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Looking Back

This month Beacon Lights celebrates an anniversary, its first anniversary. It was one year ago, in the month of February, that our young people's paper was first published, after a period of dormancy of about six months.

Why wasn't our paper published? You all realize the trouble in our Protestant Reformed Churches. Beacon Lights, too, was affected by this split. For quite some time we had no editor and capable advisor for our paper. It wasn't until February of '54 that Mr. A. Heemstra and some young people published the first Beacon Lights in more than six months.

From this point on, the staff of our paper has matured enough, so that Mr. Heemstra felt that his services were no longer needed and we could well take over the publishing of Beacon Lights, under the editorship of Rev. James McCollam.

This we have attempted to do, though we admit, with many shortcomings and failures. However, we hope that in the future, with God's grace, we shall be able to publish a paper that will be inspiring and edifying to all our young people, in everything that is put in our paper.

Now that we stand, shall we say, before a new year as far as Beacon Lights is concerned, let us look back over the past year, a year which has been one of toil and labor, as far as the Christian is concerned, and also one of trouble and some heart-ache, as far as our churches are concerned.

During this past year, we have seen much wrangling amongst our people. We have witnessed many churches splitting, one group keeping the church building while others have had to seek other places of worship. We have seen a split classis. A court case, whose decision we now know, was held just this past year of 1954.

Such important happenings in our denomination which was so small to begin with. Just think of it, people say; a split in the Protestant Reformed Churches, when they were so small. Now they're made even smaller. And think of this too. Some of them have to meet in other church auditoriums, or school auditoriums or even in store buildings. Isn't that a shame.

Also, they add to these remarks, "And to think they can't settle their little
difficulties among themselves." Also, "And to think they will split over such trivial matters."

People who talk this way never realize the pains we took to settle this difficulty among ourselves. If only they knew the weeks on end that were spent in our church political gatherings, they wouldn't say that we could have settled these arguments peaceably.

As to the other statement about these "trivial matters," the people who say these things are usually the ones who know nothing about the truth and also who want nothing of that truth. They do not realize there is this much difference, that one presentation is the truth, while the other is the lie. It is a matter of light over against darkness. It is either seeking God as the author and finisher of salvation, God from beginning to end, or man doing something for his salvation and thus saving himself. Really it comes down to this, "Is God, really God?" Or is man some kind of god, so that he is not dependent upon God for his salvation? "Who is God?" that is the question.

What could be a more controversial and heretic question? To raise man up and say he must do something to save himself, is the farthest from the truth of Scripture that God is "only" and "Complete" Savior.

This is really what the question is. No one can deny it. That is why we have the split in our churches. Those who have strayed, want that doctrine, that exalts man. It is only human to cling to an idea that builds up our ego. I say again, this doctrine is not Scriptural.

For these reasons, 1954 has been a year of crisis and trial for the Protestant Reformed Churches. It has meant constant struggle. The future did not look very bright at times. In fact, even in the light of the present court decision, our future looks rather hopeless. You know, it is not easy to lose half, or nearly so, of the church members in one denomination. You could probably compare it to losing one of your arms or legs. Of course, we realize, that when a member of our body becomes infected with a malignant growth, we cut that part of our body off. But nevertheless, it is not easy to lose that member.

So it is with our churches. It is not easy to lose those people, and they are continually in our prayers that they might repent and see the error of their way and come back to us. But, they had to be cut off for the good of the rest of the body. And such members will continually be cut off so long as we are able, by God's grace, to detect the malignant growth of heresy.

But what about our history over the past year? What about all history we might add?

Isn't history the unraveling of God's eternal counsel? Were not these occurrences the performing of God's Will in all its fulness?

Yes, my Christian young friends, the God who governs all things and has governed them through-out the year of 1954, shall still govern all things, especially with regard to His church. He shall preserve His beloved remnant, no matter how few they be, and shall cause them to grow, not necessarily in numbers, for numbers is a sure sign of weakness, but He shall make us grow spiritually, which is far more blessed and necessary.

Then we as heirs of His covenant will praise God and realize that He doeth all things well to them that love God, that are called according to His purpose.

Jim Schipper.
"He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and the servant of all."

Once a Christian doctor advised a very self-centered businessman to go down to the main waiting room of a great railway station and find someone whom he could help. He obeyed.

At the very outset he found a poor woman who had come to town to visit her daughter. She had lost her daughter's address and sat weeping silently. He managed to find the address in the telephone directory. He called a taxi and took the lady to her daughter's home located on an obscure street. On the way he stopped and bought her a few roses—the first that had ever been given to her. He left her, smiling between her tears, in her daughter's home.

Then he rushed to the telephone. "Doctor, I feel like a human being at last!" he blurted out.

The cure was permanent. He finds his own soul by helping others. The way of service is the way of release from preoccupation with his own trouble.

Kindness in ourselves is the honey that blunts the sting of unkindness in another.
Our New Department

Does anyone remember "Open Forum?" It has been a long time since that department appeared in Beacon Lights. "Open Forum" is still "open" to anyone who would like to use it, in fact we would like to hear from our readers more often. Surely you have many worthwhile ideas that others would like to hear about.

As you page through this issue, you will notice that two other departments, "Military Mailbag" and "Question Box," are missing. These two departments have gone the way of "Open Forum." They will appear in future issues only when we receive letters from you. The Beacon Light's Staff wishes to thank the editors of these departments for the work that they have done. They have done well in a difficult job for they depended upon you for their material and often they had to do as well as they could without it.

We would like you to remember that these departments have not been permanently discontinued. We urge you to send any questions you may have to our editor who will request a qualified writer to answer them as soon as possible in Beacon Lights. We will also be happy to print any letters that we receive from our servicemen.

Instead of making another department with a single editor, we intend to try something a little different. We will use some pages in each issue for articles by various writers on a number of different subjects. In this issue we have four different persons writing on the subject of "Television." Next month there will be a different subject. These subjects will be treated in various ways: Sometimes there will be a symposium; sometimes a debate; sometimes an article by a single writer. Has a member of your society written a good essay? Send it to us and we will be happy to print it.

We think that we will be able to have many good articles in this department, but the most important reason for this new department is that it will give a larger number of our young people a chance to express their ideas. Some of our departments are better written by our ministers but this one is made specifically for the large number of our people who rarely have the opportunity of writing. We hope that this part of Beacon Lights will be one of the best.

One problem that the Beacon Lights staff is trying to solve is that of finding people in our churches in Iowa and California who are willing to write for us. We have very little contact with you who live in the Western states but we would like to hear from you more often. If you have a suggestion for the solution of this problem, will you write and tell us about it? Beacon Lights is your paper and we need your help to make it the best paper possible.

This is our new department. We will use it for the discussion of practical problems, for informative articles, for any questions that may be sent us, and for letters from our service men. With your help it will be a good department. If you would like to see some problem discussed, send it to us and we will do our best to write about it in Beacon Lights. Everyone has ideas and everyone has problems.

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In our discussion of the preparation of young people to take their place in the midst of the church and kingdom of God, it is well that we devote an article to Catechetical instruction. For Catechism is undoubtedly the most important means that we have to be prepared for our future life in the sphere of the Church of God. That is true because Catechism is part of the official ministry of the Word.

Therefore our first question is, What is Catechism? Catechism is to be sharply distinguished from societies in the church. That is true because while societies are part of the church organism, Catechism is part of the church as institute. The church as institute is the body of Christ as it comes to manifestation in this world in the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments. The church organism is the body of Christ as it comes to manifestation in the spiritual life of the believers. The difference is very important. That means that Catechetical instruction is part of the official preaching of the Word. It is under the direct supervision of the consistory. It is watched over and should be watched over as carefully as the preaching by the minister on Sunday. It is conducted by a man called to be the minister of the Gospel, because it is very really the gospel which he brings. The minister preaches in the Catechism class, because preaching is essentially speaking the Word which Christ speaks; and that the minister does in Catechism even though the methods which he employs may differ from the method used on the pulpit. Thus in a very real sense of the Word, Catechetical instruction is the ministry of God’s Word. And thus it is also a means of grace. God uses the means of instruction in the Catechism to apply grace to the hearts of His covenant seed. That we should not forget. Because apart from the official ministry of the Word of God there is no grace. A man does not receive the grace of God if he never attends church or catechism. God binds Himself to these means to give grace to His people. Just as bread is a means of sustaining our physical life, so also this preaching is the means which God uses to sustain our spiritual life. If we don't eat bread, we die physically; if we don't attend Catechism or church we remain dead spiritually. So that Catechism classes are very really the same as church attendance on Sunday.

