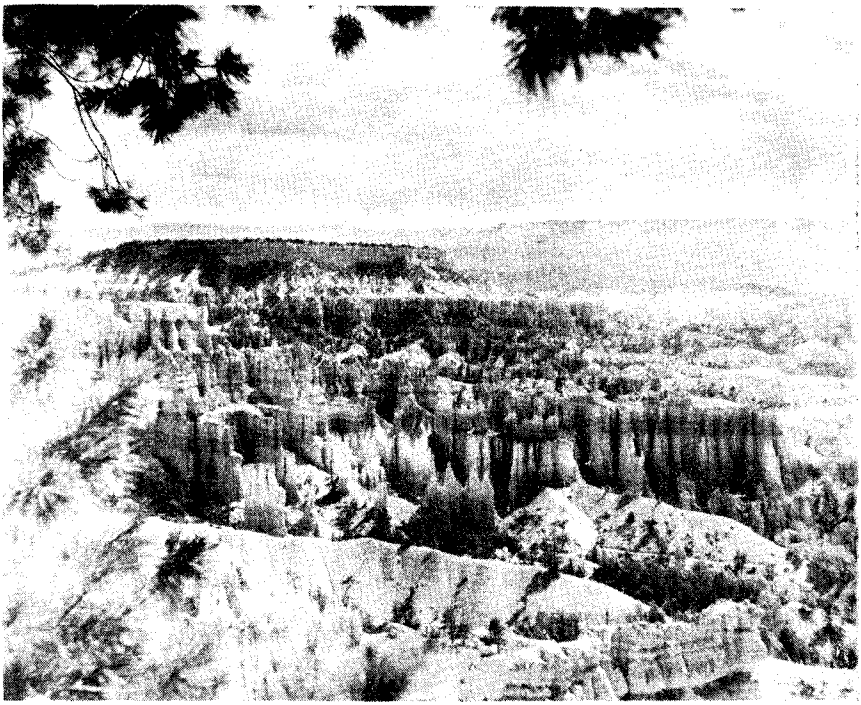
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



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THE MAY ISSUE FOR 1953

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BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOL. 13 MAY — 1953 NO. 7

SEEKING TO KNOW GOD

Miss Alice Reitsma
Grand Rapids, Michigan

"Spring is here, Spring is here,
And vacation time is near."

YOU DON'T HAVE to be a poet to write those lines. Every student from Grade School through College thinks in those terms at this time of the year. Teachers do too! We all look forward to vacation time.

For many students graduating from High School this year, and for some students finishing Grade School, there will be no more school days. This does not mean, however, that they are finished with the learning process, that now they can say, "Good, I won't have to study any more!" It only means that, as Christians, now they must study without the guidance of the school. For all our lives we must be studious people, seeking to know God in all the ways in which He has revealed Himself.

The purpose of the school is to try to develop in its students an interest in reading, in thinking things through, in studying and figuring things out; and to acquaint its students with the history of the world, with the present day situation, with what's on the world, places and people, with what has been invented, and written by great thinkers and great poets. All these things are the things with which the school is busy all day long.

And the importance of it all is that in all these things which we are privileged to learn about, God speaks to us. In history, in the sciences, in art, in music, in language, God is making Himself and His counsel known to us. When we study in geography about the green plains, and the high mountains, and about the people of the different regions of the world; and when we study in science about the animal world, and about the movement of molecules, and the pressure of air, and about the drop of rain, and the stars in the skies; and when in history we read about wars, and about slavery, and about rebellions, and about great discoveries and inventions and progress, we see that all these things are the work of an Almighty God. And the more we study about His works, the more we learn to appreciate His greatness.

When God made all things in the beginning, He did so with the end in view, the end that He was to reunite all things in Christ through the way of sin and grace. The study of the history of the world bears this out. How can we as

the people of God **not** be interested in learning about the way in which God has unfolded His counsel throughout the ages? How can we help desiring to know how God has used the Kings and the Nations, the Columbuses and Napoleons, the Huguenots and the Reformers in that way of sin and grace, so that His church might be saved and He might receive the glory? How can we help wondering about the developments of six thousand years knowing that there is a Divine purpose in all things?

And as it is in history so it is with all creation. The more we see how marvelously this world is made, the more infinitely great God becomes. The Psalms speak a lot about this. Psalm 136 tells us that God made the heavens by wisdom and stretched out the earth above the waters, that He made great lights, the sun to rule by day and the moon and stars to rule by night.

Shouldn't we as people of God, be interested to learn more about that sun which rules by day and about the other heavenly bodies, about that earth that is stretched above the waters, about the power of gravity, and about the composition of the air which we take so much for granted? God made all these things and He sustains them by His power.

In order to understand God's revelation in all these things, however, we must have the light of Scripture. The light of the Word of God must fall on all the works of God so that God Himself interprets His own work in nature and in history and in all His revelation of Himself. That is why only God's people can really understand what is going on in this world. Only God's people who know God through His Word can know that the things in nature speak of the things in grace, that the earthy things speak of the heavenly.

These things will become real to only in the way of diligent study, studying God's Word first of all, and then studying everything else in the light of God's Word. The harder we study God's works of the past, as people of God with His grace in our hearts, the better able we will be to interpret and understand the works of God in the present in regard to ourselves, the church, and the whole world. And the more we comprehend God's revelation of Himself, the better prepared we will be for the future, for the life which is laid away for us in Heaven. This present life is the pathway to eternal life. On this pathway shines the Word of God. And in the light of the Word of God, as we walk this pathway of life, we must interpret all the revelation of God.

So whether our school days are over or not, we must be studious, reading, thinking young people, seeking to understand what God is saying in all t' works of His hand. Then in a small w we will begin to appreciate God's greatness.

EDITORIALS

CHANGE

IS ANYTHING permanent? Can anything endure without change through ages of time? If we look around us, we must answer, nothing. The impermanence of all things, the transitory nature of all creatures has always plagued men's minds since the beginning of time. Time moves on. One second follows another, day follows day, and year follows year with ceaseless, irrevocable certainty. And as surely as time progresses, so surely do the creatures of time suffer change. Each moment, each event has its appointed time, then, passing into oblivion it is seen no more.

"All things change," cried the ancient Greek, and I think there was the scent of sadness in his complaint. That change and impermanence are everywhere is simply a fact, known to us all. But that fact is also a source of uneasiness, of anxiety, and of fear. For who can tell what the future will bring? Who knows whether there will be health or sickness, whether war or peace, whether fortune or famine? No one can tell. Only one thing do we know with certainty, and that is that tomorrow will not be the same as today.

