BEACON LIGHTS FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

Jehovah is our light and our salvation
January - 1948
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All matters relative to contents should be sent to: Miss Alice Reitsma, 706 Franklin St., S.E., Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

All subscribers outside of Grand Rapids are asked to send their subscription dues to Miss Winifred De Vries, 354 Diamond St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan.

All subscribers living in Grand Rapids are asked to send their subscription dues to Miss Josie Lanting, 354 Diamond St., S. E., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan.

Beacon Lights Staff

Editor-in-chief ..................................................... Homer G. Kuiper
Assistant Editors .............................. Alice Reitsma and Lois Kregel
Business Manager ................................. Winifred De Vries
Associate Business Manager ......................... Josie Lanting

Contributors

Editorials ............................................................. Homer G. Kuiper
Christian Living ................................................... Rev. R. Veldman
Early Church History ......................................... Rev. J. A. Heys
Bible Outlines ...................................................... Rev. M. Gritters
Current Comments .............................................. Rev. L. Doezema
Nature Study ...................................................... Clarence De-Boer
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A Reminder: Be Carefree

By Homer C. Hoeksema — Grand Rapids, Mich.

The new year is upon us.

What did you think New Year's morning?

While you waited for the bells and whistles that sounded the beginning of a new year, or while you slept away the waning hours of the old year and slept through the dawning hours of the first day of the new year, did something old pass away and something new take its place? Did the imaginary mark separating the last second of the old year and the first second of the new year actually mark a change?

Are you any different?

Are things any different?

Or did the bells toll vanity, and the whistles vex your spirit, and the raucous "Happy New Year" of your drunken neighbor impress upon your soul more deeply the dreadful reality of the vicious circle?

Surely, our fathers have decreed that we shall celebrate the beginning of each new year. Certainly we must go up to the house of the Lord with His people and serve Him on that holiday. Don't be mistaken: I would not deter you. I would not that you lazily loll in bed on New Year's morning, seeking relief from the vanities of a vain Old Year's eve.

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. But we will go up, and we did go up to the house of our God on New Year's morning.

But why?

It is certainly true that there is nothing new under the sun.

This year will produce nothing new, nothing different than the last. The seconds and minutes and hours and days and weeks and months will fleet away, and when another year begins—if you are mindful of these words,—you will say, "No, there was nothing new."

One might say defensively that the first day of January does not mark the beginning of a new year. For each of us personally the years are marked from the date of one's birth. For our Federation of Young People's Societies the year is reckoned from our summer con-
vention. And so on.

But granting, for the moment, that January 1 marked the beginning of a new year: will there be any changes? Really?

*Beacon Lights* will, we expect, be published at stated times throughout the coming year as it was before. Is there any change from December 1947, to January 1948? Its editors and contributors will as usual sit at their typewriters with mingled feelings of futility, pleasure and fear, pondering that recurring question: what shall I write this month? Its readers will scan its pages with the same old question: is there anything new in this issue?

You will do your daily task at the same hour each morning for the same number of days this year as last. earning the same wages, for the purpose of satisfying the same appetite, that you may return to the same shop and earn some more money and. . . *all* is vanity! Even when that regular cycle of our daily work is broken, even then all is vanity.

There will be the same problems, the same quarrels, the same fear, the same sins, the same miseries. the same pains, the same sorrows, the same deaths. Man cometh in with vanity and he departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Vanity!

Emptiness, futility, vanity, vexation!

Flaunting the old and meeting the new with a drunken welcome will not change this, though men vainly try this every year.

The vigor of youth cannot change it.

The piling up of treasures and the making of great works, the peculiar treasures of kings, men-singers and women-singers, the delights of the sons of men,—all these end in vanity.

Plans and resolutions, these cannot square the vicious circle.

Man's number is six hundred. three score, and six. He can get no further. When all is ended, the residue is vanity and vexation of spirit. Man's lot is always labor without rest, toil without success, plan without fulfillment. Vanity!

Despair will not remove the vanity.

I may hate all my labor, I may hate life itself. I may throw up my hands in despair. I may be as fatalistic as I please or as a man can be. Then I belong to those who seek death but cannot find it.

All is yet vanity and vexation of spirit.

New Year's Day is a reminder.

It reminds you and me of human vanity on the one hand, but on the other we hear in it the Word of God: "Be carefree in everything".

True enough, this day is no different than any other. And the
year which it ushers in shall be no different than the year just ended. And if in the first day of the year only you hear this Word of God, then you have not heard it.

New Year’s Day as the first day of the year 1918 stands as a reminder to you and me, Protestant Reformed Youth, that God calls us to be carefree.

Be careful in nothing!

No, we are not to go on our merry way, taking things in their stride, hoping for a better day, making new plans, striving for more riches arranging new peace conferences, arranging new battle strategies, devising more evils, seeking yet more vanities; we are not to travel our divinely-appointed path in the coming year in hilarity, in carousing, in lust and godless pleasure, in despising things holy, in forsaking our God-given vocation, in dodging our obligations.

Yet. . . .

Be carefree!

It means, does this exhortation, that I shall have no anxious care concerning those things over which I have no control, and which are not my responsibility. There are things for which I must care: I must care for my calling in life, whether I am in school, in the office, or in the factory. But over the future, over war and peace, sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, I have no control. Over the ultimate issue of things I hold no power. And I must be careful in nothing!

It means, does this admonition, that I must positively place child-like confidence in God, who controls these things in His all-wise counsel, in His abounding love, in His sovereign omnipotence; in God, who has determined to glorify Himself, who eternally sees His Church in Christ Jesus. I must place all my confidence in His providence, whereby He works out His counsel in its minutest detail, and carries out all His good-pleasure. Then I have no care. Because that God is my God for Christ Jesus’ sake, and employs all His omnipotence and wisdom in love to me, therefore I can be carefree.

And the way to that carefree-ness is prayer and supplication. We must make our requests known unto Him. No, not in the carnal expectation that He will give us whatever we think is necessary for us if we only ask for it. Nor in the vain imagination that God has to be told of our needs. He knows them all.

But if we come before His face in prayer, we see our needs differently: when we speak to God those things which we thought were real needs and causes of worry,—reasons to complain,—disappear. We thought we needed bread, and we had three meals today: we were looking anxiously—and sinfully—

(Continued on page 5)
This editorial is being written a day after a Beacon Lights staff meeting and we have elected to depart from our usual form of editorials to give you some pertinent notes concerning our proposed Beacon Lights activities during the coming months. It is appropriate that we should start the new year by giving some of our attention to this important matter.

First of all, several members present at this meeting expressed concern for the quality of some of the material scheduled to appear in Beacon Lights in the near future and also the question was raised whether Beacon Lights was truly representative of the Young People Societies of the Protestant Reformed churches. In connection with the former question it was decided to add some new features to our journal and to drop the continued story feature in order to accommodate new features. The second question was treated by making arrangements through the Federation Secretary, to contact young people in the several geographic districts of our churches who would either contribute feature articles of their own or report on young people’s activities in their respective areas.

In connection with the last item, a complete list of prospective contributors is now on hand, thanks to the cooperation of our ministers who have responded to a request from the Federation Board to submit names of young people who might write for Beacon Lights. In the near future letters will be sent out and in event you should receive such a letter from the Federation Secretary, we ask that you respond to it favorably. Beacon Lights staff is constantly on the alert to find new and interesting matter to present to our readers and we encourage our prospective contributors to give us a fresh and new approach to the activities of our young people’s groups.

Another item of interest which we hope will appear in Beacon Lights in the near future is a section dealing with the origin and development of Reformed doctrine. At this writing all the necessary arrangements have not been com-
completed and therefore we can say no more about it except that Beacon Lights' staff feels that there is a place for such material in our paper.

