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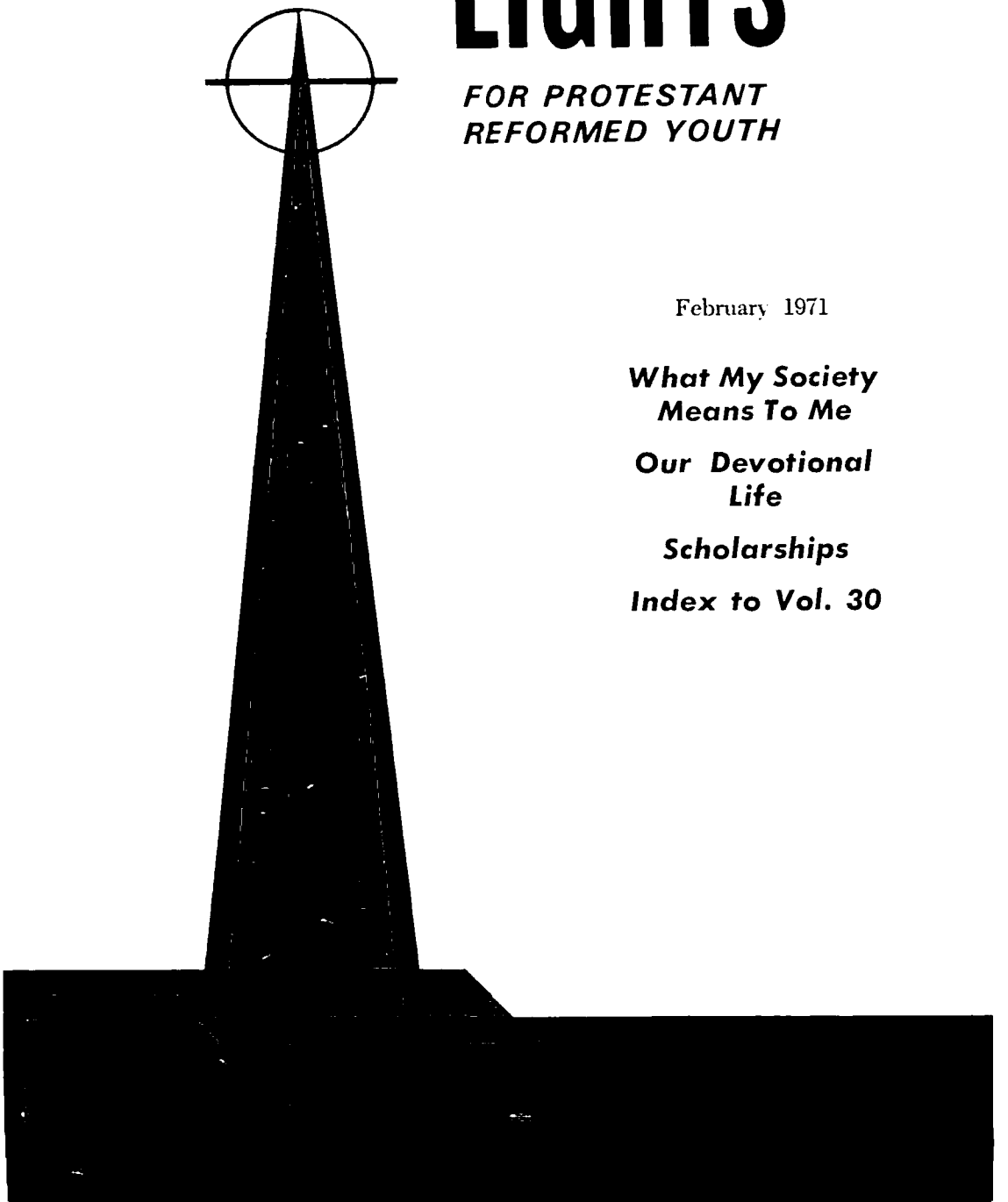
FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



February 1971

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Editorial

"THE POISON OF SUBJECTIVISM"

The title of this article is not original. It is, in fact, the title of an essay by C. S. Lewis. I think, however, that Lewis makes a point in this article which bears repeating, viz., that moral judgments, judgments of value, judgments about good and evil, right and wrong must be based upon some objective standard. "The modern view," says Lewis, "is very different. It does not believe that value judgements are really judgements at all. They are sentiments, or complexes, or attitudes, produced in a community by the pressures of its environment and its traditions, and differing from one community to another. To say that a thing is good is merely to express our feeling about it; and our feeling about it is the feeling we have been socially conditioned to have." And, argues Lewis, if this idea is not crushed, our very souls are in danger. For, continues Lewis,

> Out of this apparently innocent idea comes the disease that will end our species (and, in my view, damn our souls) if it is not crushed: the fatal superstition that men can create values, that a community can choose its 'ideology' as men choose their clothes. Everyone is indignant when he hears the Germans define justice as that which is to the interest of the Third Reich. But it is not always remembered that this indignation is perfectly groundless if we ourselves regard morality as a subjective sentiment to be altered at will. Unless there is some objective standard of good, over-arching Germans, Japanese and ourselves alike whether any of us obey it or no, then of course the Germans are as competent to create their ideology as we are to create ours. If 'good' and 'better' are terms deriving their sole meaning from the ideology of each people, then of course ideologies themselves cannot be better or worse than one another. Unless the measuring rod is independent of the things measured, we can do no measuring. (C. S. Lewis – "The Poison of Subjectivism")

But, you may legitimately ask, what does this have to do with us right here and right now? I suggest that it has quite a bit to do with us.

First of all, the worry of C. S. Lewis has not slackened in the least. Subjectivism, the idea that truth, reality, right, wrong, good, evil are concepts which are constantly changing as time changes and as history moves from generation to generation, certainly is in vogue today. Consider what has happened in the Reformed circles in recent history. The infallible Scriptures have been deprived of their infallibility – a position taken by theologians because "Moses (or some other writer) was writing about his own times, his own standards of right and wrong, and his own unique situation." It no longer has meaning for us today. Consider what has happened to the objective authority of Scripture. Scripture is kerygma, it has meaning only if it confronts us and only those parts which confront us actually do have meaning. Consider what has happened to the idea of sexual morality. If it pleases us, and if two people are willing, and if no one else gets "hurt," well, go right ahead with your lovemaking. What was taboo in prior eras is not necessarily taboo today. People just view things differently is the answer which we get to our "Why is this so?" questions. These, and there are many more, are the results of subjectivism. These are the results of the losing of the objective standards for our making value judgments and therefore certainly are reason enough for our concern with subjectivism.

