"Another year of progress,
Another year of praise,
Another year of proving
Thy presence all the days."

JANUARY - 1950
BEACON LIGHTS

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Highlights of 1949 . . . . The Year In Review

"Another year is dawning! 
Dear Father, let it be, 
In working or in waiting, 
Another year with Thee."

How fitting, these simple lines! How much meaning they hold for you and me, who know and trust in Him Who keeps and guides our every way in life!

It was with this humble prayer—appearing on our January cover—that we began our work in 1949. Our thought then, as now, was not only for ourselves who serve as the Publication Committee of BEACON LIGHTS. But we were thinking, too, of you, our reading public. And, as once again we stand in the twilight of another year and face together the dawn of still one other year of work and service, we cannot but reflect with grateful hearts on the mercy and care of our Heavenly Father.

We wish also to express at this time our appreciation for the earnest endeavor of all our many contributors with whom we have been privileged to associate during 1949 as we went about our task of giving to our Protestant Reformed youth a magazine exclusively devoted to their Christian interests.

In Christian Living, of the February issue, Rev. R. Veldman wrote:

". . . Pilots and nurses, policemen and mailmen, have their uniforms. Thus the church of God in the world has its uniform,—baptism. That uniform we wear if we are baptized, and that includes us all."

* * * *

Current Comments, by Rev. L. Doezema in the March issue, dealt with the pamphlet Youth Speaks on Calvinism. He wrote:

". . . Since, however, we are interested in Calvinism as Protestant Reformed youth, we ought to take an interest in these voices. . . . The serious error is that the principles of the Christian Reformed Calvinism are taken for granted. . . . Their
criticism is not with the principles but with the program.

* * * *

The April issue carried an article by Mr. C. De Boer, entitled: Growth Regulation. Let me quote a few lines:

"...Do you not marvel at these intricate details in the growth of a plant? ... Growth regulators—hormones—indeed! Above the plant world is He who regulates the "growth regulators" so that seed-time and harvest may manifest His glory!"

* * * *

In the May issue a Question Box was introduced with Rev. B. Kok as editor. Is the soul immortal? What is the difference between spirit and soul? What is the meaning of: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets..." are some of the questions which have been received and answered by this department.

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Schuiler has, in an interesting fashion, answered questions dealing with Summer Youth Camps, Insurance, and other problems of a social nature.

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Our Book Review editors have directed our attention to some of the more worthwhile literature which has recently been published.

Truth vs. Error in the December issue, takes up a discussion of the Authority of the Creeds. Rev. Howerzyl wrote:

"... We may then well ask, 'What is the Authority, and to what extent are the creeds authoritative?' ... Creeds certainly have authority. Not the first authority of the Scriptures but the derived authority of expressing the truth of Scripture."

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The first outline on the Covenant Question for after-recess discussion appeared in the November issue. Rev. Doezema has consented to give us an outline on this subject for each issue throughout this season.

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The Bible Outlines produced by Rev. Blankespoor are of inestimable value. These outlines have served to guide the societies in their study of the Book of John. No doubt, many individuals have also read and appreciated them.

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Throughout the year we have enjoyed the best possible cooperation from our printers. The processing of material from the time when copy is brought into the print-shop on the tenth of the month, to the time when Beacon Lights is ready for mailing on the twenty-fifth, is most fascinating.

After the type has been set on the linotype, proof must be read and lines
corrected. The type is then made up into pages and placed in sixteen-page forms, ready for printing. The printing press has become so much a part of our age, we simply take it and its products for granted. It is worth noting, however, that the printing press was invented just

![Image of printing press](image1)

![Image of printed sheets](image2)

shortly before Luther's Reformation in 1517 and that there is a real connection between the two. This timely invention of the printing press and the use to which we can put this invention in our day, is to us a revelation of God's providence.

![Image of printed sheets](image3)

And as the months accumulate, they merge into another year! In the words of our editor, in his editorial of last January:

"We must move on in life. The past is irretrievably lost to us. It is only a memory of things which we have said and done, a memory of things which we might have done differently. . . . 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' . . . The promise of God is eternally sure, and at this New Year Season we point you to Him as the source of all joy, peace, and satisfaction."

![Image of printed sheets](image4)

These sixteen page sheets are then folded into books, stapled, trimmed and addressed for mailing. Each month the staff, the contributors, the printers fol-
That was written at the dawning of this year. Now, as we stand in its twilight hour, and in the dawning of a new year, we repeat—the promise of God is eternally sure. He is the source of all joy, peace, and satisfaction.

A. R.

The Publication Committee for Beacon Lights is comprised of the staff of Beacon Lights (see inside front cover) and the Federation Board which includes President, Rev. Bernard Kok, Vice-president, Mr. John Hofman, Secretary, Miss Tillie Noble, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer, Miss Fran Dykstra, and the Federation Board Advisors, the Revs. J. Blankespoor and G. Vos. These two groups, meeting several times during the course of the year, have the overall responsibility of the affairs of our magazine, with the editorial staff handling the actual production and administrative details.

Missing from this picture is Mr. Ted Looyenga.

The publication Committee, at its last meeting, formally adopted a publication schedule for Beacon Lights which is to serve as a guide for all those connected with the work. This schedule is principally the same as that under which we have operated for the past several months and should prove to be a definite help to those who are directly concerned with getting out each issue. It should ease the situation which always has confronted the editorial staff in the election and processing of suitable cuts and photographs as those inflexible deadlines approach and are met each month.

This publication schedule will also give
an assist to our regular and special contributors who from now on will receive postal card reminders concerning their material and its deadline date. Perhaps we might add another word or two about this copy deadline situation and its attendant woes for all concerned. Our present production schedule sets the 10th of the month as the deadline for material to be in the hands of our editors. Any material which reaches them later than the 10th does create unnecessary work and disturbs the planning of the issue. The need for systematic procedure becomes evident when we consider the work involved: editing; type-setting; proofing; page composition and page proofing. These and many other little tasks have to be completed within this margin of time to get each issue into the hands of our readers on the first of the month. This situation can be particularly trying when two week-ends enter into the picture. With all this in mind we feel obliged to ask once more for the generous cooperation of all our contributors, and that they observe our publication rule of getting us the material on time.

The thought occurs again to us that we should most certainly be appreciative of the effort and energy our ministers and others contributors so willingly devote to the work of serving our people through the magazine we publish; and we are happy to be permitted the opportunity of working with them as together we seek the welfare of our own young people and the church we love.

How noble our task before the Lord. . . . 'In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit'.

—A. H.

THE SCHEMES OF MEN . . .

"Come out of her, my people", is the path for faith to tread at all times. It is the bounden duty, the solemn responsibility that rests upon every true Christian in this hour, to separate himself absolutely and entirely, yea and immediately, from all association with that mixture of worldliness and religion which abounds today, which increases every day, which is attractive to man and abhorrent to God, and which is designed by the God of this world to obliterate the line of demarcation and raze to its foundation the wall of partition which God has placed between Himself and the world. The Spirit of Babylon the Great is abroad in Christendom. The worldly principle that 'union is strength' is rapidly gaining ground and is being used as a mighty engine to accomplish the schemes of men to set up a universal religion. 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins; and that ye receive not of her plagues'.

EDITORIALS....

Meeting The Challenge

In our editorial last month, we pointed out that the need for a Protestant Reformed Seminary and Normal School building exists and that the need is an urgent one. We also mentioned that the young people of the Protestant Reformed churches can make a valuable contribution to the erection of such an institution.

Since that editorial was written, there has been another factor which impresses us with the fact that we are confronted with a challenging situation. During the last month the Theological School Committee appointed by our last Synod has received several applications from young men in the Netherlands who desire to study at our seminary. Whether it will be possible for them to come to this country and study as they desire is still a matter of conjecture because of the difficulties involved with the immigration authorities.

