

BEACON LIGHTS

**FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH**

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

AUGUST 14, 15, 16
DOON AND HULL, IOWA



Hull Memorial Community Building

August - 1956

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BEACON LIGHTS

For Protestant Reformed Youth

VOL. 16

AUGUST — 1956

No. 6



TO HULL AND DOON

It is not known to me who had the first idea to organize the Young People of our Protestant Reformed Churches into a Federation such as we now have. Neither do I know who first thought of the idea to have a Convention. Whoever he or she was, I would offer a silent salute to that person, for the idea was a beaut!

I have not attended all the conventions of the past, but I have seen enough of them to know that it is a wonderful institution in our midst.

And now we are looking forward to the 16th Annual Convention, which will be held in Hull and Doon.

I am not selfish when I hope, wish and pray that the 16th may outshine the 15th which was held in Hudsonville where I reside.

And if it does outshine that 15th convention, it will be grand indeed. For ours was a good one. And that from more than one point of view.

Especially because of the theme, the Hudsonville Convention last August was outstanding.

It had never occurred to the Host Societies to take for their theme the outstanding doctrine which we as Protestant

Reformed Churches confess and have developed: The Gospel of the Promise.

We cannot expect that our young people realized this truth to the fullest extent. But we older ones, who went through the debacle of 1924, well remember that it was this doctrine of the Promise which was the real cause of the separation in that memorable year.

The real, the fundamental question in 1924 was: WHO RECEIVE THE PROMISE? or, IS THE GOSPEL AN OFFER OF GRACE?

And therefore it was necessary to once more have this question before us, especially the young people of the church who did not go through the struggle of 1924.

However, our young people were not entirely ignorant about this struggle, for it appeared again in our midst in the years of 1949-1953, in the struggle which resulted in a split. And we are convinced that, although the fight assumed a different **form**, essentially we had to fight the same fight we fought in 1924. And so it was a good thing that the reformed conception of the Gospel once more would receive the emphasis in our Convention activities.

And how we enjoyed the fine lectures of the three speakers! Again we heard how that our Covenant Jehovah revealed the glad tidings of the Promise in Paradise, and that to His elect children, Adam and Eve; how He published this same Gospel by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented it by the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law, and lastly has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son!

And . . . that this promise, which essentially is Christ, is given only to His elect people. Oh, it was good to listen to the three lectures. The inspirational address was given by Rev. Hoeksema on The Idea of the Gospel of the Promise; The Rev. Ophoff spoke on the recipients of the Gospel and the Rev. VandenBerg spoke on the fulfilment of the Promise.

I wrote the most about this theme, and I know you forgive me. After all, the most important part of the Convention is that the young people of our churches hear the Word of our God!

Not as though the play, the music, the singing, the fellowship of kindred young minds is not important. It is. And we enjoyed that too. You could read it on the faces; you could hear it in the peals of happy laughter. The testimony of one and all was that we had a wonderful time at Hudsonville. God be thanked for our 15th Convention. It was a success.

And in this department of recreation, I think that the outing to Spring Lake was tops. Especially that chicken dinner. (Perhaps I am prejudiced: you must know that since my heart attack I am constantly on a diet. But, off the record: I threw my diet-consciousness out the window for that one meal.) There were opportunities for every sport on the calendar. We spent a happy time there.

And now we stand before the Convention of 1956!

Young People! Let me urge one and

all to go to Hull and Doon. According to the "grape vine" there is going to be a pleasant surprise in store for you. And no wonder. The man at the head of this thing is the thorough-going Rev. John Heys. At a very early date he began his preparatory work of organizing. I know him to be a very conscientious worker. And he will do his utmost, with his societies of Hull and Doon, to give the young people of our churches a wonderful time.

And if the parents are reading this article, I would bespeak their cooperation so that as many as possible of our young people may go to Iowa in August.

And I have a very good reason.

You all know that one of the most pressing and the most distressing questions in our circles is the inter-marriage of our young people with young folk of other churches, resulting in the severing of bonds which are the sweetest this side the grave. We are losing many of our young people who, through marriage, do not worship anymore with our churches which we believe are the purest manifestation of the truth.