Furthermore, we ought to be concerned with the implications of this idea because of its closeness to us. Many times the current ideas floating about the "youth movements" are assimilated to some degree into our own thinking. We, too, hear talk about change and reform, about throwing out some of the old, fuddy-duddy notions of our ancestors (some of whom are not so remote). We hear talk about generation gaps and the "not-with-its" of older generations. It is time, I believe, that we take seriously this idea of the objective standard.

The objective standard to which C. S. Lewis refers is, of course, the Word of God. The point is this: let's make sure that we keep it that way, let's make sure that we do not attempt to make our decisions upon our own sentiments and feelings.

For if we do, we, too, fall into this same error of subjectivism. Decisions have to be made. Yes, by you as young people, too. We cannot be forever relying upon our parents and superiors to make our decisions. Decisions must be made about right and wrong, good and evil. Priorities and values must be established. Value judgments are going to have to be made — by you.

If such is the case, that we wish to make our decisions upon the invariable, infallible, inerrant, unchangeable Scriptures, decisions based upon unchanging laws, ordinances, and principles, then there certainly are implications for us in this regard.

First, we cannot make these kinds of decisions if we ourselves do not have an understanding of what that objective standard is. How are we going to decide what to do if we haven't the foggiest notion of what God really wants us to do? We must be thoroughly acquainted with that Word, that objective standard. This means, then, that effort must be put forth on your part to acquaint yourselves with those Scriptures.

A second implication is that you certainly can expect this decision-making process, this making of value judgments on the basis of God's Word, to be a struggle. It simply is not an easy process. But, God knows that. There is comfort in this struggle. "We know that all things," says the apostle, "work together for good to them that love God." Furthermore, there certainly are aids which you can use — people *are* available to you as resources. Seek them out. James also assures us that God will provide. Listen to what he says: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Think about it.

(More about this later)

J.H.

FEATURES

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following two articles were written more than thirty years apart. In content they are strikingly similar — perhaps in thirty more years YOU would have made the similarity void.*

"WHAT MY SOCIETY MEANS TO ME"

MARCIA BYLSMA — December 1970

Another young people's society season has begun. In fact, most of our societies have been meeting for several months by this time.

What is your reason for attending society meetings? How important is young people's society to you? Are you an active, participating member? Do you hope to benefit in any way? I hope to answer these questions in this article and to show that we, as Protestant Reformed young people need to belong to a society and to be willing participants.

I am a member of the Senior Young People's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The constitution of our society states, ". . . the purpose of this society is mutual edification through the study of the Word of God and presentation of programs."

Edification means to build up and instruct in spiritual things. God tells us to seek edification and to instruct one another. In Romans 14:19 we read, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." And also in I Thess. 5:11, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."

We can edify one another through the study of the Word of God at society meetings. This is a good opportunity. We can meet with fellow Christians in our own peer group to discuss God's Word. Society opens the way for study of the Bible. If there weren't society meetings, how much would we study the Bible?

At society meetings, seemingly difficult passages can be discussed and explained. Also proof texts for the doctrines of the Church are found. In the times that we live, it is important to know God's Word and to know it well. Our Bibles may be taken away, but the wicked cannot steal

what is locked away in our minds and hearts. Our society meetings are a privilege of which we must take advantage. The wicked world allows us to worship God as we please. But how much longer will we have this opportunity?

As members of young people's societies, we have certain responsibilities. The success of a society meeting depends on participation by the members. Does most of the discussion come from the Bible leader? To have interesting discussion and profitable Bible study, there must be preparation. Do you come to society not knowing the contents of the passage to be discussed, or worse yet, not even knowing the Bible passage? Preparation includes reading of the chapter, studying commentaries, and asking questions. Good preparation means lively, interesting discussions.

As citizens of the U.S. we have a responsibility to learn about its history, government, and so on. But as Christians, we are citizens of the Kingdom of God. How much more shouldn't we learn about our coming eternal home? Through the study of the Bible we learn more about God and His Kingdom.

Ephesians 6:11-17 states, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil . . . that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day . . . stand therefore, having your loins gird about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness: and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

These are the weapons we must use to protect ourselves. But to stand up and defend ourselves against the sneak attack and powerful force of the devil, we must know how to use our armour. What good is that sword, if we don't know how to use it? What help is a Bible, if we don't know what truths it contains? Knowledge of God's Word is essential, and a good way to obtain it is through society meetings.

Another means of edification at society meetings is the program. This is another responsibility of society members. Are you willing to volunteer? Do you willingly give a program when asked? Young people have no problem talking about current events, such as, the war and the draft, or the big date last night. But when it comes to talking about spiritual things, which are the most important part of our lives, there seems to be no desire to speak up. The program is a continuation of the Bible discussion. We can help each other by discussing common problems and searching the Scriptures together for answers.

Young people's societies will continue to meet week after week. Are these meetings going to become just something routine or will they mean something more? Where is your sword — hidden in some dark corner, dull and rusty? Or are you armed and ready with that sharp sword of the Word of God, waiting for the battle?

ALICE REITSMA — March 1940

The highway stretched out before us!

For a long time I sat gazing out of the car window as we rode along: gazing at the fields still covered with a thin layer of snow, at the trees grouped together on the side of a hill, at the old wood farm houses and the newly painted barns. The thought that filled my mind as we traveled down the highway was that the scene was constantly changing. Telephone pole after telephone pole came into sight and then vanished out of sight. Fields and trees and hills, farmhouses and country roads, appeared and disappeared. A snow fence, a creek partly frozen over, a more prosperous looking country home were brought to my vision and were gone. First the ground was level and then it seemed to grow into a hill which in turn sloped into a valley. I read a billboard along side the road, "The wages of Sin is Death, but . . ." and we had passed it.

Never for one moment was the scene the same.

