THE OCTOBER ISSUE FOR 1950
POST CONVENTION ISSUE

.... "NOTHING IS 
SO CONTAGEOUS 
AS ENTHUSIAM"....
(see page 4)

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Reformation in Christian Living
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It was early in the sixteenth century! God's clock, which measures all time with exactitude, registered the beginning of that historic era when the church of Jesus Christ would be resurrected from her Romish entombment where for several centuries she had been buried. Great events—turning points in history—were about to transpire. Things would happen that would shake the whole ecclesiastical world. The effect of these prodigious doings of God are felt even unto this day and they will continue to be felt until the end of the world. We are reminded of them this month—October—the 31st—Reformation Day.

God raised up a Luther, a man of courage and great faith. This man would be the tool of God by which He would break down the walls of superstition and tradition upon which the colossal structure of Roman Catholicism had been erected. How wisely God works! Not at all like men who meet the circumstances of human life and try desperately to find men who are able and qualified to fill the need. But our God prepares men and fits them perfectly unto the need of situations created in the world as the stream of history continues to wend its way through the valley of time. Thus was Luther fitted to play one of the principle roles in the history of the Reformation.

In our department we are not to consider the 'historical data' of this Reformation but we must try to see how this reformation effects our practical Christian life and how we, “living according to the principles that impelled the Reformation of 1517, will see our own lives constantly reforming unto freedom and life”. Likewise, forsaking these principles we inevitably will know deformation unto bondage and death. In Reformation lies your and my salvation.

Bearing these truths in mind we must be reminded of two principles of this

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great Reformation and see further their effect (or the effect they should have) upon us. The first of these is the objective principle of the Reformation according to which Luther, and true Protestantism with him, maintained the infallibility of the Word of God over against the coordination of Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition maintained by the Romish church. It is no secret that Roman Catholicism sought to keep the laity in ignorance of the truths of Scripture and that the clergy ruled the church with a rod of superstitions instead of according to the rules of faith set forth in God’s Word. The Bible was easily subordinated to the “teachings of the church” instead of these “teachings” being determined by the Scriptures. Hand in hand with this went all forms of corruption.

It was through the Reformation that all this was changed. The Scriptures were freed. The laity were encouraged to not only obtain a copy, if at all possible, but to study it and in the office of all believers to learn what God has to say. The invention of the printing press about this same time aided the widespread distribution of the Bible. Copies were being translated and printed into the different languages and the hungry people of God were absorbing the content of the Divine Word with joy and spiritual satisfaction. What had been lacking was now supplied in that God’s Word had full and free course.

This is objectively then a fruit of the Reformation that is carried down to us of the present day. We, too, need encouragement and constant stimulation to exercise the reformation principle of “studying the Word”. The enemies who would deprive us of this blessing are not a few and the greatest of all of them is, no doubt, “our own flesh”. We are inclined to “take these things for granted”; let the minister—the church interpret for us; and becoming self-complacent we are easily led back into Romish slavery. This month in many of our churches the opportunity for “Bible Study” in the societies and catechisms commence. As children of the Reformation let us be faithful to that which our fathers have given us. It is salutary unto real Christian living that we exercise these privileges diligently.

The second or the subjective principle of the Reformation may be expressed in the one word “Life”. Luther was inwardly dissatisfied, for the teachings of a “salvation by one’s works” brought not inward peace. In the way of works there could be no “satisfaction for sin”, and where “sin remains” there can be no peace with God. Luther sought the “LIFE THAT WAS FREE FROM SIN AND, THEREFORE, THE LIFE THAT COULD BE LIVED WITH GOD.”

Eternal life of fellowship with his Lord was the object of his search. This he found when God through His word pointed him to the truth that “the just shall live by faith”. This truth is perhaps more clearly expressed by saying, “those who are justified by faith . . . shall live.” Works cannot justify. Faith can. Faith in Jesus Christ and His perfect work is God’s appointed means through which
He works in our hearts the knowledge of justification. But the point we would emphasize is that according to the Reformation principle “the justified LIVE.” Faith is the child of grace and the mother of all good works. It is the pioneer of great deeds and thoughts. It is a saving power. It unites to Christ. It draws out of Christ LIFE and then it LIVES that LIFE.

We are children of the reformation. We are christians, justified through the blood of Jesus, by faith. To manifest this we must display LIFE. And life—the LIFE OF JESUS—is evidenced in us in works that are done to the praise and glory of our God and out of hearts sincere. Protestantism does not despise or neglect good works but rather points to them as the certain evidences or fruits of God’s redeeming work. Luther, himself was often charged with indifference to good works and in reply to this evil charge he forcibly said, “Faith is a living, active, mighty thing and it is impossible that it should not do good without ceasing; it does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is put, it has done them already, and is always engaged in doing them; you may as well separate burning from fire, as works from faith.”

Hence, we affirm that to really be the children of the Reformation and to know its power, we must live out of faith and walk in the works of faith. That is then also the essence of Christian Living. Reformation, without christian living, is as absurd as it is impossible. Doctrine (continued on page 23)
TRAIT and TREND . . . .

Nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm; it moves stones, it charms both the heart and the mind. Nothing great was ever accomplished without it.

Enthusiasm—its presence and effect—its glowing warmth and lively zest vividly marked the wonderful beginning for a successful year of society activity which was made during the days of our 1950 P.R.Y.P.S. Convention! From the very opening moments of the Inspirational Mass Meeting, when with one invigorate voice we sang the praise of God, to the concluding, solemn moments late Thursday evening during the singing of the parting hymn ‘Till We Meet Again’, we saw and knew enthusiasm.

Yes, there is a world of talking we could do about the Convention, about the speeches, essays and debates which were given. But, for the most part, these things have to be personally attended to be fully enjoyed, and besides they are treated elsewhere in this issue.

There are, however, two outstanding impressions which we noted during the Convention which might be mentioned here. The first concerns what probably can be called a state of mind—or better still—a state of heart.

Our young people showed that they love the truth. They wanted to hear it and to talk about it. During all our meetings and discussions one could readily sense the feeling of loyalty and underlying devotion that rightfully should characterize a generation with so rich a heritage to apprehend.

Now, of course, youth often fails to fully realize its God-given opportunities. We hasten to add, too, that we as Christians are all weak and do so often fall short of what we could be and we ought to be. But, nevertheless, one could see in the faces of our young people, as they met together in Convention, a readiness to serve the Lord and a hopeful, Go-fearing attitude towards the challenge of the future.

The second thought which occurs to us at this time also augurs well for the cause of youth and the future of our churches in general. It is the almost sanguine interest our ministers evidence for the problems and affairs of our young people. At every Convention meeting there were five or six ministers present and at the banquet you couldn’t count them all on both your hands. So it just can’t be said our ‘dominies’ are out of touch with the young people. They most certainly are genuinely concerned for the welfare of our Protestant Reformed youth.

Here, in passing, one could express the thought that there are those times when some of our pastors seem remote'
Beacon Lights for Protestant Reformed Youth

disconnected from the hard, cold reality of the day. That this is true in some instances we do not doubt and the possibility of it leads us to the consideration of the unenviable position of the young men who today stand face to face with the prospect of five, ten or more years of enforced military service.

These young men were present in all our meetings this year at Second Church; many will probably be across the sea when our current society year closes. For their sakes—as well as for the entire membership represented in the Convention this year—we can be truly thankful our Convention theme was so aptly chosen and treated. We can be thankful, too, for the ministers who spoke this year and for their down-to-earth awareness of the reality of modern times.

Pre-eminence . . . .

There is little we can say about the Reformation that has not been said before. This statement stands in spite of its hackneyed echo.

What other event in our church history save the birth of our own Protestant Reformed churches has as much attention directed to it? The many tomes concerning it would in themselves form a sizable library. Whether our people, particularly our young people, have read even a fraction of them is another question.

