BEACON LIGHTS

"Look around and you will see that unbelievers also celebrate Christmas by putting up Christmas trees, decorating their houses with lights and exchanging presents.

Can they see that our celebration is any different?"

How Should We Celebrate Christmas?
Dirk Westra

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EDITORIAL

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT - A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

It's Christmas time. A great time of the year for Christians when we celebrate Jesus' birth. The Beacon Lights staff has a great way for you to celebrate Christmas and keep our giving in perspective. Consider with us the following: suppose that Protestant Reformed families spend an average of $200 on Christmas gifts. (While some families spend less than this, there are other who spend considerably more.) There are about 1400 families in the P. R. Churches. This computes to $280,000 spent on Christmas gifts. The Beacon Lights staff, when considering this was compelled to make it possible to give to a cause, instead of just talking about it.

Using some of this money for the worthy causes listed below would help us each keep this giving in perspective.

Our two causes are the following:

1. The Protestant Reformed Seminary Expansion Project

As you may know, the P.R. seminary has proposed an expansion to its facilities and this has been approved by Synod. However, you are probably not aware of the urgency of this endeavor, as it concerns not only this Seminary, but also the whole denomination. It is true that the Seminary provides our churches with the service of preparing men for the ministry of the gospel, but there is even more that it can do.

Our Seminary is willing to provide classes for the lay people of the church but at this time is not able to do so. These classes among others would include a distinctively biblical "Ethics" class which is desperately needed by our young men and women entering business and professional careers, and also a similarly distinctive "Reformed Philosophy of Education" class for aspiring teachers.

The present facility has been outgrown. There are no quiet areas for students to do research; the library has grown beyond capacity and continues to grow. The Seminary presently turns away much needed volumes of archive material because it has no climate controlled and fireproof room in which to keep them.

With the Lord's blessing, the P. R. Seminary will become the choice of more young seminarians. We have seen evidence of this already.

Prayerfully consider this cause.

2. Randolph, Wisconsin "Proposed" Protestant Reformed Grade School

On November 3, 1992; the Randolph P. R. School Society passed a proposal to begin classes in the fall of '93 in either a new school building or rented facility pursuant to the results of the present fund drive and final determination of the school board in early January, 1992.

Many of you are products of P. R. education and others of you have taken full advantage (and rightly so) of being able to send you children to P. R. schools. Randolph School Society has been considering this possibility for several years and only now has deemed it prudent to begin these steps of serious preparation toward this goal.

Please give financial and prayerful consideration toward this cause as Randolph is in great need of the broader denomination's significant initial support.

All money given by YOU will be divided equally and immediately forwarded to these causes. Please make checks payable to BEACON LIGHTS - GIFT FUND. Use attached envelope or send to: Beacon Lights P.O. Box 375 Jenison MI 49428. Monies should be received by January 1, 1993. Receipts sent upon request.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!!

Brain Kuiper, Bruce Miedema, and Editor

NOTES

WATCH OUT! Come January the Beacon Lights will be coming out with all new rubrics and a very exciting and necessary addition, a pullout devotional guide.

The Beacon Lights is happy to announce that Becky Kalsbeek and Sharon Kleyn will be joining the Beacon Lights staff. Becky will become our new secretary and Sharon will be in charge of correspondence for the magazine.

We are currently looking for a few back issues of the Beacon Lights; specifically January 1972 thru July 1974. Please contact the Editor if you are able to help us out.

As the end of 1992 comes to a close we thank you all for your excellent support of this magazine and hope it will continue.

- Editor

HOW SHOULD WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

by Dirk Westra

Are you for or against Christmas?

While this may appear to be an unusual question, there are two divergent spirits among us that may provide some basis for asking it. Some people go "all out" in this celebration of Christmas, while others claim that we make too big a deal out of it, and that it should be observed with a worship service and nothing more. How should we celebrate Christmas? Should we set up a Christmas tree, decorate the house, buy presents, go caroling, prepare special food, and invite all the relatives over for a good time? Or should we "just" go to church on Christmas Day to hear a sermon on the incarnation, similar to what we do on Pentecost or Ascension Day? How should we remember Christ's birth?

Christ's birth is part of the gospel and therefore ought to be commemorated. We must be careful, though, to guard against allowing the world to influence our celebration of this holiday.

For examples of responses to Christ's birth, we can look in the Bible. Upon receiving news of Christ's upcoming birth, Mary thanked God for His mercy toward her in particular and toward His people in general. At the time of the Savior's birth, the angel of the Lord could not contain his joy but brought the news to a group of bewildered shepherds outside Bethlehem. He also gave them a sign to direct them to the manger. Soon a multitude of the heavenly host joined the angel with the now familiar refrain: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

With joy overcoming their fear, the shepherds rushed to the manger to see Jesus and verify the news. Next they spread the news, returned to their work (not even a day off!), and praised and glorified God for the things they had seen and heard.