And therefore we should encourage our young folk to mix with the young people of our own churches. It is exactly at such occasions that contacts are made which result in the marriage of our own young folk with partners of our own churches.

And that makes for stronger churches!

And so, see you in Iowa! D.V.

Rev. G. Vos

Donations

Randolph Church.....	\$ 8.19
Holland Church	19.59
Hudsonville Church	42.17
Bible Study Society from	
Grand Haven	10.00
Hope Prot. Ref. Church	
Ascension Day Collection.....	28.4



EXALT THE LORD, HIS PRAISE
PROCLAIM

Exalt the Lord, His praise proclaim;
All ye His servants, praise His Name,
Who in the Lord's house ever stand
And humbly serve at His command.
The Lord is good, His praise proclaim;
Since it is pleasant, praise His Name;
His people for His own He takes
And His peculiar treasure makes.

I know the Lord is high in state;
Above all gods our Lord is great;
The Lord performs what He decrees,
In heaven and earth, in depths and seas.
He makes the vapors to ascend
In colud form earth's remotest end;
The lightnings flash at His command,
He holds the tempest in His hand.

Exalt the Lord, His praise proclaim;
All ye His servant, praise His Name,
Who in the Lord's house ever stand
And humbly serve at His command.
Forever praise and bless His Name,
And in the Church His praise proclaim;
In Zion is His dwelling place;
Praise ye the Lord, show forth His
grace.



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EDITORIALS

When any matter becomes a point of contest, it frequently grows in importance in our minds to proportions far beyond its actual relative size.

This is most clearly noticed in politics, where a contested issue is enlarged through the attention gained by the contesting itself, far beyond its real worth, even overshadowing more worthwhile or fundamental issues.

This same phenomenon is also found in our religious life, though not so clearly, and not so readily admitted.

Recently our churches passed through a period when our doctrines were questioned and defended vigorously by most of us. These discussions usually degenerated into an intellectual exercise with each opponent using every wit to prove that he himself is "right."

In this atmosphere of intellectual striving, our minds become so engrossed with arguments pro and con, that we forget the basic truth that intellectual acumen is not the most important ingredient in a Christian's life. The ability (or lack of it) to "out-argue" any opponent in a doctrinal matter is no barometer of spiritual health. Any person with a reasonable amount of intelligence can study the doctrines of our churches and defend them with skill, but this does not prove or even indicate, to any degree whatsoever, that this person is spiritually healthier than a simpler soul who cannot even defend the most elementary doctrine against attack.

It is obvious, however, that this skill in argumentation has come to be valued by us more than the most important virtue that shines through the entire structure of Christ's church. This virtue is referred

to in one source as humility, in another as love for God and man. Not a sickly, surupy, don't-step-on-anyone's-toes sort of love, but yet, a love that makes one willing to become the joke of the nations if it would do dishonor to Christ's church to do otherwise.

To illustrate this superiority of humility over intellectual prowess, let's compare the feeling of oneness that the Christian has with his God to the feeling of "togetherness" that we may experience with a friend.

We have all seen sudden friendships form when two persons realize that there exists some outside interest common to both of them, such as a sport or hobby and long as these persons agree on the elements of their hobby or sport, this so-called friendship continues to exist. But when disagreement appears, the friendship, because it is based on an outside intellectual factor, soon crumbles.

True friendship is created when two people associate together with the firm knowledge that their relationship will not be endangered by any interference from an outside source. Each knows that the other would never, for instance, terminate the friendship if someone else shamed him for continuing the relationship.

So it is with our relationship with Christ as our friend. The fact that we share with Christ the knowledge of certain doctrines, does not make us Christians. What does indicate the true fellowship of the Church, is the simple feeling (call it faith, if you prefer), that Christ will never "break the bond of friendship" because of our sin, which certainly is shameful to Him. On our part (through

(Continued on page 11)

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Unions

"Membership in worldly unions is incompatible with membership in the church!"

That has always been the stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

And so it should be.

