"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem... there came wise men from the east..." - Matt. 2:1
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In the midst of wars and rumors of wars.

We can again expect as another Christmas season approaches that there will be an almost universal clamor for "peace". Even while nations are locked in a malicious struggle for supremacy, and while others are feverishly preparing to enter the conflict at a moment's notice, the "Prince of Peace" will be eulogized from many a platform and through many a loudspeaker. People will go on dreaming of a "war to end all war" and a universal peace in which they will no more use their aluminum for bombing planes and their steel for armament, but will "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks". They will tell you that "peace" can be acquired once for all by downing all dictatorial powers and restoring the freedom of democracy.

Be not deceived. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes in divers places, and famines, and pestilences. These are but the beginning of sorrows. The Church will be persecuted and hated of all nations for Christ's sake. the apostacy will be great, and Antichrist will arise. All these things must come to pass. for the end is not yet.

And yet, in the midst of all that, the angels' song re-echoes: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace in the people of His good pleasure.

Peace, through conflict.

God has put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

Already the head of the serpent lies broken and bleeding under the powerful heel of the Captain of our salvation. Who entered into our conflict, bore the burden of our guilt in the anguish of His soul in
a pain-racked body, broke the power of our arch-enemy, the devil, marched triumphantly through death, hell and the grave, to be seated at the right hand of power in the highest heavens.

I know that my Redeemer liveth. Already the Spirit of the risen Lord has raised us out of death into life, set His throne in our hearts, giving us peace with God through the blood of the cross and daily equipping us to the battle of faith against all the powers of darkness that assail us.

O, why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? He shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The Lord shall hold them in derision.

The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. Death shall be swallowed up in victory in the new heavens and the new earth.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.

Peace on earth, now and forever.

Peace, even in the face of warfare.

Whether you be a young man or woman at home, moving about in troublous times, in a world of unrest and confusion, full of doubts and fears: or whether you are a soldier in the training camp threatened with the possibility of being called to the field of battle, that peace is your only vanguard.

Let not your heart be troubled. Others may speak of a broken morale, may whisper of cowardly desertion, in sheer desperation may approach or even go over the brink of suicide, or sell their souls to dissipation and carnal lusts.

Be not disturbed, neither be ye dismayed. Peace Christ leaves with you. His peace He gives to you. A peace with God that passes all understanding. that assures us that all is well and that we can safely commit our way into His keeping.

Faith is the victory that overcometh the world.

For unto you is born the Saviour, Which is Christ, the Lord. Glad tidings of great joy. Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth!
The Protestant Reformed Hour

Sunday afternoon, A. D. 1941. November, the ninth. The clock in the radio studio WLAV stood at precisely 4:15. At the wave of the baton the choir of six male and six women voices struck up the opening theme song, “Established in the highest heavens, the Lord has set His throne, and over all His kingdom rules, for He is God alone.” Fifteen minutes of the forty-five minute broadcast are devoted to hymns from the Psalter; words and tunes which carry a familiar ring in the hearts of many.

IT’S NEW

For those who participate in the broadcasts it was the fifth program of its kind. For me it was a novel experience to both witness and hear our own Protestant Reformed people on the air.

On this particular Sunday the Rev. H. Hoeksema spoke on the subject, “The Living God”. In a thoroughly lucid, interesting and thought-provoking way the listeners were impressed with the fact that our Triune God lives His own divine Covenant life of perfect friendship and takes His people unto Himself to share that Covenant life with Him in perfect blessedness unto the praise of His glory. The living truth of the Word of God stirred an echo of faith in the believing heart. “this is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.”

It speaks well for our youth that their first efforts toward broadcasting have produced a program of this caliber.

Anyone who hears these broadcasts will immediately agree that they are decidedly different from any other broadcast, even of their kind.

IT’S DISTINCT

Superficiality, which so commonly marks the religious broadcasts of our superficial age, is conspicuous in its absence. Mere emotionalism so often mistaken for real inspiration, does not taint these programs in any way. Just because Scripture is never superficial, and because Scripture is allowed to speak freely, the rich and full revelation of God predominates.

That is its peculiar distinctiveness. These radio addresses are not interpretations of a few isolated portions of Scripture, but are expositions of certain fundamental truths as they are revealed to us throughout all of the Scriptures. The Word of God speaks from beginning to end, and the living truth of that Word as it lives in the hearts of the believers takes on a
fuller and richer significance at each broadcast.

For that reason it appeals to the Reformed believer who treasures the instruction he has received both in the catechism rooms and from the pulpit, who delights in the study of the Word of God and finds it his chief meditation. It serves to enrich the knowledge he has already acquired and fills him with a desire to ever grow in that knowledge.

Without fear of contradiction it can be said that this is the only program of its kind, and therefore fills a crying need. No doubt, it will find an attentive and ever growing audience, not only in our own circles, but also among all those who love and cherish the faith of our fathers.

A FIRST FRUIT

We have here a concrete example of what can be done. Do you know that these broadcasts are made possible largely through the small contributions of from ten to twenty five cents per week? How many young people, and older ones as well, spend far more than this small amount every week for trifling luxuries which give but passing pleasure. A more extensive effort in and around Grand Rapids can make these broadcasts still more effective by reaching a larger audience. In other localities as well a small weekly contribution from those who are eager to take advantage of these broadcasts will do much toward making this possible.

Our young people have begun this project. Let's see it through. Let's not let anyone avail himself of the opportunity of taking it from you through your laxity.

Each local society should put forth an effort at once to bring these programs into their community. In time this could even become a project for the PRYPF. Possibly the 1942 Convention can already take preliminary steps toward making this a broadcast that can be heard throughout all of our Churches. Which is only another reason why all of our Churches should be represented in that ever growing, ever more active and influential Federation of Protestant Reformed Youth.

A weekly broadcast throughout all of our Churches may seem but a dream yet, but let's strive to make it a reality. And that as soon as possible

May God's blessings rest upon the efforts that are being put forth, and may that blessing be evidenced in the fruits of these and future broadcasts.

Listen to... The Protestant Reformed Hour

Each Sunday Afternoon — 4:15 P. M.
Station WIAV — 1340 on your Dial
BETHLEHEM!

Wonderful Bethlehem! Where the wonder of all wonders, the mystery of all mysteries, the Incarnation of the Eternal Logos, is accomplished in the way of the sign of all signs, the miraculous Virgin Birth!

Blessed Bethlehem! Small to be numbered among the thousands of Judah, yet to us the greatest of them all! For there, in that tiny Bethlehem, in that lowly manger, in that babe, so humbly wrapped in swaddling clothes,—there lies our salvation. There the wondrous grace and immeasurable love of an infinite God has broken through into a world of sin and guilt to give life out of death, light in the midst of darkness, hope where there was naught but blank despair, beauty for ashes, heaven for hell.

Well may the innumerable host fill the star-studded heavens with their joyous refrain, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!"

Come then, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, this mystery of godliness, the Incarnation of the Living God, and let us ask:

Who is this wondrous Babe, this Infant, Whom shepherds and wise men and a throng no man can number from all nations and tribes and kindreds worship as their Redeemer? What is that thing that came to pass that first Christmas night, so blessed to the heart of
God’s Church:

The wise of the world, void of the grace of God, go to Bethlehem, glance into the manger, at the child so like unto all other children, and opine: nothing out of the ordinary has come to pass. A child was born to Joseph and Mary, no more. True, he was destined to be illustrious above all other men. He was endowed with special gifts with a view to a very special task among men. Even so, he was mere man, no more.