Why then do we have to have Catechism in the church if it is the same as the preaching of the minister on Sunday? It would seem that if we went to church that would be sufficient. Nevertheless it is not difficult to see why Catechism is necessary. Probably the most important reason is that the preaching on Sunday cannot be geared to every age level. That would be quite impossible. The minister could not preach to a small child of five years old and at the same time feed spiritually the soul of an old patriarch of 65 or older. Preaching from the pulpit presupposes a knowledge of Scripture as a whole from a historical point of view, but also a certain measure of knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible. Thus, to use a figurative expression, Catechism is grade school, while church is higher
education in high school and college. That does not mean that children need not go to church, for they certainly can begin to use the preaching as a means of grace even at a very early age. But that does not alter the fact that they must be specially prepared to enjoy the full riches of grace in the preaching.

Thus it is that when children first start catechism, they are taught the simplest stories of the Bible, to acquaint them with the revelation of God in the history of God's people. And I might remark in passing that no age is too young to start the child in instruction in the truths of God's Word. Of course, the instruction as such is supplemented in the home and in the school, but nevertheless, if we remember that in Catechism there is the preaching of the Word, there is no child too young to be subjected to that. For practical reasons, we wait a few years before sending our children, but the Word of God can certainly appeal to the regenerated heart of a child of God just as soon as He can understand words and maybe before.

And after the child has had a thorough training in the history of the Bible, he begins to learn doctrine. And again there is no age limit to the instruction of a child in doctrine. In fact doctrine is really begun right away, for history is essentially doctrine when the child begins to learn the significance and spiritual meaning of the stories of the Bible. And he soon learns that even these simple stories are the revelation of God! But there comes a period in his instruction where he begins a systematic instruction of the doctrines of the Bible.

And all of these things cannot be had in the preaching of the Word in Church. For the minister concentrates on one certain text, and if his text is historical, he presupposes that his people are acquainted with all the history, and thus he concentrates on the spiritual meaning of the history. And so it is also with doctrine. The minister does not preach doctrine systematically except in a certain way when he preaches from the Heidelberg Catechism. Thus it is that Catechetical instruction becomes necessary so that the covenant youth may be prepared to enjoy fully the blessings of the preaching.

But there is another reason why Catechism is necessary, although this follows very closely upon the former reason. That is that God has so ordained that He shall save His people in the line of continued generation by means of instruction of the covenant seed. God uses the means of instruction, and therefore primarily the means of Catechism to preserve His church in the line of generation from father to son. In Genesis 18:19 the Lord is speaking to the angel in the presence of Abraham and says this: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of Him." That to which the Lord refers is the fact that all nations of the earth shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham which is the Christ. And that seed shall be preserved in the way of instruction—"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him..." Thus, in this way the church is kept alive unto the day of the coming of the Lord.

And again there is not a set age when Catechism should cease. After a young man or a young woman has made confession of faith he or she discontinues attending Catechism classes as a rule. Yet that is not a rule, nor is it the best practice. Catechism instruction should continue and be a means used by God to

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"The Promise"

Several years ago, the Rev. Hoeksema wrote a pamphlet under the title, "The Gospel," which has been published and reprinted more than once by the Sunday School Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church. In the interest of the truth vs. errors of those that have schismatically left our churches, and who, even today, continue to pretend to be the historic continuation of our Protestant Reformed Churches, and even have the audacity to claim that there is no doctrinal issue involved in the recent history we have made, I want to bring to the attention of those interested in the truth, excerpts from this pamphlet. Rev. Hoeksema gives expression to the truth always maintained by our churches, concerning the promise, in this pamphlet. When you place this pamphlet along side of the first statement of heresy, you will readily see why these two cannot walk together. (Amos 3:3)

Strongly, I suggest that you obtain a copy of this pamphlet. And if there are those who have forsaken the Protestant Reformed Churches, who are not wholly saturated with the "hate Hoeksema propaganda," and still desire to know the truth, I will gladly send them a copy upon their request, so that they can make the comparison suggested.

In the first part of the pamphlet, the author makes plain that there is a close relation between "Gospel" and "Promise." He writes: "The gospel and the promise are, therefore, identified in such a way, that the giving of the promise by God through Scripture to Abraham is the preaching of the gospel." Bear this in mind, dear reader, because when we speak of, or deal with the promise, we are treating one of the fundamental concepts of Holy Writ. Let no one deceive you into believing that our controversy has been a lot of wrangling over incidental and unimportant things. This kind of talk is only to blind you to the real issues, which are monumental, as far as the truth is concerned.

In answer to the question: "To whom is the promise given?," the author of the pamphlet emphasizes time and again that it is only for and can only be given unto the elect. For this claim he furnishes abundant proof from Scripture. Space does not permit elaborate quotations, but note the following: "It is evident from these passages that all through the old dispensation there was a promise, given unto the saints, which they embraced and believed, by which they lived and died..." And again: "It (Gal. 3) emphasizes that the promises were made to Abraham and his seed, and that this seed of Abraham is centrally and essentially Christ., vs. 16."

And, in Christ, he continues to show, the promise is only for the elect.

But what about the question as to whether or not the promise is ever in any sense of the word conditional? This question, too, is given a clear cut and decisive answer in the pamphlet. The author explains the difference between "promise" and "offer." This is an essential difference. The latter is contingent, for its realization, upon the willingness of the second party; upon his consent and acceptance of the offer. "But a promise," writes the author, "is different. It is a declaration, written or verbal, which binds
the person that makes it to do or forbear to do the very thing promised. It is an engagement regardless of any corresponding duty or obligation on the part of the person to whom the thing is promised. A promise, therefore, implies the declaration of a certain good together with the positive assurance that this good shall be bestowed upon or performed in behalf of the person to whom the promise is made. This certainty of the promise is, as regards the promise of Scripture, emphasized by the fact that it is God Who makes the promise. God conceived of the promise: He it is that realizes the thing promised; He declares the promise. Which implies, in the first place that the promise cannot be contingent, for God is God, and His work certainly cannot be contingent upon the will of the creature.”

(Bold, G.V.)

Has Rev. Hoeksema changed? Every Protestant Reformed person knows that this view, then, is his view now. And we ought to also understand that this is Protestant Reformed. Nothing else! But De Wolf et al say: “God promises everyone of you salvation if you believe.”

Or consider this quotation: “If the gospel were the preaching of a conditional offer (or promise, G.V.) there is nothing in the condition man can possibly fulfill. He cannot of himself believe the promise; he cannot even will of himself to believe in Christ. He cannot repent and turn unless God first realizes the promise unto him. In other words, the promise of God is either unconditional or it is impossible of realization.” (Bold G.V.)

Did not those who scanned the “Standard Bearer” writings of Revs. Hoeksema and Ophof with a fine-tooth comb ever come upon writings like these? Let them quote them! They can be multiplied endlessly.

And again, in answer to the question as to whether or not faith is included in the promise, we come upon this: “And, therefore, the promise also implies the gift of the Holy Spirit, first to Christ, then also to them that are of Him, that by this Spirit all the blessings of Christ may be realized upon the Church. For, it is a mistake to present the matter as if God merely promised the objective blessings of salvation to the seed of Abraham, or even to men in general, so that it depends upon their consent, whether or not the promise shall be realized unto them. Very definitely the gift of the Holy Spirit is included in the promise.”

That is the Truth!

That’s the truth which you, who have left us, have forsaken by choosing to follow the lie of a promise to all if you believe. What prevents you from adopting the erroneous Point I of 1924 against which the Truth of this pamphlet is directed? You aren’t afraid of the words “common grace,” are you? And when you absorb Point I, what withholds you from Points II and III? Do you still think that, before God, you have a right to a separate existence?