We cannot look to the earth for stability and permanence. For in the earth is nothing but alteration: all is transitory and fleeting, all is in constant turmoil. The farmer knows this full well. He may till his land, remove the stones and kill the weeds and drive off the birds, but wind and rain, erosion and blight are forces which he cannot control; even though prosperity may prevail today, tomorrow the fertile fields may be turned to wilderness by wind and floods.

Nor can we find permanence in the works of men. The Pharoahs seeking to build themselves lasting memorials, constructed gigantic pyramids, but even these things of cold, inanimate stone are buffeted and buried by the shifting sands of Egypt. Year by year, century by century, they are worn down, slowly being destroyed by time itself.

Men today are also driven by the desire and the longing for that which endures, which is not subject to the law of universal change. Can houses and barns, automobiles and treasures of silver withstand time's ravages? We realize with sorrow that they cannot. Houses wear out; the barns decay, and automobiles and machinery break down.

But the instability of things is minor compared with the transitoriness of life itself. Man himself realizes all too painfully how frail he is. Man, of all God's creatures, changes most perceptibly and most completely. Each moment of life lasts but an instant and then vanishes completely. The infant becomes the child, the child becomes the youth, the youth becomes the adult, and after but a few years, life is gone. Nothing can be repeated; no moment can be continued. A song floats on the breeze but once, the last sweet lingering note of music hangs on the air, fades into a sigh, and then is gone for ever. Can the song be brought back? Can we hold

it fast and never let it vanish? We know we cannot. It is gone, never to return, and though you sing it again, it is not the same song and you are not the same person. All things change and we change with them. That is the reason why there is so much sadness in the impermanence of nature; it reflects the impermanence of our selves. The aged, nearing the end of life's span, knows the full measure of the frailty of man, but age has no monopoly on this knowledge. Youth, with all its hoping and striving and planning for the future, experiences also that the future for which it plans is nothing but uncertainty. Tomorrow will be different from today, but beyond that we do not know.

David, with the combined vision of saint and poet, expresses this awe-full reality by comparing man's life with the grass of the field: "In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth."

But David, because he was saint as well as poet, saw beyond the transient insubstantialities of time to the only eternal, unchangeable reality, that which alone is the firm and stable support for our reeling minds and hearts. All things change; all we creatures change and pass away, but there is One who endures from everlasting to everlasting, and who is always the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow. What does it matter that this world passes away with all that is in it? In Christ we have the permanence of the heavenly abode and this permanence guides our lives even now. "The lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." Who can then be dismayed at the alterations of time? With such an assurance we can only respond as David did, with a heartfelt and fervent "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" —R.F.

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CURRENT COMMENTS

REV. L. DOEZEMA
Bellflower, California

THE CHURCH'S WITNESS

THIS IS BEING called forth in these times of crisis. Whenever there is a rise in a powerful world state which threatens men's lives, then also there arises the threat to their faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. That is the teaching of the Word and of history. It was clearly taught in the recent history of Nazism and now again some of the figures which gave a startling testimony in a decadent society of the world prior to World War II are giving strong testimony overagainst Communist Russia. They are giving that as they are directly concerned with the Russian Octopus.

Time magazine featured an article on Bishop Otto Dibelius, and speaks of him as the leader of a 400 year old church community, the Marienkirche, the church of Martin Luther. On their front cover **Time** pictures Dibelius upon the background of the broken gammadions, the swastika cross of the Nazis, which has behind it a Red Octopus, and above it the Cross of Christ. It conceives of the true relation of the cross of Christ as we are taught to see it every Lenten season and as it has just been impressed upon us again in the Resurrection. The cross of Christ towers over the wrecks of time, and these wrecks are not the buildings, but the ideals of men.

Otto Dibelius is one of Germany's few consistent fighters against the totalitarian state. The German state can no longer claim, he maintains, divine sanction. Far from being a God-blessed state of St. Paul's epistle to the **Romans,** it, in Dibelius' opinion might conceivably change itself into another state mentioned in the New Testament—the godless, seven headed monster of St. John's Revelation.

Other things are said about this man's opinions. It is also stated that they have been criticized by Karl Barth as not being theology. Our point in this comment is not to consider the opinions of these men as to what constitutes the relation of the church and state. Our purpose is merely to show that a witness is being made again against a Communist regime. That shows that our calling as church is always being forced upon us by our Lord Jesus Christ who wills that His issue come to the foreground in all world issues.

One sentence of Dibelius was placed at the head of the article in **Time,** which I think is very arresting and which I shall quote without comment, to conclude my comment on the Church's witness.

"He has not made life easy for me. On the contrary. It would have been more comfortable to be without Him than to live with Him. He puts burdens on the soul, which one would rather let pass by unheeded. He exacts a great deal with His demands. And when one thinks that the cross is not so dread, which His children take upon themselves, then comes the moment when it grows very dread indeed . . . Report of Jesus of Nazareth."

—cont. on page 8

TRUTH VS. ERROR

REV. ANDREW PETTER
Grand Rapids, Michigan

UNBELIEF AND REVOLUTION

THE ABOVE caption is the title of a book written about a hundred years ago in the Netherlands, by the Christian statesman and author, Groen van Prinsterer.

It was written in connection with the very concrete historical struggle of unbelief and its consequences in the economy of the state as it appeared in the terrible French Revolution.

There were in the life of the author some very favorable circumstances that made such a work possible and successful. Groen van Prinsterer lived in the most intimate connection with the terrible seething revolutionary developments of his time.

Born in 1801 of wealthy and cultured parents he had the choicest education of his day and in his early twenties he already used the classic languages with great adeptness and spoke the European languages as readily as his own native tongue.

He was a young man of only 26 years when he already became secretary of the King's cabinet and in this position he was required to travel to the neighboring countries as minister extra-ordinary.

It was in connection with this office that he received the responsible task of editing the Archives of the House of Orange-Nassau, a task that occupied him for some 25 years (1835-61) yielding a work of thirteen volumes, known at that time as one of the most fruitful and informative sources of history and statesmanship, in which Groen was also several times elected to the Dutch Parliament, a great mass of writings issued —series of articles, instructions and advices, documented proposals of legislation, eloquent parliamentary speeches and debates, and several, yes, many books.

And since the same spirit that manifested itself in the French Revolution inevitably drifted over the borders into Netherland, Groen was led to hold a series of readings with a group of his personal friends in his private study.

The content of these readings was published in 1847, in the book entitled "Ongeloof en Revolutie", and it saw a second publication in 1868.

It is to be regretted that such a book is not available in our English language. It is a book of which Dr. Bavink, borrowing the old simile, says in the foreward to the Second Edition, "... there are a few books which, just as the staff of Moses among the staves of the magicians, have a devouring power. This book has such a devouring power that it consumes other books."