Finally, we remind you that material to be published in Beacon Lights should be in the hands of Miss Alice Reitsma, 706 Franklin St., S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan on the twentieth (20th) of the month preceding the date of publication. By doing this, the material of all the contributors can be properly assembled and suitable cuts and pictures may be obtained in sufficient time to meet our printer's deadline.

In conclusion, we want to say also that we not only want articles but we want constructive criticism from our readers and we assure you that all your remarks and comments will receive the attention of Beacon Lights' staff.

We took the liberty to translate her letter in order that our readers might understand it. It was not easy to translate and upon its completion we submitted it to the criticism of an authentic Dutchman. Mr. P. Alphenaar of Kalamazoo, Michigan very graciously consented to look it over and his knowledge of the Dutch language gave us an improved translation.

Concerning the contents of the letter, it speaks for itself. I wonder if you can read anything between the lines.

BE CAREFREE

(Continued from page 3)

at the future. And our real needs appear when we face God in prayer and supplication. We need Christ and God in Him: we need the things of His kingdom, which are not temporal: we need eternal life and glory, and we receive them from Him abundantly.

And in the light of this assurance the vanity and vexation of spirit also disappear. For we see that through all things God is our God, almighty, all-wise, all-loving, who works all things with a view to our eternal welfare in Christ Jesus. Our foolish cares, our sinful anxieties fade away. We could not manage the affairs of the world so that they all worked together for our good.

And our prayer and supplication ends in thanksgiving.
"And presently, when crossing the threshold of a new year, don't forget the lesson of New Year's Eve. but let the Word of your God, 'The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer', fill your souls." This sentence, you may or may not remember, concluded our December article. Well may we begin this January meditation on the same note.

"The end of all things is at hand." That is as true today as it was yesterday,—in fact, more so. Nearer my home am I today than ever I've been before.

Wherefore, Christian friends, we exhort just as earnestly: mark the signs of the time! Be spiritually minded and seek the things that are above! Watch and pray that ye fall not into temptation! Hold that fast which ye have, that no man take your crown!

God forbid that we should forget the reality of the end in a carnal enthusiasm for the New Year.

However, there is such a thing as another year, and it will have to be reckoned with. We have not yet reached that end, though it be at hand. We are still in this world. Life's pathway still stretches out before us, the hours and days and weeks and months of 1918.

What this new year has in store for us no one knows,—no one but God alone. True, in a general way we know. This new year, too, will yield its harvest of trouble and misery, heartaches and worries, suffering and pain and death and tears. But the details are hidden from us. Before our eyes there still hangs that impenetrable veil behind which God suffers no man to look.

What must we do? What can we do? What will become of us in that dark future?

Christian friends, also to us God speaks through His servant of old,
“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”

For Israel this was not easy.

To “go forward”, for them, implied that they had to take up their tents, leave the spot where they were and continue their journey. Also, that they should do so in complete confidence that all would be well with them.

However, consider the facts.

God had delivered His people Israel from the land of Egypt by the hand of Moses. His servant. Now there was a way to Canaan,—a shorter way, too—along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and through the Isthmus of Suez, which would have by-passed the Red Sea entirely. Instead, however, God had led them along a longer route, through a bleak and trying wilderness, directly to the Sea. Pharaoh had been quick to notice this, and thinking that Israel had blundered off course and stumbled into a trap, he had hardened his heart, gathered together his mighty army and pursued Israel, overtaking them just as they were encamped before the sea.

And now, visualize the setting! On every side were insurmountable obstacles. To the right and left of them they could see nothing but mountain and desert. Flight in that direction was certainly out of the question. Breathing on their heels was the still unbeaten might of Egypt, supreme in the world of that time. Before them lay the Red Sea, deep and wide. Where could they go?

Is it a wonder, then, that Israel trembled with fear and despair? True, God’s people never have cause for fear and doubt. The word “despair” does not belong in the vocabulary of the Christian. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of man the situation was desperate. They were trapped. There was no escape. Whichever way they looked death stared them in the face: by drowning and exposure and the enemy, too, if they went either to the right or to the left. They couldn’t win.

And how did this affect the people? They should have been calm and confident, assuring one another: “If God be for us, who can be against us”. But they weren’t. They saw everything as lost. They were paralyzed with fear. In their terror they cried unto the Lord and grumbled to Moses. “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? . . . it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness”. Something familiar about it all, isn’t there?
As we enter upon another year, wholly unaware of what the next moment may bring, we cannot help but realize that the future is dark in more ways than one. Before us, too, lies the Red Sea, obstacles of every kind, some imaginary, some very real. And even before they come upon us we realize only too well that we shall be able to do nothing about them.—about storm and disaster, sickness and adversity, suffering and pain, death and the grave, stake and scaffold and sword, when once the son of perdition holds sway on this earth.

And oftener than not, what effect does all this have on us? We, too, lack the courage to go forward. We are rocked by carnal fears and apprehensions. We dread the mysterious future. We grumble and gripe and cry. If there were aught we could do about it, we should refuse to take another step ahead.

Forward? But, Lord, we can't!

* * *

Oh yes, you can! What's more, you must! Nor should there be any doubt in your soul that all will not be well.

It was wicked on the part of Israel to fear and grumble as they did. Was there one good reason for their attitude? Why should they fear that sea before them, or that host behind them? Was He not on their side, who is infinitely mightier than both?

Think of the Name wherewith God had revealed Himself to them! Jehovah! I AM THAT I AM! The Self-existent, immutable God, the same yesterday, today and forever. And had that eternal "I AM" not promised them, "I will bring you into the land, concerning which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob: . . . I am the Lord!"

Think of the love wherewith Jehovah had always loved them! Would that love, having brought them this far, now suffer them to perish in the wilderness?

Think of the mighty works already wrought in Israel's behalf! These should have been more than sufficient to convince the people. Had they forgotten so soon? Only a short time before Jehovah had given them ten important demonstrations of His terrible and irresistible might. How clearly He had shown them that the hearts of kings are in His hand as rivers of water, and even the elements tremble at His word and hasten to do His bidding.

Besides, was not the situation wherein they now found themselves God's work alone? He told them in advance precisely what was going to happen. Ex. 15:2-1.

For the same reasons we, too,
should go forward in all the confidence of faith in God. Is there
one reason why we shouldn't? Is
His Name not Jehovah still? Is
His arm shortened or love dimin-
ished? Are both Scriptures and
history not full of His mighty
works in our behalf? Has He not
blessed us abundantly in the past,
individually and collectively? Are
not all circumstances only by His
command? Not one hair can fall
from our heads without His sover-
aign will.

Shall we not go forward, singing
as we do:

"Jehovah's promises are sure
His words are true, His words are
pure
As silver from the flame.
The base men walk on every side,
His saints are safe, whate'er be-
tide.
Protected by His name."

* * *

"Speak unto the children of Is-
rael, that they go forward".

In the very command, coming
from God Himself, lies the prom-
ise of victory.

To be sure, to go in our own
strength would be suicide.

In the way of God's command,
however, one can never be put to
shame.

If I set my little boy on a table
and tell him to jump in my arms,
there is implied in the challenge
the promise that I will catch him.

When God tells us to go forward
the promise is implied that He will
be present to help us. He will be
with us every moment; will re-
move every obstacle: will give
grace and strength according to
need, and lead us safely home.

Christian friends, let us then go
forward in all the confidence of
faith, never fearing, never doubting.
The battle is the Lord's, not ours.
Before us lies the only pos-
sible way of salvation. The future
is in His keeping.

Jehovah, however, how weak we
are in ourselves, how carnal and
earthly-minded, how prone to de-
part from the way of the Lord,
how inclined to forget Him and
trust in the arm of flesh, how we
need His sustaining grace day by
day, let us kneel before our Maker
and unite our hearts in that beauti-
ful New Year prayer:

"Another year is dawning!
Dear Father, let it be,
In working or in waiting.
Another year with Thee;
Another year of leaning
Upon Thy loving breast.
Another year of trusting.
Of quiet, happy rest."