Being blessed with a pre-Pentecost dose of the Holy Spirit, Simeon thanked God for allowing him a look at the Redeemer and prophesied concerning Christ's work. Anna the prophetess also thanked God and directed others to look to Jesus for redemption, The magi celebrated by rejoicing, by worshiping Christ, and by giving Him gifts.

What principles can we gather from these reactions? First, we see that the faithful recognized God's condescension, that is, they saw the deity of Jesus Christ; second, they saw deliver-

ance from their sin; third, they thanked and praised God for His Gift; fourth, they were eager to spread the news; and finally, their reactions were characterized by unbounded joy.

There was also a reaction of unbelief. Upon hearing the news that there was a King born in Bethlehem, Herod was troubled to the point that he ordered a mass execution of all the young children in Bethlehem. He wanted to see the hope of a Messiah King smothered and forgotten.

What does all this say about how we should remember Christ's birth?

Consider the reactions of the eyewitnesses to the Christ. Would a decorated tree have led them to a greater appreciation of the salvation that God had prepared for them? Would colored lights have heightened their comprehension of the mystery of God living in the flesh among them? Would the exchange of gifts have caused them to more clearly understand the ultimate gift that Christ would eventually give when he died on the cross? My answer to all these questions is, "I doubt it." On Christmas we celebrate a spiritual event. If any material part of our commemoration draws our attention away from the spiritual significance of the event, I believe it *doesn't belong there.*

Here comes the ticklish part. How do I feel about Christmas decorations, lights, trees and the rest? I realize that they've been part of our Christmas celebrations for a long time, and that tradition counts for something in our circles, but I'll be straightforward. I think they cloud the spiritual wonder of Christmas. I don't think it's wrong to set up trees in our houses and decorate them. I don't think it's wrong to give and receive presents at any time of the year. Getting together with one's family is always a good idea, and there is certainly nothing wrong with eating a special meal. What connection, though, do these material things have with such a spiritual event as the incarnation? I'm concerned that we spend altogether too much time with these things that - let's face it - have nothing to do with the Baby in the manger.

Why do we single out Christ's birth and give it more emphasis than any other New Testament holy day? True, this event in Christ's life was announced by angels, but then all the other New Testament events we celebrate were accompanied by heavenly phenomena as well. Without the incarnation, there could never have been a death, resurrection, ascension or outpouring of the Spirit, but neither would the incarnation have significance all by itself either. We could make arguments for emphasizing any one of the others. For instance, don't you agree that although Christ's birth and His passion are necessary, it is on Resurrection Sunday that we celebrate His victory over death? Where then are our Easter trees and our Easter parties? For that matter, isn't Ascension Day also a joyful holy day? When's the last time your family had an Ascension Day family reunion? Shouldn't we go Ascension Day caroling to reflect our joy at having an Intercessor in heaven? Shouldn't we exchange gifts on Pentecost when God poured out His gift of the Spirit?

Without de-emphasizing the spiritual significance of Christ's birth, perhaps we need to spend more time commemorating the other aspects of His work.

I guess no treatment of the subject of Christmas decorations would be complete without a reference to Jeremiah 10:3 & 4: "For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not." Some people appeal to this as a clear scriptural prohibition of erecting Christmas trees in our homes. I would disagree, though, since the context shows that this refers to the making of idols, wood just happening to have been the material chosen for the image. I have been in the homes of many Christians around Christmas time, and have yet to see one person bowing down to their Christmas tree.

If we are to be separate from the world, though, we must celebrate Christmas differently. Look around and you will see that unbelievers also celebrate Christmas by putting up Christmas trees, decorating their houses with lights and exchanging presents. Can they see that our celebration is any different?

In much of nominal Christendom, the trappings of the holiday have accomplished what Herod could only try to do: they have smothered the memory of the Messiah King Who came to rescue His people from sin. The "true meaning of Christmas" has become a material emphasis on being kind to each other, buying presents for poor children, getting together with your family and spreading good cheer to all you meet. Noble as these things sound, they are empty if they eclipse the hope of deliverance from sin. We have a redeemer Who paid for our sins and Who is soon returning to bring us to a better life. The great privilege we as believers have is to transcend the material and celebrate the spiritual significance of the incarnation.

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

by Daniel Kleyn

Christ! Yes, this is the "kingly" name of our Savior. It means "the anointed one". This title signifies to us that Christ was anointed as King. Christ, the eternal Son of God, was King from all eternity, and He came into this world as King and now lives and reigns as King for ever. But do we always acknowledge that Christ is King? Do we always keep in mind, when remembering His incarnation and birth, that He always was, is and shall be King?

