

BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
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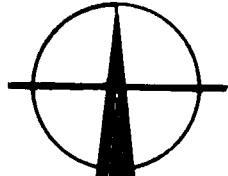
August-September 1970

***Sloth and
Presumption***

REV. R. C. HARBACH

***Sunday School in
the Protestant
Ref. Churches***

MR. D. DOEZEMA





BEACON LIGHTS

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"IS THE CENTER OF MY LIFE THE CHURCH?"

Have you ever met Harry? He is one of those fellows who is not so very interested in the worship service or various activities of the church. The first thing Harry does after he is ushered to his seat in church, is settle down as comfortably as possible. Then he struggles through a tradition prayer. During congregational singing, Harry mumbles along as best he can. The songs of God's praise don't stir his heart. When the minister leads the congregation in prayer, Harry sleeps. When Christ speaks to His people through the minister, Harry is restlessly watching his watch or he is far off in some distant land to which only sound sleep can bring him. Harry is the first to complain about the long windedness of the servant of God. Harry wasn't spiritually fed and strengthened because he never listened for the voice of Christ as He spoke through the minister. Harry says to his friends that he doesn't get much out of the sermons either. In societies Harry is a quiet fellow — bored to death really. He hasn't prepared for the society meeting and he doesn't participate in its discussions. You can't discuss the things of the church with Harry because Harry doesn't know much about these things. Harry doesn't read much either you know. But Harry is a most interesting fellow during the week. He plays softball two or three nights a week. He is the real hot shot on the ball diamond. Harry is a real talkative fellow when it comes to sports, cars, girls, or most anything else, but he is mum concerning the church and the things of God's kingdom. In the sphere of the church Harry is deaf and dumb.

I pity Harry.

The center of Harry's life is not the church of Christ. It certainly is a most blessed thing, however, when one can say that he finds his delight and joy among the people of God and in worship with them. There are families and individuals who express by their walk that they find their life's purpose solely in the church of Christ. You can tell by their walk among us. Many may say that they find their joy in the church, but does their walk confirm their speech or betray them? There are a few elements of

church life which we should consider in this connection to determine whether or not the center of our life is the church of Christ.

The spiritual names of the child of God are "thirsty one" and "hungering one." Such a one comes to church regularly. But he is not there just to fill his customary place in the pew, he is there with a desire to partake of the bread of life and of the water of life — Christ Jesus Himself. He is not there to take a "cat nap," but to feed his soul. Such a one worships God! During the congregational prayer, he prays. He too brings the needs of the congregation in prayer before the throne of God. When he has the opportunity to praise God with his fellow saints in song, he sings making a joyful noise unto God. Maybe he doesn't have a good voice, but he sings anyway because he is conscious of the fact that congregational singing is part of the worship service. Something which some of us seem to forget. Do you sing in church or just mumble along which is dishonoring to God?

Also the people of God desire and seek the communion and fellowship of one another especially as they are one in public confession. They desire one another's fellowship because the truth of God's Word lives in their hearts. They come to young people's societies so that as individuals and society they may study the Scriptures and enjoy an hour of Christian fellowship. Young people's societies are not just another social club, but a society which has the study of God's Word and related matters as its uniting force.

To live along with the church also means that we read the *Beacon Lights* not only but also the *Standard Bearer*. If you do not read the *Standard Bearer*, I would urge you to do so. Of course, it is not the official church paper as some have mistakenly imagined, but it is a source of edification and an opportunity to keep up with developments in other churches. It certainly is sad when the people of God can not because of ignorance of the facts discuss intelligently developments in our own churches and in the church world in general.

When we find our pleasure elsewhere

than in the church of Christ it is an occasion for humility and repentance. All too often, our major concern in life is sports, money, recreation, etc.; but those who live with the

church, walk with her in all her manifestations, experience the joy of communion with God and His people. M.K.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Your editorial "One Man" in the issue of May, 1970 prompts me to rise to the defense of a friend of mine, viz., John the Baptist.

Your word picture of the man is entirely foreign to anything we read in the gospels.

You write, "He is of average height, with a long, sandy, uncombed, vermin-filled beard. His body is totally covered, to all appearances perpetually covered, with the grime of the desert; and it would be difficult to say if he had ever bathed. The man is preceded and followed by the offensive odor of unwashed body and rotting teeth, mingled with the stench of lice-filled skins with which he is negligently clothed." Again, in paragraph 6, "This filthy Nazarene was John the Baptist." Later in the same paragraph, "Yet many could not see past the lice crawling in his beard, many could not understand through the odor surrounding his body. Many hearts would not be touched by a creature so lowly."

In harmony with the rest of your article, you should have ended the last named paragraph with the word "vile." Lowliness can be a Christian virtue; physical uncleanness is never that.

Scripture, however, gives us an entirely different picture. It is very unlikely that the Pharisees would have come to John: if your picture were real. These were physically clean far beyond the demands of the law. Besides, we get the impression that John's visits to King Herod's court were not at all unusual. He must have frequently rebuked the king for living with his brother's wife. These admonitions were the real cause of John's death. We also read that in spite of all this Herod heard him gladly. See Mark 6:16-29.

Furthermore, what exactly is the message you wish to convey to your readers? Per-

haps the weeds prevented me from seeing the flowers.

With Christian greetings,

D. F. LANGELAND

Kalamazoo, Michigan

Dear Editor,

Contemplating the editorial, "One Man" (*Beacon Lights*, May 1970), I felt compelled to express what I believe is a more acceptable description of that beloved saint, John the Baptist, whom the editorial portrayed as a "filthy Nazarene."

First, our conception of John the Baptist must be a biblical one and not that of modern day mockery. The image of John set forth in the editorial mentioned above is strikingly similar to that picture of our Lord Jesus Christ painted by the National Council of Churches, modern day evangelism and certain hippies.

In the second place, I point out that John was not a Nazarene (there is no indication he came from Nazareth), but rather a Nazarite.