As the years go by and the history of the world progress, this stand of the churches becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. This is due to two reasons at least. In the first place, it is becoming increasingly evident that the Protestant Reformed Churches stand almost alone, at least in our country, of all the reformed churches, who maintain this stand consistently. In the second place, the power of the unions steadily increases so that it becomes more and more difficult for the members of our churches to find work without sacrificing their principles with respect to this problem.

It is important that also our young people are well acquainted with the reasons why this stand is necessary for our churches to maintain. It is not merely sufficient to know that the unions have no respect for the rights of individuals, of law or of christian principles. That in itself is certainly true, and should be reason to warn of the danger of affiliation with them. But it is equally important that we also know the principle reasons why our churches have always taken the stand that they have.

The unions are becoming more and more an influential power in the country in which we live. It is very seldom that one can pick up the evening newspaper or a news magazine without some article that deals with a certain phase of union

activities appearing in it. More of the jobs available in this country are directly controlled by that organization. More of the influence in social and political spheres is exercised by the unions. More of life is constantly being subjected to their control. And they have almost reached a point where they are in a position to exert their influence in every sphere of life, also the life of the people of God.

It is well therefore, that we consider again the stand that our churches have always taken and the reasons for it.

If you consult the Acts of the various Synods of our churches, you will not find a definite decision with respect to the unions. Our highest ecclesiastical assembly never passed a concrete decision with respect to union membership. If I am not mistaken, in 1927, when there was as yet no Synod, but only Classis, there was a decision to this effect. But that decision was later revoked on the grounds that there was no particular case that was before the assembly. Yet that body made clear at the time that the decision was not revoked because it was not the stand of our churches, but rather because it is not proper to make decisions of this nature without a concrete case.

Nevertheless, there are other facts which clearly prove that the decision of our churches is certainly against union membership. There is the fact that the Synods of 1941 and 1946 sent letters to the president, the various members of congress and members of the supreme court, making clear the position of our churches on the matter and urging these various bodies to enact legislation or influence legislation which would protect the rights of the citizenry to work in

the work of their own choosing. And in these letters it was always made clear that our churches were opposed to the existing labor unions on principle grounds.

It is also true that when union membership becomes a matter for censure and discipline in one of our local congregations, the consistory must have the approval of the Classis in order to proceed. Classis has always granted their approval; and by this act have gone on record in favor of the position that union membership and church membership are incompatible.

If you read the Standard Bearers of the past, then often times the whole union question was discussed. Especially in 1942 and 1943 there were lengthy discussions and debates carried on in the columns of the Standard Bearer with respect to this question. In those years, the question was primarily limited to the CLA, the Christian Labor Association, but it became clear in these debates that our churches were strongly opposed to the existing labor unions. In fact the discussion in those two years was concerning the possibility of membership even in the CLA because of the fact that even that labor union had a strike clause in its constitution and also permitted complete open membership. And it was felt by many of those who wrote at that time, that the CLA had lost its right to be called christian, because of these weaknesses.

At least three of our churches drew up documents also which made clear their stand with respect to the whole union question. First Church drew up such a document in 1941 in which they listed the grounds of the objections against union membership and also advised the members to join the CLA rather than the other unions, although they made clear that they were not in complete agreement with all the principles of this organization either. In 1943, the consistory

of Holland drew up a similar document, and later also the consistory of Second made such a grounded decision. There may have been more of our churches who also took such a stand.

All of this clearly shows that the position of our churches from the very beginning of their history as Protestant Reformed Churches has been against membership in the existing labor organizations. And even though this decision is not incorporated into the Acts of our Synods, that is only due to the fact that no specific case with respect to union membership ever reached the level of this body.

But because the problem constantly arises, and because the problem is increasing in its importance for our daily life, and because many of our young people are not aware of the reasons for this stand of our churches, I hope, the Lord willing, to spend the space of a few articles on this entire question. It is well that we again examine the grounds for this important stand, not in order to call them into question, but so that we may become better acquainted with them. Then our stand in the world as believers, also with respect to these organizations will be an intelligent stand, founded upon the principles of the Word of God.