But the thing is more serious. The real seriousness of it is expressed in this quotation, in which the bold is mine: “If the gospel is glad news about the promise, that is, about a positive assurance of God to the seed of Abraham, the heirs of the promise, that He will bestow a great good upon them, realize for them a glorious inheritance, it follows that the contents of the gospel must always be such with respect to the contents of the promise; and he that declares anything else than the riches of the promise is not preaching the gospel but vain philosophy of men. It must be such with respect to the certainty of the promise; and he that changes the sure promise into an uncertain and contingent (conditional) offer (promise) is corrupting the promise of God.”

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"Tuning In On Nature"

You can hear the patter of rain on leaves and the hiss of wind across a field of dry grass; but that is not listening to the plants of this green world as they grow. Behind the poetry of the landscape is a chorus of dramatic events. Bright colors, fragrance, marvelous design, are but outward expressions of never-ending activities.

Listen again — not with ears, but with your imagination. You may hear the whirr of pollen grains through the air; the echo of bursting seed; the tinkle of sap in the tubes of a tree trunk; the muffled sounds of roots expanding with the power of dynamite. The landscape offers a vast variety of continuous action.

Psalter No. 39 vs. 2

They speak not with audible word, 
Yet clear is the message they send; 
Their word to the world's farthest end.

Some of the actions of plants are so fast, such as the bursting of pollen sacs and the ejection of pollen; or so obscure, like the releasing of spring mechanisms that throw out seeds, that we hardly perceive that they happen at all. Other actions are so slow, such as the elongation of a twig or the turning of leaves to receive light, that we never think of them as motion.

To see these realities of motion, you must look at trees and flowers not once, as most people do, but twice — the second time with an eye for their functional beauty and mechanical precision. You are filled with curiosity? You suddenly wonder why some flowers open in sunlight and fold up in rain, how a root system penetrates the hard ground, or how leaves burst out in the spring.

I am sure that most of us know of the following facts about the world around us: that there is an unbroken column of water in every living tree which extends from the deepest rootlet to the topmost twig, and that by an unfailling mechanism the tree pulls tons of water from the soil for its nourishment; that leaves are green because they throw away green light while absorbing blue and red light; that oaks, elms, maples, etc., have flowers; that buds are formed in the fall rather than in the spring; that there are four kinds of elms, twelve kinds of oaks, six kinds of maples, and five kinds of hickory.

Few of us realize, for instance, that the daisy is a closely packed aggregation of several hundred flowers . . . that roses and strawberries are so closely related that they are members of the same family . . . that orchids grow not only in hothouses, but also abound all around us in woods and fields . . . that every flower advertises for its special kind of insect to collaborate in its life cycle.

It would be no more than proper, when looking closely at the plant world, to take notice of the elemental units of a plant before going any further. The basic unit of any living thing is the cell. A living cell can change shape and in certain instances also adjust its function to specific situations. A plant cell looks like a battered shoe box in miniature, filled with a fluid called protoplasms. In this mass are little specks which may be air bubbles, grains of starch, green chlorophyll, and most important, the nucleus.
We know that these cells carry on all the life processes of plants; but just how, nobody knows. By means of cell division, they multiply and form communities and finally whole structures and organisms. The sort of plant or the part of the plant which they will eventually produce, is a secret to man. Apparently identical cells will build a wide variety of structures. For instance, when a tree is formed, you have leaves, flowers, seed, bark, wood, roots, etc. all perfectly proportioned and fitting into the system.

Although a tree is built entirely by the force of living cells, it does not follow that every cell in it is alive. In fact, the bulk of the tree is dead, although this dead part functions like a solid frame and a sort of plumbing system for the whole organism. The living cells are a small percentage of the whole system, but are strategically located. They live at the tips of the roots to absorb water; in a thin sheath just below the bark to keep food moving through the system and to enlarge the trunk; at the tips of twigs to keep them elongating; and in leaves where they work as sun motors to keep the whole plant in operation. In a big tree perhaps less than one per cent of its body consists of living cells. The rest is mechanical structure.

At exactly the right moment, certain cells which are no longer dividing, yield up their lives and transform their bodies into structural material. If one of these cells is located just below the bark, the air bubbles will combine and finally fill the hollow cell. While this happens, the walls thicken and lose their transparency. If much strength is needed, the walls thicken so much that the cell becomes solid. Or a cell may fortify its own wall like barrel hoops, become hollow inside, and join with other cells above and below to form a tubular network from the roots to the branches. If a cell is near the outer rim, where a unit of bark should be added, the cell will fill up with a corky substance and become bark. Location seems to exert a mysterious effect.

Plants and more specifically trees, are the world's greatest waterworks. Why a tree, for instance, raises so much water in the course of it's life cycle, remains a mystery to natural scientists. It seems to accomplish no real service to the tree or to its life in general.

The course of water through the intricate system of a tree has always been a great mystery to scientists; not because they do not know the course traveled, or many of the services rendered; but rather, they do not know exactly how it is accomplished. The cycle can be traced beginning at the very tips of the roots... in fact, even much further away than that, at the root hairs. These root hairs are composed of all living cells and have amazing properties of growth, absorption, and conduction. They grow towards water, or more accurately, towards moisture. They are capable of finding moist particles of earth and, literally wrapping themselves around each individual grain, remove the film of moisture for its own use. These root tips can get this necessary moisture from seemingly dry ground. The water that each of these tips collects, is transported cell by cell, through the root hair, along the canals of the roots and up through the trunk of the tree.

This process has often been falsely called root pressure which gives the idea that the water is pushed up. However, it seems more likely that it is rather pulled up after it has once been absorbed. When the water has coursed through the trunk, it is fed into the leaves from which it is sprayed out in the form of a fine mist. Although it gives the tree all the moisture it needs, most of the water just passes through, in this fashion, with
seemingly no effect. About ninety-nine percent of this water is simply sprayed from the leaves, and follows this same cycle again. A large tree, at the peak of its season, will desiccate, literally, tons of water, in this fashion. It seems that the leaves are continually pulling the water up, and that function can be explained thus: We must not imagine that a tree or plant is equipped with a pump which would create a sort of vacuum since the maximum height to which it could raise water would be only thirty-three feet. This would be satisfactory for small trees and plants, but what could be said about the giant redwoods such as the “Founder’s Tree” which is 364 feet tall. Nor is it a sort of capillary action which operates in an old-fashioned oil lamp.

Psalm 104:13, 14, 16, 17.

He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth.

The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted.

Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.

It appears that the world’s greatest water works depend on cohesion in a column of water. From roots to tiptop runs an unbroken “rope” of water, woven out of countless threads. Pull on the top, by the evaporating water, out of the leaves, and you simply pull up more water by its own rope. This marvel implies that, throughout the tree, every single twig and bud and leaf, is connected by unbroken threads of water, with the roots. When we consider the tensile strength of sap — that is, how hard you can pull on it without having it break — we will find the answer, in part, to the plausibility of this theory. It has the amazing strength of 2,250 pounds per square inch, or fifty times greater than the force of suction. Thus, sap could be pulled to the top of a tree 4,950 feet tall, or almost a mile high.

Perhaps more remarkable than the quantity of water lifted by a tree, is the intricate beauty and perfection of roots, trunk and leaves. These represent three departments of the water works system. Each department is different from the other two, not only in appearance, but also in function. And, as we examine them, we cannot fail to see the omnipotent hand of Almighty God, as he formed such a perfect creation, and also upholds it by his might and providence.

Psalter No. 167 vs. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Thou visitest the earth with showers, Thy boundless store supplies its need: For fields enriched and well prepared Thou dost provide the sower’s seed. The furrows where the seed is sown Are softened by thy gentle rain; Thy gracious care and providence Supply and bless the springing grain. The year with goodness thou dost crown, Thy ways o’erflow with blessedness: The hills and valleys clothed with green, Are joyful in their fruitfulness. The pastures teem with flocks and herds, The golden grain waves o’er the fields; All nature, singing joyfully, Her tribute of thanksgiving yields.