Thirdly, the fact that John lived a separate and holy life (being a Nazarite), clothed himself in camel's hair, ate locust and honey, by no means implies that he lived like or looked like a modern day American hippy. Our Lord Himself testifies that John was a shining light (John 5:35). No man "with sandy, vermin-filled beard," "followed by the offensive odor of rotting teeth" can be a shining light! Moreover, he was not "a man of vague qualities," but a man of very definite high and holy qualities — not a ragged, wind-driven reed, but a rock; more than a prophet; none greater!

Jesus says John "bore witness of the truth" (John 5:33). Now the truth is that the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). In the light of this, why is he described as a mind-bent, freaked-out, stinking wanderer, crazily "muttering constantly to him-

self"? One who is filled with the Holy Spirit certainly must conform to God's standard of propriety! Moreover, each Christian is held responsible to glorify God in his body (I Cor. 6:20).

In the fourth place, Scripture bestows a great deal of honor upon John the Baptist, indicating that he was definitely qualified as the Messenger of the Refiner and Purifier. This Purifier once said to John, "Suffer it to be so now," requesting His baptism by John. Baptism signifies a washing, a cleansing. Would he be qualified to administer the sacrament when it is "difficult indeed to say if he had ever bathed"?

Our young people must not get into that popular modernist viewpoint of Christ's physical appearance. This modern liberalism, which erupts from the college campuses, tries to persuade us that we had better not criticize the grimy, grubby hippy because he is really an intelligent person, a Child of God, and, after all, he looks like Jesus more than any of us!

John deems himself friend of the Bridegroom, as the bride. He thinks of Christ in terms of the Song of Solomon. But picture the hippy wedding couple. Groom a wobbly, bean-pole of a shaggy-headed rag-bag—the bride a sad-sack, lank-haired, bare-footed squaw, hand in hand, uttering her toothless, "My beloved is mine and I am his." The Editor's "John" is incongruous and impossible.

As for John's dress, it was plain, simple, neat, and not at all inharmonious with the standard of Christian dress we have in Jesus' words, "Consider the lilies how they grow . . . yet I say unto you that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." Our dress standard is the beauty and glory of God's creation, the delicacy and purity of the lily. "Shall He not *much more* clothe you?" Then Christ's faithful followers (and John must have been self-consciously among them) are expected to dress according to *that* pattern!

Respectfully submitted,

PHILIP HARBACH
Kalamazoo, Mich.

REPLY:

Dear Brethren:

It is always interesting and exciting to hear from our readers. It means that some-

one is reading what we have to say! And in this case it means that our articles are being discussed too, and this is what they are intended to be.

In response then, to your observations regarding the editorial let us take a second look at what was written:

The setting is the desert of the Jordan. You will recall that John the Baptist was in the desert from his childhood until his showing to Israel. At any rate, John is walking through the desert toward the watercourse of the Jordan. The desert, according to Webster's, is, "an arid region lacking moisture to support vegetation." So then, we can assume that the desert where John walked was sere, deserted and sandy. Assuming the absence of any appreciable amount of moisture, clouds of dust would be raised by anyone moving about.

As John walks toward the Jordan he is observed. This observer makes no commitment to ideology or faith, nor is he aware of the personage whom he describes, but rather describes him as a stranger, from a distance, and completely through outward appearance. This is what he observes, and why:

He sees first of all a man walking toward an apparent, though presently invisible watercourse.

He sees a man of average appearance. The prophets were spiritual giants through the hand of Jehovah, not necessarily physical giants in any way. Remember the words of the prophet spoken of the Christ: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Isa. 53:2b.

Our observer saw a man with a long, sandy, uncombed, vermin filled beard. As a Nazarite his beard was of course of a goodly length. Walking in the desert as he was it would have been difficult indeed to keep the dust and sand out of his beard, or to keep it neatly combed. Of all the tools for grooming he would have been able to fashion and use as a recluse in the desert the comb would have been the most difficult to successfully make and one of the most crude. Attempts at grooming would have been something less than successful. In addition, as a man in a hurry—as a man with a heaven-sent mission, it would be very doubtful whether he would have taken

the frequent and lengthy pauses necessary to completely acceptable grooming.

This would also have encouraged the presence and the proliferation of vermin. Lacking the abundance of water for frequent washing, and scented oils for adequate grooming, the presence of vermin was almost inevitable. As today, only the most scrupulous cleanliness frees bearded men from the presence of vermin. In the day of John the Baptist, it was a rare and rich man who could completely rid himself of the ever-present vermin.

He observed a man with an unwashed body. John had been living in the parched desert for a long time. It would have been impossible for him to wash frequently enough to avoid body odor. In addition, he had been walking in the desert. Even had he walked only a short distance, the heat of the day and the exertion of the journey would have encouraged the growth of bacteria with accompanying results.

When John spoke, listeners were assaulted with the odor of rotting teeth. Until our own generation, rotten teeth were a major health problem. It was a rare person in the age of the Christ whose teeth were wholesome. Few were the men or women seen without a scented cloth to cover the mouth when speaking. John would hardly have been seen in camel's hair clothing with a scented handkerchief. John would have even been hard put to find a decent stick to chew on in order to clean his teeth.

The man was observed wearing lice-filled camel-hair clothing. It would have been as impossible to keep John's clothing clean and free of vermin as it was to keep himself perfectly groomed. Over a time of wear and with a limited supply of water and scented oils John's clothing would have absorbed body odors and oils, making it a natural home for preying lice and other vermin.

This then was the John the Baptist observed walking through the desert. Doubtless, given the opportunity for good grooming, he would have been more acceptable to the eye, but this was the John who could have been coming from the desert for his first rendezvous with God's chosen people.

This was a man with a mission . . . talking to himself as he walked. He looked like what he was muttering was crazy, but that

was the error of appearances, for the Lord was speaking through his mouth. It is difficult to judge when all one can see is the outward appearance.

This inability to judge from outward appearances is precisely the point this editorial was trying to make. Whether John actually appeared as his description above indicates is secondary to the fact that he was rejected by some because he was different in appearance. It was the soul of the man that was important. It was the message he carried which mattered, not his outward appearance. But many could not see the soul for the body, many could not hear the message through the odor which assailed their finicky nostrils.

