February 1967

Gather Together!
Build The Wall!
"In God's Gymnasium"
And The Night Arose
Published monthly, except June and August by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

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Second Class Postage paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan
Subscription price $3.00

In This Issue

EDITORIAL ...................................................... 1
Gather Together — D. Huisken

FEATURE ..................................................... 1
Build the Wall — Mrs. Louis Kamps

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY ............................... 4
"In God's Gymnasium" — Rev. G. Lubbers

TRUTH vs. ERROR ........................................... 6
ASSURANCE: Problematical But Possible — Rev. Robert C. Harbach

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS .......................... 8
Mark Hoeksema

BOOK REVIEW ................................................ 9
Hymns for Youth — D. Huisken

CRITIQUE ................................................... 10
And the Night Arose — Rosalyn Reitsma

OPEN FORUM ................................................. 11
"Sunday Christians" — Gary Bylsma
Y.P.S. on Sunday — Karen Reitsma

HELPs FOR BIBLE STUDY ................................ 12
Epistle of James — Rev. H. Veldman

NEWS FROM, FOR, AND ABOUT OUR CHURCHES ............. 17
Georgia Hendricks
GATHER TOGETHER!

A practice which is common in our churches, and, especially among our young people must be complimented. The practice is that of young people's societies meeting together in joint sessions. There is no better way for young people to meet and become acquainted with other members in our churches. And what a noble, lofty, and blessed way to meet—studying, discussing, and meditating upon the truths of God's Holy Word. This practice should continue not only, but it should be expanded.

You have expanded it somewhat already in that during the Christmas season Prof. H. C. Hoeksema spoke to the Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies of the Grand Rapids area. What a wonderful way to celebrate the birth of Lord Jesus Christ; what a worthwhile activity for a Sunday afternoon. For that reason the Sabbath was set aside to rest in the Lord and thank Him for His greatest Gift. This is a start.

I would, personally, like to see this type of meeting on every one of our Christian and Reformed holidays. For example, Easter will soon be here. Plan a mass meeting for this great event in the life of the church. Then, comes the Ascension of our Lord a most joyous occasion in the life of the Christian—even the young Christian! Next, the forgotten holiday in the church world today, Pentecost. What a program could be planned in commemoration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit!

Our churches already have a traditional Reformation Day Rally; you young people are actively engaged in it also. But you should feel free to sponsor a Reformation Day singspiration on the Sunday preceding or following Reformation Day. Our churches in Doon, Hull, and Edgerton already have this practice.

And as a footnote to the above, Protestant Reformed Y.P. Societies and/or the Beacon Lights Staff ought to sponsor at least one singspiration a month. A more beneficial Sunday evening cannot be found. And when they are sponsored, these not only older people but the youth should attend. Plan them and cause them to abound among us.

Continue the work of gather together as joint societies, and give these mass meetings some serious thought. Let this song be heard in our midst:

How good and pleasant in the sight
When brethren make it their delight
To dwell in blest accord;
Such love is like anointing oil
That consecrates for holy toil
The servants of the Lord.

Such love in peace and joy distils,
As o'er the slopes of Hermon's hills
Refreshing dew descends;
The Lord commands His blessing there,
And they that walk in love shall share
In life that never ends.

How good and pleasant in the sight
When brethren make it their delight
To dwell in blest accord;
The Lord commands His blessing there,
And they that walk in love shall share
In life that never ends.

—CHARLES H. GABRIEL

D.H.

FEATURE

BUILD THE WALL!

MRS. LOUIS KAMPS

The merciless sun of Palestine beats down: weariness past groaning; sweat-fouled bodies; thirst; heads pounding with fatigue, hunger, tension; the chalk-dry taste of unslackening fear; desperately aching muscles; sword clumsy in one hand. tools or lift ropes cumbersome in the other as the heavy stones are inched into place-slowly, so exasperat-
ingly slowly. The time—the age of Nehemiah. The occasion—the rebuilding of the Wall.

Israel's history is a picture of the Christian Church traveling towards the historic day of Judgement. Both have seen tones of intense vitality, times of the fiery pillar thru the desert, the fallings away, the sword of Jehovah against Phylisitia, Egypt, Assyria. Both have had their dark ages of captivity. We are presently, so believe some, in the days of the rebuilding of the wall. The days of final fortification. The persecution is near, even upon us.

We too build sword in hand, harassed by spiritual samaritans, hebrews who are not Hebrews, fellow churchmen who are apathetic, even hostile to our cause. We build encumbered, awkward, painfully limited. We have hardly the means, hardly the knowledge, hardly the spirit to begin. Our wall is our Christian educational system. Particularly we have in mind our own proposed high school. Awkwardly, painfully, we begin to build the structure, form our policies, set up our curriculums, study and choose our texts. The wall intends to guard our children so that they may be nurtured in safety.

Even as every man under Nehemiah's command built that portion of the wall nearest to where he lived, so we are called to see ourselves—with our very lives and the seed of the covenant at stake. Yet how many of us feel the need for that wall near at hand? What are we thinking as we turn down the lamps and bolt the door knowing that come midnight Death may come quietly stepping dainty-footed over the unmended gap? A little sleep, a little folding of the hands, thus our calamity shall come upon us. Beware, all who would willingly let the present situation continue!

Anyone who has attempted to plan a curriculum for even one subject knows that it is a plodding painstaking process. It seems especially so when one labors under the knowledge that this high school which we propose may quite possibly be the very last chance we may ever have to rebuild the walls which the tremendous host of modernism, ecumenism, social gospelism, Darwinism, and all the other forces of Babylon have attempted to throw down and pulverize.

Christ sends us and our children as lambs into the midst of wolves, exhorting us to be wise as serpents, harmless as doves. This is why we are equipping our young soldiers with the best ordinance available, training them to know the pit-falls, to scrutinize the path for land mines at every step. In our subjects we drill them to ask: "Does this path lead God-ward, or point to Man?" "Is this water fit to drink: will partaking of it set man free or enslave unto death?" When we consider that every part of our curriculum must contribute to this military training, we begin to comprehend the immensity of the task and the necessity of painstaking, detailed, and relentlessly vigilant planning.