Dwight J. Monsma

The only instance of prayer to saints mentioned in the Bible, is that of the rich man in torment calling upon Abraham; and let it be remembered, that it was practised only by a lost soul and without success.
**BIBLE OUTLINE**

**LESSON XVII**

"THE TWO SONS OF ABRAHAM"

**Galatians 4:21-27**

1. It should constantly be borne in mind in studying this Epistle to the Galatians that Paul is in "travail" of soul over these churches, that Christ may be formed in them, that they may walk as those, who are under grace and not under law!

   a. To bring them to their spiritual senses he asks them the very pointed question in Verse 21. "Tell me ye who are desiring to be under law, do ye not hear the law?"

   b. For notice:

      (1) That it is not the subjective conscience that is the standard and rule by which matters of faith and life are decided. The dictum of Isaiah reveals this. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

      (2) Hence: Do ye really hear the law, or is it a closed book to you, a covering being over your heart? II Cor. 3:14; Acts 13:27; John 16:3.

   c. Hence if they do not "hear the law" there is no hope of their ever recovering from their backsliding. And this question of Paul is one that must always guide us in all of our thinking! For the "law" which must be heard are the very Scriptures as they are the "rule" of faith. It seems that, for this reason, Paul calls the Scripture "law" which must be heard. Compare John 5:39-47.

   2. What is it that is so determinative and directive in the "law" as a rule of faith, which we must hear? It is the sense, the meaning of the "two sons" of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac!

   a. Paul, no doubt, presupposes that his readers are sufficiently acquainted with the Scriptures, the "law," in this case Genesis 16 and 21, so that there is no need of his relating these facts at length. Should they not have been they could "search the Scriptures." Whether these are really contained in the Scriptures! See Acts 17:10, for a proper attitude toward the truth of Scripture. We do well to follow this good example.

   b. Concerning these two sons Paul points out two things: They are:

      (1) In Verses 21, 22 — The facts as such.

      a. These sons are both from the loins of Abraham. But in a different sense.

      1. Ishmael was born from Abraham at a time when the natural "father" in him had not yet died. (Romans 4:19). "His own body being dead." Hence, Ishmael was born when there was some "hope" yet as far as the flesh and blood of Abraham was concerned. Hence, Ishmael was "born according to the flesh." Verse 23. It was an attempt of Sarah, who evidently was now "dead" as far as bearing children is concerned, to raise up "seed" unto the Lord out of their dying natural, fleshly "hope."

      2. Isaac was born also from Abraham's loins, but out of an Abraham who by virtue of the promise, was made alive by God through the Holy Spirit. God, who raises the dead to life and who calls the things that are not as though they were, had raised Abraham from the dead, to bring forth Isaac from his loins.
Hence, Isaac is born from the promise!

1. The two sons were born not simply from two different mothers, but they were born from two different kind of mothers. The one was a bond-woman and the other was a free-woman. Verse 22. We notice the following particulars:

1. That Hagar is the bond-woman, an Egyptian handmaid. Sarah was a free-woman.

2. That this being “free” and being a “bond”-woman does not refer to their respective relationship to Abraham, but to their respective relationships to one another! Hagar is a bondwoman in relationship to Sarah. She is Sarah's property, the latter being the “Mistress” of the former.

3. And so Abraham’s son with Hagar, the bond-woman could only be a son of the flesh (see above under 2, b. 1- a-) and in bondage.

(2) Verses 24-26 teach that these basic facts in the relationship these two women and their birth of their respective sons are such that in their very nature they are an allegory. Concerning this point we would make the following observations.

a. That the term “allegory” in the original Greek literally is: “which are things of such a nature that are allegorized.” Verse 24. The term “allegorize” is compounded of “allo” — another and “ago-reuo” to speak, and thus means: to speak something else than what the literal language means! We should observe that Paul says here, that he is using “allegory”! The Holy Spirit causes Paul to speak “by revelation,” opening to us the sense of the Scriptures; this allegorical sense was implicitly present in these events, although it was not till here in Paul’s interpretation that it is explicitly stated.

b. These two women and their respective sons are a fit instance corresponding exactly to, “The two covenants” that of the Covenant which is old and weak and beggarly, and the New which is strong, great and abiding. Hebrews 12:18-29. We need not delineate upon this “Covenants” at length. The following is sufficient:

1. The one is the Covenant which is “under law,” in the package of the law, and genders to bondage. It is weak and beggarly principle, days, months and years. The other is “free,” free from the guilt of sin and from the pollution of sin. Here we have the mediator, Jesus, whose blood speaketh better things than Abel. The lines of Hagar, Ishmael, Sinai, the earthly Jerusalem, temple-worship, priest-hood — it all genders into bondage, captivity, curse! It never delivers out of Egypt, the land of bondage, giving a free conscience from sin.

2. The other is that line of Sarah, Isaac — Jesus, Jerusalem above, it leads to heaven’s glory, the city of the Living God, prepared for the saints. Here we have Abraham, the father of Multitudes come his own. For from the barren woman in Christ, the Spirit of Pentecost, the children are brought in from the East and from the West. Great is the Mother-joy of Sarah, in her Children of laughter. Isaiah 54:1; Gen. 21: 2, 7, 7.

QUESTIONS:

Does one understand the Scriptures who denies sovereignly free grace? Why does such a preacher preach on Genesis 21 tell a “story” with a practical “moral” application? May we make our own allegories when we interpret Scripture? Why not? Why is this passage the death-blow to all Salvation by Works? Is Pelagianism a perennial evil? Why? Is there yet “another side” to the truth in Scripture, or is this the whole truth, the fundamental structure within which all the truths of Scripture
fit and all the elements can be arranged in "logical" consistency?

**LESSON XVIII**

**"THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER"**

*Galatians 4:28-5:1*

1. In these verses we really have Paul's final conclusion taken theologically, positively from the "law," that is, the Scriptures as the rule of faith! This conclusion wholly agrees with the earlier conclusion that Paul came to at the close of Galatians 3:29. There Paul showed who the Children of Abraham were; here he shows of what nature such children are, namely, that they are free!

a. We are free because the "allegory" teaches us that our line is Sarah, Isaac (by Promise) Jesus, Jerusalem above, (Pentecost). "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." II Cor. 3:18, compare Rom. 8:2, 14, 15; John 8:32.

b. This "conclusion" taken from the allegory of the "two sons" of Abraham is Gospel truth, the absolute standard of our life of faith and hope in this world. On this truth the entire discipline in the church rests, the "Key-power" in the preaching as on an immovable foundation. It is the distinction of those who are cast out and those who are the rightful heirs. See Rom. 9:6-13.

c. It is of the utmost importance to hold fast to this principle, lest we come under a yoke of bondage from which Christ has redeemed us! For we are not children of the flesh, but Children of promise, and, therefore, we are free!

2. Why are the free-born sons, sons born by water and spirit persecuted? Notice, that to be persecuted for righteousness' sake one must stand in the righteousness by faith! The sons of the flesh are never persecuted for righteousness sake; they are simply "cast out" by the authority of Mother-Sarah, the Jerusalem above with its judgment seats. Ps. 122. Thus it is stated here in Verses 29-31. We notice the following, which belongs to the "conclusion of the whole matter":

a. That it was not Isaac who persecuted Ishmael, nor even Sarah who persecuted Hagar (Read: Gen. 16:4-6) when she dealt hardly with her. It is always those who are born of the flesh who persecute God's children, born of the Holy Spirit. Thus it was Ishmael who "mocked" with Isaac. It was sheer spite of a slave-boy toward the son of the freewoman. And it was then that Sarah, who is the "Mistress" of Hagar (Hagar is not Abraham's wife) told Abraham to cast out Hagar and her son.

b. Here Paul draws the line through to its Scriptural and divine logic. It is the logic that says to any one who raises objections here against this "discipline," but who art thou, O man, that Answers against God. Rom. 9:19-20. And this "logic" is such that Abraham can only "submit" to it. Gen. 17:17, 18; 21:9-12. It is the line drawn by Jesus in Matt. 12:46-50, and as He so often says: Many are called, but few are chosen! Of this we remark the following:

(1) That as it was in the church in "Sarah's tent," so it is now! Verse 29. The reason is that here is the enmity which God has set between the two seeds, the seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent. Gen. 3:15; Matt. 10:34, 35. (Micah 7:6). It is impossible for those who live according to the flesh to submit to the law of God, as this is the joy of those who live according to the Spirit. Thus the "conclusion of the whole matter" of the "two sons" is given in Genesis 3:15. Does not God tell the end from the beginning?

