January 1965

Parental Obligations with Respect to Protestant Reformed Secondary Education

PROF. H. C. HOEKSEMA

Holiday Reflections

HILDA GRACE MEELKER
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KALBEK
THIS YEAR OF OUR LORD

This is the year of our Lord, 1965. It has come upon the earth, in spite of the worldling’s vain attempts to obliterate the knowledge of this fact from his mind. Naturally, he desires to have no cognizance of such a thing as that! The fact that he has come through another year, in reality, means that he has participated, for one more such span of time, in “vanity and vexation of spirit” to the hilt. And now he has to be reminded of that once more, not only, but also that another year hastens upon him at the departing of the old! His key? False merriment and drunken oblivion.

We repeat: This is the year of our Lord, 1965. When you take such a designation upon your lips, youthful saint, you indeed make a confession. You, as a child of our God, do. It is not so that you here make confession simply by using these words without care, of course. But, is that the way in which you use words, and especially those that involve the King of the whole earth? We think not.

That year is upon us. And, you know, it seems filled to the brim with uncertainties and the fear-instilling unknown. But what a mighty confidence you set forth when you actively and meaningfully call it the year of our Lord! No, not now in the sense commonly employed to denote a given span after the birth of Jesus. There, too, of course, we have the expression and confession that He Has Come! But as Christian youth we should and do consider that this year in all of its scope belongs to and is of the Lord. The covenant youth of the Church of Christ Jesus should reckon, in this connection and to the peace of their souls, that the Lord our God is the absolutely Sovereign One, Who works His Work in the earth for His sake, and to that end for the everlasting good of His children. Always He does that. Always He governs all things for the sure gathering of His chosen, His Church. And if you, in your contemplation of the future, think that you can conceive of an event that would not answer to that purpose for His Church in the midst of the world, you may be sure that such an event shall never transpire.

The sanctified heart of the Psalmist understood this, and whether in faithful anticipation or in joyous retrospect, he glories in the truth: “Thou crownest the year with thy goodness…” (Psalm 65:11a). Humble trust in the Lord is certainly one trait evinced by the saint, the youthful saint also, as together we traverse this weary scene with our God. It is important to remember this, covenant youth, as we embark upon the seas of this new year.

In love and with limitless power, our sovereign God, working all things from the beginning according to HIS PURPOSE, cares for you. Do you believe that? Do you know that in the experience of your soul? Do you, as you look forward into this year, rest in the beautiful assurance given to the Zion of God in Isaiah 50:16 where your God comforts: “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.”?

We mentioned earlier that this year, even the year of our Lord-1965, seems to be filled with uncertainties and unknowns. What a list we think we could compile! But this is not, in reality, so at all. For ALL things are known and purposed by our God, and even though we experience but the reality spoken of in Isaiah 55:9 and in our flesh struggle with the truth: “…as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”, we also most assuredly shall experience, in a life of trust and consecration to our God in 1965 as in the past, the blessedness: “…ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.”

Because the absolutely Sovereign God so speaks to you, all terror and anxiety is utterly banished from your soul.

May God so bless you as soldiers of the His Cross, who, though young, manfully engage in the battles of the militant Church throughout this year, 1965. H.W.K.
A Word of Introduction

This article constitutes a summary of an address delivered last November at Southwest Church under the auspices of the Protestant Reformed High School Circle. Because it is a summary, and because the staff has limited my space in Beacon Lights, I must needs be much more brief, and consequently less thorough, than when I actually delivered this address. I hope, with a view to clarity, that I will not be too brief.

In my introduction remarks I tried to make three points clear, as follows:

1) That I spoke as one who is personally one hundred per cent committed, for various reasons, to the principle of Protestant Reformed education.

2) That my very frank purpose was to further the local cause of Protestant Reformed secondary education. I have no sympathy with the notion that we can be or ought to be satisfied with less than Protestant Reformed education for Protestant Reformed children. And I am positively committed to the ideal that wherever and whenever the Lord opens the way, Protestant Reformed people should establish and maintain Protestant Reformed schools, whether at the primary or any other level.

3) That I believe that the success of this movement is not to be triggered by a superficial, “eager-beaver” type of enthusiasm, but by a deep-seated devotion and commitment, and therefore by a thorough understanding of the principle and ideal, by a “catching of the vision” of Protestant Reformed education, and by actions consistent therewith.

The Idea of Protestant Reformed Education

At the risk of belaboring the obvious, I want to remind you, first of all, of what is not the idea of Protestant Reformed education.

1. It is not the idea of merely having a separate school which we can call “our own.” Being practically minded, we are easily inclined to think of the matter this way. We must have a separate school with the name “Protestant Reformed” on it, a school for our own children that is under our own control. And, of course, it follows from this viewpoint that the weight of emphasis is placed upon getting the physical plant of such a school completed. The danger of this viewpoint is that when the physical plant is complete, if you have nothing more, your victory is rather hollow, your enthusiasm will wane, and your attitude toward the educational processes taking place in that plant will become one of complacency. We must not be separate merely for the sake of being separate. That is the spirit of separatism, the party spirit, the spirit of strife and vain glory.

2. Nor is the idea of Protestant Reformed education negativistic. The idea is not merely to cleanse the education of our children of some bad elements, some evil influences in the existing schools. There are indeed plenty of such “bad things,” both curricular and
extra-curricular. As a parent who is having his first year’s experience with the existing high schools, I shudder to expose my children to such evil influences. Surely, in our own high school we must get rid of these bad elements and must rid the education of our children of all overt error. But these concrete instances of evil and these overt errors are only the results and the symptoms of something deeper. And if we do nothing more in our own schools than get rid of these symptoms, then ultimately all these wrong elements in the instruction and life of the school will ultimately creep back into our own movement, and that too, in worse form.

From a positive point of view, we must remember that our school movement, even as the movement of our churches, has its roots historically in 1924 and in the Reformed principles that were at stake in 1924. Let us not forget that! The philosophy of common grace, with its devastation of the whole idea of the antithesis, and the Heysian, Arminian view of the covenant, — these two spell the real doom, principally, of Christian education. And positively, our Reformed, our Protestant Reformed principles spell the only possibility and salvation of real Christian education at every level.