We must admit to the fact that Luther was quite a man. We have read much about his boldness and his indomitable courage. He is quoted as saying at one time, "Tell your master that if there were as many devils at Worms as tiles on its roofs, I would enter." And he very likely would have done just that.

Reformation Day and the person of Martin Luther have an important place in the celebrations of our churches. All this is well. And as we approach another remembrance of this historic event and the man who was used of God to bring it about, we most certainly should let the emphasis point to the hand and the might, the power and the glory of the Lord Himself who uses the man and the hour to serve the cause of the coming of His Kingdom.

For an interesting and instructive article on the Reformation, with a sound approach to its observance in this manner, we refer our readers to the Christian Living department in this issue.

The Empty Forum . . . .

Just as you would not have a fox be judge or jury at a goose's trial, those of us on the staff feel hardly able to appraise the results of our work with Beacon Lights. That's a job for others. And far better it would be if you, dear reader, would help along by telling us what you like or what you think you'd like in this magazine.

The Open Forum exists for the open discussion of current issues and as a voice for our reader's opinions. Although we are in the dark most of the time we trust the gradual progressive changes we continue to make as we go along—both as

(continued on page 23)
CONCERNING: Choosing a Vocation

(1)

Two young men are on their way to a session of their Young Men's Bible Club. John is nineteen and Jim is just twenty.

They are engaged in an animated discussion concerning the question of Choosing a Life's Vocation. This is not the first time that they have tossed this subject back and forth between them. Mary a time in the past they have touched upon the problem in passing, but now the matter has become a matter of dead earnestness to them.

The reason?

It is this: both John and Jim plan to enter College. And they are Christian young men, who take their future in life seriously. They do not simply want to drift through College and Life. On the contrary, they each have a definite goal in life and plan to pursue their studies to prepare themselves for this goal.

However, when they confront themselves with the matter of the choice of a life's calling they do not see eye to eye on the basic considerations that enter into such preparation for life, and what must be considered the basic elements entering into such a choice. The difference between the two young men is whether the choosing of a vocation is simply a matter of following the course of providential guidance, or whether the matter of careful and prayerful free-choice is preponderant. John feels strongly for the former and argues from the viewpoint of God's guidance in history and in events as they touch our life and control all things, while Jim is convinced that in that way the element of free-choice does not receive its necessary emphasis. The latter is afraid that to reason from the guidance of Providence smacks just a bit of Fatalism, reducing man to a stock and block.

And, as is to be understood, this matter is a burning issue in the minds of both John and Jim and both are thoroughly convinced that their own position is correct. And since they cannot see eye to eye on this matter they decide that they shall pay a visit to their pastor and friend, and to acquaint him with their respective arguments and conclusions in this matter.

And so after the meeting of the Young Men's Bible Club they wend their way to the parsonage. Both John and Jim are impatient and overly eager to present their side of the question. But they are bidden to be patient and so each tells his side of the question.

John, who argues very strongly from the Counsel of God and from His providential guidance in history relates his arguments and views first, while the
pastor, in the presence of Jim, listens carefully.

It is the contention of John that in the choosing of a vocation not too much emphasis must fall on the element of free-choice. We should bear in mind, according to him, that God leads us very definitely and certainly in His kind and Fatherly providence. The matter of choice is not primary but secondary. Whether one is going to be a doctor or farmer, teacher or preacher, is solely determined by God and by Him alone, and that we are led in our “choosing” in good measure by the circumstances, place and time of birth, our environment and family back-ground. Then, too, and this must not be forgotten, thus John, there is the regenerating power of the Lord and Holy Spirit in our lives impelling us toward following a certain course in our lives. The matter of free-choice is not so much a matter of personal decision and of our own choosing as it is the prompting of God’s providence and of the Holy Spirit.

Now John feels that he can clearly see this in his own case. He has been an A-student both in the primary grades and in High School. Added to this there is the objective fact that there is now a dire need of Christian School teachers. And he feels quite certain that there will be such a need also in the future. And so he sees the way clearly marked out for him as leading to the teaching profession after the necessary preparatory work in college.

Summing up, John sees the following factors in his “choice”: 1. The dire need of teachers for the Covenant children and youth; 2. That He has received the ability to study, he has received natural talents. And so he has but to follow the way of the promptings of Providence for him. The choice is, as it were, made for him rather than by him. He looks at the matter of “choosing”, as he calls it, objectively.

Not the subjective choice but the objective guidance is for him determinative.

But now it is Jim’s turn to relate to the listening pastor his view of the matter. Jim does not share John’s view as to the objective nature of the choice of calling. He is of the conviction that it is a matter of personal free-choice. A man and woman must choose a vocation. He is of the conviction that the matter is not quite as simple as stated by John. In fact he feels that John does not state it correctly.

To begin with, thus Jim, there are a great number of possibilities, of vocations from which to choose. One can choose to be a farmer or a shop-worker, a carpenter of an artist, a teacher or a preacher, a doctor or nurse. But in all this man has a free-choice. And that choose each one must, not so much by dint of providential guiding posts as from the prescription in the Word of God circumscribing our calling in Christ Jesus. He feels that only so one can really speak of a vocation, a calling. And what is more: choosing a life’s calling.

Jim reasons that this calling does not simply follow from a need of teachers coupled with an ability to study, but that (continued on page 25)
LESSON I.

Authenticity and Historical Setting of the Book.

(Esther 1:1, 2)

The Book of Esther, which the Board has chosen for discussion in our societies this season, is unique among the books of the Bible. It is unique in that it alone fails to mention the name of God even once. It is likewise unique in that all the characters who are mentioned by name in this book are unbelievers, and the name of not one believer is presented. Unique it is too in that it is the only book in the Bible named after an unbeliever. You may perhaps wish to dispute and discuss this in your society, but please leave the discussion of this matter for later lessons. There are other matters which demand our attention in this lesson.

Fact or Fiction?

You and I have been taught from earliest childhood that the Bible contains sixty six books and that one of them is this book of Esther. To question this does not enter our minds. The thought that this book might conceivably be a mere fictitious novel comes to us from those who in unbelief are bold to question that which God has lead His Church to accept of the truth of His Word. Men there are, and they present us with the claim that the incidents recorded in this book are simply the product of the vivid imagination of some man. One must indeed confess that this book does read like many fictitious novels. Everything happens just in the right way and at the right time for the advantage of the hero and heroine. Mordecai happens to be the one who overhears and exposes the plot to kill the king, and the king fails to reward him at that time. The king happens to have a sleepless night and asks to have the records read. Haman coming to request the death of Mordecai happens to be the first one in to see the king the next morning and is commanded to take Mordecai, his bitter enemy, and honor him before all men. Now one who confesses that this all reads like a fictitious novel must also in all honesty confess that it could not be otherwise than all these things happen at the right time and to the right person. For the Almighty God was directing all these things, and He always causes things to occur at the exact moment necessary to serve His purposes. And His ways are past finding out. One thing we must maintain as we begin the study of this book is that all these things actually occurred exactly the way they are recorded. This book is not fiction.
but actual history which played an important part in the gathering and development of God's covenant and Church here upon earth.

King Ahasuerus and his realm.

The king Ahasuerus mentioned in this book is generally conceded to be Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspis. This Xerxes reigned from 486 B.C. until 465 B.C. There are a few commentators who insist that Ahasuerus was Artaxerxes Longimanus who was the son and successor of Xerxes. The weightier arguments are found, however, with those who consider this Ahasuerus to have been Xerxes the son of Darius Hystaspis. We do not believe that a discussion of this point in our societies is either necessary or advisable. Whatever our conclusion might be, the principle thing would remain unaltered, and that is the social, political and spiritual condition of the world power which holds Israel in subjection.