(2) That is Church History.
(a) It is always the children of the flesh, the legalists, the moralists, the Pelagian deniers of the Cross, who stumble at the Word, who persecute the Children, who are free, and walk according to the Spirit.

3. What the Church as Mother of the Free must do.

a. Always in the name of the Lord, by the discipline in the church, such are cast out; they are cast out by the pure preaching of the word, the proper administration of the Sacraments and Church Discipline. And so the church, as Mother, protects her free-born sons according to the Word of the Lord: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." Galatians 5:30; Gen. 21:11, 12; John 8:35. John 8:35 is very instructive on this point.

b. Must insist to her Children that they are free, lest "Sarah" deny her identity. If the church does not tell her believing children that they are free — then she says that "Jerusalem above" is not free with her children. Verse 26. And, therefore, those churches which declare that faith is a "Condition" and not a "gift" conferred in the preaching through the Spirit is no longer Mother. She is at best playing the harlot.

4. It stands to reason that Paul, therefore, as the Messenger sent from the Heavenly Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-9) has as it were "travail" of soul over the Sons of Sarah! He therefore does two things:

a. States the great fact: "Unto liberty Christ has made you free." Gal. 5:1. Verse 13. Paul says: "Ye have been called unto liberty, brethren."

(1) Legally we are sons by virtue of the redemption in Christ, which again is even as God elected us in Christ.

(2) The "dominion of sin" is broken in us so that with a "free and good conscience" we may fight against sin. Ques. 32, Heid. Cate.

b. On the basis of this fact the admonition is built. Since we are free — we must stand in this freedom, unmoved from the hope of the Gospel.

(1) We must not again be under a yoke of bondage. A heavy yoke which none of the fathers could bear. Acts 15:16. That would be tempting God.

(2) Hence, the Galatians must "stand." Such is the "conclusion of the whole matter."

QUESTIONS:

By which earmarks is the true church distinguished from "sects"? Belgic Confession, Art. 29. Is this a throbbing question in our day, a matter of life or death? What must we think of seeking for the earmarks of sects in such accidental characteristics as: (1) Have pet doctrinal notions. (2) Having leaders(s). (3) Being "denunciatory"? Wouldn't Paul and Christ Himself thus be undistinguished from "sects"? Will the true Mother of her children allow such accidental characteristics to distinguish her from the bond-woman, Hagar?

LESSON XIX
THE REAL FAITH OF FREE-BORN SONS
Galatians 5:2-12

1. In these verses Paul delineates a bit more on the calling of us, children of the heavenly Jerusalem, to stand in our great and glorious freedom in the Anointed, the Christ of God! In doing so Paul takes the strong stand in the "either-or" position. Here nothing is relative. It is either grace or faith, free gift or merit. It is the same argument at bottom that we have in Romans 11:5. "Thus also in the present times a rem-
nant according to election of grace remaineth. Now if it is by grace, it is no more out of works, otherwise grace has become no more grace!" On this crucial point Paul builds his further exhortation. For all exhortations in Scripture to the Church are based upon and stem forth from what we are and possess in Christ! Let this sink deep into our hearts. Hence Paul admonishes the Churches of Galatia and us as follows:

a. He says, "Behold, I Paul" the called Apostle of Christ say unto you most solemnly and authoritatively that Christ profits you in nothing if you be circumcized as a rite of work of law. Verse 2. The entire glorious truth of Romans 8:1. "In nothing is there condemnation to those who are in Christ" is made void to such in their experiential life as a spiritual-psychological reality. It becomes: There is therefore condemnation in all things for those who are circumcized. Why?

b. The reason is: one becomes a debtor to do the whole law which places one under the "curses" of Ebal, Jerusalem which is now. One is then "fallen from grace"! What a terrible thing this is! Woe to the man who becomes entangled with such a yoke of bondage! All joy of salvation is gone. The waters of our life then are troubled, breeding despair and sin under the power of the law. Romans 5:20; I Corinthians 15:56.

c. Here is a good example of the threatenings, admonitions and exhortations of the Gospel precepts as so beautifully expressed in the Confessions. See Canons III, IV, 17; V, 14. God preserves, continues and perfects the work of grace in us by the hearing and reading of His Word, by Meditation thereon, and by exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the Sacraments.

2. Positively this exhortation to stand in the liberty unto which we have been called comes to us in reminding us what we have and what our expectation is in Christ by Virtue of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. "For we expect with earnest longing the hope of righteousness by the Spirit out of faith." Concerning this we would make the following remarks:

a. That this faith out of which, by virtue of the working of the Spirit of adoption, we expect the hope of righteousness is further defined here by Paul in Verse 6. It is called "faith energized by love." And thus we are given to see how in such a faith energized by love, which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are indeed standing very actively, spiritually ethically in our freedom as Sons of Sarah.

b. This faith energized by love, we must learn to appreciate for what it is:

(1) It is a mystery. At bottom only those who possess it know its power experientially. It is a persuasion which comes from God. Verse 8. And only by walking in this faith do we "run well." Verse 7. Those who oppose this faith energized by love, "trouble" the free sons, attempting to bring them into bondage. They would make the Cross of Christ of none effect unto subjective experience of salvation! Natural men they are, who know not, since they do not have the mind of Christ. 1 Cor. 2:16. No wonder that Paul says: Would that they mutilated themselves who are exciting you, and stirring you up to unsettle you! Here is a hatred for those who hate God! Ps. 139.

(2) It is here the source (subjectively in our hearts) from which we expect each day anew the hope of righteousness, i.e., the hoped for righteousness of Christ, which spells forgiveness of sins and right to eternal life as this is subjectively appropriated. This is out of faith. From
this faith springs forth both to will and
to do in fear and in holy trembling.

(3) What is the energy of this faith? It is energized by love — the love of God for us, in us and through us. The Holy Spirit sheds this love abroad in our hearts. Romans 5:5. The love that is commended to us in that Christ died for us. It is God's love that causes us to believe. Only those who love God believe in him. Unbelief is rooted in hatred for God and for our neighbor! Hence true and living faith always reveals itself in a new obedience. All true disciples are recognized by their having love one for another. And such love bows before the precepts of the Gospel in energized faith.

(4) It is, therefore, indeed impossible for anyone to be ingrafted into Christ by such a true faith and not bring forth fruits of thankfulness. Heid. CatE, Ques. 64. Notice: fruits of thankfulness, which are the fruit of the Holy Spirit shedding love in our hearts, working faith! And, so he that sinneth not but believeth is free indeed! cf. John 8:34 for the contrast of this freedom.

QUESTIONS:

Is there a tendency in our sinful flesh to fall into the sin of seeking salvation by works of law? Did Jesus warn against this leaven of Phariseeism? Matt. 17:6. Is there a "little leaven" of legalism in the presentation which make faith and experience the condition of salvation? What is neo-nomism? What must be said of the dictum "the believers act of conversion is a pre-requisite to enter the Kingdom?" Would Roman Catholicism take issue with this? Is there a danger of so construing faith, as it is energized by love, that we fall into the error of antinomism, that is, let us sin that grace may abound? What is the lesson of history on these "isms?"

LESSON XX

"THE WARNING FINGER AGAINST MISAPPLICATION OF LIBERTY"

Galatians 5:13-15

1. In verse 13a the apostle gives a reason for his strong and ardent insistence that we, as the children of Sarah —Jerusalem which is above, are free-born children. He need not apologize and give any excuses for his strong and undaunted stand over against the false teachers, who place the church once more "under law." Wherefore he says: "for ye were called unto liberty, brethren" Resistibly and effectually they were "called" by the gospel and through the Holy Spirit. Gal. 1:6. Hence, all, that Paul has said about freedom, stands!