The question which we hope to answer therefore, is, Why do our churches stand opposed to membership in the labor organizations of today? This question we will discuss in succeeding articles.

H. Hanko



TRUTH vs. ERROR

The Rule of Faith and Life

At first glance it might seem quite unnecessary to express the subject matter of the fourth article of our Confession as a matter of faith. The article simply lists the sixty six books of the Old and New Testaments which we confess to be canonical. This matter is not disputed in Reformed circles. All are agreed that these books constitute the Holy Scriptures.

Moreover, the subject itself is one that is so familiar to us that we are inclined to read this article and pass it by without further comment. When we were considerably younger than we are now we were made to memorize these books so that now all of us can recite them without hesitation in the order they appear in Scripture. Can't we? If not we should put everything else aside right this minute and learn them and then review them daily until they are so firmly fixed in our mind that we never again forget them. This familiarity of the subject is an added reason inducing us to conclude that there is nothing new here for further consideration.

This, however, is by no means the case. The subject matter of this article is of greatest importance and must be firmly maintained over against errors that are prevalent even today. Historically the fathers expressed the truth here over-against the error of the Romanists who shortly after the Reformation, under the immediate control and direction of the Pope, declared tradition and the Apocrypha to be canonical and authoritative; and, hence, these apocryphal books are always found in Roman Catholic Bibles.

Is this a serious error? We may see how the Holy Spirit, the primary author of Holy Writ, has anticipated in more than one way that there would be those who attempt to add to the holy writings and, therefore, placed three significant sentinels as it were to keep the inspired Scriptures intact, and to guard them from having any uninspired works included among them. Three times the Bible itself warns against any attempt to add to the words of Holy Writ and the significance of this is greatly enhanced by the fact that the first of such warnings was written by the first of all the writers of Scripture, the second is found very near to the middle of the Bible, while the third was written by the last of the writers; e.g.—

Moses wrote: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." (Deut. 4:2).

Solomon wrote: "Add thou not unto His words." (Prov. 30:6).

And John wrote: "I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book. If any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this Book." (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Very important, therefore, is the matter of determining the Canon of Holy Writ. To clarify this further we must ask the question, What is meant by "Canon" or "Canonical Books" against

which, the article of our faith states, nothing can be alleged? "Canon" literally means "a rod, a measurement" and as it is used here figuratively it has the sense of "a standard, criterion or rule" of faith and life. By canonical books then is meant that collection of sacred writings which the church accepts as the Word of God and, therefore, as the only infallible rule for the faith and life of believers. By these alone our life each day is to be governed. The books included in this "Canon" have Divine authority over all our conduct and behaviour. They are the "lamp unto our feet and light upon our pathway." Blessed is he that walketh in the ways set forth in this canon and woe to him that despiseth them.

The Canon of Holy Writ is divided into two major parts, the Old and the New Testament. The former of these may again be divided into books of the Law, Prophetic writings and Poetical books while the New Testament has a similar three-fold classification—Historical Books, Epistles and the Book of Revelation. We will not discuss this distinction further at this time except to say that the Old Testament Canon was already fixed before the first coming of Christ as is evident from various references of both Christ and the Apostles to it while that of the New Testament was finally fixed by the church at the Council of Carthage in the year 397 A.D.

How, it may be asked, is it determined which of the many writings are to be considered as the authoritative Scriptures and which are not. This task, being very important, is not one in which man simply selects out of various possible writings those which are the most suited to his purpose. Then certainly other books than those which now comprise the Canon would have been selected. Man actually has nothing to say about this for God determines His own Word. It is God's Word, not the word of man. In determin-

ing the limitation of the Canon, therefore, the church is led by two fundamental principles:

a) Firstly, the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The church has the promise that she will be guided into all the truth by the Spirit of God. That Spirit, given to Christ and poured out into the church, dwells in the latter and governs and directs her in this task.

b) Secondly, the testimony of the books themselves. The content of the books of Holy Writ are easily distinguishable from all other books, especially by their self-testimony as well as by the fact that they constitute one whole. There is an organic unity running through the whole Bible. The more Scripture is studied, the more one becomes convinced that they are self-contained and absolutely complete—revealing a perfect plan throughout and having neither superfluity nor lack. Neither are they contradictory for they are the perfect Word of the perfect Spirit—the rule of a perfect life.