Others, unbelievers too, have gone to Bethlehem, studied the child, and concluded: that child is neither God nor man. He is a sort of intermediate creature, made in eternity by God and come into the world in the form, the appearance of the human nature.

The church of God has confessed from the moment “this thing came to pass”: it is the mystery of godliness! The promised Redeemer! That Babe is not a mere infant among infants. He is God and man. Even so, however, also in the church of Christ perfect clarity has not always prevailed on the doctrine involved. There were those, on the one hand, who separated the two natures of the Mediator to that extent, that all unity was lost sight of. Others failed to maintain the eternal distinction between the divinity and humanity of “the Babe of Bethlehem” and fused the two natures into one in such a manner that all distinction was lost.

After centuries of controversy and intense study of the Scriptures, however, the church gradually came to greater clarity of conception and purity of confession, so that we are now able to confess, briefly but pertinently: “That God’s eternal Son, Who is and continueth true and eternal God, took upon Him the very nature of Man, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost: that He might also be the true seed of David, like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted.” Catechism, Lord’s Day 14. (See also articles 18 and 19 of our Belgic Confession).

That Babe, therefore, is God’s eternal Son, the second Person of the Adorable Trinity. That Son is the one and only person involved in the miracle of the Incarnation. “The Word became flesh.” “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Neither does the Son become a human person when he enters into the flesh. Whenever the Mediator says “I” the eternally begotten of the Father, no human person, speaks.

That Babe, personally the Son of God, is, according to the divine nature, true and eternal God. Thus the Babe of Bethlehem is God forever. Coessential with the Father
and the Holy Spirit, the Son lives eternally the full divine life in the full essence. His are all the divine names and attributes. He is and forever remains true, righteous, holy, omnipotent, omniscient, immutable God. This is not changed by the Incarnation. Wherefore it is written concerning that same Babe: "Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Romans 9:5.

That Babe, however, is God's eternal Son, Who is and forever remains true and eternal God, in the nature of man. The Son became God and man, even so, that while He, as God, lives the full divine life eternally, He, as man, lives the full human life in a perfectly human way. That is the incomprehensible but infinitely glorious and comforting miracle of the Incarnation of the Word. That is "the thing which is come to pass.

Concerning this union of the divine and the human nature in the one person of the Son of God, the Church of Christ, as early as the year 451. has emphasized, that they are "inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly and inseparably united. Never, therefore, may these two natures of the Mediator be confused, that is, fused into one. That has been and is being done by all those, who conceive of the Christ as a sort of God-man, theanthropos, a being, who is neither God nor man, but a mixture of the two. Of course, then all is lost. Then God does not remain God. Then Creator and creature are fused into one and you have fallen into pure Pantheism. With an eye to this heresy we confess, that the two nature are united "inconfusedly". Never do they become one. The unity must not be sought in the natures, but in the one person who lives in and through both natures, in the one as God, in the other as man.

By the same token neither the divine nor the human nature may be presented as having undergone any essential change in the Incarnation. True, the Son of God came in the form of a servant, in the likeness of sinful flesh, in which He humbled Himself even unto death. Even so, the Godhead did not change. True, too, the human nature was endowed with special gifts by virtue of its miraculous union with the divine. In fact, by virtue of the latter the former was exalted to the highest heavens. Even so, the human nature remained wholly human, in Bethlehem and forever more.

The two natures of Christ, so the Church continues to confess, are "indivisibly" united. There was nothing lacking in either nature. The complete human nature united with the complete divine nature, and that in the single person of the Son of God.

Finally, the divinity and human-ity of the Mediator were "inseparably" united. Both extremes, there-
fore, that of confusion as well as separation of the two nature, stand condemned. The unity, however, must never be sought in the natures as such, but only in the one Person, Who lives in and through the two natures. The latter, eternally distinct, are one only by virtue of the fact that there is one subject, one “I”. Who according to the Godhead knows, wills, speaks and lives as infinite God, while the same subject, according to the human nature knows, wills, speaks and lives as finite, dependent man.

Truly, the mystery of godliness is great! God manifest in the flesh!

How could this thing come to pass? That wonderful Babe must have been born in a wonderful way! And so He was!

He was “conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary!” Thus that Christ-child, so like and yet so unlike all other children, was born in a way, so like and yet so unlike the birth of any other child.

He was born of Mary. How simple, how perfectly natural, how similar to the birth of any child! Jesus’ mother was simply one of the women of our human race, like unto any other covenant woman. And yet, how significant are these words: “Born of...Mary.”

Thus we know, that the Son of God became very, that is, real man. Born as all children are born, out of one of the women of our race, He assumed our flesh and blood. He was not a foreigner to our race, nor was the blood He shed on Calvary strange blood. He was one of us.

Thus we know, that God’s Son assumed the flesh and blood of the children. He had to be of the seed of Abraham, out of the house of David, like unto His brethren. Born of Mary He became all this. And this is pertinent. Here, if ever, we must emphasize the covenant line. Israel’s Redeemer must take hold of the human nature in the very core of the covenant of God.He must come as the Elect of all the elect, and hence out of and in their very midst. He must be born of the elect kernel, of which He is the root, as the Son of David, the Head of the covenant of Jehovah.

Out of Mary He assumed the weakened human nature. Christ took our flesh and blood, not as Adam bore it before He fell into sin, but as Mary herself bore it. He assumed the corruptible, mortal, weak, earthly, natural human nature. Truly, He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Rom. 8:3. Mind you, He did not come in the likeness of flesh, nor did He come in the sinful flesh. In either case we would have no Redeemer. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and thus became like unto us in all things.

Sin excepted! He knew no guilt, because He was not a human per-
son and guilt is reckoned to the person. Personally He was not a member of the human race, included as all men are in Adam, but He was and forever is a member of the Holy Trinity. And He was without the stain of sin, because He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and preserved from all pollution in Mary's womb.

"Born of the Virgin Mary!" Oh, mystery of mysteries!

How the modern, conceited world opposes this miraculous conception and birth of the Saviour we know. Presuming to be a scientist, it scoffs and says: it is scientifically impossible that a child should be conceived without the will of man. Setting itself up as an exegete of the Word of God, it posits: the word "virgin" in Scripture also refers to a young married woman. But, can that be the meaning in the case of Mary? If it is, Jesus was a bastard, for this much is certain: if Jesus had an earthly Father, it was another than Joseph. Why, else, was Joseph, "being a just man, minded to put her away"? Matt. 1:19. Either, Jesus was born of a virgin or He was born of a horrible fornication. Why, then, does this same world continue to glorify a bastard like Jesus of Nazareth and adore a harlot like Mary?