As we now again remember the birth of Christ may we not only consider the importance of Christ's incarnation, but may we also consider his life, death and resurrection, and look forward from all of this to His second coming. For it is to His second coming that we now look. At His second coming all the misery and suffering of this life will be ended, and we who are His shall be raised to glory to praise Him to all eternity. But it is also at His second coming that Christ will finally be acknowledged by all to be King of the heavens and the earth.

Let us therefore consider Christ's first and second comings, and notice the similarities and differences between them. As we consider these things we will be able better to understand that Christ was King as a babe in Bethlehem, and will show Himself as King when He comes again.

The first similarity that we notice between Christ's first and second comings is the fact that the Old Testament Scriptures prophesy of both. The Old Testament does not only point to Christ's coming in the flesh as David's royal seed, but it also speaks of His second coming when He shall come as King in power and glory.

Another similarity is the fact that just as the church of the Old Testament looked forward to Christ's first coming, so we, the church of the New Testament, eagerly await His second coming. God had given the promise of Christ's coming already to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 immediately after the fall, and He reminded His people of this promise when He renewed it with Noah, Abraham, David, and all His saints throughout the Old Testament. They knew that Christ would come, and they yearned for His coming. The New Testament church does likewise. We have the promises of His coming, and the assurance also that He will come, and we pray earnestly with the Apostle John in Revelation 22:20, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

A further significant similarity is that just as the true Church, the remnant, was small at the time of Christ's first coming, so the church will be small and seemingly non-existent at His second coming. When we read of Christ's first coming we see that the true Church barely existed. We only read of a few who still faithfully worshiped God, such as Simeon and Anna. These are the only two who are mentioned in the New Testament as recognizing Christ when He was brought into the temple, the center of worship for the Old Testament Church. The remainder of those who called themselves the Church were profane and irreligious, and were caught up in worshiping ordinances rather than God.

This will also be true at Christ's second coming. The remnant will be few, the Church will be hidden, and the majority of those who call themselves the Church will be servants of Antichrist and his kingdom. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5).

Let us now consider the significant differences between Christ's first and second comings.

What we notice about Christ's first coming is that He came quietly. There was no loud trumpet for all the world to hear and know that Christ was born. No, His coming was not noised abroad, but was inconspicuous.

At Christ's second coming, however, there will be a great noise, and all the world will see

Him coming on the clouds of heaven. For there will be a great shout, and the angels will be sent forth to sound the trumpet, and every eye shall see Him, including those who pierced Him. (I Thessalonians 4:16, & Revelation 1:7) All who have ever lived and all who are living will see and know that Christ has come again.

As we have already noticed somewhat, at Christ's first coming He was acknowledged by very few. We could count on our fingers the number of people recorded in Scripture who acknowledged Christ as the Son of God when He was born into our flesh. There were first of all Mary and Joseph, and Mary's cousin Elizabeth. There were also the shepherds to whom the angel appeared, and the wise men who "saw his star in the east", and came "to worship him." (Matthew 2:2) As we mentioned earlier there were also Simeon and Anna. The great majority of mankind failed to acknowledge Him as Christ, the King, the Son of God. Even though John the Baptist witnessed and preached concerning His coming, and even though the whole Old Testament pointed to this coming, yet only a handful of men acknowledged Him.

However this will not be the case at Christ's second coming. For then all will recognize Him as the Son of God, and all will acknowledge that He is Lord and King. Even the wicked will recognize Christ as the Son of God, and even all those who rejected or ignored Him at His first coming will be forced to confess that He is Lord indeed. There will not be a single person who has ever lived that will not confess that Christ is Lord, and even Satan and all his hosts will be made to kneel before Him. For every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10-11)

We see another difference between Christ's first and second comings when we consider how Christ was persecuted and how He suffered in this life. The world was full of disharmony and friction, but yet it could agree on one thing, and that was to oppose the Son of God - something which is also true today. We see this immediately after Christ was born when Herod sought to kill Him, and this opposition and suffering continued throughout His whole life. Many times the crowds picked up stones to kill Him, or used other means in order to put Him to death. And they finally succeeded when they judged, condemned and crucified Him on the accursed cross.

But will this be a characteristic of His second coming? No, the tables will be turned. For then Christ will come to bring justice and judgment on all His enemies. Christ will not be the suffering lamb spoken of in Isaiah 53, but He will come to exercise judgment on the earth, and will judge and punish all those who are not His people, and will cast them and the devil into hell, into the lake of fire burning with brimstone .(Revelation 19:20, & 20:15).