The book in its present form is uninviting to the reader. It is known that Groen as a Christian statesman and forerunner of Dr. Abraham Kuyper was a general without an army. He did not have the gift of writing for the common people. Anyone who reads this book will understand this. The organization is not perspicuous; the style carries the stamp of his aristocratic spirit. It is overloaded with tedious parenthetical over-dignified reflections, with cumbersome qualifications made enpassa

and it carries the mark of its surroundings with its German and French documentation.

But there is, of course, something else that makes this book so valuable for us today. It is not merely because it is a great source on the history of the revolution. Rather it is because of the ringing Christian testimony that sounds thru it. It is the book of a Christian historian and a Christian statesman. At the age of twenty-eight years the author saw the impossibility of a mediating to a deep principle change that grew through the years. It is echoed in the theme of his humble motto: Not a statesman am I, but a witness of the Gospel.

And as a real Christian statesman, pioneering a path through the confusion of his own time he was a lone figure. There were Christian statesmen of a fashion in his day, and he repeatedly refers to them with appreciation. Among them Friedrich Stahl, a Christian with a Lutheran view of the state; and Francois Guizot who as a Christian, and a first-rank statesman nevertheless, unbelievable as it may seem, supported the French Revolution for 30 years "before the lightning-stroke of 1848 opened his eyes."

In such a world Groen wrote his book.

And now the ruling theme of the book is that the abandonment of faith in the God of the Scriptures must inevitably bring the dissolution of order and law in life and society and the state. That is the theme supported with great masses of material and true Christian insight.

And that is a wonderful thing for us to hear and see in our day of growing Atheism, and at the same time of hopeful clinging to the back-log of conservative, traditional forms.

There is much in this work that causes us to open our eyes in the day in which we live with its constant agitation for change, for radical reconstruction.

Groen takes great pains to show that the revolution and Reign of Terror was not really caused and necessitated by the evils and wrongs and maladministrations of the foregoing years and generations. Many of the goals which ancient statesmen, philosophers and social leaders had envisioned for a happy world had been approximated. And many of the evils which were ascribed to the late ages were grossly exaggerated. Certainly the authority of princes had not degenerated into boundless despotism. The mutual relation between the provinces and crown was far from senseless and intolerable. He makes the strong statement that the 18th Century was free from the feudal burden of the 10th and from the religious wars and the princely tyrannies of the 16th. The griefs were to a great extent unreal and existed only in the imagination of those whose memories were systematically refreshed regarding this distant past by revolutionary leadership. Had the evils been much greater than they really were, they would still not have caused the revolution.

These things are worthy of our consideration in our own world where hand in hand with a climbing standard of living there is always the complaint of injustice, inequality, oppression, enslavement.

And overagainst this trumped-up cause for the anarchy and reign of bloodshed and pillage and incendiarism, Groen asserts and defends with great masses of documentation the judgment that the true cause was the unbelief in God, the reign of reason, the glamor of individualism and a new false freedom for all and every one.

And his pervading emphasis is that this outcome was inevitable. It was the logical outcome of a principle. "We are

inclined to launch the charge of anarchy and despotism against leaders such as Robespierre and Napoleon, and of Atheism and rebellion against such as Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau. And rightly so. But they were also the tools of the spirit of their time (Tijdgeest). They were the mouth-piece rather than the teachers of the populace; leaders to urge a step farther that which could not be halted."

But he goes farther than this by pointing out that even the most horrible of the terrorists were not really men naturally more vicious and cruel than those who hesitated and checked themselves, but were only more courageous in carrying out the fundamental principles which all alike held essentially.

This principle could not rest until that vaunted freedom, in which all were to enjoy the wealth and riches of all, should become a reality.

And so one of the leaders of the revolution, most lusciously enriched by the socialistic "equalization" closes his "History of the Revolution" with the statement, "The freedom has not come; it will come."

It is a mirage by which man is stimulated to strive, to hope. But it is a vain hope that ends in destruction.

In a moving close our author holds before his friends the call of the hour. "We may have little power and that is also our guilt and shame. But let us not pause there. Let us rather point each other to the only fountain from whence freely flows all the strength we need... at the foot of the cross which has by God's mercy become for us a tree of life... peace through the blood of the cross, an offer which has paid the ransom for many, working a change of heart and issuing in love and good works, of which the Saviour Himself testified, "I thank thee Father, Lord of heaven

—cont. on page 10

CURRENT COMMENTS

continued from page 5

But, I cannot refrain to add that though it is so, it is not so; it is as Jesus says, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

ANOTHER PLACE OF WITNESS:

From **Newsweek,** an item appears of a little interest for us in our apparently easy American life. The news carries headlines today of the possible Korean peace. Such will enable us to continue our eating and drinking... but our witness will always be called forth wherever we are.

"Grace before meals": A young couple came into an Indianapolis restaurant and sat down in a booth. One of them took up a card and showed it to the other. Then they made silent use of it and like thousands of others took it home.

"Printed on the card were five prayers (Roman Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran, Episcopalian and Methodist), to be said at grace before meals. The age old custom of asking God to bless food and thanking Him for it was getting a tremendous boost. The Indiana department of the American Legion had started the movement in February as part of the "back to God" movement. By last week 23,000 cards had been distributed to restaurants, hotels and luncheons.

And in Monaroneck, New York, Rev. Wm. F. Fairman of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran announced that 25 restaurants had agreed to print different versions of grace in Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, right on their menus."

This is passed on to you to show a trend. It does not mean that we must join such a movement. Our witness is clearly laid upon us as individuals wherever we find ourselves, and our strength is not in a movement.

NATURE STUDY

MR. ANDREW VOSS
Grand Rapids, Michigan

THE EARTH ON WHICH WE WALK

IN THE NORMAL pursuit of our daily activities we seldom, if ever, give thought to this terrestrial ball of matter to which we are bound so completely. This world upon which we rush to and fro seems in comparison to our bodies very huge indeed! But we and it are composed of the same basic elements, so that we are indeed of the earth earthy.

Our great interest lies, of course, in the activities that take place on its great irving surface and although we are restricted to a tiny part of it, yet because of modern invention we are able to know the doings of our fellow men no matter how remote they may be from us. Not what goes on its surface, but what lies below and how it reveals the greatness of its Creator is to concern us in this brief study.

Our world is a solid sphere that has undergone a slight flattening at the poles so that specifically its shape is oblate spheroid. Its size—with all its sister planets—in relation to the sun about which it revolves, is one seven hundreth. From pole to pole it is 7,899.6 miles and at the equator 7.926.6 miles so that in shape its departure from the perfect sphere is very slight. Scientists tell us that the mass of the earth is six thousand trillion tons!—a figure that our minds cannot grasp—and this great mass of material hangs as it were in space and is kept in relation to the sun and her planets in its exact position at all times as it hurtles along with its teeming millions.

