THANKSGIVING ISSUE

THE MACHINERY OF BEACON LIGHTS

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Beacon Lights wishes to acknowledge with thanks the assistance of
Mr. Lambert Mulder in the preparation of the cover for this issue.
What is True Thankfulness?

Thankful for what? This question is often placed before us at this time of the year. We are warned against being thankful for material gifts only. We are reminded that, above all, we should be thankful for God's grace which has been imparted to us through the death of His only begotten Son; that we must be thankful for adversities and trials as well as prosperity and comfort. Again, we are cautioned not to put all our emphasis on this one day, but to continuously thank and praise our Maker who creates and sustains all things by the Word of His power.

Now, beyond a shadow of doubt, we should heed these warnings and realize their significance to us as covenant youth who are celebrating Thanksgiving Day. However, though this be true, the question of what we are thankful for and the essence of this thanksgiving goes unanswered. What then is the essence of thankfulness, the true thankfulness of the Christian. This question we find to be answered in three ways. We find our answer in the third heading of the Heidelberg Catechism. True thankfulness consists in being always in prayer, obeying the law of God, and living in all good works. This is true thankfulness to our covenant God and Father.

We are told that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. Prayer—the christian's intimate fellowship with God. By prayer we express our thanks to God, we glorify him. When a child of God sees and feels the Lord's work in him, he instinctively prays to his great Redeemer. He seeks God's face to thank and praise Him, the Lord of lords. This prayer of thanks must be genuine, from the depths of the heart. For God will not give His grace and spirit and accept our thanks if we do not earnestly and sincerely desire them. And we must be thankful, for we cannot truly pray or have our prayers answered unless we are thankful. The catechism tells us that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. By our communion with God we express the highest and truest thankfulness. Real thankfulness is attained only through prayer. There is no gratitude
apart from prayer. For prayer by its very nature is thankful—we are thankful that we may pray to Him. The infinite listens to the finite, the almighty to the insignificant. This in itself is a phase of prayer for which we can never be sufficiently thankful. For it is indeed a great privilege to commune with God, to implore Him with true faith, knowing He will send what is best for us.

He teaches us how to pray and commands us to bring our needs to Him in true humility and thankfulness. Thus we see why our pilgrim fathers instituted Thanksgiving Day. It was to be a day of prayer. For only through prayer and supplication could they thank their Lord. So this day should be filled with prayers, not for peace and prosperity and earthly bounties, but to present before God our needs and to thank Him for whatever has come and may come. For we know that it will all be for the good of God's people. We must pray without ceasing for only in that way can we properly thank our merciful God.

Again, we have the command, be thankful for your Maker by keeping His law. How can we be thankful and break His commandments, outwardly or inwardly? We must constantly strive to abide by the Divine Law for by so doing we thank our God. We cannot celebrate this season of the year in any other way. God's law is our standard and we must obey Him through it; and by doing so, we show our love and thankfulness to Him. If we look at thankfulness from that point of view we see that it is not the thankfulness of a few days, but of the whole year around. Then, strictly speaking, we need no Thanksgiving Day; because we give thanks every day. But more, we do not only give thanks every day, but we also give thanks to the utmost of our ability every day. We do not give special or more thanks on this day—that is impossible. If we are truly thankful we give our all and do not hold back some for a special day. We do not give more thanks on a special day, but constantly, every day, give thanks to our God by walking in his law and meditating upon it.

Not only must the covenant child of God express his thanks by being daily in prayer and by obeying God's law, but he must also "live in all good works according to the will of God". We render thanks to God and glorify him when we do good works. We must do this, but we cannot do it of ourselves. Good works and thankfulness have their chief roots in true faith, given to us by God. These acts are a direct result of keeping the law of God—yes, are an integral part of it. We thank God for showing men our good works and testifying in word and deed. Our works are an evidence of our true faith and through them we thank the Lord of all. We must remember that we must daily show this outward thanks to God. Prayer and the inward keeping of God's law only appear to us personally, but our works appear before all men. We should and do become a living testimony of thanks. We show before ungodly and thankless men how the true child of God thanks his Creator. We testify that the worldly conception of
thanks is vanity and full of materialism. It is not true thankfulness but religion-cloaked hypocrisy. Good works are certainly an important part of real thankfulness because by them we testify of our God who should receive all the glory and thanks forever.

Therefore, we see that to really be thankful children of God, we must pray, obey, and walk uprightly. For unless we do this, our thanks is an empty shell with no meaning. Let us strive to thank God—in prayer, in obeying His law, and doing good works. For then we have a blessed Thanksgiving Day and then we are truly thankful. We must pattern our lives after these requirements of thanks, and then we grasp the true meaning of thanksgiving.

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Thanksgiving . . .

We and all our countrymen will be called upon this month to observe a day of national thanksgiving. Generally speaking, most Americans will be doing so with mingled feelings of insecurity and fear of the changing times in which we live. It is a foregone conclusion that overshadowing any superficial thankfulness a wicked man might conceivably have, for his harvest or for his present high living standard, will be the anxiety and fitful apprehension for a world torn wide with international strife and the jitters of war.

One can readily imagine a worldly person being glad for whatever things he possesses and enjoys. Such a primitive reaction is a part of man’s innate nature. It is unthinkable, however, that there can ever be any semblance of genuine gratitude in the unregenerate heart of the wicked who see neither rhyme nor reason in the turbulent course of changing time.

It is only when one has within himself, by the grace of God, the basic comprehension of the meaning of things that he can be thankful for the change and the results of change which the order of time brings about in this world. Such an assurance a Godless world has never known. We can rather epitomize the dark philosophy of the wicked man in the words of Omar Khayyam, the Persian bard who wrote:

Into this Universe, and Why not knowing,
Nor Whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing:
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.

Thus has the world placed its destiny in the hands of fate. Small wonder it is then that as the basic structure of western civilization begins to crumble and change the worldling fears and trembles. Those who know nothing but the vain deceit of man see no hope or meaning in the swift chaotic tempo of our times. For them the changing times offer little for which to be thankful.

But let us—fellow Christians who know the Lord our God—rejoice this month and every month, in the hope and vision which is ours in Christ. In Him we can conceive of all physical and spiritual change to be the manifestation of His Will and the working out of His Eternal plan. Even the titanic social-economic upheaval now in progress in the world is a thing to bring thanks to the lips of the child of God.

When we know that every movement of the finger of time is controlled by the

(continued on page 7)
Marriage
(II)

In our previous article on this subject, we wrote primarily of the events of the life of the covenant youth which lead up to the state of marriage, or, the time of courtship. Three thoughts we expressed as ‘guiding principles’ which, if heeded, would contribute to the assurance that one in the pre-marital state would find happiness and blessing. We stated that the courtship of covenant youth must, in distinction from the world’s increasing immorality, be characterized by chastity. A second thought was that in this courtship there must be spiritual compatibility. Spiritually mixed relationships conceive and bring forth misery and apostacy whereas ‘two that are agreed’ walk together harmoniously in love. Our final thought was that whereas ‘the Lord brings to every man his wife’ we must learn submission to His choice. We must not seek one who answers to the qualities of our carnal lusts but one who according to God’s standard is fully qualified as a life companion to assist us in the higher service of God. Along these lines our courtship will be fruitful unto a truly Christian and richly blessed marriage.

In our present article we will continue these thoughts and this time consider especially the ‘institution of marriage’ itself. One has no right to enter a relationship such as this without an understanding of what is involved and, consequently, we shall try to elicit from the Word of God a few ‘guiding thoughts’ which we hope may prove helpful to a better Christian Living in the marriage sphere.