Unfortunately, Christians tend to judge each other in the same way. We say that because a man's hair is long, therefore he is a hippy and not a Christian; because someone is not clean, therefore his soul is also dirty. Of course, to be consciously dirty when cleanliness is available is a sin. To rebel against decent, Christian attire and habit is also a sin. But to label, to judge our brethren because of outward appearance would make us more guilty than the hypocrites who laughed at John the Baptist. As Christians it is our duty to judge a man by his soul more than his body. Christ saw His children even in the bodies of publicans and sinners. If Christ did not judge by outward appearances, how much less must we?

I do not recall saying, or even implying, that John the Baptist was a hippie. A hippie is one in rebellion against God and man, and in the active state of rebellion cannot be called brother. The statement that the John in our description was a "mind-bent, freaked-out" hippie was yours. Perhaps the tendency to judge by surface, cursory appearances and extra, uninvolved reading rather than by the soul — both of the person described and the article written (soul being heart in an editorial sense) is a tendency more subtly pervasive than we realize.

Perhaps John the Baptist was not dirty as he came from the desert. Perhaps the Lord protected him from the wear of the elements present and kept him clean and shining. Perhaps his teeth weren't rotting, perhaps he was appealing physically and

drew admiring crowds, perhaps he did "fit." But whether he did fit and was acceptable or not — God did not judge him by that. There are many giant souls among us today who go unnoticed, unloved and unheard because of some physical unacceptability. This was the point of the editorial:

We are not wise enough to judge our fellow Christian by his physical appearance nor are we perfect enough to see the soul in the body. But as Christians it is our duty to search the soul of our brother. If he is a Christian in truth regardless of his appearance, Christ is there. C.R.



CRITIQUE

AGATHA LUBBERS

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE: AN INTRODUCTION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION (III)

As we continue the study of the dangerous and deceitful theories of Arnold J. Toynbee, we wish our reader to be thoroughly aware of the fact that an exceedingly important part of his theories is the growth and breakdowns of civilizations. Somervell in his authorized abridgement of Volumes I-VI of the *Study of History* devotes over 300 pages to the genesis, growth, and breakdowns of civilizations.

In previous articles we have noticed the genesis and growth of civilizations. We have briefly seen how Toynbee applies mythology to the whole problem of "challenge and response." Challenge and response, a concept which is central to the theories of Toynbee, also provides the impelling reason for the discussion of the relationship of the creative minority to the uncreative majority. Using a process called *mimesis*, the uncreative majority is able to keep up with the creative minority.

As we concluded our last article we were discussing the breakdowns of civilizations. In a chapter from Somervell (XIII, "The Nature of the Problem") the position of Toynbee is summarised. When states or civilizations disintegrate one of the most notable marks of such disintegration is the reprieve purchased by "submitting to forcible political unification in a universal state" (p. 244). This forcible unification, says Toynbee, has not yet happened to Western

Civilization, but it seems that he was beginning to see precursors on the horizon that foretold the coming of such a universal state. Breakdowns said Toynbee ". . . are failures in an audacious attempt to ascend from the level of primitive humanity to the height of some superhuman kind of living . . ." (p. 245). Toynbee says further: "We have also described the nature of these breakdowns in non-material terms as a loss of creative power in the souls of creative individuals or minorities . . ." (p. 245). The result of this loss of creative power is the complete lack of *mimesis*.

Toynbee also states: ". . . a creative minority *degenerates into a dominant minority* which attempts to retain by force a position that it has ceased to merit; this change in the character of the ruling element provokes, on the other side, the secession of a proletariat which no longer admires and imitates its rulers and revolts against its servitude" (p. 246).

Toynbee summarizes the nature of the breakdown of civilizations as follows:

- "1) a failure of creative power in the minority;
- "2) an answering withdrawal of *mimesis* on the part of the majority;
- "3) a consequent loss of social unity in the society as a whole" (p. 246).

More should be said about the breakdowns of civilizations, but for this article

we shall hear Toynbee reject determinism and the deterministic solutions of this historical problem.

Determinist Solutions Rejected

We have said previously that Toynbee rejects deterministic or "predestinarian" solutions for the breakdowns of civilizations. Toynbee disposes summarily of three determinist solutions for the breakdowns of civilizations. Those that he quickly denies are:

1. The theory that they (the breakdowns) are due to the "running down" of the "clockwork" of the Universe or to the senescence of the Earth.
2. The theory that a civilization like a living organism has a life span determined by the biological laws of its nature.
3. The theory that breakdowns are due to a deterioration in the quality of the individuals participating in a civilization, as a result of their pedigrees' accumulating too long a tale of "civilized" ancestors (p. 251).

Toynbee also wishes to dispose of a fourth deterministic solution; i.e., the cyclical theory of history. This is a theory commonly held since the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. Plato and Virgil adopted this theory of history. Toynbee insists, however, that his *Study of History* has given no encouragement to this view. In spite of the obvious element of recurrence, says Toynbee, we need not adopt the cyclic interpretation of all things occurring again and again in a series of never-ending and ever-recurring cycles. He says:

"Yet the shuttle which shoots backward and forward across the loom of Time in a perpetual to-and-fro is all this time bringing into existence a tapestry in which there is manifestly a developing design and not simply an endless repetition of the same pattern" (p. 253).

Toynbee further suggests that the metaphor of the wheel offers an illustration of "recurrence being concurrent with progress."

"The movement of the wheel is admittedly repetitive in relation to the wheel's own axle, but the wheel has only been made and fitted to its axle in order to give mobility to a vehicle of which the wheel is merely a part, and the fact that the vehicle, which is the wheels *raison d'être*, can only move in virtue of the wheel's circular movement round its axle does not compel the vehicle itself to travel like a merry-go-round in a circular track" (p. 253).