We stated at the beginning that we would concern ourselves with what lies below, so let us in fancy break through the outer crust to see what lies below our feet. First we may say that the bulk of the earth consists of the lithosphere, or solid globe rocks. It comprises a little more than a quarter of earth's whole area which rises above the seas and is called land. Inside this great shell of rocks lies the core of the earth which is about 7,600 miles in diameter and is composed of iron and other elements.

What a terrific pressure must be exerted upon this core above which lies millions of tons of rock! Even with man's ability at present in unlocking many of the powers which God has placed here it is safe to say, we think, that he will never be able to penetrate this realm at earth's center.

Surrounding this 7,600 mile core is another shell consisting of liquid matter and composed of all the rocks we know at the surface. This liquid mass is thought to be about 100 miles in thickness. Upon this sea of molten matter floats the outer crust composed of various rocks, breaking down at the surface into soil. Three quarters of this crust is covered by water and is called the hydrosphere of the earth.

And surrounding all this, of course, is our familiar atmosphere composed chiefly of air and acting as a blanket to keep the earth warm and as a shield against the pieces of matter which constantly

bombard the earth and are called meteorites.

Now back below the surface again; when we drill into the earth we find a gradual increase in the temperature. The average is one degree for every sixty-four feet of descent. At a depth of twenty miles, with this gradual increase in temperature, the earth must be red hot and still further down is sufficient to melt every known substance. The solid earth then, upon which we walk, is but a thin crust—thirty or forty miles thick—floating upon a sea of fire!

The fiery lava that pours from the various active volcanoes scattered over the surface of the earth is proof of this molten sea below. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions speak of the pressure that builds up and is now relieved in this manner.

These earth tremors constantly remind us that this earth is our temporary home and these great internal fires beneath our feet remind us of the manner in which this present earth shall come to an end. The apostle Peter gives us a graphic picture of the end of our earth in the third chapter of his second epistle, where we read, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same world are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

TRUTH VS. ERROR

cont. from page 8

and earth that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to babes"... In this humble submission we shall not strive after high things but condescend to men of low estate, and shall cast down every high thing and lead our thoughts into the obedience of Christ. And let us remember that no work of ours is of any value to Him who knows our hearts unless it is sanctified by these two places, "God be merciful to me a sinner" and the other "my soul cleaves to the dust, make me alive according to thy Word."

I wonder how well we are aware of the pertinence of this testimony in our day in our lives, with its turmoil in home and abroad, in society and in government.

The forsaking of God brings destruction of the state inevitably.

And we are seeing the forsaking of God on every hand before our eyes...

Do we know where we stand and how to stand in such an age?

QUESTION BOX

REV. G. M. OPHOFF
Grand Rapids, Michigan

EXPLAIN HEBREWS 6:4-6 please. (See Beacon Lights, issue for April last) The passage reads:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame."

This Scripture passage does not teach, needless to say, the arminian heresy of the falling away of the saints, the error that the life of regeneration can again be lost: regenerated today, unregenerate tomorrow. For this would set the Scriptures in conflict with themselves, as elsewhere they teach that once a saint always a saint. So at John 10:27-30: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

The arminians corrupt this Scripture by saying that what Christ meant is that "they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand, **on the condition that they abide in me.**" In this way do they render the promises of God null and void by their miserable "conditional theology".

If there is no such thing as a falling away of the saints, it follows that the only kind of people to which the above-cited passage from the Hebrews can be made to apply is the reprobated. What it means that I insist on this is that I am going to explain also this Scripture **with the Scriptures.** And this, certainly, is my solemn duty.

How then is the passage in question to be understood? Let us see. **For** it is impossible for those who were once enlightened....

The (reprobated) apostate was once enlightened, and he still is, meaning that, being born and bred in the christian church, he has a clear conception of christian doctrine, that is, he discerns the truth, **not spiritually,** but purely rationally. Let us put this to a test and see how true it is. According to the Scriptures, when "the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, (then) our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare himself judge of the quick and the dead; burning this old world with fire and flame, to cleanse it...." etc.

Now certainly, this is language the meaning of which the reprobated in the church grasp and understand (purely rationally, of course) as easily and quickly as does any saint. And why not? It's perfectly clear and intelligible isn't it? But the truth it sets forth does not stand out in the minds of the reprobated as a blessed reality, the reason being that, lacking as they do the life of regeneration they hate Christ and the things of His heavenly kingdom. Accordingly, they deny that these things exist. Hence, seeing (rational perception) they see not (spiritual perception).

Mark 4:12. In a word, they are, as our text states, **enlightened.** The reference here is not to spiritual but to rational light. Enlightened, they have light, only to be hardened by it according to the sovereign good pleasure of God.

Further, **they have tasted, and perhaps still do, the heavenly gift.**

By **heavenly gift,** I understand the truth as objectively set forth in the Scriptures. And **the** truth is Christ Jesus, and the triune Jehovah, the God of our salvation as revealed in His face.

That these apostates taste this **heavenly gift** is but another way of saying that they rationally discern the truth and may even be fascinated by it, so that they go to shouting Hallelujah! in the meetings for public worship especially when the Gospel happens to be preached by an exceptionally gifted preacher with a musical voice, imposing presence and faultless pulpit manners. It is also of these same people that Christ speaks in his parable of the sower. He says of them that they hear the word, **and anon with joy receive it** (mark you, with joy do they receive it.) But not having root in themselves—that is, being devoid of the life of regeneration—they endure only for a while. Matt. 13:20, 21.

Were made partakers of the Holy Ghost....

Also rational light—natural, outward knowledge of the truth—is of the Spirit. It is exactly by this light that the Spirit hardens. Wherefore the sacred writer could say, "Were made partakers of the Holy Ghost."

And tasted the good word of God....

This is added because the heavenly gift that is tasted is revealed in the Scriptures, so that tasting this gift is to taste God's good word.

And the powers of the world to come. that is, the powers of Christ's heavenly kingdom, doubtless the powers mentioned in Chap 4:2:— signs and wonders, divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Gho such as prophesying etc. Enlightened by the Spirit and tasting the good word of God in the sense just explained, necessarily includes tasting also these powers. The reprobated preacher of the Gospel in the church prophesies: he proclaims the Gospel perhaps with considerable zeal and enthusiasm—think of Balaam—yet without really sharing in the blessedness on which he discourses.

Now certainly the elect are also endowed with natural, rational light as well as the reprobated. Objectively there is but one knowledge of Christ, one doctrine of God. But they being true children of God, this natural, rational light with which the Spirit endows also them is at once spiritual perception, and thus salutary. Thus it is by the same knowledge of Christ that the Spirit hardesn and softens. And therefore the apostle could write: "Now thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of the knowldge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are—through this knowledge—the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (II Cor. 2:14-16).