Our first thought in this connection is that marriage is an institution of God. John Calvin wrote in his ‘Institutes’, “Marriage, as an institution is not only originated by God’s authority but is also sanctified by His blessing”. As Christians, it is salutary to be mindful of this important fact and that especially if our courtship is attaining maturity. The world ignores and disregards this truth and by and large considers marriage as a human agency by which man may legally procure the deepest satisfaction of his carnal nature. As a result such marriage is not enacted and perpetuated according to the ordinances of God and, therefore, cannot be blessed. “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. Prov. 3:33.” As covenant youth we are not to emulate this worldly way and seek marriage as a means unto self-satisfaction but bear consciously in mind the Divine phase of this institution and enter
it with the intent and purpose of making Divine satisfaction. That is done when the ordinances and laws regulating life in this institution as they are set forth for us in the Word of God are properly and faithfully kept. Then "He blesseth the habitation of the just. Prov. 3:33."

When covenant children enter this holy state, it is not only the relatives and friends of those to be married that are interested in the affair, but just as much and perhaps more so is the church concerned. She realizes that God, through Covenant marriages, continues His church and in the families of believers bestows His blessings. Hence, our second thought is that "marriage ought to be performed by the church". By this we do not mean that the minister alone performs the ceremony in the church as is the customary practice in many of our circles, but rather that the church through its offices, through its offices, the consistory, attend to the marriage of her children. (See Article 70 of our Church Order). At such a marriage the Word of God is appropriately preached and the church, institutionally convoked, offers her prayers for the blessing of God upon the marriage that is being solemnized. Such a beginning is "in the Lord". There are many, I think, who, because we have traditionally discarded this good practice of our fathers, are even averse to it today. They prefer the gaudy show of modern wedding to the simplicity of that which our fathers wisely prescribed. I would, therefore, encourage those who oppose 'church weddings' to express openly their principle objections but at the same time may our consistories and parents further enlighten our youth regarding these matters and discourage the practice of 'a wedding in the church' and cultivate the desire for simple, spiritual 'church weddings'. This is an institution of God and primarily "the consistories shall attend to it. . . ."

Our third and final thought has to do with the duties, privileges, purposes, and briefly, the relationships of the marriage state. Marriage is not a state that God commands us to enter, neither does He prohibit us from doing so, but it is left to the choice of the individual. Hence, those who choose entrance also willingly assume the duties. The husband affirms that he shall love his wife, lead her with discretion, instruct, comfort and protect her and labor faithfully to provide for the needs of his family. The wife, likewise, promises love, honor, reverence and obedience unto her husband in the sphere of all lawful things. These duties ought to be understood before the marriage bond is confirmed.

Then there are privileges in this new relationship which, if exercised in accord with the command of God, result in the blessed realization of the divinely instituted purposes of marriage. Man and wife, exercising marital cohabitation, experience the fellowship of two creatures whom God has not made separate but has created that they should be one. "It is not good that man should be alone. . . . I will make an help-meet for him." (Gen. 2:18). Man and wife, who are created physically and spiritually the counterparts of each other, complete one an-
other's life and joy. It is not good that one should be alone but that they should be together in the Lord. That is the fellowship of marriage.

In such a normal union the beginning of the home is made. For marriage also has its purpose in procreation and the establishing of the home. The christian home is the blessed fruit of the christian marriage. The broken home, orphaned children and pitied vagabonds are the results of worldly union. As we sow we shall reap. The sowing era is 'courtship' and the reaping time is 'in the married state'. Our aim must always be the realization of fruits unto God manifest in a model christian home. Many are the forces to combat in the striv... toward that goal. Evil lurks on every side. Marriage is contracted for selfish purposes. There is a mad striving after 'houses, beautiful furnishings, modern conveniences, automobiles, etc.' which, in our day, require years of combined labor of husband and wife. The children of the Lord are not wanted... at least for a time... and the "home" is not established. The goal of the christian marriage is not attained and the true blessing of marriage is lost. As we approach the end of the ages, we must not expect this to improve but CHRISTIANS.... young men and young women.... "watch and pray that ye fall not into temptation." Build your hopes, also in marriage, not in the things of this world but in the things of God.

That is Christian Living!

THANKSGIVING

(continued from page 4)

God of heaven and earth to work out the salvation of His people and the glory of His matchless Name, we can render true thankfulness for all things. Thus as thankfulness can only arise from the heart which possesses a saving knowledge of the Eternal, Sovereign God, let us give thanks.

—A. H.

O God of our salvation,
Since Thou dost love the right
Thou wilt an answer send us,
In wondrous deeds of might.
In all earth's habitations,
On all the boundless sea,
Man finds no sure reliance,
No peace, apart from Thee.

—Psalter.

O Thou,
Whose Bounty Fills My Cup

O Thou, whose bounty fills my cup
With every blessing meet!
I give Thee thanks for every drop—
The bitter and the sweet.
I Thank Thee for both smile and frown
And for the gain or loss;
I praise Thee for the future crown,
And for the present cross.
I bless Thee for the glad increase,
And for the waning joy;
And for this strange, this settled peace
Which nothing can destroy.

—Jane Crewdson.
BEACON LIGHTS FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

BIBLE OUTLINE

LESSON VI.

Esther and Mordecai are Introduced
(Esther 2:5-7)

In the verses which constitute our lesson today we have the introduction of the chief characters of this book. It is worthwhile to pause here before we go on and appreciate what is written about them in these verses. Not much is said, that is, not many words are used, but important things are indicated by these few words. And, of course, they are written for us to observe.

Descendants of King Saul's House.

There can be no doubt that Mordecai was a descendant of the family of King Saul. His genealogy is traced back to Kish the father of King Saul. The mentioning of Shimei rules out any possibility that this Kish might not be Saul's father. A reference to II Samuel 16:5 and II Samuel 19:16 and 17 will make it plain that Shimei was related to Saul, and the mentioning of these two names of Saul's house together, namely Kish and Shimei, leaves us with no alternative. Mordecai was a descendant of Kish, the father of King Saul. This, of course, does not make him of royal descent. He was not a descendant of King Saul.

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There is, however, one thing that is immediately suggested by the revelation of His ancestors and that is that he came from a line of ungodly forefathers. We suggest that you read again in the verses indicated above and in I Kings 2:36-46 of Shimei who would not be loyal to David's kingdom but clung to Saul's house. Generations later and yet from that line Mordecai is born. This in itself may never be used to condemn him. Jonathan was the son of unbelieving King Saul, and he was a man of marvelous faith. Yet in the light of all else that we do read it is significant that Scripture does point out that he is a descendant of this sinful man.

Esther likewise then comes from this family tree. There is the possibility that her father, the uncle of Mordecai, was the uncle on his mother's side. Then she would not be of this lineage of Shimei and Kish, but since no indication is given of her genealogy except that her father was Mordecai's uncle we doubt this.

Mordecai dwelt, we read, in Shushan the palace. This may mean that the palace was in Shushan and that Mordecai lived in Shushan, but all that follows in this book points to the fact that he dwelled in the palace itself. He was some kind of servant of the king. Otherwise he could not have kept such close contact with Esther without detection.
Nor would he have had the opportunity to overhear the plot to kill the king, of which we read in chapter 2:21-23. Then too in chapter 3:1-3 Mordecai is certainly clasped with “the king’s servants that were in the king’s gate.

Rare Beauty.