What is that positive principle in its simplest form? It is this: a Christian school is a school that is founded on the Bible. It is a school that proceeds in every branch of learning from Scripture’s truth. It is a school that is built upon and that proceeds throughout from the principle of God’s sovereign, particular grace. It is a school that is built upon and proceeds from the central truth that God is our covenant God, Who establishes and realizes His covenant in Christ with His elect people as a peculiar and regenerated people, and with their seed in the line of generations. It is a school devoted to the idea that the seed of believers must be instructed in and according to this doctrine with all our power. It is a school that principally teaches nothing else than the precepts of the Lord in all branches of learning. It is a school founded for the sole purpose of instructing our children so that they may be equipped and prepared to live their life in the midst of this world from the principle of the new life, anti-theetically. That is the only goal! As a covenant people we have but one calling: to glorify our God and keep His commandments all the days of our life, and thus to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. To prepare and equip us for that calling in all our life in the world is the goal of the Christian school.

Permit me to spell this out in greater detail.

The practical purpose of all education is that the wise may walk in the fear of the Lord, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Our children are wise principally. For the principle of all wisdom is the fear of Jehovah, Proverbs 9:10. And this principle of the fear of Jehovah our covenant children, organically considered, have in them by virtue of regeneration. This wisdom is a gift. It is the spiritual gift, power, grace, whereby a man is able to judge correctly, to love, and to assume the right attitude toward reality, that is, toward the three-fold reality of God, the world, and self, — with God Himself being the central, the sovereign Reality. The wise man stands in the right relation toward this reality. The fool stands and lives in the wrong relation. And the fear of the Lord is the principle, the seed of such wisdom. You cannot have wisdom, true wisdom, without it. You can have a certain counterfeit wisdom, the wisdom that is from below, earthly, carnal, devilish. But such wisdom is in reality folly! The fool hath said in his heart, “There is no God.”

Now education does not and cannot impart wisdom. As such, wisdom is a gift, a quality. It cannot be learned. It can be developed and exercised and practiced. The wise can be trained in wisdom’s way. But you cannot teach wisdom as such; and you cannot learn wisdom.

But necessary for and basic to such a walk in wisdom’s way is knowledge. Knowledge is the mental apprehension, the conception, of reality. Knowledge is therefore concerned with the answer to these questions: Who is God? What is His Being? What are His virtues? What is His will? What is God’s work? What is the world? Whence is the world? What is the condition of the world? What is the destiny of the world? Who am I? What is my nature? What is my calling? What is my purpose? What is my history? What is my relation to God? What should I be? What am I? How can I be what I ought to be?
And also of this knowledge, both objectively and subjectively considered, the fear of the Lord is the deepest principle. Proverbs 1:7 teaches this literally. This means, therefore, that knowledge can be gained in the deepest sense only from God Himself. I cannot find out God; nor can I find out God's work with respect to the world and with respect to myself; nor can I determine my own calling with respect to God and the world and self. Hence, as far as the objective content of all true knowledge is concerned, revelation is the source. And revelation is God speaking concerning Himself and concerning His own work. That revelation we have in God's own Book, the Scriptures. And that revelation we possess in God's book of creation and history, which can be read only with eyes enlightened by the fear of the Lord and which can be understood and interpreted only in the light of the revelation of God in Christ, i.e., Scripture.

Here, therefore, we must draw the line. There is not any other knowledge than the true, living, spiritual knowledge of the fear of the Lord. And education, when distinguished as Christian or worldly (ungodly), is not a matter of more knowledge or less knowledge, is not a matter of knowledge as over against mere natural, intellectual ignorance. It is always a spiritual matter! Apart from the fear of the Lord there is no real knowledge. Just as fools, sinners, hate wisdom and instruction, so they do not love knowledge, but they love deception, error, the lie! The latter is the Scriptural characterization of all the great knowledge of the world. There is no fear of the Lord in it; and therefore it really is not knowledge at all!

Test Questions

Surely, the world and modern education will be offended at this. They are proud of their "learning" and of their "science." But just put this to a test once by asking some crucial questions. Who is God? The world says: "There is no God. Man is God. God is the great Unknowable. God is a universal Father, and all men are brothers." What is this? Knowledge? No: it is the greatest ignorance. It is deception, the lie! Ask at the world's institutions this question: whence is the world? You will get the answer: "The world had no beginning. It is eternal. It developed by itself. It evolved through billions of years." Is that knowledge? No! What then? Natural and intellectual ignorance? No! It is deception, the lie! Ask the world: who am I? They will tell you that you are the son of a monkey, or that you descended from an amoeba. Ignorance? Lack of learning? No; this is error, the lie! There is no fear of God in it!

And thus you can go on and ask all the crucial questions that are at stake in various branches of education. What is history? What is sin? Who is Jesus Christ? What is His cross, His resurrection? What is heaven? What is eternal life? What is the family and marriage? What is government? Such questions you can multiply. And to all of these questions there are but two possible answers fundamentally: a true and a false, the answer of knowledge and the answer of the lie, the answer which proceeds from the fear of the Lord and the answer in which there is no fear of the Lord!

Now education is the process of instruction and discipline. It is the process of imparting knowledge. In the light of what I have already laid down, it is obvious that in this sense genuine education is possible only on a Christian basis, the basis of the Word of God. All other so-called education is the misrepresentation of reality. It is not instruction, but deception, a leading astray.

Exactly at this point our distinctive Protestant Reformed point of view is of crucial importance. The theory of common grace fundamentally compromises the position I have outlined above. It makes room for concord between light and darkness, between church and world, between the truth and the lie, between knowledge and deception. Common grace is hailed as a glorious truth at an educational institution such as Calvin College. And I make bold to say that there is probably no area where common grace has had more devastating, — and more influential, — effects than in that of the whole realm of education.

Here, therefore, is the deepest reason for our own Protestant Reformed educational system. We want knowledge! We want knowledge in the fear of the Lord! We want knowledge unadulterated by the synthesizing influences of common grace!

(to be continued)
FROM DORT TO TODAY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REFORMED FAITH

the secession of 1834

(15)

REV. HERMAN HANKO

The churches of the secession continued to grow.

By 1836 the new denomination numbered 4000 souls and was ready for its first Synod held March 2-12, 1836.