Toynbee likewise sees this explanation a reason for happiness; he does not believe Western Civilization is inevitably doomed to failure and to consequent breakdown. He envisions the possibility of a civilization which will not breakdown but will be able to survive. He has a utopian dream which he hopes will be fulfilled. Toynbee says:

This is a message of encouragement for us children of the Western Civilization as we drift today alone, with none but stricken civilizations around us. It may be that Death the Leveller will lay his icy hand on our civilization also. But we are not confronted with any *Saeva Necesitas*. The dead civilizations are not dead by fate, or "in the course of nature," and therefore our living civilization is not doomed inexorably in advance to "join the majority" of its species. Though sixteen civilizations may have perished already to our knowledge, and nine others may be now at the point of death, we — the twenty-sixth — are not compelled to submit the riddle of our fate to the blind arbitrament of statistics. The divine spark of creative power is still alive in us, and, if we have the grace to kindle it into flame, then the stars in their courses cannot defeat our efforts to attain the goal of human endeavor (p. 254).

A Preliminary Evaluation

I have refrained from evaluating the theories of Toynbee in my former articles but I find that as I come to the conclusion of this third article I must make a preliminary evaluation of the historical theorizing of Toynbee.

Arnold Toynbee's theories are humanistic and nominally Christian. Man is the measure of all the events of history in Toynbee's, *A Study of History*. He believes that man can erect, if he will use his powers, a utopia which will not fail. Toynbee always suggests that if man will remain creative he will cause a great civilization to arise.

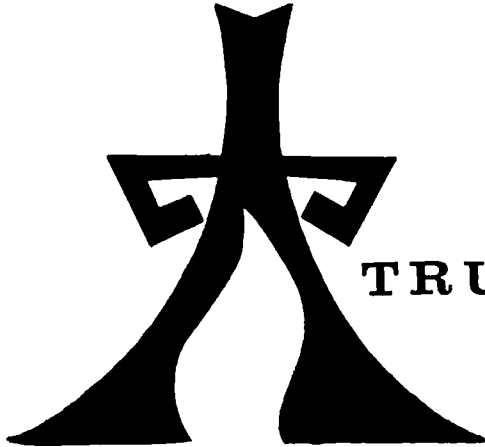
Such a utopian, postmillennial dreamworld is not promised by the Scriptures. The kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ cannot be understood by the idealists of the world. Nominal Christendom has prostituted the Christian ideal and has not understood Christ's testimony to Pilate. "My kingdom is not of this world; if my servants were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the

Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). The kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ has never been imagined by man. It could not enter into the heart of man. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the

heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9; Isaiah 64:4).

"But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16b).

(to be continued)



TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

Sloth and Presumption

"Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep."

— Solomon

"Presumptuous are they; self-willed."

— Peter

Simple, Sloth and Presumption, a trio of sleeping fools! You find them in a bottom, in the arms of Morpheus, and taken by the heels in the iron clutch of man's worst enemy, Sin. Even aroused out of sleep, they remain shackled like members of a chain-gang, but entirely oblivious to their captivity. They are living proof that

*"Sin is a prison, hath its bolts, its chains,
Brings into bondage who it entertains;
Hangs shackles on them, bends them to
its will,
Holds them, as Samson's grinding at
the mill;
'Twill blind them, make them deaf; yea,
'twill them gag,
And ride them as the devil rides his nag.
Wherefore look to it, keep it out of door,
If once its slave, thou mayst be free no
more."*

Sloth

It is not saying much when it is averred

that Sloth has a better head than Simple. Almost everyone has a better head than Simple. But Sloth makes no better use of his better head. In fact, he uses it less than Simple uses his. Usually, the extent of his thought is expressed in, "Yet a little more sleep." Really, though you would never know it from his life and appearance, Sloth is a man of envious ability. That ability put to use would make the church a hundred-fold greater force in the world. Great men of the church, Calvin for example, became great because they melted the fetters of sloth from their flesh by the white-heat zeal of hard work. Calvin, you know, was no pedantic old man. He didn't live long enough to be an *old* man. But he produced more (wonderful and lasting work) than many older men. He believed others ought to be encouraged to be productive for God and His kingdom. What do you think of the following advice? "Although many

things contained in this book are beyond the capacity of your age, yet I am not acting unreasonably in offering it to your perusal, and even to your attentive and diligent study. For since the knowledge of ancient things is pleasant to the young, you will soon arrive at those years in which the history of the creation of the world, as well as that of the most ancient church, will engage your thoughts with equal profit and delight." That recommendation was made to a ten year old boy, urging him to read Calvin's commentaries on the Book of Genesis. The task would be worth it to a boy if the only thing he could at first do with it would be to spend two years learning to use the dictionary and so to learn Calvin's vocabulary. That age is not too young to learn and begin to watch and pray, to fight the good fight of faith, to run with endurance the race, to keep the faith, to study the Word of God daily, rising early to do so, and continuing until late, and standing in the evil day with the whole armor of God. Calvin further counsels, in a chapter in the *Institutes* on Angelology, "Let us make it the grand object of our attention that we suffer not ourselves to be oppressed with slothfulness and inactivity, but, on the contrary, arousing and collecting all our courage, be ready for a vigorous resistance; and as this warfare is terminated only by death, let us encourage ourselves to perseverance."

Sloth loves his sleep; so much that it matters not where he sleeps, prison or in a bottom. It matters not that he, committing sin, is the bondsman of sin, that he is under tribute to that tyrant-king, Sin, who reigns unto death. Strangely enough, Sloth does, occasionally, get up enough energy to go hunting. He can push himself to the exertion of that sport. But he never enjoys what he takes in hunting; never dresses, roasts or relishes it. He wouldn't go to that trouble. He either gives away his catch, often to his brother, Waster (Prov. 18:9), or throws it to his dogs. He can't hack it because his way is always hedged up with thorns. Isn't that enough to make a man's hands refuse to labor? It is for the man who fears effort and loves ease. He desires no more effort than turning over in bed (Prov. 26:14). You are getting like this fellow when reading of Bible at the table is boring and is the only contact you have during the

week with Scripture. You are getting like him when you almost never engage in spiritual conversation, and find it difficult whenever you do. In that case, you are beginning to tire of the ways of God. Wake up, or you may be found mumbling sleepily, "Sloth, move over!"

