whole introductory section: upon what one event of grace does all the emphasis fall here? What place does this event occupy in the Book of Acts?

II. The Ascension, vss. 9-11.
1. What other passages of Scripture refer to the ascension of the Lord?
2. What does this passage show very plainly concerning the ascension?
3. The ascension, of course, also marked another appearance of the risen Lord. Is there anything in the narrative which shows that the disciples themselves sensed a difference between this and the other appearances?
4. How must the event of the ascension itself be understood? Did it simply consist in this: that the disciples witnessed the beginning of a long journey on the part of Jesus, and His disappearance, eventually, into the clouds? Or was the ascension a wonder, the earthly manifestation of which the disciples witnessed?
5. Do clouds have any significance in Scripture? Does this particular cloud have any significance? Does it have significance, also, in the word of the angels that He shall come “in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”?
6. What is the significance of the appearance of the angels at this time? At what other important times do they appear in gospel-history? Why is it necessary for them to appear at such times?
7. Concerning the angels’ message:
   a. Why do they ask the question of vs. 11a?
   b. What do the angels establish concerning the return of Jesus? What is the connection between the ascension and the return? How must we judge the premillennialists’ teachings concerning the return of Jesus in the light of this passage?
8. What is the significance of Jesus’ ascension:
   a. For Himself?
   b. For His people?
III. The 10 days between the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, vss. 12-20:

1. Where did the disciples go after the ascension, and why?
2. Where did they gather? Can it be determined what upper room this was, whether a room in the temple, or in a home?
3. Who were gathered together in those days, and how many? Was this the church?
4. What characterized this assembly, vs. 14? For what do you suppose they prayed?
5. Why was there a delay of ten days before the outpouring of the Holy Ghost? Is the number ten of any significance here?
6. Concerning the appointment of Matthias:
   a. How was his appointment brought about?
   1) Analyse the speech of Peter. Does his conclusion follow from his speech?
   2) How is it to be explained that Peter could make such a speech before the outpouring of the Spirit?
   3) Does the entire passage from 16 to 22 belong to Peter’s speech, or is part of this passage comment by Luke?
   4) How must we judge concerning the casting of lots in this case? Were lots cast after Pentecost? Was the casting of lots authorized in this case? Was it a “free” casting of lots, or was it severely limited by a “human” nomination?
   b. There is much difference of opinion on the subject of Matthias’s apostleship. What arguments can you produce pro and/or con?

H. C. H.

TRUTH VS. ERROR
(Continued from page 10)

church! Would you want to be fed by such a preacher?
(b) it is wrong to conclude from the preaching of individual ministers that there is no difference between churches. This difference must be sought in the Creeds. They are the official expression of the doctrinal position of the church! In this connection, young people, don’t you ever forget that the Creeds of the Protestant Reformed and the Christian Reformed Churches are NOT the same! Don’t ever let anyone tell you they are. THEY HAVE THE THREE POINTS! Don’t forget it! And all of their Standards are interpreted in the light of those Three Points! That’s the difference! Remember?
(c) The error undoubtedly lies with those making such a claim. They, having neglected their former instruction, are unable to discern the difference, or they have failed to conduct an honest, thorough and serious investigation.

One can never justify his departure from the Truth! From the True Confessions! From the church that maintains the Truth of these Confessions! (Consider Hebrews 4:13)

But we will have to continue this subject next time, D.V.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg

DID YOU KNOW . . . .
— That Grand Haven church service begins at 10:00 in the morning?
— That there will be ten books in the completed series on the catechism by Rev. H. Hoeksema?
— That there still are some of our people who do not subscribe to “Beacon Lights”?
— That it costs more than $200.00 to print “Beacon Lights”?
Ants

You have heard of women aiding an army, and in a few cases women have been reported as fighting along with the men. There is an army in nature which never contains any males. As long as ants have lived they have had armies and the ant soldiers have always been females.

The male ants are so lazy, so blind, and so stupid, that they are of no use whatever to the ant tribe except to serve as the fathers of future generations. They live only a short time. They are of no value as soldiers.