We mention this fact because it indicates a trend. People in various places and through various means are coming to realize that training in the Protestant Reformed doctrine and world view is a thing to be desired. Not only are people in the Netherlands interested but we have good and sound reasons to believe that there are others in this country who, although outside of the Protestant Reformed churches, are desirous of training that will better fit them for the ministry of the Word of God in the churches where they have been given a name and place.

We submit to you the hard fact that our facilities are not good enough to meet this challenging situation. We believe that there is a trend toward the recognition of the fact that the Protestant Reformed churches stand for sound, Reformed theology. Living in our own churches, we may feel somewhat complacent at times but we ought rather to have a vision of the possibilities which we have, to increase the scope of our testimony.

This situation has the character of a challenge because we may be called upon to exert considerable effort to realize the goal of a Seminary building having good facilities to train men in the ministry of the Word.

As a suggestion toward meeting the challenge, we think it would be a fine thing if our churches would celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of their existence by establishing a fund to be used in the erection of an adequate theological seminary building. Let's meet the challenge!

—H. G. K.

Editor's Note:

We have received a letter from the Reverend James Van Weelden in reference to our editorial which appeared in the December issue (An Urgent Need). In as much as this material arrived too late for publication in this issue, it will appear next month in our February issue under OPEN FORUM.    H. G. K.
Time For Innovation

Happy New Year!

But only in the way of Christian Living!

Putting these two together, we would conclude that there is no better time to stop and reflect upon our Christian Living than at the beginning of this New Year. Then, if a sincere introspection is carried out, we will see the necessity of certain improvements and other changes in our Christian life and when these, through grace, are properly effected we will be able to enjoy a truly happy and blessed New Year. In the neglect of these innovations, the future, though it be materially more prosperous than ever before, will be spiritually degenerating; we will fall farther away from the consciousness of real happiness.

We might, perhaps, reason that our lives are already on a high Christian level and consequently we see no need of change. We are quite satisfied with the present routine of limited Christian duty and for that inane reason even resent the suggestion of any innovation. Such thinking is suggestive of the carnally-minded Pharisee who, tapping on his own shoulder, whispered in his own ear, “Sir, you are really a fine fellow”. When we even dare to suggest that in the Kingdom of God we have or are doing our share, it would reveal a blind ignorance of the Biblical standards of our Christian endeavor—which demands nothing less than the whole heart, mind, soul and strength. Always we fall short! Even our best efforts are polluted with sin!

Time then for innovation!

So it is, indeed, for the apostle Paul tells us that we “should walk in newness of life”. That requires daily change and improvement. Our Baptism Form reiterates this when it speaks of the “daily renewing of our lives”, and that “we crucify our old nature and walk in a new and holy life”. More could easily be added to this but it is not necessary. Surely none of us are able to say now that we need no change for even in the best there is great room for betterment. The problem is: “Where shall we begin?”

In facing the New Year in this light we must guard carefully against another danger. We are apt, in looking for a point of departure, to break down our lives into various categories: “the religious, the social, the business, the re-
creational, the family, the individual, etc". Next, we are in danger of labeling some as "satisfactory", others as "to be improved", and a final and usually a very small group as "in need of renovation". Doing this we defeat our exact purpose which is the "transforming of our lives", and not just a selected part of them. To make the necessary innovations, therefore, it is important that we begin with that which is the closest to us: OUR HEARTS! There the change of life must begin. True it is that we are not "masters of our hearts" and that we do not possess the power to change them—but as professing Christians we do believe that the potentiality to change them has been given to us by God. It remains for us, then to exercise that grace. If our hearts are filled with malice, hatred, greed, covetousness, lust, evil-speaking and a thousand other vanities, the fundamental change essential unto a Happy New Year is that all these vices be rooted out and be supplanted by love, mercy, brotherly-kindness, spiritual affection, and a hungering and thirsting for the Kingdom of Heaven and all its righteousness.

Time for innovation!

Have we made and do we experience this first essential change? If we have we are on the road to happiness! We are then in a proper position to see the need of change in the various departments of life and also to strive diligently toward making the required alterations. Then NOW becomes the imperative moment for a broader reflection upon life and a more careful analysis of our conduct in the past, at the present, and with a view to the future.

But how shall we do this, Christian youth? Shall we take concrete things and write them down in two separate volumes, entitling the one "You may do this" and the other "You may not do this". No, let us not attempt it, for besides thus infringing upon your Christian liberty, we would be identifying things with good and evil. This would involve us in still greater difficulties and would result in endless confusion. Besides, so complex is life today, that we would scarcely be able to complete such a work in one lifetime. What is more, such a policy betrays our confidence in youth to discern the good and evil. The cardinal requisite toward reaching our desired end and seeing the necessary day by day changes in our Christian life, is that each one of us makes this a "personal" matter. As we individually are thus renewed, we will collectively see and joy in the changes made.

But this does not mean that we simply "brush aside" the matter without further ado. Let us make some suggestions—fitting to one or all. In our present day there is a festering cancer called by such names as "pleasure, amusements, recreation", which is working mightily to destroy or at least degenerate youth. It keeps them from the mid-week meetings of the church; it draws them out of the home and away from the family sanctuary; it places them in company with the "sons and daughters" of the world; it builds the body and destroys the soul! We don't mean to be "old fogies" here, nor do we advocate that youth live like
"grandpa and grandma". The impression must not be left that we consider recreation to be sin nor pleasure by itself wrong. But these things so easily lead to sin—readily cause sin! They steal one's first love for Christ and Spiritual values and they distract one's attention from the WORD of God. There are those in the church who can recite the "lineups, scores, averages," etc. of all the big games, but who are ignorant of the "ten commandments, the twelve apostles, the Apostle's Creed," etc. We do well to bear this in mind: "Bodily exercise profiteth little but godliness with contentment is great gain".

Time for innovation? Do we, perhaps, need a change? How about your emphasis in this respect? Upon what is it placed? "Where your heart is there will your treasures be also."

It goes without saying that the time to abandon the theatre and its adjuncts is NOW! Perhaps you plead "not guilty". We hope so and yet it is revealing that would-be Christian youth do frequent such places. It is not so astounding though when the church condones theatrical performances and even sponsors them. Of the theatre and its devilishness one author writes: "It puts a gloss upon sin. The base and wicked are exalted and virtue is ridiculed. Religion is scoffed at; blasphemy is indulged in; criminals become heroes, and the good are made to appear as simpletons. Murders, adultery, divorce, theft and other crimes are made light of and the sacredness of love and the solemnity of dying is trifled with. There is scarcely an incident, however debasing, that may not be learned at the theatre, making it a university of vice and immorality for the youthful mind. There is one consolation. If plays get any rot, they can't harm the kind of people that continue to patronize them. The attitude of most performers on the stage is well known. We read that in a theatrical performance in an eastern city, one of the performers says: "If your country's laws forbid you, change your laws! If your church forbids you, change your church! If your God forbids you, change your God." The reason some do not see the evil of these things is that the god of this world has blinded their minds.

Time for innovation? O man of God, flee these things. Abstain from every appearance of evil. Fight the good fight of faith. Follow after righteousness. Lay hold on eternal life! Let the wicked forsake his ways! Return unto the Lord! Time for a change in practical things?