Notable, at this Synod were several decisions of importance for the Reformed faith in the years to come.

First of all, the Synod made it clear beyond doubt that the purpose of the secession was primarily to bring the Church back again to the historic confessions of the Reformed faith, and, via these confessions, to restore the truth of the Calvin Reformation. They thus insisted (and correctly so) that they, and not the churches from which they departed, were the true continuation of the churches of the Reformation.

Secondly, the new denomination adopted a name: The Free Reformed Church. This name was later changed to the Christian Reformed Church.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all at least as far as the life of the Church was concerned, the new denomination severed all ties with the State. We must appreciate the importance of this. It was really an entirely new experiment in the history of the Reformation Churches. In practically all places where the Reformation (whether Lutheran or Calvin) had penetrated, the Church was tied in one way or another to the State. As expressed in our own Belgic Confession, (Cf. Article XXXVI) the reformers were of the opinion that the State had definite obligations towards the enforcement of the first table of the law of God; more specifically, that the State had an obligation to aid in the promotion of the Church of Christ and the preaching of the gospel. Naturally this had led to rather close ties between the Church and the State (although the precise relationship differed considerably under Lutheran or Calvinistic influence.)

Without going into a discussion of this question itself, it can be said without contradiction that such a relationship had only the most disastrous consequences for the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. This was not however (and this ought to be carefully noted) due to a fault in the principle itself; it was due rather to the fact that the State often overstepped its bounds on the one hand; and that the government lost interest in the truth of God’s Word, interfering in the affairs of the Church to the comfort and encouragement of heretics.

But now the Reformed Churches were freed from the ties of the State. This was not, of course, a matter of choice only. The simple fact was that the seceders could not by any stretch of the imagination claim to be the national Church whether they had wanted to be or not. They could not presume to take the place of the State Church even if this was what they wanted. The State had already put its arms around one denomination—the denomination from which the seceders had come out; and the seceders represented much too small a group to claim this “privilege” for themselves. The secession itself forced them to forsake the protecting and sheltering wing of the state.

But they were not interested in this either. They had had “their stomachs full” of the State. They did not want to abandon the principle of Article XXXVI of the Belgic Confession; but they wanted no part of the State as it existed in the Netherlands in their day. They did not want the support of a State that
would give aid and comfort to heretics. They did not want the stifling embrace of a State which interfered in their affairs and was inimical to the Reformed faith. As far as the position of the crown was concerned in the 19th century, they were eager to strike out on their own.

This involved considerable financial sacrifice to them, for the State had supported financially the State Church. The ministers’ salaries, the expenses of ecclesiastical assemblies, the education of the children, etc. where all paid out of the State’s coffers. The seceders were deeply aware of the fact that now all this would have to be paid for by themselves while the Church from which they had come out would continue to enjoy the material support of the government. But all this was a price worth paying if it made possible the preservation of the truth.

Yet the cost of secession was higher still. The seceders were severely persecuted.

The leaders of the secession had not expected this. The government had adopted a policy of freedom of religion. In 1816, when the new Constitution of the government was adopted, the king was required to protect all denominations within his realm. On the basis of this the leaders of the secession expected to enjoy the continued use of the church property which belonged to them and to enjoy unmolested public worship.

But the government had other ideas. It interpreted the ruling of 1816 as applying only to denominations which existed at the time the new Constitution went into effect; and the seceders were thereby excluded. What followed was a long period of harassment, trouble and suppression.

No more than did the secession begin in Ulrum under the leadership of De Cock when the government dispatched a contingent of 150 soldiers to the town with the ostensible purpose of keeping the peace. The seceders were branded as revolutionaries threatening the peace of the kingdom; and, it was argued, soldiers were necessary to maintain the peace. These soldiers were housed among the seceders who were expected to provide for them. The law stipulated that anyone who housed soldiers had to be remunerated for this by the government, but seldom did it happen in the case of the people of the secession. De Cock himself had 12 soldiers in his house for a considerable period of time.

While the soldiers were supposed to be present to keep law and order, the fact of the matter was that the lawlessness did not come from the seceders; it rather came from those who opposed the secession. Wherever the people congregated to worship, crowds of others would riot, disturbing the services, threatening the worshippers with harm, damaging property and creating so much confusion and unrest it sometimes became impossible to worship. But these violations of the peace were not stopped by the soldiers; rather, the soldiers were inclined to foment these riots oftentimes and encourage the rioters.

Further, at the request of the general Synod of the Reformed Churches, an old criminal law was exhumed which limited the number of groups meeting without government consent to twenty. This law had originally been adopted with the intention of limiting the influence of political gatherings; but it was now used against the Churches of the secession. The result was that no more than twenty believers could meet together at once, making worship extremely difficult.

And the seceders had to recourse to the law. Almost without exception the courts would rule against them and levy fines for every conceivable kind of real and imaginary crime. In many cases the fines levied against members of certain congregations totaled thousands of guilders. And, because the seceders were as often as not, the poor and humble folk, these fines could not be paid. In this case, their possessions, as meager as they were and as necessary to earn their daily bread, were seized and sold at sheriff’s sales to make up the amount of the fines. Or, the people themselves would be imprisoned. De Cock, the leader of the secession, spent three months in jail soon after the secession began.

The history of this persecution, and the negotiations that finally led to a precarious truce, was long and bitter. There is little point in our tracing it here in all its details. There did come a time when some sort of truce with the government was finally made. The government gave recognition to these Churches at last, but the price was high. The seceders were forced to make important concessions to the government for one thing. They had to change their name also, for the government claimed that their name was stolen from the established church. The whole cause of the secession was rent by internal disagreements as to how far the church could submit
to the government's demands without sacrificing its cherished principles. Many, to escape persecution, emigrated to the United States. But finally a truce was reached.

The point that immediately concerns us is the fact that through struggle and persecution, the Reformed faith once again survived in the Netherlands. The Church, called to defend herself against error, had, by the power of Christ within her, withstood the attacks of the enemy. The fruit was the continuation of the Reformed faith both in the Netherlands and in our own country.