Amen.
Attitude Toward Science?
By Mr. C. De Boer — Kalamazoo, Mich.

The reason this subject was chosen is because frequently in our orthodox circles one hears or reads generalizations condemning science. Being interested in this phase of work I find it not only fitting but necessary to attempt to clarify certain aspects of science in order that we as Protestant Reformed youth may assume an intelligent and sound attitude towards it.

Briefly, let us compare the attitudes and practices of the Old Testament Hebrews with those of the heathen nations surrounding them as to disease and plague. According to the heathen nations—Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome—disease was brought by evil spirits and the gods; consequently, idols were made and sacrifices given to them. The Romans worshipped the goddesses Febris (goddess of fever), Mephistis (goddess of putrefaction and decay), Anzeronia (deity of the plague), and performed religious services to Uterina (goddess responsible for pains in childbirth). Astrology also played an important part in explaining the plague and communicable diseases.

In sharp contrast to the heathenish superstitions we have the Scriptural concept of the Hebrews as expressed in the Old Testament—"I wound and I heal, saith the Lord", Deuteronomy 32:29, and "I, God am your healer." Exodus 15:26. The Old Testament abounds in examples of plague, (the ten plagues), pestilence, and death sent directly by Jehovah as chastisement or punishment. All occult practices, sorceries, and enchantments were condemned in the Old Testament. However, it must be admitted that little reference is made to medicine and physicians, but no surrounding nations at this time produced anything of significance at this time.

Guthrie in his recent work on "The History of Medicine" says, In spite of the disappointing references to medicine and surgery, the Bible is a mine of information on personal and social hygiene. The 13th and 14th chapters of Leviticus contain explicit instructions to be observed by the priest in cases of
leprosy. A social conscience had awakened and the Jews were the pioneers of public health."

Shortly after the time of Christ a Greek physician named Galen, studied the anatomy of apes and pigs, since law forbade the use of cadavers (human corpses). On the basis of these animal observations he wrote several medical books directly applying what he observed in animals to man with the result that his texts were filled with errors.

During the next thousand years, called the Dark Ages, the Catholic Church ruled supreme. Since the church endorsed Galen's textbooks they were followed precisely without further experimentation and question. In fact, many of the physicians were monks who claimed to be divinely chosen practitioners. (Thomas Aquinas for example). How strange that these men were not eager to unveil the truth in nature! The Catholic Church discouraged investigation by its authoritative policies and merely accepted disease and pestilence as fate.

At the Council of Tours in 1163 the clergy and monks were forbidden to perform major operations. The two possible reasons advanced for this declaration are that the mortality was extremely high, and that the Church was opposed to shedding blood. Consequently surgery went into the hands of the barbers of which we still have a reminder in the barber-pole—red, representing blood, and white indicating bandages. If the Council had only taken another attitude and investigated the cause of high mortality and the possibility of saving lives rather than shedding blood, medicine might have made more rapid progress.

In 1301 Pope Boniface issued a Bull against Di Luzzi stating, "Persons cutting up bodies of the dead and barbarously cooking them in order that their bones, being separated from the flesh, are by the very fact excommunicated".

On the basis of these and similar action scientists accused the church of having stymied the development of medicine. We must admit that the church certainly held medicine under its control, that it definitely strove to uphold the ideas of the past as of Galen: but we must not forget that the Catholic Church was the only means by which the then known science and medicine as well as culture in general was preserved. All around them the barbarian tribes of Europe, and the Mohammedans of Asia and North Africa were destroying all traces of religion and culture.

The third phase commences with the 15th Century or the Renaissance Period marked by individual research and rebellion against the Catholic hierarchy. Needless to say, we are familiar with the Re-
formation as represented in such bold men of God as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, etc. So also in the realm of science, courageous investigators transgressed Papal edicts and questioned the long accepted books of Galen to find that his dissertations on the human body were fraught with errors, because these deductions were made from a study on apes and pigs.

It required tremendous courage to express one's ideas when there existed an all-powerful Pope, who infallibly spoke on all phases of life and unhesitatingly excommunicated and damned people to hell if they discovered something which conflicted with the Catholic philosophy. For example, to show how absurd some of these ideas were, the clergy denounced forks as an insult to the Creator. "God in His wisdom has provided man with natural forks, (fingers). It is considered impious to substitute them by metallic works when eating. The same argument was used against spectacles, for on the tombstone of the individual who invented them we find the following inscription: 'Here lies Salvina Arimoto, inventor of spectacles. May God pardon him for his sin.'

"THE CLOCK..."

The clock strikes one, a new day has begun
The clock strikes two,—the Lord watches over you.
It strikes three and it strikes four.
And soon our sleeping hours are o'er.
We hear strikes five and six and seven.
The prayers of the saints rise up to heaven.
Yet ere the clock has dared strike eight
Our sins have increased at a rapid rate.
While the clock strikes nine and on to ten
The hours are marking the works of men.
The hour of eleven strikes boldly and long
"The last before noonday", seems to be its song.
Both hands on twelve seem to say,
Do your duty, Christian, also to-day.
For an hour past is an hour spent
And of each minute we must repent.

Harold Kelderman,
Oskaloosa, Iowa.
Current Comments

by REV. L. DOEZEMA

Bellflower, California

The difficulty of making comments upon current events for Beacon Lights was impressed upon me as I was studying an advertisement in *Time*, December 8 issue, page 112. It was an advertisement by Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation explaining its part in transportation. The picture was fascinating. Commercial artists are very successful in making their pictures so expressive, as you will also notice from the cover pictures of *Time*, and the comments that are made about them by the readers. Some of the most important people and events of the week are focused to gain our immediate attention. What particularly impressed me this time was not the clever arrangement of the means of transportation—the ships, trains, buses, cars, and stratoliners—circling the globe with the dim figure of an engineer working with a precision instrument as the central force: but the text from Daniel xii.4 quoted in white on black on the top. The text is probably more fitting than the Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation’s artist realized himself. It is “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge will be increased.”

That is the prophecy of our day, the last days without a doubt. You and I are living in an age of speed and great scientific development. Knowledge of the world is increased, indeed. But the running to and fro is more applicable to the confusion and doubt and impending destruction in which we live. That is clear from the context of this text in Daniel.

This makes the task of commenting upon events very difficult. At least for Beacon Lights which is a monthly. The events must be chosen which are of more than day by day occurrence. Besides between the time my comment is made and the time that the issue appears the entire set-up may have changed, to bring confusion of face to me sometime, or—perhaps. the fame of a prophet.

*The Jewish Problem* . . .

Strangely enough, there always has been a Jewish problem since God called Abraham out of Ur of
the Chaldees to go to the land of Canaan.

Many nations have been concerned about the growth of the Jews since Egypt had the worry.

Since God rejected the Jews as a nation upon their rejection of the Christ, all the efforts to give the Jews a homeland have failed. The Balfour treaty was a promise never fulfilled, and the British are not at all in a position to do so now. For not any of the nations singly or together dares to tackle the problem and settle it according to justice. Moreover, who knows what justice implies?

The United Nations gave its solution to the partition-of-Palestine problem, and the results trickle into our papers and sometimes make the headlines—Jews and Arabs fighting in Jerusalem! In old Jerusalem!

The situation is serious because Palestine is so strategically situated. For an interesting description of modern Palestine, that will arouse you to follow this drama, I refer you to the National Geographic of December.—An Archæologist Looks at Palestine. It causes us to look at current events as they should be viewed, that is, in the light of the past, and in the light of prophecy. That is the slant that we have as our main interest in events.