Continuing the metaphor of Christian Education as Military Training and defense system, let us examine carefully some of the weapons. The realm of Rhetoric and Literature is a good starting point. What is Rhetoric? It is, very simply, the skill of powerful and persuasive speech—either by means of the spoken word of through written literature, or music, or painting, or whatever. It implies the effective use of logic, symbolism, comparison, order, and grammar. It implies the best, most persuasive, and most effective use of all the means of communication. Rhetoric implies the correct and precise and commanding transmission of ideas. Surely it becomes obvious even to the most unlettered person why a consideration of literature and rhetoric as its tool, is the obvious starting point for consideration of Christian Education.

We will elaborate on this starting point—from a Protestant and Reformed viewpoint. All learning is accomplished by the transmission of ideas. Literature may be defined as the idea content, and the message transmitted. There are many kinds of literature—the literature of music, the literature of the Classic Greek dramatists, the literature of modern existentialism, and the literature of the sacred Scriptures. A study of literature, then, involves two things, the message itself with its intellectual, historical, and philosophical content; plus the study of the skills, the techniques, the methods used to convey this content, namely, the rhetoric.

All learning then involves rhetoric and literature. All transmission of ideas between two or more persons be it via books,
radio, television, debates, lectures, plays, or by the preaching of the gospel. How must the simple-hearted Christian, learned or unlearned, approach the subject? If he would approach it wisely, he opens his Bible and begins a prayerful search. The first communication of ideas is recorded. God communed with Himself; and God communed with Adam. Why? So that Adam should hear, obey, and praise his Creator. The devil also communicated with man. Why? In order to deceive, teach, convince, coerce the hearer to obey him and become his, the Deceiver's slave. Is it not clear then that Anti-thesis permeates all learning from the very beginning?—and thus all communication, all literature, all rhetoric? Everything we drink into our minds either tastes of the Deceiver's poison or flows from the Rock; every path of knowledge must be either laid with mines for our destruction, or lead safely thru the Valley towards the City that hath foundations! How deep-rooted and important then is the study of literature in pointing out that life or death antithesis for our young soldier-scholars.

Christian parents, young people, board members, teachers, elders of the church, awake out of complacency! To our battle stations: re-form your lines into fighting position, men and women of God! Do you not realize we are under full scale attack? Have you not heard the watchmen sounding the trumpet? Why are you not rushing to the defense: Are you Protestant? (i.e., Pro—with and for the TESTANT—the BOOK, the WILL the TESTAMENT once offered up unto the prophets). Are you not willing to be Reformed—RE-formed—back into position for battle? Are we or are we not Protestant Reformed, that is, the people who believe that the whole truth revealed in that Book is our only line of defense? Are we or are we not the people who believe that the whole of our lives, all our communications, learning, and literature must be brought under the scrutiny of that Word? Do you or do you not hear the Clarion Call from Zion's walls? Will you not rush with your brothers to the defense as did the Jews in Nehemiah's day?

From this urgent reminder of our intense personal involvement in this warfare, we return to our discussion of the Weapons of Defense. Since literature and its rhetoric are so basic, what should the English cur-

riculum of a Protestant Reformed secondary school be? How must its goals differ from those of presently existing schools? In what must its approach and methods, content and guiding principals differ and show themselves distinct over against those of today's American schools, both secular and (would-be) Christian?

Goals, principles, content, approach, method, texts—that is quite a list! It isn't so, as some foolishly think, that these are considerations we can leave for the future principal to decide in a couple of weeks or months! Nor is it so, as even more foolishly is thought, that first we must erect the building and somehow expect the curriculum et al to be taken care of! We are building the walls of Zion, not the walls of Jericho! If we adopt the same curricular and methodological approaches of the now existing schools, we are adopting with them their pagan and idolatrous principles. This is parallel to erecting Jericho's walls to protect Zion. On such false assumptions—even in such a seemingly indifferent matter as curriculum and syllabus—how could we ever dream that the walls should stand? We cannot. We must start anew, laboriously, awkwardly, painfully the immense task of re-thinking our whole educational philosophy (if we must use such a term). More simply, our foundations must be laid only on sound Biblical principles. Any who would think this a matter to leave for last is criminally foolhardy, and blind to the gravity of our modern cultural-political-religious dilemma.

The purpose of this, the first of a proposed series of articles, is two-fold: First, it is to remind our parents and young people not merely of their financial but more importantly of their moral and spiritual calling to support our school. It is a support with respect to working out and realizing goals and principles. It is the thinking-out, the planning of the school proper before the mere fact of a physical edifice. It is a support which involves decisions and life plans, even from a very young age, as young people and parents consider the need for teachers, and the command to give of our best, not just of our money.

The second purpose of this article is really a brother to the first; it is a call to inspire, coerce, or otherwise strike the
consciences of our teachers and leaders to contribute their experience, practical knowledge, and expertise in their own respective fields of specialization, be it math, music, science, or history in making plain to the Protestant Reformed public the application of Protestant Reformed principles in the foundation of a school. Let’s get these discussions out of the seclusion of Teachers’ Institute, into the public eye, and to work! This task is immense; it needs the work of many willing and skillful hands, each doing or giving that which he is best able to do or give; let each of us remember Nehemiah and actively, prayerfully, diligently build that portion of the wall nearest us.

"... exercised to discern both good and evil" – Hebrews 5:14

"IN GOD’S GYMNASIUM"

Don’t we live in a strange and superficial world, young people? Yes, we live in a very evil world. The whole world lies in the Evil One. And we have much flesh, do we not? Easy is as easy does. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands, and so poverty doth come like a robber, and our want as an armed man! Yes, study must be mad easy so that the biggest dullard will not experience any difficulty. And by nature we are such spiritual dullards; we are so obtuse to the great truths of God in Christ.

But when it comes to competitive sports — well, that is a different question. Here the coach insists on that little extra effort in each play and crucial point of the game; and extra session in the “gym,” a few extra practice throws; nothing less than perfection of skills is aimed at. The race is to the swift, and the victory is for the strong. The individual player must be in fine fettle, and the spirit of the team must be high; it must all be split-minute timing, and the gymnast must be razor-sharp in all his faculties! It is a real distinction to walk on the campus as a “letter man,” to sport the athlete’s sweater!