Presumption

Presumption is the third man who lay in irons a little way this side the cross. It was he who had said, "Every tub must stand on its own bottom!" One old tub had a torpedo shot through its bottom. Of course, it got to the bottom of things in a hurry. Another old tub had a leak in its bottom. It ended up in the same place but wondered why. Presumption also says, "Let us do evil that good may come. Let us continue in sin that grace may abound." He thinks, I can sin as I please and still have remission. Or he says, "I am young, and so have plenty of time." Or when he is old he says of a neighbor two years older, "When he dies I'll buy his property at auction." Or he says, as he lays thinking on his prison cot, "I'm smarter now; next time I won't get caught." When he hears the curses of Mt. Ebal, he presumes upon mercy and blesses "himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, and add drunkenness to thirst'" (Deut. 29:19, 20). But he presumes even more on God's power. He flaunts his sin against God as if he were a party with power to bargain with Him. He provokes the Lord; he presumes he is the stronger (I Cor. 10:22). He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty (Job 15:25). Sleeping with Simple and Sloth, Presumption will wake up with a jolt. For "the soul that doth aught presumptuously, . . . reproacheth the Lord, and . . . shall be cut off" (Numbers 15:30).

Presumption is so intent, so determined to carry out and enjoy his sin that he waves off God with, "How doth God know?" (Job 22:13). "God hath forgotten: He hideth His face; He will never see it" (Ps. 10:11). He belches out with his mouth whatever he pleases, thinking, "who doth hear?" (59:7). Presumption joins his deistical associates in their works of darkness with the attempt to convince himself that

"the Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth" (Ezek. 8:12). Settled on his lees, comfortable in his wickedness, Presumption says in his heart, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil" (Zeph. 1:12). He believes that God will never call him to account, or punish him for his sins. He thinks there is no God, or that he has forsaken the earth, or that he is a weak and careless God. Presumption, shackled and sleeping in a bottom, is at bottom an atheist. He believes that God will be merciful though he goes on in his sins. "Is not God merciful?" he asks, as though that were all He is! He cannot believe that God is as severe as faithful preaching and concerned Christians have told him. So Presumption turns the grace of God to lasciviousness (Jude 4). He cannot accept that as the inspired, infallible Word of God which says of the man who blesses himself under the curse, "the Lord will not spare him" (Deut. 29:19f). That could never apply to him! For he presumes that he will eventually repent. He forgets Nadab and Abihu, taken way in the act of sin. He forgets Korah, Dathan and Abiram, wiped out in the thick of their rebellion. What kind of a man is he who is so sure he will yet repent, yet does not from day to day, gambling with his own soul? Live in the way of the reprobate and a man may only expect God to give him up to hardness of heart so that he can never repent.

"Is it true that the best of men may sin presumptuously? Ah! it is true! It is a solemn thing to find the apostle Paul warn-

ing saints against the most loathsome of sins. He says, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, inordinate affection . . .' What! do saints want warnings against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The highest saints may sin the lowest sins, unless kept by divine grace. You old, experienced Christians, boast not in your experience; you may trip yet, unless you cry, 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.' Ye whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, 'I shall never sin,' but rather cry out, 'Lord, lead me not into temptation, and when there, leave me not there; for unless Thou hold me fast I feel I must, I shall decline, and prove an apostate after all.' There is enough corruption, depravity and wickedness in the heart of the most holy man that is now alive to damn his soul to all eternity, if free and sovereign grace does not prevent. O Christian, thou hast need to pray this prayer." So spoke Chas. H. Spurgeon on Psalm 19:13.

Say, old Christian! do I detect a limp in your walk? Why! I see the reason for it, too! Your legs bear shackle scars, and your ankle bones still have imbedded in them bits of the devil's poisonous iron. True, is his open answer, but if you have a new Master, as I, then come with me and let us sing,

*O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee!*

FEATURES

EDITOR'S NOTE. *The following article is the first of a three part series on the Sunday School. Mr. Doezema is superintendent of the Sunday School at the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.*

Sunday School in the Protestant Reformed Churches

MR. D. DOEZEMA

I.

Some time ago I was asked to write an article on the Sunday School for the BEACON LIGHTS. That's a pretty broad subject, of course, so the committee wisely gave me a topic to which I was to address myself. Now, somehow or other, I managed to lose the letter which I had received from the

committee. And I couldn't remember what that topic was. A diligent search of my manse failed to disclose the whereabouts of said communication. I was, then, faced with two alternatives. I could contact the committee and ask them to refresh my memory, which would have been an extremely simple task. Or I could, because I didn't know

what the topic was, write on anything I wished. The more I considered it, the more this latter idea appealed to me — especially so because this past summer I've been busy with Sunday School materials and the Sunday School program in general, and this BEACON LIGHTS article would give me an opportunity to write about something which has become of great interest to me. So, if the committee will forgive the obvious liberty I'm taking with their request, and if the reader will pardon the lack of unity one would be more likely to find under a narrower topic, I will proceed to ramble on.

It seems that an Englishman by the name of Robert Raikes was the founder of the movement called Sunday School. That was back in 1780. Raikes noted that children in the England of his time were receiving little, if any, education. They were being neglected by the church, as was also the church being neglected by the vast majority of Englishmen. The spiritual lethargy of the day was accompanied by a watering down of the ministry of the Word, and by non-attendance of church services. Catechetical instruction was all but non-existent. And, not only that, the children, except for those of the rich, were receiving no instruction in schools, either. Most of them were, at a very early age, slaving away in the mines and factories to help their families eke out an existence. They spent Sunday, their only free day, playing in the streets. They were, then, getting no education at all, either in the school or in the church. This situation bothered Raikes. The children were growing up in ignorance of God's Word and accustomed to profanation of the Sabbath. So Raikes conceived the idea of the Sunday School — an attempt to get the youngsters off the streets on the Sabbath and, at the same time, give them the instruction they could get on no other day of the week, an instruction they would, otherwise, have never received.