We ask questions at this stage of the development.

What is the relation of this trouble between Jews and Arabs to the trouble between the nations of the world? Is there something comparable in the fact that both claim it as their homeland? Both are descendents from Abram. What is the relation of this trouble to the development of the hatred against the real seed of Abraham? Coincidences of names and places are not coincidences with God whose counsel stands from the beginning. We know that the trouble is not religious yet: it concerns control of the resources of the earth. But will the nations be aroused to think that the real trouble is against the real people of God?

* * * *

— S I L E N C E —

With firm resolve I held my peace
And spake not either bad or good.
Lest I should utter sinful thoughts.
While wicked men before me stood.

While I was dumb, my grief was stirred,
My heart grew hot with thoughts suppressed:
The while I mused the fire increased
Then to the Lord I made request.
The Golden Whip
by Abe Brower.

Translated from the Frisian
by Dr. Albert Hyma.

The Golden Whip tells the story of Douwe Ates Wallinga, the proud and willful owner of the Free Estate near Hantum, Friesland. His intense interest in horses and horse racing led him to neglect of his wife and farm. At times he would feel sorry for his lonely wife and her concern over the debt into which the Free Estate was falling. Instead of working hard on his farm, he borrowed money from Wilco Heerema, his fast friend.

The great day in his life was that of the horse races in Leeuwarden, where he raced on Prince and won the Golden Whip of Friesland.

Douwe Wallinga left his horse racing for a time when his son, Ate Douwes was born. As Ate Douwes grew up, he realized that his father cared for and spent money on his horses instead of his wife and farm. Gradually he learned that Wilco Heerema was a counsellor, but when he told his father, he was driven from home.

After a reconciliation, Douwe Wallinga sold his race horses to pay the debt to Wilco Heerema.

Life again ran smoothly until Ate fell in love with Janke, daughter of a common laborer. Again he and his father separated, and the last chapters of the book tell the fascinating story of their reunion.

The book is well worth while reading from a literary aspect. Filled with local color, it is of especial interest to all of Dutch descent. The character studies are excellent. Douwe and Ate Wallinga become real to us as we see their pride, stubbornness, perverseness and loyalty.

From a Reformed point of view, we can say that although the book has a religious atmosphere, and that Liesbeth, Douwe's wife, found peace through studying the Bible, the Christianity of Ate and Douwe seems superficial. For example,
Douwe was converted without the Word of God or its preaching.

The book, if read discerningly, is worth a few hours of our time: it is far better than the average book on the market today: and undersigned recommends it with the given qualifications.

--- Contribution ---

Revival Needed!

Our Young People's Societies mean a great deal in the life of the Church. It is through this organization that our young people learn to think along Scriptural lines, to learn self-expression, to testify, to become leaders in the church, to learn to study God's Word, to take part in Christian fellowship, to be inspired, alert, and enthusiastic young Christians.

These are the things which our constitutions stipulate as being the purpose of our societies. But how nearly do we, in our meetings from week to week, actually come to realize this purpose. At a recent meeting of our Young Men's Society, I noted the following:

The meeting began at 8:20 instead of 7:45. Recess was declared at 8:45. This means that 25 minutes, instead of an hour, was the actual length of the Bible discussion. Discussion? It really can't be called that—only 6 out of 24 members present made any contribution at all. Of these 6, 3 made remarks indicative of preparation. The entire period was interspersed with loud "guffaws" from certain individuals who were totally disinterested in that which was being said. Whispering and general inattention prevailed. The chairman through no fault of his, was forced to contribute to the discussion for sixteen minutes.

Our constitution presents the beautiful "ideal"—our meetings, the deplorable "real". If this is also the condition of your society, don't be content to read the constitution, but do something about the reality. And don't complacently shake your head at the idea of a Revival. In the face of the facts, I think we need one!

Carl Reitsma.
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

--- DONATIONS ---

BEACON LIGHTS FUND

Jake Vanden Top (Doon, Iowa) ..... $5.00
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Attention — Beacon Lights Agents!

There are some of you from whom we have heard very little or nothing concerning subscriptions that became due in October, November, and December. These subscriptions are now all past due.

Won't you help us clear our records in order to start out new in 1948?

Your Business Manager,
Winifred De Vries.
Program Reviews...

Christmas Concert

Our Radio Choir presented an excellent Christmas concert in the First Church, after the evening service, December 21. With precision in the correlation of the different parts, the choir sang several classic works, and also some appropriate and familiar carols. The vocal quality in the blending of rich, full tones created in the listener a unified effect. Two solos from Handel's Messiah were equally fitting and beautiful. The efforts of the choir and especially of its director, and accompanist, are to be commended.

Sunday Schools Give Programs

The Fuller Ave. Sunday School, consisting of some 300 pupils, gave its program Christmas Day at 5:00 p.m. Rev. De Wolf made the customary "introductory remarks"—a series of questions relative to the Christmas story to which the children, especially the smaller ones, eagerly responded. A special feature in which many children took part was an arrangement of vocal and instrumental music with a responding echo from the balcony.

Hope Sunday School presented a very unusual program. The entire Sunday School except for the Primary Grades, is organized into a choir under the direction of Mrs. J. Lanning, and on Christmas evening this very youthful choir astonished and pleased its audience with its excellent rendition.

Easter programs are also being planned by both these Sunday Schools.

Male Chorus Sings on New Year's Day!

On an evening when a furious snow storm caused many seats in the Fuller Ave. Church auditorium to remain empty, the voices of the Men's Chorus filled the auditorium with Remember Now Thy Creator, and like numbers. The chorus was supplemented by an organ solo, an instrumental trio, and two numbers by the Junior Girls' Glee Club, which is of recent origin. The program was sponsored by the Protestant Reformed School Auxiliary.

While the choruses sang sweet, soothing music within, the storm raged on without. Everything spoke to the hearts of God's people of God and His glory. After the program all turned up their collars and wrapped their scarfs securely around their heads and necks before leaving the warm, comfortable church. Everything tended to exhilarate—a perfect first evening of a New Year!
The Book Of Judges

OUTLINE XIV.
(Judges 8:22-27)

"Gideon Refuses The Crown"

Introduction:

Gideon had shown himself a powerful man: you may read about that also in Judges 8:1-22. He not only subdued the Midianites, tracking them down into their very dens, until the last one was subdued, but he slew also princes and kings. He spoke wise words to the haughty Ephraimites (vs. 1-3) and he punished the men of Succoth and Peniel for their contempt. Indeed, Gideon towered out as a mighty man of valor.

Now in our present Outline it appears that a carnal Israel cannot even use such a gift of the Lord correctly. So carnal are they that when Gideon stands among them, they want him to be their king. So to our Outline for today.

1. Israel asks Gideon to become their king. (vs. 22). This is the first, but not the last time that Israel reveals its desire for a king. In Abimelech, Gideon's son, first and later in Saul their desire for a king is expressed once more. Hence Israel did definitely desire something more than a judge. In other words they were dissatisfied.

(Questions): What do you suppose Israel lacked in a judge that they sought in a king? Was it more sinful to request or have a king, or did the sin lie in WHY and WHAT KIND of king they wanted? Note: Surely Israel shall have a king. David must come, the forerunner of Christ. How would there be the "King of the Jews" if Israel had never had a king? Yet God nowhere commands them to ask a king. He does predict it (Deut. 17:15).

They want Gideon to rule over them, and then Gideon's sons and sons' sons, etc. Hence they offer Gideon supreme authority and are willing to make it hereditary besides. If Gideon pleases he may now be the first king of Israel's royal line. And the grounds upon which they offer it him is the valor he had shown in delivering Israel from Midian. Note: How fickle this reasoning is is evident from the fact that as soon as Abimelech arises they pour contempt upon Gideon and everything for which he stood.