King Ahasuerus had indeed a vast territory over which he held sway. His kingdom extended from India to Ethiopia. The thing here again that concerns us, and we believe that it is for this reason that the Spirit moved the writer of this book to pen down these details, is that the land of Canaan is included in this broad expanse of land over which Ahasuerus rules. Thus even if we were not able definitely to determine who this king Ahasuerus was, we still gather from these lines the historical setting of the incidents recorded in this book. It took place after the Captivity and during those years when the Persians and the Medes ruled over Israel.

The book of Esther follows the book of Ezra and Nehemiah in our Bible. However, the events recorded in the book of Esther took place before those recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. At any rate we get a rather definite indication now of the time when the story told in this book took place. It occurred between the Captivity of Israel and the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah to the Jews who had returned by the edict of Cyrus king of Persia.

Israel's condition.

It was a dark period in the history of the nation of Israel but also for the Church of God. As we remarked above, the remnant had returned back to the land of Canaan. However they had not gone as an independent people. They returned as a vassal state of Persia. And according to the last two chapters in this book it is evident that Shushan the palace of this kingdom of Ahasuerus is still "full" of Jews who did not return. The interest in Zion's good and the peace of Jerusalem is so small and hard to find. Another thing to note is that in the court of this worldly Ahasuerus is no Daniel or any such believer. God sees to it that there is a woman whom He uses for the good of His people, but there is not an Israelite anywhere in the court of Ahasuerus whose nationality and faith are known and who in spite of these remains there in favour of the king. As we remarked earlier Ezra and Nehemiah appear later and gain favour with the godless kings, and who would dispute the fact that they gain this favor because of the outcome of this story of
Esther and her plea for the life of her people? In other words God also used Esther to prepare the way for the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah. We must leave this too for later discussions. But here we see the world is feasting while the Church in Canaan languishes among the ruins of Jerusalem and struggles against the evil Samaritans who troubled the builders at many times and in many ways.

Points For Discussion:

The above lines we gave as a general view of the material to be treated in this lesson. And rather than be lost in a maze of questions the answers of which touch the main thoughts in the book but little and take up valuable time, we believe that it is better to point out things in the lesson around which the discussion most profitably would turn, and we list questions in groups to further this discussion.

1. The author of this book. The identity is unknown, but in your opinion was he a believer or unbeliever? Here you might briefly treat the matter of infallible inspiration. Would a man divinely inspired fail to mention the name of God even once? On the other side we have the question as to whether God would use an unbeliever to write His Word. He used unbelievers to prophecy, such as Baalim, and Caiaphas. But then does 2 Pet. 1:20, 21 rule this out as far as secondary authors of the Scriptures are concerned? Or would a believer record this history without in some way expressing his opinion of the sins of the leading characters?

2. The authenticity of this history. The Jews according to the Apochryphal books celebrated the feast of Purim which the book of Esther claims was inaugurated because of the deliverance she wrought for her people. In your mind is that sufficient proof that all these things actually did happen? May we prove the certainty of Scripture by the writings of unbelievers? Does faith need the testimony of men? If, for example, men would find the Ark of Noah somewhere would that strengthen your faith in any way and to any degree?

3. The place of this book in the canon of the Old Testament. As we wrote above the events in this book took place before the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, yet the book is placed after these books in the Old Testament canon. Have you any reason for this? Does the fact that it deals alone with unbelievers while Ezra and Nehemiah continue the story of the Church have anything to do with this? What of the book of Job which follows this book of Esther seeing Job lived much closer to the days of Abraham than those of Esther? Was the Church infallibly inspired also in the arranging of the books of the Bible?

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LESSON II.

King Ahasuerus Shows His Riches
(Esther 1:3-8)

There is something about the first half of this first chapter of the book of Esther that reminds one of the first part of the book of Daniel. We read in chapter one of this book of Esther of Ahasuerus and the feast he prepared for his princes after showing them his riches. In Daniel we read of Nebuchadnezzar and the celebration he arranged for his princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, coun
sellors, sheriffs and rulers of the provinces when he demanded that they bow down to the image he had made. We read there also of Belshazzar and the feast he made for a thousand of his lords, at which time God sent the handwriting upon the wall. These godless kings who ruled over Israel were in the habit of giving lavish feasts and of calling their princes and rulers to their capital cities for feasts and celebrations. The whole philosophy of their life plainly was, “Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”

A Sinful Display.

The passage speaks of two distinct feasts, the one lasting 180 days and the other one week. The first feast was for the sake of the princes who ruled in his name over the length of his vast kingdom. The other was for the sake of the common people in his capital city of Shushan together with the chiefest of his princes who either lived there with him in Shushan or else were detained there for the feast. Verse 14 makes it plain that the princes who also partook of this feast were the chiefest. It is not at all improbable that during these 180 days the king showed his riches to his nobles and princes a few at a time. His realm was a vast one: There was the time consumed in travelling to Shushan. Then, too, it surely would not be wise to bring all his nobles and princes into Shushan at one time. This might encourage a general revolt. The feast probably took 180 days because these princes assembled in groups, a certain number each week to remain a week or two.

During these 180 days the king showed to his princes the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty. This does not mean merely that he showed his gold and silver, his gorgeous apparel and the like. This he surely did, but behind it all was his vain purpose of seeking thereby to impress upon his nobles and princes his power and ability to wage war victoriously. He was at that very time planning to wage war on Greece to extend the borders of his kingdom westward. Nebuchadnezzar had demanded of his rulers that they bow down to his image and show their loyalty to him and his new world order. Ahasuerus rather than to conduct a “loyalty check-up” such as Nebuchadnezzar did, seeks to attain the same end by making a profound impression upon his nobles and princes and by showing them the folly of trying to break away from such a mighty king.

A Lavish Feast.

In verses six through eight we have a description of the feast for the common people in Shushan. What a dazzling display! Gold and silver and marble are everywhere! Brilliant royal colors are on every side! If he prepared a beautiful setting for this feast, it surely must also have been beautiful at the feast for his princes. Seeking to show the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty, he surely went out of his way to overpower the princes and the common people.

A few details not worth a discussion in society, yet things that might cause questions to arise in our minds. The
beds mentioned in verse 6 were reclining couches which were placed at the tables. It was custom to recline on the left side at the table rather than to sit at the table as is our custom. Rather convenient for the heavy drinker, do you not think so? This brings us to the second point. The drinking was according to every man’s pleasure. That “none did compel” does not mean that the king believed in moderation in drinking. It does not mean that instead of pledging the people time and again and demanding of them that they drink at each new pledge, he allowed them to drink as much or as little as they desired. Why? Not for the sake of moderation and decency. For if a man wanted to he might drink all he pleased. Verse 7 also speaks of “royal wine in abundance”. And the king himself partook too freely as is evident from his immoral demand of Queen Vashti that she appear there. Wine is indeed a mocker. We believe that the king made an exception at this feast just exactly because of that impression he was trying to make both upon his princes and the people of his capital city, Shushan. They must go home sober with a lasting impression of his power, riches and majesty. They must go home with a deep respect for him. The feast must not be a dream which they faintly remember. Yet he dared not deny wine to those who wished it. He was seeking to build up an impression of himself as a good and powerful king. He will do nothing to antagonize. He will even drag in his own wife for the pleasure of his guests. But more of this later. At any rate he does not demand drinking of wine and yet allows each man to drink as much as he pleases. By the seventh day it must have been a sad sight, this prolonged feast.

**Points For Discussion:**

We have touched upon the demand that Vashti appear. We suggest that you come prepared to discuss the following points.

1. **Ahasuerus and God’s Providence.** Had the king not made this immoral feast and made this immoral demand of Vashti the entire course of the history of Israel would have been different. Now Proverbs 21:1 says, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever He will.” Do we state things correctly then when we say that God permitted Ahasuerus to do these things? Does God permit sin? If I permit a murder or a theft I could have prevented, am I innocent? What do Gen. 3:15 and II Thess. 2:11, 12 say about this? Does God permit or put enmity, send or permit a spirit of delusion?