But the females are divided into many castes. One of the castes in ant families is especially fitted for warfare. Usually, the soldier’s head is much larger than the heads of others in the family. Its mandibles are larger and more effective as weapons. In some families the soldier is also provided with a gas tube through which it shoots poisonous gases to drive off or destroy the enemy. The armies of ants are always made up exclusively of females. You see, the female is by far the dominant sex among the ants.

Every now and then we see ants with wings. These are not a separate species of ants; nor, as popular belief has it, are they males only. Every year some females and males are born with wings. At an appointed time in the fall, these winged ants fly into the air.

The males have almost no sense whatever. They do not know how to feed themselves. They cannot find their way home. After their flight they drop to the ground and starve to death. Yet, they were created with some kind of an instinct or sense which enables them to follow and find one of the virgin queens.

The wedding takes place in the air, sort of an airplane wedding. After it is over, the queen descends to the ground, bites off her wings, and starts a new colony — alone. For the male life is over. His tomb is the great out-of-doors.

Some of the soldier ants with the specific scientific name Pheidole instabilis, have a head which is twice as large as their bodies. Their job is to defend the rest of their tribe. The soldier ants fight with their heads. Each soldier has strong jaws with which he seizes other animals. These large mandibles are operated by strong muscles inside the head. That is why the head must be so large.

The other ants feed the soldiers, since they do not have cumbersome crops or storage stomachs. Thus, they are able to devote their whole body — and head — to warfare. The worker ants have larger crops for food storage and collect excess food for the whole colony. They feed the soldiers, the queen, the males, and the baby ants.

Thus we can find some justification in the ant kingdom for slavery, for there are some species of ants which cannot feed themselves. The mandibles have grown so large that they cannot secure their own food. Neither can they care for their own young. Consequently, they must keep slaves if the race is to be perpetuated.

The Amazon ants, for example, have grown helpless and they must capture another variety known as Formica argenteata. As a matter of fact, they do not capture their slaves, but rather raise them. They go to the nest of the For-
mica, kill enough of the adults so that they can carry away the cocoons containing the Formica larvae. When these babies hatch, they become members of the Amazon ant family and serve faithfully as slaves. They hunt food and care for the offspring of the Amazon queen.

Ants have had a public nursing system as long as they have been on this earth. Their community nurses are extremely busy. They control the temperature, prevent disease, and maintain cleanliness in the ant nest. They bathe and exercise the ant children. They care for the eggs and cocoons.

Those ants which are born to be nurses stay in that service all their lives. They do not know how to do anything else. The foraging ants gather the food and bring it to the nest. There it is fed to the nurses and those other workers in the ant colony who do not hunt for food.

The nurses move the eggs, larvae, and pupae from one compartment of the nest to another in order to keep the developing youngsters in just the right temperature and humidity. Separate compartments are provided which serve as brooders. In each one there is a different temperature and a different degree of humidity.

The nurses prevent disease by keeping the larvae licked clean. They bathe them with their large tongues. The tongue is provided with a kind of soap which helps to do the cleaning job well. After the children are large enough to walk, the nurses take them out into the open for exercise every day until their muscles are strong and they are ready to assume their special jobs in the ant community.

Ants domesticated "cows" long before man made widespread use of them. Ant's most common "cows" are the aphids. These are tiny plant lice which give a desirable liquid, as our cows give milk for us. The ants pasture these "cows" and herd them in much the same way we care for ours.

There are nearly six hundred different kinds of animals which have been domesticated by ants. We have nowhere near that number. In some cases, the domesticated animals seem to be kept as pets just as we keep cats and dogs. In other cases, they are kept for the purpose of supplying a sweet odor.

Some ants have domesticated the American beetle. Some nurture the crickets in order to get benefits from them. In every case, ants take as good care of their domestic animals as they do of their own babies. For instance, the ants move their aphid "cows" from bush to bush for better pasture. When one bush is stripped of its leaves and ruined, the ant "herders" move them.

Among the ants, the dairymen never go on strike. They are always willing workers. They are not males, but females which milk the "cows" on the leaves in your garden.

The green, red, or black plant lice or aphids are the "cows" which supply delightful milk to several species of ants. So valuable are these "cows" to the ant family that the female ant not only milks them but cares for them just as affectionately as any farmer cares for his four legged cows.