To the world as theologian we say: it was necessary that Jesus be born without the will of man. This necessity follows from the very fact that it took place in this manner. It was necessary in order that all the world, and the church in particular, might know that the Babe of Bethlehem was indeed the promised Messiah. It was necessary, because that which is of the flesh is flesh, and sinful man could never have the right to beget anything that is not sinful flesh; because mere man could never beget a nature fit to be the home of the eternal Son of God; and because only the eternal Son Himself can prepare His own nature in the womb of the virgin Mary.
To the world, in whatever capacity, we say: you refuse to accept this miracle of the Virgin Birth only because you refuse to accept the miracle of the incarnation itself. For one who believes the latter, the former should be and is easy to believe. In fact, the more deeply conscious we are of the truth of the Incarnation itself, the more deeply we feel that it is as inevitable as proper that such a miracle should involve a corresponding miracle in the physical aspect of the birth. With the late Professor B. Warfield we say, "To Christianity it would have been unnatural if the birth of the Saviour had been natural."

Hence, the confession of the church of all ages stands: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Thus the Holy Spirit, not the will of man, is the efficient cause of the conception. And Mary became pregnant by a direct work of God Himself, Who through the Spirit prepared humanity in the most blessed among women and with that divinely conceived humanity united the Person of the Son of God. A profound mystery, you say? Of course! Is not all conception an unfathomable mystery? Science, with all its wisdom, is still unable to unveil the mystery of the origin of a child. How then shall the manner of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word be anything else than a wholly unfathomable mystery.

Wonderful thing that is come to pass! Mystery of godliness!

Thus, and only thus can that Babe of Bethlehem, later the Sufferer of Calvary, and now the Resurrected and Glorified Lord, be our Head and Redeemer, our merciful High Priest, Who can prepare eternal salvation for us and us for eternal salvation.

Only in this way that Babe is the Lamb of God, without spot and blemish, in Whom is our reconciliation with the living God. He bears our nature, so that when He suffers and dies, we suffer and die. And behind that nature our nature is always the power of the divine to sustain and strengthen to the very end, to glorify Him and give divine eminence to all His work as our Saviour.

Thus, and only thus, as the Word become flesh, our Mediator can apply that reconciliation and perfect redemption and exalt that human nature, our nature, you and me, to the glory God has ordained for us in the Beloved. He is Immanuel, the Lord of heaven, the Wonder of the grace of God! In Him the divine and the human, God and man, are united forever in blessed covenant fellowship.

Blessed Bethlehem!

There is our peace and the pardon of all our sins!

There was centrally realized the word of the Lord Jesus Himself: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."
Under the above title I shall write on the subject assigned me for this December issue of our "Beacon Lights". The subject on which I have been asked to write is actually: "The Political Conditions of Rome and Palestine at the time of our Saviour's Birth and the relation of the former to the latter". However I shall write on "the fullness of time" because this is a literal quotation from Scripture and because it will cover also the subject material which was assigned me. The term "fullness of time" refers to that time which was made full and complete by our covenant God, so that the Saviour could be born in a world that was made ripe for His blessed coming.

We must at the very outset however guard ourselves against a very prevalent but wholly mistaken view of this fullness of time. Most students of Scripture maintain that the fullness of time is that period of time in which the world was in a state of readiness to receive and accept the Christ. The whole world, both Gentile and Jew, had been gradually made receptive to the gospel of Christ and were in the state of preparedness to believe this gospel. So it is reasoned. The heathen world was not always ready or receptive to receive the Christ, it is said, but this receptivity came about by a process of development and formation throughout all the Old Dispensation. For centuries the Heathen world had their sacrifices and forms of religion. O surely they were not real sacrifices and their religion was in reality paganism, it is argued, but nevertheless it all proves the fact that there was a groping for, and striving after that religion which alone can be to man's eternal happiness. When finally this religious attitude reaches its climax, and all heathendom has learned the foolishness of their own religion and are ready to turn to the true gospel of peace and righteousness, then the FULNESS OF TIME has come and God sends forth His Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh. into all the world.

Let us not be deceived into thinking that we are merely referring to some very modernistic thinkers, far removed from our own circles. This is not the case. Even Prof. Dr. H. Bavinck of the Netherlands took a somewhat similar view of the matter, as well as the famous historian Schaff and others. Very well do we remember that as a boy we heard of the theory teaching us that whereas in the Old Dispensation only the Jews could receive
(and that partially) the true religion, in the New Dispensation the whole world (Roman and Jew) were ready to receive and accept it, and that therefore God now sends His Son.

Of course this whole theory is in conflict with the plain teaching of Holy Writ. The light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. Moses writes that the gods of the heathen are devils and in describing the condition of the heathen world of his day, the apostle Paul tells us that the things sacrificed by the Gentiles, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. The Gentiles have their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. It is therefore not difficult to prove from Scripture that the fullness of time refers to the time when the pagan world was receptive to the truth as it is in Jesus, for the heathen world never was and never will be receptive to the true religion.

However, we may first of all say, by way of explaining the term "Fullness of Time," that it does to that time wherein all the world was ripe. All things were ready and prepared by God. This means that also the very political condition of Rome, the ruler of the world, was such that Christ could now be born. Caesar Augustus had indeed succeeded in establishing a world empire, such as had never been seen before, even not under Alexander the Great of Greece. And though the Romans had at first conquered the world in barbarous fashion, idealizing only power and not so-called culture, as the Greeks did, nevertheless under Caesar Augustus, the Roman Empire established the first real peace over the world since Alexander of Greece. In all the countries round the Mediterranean Sea and from distant Britain to the Euphrates River, the world was at rest. Rome had made an end to her own civil wars and had also put a stop to the various wars between the nations. The Empire under Augustus politically united Romans, Greeks and Jews, and ruled them all under a uniform system of government. All were members of one earthly State, when our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, to establish His kingdom with citizens taken from every tribe and tongue and language.

Another element constituting this fullness of time was the spread of Cosmopolitanism, which had already begun with the Greek Alexander. Under the Roman Empire of Augustus all national barriers were removed, and the great cities of that day — Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, etc. — became meeting places of all races and languages. The Romans were everywhere carrying their laws and civiliza-
tion. Greeks settled by the thousands in all important centers as tradesmen, professors, physicians, etc. Orientals were found with their gods and mysteries in Rome, the center of influence in the then known world. In the Roman armies soldiers from all quarters of the Empire became companions. So that the cosmopolitan character of the peoples served the purpose of the coming of the gospel to all nations, tribes and tongues.

In close connection with the former, we may mention also the universal use of the Greek language, which was of course also begun under Alexander the Great of Greece. Even as today Herr Hitler of Germany demands the study of the German language throughout all Europe, so the Greek language became the commonly used language: and was used at the time of Christ’s birth by Jew and heathen alike. It is readily to be understood that this element contributed immediately to the propagation of the blessed and good tidings which began when the Angels announced to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem: “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people”. By this common use of this language, it is readily understood that many disciples of Christ, being uneducated in the schools of learning, could nevertheless spread the gospel and also discourse with others even of a different nationality, about the kingdom of heaven. So we may say that the fullness of time includes the general state of the Roman Empire, which from many points of view made the spread of the gospel favorable.