Really, it was this heroic defense of the faith during these bitter years of secession that enabled the Church to be established without this United States, and led to our own beloved denomination. The price was cruelly high—the price that our fathers paid. But, as throughout the ages, no price has ever been too great—though that price was life itself—to pay for the defense and preservation of the heritage of God's truth, our fathers sacrificed all that they might cling to that which meant more to them than the world.

From the Pastor's Study

By G. Lubbers

"As For Me And My House" Joshua 24: 15

They had met each other at a respectable place, and they were both from homes of God-fearing parents. At least such was the humble and sincere confession of each. Fact is, they were both from Protestant Reformed homes and belonged to the same congregation. Their parents faintly remembered the fateful year of "1924", and they had heard their respective grand-parents speak of it with an earnestness which sometimes caused them to suppress a smile!

They were both young! Their spirits were young and gay. Sometimes it was even a bit difficult for them to maintain an attention-span in the Catechism class for an hour, without a few furtive glances at the clock which at that time just would not hurry! It was good to be alive! An overtone of hate reverberated in their veins. In a sense they were going places, but they had not too seriously and prayerfully considered the question "Quo Vadis?" It was just a bit of bewildering and frustrating when their parents attempted to monitor their lives with a firm hand, and allegedly maturer judgment. Yes, they were their parents, but then does not each live his own life? 

And, believe it or not, they were "in love"! No, they had not given too serious thought to its implications. There were really so many things to consider, and it was really a rather bewildering experience. It was a rather storm-and-stress-time to pass through. Who was it that had characterized it as the age of "Sturm und Drang"? Yes, some German philosopher, who could write blithely about modern youth, the "Revolt Of Youth" as a grey-haired man in his study, far from stress and strains of youth's dreams. The old fog! He did not feel the charm and joyous enchantment of her "hope chest", and what it meant for him: the girl of his dreams. . .
Yes, what did it mean?

O, father had read the Bible at the table. and it seemed that he deliberately read from the writings of Solomon, the king, the wise man, the muse. Did Solomon not say “Rejoice, o young man, in thy youth. . . .” They rather felt relaxed when that was read. But when father became rather solemn reading “but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” it was a bit disturbing. A shadow fell upon their gayer mood!

They thought of last evening when after Catechism they had gone to the Cafe in joyous mood; they thought of the coin which they had furtively placed in the Juke-box, and songs and music they had selected. There was not much choice between the good and the bad, it was really between the bad and what was worse! But it had been a bit exhilarating, it fitted the joyous mood of two young people in love. And does not everybody love a lover? Father, had just read the end of the Chapter from Ecclesiastes 11, “for childhood and youth are vanity”. And in their more somber moments of reflection they vaguely were aware that in their youthful joy there was still a bit of veneration of spirit.

It sounded a bit doleful, like the peeling of the death-knell!

Still they feared the Lord in their own way. They did desire to confess His Name in the midst of the Church — and in the world! But to think ahead of the future in faith and hope in God, they had not yet so profoundly considered. That two lovers are brought together in God’s profound wise and providence, as with His own hand, was not yet a matter of reflection. They were too near to all that was happening in their lives to have any perspective of experience. But then there is the perspective of faith in the Scriptures which puts all things in focus, and places also their being brought into its place in rather bold relief.

Yes, they remembered!

They had had a rather serious conversation with their Minister and Elder at family-visitaton concerning the word of Joshua, which he spoke to Israel at his fare-well address “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!” They remembered that their Minister had been rather insistent and adamant that to “serve the Lord” was first of all a matter of serving Him as He has revealed Himself in His Word. And, coming to this point, in the sermons he would emphasize this so very, very much too! He often warned against false doctrine and heresy, and quoted John, who ends the first Epistle with “Little, children, keep yourselves from idols”, and he would insist that “we prove the spirits, whether they be of God”! For that is what the aged servant of the Lord, Joshua, had told Israel at Shechem. The idols of the heathen were not to be brought into the Sanctuary, and false doctrine might not be smuggled into the church under the label of orthodoxy! And that nothing might be condoned in the church which conflicts with the structural truths of the Christian Religion, not even the theory of Common Grace though it have the approval of church counsels and decrees!

They were looking in a vague way toward asking to be admitted unto the Table of the Lord. Both were to put their feet together under the Table of the Lord, before they put their feet together under their own kitchen-table! And both would vow to reject all teachings concerning God, Christ, the church, salvation and the glory of God!

No, they had not yet read the “Form For the Ordination In Marriage” in the back of the Psalter. Wasn’t that a bit sad and morose for a wedding what had been read at a wedding recently which they attended? The minister had read with grave mien that ponderous paragraph at the very beginning of the Form, “Whereas married persons are generally, by reason of sin, subject to many troubles and afflictions . . . . may also be assured of the certain assistance of God in your afflictions . . . . ! Possibly they would not even hear too much of this on their wedding-day. The sobering reality of the “afflictions” and the “cures of life” will bring their feet to terra firma!

Yes, they had been “in love”. But then it was something which they could still vaguely remember, and not entirely forget. He would ever think of her as the wife of his youth, and he would remain the young man of her dreams. But they both discovered something which they really knew before and somehow could not admit. He discovered that this beautiful girl with whom he had been “in love” was after all but a poor sinner, whom he had to learn to love with the love where-with Christ had loved him. Fact is, there were times when he had to read once more the injunction of Paul “Husbands, love your wives, and be not embittered against them”. 
And she had to learn to obey her husband and to reverence him even as the church reverences Christ!

Yes, it is: as for me and my house!

The little ones will need to be taught at mother’s knee to pray, to obey! They will need to see this especially in the example of their mother and thus be in the Kindergarten of God! They must speak the mother-tongue! And they must see something of the love and understanding of Christ in their father. They must learn the meaning of what is says: that thou mayest live long upon the earth!

Life is full of disillusionments!

There is a blessed disillusionment for youth, when the soap-bubbles of “forever blowing bubbles” break, and when the pearls of the truth of godly fear become our portion, my youthful reader.

Anno Domini, 1964!
As for me and my house.

CRITIQUE
HILDA GRACE MEELKER

HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS

The question must always come at last,
What have you left when Christmas is past?
When the glitter of tinsel and wreath are gone,
What have you left when the day moves on?