All this does not mean that such a one is a man of letters, that he is erudite, studies hard, is an incisive thinker. Very few think of a gymnasium as being a place of learning, an institution of secondary education, where men and women are prepared to enter into the university. All but a very few associate gymnasium with a physical gymnast; it is of a great athlete, a mighty contestant, the shouting of the audience of spectators in the arena, that a gymnasium is linked.

However, God’s church is also a gymnasium. It is God’s place where the believer must run the race. This is true not only of the ministry of the Word on Sunday in church, but is equally true of the catechism class, the young people’s society, and in
our Christian day schools and high schools and colleges. God's gymnasium it is! It is the spiritual and mental gymnasium of the saints, old and young. Here none become too old to participate. Badly gymnastics profits very little, but the exercise of godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come (I Tim. 4:8).

Here we are challenged to put our senses, all our senses, to use and good habits. Yes, we need good spiritual habits and use of all our senses, mind, will and heart. Our soul must ever be attuned. We must be able to distinguish truth from error, the false teaching from that which is true. The way the church is lost is through lack of knowledge of the truth. Then she is carried away with every wind of doctrine and by the sleight and cunning of deceitful men and false teachers. We must be able to discern good and evil. Only those who are full grown and matured men and women in the truths of Scripture qualify. Yes, we must be thoroughly versed in the first principles, the A.B.C.'s of the truths of the Christian faith. Howbeit, we must not remain such as are little children who can only eat milk and not digest solid food. It is an unnatural thing to ever remain children and not become adults.

However, there is something far worse than to be little children. It is to revert back to children when once on the way to adulthood in Christ. Such was the case, sad to say, with some of the Hebrew Christians to which the letter of the Hebrews is addressed. They were in need of being instructed in the great truths of the Old Testament concerning the temple, the shadows and types, the priesthood of Aaron and Levi, as these are all fulfilled and superseded in Christ, the Son of God. This subject itself is perspicuous and lucid enough; the difficulty was in those who needed instruction. They had become dull of hearing. As far as the time was concerned they should have been teachers of others. And, lo, they are in need of being instructed anew which are the first rudiments of the words of God. They needed a refresher course. They are like a musician who should be playing beautiful chords and arias, and must once more even learn the key-board of the organ! Such we must be never become, young people!

Take your catechism serious. Learn well. Take part in the discussion in your society. Do your home-work well. Let your progress be obvious to all. We must seriously study unto godliness, otherwise we will grow static and will become spiritual runts! Yes, then we will forever merely need to learn the first principles: repentance to God from dead works, the teaching of baptism and laying on of hands, and the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment. Do not be Christians which must be fed with an eye dropper. That is for those who are almost sick unto death with spiritual lethargy.

Yes, we must know the truth, and know is progressively. Only then will we have our senses exercised by use to discern good and evil. It is told of bank-tellers who must learn to discern real money from that which is counterfeit. How do they become proficient in it? By having their sense exercised, especially the sense of touch. For two or three weeks they do nothing but handle real and genuine money. Only thus will they be able to detect that which is false. So, too, we must be. We must be steeped in Reformed faith; must be so progressively, and, then, we will be able to detect keenly any departure therefrom.

Get busy in God's gymnasium. A little extra effort to master that catechism lesson. Be sure to take notes and save them for use. The weakest ink is stronger than the strongest memory. The Bible desires to be studied. Be at your very best in church, be alert under the preaching and meditate thereon. And be exercised to discern both good and evil. Do not place your talent in the ground, but use it. To him that is faithful in a little shall be entrusted much. Be God's letter man, able in all the Scriptures. Only he who learns more remembers what he has learned!

**NOTICE**

Please send all church bulletins, notices, and announcements to

MISS GEORGIA HENDRICKS
1137 FULLER, S. E.
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

BEFORE the 13th day of each month.

Five
ASSURANCE: Problematical But Possible

In our English Bible the term Assurance appears only six or seven times, not at all to imply that the doctrine of assurance has but meager place in the Word of God. For it is a very strong vein running all through the whole strata of Scripture. Nor is it presented in the Word of Truth as having only minor importance, for it is given as an inseparable element of faith. Nor is it a quality which is to be looked for in the Christian in but weak and scant form. For in half of the occurrences of the word itself, reference is made to full assurance of faith or to much assurance.

Yet it is not easy to write on the subject of assurance, lest we distress and dishearten the truly godly, or puff up those who suppose they are rich and have need of nothing. Many things have been uttered on assurance which never should have been said, because in the saying, the balance of truth was not preserved. There are true believers who find little spiritual comfort in their past experience. As they grow older, they find it increasingly difficult, if not, impossible to remember. At least, time takes them farther from it; there is little to appropriate from it. Sometimes, therefore, they feel as though they never ate and drank from the table set before them in this wilderness world. They seem to have little joy with which to rejoice. Life is so full of tears, groaning, complaints, feelings of desertion and failings. This is the way the saints often are, not as they ought to be. Though you may not have learned all this yet by experience, you will.

The blessing of assurance is not necessarily one where we are continually on the mountain top, never getting down into the Valley of Humiliation, or into the Slough of Despond, where we are always shouting “Amen!” or singing “Hallelujah.” Jacob, you remember, prevailed with the Angel of God, but did not go the rest of his life as a glorious hero triumphant. He went as a battle-scared veteran with halting gait. He still proceeded as a militant warrior. The weapons of his warfare were not yet put aside. “I write unto you, young men (and young women) because ye are strong.” But you are also weak, and the stronger you become, the more conscious you will be of your weakness, the more you will learn to cry out of the depths of your helplessness to the Mighty God for strength. Why should this be so, if there be such a promised blessing as assurance? The one experience in no wise cancels the other! Both may be ours at the same time. Paul said, “When I am weak, then am I strong” (I I Cor. 12:10). We are to increasingly discover that though we delight in the law of God after the inward man, there is another law in our members, striving against the law of the mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin (Rom. 7:22f). The Lord would have us always, even when weak and wavering,
to, nevertheless, be able to say, "I know Him whom I have believed!" But He puts us through these many infirmities to reveal to us our nothingness (John 3:30).