The Almighty had given to Esther a rare beauty. Of Vashti it is said that she was “fair to look on”. But of Esther it is said that she was “fair and beautiful.” And the first of these words literally means “fair or beautiful of form”, so that it was more than merely a beautiful face that pleased king Ahasuerus. It was a lustful beauty that made her pleasing to the king. This was also the beauty of Rachel—see Genesis 29:17 where this same expression is used.

Her name was undoubtedly changed to this Persian name, Esther, because of her beauty. Her real Jewish name was Hadassah, which means “myrtle” and the myrtle tree was a much respected tree by the Jews, see Isaiah 41:19 and 55:13. While the name Esther means “star”. Personally we believe that Mordecai gave her this name in order to hide her nationality, as we read in chapter 2:10. The name Hadassah would surely give her nationality away.

Points For Discussion:

1. Mordecai’s presence in Shushan. Mordecai plainly did not return to Canaan when, under Cyrus, the Jews were given permission to return. Was his stay in Shushan in itself sinful? Does it show the lack of interest in God’s covenant that is mentioned in Psalm 137:5-8? If this was the only thing we read of him that did not sound right, might we brand him as an unbeliever? Before you answer consider that Ezra and Nehemiah also were in Shushan and not in Jerusalem and that Nehemiah even returned after once having been in Jerusalem. Are there church members today who have remained in a spiritual sense in Shushan instead of going to Jerusalem? Who are they, those who know the truth and remain in churches that preach the lie?

2. Esther’s sinful lineage. Assuming that we are correct that Esther’s ancestors were the same as Mordecai’s and were therefore sinful, does her parentage have anything to do with her faith or unbelief? Is one nation more susceptible to the truth than another? Consider that in the Old Testament times the Jews were the vessel in which God preserved the truth and that in the last centuries it pleased God to preserve the Reformed truth of the Reformation chiefly in the descendants of only a few nations. Was the Jew more susceptible to the truth than the Philistine? Is the Hollander, the German, mentally better adapted to the truth of election than the emotional Italian, Does the emotional temperament of a man have anything to do with his faith? Is it easier for God to save and implant faith in a child whose parents are believers than in one whose parents are unbelievers?

3. Esther’s beauty. Is this beauty of
Esther a gift of God's common grace? Many women are even disfigured and deformed. To be consistent then would we not have to say that God is not gracious to them and that Common Grace is not so common after all? If grace consisted in things should we not expect God to make every believing woman physically beautiful? Why should He give them simply saving grace and deprive these of His "common grace"?

LESSON VII.
Esther Prepares For The Trial
(Esther 2:8-14)

Our space in Beacon Lights being limited to a definite number of pages we divide the material indicated above into two lessons both under the heading: "Esther prepares for the trial". For reasons which will become obvious later we do not call it a beauty contest. And feeling that this is the time to face that question as to whether Esther and Mordecai were believers or unbelievers we were also inclined to put as title above these lessons, "Esther and Mordecai Evidence Their Unbelief", but there are other passages coming in which their unbelief is plainly in evidence, and so we chose the above title.

We already called your attention to the fact that the king commanded the virgins of his realm to be gathered and to appear before him. Thus Mordecai did not enroll Esther in this immoral trial for the queenship. It is our firm conviction that both Esther and Mordecai were unbelievers, but it is also our firm conviction that it is our calling to assume as charitable an attitude as possible to them so that we do not accuse them of things they did not perform. Our reasons, that is, three of our reasons for believing them to be unbelievers we will list in this lesson and the next and ask you to study them carefully and to discuss them with all their implications for our own life.

1. The first thing that reveals Mordecai's and Esther's unbelief is that they both agree that Esther—and then also of necessity Mordecai—shall hide her kindred and people. For Esther this is equal to saying that she would hide her religion. We must not forget that at this period of history the true religion was the Jewish religion. It was this in that the worship of and faith in Jehovah was found only in the Jews with very few exceptions. Thus by worshipping Jehovah one would immediately brand himself as a Jew. And therefore to hide her people and her kindred Esther had to hide her religion. It meant that she might never pray to Jehovah. She might never sacrifice to Him. It means that her Sabbath would have to be a worldly, Persian Sabbath upon which she would have to continue in this work of preparing for this trial for the queenship. It means that she would have to worship and bow down to Persian idols. The minute she would refuse to do a thing on the Sabbath that was contrary to God's law she would reveal her kindred
and people. Please do not overlook the fact that in the Old Dispensation the Jew alone had such an Holy Day and that God law alone forbade work on the Sabbath. She must thus deliberately do things to hide her religion. When it comes to religion we cannot be neutral. We either reveal or hide our religion. And knowing the furious rage of the king and the unpredictable changes of heart of which he was capable it means that Esther would have to hide her religion all the rest of her life if chosen to be the queen. Her action means that she was ashamed of her religion, that she was ashamed of the Covenant which God had established with her people and kindred. It means that she is in the class with Esau who despised his birthright. It means that she is ashamed of Christ and has rejected Him.

Points For Discussion:
1. The hiding of faith. Would a believing parent ever give such advice to his child? What does Matthew 10:33 or Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26 say of such action? What do we read that Christ-denying, religion-hiding Peter did after a few hours of hiding his religion? Is it significant that we do not read of such a reaction on either Esther's or Mordecai's part even after their kindred was known?
2. Present day Esthers and Mordecais. Who are the Esthers and Mordecais of today? Are they the members of godless unions who swear allegiance to their union above God? Are they parents who send their children to Persia, to Ahasuerus, to the world for daily instruction where all teaching of religion is forbidden by law? Are they young people who attend the movies and dance floor? Do we show our religion when we go there? Are all of us who fail to rebuke those who blaspheme and take God's name in vain placing ourselves in that category? Explain why you say yes or no in each case.

LESSON VIII.

Esther Prepares For The Trial
(continued)
(Ester 2:8-14)

We wish to give you in this lesson two more reasons for our stand that Esther and Mordecai were unbelievers.

2. When we consider Mordecai's reason for hiding Esther's religion and kindred and people the matter becomes even worse. There never is a good reason for hiding one's religion, but here she does so for a very immoral reason. She does so in order to enjoy sin. Remember that at this time her people are not yet in danger of extermination. She does not plan to hide her religion and her people in order to get to a position of power from which she may save them. Her reason is solely the earthly glory and honor of the queenship and the willingness to walk in sin for the satisfaction of the flesh. Now a man may hide his religion when his life is in danger—that
is sinful and never excused by God. But it is surely a more vile sin when without pressure and in order to reach out for the forbidden a man will deny his religion. The goal that Mordecai and Esther seek is her marriage to this divorced, pagan king. There are two things forbidden here. She may not marry an unbeliever, and she may not take Vashti's place. For in God's judgment Vashti is yet the lawful wife of Ahasuerus. She is not (as we sometimes say to soothe our consciences) marrying him in order to convert him. She hides her religion (or we should say the religion of her people) and intends to do so all the rest of her life. At the expense of God's glory they will seek a little filthy honor and praise among men.

Could she have attained to the queenship along a more legal way the case would have been somewhat different but still sinful. Were he a believer, were he unmarried and had this actually been a beauty contest and nothing more it still would have been wrong for the king to hold such a contest in order to find a wife and wrong for Esther to enter it. There was the matter of deception which was sinful. It is very plain that had her kindred been known she would have been rejected immediately. There is also the matter of the sanctity of Holy Matrimony. They may not treat it so lightly and seek mates for the raising of the covenant seed through a beauty contest. But this contest was far worse! Read verse 14! In the evening, alone, a virgin would go to the king's house. The next morning she returned. Enough said! And this had been going on for four years. Do not say that Mordecai and Esther did not know what was required.