Christian young people, what have we left?
Once again another Christmas season has past by into eternity. The most festive and celebrated event of the year has ended amid the helter-skelter of a busy, mad rushing world. The glitter and tinsel decorations have been removed. The well-known Christmas carols are no longer heard. The cards which were sent with their “Merry Christmas” and “Happy New Year” greetings for the season have been discarded. The loud sound of the cash register’s ring in the store of the town’s main street has quieted. American people have already spent their yearly six billion dollars for the Christmas season. The dining and feasting are over and the churches have finished with the yearly Christmas program.

Yes, when Christmas arrives, our country outdoes itself in celebration. Many people also outdo themselves to make Christmas a festive season. Many make Christmas a season for well-wishing and for complete enjoyment. When Christmas comes everyone wears a happy holiday smile. Man speaks of “Peace
on Earth” and even of putting “Christ back into Christmas.”

But, alas, when Christmas is past, man still lives in the same hopeless world. He still has the same problems to face. The world problems are the same. The radio, which only days ago played the Christmas carols and proclaimed peace to all mankind, just now is telling about wars and rumors of wars all over the world, of murder and theft, and of failures of the U.N. Bills are collected from those who were yesterday hypocritically wished a “Merry Christmas.” It’s the same old world. Those magnificent lights and decorations, those beautiful cards of greeting, yesterday’s carol singing and yesterday’s discourse about peace on earth is over. It all hasn’t brought much change. The world bought presents for far more than they could afford. The host of lovely cards have changed to a mass of unpaid bills. Man ate more than was proper yesterday, and many people have little left than a hang over when Christmas is past.

It was a phantom—the whole Christmas spirit was a beautiful colored blown-up bubble and now that bubble has burst. Nothing is left of the bubble but the air which was inside and that too has blown away.

It seems now a more appropriate question to ask not, “What the world has left when Christmas is past,” but, “What the world does not have when Christmas is past.” Although the world may change the joy of Christmas, by their celebrations, it often possesses a superficial religion, which subtly hides God’s gift to His people, by proclaiming Christ as a gift for all mankind only to be accepted. Or man speaks of the little baby Jesus who came to earth to become the best man that ever lived and we must only follow his teaching and the world will become unselfish and loving.

Oh, how hopeless and vain and wicked is the modern Christmas celebration.

Christmas is past, and what have we left Christian young people? Was our Christmas a bubble which burst at the seasons end? Have we outdone ourselves to buy glitter and tinsel? Have we overemphasized the presents and given our often hypocritical reaction of acting pleased with a gift when really we didn’t care for it at all? Was all our emphasis upon celebrating, on decorations, dining, and feasting?

Then it is doubtful whether we Christian young people have much left when Christmas is past. Except that we too will have the same world, the same problems to face and no peace upon earth.

In this world of imagination, hypocrisy, and hilarity which completely surrounds God’s people, it is sometimes difficult to keep our balance. How did you and your family fare at Christmas? Now that Christmas is past, did Christmas mean anything? Did it leave you something real, something that has been of benefit, something that strengthened you and yours in the faith? Did it leave you with that outlook of faith and hope in this present world?

The Christian’s answer to the question, “What do I have left at Christmas?” is only, “That what I did to God’s honor and glory.” If we look back over the past season to see what we did to God’s honor and glory we must needs admit that we have failed miserably. Of ourselves we have nothing left after Christmas, and hopelessness and despair overcome us.

But God sent the Holy Spirit and he so works in our hearts, that we have everything left when Christmas is past. We have a strengthened faith, new courage, and increased hope.

We as Christians have seen another Christmas ebb away into eternity. What is left for us to be joyful in? Unto us a Savior is born! That is what we have left after Christmas. Christmas is past and the Christian again visited Bethlehem and saw the babe in swaddling clothes. We saw our own misery in the wicked celebrations of the world and understand that we are rich in our rejoicing in Christ. We have our hope left. We know that Christ was crucified. We know he is in glory. He is coming back. Then when temptations come and we hear of unrest and sadness in the world we do not become discouraged but rest in the fact that God sends all these things for the building of His church and for the honor of His name.

Christ was not sent merely for the assurance of our faith but for the glory of the Father who sent him. Therefore, our hope after Christmas lies ahead to the time when God’s name will be fully realized in glory.

Yes, we as Christian young people do have something left. Christmas is past and we are one year closer to that salvation which is promised us in Christ Jesus.
THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

1. Introductory Remarks

Twenty-four years ago, when president of a young people's federation and of a local young people's society, a very influential ecclesiastic and "master of Israel" made a personal attack on us for preaching and teaching the doctrine of predestination, election and reprobation. For this the writer was regarded as inimical to the spiritual welfare of the young people, and as suffering from a not incurable immaturity. For with the advance of riper years, youthful dotings on imagined theologies would disappear. Since that time we have found that in certain circles the strongest opposition to this truth comes from those who know the least about it, having never made it the object of fair investigation. However, we have known others whose hearts were opened to the truth, their prejudices removed and who found grace to give diligence to make their calling and election sure.

This is a fundamental truth. It is a fundamental of the Christian faith, an essential and indispensable element of the faith. Yet it is strange that those called Fundamentalists, and who pride themselves in being great defenders of the faith, do not give a place to this basic fundamental, the doctrine of election. Strange, that the Fundamentalists omit this keystone fundamental; yet not so strange when we understand that, doctrinally, they are almost to a man Arminian. What is so detrimental about this is that one who simply must be classed as Arminian is either a determined or a tacit enemy of the truth. But among its friends, the best instructors in systematic theology have always begun their doctrinal works, first with a dissertation on the attributes of God, then continued with a treatise on the eternal counsel of God. Perhaps the writer suffers from an incurable immaturity, for through the years, after comparing the works of the great predestinarians with those of the moderns, he has come to believe that the method above referred to has never been, nor can be, improved. God is God, and over against Him man is nothing and less than nothing. God is always first. God's counsel is always first. None can be His counsellor. He is before all things. His counsel is before creation, before man, before the fall. An architect has his own plans in mind before he draws them up. He draws his plans before he begins to build. Yet how inadequately this illustrates the high and mighty Architect of the universe whose counsel is no dead, mechanical blue-print, but the eternal, sovereign, living will of the living God! According to His own will He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass before the creation of the universe. From all eternity He has determined all things in the secret counsel of His eternal purpose. Yet this secret counsel He has not kept and caused to remain a secret, but has revealed it in His own Word of grace. There is revealed His eternal purpose, the end which He has purposed, to-
gether with all the means ordained to that end.