But there is a great deal more. The foregoing covers only a fragment of our life. There is still the much more important phases of life. How about our homes? Any room for innovations? Not that we mean to say that a change is always good, for that may not be the case. We heard of a father who for ten years led his family in prayer and then decided to make a change and because of the "extras" in social and business life he dropped the family devotions. We don't advocate that. But how about rekindling the home fires; re-establishing the family altar; returning from the streets of the world to the sanctuary of
Divine Institutions. What about the church? Don't be so hasty to conclude that it stands upon its highest possible spiritual level. We never saw the church in this world that did. To reason that way is but an excuse for "work" and reflects an attitude and spirit of "self-complacency". Dismiss it. Set yourself to thinking. Appoint yourself a ways and means committee and come to the next meeting with suggestions for the spiritual improvement of your church, society, fellow-member and yourself.

So go through life. So begin a new year and in the way of positive, beneficial change from day to day may our Christian living be an ever happy one. Say with Dr. J. Chapman: "The rule that governs my life is this—anything that dims my vision of Christ or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes my Christian work difficult, is wrong for me, and I must as a Christian turn away from it."

God help each one of us to resolve this day to set his face like a flint in the presence of compromising situations and sinful pleasures. Change! Yes, the world is changing all the time. It is in the process of disintegration and deformation even as it seeks to hold on to the threads of an outward union upon which it attempts to build itself. It is, according to God's Word, on the brink of disaster. Let us not be part of it. Let us, too, change, but change through regeneration and daily sanctification, so that as the days and years roll by we may find ourselves farther and farther from burning Sodom and closer to our Eternal Refuge.

Fuller Avenue Choral Group Renders:

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN SONG

We would like to share with our readers our pleasure in listening to the Fuller Ave. Choral Society render the "Christmas Story in Song" the evening of Dec. 15, under the most capable direction of the talented Mr. Al Smith.

With Mrs. Irving Cramer at the piano, the chorus of more than 100 voices entered the auditorium in traditional procession, to take their places.

As the Chorus sang, the darkened auditorium filled with paeans to God, proclaiming the beautiful Christmas story, as did the heavenly hosts that first Christmas night.

Miss Mary Vander Vennen, Miss Helen Hinken, and Mr. Jack De Vries heard in solo roles and Miss Sylvia Zuidema sang a soprano obligatto with the Vesper Octet.

The program also featured Mr. Don Knoper and his melodious trumpet. The offering of the evening was intended for Missions.

The number of our people in attendance at this sacred concert indicates a real interest among us for this type of musical interpretation, and in voicing our appreciation, we would add the thought that such edifying renditions of sacred songs are a rich source of spiritual inspiration.
The Food Problem:

In view of the recent plentiful harvest and our present storage of surplus commodities in the United States, it seems strange to speak of a food problem. Such is the case however, as is evident from the commissions which are appointed to deal with this problem.

Last Saturday evening I listened over the radio to a group of reporters quiz Mr. Dodd, chairman of the international board to deal with the problem of food distribution. He told them something of the situation which we face as a nation and of his plan to solve the problem.

What is the situation?

Mr. Dodd pointed out that two thirds of the people of the world are not getting an adequate diet. The amount of food produced in the world today has not diminished since about ten years ago, but the population has increased considerably. The inadequate diet of so many people is caused by the lack of proper distribution. He cited the example of India. From personal observation in Calcutta he saw that the ration there was only rice in an amount equivalent to a half loaf of bread a day! There are other nations in the world, too, who are forced to live on a limited diet.

This inadequate diet is due to the inability of some to produce enough variety from their own soil and their further inability to buy from other nations which do have sufficient amount and variety to supply them. As a case in point he mentioned Europe which used to import much dried fruit from the west coast.

From the last example Mr. Dodd showed that the food problem of Europe became a very grave financial problem for the fruit growers on the west coast. I saw his point immediately, for this last summer while traveling along the west coast we were struck by the appeals that were made over the radio to have people in different communities come to pick the fruit free so that it would not go to waste. Others also who are well acquainted with the farm problems reported many fruit growers suffering a great loss this past season because of their inability to unload their fruit. This condition prevails where there is no government subsidy for farm products. Even with the government buying and storing surplus farm products there remains a serious problem for our nation. I read that in Iowa the crop of last year is still untouched and the problem is what to do with this year’s crop.

The food situation of the world therefore becomes the grave concern of our government and people.
Now Mr. Dodd had a plan whereby a board or clearing house would be set up to enable nations to buy food and to exchange their products for other things that they need. His plan was favorable to the farmer and was very convincingly presented. Mr. Dodd is a wheat farmer and his conversation had that characteristic appeal that one finds in a farmer. Farmers often know what they want in politics and religion. Their plans often are characterized by that simplicity and logic that defy contradiction. Probably their close observation of God's ways in nature gives them that perspective to observe the natural way and to think clearly.

Would it be the Christian way to give of our wealth to the have-not nations? I think not. What do you think?

Did Joseph propose to give the surplus of Egypt to their own people and to those outside their nation? To give as a dole ruins the economic structure of a country and spoils those to whom it is given. Many of the compensation schemes in our own country will bring us to ruin because the principle is the dole.

To be sure the question of fair trade enters in and that is where the problem is solved in justice and wisdom.

When we listen to the solutions of men who seemingly have a perfect plan we still are left with the impression that the problems will become more acute and we are headed for a maladjustment such as we have never seen before.

God is concerned in all these things. The Lord not only causes to grow and gives the increase, He also gives wisdom and withholds it so that the blindness of men may become evident. The Lord desires righteousness and judgment above all else. He gives His righteousness to His people in Christ. Without that righteousness there is only the expectation of judgment and wrath. The world today with its plentiful harvests and its contrasting want gives us a picture of the preparation of God for His final judgment.

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**SOCIETY MEMBERS — PLEASE NOTE . . . .**

The next *Regional Mass Meeting* to be held in your locality is scheduled for the last Tuesday in January.

**PLAN TO BE THERE!**

The Federation Board would very much appreciate the cooperation of the individual societies in arranging these meetings.

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12
LESSON XLVIII

“Jesus, The True Vine”
(John 15:1-8)

After rising from the Passover Supper, and while still in the upper room, Jesus utters His last words to His disciples. He will speak of the disciples as they will fare after His death, but first of their connection with Him. That we have in the words of this lesson.

Since these eight verses convey to us one thought it is well to read them all before we begin with the discussion.

The Vine and The Branches:

First of all we read that Christ is the vine, which means that in Him only the fully reality of a vine is found. All the millions of earthy vines are only pictures of Him. All of the earthy is a picture of the heavenly. God, of course, is the husbandman. Then there are also the branches. These naturally represent God’s people, the believers. They are those grafted into Christ by a living faith. In other words, the branches are the Church of Christ. She it is that is brought forth by Christ. The branches do not exist apart from the vine and then become one with it, no, they grow out of the vine. So Christ brings forth His people. He gives birth to them, causes them to grow, and all their life’s “sap” is found in Him.

Questions: Mention other things in nature which are figures of the heavenly. In the light of the fact that the branches have life only by being brought forth by the vine, show the impossibility of man accepting Jesus of himself.

The Necessity Of Fruit:

This is the main idea of the text. It is mentioned in vss. 2, 4, 5, 8. In bearing much fruit God is glorified. It is in this that the nursery man is interested. To be sure, he wants a good healthy plant, etc. But why? Because he wants fruit. His success is measured by the amount of fruit his vineyard produces. So here the emphasis does not fall on Christ in the final analysis, nor on the branches in themselves, but on the fruit they must produce. God will be glorified. Christ therefore is really only a means in God’s hand to save His people in order that they will glorify Him.

What are some of the fruits of God’s vine? Scripture speaks of them in many places, Jesus also in the subsequent verses. Notice also Gal. 5:22. They are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, trust in God, serving Him alone
and no idols are marvelous fruits. Spiritual fruits are all good works.