And therefore certainly the point that our writer argues is not that all who are endowed with natural, outward knowledge of the truth are reprobated. The believers, too, are thus endowed, and this by reason of what they are—creatures rational and moral. But as was just stated, in the true believers this light is at once spiritual perception and this knowledge saving. It is precisely of this saving knowledge of Christ that the enlightened reprobated are devoid.

Now, says the sacred writer, if those thus rationally enlightened, endowed with knowledge of Christ and the truth

ll away, apostatize, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Of course, their falling away is the sign, evidence, that their knowledge of Christ is only outward and not saving, and that the light with which the Spirit endowed them is but rational perception and not also spiritual discernment. Through their falling away, open and public repudiation of and opposition to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, they become revealed as reprobated. Such, says the sacred writer, cannot again be renewed unto repentance. Not, of course, as if once they had been truly penitent. Not at all. Their repentance, to be sure, was also outward. It was not genuine.

Now to renew such again to repentance is impossible. God could, of course, regenerate them, if He so willed. But He wills not, because they are reprobated, or because, in the words of our writer, they crucify to themselves, now openly, of course, the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame. So they do by openly repudiating and trampling the doctrine of Christ, in a word, the truth.

Let us take notice, by their repudiation of the truth, they crucify Christ not objectively and actually, which, of course, is impossible, but in their minds, imaginations and thus by word and thought. In a word, they crucify Christ to themselves.

Christ was objectively and actually crucified approximately 1900 years ago now by the Jews; rightly considered, by the whole of mankind, including the elect. However, we did it in our ignorance of the fact that it was the blood of the atonement that we were shedding, and therefore this great sin is forgiven us, who by His mercy repent. For we did it in our ignorance. "Father," so prayed Christ at the time, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But now Christ is being crucified anew, afresh, by the reprobated in the church, who commit this great sin, not in their ignorance but, mark you, as enlightened, in clear knowledge of the truth. They sin against the Holy Spirit. It is a sign that they are reprobated. And God wills not to forgive them and to save them. (If space did not forbid, I would add to this exposition some pertinent practical remarks).

And this brings me to the last of the three questions put to me by my correspondent:

Does this apply individually or also in the generations? As there is more in this question than appears on the surface, I shall have to wait with answering it.

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The Military Mail Bag

KENNETH EZINGA
Grand Rapids, Michigan

What say, GI's?

It's time once again to spend a few moments with your fellow servicemen who are writing from various parts of the globe. Three letters this month! Everyone as welcome as a three day pass.

March 25, 1953
Adak, Alaska

Dear friends:

I received my March issue of BL yesterday, and one of the first things I always look for is the letters from my fellow service men. It is always interesting to know where they are and what they are d o i n g. I'm ashamed of myself for not writing before, as every time I get the BL, I say to myself that I'm going to write a letter too. So far, that's as far as I ever got.

I've been in the Navy now for about twenty months, and the first year of it was spent in the States going to different Navy schools. This second year, I'm spending on this place everyone calls "The Rock", which Bill Kooistra wrote about in the March issue.

I was surely surprised when I heard that Ralph Vander Lee and Bill were both coming up here. All three of us were home on leave last summer but I got here two months before they did, as I came direct to Adak after staying in Seattle for only a week.

We stopped in Kodiak for an hour to refuel. That's where we had our last look at trees and other growing plants. Up here there is only Tundra grass. Adakis is about three fourths of the way out in the Aleutian Chain and only servicemen are on the island. It is mostly Navy with a few men from other branches of service. I guess the natives must have known better than to live here.

I am from our Grand Haven church and so is Ralph Vander Lee who happens to be my cousin. Bill, as you read, is from First Church in Grand Rapids.

We don't get to see much of each other except on Sunday in Chapel. We have a new Chaplain here now and he is much better than the last one. None of them I've ever heard however can begin to measure up to our ministers back home. I'm looking forward to the time when I can once again be back in my own church.

I have a very nice job here—an instructor in an Instrument Flight Trainer. It is used to teach pilots the fundamentals and procedures of flying a plane by instrument. We instruct both Navy and Airforce pilots.

Now I can say that I've fulfilled my duty; at least for awhile, and I promise it won't be so long until I write again.

So until next time, I'll say,
Your Friend in the Lord,
John Peterson

John L. Peterson, TD3
Navy 230, Box 48, c/o PM
Seattle, Washington.

April 1, 1953

Dear friends:

I have just received the February issue of the BL. One sure enjoys reading the papers when they are far from home.

December the 9th I left the States from the port of New York. It took eight days for the ship to get to Korea. We stopped at eight different ports and I have seen eight different countries since leaving our shores.

I pulled MP duty on the ship which wasn't such a bad deal. We had every other day off. I took many pictures on the way across. Here is one of myself.

Next month I expect to go to Japan on R and R leave. I haven't made up my mind yet about which city to go to. We have a choice of three.

Here in Korea, our outfit is guarding an airbase against air and ground attacks. We are called out on alert several times during the day and night.

Our living conditions are very good. We live in tents equipt with bunks. It's almost the same as our barracks back in the States. Next month we are going to move into Quonset huts.

Even though we are in Korea we still have inspections. Our quarters are given the once over every day and the equipment every week. Every morning we have PT and all the rest of the silly ideas that sargeants get.

That's all for now.

Sincerely,
Bill Faber

PFC Wm. F. Faber, US55269915
Btry A 398th AAA AW (SMBL)
APO 301 c/o PM, Frisco.

April 2, 1953
Thursday Nite
Time: 6:45

Dear Christian friends:

Well, at last I got up enough courage to write a few lines to BL. This is the first time for me and from now on I'll write once a month if it is all right with you readers.

Well, I suppose you would like to know what has happened to me thus far. I entered service in August of 1952. I spent one month in Fort Custer, Michigan, and then was sent to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas. I completed basic training the 2d of January and went home on a nine day leave (when I took the fatal step) and from thence proceeded overseas.

We left the States January 26 and arrived in Japan February 12. There I was notified that I was on local orders and a few days later was put on a train and headed north to the island of Hokkiado. That is where I am now.

I'm in the 8th Cavalry Regt. of the 1st Cavalry Division in a heavy weapons company.

So far my impression of Japan is about the same as yours. Just from reading about it. I haven't taken any time yet to go sight seeing. I imagine if I stay here long enough I'll get the opportunity.

I have not been fortunate enough to receive any of the BL's yet but I understand I'll be getting them soon. All the time I was in basic I didn't receive them either, and I sure do miss them.