A building in the process of construction may often seem to resemble a shambles, its hideous, somewhat bomb-blasted appearance obscured with an equal, or only slightly less hideous scaffolding, in all, so far, revealing no order nor design. In fact, to begin with, there is much more design apparent in the scaffolding than in the building. Most spectators are content to gape at the, to them, meaningless disarray of stone and steel. Rarely, have they the curiosity, much less the interest, to see the master plan, which would furnish them with a view of the finished edifice, and so seeing the end from the beginning, would have that which so mystified them made plain. It similarly follows with a knowledge of God’s eternal counsel. Ignorance of the decree of God will render history an insoluble riddle. The basic question to the issue at hand is whether God works all things according to the counsel of His own will, or whether He is often governed by chance; whether the call of the Gospel makes an uncertain sound, or whether it is sure to all the seed which the Lord has blessed; whether God prevails or man prevails; whether the evil is always subservient to the good, or whether throughout time the antithesis between good and evil must be left indeterminate; whether the Lord depends upon His own almighty will or the puny will of the creature; whether all things, whatsoever comes to pass, has been infallibly and immutably fixed in God’s eternal decree, or whether God and His universe are bound by a merciless fate.

The doctrine of election takes us back to the beginning of all things, to the decree of the covenant, where God decreed His dwelling with many glorified sons, decreed the preaching of the Gospel, the coming of Christ, the fall of man, the creation and the entrance of sin into the world. It takes us back to the starting point, where God begins, where man, too, must begin, if he would have a right view of life, and have an understanding of the truth. Being foundational truth, anything not established upon it is built on sinking sand. Any thinking not in harmony with this truth, will according to the degree of deviation be faulty. Departure from this fundamental truth will result in fundamental error and fundamental misunderstanding. The Gospel will not be understood. In-

deed, without election, there is no Gospel. With such a departure, the atonement will not be understood. In fact, without election, there is no atonement. Neither will there be understanding of God’s purpose in sending His Son, of the mysteries of God’s providence, of His promises, and if what is even more fundamental, His covenant.

It is, admittedly, a difficult doctrine. This is especially so in the understanding of it. Many sit under a non-doctrinal preaching ministry where the truth at best is presented topically, but at that, not comprehensively. So that even if the hearers have the ability to search, sift, collate, classify and index, the scattered statements from the Gospel furnish nothing of this truth. Needed is regular, systematic preaching, according to the confessions, where this truth has an orderly setting forth. Still, the acceptance of it is not easy. For even when the mind grasps what the Scripture teaches on the subject, the heart rebels against such pride-abasing truth. The natural mind is enmity against God and His revelation, which enmity is especially manifested in prejudice against this particular truth. Only the grace and power of the Holy Spirit can remove this opposition to His Word. Further, the preaching of this truth is not a simple task. The novice is not one to handle it competently. Sharp tools do not belong in the hands of children or fools. It is not “for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have . . . before their eyes the sentence of God’s predestination,” for such only wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (Art. 17, “Of Predestination and Election,” The Thirty-Nine Art. of Relig., Ch. of Eng.).

But difficulties should not discourage us, nor deter us from investigating what God has revealed on this truth. There is nothing unnecessary taught in Scripture, nor is there anything not beneficial to know. Where the Lord ceases to teach, we should relinquish our desire to learn. But whatever is declared in Scripture, we must be careful not to refuse or withhold from God’s people. “We can know only as much about predestination as God has seen fit to reveal. It is important we know that much.” “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23) is a price many are unwilling to pay. Too occupied with television, or other worldly pursuits, they have no time for prayerful and careful study of God’s Word. But these difficulties are only insur-
mountable to the lazy. Especially the minister, but also the believer, is called to expend effort to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed, because he knows how to cut a straight path through the Word of truth.

No truth is more important than this one. Upon the book of election there stands inscribed at the head of its register the name of the Son of God. If there were no eternal election, there would be no Jesus Christ, and if no Jesus Christ, then no Gospel; with no Gospel, no people chosen in Christ, and so no salvation of any part of the race. But the Gospel, the plan of redemption and the whole eternal purpose of God for the entire universe have their origin in divine election. For as our Canons of Dort (I. 9) remind us: “election is the fountain of every saving good, from which flows forth faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself.” Out of this fountain God has from all eternity blessed His chosen church with all spiritual blessings in the heavens in Christ, according as He has chosen us in Him before the creation of the universe. This being so, election is of the most blessed truth. Election is before all blessings, the fountain of every blessing. Those blessings the elect have already out of eternity because they are in Him, and they are in Him because chosen in Him. Therefore, to shut out this truth is to rob the people of God of their most glorious hopes and prospects.

Calvin should be heard on this point: “We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the fountain of God’s free mercy, till we are acquainted with His eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by this comparison, that He adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what He refuses to others. Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the divine glory and diminishes real humility . . . If we need to be recalled to the origin of election to prove that we obtain salvation from no other source than the mere goodness of God, they who desire to extinguish this principle do all they can to obscure what ought to be magnificently and loudly celebrated . . .” (Inst., III, XXI, 1).

Despite the fact that blessing comes to us in no other way than through election, it is, to many, the most distasteful doctrine. Even when it is clearly and scripturally presented, they will not have it. Such frequent biblical terms as “predestinated,” “elect,” “chosen,” occurring in Scripture ought to lead them to conclude that the infallible Word of God teaches that all things come to pass by the sovereign good pleasure of God. But plain Scripture is not enough for them. This is the doctrine they hate the most. The natural man will not have it because it extols God too highly and abases proud man too low, to the dust. It makes God everything and man nothing. Men of the world, enemies of the church bitterly hate the doctrine of eternal punishment. Yet there are professing Christians within the church who, more than enemies without, loathe, despise, vilify, misrepresent and revile God’s sovereign election. How they detest the truth that the salvation of the righteous is not of the will of man, but of the will of God (Jn. 1:13; Rom. 9:16)! How they rage when it is taught that the sinner is so dead in sins that the elect themselves must be made alive and made willing in the day of God’s power (Ps. 110:3)! They will corrupt young people with humanism, before they will permit them to be indoctrinated in this truth. They will destroy an entire church before they will brook such preaching from its pulpit. They will wreck a whole denomination before they leave the truth of predestination in peace.