2. **Ahasuerus and Solomon.** Solomon revealed to the Queen of Sheba all his wealth and achievements. What points of dissimilarity can you find between these two incidents? Are both sinful or neither? Is there sinful pride evident today in world fairs and exhibitions of man’s achievements in science, industry, medicine, etc.

3. **Ahasuerus and Feasting.** What of our Convention banquets and the like? Is a feast of the unbelievers ever pleasing in God’s sight? Is He pleased with banquets of unbelievers the proceeds of which are for such things as Infantile Paralysis research and cure? What does Heb. 11:6 say about this?
LESSON III.
Vashti Disobeys The King
(Esther 1:9-12)

In the ninth verse we are told that Vashti also held a feast for the women. Whether these women were the wives of the princes or the wives of the inhabitants of the city of Shushan is not stated. However this note that Vashti also held a feast is placed here for a definite purpose. We may not read on as though it was never brought to our attention. We believe that it shows us two things. It shows us that up till the seventh day of the king's feast the women were kept from the celebration, having a separate celebration of their own. This, we believe, was also by the special arrangement of the king that all the attention at his feast might be focused upon himself. But it also explains to us why the wise men of the king show such concern over Vashti's refusal to do the king's bidding. Had the Queen been alone when the request came, there would have been no danger that the women over the length of the realm would show contempt for their husbands. She was not alone, however, but gathered in the presence of the women of the realm. And they saw her example. That is why the king and the princes realize that something must be done. Had only the men at the king's feast known about it, they would not have gone home to tell their wives and thus encourage them to rebellion and disobedience.

Vashti Refuses.
There comes a time when one becomes tired even of celebrating and feasting. Only in the perfection of God’s everlasting kingdom will man not become weary of the enjoyment of the wedding feast of the Lamb. And here at the feast which King Ahasuerus had prepared in Shushan when his heart was merry with wine he stoops so low as to demand that his wife display her beauty before his princes and the common people of Shushan. Perhaps he felt that some new excitement was needed. Things were getting dull, and his guests were getting listless of the continued feast. Perhaps he was seeking in one last desperate move to make one final impression on the people. Whatever it was, the text tells us that his wine was that which influenced him to do this thing. He had not planned this beforehand. This riches of his kingdom he had not intended to show until the wine made him merry. Now the word merry here strikingly enough is literally “good”. This must not be taken in an ethical sense but in the limited sense that he was so under the influence of his wine that he was “everybody's friend.” He felt happy, so happy and so well (good) disposed to all at his table that she who should have been nearest his heart he would display to the eyes of a drunken and sensuous group of men. But he is not so drunken with wine that he does not insist that she wear the royal crown. He will see to it that the most drunken of his guests has no doubt as to whose property she is. They all must understand what a “fortunate” man he is to have such a beautiful wife. For it was the dazzling, flashy
beauty of gold and silver, of jewels and fine clothing rather than the beauty of a clean and pure heart reflected in the features. (See I Peter 3:3, 4).

There is really nothing in the passage to indicate that he demanded any immodest show of Vashti's beauty. She was to come clad in the full attire of a queen. And it was the rare beauty of her face that he would proudly display before the eyes of his drunken guests even as one would display his thoroughbred horse or dog before the eyes of men. These chamberlains whom he sent to bring Vashti in unto him were eunuchs who served the king. The number seven has no symbolic significance here. And their names are recorded because Scripture is the truth and can give with perfect accuracy even the names of the king's servants.

But Vashti refuses to appear here for the pleasure of the king and the amusement of his guests. Her reason for refusing is not stated. Many women of today would have come only too gladly in their pride and conceit because of the pleasing features God has given them. Some make it their life's calling to be models and chorus girls for the amusement of men. Vashti, however, refuses to appear. She was a proud woman and deeply conscious of her beauty. But she will not display it before a group of drunken men. It was often the custom of the queen to sit with the king at the feasts he held. It may be that she was bitter because the king had kept her in isolation with the other women these six days. Verse 18 seems to indicate that she was filled with wrath and contempt. Whatever her reason may have been, she was not motivated by the love of God, nor anxious to keep His commandments.

The King is Furious.

Well might the unbelieving king be furious. He had been shamed before the eyes of those before whose eyes he had been seeking to make an impression. He had sought to show his ability to wage war with Greece and that he was a mighty ruler. And now publicly it is shown that he has no power over his own wife! Fed by the wine he had consumed his anger burns within him. How true it is that sin begets sin. His excessive drinking leads him to an immoral demand. And this in turn so blinds him to his own sin and to reality that he burns with fury when he should have been conscience stricken and have acknowledged the foolishness and sinfulness of his demand.

Points For Discussion:

1. The king's demand. Just what was the sin of Ahasuerus in this demand? If you had to classify this sin, under which of the ten commandments—one or more—would you list it? May a young man be proud of the beauty of his bride-to-be or of his wife? Does the Song of Solomon say anything about this?

2. The king's character. What kind of judgment do you have of the king's character in the light of both his feast and this demand of his? What definite traits of character would you say he had? From a natural viewpoint did he have the qualifications of a good husband? Explain your answer.

3. Vashti's refusal. Is it possible that Vashti was a believer? Had she been
a believer how would she have answered the king? Does this incident show that the natural man has by virtue of “Common Grace” a little good in him so that he can refuse to commit sin? Will Vashti be rewarded in the judgment day for refusing this thing? What do the Canons—look them up in the back of the Psalter—say about such things in chapters 3 and 4, article 4. Be sure to read it ALL and not just that which was quoted in 1924. The last half knows no “civic righteousness.”

4. The king’s wrath. Later in a sober moment the king regretted the deposition of Vashti. See chapter 2:1. What lessons in regard to liquor may we learn from this incident? Scripture does not condemn the use of wine, but does it give ground for maintaining saloons and taverns? May we partake of our wine there, according to Scripture?

LESSON IV.
The Worldly Wisdom Of The Wise Men.
(Esther 1:13-22)

From the book of Daniel we learn that it was customary for the kings of that day to have their wise men, their cabinet or advisors. Here too Ahasuerus has seven men to whom he turned for advice. These wisemen in this instance were the same as the seven princes mentioned by name. This is plain, for Memucan is listed as the last of these seven princes and at the same time is the wiseman whose counsel is adopted. These men were skilled in the law and therefore were able to judge the cases and matters which the king presented to them. For this reason likewise they “knew the times”. This means that they knew what action the moment called for. They knew each time what was the best action to take.

Distortion of Fact.

Memucan’s evaluation of the situation was indeed a gross distortion of the real facts in the case. He claimed that Vashti had done wrong—literally done “perversely” not only to the king but to the princes and all the people in all the provinces. That surely was not true. The fact is that the king did perversely before GOD. He is left entirely out of the picture by these wise (?)men. Forget God and His precepts, rule out the first table of the Law and telling the truth may even become a crime in man’s eyes and dishonoring authorities, deception and murder may be for the good of society. Did we say that these men knew law and judgment? Did we hear someone say that the natural man performs “civic righteousness” by his chastity and good order? The wisest of Persia here call the works of reprobate Vashti perverseness.

When Memucan likewise states that Vashti “came not” when the king commanded her to be “brought in before him”, does he make a gross misrepresentation of the case. It was not merely a stubborn refusal to come and stand before the king. It was a refusal to be his little plaything to display when he pleased to satisfy his evil pride and conceit. She refused to be humiliated before the eyes of lustful drunkards and to have her position both as wife and queen changed into that of an exhibition piece.
One thing that Memucan overlooked or purposely ignored is the fact that there is even among the ungodly the phenomena of natural love. There plainly was no natural love between Ahasuerus and Vashti. She held him in contempt according to verse 18, and the king’s demand surely did not spring forth from love for her. If all the marriages in the whole realm of Ahasuerus were devoid of natural love, then the law Memucan suggests is indeed necessary. This law is surely an insult to every married man and woman in Media and Persia. Vashti did not do wrong to every prince and man in this realm, but Memucan insulted every man and woman in that kingdom. For the law he suggested proceeds from the assumption that all their marriages are lacking in natural love.