But fruits on the vine are not merely something delightful or pleasant; no, they are a requisite. There must be fruit. Neither does God have a fruitless vine, for He always fulfills His good pleasure. And all His works find their goal in bringing forth much fruit.

And so these words speak of two kinds of branches, not of dead and live ones (even though this is true) but of fruitful and barren. There are always some branches that bear no fruit, they are barren. Perhaps we can call them the suckers. They have every appearance of a real branch, but bear no fruit. And what does the nursery man do with them? He cuts them off. The same is true in the Church of Christ. Naturally they really never were in Christ. But they have a show of piety and religion, attend the services, and the catechism classes occasionally, or even faithfully, but in vain does one look for positive fruits, good works. Hence, God cuts them off. They are a hindrance to the good branches, like those suckers. Often these kind of people leave the Church when she is brought into straits, when persecutions arise, etc. And this always takes place through the stand the Church takes in the midst of the world by means of the preaching of the Word and the exercise of Christian discipline.

Naturally there are also other branches which do bear fruit. With such people you find faith, love, sacrifice, devotion, confidence in God, etc. As is true with a natural vine, there is a great deal of difference in these branches, some bring forth much fruit, being very weak in their manifestations of spiritual life, while others are remarkable examples. But what does God do with these branches? He does what the nursery man does every year with his vine, He prunes them. Did you ever see this done? The sight is almost pathetic. There's hardly anything left; nearly all the branches are cut off. Foolish? No, such pruning results in more fruit.

So God purges His branches. He purges us and cleanses us from the dross of sin and the contamination of the world. Due to these things we often produce such little fruit. O how this "pruning" hurts the flesh! For this He does through the preaching of the Word and the exercise of discipline, and in connection therewith afflictions, persecutions and distresses. By the same acts the barren branches are cut off and the fruitful made even more productive, doing more good works of trusting in Him, seeking Him only, etc.

This purging takes place throughout our lives. God purges and purges some more. Why? Because He wants fruits unto His glory.

Questions: How can there be barren branches on Christ's vine? What happens to the Church when the barren branches are not cut off? What attitude must we assume toward such people leaving the church? Does it ever happen that all are cut off? Why does the Psalmist say that it was good for him to have been afflicted?

Why Purging Produces Fruit:

Why is it that the pruning of a vine
produces more fruit? Because then branches draw more of the life's sap from the vine itself. So it also happens spiritually. In afflictions, etc., the Christian ever more clings to Christ and Christ's life becomes manifest in him. To Christ he must learn to cling. Therefore Christ says I am the true vine. Hence He also speaks of abiding in Him, seeking it in Him. This the disciples must also do at this time and all shall be well. The same will be true of the Church throughout the ages that so lives in Him by faith.

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LESSON XLIX

"The Exercise of Love Through Christ"

(John 15:9-17)

By Keeping His Commandments: vss. 9-12.

Remember the setting of all these words. Jesus is about to leave the disciples, and they realize it. Therefore Jesus is speaking to them at this time in a vein that will cause them to seek their all in Him. That became plain in the previous verses by showing that they must abide in Him, seek all things in Him. Here he teaches the same thing regarding the grace of love.

First of all they must continue in His love, i.e., His love for them; at all times they must be conscious of Christ's love for them. What a blessed reality in the various circumstances of love! To know that Jesus loves me! This they can experience only in the way of keeping His commandments, vs. 10. This is, of course, a very common law laid down in Scripture. Chap. 14:21; I John 2:10. In that way they will also receive the joy of Christ in them. By this joy is meant the holy joyous tone of the soul, the conscious moral courage of joy, which rises victorious over all suffering, in virtue of the fellowship with the Father. It is the joy of the saints, of which Scripture speaks so often. For clarification let me explain it this way: 1. They must keep the commandments. 2. In that way they will be loved by Jesus. 3. And so receive that blessed joy of the Father, filling their hearts.

However, we must not fail to see that all this can be done only through Jesus. Christ speaks of Himself as the example, having kept the commandments of His Father, and so remained in His love and consequently experienced that blessed joy. But He is not a mere example for us. No, the disciples, and we with them, must see that in Him is all our life, and every possibility of such living and receiving such blessedness. All our fountains are in Him. This the disciples must surely see at this time, and not think that He is just a beloved Master and no more. He is their Saviour, the Son of God.

Questions: Do you think that saints very often keep the commandments, out of love? Why is it that men experience so little of this joy? Can we say that Jesus is an example for us? For all men?

By Loving One Another: vss. 13-17.

In these words Jesus elaborates on the
exercise of love. We must love God, but also one another. In fact we always practise both or none, for the love of God (keeping His commandments) is the root of all love of the neighbour. And speaking about our love for the neighbour, Jesus immediately speaks of its highest manifestation, laying down our life for our friends. More one cannot give. He give his friend much of his time by helping him in his need, he can give him much of his money, no, he can give him all his time and all his money, but that still wouldn't be the supreme sacrifice. Giving his life he would give all he has.

Yet such love we must have for our friends, if such is demanded. Jesus does not say that all men must practice this, but our love must be willing to rise to this height. Love for our friends (who naturally are children of God in this case) must reveal itself in our love for their spiritual welfare. Other love there is not. Love always seeks his good, never seeks his downfall. It covers a multitude of his sins. Love does so much. Be sure to read I Cor. 13. And in doing this we shall manifest fruits, vs. 16. Such actions certainly are manifestations of a marvelous work of grace in our hearts, for we usually see and experience the very opposite. Are we not hateful and hating one another?

But here, too, we must see that this can be done only through Christ Jesus. In Him we must remain and seek all our help. He it is who first of all did indeed lay down His life for His friends, and that as the Son of God. In connection with this He tells the disciples that He will call them friends now, not slaves. Now a slave or bondservant simply receives his master’s orders and carries them out; his master does not confide plans and purposes to him. But a friend is one to whom we reveal our thoughts. We don’t hide any secrets from him, but open our hearts to him. Therefore Abraham is called the friend of God, God revealing His thoughts unto him. For the same reason we are God’s friends in the covenant, He revealing His counsel unto us, His own heart, and we in turn call Him our Sovereign-Friend, hiding nothing before Him. Formerly we were slaves, slaves of sin. But imagine, in the covenant we become friends of God. Therefore Jesus also reveals all these things to His disciples. They must know all things.

Jesus does more. For these friends He gives His life. The Son of God lays down His life for His brethren. And it is through Him that we can manifest such love to our fellow Christians. Jesus, therefore, teaches them the laws of the kingdom, but also that every possibility of even beginning to fulfill this law lies in Him. In Him they (we) must seek it, also through prayer, vs. 16. Again, this the disciples must see at this time, and behold Him in this light, also on the cross. Questions: Can the natural man in any way love his neighbour? What is the teaching of the third point of common grace on this issue? Can we measure our spiritual life by the amount of love we have for one another?
LESSON L.
"Hated By The World"
(John 15:18-16:4)

Jesus Informs His Disciples of the Hatred of the World, vss. 18:20:

The friendship and love of Jesus, of which the previous verses spoke, means the enmity of the world. On this subject Jesus informs the disciples in advance. This world will hate them in the future; that they must know now. But they must keep in mind and consider how the world treated Him. Always did it hate Him.

If they were of the world, vs. 19, this naturally would not take place. But now they no longer have a nature and character of the world. This, however, is due only to the work of Jesus, for He chose them out of the world. Once they, too, were of this world. He Himself is the opposite of the world and when He now joined the disciples to Himself, they will suffer as He always suffered. How could it be any different? The servant (slave) is not greater than his lord. Cf. chap. 13. As slaves we are chosen by Him out of the world, we stand under Him and therefore must suffer with Him. Notice how everything again centers around Jesus.