Perhaps the most important difference between Christ's first and second comings is that His first coming was in humility, but His second coming will be in power and glory. At Christ's birth all refused to give Him and His parents lodging in an inn, and so he was born in the lowly manger. He was thrown into a stable and refused a place of lodging among men. He was as one of the outcasts and street people of our present day cities. It is difficult to see Him as a King in this condition.

But Christ is King, and at His second coming He will come so that all will see Him as the King of heaven and earth. He will come in glory and power. He will be triumphant. He will have the victory over all His enemies. And every eye will see that He is King. And every mouth and tongue will confess that He is King. He will not come as a humble babe born in a manger among cattle, but He will come as the triumphant Lord and Christ of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.

And this great King is our King. He will be triumphant over all our enemies and will bring us into His glorious kingdom, so that there we will live and reign with Him to all eternity. Christ is King!

MOTIVES

Unfortunately, too often our motives are self-centered rather than God-centered. We want to maintain our reputation before others, or we want to feel good about ourselves. Or we may even seek to live a decent and moral life or to do good deeds because such an ethic has been instilled in us from childhood. But that motivation is never related to God and thus is not acceptable to him.

- p. 71, "The Practice of Godliness" by Jerry Bridges, Navpress 1983

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

by Rev. Ron Cammenga

"Not another article (sermon!) on the fifth commandment," I can hear some of you say. It's the same old thing over again: "Honor your father and your mother." How many times haven't we heard this?

And you are right. You will learn nothing essentially new who endure me long enough to read this article through to the end. You will be reminded, directed, encouraged, warned, but everything you read here you have already heard elsewhere.

I'm glad for that. Quite tragic it would be if this were not so, if the teaching and application of the fifth commandment were some new thing to you. But because you are covenant young people, brought up by Christian parents, instructed in the Christian school, nurtured in the church, you have grown up within the framework of the fifth commandment.

Two considerations, however, ought to compel you to take a fresh look at the fifth commandment. The first is that the fifth commandment comes to you as young people, not any longer as children. Although the fifth commandment applies to you now as much as ever before, its application has changed. What uniquely has the fifth commandment to say to you as young people?

The second consideration that ought to compel you to a fresh consideration of the fifth commandment is the fact that not too long from now many of you will be parents yourselves. It's worth your while to look at the fifth commandment from the perspective of a parent. As a Christian parent what implications will the fifth commandment have for you?

One of the very best explanations of the fifth commandment is that found in our Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 39. Because what I have to say in this article derives from this Lord's Day, I quote it here:

What doth God require in the fifth commandment? That I show all honor, love, and fidelity, to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

The fifth commandment stands at the head of the second table of God's law, at the head, therefore, of those commandments which define my duty towards my neighbor. This is so for good reason. Your parents are the very first and closest neighbors that you have in life. It is fitting, therefore, that the second table of God's law begins by calling attention to your duty towards them.

Besides this, the fifth commandment addresses itself to the most fundamental relationship in human life, the relationship of children to their parents. Our right behavior towards our parents is basic to our right behavior towards all of our neighbors. Experience bears that out. Those children who from their earliest years grow up obeying the fifth commandment inevitably grow up honoring all who are in authority over them. But those children who impenitently break the fifth commandment, who show themselves already as children and young people to be rebels against the authority of their parents, inevitably end up rebels against ALL authority: rebels against their school teachers, rebels against the church, rebels against the state.

THE OBEDIENCE ENJOINED

The fifth commandment concerns itself with authority and obedience to authority. That the fifth commandment concerns authority is plain from the language of Lord's Day 39. The Lord's Day speaks of "all in authority over me;" calls me

"to submit" to them "with due obedience"; points out that God is pleased "to govern us" by the hand of our parents.

That the fifth commandment concerns our behavior to authority is plain from the commandment itself which calls us to "honor" our father and our mother. Honor has to do with authority. Honor concerns a right attitude towards those who are in authority.

What is authority? Authority is the right from God to rule, to impose your will over others who are under you and are called to obey you. Authority is not power. Parents do not have authority over you because they are bigger and stronger than you. They do not have authority over you because they are smarter than you. The slight-of-built, relatively frail 130 pound mother has authority over the 230 pound high school linebacker who happens to be her son. The father who only had an eighth grade education is in authority over his eighteen—year—old who has just graduated from high school and in the eyes of the law of the land is considered an "adult." Why? Because God has given parents authority over their children, so long as those children live with them.

God gives authority. Lord's Day 39 says that "it pleases GOD to govern us by their hand." That means, young people, that when you obey your parents the reality is that you are obeying God. Do you believe that? Really believe that? Do you think about that when your parents tell you to do something or forbid you to do something else? At that very moment, God is pleased to govern through them.