A severe punishment.

Nor was the law that all wives shall give to their husbands honor and that every man should bear rule in his own house the only advice that Memucan gave. He demanded that Vashti be deposed and divorced. Evidently all the laws of the Medes and Persians were unalterable except the marriage law. That holy bond might be broken for convenience’ sake. Their own laws were unalterable, but God’s need not even be recognized! And so unalterably Vashti must be deposed and divorced. Even the distorted accusations of Memucan did not call for such a drastic step. What a mess this realm of Ahasuerus would have been in if every man whose wife refused any of his wishes immediately divorced her! What an inconsistency in this advice of Memucan! The law is that every man bear rule in his own house. But what of Ahasuerus? Rather than rule his house, he breaks up his house and sends his wife away because she did not obey him. If so severe a punishment is meted out to every woman who disobeys the foolish and sinful demands of her husband, then indeed there will arise “too much contempt and wrath”. One thing is sure, that Vashti did not deserve so severe a punishment even if the king’s demand had been a proper one—which it was not.

**Points For Discussion:**

1. The king’s unalterable law. Some 900 years before this incident God gave commandment at Sinai that we should obey those in authority over us. Does Memucan’s advice show that the natural man, if left to himself long enough, will discover God’s laws and their wisdom? Is this law which Memucan advises essentially the same as the fifth commandment? Or are you able to point out distinct differences between God’s law and the king’s law? Is it wise for man to make unalterable laws? Are we wise then in making articles to the constitutions of our societies which may not be altered?

2. Vashti’s punishment. What advice would you have given if you had been one of those wisemen? And if Memucan’s claim was true, leaving out of consideration that the king demanded her public appearance and assuming that the king had a right to demand her presence, what punishment would you have suggested for a disobedient wife and queen? How does Memucan’s advice that she be so punished reveal that he is not interested in having
the fifth commandment observed by all in the realm of Ahasuerus? If Ahasuerus had taken this case to a consistory rather than to a worldly court, what advice would he have received? Would such a consistory have had any word of condemnation for Vashti? Do you suppose that her life had been so pure before this and that her beauty had not "gone to her head" so as to make her conceited and vain?

Would such a consistory have pointed her to I Peter 3:3-5?

LESSON

The King Seeks A New Wife
(Esther 2:1-4)

How much time elapsed between the event recorded in chapter one and that which is recorded here in the second chapter we cannot say. Had it been of importance we would have been told. But knowing the character of the king and carefully weighing the facts recorded in the preceding chapter and in the passage we treat today, we are safe in assuming that not very much time had elapsed during these events. And the "after these things" was indeed shortly after these things.

The King's change of heart.

Before going any further we believe that a few remarks about the character of this king Ahasuerus are in order so that we may appreciate that which occurs in the soul of this sinful man here in our passage. The commentator Keil tells us that both Greek and Roman historians describe him as "a very luxurious, voluptuous and at the same time an extremely cruel tyrant." He goes on to tell us of a few deeds of this man which prove his statement. He tells of the time Ahasuerus and his army had been hospitably entertained on its march to Greece and an enormous sum of money had been offered him towards the defraying of the expenses of the war by Pythius, the rich Lydian. This Pythius had afterwards asked Ahasuerus whether the eldest of his five sons who were in the army might be released to be the comfort of his declining years. The letter so filled this Ahasuerus with fury that he commanded this son to be hewn in pieces and that his army pass between the two pieces (Herod. VII c 37-39; Seneca, de ira, VII. 17). At another time he demanded the builders of a bridge over the Hellespont to be beheaded, because a storm had destroyed the bridge, and also commanded that the sea be scourged and chained by sinking a few fetters in it (Herod. VII. 35).

With such a man we here deal. And you never know what he in his insane fury will do next. It is evident that he began to be sorry that Vashti had been punished so severely. Not that he was so concerned with justice or with Vashti's sorry plight. But he had lost his beautiful wife of which he had been so proud. After the wine wore off and his fury had burned out, her refusal did not seem so great a crime to him anymore. Meanwhile he was denied the privilege of having her around for his own sinful satisfaction. It was his own loss which bothered him now, not Vashti's. That he remembered her deed and what was decreed means that he is no longer under
the influence of Memucan's distorted picture and now (remembers) is aware of what actually happened.

The wisemen fear.

Considering the violent vents of rage of which King Ahasuerus was capable it is not difficult to see that these wisemen feared for their lives and why they immediately came with the new proposal that the king seek out young virgins to take the place of Vashti. And as soon as it became plain to them that the king was thinking again of Vashti, they proposed this thing which they knew would appeal to the lustful heart of this sensuous and cruel king. It was a scheme that was hatched with devilish ingenuity. In this way the king would again have a beautiful queen and would forget his loss. And until that time arrived he would satisfy his base and lustful nature with a host of the most beautiful virgins from his vast realm. Surely these wise-men knew perfectly the nature of this vile king. The king, of course, is swift to agree to the plan. And the wisemen escaped the death at his hands which they feared. For surely he would hold them responsible for the loss of his beautiful wife since they advised her deposition.

Points For Discussion:

1. The king's wrath is appeased. How do you explain that an unregenerated man's wrath can be appeased? The word appeased here means, "to cease" or "to settle" or even "to subside". Is this the same as saying that his love for Vashti began to assert itself? Is wrath the opposite of hatred? Is natural love the fulfillment of God's law?

2. The king and total depravity. There are those who like to make a distinction between total depravity and absolute depravity. They maintain that they teach total depravity and because we deny that the natural man can do anything pleasing in God's sight (see again Heb. 11:6) they like to claim that we teach absolute depravity. Is such a distinction possible, or is that which is absolute, total, and is that which is total, absolute? Was Ahasuerus totally depraved or absolutely depraved? (Be sure to center your discussion of this matter on Ahasuerus and do not have a general discussion on total depravity). But then, even using these terms with the meaning given them by those who believe that the unregenerated man can do works of civic righteousness, when they say that man is totally depraved, are they not stating that his salvation is as humanly impossible as when we say that he is absolutely depraved?

3. The king's commandment. From vs. 8 it is evident that the king gave a commandment and decree to collect the virgins. Apparently these young women had little to say about it, and the ruler in each province was to gather the fairest in his province. Does God grant to kings the right to do a thing like this? Apart now from the fact that the king is divorced and is such a vile man, is there really any essential difference between this attempt of the king to get a wife and Abraham's procurement of a wife for Isaac? Compare the two carefully and bring out any differences you may find. Where does a king's power end, and what according to God's judgment may he not appropriate for himself. (See also I Samuel 8:11-17).
(Questions on I Timothy 2:15)

The verse reads: "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."

My correspondent asks:

1) What content is to be given to the "salvation" mentioned in this verse?
2) What relation does the "continuation in faith and charity and holiness" have to childbearing?
3) What connection is there between the "salvation" and the "childbearing".

Answering these questions consists in explaining the Scripture verse on which they bear. Let us first get before us the apostle's argument in its entirety by taking notice of the context. At verse 13 we are told that Adam was first made, then Eve. From this priority of Adam's creation it follows that the woman must learn in silence with all subjection (to her own husband, vs. 11); that she must refrain from teaching, that is, she must guard against usurping authority over the man, but be in silence (vs. 11). The apostle proceeds (vs. 14): "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." This is meant as an added reason for the woman to refrain from all attempts to lord it over the man. Not Adam was deceived but the woman. It came about 'in this way. Instead of being silent and allowing her husband to deal with the serpent, the woman took it upon herself to reply to the treacherous speech of the tempter; and thereby in her self-will and pride she usurped authority over the man. And she was deceived by the wily speech of satan. And she ate of the forbidden tree and pursued her husband to do likewise. So was she in transgression. And she brought disaster upon herself and her husband and all her descendants. Through their joint disobedience sin entered the world and death by sin. The ordinances of God cannot be resisted with impunity. God is not mocked.