You see, the believer's deepest experience of the knowledge of his soul-felt misery does in no wise debar the experience of assurance. It is Roman Catholic doctrine which insists that no one may be assured of salvation until after the moment of death. There is nothing Reformed, humble, nor pious about this doctrine. The Reformed, therefore, biblical, teaching is that assurance is an essential element of saving faith. This does not mean that if a person does not know he was "accepted in the Beloved One," he is yet in his sins. We do not view our infant seed, tender children, covenant youth or unenlightened believers as yet in their sins. The elect have been accepted in the Beloved One whether they know it or not, whether they believe it or not! But they will come to believe it, and so to know it. But if a Christian of some years standing does not have the assurance of his salvation, it may be because his spiritual diet has for a long time been on unsubstantial food. It may be that some rags of Romanism yet cling to him, or that worldly influences have swayed him. For the world is full of the deadening influences of Deism (modern Unitarianism), Modernism (now deeply imbedded in Romanism), Pelagianism (the Romish-inspired religion of the man-on-the street) and Arminianism, which originated within Romanism. These worldly influences have engulfed the church; to a degree, even our own churches, as we must always consciously sweep out the lie, first from our own hearts, then from our own House.

The lack of assurance may be due to the fact that of the three things which are necessary for a Christian to know, the first, how great his sins and miseries are, he never gets beyond. He never goes on to know how to be delivered from his sins and miseries, and knows practically nothing of the joy of gratitude for such deliverance. Perhaps he never grasped nor understood real doctrinal preaching, or had such little of it that serious self-examination was the dominant part of the ministry sat under. The latter, without a proper proportion of the former, results in doublings and de- spondency. But the Lord intends that the Christian be neither a sickly mystic nor an ignorant professor. He intends that he shall possess his possessions, and always be able to say, I belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ! "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"

The full assurance of salvation is a blessing to be coveted by every believer. It is to be regarded as neither "Fundamentalist fanaticism" nor naive presumption, but as the gracious favor of spiritual enlightenment, the gift of God. Many professing Christians are led to believe that a constant experience of doubts and fears, sighs and groans, welling sins and shortcomings, are the highest evidences of a regenerated state and true spiritual-mindedness. They measure their piety by the length of the face. However, these doubts, fears, and sins many find mixed with worldly and fleshly lusts which war against them. So they have hesitated to affirm that they are true children of God. They can always say, "In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." They cannot yet bring themselves to say, "Christ liveth in me," and, "whatever God doeth, it shall be for ever!"

On the other side, there are those who never have a doubt or fear. They claim to rest on the bare Word of God and the finished work of Christ. or they rest on John 3:16, or 5:24. How could they then fail to be assured of their salvation? They have the utmost confidence in the letter of Scripture. It must apply therefore to them in its happy declarations, as much as to anyone else. They have not the slightest doubt that they will spend eternity in glory. We are afraid for them. So many who give no evidence of election, calling and regeneration are sure that the Lord has saved them. They, under the ministry of some ill-trained evangelist or teacher, made a decision for Christ, and therefore all is well with them, automatically, for time and eternity. Blithely they flit through life as they sing,

"Depravity's a cavity from humanistic bruising.
Election's gone; 'God waits upon man's card-recorded choosing.'"

The latter souls are the ones who continually remind us that the whole Word of God is what we need. True, but not all at once. That would be too much of a dose for anyone. In fact, certain portions of God's Word would be highly injurious if applied at the wrong time and place. Meats
and nuts are nutritious, but so are bread and milk. The one combination is for the mature; the other for babies. The convalescent would do better on a diet of milk and honey than on one of nuts and sweetmeats. The doctrine of eternal punishment is part of the infallible truth of Scripture. But would you give a dose of that truth to the broken-hearted Christian parents whose agnostic son was recently killed? The glory of heaven is a reality that awaits every pilgrim in the narrow way, but who would put that before a professing Christian who was intoxicated? The doctrine of the saints' eternal preservation is also clearly founded in Scripture, but I would not press it on a wayward brother in the Lord.

There are many empty professors of the faith who are sure of their salvation merely because "I accepted Christ as my personal Saviour." This sort of certitude is deficient because it does not include evidence of the same, namely, obedience. "He that saith, 'I know Him,' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). But some will say, "There is no need for me to go to such lengths to prove my salvation. I know that my faith is genuine. I believe that Christ died for me. I am trusting in the finished work of Christ." This is wrong and foolish because the Author of Scripture Himself commands, "Make your calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10). Furthermore, when we read that "we know that we have passed from death unto life," it is not because "we have trusted in the finished work of Christ," but "because we love the brethren"! The true Christian does not merely say, I know Him. He wants to prove it, and does. He bears a resemblance to his Father, and would have all see to which "father" he belongs (John 8:44).

The question must be settled as to what kind of a hearer I am. Am I a hearer who never retains the preached Word because Satan snatcheth the good seed of the Word out of the heart? Or am I such a hearer as for a while believes the Word, but in time of persecution apostatizes? Or one who finds the cares, riches and pleasures of this life choking out the Word from my life? Or am I a good-ground hearer, having an honest and good heart, hearing the Word, keeping it and bringing forth fruit with patience? Then the test which identifies the elect of God, which reveals the mark of election, is that of fruit — in evidence. Knowledge is fine; orthodoxy is necessary; joy is commendable. But the identity of the godly is in spiritual fruit, especially in the fruit of likeness to Christ, or conformity to His image. May these broad lines briefly sketched here be of practical spiritual help to strengthen the reader in "blessed assurance."

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

Why do not Protestant Reformed young people attend movies? Is it because there are rules and church laws forbidding it? Assuming that Protestant Reformed young people do not attend movies, (a few do but most do not), why don't they? Could it be that they are interested in preserving our Reformed heritage over against the world? I have recently talked to several of our young people who said that they did not attend movies but didn't know exactly why they were wrong. When I got to thinking about it myself, I had to delve to find reasons and defend my position. As I began to study, I found that the origin of the movie is Hollywood, a place long notorious for its wickedness.

The people who act in these movies, as it is plain to see from the lives they live, do not live and act in a Christian manner. Their lives are filled with wickedness. The movie itself portrays scenes of wickedness, the most common of which are killings, savage fights and assaults, stealing, rape, and adultery. Also frequently advertised are movies which speak of angels and devils, of heaven and hell. They do not, of course, mean this in a spiritual sense, but in a way of mocking Christianity. The people who make these movies are not ashamed of their sins, but set them up as goals and examples for others.