Thus we have the Holy Word of God. Presently in some areas our Young People's and other Societies will begin another season of activity. Remember the primary and in a sense exclusive purpose of our societies is the study of the Word of God in order that we may together grow in the knowledge of the truth and that the whole Word of God may become more and more the rule of our daily life as well as the standard of our faith. Study it, search it from cover to cover, and discuss it with all diligence as you see the things written therein being fulfilled before your eyes.

G. Vanden Berg



CONVENTION NEWS

You plan to attend the sixteenth Convention.

That is taken for granted.

You are anxious, therefore, to have more information about this particular convention.

That is to be understood.

We want you to be our guests at this sixteenth convention.

That is why we planned this convention with the care and zeal that has characterized all the preparation thus far.

We want you to know more about the details of this convention.

That is why we come to you with these lines.

* * * *

You may have heard our tape recording of "The Convention Preview" with its accompanying colored slides. But one forgets so quickly what was spoken once in one's hearing. And we want to refresh your memory and arouse your interest more fully because we know that you are going to enjoy this convention if you attend it and will be sorry should you miss it.

The Time. August is always convention time for the Young People's Federation of our Protestant Reformed Churches. We have picked the middle of August for the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the Federation. The three days August 14, August 15 and August 16 are red letter days on the calendar of all Protestant Reformed young people because on these days, the Lord willing, we will enjoy the Christian fellowship and spiritual edification of this convention.

The Place. The northwest corner of Iowa, part of what is called "The mighty Sioux empire" or more generally "Sioux-

land" is the place designated to be the scene of this convention. Here the Sioux Indians once held sway before the white men took over. (By the way, that was also before Young People's Federation conventions were held). Do not expect to find Indians now. Do not come expecting a wild and woolly West. Come expecting to find nothing different from your own State with the exception that this is a farming community, a peaceful, industrious, modern farm community. The Indians or Indian color you will find only in the Indian names that you may come across in your sojourn in these parts and on your trip over here. Here are a few: Sioux County, Sioux Center, Sioux City, Sioux Falls, Sioux Rapids, Sioux River, Cherokee, Okoboji and Pocahantas. On your way, see if you can add to this list.

Hull and Doon are twelve miles apart with the Sioux County-Lyon County line in between. Hull is in Sioux County; Doon just over the Lyon County line. Both counties border on South Dakota on the West and Lyon County borders on Minnesota on the north. It is a land of rolling farm country quite unlike the flat land around our Oak Lawn and South Holland churches, with far less trees than our Michigan and Wisconsin guests see every day; and consequently visibility out here is very great. But come and see for yourself!

The Program. To give you a little idea of what to expect at this convention we will give you a schedule of the activities as we have planned them.

Tuesday, August 14

1. Arrival and assignment to places of lodging. (We will tell you later where to meet in Hull for assignment to places of lodging).

2. Inspirational Mass Meeting in the Hull Memorial Community Building. The Rev. H. Hoeksema will speak.

Wednesday, August 15

1. Registration at the Doon church.
2. Get-acquainted hour.
3. Business.
4. Lunch at the church.
5. The outing at Rock Rapids park.
 - a. ball game: The East vs. the West.
 - b. group games, swimming, etc.
 - c. wiener roast in the park.
 - d. evening program in the Rock Rapids Community Building. The Rev. E. Emanuel will be the speaker.

Thursday, August 16

1. Cornbread breakfast in Doon Park.
2. Business.
3. Lunch at the church.
4. Finish business and eagerly wait for the banquet.
5. Banquet at the Sheldon Community Buiding. The Rev. Mc Collam will be the speaker.