But it raises the question: is Eve on account of her transgression excluded from the salvation of Christ and likewise her daughters—all women? Not at all. She shall be saved in, by means of (dia), childbearing, if they—the women—continue in faith.

Saved by means of childbearing. According to some, the meaning of the expression is that the salvation of the female sex depends on childbearing in the sense that through bearing children the woman merits with God. Needless to say, this cannot be the meaning of the expression. As if Paul could be guilty of teaching such a thing.

According to others the apostle would say: if the woman in love of Christ refrains from trampling God's ordinances through her usurping authority over the
BEACON LIGHTS FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

man and remains in her allotted place in the home, bearing children and fulfilling the duties of mother and wife, she shall be saved also by abiding in the way of these good works of faith.

Now it is true, certainly, that a woman who is in subjection to her husband in love of Christ is saved. And so, too, if in faith she bears children. For that woman fears God; and the God-fearing are saved. But this does not yet adequately explain why a woman is saved in, by means of, childbearing.

For a correct understanding of the expression, I believe we must have before us the Lord's promises to Abraham, the father of all believers, particularly the promise: “Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen. 12:7). And again: “Lift up thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward and southward, and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever” (Gen. 13:14, 15).

Let us take notice: “and to thy seed will I give this land,” by which is to be understood in the final instance the new earth where God’s tabernacle will be with His redeemed people, Abraham’s seed. And the Lord vowed that He would make Abraham’s seed “as the dust of the earth: so that, if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall that seed also be numbered” (Gen. 13:16). Such being the promise, Abraham could not inherit Canaan, should he continue to abide alone. Without seed the land could never become his in actual possession. It was in the awareness thereof that he sent forth his servant in quest of a wife for Isaac. Later the Lord said to him: “Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” It was again in the awareness that without seed he could not inherit Canaan—could not be saved—that he replied: “Lord God what wilt thou give me, seeing that I go childless.” And the Lord replied: “Unto thy seed have I given this land.” And the Lord’s promises are unfailing. Abraham shall be given the land, the heavenly country that formed the object of his expectation. He shall be saved, he and his seed, including the believing mothers in the church. Saved they shall be by means of Mary's childbearing; for she brought forth the seed—Christ Jesus—who atoned the sins of God's people. Saved shall they be by means of the childbearing of all the mothers in the church of all ages; for they bring forth elect seed—children of the promise—for the promised land. How true then, that not only Mary, the mother of Jesus, but every believing woman is saved by means of her childbearing. She helps to bring forth the promised seed to inherit with her the earth. Yes, of course, but the total of mothers bring forth also the carnal seed in the church; “for they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” For as the chaff is needful to the wheat, so is this carnal seed needful to the salvation of the children of the promise. Hence, also through their bringing forth this carnal seed are the believing moth-

(continued on page 26)
Truth vs. Missionary Zeal?

I have received the following question. The writer is known to me, so that the prerequisite of signing your name to questions sent to this department is met, even though I do not attach the name of the writer.

Here is the question:

"I believe that inasmuch as we have the purest manifestation of the truth, our hearts should burn with the desire to tell it to others and win them to Christ. Instead of this our attitude seems to be cold and indifferent towards the lost. One cannot help but feel that our attitude is, "I am saved and let the rest of the world go by." Is it then more important for a person to remain with a church that preaches a pure doctrine but apparently lacks love and missionary zeal than to unite with a church that is interested in the salvation of others and more actively answers the command of Christ to "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"?

We note a very good beginning in this question: I believe that... we have the purest manifestation of the truth...

And that is really the answer too. As soon as anyone believes that we have the purest manifestation of the truth, he or she is duty bound to remain in such a church. There are no considerations, however weighty they may seem, that would warrant leaving a church which is the purest manifestation of the truth. It is axiomatic among all that call themselves Reformed.

Let us look at it a little closer. A church that is the purest manifestation of the truth is a church that harbors the living Christ like no other church on earth: And, surely, if one belongs to Christ, if the living Christ dominates a person's life, he does not desire to leave a church where He is manifested so purely.

And this stand is entirely reasonable. The Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, is a living image of that Christ. And a church that confesses to believe that whole Word, harbors the Christ of that Word in mind and heart and soul, cannot feel at home in a church where all or part of that image is neglected, nullified, or even defaced. Remember, my dear young friend, any defacing of the truth of the Word and of the Reformed confessions is a defacing of the Countenance of God.

Moreover, you speak of missionary zeal in other churches where we do not find such a pure manifestation of the truth. But attend to this: Christ said: the truth shall make you free. Any zeal, enthusiasm, fervor for God and His cause in the world is nothing but an evidence of the truth that first lives in our hearts and mind before it finds its fruit in good works, also the good works of missionary endeavor.

Be not deceived. There is much missionary zeal that is contraband. Many people accept a Christ which they never received. Remember this fundamental truth: the true Christ is the Truth per-
sonified. And therefore, a church that according to your own confession has the purest manifestation of the truth, has more of the Christ than some other church or churches.

I find also another weakness in your question. And this weakness makes me think of an English proverb: Familiarity breeds contempt. You are rather well acquainted with our shortcomings. You are born, bred and raised in the Jerusalem of our churches, and you have seen and heard much that is wrong with us. And I will admit at once that we are far from perfection. On the other hand, there is much that attracts in churches that surround us, churches whose intimate life you do not know. Were you to know as they really are, you would see the truth of what I said before: the truth and the truth only inspires and motivates to all good works, also the good work of missionary zeal and endeavor. I know, f.i., churches where they seem to burn of missionary love, but the constituency of that church allows lodge membership, movie and theater attendance, are positively against Christian education, and do deny some of the fundamental truths of Christ your Lord.

Would you, could you feel at home there?

I have not said all I desire to say, and so I will write again in the next Beacon Lights. But let me close and say this: with all the faults we have, and I am sorry for them, let us stay with her, for nowhere else do I see Christ's face as clearly. With love in Him,

SCHUILER.

Reformation In Christian Living
(continued from page 3)

or Truth and Life are inseparable. The truth makes us free and in that freedom we live—not licentiously a life of sin—but a life of holiness unto our God. That must be the underlying principle unto which we work as we daily—by God's grace—reform our lives. Then Protestantism proves itself worthy of its name and then, Reformation abounds unto its richest fruit.

EDITORIALS
(continued from page 5)

to format and content—are pleasing to the tastes and needs of those whom we serve.

But it would still be nice, we think, to occasionally hear from some of you during the course of the year. And what's more, friends, we won't even hold you to the old saw "Admonish your friends privately, but praise them openly". The Open Forum will print whatever you write, either-wise.

Perhaps the foregoing bit of whimsy (we really won't get many letters anyway) contrasts rather sharply with the serious, all-important aspect of our job in publishing Beacon Lights. We, too, must never, never overlook the primary function of this as well as every other kingdom endeavor: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

—A.H.
"THE GOOD TIDINGS"
by William Sidney
Published by Farrar, Straus & Co., Inc.

The Good Tidings" is a story dealing with the time of Christ’s birth and early teaching. Very little is said concerning the activities and teaching of Jesus as the story tells primarily of the life of John the Baptist.

In the days of Augustus and Tiberious, the Jewish people, suffering under the double yoke of imperial Rome and the tyrant Herods, and inwardly strangled by the teachings of the Sadducees and Pharisees, were fighting a desperate battle for national survival. Strife, bloodshed and all sorts of abominations ran rampant within the land. That this period in the history of Israel was one of the darkest hours for the church can be verified by the Scriptures. In this respect the author is remarkably accurate. This vivid novel of the troubled days preceding Christ’s ministry portrays a land in turmoil.

