

m. s. "Meonia"  
Antwerp, Belgium  
March 31, 1948

Dear John:

We arrived on board this freighter late yesterday afternoon, just in time for dinner. While enjoying our first meal on the ship, one of the stewards came into the dining room and gave us a stack of mail. The purser said he never had a passenger receive so much mail. Some thought before we came on board that we were newly weds according to the amount received.

After we were partly settled for the night in our cabin, we sorted some of it. Esther's mail was put in order and so we read her letters first. Then we opened your special delivery letter which requires a special answer which I will immediately send.

It is difficult to give a proper reply in this limited time as we were busy ever since early morning with formalities, attending to baggage and last minute preparations that are always needed before making such a long voyage. However, I will give you our opinion which we discussed at length last evening.

A cable was requested but we cannot send it as our reply is not in full accordance with your request. We have no objections that you love Esther and that she in turn has that same feeling. The request to be officially betrothed on May 31st seems somewhat premature, however, if that is the desire of both of you and since it is for the welfare of Esther's happiness, we will give our united permission for you two to become engaged with certain conditions.

In the same letter you are stating your plans for the future. It refers to your engagement this coming May and in May 1949 you will be married. Your studies at Nyack at that time will be completed but that only gives Esther two years of Nyack. If she goes to college with you according to your plans, she would only get another two years of college and therefore would have neither a degree from Nyack, nor from the college you will select. It would seem wise to us that Esther first complete Nyack since both of you are looking forward to a ministry on an Alliance mission field. Before making such plans as you presented, the Personnel Secretary of the Alliance should be consulted as Rev. Smalley is specialized in giving proper advise to students who in the future hope to become Alliance missionaries.

Therefore, your request which is before me can only be partly answered. We do not object that you become engaged, although we would have preferred that you continue keeping company for awhile. Since you love one another, what difference does it make if you are officially engaged. However, it is your request and we do not want to hinder either you or Esther in any way. It would seem to me that you should see that Esther finishes her studies before venturing out into marriage. If Esther finishes her studies, she will be a better asset to you either in the home ministry or in the foreign. If you rush into plans, a mistake might be made and before such plans are definitely made, both of you should consult with proper authorities who would be able to advise you and help you with great understanding. We have seen youth plunge into marriage without proper advice and their ministry was partly hindered. This must not happen to you. This is what we are trying to avoid for both of you.

Understand me well, since Esther is happy to be engaged and you give her that happiness, we will not stand in the way, but the question of granting permission to be married in May 1949 is a more serious one and that cannot be given before we also consult with certain officials. You must be careful not to make a

mistake that will hinder your own future ministry. You are preparing for a life's work that demands sacrifice in every realm. It might mean sacrifice towards Es-  
Esther for a year or two so both of you can be brought together in a marriage that is definitely led of the Lord. At present I cannot see it and therefore cannot give my wholehearted permission but to become engaged, far be it from us to stand in the way and may the Lord bless both of you.

With greetings from Mrs. Van Hine and loving congratulations from both of us, I am

most sincerely yours,