When we discuss these matters we shall have to remember that the need for a king was there, but. would they need
either a judge or a king if they had served and obeyed God?

2. Gideon Refuses. (vs. 23). Gideon answers NO! He speaks not only for himself but also for his entire house. Gideon refuses to begin the royal line in Israel. God lays the royal line, fastening it and anchoring it in Christ: should a mere man then presume to appoint himself to such a position? Gideon says: The Lord shall rule over you!

Observe: In Gideon's mind Israel's request really implies: shall God rule over you, or shall I . . . Gideon was a man of God. He does not need long to argue about this. Israel's request is therefore positively sinful.

Question: What did Israel want in their king? If Gideon's answer accuses them of wanting some other than God to rule over them, what did they want? (2) Could we say that what Israel wanted was a king who could give them victory and prosperity, while they walked on in their sins? (3) Was Christ the King they wanted, why or why not?

Gideon reveals himself truly as an unselfish hero of faith. He greets Christ like John the Baptist, who says: "He must increase but I must decrease".

3. Gideon's Ephod. (24-27). Refusing the crown Gideon tells them that he will do something. He will make them an ephod. Likely this was some kind of compromise, don't you think? He would not be their king, but he would come part way and make them an ephod. The ephod was a priest's garment. He makes it of the prey taken in battle. Israel went a whoring after it, we read in vs. 27. Israel forsakes the Lord to whom she is covenantally married. In spite of all that God had shown about Himself in Gideon, Israel prefers idols to God. The slightest suggestion arouses the carnal Israel to go a whoring, like a man addicted to drink returns to it at every suggestion. Gideon had come and Gideon had gone but idolatry goes on forever.

Discuss: Do you think Gideon might have had a good motive in making this ephod? Why do he not refer them to Shiloh, where the Lord's house was and where the priest of the Lord can be found?

OUTLINE XV.

(Judges 9:1-6)

"King Abimelech, the Antichrist"

Gideon is dead. Corruption breaks forth like a flare in the night. If there is any doubt in your mind about who was the first king of Israel Judges 9:6 and 22 will remove your doubt. Israel had at least two imposter kings: Abimelech and Saul. And that Abimelech is an advanced Old Testament type of antichrist becomes evident from everything you read in this chapter. We might say he occupies the throne of David before even it is raised up. The throne upon which Christ will eventually sit is not even erected but Abimelech at least stands upon that spot where some time the throne will come. And this Baal-Berith worshipper will be king of God's people—what a monstrosity!

We ought to take note also of the fact that whereas at other times Israel's enemy comes upon them from without, this
time from within. A true mark of the antichrist is it not?

1. Abimelech’s Conspiracy. (vs. 1-3): Gideon had many wives. Scripture does not justify this, it simply relates it as a fact. Gideon had seventy sons. Special notice is given to Gideon’s concubine at Shechem, who had a son and his name was Abimelech.

Question for discussion: The name Abimelech means father of a king. Why do you suppose this name appears when Gideon had told Israel he did not want the name of king associated with either him or his sons? Was it perhaps an act of faith (looking forward to the coming of Christ) or what was it?

In vs. 33 of the former chapter we are introduced to Israel’s renewed apostacy. And what punishment comes at this time. God sends them Abimelech. That is the punishment.

The conspiracy starts when Abimelech goes to Shechem and corresponds with his immediate family. He advises them to start a purge by influencing the people to dispose of Gideon’s seventy sons, and elevate him as king instead. The scheme was a success, they said: let us dispose of the Gideon family at Ophrah and have Abimelech for king. The revolution was under way, the seed had been sown, the fruit would follow.

Questions: 1. Was it true, you think that Gideon’s seventy sons conspired to reign over Israel, that Abimelech could use this as an argument in his favor, or was this a plain lie? 2. How do you account for it that the proposition of having a king immediately appealed to the Shechemites?

Notice: Carnal Israel evidently wants a king that will walk with them in all their sin, but in the meantime safeguard them against the possible consequences of their sin. Would not an “insurance policy” of his type appeal to all apostate church members?

2. The execution of his conspiracy: (4-5). Out of the treasury of Baal-berith (the name baal-berith means “god of the covenant”—imagine that if you can) out of this treasury comes the money to finance the conspiracy. It reminds you of Judas Iscariot money. Even from a notice such as this it is evident that the Abimelech movement comes out of hell—and Abimelech is the Beast of Rev. 13. Yet Israel wants such a king:

Abimelech’s army is made up of shameless profligate sinners, of whom there evidently were plenty.

This rebel army goes to Ophrah and they slay all of Gideon’s sons on one stone, except Jotham, whom the Lord preserved for reasons which we shall see later.

Question: Why do you think it is noted that the sons of Gideon were slain “on one stone”?

3. Abimelech’s success: (vs. 6). This was just what Israel wanted. They acclaim Abimelech king. The house of Gideon they have rooted out and a “new order” has arrived. The purge has been successful.

Israel wanted a king so bad. God gives them one. He gives them just what they want, for punishment.
Question: Why do you suppose they really wanted to purge themselves of the house of Gideon? What kind of purge did the Jews intend when they crucified Christ?

**OUTLINE XVI.**

**(Judges 9:7-21)**

Jotham's Curse.

There was method in Abimelech's madness. When he slew Gideon's household he sought to stamp out the Word of the Lord, as Gideon's family evidently represented it. Had not Gideon said: I will not rule over you (8:23): Gideon's family therefore was a testimony to Israel that God shall rule over them and they shall not have a man-made king. But Abimelech and his followers defied this Word of the Lord. And in destroying Gideon's household I have no doubt but that this mad-man evidently sought to put an end to the Word of the Lord, as once men sought to do with Christ at the Cross.

It must therefore have been a supreme surprise to Abimelech now to discover that he had failed in his attempt to destroy Gideon's family, and thus had failed also to rid himself of the Word of God. Jotham, one of the sons of Gideon was left. And Jotham ascends Mt. Gerizim and from there confronts Abimelech with the Word of God which he had so vainly thought to destroy. The Word of God in Jotham's mouth becomes a curse for Abimelech and under that curse he goes down to destruction and perdition.

Note: The Word of God, with the Cross in the center of it, is the judgment of the wicked and the ruin of antichrist. In II Thess 2 we read that Antichrist shall be slain by the “breath (or spirit) of His mouth”. Jotham is the instrument thru which Christ slays the antichrist.

1. Jotham's Parable, (9:7-15): Jotham utters a fable—a figure of speech—of which there are two in the Bible. He brings the Word of God under the figure of trees, acting and speaking.

In this fable, even as in parables, we ought not to make something of every detail. We must get the over-all picture of what Jotham, and thus, of what the Lord says.

Note: Three times the trees go out to anoint a king over them—three times they are refused. This at once brings out that the men of Shechem had been fully warned that they must not seek a king—God is their king. Gideon had told them this very plainly.

The triple refusal of such stately and fruitful trees is based on the fact that it was contrary to their nature and function to be promoted over the trees. God is your king. Israel, it is monstrous to imagine that a man should reign over you.

The bramble however will consent to be ruler over them IF they act in good faith. But observe that the bramble is nothing but a thorny bush, incapable of casting any shadow, and, being full of tar, easily catches fire and can set the whole forest on fire.

Question: In vs. 15. what point does this part of the fable emphasize? The bramble puts the trees before two conditions, why?

2. Application of this Parable. (vs. 16-
Jotham uses the speech of the bramble to describe the conduct of Abimelech. The question arises, why does Jotham use the conditional sentence: if ye have done sincerely, and, if not. Does Jotham want to leave it to Abimelech to decide for himself whether he is walking sinfully? Or does Jotham outright accuse him of murder and carnal ambition?