That, briefly, was the original purpose. Now, it's obvious that the Sunday School, as we know it in our churches, is no longer necessary for that purpose. The fact of the matter is that our children receive instruction in the truths of God's Word by means of the catechism, in addition to regular church attendance. And they are instructed in day schools, *Christian* day

schools, in fact — even *Protestant Reformed* Christian schools. Then what about the Sunday School? Where does that fit? A superficial consideration of the question would lead one to conclude that it has outlived its usefulness. The truth is, though, that the Sunday School has become a useful instrument for additional instruction of covenant youth. To most of us, this is a truism. But we know that there are also those who find no place for the Sunday School in our churches. There are others who, though they do not *oppose* Sunday School, merely *tolerate* it. And since we would like to see it actively *supported*, it might, perhaps, be wise to consider that place for a moment.

We will have to concede, of course, that Sunday School does provide what must be called *unofficial* instruction in God's Word. Though supervised by the consistory, it is, nonetheless, not the official means by which the church institute provides instruction for the covenant seed. It can never replace, nor is it even on a level with, the instruction provided in catechism. But this does not mean for one moment that the Sunday School should not receive our enthusiastic support. The fact is that it is, in our churches, a society in which children receive instruction *in addition to* that which they receive at home, in church on Sunday, in catechism, and in the day-school.

That sounds, perhaps, as if Sunday School is mere repetition. It happens that we do not believe that nothing new is ever taught in Sunday School. But even if there were *not*, there would be nothing "mere" about the repetition. Repetition is recognized as an important part of good pedagogy. Just as repetition (drill, practice) is necessary in acquiring a skill, so also is repetition (even a certain amount of "overlearning") important to ensure retention. We all know from experience that to hear the details of a story *once* does not mean that those facts have found a permanent place in our memory. So it goes with Bible stories: they become *familiar* only after we hear them repeatedly. And I think that we also know from personal experience that there are a lot of Bible stories, especially in the Old Testament, perhaps, that are, in fact, *not* so familiar. The Sunday School deals with these, too — not just the familiar ones. I've heard repeatedly from Sunday School

teachers, that they were not sure how much good they did for the children, but that Sunday School had done a lot for their *own* knowledge of Scripture. Now, if the *adult* Sunday School *teacher* finds a study, or a restudy, of the Bible stories to be of great value, certainly the *pupils* should be able to gain something. Perhaps all this seems to be belaboring the obvious; but the fact is that the most common complaint of disgruntled Sunday School students is that "we've had all this before." Well, we think that, unless the teacher completely botches the presentation, a complaint like that can arise only from a dissatisfaction with the study of Scripture.

We should add that there's still another reason why the repetition is not "mere." The fact is that an older student should get *more* out of the Bible story than he got out of the same Bible story during a previous study. These seemingly simple stories

actually have a depth which cannot be probed by the young child. As one grows older, he is able to see more and more truths in the same Bible passage. And the teacher who lives up to his responsibility is going to be sure that his older class does not get the same instruction, on a particular Sunday, as a class that is several years younger. He will lead his students deeper.

Well, I'm just beginning to warm to the subject; and already I'm at the point, space-wise, where I should start winding things up. For some strange reason, the editor will not give me half of his magazine; so the next best thing is for me to stop at this point and hope that he'll give me a little space in the *next* issue. So far we've only begun to touch on the importance of Sunday School. Next time, then, we'll attempt to show that, if used properly, Sunday School can be of inestimable value to both students and, we think, parents.

A Day and the Life of a Minister

REV. B. WOUDEBERG

I have been asked to write an article on the subject, "A Day and the Life of a Minister."

My first reaction to this title was to suppose that it had been misstated, and that what really was meant was "A Day *in* the Life of a Minister." What then would be called for would be some kind of a resume of an average day in my life as a minister. The trouble is that in a small, isolated congregation such as ours here in Lynden, most of my days are spent rather quietly in the study, and most of my contacts with others are by mail. Nothing could be quite so much a bore to either write or read about.

Accordingly, I have thought it best to take the subject just as it was given, and reflect more personally on just exactly what a day, and what each day of my life means to me as a minister.

A day, of course, is a unit of time, perhaps the most basic of all units of time. It arose from the pattern of the original creation and constitutes that span of time which we arise to each morning and which, to all practical effects, continues until we return to sleep again at night.

Moreover, a day is that unit of time

which is always to us the most important. It is the present. The past is gone and cannot return. The future is not yet and is unknown to us. But today is now, the present, that element of time with which we have to contend. Jesus pointed out the importance of this most vividly in Matthew 6:34, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

To me as a Christian, therefore, each day has a very particular importance. It is that element of time in which I am called to live out the faith which God has given to me. Forgiven by Christ, I do not have to be filled with regrets for the past. Recognizing the sovereignty of God, I don't have to worry about the future. My calling is to meet the day, this day, each day as it comes to me in faith. I should desire every moment of every day to be able to join in with the cry of the Psalmist in Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

And so now the question is what I find in my work as a minister which enables me

to meet each day with this kind of spiritual joy. And the answers to this are basically two.

The first of these is the privilege which comes to me as a minister to spend a great deal of each day considering and working with the truth of the Word of God. Here, after all, is the richest, most wonderful, most beautiful reality in all of the universe, the self revelation of God to His people. It is the light above all lights; it is the glory above all that is glorious; it is the good above all that is good. Well did the Psalmist say in Psalm 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." Surely to spend as much time contemplating this greatness of God as the ministry allows one to do is not a privilege easily to be overlooked.

Not, of course, as though this is always, automatically the case. It is easy enough to allow even those activities which bring one closest to the Word of God, things like teaching a catechism class or preparing for a society or even making a sermon to become a mere mechanical chore which must be gotten out of the way. It is easy enough to allow the Word of God to become the mere stuff with which one works. It is a sad thing when it happens for it means that the working of faith has been substituted by mere mental activity, and the result is inevitably that the joy and satisfaction of the ministerial life also disappears.

This is perhaps even more true in the second area of satisfaction in the daily life

of a minister: working with the lives of the people of God. Here arises any number of problems and frustrations, of sorrows and disappointments. Many a time a person would nearly despair over some of the most serious problems of life which are thrown upon the minister's shoulders without any apparent answer. And then it is important to remember that those who come to the minister are the world's most important people, the elect for whom Christ died. Rather than a burden, it is a privilege of the highest order to be able to meet and labor, and worship with them. When through faith one can grasp this truth and hold to it, once again the labors of the ministry take on a new and blessed light, an occasion to meet each day with spiritual satisfaction and joy.