This indicates what is always the root cause of rebellion: we do not and we will not see that GOD has set a certain person in authority over us. All we see is the person. And we don't look beyond the person to see God Who has set that person in authority over us.

If your parents have authority over you, young people, your calling towards them is clear.

First, the fifth commandment calls you to LOVE your father and your mother. The fifth commandment is part of the second table of God's law. Basically the second table of God's law is the command, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." The young people of the church are commanded to love their neighbors, their closest neighbors who are their father and their mother.

Secondly, you are to OBEY father and mother. In fact the proof of your love for your parents will be your obedience to them. This is always true. This is true of our relation to God. If we love God, we keep His commandments. Young people who truly love their parents will obey them.

This is to be an obedience of them in all things that do not expressly conflict with the Word of God. It is to be an obedience to both father and mother. And it is to be an obedience to them so long as you are in their home and under their roof.

Thirdly, you are to HONOR your parents. That's the language of the fifth commandment itself. Now, "honor" isn't the same as "obey" them. It is possible, in a way, to obey your parents without honoring them. That is a merely outward obedience, doing what they say, probably because you are afraid of being punished or want to avoid a confrontation. That's not honoring your parents. Honor is respect for your parents in your heart, respect for them as those who have been put over you by God. Always the law of God calls for obedience from the heart. This is the only kind of obedience that pleases God. As with every commandment, this is also the demand of the fifth commandment.

Finally, the fifth commandment calls young people to FIDELITY towards their parents. The 39th Lord's Day mentions this. Fidelity is faithfulness, and faithfulness is always a characteristic of genuine love. A husband who loves his wife is faithful to his wife. God loves us and is always faithful to us. The fifth commandment calls young people to be faithful to their parents.

That fidelity includes especially two things. First, fidelity towards your parents is fidelity to the instruction and upbringing that your parents give you. That means that you don't follow the instruction of your parents only so long as you are living in their home or so long as they are watching, but otherwise live as you please and throw all their good instruction to the winds. But fidelity means that you abide in the instruction of your parents all you life long, even when you have established your own home and are called by God to bring up your own children. That fidelity to parents, in the second place, is a fidelity to them even in a physical and natural sense of the word. Parents must never neglect and abandon their children. But children must never leave their parents. This applies especially when parents become old and feeble. Then the fidelity of children must show itself in their caring for their aged parents themselves in their own home, or providing that good care be given them in an institution. And then, not leaving them shut up in some institution, but visiting them and attending to them, and not becoming so preoccupied with their own lives as to have no time

to do this.

THE REBELLION FORBIDDEN

Just exactly because it enjoins love, honor, and fidelity to parents, the fifth commandment prohibits rebellion against parents and all who are in positions of authority.

Young people may never under any circumstances or for any reason rebel against their parents. Any young person who takes the fifth commandment seriously can only come to this conclusion. You may certainly have disagreements with your parents, discuss differences with your parents, attempt to get your parents to understand your viewpoint. And good Christian parents will be sensitive to these things in their young people. But, in the end, your parents have the last word. You may never rebel against them.

This is so even though parents often manifest many weaknesses and infirmities. Sometimes your parents are not going to be fair. Sometimes your parents are not going to be very understanding. Sometimes your parents are going to make harsh demands of you. Sometimes your parents are going to be too strict and too severe. Sometimes your parents are going to correct you in anger and not in love.

And these are serious matters, SINS on the part of your parents. But the weaknesses and sins of your parents never give you an excuse to rebel against them. Even then you must submit yourself to them and "patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities."

That rebellion against your parents may take several forms.

First of all, the fifth commandment forbids outright rebellion, the striking out against those who are in authority in an attempt to overthrow that authority or at least to injure those who are in authority. Then young people actively resist their parents and defy their authority. The young person talks back to his parents, refuses to listen to his parents, or even comes to blows with his parents. That sort of behavior is absolutely forbidden. The law of God in the Old Testament was, "And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death Exodus 21:15. That law applies as much today as it did back then.

A second form of rebellion forbidden by the fifth commandment is the refusal of young people to take to heart the instruction and discipline of their parents. Has it ever happened, young people, that when your parents instructed you about association with unbelievers, that you crossed your arms and set your jaw and did whatever else you could to show them that although you heard every word that they said you were not taking it to heart? Has it ever happened that when your parents caught you listening to rock music or attending a movie and reprimanded you for that and warned you about those evils dishonoring to God, that you glared defiantly at them, making it very plain that you were not taking their rebuke of you to heart? Or has it happened that when your parents found it necessary to discipline you in one way or another, that you became very angry, stormed off to your room, and slammed the door behind you? Or has it happened that in spite of your parent's refusal to allow you to do something or go somewhere, you did it or went there anyway? Has it ever happened that your resentment of the authority of your parents has led you to run away from home or to contemplate running away from home? All of these are forms of rebellion, a refusal to take to heart the instruction or discipline of your parents.