And so it is with life, thought I. Just as the scene along the highway is constantly changing so it is with us. God gives us life, we are young, we are old, and God takes away our life. During that short period, called a lifetime, the scene is never

for one moment the same. Our lives are constantly changing. Just as a farmhouse was replaced by a barn or a field along the country road, so our thoughts, sometime peaceful, sometimes troubled, follow one another on the highway of life. One moment we are on the hilltop of hope and buoyancy and the next we are in the valley of despondency and disillusion. And not only that but constantly we are forced by our surroundings and circumstances to make decisions which mold and make our lives. Sometimes we recognize opportunities and often we allow them to slip quietly by. And when time has taken hold on us and we look back over our course, we see where our judgment has erred, where our perspective was faulty and where our resolutions were vain.

This is the true picture of life. Now we are confronted with the question, "What must we do about it?" We must move along until we reach the end of the highway; our destination. Since we can not stop, how can we best prepare ourselves to go on; to meet these changes? What means can we employ to best equip ourselves to make the correct decisions, so that we may grow and progress in the right direction?

The wise Preacher tells us: "The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom preserveth the life of him that hath it." And also: "The knowledge of God is the beginning of wisdom." And then he admonishes: "Consider the work of God, for who can make straight that which God hath made crooked?"

Amongst the various ways of increasing our knowledge of God and considering His work, is the society life of the church. And it is with this means of Grace that we are concerned in this essay. I shall endeavor to make clear what my society means to me and, of course, hope and believe that these benefits are also experienced by many other society members.

In the first place a society is an organized group within the church. And this group is organized with the definite purpose of studying the Word of God. In the particular society of which I am a member, the doctrine of God's Sovereign Grace as upheld by our churches over against the three points of Common Grace as adopted by the Christian Reformed Churches is the topic of discussion. A subject of this nature necessarily leads one to a better knowledge of God's Word. Comparing scripture with scripture, reading texts in their contexts and interpreting in the light of God's Word as a whole surely will result in a better understanding of God's Grace toward his own, and also will kindle in our hearts a richer love for him, and a deeper desire to serve him.

In the second place we may look at a society as a social function. By this I mean that it is the communion of the saints over against our constant contacts with the world. At the office in which I am employed, my fellow-workers are unbelievers, that is, unbelievers who reveal themselves as haters of God. They take pleasure in ridiculing and reviling God and his church. This always makes me conscious of the difference between them and myself. It reminds me of the peculiarity of my position in this world, and makes me feel alone and out of place while in their company. It is for that reason that I seek the fellowship and companionship of the Lovers of God, the gathering together of God's people where God is praised instead of ridiculed, honored instead of reviled and worshipped instead of mocked.

Also, a society is an organization which helps one to develop Christian leadership, responsibility and a spirit of cooperation. Everyone has the privilege to contribute her part towards the discussion. Not only does she have the privilege but it is expected of each one who has a constructive opinion that she give it so that the discussion may follow along proper lines, and may be beneficial to all present. Then too, in the after-recess programs, opportunity is given to use the gifts of music and speech with which God blesses his people.

In order to have a successful meeting, cooperation amongst the members is necessary. I am, of course, willing to concede that often the members of a society do not cooperate, that many are not conscious of the necessary feeling of responsibility and that often the opportunity at leadership is thrown back into the hands of the president, and that therefore, to many, the meeting is of little value. Nevertheless, we can then trace this failure back to the in-

dividuals, in other words, to ourselves. I know how it is with myself. If I listen intently to what others are saying, ask questions when I do not understand, and perhaps contribute an opinion or remark to the discussion, take an active part in committee work, I feel that I have done my best, that I have derived some benefit from the meeting, and my conclusion will then be that, for me, the meeting was well worth while and therefore a success. But when I merely sit back in my chair, with my mind preoccupied with a million other things, the discussion will be most disinteresting and as far as I am concerned, the evening a total failure.

However, as soon as we realize that this failure lies with us, and we strive to correct this faulty attitude, we will find that our society does, indeed, teach us that we should cooperate and work along with those who are of the same convictions as we, so that we together may be blessed. That it also makes us feel that we are individually responsible for the things which are said and done at the meetings and that in this way we will become capable to lead in prayer and to intelligently and believingly take an active part in discussing the things of God's Kingdom.

We are swiftly moving down the highway of life. We cannot combat time, we cannot shut our eyes to the inevitable changes, we can not evade the destination. Let us face the facts! Let us take advantage of the privileges presented by our societies and use this means of living nearer to God and growing in his Grace.

The highway of life stretches out before us; and the command? "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

OUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE

REV. H. HANKO

In his work on the Lutheran Reformation, Philip Schaff discusses the home-life of Martin Luther and writes:

> He began the day, after his private devotions, which were frequent and ardent, with reciting in his family the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and a Psalm.

In a letter to Melanchthon, Veit Dietrich wrote concerning Luther during the Diet of Augsburg:

> No day passes that he does not give three hours to prayer, and those the fittest for study. Once I happened to hear him praying. Good God! how great a spirit, how great a faith, was in his very words! With such reverence did he ask, as if he felt that he was speaking with God; with such hope and faith, as with a Father and a Friend. 'I know,' he said, 'that Thou art our Father and our God. I am certain, therefore, that Thou art about to destroy the persecutors of Thy children. If Thou doest it not, then our danger is Thine too. This business is wholly Thine, we come to it under compulsion; Thou, therefore, defend.' . . . In almost these words I, standing afar off, heard him praying in a clear voice. And my mind burned within me with a singular emotion when he spoke in so friendly a manner, so weightily, so reverently, to God.

Private devotions, including the reading of Scripture and prayer have always been considered an important part of life by God's people. The "habit" of these daily private devotions ought to begin early; it ought to begin when we are still young people, a habit to be carried with us through all our life.

Life is hectic and filled with much hustle and bustle. There are so many demands placed upon us today that there seems no end to it. This busy-ness of life is sometimes used as an excuse to forget the important matter of personal and private devotions. "There just simply is no time for such things," is often the anguished cry that is made. Yet rather than letting this be an excuse to lay aside this important part of life, the very busy-ness of life ought to be added incentive not to neglect Scripture reading and prayer. It was the same Luther whom we quoted above who said in a different place that the busier he was, the more time he needed for prayer and the quiet meditation of God's Word. It seems paradoxical and contradictory; but it remains an important truth for all that.