In these words Jesus speaks of a very important truth, which we all must know, also as young people. It is that the Christian always suffers in this world. In the world ye shall have tribulation, Jesus says on another occasion. In his first epistle John says that we must not marvel if the world hate us. We shall be hated of all men, Matt. 10:22. Also Matt. 24:9. Who is not acquainted with the words of Paul: For His sake we are killed all the day long. Fact is that Scripture's narrative of the saints is one of suffering, from the beginning to the days of the apostles. And the history of the Church is no different. However, in it all we must look at Jesus whom they hated first of all. This gives comfort and courage.

Questions: Is the Church also hated today? In what different ways does the world show this? How are Christian young people persecuted today? If we are not hated, what's wrong? Can we say that the world is merely a group of helpless, harmless people groping in the dark? Can we speak in any way of the "good" of this world? Who does?

The Cause of This Hatred, vss. 21-27.

On this subject the disciples must be clear. Having been chosen by Jesus it is also because of Him that we are hated. For His name's sake means because of His entire revelation to men. So men know Jesus, also in us. And the more they see of Jesus in us, the more they will turn against us. But why does the world hate Jesus? Because they do not know God who sent Him.

For this world it would have been much better if Jesus had not come, for now they have no excuse for their sins. This does not mean that otherwise they would
have had legitimate excuses. Never! But for this hatred of Jesus they would have been excusable, as will be true with the heathen. Now, however, they manifest all their fury and hatred.

In vs. 23 Jesus again speaks of the deepest cause of this hatred. He is of the Father. And the works of the Father He has shown them. In all His mighty miracles, which were signs, He showed them God, also in His mighty condemnation of sin. In fact in these they had seen God. And the result? They hate Jesus because He is God, and they hate His chosen ones because they are born of Jesus, the Son of God.

But it is exactly in this hatred that they expose themselves. According to vs. 25 the Scripture must be fulfilled, that He is hated without a cause. This David already experienced, Ps. 69:4. No, this was true of all the saints, from Abel on. To be sure, the world found “excuses” or “causes” for this hatred. So they said. But David and all the other hated ones knew that the reason for their hatred was the love of God. However, because all men are sinful, they possibly could find something in their lives which they could falsely claim as the reasons for such hatred. But now that is impossible. Jesus comes, in whom there is no sin. No once can convince Him of sin, hence there can be no reasons for this hatred; and the Scriptures are fulfilled, they hated Him without a cause. And yet there was a cause, which now has become plain. They hated God.

That is the result of Jesus testifying to them. However, let us never consider this to be something unexpected, on the part of Jesus. No, this hatred must become manifest in all its intensity. Therefore the disciples will receive the Spirit of truth (Jesus is the truth). Being filled with the Holy Spirit they will go into the world and speak of Him, ever more showing the world the Father, vs. 20. And the disciples, having been with Jesus all this time, must bear such testimonies in a special way, vs. 27. The Holy Spirit is given for comfort, instruction and edification, but also for the manifestation of the hatred of the world. The full hatred of the world must become revealed. And remember it is through Jesus that this always takes place.

Questions: Prove from vs. 22 that it is not grace for the world to hear Jesus. When will this manifestation of the hatred of the world come to a climax? Whom must the believers constantly behold in faith during such times?

The Disciples Must Not Become Offended, chap. 16:1-4:

Of this there is great danger. They may stumble over such hatred, revealing itself in persecution. Let them (and us) beware lest we stumble over it and fall into sin. To make matters as plain as possible Jesus even mentions several kinds of persecution that will take place, vss. 2-4. But always must they remember that Jesus told them (and us) of these things when still on earth. Imagine what would happen if He hadn’t told us.
LESSON LI.

"The Work Of The Holy Spirit"
(John 16:5-15)

Jesus' Departure Expedient, vss. 5-7.

Jesus now passes on to a new subject, the advantage of His leaving and sending the Comforter (Paraclete) who will do what is now described in detail. He will soon go away, to Him that sent Him, having completed His mission on earth. But, strange to say, not one of them asks Him where He is going. How must we understand this since in ch. 13:36 Peter asks this very question, and Thomas does the same thing in ch. 14:5. Jesus means to say that they make no request to learn more about His destination, and about what it means to Him to return to His Sender. Christ has in mind the significance of His return for the disciples whom He is now leaving behind. They are making no request to learn something about that from Him. In that light the questions of Peter and Thomas were of an entirely different nature.

Sorrow has filled their hearts so completely that no room is found for any other thought or feeling. This naturally also aggravated Jesus' suffering, yet even now He will encourage and lift them up. But, whatever the disciples may think, His departure will be advantageous for them. He will send the Paraclete, i.e. the Holy Spirit. A paraclete is one who is called to the side of someone else to help him and take up his cause. In a certain sense advocates, lawyers, can be called paracletes. If Jesus does not depart He will not be given them. Then this greater blessing of the disciples, concerning which Jesus has taught them and for which He has trained them, cannot follow. With the coming of the Comforter the work of salvation will be carried gloriously to its consummation to the everlasting joy and glory of the entire Church.

Questions: Why is the Spirit called the Comforter? Why couldn't the Spirit be given if Jesus couldn't leave them and ascend to heaven?

The Work of the Spirit in the World, vss. 8-11.

The Spirit will take care of Christ's affairs on this earth. Christ will do so through Him, to express it in different words. And the disciples must also see that this new helper will be far more able to help them than Christ was able to do Himself in the state of humiliation.

Thee disciples must also see that He is their Advocate. He will take up their cause. What cause? The work of salvation? Yes, by all means, but also their work in re the ungodly world that hates them, as we have seen in the previous verses. The Spirit came, to save the righteous, but also to complete the justification of the ways of God with the wicked. The Holy Spirit also works in the perishing, condemning them. This we must never overlook.

He will reprove, i.e. convince the world. Concerning what? Three things. 1. Of sin, because they believe not on Jesus.
The world, by the Spirit, will be convicted of its own utter sinfulness. The world will know its own depravity. The ground for this is their unbelief in Jesus. This does not mean that the world goes lost on account of this unbelief (Lenski). No, sin is always the reason. But with the manifestation of the Son of God, and their unbelief in Him every veil with which they might hide the fact that they are not really enemies of God is removed.

2. Of righteousness, etc. This righteousness naturally refers to Christ, not to the world, for the world is unrighteous. That Christ was righteous in all His works the world must become convinced of. Of this righteousness Christ's ascension and exaltation is the proof, God always blessing the righteous. And it is the Spirit who through this departure of Christ, convinces the world. 3. Of judgment, etc. Through the approval of Christ, declaring Him righteous, the world is naturally judged and condemned. By the approval of Christ the prince of the world is judged and condemned. Of this the world is convinced, even now.

Questions: Show in the light of the above statements that Christ always has the victory, also today. Is the work of the Spirit very often presented as being anything else but saving the Church? Why is it that this work of convincing, unto their own damnation, is also given them? Through what means does the Spirit convince them? How can also this be a comfort for the disciples?

The Work of the Spirit in the Church, vss. 12-15.

Jesus now turns to the work of the Spirit in the believers, continuing to show them the advantages of His departure. Jesus still has many things on His heart, but taking into consideration their sorrow and their present state, He will not tell them at this time. These things are not new things, but details of the revelations already made. But the Spirit of truth will show them all things, yea, marvelous things of Jesus. He will lead them into all truth. Being that He will speak and show only what He hears and sees in the glorified Christ. He will show the Christ in all His glory. And so Jesus will be glorified before men, and that after all is the purpose of all things that God may receive all the praise.