Everything that you and I do is either good or evil, if not in itself, then in its influences. A television set, for example, is not wrong as an instrument: but it can be

Eight
used for wrong. Everything that is done falls into one of these two categories. For the moment, let’s give movies the benefit of the doubt and suppose that they can produce “good” scenes. They do it for the entertainment of others, and not for the glory of God. It is wrong to portray good just for the sake of portraying it. It is difficult, in fact impossible, to find a scene of good in a movie and show that it is for God’s glory. The wicked cannot praise God.

Since movies cannot show good, they must portray evil. This is twice as bad as sin, if we can speak of sins having degrees. It is bad enough that sin is committed, but if it is committed over again for somebody else’s benefit, this makes the sin doubly abominable before God.

Nevertheless, objections have been raised. The question has been asked, “What’s the difference between going to a movie or to a football or basketball game? Aren’t we in contact with the world either way?” True, we may be forced to mix with some very undesirable people at these sports events, and that is a big reason why we should not indulge over-much in these activities. But as such, football or basketball games have little or no moral, intellectual, or spiritual content; we derive no great benefits from them. Whether we watch or play, these sports will not, in themselves, have an appreciable effect on us. But with the movie it is different; the movie influences the mind and the heart, revealing its ideals and attitudes toward all things, good or evil. The world through the movie pictures life as it wants to live it, not as Christ wants us to live it.

“But cannot the Christian benefit from movies, using them as an art form?” someone might ask. I would say, “What benefit can be derived from watching wicked pictures of what passes for culture in the world?” The world has no culture, save that of the devil. The Christian cannot serve both God and mammon, cannot deliberately place himself in the sphere of the ungodly.

In short, because of its origin, its actors and actresses, and its wicked content, the movie is wrong. But what makes it worse is the influence it has on the world of today. It seems that many things are done in imitation of movie stars. The movies set certain standards: The way people talk, dress, act, and their moral code are to a large extent determined by the movies they see. Such-and-such a person did this or that, and now it’s the “in” thing to do. Movies, and this includes television, have an influence on crime. It has been estimated that three-fourths of all juvenile crimes committed are conceived as a result of the movie. Manufacturers capitalize on the killings and violence shown on TV. They offer “war games,” “G.I. Joe’s,” and “spy kits.” Many small children have these toys; think of the influence they have on these impressionable children.

The influence of the movie must be increasing, because the 1966 Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches removed the ban on movies, saying that if they were used with discretion, movies were a legitimate culture medium. Through common grace they can do this in the face of all the evidence which has just been presented!

Why don’t Protestant Reformed young people attend movies? Because they want to be Christian in every sphere of their lives. They don’t want any contact with the epitome and personification of worldliness. They want to live distinctively, being in the world but not of it. This is a characteristic of all of God’s people, and must be maintained, because these are the last days in which the Church must remain pure over against ever-increasing wickedness, until Christ comes again.

MARK HOEKSEMA

BOOK REVIEW

Hymns for Youth

If one is looking for a song book filled with catchy tunes, jazzy rhythms, and finger-snapping lyrics, Hymns For Youth is not the answer. But if one is searching for a hymnal that is abundantly filled with solemn worshipful music, Christian lyrics, and biblical illustrations; this work is the answer.

The music and accompanying songs, although unfamiliar to most, are not too difficult for the youth to master. Many of the
CRITIQUE

ROSALYNN REITSMA

AND THE NIGHT AROSE

The sun suddenly dove behind lofty mountain peaks, and as its light faded from the heavens, the glory of the night began to appear. First came one lone star in the east, then another, until, myriad upon myriad in splendor the heavens were splashed with light as with an iridescent paint upon a black cloth. Thus night fell, or rather arose, in all its glory, for after the twilight comes the night, the time of clearness when the heavens are revealed.

The night is so often considered a time of loneliness and fear, for such it can be, but it can also be a time of peace. It is at night that we have time to pause and think. And thinking we can hear the rustle of God as He passes in the wind, we can see His presence in the glow of the moonlight. At
night there is naught of this world to distract us, we are with God.

For, you see, we are living in the twilight of time. Slowly, inescapably, the glaring sunlight of time is fading into twilight; soon there will be the night. And what will the night mean for you? Will it mean a time of fear and terror? Or will the night be a time of joy? Can you hear God in the night?

Yes, young people, the end of the ages is upon us. In our lifetimes we can expect increasing apostacy. The lines of difference between Church and world are going to become increasingly blurred. But through all this blurring and confusion, which is really no more than modern day persecution, God is calling His Church. While the whole world runs frantically about in a whirlwind of “Living” to hide from Him, God is speaking to us in a still, small voice. He is telling us to fear not, for in the apparent terrors of the night, the whisper of His presence will be there for His own, bringing them peace.

God is speaking, are you listening? Are you listening, or has the clatter of your daily life drowned out His voice? Are you so very independent that you can go a whole day or more without this whisper in your heart: “Father, I am so very weak, make me strong in Thee”? Have you placed yourself in God’s hands today?

It is so hard for those of us who are young to learn the complete trust in God that characterizes those who wear the crown of years. We cannot help but make plans for a long and glorious future. It is almost impossible for us to ask merely for daily bread, for we always find ourselves looking toward tomorrow’s sustenance. And yet daily bread is all we may ask for. We must live only day by day, placing each second in the hands of the Lord, counting all tomorrows only as steps in the stairway toward heaven.

But how are we to gain such trust in God?

Trust in God requires in the first place that we stop. Completely. Before you move to take your next breath think: I could not do even this without God. To trust in God, we must take note of our dependence upon Him in all things.

Trust in God requires, in the second place, that we heed the Master’s advice to the rich young ruler: “Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor; and come, follow me.” What a hard thing this is for us to learn! We become so enmeshed in our daily lives that we forget to serve God and rather serve ourselves. For us, “selling all that thou hast” means counting all things (goods and self) as nothing save God. It means that we become heaven-centered instead of earth-centered. It means that we long, not for the joys of tomorrow, but for the joys of eternity. For if we truly place our trust in God, we will accept nothing less than being with Him forever.