The aphids have a long proboscis which it thrusts into the leaf of the plant on which it feeds. Through this proboscis, it draws the liquid from the inside of the leaf into its stomach. There the liquid is digested, and part of it is drawn out in the form of a sweet liquid known as "honey dew." This is what the ants use as food.

One ant will fill her crop with honey dew and then, as she goes back to the nest, she may meet one of her nest mates who is hungry. They both stand on their

(Continued on page 20)
Life's Golden Rule

During the month of August in a courtroom on Governors Island in the New York harbor, there sat a court-martial of eight U.S. Army officers, gathered together for the purpose of hearing the charges of murder and collaboration with the enemy brought against Sergeant James Gallagher.

During his 33 months as a prisoner Gallagher testified that he was not a murderer but a dispenser of mercy to the weaker prisoners; he said that he had not informed upon his fellow prisoners, nor accepted rewards from the Communists. To this, 28 former PW's protested and testified to the contrary, accusing him of consorting with the Chinese Communists and causing the deaths of three of his comrades. By the end of the month, the court martial rendered its verdict: guilty of the unpremeditated murder of both the sick men he put out into the snow, of the maltreatment—but not the murder—of the third man he had strung from the peg, and guilty of collaborating with the enemy. The sentence to be served was the maximum: confinement at hard labor "for the term of his natural life."

Here in this morbid trial, we see how one man was found guilty of pouring out his hatred upon his fellow comrades. To most of us, an incident like this is one that receives extraordinary attention from everyone, an incident that is very unusual. No doubt the reason for this was the fact that this case has been and was in the front page of nearly every newspaper and magazine throughout the country. But let us examine the principle of a case like this and notice how that on every side of us this very thing is going on continually.

To the people of the world, success, wealth, and good fortune is the main objective in life. If a man is to be a success, he must have wealth, and if he is to be wealthy, he must have good fortune, and in order to obtain all this, you will very often find that the principle of his success lies in his belief that "the end justifies the means." There are many successful people today in the world who are respected by their neighbors as diligent and kind people who have made great contributions to mankind, but who really are none other than "thieves and murderers" who have reached the top by disqualifying their fellow workers and who have cast aside those who "just didn't count."

But as Christians let us remember the great commandments which Christ laid down for us in Matt. 22:37-40, when he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." From this commandment where Christ teaches us how we ought to act and feel toward one another, we all might well take a lesson, and practise this principle in our everyday life. So many times we become guilty of the same sin of hating our neighbor as did the Army Sergeant. How often we talk about our neighbors behind their backs, or disqualify them for something that they are rightfully entitled to. Or how
often we take the credit for something that our neighbor is entitled to. In doing these things, we are no different than the man who was found guilty and who is serving his life sentence for the mistreatment of his neighbor. We find it so easy to pass judgment on a man like this who committed such morbid crimes, but fail to notice that we ourselves are often guilty of principally the same sin. Paul asks us in Romans 2:21, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"

Let us then, as true believers in Christ, strive to live a life consecrated to God and our neighbor, keeping "Life's Golden Rule" before us always, namely: Matt. 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

John H. Haan

NATURE STUDY

(Continued from page 18)

four hind legs, place their huge tongues together, and the honey dew passes from the crop of one ant to the stomach of the other.

In the wintertime, these herds of plant lice are taken underground and are protected below the frost line so that, in the spring, there will be plenty of seed stock from which a new herd of aphids may be reared.

Insects need implements just as we do. Thus, they have been created with them on their bodies, whereas man must make his. Ants have a number of tools. Among the most important are combs. The combs grow on the ants' front legs. Like the combs we use on our hair, they have stiff backs and teeth that are pointed at the end, and thickened at the base. One of the combs has the teeth close together; the other, has them far apart. In other words, the ant has a coarse comb and a fine-tooth comb. These are used to clean the hair on the ant's body.

The ant has its skeleton on the outside, but this skeleton is covered with hair. Dirt collects on the hair, and the ants do not wish to be dirty, so they comb their hair frequently. The antennae are also cleaned by these combs on the front legs.

Thus, even at the low echelon of the ant we see that there is purpose and design in creation. How much more have we been fitted for our places in this world. We have been endowed with reasoning powers and a high sense of moral obligation which is only shadowed in the animal kingdom. The development of civilization was due to such gifts to us from God. Animals are capable of many wonderful accomplishments but they are limited by instinct.