A third form of rebellion forbidden by the fifth commandment is disparaging talk to others about those who are in authority. The sad part of this is that sometimes parents themselves take the lead here, so that children and young people are only following the example of their parents.

It is no surprise that in homes where parents speak disparagingly and critically of those in authority—the elders, the pastor, the policeman, the employer—that children growing up in that home do the same thing. Nevertheless, this is forbidden by the fifth commandment. Talk about your parents, references to your parents in your conversations, especially with other young people, is to reflect the honor that they deserve.

THE REWARD PROMISED

To those who do honor their father and mother, the Lord in the fifth commandment gives an incentive. That incentive is the promise of a great reward. That reward is a reward of grace. It is never earned or merited, but is a free, gracious gift of God. It can't be earned because as we are by nature it is impossible for us to honor and to obey those in authority. By nature we are rebels, rebels against the authority of God, and rebels against the authority of our parents. Every young person who knows anything at all about himself and about his nature recognizes the truth of this. We need the grace of God if we are ever going to keep the fifth commandment. God gives that grace to covenant young people.

The reward for those who honor their father and mother is: "that thy days may be long in the

land which the Lord Thy God giveth thee."

That reward is, first of all, God's blessing on your earthly life. In Deuteronomy 5:16 we read, "that it may go well with thee." The reward is a good and clear conscience here in this life, freedom from the burden of a conscience that accuses us of disobedience to and dishonoring of our parents. That can be a very painful thing, and that can plague a rebellious young person all his life. The obedient young person is spared that misery.

Besides, he is spared all of the troubles that are the consequences, in this life already, that come to the young person who grows up a rebel against his parents and a rebel against the church and state.

Nevertheless, the reward promised in the fifth commandment is not essentially an earthly reward, the promise of a long earthly life to those who are obedient to their parents. Then we could conclude that all children who die young must have been disobedient to their parents, and all who lived to be very old must have been very obedient as children and young people. That, of course, is not necessarily the case.

We have to remember in this connection the typical significance of the land of Canaan in the Old Testament. That is "the land" referred to in the fifth commandment. Canaan was a type of heaven. The promise of reward is the promise of heaven and a place personally in heaven.

You young people, you want to go to heaven, don't you? You want to see Jesus Christ and enjoy fellowship with God, don't you? Then while you are on this earth, honor you father and your mother.

WRITING CONTEST WINNER
3rd Grade

THE BUTTERFLY

by Bethany Joy Haak

As we look around we observe the butterfly. It is one of the most beautiful insects. The Greeks believed that the soul left the body in the form of a butterfly. This is not true.

The butterfly is a picture of the resurrection. When the caterpillar goes into the cocoon a miracle happens! The ugly caterpillar becomes a beautiful butterfly. The caterpillar in the cocoon is a picture of Jesus in the grave. The grave opened and Jesus came out wonderfully transformed.

If you hold the butterfly tightly the scales will come off and it will not be able to fly. It will probably die. I know that because my friend did that.

There are all kinds of different butterflies. And they are all beautiful. These are some of them: the Swallow-Tail, the Monarch, and the Painted Lady butterfly.

Are not these wonderful creatures of God?

BOOKS

Published by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies

Reformed Education by Prof. David Engelsma - 86pp. - **$2.50**
Originally published in 1977 by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies, this excellent book was reprinted by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies in 1981. An excellent series of speeches on:
The Covenant Basis of Christian Education
Scripture in the Schools
Reformed Education and Culture
The Protestant Reformed Teacher - and
The Goal of Reformed Education.

Implications of Public Confession of Faith by Abraham Kuyper - 68pp. - **$2.50**
A reprint of Abraham Kuyper's stimulating volume answering the question, "What is expected of me after I make confession of faith?" He reveals how full Christian life does not end but begins with confession of Christ as a personal Savior. An ideal gift book which includes a presentation page.

Leaving Father and Mother by Rev. C. Hanko - 56pp. - **$1.50**
A brief discussion of finding a mate, and courtship, the marriage vows, and the bond of marriage that unites two lives in love, in devotion, and in the fear of the Lord.

Christian Liberty by Rev. R. Harbach - 48pp. - **$1.50**
An excellent short book on Christian Liberty in matters indifferent, concerning proper mutual respect, vs. judging and despising, in observance of days, occasions to fall, offenses, and the principle of faith.