So finally, trust in God means service. Realizing our utter dependence on Him, putting away all things of this world in our longing for Glory, we will manifest our trust in God by striving to fulfill the earthly task that He has given us. Be our task little or great in the eyes of others, we, who trust in God will do it for His glory and His alone.

This is trust, the trust in God which will carry the Church through the night that lies ahead. But this trust only comes from God alone. It is a matter of prayer and earnest spiritual endeavor.

Yes, the night is rising in all its glory and we find the beauty of the night in our absolute trust in God as our sole support. Thus, when the night is fully risen, we will see God in the glow of the moon, and hear Him in the whisper of the wind... God is speaking, are you listening?

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**OPEN FORUM**

**"SUNDAY CHRISTIANS"**

Is Sunday the only day we serve God? Is Sunday the only day we turn our minds from our everyday labors and think about God? Are our thoughts turned more towards our earthly goals on earth during the week and suddenly turned heavenward on Sundays? I’m beginning to think so. We are Sunday-Christians. We all boast the name we have, Christians, but do we ever stop to think that all our religious activities are crammed on Sundays; choirs, society and inspirations. Take society for instance. We decided to change our meeting time from a weekday to, of course, Sunday. Oh yes!
there were the usual excuses — Oh, I'm too busy, or yes, but there is a basketball game, or I have oh so much homework. Did we ever stop to realize that we also serve God through the week and that He should come first. Here's another example: Prior to the Reformation Day we had to have a meeting day for the Massed Choir. Sunday, of course! Any other day hardly anyone would have shown up.

Also, another important point for society not being held on Sunday is the fact that we should prepare for the evening service. Reading over the text and maybe even looking up a few of our questions in a commentary. With society going on we hardly have time to eat our midday meal much less prepare for the evening service.

My last, although not my least important, point is the payment of dues and buying of banquet tickets and such on Sunday. You wouldn't think of buying a basketball or for that matter, buying anything on Sunday! Why are society functions and dues an exception to the rule. We must be all one way, not one way sometime and the opposite another more suitable time.

Finally we must strive to serve our most high God and Father not just on Sunday but every day of our lives for this is our command by Him.

GARY BYLSMA

Y.P.S. ON SUNDAY

We have heard much discussion about whether or not Young People's Societies should meet on Sunday afternoon. Some of our young people would rather have their society meet on a night during the week. I think that Sunday afternoon is the best time for meeting with other Christian young people.

Sunday is a day that is set aside for worshipping our God. By leaving Sunday afternoon free we set before the young people the temptation to either sleep, do homework, or read secular books. That is not what is meant by worshipping God. We can worship God by getting together with other young people of our own faith and discussing God's Word.

If we were to meet on a night during the week, we would run into conflicts. Already there are catechism classes on three of the five nights, and also many of the young people are members of church choirs which practice during the week. Most of us are going to school, and we must have time to do our homework and to study for tests. We are not being "Sunday Christian" because there are other church activities during the week. I also feel that we have much better attendance at Young People's Society on Sunday which is reason enough for keeping things just the way they are.

KAREN REITSMA

HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE

REV. HERMAN VELDMAN

(continued from last issue)

c. A third explanation would apply this to God.
1) In God mercy always triumphs over judgment and justice. God loves everybody. This is the modern conception of God, also of the Three Points of 1924. Explain. This is also the Arminian conception of present day so-called evangelicalism. Explain.
2) This is wickedly erroneous.

First, there is no place in this conception for the righteousness of God. Man does not care about God or His righteousness. He cares only for himself. Secondly, this reasoning also does away with mercy. God’s righteousness is surely a merciful righteousness. However, His mercy is also a righteous mercy. How wondrously this is revealed

BEACON LIGHTS
in the cross of Calvary. Explain.

2. Its meaning.
   a. We must all appear in judgment. The judgment here I interpret to refer to the Judgment Day.
   b. That mercy rejoices against judgment means that the child of God, being merciful, can place that mercy over against the judgment, have peace, be confident and rejoice.
   c. Unto him who showed no mercy no mercy shall be shown. We understand, of course, that this is stated of the wicked who will go to hell. Mind you, he never showed mercy! How about the Red Cross, Committees for Relief, etc. No mercy? The text says: No. No mercy outside of salvation. Explain. The reprobate never performs one single deed of mercy. Another terrible indictment against the theory of Common Grace.
   d. But mercy rejoices against judgment.

C. Verse 12.
   1. God will judge us by the law of liberty.
      a. What is liberty? Liberty is not moral sovereignty, that man is the captain of his own soul, the master of his own destiny, that he sovereignly charts his own course. Liberty for the creature (fish, bird, plant) means to live unmolested its own life. Life for man is to move about, unmolested, in the sphere of the friendship and service of the living God. Now in principle. Presently in everlasting and immortal perfection.
      b. What is the law of liberty? The law here refers not only to the ten commandments, but to the Word of God, as in James 1:23-25. This Word has become for the child of God a law of liberty, because the Word of God has become his only norm and rule of life, according to which he conducts himself, and, conducting himself according to this law, he receives liberty, is free, tastes and experiences this wonderful liberty.
      c. God will judge him by that law, that is, through that law. His judgment will be based upon our fulfilling of the law of liberty.
   2. Therefore mercy rejoices against judgment.
      a. This does not mean that our conduct is meritorious. This is Roman Catholicism. We will be justified in the Day of Judgment not because of our works. We are always saved by grace, for Jesus’ sake.
      b. But, that I am merciful is because I have received mercy. And, I received it only for Jesus’ sake. Only because Christ has died for me. My merciful conduct is always the fruit of the cross. God, therefore, will judge my work as His work wrought in me only for Jesus’ sake.

V. Verses 14-17.

A. The harmony between James and Paul.
   1. It is alleged that there is conflict. James, then, emphasizes works; Paul emphasizes grace and faith. It is said that Luther considered this epistle for some time to be a straw epistle.
   2. However, there is perfect harmony between James and Paul. James does not contrast faith and works, but he draws a sharp contrast between a living faith and a dead faith. Paul, however, does the same: Rom. 6:1-4; 6:12-14; Eph. 4:20-24; 5:1-5.
   3. This is beautifully stated in these verses.

B. What is this dead faith?
   1. Notice what we read in verses 15-16. This faith is mere intellectual knowledge of the truth. It is historical faith, an intellectual knowledge of and agreement with the
truth. The devils have this also. — see verses 18-19.