Dwight Monsma

DID YOU KNOW . . . .

— That the next convention is to be held at Hull and Doon, Iowa, and that special busses will take our young people there from the East?

— That Rev. J. Heys had been at Hope for more than 14 years before leaving for Hull?

— That all articles for "Beacon Lights" must be in on the 10th of the month before the month of publication?

— That "Beacon Lights" is sent to many schools free of charge?

— That Rev. H. Veldman was ordained September 1932?
THE 1955 CONVENTION

SUMMARY OF SPEECH BY
REV. G. M. OPHOFF

“The Recipients of the Gospel of the Promise”

I. Content of the Gospel
II. Character of the Promise
III. What Believers Themselves are:
IV. Objections

The gospel of the promise has two meanings. One, the gospel as the content of the promise, and the other meaning, the gospel as glad tidings.

God gave His people one promise which began with the fall of man. This promise is also known as the seed promise on the protevangel. This promise was given to our first parents, Adam and Eve, and God has renewed that promise through the ages constantly shedding light upon that promise. The protevangel was a promise only to the elect and a prediction of Satan’s destruction. (There was no promise for the devil.) In Genesis 3:15 God promises to bring into being the elect and to destroy the evil one. The content of the promise is Christ Himself in connection with the cross. (God sees His elect as holy and sinless.)

The character of the promise is that man by nature is a person of conditions, but God on the other hand, is the unchangeable One who has no conditional dealings with man. The promise is an unconditional oath to His people. Election is the supreme cause and fount of God’s salvation.

There are objections to this promise of the gospel. First some say that the gospel of election can’t be preached because we do not know who the elect are. On the contrary it is believed that, historically the believers are the church and the true church can be seen. Election is not a hidden thing for God in His fulness expresses salvation and all its glad tidings to His people. Then too, God is the infallible and true preacher of the Word whose chief concern is the salvation of His people.

A second objection to this promise is that the gospel should not be preached to all men, however, the Bible teaches that the gospel should be preached to all men. Our confessions and catechism also teach that the gospel should be preached to all men.

The final objection to the gospel of the promise is that the gospel promise is a prophecy prediction and not a promise. Those who adhere to this conviction believe that the promise is given to everyone. Every baptized child receives the promise. The opposing view to this conviction is that he who wants a promise to all must deny that the promise is an oath given to the believers alone. To say that the promises of God are conditional is to destroy the promise of salvation and its benefits. God assures the election of His children in their hearts for we read that God’s spirit beareth witness with our spirit telling us that we are His children.

Debores Mensch

DEBATE REPORT

Resolved: Television is Beneficial to the Christian Home.

Negative debaters: Dave Engelsma and Jake Kuiper of Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

Dave Engelsma:
The church for many years was against the theater movie. Now instead of going to the theater, people buy a Television
set and that way allow the movies right in their own home.

The Bible commands that we as Christians must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. This of course is most difficult when, with a flick of a button, we bring the world in our own living room. We also pray, “Keep us from Temptation,” and we turn right around and subject ourselves to temptation through T.V.

We should also consider that gradually the Christian becomes insensitive and immuned to the evils seen on Television. T.V. of course represents and portrays Hollywood. Soon the Christian begins to watch and becomes enthused in the movies he condemned others for watching in the movies.

Jake Kuiper:

Besides building spiritual insensitivities, T.V. also has many psychological effects over young people. Many times you read in your newspapers of young people committing crimes, getting the ideas from T.V. movies. Also it affects the hygiene and health habits of today’s Americans.

Television may have some good programs, but even these are produced by the moneyscuring wicked of Hollywood.

Bearing these things in mind, the only conclusion that any Christian can come to is that the evil programs outweigh the good programs to such a degree that it would be detrimental for the Christian home to allow a Television set to take a place in the home.

The judges decided that the Negative set forth the stronger arguments and therefore won the debate.

Jim Schipper — Reporter

ESSAY REPORT

“Is God’s Giving of Things in This Present Life a Blessing to the Wicked?”

is the title of the essay given by Everett Buiter of our Oaklawn Church.