Finally as to the state of the Palestinian governments, which also were under Roman rule, we may remark that there were no true Jewish believers in high places anymore, when the Christ was born. The scepter had indeed departed from Juda. The high-priesthood, which wielded great influence also in political matters, was corrupted. Under Herod the great, the country was prosperous and peaceful, although Herod’s reign was characterized by the greatest cruelty. There was left in the country of Judea and Palestine, a remnant according to the election of grace, which did long for and soon expected the coming of the promised Messiah. Throughout the whole dark period from the last of the prophets until the birth of Christ, the faith of the fathers under the law, was upheld by this remnant, especially under the guidance and influence of the Maccabean brothers. This, too, contributed to the ripeness and fullness of time. All in all we may remark that the unity and greatness of the universal Empire of the Romans in that day, gave an earthly picture of the church of Christ, as to the universality and cosmopolitan character of the kingdom of Christ,
who was born in the fulness of time. Even as the national boundaries were broken by Caesar Augustus, so the Church had to be prepared to break the national boundaries of the Jews and bring the gospel of the kingdom of grace to all peoples.

However we must be on our guard that we do not interpret the fulness of time as signifying the preparedness of the heathen world to accept the gospel of Christ. In the first place we must remark that God had so determined all things that they would be ripe for the further development of His covenant unto all peoples. It is not true that through all these various changes in the universal setup, the peoples were as one man waiting for the gospel of peace. Contrariwise, the people remained in darkness and hated the light, also the light of the gospel of Christ. This is manifest especially when the Apostles go out into all the world to preach. Even the very elect, before their understanding was enlightened by the power of God's grace, were hostile to the kingdom. Think in this connection of the Jailer who had charge of Paul while the latter was in prison. He had laid many stripes upon the backs of Paul and Silas and then put them fast into stocks in the inner prison rooms, to insure their captivity. Think also of the citizens of that same city, when the damsel, possessed of a spirit of divination, was crying out in the streets of the city: "These men, are the servants of the most high God, which show us the way of salvation". The men of Lystra surely did not show a disposition to receive with open arms the preached Christ. Instead they revealed the greatest enmity, explaining that these men were troubling the city, teaching things contrary to their customs.

Thus we could enumerate many instances of where the heathen or Gentile world, was contrary to the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Think also of the men of Athens the center of so-called Greek culture and wisdom, as well as the people of the city of Corinth. Wherever the gospel of the Kingdom was preached, the unbelief of the people would as it were awaken out of sleep, and in the name of the multitudes defy the Christ who was preached and they would kill the prophets that were sent unto them and persecute the saints that believed.

This condition also prevailed in Palestine. The fulness of time revealed that the remnant of elect, surely were ready and eager to receive the Messiah, and by God's grace they stormed the kingdom of heaven. Nothing could withhold them from entering in, for it was the irresistible grace of God that prepared them and made the time full for the people of God.

Cont. on page 23
How it was done

As I read in *The Standard Bearer* the "impressions" our 1941 Convention made upon the guests, I am glad that we have had the privilege of being the Host Society. Especially glad that everyone felt that we wanted them to enjoy themselves, and that they did.

We wondered, as we looked at that cold, wintry picture of our Church in the "Convention News", if you were not somewhat in doubt about receiving the warm reception we promised you. We wanted the 1941 Convention to be the biggest and the best yet. And we feel satisfied and well rewarded for the effort we put forth in trying to make it so.

We did have quite some work with the Convention though. Even our president spent some time and thought on it, doing his best to advise us in that difficult but worthy task. We started our committee meetings soon after the 1940 Convention and continued to meet all through the winter on the same evening that our Catechism class met. This summer we met just about every week. But it was fun!

I do not believe that it would all have turned out as well as it did if our former Federation president, Mr. Homer Kuiper, had not been as helpful and full of zeal as he was. He attended most of our meetings during the summer months and gave us many valuable suggestions and needed advice.

The committee members still remember the evening when the bus tour was brought up for discussion. Two gentlemen said they were willing to go to the bus station at once to investigate about the matter. After some time they returned with the necessary information. We listened, and stared! On someone's shirt front we saw the telltale marks of the remains of a hamburger. (Was he in a hurry or had he forgotten a napkin?) No wonder they were so eager to go. We were all so hungry, but could only grin and remain hungry.

One of our worries was how and where we would lodge all the delegates and visitors, but also this worry was needless because we had room to spare. We were surprised and happy to see even far away Manhattan and Iowa so well represented. It showed their confidence in our ability to be the Host Society, even though we were small in number.

With all our activities connected with serving as host for the Convention, I believe that the Convention itself made a deeper impression upon us. I dare say that we were edified, and that we left the final assembly just a little more
positively Protestant Reformed, and that because God wants us to be. It is as He reveals Himself to us.

With the Convention a thing of the past, it seems as though a part of our life has been taken from us. And it has! As we look back we see how time flies. How much can be accomplished if we set ourselves to doing it with a will. How important it is to make the most of our time, and that by serving God as we ought, in doing all things to glorify His Name. Coming from far and near we spent those two days as Christian young men and women and fellow servants of Jesus Christ. We were all very active, and time sped by like a flash. A week later one of our number had exchanged time for eternity. How important for us that we do spend our time profitably.

We want to thank every one for the splendid cooperation, good behavior and interest shown in all that took place at the Convention.

Next year Roosevelt Park will have the needless worry, the excitement and fun we had in planning the 1942 Convention. We hope it will be still bigger and better, bigger and better in the sight of God, to Whom be all Glory!

In conclusion I would like to add a few remarks about our “Beacon Lights”. I am glad that the delegate board decided not to make use of advertisements in our paper. It would thereby lose its Christian distinction from the world. Rather than to rely on advertisers, we shall rely on our God, Who can fill us with sufficient zeal that we finance the paper ourselves without any difficulty.

The “Open Forum” will, no doubt, arouse the young people to writing. After they see that a friend has written they, too, will want to get into the discussion. It will set them to thinking, and as they think they will begin to see things more clearly, and be eager to express their own opinions.

The first issue promises much for the future. We are thankful to have our own paper, but especially thankful that this is one of the firstfruits of our Protestant Reformed Young Peoples' Federation.

“Unto you is born this day
. . . . a Saviour.”

May Christmas leave
Its peace with you,—
The meaning of the Christ Child’s birth.
Reveal to you
God’s loving care.

GREETINGS —
The Editors and Publishers
of Beacon Lights.

— 16 —
"The flowers have left their withered stalks,
And snow-encompassed lie the walks,
That once were gaily shared.
A few green shrubs that dot the snow,
Some gaunt-stemmed berries still aglow,—
Else lonely have I fared."
—Sarah Day.

Yes, lonely, for who of us have not noticed the gradual disappearance of familiar forms and sounds in the realm of nature? Who of us have not missed the chirping cricket, the buzzing bee, the singing cicada, and the croaking frog? The strains of this symphony have reached the grand finale. Silence reigns! Winter has come.

But what has happened to the members of our tuneful chorus? Have they departed for aye? If not, where are they sheltered? Whither have they gone? How do they adjust themselves to the cold and stormy blasts? Certainly, the animals cannot store fuel and don warmer clothing as we do.

Years ago the Indians observed that animals hibernated, but they termed it the "Long Sleep." Hibernation is instinctive; that is, it is an inherited power to perform a complex act, having a definite end without previous training—an act instilled into the creature's very being by God.

What are the factors which act as signals to stimulate hibernation? Any one or all of the following may serve as stimuli—cold, diminishing food supply, increased darkness, and silence. In the case of the bat hibernation is brought about by a lack of its food supply—insects—and we discover that it has a peculiar type of hibernating for it hangs in a suspended fashion for months, instead of the usual form of curling its body in relaxation. However, the cold seems to be the main element in turning the woodchuck and the bear into their respective winter retreats.