2. This is a faith without works. You believe that God is one; the devils believe this also. You take great pride in what you know, may be able to discourse about the truth. You probably give your brother or sister your sympathy, give him the address of a relief agency, but do nothing to help him (her) in their misery?

3. Your faith is dead, because it stands alone, by itself, without works.

4. A dead tree may be rooted in the fattest earth, but it will never produce fruit. A dead post may be set up in the richest soil, but it will rot away.
   a. A dead faith is a faith which does not produce works, because it is dead.
   b. The natural man is dead. He does not produce one good work. This is true, in spite of the teaching of Common Grace. Fact is, that man is dead. He is all darkness and corruption. He may know much about the truth. But, this is also true of the demons. But, he has no life. His faith is merely historical, produces no good works.

C. How different is a living faith!

1. True faith presupposes, first of all, that we are by nature, of ourselves, dead in sin and in trespasses. Explain.

2. True faith presupposes, secondly, that in Christ alone is all our blessed and complete salvation. He is all our salvation, in God's counsel . . . upon the cross . . ., and now spiritually by His Spirit.

3. When we have that faith, we are united with Christ, live out of Him, and therefore must bring forth fruit.

VI. Verses 20-24.

A. Verse 20.

1. Who is this "vain man"? In Ecclesiastes the word, "vain," means "purposeless." Here it means: emptiness. Void of all spiritual wealth and content. This is the man who divorces faith from works, who thinks that this faith without works can save him. They are also the ones whose faith never involves them in any sacrifice. This man is vain, empty, a hollow vessel, an empty cup, a mere shell.

2. And James declares, in verse 20, that his faith without works is dead. The word, "dead," here means: barren, fruitless, and therefore correctly translated in the Revised Version. James does not merely say that his faith itself is dead, but he emphasizes that it is fruitless. O, he may have a wonderful knowledge of the truth. Explain. He may know all about God and about Christ. But, for the rest his faith leaves him cold. Spiritually and personally, he has no experiential knowledge of all these things. His faith is indeed dead, barren.

3. And to show that faith without works is dead, he points to the example of Abraham, that that father of believers was justified only in the way of a living faith.

B. Abraham was justified — what is justification?

1. Justification implies two things. It is a legal concept. Negatively, it means: no condemnation. We appear before God, the Judge of all the earth, and we are not condemned. And, positively it means that we are declared heirs of everlasting life. Justification is a legal concept. God declares, upon the basis of His law, that we are free from sin and guilt, and also that we are heirs of and have the right to everlasting life.

2. What a wonderful blessedness is this justification!
   a. First, I am a sinner, in myself utterly unworthy and condemnable. I can do nothing to pay my guilt. I can never satisfy God's justice, do what His justice demands, and this justice demands the bearing of His eternal wrath in perfect obe-
dience. There is no possibility of salvation without this complete satisfying of the righteousness of God. I am therefore hopelessly lost.

b. Secondly, this justification is wholly of the Lord. It is an eternal fact, in God's counsel. In God's counsel Christ is our Head. Eternally God willed for us a hopeless misery in order that He alone might save us. Man cannot and may not contribute anything. This justification is realized, in time, upon the cross. Then Christ suffered and died for all my sins, paid my debt, atoned for all my guilt. merited everlasting life and glory. And, thirdly, it is God Who bestows this justification upon me. He unites us with Christ, convicts us of sin, leads us to the cross, bestows upon us the assurance of our forgiveness, and that, for Jesus' sake, we are heirs of everlasting life and glory.

C. Abraham was justified — how?

1. James does not say, literally, "by works."

a. His works did not produce his justification. This is what Rome believes. God, then, accepts our works as meritorious.

b. This, however, is obviously impossible. In the first place, James does not say literally by works, but out of works. Secondly, this would be impossible for many reasons. On the one hand, we read that God justifies the ungodly. So, we are ungodly. Hence, God does not justify good people, but hopelessly bad people. Besides, objectively, God's justification of the sinner precedes his faith. We are justified because of Christ's work upon the cross. He alone is our righteousness. Then, upon the cross, He blotted out all our sin, paid for all my iniquity. merited for us everlasting life. All this happened upon the cross, and therefore surely before our believing in Him. Then it must also be plain that our faith can never be the ground of our justification. Finally, we are justified because of God's good pleasure. This must be obvious. To be sure, we are justified because of the sufferings and death of Christ. But, that He dies for us, could die for us. is only because He is our Head eternally, and as such came into this world with our sins, the sins of the elect upon His shoulders.

2. Abraham was justified, received it into his consciousness, out of works.

a. His faith wrought with his works. These works of Abraham were possible only by faith. Faith wrought with his works. It was only because of the union between his faith and his action, suggested and indicated by the word, "with," that his action was possible.

b. And by his works was his faith made perfect, was it completed, finished. Abraham believed unto the end; his faith ran its full course; he did not stop believing; the process of faith was finished and he received his reward.

D. Abraham was justified — how illustrated.

1. Many other incidents in the life of Abraham could be cited: his leaving of Ur of the Chaldees and the birth of Isaac. Also these events were possible only by faith.

2. This incident is selected by James because it illustrates so beautifully what he has been saying.

a. How Abraham had believed since God called him out of Ur. 25 years he waited for the birth of Isaac. Finally Isaac was born, but only after both he and Sarah had died, according to Heb. 11:12.

b. And now he must offer Isaac, slay him. Notice how he believed unto the end. Was not
Isaac the son of the promise? Would not his death be the end? Surely, not another could take Isaac's place, inasmuch as he was the son of the promise. But Abraham believed that God would raise him from the dead. His work wrought with his faith, was possible only by faith; he believed in God, Who always raises the dead; and by his works, because he went to the very end, his faith was finished, ran its course, and he received Isaac as in a figure from the dead.

c. We, too, must believe as Abraham did. We must walk in the way of the Lord's commandments; we must trust wholly and unconditionally in God. Then we shall be justified, i.e., be justified in our consciousness, experience its blessedness, know that we are righteous before God, now and forever.