Today, in our world there seems to be a very little difference between it and the church as the latter generally shows itself. This idea, he expressed, seems to be rooted in the idea that man can do some good in this world and that God gives some sort of “Common grace” to all men. This seems to be based on the fact that if man were totally corrupt he would not receive rain, sunshine, health, strength, etc., but would be destroyed every moment of the day.

The church, when they accepted this idea, accepted the fact that the world and church could more or less “live under the same roof” — which was expressed in the first point of 1924 — which has to do with the favorable attitude of God towards all humanity in general.

Yes, it is true that God gives us a certain amount of things in common such as health, sickness, war, peace, prosperity, adversity, and so on but that isn’t because God is favorable toward all men. Because when God gives sickness, pain and sorrow, adversity, poverty and death, He does not do it out of wrath, so also the good things are not sent to the wicked to bless them.

Those things, that in our eyes are good but end in destruction are not given to them out of God’s grace.

God, in His providence, keeps all and supplies them all according to their needs as it is expressed in I Timothy 4:10.

Only the believers does He preserve in His grace and only them does He bless.

Although this is thought of as a terrible doctrine to the wicked — even an earmark of the church that is falling away — it is a comfort to us as believers that all things work together for good to the righteous and to evil for the ungodly.

This is the truth, let us stand fast to preserve it. — Virginia Griffioen
THE IDEA OF THE GOSPEL
AND THE PROMISE

Rev. Hoeksema, as the first convention speaker, pointed out that the chief contents of the gospel is the promise. In a certain sense gospel and promise are synonymous. We as Protestant Reformed young people are always interested in the question of the Gospel. This is especially of interest to the Protestant Reformed people because we stand opposed to every Arminian, and Pelagian doctrine because they cannot really speak as the gospel of the promise. We are also opposed to the Christian Reformed doctrine in the three points. In the first point they make a general offer without distinction. In this we can never agree. This subject also points out the difference between those who left us a couple of years ago. They also have conditions. “God promises to every one of you that if you believe you shall be saved.”

His first point was the Idea of the Gospel. The term idea, means the general concept of anything. An example for idea would be a tree with its roots, trunk, leaves, etc. This is an easy subject because there is only one gospel described in the Holy Scriptures. Gospel in the original means glad news or tidings. The essential characteristics are: a) Light in the midst of darkness. b) God is sole author. c) Chief content is God as God of our salvation. d) Also of the Son of God. Gospel of Jesus Christ. e) The Gospel of the kingdom of God through Christ in glory in Heaven. f) The gospel of salvation. g) The gospel of peace. h) The gospel of grace. The gospel is the joyous work of God for his people where they are turned from darkness to light through Christ.

Rev. Hoeksema then pointed out the contents of the gospel. First a promise is something favorable or good, never evil. Evil is called a threat and a promise we desire. A promise is impossible among men. A promise is a sure pledge. A promise is never doubtful. A promise is absolutely unconditional. A promise is a sure pledge of something good. The good in the Promise of the Gospel is eternal life from death. Eternal blessedness from deepest misery. A promise is in this case absolutely sure and cannot fail. That is why a promise among men is impossible. Many things may happen. We always have to add to our promises, “If the Lord wills.” God’s promise is surely fulfilled. This promise is realized to whomsoever he will have it realized. It is preached to all who hear but not promised to all who hear.

Rev. Hoeksema also pointed out the idea of its being preached. In Rom. 13 we read, “How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?” The gospel alone must be preached, and preached according to the Scriptures. God pleases to send the word through men whom he has called. Christ Himself must speak through him who is sent and to those who hear the preaching. “Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

Eileen Van Baren

BANQUET SPEECH BY THE
REV. G. VANDEN BERG

“The realization of the Gospel of the Promise”

The Rev. Vanden Berg first pointed out to us that the realization of the gospel of the promise has a threefold view; the past, the present and the future. It has already been fulfilled in the past and has its deepest roots in the eternal counsel of God. The gospel of the promise has been realized in the perfect and complete work of the cross and the resurrection. Viewing the present, the promise is being fulfilled as of now. In
the midst of the world, God causes through His Spirit the realization of the Gospel of the Promise. Viewing the future the gospel of the promise shall be completed, perfectly manifested in the last day. Then the promise in the most absolute sense shall be fulfilled.