It might be argued that Mordecai and Esther had no choice since it was the king's command that virgins be gathered. That is not true. It would be closing our eyes to that which receives so much emphasis here. Scripture shows clearly that both Mordecai and Esther were absolutely convinced that to show her kindred and people would disqualify her. They had a way out. This they did not want. And to appreciate this fact simply contrast their deeds with those of Daniel and his three friends who refused the polluted meat and wine. Here is another thing, Esther undoubtedly did have to eat the polluted meat and is ready to pollute her body.

3. There are other things which reveal Esther's unbelief. These we will leave until we get to the passages concerned. One thing we point out now, however, is that if she had been a believer and as a believer had accomplished this great deliverance for Israel for the sake of God's covenant then she was indeed a woman of outstanding faith. And why is she not mentioned then in Hebrews 11? She surely did as much as Barak and Jepthae who are mentioned. Samson with his sins is mentioned, and yet the deliverance she wrought was greater than that of Gideon and Samson. The author of this epistle made no mistake in overlooking her. The Spirit made it plain to him that she does not belong with the heroes of faith.
Points For Discussion:

1. Marriage with unbelievers. What does II Cor. 6:14-18 say of this? May our covenant youth have “dates” with unbelievers? Is there much danger of this if they show their faith in all their walk of life. Fit Jesus’ words in John 15:18-20 into this picture. Do the same with I John 2:15-17. Does marriage with unbelievers show love to God and His covenant? Is it possible for a regenerated child of God to love one who does not love God and Christ?

2. Esther’s preparation. Esther spent one whole year in preparation. Does Scripture anywhere approve of women using oils, ointments and perfumes? Is there a great danger in misusing these things? Should a young man choose a life’s partner because of her beauty or faith? Should our young women seek to capture them by beauty (?) preparations?

LESSON IX.

Esther Becomes Queen
(Esther 2:15-18)

Esther’s father’s name is given us here for the first time. It tells us nothing more than that he was a Jew, and the name means: “Father of might,” which does not necessarily express any element of faith in God. The striking thing is that with a Jewish father and

no doubt a Jewish mother Esther’s features did not betray her kindred and people.

The selection.

Esther was chosen to be queen in the tenth month which corresponds to the period between our January and February. It was the seventh year of Ahasuerus’ reign and thus four years after the divorcement of Vashti. Historians tell us that it was during this time that Ahasuerus waged his campaign against Greece. Thus he was not in Shushan all these four years. The selection of a queen had been started but was interrupted by his war with Greece. However, we may surely believe that during the time when he was home he interviewed (if we can call it that) many, many virgins who appeared for his enjoyment and had become his concubines. Solomon, remember, had three hundred concubines. And historians tell us that this evil man, Ahasuerus, sought after his return from Greece, to drive away the vexation of his defeat by an immoral life with his concubines.

The custom was that the virgins (?) would, after having spent the night in the king’s house, go to the house where his concubines were kept. See verse 14. Whether Esther entered this house with the royal crown upon her head designating that she had been chosen, or whether the king kept her in his house till the choice was shown to his court, is not stated. Most likely that latter was the case.
The celebration.

The proud king now makes another feast which he calls "Esther's Feast." It is called a great feast and was in Esther's honor. To the people the king gave a holiday to celebrate this fact that a queen had been chosen. This was the release, not from taxes but from work. He even gave gifts to various provinces. What they are is not stated. The king is very, very happy, and of course, he is happy for himself. He will never miss Vashti again, and what do God's ordinances and laws mean as long as he has an enjoyable time? So the king reasons. So the fallen human race has reasoned ever since its first parents in Paradise decided that God's law meant nothing as long as eating of the forbidden fruit would bring joy and pleasures to them.

Points For Discussion:

1. The king's love for Esther. In verse 17 we read that the king loved her above the others and she obtained grace and favour more than all the virgins. It was not an exclusive love, only a relative love. Can we expect such love which is based on physical beauty to fade with the fading of that beauty? Is this in your judgment the reason for many of our present day divorces? What must be our judgment of all trial marriages and companionate marriages? Would you class this whole procedure of Ahasuerus with these virgins with such trial marriages?

2. Esther's obedience. Esther faithfully kept Mordecai's command that she hide her people's and kindred's identity. She also left to Hegai the entire choice of the clothing and ornaments she should wear when her turn came to go in to see the king. (see verse 15). What kind of impression do you get from these facts as to her character? Was she of a gentle, pliable nature? Does she appear to you to be the very opposite of haughty, proud Vashti? Is a gentle, unassuming, submissive nature always the evidence of faith and regeneration? Or do you think that Esther's willingness to leave the choice of her ornaments and dress to Hegai nothing more than worldly wisdom springing from a soul that is interested in the material rather than the spiritual?

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The difference between listening to a radio sermon and going to church is the same as the difference between calling your friend on the telephone and spending an evening with him.

—Christian Herald.

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An error gratefully acknowledged is a victory won.

—Gascoigne.
Christianty and the Class Struggle.

This is the title of a translation of an address by Dr. Abraham Kuyper which he delivered at the opening of the Christian Social Congress in 1891. It has been translated by Dirk Jellema and published by the Piet Hein Publishers.

Since I consider it my purpose to draw your attention to world events and to the view we should take with respect to them in the light of God's revelation, I also consider it of importance to call attention to publications which will enable us to understand the problems and to know the view a Christian should take.

Abraham Kuyper is known as his name and position in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands to many of you. Very few of you know his works. And it is worthwhile for you as young people to become acquainted with his writings. This translation enables you to do just that. Besides it is a small book of sixty-four pages, which will enable you to read it without much effort.

Of course, when we do such a thing as recommend the reading of a certain author, and that author who is particularly responsible for the theory of common grace and thus a definite departure from true Calvinism, we do not mean to lead you astray. Nor should we brand anyone who reads or recommends to read Kuyper's works a Kuyperian.

I recommend this reading of Kuyper because we must be familiar with his point of view in order to criticize it intelligently. It is also valuable reading because Kuyper presents the social problems very clearly and offers many solutions.

Concerning his particular translation and work I have the following:

1. Although this lecture was delivered more than ten years prior to the publication of his work on "Common Grace", there is nevertheless a definite trace of that same point of view, although the concept and term common grace is not mentioned. There is this sentence for example, "No, the cause lay in this, that men regarded humanity apart from its eternal destiny, did not honor it as created in the image of God, and did not reckon with the majesty of the Lord, who alone is able to hold in check, through His grace, a race sunk in sin." (p. 22).

In the second place this is evident from his wrong application of Scripture and especially the words of Jesus to the social problem, to the disturbances and troubles of our century which Kuyper so keenly analyzes. Kuyper brings out that there is an undeniable relation between the social question and the Christian religion,
and seeks to bring out a self criticism of Christianity's failures. He writes this: "And it is in this spirit of self criticism, and not at all in a tone of haughtiness that I understand your probable reproachful question whether such an obvious truth needs demonstration in a gathering such as this, and whether standing before the awful need of these times, a need which at every point is related to the very essence of error and sin, our eye should be allowed to turn away from the Christus Consolator, who assuredly also addresses to our violently disturbed century the persistent call of His divine compassion: Come to me, richest century that ever was, which is so deathly weary and heavy laden, and I shall give you rest." This paraphrase of the words of Jesus makes the fundamental error of implying that the century and thus all men are weary and heavy laden. The opposite is the reality. And Jesus makes the distinction in all time to call only the weary and heavy laden.