During this turbulent era there arose many different sects, each with the firm belief that their teachings were the answer to Israel’s economic and religious problems. The author writes in detail of the Sicarii, and organization which we today would call the Underground. Leader of this group is Tola, young patriot whose fanatical desire it is to rid Palestine of the Roman Eagle. There is Barabbas, the outlaw, who according to Sidney, saw his father nailed to a Roman galley’s mast, and took his revenge many times over. Akim, the spy, whose professions of friendship and loyalty filled the reeking dungeons of Jerusalem, who betrayed resisting Israel to the Roman sword only to meet a traitor’s death.

The story begins with the announcement of the birth of Christ and the following of the Star by the Wisemen. As a result of the joyous heralding of the good news that the Messiah is born John’s father is put to death. John then is taken to Persia by the Wisemen and does not return until a little before his ministry. Scripture does not verify this. According to Sidney, John’s teachings were based upon the belief that all men together should unite in a great brotherhood and share all their burdens together. Then shall there be peace on earth. Here again the author contradicts Holy Writ. Scripture speaks continually of the tribulations of the church here below.

"The Good Tidings" tells the story of Miriam and her love for Tola. Miriam, a childhood friend of John, seeks hopelessly for a spiritual life to replace the vacant,
stilted and hypocritical religion she sees all around her as taught by the Pharisees. Separated by their aims, these two, as many others, turn to the prophet John for an answer. Eventually Miriam embraces the doctrine of John but Tola clings steadfastly to his belief in the sword.

The book quite often speaks of the total depravity of man but in the sense that man can rescue himself from his depraved condition. The author makes a pretense of delving deep into Scripture. He writes of the cry of all nature to be released from the bondage placed upon it by the sin of Man. Apparently he feels that the continual struggle and death in nature itself is the result of man's violating God's commandments.

In one respect the book is a refreshing change from the majority of those written about the time of Christ. The author does not concern himself too much with Christ and His work. That is, he does not write concerning Christ's teachings and then present an entirely false interpretation. This however is small consolation light of the fact that he does not correctly present John's teachings as Scripture has them. Christ in His work did not at any time repudiate the work of John. Hence it would follow that if Sidney contradicts John's doctrine he basically also refutes the doctrine Christ taught.

Although the book does not abide too close to Scripture it does prove to be interesting reading. The book certainly may be read, especially in light of the fact that some of the beliefs brought forth are very prevalent in our day.

If you have the time or the inclination to read it however, bear in mind that it will not prove to be more edifying than the Scriptures.

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"THIS, MY BROTHER"

By Argye M. Briggs
Published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co.

This story, written by the author of the well-known novel, Root Out Of Dry Ground, finds its setting in the oil fields of Texas. Josh Kenyon, a young boy just in his teens as the story opens, is the youngest son of old Colonel Kenyon, who was proud, superficially religious, and unreasonably partial to his worthless son, Ran. Josh was sickened by Ran's escapades and hurt and angered by his father's attitude toward Ran in spite of the fact that he was apparently aware of the way Ran lived. In high school Josh met and fell in love with Ruthie Harris. He married her when he graduated, against his father's wishes, and took a job in the oil fields.

Later Josh took a better job in a refinery but hard times followed. Deep trouble came to Ran leaving its hardship near Josh and the rest of the brothers; the depression came bringing troubled uncertainty; an explosion at the refinery left Josh jobless and afraid; and death came to shatter one of his fondest hopes. Josh came to such depths of hate and despair that if God had not graciously...
restrained him he would have killed himself.

After Josh's conversion the hard times lifted and life gradually became easier and pleasant again, but now his problems were of a mental and spiritual nature. He had to learn to meet life's events and responsibilities in a manner that correlated with his calling as a Christian.

Although the author of This, My Brother tells the story of Josh Kenyon's life, yet she really tells the story of Josh himself—of his hatred and pride, his inner turmoil, his ambitions and longings, his defeat and despair. She tells, too, how his hatred was changed to pity, his pride to sorrow and humility, his turmoil to peace; and his ambitions and longings to contentment in the Lord's way.

The story is realistic with the exception of two or three incidents that are unrealistically dramatic. It is interesting entertainment throughout and can be recommended as worthwhile reading to those who are well enough informed in our Reformed truth to detect the errors in the author's presentation of conversion or "gittin saved" and other religious principles. Her treatment of the negro problem is thought provoking and instructive and perhaps brings out the author's idea of her title even more than the brother-relationship of Josh and Ran.

Mrs. M. Kroondyk
Grand Rapids, Mich.

TRUTH vs. ERROR
(continued from page 7)

it is first of all a matter of standing in the service of Christ. And then, to be sure, this standing in the service of Christ is not to be limited to the profession of teaching, nor to the office of the ministry of the Word, but that this calling is a matter to be considered in our working in the factory and on the farm, in the kitchen as well as in the nursery.

For him every place in life is not simply a job, a position to profit withal to "make money", or even to "earn a living" first of all, but that it is all a matter of walking in the "vocation" of life.

And this all calls for a free-choice, thus Jim.

Jim urges that the choice is not merely a matter of following the promptings of providence, but that it is a matter of following the prompting of the Holy Spirit as stated in the Word.

Jim feels much more for the subject. In fact this is the one and all for Jim.

Thus these young men present their respective sides of the question. Let us who have also listened in think the matter over till the next issue of Beacon Lights and listen to the reply of the Pastor in regard to this weighty matter.

Reformation Day Mass Meeting
OCTOBER 31
Hudsonville Church
Rev. Hoeksema, as the first convention speaker, laid the ground-work for the development of the 1950 convention theme with the topic, “The Significance of the Power of Godliness”. As introduction he pointed out that Daniel’s faithfulness to Jehovah during the Captivity is a good example of the power of godliness. Faithfulness, he said, is the fundamental calling of the Christian. Daniel’s conduct clearly illustrates the two sides of godliness, namely, the inward relation of love with God and the outward manifestation of faithfulness.

Rev. Hoeksema divided his speech into three parts: Godliness, its Power, and its Exercise. Godliness, he stated, is a very practical virtue. It finds expression in all of our actions. Good evidence for that statement is the fact that the term is often used in the “pastoral” epistles to Titus and Timothy, where the practical problems of Christian living are given special attention. Godliness is composed of four elements. First, it includes knowledge of God. Because this godliness is distinct from pagan religion, the knowledge concerns the true God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Second, godliness is always present in all his thoughts and actions. Third, godliness includes reverence. This is the reverence which is often called in Scripture, “the fear of the Lord”, and is therefore the reverence or fear which is based on love. Fourth, godliness must find expression or manifestation in the Christian’s everyday life. The godly person is one who walks “before the face of God” continually. God is the reason, the power, and the purpose of all his actions. A few examples of the practical manifestation of godliness are the following: The godly person reveals his godliness in his relation to the church when he seeks and joins the true church and rejects all here-sies. He also reveals his godliness when he seeks a marriage partner from the household of faith, and his godliness is again demonstrated in the family relations between parents and children in producing the atmosphere of a Christian home.

Rev. Hoeksema then proceeded to show that the power of godliness is a spiritual power. It is not a natural power like atomic energy or even natural juridical law, but is a special gift of the Holy Spirit. Christ always possessed perfect godliness: He was always faithful and always walked “before the face of God”. And Christ’s perfect godliness is the basis and source of our partial godliness. Of ourselves we have no right to be godly—but in Christ we do. Of ourselves we have no ability to be godly—but Christ makes us able. Hence, godliness is a power of God, in Christ, through the
Holy Spirit, which is revealed in our hearts and life. The power of godliness, he said, is the power that overcomes the world—not physically, but spiritually by faith. For example, the power of godliness is the power of contentment and complete surrender to God's way. Also, our possessing the power of godliness requires that we live a quiet and peaceable life: we will not strike or boycott, because our fighting is spiritual. In brief, the power of godliness causes us to stand before God so that we perform our part of the covenant as it is expressed in the Baptism Form.