The Rev. Vanden Berg further brought out the Gospel of the Promise in the viewpoint of the future. The three phases of it were the absolute certainty, the revealed pattern and the final reminder to our covenant young people. God has determined the salvation of his own people and not one is lost. He surely fulfills this promise because He alone is God. God realizes the promise and glorifies Himself through us. The promise cannot be added to by His people but unconditionally formulated by God, who always does as He decrees and promises. God’s promise is absolutely certain as Scripture throughout has proved. For example the promise to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and to the tribes of Israel were all fulfilled as before decreed.

The revealed pattern refers to the manner in which the promise is revealed in the past, present and future essentially the same. God gathers His people out of the midst of the world. He preserves and keeps them from evil and the clutches of the carnal world who despise the promise. Also many things must come to pass before the full revelation can be realized. The luxurious days of Noah must return, days of unrest, wickedness and filth shall again come upon the earth, in fact there appear signs of them already today.

However, we must not be alarmed or surprised but remember that it all belongs to the pattern of the realization of the promise.

In conclusion the Rev. Vanden Berg gave his final exhortation to us as young people, heirs of the promise and on the other hand the future Protestant Reformed Church. We must not assume an attitude of indifference and a reckless no care attitude for this is characteristic of those who do not understand the calling. In fact, this is utterly impossible for the children of the covenant to do. According to Peter, “Seeing that ye look for these things through all things live day by day with your life centered upon the blessed hope.” Whether at home, work, pleasure or school be diligent. We must be diligent in our society study of the Word so as to give us a more wonderful realization. Therefore stand fast until the last day shall be fulfilled.

A NOTE FROM COLORADO

Before I express my opinion of the Young People’s Convention, I would like to say “Greetings” from our Church in Loveland.

I was very much impressed by the convention. May I express it in this way. For me it was a new and different enjoyable experience. Perhaps it is the feeling of an unsurpassed satisfaction that one gets from Christian fellowship.

In our church in Loveland I am the only young person of my age; however, there are about twenty five children under the age of twelve. I was happy to be in the midst of young people of my own faith; and am deeply grateful to our Lord that it was His will that I might attend the convention.

I feel privileged to have heard the wonderful lectures on “The Gospel of the Promise” each evening during the convention. Even though I am sure I did not understand the lectures to the extent that they were expressed, I did receive a great deal of Reformed knowledge from them.

May I close in saying—The convention in my opinion was a great success and, the Lord willing, perhaps I can again attend the convention next year.

Loveland, Colorado        Delaine Huber
THE 1955 CONVENTION

The May issue of “Beacon Lights” arrives. As we eagerly page through it we find that it gives us information about and a preview of the coming convention. What’s the theme going to be? “The Gospel of the Promise.” The place? Hudsonville. (Picture No. 1) The dates? Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, August 16, 17, and 18. Boy, what a long time to wait. Three whole months!

The summer days, weeks, and months flew by with amazing speed, however. August 16 came sooner than expected. We left for Hudsonville, riding down the hot, dry highway, through big cities and small towns, stopping only for meals and to change a flat. We arrived at our destination (Picture No. 2) about 4:30 Tuesday afternoon. There, at the church, members of the host society greeted us and gave us directions to our place of lodging. We were to stay at a farm a couple miles from the church. At the farm, introductions completed, we washed up and sat down to a luscious meal. We helped dry the dishes also, not because we liked to, but because we felt we should. We changed our clothes and rode back to the church for the Mass Meeting.

After the usual opening and singing, we were favored with a musical number, a mixed quartette from Second Church. This was followed by the high-light of the evening, the inspirational speech by Rev. Hoeksema. (Picture No. 3) Arnold Dykstra of the Hudsonville Society sang. A collection was taken and the meeting closed with prayer. Outside the church afterwards we met many old friends and also made a few new acquaintances. (Picture No. 4) We rode around for awhile, stopped for cats, and then hit the sack.

The next morning after breakfast we went to the church for registration and the get-acquainted hour. After opening devotions and roll call, we started with federation business consisting of reports and nominations of officers. We ate a small lunch around 11:30 and left in one long procession for the outing at Spring Lake with orders not to pass or drive recklessly. The lead car set a fast pace and the procession arrived at the lake in two groups. The first was those who kept the pace, the second group was those that were left behind and got lost.