Every Christian family has its periods of devotions. In these devotional periods the

family itself joins in worship of God. In our homes (although this is not necessarily the only time for devotions), usually these devotions are held at mealtimes. The family together turns to the Word of God and bows together in prayer. This is as it should be. Every child of God closes the day with prayer. In the privacy and quiet of his or her own bedroom, and before sleep brings refreshment and renewed vigor for a new day, the child of God pauses to pray to God giving thanks for the blessings of the day, confessing the sins which have been committed and seeking the throne of Him Who neither slumbering nor sleeping, watches over Israel. All of this is as it should be.

When we speak in this article of "private devotions" however, we refer to the need for everyone, but especially our young people, to find some time for personal and private reading of Scripture, for prayer and meditation. The need for this is unspeakably great.

Why Scripture reading?

We can perhaps get at this question best by reminding ourselves of the many figures which Scripture itself uses to describe the Word of God.

Sometimes Scripture speaks of itself as bread. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness to make stones into bread, He responded by saying: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4). The figure is quite obviously important. There is bread for the body – to sustain our earthly life in the world; there is bread for the soul. The bread for the body, potatoes, hamburger, peas and carrots, will not do for the soul. It was the sin of the rich fool that he thought it would (Luke 12:19). The child of God has the life of Christ within him. This needs nourishment. The Word of God is the only food which will do.

Sometimes Scripture speaks of itself as a lamp and a light – a lamp unto our feet and a light on our path (Ps. 119:105). The figure is made against a background which assumes that our way in life is very dark. It is dark because of sin. If we walk in the darkness, we stumble and fall and lose the way. We need a light to find our way in this darkness; a light which will show us the way to walk from here to the house of our Father. There is only one light which can shine unerringly and brilliantly enough to show us this way. It is the Word of God. If that light shines upon our path, we will know the way to go. Without that light we will not.

Then again Scripture speaks of the Word of God as armor and weapons for warfare (Eph. 6:13-17). Paul is speaking of one of the chief characteristics of the life of the Christian. This is warfare. The Christian is a warrior – must be a warrior. The enemies are strong and intent on destroying us. Life is a fight, a battle. It can be no different. It is ordained by God that it should be so. There is enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Life is filled with the noise of the clash of weapons, the cries of wounded men, the hard breathing of those who exert all their energies in fighting. In the midst of the battle stands the Christian warrior called by the Captain of his salvation to protect himself from the enemy's weapons and called to advance on the battlefield of faith in the cause of the kingdom, fighting all the while under the banner of the cross. As Paul describes the armor and weapons which the Christian warrior needs, it is striking to notice that almost all his regalia is the Word of God. His loins must be girt about with the truth; his feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel; he must carry the shield of faith; he must swing vigorously the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This is all that will do. Without this armor he is easy prey. Without these weapons he will soon lie mortally stricken on the battlefield of life. But with this armor and carrying these weapons he will stand though all hell and countless hosts of the world hurl repeated attacks against him.

Why prayer?

It is interesting and instructive to note that Paul concludes his description of the Christian warrior's armor with the words: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication . . ." (Eph. 6:18).

There are several different words used in Scripture for prayer and they mean different things. One word means "prayer in general." It includes all different kinds of prayer: petitions, praise, thanksgiving,

etc. Another word means "petitions." It is the word used to describe our bringing of our needs to God. And yet another word speaks of what our Heidelberg Catechism refers to when it says that prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. Not necessarily is thankfulness the chief part of prayer – although this too may sometimes be true. But prayer is the chief part of thankfulness. All kinds of prayer are important. All are necessary.

It must have made a profound impression upon the disciples that they saw how often the Lord Jesus Himself resorted to prayer. It was not at all uncommon, especially in times of crisis, that Jesus would spend a whole night in prayer. How strange. Jesus was perfect. He had no sin. He was Emmanuel – God with us. Yet He needed prayer; needed it desperately and often. Moved by this, the disciples asked the Lord: "Lord, teach us to pray . . ." (Luke 11:1).

On the wings of prayer we are carried into the presence of the Most High God. In the sanctuary of prayer we are brought consciously into the throneroom of Him Who is our Help and Strength. All sorts of wonderful things happen when we pray – truly pray. We are overwhelmed with the consciousness of the greatness of Him Who is our Savior. And praise breaks forth from our lips. This is necessary if we are to achieve the chief end of man: to glorify God forever. We are moved deeply by the greatness of the salvation which is our inheritance and our portion. If some sense of the greatness of our salvation catches at our hearts, the result will be that all our grumbling and complaining, our dissatisfaction and criticism of the ways of the Most High get stuck in our throats. We are thankful. We may have a long list of needs which we think it well to bring to the throne of grace; but the list is drastically shortened and the items on it are remarkably altered in God's presence when there, bowing before God, we see that the only need we really have is an abundance of the Spirit to walk as saints in life.

Prayer is communion with our heavenly Father. It is the fountain of strength. It is the nearest to heaven we get in this valley of tears. It is the way to peace and quietness of spirit. It is the joy of the believing heart. Paul speaks somewhere of the need to pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17). He means, no doubt, that all our life, each step of the way, we must walk in the consciousness of God's presence. This will never happen except we have time to enter the sanctuary of prayer.

Scripture reading and prayer go together. They are two sides of the same coin. They are two halves which make a whole. They complement each other. It is impossible to pray in the right way except we pray according to the Scriptures. These Scriptures must then be deeply in our hearts and minds; they must conquer us and be ingrained into our very being, if we are to pray. But we cannot read Scripture in such a way that the Scriptures speak to us unless we read them prayerfully and meditatively. The Scriptures speak only to those who have the Spirit to lead them; only to those who bow humbly before them; only to those who say all the while they read: "Lord, speak, for thy servant heareth."

Why devotions? And why personal and private devotions?

The first question first.

While it has been true throughout all ages that the saints of God have needed these quiet moments of prayer and meditation upon the Word of God, the urgency increases as the days move on towards the end.

The night of sin grows darker. Who can doubt it? Look around you. How much more then do we need the light which only God's Word can bring. The battle gets hotter and more fierce. We had better be sure that our armor is firmly buckled on and our weapons ready at hand. A gluttonous world thinks only of its belly; but its belly, stuffed with fat, goes to the grave for all that. And the grave opens to hell. The bread of life is what we need to nourish us to eternal life.