Let us cite a few examples to make the subject a bit more realistic. Beginning with the insects, we find the interesting coddling moth, which lays its wee eggs in the small green apples. Later these eggs develop into apple worms, whose self-preserving efforts we seldom appreciate when biting into an infested apple. Before the fruit has ripened, the apple worm burrows its way out and drops to the ground, where it immediately searches for the trunk of the tree. As it ascends it seeks its winter abode under some loose piece of bark or in some crevice. Here it is sheltered during the stormy months. So, my reader, be assured that an apple with a worm-hole is
a sign that the invader has departed.

Another striking example of winter protection is the carpenter ant which may readily be found in decayed logs in the northern forests. In autumn the female winged ant instinctively finds a place of refuge. Before entering the log, the ant sheds its wings, and then prepares her home by sealing the opening so that adverse conditions may not interrupt the rearing of her family. In perfect solitude she lays her eggs, which develop into tiny young, called "callows." But how can the mother feed herself and family in such a secluded place. Again we are amazed at the providential care of the Creator. The wing muscles of the mother, formerly needed for flying, now serve another purpose, for they degenerate and are used as a supply of food in addition to small "fat-bodies" within the mother. Thus she cares for her family during an eight month's fast—as Dr. Wheeler concisely stated, "To bring up a family of even small children, without eating anything and entirely on substances abstracted from one's own tissues is no trivial undertaking".

More common examples may be found among the butterflies. The beauty of its body no longer attracts attention, for it is transformed into another stage of its life cycle. Cozy and warm it is in its winter habitat, suspended from some twig or branch as a cocoon.

_**BEACON LIGHTS**_

The grasshopper, on the other hand, overwinters in the egg stage. Contrary to popular belief, some insects are active all winter, even though we cannot observe them. The bees are busy, indeed, for they must maintain their body temperature by a peculiar buzzing which goes on incessantly. In the meantime, they are nourished by their ample supply of stored honey. The ants, too, toil all winter in their underground home, being sustained by the food which they "provided in summer." Some insects, as flies, hibernate in the adult stage. To adjust themselves to the tremendous change in temperature, they dehydrate: that is, most of the moisture leaves their body so that the tissues will not be broken when it freezes.

In conclusion, then, insects are protected from unfavorable climatic conditions by being in a cocoon or egg stage or as adults hiding in stumps, under loose bark, or in sub-frostline tunnels.

All of us are familiar with amphibians—the class of animals that live either on land or water. They bury themselves in the mud, weeds, or under flat stones. For example, the snail secretes a small protective covering over the opening of the shell and rests among the weeds and moss. With arched back and withdrawn legs, the toad—already in September—is protected for the coming months, being nourished by small fat lobes beneath its skin.
How do fish maintain themselves in their watery abodes? They, as well as amphibians and insects, are cold blooded, which implies that the body temperature changes with that of their environment. Usually, fish go to the depths of lakes, streams, or rivers where the ice and snow will not engulf them.

Among the higher animals, we find the woodchuck indulging in a feast of September clover. If we observe him closely, we will notice how much heavier he is growing, but how much slower he moves. Layers of fat are being stored around his chest, legs and shoulders. These layers will serve as his winter’s food supply. His burrow is often extended to the length of thirty feet, at the end of which he builds the nest, just below the frost-line. As it becomes colder, his body temperature falls from 97 degrees to as low as 40 degrees. His heart beat is slowed one twentieth its normal beat; his breathing rate (normally 30 or 40 times per minute) is decreased to ten times per hour. But what a sudden change it is in March; for within an hour’s time, the processes become normal once again.

Of course, we are all familiar with a bear’s hibernation. While the female hibernates the entire winter without any additional sustenance, the male makes an occasional excursion from his den to satisfy his craving for food. Very tame and harmless appears the female as she slumbers serenely, and no amount of prodding will incite her to action. An amazing feature of the female polar bear is that she gives birth to two cubs during her long sleep, two months before she awakens from it and realizes that her family is increased. Imagine nourishing two hungry cubs for this period without an added supply of food.

In general, then, we may conclude this topic by stating that the effects of hibernation are the slowing up of the main body processes as breathing, digestion, circulation of the blood, nervous reaction, and excretion. Again we must admit that the creature’s life is beautifully and purposefully planned.

“For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills”. — Psalm 1:10.

**IN MEMORIAM**

On Thursday afternoon, Nov. 20th, 1941, it pleased God to take from our midst a faithful member of our Protestant Reformed Young People’s Society at Oskaloosa, Iowa, Miss Fanny Wassink at the age of 27 years.

We wish to express our heart-felt sympathy to the parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Wassink, to the sisters, the Misses Minnie, Jeanette, and Rose Wassink, to the brother, Mr. Henry Wassink, and to Mr. Alvin Van Zee in their bereavement. May the Lord comfort them with the blessed assurance that she is now with her Saviour.

Rev. A. Petter, President
Miss Adriana De Wolf, Sec'y.
Fiction is often defined as that form of prose narrative in which the characters, scenes, and incidents are partly or entirely imaginary. The novel and the romance are the two kinds of fiction, although they are not often consistently differentiated. There is, however, a slight difference between a novel and a romance. A novel deals with characters and events that are strictly in keeping with events in ordinary society and history. In a romance, the scenes, characters, and incidents are improbable, uncommon, unreal, and even marvelous. Most of the novels we read are strictly novels, which deal with incidents which could have happened.

From the nature of the novel, as we have defined it, even if you had never read one, you might readily conclude, and rightly so, that it is a highly interesting form of reading material. Everyone likes a story. A little child at his mother's knee will plead for a story and then for just one more. Children in school can easily be bribed into hard work by the promise of a story sometime during the day. And when those same children grow up, many of them are able to occupy themselves for hours in a stretch with a "good" book. Go to the library and examine the books on the shelves in the fiction room. There the books are well worn and many of them have been repaired over and over again and then finally replaced. Ask a librarian which books she most often checks out, and she will tell you that more novels leave the library shelves than any other kind of books. People "go for" them. Why? One reason, I think, is that it is so easy to read a novel. No effort, no mental strain is necessary; one can begin to read, but soon he loses himself, and it seems as if he is no longer reading, but living with the characters in the book, saying what they say, experiencing what they experience. Besides, the material of a novel is usually so attractive. Whether realistically
learn to or idealistically, a novel deals with life, and life is exciting, interesting: people in books are so real, so new, so different: we meet and learn to know so many different kinds of people through books. Finally, and many chronic novel-readers give this as a sort of defence, many novels are very instructive. It would be more honest to say, sometimes one can learn something from a novel. You will agree with me when I say that a person who wants to learn, who desires to expand his mind in different fields of knowledge, will not look for his learning in novels.

Since instruction is our main goal in reading, as we pointed out in a previous article, it necessarily follows that the novel is not at the top of our reading list. The general purpose of novelists in writing their books is entertainment. Their books may be vehicles for religious, sociological, or moral doctrines, but the main objective is entertainment. And if you are honest with yourself, you will concede that when you sit down to read a novel, your own aim is to relax, to enjoy yourself, to be entertained. You don't sit at your desk on a hard, straight chair, and resolve to spend the time in intense concentration, but you are much more likely to put on a robe and a pair of easy slippers and curl up in an easy chair. That is natural. But, do not read novels all the time, do not even let novels comprise half of your reading material: there are so many important things you should read! A novel should be a rare treat to be gently sipped occasionally, for over-indulgence leads to giddiness, to a very definite light-headedness. We must not have too much entertainment.