Note: If they have acted sincerely, then come under the shade of the bramble (but, of course, a bramble has no shade, only thorns) if they have acted wickedly—let fire come out of the bramble. Thorns and fire represent the CURSE. They can choose between curse or curse.

Jotham places Abimelech and his followers under the CURSE of the Lord (Cf. Judges 9:5-7). He declares to them that they stand exposed to the wrath of God.

Questions: 1. Why do you think Jotham identifies their sin as a rebellion against the house of Gideon instead of against the 8th commandment for instance? 2. In vs. 19 is Jotham uttering holy sarcasm? 3. Jotham pronounced curse, does the ministry today pronounce curse also—does Christ through the ministry pronounce curse—if so how and upon whom? (Cf. Catechism. Question 84).

Jotham too may be dismissed. Christ is King. His Word. His cross, His Spirit. the breath of His mouth shall slay the wicked. The only “judge” we see on the battle field now is the Word of God, as spoken by Jotham—centered in Christ.

Discuss: How may that Word of God be our weapon on today’s battlefield? How do we conduct ourselves if we depend upon that word as victorious?

OUTLINE XVII.
(Judges 9:22-29; 50-57)

“Abimelech’s End”

Introduction:

Job, in 21:7 asks: why do the wicked live? Well may we ask ourselves when we read this chapter: why does Abimelech live? What purpose does he serve? Try to answer that question as we now come to the end of the narrative of Abimelech.

Under the curse of the Lord, at the mouth of Jotham, Abimelech stumbles forward, through revolution and bloodshed. until finally a woman drops a stone upon his head, killing him. Such are the wages of sin. So powerful was the curse of God. Such is the retribution from heaven upon this antichrist.

Notice that it is a house divided against itself—because the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.

1. Revolution and Rebellion (vs. 22-29). God sends an evil spirit between Abimelech and his followers. splits up his ranks and they begin to rise up against one another. They even seek by treachery to take his life.

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Notice: I Sam. 16:4 and 1 Kings 22:22 speak of an evil spirit sent from God to execute the Lord's designs of punishment.

Question: Is the idea here that this is a good spirit, sent to effect what will be evil for Abimelech: or is it per se an evil spirit, who now goes forth at God's word to sow rebellion in Abimelech's ranks? Figure it out.

The wicked world, under the influence of antichrist tries to attain unity today, but cannot. The nations are at odds. unions and corporations fight each other —why? Paul says in II Thess. 2:6, 7 that something withholds or restrains the antichrist—do you think it could be that this evil spirit sent of God is dividing his ranks? Yet the question arises, would the devil divide his own house again himself? The design in sending this evil spirit is: that God may bring upon Abimelech the judgment for his crime. The punishment must fit the crime.

Revolution breaks out. The men of Shechem get themselves a new king, namely Gaal. and they rush to put their confidence in this competitor of Abimelech.

Notice vs. 27 especially. In the name of their gods the erstwhile followers of Abimelech now rise up to curse him. Whatever designs the wicked may have in this instance, and it is evil enough; and however unjustly and corruptly they act, God orders and executes His work in the most excellent fashion—God brings the curse of Jotham upon the head of Abimelech. Quite that way today, thru thousands of means and agencies God bring upon the heads of the wicked the judgment of the Cross.

And hence the picture is one of revolt and rebellion within the ranks of God's enemies. And at the same time, don't miss seeing the beautiful portrait of the Sovereign God, watching over His Church.

2. Abimelech's Shameful End. (50-57). From vs. 29-50 Abimelech leaves behind him a trail of intrigue and bloodshed. Finally Abimelech ventures to fight another colony of rebels, entrenched at Thebez. He captures it very easily, except that a band flees into a tower. In attempting to rout them a woman drops a millstone upon his head and he lives just long enough to call for his armour bearer to kill him, lest it be said that a woman had slain him. And thus Abimelech meets his end. When Israel sees their leader dead they go back to their own place.

Observe: vs. 56-57 plainly tell us that God brought about this retribution. and thus was realized the curse of Jotham. The word of God slew Abimelech. There is no judge in the field fighting God's battles, but God's Word fights and God's Word conquers. Christ conquers. His Spirit shall slay the antichrist. And God slays him before the eyes of his followers—with an humiliating end. Let Israel know that the Lord is God. Let Israel serve and obey the Lord, lest His curse consume also them.

continued on page 27
Dear Young People:

It is with great pleasure that I fulfill the request of the editors of Beacon Lights, to write an article for your paper. We have made personal acquaintanceship with many of you and a number of photos in our big American album clearly remind us of the numerous pleasant contacts and it is a joy for me to renew these contacts even though it is in a literary manner by means of Beacon Lights.

Various numbers of this paper lay before me on the writing desk. Before I began to write I had leafed through them once again and many familiar names found there make it much easier for me to write to you. Once again I feel "at home" and it seems as if we are able to speak to each other even as we did a few months ago when we were with you. And it is good to look at it that way for if we, as the Bible says, only see that which our eyes see, then we are far removed from one another.

A broad ocean lies between us and with many of you there is, above all for those in California and Montana, the

broad expanse of American land. Fortunately it is, that we as Christians can and must see things differently. In spite of all the great distances we are still one in spirit and this bridges the widest separation and greatest differences which may exist in circumstances. We are beginning to stand so close together with one another, you in America with all its riches, we in the Netherlands with all its cares. So it is with all of us, young and old. So I feel myself to be one with you because we all stand before a great and eternal future.

Now, especially at the beginning of the new year our minds, more than usual, are concerned with time. A whole year once more lies before us. What shall we do with it? What shall the year, no, what shall God do with us in 1948? We have so many questions and so many plans. That is fine, naturally you should have and make many plans. I approve of young people with a mind full of plans for the future. They are people with zest.

But before you know it the year is gone, and then it is the same thing all
over again. You look back for a moment, for just an instant but then you look ahead again and try again to courageously into the new year. This time you will do better. So it goes on again. Eventually there comes some difference. As you become older, one glances backward more and forward less. Yet we are always longingly hopeful or anxious, staring into the secretive new year. What will it bring? So it shall continue until God, in a moment, brings us over to the land where there is no more time and where we do not reckon and number new years and times.

That is still far away, we say and think, while we are still young. It is perfectly natural to think thus but that does not take away the fact that we are on a journey to the great future. And what are a few earthly years, even eighty or ninety, compared with an eternity? We are all travelling on that road. Yes, believer and unbeliever. But it is wonderful that I write this to you young people who, perhaps very quietly and very timidly, perhaps only to yourself, dare to say that they believe in Him who gave His life for us, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that they love Him. Therefore, I can write with all the gladness of my heart, this New Year and every New Year proclaims to us time and temporality but we are on the road to eternity. And banquet-goers we are on the road!

Banquet-goers! It does not look much like it, some would say. They point us to the sorrows, griefs and cares, even in our young lives. Certainly that grief, that sorrow, those cares are present with so many people. And sometimes it appears as though a double portion rests on those who believe. But certain it is that we travel as banquet-goers.

A banquet-goer is not yet at the banquet. He is on the way. The way may be long, sometimes difficult with many dark corners but at the end there is the banquet hall. This glad certainty dominates all your progress along the way.

You are still young, therefore you can still very well recall that as a child, so innocent, you could be completely happy with the anticipation of a banquet or party in the near future. Joyfully and cheerfully you thought of all that might happen at the party and who of your friends might be there and whom you might see of your family. Carefully mother’s hands made a new dress and all that belongs to it or a new-suit was purchased. It was hung in a corner of the clothes closet, carefully covered and out of sight. You knew for certain that it was there. But you had to wait a little while. In the meantime each day you had to do your usual work. Sometimes you had old and dirty clothes on just good enough for the work that you had to do. It was not nice but in your work, with your old clothes on you thought happily of the new clothes hanging in your closet. Things would be different. Only a few more days—meanwhile you were happy in your work—in your old clothes.