Where election is the most vehemently denied, the free will of fallen man is the most loudly proclaimed. The Roman Catholic Church denounces predestination in these words: “No one ought to presume that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate. For except by special revelation, it can not be known whom God hath chosen unto Himself.” (Condensed from the decrees of the Council of Trent, XII). Nor has Rome ever retracted its curses upon Protestants, one of which bearing on this issue is: “If any one says that after Adam’s sin, the free will of man is lost and extinguished . . . let him be anathema” (ibid., Justification, V). The agents of the pope are responsible for the martyrdom of such great Calvinists in the reformed Church of England as Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Philpot and Bradford. The latter, persecuted by the papists in and out of prison, incarcerated with Arminians, then called “free will men,” debated Calvinism with them, and therefore knew firsthand that “more hurt will come by them than ever came by the papists. In free-will they are plain papists, yet, Pelagians.” (To be continued, D.V.)
General Subject: *The Return of Jacob and His Life with His Family*

Chapter 32: *Jacob's Consecration*

I. Preliminary Events:

A. "Mahanaim," vss. 1, 2

1. What is the significance of the fact that the angels of God met Jacob at this time?
   a. Where and when had angels had a part in Jacob's life before?
   b. Why should they appear at this particular time?
   c. Where was Mahanaim?

2. What is the meaning of "Mahanaim?" To what does Jacob refer by this name?

B. Jacob's messengers to Esau, vss. 3-8.

1. What does the fact that Jacob sends these messengers at this time prove?
   a. Where was Jacob now?
   b. Where had Esau settled?
   c. Was this action of Jacob not a bit premature?

2. What is Jacob's attitude at this time toward Esau?
   a. Why does he call Esau his "lord?" Why does he call himself Esau's servant? Was this true? Was it proper?
   b. Does the rest of Jacob's message fit in with this terminology? Why does Jacob refer to his great possessions?
   c. Why does he want to find grace in Esau's sight?

3. With what news did the messengers return?
   a. Does the text state the purpose of Esau's coming to meet Jacob with four hundred men?
   b. How does Jacob evidently interpret Esau's coming?
   c. Why was Jacob "greatly afraid and distressed?"

   1) Does this represent a different turn of events for Jacob?
   2) If Jacob's trust had been in the right place, would he have to be afraid?
   3) Was Jacob perhaps attempting to solve matters, up to this time, in his own strength?

   d. Would it be correct to say that God Himself was through Esau coming against Jacob at this time, that is, against Jacob as he attempted to solve his problems with an arm of flesh?

   e. What was God's purpose in Jacob's becoming afraid and distressed?

4. What was Jacob's strategy in meeting the situation?
   a. Was this a good piece of strategy?
   b. Was this the solution for his fear and distress?

C. Jacob's Prayer, vss. 9-12.

1. To whom does Jacob pray?

2. On what basis does Jacob plead?

3. What does he acknowledge concerning himself?

4. For what does he plead?

5. How would you evaluate this prayer of Jacob?
   a. Was deliverance from Esau the thing Jacob most needed at this time?
   b. Or did Jacob need more deeply deliverance from his own carnal nature?
   c. How do you harmonize Jacob's strategy with Jacob's prayer? Does he mean to say, "Lord, please make my strategy succeed?"

6. How did the Lord answer Jacob's prayer?
D. Jacob’s Plan to Appease Esau, vss. 13-23.

1. Describe Jacob’s plan, vss. 13-20.

2. Evaluate the plan.
   a. What did Jacob intend to achieve by this?
   b. What was the idea of leaving a space between drove and drove?
   c. Would this leave the two-fold impression of being a very elaborate and generous present and of Jacob’s being a great and powerful man?
   d. Are the words “thy servant” said “with tongue in cheek?”

3. What was the location of this activity?
   a. Where is the Jabbock?
   b. How and why was Jacob finally left alone that night?

II. Jacob Wrestling With God, vss. 24-32 (Cf. Hosea 12:3, 4)

A. The Object of the Wrestling.

1. For what did Jacob wrestle? vs. 26
   a. Did Jacob merely want a blessing in general?
   b. Or did he want the blessing of the covenant? cf. vs. 12
   c. What is implied in that blessing?
   d. Were Jacob and the other patriarchs merely interested in the temporal blessings of the land of Canaan? Proof?

2. Was this blessing now at stake?
   a. Is it correct to say that Jacob had been wrestling for this blessing all his life?
   b. What was the difference between Jacob and Esau in this respect? What produced this difference?
   c. On what had Jacob relied all his life in his struggle for the blessing? Proof?
   d. What is the meaning of the name Jacob? Do you think it is a nice name? Is there also a reference to the carnal element in Jacob in this name?

3. How and why does God come against Jacob at this time?
   a. Through Esau? What will be proved if Esau comes and destroys Jacob?
   b. Why does God come personally against Jacob? What is the purpose of this? What is Jacob compelled to do finally with a view to the covenant and then its blessing?

B. The Wrestling.

1. Who was it that came to wrestle with Jacob? Proof?

2. What was the character of the battle?
   a. Was the chief question one of physical strength?
   b. Or was the question whether Jacob was spiritually strong enough to “overcome God?”
   c. What purpose did the physical side of this wrestling serve?

3. How did Jacob battle? Hosea 12:4
   a. For what did Jacob weep?
   b. What does it mean that he made supplication? What is implied in supplication?

4. On what basis did Jacob plead? (cf. vs. 12)
   a. Did Jacob personally possess this Word? Proof?
   b. What change came over Jacob at this time therefore?

C. The Outcome.

1. Jacob’s new name.
   a. Why was his name changed?
   b. What memory would always be connected with the name Jacob?
   c. What is the meaning of and the reason for the name Israel?
   d. Why are God’s people later still called “Jacob?”

2. Did Jacob obtain the blessing?
   a. Why does he ask for the name of Him Who wrestled with him?
   b. Why is that name not given? Was it necessary? Was this name revealed in the fact that “He blessed him there?”