Jesus' Beauty Shining In You by Rev. C. Haak and Rev. R. Van Overloop, Don Doezema and Marybeth Lubbers - 187 pp. - **$6.50**
The three main authors of this book took each fruit of the Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-26 and wrote from a particular point of view. Don Doezema wrote on the fruit shown in the life of Christ; Marybeth Lubbers wrote about the fruit shown in the life of a biblical character; and Rev. Van Overloop wrote on the fruit of the Spirit shown in the life of Reformed youth today. A superb study of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of Christ and in the lives of God's people.

Orders for books should be sent to:
Beacon Lights
P.O. Box 375
Jenison, MI 49428.

WRITING CONTEST WINNER

THE VINE

by Larry Meulenberg

The other day I planted some melon in the garden. The plant was small. I took the word of the local greenhouse that it was melon, and looked forward to the time, not many days hence, when I could lay a big slice on my oversized plate, and heap a goodly scoop of rich ice cream along side of it. Such things are what dreams of ancients are made of. I watered, I weeded, I dreamed, I waited.

As the days passed, my dreams wilted along with the plant. I was befuddled, for enough water she had. Neither was she choked with weeds. A few perhaps, but nothing threatening. Why this limpid thing? From whence this tawny color?

"Fertilizer she lacked," I was told.

And so in quantity it came. Measured, delicately, day by day, never it lacked this need. With restrained eagerness I watched its leaves to see what hue they would turn. Slowly, greener they became. Soon it showed some life. My dreams returned, along with a watering mouth, as I anticipated natures bounty.

Wildly it spread across the garden, its vines daily searching new limits. Vibrant, living, growing fast; I waited. Soon the yellowish orange flowers would appear. Harbingers of fruit to come. I waited. . . , I watched. . . , I waited in vain, for ne'er a blossom did see.

A little more time is all she needs, I thought in ignorant bliss. But days, they passed; they came and went. The vine continued to grow. Its searching tentacles knew no bounds, while its leaves in splendor flourished. its health and vigor were evident to all and many were the compliments I received. The praises fell on an empty stomach however. its growling demanded an answer I couldn't give.

"Where is the fruit?"

"WHERE IS THE FRUIT!?"

Its consistent and insistent bickering gave birth to the irritation I directed towards the plant. Irritation bred anger, and as the vine continued to grow, so did my wrath. Neither knew no limits. I could have killed it easily. One chop with the spade at its base was all it would take. One violent, life ending thrust! So I did it, but my anger was not appeased.

Later, as I watched the fire lick its way through the now brown brittle remains, I wondered what had happened. What had caused such an abnormality? Why was it that such a vibrant plant wouldn't use all my watering, weeding, fertilizing, and caring to bring me its fruit? Why did it keep it for itself?

Such are we in the Master's hand. He planted us for His purpose. Our fruit He wants to pluck, to handle, and taste. So He waters, He weeds, He fertilizes, He cares, and cherishes us every day. But what do we do with all of these things? Do we channel them into ourselves? Do we make ourselves a beautiful, thriving, far reaching vine; fruitless in every detail?

One thrust will He give, and rightfully so; and later, as the judgment of fire consumes, His damning voice will echo the blast, "Poor stewards of all that I gave."

So what are you, youthful plant? And what are you, ye ancients? Is the master's garden filled with useless vegetation, or is He pleased to see from afar, not only the flowering promises of fruit dotting the plants in His garden, but as He comes closer and lifts your broad leaves, smiling find the fruit He craves?

He gives . . . that He might have.

Isaiah 5:1-7 Luke 13:6-9

CHURCH NEWS

by Lora Ellerbroek

PEACE (Illinois)

Dan and Jessica Wiersma rejoice in the birth of Samuel Isaac and baptism took place October 18.

On October 13, Bart and Jan Zandstra were blessed with the birth of Justin Bartel.

The sacrament of baptism was administered on September 6 to Nickolas James, infant son of George and Ranae Vroon.

DOON (Iowa)

On September 13, Teresa Aardema, Rachel Blankespoor, Cara Bonestroo, Brent Boon, Heather Dykstra, Lanette Van Den Top, Lavonne Van Den Top, Monica Wiersma, and Brian Wynia made public confession of their faith.

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Larissa Joy, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Burgers on September 20.

Stephanie Bleyenburg and Jeff Zylstra were united in marriage on August 1.

Crystra Bonestroo and Allen Brummel were united in marriage on August 14.

BETHEL (Illinois)

Mr. and Mrs. Daryl Poortinga rejoice in the birth of Madeline Elle. Baptism was administered on October 4.

SOUTH HOLLAND (Illinois)

The elders have received the papers of Dan Falb from Park St. Congregational Church in Mass. and of Jason Whitman from Bethany CRC of South Holland.