You went to school and studied your lessons which can sometimes be so diffi-
cult and monotonous. Back of it all, however, was the glad certainty of the new things. So you did when you were a child, joyous in circumstances that for the moment were far from festive. The banquet or party gave you joy in anticipation. That thought of the coming party kept you happy in spite of difficult and burdensome moments. But also in another manner that anticipation influenced your actions.

The banquet or party would come but first the work must be done or the lessons at school must be learned. That was quite definite. If the work was not done or the lessons were not in good order, mother or father would say: "You may not go. . . ." In that manner also the party controlled your actions. Banquet-goers, thus are we together, both young and old.

Banquet-goers, you in your land of abundance, we in our land full of anxiety. Yes, precisely because of this I dare to write this to you, here from the Netherlands where the cares are still many and for numberless people the lack of the barest necessities still exists, for God has taught us this lesson through the dark days of the war. It sounds strange then to learn to be a banquet-goer. Naturally it seems strange, worse it seems foolish. But we are now speaking the language of the world. They only see that which the eye sees. From that viewpoint there is no festivity. Thus it is often in the lives of those who believe. They often do foolish things according to the standard of the world. Here in the Netherlands we often sing at an open grave. Then we often sing Psalm 89. We raise high our heads and shall wear the crown of glory. Wear a crown of glory. . . . we sing that but we stand before an open grave where everything speaks of death, destruction and decay. Yet we sing and are comforted for by faith we see over the grave beyond to the future with our Lord Jesus Christ.

In that manner we observed Christmas in the war. You have read of those times in your papers. The London radio broadcast did not hide the fact that losing battles were raging on all fronts. Germany seemed to have the upper hand. The road to the concentration camp was populated with our best citizens. Rightfully could we have sung from Psalm 97, "about Him are clouds and darkness". But thanks be to God, it was Christmas and we had a true Christmas sermon. Therefore we could sing "peace on earth" and be comforted. For the world this again was foolishness.

Exactly in those dark times, I began to learn better that this is temporary. All of us in our land oppressed from all sides, learned to bear everything. One placed another with . . . "soon". Then peace will come and the future will be built again. No matter how bad the news or how discouraging the facts, one of the other still knew how to discover a ray of light. It would change. We would become free again. So we bore everything. All shortage, all scarcities, all unrest, all compulsion in as far as it was not in conflict with God's Word, everything, because it was temporary.
Sometimes there was hardly any reasonable ground for this optimism but we retained our courage. Soon—there was no enemy in our land, we could freely cross the street again, no Gestapo, no prison or concentration camp in the vicinity, no compelling hunger. Thus we go farther, cautiously on the one hand, to the limit on the other hand, doing that which must be done.

The certainty of that other future helped us. I often thought then that it is good that we look at things that way and now we learn as Christians very plainly what it means to see our life in the light of the great future of our Lord Jesus Christ. That moment certainly shall come. That is a future which will never disappoint any true banquet-goer. When our future became a reality after the peace-making, there was still much that caused bitter disappointment. We understand very well what the Bible means when it says, “Watcher, what of the night? The morning is come and it is still dark”. But when once the future of our Lord Jesus Christ is a reality for us then there shall not be a single disappointment for He promised that He would wipe away all tears from our eyes and we shall see Him personally face to face. The world says mockingly “foolishness, a check made out to you for eternity”. That doesn’t matter, we get used to that, we continue on our way for we have a joyous certainty through His Word and Spirit. Therefore we go assuredly and also happily into 1948.

Now we all would like to glance curiously into the secretive New Year. That is easy to understand. But we cannot go any further because the harder we look, the less we know about it. Nor is it necessary. If we only know with certainty, complete certainty, that we go into the year as a banquet-goer. On the way to the banquet-hall we may perhaps come through some dark regions, sometimes we get a burden which is very hard to bear each day. It is possible. I would not make you somber but you see it often around you with many whom you love. Then again the way God leads us may be smooth and peaceful. But He guides us in His way to His banquet-hall. That makes everything good in our lives. Also in 1948. May God give all of you a lively consciousness to be a banquet-goer. That indebts us but that is also comforting. Now and always.

That is the best that I wish for you in 1948. With many hearty greetings.

Mrs. H. Van Spronsen.
GOES Wilheminastraat 24 Nederland.

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Questions: 1. When the wicked die, and even apply means to hasten their death—are they blind to what awaits them, do they deny what awaits them or do they defy what awaits them? 2. What purpose did Abimelech’s life serve, what did it mean to the Covenant Cause that Abimelech lived? 3. Someone said: If the spirit of Christ is not in our hearts, home, church, school, the evil spirit is—is that true? 4. What is that “spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2)?
THE PARADE

Accid-Adab leaned against him and he wriggled out from under his weight. He must get a grip on himself. “I—I am not feeling well,” he gasped, but Accid-Adab ignored him.

Raanah edged forward and did not hear Isme-Dagan hiss at Accid-Adab. “You would not dare! You would scorch your own fingers in the blaze.”

Through his restless movements, he was pushed to the front line. His attention was held by the fire of torches and the crunch of heavy wheels. The sweetish smell of incense offended him.

Raanah closed his eyes to blot out the sight of the gods, yet before his inner vision the grim jinn crept along.

“Ah, see who comes next!” Egiba cried, stretching his neck and straining on tiptoe. “If it isn’t the great Mumbo-Jumbo himself!”

Accid-Adab moved up beside Raanah. His eyes gleamed unnaturally and the fingers that stroked his beard trembled. Egiba, Isme-Dagan, and Dahmru were separated from them by the crowd. In the spectral glow their faces looked chalky.

The face of the image was streaked with red, black and yellow paint. Its bulging, crystal eyes caught the light of the torches and threw back their fire, as did each white tooth in its red mouth.

The warning cry of guards increased the hubbub. The crowd stirred excitedly, and Raanah was pressed so close to the low-slung truck that his toes barely escaped its wheels. Suddenly Accid-Adab gave him a hard push, and he pitched forward on its platform at the feet of the ogre.

Raanah was yanked off the float by the infuriated priests of the god, and the wagon containing Mumbo-Jumbo rolled on. No one had seen Accid-Adab push the youth. They believed that Raanah was the sole offender.

“To the temple! To the temple! Let the gods pass judgment!” someone shouted, and the mob took up the refrain.

As the cool glory of a new day began to brighten his cell, Raanah was aroused.
A squad of soldiers marched into the courtyard. An officer halted them and stepped forward. The rasp of a key sounded in the lock, and Raanah's prison door swung open.

The Ishmaelite merchantmen and two slaves were waiting outside the courtyard. Their faces were grim and their bodies sagged with fatigue. They nodded to him and fell into an uneven step behind the squad. Raanah felt horrified by their presence. Accid-Adab appeared, but lagged behind the others.

Being the youngest of the condemned men, he was the first to take the post. As his captors stripped off his tunic and bound him, a wild yearning for flight surged within him.

Arrangements completed, the officer who had brought him in repeated the sentence briefly. "Thirty lashes!" He raised his hand. "Ready—one!" The merchantmen and Calah turned away. They could not look upon the tortured youth. Egiba muttered in his beard. Isme-Dagan clenched his fists. Dahmru's teeth chattered, and Obal showed the whites of his eyes.

"Two!"

The whip continued to whine with its efforts. Blow after blow descended, laying the flesh open in deep, raw cuts with rising welts between. Raanah did not cry out, though he could not stifle his moans. Once he called upon Ishtar to save him.

Finally the last blow fell, but before the horror ended a merciful God intervened. Raanah became unconscious and when the soldiers untied him he crumpled to the ground.