I wrote my wife the other day and asked her to send me some old ones and also some other church papers.

I got the package today and there were three BL editions: December, January and February. I was sure happy to get them. I was also surprised to read a letter sent in by my brother Tom. I didn't know he had written you.

A few weeks ago I had a rare pleasure of speaking to him via the telephone. He had been to Japan an R and R leave. He decided to call me up and see if we could arrange a meeting. It was impossible, so he said that when he rotates and stays in Japan any length of time, that maybe we could get together then. Otherwise he will call me again. You can't imagine what a feeling I got when I heard his voice.

Right now I haven't any pictures to send but I'll send one next month.

I'm sorry to hear that in the past the Military Mailbag just about went hungry. Come on, Fellas, let's make this at least a couple of pages in the BL! This is our column so let's all contribute!!

Well, Friends, I've got to sign off now. But I'll write again next month. Until then may the Lord abundantly bless you all and may He continue to bless BL in all it's activities.

Remembering you all in my prayers, I remain,

Your Christian friend,

Pvt. H. James Sjoerdsma
Co. M, 8th CAV. REG.
APO 201 c/o PM, Frisco

LIFTING THE LID. . . . .

SEYMOUR BEIBOER
Grand Rapids, Michigan

PART IV

A TYPE OF, IF NOT THE ACTUAL ANTICHRIST

"Now children, close your eyes and pray, 'Dear God, I want some chocolate very badly. Please give me a piece of chocolate.'"

This is what the Bolshevik woman teaches at "Sautrai," the Latavian Baptist Orphanage in Vainode, told her class in 1940. (Total Terror, Albert Kalme, page 167).

The children did as they were told and then opened their eyes when the prayers were over.

"Did you get any chocolate?" she ked.

"No," answered the downcast boys and girls.

"Well, try again and again," she ordered. The children repeated the prayers over and over and then again when the teacher instructed them to "put more fervor into it—weep." Still no chocolate.

"Well," said the teacher, "now repeat the following prayer: 'Dear Stalin, friend of all children, I want some chocolate. May I have some chocolate?'"

The children did as they were told and when they opened their eyes a bar of chocolate was on each of their desks. They grinned happily and devoured the precious candy.

"Now children, did God give you this candy?" asked the teacher.

The tots, ranging in age from three to seven, shook their heads solemnly.

"Then who was it that gave you this chocolate?"

"Stalin!" shouted the children.

"So you see children," the teacher continued, "There is no God. Prayers to Him bring nothing. We must look to Stalin, the great father, for everything in life."

Yes, this is but a small sample of the daily instruction that all of the subjects of the Soviet Empire are forced to receive and practice from earliest childhood until the day of their death—the worship of a mere, mortal man who even now is numbered amongst the dead.

In II Thess. 2:4 we read, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The Apostle Paul is here referring to the "man of sin," which is the same as the "beast" of Rev. 13. It looks as if all the portions of Scripture referring to the beast are being fulfilled with all its reality today in Soviet dominated countries as well as in Russia itself. Leland Stowe. in his book, "Conquest by Terror," gives us the following facts:

"Under a Communist government, what happens to your children and to everyone else's children? They are literally kidnapped by the Red state. But no amount of gold can restore the children to the parents' free guidance. The Stalinist's ransom is the child's mind and soul.

"In the course of two weeks, two million adolescents and children from every section of Eastern Europe participated tumultuously in East Berlin's "World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace." Day after day they marched behind blaring bands, sang the hymns of Red Revolution, roared their chants of 'Long live Stalin!' They carried hun-

dreds of portraits of the Great Red Father. They flaunted huge banners with fiery slogans, many reading, "Death to the Anglo-American War Criminals and German Imperialists!" Never in living memory has there occurred such a terrifying "peace" demonstration as this. The faces of boys and girls in peasant costumes from Poland, Bohemia, Slovakia, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria, were flushed with exultation. Parades and pageantry; music and dancing; speeches and fireworks; glory and delirium—while the citizens of democratic nations everywhere continued walking in their sleep."

From the above quotations we can readily see how well all the children of Soviet ruled countries are indoctrinated in the worship of the totalitarian state and of its god, Stalin. The youth are coerced to join one of the Soviet type youth organizations, which upon joining, one must swear an oath under solemn circumstances. These oaths can be summarized to read as follows: "I solemnly swear in the presence of all my comrades, to fulfill all my duties—to openly rage perpetual war upon all religion; to denounce the Living God, to fight with body and soul, the battle of our people against the American imperialistic assassins, and declare myself ready to defend with my life my happy Socialist homeland." The members of youth organizations are dedicated to the worship of Stalin and they alone can enjoy the group games, excursions, free movies, and can win and wear attractive badges. There are also workshops for the mechanically minded members and separate departments for radio, aviation, chemistry, astronomy, photography, and stamp collecting. They give them real jobs and flattering responsibilities. But what happens if a youth refuses to join one of these organizations? Even if he is an excellent and conscientious student, he will receive shockingly low marks. The only qualifications for entrance into the higher Soviet institutions of learning is how well one can worship and serve the State and its "god". Thus we can see that the youth in Soviet occupied countries cannot "get ahead" in anyway whatsoever except they prostrate themselves before the "Almighty State".

The same is true of the adult population under Russian domination. All factory workers, farmers, office help, in fact all people in every walk of life must attend classes where they are indoctrinated in the Soviet religion. Even the Communist newspapers such as "Pravda" daily devote at least three or four pages in praise of Stalin and the Soviet Empire and the denunciations of everything that pertains to Christianity and all religion in general. So does the radio. Listening to foreign broadcasts is strictly forbidden. The radio program of the Soviet Empire are merely "piped" into the peoples homes from a centralized broadcasting station by means of loudspeakers—about the same way that music is "piped" into department stores, offices, factories, etc. in the U.S. All culture such as science, literature, drama, poetry, painting, art, music, yes, even sports and athletics, etc., are subverted to suit the Communistic doctrine. NOTHING, absoultely nothing, can escape this. It must be emphasized that all religious teaching is strictly forbidden as well as the publication of religious papers, books, catechisms, and hymn books. All teachers must sign in writing that they do not believe in God. Yes, Communism will "even think to change times and laws." (Dan. 7:25). All customs and manners of other nations are outlawed. One would be arrested and sentenced to death if he dared to sing "The Star Spangled Banner." The five day week has been instituted

order to do away with the Sabbath. Hence there is no day of rest physically or spiritually. They do not have any days off at all. All of history from the beginning of time to the present is rewritten in order to glorify the Soviet State above all other nations. For example the Kremlin teaches that Russia won the war with Japan in 1945. Their three week war effort, in which the Russian soldiers are thrust into the foreground, was largely responsible for the Japanese defeat. The newsreel version of the surrender entirely omitted General MacArthur and pictured a Japanese officer surrendering to a Russian General! It wasn't Sir Alexander Fleming of England, who discovered penicillin, but three Russians who performed the service for mankind in 1871 according to "Pravda". For some reason or other development was held in abeyance for about fifty years because the Russians lacked the equipment to take advantage of the discovery.