2. In verse 13b. Paul sounds a great and strong warning to the brethren in Galatia. It reads as follows: "only use liberty as an occasion unto the flesh." Concerning this we remark:

a. That this warning may not be understood as teaching or intending an exception to the rule, the "canon" (Gal. 6:16) that we are, indeed, free.

b. But it is the warning, an exhortation to properly apply and work out the principle of true spiritual freedom, the liberty in Christ Jesus in our life, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God! This warning is needed. For extremes meet. The misapplication of the principle of "liberty" would simply mean that the brethren would still walk so that they would be "under law." They must so walk that their life is filled with those fruits against which there is no law. Compare verse 23. Only those who are led by the Spirit will have the wonderful experience that all the shackles of the law have completely fallen from them. See verse 18. For he that doeth sin is a servant of sin. John 8:34.

c. The "vice" of all misapplication of
“freedom” is that it forgets that “liberty” is not equivalent to “licence”! Such a conduct shows that a believer is not wholly spiritually sensitive to the “things that differ.” He does not see the tremendous glory of grace in the mystery of godliness, which we call “faith.” For faith is energized by love. Hence:

1. It conceives of faith as not being spiritual relevant to the law of God, which is spiritual, holy, just and good. Romans 7:12, 14; 12:1, 2.

2. It separates faith from love and can, therefore, have only the dead faith, which even the “devils have and tremble.” James 2:14-25. The moral law, the Decalogue is, according to James 1:25, the royal law of liberty! Liberty is whole-hearted, inward, spiritual submission to the law of God.

3. The only positive application of the principle of our “liberty” is to remember that true faith, by which we are justified, is the same faith that is energized by the love of God, and, therefore, must needs reveal itself in a full-orbed walk of love as contained in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Compare Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Rom. 13:9.

   a. We notice that Paul quotes only the “second table” of the law here, The first is omitted. Why?

   b. This must not be interpreted as though the “first table” is here excluded. It is rather presupposed as very much the basis of the second table. The keeping of the second table of the law is the evidence of our keeping the whole law. The law is one. James 22:8-13. Wherefore we have here the truth presupposed as is explicitly taught in I John 4:20, 21.

   c. Thus the entire “pleroma” of the law is manifested in our not living in the “small beginning” of some but of all God’s Commandments. Sufficient regard should be had for the “yet so” of Question 114, which see in Heid. Catechism. Sanctification is not piecemeal!

4. Paul adds a particular warning in verse 15. It reads: “If ye bite and devour one another, beware lest ye be consumed one of the other.” This is a very strong metaphor derived from the ferociousness of wild animals. Such is not the “pleroma” of love. Such love is “bull-dog” love, a travesty on the moral law! We notice the following:

   a. This condition of “biting and devouring” one the other was actually a sad reality in the churches of Galatia. Paul used a conditional sentence expressing determined reality. It is assumed that this is the true but sad state of affairs in the church.

   b. Those who were not evil in the congregation were nevertheless weak, and had fallen into the Temptors snares. They used their liberty as an occasion for the “flesh.” Now the works of the flesh were very evident and easy to point out: personal animosities, rivalry and discord, jealousies, wrath that revealed itself in hot-tempered explosions, fac-
tions, party-spirit, divisions and splits, sinful preferences and all manner of ill-feelings! See verse 19. And the very "liberty" they contended for slipped through their fingers! The "liberty" in Christ became the "rallying point" for the flesh to have its day. Hear the clarion call: only use not your liberty for the flesh!

C. Can order and godliness thrive in such a "seed-bed" of confusion and seething unrest? Listen to Paul's irony: Beware lest there be nothing left of either dog in the fight! When that happens in the church an evil day has come making for much suffering and weariness, and Satan has his "round!" Well may we daily take the prayer of Question 127 of the Heid. Cat. upon our lips!

QUESTIONS:

Is the position of our freedom in Christ, of true faith working in love a middle-in-the-road position between legalism and antinomism, or is it a principally "wholly different" position of a new creature? What does the Belgic Confession, Article 24, say of true faith and "good works?" Is it wrong to tell the church of Christ that they "ought" to walk in good works? Is a minister free from the blood of the congregation if he neglects to warn as does Paul? Can these admonitions properly be called "pre-requisite conditions" to enter the Kingdom? What do we confess in Canons of Dort, Chapter 5, Article 14 concerning the manner in which God "continues, preserves and perfects" His work in us? To "maintain an assurance of persevering" is it God's ordained way that we are solicitous and careful to continue in the ways of the Lord? Article 13, idem the Canons.

HE DRILLED OFTEN

A British soldier one night was caught creeping stealthily back to his quarters from the nearby woods. He was taken before his commanding officer and charged with holding communications with the enemy. The man pleaded that he had gone into the woods to pray by himself. This was his only defense.

"Have you been in the habit of spending hours in private prayer?"
"Yes, sir!"
"Then down on you knees and pray now!" he roared. "You never needed it so much!"

Expecting immediate death, the soldier knelt and poured out his soul in prayer that for eloquence could have been inspired only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"You may go," said the officer simply, when he had finished. "I believe your story. If you hadn't drilled often you couldn't do so well at review."

THE COVENANTER WITNESS

EDITORIALS

(Continued from page 4)

The purpose of Beacon Lights is to attempt to share those ideas and to solve those problems.

Looking ahead, we hope that the day is not too far off when we will be able to say that everyone in our churches subscribes to Beacon Lights and that all of our people feel free to use it. Then we will have a paper that serves an important purpose in our churches. We are working toward that end and with your help we hope to achieve it. Will you help us?

F. H.
"The More Abundant Life"

As we begin another new year, we cannot help but hear optimistic statements around about us. On the radio, in the newspapers, and in magazines, we hear and read such things as: "More and better things for more people," two cars in every garage; tax reductions; unemployment reaches a new low; private incomes reach a new high; private savings have gone up while private debt has declined; and the standard of living in America has reached a point where everybody is enjoying yesterday’s "luxuries."

Let us look at these things in a two-fold manner; first, looking at it from the viewpoint of the world; and secondly, from the viewpoint of the Church.

There is no doubt at all that America is enjoying earthly abundance in a measure that has never been equalled. The standard of living in our country has never been challenged or even compared to that of another nation. Peace and prosperity has entered our land, and America as a nation is prepared to reach new heights, allowing everyone to enjoy more and better things. Social security and retirement programs that provide security are had by more people today than ever before. True it is that business in America is very prosperous, that unemployment is lower than ever before, and that the new year does look very promising, as far as earthly abundance is concerned. However, what must we as Christians think of all these things? Must we turn our backs to prosperity and try to ignore the abundance that lies around about us? Or should we go out and enjoy all these things and try to derive as much joy and satisfaction from them as possible?

For Christians to ignore prosperity is folly. For prosperity is not made in this world, but it is given by God, as it is written in Deut. 8:18, "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.” We should not dispose of these things, nor shun them; but we should accept all of these things in a spirit of thanksgiving, and acknowledge that God is the giver of all good and perfect gifts. I Thes. 5:18, “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” We are not of this world, but we are in this world, to use these material things in the fear of the Lord.

On the other hand, should we go out and try to derive as much joy and satisfaction from these things as possible? Not at all. For all these things are given to us by God to use them to his Name’s Honor, and Glory. Matt. 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” Surely, a true Christian would not accept all this abundance and use it in a way of earthly pleasure, as it is written in Luke 21:34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be over charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.” Rather, let us accept these things in a spirit of thanksgiving, and try to use them in a manner...
BEACON LIGHTS FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

which is acceptable unto the Lord. Thus it is written in Tit. 2:12: "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

So then, as Christians let us live in this world, taking heed to the words of Christ in Matt. 6:19-21 where we read, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

John H. Haan

WHY TELEVISION?