Kuyper also fails in his search for a solution to the social question and in his keen analysis of the social need and in his rejection of the wrong individualism of the French Revolution, and in his presentation of the Christian view, to distinguish the organism of the world and society of which we are members and the other organism, the Church, of which we and all who shall be saved are and must become members. He fails to make a clear distinction. This failure may lead many of his followers, especially those who are addicted particularly to his view of common grace to the wrong social principles and the wrong program as to the Christian calling toward the misery of mankind.

2. There is something commendable in Kuyper which causes one to question just how far the above criticism applies to Kuyper himself. I refer to his pointing to the appalling spiritual need of our generation. He writes this, "But even greater and more appalling is the spiritual need of our generation. When in the midst of our social misery, I behold the demoralization which comes up behind this need, and hear a raucous voice which, instead of calling on the Father in heaven for salvation, curses God, mocks His Word, insults the Cross of Golgotha, tramples on whatever witness was still in the conscience, all in order, as though in a frenzy, to inflame everything wild and animal which hides in the human heart; then I stand before an abyss of spiritual misery which almost arouses my human pity more than the most biting poverty.”

Here we have a recognition at least of the real misery which is often lost sight of in any so-called Christian consideration of human misery.

In this connection it is to be noticed that Kuyper does not fall under the same criticism that many of the present day Neo-Calvinistic stamp do, in that they forget the eschatological purpose of God with all things and the imperative upon Christians to witness to that in all our witnessing. This also makes us wonder about some of the statements of Kuyper, how we should understand them, whether
we are correct to condemn him, or whether some of his followers are correct in claiming him as their leader. The quotation I have in mind is this, "And therefore, you who profess our Lord Jesus Christ, it is your duty to place in the foreground, with a gripping earnestness and a soul-penetrating emphasis, on every occasion, for rich and poor alike, the life eternal. Only he who reckons with an eternal life knows the real value of this earthly life." (p. 59)

2. As to the translation, I have noticed one serious error which to my mind expresses something as to the probable reason for the misunderstanding that men have of Calvinism and of Kuyper. This is the quotation, "Dour pagan Rome, even as laughing Greece, sank away into the morass of human misery; but before it sank, there had been a light in Bethlehem, there had been heard a dying cry from Golgotha through which a new hope was awakened for all peoples. A new hope, not in the sense which men today wish to degrade the Christ of God to a social reformer; Saviour of the world was His higher and much richer title. But nevertheless the "blessedness" which He brought to humanity had a promise "not alone for the future but also for the present life." (p. 26).

It is a question what Kuyper may mean with humanity, in other connections. But in this connection his original is different. In the Dutch we read, "maar toch de "godzaligheid" die hij onder menschen aanbracht" which is, "nevertheless the "blessedness" which He manifested among men". Kuyper cannot

be appealed to here to support the view that God brings salvation to all men with the intention of saving them. The translation lends to that conclusion.

3. The translator and publishers should be recognized. We also wish to express our appreciation for their efforts.

ETERNITY (III)

This Thou hast promised, and shalt do
Give us Thy grace to believe
That death is gone, which we'll pass thru
That Thou shalt us receive;
With arms of Thine embracing love,
To be with Thee at home,
To see Thy face, to praise Thy love,
Redeemed; then safely home.

We are not worthy of all this,
Ah nay! but Him we trust,
Who our dear Lord and Saviour is,
He's all our blessedness;
He promised it, in Him we plead,
And know it shall be given
We know, that when we'll leave this earth
We'll be with Him in heaven.

With Him; and with the saints above;
How glorious that shall be!
Just to adore Him for His love
Throughout Eternity.
Amazed I ponder on all this
That I His face shall see,
My prayer and praise thus ends as is,
And says, Oh Lord! Why me?

—H. A. Van Putten.
CHOOSING A VOCATION (II)

In our former installment (see last month's edition of Beacon Lights), we left John and Jim with the pastor in the manse, whither they had gone after the meeting of the Young Men's Society. We sat in with them to hear their particular problem. John and Jim could not see eye to eye on the particular considerations that enter into the choice of a life's vocation. When we left them they had each presented their respective view of the question. John had stressed that in the choice of our vocation God in His kind and Fatherly providence leads the way. The choice is made for us rather than by us. Jim, on the other hand, emphasized that it was a matter of personal choice. And each was rather insistent that his view was the correct one.

And now it is the pastor's turn to speak.

It is really not a surprise to us that the pastor is rather hesitant to speak. Giving good guidance to the young men in God's church is a very delicate task, requiring much wisdom and spiritual discretion. And being a man of keen spiritual insight into the problems of God's kingdom as they pertain to our walk of godliness, he is well aware of his own limitations to give advice on such a matter. And so he is a bit hesitant. But God calls him to duty and this calling he will not shirk. Besides this, the pastor also believes, that both John and Jim are serious minded believing young men, who are earnestly desirous of knowing the truth as it is in Jesus—this truth as it has reference to their particular problem in the determination of the choice of a life's calling. Were this not the case with them all advice would be of no avail and the request for light on their problem would not be sincere. At best they would simply be airing their views to their one-man audience, without the slightest thought of earnestly seeking good and Scriptural advice. Each would then live in the vain imagination that they had uttered the last bit of wisdom.

Also this the pastor will not believe of them. And believing the best of these young men and also knowing his calling, he takes courage to enter into the question.

Confident that these young men are earnestly desirous of being instructed in the truth of God as this is profitable to godliness the pastor undertakes to instruct these young men, John and Jim.

The pastor points out to John and Jim, first of all, that it is of the utmost importance to understand, that the question involved here in the matter of the con-
siderations necessary in the choice of a vocation is not merely one of simply choosing a life's calling. It should be constantly kept in open view, that the matter is emphatically that of the believer's choice of a vocation.

Evidently, thus the pastor feels, neither John nor Jim has sufficiently given himself account of this factor. To say the least, neither one has brought this matter emphatically to the foreground. And, since this matter is so extremely important, the pastor emphatically wills to call attention to this truth.

To do so is important on two counts, he is certain.

In the first place, this is very necessary for a proper understanding of the issue involved. It certainly makes a great deal of difference, in fact all the difference in the world, as great as the distance from east to west, whether one who is an unbeliever, one who is disobedient to God in Christ, chooses a life's "vocation" or whether a believer in Christ makes such a life's choice. For when the believer and the unbeliever make such a choice they do not do the same thing. They both are prompted by different considerations. The former is prompted by the considerations of faith that works by love, while the latter is prompted by the considerations that are rooted in hatred for God and man. Therefore, the pastor is convinced, that we should make this very important distinction at the very outset. Only then will we not be confused in our thinking about this question.

Then, too, there is a second consideration that prompts the minister to insist, that thus the matter be formulated at the outset. It must be so stated for our very life's sake, for the sake of our spiritual well-being. Only by clearly seeing this very important point with believing eyes can we be stimulated to make a believing and prayerful decision. For, in very truth, only this high and exalted motive has prompted, the pastor believes, John and Jim to seek his advice and instruction. He would, he feels, not be doing justice to these young men, in caring for their souls, if he stated the matter differently.

To this latter observation both John and Jim nod their approbation. Both feel that they have been led by their pastor to holy ground, where it behooves them to take their shoes from off their feet.

The pastor proceeds.

The next question to keep in mind is, according to him, that in all of our walk in faith and in the acts and deeds of faith, the Word of God must be our only guide. For such is the plain and exalted pretense of the Holy Scriptures themselves. They are the only rule of faith and life. And, as John and Jim have been instructed in catechism, they are reminded, that they have always heard that Reformed theologians as well as the confessions speaks of the Holy Scriptures as the only rule of faith. Jim, who has studied a little Latin, thinks out loud and murmurs "Regula Fidei".