At this point, however, I do want to be careful not to leave the wrong impression. I certainly would not want to imply to anyone that my occupation, even as a minister, is the only source of such spiritual satisfaction. For those who are called to labor within it, I certainly would hope that it should be. But there are many different Christians with many different callings in life. And to all the Word of God gives its own promise of joy and satisfaction. And so, whatever our calling in life, what we must all do is to recognize the areas of spiritual possibility and opportunity in life so that each day may come to us with promise of spiritual pleasure. Then each day we can go forth with the song of the Psalmist in our hearts, "This is the day which the LORD hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it."

OPEN FORUM

THE SPRING RETREAT

MARVIN KAMPS

As most of our readers know, the young people of the Protestant Reformed Churches from the Grand Rapids area gathered together at Camp Rogers for the Spring Retreat. Camp Rogers is located approximately 20 miles north east of Grand Rapids near Bostwick Lake. If memory serves me correctly, on April 10 and 11 there were about

ninety of our covenant young people there for this "Retreat." The purpose of these Retreats, it is assumed, is to provide *Christian* fellowship and *spiritual* edification for our young people. For what other purpose could warrant its existence? These young people were assembled to accomplish that purpose. Their parents expected that every

means available would be employed to accomplish this objective. It was their God-given parental right to expect this of us as covenant young people, and the Christ appointed office bearers of our churches expected this of us. And not only they, but God Himself demanded this of us. God, Who has spiritually called us to manifest the life of Christ given us as His regenerated children, demands: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written 'Be ye holy; for I am holy.'"

To one degree or another we failed! Miserably! And why did we fail? Because we did not employ every means possible to accomplish our purpose for gathering as covenant people.

Here is what we did. Very properly, we began our Spring Retreat with prayer. One of the young men from the Federation Board led us in prayer, asking for the blessing of God; for His grace that we might do every thing to His glory and honor . . . etc. But immediately after we stood before the majestic throne of God earnestly seeking His grace and blessing — three young men, two strumming electric guitars and the other playing an accordion, began to make rock and roll music. First of all they played a song entitled "Wipe Out" followed by the singing of some hill-billy love songs. We all sang some of the following songs: "Five Hundred Miles," "High Barbaree," "Puff the Magic Dragon," "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" and others. All this was employed, I take it, as a means to stimulate Christian fellowship. Or was it a means to our spiritual edification, to our spiritual enrichment? And not only that but it was to receive the blessing of our Holy God and Father in Heaven. And did it proceed from His grace and Spirit? Nonsense! After much rationalizing, I still cannot make myself believe that that rock and roll type music could have been a means to stimulate Christian fellowship, or be a means to our edification. I do not think that God was well pleased with us.

Maybe you sense the incongruity, the spiritual inconsistency of it all. First to pray as covenant young people for the grace and blessing of God, and then to immediately begin singing these songs. And to have done that in the name of, and representing the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Really we represented the cause of Christ Jesus our Lord. It certainly is a cause for shame and humility on our part. We didn't create the proper spiritual atmosphere for the Retreat. We should have begun as we closed the Retreat, with the singing of some hymns and psalter numbers. Then we would have at least attempted properly to create the right atmosphere for the entire Retreat. If we had done something like that the whole Retreat, which had several good aspects, would have had a unifying spiritual character.

I have one other negative criticism to make. Our time was on the whole rather poorly used. If we were to achieve our objectives at the Retreat we had to work at it, and that requires time. All day Saturday, except for two-one hour sessions of group discussions, was spent playing volley ball, football or just aimlessly wandering about the camp grounds. I am not condemning the sport activities as such because I recognize the need for something through which the young people can release their boundless energy. But there is no need to spend the greater part of the day at such activities. To make these Retreats a success we will have to utilize our time somewhat better with events a little more closely related to the purpose of having a Retreat.

I have said all I care to say about the Spring Retreat of 1970. But what about the Retreats of the future? Are we going to continue and probably increase the amount of time singing secular songs and listening to guitar music at the Retreat? I hope not. And if you do, you will have destroyed the Retreats. We must strive to provide better outings, i.e., spiritually better outings. What can we do to provide better Retreats?

In the first place, I would suggest that the Federation Board must seek the advice and approval of its advisors and youth coordinator for what ever activities are to take place at the Retreats. This has not always been done in the past. The Federation Board has done much for which it can be commended. But I think it can do a better job if it were compelled to gain the approval of its advisors in all its activities. Secondly, it seems to me that the individual societies have not established good contact with its Federation Board. Each young people's

society should be well informed in advance of what the Federation Board has programmed for these Retreats.

In conclusion, let us not look around for someone to blame for past faults and short

comings of previous Retreats; but let us as covenant young people, as societies working with the Federation Board and its advisors, attempt to provide a much better Retreat next time the Lord willing.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. VAN BAREN

"SIGNS IN CREATION"

Once in a while, though admittedly not frequently, one notices that even the world recognizes that something is happening in this world of ours — something which causes them to sit up and take notice. I observed this as I read *Time* of June 15, 1970, which presented the account of the terrible earthquake in Peru. The account of this earthquake began with these striking paragraphs:

"This year, as always, the world's attention has been focused more often on the catastrophes wrought by man than on those caused by nature. It may be that because wars are man-made and therefore avoidable, they are more horrifying than erupting mountains and flooding rivers, over which man has virtually no control. Yet this year natural disasters have claimed far more lives than the fighting in Indochina and the Middle East. As many as 200 Europeans perished in avalanches; 1,100 Turks in an earthquake along the Anatolian Fault; 800

Indians in a searing heat wave; 200 Rumanians in the worst floods in the country's history.

"Last week an event took place that far overshadows any of these disasters, and in fact any in the past several decades. In his 1927 novel, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, Thornton Wilder wrote: "Those catastrophes which lawyers shockingly call the "acts of God" were more than usually frequent. Tidal waves were continually washing away cities; earthquakes arrived every week and towers fell upon good men and women all the time." He was writing of Peru."