Over twenty-two years ago, in my neighborhood, a mysterious laboratory sprang into existence to conduct experiments in the unheard of field of television. Today, "television" is not only a household word, even a taken-for-granted household furnishing; but it has become an industry which influences our whole home, church, school, economic and national life. It is not only advantageous, therefore, but necessary, that the matter of television be examined and discussed by the members of the family; by our Christian school teachers; and by our ministers. For, with the debut of this amazing instrument, there have arisen, for the Christian, many complex problems. Some, to reduce the question to a minimum, rush in the defence of "T-V" to assure us that it is not in itself sinful, since it is one of the "indifferent things." What, however, is meant by this last statement? In the field of medicine the term "indifferent" refers to certain ingredients "which are incapable of doing either harm or good." We immediately sense that such an understanding of the term cannot be true with respect to television, except, perhaps, abstractly. For television, taken as an abstraction (in and of itself), is incapable of doing either harm or good. The same may be said of a butcher knife. It depends on the use made of the knife. If used to cut meat for God's poor, that is good. But if used to stab an innocent person, it does harm. In ethics, the term "indifferent" denotes "any practice or form of conduct not included under the essential principles of morality, and which may therefore be left to be determined by custom or individual choice." In Church History, the term had reference to a party of the Lutherans known as adiaphorists, followers of Melanchthon, who "conceded to the Roman Catholic Church, as being non-essential, certain usages, such as candles, gowns, holidays, etc." And to this they would now add television. But is there any part of doctrine or life that can be regarded as indifferent? For the Reformed believer there is no borderland of neutrality where he may adopt an attitude of indifference toward the principles of the law of God which apply to all of life!

But it may be conceded that the owning of a television set is, in itself, no more sinful than having a telephone, a car, or a radio. Yet a telephone, for example, can be used very sinfully, as when it is made to convey gossip, the placing of horse-racing bets, and worse. Time was, when the telephone was just a new gadget, a novelty. But before long it became a necessity. In our modern civilization we can scarcely do without one. So with the automobile; it was
at first an oddity, then a luxury, now a necessity. The same may be said of the radio. It has become more than a means of recreation or relaxation. It is a household necessity: (to obtain accurate time, weather reports, storm warnings, travel conditions, advice concerning local catastrophes, national emergencies, etc.). But though undoubtedly the day hastens when possession of the television apparatus will be a necessity, it, nevertheless, to this date, is not so. Therefore no one owns a “TV set” because he needs it. One can, then, easily do without it.

Why, however — since invention is the gift of God — do without it? Is not every creature of God good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving? Why not rather enjoy the many wonderful creations of science the Lord affords man? We are not anabaptistic, to think that all science and modern invention is per se a hindrance to spiritual life, and so must be discouraged! What wrong can there be, then, in having a “TV set”? Let us consider. The minister enters the catechism room where twenty primary age boys assemble. Standing at the lectern, he prepares himself for opening prayer, but discovers the class is not with him. For over the tops of the seats appear some forty little fists clutching cast-iron pistols, plastic ray-guns, a model sub-machine gun or two — all aimed in the general direction of the minister; while chaotic cries leap from small, but hearty throats, in realistic imitation of the sound of rifle shots and ricocheting bullets . . . And Sunday school teachers are regarded as “tame” because they cannot compete with “Superman” or “Hopalong.” No far-fetched depiction this, as almost any minister or Sunday school teacher can tell you.

The reason for this? May it be traced to the influence of modern television on the home life? Conscientious parents are discovering that they can do almost nothing with the children. Loving commands go unheeded, calls to meals, study and bedtime are hardly heard; so engrossed are they in the protracted viewings. Provoked parents often feel they may as well talk to a stone wall. The children themselves become aware of the hindrances and disruption of “TV,” for they soon realize the interference it creates in their school life and home studies. (Note: The more children in a family, the less reason for having a TV set). Especially supper is hurried through, with no interest as formerly (normally) for the opportunities thus afforded for family fellowship. Meals must be re-scheduled suitably to the TV time-tables. In fact, so that supper need not interfere with an exciting or favorite feature, the food markets have produced a “solution” (?) in the form of complete “TV dinners,” pre-cooked and sold in aluminum-foil plates. Thus the entire family (with meal on lap) may eat and watch simultaneously “without annoying distractions.” Now, would a Protestant Reformed family hurry through supper, omit the usual Bible reading, in order to view a TV film? or entirely set aside family worship on occasion in order to “catch” a particular “show?”

Thus Bible reading is on the decline, and where few still do cursorily read the Scripture, it is without understanding of its doctrine. For the insatiable craving for amusement results in aversion to study of Holy Writ and a falling away from the church. How to correct this! In the use of radio, e. g., there should be moderation, exercise of Christian judgment, and discrimination. But the writer (formerly a Fundamentalist), knows of no “TV users in that movement, who make a discriminatory use of
TV. One wonders if that is even possible. Fundamentalists, beholding the ruin of worldliness in the churches, have, (strangely), employed the "remedy" of fighting worldliness with worldliness; church entertainments, religious movies, ecclesiastical ventriloquists, converted magicians, Sunday school puppeteers and frenzied efforts are used to maintain a constant flow of amusement to hold the "teen-agers."

Since television has so many disadvantages; is a profound waste of time; brings the world (the enemy) into the home; displaces family duties; corrupts with a distorted view of life; it is preferable to remove it altogether from the home. But the mere removal, or mere refusal to have television is not enough. Something positive ought to take its place. A modern hi-fidelity record player might be a step in this direction. Fill the home with the enjoyment of the most beautiful classical and Christian music. Aim to create that which TV almost entirely eliminates; viz., cultural attainment, and the development of the art of home which destroys the covenant life, or which excludes Jesus Christ. Emphasize family unity and love. Let all things which God hath given us richly to enjoy, be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

Robert C. Harback

TELEVISION — OUR FRIEND AND FOE

In deference to the cursory reader, who is given to paging through the magazine, breezily skimming off the words at the beginning or near the end of an article—without really giving the author a chance to make a point—let us say this article in substance qualifiedly "endorses" television in our homes, and Cursory Reader can now go on to the next article and do the same. Conversely, if the more patient reader will agree that television has become a matter of some importance to us all today, then it ought to have our serious attention now.

What it television? Just simply an ingenious machine designed to reproduce a picture on a screen, and the image which there appears, is made to speak. It is actually the newest instrument of visual-audio communication. It reaches one with a message in much the same way as do books, newspapers, magazines and radio. Practically speaking, it can do something for you, as can all these other media. Television can do something to you as well, as can liquor, wild living, and gambling.

Fact is, our life is full of things that affect us this way. And so this newest medium, the subject of our symposium, ought to be examined and evaluated as any other thing we know, which can touch our sensibilities with a resultant effect. We ought never to take it out of this perspective. Thus, television is a cause. More powerful, however, as a causative agent than any book, magazine or radio program ever could be.

Most everyone today strives to develop a good sense of appreciation for the better things in life. The enjoyment of classical music, and a speaking acquaintance — if no more— of the classics generally, are things, which, while found on the periphery of our existence, are generally considered to be vital to the attainment of any reasonable level of culture. "Culture," that is, when defined as the resulting refinement and progressive devel-
opment which comes of education, and the useful application of the knowledge available to man today.

But think how useless it would be, if one has no interest in the symphony, to attempt to show the merits of a classicist-type television program which makes easily accessible, in our homes, the finest renditions, by accomplished artists, of the works of the world's great composers. We must understand that television—just as all good books, good music, and intelligent conversations—is an agency of communication, whose prime asset lies in its capacity to increase and implement one's learning, and broaden one's culture. Those who feel no need for further knowledge, or who do not seek cultural advancement, will never need a television set, just as they've probably never felt the desire to own a good encyclopedia, an unabridged dictionary, or hear Heifitz play the violin. Still further, would it not be a good assumption, that anyone lacking an interest in the dramatic history being made each day of our lives by the nations and men in power around us, would never find a television set a profitable investment. Those who have no desire to see the news of the day documented for them almost as it occurs, by motion pictures taken of the events, would not appreciate news by direct report such as only television is able to present it.

I sincerely believe that, today, there are already a sufficient number of these two types of programs alone, to justify the purchase of a television set. In addition, there are many programs devoted to highlighting the scientific and industrial achievements of the wonderful mechanical age in which we live, and which help to build our knowledge, usefully. It is generally accepted that the larger part of the formal education one receives today serves mostly to acquaint one with the methods most helpful to the utilization of what we later learn in life, except perhaps in the most specialized branches of learning. If it is one's desire to comprehensively build his knowledge, and to more and more effectively utilize what learning he has, he will find in television a ready tool to help him.