No one can escape worshipping the so-called State because all industry, farming, trade, in fact everything is under its absolute control. Everybody, including women, are forced to work for the State. One is at the mercy of the State for the bare essentials of life and the State must be recognized for this. All workers are forced to give as much as 15% of their wages each payday in order to prove that he is a staunch proletarian devoted for the cause of Communism. The State simply deducts this gift (so called) from the worker's pay—about in the same manner in which our Federal Government takes money from our paychecks for income tax. In the Soviet Empire no strikes, sabotage, or labor unions of any kind are permitted. Factory workers are sentenced to six months of slave labor if they come twenty minutes (or more) late to work for the first time. One cannot quit his job and seek another without permission from the State which also dictates how much a person can earn and how much one must produce in order to earn a full day's pay.

Can a Soviet subject seek to escape this tyranny by fleeing into some free country? In the first place all travel is strictly forbidden without the permission of the State. Furthermore in order to escape into the free countries one must pierce an encircling "iron curtain" consisting of armed guards, trained dogs, and miles of electric and barbed wire fences and other barriers. Very seldom does one pierce this "iron curtain" alive.

In the Soviet Empire they also have "images of the beast which both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the beast should be killed" (Rev. 13:14-15). Think of the possibilities of radio, radar, and television, which Russia also uses. Russia possesses the greatest and the most barbaric secret police system the world has ever known, which is Moscow's first top priority export into the Iron Curtain countries. It has been installed and consolidated in every city, town, and village. It penetrates every nook of daily occupation. every cranny of human activity or entertainment and even in the innermost privacy of the family. No conquered nations have ever been so utterly and inescapably police controlled as the so called "liberated peoples' democracies". The Kremlin's M.V.D. network reduces Hitler's Gestapo to a second rate status by a wide margin. It is much more all-embracing, more tightly organized. All employees of hospitals, hotels, restaurants, amusement centers, public transportation, all apartment house managers, mailmen, janitors. and countless others are forced to act as spies for the Soviet secret police system. Even children are required to act as spies against

—cont. on page 24

BIBLE OUTLINE

REV. M. GRITTERS
Pella, Iowa

LESSON 61

TENT HOUSE AND THE BETTER

II Cor. 5:1-5

CHAPTER 5 begins with the word "for" and indicates that Paul is motivating what he had just said in the end of chap. 4. He spoke of fainting not, of being of good courage, even in the face of death. Because we look at the things which are not seen. The unseen things are eternal.

To the unseen things belong the heavenly, new and resurrected life in the glorified body. So in our lesson we have the contrast between the "tent-house" which is the present state of existence, and the "heaven-house" which is the new life of the resurrection. The regenerate lives now in the tent-house of this tabernacle, he will move to the heaven-house by and by.

The great mystery of faith leads us to say, "We know" (vs. 1) that when the earthly house in which we live at present is folded up or taken down, or collapses, we know that there awaits us a new life, called: the building of God. It is a house untouched by human hands, eternal in the heavens. The contrast is therefore between the present earthly life which is (1) temporary, (2) destructible and (3) uncertain, and the new order of things after this life. Paul had spoken in chapter 4 of his suffering as Christ's missionary and of the death to which this persecution would likely lead (4:11). At that point the earthly tent is destroyed. But what then? Then we know that we enter upon a new life, not of the tent-type but permanent and eternal. Therefore we faint not. What if the enemies of the Cross succeed in breaking down this present tent-life, they cannot touch the "building which we have of God."

Not only do we have good courage therefore in the face of imminent death, but (vs. 2) we groan with intent longing to put on this new life. Some might want to die to escape the present distress. Not so we, who have the Spirit, we know that there is a new ord waiting in glory, and we do long for Do you ever long for heaven and its glory? We do not long to be unclothed and be found naked, but we groan longingly for that great act of God in which we shall put on the new man as it is created in Christ Jesus. The condition which Paul calls nakedness, I take it, refers to this temporal death. The soul is then unclothed. It lacks its dwelling place. Immediately after death the 'soul shall be taken up to Christ its head' (Catechism, Q. 57) but the body reposes in the cemetery. There is a first resurrection (Rev. 20:1-5). But the final act of being clothed upon does not occur until the soul and body are reunited (Catechism Q. 57 and Phil 3:21). Then we have our heavenly House. And death is swallowed up.

Of all this God has given us the guarantee by giving us His Spirit (vs. 5). The Spirit is the first fruit. It is God Who has worked this out for us for H

s prepared all this for us and it is God Who has promised us all this. But it is also God Who has worked the hope of this in our hearts and it is God Who has set us to longing for it. Therefore we, His missionaries, are not afraid of the threatenings of the persecutors since we are more than conquerors. Paul is assured of the immortal glory. With less than this assured hope who would be missionary? Who could be?

Discussion

1. What does the word "eternal" mean in vs. 1?
2. That our bodies here and now are called "earthly house of this tabernacle" (vs. 1) what world-and-life view does this give us?
3. What about the souls of the saints between the time of their death and the moment of resurrection? Are they "naked"?

LESSON 62

LIVING UNTO CHRIST

II Cor. 5:6-15

Paul is still emphasizing that he has every reason to carry on his missionary work with high courage and fortitude. He is servant of His Lord. His aim is to labor sincerely, as in the presence of the Lord, living unto His Lord. Assured, moreover, of the coming judgment and the immortal glory which awaits. As Paul had also said, in his examination before Felix: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." cts 24:15-16). As every Christian should say: I live in the presence of the Lord.

In vs. 6-9 there is the contrast between being "at home in the body... and then being absent from the Lord" and being "absent from the body and being present with the Lord." In the roll-call, "present" here on earth in the tent-house means "absent" over there in heaven. And absent here on earth means present over there. All the while that we are "at home in the body" we are "out of home, away from the Lord." What the intermediate state is, I cannot fully say, but this much is plain from Scripture that as soon as we are "absent" in the roll-call on earth, we are "present" over there. Phil. 1:23 also speaks of departing and "being with Christ." This is a conscious state of bliss.

If we understand this we will think of the death of the righteous as an arrival (in glory), not as a departure (from our world). Something that ought to be emphasized at the funeral also.