The article in *Time* continues by describing that destructive earthquake in Peru. It points out even the reaction of many who lived through it — they raised their fists toward heaven and cursed God. How striking is the account — and the recognition of man that these are terrible events! Only one thing, the important thing, is lacking in the

account — man refuses to recognize in this the judgment of God, nor sees this as one important sign of the end of time.

Do we read and understand?

Jesus said in Matthew 24:7, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places."

Again, among the various passages in Revelation which speaks of seals, trumpets, and vials, there is the section of Rev. 9:17-21, "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood; which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

The fulfillment of the prophecies of Scripture is so clearly evident that none can deny it. The signs of the end of time are being realized before our very eyes. Every headline in the newspaper shows this anew each day. Have we eyes to see? Have we ears to hear?

The end is not yet — though it can not be far away. More "natural" disasters will take place. Some of these are going to touch the United States of America too. Scientists forecast the probability of a terrible earthquake on our own west coast. Only last year we heard of the most terrible hurricane ever to hit this country. We can expect to hear more of these.

Natural man will give logical explanations to all these "disasters." He might curse and swear — shaking his fist towards the heavens. But he will not believe that God sends these. He refuses to see these events as signs of the end of time. He continues

and develops in his wickedness — until the end arrives.

How have you observed all these events, young people? Sometimes, I fear, young people regard any reference to end-of-time signs as being "scare tactics." Reference to these seem to be means, they believe, for compelling them to think more of spiritual things. These young people refuse to be "scared." They will go on their own wilful way as though all things always remain the same.

Others insist that though there are disasters in our day, these have always taken place. These consider the events of our day to be but ordinary occurrences. Some young people have come to accept wars, disasters, etc. as though these are normal. These too refuse to see any "sign" in the events of our age.

But we have the clear testimony of Scripture — with striking confirmation in the news-reports in magazines and papers. The end of this age is upon us. There must yet arise the antichrist with attendant persecutions. This will shortly come to pass.

Does it mean anything to you, young people? It seems to me that if we are indeed observant, we will also be very faithful. Now, as never before, it is our calling and duty to apply ourselves to the study of God's Word. Now, as never before, we are to know that which God has revealed to us in the Scriptures. We must know what we believe — and why.

When a soldier is about to enter into terrible battle, would he not be spending the time immediately preceding in preparation? Should we do less?

When a farmer observes that the time of planting is at hand, does he not diligently prepare his equipment and obtain his seed? Should we do less?

When the athlete is about to enter a contest, does he not spend his time wholly in preparation for the impending event? Should we do less?

When we see that the night is far spent, that the day of salvation is at hand, ought we to be so concerned about what can be seen on television, or so concerned about the world's latest novel, or so concerned about new cars or clothing? We ought to be more concerned about the new heavens and new earth which shall soon appear. Our

concern must be reflected in our words; in our actions; in our thoughts.

To do otherwise is to live the life of the blind fool whose end is destruction.



The **Beacon Lights Staff** wishes to thank the following congregations for their gifts:

Hull	\$ 15.70
Randolph	23.98
Holland	38.70
Hudsonville	131.17
Southwest	65.55
Kalamazoo	18.15
Edgerton	13.59

NEWS

from, for, and about our churches

KAREN LUBBERS

Our Young People

August — the month of the Prot. Ref. Young People's Convention! For those who attended, this was perhaps one of the most significant aspects of summer, 1970. For five days, August 19-24, the young people from almost every church came together in Hudsonville. We not only had many good times but also discovered more about ourselves and others as we discussed many topics under the theme "Strangers In A Strange Land." Let us all hope the Convention spirit carries over into the years ahead!

A beach party was held on July 17 at North Shore Park in Muskegon for all the Grand Rapids area young people which was sponsored by the Federation Board.

A Pre-Convention Singspiration was held in First Church on August 16, the Sunday prior to convention week.

Births

Mr. and Mrs. E. Kortering from Holland, a son.

Mr. and Mrs. G. Vanden Berg from Holland, a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Irv Velthouse from Hope in Walker, a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Leon Garvelink from Hope in Walker, a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. Rog Berens from Hudsonville, a son.

Mr. and Mrs. Rich Huizinga from Hudsonville, a daughter.

Membership

Mrs. Dave Doezema from Hudsonville to First in Grand Rapids.

Mr. and Mrs. Vern Huber and children from Hudsonville to Kalamazoo.

Mr. and Mrs. Menno Smits from Oak Glen Chr. Ref. Church to South Holland.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur De Jong and ten baptized children from Oak Glen to South Holland.

Kenneth and Elizebeth De Jong from Oak Glen to South Holland.

Mrs. Robert Miedema Jr. from Highland Hills Chr. Ref. Church to Hope Church in Walker.

Miss Peggy Bertsch from Ebenezer Prot. Ref. in Forbes to Hope Church in Walker.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hoven and three daughters from South East to Hope in Walker.

Membership

Mr. Myron Moody from the Cornville Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Maine to Hope in Walker.

Mr. Brent Overway from Calvary Ref. to First in Holland, Mich.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Boer and five baptized children from South Holland to Loveland.

Mr. and Mrs. John Heys from South Holland to Loveland.

Confession of faith was made by Mrs. Ben Huizinga in Holland.

Miss Floella Griess was received as a confessing member in Loveland.

Marriages

Mr. Will Haveman from Hudsonville and Miss Sue Aardema on June 26.

Our Servicemen

Rick Huizinga's new address is:
PFC Richard Huizinga 380-54-2614
Co. B, 79 3d M. P. Bn.
A.P.O. New York, New York 09114

Larry Koole from Hope Church in Walker has returned home from Vietnam. Welcome home, Larry!

Our Pastors

"The Coming of the Antichrist" is the title of Rev. D. Engelsma's latest pamphlet. The Church Extension Committee in Loveland now puts out one pamphlet each month.

In September Rev. Lubbers and his wife will return to Jamaica where he will become once again missionary of our churches. We bid him and his wife Godspeed!

On Wednesday, September 2, Installation Services were held to install Rev. Lubbers as missionary of our churches.

MR & MRS JIMMIE ZANDOTTA JR.
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