These are days of fierce temptation. Who can stand? Only he who stands in the strength of God and Christ. Many are the sins which we commit. Is there forgiveness to be found anywhere else but at the foot of the cross? We live in a world of compromise and ungodly tolerance. Someone has said, and rightly so, that tolerance –

in the sense in which it is meant today — is the worst sort of intolerance: for it is tolerance for all but the truth of God. It is hard to be different. It is hard to stay pure. It is hard to walk as pilgrims and strangers. It is hard to stay on the right side of the chasm that separates by grace the wicked from the faithful. Always we are building bridges across this chasm to reach out to pull the world to us — or allow the world to catch us in her slimy clutches. Prayer and the Word of God will alone keep us on the right side of this chasm. It will hold us tightly so that we cannot and will not want to escape. Do we now have problems with dress? with music less than Christian? with the tug of pleasure? with dissatisfaction over the preaching and worship services? with countless other temptations which drag the young people — even of the church — away from the safety of the antithesis? If we have no time for devotions, it is no wonder. We can expect nothing else to happen.

Why *personal* devotions?

Worship in Church is congregational — and is fundamental for all of life. Devotions with the family are times for the family to bring the needs of the family to God and share in the communion of a Christian home before the throne of God. But each of us has his (or her) own problems, temptations, sins, reasons for gratitude and praise. We must seek, alone in the quietness of the communion of our own hearts with God, the help that we need.

I speak to you who are the young people of the Church; and, therefore, the Church of tomorrow. If you do not create this habit now, in the days of your youth, most likely you never will. God knows how much shall be required of you when you take our places in the pews, in the consistory rooms, on the pulpit, in the classrooms, in the daily defense of the faith. Now is the time to form these habits which will serve you in good stead in the fearful years ahead. Do not fail. The issues are too urgent.

Scholarships ! !

THOMAS NEWHOF, Jr.

For the sixth consecutive year the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Committee is making plans to receive applications for scholarships for young people who have decided to prepare for the teaching profession or the ministry.

The scholarship fund was discussed by the Federation Board during the 1950's. It was proposed in the BEACON LIGHTS in 1960. Since that time, the fund has become a reality and scholarships have been awarded.

The idea of establishing the fund was, by assessment, gifts and offerings to create a "base" which would yield a continuing return on its investment and thereby to fund an annual scholarship program. It was recognized that time would be required to collect such a "base," and annually since the fund was created, the young people have voted for an assessment. Many gifts and offerings have also been received so that it has been possible to offer scholarships since 1966.

The purpose of the scholarships is to make a college education financially possible for the talented but needy prospective minister or teacher. While the fund has prospered, the committee believes that its effectiveness has not yet reached its full potential.

Applicants for scholarship funds have, thus far, been harder to find than funds. Although each year the committee has launched a publicity campaign (one year even resorting to a publicity "overkill") seeking applicants, the largest number of applicants in one year was two. Most years only one application was received. A pleasant side effect of the few applications is that, so far, no applicant has been refused a scholarship. Everyone who has applied has been awarded a scholarship.

The value of the scholarships has been increasing from a low of $200.00 to a high of $700.00 last year. The fund constitution limits the grant to tuition only.

Following are the rules which apply to scholarships:

1. An applicant must be a prospective minister or teacher.

2. An applicant will be judged on sincerity, ability and need.
3. An applicant must be a baptized or confessing member of a Protestant Reformed Church.
5. The scholarship will apply to tuition only.
6. The applicant is asked to repay the scholarship if he *refuses* to teach or preach in Protestant Reformed schools or churches.

Rule 6 (above) is interpreted not to apply to those who do not finish school, change their course of study or are not able to teach or preach when they finish school.

If the scholarship program sounds interesting to you, contact your society secretary for an application blank or contact the committee secretary, Miss Agatha Lubbers, 7501 Terrace Lane, Jenison, Michigan 49428.

The committee also solicits your continued financial and spiritual support of this program. It is our prayer that God will use this means to assist those who are called to the ministry or the teaching profession.

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

RACHEL LUBBERS

My graceful ride moves on as I float high and far above a lonesome world. I feel happy, free, content, and . . . found! Different from many of you.

And so the world turns and twists in confusion about the ugly word d-r-u-g-s. The problem presents complications which are like a huge web, each day slowly being spun, every fiber becoming more involved. As the web becomes more intricately spun, the possibilities of solving the problem in our society seem more and more remote.

Would we to any extent achieve our goal of solving this great drug problem by legalizing drugs? Would we be able to pull ourselves further from this problem through legalizing drugs or are we to the point now where it is only and forever hopeless? We must admit that the problem is presently becoming worse and growing deeper, but we cannot allow it to swallow us up. Rather, we must try to overcome this problem. Would legalizing drugs stifle people's curiosity and drive for them? For isn't it true that we are pulled to experiment with the wrong in that which is wrong? Possibly it would prevent many young people from running to drugs for an escape from their problems. And, perhaps experimenting with drugs at young people's parties would lose some of its popularity. It is there that many tragic incidents occur because of a general lack of knowledge about the kinds of drugs there are and the effects of drugs on a person. Also the atmosphere of a party and other similar situations will make some feel as if taking drugs is the "in thing to do." If one feels insecure, as many young people do, he will use drugs as a means to prove himself to the crowd.

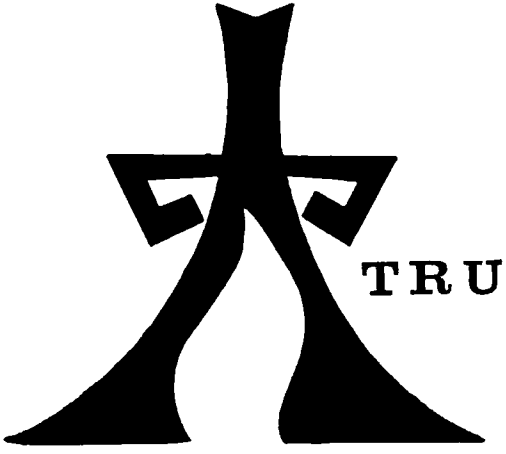
Yet, legalizing drugs would probably give birth to new insurmountable problems. Very possibly people would be encouraged to try drugs because they would be available to more people and much easier to buy. Reality closes in upon us another problem, however. The point really is not whether legalizing drugs will solve the problem; the point is whether or not legalizing harmful drugs is right or wrong. When something is legalized it does not automatically become right.