There are many dangers connected with novel reading. The book market is flooded with trash. Authors must cater to the sinful, corrupt public in order to write books that sell. They delight in writing what is coarse, obscene, impure, and the public takes pleasure in reading what their degenerate souls have concocted. A Christian does not poison his mind, he does not soil his hands with such "literature". You are not contaminated by it? There are books which have influenced nations, there are novels which have swayed public opinion in times of crises. Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin exerted a strong influence in molding public opinion in our country against slavery. Whether you realize it at the time or not, every book you read influences you imperceptibly in some way.

More dangerous, I believe, are novels which are generally recommended as good literature, and that is why we must read so cautiously and critically. There is such danger in relaxing and reading for pure enjoyment, for we are so apt to become wrapped up in the story and let our judgment and principle
relax too. A novelist can so easily arouse our sinful emotions. When you read Dumas' *Count of Monte Christo*, in which the whole plot deals with revenge, did you not rejoice with the hero every time he dealt another blow of vengeance? Yet the desire for revenge is un-Christian. Many authors have used their literary talent to arouse class hatred and to publicize their socialist or communistic views. Others have used the novel as a means to attempt to abolish moral standards. And many have even used it to propagate their false religious doctrines. The novel can be a subtle weapon!

Because of those dangers it is very necessary first of all to be very careful in our choice of novels and secondly to keep alert in order always to discriminate between the right and the wrong when we are reading novels. For there are very few novels that can be unreservedly recommended.

**INSTEAD OF THE THORN**

Bastian Kruithof,

Half Moon Publ. Co.,
Fifth Ave., New York.

This historical novel, very recently written, goes back a century into the history of the settlement of this country to give us a picture of the hardships undergone by the Dutch and of their indomitable spirit and courage in the face of disappointment. The book will be especially attractive to you, I believe, because its setting is Holland, Michigan, a town so very familiar to many of us. Lake Michigan with its high, grassy bluffs, its blue skies with massive floating clouds, and its marvelously brilliant sunsets was well-loved by Keesge, one of the principle characters.

There are many other worthy qualities which make this novel very commendable. It is distinctly a Christian novel, with the Arminian nonsense and social liberalism of so many so-called Christian novels lacking. Keesge, with his parents and the other Dutch pioneers, came to America with Domine Van Doren, as a congregation. The reason for their leaving the fatherland was not entirely a religious one, however, and with some of the settlers the religious purpose soon slipped into the background and the soil seemed to demand all their attention. For most of the settlers also sought a place where they could make a better living than they had in the Netherlands. Success in the new land led some of the settlers to forget more and more the heavenly things and set their hearts on wealth and expansion in the world. That brought a great struggle between the better element who sincerely strived to seek first the kingdom of God, and the materialistic people who would rather enjoy their farms than anything else.
Strong characters in the book merit one's respect and admiration. Wiebe Gombert, father of Keesge, is very outstanding as an intelligent, sturdy, God-fearing man, who is a rock in the settlement, hated by some, but respected by all. He is an ardent nature-lover, and finds God close to him as he works in the field. Niebe's strength of character is brought out by contrast in other weaker characters who are unable to withstand the adversity as it came in the form of drought and death. Keesge resembles his father in many ways, especially in his love of beauty in nature.

The love story which runs thru the novel is a charming one, but it is not the main theme of the book. The thread of it runs through the book until the end when Keesge and Elaine are happily married.

You will feel at home in the little Dutch settlement and be ready to sympathize with the characters in their joys and sorrows. One doesn't stay outside and look on, but lives with the settlers in little Holland.

Can be bought at Zondervan's Book Store.

WHEN THE FULNESS OF TIME WAS COME — Cont. from p. 11

But it is equally true that the fullness of time in Israel revealed that the Jewish nation as a whole, had ripened to that stage where it was ready to crucify the Lord of glory upon the cursed tree. The sin of all sins, the root of all enmity, had developed to that degree that the Jews would not and could not accept the Christ of God. He was indeed despised and rejected of the men of Judea. The time was full for the crucifixion of our Lord. It was essentially therefore that there was no room for Him in the inn. Therefore also the chief elders of the people, when hearing of the birth of the great King, desired to exterminate Him for good and for all. They willed not a Saviour that would establish the better and heavenly kingdom of God.

In conclusion therefore we may say that the Fullness of Time is that time which culminated all the preparation of God for the coming of the Messiah, both as to the elect people of God as well as the reprobated Jewish nations, both as to the old covenant as well as to the Gentile world. And in that sense it is yet the fullness of time even until the end, in which time we either love the appearance of the Lord of light and glory, also at this Christmas season, or we belong to that heathen family of nations that despises and rejects the Christ child of God. Let us therefore as young people of God's covenant at Christmas time, reverently bow before Him, Who comes in the name of the Lord and exclaim in gracious wonderment: "God is revealed in the flesh". Come let us adore Him, forever and ever.
Society—Secret Societies—High Society—Society Life of all kinds! Webster defines the word as a "number of persons united for a common interest; the more cultivated portion of any community in its social relations."

Secret Societies have been a common form of organization since the beginning of communal living. They vary from organizations whose only secret is a pass word to those with elaborate initiation ceremonies, a private language, badges and many other secret rituals, all calculated to increase the atmosphere of mystery and exclusiveness.

The upper, richer or more fashionable class of people consider themselves in "high-society"—the body of those associated with the fashionable world.

To which do we belong? A society? Yes! But let us be glad and thankful we may be among the "number of persons united for a common interest"—in a very particular sense of the word.

The organization of young peoples' societies in our churches has been a blessing in years past and we should appreciate the privilege we now have of being members. That is the place where we are given the opportunity to develop our talents in a very specific way, where we learn to express our thoughts and create ideas especially along religious lines.

Just why are you a member? Are you interested in your society? Do you cooperate? How can we make OUR Society an ideal one?

I am privileged to quote from a "pep" talk given by the vice-president of the Talitha Society of Fuller Avenue at our first meeting of this season. She outlined the necessity of the members being "prepared, enthusiastic and having perseverance until the thing set out to be done is accomplished."

In order to have proper co-ordination in a society these three requirements are important; but, of course, let us understand this applies to each individual member, first of all.

Surely, we should all do our part to enable our respective organizations to develop the "common interest"—the study of the Word of God. Mere membership is not sufficient. We must study, we must discuss the lesson, we must be active! That cannot mean reaping knowledge from society life by only
With this parable begins the study of what we have called the second group of parables. (See the Beacon Lights of September.) The parables thus far studied were spoken first, and all treated of the origin and growth of the kingdom. This group was spoken second, after the sending out of the seventy and before the final stay in Jerusalem. All these treat of spiritual-moral relationships in the kingdom. In them Jesus illustrates how the children of the kingdom must behave toward one another and toward God. They all have direct, practical bearing upon our life and behavior.

The first of these is the parable of the Unmerciful (better: Unforgiving) Servant. The Scripture passage is Matt. 18:23-35. Don't fail to read the passage from Scripture first!