Now it is the conviction of the pastor, that if this presupposition, this prejudice of faith, namely, that the Scriptures
Among Our Societies . . .


Middle Row: Rev. P. Vis (Pres.), Phillip Flikkema, Garret Flikkema, Anna Schipper, Claire Edna Leep, (Vice-Sec'y-Treas.), Bertha Ann Visser, Peter J. Visser, Roger Van Dyken.

Bottom Row: Sadie Schipper, Fenna Flikkema, Arlene Leep, Marjorie Holdiman, Jeanette Flikkema, Faye Ellen Ungersma, Trynia Schipper, Dorothy Van Dyken, (Sec'y).

Absent when picture was taken: Ethel Kimm, Richard Heys, John Vander Molen.

The Manhattan Young People's Society meets every Sunday evening at 7:30 in our church auditorium for about an hour of Christian fellowship.

Our meetings are opened with a 15 minute song service and prayer, led by our president, or in his absence, by the vice-pres. A portion of the Bible is then studied, for 45 minutes, which at the present time is Genesis 21. During the winter months we follow the Outlines in Beacon Lights.

After a 10 minute recess our business matters, if any, are taken care of and then a program of 3 or 4 numbers is rendered. The meetings are closed by singing a Psalter number and prayer by one of the boys, after which the Doxology (either 196 or 197) is sung.

Our society also sponsors the radio program in our vicinity, which we call "The Protestant Reformed Radio Hour". Rev. Vis is our speaker, and the Choral Society furnishes the music.

Our one regret is that we are so far away from other churches of our faith, but we are grateful to our Covenant God that we may have this hour of fellowship with one another, and our hope and prayer to God is that He may use us in His service, and that what we do may be to His Honour and Glory.
TRUTH vs. MISSIONARY ZEAL?

Perhaps you will remember that I would write a little more on the question put to me by one of our young people regarding the above topic? If you desire to familiarize yourself with the matter, it might be well to read the question once more on page 23 of the October issue of our Beacon Lights.

It is a little tragic that my young friend characterized our (the Protestant Reformed) attitude towards the lost as "cold and indifferent", and that it seemed as though our attitude was: "I am saved and let the rest of the world go by." Tragic because if this were true we would stand condemned in the worst way before God's throne. If we really and truly are saved, we could not take that attitude.

And what must I do with this serious charge?

If I were to say: "It is not true; we detest such a cold and heartless attitude!" I would be as far in my denial, as my young friend is regarding the charge. It would mean nothing.

And therefore I will not simply deny the charge, but I will prove that as although I would that we had done much group of churches we have done much, more.

Take the above charge and tell it to men like the Rev. Wm. Korn in South Dakota; or to the students Mensch and Koerner who drink from the presenta-

No, we are not big enough and strong enough to go to heathen lands, in order to bring the story of the cross. But we have begun in Jerusalem, carried the work through in all of Judea and Samaria. And with God's help we will go to the ends of the world to tell them of the Sovereign Father and Shepherd which we preach about, write about and sing about. In God's own good time.

All I would ask my young friend is this: Measure our numbers and our financial strength, and then listen to the extent to which we have told our story, and this friend of mine, myself and my readers, will marvel what God hath wrought. Yes, we are cordially hated too. And even that is proof that we brought the old, old story of the true Jesus. But we are cordially loved too. I asked you a while ago to ask some men the question you asked me. On second thought I caution you not to. They would not like it. They heard from afar; they came closer, very close
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to the heart of the movement of God’s grace, that is, they came to the seminary, and they found that the half had not been told.

And by God’s grace we will march on as the hosts of the Protestant Reformed, and we will shout our war-cry as long as God wills it: He is God alone, and there is no other God besides Him! God’s own have listened and will continue to listen.

That is the heart of the strength of our movement.

And I am convinced that neither you nor I could forsake it.

God love you forever!

SCHUILER.

TWO QUESTIONS

What is your opinion on the gossiping and backbiting often done before, during, and after divine services about a brother or sister in Christ’s personal appearance and mannerisms? It seems as if many of our church people think more of outward personal appearance and etiquette (traditions of the elders, Mark 7:1-8, Mat. 23:13, 23, 24, 1 Sam. 16:7) than the preaching of the word. After all Scripture makes very little mention of the personal appearance and etiquette of the patriarchs, prophets, and of the apostles and saints.

A Beacon Lighter.

If all questions sent in were as easy to answer as this one, and also the one that follows, I would not need much time. I could simply say: my opinion is the same as yours! You asked a question and you really supplied the answer yourself! And what other possible answer could I give than to simply say: such people stand condemned!

But you have given me no problem to solve. The matter is self-evident.

Your friend, SCHUILER.

P. S.—As far as our real appearance is concerned we should “be clothed with humility”.

Should a sincere Christian, who delights to be busy in the things of the Lord, permit his daily occupation to interfere with his attending society, catechism, consistory meetings, and other work connected with the Kingdom he may be engaged in? I mean such things as night work and working overtime whether he works for himself or for an employer. Or should he endeavor to find other work, which will not interfere with the church activities he delights in, even if it means another vocation or lower wages?

A Beacon Lights Reader.

My answer is that “a sincere Christian who delights to be busy in the things of the Lord” does not permit “his daily occupation to interfere” with the aforementioned “things of the Lord”.

To put it in a still shorter form: such a sincere Christian has no such problem. The person that allows his daily work to interfere with his Christian walk is neither sincere nor does he delight in the things of the Lord.

Sincerely,

SCHUILER.
Hollywood.

I.—Its Influence.

In the vicinity of Los Angeles, Calif., there lies a small village called Hollywood. Many map-makers do not take the trouble to indicate this spot and the rest are satisfied to indicate it by a small dot and very small letters. It may interest our readers to know that Redlands, Calif., is indicated on all medium-sized maps of the U.S. in medium-sized letters. The point I wish to bring out is that Hollywood is very insignificant geographically.

Hollywood is the home of the two billion dollar movie industry. It has its 18,000 theaters scattered throughout the United States, attracting some 85,000,000 visitors weekly. Its influence is not only nation-wide, but world-wide, and is so powerful that a recent report of a British Commission on “The Film in National Life” says that the nations can be judged by the films they export and that only the Bible and the Koran have a indisputably larger circulation than the latest film from Hollywood.

Hollywood sets most of the standards of living in America. Much of the worldly music, silly popular songs and jazz comes from Hollywood. This is also true of the immodest styles of clothing today. American’s try to imitate the movie stars in their way of speech, dress, hairdo, dancing, love-making (Hollywood style), smoking (particularly of women), make-up, manicure, drinking of intoxicants, eating, bathing, and in deliberately breaking every precept of God’s law.

The advertising of the movies is so extensive, that they control very largely the policy of the magazines and newspapers. I have yet to see the movies criticized and condemned in a popular newspaper or magazine. Life Magazine even held seven ministers and their congregations of Sioux Center, Iowa up to outrageous ridicule a few years ago because of their condemnation of the movies. These seven ministers (including one of our own Prot. Ref. ministers) were termed as “hellfire and brimstone preachers”. In spite of the fact, that the issue, to close the only theater in that town, was voted in favor by over half of its citizens; the town council secretly voted to let the theater remain open!