Today the drug problem is no longer limited to young people of high school and college age who are experimenting with and curious about drug reactions, but students already in the third and fourth grades are informed! They can formulate very concerned questions about the drug problem such as "What is purple haze?" While attempting any solution, the problem must be approached carefully, because past history has proven to us that trying to scare people from taking drugs is incorrect and ineffective. One way to make a step forward from this tremendous problem is to educate. Our health centers would like to offer classes to parents, young people, and elementary school children. People in our society have to be given more details on

how drugs will affect one's physical functioning, and how one's mental state prior to a trip can affect the trip itself. They must realize that they could be dealing with results which may not be overcome. Information is also needed on how a total outcome varies with each individual. To educate on this subject would require much time and slow progress because it covers such a wide and broad area.

We cannot stop here yet. This may all be useless unless everyone of us shows a real amount of interest and concern in this problem. We must force ourselves to deal with this problem and not only accept it as a problem. Maybe the first step each individual can make is to admit that some existing conditions are contributing to the problem. Are we so blind as to not see this as a problem within our own circles? Much of the drug problem stems from people's lost and unfound feelings, which, in my estimation, we often fail to admit. Many lonely people are being comfortably ignored and friendless people are being left in their friendless worlds. Unhappy faces keep offering sad smiles and if we look hard enough we will find many aching hearts. Minds are being torn and beat from an empty world which has lost patience with cries for help. Others are running as fast as they can to destroy themselves.

So our responsibility as Christians carries on, stronger today than yesterday and stronger tomorrow than today. We must care – care like we have never cared before. The drug problem is yours and it is mine!



TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

Timorous and Mistrust

Three men walk the Narrow Way leading up the Hill Difficulty onward to Jerusalem the Golden – Christian, Hypocrisy and Formalist. There is an infinity of difference between the one and the other two. The Word of God makes that difference. "I walk by the Rule of my Master. You walk by the rude working of your fancies. You go *on* by yourselves without His direction, and shall go *out* by yourselves without His mercy." They proved this difference when they replied, "We don't see where you differ from us, except for that gratis garment you wear, as you say, to hide the shame of your nakedness." Soon enough they disclose their spite and contempt for Christ's righteousness.

Hill Difficulty, Christian got to know quite well, even its rocks, ruts and bumps. He had been over it times enough. A difficult way pursued without error is traversed only once. But retrace a long, lonely, dark and dreary way to recover an indispensable valuable, carelessly lost or left behind, and you must extend yourself over the same route three times. When the Christian

finally conquers a difficulty and goes on for the cause of the Son of God, he doesn't need Calamity Janes, like the ten spies, running in the wrong direction, crying, You can't get there from here! But right at the summit of the hill, who come running into him full tilt, but Timorous and Mistrust. Breathlessly they relate that what lies ahead will make the Slough of Despond and the Hill Difficulty look like a kindergarten May-pole dance. Furthermore, they heard (not saw), far down the road, a couple of lions roaring. His map, too, they point out to him, indicates the way leading through Lion's Mouth country. So, it's back, man! back where we came from! Discouraging? The morbid thought made Christian cringe with a twinge of fear. Not safe forward? Then where is safe? Not back at my own country of Sodom and Egypt, prepared for fire and brimstone! To go back is certain death, nothing but death. Forward is the fear of death and the certain safety of the Heavenly City. I must venture! I go forward!

I must venture! I'll chance it. I'll stake my life on the narrow way. I'll risk any harm or loss to gain the desired end. I'll throw in my lot with the "chosen men . . . men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:26). I'll hazard it. If necessary, I'll betray myself to the lion's mouth.

The Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth Rock in a day of civil persecution and religious tyranny. Under continual reigns of terror, many would-be Christians, like Timorous and Mistrust, went back and walked no more in that lion-guarded path. From a despotic prison in our own day, a tortured believer wrote, "The most unfounded hope is much more founded than the most founded despair." Released, he testified. "There has been in this time a plot against my life. I live in continual danger of being kidnapped. Sometimes simple swindlers, at other times church leaders . . . attacked us. . . . In all adversities, God made us more than conquerors." I must venture!

You have deeply ventured;
But all must do so who would greatly win.
— Byron

Bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy! Venture? — a venture to hope in the invincible power of Jehovah, mighty to save? Lions between here and eternal life? Every Christian has his own lions, which neither religious or civil persecutors know anything about. The fiercest lion is sin. Sin made the lion what he is. The early martyrs saw saving grace between the teeth of the lions in the arena. Repentance and reformation? Indeed! but they lie in the way of that lion. Crucify the flesh! present your body? offer the sacrifice of your own heart? What else is an indispensable means of our salvation? It is all a divine line drawn through the den of lions. Herod was a mad lion to John the Baptist. The Sanhedrin was a lion to Stephen. The lion, Herod Agrippa I, swallowed up James, the brother of John. Daniel maintained that lions and all, he could do no other than to serve his God only. Lions? what is a veld full of them to a heart full of sin? Lions are lambs compared to sin. I go forward.

Timorous and Mistrust fear the rage of men more than the wrath of God. They despaired of divine providence which can alone restrain or disarm the fiercest persecutors. These two misfits are enemies to the Christian's faith. The best defence against them is not to listen to them, but to look to God's truth and faithfulness, to rely on His promises, and take up the whole armor of God! This demoralizing action of theirs threw Christian into a temporary fit of fear, filling him with perplexity, remorse, self-reproach, uncertainty; yet he conquered all and cast out fear. Sound scriptural reasoning drives off Mistrust, or Unbelief. We always have a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light in a dark place. In the face of danger, remember whose you are, whom you serve, the way you are on and the end of your faith.

The lives of the martyrs, yesterday's and today's, reveal that the lions could roar them deaf, dumb, blind and out of their heads, but could not roar them out of the path to Jerusalem Above.