By reaching out to even the most remote portions of the world for reports and descriptions of twentieth century activity, and by skilled appraisal of historic events of decades ago, television enables even the most limited individual to better grasp the magnitude of the activities of this universe, and to better understand the significance of the times in which we live. Our God moves in this age—as in every other—His wonders to perform. He reflects His power and greatness in all the creative fields, and in the world of science as well. Electronics generally, and television in particular, while not brought into existence by sinful man for this purpose, also serves to reflect the power and wonders of God, and the physical laws He has ordained. Not only does television do this as an intricate device in itself, but also as it communicates to us all the worthwhile things mentioned above.

But this modern marvel can hurt us. It can so easily become a prodigious waste of time, particularly for the adult; and it can be a corrupting influence to all, if used indiscriminately. Just as many people squander almost an entire evening each day pouring over the newspaper—reading every lurid word printed about the violence and crime that goes on in this world—so television has its dismal side.

Characteristically, television has been abused by man. Much of its potential usefulness is now prostituted in the service of Satan, and is used to propagate sin. It is possible that more than 75% of all television programming is unfit
to come into our homes. There are extremists, naturally, who make the sweeping assertion that all television is permeated with sex and idolatrous hilarity. This is not the case, of course, as we have seen above, and which anyone having a television set soon comes to learn. But that television is also a means in the hand of the devil, who seeks to deceive the minds, and deteriorate the lives of Christians everywhere, we may all agree.

We can probably conclude, that television has a useful ability to serve us as an agent to give us the finer, better things in life, and it can also easily become a real menace in the home. As with all other material things, television, too, is what one makes of it.

Al Heemstra.

**MY OPINION OF TELEVISION**

A television set in itself is not wrong, but the trash which we see on it, in fact, half of the programs we see on television are the same films you would see in a theater. We don't go to theaters, so we shouldn't watch films on television either.

When children watch western movies, they get the wrong idea of what cowboys really are, and they want to play with guns too. When a child's favorite program doesn't come on, or if he is not around when it comes on, he gets stubborn and cries and blames the parents, for not seeing it.

Television also keeps adults and children from doing things they should. They should study for school, society, catechism, or study Sunday School lessons. T.V. keeps children and adults up late at night, and then the children get bad marks in school and the teacher always gets the blame. When adults stay up late, to see T.V., they sleep in church, when they should listen to the sermon.

Television is just as much of a temptation to those who have't got a television set, as it is to those who have got television sets; because they go to other places to watch it, and the people in whose homes they go to, probably don't care what they watch; so the people who go there, watch bad programs also. This is especially true for children.

When boys and girls are asked to babysit for somebody, they ask if there is a television set. If so, they babysit; but if not they make up an excuse to stay away. When they do babysit, they put the children to bed, turn on the television, and watch it. Then, if the baby cries, they don't even hear it, because they get so interested in the program they are watching.

I think that television, with the help of radios, movies, and comic books, is one of the main causes of Juvenile Delinquency. Television, with all its crime and horror programs, make children afraid and nervous; and finally they are afraid to go to bed alone. Television in itself is not the cause for emotional disturbances, but if a child's mental hygiene isn't just right, and he watches crime and horror programs, the loud noises and the gun battles and strange photography may all create an emotional disturbance.

There should be more current events, science and geography, or history programs, instead of crime and horror programs.

If you do have a television set, I think the parents should pick out the programs which we may watch, and have the others off at all times, instead of watching them.
themselves. The children would be less apt to turn it on, even if the parents are not at home, but even then I still think everybody would be better off if he did not have television, or if he didn’t go to other places to watch it. Instead of watching television, it is better to stay home, and read church papers, study different lessons, or discuss catechism, Sunday School, or any other lessons, with their children. This helps the children a whole lot more then watching the programs which are seen on television.

Ruth Kuiper
Adams St. School
9th Grade

TELEVISION—PRO AND CON

Recent surveys in the “Readers Digest” have pointed out that a large share of the crimes committed today are due to the influence of television. Many juvenile delinquents, when questioned, have reported that their ideas originated from a similar scene enacted on television. This fact may be true. We believe that it is.

The question arises whether or not television has a place in the Christian’s home. This is a very difficult question to answer. The television set in itself is not wrong for sin is not in things but in the use made of them, as quoted in I Timothy 4:4, “For every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.” We must also remember that we must do all things to the honor and glory of God, as we read in I Corinthians 10:3, “Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Therefore all our works and actions must be to His praise. If a T.V. set can be used to God’s glory, we may conclude that it has a place in the life of a Christian.

We know that this question is very difficult to answer because, just as the radio, magazines, and newspapers are controlled by wicked people; so also T.V. is controlled by wicked people. The devil can very easily use T.V. for his own advantage. He uses it to tempt the Christian with programs which may keep him away from activities in the church.

Therefore, we would say, that since T.V. in itself is not wrong, and since it can be used properly, it may have a place in the life of a Christian. This place is very limited, however, because, as yet, most of the programs do not cause us to lead a life of gratitude to God.

Hope Prot. Ref. Chr. School
Wayne Lanning
9th grade

HOW TO HELP YOUR PASTOR

Lyman F. Lance

1. Pray for him daily that he may be at his best for God and you.
2. Do not overload him with the small details of Church work.
3. Do not make an errand boy out of him. Give him time for prayer and study.
4. Do not tell him things that he does not need to know. Let him find out some things for himself.
5. Give him your interest and the proper encouragement. He will have
enough of the other to keep him humble.

6. Confide in him. He can be trusted and he will understand.

7. Call on him in his home. He gets hungry for a social call as well as you do.

8. Be loyal to the Church he serves and to which you belong.

9. Join him in working out a program of advancement for the Church. He is a leader and while he may not always know what is best if proper counsel is given to him the best plan will be found and then pastor and people can make the work of God a success.

10. Love him and show it. It will cause him to work harder and accomplish more because he knows his work is appreciated.

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**GRACE AND PEACE**

H. Lester Shenk

Within the oyster's habitat

The ocean tide will sometimes hurl
A grain of sand—a painful thing;
He makes of it a lovely pearl!

The tides of life may cause dismay,
Adversity and cruel pain;
"By Grace through faith" our lives proclaim
His "Grace and Peace"—eternal gain!
—Gospel Herald

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**CHRISTIAN LIVING**

(Continued from page 6)

enable the believer to enjoy more fully the worship with the saints as they hear the Word proclaimed.

Thus you begin to see the importance of Catechism. Maybe even it can be argued that one hour a week for about three-quarters of the year is not enough to teach the covenant seed. But a fact it is that this instruction should not be taken lightly. The work that is required should be done diligently and with a sense of its importance. And it is just as serious a matter to "skip" a catechism class as it is to "skip" the services on Sunday.

The better training we have during our formative years, the more we can enjoy the life of the church and the blessings of the Word when we take our place in the midst of God's kingdom as active members.

H. Hanko

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**TRUTH vs. ERROR**

(Continued from page 8)

God and the gospel of promise. And it must be such, finally, with respect to the promise, and he that presents the matter as if the promise of God were made to all men, or to an uncertain number of men, is not preaching the gospel and makes God a liar. For God does not realize the promise except unto those to whom He promised, that is, the seed of Abraham, the heirs according to the election of grace."

The thought lingers in my soul. How would those who once professed to believe this truth, evaluate this beautiful pamphlet today? For the truth's sake, they ought to tell us!

Send requests for the pamphlet to:

Rev. G. Vanden Berg
9402 S. 53rd Court
Oak Lawn, Illinois.

Rev. G. Vanden Berg
OUT OF THIS LIFE

Out of this life I shall never take
Things of silver and gold I make.
All that I cherish and hoard away,
After I leave, on earth must stay.
Though I have toiled for a painting rare,
To hang on my wall, I must leave it there.

Though I call it mine and I boast its worth,
I must give it up when I quit the earth.
All that I gather and all that I keep
I must leave behind when I fall asleep.

And I wonder, often, just what I shall own,
In that other life when I pass alone,
What shall He find and what shall He see,
In the soul that answers the call for me?

Shall the great Judge learn, when my task is through
That my soul had gathered some riches, too?
Or shall at the last, it be mine to find,
That all I had worked for I had left behind?
ATTENTION!!!

SINGSPARATION

At our CRESTON CHURCH

On Sunday, February 6, 1955, 9 o'clock

Don't miss it  Tell your friends

This is for ALL our people