Finally, Rev. Hoeksema considered the exercise of the power of godliness. He stated that although godliness is purely a gift of God, it nevertheless can and must and will be exercised by us. This exercise is neither mystical nor weak; it means simply that we act at all times as conscious, active Christians and Calvinists. However, in order to practice godliness, we must first be instructed in godliness and the knowledge of God. We obtain this instruction especially in our church activities. The preaching of the Word on Sunday is the principal source of this knowledge, and important supplementary sources are the societies and study groups. Only if we receive this instruction can we exercise godliness. And we must exercise it, for godliness and its instruction is profitable for all things, "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Then we can walk before the face of God throughout our lives. Then God is with us and nothing is against us, all things work together for our good, and in the end Eternity and all its blessings are ours.

The Possibility of Possessing it!
Rev. P. De Boer, Edgerton, Minn.

The topic given to Rev. De Boer was: "The Possibility of Possessing the Power of Godliness". He spoke at the banquet of our convention.

The speaker posed the following question: How may I, a covenant youth, be godly?

First of all Rev. De Boer pointed to the fact that there is no possibility for godliness outside of the Covenant of Grace. It is only in Christ through His Spirit that true godliness may be possessed by us. In answer to question posed above, a selection from 1 Timothy 4 was read, the verses 7 and 8. The speaker emphasized especially two words of the first verse, namely, exercise and thyself. Elaborating further he explained the etymology of the word exercise as training or preparation, as for a battle. And the word thyself shows that the
training unto the acquirement of the much desired quality of godliness is very personal. Watching others train is of no avail, although we do need helpers and coaches.

Then he followed with the cataloguing of several do's and don'ts.

Do not lose self in bodily exercise.

Do not believe false doctrines.

Then he followed with the cataloguing of several do's and don'ts.

Do take an active part in the preaching of the Word.

Do take an active part in society life.

In conclusion, he stated, that essentially we are godly in Christ Jesus, and the acquiring of this virtue of godliness is by grace alone. We should exercise ourselves on bended knee.

It was a very interesting speech and was well received.

**The Danger of Denying it!**

Rev. L. Vermeer, Redlands, Calif.

The second speaker to address the convention began by pointing out to us that we are living in the last days, the days of the end. These are indeed perilous times and we must be careful not to deny the Power of Godliness. This great power is denied more today than at any other time in the world's history, so we must be on our guard. He, then, contrary to the usual procedure, divided his speech into two parts—the denial and the danger for us of denying it.

I. What does it mean to deny? No one can really deny this power because God cannot be denied and His power is an undeniable fact. We only suppress the knowledge of God when we deny Him. But to deny here means that in our lives we do not live in the power of Godliness. We have a shell, a form of godliness, but lack the power thereof. It is counterfeit godliness which can be compared to a wax banana which has the form and appearance of a banana but has no food value or nutrition. Denying also means that we love ourselves rather than God—it is simply pleasure and self-love. This self-love is opposed to the true power of godliness and is found among all men, those in the church as well as the worldly. Self-love of this type will be characteristic especially of the last days. It has always been an outstanding sin but it will continue to grow as the last days approach. It will carry a form of godliness so we must be careful not to be deceived. It will be self-love under the cloak of religion, not open ungodliness, but having a form of godliness and denying the power of it.

II. So this danger besets us close to home. We need not look across the sea but all around us where many and varied religious groups have all form and deny the power. They are as Cain's sacrific
and Israel's offerings which were merely outward form. The highest example is that of the hypocritical Pharisees of Jesus' day. They were completely wrapped up in form and there was no power of Godliness in them. Therefore we see that the things around us which have just a form of godliness are our greatest danger. The U. N., labor unions—with their ideals of helping the fellow man—seek thereby to deceive us with this form of godliness. They do not have to deceive the world so they use this form to deceive us. Some would even have us believe that God would allow man a form of godliness without renewing the heart. These are the kind of evils we face every day around us.

However, by nature we love that form of godliness, we like to follow the crowd. We love that outward form and its accompanying earthly power. So we must be able to distinguish the imitation from the real. The world will be full of imitations: but we must, as did Daniel's three friends, be ready not to defile ourselves with the sins of self-love and pleasure-love. The way to combat these dangers is by purposing in our hearts not to deny this power. Do this before you meet the world. Face God, with yourself, and with His help we can face all the dangers of denial and remain steadfast, standing and conquering in His power. May God be with us to help us exercise, and not deny, this power.

A vacation makes some people so lazy that they don't care if they have to work again.

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QUESTION BOX
(continued from page 21)

ers in Israel saved—saved by means of their childbearing.
How the questions of my correspondent are to be answered should now be evident.

1) What content is to be given to the "salvation" mentioned in this verse? It is the salvation of Christ.

2) What relation does the "continuation in faith..." have to childbearing? The text says that the believing mother will be saved through childbearing, if she continue in faith. And that she will, if she is a true believer.

3) What connection is there between "salvation" and "childbearing"? The text says that the believing mother is saved by means of childbearing. How this is to be understood has now been fully explained.

To bring forth "children of promise", elect seed, for the land of promise, that is the high calling of Christian mothers. It is this purpose that gives real meaning and significance to the marriage of Christian people.

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OCTOBER 31
Reformation Day Mass Meeting
Hudsonville Church
**Convention Business in Brief**

We can well give a vote of thanks to our Host Committee of the 1950 Convention as once more we look back on what was a three-day, spirited convention. We had a good turn-out of young people at this convention, and the Mass Meeting led the way with a packed house. Business meetings also were well attended by delegates and visitors, and many took an active part in the discussion of the proposals. Programs were included with our business sessions, and after such numbers as essays and a debate, the floor was thrown open to all for general discussion, and these discussions were very lively. In fact, the young people could have continued discussion much longer than time permitted. Also, the women of Second Church did an excellent job of providing the group with lunches the two days we were there. The outing, too, was a success in spite of the rain, and the banquet, the highlight of the convention, was entertaining, educational, and edifying. So once again we close the doors on what was a worthwhile convention, the effects of which we hope will inspire our youth for some time to come.

Tillie Noble, Retiring Secretary.

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**Our Convention Hosts Write**

Looking back, after this 1950 Convention, there is a sense of joy at knowing and feeling that the big event was a success. What a thrill it was to see the Second Church packed that night of the Inspirational Mass Meeting! How nice it was to meet so many of our people from out-of-state! We really enjoyed putting on this Convention and seeing the fruits of our work! Perhaps it could have been improved, but we feel that it was a success. The more a person puts into a thing, the more he receives—and we feel that this is very true in connection with working on such a committee as this.

Another thing we enjoyed seeing was the active part which the Young People took in the discussions. It really became a part of them, as it should be, being a Young People's Convention. Such activity unites and knits us together as one whole. Even though some of our churches are hundreds of miles apart, we feel as one—together in one church.

We wish to thank all those who took part in making the meetings so edifying.

We thank God for the many privileges which He has given us—for the privilege of being able to unite as one at a Convention, and the blessings of His Grace whereby we serve Him.

Ardyth Griffioen, Sec'y.
YOUNG PEOPLE!

Here's a date you'll want to keep in mind! October 31
Why? For the Reformation Day Mass Meeting.
Where? At our Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church.
What Time? At 7:45 o'clock.

Come for an evening of inspiration and enjoyment!

Let's Not Forget! — Let's All Be There!
Mr. Stuart J. Bylsma
1024 Baldwin St., SE
Grand Rapids, Mich.