Melanie Van Der Noord made confession of her faith on August 23.

We express our sympathy to Henry and Joanne Zandstra and family in the sudden death of her brother.

Mrs. Bessie De Vries was called to her eternal home and sympathy is expressed to her family (George and Denise De Jong and Jim Flikkema).

Bob and Linda Van Baren were blessed with the birth of Krista Marie.

Jeremy and Lynn Lubbers were blessed with the birth of Nicholas James August 30.

The church has received the membership of Karen Hanko from Hope, Walker.

Todd and Valerie Terpstra were blessed with the birth of Jilliam Rey on September 14.

Mr. and Mrs. James Blankespoor celebrated their 50th anniversary September 25.

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Krist Van Baren on September 27.

Phil Van Baren made public confession of his faith September 27.

SOUTHEAST (Michigan)

Mr. and Mrs. Jim (Dot) Swart join our fellowship from First PRC (GR).

Rev. Dale Kuiper celebrated his 25 years of ministry on October 1.

SOUTHWEST (Michigan)

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Rutgers and family have been transferred to Hope PRC Walker.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Dan Kaiser on the birth of Alex Jay on September 19.

LOVELAND (Colorado)

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Bill Bos and family in the birth of Alicia Renae.

FIRST (Holland)

Ben and Loree Bosman were blessed with the birth of Jessica Ashley. The baptism was administered on September 27 along with the public confession of faith and baptism of Mrs. Loree Bosman.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs.

Doug Wassink and family have been received from Southwest PRC.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Nasry Rizk and children have been received from Goshen CRC in New York.

HUDSONVILLE (Michigan)

Jodi Doezema made public confession of faith September 20.

The consistory has received the membership papers of Mrs. Marie Van Belkum and son.

HULL (Iowa)

Mr. and Mrs. Kimmy Kooiker became the parents of Cristina Rose on August 15.

Mr. and Mrs. Harlan Hoekstra requested that their papers be sent to Hope in Walker.

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Thomas Gerben, of Mr. and Mrs. Gerb De Jong and to Justin Lee, of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Kooima.

Mr. Mark Hoekstra and Miss LaBeth Oostra were united in marriage.

Mrs. Ben Bleyenberg celebrated her 91st birthday.

Mr. and Mrs. Vern Hoekstra were blessed with the birth of Dylan Jay.

Mr. Herman Boonstra and Miss Ruth Bleyenberg were united in marriage August 6.

HOPE (Walker)

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Martin Dale, son of Randy and Barb Feenstra, and to Kyle James, son of Keith and Sara Noorman.

Mrs. M. Veenstra celebrated her 87th birthday September 14.

Mr. and Mrs. David Tanis rejoice in the birth of a baby boy.

The papers of Jon and Lisa Langerak and family were sent to Southwest PRC.

GRANDVILLE (Michigan)

Mr. and Mrs. Dan Huizinga were blessed with the birth of Kevin James.

Mr. and Mrs. Rob Huizinga were blessed with the birth of Trevor James.

The membership papers of Mrs. Sherry (Bouma) Dommisse have been transferred to Byron Center PRC.

A welcome was extended to Mr. and Mrs. Tim Schimmel from Hope PRC Walker.

Rev. and Mrs. Robert Harbach celebrated their 49th anniversary September 22.

FAITH (Michigan)

Welcome to Shon Griess from Loveland PRC.

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Hannah Joy, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dirk Westra on September 27.

REDLANDS (California)

Mrs. Ann Van Meeteren celebrated her 77th birthday September 7.

Mr. Clarence De Vries celebrated his 77th birthday September 8.

The consistory has approved the transfer of membership of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Jabaay to Faith PRC.

The confession of faith of Paul and Jennifer Bell was received with joy September 27.

Mr. and Mrs. Bud De Vries celebrated their 54th anniversary on October 6.

Sympathy to Jake and Marty Mantel in the passing away of her grandmother.

Mrs. Effie Krikke celebrated her 86th birthday.

PUT OFF AND PUT ON

We are to put off falsehood and put on truthfulness. We are to put off stealing and put on generosity. Unwholesome talk must be put off and replaced with speech which is helpful for building other up. Bitterness, rage, anger, and slander are to be replaced with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Obscene or suggestive speech is to be replaced with thanksgiving. Even Paul's list of gracious qualities in Galatians 5, called the fruit of the Spirit, is set in contrast to a lengthy catalog of vices of the sinful nature which must be put off by the godly person.

- p. 78, "The Practice of Godliness" by Jerry Bridges, Navpress 1983

The Beacon Lights Staff
wishes you a
Blessed Christmas
and a
Happy new Year!