The Theme and Theme Song. The theme for this convention is an expression that appears in Psalms: "Exalt The Lord." Our theme song is Psalter number 375, which, in the versification of Psalm 135, begins with the words, "Exalt the Lord, His praise proclaim." The three speakers, The Rev. H. Hoeksema, the Rev. E. Emanuel and the Rev. James Mc Collam will develop the truth of this expression in their speeches. The Rev. Hoeksema will tell us what it means to exalt the Lord. The Rev. Emanuel will set forth before us our obligation to exalt the Lord. The Rev. Mc Collam will show us how it is possible that we, sinful creatures that we are, are able to exalt the Lord. May this convention also be to the exaltation of the Lord in the lives of our covenant young people. Then, and

then only, will this convention have served its purpose and been a blessing to us.

Lodging. We will do our utmost to provide lodging for all delegates and have many homes that have promised to "house" you for this convention. But we need the co-operation of the secretaries of all the societies. Will you please, if you have not done so already, send in in the names of the delegates so that we can know how many delegates will need lodging. They, of course, come first.

Visitors requiring lodging will be provided for as well as we can with our limited resources of two comparatively small and widely scattered, congregations. Visitors wishing lodging please write Jane Van Maanen, Box 361, Hull, Iowa. Then we will know how many to figure on for lodging and for the banquet.

The banquet meal will be served and prepared for us by a restaurant noted for its tender, cornfed swiss steak. The owner promises to give you plenty to eat so that those of you who start back that night yet will not be traveling on an empty stomach unless you prefer it so.

All business meetings we plan to have in our Doon church building. Doon may be found by going 2 miles West on U.S. 18 to Perkins Corner where it joins U.S. 75. Turn right and continue on U.S. 75 for six miles. You will then see the sign pointing westward to Doon on Iowa 167 and three miles from U.S. 75. To get to the park in Rock Rapids for the outing on Wednesday continue on U.S. 75 in a northerly direction, instead of turning off for Doon, for another 10 miles. Then turn right on Iowa 9 and go through the business district and look for the signs pointing to the park to the left one or two blocks before you get to the Rock River.

So, there it is!

We could tell you more about this convention but we believe that it is better

to invite you to come over and find out for yourself to enjoy all these things with us.

We look forward to being your host.

The Young People's Societies of
Doon and Hull, Iowa.

HEYS' HIGHLIGHTS

A growing, but loosely organized group is among us, that converses with easy familiarity, about "f" stops, shutter speeds, depth of focus, and film speeds. Call them "shutter-bugs" if you will, and grumble about their fussiness in getting the mysterious camera settings exactly right, but don't forget, these same people are preserving everyone's good time in such a manner, that in years to come these memories can be relived and re-enjoyed.

For the benefit of this group, Rev. J. Heys, himself a veteran member, sent us a few pointers on where to find good shots, whoops—pictures!

The heights near the junction of U.S. 20 and Illinois 80 are tops in vantage points to shoot the nearby rolling farmlands. Nice for both color and black-and-white.

The sandstone formations near Dubuque offer unlimited variations both as background and as subject matter themselves. Also in this area, look for roads which have been cut through the rocks.

There are still quite a few narrow, antiquated bridges on many Iowan roads. Though a definite traffic hazard, many make interesting pictures. And though cornfields are, shall we say, plentiful, their vastness and the height of the cornstalks, are always a sight worth bringing home in the faithful Brownie, Argus, or Leica, whichever the case (with camera inside) might be.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 4)

grace) true Christian conduct will not find us being ashamed of our association with His church in the face of ridicule by those with whom we come into contact.

The earmark of a sincere member of this greatest of all Kingdoms, is not the ability to defend its doctrines against all opposition, but to believe and practice them in spite of opposition.

C. Westra



Young People's Societies of Hull and Doon

GISE VAN BAREN FEB
651 DELAWARE S E
CITY

Traveling Schedule

LEAVING

12:30 A. M. Monday, August 13, 1956
from First Church — stopping at South
Holland at 5:30 A. M.

VIA

Air-conditioned, air ride bus with tinted
panoramic windows.

DESTINATION

Hull, Iowa — 7:30 Monday evening for
the 16th Annual Young People's
Convention

Is your reservation already in, or are you going
to be left behind? Better see if there is still room
for you aboard this luxury bus. Price still only
\$22.00.