"We are confident" says Paul, since we walk by faith, that we are never forsaken of God. When death comes we go to be present with the Lord. Therefore it even attracts us. By faith we understand mysteries, also the mystery of death. It becomes an act of faith to die. Animals die as animals, wicked as wicked, but righteous die as those who love to "be at home" with the Lord Blessed mystery. In vs. 9 Paul adds that in view of this blessed outlook, we labor. This word, I believe, means to be ambitious, to strive with earnest endeavor (I Thess. 4:11). I should probably give a paragraph explaining this word, so beautiful it is. Suffice it to say that it indicates a burning desire on the part of Paul to be well-pleasing to God. Whether present or absent, to live in justification by faith and good works and have the consciousness of God's approval.

How significant too. There is a public judgment coming (vs. 10). God judges every day, every day we live in His presence. But there will be a public judgment, when all the public shall see what each one of us has done. Every secret of everyone's life shall be manifest to everyone. Everyone shall be judged before the judgment seat of the exalted Christ. And each one shall receive what was done through the body, whether it was good or evil (Cf. Romans 2:6-11). Men may pass judgments, courts and judges try cases, but Christ tries every man and every trial. And each shall carry away that perfect justice requires shall come to him. God's people are not glorified on the basis of their works, neither apart from their works. Here is that mystery of grace by which the works of Christ become our works before the Father. We are called therefore to walk in those works.

Vs. 11 knowing therefore the fear of the Lord we persuade men, we preach to them. God sees us and He knows our hearts... why we preach and what we preach. Even if sometimes we seem to you to be "beside ourselves" (as they also said of Jesus in Mark 3:21) or whether we seem to you to be sober, we are motivated by love of the Christ. He died for us and we died (vs 14) in order that we should live unto Him now. We have died to carnal and selfish ambitions. Christ died and was raised. We have died. The world is crucified to us and we to the world. We live not unto ourselves. Therefore we preach. We are not lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.... be that your confession too.

Discussion

1 In vs 9 Paul gives the motive of his laboring. Heretics have corrupted the doctrine of and the value of good works. To keep you reformed in y thinking on this subject watch also the Confessions on this point (Catechism L.D. 23; L.D. 32, Belgic Conf. 24). Apply Paul's motive to yourself and what do you find?

2 What is it to "glory in appearance" in vs 12?

3 "Not living unto ourselves but unto Him" what a glorious world-and-life view (vs 15) and don't forget the word "henceforth."

LESSON 63

RECONCILIATION AND NEWNESS

II Cor. 5:16-21

Christ died for us. We died with Him in order that we should henceforth live unto Him, so Paul has s in Vs 15.

Then, in vs 16, Paul says "wherefore" .... we think, preach and live in terms of this newness of life. We do not glory in appearance nor consider men on carnal bases, but we come to know each other as children of God, as being raised with Christ in newness of life. Paul once knew Christ after the flesh i.e. had carnal ambitions concerning Him (as before his experience enroute to Damascus) but now he knew Christ in a new light. He had been raised from the dead with Christ and had entered into the newness. For being in Christ (vs 17) by a living faith, we are new creatures. We have gone from death into life. Old things are passed away. Newness is come. If anyone is in Christ he is a new creature. If your life does not bespeak newness, it is because you are not living in Christ. Probably the Corinthians, with their bickering amo

ch other and their suspicions of Paul needed to be reminded that they must break with the "old things".

In vs 18 Paul declares that all this newness has come from God. It is God Who brought it about. And how did He do this? God reconciled us unto Himself, through the Cross of the Lord. Through that Cross indeed, the world died unto me and I unto the world. The new relationship of reconciliation has entered. The enmity of sin has been put away in Christ and the embrace of God's eternal mercy a genuine experience. And this newness becomes ours through the Gospel of Reconciliation. The new grace relationship between us and God is effected through the preaching of (about ... concerning) the reconciliation. As the Form says: "without this Word of reconciliation faith in Christ and consequently salvation is and remains forever impossible" (Ord. of Missionaries). God has given to his ministers the ministry (or service or the administration) of the reconciliation. Vs 19 declares the contents of the Gospel ministry. God's ministers are called to "explain ... apply ... instruct, admonish, comfort and reprove ... preaching repentance toward God and reconciliation with Him through faith in Christ ... refuting all heresies repugnant to the pure doctrine." They must therefore proclaim that God sent His Son into the world, and that God Himself "in Christ" was bringing the world into reconciliation unto Himself. God was forgiving our trespasses, imputing our trespasses unto Christ. And upon the Cross God bruised His Own Son for our sakes and thus cleansing away our enmity and judgment. This Word of reconciliation God has entrusted unto His legally called ministers. In fact God put that word in His ministers (vs 19) and sent them out into the world to proclaim what God had been doing on the behalf of His people. While we had been ignorant of God and sinning against Him, while we had been enemies and fighting against Him, God was in Christ going about to reconcile us. That makes us feel ashamed. As the believing sinner sits under that kind of preaching it gives him hope. He is reminded from what great Authority this Word comes and is commanded to believe it, to obey it. And he enters into the newness with the experience of Ps. 116.

God mercifully calls them into this reconciliation (vs 20). Now the Corinthians, and the churches today, must know that Paul and his fellow-ministers are legally appointed of God to be "ambassadors". They speak in God's Name, in Christ's Name. So much so that it is as though God Himself exhorts and beseeches them through His ministers. We pray you, by the authority of God, be ye reconciled to God. This is very personal. The address is to the believer. It must be said to him (vs 21) that God has made Christ to be sin for him. Christ Who had no sin became guilty in our stead, that we might have the righteousness which can be approved of God. Come then ... He beseeches, we pray you, enter into the reconciliation. Have boldness. God Himself beseeches you.

Discussion

1 What are the new things in Vs 17?
2 "God was IN CHRIST ...." what does that mean? Why "world" in vs 19?
3 Why does God have the ministers preach beseechingly? Vs 20.

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their parents. The same is true of wives, husbands, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. If they do not, they are punished for lack of vigilance. In brief it can be summarized that everybody is compelled to act as a spy on one another. Therefore in the Soviet Empire you either worship the "beast" with all your heart, soul, and mind and don't you dare to say or even whisper the least thing against him—or else you will experience the meaning of those awful solemn words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matt. 24:15-22 and of the Seer on the Isle of Patmos in Rev. 13:16-17 to the very letter; for Communism bears not the sword power in vain. The dread terror of starvation, torture ,and of being sentenced to slave labor in Siberia constantly hangs over the heads of all the subjects of the Soviet Empire. I hope to dwell more fully on this sordid phase of Communism in my next installment, not because this subject is pleasant to write on, but because the dark portions of the Scriptures are being fulfilled today with all its stark reality. And when these dark portions are being fulfilled; they remind us Christians of something else—that Jesus Christ is coming quickly and that the day of our deliverance is at hand.