Dr. John R. Rice in his pamphlet, What is Wrong With the Movies?, states that he has had many advertisements of his sermons rejected by the newspapers because they spoke too sharply about liquor, modernism, and the punishment of sin. These same newspapers, which rejected his advertisements, contained column after column of movie advertisements, pictures of half-nude women, direct appeals to the sex instinct, and long columns of comment on the latest films at the various theaters. This much boasted “freedom of religion” in America is certainly a sham.

The public schools are also influenced...
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by Hollywood. Frequently school children are given free tickets and are asked to make reports on certain shows that are supposed to have historical or news, or educational values. A neat trick of the devil to get the children to attend the theater.

Hollywood is encouraged in its wicked shows by the false church. Many modern liberal ministers(!!?) are not at all interested in the Word of God, but interested in themselves primarily. They do not condemn, but actually defend and encourage theater attendance by recommending certain Hollywood shows. Many church papers advertise these films. These wolves in sheep's clothing do this to be on the right side of the business men of their congregation. Remember that Hollywood is connected with all kinds of businesses, ranging from the manufacture of steel, lumber, textiles, photographic and electrical equipment, to the manufacture of cosmetics, pop-corn, paper cups, and Coca Cola. Also bear in mind that the Hollywood stars and executives are large stockholders in the various industries. To say anything against the movie would seriously handicap many of the big businesses; the executives of which (including Hollywood stars and executives) are members of these modern churches and of the Masonic Lodge. These Balaks pay big salaries to their Balaams in order to have their itching ears tickled instead of boxed. (II Tim. 4:3-4).

The same can be said about the various censorship agencies sponsored by religious groups and by state and city governments. Hollywood simply offers to pay the expenses of the censorship boards in order to prevent their films from being rejected. The boards merely classify the films.

How do the Hollywood stars rate in popularity. They are held in high esteem by the world. They are recognized at once when their pictures appear in the magazines, newspapers, and billboards. The walls of many factories and homes of America are (dis)graced by pictures of movie stars after appearing in the nude and in a suggestive posture. Their every move is studied, admired, and copied. The manufacturers of various commodities such as liquor, cigarettes, phonograph records, beauty preparations, soap, toothpaste, etc., also recognize this fact. They can increase the sales of their products merely by placing advertisements picturing movie stars using popular magazines. No college professor, president of the United States, senator, congressman, sports hero, explorer, musician, inventor, or minister can ever rival in popularity a Clark Gable, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Hedy Lamarr, or Greta Garbo. Dan Gilbert in his pamphlet, “Hell Over Hollywood”, gives us some examples of the unexcelled popularity of the movie stars of which I quote:

“Edward G. Robinson had reached the pinnacle of fame (or infamy) by depicting gangster roles in the movies at the same time that Mr. Hoover was going out of office as President of the United States. By coincidence, their trains arrived in Pennsylvania station, New York at the same time. Crowds of frenzyed
fans almost mobbed Mr. Robinson. Practically no one even noticed President Hoover.

"Time Magazine reports that all appeals to the American people to buy more war bonds from patriotic motives were weak and ineffectual. Every month the government's quota of war bonds was left unfilled—until Hollywood utilized sex to put the campaign over the top! One movie star promoted the bond-selling drive by giving kisses to everyone who bought over a specified amount. Two hundred and twenty five individuals in Philadelphia bought $4,520,000.00 in bonds for the privilege of taking Hedy Lamarr to a mass luncheon engagement. Frances Dee sold an embroidered negligee for $5,000.00 in bonds. Other film luminaries advanced the sale by partially or wholly disrobing, by dancing, singing, etc."

These two examples gives an inkling of the influence of Hollywood upon our nation. Even in the city of Grand Rapids the film gods and goddesses are worshipped. This I personally experienced on the evening (10:30 P.M. approx.) of Labor Day, 1949, while riding the bus on Monroe Ave., when Bob Hope appeared at the Civic Auditorium in person. The traffic jam was twice as bad as it normally is at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. According to reports, the Civic Auditorium was filled to capacity. I greatly fear that many people were there who should have not been there that night. It is a sad thing that so many of our own Reformed people worship the gods of Hollywood by attending the theaters.

A survey taken a few years ago at the Grand Rapids Christian High School showed that less than 5 percent of the students never attended a show in their life.

The same is true about the same movie battle that occurred in Sioux Center, Iowa. Life Magazine reports that there were fewer than fifty persons in that town (pop. 2,000) that were not devout church- goers and that "every one in town attended two services on Sunday." But when the issue to close the theater came to a public vote, 427 out of 915 votes (or nearly half) were not in favor. This really shows the influence of Hollywood even upon our own church people. To them I warn, "Come forth, my people, out of her, that we receive not of her plagues: for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. (Rev. 18:4-5). Of these iniquities I hope to treat more fully in the next installment on "Hollywood".

So long as mere reason is the only listener, the melody of the cross will be unheard. Charm we ever so wisely, men cannot hear the music until the ears of the heart have been opened.

—Selected.
AHIRA, PRINCE OF NAPHTALI
by Ella M. Noller
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

"For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." (Deut. 11:10-13).

This is the story of the children of Israel on their journey to the Promised Land. The events take place immediately following the years of wandering in the wilderness up unto the sending of the two spies into the city of Jericho.

Ahira, the hero of the story, is a young prince who is leader of the tribe of Naphtali. As one with authority, Ahira is a mighty warrior and serves as a spy many times for Israel in their conquest of the heathen round about them. On his first spying expedition Ahira falls in love with Zoheleth, a high priestess of Midian. From that day on his soul is vexed because he desires to have her for his wife and yet realizes that the children of Israel shall not join themselves to the daughters or sons of the heathen round about them.

Finally upon a certain spying expedition Ahira and his companion are aided in their escape by the high priestess. However before they leave they have an opportunity to expound to her the marvelous goodness and majesty of the God of Israel. She had previously become acquainted with the teachings of Israel and her interest in the matter together with the teachings of the spies result in her conversion to the faith of Israel. This causes Ahira to become joyful for he can now visualize a fulfillment to his dream without transgressing the commandment of God.

However, Israel is caused to sin by their fraternization with the Midianites and God commands them to wage war against Midian where previously they had been at peace. Ahira fears for Zoheleth's safety and attempts to save her. He is betrayed by his half-brother Caphtor who then rescues the princess and makes known his intention to marry her. He is finally thwarted and dies a horrible death in the waters of the Jordan.

The story abounds in exciting adventure and dangerous episodes. A dark web of intrigue and sorcery, in the per-
sons of Caphtor and Jonathan, create intense situations and many times disrupt the pattern of Israel’s plan. Both are superstitious, vain men who aspire to greatness. Paganism, sorcery and petty ambitions cause them constantly to assume the role of spoilers.

The author is Arminian in his presentation of God’s divine counsel for Israel. At the time of God’s visitation upon Israel with fiery serpents this presentation comes especially to the foreground. However this false interpretation is easy to detect and should not serve to be a stumbling block in understanding the contents of the book.

I found the book interesting and well written. It will leave the reader with a fuller understanding of Israel’s epic journey. The faithful portrayal of the customs and superstitions of the day indicate a quite thorough knowledge of that time in history and a wealth of background material.

FROM BEGINNING TO END . . . .

Not only must we grow into Christ, but in growing into Christ we must grow out of him, so that all the manifestation of our life becomes like Christ. We grow into Him; and then growing into Him, we derive everything out of Him; and deriving everything out of Him, we become conformable to His image. And, we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Thus we fulfill our part of the covenant of God, namely, that we love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. That is our part!