One day, as Christian was passing through the town of Mount Ego, he came to a very narrow passage called the Queen's Drive. Surely this would be a grand road,

pleasant, with rough places made smooth, never stony, indeed, a royal highway. But as he proceeded, he found it nothing as he had imagined, and two lions were in the way. For a moment he made as though he would go back, when one, Mr. Watchful, called out to him, "Is thy strength so small? Fear not the lions, for they are chained; placed there for the trial of faith and for the discovery of those who have none. Keep to the midst of the path and no hurt shall come to thee." With that heartening word he went on. But the way was like a razor's edge. Sometimes that is the only way for us. The path for Christian he found so narrow as to allow only foot by foot in the way ahead. A fall to the left would have thrown him into the speeding traffic of the Queen's carriages. A fall to the right would hurl him through lacy palm fronds and thick grasses down the steep face of a precipice. The path of righteousness lies straight forward, wide enough for but one foot at a time. One must go forward and onward in it, must not pause in it. It has no standing room, is not for loiterers. A mis-step to left or right could be fatal. Mind, heart, eyes and feet must be kept in the very middle of that path with all perseverance. The walk here cannot be taken for granted, nor ever relaxed, nor eternal vigilance ceased for a moment.

Carnal security lulls into a sleep, which would be fatal if the Lord did not arouse us.

Press forward and fear not! though trial be near:
The Lord is our refuge – whom then shall we fear?
His staff is our comfort, our safeguard His rod;
Then let us be steadfast and trust in our God.

Press forward and fear not! we'll speed on our way;
Why should we e'er shrink from our path in dismay?
We tread but the way which our Leader has trod:
Then let us press forward and trust in our God.

We wish to thank the following for their contributions:

First Men's Society	$10.00
Loveland Congregation	22.20
Kalamazoo Congregation	13.35
Oak Lawn Congregation	13.05
Southeast Congregation	31.07
Southwest Congregation	35.51
Hudsonville Congregation	62.71
South Holland Ladies' Society	25.00
Redlands Congregation	42.70

The Federation Board thanks the two retiring staff members – Gayle Dykstra and Ken Kuiper. Their dedicated work in the interest of the **Beacon Lights** has been, and is, very much appreciated.

The Federation Board
Carol Dykstra, Sec'y

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. VAN BAREN

"GATHERING JUNK"

It has repeatedly been suggested that ministers can shake sermons, speeches, or articles "out of their sleeves." Ah, how sometimes I wish that were true! Five days ago I received a reminder from our editor that my article for the next BEACON LIGHTS was due ten days earlier. I should have remembered. I'm sorry, Mr. Editor.

But what to write about? That sleeve method does not work for me. Just choosing the subject is a major project. While in a quandary about this, I turned from my typewriter and began cleaning out one of my desk drawers. The incentive to do this was the fact that the previous evening my wife kindly began sorting out unfiled materials and discarding that which belonged in "file 13." There comes a feeling of relief when finally all the "junk" is discarded and that which is useful is returned to its proper place.

Strange, isn't it, how quickly one can accumulate much "junk"? We have found that to be true particularly when we have had to move from one home to another. Then one discovers all the boxes of materials which were put aside because, perhaps, some day these might be useful. Soon atties are cluttered. Drawers are filled. Closets have no more room. When out of necessity — or desperation — one finally sorts out all of these things, he finds that much "junk" has accumulated which could best be thrown away.

And when one thinks of it, how much is the same not true with us spiritually? We have been called of God — called from sin and evil unto true conversion. That means that our allegiance has been changed: we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. We are now accounted as pilgrims and strangers in this world. We, on our pilgrimage, have one thought in mind: our home which is in heaven. And one on such a journey must keep his baggage at a minimum. There is certainly no place for "junk." That would not be useful in the pilgrimage — and there would be no place for it in heaven. Rather the spiritual pilgrim must make wise use of what he has: his time, his talents, his possessions, in order that he may be properly prepared for that time when he arrives home.

Surely, that home which is ours in Christ Jesus is a beautiful place. There will be perfection and holiness there. All things will exist in perfect harmony. There will be no excess or left-overs — or "junk" if you

will. That must be a glorious place, indeed.

But what spiritual "junk" we can accumulate here on our pilgrimage! Utterly useless stuff! This "junk" is neither profitable for us here on the earth – and surely will be useless for heaven. There is special danger, I suppose, in one's youth to begin to collect such "junk" nevertheless. It clutters up one's mind. It seems to fill one's heart. It interferes with the seeking of one's goal. Yet careless Christians insist on holding on to all this "junk" – and even continue to accumulate it.

Such "junk" includes that involved in modern means of communication. Certain misuse of books, magazines, newspapers, radio, television can soon clutter up our lives exceedingly. How easily one can spend hours in front of a television set. It might properly be asked: how much of the time spent there is for our spiritual benefit? What, of all the things we might want to see, can be of use to us in heaven? Or, for that matter, what profit is most of it for our lives here on this earth? How can it help us in our pilgrimage? Much of that which we see clutters our lives and interferes with the seeking of that which is spiritual.

And how much "junk" one can accumulate when reading books or magazines! Some reading of materials of this world can be beneficial for the child of God. One can see, for instance, in news reports and commentaries how that the signs of Scripture concerning Christ's return are being fulfilled. One can read history, and in the light of God's Word, he can see how this is the unfolding of the plan and purpose of our God. But much of our reading is of such material which can not benefit us in heaven – and does in no way benefit us here on the earth either. It serves merely as that which clutters – and interferes with our spiritual lives. We can become so entangled with the writings of men that the Writing of God assumes second place in our lives.

Then there is the "junk" of entertainments of various sorts. Entertainment for the child of God has a place. I can not deny that. But often children of God can seek such entertainment which is contrary to the instructions of Scripture, or may place undue emphasis upon entertainment. This becomes easily spiritual "junk" which often causes Christians to stumble as they walk toward their heavenly home.

Or there may be the "junk" of evil, worldly philosophies or earthly goals. Repeatedly, natural man in this world emphasizes goals which are purely earthly and temporal. Man has the goal of making this earth the utopia which he desires. Man has the goal of seeking honor, wealth, or praise of men. He goes to school to attain these. He chooses an occupation in which he can more easily obtain these. How soon we can clutter up our lives with this same sort of "junk."

One looks at himself, at his life – and he soon sees by grace what a great deal of "junk" does truly clutter his life. All sorts of things now interfere with a proper seeking of the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness. Many of these interfering things I like and want to keep. I try to convince myself that perhaps in some way these things may prove useful in the future. I try to convince myself that these things are not much in the way. I have room both for the "junk" and for those things which are useful.

But I must not try to fool myself. "Junk" has no place in my spiritual life. On that which is earthly, temporal, which passes away – I can not place my heart.