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**NO LITTLE THINGS**

by Florence Emeline Wright

There are no little things!
Those which look small are fraught
With meaning which we do not see.
Great deeds are often wrought

Through trivialities:
Two mites, a pebble in a sling;
A needle, common, wayside clay—
Each seemingly a paltry thing.

Nothing is really small:
A bit of meal, a rod,
The loaves and fishes of a humble lad—
Little things, until magnified by God.

—FORWARD.
The OPEN FORUM offers to all our readers the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts concerning articles and contributions published in Beacon Lights. It also extends to our readers the privilege of space for comment on any other issue or development within our sphere of interest.

If you wish to place a contribution in OPEN FORUM, please feel free to do so. All we ask is that copy be typed (double-space) or at least legibly written.

P. S. — And not too long, please.

Dear Editor,

In regard to Miss De Koning’s article of “The Church and The World” in the November Beacon Lights, I do not wholeheartedly agree with her in respect to the amusements of the world. She states that “If we as Christians go along to any of these places of amusement, we are going along with the world.” She gave us an example: ball games, swimming pools, fairs, the circus, car races, theatres and many other things.” I believe she has the right idea about the circus, car races, theatre, etc., but in regard to ball-games, swimming pools, and other clean sports such as bowling, ice-skating, golfing, etc., I cannot understand why these should be wrong if they are performed in public places. Rev. Hanko brought out in one of his sermons that when the question is asked, “What is the root of all evil”, people usually say “money”. However, this is not true, for it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. So it is in the case of clean sports. If these amusements interfere or take the place of spiritual things, then we are making misuse of them. If we “skip” catechism, society, or even congregational meetings, to attend or participate in these amusements, then we are going along with the world. If attending these sports (that in themselves are not sin) in public places is sin, then we had better get recreational facilities of our own so we can separate from the world. In attending these amusements in public places we must show to the world that we are not like them, just as at our place of employment, etc., we must set an example by our speech and conduct.

Mrs. Thomas A. Rhoda
Grand Rapids.

A Timely Text . . . .

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

—2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.
IV. Principles For Our Discussion:

(Since we do not have the time and space to bring out the detailed issues which are debated in connection with the covenant, let us propose some questions to bring some of the issues to our attention and also some answers to indicate the principles which should guide us in our discussion.)

1. What important Scripture passages are there that should be considered first of all in our study of the covenant?

There are many passages which you can find by means of a concordance in both the Old and New Testaments. But there is the important history of God's revelation of the covenant to Abraham which is basic to a Scriptural conception of the covenant. In this connection we find that,

a. The Lord Jehovah reveals the reality of His covenant to Abram first of all in the form of promises. (Genesis 12).

b. The Lord after assuring Abram of these same promises again gives Abram a tangible, legal right to the covenant promises. (Genesis 15). In a vision Abram was given to see the work of God in Christ's blood whereby he and all of us have a title or legal evidence that we are possessors of eternal life with God. The Lord binds Himself in this transaction or contract in His righteousness to give us the covenant.

c. God reveals His covenant to Abraham that He Himself will cause Abraham and his seed to be worthy participants of His promises. He reveals in Genesis 17 that He will establish, or keep, or set up permanently in His covenant people the life of sanctification, without which there can be no covenant realization. The demands of the covenant are presented which are inherent in the very relationship with God, and it is solemnly promised that the Lord will realize the demands. Abraham is thereupon commanded to keep this covenant, that is, to believe and confess that word of the Lord, in the sign of circumcision.

d. God finally also deals with Abraham as a covenant friend, reveals His plan to realize His counsel in the way of reprobation and judgment upon Sodom, deliberates with Abraham in order to take His ordained friend into His covenant as an individual, who trusts, believes, and prays to the Judge of heaven and earth. Genesis 18 ff.

2. How ought we to define the covenant?

We cannot define the concept covenant from the word only. The word covenant may mean as such, a contract, or agreement, oath, testament, promise, pact,
BEACON LIGHTS

or bargain. Although Scripture does not make its own language, but uses our language, the language particularly of the Hebrews and the Greeks, and however the Scripture may use these various elements of the word covenant in different connections, the concept covenant as it is given to Abraham and to all His people must be first of all determined from the particular context and then in the second place must be understood with a divine limitation. That last statement means that we cannot ascribe to God anything which essentially is human, nor which God does not reveal of His own Being and Works.

3. What definition serves us best as a guide to return to the individual passages of Scripture to think the thoughts of God's revelation?

That definition which points us to the relationship between God and His people in Christ, as determined by His counsel as an everlasting relationship, the object of the hope of the believers. There are several definitions which have been given which agree in important elements and which point us to the eternal character of the covenant in God's counsel. Other definitions disagree in the fundamental element by emphasizing the temporal forms. The definition of Rev. Hoeksema in his "Essentials of Reformed Doctrine" ought to serve us best. There are also several texts which are the basis of this conclusion. Which are they?

4. How are we to judge of other "views" of the covenant?

It is impossible to make a judgment without a careful examination of each individual view. This is necessary although almost beyond our scope at this time. We should take the position that although we value our definition it does not mean that other views of the covenant will not aid us to see some of the elements of the Scripture which are given us for our instruction and enjoyment. In that good sense of the word all the correct views of the Word of God aid us and enrichen our understanding. Also contrary views aid us to see the value of our point of view and sharpen our defense of the Word of God. Without minimizing the value of definitions we ought to see that there is not one that will comprehend all the riches of God's Word. A definition serves as a working basis. Further we should see that some views fail to search out the deep controlling thoughts of Scripture and raise subordinate elements to receive primary attention. Such elements as contract, agreement, and others are taken as premises from which erroneous conclusions are drawn to confuse the Church with dilemmas as it seeks to understand all the Scripture as the Word of our Sovereign God.

Nothing is easier than fault-finding; no talent, no self-denial, no brains, no character, are required to set up in the grumbling business.
A reader asks, "In the Lord's Prayer is it more correct to say: 'Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one', instead of saying—'deliver us from evil'?"

This question is undoubtedly occasioned by the fact that there is a difference between the rendition of the Authorized Version, and the Revised Version of the New Testament. The Authorized Version translates 'but deliver us from evil', while in the Revised Version we read 'but deliver us from the evil one'. As far as the form of the original word for 'evil' in this prayer is concerned, it may be either, or, neuter or masculine. In the former case it would not merely mean 'evil' in general, but according to the New Testament meaning of this word it would mean 'moral wickedness'. However, in view of the fact that this word in the original is preceded by the definite article (the), and that this same word in many other passages in the New Testament very definitely refers to the devil, it is better to prefer the masculine, and translate this word as 'the evil one' meaning the devil. This is certainly the meaning in Matthew 13:19 where this same word is used in the original as in the Lord's prayer "When anyone heareth the Word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which is sown in his heart". In the following passages the same word occurs, with clear reference to the devil; Matt. 5:37; John 17:15; I John 3:12. Essentially, however, it makes little difference whether we pray, 'deliver us from evil', or 'from the evil one'. Satan himself is indeed the enemy that lies in wait for our life; but sin and evil are the weapons with which he seeks our destruction. Hence the prayer 'but deliver us from the evil one' is a petition to be delivered from his power, his snares, his arts, his temptations. He is the father of all evil, and to be delivered from him is the earnest desire of every child of God. For a further study on this question I would refer you to the splendid explanation of this question, as found on page 102 of "In the Sanctuary" by the Rev. H. Hoeksema.

"Were Zacharias and Elizabeth praying for the promised seed when they prayed for a son? If so, didn't they know that the Messiah was to be born out of the tribe of Judah?"