Negatively that means we must not grow into anything that is outside of Christ, must have nothing to do with it. We must never strike any roots into outside soil, that is, outside of Christ. And positively that means that in our inward life and in our outward manifestation and walk of life we grow spiritually into and out of Christ in all our life. Inwardly, so that all our righteousness, all our love, all our faith, all our confidence, all our hope, all our spiritual life is out of Christ and into Christ from beginning to end. None of our piety, none of our religion, none of our goodness, nothing that we can do, nothing that we have to do, absolutely nothing as regards our salvation! Nothing! That’s Scripture! That’s Reformed! That’s the Confession!

Exercising Godliness in witnessing for Christ

Some nineteen hundred years ago, just before our Lord ascended into glory, he left with his church on earth the command “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. This injunction did not stop with the apostles, but has been handed down through the ages, and now rests upon us as the coming generation of the church.

We have gathered here at this convention as a Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies. Many of us have traveled great distances to attend this convention. This enthusiasm in itself is a manifestation of the seed of godliness that the Holy Spirit has planted in the hearts of the elect. The purpose of this convention is not primarily to get together for a good time, but to glorify the name of God, and to inspire the youth of the church to exercise that gift of godliness that has become our possession. We as Protestant Reformed Young People have a distinctive calling. We have been brought up from the cradle in the fear of God. We have been thoroughly instructed in the Reformed truths, which have been founded on the Word of God. Our lives have been impregnated with the Spirit of Godliness. We are constantly being reminded of our heritage and the dangers that threaten it. This heritage is a gift of God. It holds for us many privileges, but also a great responsibility. Christ calls upon us to witness before the world. In Matthew 5:16 he commands “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

But we have fallen, and continue to fall far short of this calling. Sad to say, it is often difficult to distinguish between the damned sinner and the supposedly regenerated child of God. It is comparatively easy for us to witness for Christ when we are in christian company, at home, church, or society, but when we are confronted by the world, and the things of the world, our faith too quickly fades, and our light fades with it. Instead of testifying for Christ on the witness stand, we are content to sit in the back row and watch evil men curse his Holy Name. When we do let our light shine, we often try to shade it a little, to make it easier on the sin-darkened eyes of men. Instead of glorifying the Name of God, we, mortal men, are actually ashamed of a true and perfect God, who is the Creator of all. We ignore the calling “Come out from among them, and be ye separate”, because we enjoy the folly of the world, and are enchanted by the temptations of the devil.

We are the salt of the earth! Has the salt lost its savour? Are we merely in the world, or are we also of the world?

The people of God must be a peculiar people. The line of distinction must be plainly visible. There can be no compromise between good and evil. Man
cannot serve two masters, nor can there be a twilight in Christianity, for twilight always heralds the coming of total darkness.

Perhaps the greatest reason for our failure to witness for Christ is our own sinful pride and selfishness. We want to make a name for ourselves in this world instead of magnifying the name of God. We are afraid of being ridiculed by godless men who would make us believe that there is no God. We are ashamed to confess that we are dependent upon God for our very existence. We are ever ready to defend ourselves, and even other men, but God is denied and cursed, His Name mocked and cast out, and we do nothing about it.

Where is this godliness that we hear so much about?

God, in His marvelous grace, has given every one of us, each in his own measure, the ability and the opportunity to reflect his perfect light. We are duty bound to use these gifts that his purpose in us may be realized. What will we do with our talents? Will we exercise them for the glory of God? Or will we bury them deep in the gloom of our sinful hearts, to be rooted up in the judgment, to testify to our own damnation?

Some may think that they are too young to be so serious minded, that now is the time to enjoy our youth and get a little fun out of life, and that there will be plenty of time to confess our faith and live a godly life. This is a common, and often disastrous error. We are under an obligation to God from the hour of our birth, and the fact that one is not a confessing member of church does not free him from this obligation. Life is too short, and time too precious to be squandered in the folly of this world. The call comes to each one individually; and we must not wait until tomorrow; tomorrow may be too late.

We are living in perilous times. Never before in history has been become so aware of the uncertainty of human life. Within one generation this world has experienced two devastating world wars, and now seems to be on the threshold of a third. Each conflict brings more bloodshed and destruction than the one preceding it. Man, who formerly was afraid of planes and guns, is now terrified at the thought of rockets and atomic bombs, which have the power to destroy millions of lives in a matter of seconds. He is so filled with fear and discontent that he does not trust his fellow man, and often not even his own friends and relatives.

The strife between capital and labor is at a maximum. The divorce rate is higher than it ever was before. Parents desert their children and children murder their parents.

This nation was founded to overthrow the tyranny of earthly dictators and to give freedom to the common man, but the common man has only proved that he is incapable of governing even himself.

When man views the confusion and turmoil which surrounds him, he stands aghast, and wonders what will happen next.

And through it all he strives for a
vague something which he calls peace, but he finds no peace because he seeks a peace of this world, which does not exist.

But we as members of the body of Christ have a peace that is sure. A peace that passeth all understanding. A hope that is anchored in the Rock of our salvation.

When we behold the comfort that is ours in Christ, we can sense, in a small way, the power of godliness. May we always respect this treasure, and pray God for more godliness and for grace to exercise it before the world. And also that this convention may be an inspiration for us to take our candles from under the bushels of sin, and to let them shine in the darkness of this modern world, that through our testimony, our Father which is in heaven may be glorified.

TRUTH vs. ERROR
(cont. from page 19)

are the sole role of life and faith means anything, if it is not to be a mere meaningless formula, but is to be rigidly applied in all of faith and the life of faith, then also in this question of the believing choice of a vocation, our act must meet with the rule of faith.

The pastor is certain, that now he has come to the very crux of the question. This matter is the pivotal point in the whole debate, as far as he can see.

It will be interesting to hear how this observation, which, we too believe are of a fundamental nature, are brought to bear by the pastor on the matter in question: The believer's choice of a vocation.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN
(by John Rankin)

Don't think you're a Christian because you were born
In a so-called Christian land;
Don't think you're a Christian because baptized
By ministerial hand,
Don't think you're a Christian because confirmed
When reaching youthful age;
Don't think you're a Christian because enrolled
On denominational page.
Don't think you're a Christian because you attend
Church service regularly;
Don't think you're a Christian because you give
Your money liberally.
Don't think you're a Christian because you repeat
The Lord's prayer as 'tis known;
Don't think you're a Christian because you teach
A Sunday School Class of your own.
Don't think you're a Christian because orthodox is
The sect to which you belong;
Don't think you're a Christian because you join
The choir in sacred song.
Don't think you're a Christian because ordained
To publicly preach and pray;
Don't think you're a Christian because you are praised
For clever things you say.

(continued in the next issue)
FUN - FOOD and FELLOWSHIP . . .
AT THE 1950 OUTING — FIRST CHURCH
REFORMATION DAY MASS MEETING

You haven't forgotten that very important date, have you?

Remember! — it's October 31st, at our Hudsonville Church 7:45 is the time.

High-lighting the evening will be:
1. A short singspiration; to set things in the right mood.
2. Bible lesson directed by two of our Holland Young people and two from First Church. Afterwards the floor will be open for a general discussion.
3. The after recess program featuring the speaker for the evening—a very good friend of yours and mine, our former Board advisor, Rev. Vos. His topic will be:

"Reformation Day Thinking In Our Practical Life".

Let's see all of you and your friends there to enjoy this evening of Christian fellowship.

Refreshments will also be served.

Ardyth Griffioen Sec'y.
Every Protestant Reformed person who purchases a copy of this commemorative volume will bring into his possession a complete and comprehensive history of the growth and development of our denomination during its first twenty five years of existence.

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