As consciousness returned, Raanah stirred and moaned. The raw stripes on his back were insignificant compared to the anguish that seared his soul. Where was the fickle goddess who had once stood beside him and parried every blow, protected him from every disaster that threatened him?

His resentment at her boiled over. "Where are you hiding, you craven hus sy?" he called in a loud voice. "Come forth, you deceiver!" His face flushed with anger, and without a thought of consequence he thrust a weak hand into his pocket, drew forth his false goddess and spat upon her.

The merchantmen, struck with horror by his incredible behavior, tried to quiet him.

But in a voice growing more furious, Raanah hurled his rage at his despised deity. "You ugly dwarf! You are more loathsome in my sight than all the Egyptian gods. May the crocodiles eat you!" he screamed after it.

* * *

Although Raanah had insisted that Calah go, the steward would not leave him in such a pitiful state, but remained outside until Bashia came. A priest of Ptah listened to Bashia's pleading and had come to let her into Raanah's cell.

She spread a soft blanket over the irritating straw. She had brought food and fresh water. She anointed the livid stripes on Raanah's back with a soothing balm.

"Now that day has come," she spoke in a low, optimistic voice, striving to lift
the gloom that engulfed him. "the merchantmen will find Potiphar and Joseph and they will save you."

As hours passed and no word came from the merchantmen, her heart sank into despair.

That day to Bashia seemed the longest of her life. Outside, the voice of the city grew louder. People were going home for the evening meal—drifting past the grating in a never-ending stream. Then came the tramp of feet and clank of arms. Oh, it couldn't be the soldiers!

It was the soldiers—half a hundred of them. Bashia's eyes blazed. She wouldn't let them in. She stood at bay like a she-wolf protecting her young. As the men came closer, she recognized the civilian and gave a glad cry.

"Joseph! 'Tis Joseph! Oh, Raanah—Raanah! Joseph has come!" She burst into tears.

The barred door was quickly unlocked. The officer stepped aside and Joseph entered the cell.

A smile spread over the sick youth's face. "Oh, Joseph—I am so glad you have come."

Joseph's face twitched, and he struggled for speech. "You are released now, Raanah, and tomorrow you will go with us—with Potiphar and his company—to Memphis."

Raanah gazed at him wonderingly, then shook his head.

"Oh, but I could not leave Bashia."

"She will come, too," Joseph said smiling.

After Raanah had been bathed, had his wounds dressed by the herb doctor, and had eaten some bread and fruit, he was much improved.

Raanah lay in a contemplative mood. "I must confess," he said finally. "that it is hard for me to understand how this good fortune should top hours of suspense and misery. Of course, you know that I defied Ishtar, and for that a god takes vengeance. When I was condemned to die, I did not care. But now—" A note of trepidation crept into his voice.

Joseph felt that the time had come for a bold stroke.

"I think it would be well to forget it," he advised. "If Ishtar was unable to help you, then she cannot harm you. Besides, I believe it was my God who saved you, even as He is now healing your stripes. My God is always working to bring good out of evil."

"That may be true." Raanah admitted. "Some evil force certainly had me in its grasp; and then some higher power saved me."

"That higher power", said Joseph, "was none other than the God of Israel."

Raanah fell silent. "I know," he said finally, "that everyone should have some god to lean on. I need one now to protect me from Ishtar, and my heart seems to be turning to your God. Certainly the entire course of my life has changed for the better, and it must be that your God found me when I was deserted, suffering and condemned, and took charge of me."

* * * *

The three men of the Ishmaelite company who went to Memphis prospered beyond their highest hopes.
In a few years Joseph had become majordomo of Potiphar's extensive household. Raanah’s ability as a horseman was marked. He became a charioteer, trainer and exercise man, and no one could question his right to select any team from the stables whenever he chose to drive them.

Damhru, likewise, had shown more than ordinary ability. He carried on a lucrative trade in rugs, vases, rare oils, and spices in a booth in the most aristocratic part of the business center. Bashia helped him, and her fresh beauty and personality attracted many customers.

But as Bashia developed into more lovely womanhood, Damhru’s wife became jealous. Finally, Raanah protested so hotly over her treatment of his sweet-heart that Damhru reluctantly consented to set the date of their wedding a few weeks ahead. Although the price he asked for the girl was too high, Raanah felt sure he could meet it.

As he drew up one evening at the side entrance of Potiphar’s house and sent a servant for Joseph, his team pranced under the tight rein and cocked their delicate ears at each sight and sound. Knowing well the impatience of Raanah’s horses, Joseph appeared almost instantly. drawing a rich cloak over his tunic, and made a running leap into the chariot.

"Ah," he said, "at last we are to try out the young sorrels you have been crowing about."

Raanah laughed, gave the team their heads, and they bounded off. "Look at that action!" he gloated. "Their gait is as smooth as a rocking cradle. All they need is a little more experience with crowds. I'd like Bashia to see them. What do you say—?"

Joseph nodded.

As Raanah dropped Joseph at Potiphar’s house, he bantered. "There is no need to wish you pleasant dreams, for you are already immersed in them."

"I’ll wish them to you anyway." Bashia called. "Good-night, Joseph."

To be alone with Bashia was a chance that came seldom. Arriving at Damhru’s booth, Raanah threw the reins over a post. lifted the girl from the chariot, and held her in his arms while she snuggled close to him.

He brought forth a tiny package of papyrus and spread it open. Inside lay a ring cut from a single piece of turquoise. It was a rich, heavenly blue with a pattern of light matrix woven through a pattern of light matrix woven thru it.

"Raanah!" Her eyes glowed. He caught her hand and slipped the ring on a finger, then touched it to his lips. "While you wear this ring, no one can take you from me."

She turned her hand around to gaze at it admiringly. "You extravagant man! I shall never take it off—even to my dying day!" She drew his head down and laid her cheek against his.

* * *

But Raanah’s happiness soon ended. Misfortune slunk beside him and speared his friends.

In less than a week after the visit of the young people to On, Damhru died suddenly. When a slave brought Bashia’s message, Raanah rushed to her side.
She was afraid of Dahmru's widow, for she was now under her will.

That same afternoon several companies of the Guard were ordered on a short expedition to Lake Qerun, and as charioteer Raanah must go too. Although the order came at an inopportune time, Raanah was pleased. He liked to be out among military men and following the rich watercourses would be pleasant.

When he returned, tired and dusty, but filled with happy anticipations, he rushed over to see Bashia. The place looked unfamiliar, and a strange Egyptian was in charge of the booth. Bashia's tearful premonitions struck him with unwonted force. He managed to pull himself together and maintained some semblance of outward calm as he strode into the place.

The Egyptian told him that he had bought Dahmru's booth and stock. The widow had reserved a few personal effects. A day later she and her servants had joined a caravan. He did not know where they had gone.

"But the girl—did she go with them? Did she leave no word?"

The Egyptian shook his head. "I did see her about the booth before I bought it, but I know nothing about her."

One thought hammered at Raanah with thudding pain—Bashia was gone, and he must find her! He would drive the team to the stables and saddle a horse. It could travel faster.

Raanah rushed to the stall of a racer. "Help me, Calah, to saddle Rebus! He is the swiftest. They have taken Bashia away with a caravan, and I must go after her."

"Umph!" Calah grunted. "You have ever been hotheaded; but now, methinks you have lost your mind. There are caravans going out of the city every day in every direction. Unless you know which way to go, you would just as likely ride away from her."

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— A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE —

I asked the New Year for some motto sweet,
Some rule of life with which to guide my feet;
I asked and paused. He answered soft and low,
"God's will to know."

"Will knowledge, then, suffice, New Year?" I cried
The answer came, "Nay, this remember too,
God's will to do."

Once more I asked, "Is there no more to tell?"
And once again the answer sweetly fell
"Yes, this one thing, all other things above,
God's will to love."

— Selected. — 32 —