3. What was the possibility of this victory?
   a. How could Jacob prevail and overcome God?
      1) If God came against Jacob, how could Jacob conquer?
      2) How could he even have the courage to wrestle?
   b. How only can God be held and prevailed upon? And how only is it possible to do this?

4. Is this wrestling and victory characteristic of all spiritual Israelites?
Rev. J. A. Heys declined the call to First Church.

Rev. H. Veldman declined the call for Home Missionary.

The consistory of First Church has granted a three-months leave of absence from his pulpit to Rev. H. Hoeksema. Professor H. C. Hoeksema has graciously consented to conduct the morning service and the various ministers in Classis East have been conducting the evening service during the vacancy. In that connection, it may be said that the evening of November 15 was a memorable one, for at the time Rev. G. Vos of Hudsonville preached at First Church, the first time in eleven years.

Concerning our Servicemen:

Dale Bartelds, (First), Ken Haak (Oaklawn), and Irvan Velthouse (First) enjoyed a recent leave of absence enabling them to spend the Christmas Holidays with their families.

We have also received the addresses of several of our servicemen:

Hudsonville:
- Chester Haveman U.S.55800724 Medical Company (3412)
- Fitzsimmons General Hospital Denver, Colorado 80240
- Pvt. Jason Holstege E716786205 Co. D, 9th Bn
- 3rd Tng Bde USATC, Armor Fort Knox, Kentucky 40121
- Capt. Larry D. Lubbers 2058640 M.D. USS Constellation, CVA 64 c/o FPO San Francisco, California
- A.B. Robert A. Vander Kooi A.F. 27127564 Box C-8297 Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado 80230
- Marvin Feenstra (Redlands) is currently stationed in Germany. His address is as follows:

Pvt. Marvin Feenstra
U.S. 56302784
Co. C. 2nd Pltn.
A.P.O. 154 New York, N.Y.
The address of Donald Hoksbergen (Hull) is:
- Pvt. Donald L. Hoksbergen
N.G. 27819938
B-1-2.
Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri 65475

Membership transfers:

Hope welcomed Mr. and Mrs. J. Huiskin with one child from Edgerton and Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Vanden Top with one child from Doon. The Dennis Gleason family left Hudsonville for Loveland and Mr. and Mrs. Vern Huber with their three children transferred from Loveland to Redlands.

For the Next Census:

A daughter, Debbie Lynn, born to Mr. and Mrs. John R. Velthouse (Southeast).

A son, David Michael, born to Mr. and Mrs. Steve Holstege Jr. (Hudsonville).

A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Zwak (Hudsonville).

A son, Timothy, born to Rev. and Mrs. Herman Hanko (Doon).

A daughter born to Rev. and Mrs. Gise Van Baren (Randolph).

A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Schuitema (Hudsonville).

A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. Merle Veenstra (Hope).

A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. Stan Dykstra (Hope).

Congratulations are in order for:

Mr. Larry Hoezee and Joyce Gale Kuiper (Hudsonville) who were united in marriage on December 14; Mr. J. Westra (Randolph)
who celebrated his 83rd birthday on November 18; Mrs. J. Lout (Randolph) who celebrated her 86th birthday on November 20; and Mrs. Wm. Nienhuis (First) who celebrated her 90th birthday on December 11.

Called home:
Miss Sheryl Maring (Hudsonville) at the age of 17 years; Mr. John Schut and the infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Schut of Hudsonville; and Mr. Jacob Bolt (First) at the age of 83 years.

Concerning our schools:
On November 20, Hope Protestant Reformed School presented their annual school program under the theme: "Now Thank We All Our God."

At the December P.T.A. of Hope School the program centered about a roundtable discussion by the teachers on report cards. The children of Adams St. School once again thrilled the hearts of the Mothers' Club as they told of Christ's birth in song and speech at the December meeting. Mr. Wayne Lanning addressed the Protestant Reformed High School Circle at their November meeting held in First Church.

Many activities are currently being carried on in Northwest Iowa in an united effort to open a Protestant Reformed Elementary School in September, 1965, D.V. On November 13, a special society meeting was held at Doon for the purpose of deciding on the location and building of the school. On November 24, an organizational meeting was held for the establishment of a "Ladies Auxiliary". A fine turnout at the first meeting was recorded and at the next meeting a constitution is to be adopted and a name for the organization is to be chosen.

Items of General Interest:
Many of the societies in the Grand Rapids area have been enjoying fellowship with one another in joint meetings. On November 8, Southeast Young Peoples' travelled to Holland, and Hudsonville Young Peoples' met with Southwest. The Men's Society of First Church was host to Southeast on November 9. After recess Mr. R. Tootsma presented a paper on Supra and Infra Laparianism. On December 6, Hudsonville and Hope Young Peoples' Societies met at Hope; and on December 8, the Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope was host to Hudsonville's.

There have also been many Sunday evening programs in this same area. On November 22, a Singspiration was held at Southeast and on November 29 the Hope Ladies' Circle sponsored a Hymnsing at Southwest Church. The Choral Societies of Hudsonville and Hope Churches rendered their annual Christmas concert on December 13 and 20 respectively.

Confession of faith was recently made by Sandra Garvelink, Judith Lanning and Betty Young of Hudsonville and Mrs. Rolland Griess of Loveland.

The Oaklawn Ladies' Society sponsored a supper on December 18 for the married couples and young people of their congregation.

The Young Peoples' Society of Southeast has been diligently working throughout the past couple years to earn money in order to put carpeting in their church. The last two projects included the collection of the banks which were issued to the congregation last spring and a pot-luck supper for their congregation which was held on December 5. Approximately $600.00 were needed in order for their goal to be achieved. With these projects, the end should almost be in sight.

At Redland's Annual Congregational Meeting, a decision was made to remodel the kitchen of the parsonage.

* * *

Attention: There are some of our churches from which there is never any news. These churches include Edgerton, Forbes, Holland, Isabel, Lynden, South Holland, and Southwest. WHAT'S THE MATTER - NO NEWS? In the coming months, the editor at 1312 Roswood S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506 will be anxiously awaiting the arrival of your news also.

Beacon Lights

Seventeen