A. Rahab believed—what?

1. What was Jericho?
   a. Naturally, it was the gateway into Canaan. Where was it located? Why is it the gateway into Canaan?
   b. Spiritually, it was heathen, worldly, represents the world in the account of Joshua 2. They had heard of Israel, and of the exploits of Israel's God. But they were the enemy of Israel, and determined to resist unto the end. We read of Jericho that it was straightway shut up, so that none might enter it or leave it.

2. Who was Rahab?
   a. She was a citizen of Jericho. Besides, she was also a harlot.
   b. We must not minimize the word, "harlot." It must not be spiritualized. It means exactly that it says.

3. Rahab chose for Israel against Jericho.
   a. Humanly speaking, she would surely choose for Jericho. Was not Jericho impregnable? How could Israel possible capture this stronghold? Besides, did not Rahab belong to this city? Was she not a harlot, and therefore really a part of this city and its life? Did she not love Jericho and its life? Did she not hate Israel and Israel's God? How could she possibly change? Besides, why should she escape? What right did she have to this escape? And what right does she have to Israel's inheritance? Was there any reason, in her, why she should escape Jericho's destruction when all the rest were destroyed? Was she any better than they?

b. Yet, she chooses for Israel against Jericho. She did this by faith. Hebrews 11 informs us to this effect.

1) She believed in God, in the forgiveness of her sins, that she was righteous before the Lord. She believed this.

2) By faith she confessed her sin, forsook her evil way, confessed her adultery, threw herself upon the mercy of Israel's God.

3) By faith she was no longer a harlot, but the Rahab who chooses for the kingdom of the Lord and sought Israel's salvation.

4. How must this be explained?
   a. We must bear in mind the narrative, and the messengers whom Joshua sent to Jericho. We should have this story in our minds, as narrative in the book of Joshua.

b. We must note the remarkable words of Joshua 2:9-13. Please notice what she says to the spies. We should take careful note of these words and try to digest them.

c. They had preached to her, had told her of Israel's God, that He is God alone, of Israel and its unique position among all the
nations of the world; they had instructed her in her own sin, had proclaimed to her the word of salvation.

d. And she had believed, and had begged them to remember her. And then we read of the scarlet cord, the symbol of her own sin and also of the blood of Christ.

B. Rahab believed—how?

1. Please notice how her faith was tested and tried! It was a considerable time after her meeting of the spies that she was finally delivered. Note what all took place before her deliverance was effected. We may read of this in the book of Joshua. And during all this time she continued to believe.

2. Also, because of her faith, she was a marked woman. She was no longer a harlot and, of course, Jericho knew this. She had adopted Israel’s life, and this, too, was known to all. Hence, her faith had placed her in great danger.

3. What added to her danger was that Israel, whose life she now loved and lived, lay outside the gates of Jericho. Notice now what she does and how she acts. She chooses for the spies, does all she can to protect them, will not return to her former way of living.

4. This also applies to us. We cannot serve two masters, God and Mammam. We must walk in faith. We must love the Lord and His cause, hate and forsake the world, and place all our confidence in God.

C. Rahab believed—her reward.

1. James is emphasizing a living faith. We also read this in verse 26. She was justified, not by works (we also saw this in connection with Abraham), but out of works.

2. What would have happened to Rahab had she not believed? Of course, we realize that this could not possibly happen, inasmuch as God finishes His work. But the point is that James speaks of a living faith. What would have happened to her had she not continued to believe, had she failed, e.g., to hang out the red cord? She would have perished. But she believes unto the end. And in the way of her living faith she received a name and place among Israel, the people of God, and becomes a mother of our Lord.

3. We, too, must walk by faith. O, it is a good thing that Rahab appears here in James 2. She was a harlot. This means that also for such there is salvation, according to and by the mercies of God. We, too, must walk and live out of Christ. In the way, by God’s grace, we, too, will experience the blessedness of justification, that our sins are blotted out, that we are heirs of everlasting life and glory, that one day we will be glorified forevermore.

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**NEWS from, for, and about our churches**

**GEORGIA HENDRICKS**

**GENERAL**

On Dec. 20 our Loveland Church held a Casserole Supper after Christmas carols were sung.

On Feb. 2 Prof. H. Hanko delivered the first lecture of a series of five on “Total Depravity” in the First Church. In this series the Five Points of Calvinism are to be treated.

At the Hope Church on Jan. 3 the Office Bearers Conference was held. Rev. J. Kortering spoke on “The Proper Supervision by the Consistory over the Preaching of the Word.”

On Jan. 19 Prof. H. C. Hoeksema lectured...
in the Thornridge High School, Dolton, Ill., on the subject "The Reformed Faith in Crisis."

On Jan. 5 the Oak Lawn held a supper for the Young People and Adults. All were to bring a 25¢ Grab-Bag.

Prof. Hanko spoke on the topic "Creation vs Evolution" in the Doon Chr. Ref. Church on Dec. 19. It proved to be a good turn out.

Classis East met on Jan. 4.

An infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Meulenberg was baptized in our Southeast Church.

MEMBERSHIP

On Feb. 5 Richard Vander Berg made public confession of faith (Oak Lawn).

Our church in Loveland has received the membership papers of Mrs. Joyce Alsum from the Chr. Ref. Church of Oak Lawn, Ill.

Our First Church has received the membership papers of Mrs. John Snyder from the Mayfair Chr. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids.

The membership papers of Gary Moelker (Hope) were transferred to our Southeast Church.

Upon request baptismal certificates were sent to Larry Schut and Chester Schut. Also, membership papers were sent to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Holstege and family (Hudsonville).

Our Hudsonville Church has received the membership papers of Mr. Leonard Brink from the Bauer Chr. Ref. Church.

SERVICE MEN

Neal Buiter has left for duty in the armed services. (Oak Lawn)

An address: (Hope)

Pvt. Clarence Kuiper
ER 16 803 148
Class 130, B-1 USAMEDTC
Ft. Sam Houston, Texas 78234

Rolland Griess left for six months training in the armed services. (Loveland)

CALLS

Rev. Hanko has declined the call from Holland.

Rev. Schipper has declined the call from our church in Hull, Iowa.

DEATHS

Mrs. Harold Schipper passed away on Dec. 15, 1966.

BIRTHS

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. C. De Korne. (Hope)

A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Campbell. (Loveland)

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hanko. (First)

Eighteen