In the first chapter of Luke we read of Zacharias and Elizabeth that they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren; and that both were well stricken in years. Humanly speaking, childbirth was
for them impossible. And then we read that an angel appeared unto Zacharias, as he was ministering in the temple, saying, "Fear not Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard: and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." Now the question is, were Zacharias and Elizabeth praying for the promised seed when they prayed for a son? This question must be answered very emphatically in the affirmative. They were indeed praying for the promised seed. Every God-fearing parent, both of the Old and New Testament longs to bring forth the seed of the covenant, the children of the promise. Therefore God-fearing parents, such as Zacharias and Elizabeth, looked upon barrenness as a great affliction, and earnestly pray for the blessing of children. No, not as though God-fearing parents can bring forth the promised seed of the covenant, for they confess that they and their children are born and conceived in sin, but they bring forth children in faith, in view of the promise of God, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee, in their generations, to be a God unto thee and unto thy seed after thee."

The second question, "If Zacharias and Elizabeth were praying for the promised seed, didn't they know that the Messiah was to be born out of the tribe of Judah?" seems to go out from the supposition that the promised seed is Christ to the exclusion of all else. This supposition is wrong. Indeed Scripture teaches us that essentially the promised seed is Christ; Gal. 3:16: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Not Christ to the exclusion of all others, however, but in Christ are included all the elect, all those given him by the Father. The Heir of the promise is Christ, and we receive the promise through faith in Him, even as the apostle Paul says, "And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Hence I would answer the question that even though Zacharias and Elizabeth knew that the Messiah was to be born out of the tribe of Judah, nevertheless they, and all God-fearing parents, may and do pray for the privilege of bringing forth children, who, together with Christ, are heirs of the promise of salvation.

* * *

Don't brush aside that social problem!

Ask SCHUILER to write about it.

c/o Doorn Printing Co.
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Grand Rapids, Michigan
We feel that the subject of dramatics is a very timely one. Timely, because it presents a very real problem for everyone of us. For you who are still in school, the semi-annual plays which are given render an opportunity for you to participate in them. For you who are no longer in school, you will no doubt admit that there were occasions when you considered attending one of these plays for an evening of entertainment or for some other reason. I think I can further say with confidence that no one will deny that enough objections have been raised to make the presentation by one of the life of another, a questionable form of entertainment. Therefore, we would like to present a few ideas to you tonight on the problem which drama creates in the life of the Christian.

Before we can proceed to treat the problem, it is essential that we understand the meaning of the term drama. We have consented to accept for our discussion Webster's first definition of the term, where he defines drama to be a composition in prose or verse, portraying life or character by means of a dialogue and action and designed for theatrical performance. In plainer English I would say that it is a play either in written form or as presented in action by actors.

I should also take a few moments to say a little about the term Christian. Not because our knowledge of the term is insufficient, do I call attention to the term, but rather because of the point-of-view we are to take in this discussion. You will recall how Rev. Hoeksema pointed out Sunday morning that the responsibility of the Christian is that he does not walk in sin; that we must walk in the Light. Therefore, we must so live that the acts of our life, the deeds which we perform are an articulation of the life of God which dwells in our hearts. You see then our problem becomes this: is it a sin for me to make use of drama in any of its forms. To put it a little differently, we as Christians must strive unto perfection. Now is it at all possible for drama to help me or someone else, to make progress in that striving unto perfection, or is the use of it a hindrance.

I think we are now ready to say something about the problem itself. First of all, then, let us see if there is some profit we can derive from drama; some way in which it can be beneficial to us. And, then, in the second place, let us see if there is anything inherently wrong.

* * * * These speeches were given at a recent combined young peoples' meeting at Fuller Ave. Church. They were summarized for publication. —A.R.
with drama which would prevent our using it.

It would be quite impossible at this time to treat all the purposes for which drama is used. This is hardly necessary either, for, to prove our point, we need only to show that it is possible to use drama profitably in one respect. And for this purpose, I wish to single out one possibility of using drama profitably by showing how it can be used to educate.

I wish to prove to you that the use of drama in educating is both possible and desirable. Suppose that you were to step out into the hallway with a particular friend. You will have to grant me that it would be possible for this friend, by way of conversation, to educate you, or for you to educate him on some particular matter. Now, then, you are also ready to acknowledge that if a person is capable of writing, he is also able to reproduce this situation. Now, since drama is the portrayal of life or character by means of dialogue, and dialogue according to Webster is a composition representing two or more persons conversing or reasoning; I trust you see that it is possible to educate by means of drama. For you acknowledge that it is possible to be educated by means of conversation, and drama is a reproduction of this conversation. Therefore, you should see that it is possible to educate by means of drama. And now, if you question whether this educational drama can be used by Christians, you have but to ask whether that conversation out in the hall was conversation that could be used by Christians.

In order that I may touch upon the complete definition, I would like to point out that in a very particular way, as you learn by conversing with others, you also learn from the experiences of others. You all admit that experience is a good teacher even though it be a hard one. Now don't you see that when experiences of others are reproduced by writers this can be a very effective way of educating. It certainly is not consistent to admit that experience is a good teacher, and then refuse to admit that you can learn much from drama, which is a reproduction of the experiences of others.

You may all have agreed with me thus far and yet come with this objection, that if the goal is to educate then the most effective method should be used. And, surely, you say, lecturing is a far better method of teaching than dramatics. But let me show you that there is an error in this objection. Consider, for example, one of our ministers teaching in catechism class, or any other similar situation. You recognize in the group of pupils three distinct groups. (1) Those who comprehend immediately the depth of the lecture; (2) Those who need examples, diagrams, illustrations, practical applications, (you know what I mean, it must be presented to them as it really is in life); (3) Those who just never get it. Since the majority fall into this second group, my conclusion and yours will have to be that drama is highly desirable for educational purposes.

Now let us consider whether there is anything inherently wrong with drama which would prevent our using it. There
are those who hold that acting is essentially hypocrisy because the actor assumes the life of another before an audience and thereby deceives them. This is really foolish! The last time you pulled a prank on somebody, did you first inform him of what you were going to do and then still hope to lead him into your trap? No, of course not. Neither would the actor, if he really wanted to deceive the audience, publish beforehand, the role he intends to play. He does not desire to deceive but he merely assumes a particular part having already informed the audience that he is doing so, and he does this all for their benefit.

Another objection, sometimes raised, is that you cannot display the truth by assuming a hypothetical situation. This, too, seems false to me, for consider how often in your conversation, or even in my speech tonight, we say: "supposing this to be the case", or "assuming that this be true", in order that by illustration we may show the truth of a certain statement. Certainly you would not condemn this. At least, I hope not.

Finally, notice that the definition qualified drama as designed for theatrical performance. Now I know that anything associated with the theater, you are ready to condemn. But notice that the reason why the theater is corrupt is not because the people of the theater have not the means to do that which is good, but because they use the means wrongfully.

You might say, it certainly would be difficult to accomplish this end in drama, or that it is not to be found in this form. I say, perhaps this is true, but there are no reasons for condemning drama without qualifications.

Dramatics: Always To Be Condemned

Herman Hanko
Grand Rapids, Michigan

In order to fully understand the subject on hand, and in order to give an intelligent consideration and discussion of the problem, it is above all necessary to define drama so that it can be discussed in an acceptable way. We have agreed to accept Webster’s definition which has already been stated. However, I would like to repeat it: Drama is a composition in prose or verse, portraying life and character by means of dialogue and action and designed for theatrical performance. Now it is first of all necessary to distinguish between the drama and the dramatist; between the actor and the acted. It must be clear that I am not arguing against drama, the acted. On the contrary, I am arguing against the dramatist, the actor, the one who acts out the drama. I would in no way condemn the play as such, for then I would have to condemn all literature of every kind. But on the basis of my definition of
drama I condemn the actor for again according to Webster a dramatist, an actor, is a performer of drama.