THE STORY

Briefly, the story of the parable runs as follows: A king made an accounting of his servants. One was brought who owed him an enormous debt, which he could not pay, and for which he was ordered to be sold, together with all his, that payment might be made. The man pleaded for patience and the king moved with compassion forgave him all his debt. But this same servant had the audacity to go out and pounce upon a fellow-servant who owed him a paltry sum, insisting upon immediate payment. This fellow-servant pleaded for time but the man just shortly before forgiven his own enormous debt showed no mercy at all. He cast the man into prison. The other servants of the king saw this and were grieved and reported it to the lord. Again the lord calls the servant, this time severely condemning him for refusal to show mercy and, recalling his previous discharge of the debt, casts him into prison until the enormous debt is paid.

THE LESSON

Every parable has one chief lesson. Also this parable. The lesson taught is the duty and necessity of forgiving one another; if
Christians refuse to forgive one another, neither will God forgive them their sins. That this is the lesson is evident if the parable be taken in connection both with the preceding and with the concluding application of Jesus Himself. The "therefore" of vs. 23 points to the fact that Jesus spoke this parable to lay emphasis upon His previous assertion, especially the assertion made in vs. 22. In the entire chapter Jesus had spoken of the high esteem in which each child of God must be held (Woe unto him that offends one of these little ones). He had called attention to the procedure of love in which we must labor to restore the brother that sins, with a view to gaining him if possible. And then when Peter asked how often we should forgive a brother that sins against us, and had suggested seven times, Jesus emphatically declared, "I say not unto thee. Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven". Seventy times seven means: ever be ready to forgive his sins against you. And now, to illustrate and emphasize the necessity for Christians ever to be ready to forgive, Jesus "therefore" told this parable. In view of this context, the one main lesson of the duty and necessity of forgiving is plain. But, not only does the preceding point out the lesson, also the applicatory conclusion of vs. 35 does so. This conclusion is drawn, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." This means that God will not forgive but punish him that refuses to show mercy. You cannot live by mercy, if you will not show it.

We take it that it is self-evident that the king represents God; the servant, the sinner indebted to God; the fellow-servant, his brother indebted to him; the fellow-servants are the fellow-church members who are grieved when one Christian refuses to forgive the other.

QUESTIONS: The servant's debt amounted to ten thousand talents; if these are talents of gold, what sum in American currency was involved; if talents of silver, what sum? What sum does the fellow-servant's debt of a hundred pence represent? Why should man's debt toward God be represented as ten thousand talents, while that of the brother's debt as a hundred pence? Why did the man owe forgiveness to his fellow-servant? Mention various ways in which this man revealed a wicked attitude toward his fellow-servant. Why did the fellow-servants grieve? Do Christians frequently need the reminder of this parable? I love your point.

PROBLEMS

Various problems arise in connection with this parable. The first regards the question, Does the parable teach a final falling away from grace? The Arminian denies
that "Once God's child, always God's child", and maintains that this parable shows that one can be forgiven of God, later make himself unworthy, and lose God's forgiveness and be cast into hell. We of Reformed persuasion emphatically reject the doctrine of the full and complete falling away from grace, insisting that it is un-Scriptural. We leave its discussion to you.

The second problem regards the relation of God's forgiveness to ours. Does God's forgiveness of our sins depend upon our forgiveness of the brother? The answer should be negative, of course. God's forgiveness is independent, it is first, it is complete, it is eternal. We should add that a Christian, truly forgiven of God, is a re-born man, and a re-born man will by God's grace also bring forth fruits of repentance and be willing to forgive those that sin against him. However, because of indwelling sin this is a battle. Hence, we must frequently be admonished and reminded, and grow also in this grace.

QUESTIONS: How would you disprove the contention that a Christian truly forgiven of God can wholly lose this forgiveness and perish? Prove that a Christian may temporarily fall from grace. Why will a true Christian, walking in sanctification, be willing and eager to forgive his brother? Can we in our conscience experience the joy of being forgiven if we will not forgive? Why not, if not? Why does vs. 35 add "from your hearts"? Why is it impossible to be saved if one steadfastly refuses to give forgiveness to a brother?

Outline X

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

2nd week of December

This parable may be read in Luke 10:30-35. It clearly teaches the duty of playing the part of neighbor toward all with whom we come into contact and not only toward those that are our friends. A Christian should be merciful, desirous and willing to aid those in distress—he should be that toward all those he comes into contact with.

THE OCCASION

The occasion that called forth a parable often sheds light upon the one chief lesson taught in the parable. Such is also the case in this instance. Vss. 25-29 furnish the setting for this parable. A lawyer came to Jesus with the question. "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" However, he did not come in earnestness, he was not a seeking soul: on the contrary, he came to tempt Jesus, that is, to show Him up, to catch Him in His words, to get something on Jesus, to accuse Him. Jesus, knowing the heart, counters with a question in which he asks him what is written
in the law. After the lawyer correctly summarizes the law as teaching, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. . . . : and thy neighbor as thy self" Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live". Thereby the man's attempt to catch Jesus had come to naught, and "willing to justify himself", that is, intending still to catch Jesus in some wrong statement, he (undoubtedly in some what of a sarcastic way) put the question, "And who is my neighbor?"

It is that question, "Who is my neighbor?" that is answered in the parable. Notice, that Jesus does not enter into a theological dispute about the question, but He by implication clearly and pointedly settles the matter with this parable. Notice further, that Jesus really turns the question about. At the conclusion of the parable he asks, "Which now of these three, think-est thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" The Samaritan did not go about asking "Who is my neighbor?" but he played the part of neighbor toward a Jew in distress.

In connection with the lawyer's question it ought to be borne in mind that the wicked Jews had made God's law of love toward the neighbor of none effect by teaching that one's neighbor excluded the Gentiles and even one's enemies. See Matt. 5:43—they taught "Love your neighbor, and hate your enemy". As Jesus condemned that interpretation in the Sermon on the Mount, so he also did here by implication in this parable.

Taken in the light of vs. 37, "Go, and do thou likewise" the clear teaching of the parable is the duty of mercifulness toward all that are in distress, irrespective of nationality, etc.

VARIOUS ELEMENTS

The picture of vs. 30, of a man that had fallen into the hands of thieves and robbers and left bleeding at the wayside is a very striking one. Such things must have happened even in Palestine. It is said that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a dangerous one: it led through a wilderness region and was frequented by marauding brigands. Robbed and beaten and left at the wayside to die—what a picture of man's inhumanity to man! As true today as then. The man left to die must be thought of as a Jew. The distance from Jerusalem to Jericho was about twenty one miles. Perhaps the man was going home from a visit to the temple?

First Jesus, in the story, lets a priest come by. Priests were privileged to serve God in the temple, and their duty was to represent the people to God. They, of all men, should have been the most consecrated to God and to His people, and full of mercy. Especially this priest, who was on his way home from Jerusalem and had un-
Then Jesus lets a Levite come by. He, too, was busy in the service of God and His temple, be it only as a common Levite. This man "came and looked" on the wounded man, and then passed by on the other side also. He had the heart to take a look, and then go on, leaving the man unattended and unaided!

Says Edersheim, "It was the principle of questioning, 'Who is my neighbor?' which led both priest and Levite to such heartless conduct. Who knew what this wounded man was, and how he came to lie there; and were they called upon, in ignorance of this, to take all the trouble, perhaps incur the risk of life, which care of him would involve? Thus Judaism (in the person of its chief representatives) had, by its exclusive attention to the letter, come to destroy the spirit of the Law." Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus*, Vol. II, p. 239.