We really had an enjoyable time there. We could sit around and watch or else play shuffleboard, horseshoes, volley-ball, (Picture No. 6) or softball. Some even went in swimming. The softball game was especially interesting, due partly to the fact that Rev. Vos was the umpire for part of it. He was, as someone put it, “Firm, but rather off the beam.” Arguing with him or teasing him, however, did no good for he’d never listen but only say, “Knock it off, knock it off.” After a bit he gave up umping and became a cheering spectator exclaiming, “Poot dat maan in clover” when someone got a good hit. We were also served a big delicious and really wonderful dinner about 2:30. (Picture No. 7) After the outing, we went back to the farm to eat and then drove to church for the evening program.

Following the opening prayer and singing, a girls’ quartette from First Church Senior Society sang. The address by Rev. Ophoff (Picture No. 8) was very interesting and he held the attention of his audience. We rode around after the program again and then went back to the farm.

Thursday morning at Hughes Park, just before the pancake breakfast, we heard about an incident which happened Wednesday night. Some guys from Holland, who were attending the convention, saw a police roadblock ahead of them. Making a “U” turn, they sped off. The
officers chased them and stopped them, thinking that they’d caught the jail-breaker but discovered it was only a prank. Everyone thought it was funny, everyone except the cops, that is.

The pancake breakfast was very good. (Picture No. 9) At least two people received fresh meat, a guy being served a dead fly and a girl served a dead bee. After breakfast, there was a program including a debate on the topic, “Resolved: That Television Is Beneficial to the Christian Home.” As expected, the negatives were declared the winners. (Picture No. 10) More business, regarding the election of officers, was taken care of. We then drove back to church for lunch.

One boy with a cigarette lighter decided to help out the ladies who had to clear the tables. He, aided by a couple others, piled napkins on a plate. Soon, however, Rev. Vos told the boys to put out the merry bonfire. The ladies did not appreciate their “helpful” efforts.

At that meal Rev. Heys learned proper table manners when a dozen or two voices chorused in unison, “Rev. Heys so strong and able, get your elbows off the table.”

The afternoon program consisted of unfinished business and an interesting essay by Everett Buiter on the topic, “Is God’s Giving of Things in This Present Life a Blessing to the Wicked?” (Picture No. 11)

At six o’clock we all gathered in front of the Reformed Church, the scene of the banquet, for the convention picture. The photographer (Picture No. 12) with his equipment, a hand-painted car, a dime store whistle, and an ancient camera, possibly a Civil War relic, tried to get order. He evidently had a severe case of laryngitis as all his feeble messages had to be relayed by Rev. Vos after they were whispered in his ear.

We were served a delicious dinner in the basement of the church. (Picture No. 13) Each person received two scoops of ice cream. Someone substituted mashed potatoes for a scoop of Rev. Vos’ ice cream, though. When Rev. Vos returned he spotted the fraud and after eating the ice cream, calmly dumped the potatoes into a coffee cup.

After eating, we went to the Protestant Reformed Church. Arnold Dykstra sang, after which Rev. Vanden Berg gave a stimulating speech. (Picture No. 14) The new officers were presented, (Picture No. 15) parting remarks were made, and after singing “God Be With You Till We Meet Again” we closed with prayer.

After the usual ride we went to bed. We heard, however, that some girls had a different idea. Soon after midnight, they left for Lake Michigan to swim. They were on the beach by a friend’s cottage when they thought they heard a noise in the bushes. All plans for swimming were forgotten and they left in a hurry.

As we look back on the convention, we think of all the fun and good times we had, of the old friends we met, of the new friends we made. On the serious side, we think of the lectures, the new things we’ve learned, the ageless truths that were more clearly revealed to us and impressed deeper in our minds. We can truly say that the convention was an uplifting experience (although one lad was let down when his girl refused to cooperate). We eagerly wait for and look forward to the convention of next year in the northwest corner of the corn state.

Anonymous

DID YOU KNOW . . . .

—that our Lynden church is meeting in the basement of a bank building in Lynden, Washington?