It is often said that we are all dramatists because we are all acting our own lives constantly. This, however, is not true. We are not portraying life and character. By the very meaning of the word portray we do not fall into this class, for portraying is depicting, and depicting can only be done of past events.

Although it is true to a small degree that an author experiences some of the sensations of an actor while writing a book, a novelist and his work do not fall into this class. He is not portraying life by means of dialogue and action. He is doing it by words only. He is portraying action with words, not portraying life with action.

Some would also maintain that Scripture uses dramatics in many instances, for example: the Levitical sacrifices, feasts, laws, etc., as pictures of something greater; Isaiah walking “naked and barefoot” as a sign of the captivity of Israel; and many others. But you immediately sense that this is not drama in any sense of the word, nor are the prophets dramatists. The prophets were not portraying life, they were portraying character. They were showing, by signs, God’s will.

Often speakers are accused of dramatics. But the emphasizing of your own ideas and thoughts by gestures and motions is not dramatics according to our definition.

All the above mentioned forms of getting a message across are not included in my definition of drama, as you can readily see. If someone should insist, however, that they are a type of drama, I would say that then in that sense drama and dramatization is good. I think I have made plain the differences between these and the drama of my definition, so that we can condemn the other without touching these.

What then is included in the definition? To that I would answer, every bit of acting life from humorous skits and dialogues to the most technical and highly organized drama of Hollywood. Here we had better ask the questions: “Why is portraying life by means of dialogue and action wrong?” In order to make this clear, I would like to discuss first professional drama as practiced by Hollywood and all Civic players who do so for remuneration, and second the thousand and one plays, dialogues and skits we run into in our high school and college life. It must be understood first of all that all acting by the very nature of the word is attempting for a time to be someone other than yourself. To what degree this is done, is shown by the quality actor you are. Attempting for a time to be someone other than yourself, you assume that person’s character as you know it or as it was shown by you. Involved in assuming that character is taking on the aspects of that character which are his emotions, feelings, desires, will, etc.

Professional actors spend their whole lives acting the lives of others. They make it their calling to entertain a pleasure-mad world. God in His eternal
counsel never called a person to such a life’s task. Nowhere in the Bible do we find a single instance of it. Man in his original state of righteousness had no need for entertainment. He was happy in fellowship with God and needed nothing to divert his mind from carnal unhappiness. As a result of sin he seeks amusement. Furthermore, a person who spends his whole life acting, assuming the role of another person, warps and distorts his own personality and uses that which he received of God to take his place in the reality of life, in a manner which does not comport with its nature and development.

Is acting then, not a gift of God so that it can be used correctly? Remember that all acting of any kind is attempting to reproduce the feelings, personalities, passions, emotions of some character, fictitious or real. And in that light I would say: No, acting cannot be a gift of God. This should become clear from the following.

First of all, when we act, we must necessarily act out sin. Entering into the emotions, feelings, passions, thoughts, whether that be on a large scale or on a small scale, involves taking upon oneself that sin. And is not our own sin great enough without trying to assume someone else’s besides? Does God find pleasure in the fact that His creatures willfully add to their sin by assuming for a time the sins of another?

You say, well, act out good things! Can a sinful creature, dead in sin, act out good things without sinning? It leads to a set-up of this nature. On the one extreme we have the very best a man could act out, namely: holy things, such as prayer, devotions, preaching. But if these things are not done from the heart to God, are not they mockery? And if these things are done from the heart, then it is no more acting, but true communion with God. On the other extreme we have all the very worst things in life: all the lusts, passions, desires of the evil heart man is filled with. These cannot be acted out in a pleasing manner before God. The same objections hold with regard to the host of other things which fall between these two extremes. And so we have not yet found any way in which acting can be considered a gift of God and used aright.

In conclusion, what is our duty over against this evil of dramatics?

We must, first of all, as Protestant Reformed Covenant youth, take no part in any program of this nature. We may not play a role in any dialogue or whatever it may be.

But we must do more. We must protest against any program that has dramatizing in it. May be you think it doesn’t do any good, but that does not lessen our duty. We must show that we as true children of God, by His grace, walk the way of true Christians, and if others choose not to, we must show that we will have no part in it. Then we are doing our Christian duty and then we are showing that although we are in the world, we are not of the world.

— 30 —
Mrs. M. Kroondyk  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Title: “Instead Of The Thorn”.  
Author: Bastian Kruithof.  

This is another story picturing life in the Dutch settlement that is now Holland, Michigan. All of its characters and many of its events are fictitious. This novel is not just a plot which is gradually revealed to the reader until he comes to a climax at the end of the story. There is more than action; more than just events in the lives of its characters.—Not that the story lacks interest, for the story of Keesje Gomert’s life in the settlement, his love for Elaine Voskert, his life at the University at Ann Arbor, his return to the settlement to eventually claim Elaine as his bride and to take his place in the community as a teacher in the Academy makes a fascinating tale. Into the story of Keesje’s life is woven much of the life of the others in the settlement. There were those who were fanatic in their religious zeal; there were those who put their trust in their own opinions and possessions; and there were those for whom the grief that came to them in the new world was almost too much, so that only God in His grace could soften and mellow their hearts.

Throughout the story, the author weaves the dreams and ideals of these people. Keesje and his father, Weibe, were dreamers, thinking thoughts that were strange and foolish to the other Hollanders. In telling of their dreams and their love of nature and the symbolism which they found for the former in the latter, the author gives many beautiful and graphic descriptions of the sky, the trees, the lakes, the seasons, etc. And the book is literally filled with similes. This does not make the story easier to read because such material cannot be skimmed over lightly if the reader wants to grasp the beauty the author is trying to portray.

This book may be recommended as interesting, entertaining and worthwhile. As a Christian novel it surpasses many that I have read.
Grand Rapids and Vicinity
Regional Mass Meeting

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 8:00 P. M.
FULLER AVENUE
Church Basement

In addition to our usual Bible discussion there is planned an excellent program for your enjoyment. There’ll be:

... Band Music
... A Men’s Quartet
... Community Singing
... Refreshments

And - - - -

A surprise packet

It’s approximately 300 years old and has never appeared on our program before. The feature of the evening!

Also - - - -

Two brief speeches on the question:

“Do we or do we not approve of the dramatization of historical and fictional events and characters for the purpose of education.”
TEACHERS WANTED!

The Free Christian School Society of Edgerton, Minnesota, expects to open the doors of its own Protestant Reformed School for the Reformed instruction of the children of the covenant, Sept. 1950. Instruction will be offered in the grades one through eight. We expect an enrollment of approximately fifty pupils.

We will need teachers, Protestant Reformed teachers, two of them. One to serve as principal and to teach grades five through eight, the other to teach grades one through four.

The Board hereby invites teachers, and prospective teachers, to make application for these positions. Full co-operation of the parents and of the Board is assured. Attractive salaries will be offered. A new school building, with up to date class rooms, furnished with new educational materials, will provide pleasant working conditions.

Anyone qualified, and interested in more information, is invited to correspond with the secretary. We invite you to send a letter of application for one of these positions. Please include in this letter a statement of educational background and attainments, and indicate the position for which you apply. Kindly indicate previous experience, if any.

This is an opportunity for anyone eager to teach in one of our Prot. Ref. schools, under pleasant conditions, at a good salary. It is an opportunity to help lay the groundwork of a new Prot. Ref. school, in order that the school may get off to a good start, doctrinally and educationally. We earnestly solicit your application, teachers and prospective teachers!

Applications should be mailed to the Secretary:

Mr. Wm. Huiskens
Edgerton, Minnesota.
Greetings for the

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