Finally, Jesus lets a Samaritan pass by. The Samaritans were a mixed race, with a temple of their own, occupying the land of Samaria (between Judea and Galilee). They were hated of the Jews, John 4:9ff. It is one of these despised semi-heathens that put the priest and the Levite to shame, and showed mercy: mercy in giving first aid, mercy in seating him on his donkey and bringing the man to an inn, mercy in leaving the necessary money for his care, mercy in promising to pay the rest of the bill if it should still be more.

QUESTIONS: How did the Jewish interpreters explain 'love thy neighbor'? Who were the Samaritans, and what was the Jews' attitude toward them? May a church limit its duty of charity toward those in its own midst? Should a Christian give toward the Community Chest and the Red Cross? Is there need of emphasizing the duty of mercifulness today? Does mercifulness toward all imply that a Christian may company with all men?

*Outline XI*

**THE IMPERTINENT FRIEND**

*3rd week of December*

The parable itself is contained in the vss. 5-8 of Luke 11. For the entire setting it is well to read all the first thirteen verses of the chapter.

**THE STORY**

The parable speaks of the coming of a traveler to the home of his friend at mid-night. He has had a long and wearying journey, and is hungry as well as tired. But the friend-host has not the necessary food to feed him. Hence, he goes to the home of one of his friends, even though it is mid-night and he and his family are in bed. and shamelessly knocks until he receives the needed food. *Shamelessly*, we wrote, because the Greek
word translated “importunity” in vs. 8 means exactly that. He shamelessly persists in knocking even though the man does not feel much like getting up, even though his family may be awakened: he does not quit until he has received the three loaves he needs to entertain his traveler-friend properly. And the man at whose home he knocks finally arises and supplies his needs. Although he would not rise and give him because he was a friend, yet he did it because of his insistent knocking.

THE LESSON

The lesson of the parable is simply that God certainly hears and answers prayer. If the friend granted the request, God most certainly will. Not, of course, to get rid of His people’s botherings, as did the man in the parable. That part of the parable does not apply to God; God willingly hears His faithful people. That God answers His people’s prayers and that He answers them willingly is plainly taught in vss. 9:13. This presupposes that His people pray for what they need (vs. 8): for the Holy Spirit (vs. 13): for bread, fish and eggs: and not stones, serpents and scorpions. Praying for the things that they need, they must boldly, constantly and persistently approach God’s throne. They shall receive them, ask and it shall be given.

The parable does not teach, as some claim, prayer in the face of apparent refusal to hear. Thus some would interpret the fact that the friend knocks, while the man within at first is unwilling to hear. It is true that in the parable the man did not receive at once, but nothing in the application Jesus makes in vss. 9-13 comes back on this. On the contrary, the point of this parable is the unhesitating bold approach to God at any time and any hour in which we have need. Men may hesitate to answer at inconvenient hours; for God every hour is convenient. Whenever His people need Him, He is ready to answer. Prayer is most certainly answered, always answered. Hence, let His people boldly pray, in the assurance of being heard.

QUESTION: For what ought Christians to pray? Does God always hear the cry of those that pray? Does God grant every petition? If not, why not? May we pray for the cessation of the present European conflict? Does God hear the prayer of the wicked? Prov. 15:8, 29. Should we conduct special Prayer Meetings in our churches? Can we expect God’s blessing without prayer?

Outline XII

THE COVETOUS FOOL

4th week of December

Usually this parable, found in Luke 12:16-21, is called the parable of the Rich Fool. However, it would be better to call it the
parable of the Covetous Fool—the fool's sin was not his riches, but his covetousness.

THE PARABLE

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenteously", thus Jesus begins this parable. There is no cause to think that this rich man gained his possessions by unlawful means — "the ground brought forth plenteously" would seem to suggest that he acquired his possessions lawfully. God in His providence made him very successful in his farming. He was successful, but not blessed. The rich man "thought within himself". He did not seek guidance of God. He did not address himself to God, he did not go to the Scriptures, he did not think of the poor and needy—all his thoughts were only of himself, and in himself. As he has no more room for his crops, he decides to enlarge his barns: he construes all his wealth merely as a means to secure his future. The thoughts of the heavenly treasure, of laying up treasures in heaven, are far from him. He feeds his "soul" on material, earthly things. His wealth is his god and trust. Prov. 18:11. In his own thoughts this man is very wise. God thinks other. God calls him a "fool". This very night God will require his soul from him. He will be called to account, for God will take him away. And he cannot carry these goods along. As utterly foolish he reaps his reward, and leaves all his goods behind.

THE LESSON

The lesson of the parable is evident in various ways. In the light of the context, it is a warning against covetousness. According to vs. 13, while Jesus was speaking to His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees, a certain man abruptly put the question, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me". Jesus lets the man know that He has no authority to do this (vs. 14), and then in vs. 15 turns about to warn the disciples against covetousness, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness..." While Jesus had been teaching, the questioner had been thinking of his inheritance—that was covetousness. But all His disciples must take heed and beware of covetousness. To emphasize this Jesus told this story, a cogent warning against covetousness (covetousness in the sense of seeking the earthly and material treasures as an end in themselves, to satisfy the insatiable longing after the things of earth and not after God). Finally, Jesus' own application of the parable emphasizes the lesson not to seek after the earthly things. He said, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Hence everyone that layeth
I treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God in the spiritual things of God's kingdom, is just such a covetous fool, whose end is perdition.

QUESTIONS: Is it true that a man may acquire riches, if he only acquires them lawfully? May a man use his possessions and goods as he pleases? Is it in itself evil to lay up goods for old age? Proof. Why does God call the man "fool"? How must the Christian fight against the sin of covetousness? Do you think that the frequent lack of money for kingdom-work is perhaps due to covetousness?

PROPER ATTITUDE TOWARD MATERIAL THINGS

It ought to be noted that the Word of God passes on from this warning against covetousness to an exhortation against all anxiety and to wholehearted trust in God. See vss. 22-34. God's children should seek the true riches with undivided attention. In faith, for God has assured that all that we need of the earthly goods during our sojourn below will certainly be added unto us. Seek the kingdom and its righteousness. In so far as we do not seek the heavenly, eternal things, in so far as we do not have wholehearted trust, we too are guilty of covetousness and are foolish.

SOCIETY LIFE—Cont. from p. 24 listening to what others have to say, expecting your fellow members to always do their best without your co-operation and assistance. It is up to you, to all of us!

Further, if you have been a member of a society for a few years, consider with me the friends you have made there. And where would be a better place to become acquainted with and make new friends? True friendship has common interests and one faith. Therefore if we are known and judged by the friends which we have made during society life, let us have societies of which we can be proud and realize the great opportunity of having Christian fellowship in the church.

Then we will have societies from which we can derive much benefit and be able to show others that society membership has been an important factor in our lives. We will speak well of our societies, we will be proud of them, we will encourage those planning to join. We will be thankful that we are privileged to belong to a real society, and not have a desire for one necessitating membership in the body associated with the fashionable world or one having secret codes, passwords and the like; but let our light shine also as a result of our society life in order that others may see that we belong to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.