Rather, that which is useful must be that which I seek. Prayer is one of these spiritually beneficial things. It is the fruit of the work of regeneration within us. Through it, I can come before God in thanksgiving and supplication. Nothing may interfere with that holy exercise. Seeking God's Word is another. God has revealed Himself infallibly in His Word. He speaks there of the wonder of His Sovereignty, and of my salvation through Jesus Christ His Son. That Word is beneficial both now (especially now), and hereafter. Choosing godly friends is another beneficial thing. And so one could continue.

One's spiritual life must be filled with such things which are beneficial for us on our pilgrimage – and for us when we finally arrive at our home. Junk clutters.

Examine yourselves, young people. How much "junk" are you storing away in your minds and lives? By grace, recognize that – and cast it away. Seek ye first the king-

dom of God and its righteousness. . . .

Now, Mr. Editor, back to my drawer. I've repeatedly cleaned it out before – but the "junk" repeatedly seems to return and must be cleaned out again. Perhaps if I keep it clean, I won't lose the schedule for articles you sent me – and my next article will be on time.

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Author's Key —

W.B. — Wayne Bekkering
P.B. — Priscilla Bol
K.B. — Kathy Bylsma
M.B. — Marcia Bylsma
R.C. — Ron Cammenga
D.D. — Don Doezema
L.E. — Linda Ekema
R.D.E. — Rev. D. Engelsma
D.F. — Donald Faber
J.G. — Jeanne Gritters

P.H.H. – Prof. H. Hanko
R.R.H. – Rev. R. Harbach
L.H. – Lois Hoeksema
P.H. – Peter A. Hoekstra
J.H. – Jon Huisken
J.K. – John Kalsbeek
M.K. – Mary Kamps
A.K. – Mrs. A. Karsemeyer
R.K. – R. Kreuzer, M.D.
Ka.K. – Karyn Kuiper
K.K. – Ken Kuiper
J.L. – Jim Lanting
R.G.L. – Rev. G. Lanting
R.L. – Rev. G. Lubbers
A.L. – Agatha Lubbers
K.L. – Karen Lubbers
R.L. – Rachael Lubbers
R.A.M. – Ruth Ann Maring
R.M. – Randy Meyer
T.N. – Thomas Newhof, Jr.
S.P. – Sue Porte
A.R. – Alice Reitsma
C.R. – Calvin Reitsma
C.E.R. – Carole Reitsma
B.T. – Bonnie Talsma
S.T. – Sue Terpstra
J.V.M. – Jane Van Maanen
R.V.B. – Rev. G. Van Baren
D.V.U. – Donna Van Uffelen
B.W. – Ben Wigger
R.B.W. – Rev. B. Woudenberg

– Shirley Gritters, Fed. Board Librarian

BOOK REVIEW

Springboards for Discussion

by John H. Bratt

Baker Book House, 143 pages, $1.25

Dr. Bratt is a Professor of Bible at Calvin College and also edits a column in *The Banner*. His book is divided into four units for discussion using a question directed to him by a disturbed Christian. It is simply written. There is a short essay on the topic question, he then uses his own questions and many scriptural passages to back up his usual Reformed beliefs. Under the topic, "The Incarnation and Atonement of Jesus Christ," there are several questions that seem of little importance to be used as discussion topics because God's Word itself gives us the answers. However, most of this book can be used successfully as SPRINGBOARDS FOR DISCUSSION.

C.E.R.

MR & MRS JOHN ZANDSTRA JR.
492 GLENWOOD-LANSING RD.
GLENWOOD, ILLINOIS 60425

NEWS from, for, and about our churches

KAREN LUBBERS

After several months of a severe news shortage, your news editor once again discovers that even though some of our churches are seldom heard from, they are, nevertheless, still making these worthwhile noises we call "news"! Thank-you.

From Hudsonville, Michigan:

The young people here celebrated their annual Christmas party by making fruit baskets for the sick and shut-ins in their church. Among the many expressions of gratitude found on their bulletin was this one: "Mr. and Mrs. ..... wish to thank the young people for their visit. It was appreciated very much."

From South Holland, Illinois:

Mr. and Mrs. Don Haak rejoice in the adoption of a daughter and Mr. and Mrs. Lamm Lubbers rejoice in the birth of a daughter.

Mr. Bill Rutgers has transferred to the First Church in Grand Rapids and Twyla Brummel was received from the Edgerton Church in Minnesota. Also, Mr. and Mrs. E. Holleman and their three children have transferred to Hope in Walker, Michigan.

The young people sponsored a bake goods sale to help raise funds for the upcoming Convention. It may seem as if the '70 Convention has hardly passed but the '71 Convention is only six months away!

From Hope in Walker, Michigan:

Jim Rau's address is:

Pvt. James Rau 380-54-3772
Co. C, 4th Bn. 2nd Bct. BIDE
Ft. Polk, Louisiana 71459

It's very possible that many of us do not know the servicemen whose addresses are printed in the *Beacon Lights*. However, it would be a good idea and probably a much appreciated gesture if we would send these young people a card or letter as their addresses are printed.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hoven rejoice in the birth of a son and Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Vanden Top rejoice in the birth of a daughter.

From Hull, Iowa:

Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Bleyenberg rejoice in the birth of a son.

The young people's Christmas party included caroling, the exchanging of "grab-bag gifts" and refreshments.

Did you know that in the young people's society here the Bible discussion is introduced by a member of the society? They also meet on Sunday nights at 7:00.

From Loveland, Colorado:

An ice-skating outing was held for the entire congregation on January 2. It was sponsored by the Ladies' Circle.

There must be many good Germans in this congregation! On the occasion of the school Christmas Program, a song entitled "German Song No. 91" was sung by the audience!

From First, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Mr. and Mrs. Gary Bylsma rejoice in the birth of a daughter.

Miscellaneous News:

On January 15 the young people of the Grand Rapids area gathered for their Winter Banquet at Adrian's Ramona Terrace. The speaker was Rev. Van Baren who centered his speech about the banquet theme "Treasure of Snow." Hopefully there will be more details about this in the next BEACON LIGHTS.

The theme of last August's Convention has not died! On January 28 Rev. Heys spoke at a public lecture in Zeeland, Michigan on the topic "Strangers in a Strange Land."