BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

THE DECEMBER ISSUE FOR

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BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOL. XIII DECEMBER—1952 No. 3

God In Our Flesh - Why?

ROGER FABER
Grand Rapids, Michigan

THERE HAVE been many critical moments in the history of the world, moments when the fate of nations was at stake, times when the very existence of civilization seemed to hang by a slender thread. Historians have given much attention to these momentous periods for their significance is great indeed. The period of cultural development in Greece, the time of Roman expansion, the revival of learning, the American revolution, all have a profound effect on our life today. But there is one period of history which in its splendor and wealth of significance eclipses all the others, and that is the thirty-year period of Christ's ministry on earth.

A many other times kingdoms and nations were destroyed and built up, but during this time a Kingdom was established which far transcends all earthly boundaries of time and space; the foundation was laid for an eternal "city of God", a people who, although their origin is of this world, have a destiny surpassing in glory anything which could be imagined on earth, a destiny in the kingdom of heaven. The climax of Christ's ministry was his shameful death on the cross, but the beginning of his ministry is also of tremendous significance and a source of unlimited wonder and awe for us. It is this event which we commemorate each year in December, the incarnation, the coming of the promised Messiah.

God humbled himself. The Almighty took upon himself the weaknesses of human flesh. The Son of God, the Word who was with God and who was God at the beginning of time, who operated in the creation of time and who is far above all limitations of time, voluntarily assumed those limitations and became a subject of the very thing which he created. The Every-where-present One bound himself to a particular spot in space, and he who had no need of anyone or anything willingly took upon himself the human body with all the physical needs and defects it contained: hunger, weariness, pain, and even death.

It was a miracle. No one can begin to comprehend the virgin birth of Christ. The Church throughout the age has pondered this amazing fact and, although books and countless articles have been written on it, we today are no closer to an understanding than was the Church of the first century. That Mary, who "knew not a man" should conceive seed; it was unheard of. And that this seed

should be the Son of God! Even Joseph was staggered. We do not understand; we do not ask to comprehend; we only believe. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

God suffered. When we think of the suffering of our Lord, our attention is usually drawn to the short time immediately before his death, to the crown of thorns, the buffetings at the hands of the soldiers and the spiritual agony of separation from God. However, this was by no means the whole of his suffering. From the very first moment of his earthly ministry Christ suffered. The simple fact that he was bound to earthly, finite limitations occasioned suffering. Moreover, from the very first he was received not as a king but as an outcast. The Jewish people had been waiting for thousands of years for the promised Messiah; prophets had told of his coming, poets had sung of it, everyone looked for it. But when he came was he received with feasts and rejoicing? No, there was no room in the inn; his only welcome was given by lowly shepherds; he was forced to be concealed in Egypt because of the frantic persecution by Herod; later, during his active ministry, he cried out, "O Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thee under my wings . . . . and thou wouldst not!" On that night when all the world was assembled for taxation, the Son of God began to walk a road of bitterness, of rejection, of pain and suffering. He came unto his own and his own received him not.

What does it all mean? Why should the omnipresent God assume the weakness of human form? What was the purpose of such a miraculous birth? Why did God's own Son have to endure such ignominous pain and reproach? Why? Ah, that is the glory of it; that is what makes the period of Christ's ministry so significant. When we stop to consider the reason and purpose of this most important part of history, we are overwhelmed. Why did the Almighty come down to earth? Why did Christ begin to walk the way of the cross? In the answer lies all our hope: He did it **for us.**

PEACE

"Peace, Peace," the people cry
And build the deadly tools of war
And wonder why the dove of peace
Still lingers far.

For peace is not the fruit of
Nor comes to men by brutal force.
'Tis true that fruits of greed and hate
Are like their source.

The angel's song has died away
And glory to the God of heaven,
To men, alone, whose will is good
Can peace be given.

If men were truly just and good
And filled with love for God and men
And followed Christ, the Prince of Peace,
Then Peace would reign.

W. A. Miller, in
United Presbyterian

EDITORIALS

THE DARK, UNCERTAIN FUTURE

ALTHOUGH, in a sense, the future can always be said to be uncertain, yet at present this is the case as never before. Although there have often been periods in history when the times looked dark and the future very uncertain; the present in a very particular way can be said to be so. The previous uncertainties were usually more localized and they also did not touch every phase and department of the life of the people as they do today.

Economically we face a viscious inflationary spiral due to the piling up of a huge debt and consequent increasing demands for wage increases by labor and price-raises by manufacturers and farmers.

Politically we see a sordid picture of increasing corruption and graft; the selling of influence and protection for money and the domination of office-holders by labor unions and other minority blocs.

Internationally we live under the constant dread of communism and its attendant threat of war with Red Russia and her sattelites.

Scientifically we live under the shadow of the atomic cloud. The world of science itself fears the very weapon of destruction it has forged. They fear that the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb which they have developed will one day destroy them.

After having surveyed these categories, we still have not touched on those of the church and the home.

The Church in general has deteriorated into a society for community uplift and welfare, and the pulpit has become a forum for expounding moral and political values. Whereas doctrines are no longer preached and much less understood, and whereas the general idea and thrust of all churches is virtually the same, a veritable rash of church merger and union in the inevitable result.

The home, which formerly was a bulwark of security and protection; where children were nurtured and taught the first principles of devotion and obedience, has become, by and large, remiss in its duties. The parents neglect the proper training of their children by word and example. The children are, as a r e s u l t, disrespectful and disobedient both at home and in society. The result is that a generation arises who respect nor obey either God or man.

"What a pessimist!" you perhaps say.

Let us assure the reader that this is, however, not the purpose. The picture we have painted is quite true to fact as all of you know from reading and experience.

It is especially for our young people, who stand at the threshold of this troublous and dark life that we write. Our purpose is not to point out the future darkly and leave it at that, but to show, by God's grace, that in dark times God is our light and in troublous times He is our defence. How do and should we react to those facts?

We sincerely sympathize with our young men, who, when they finish their schooling, face induction into the ser-

vice for a period of years. They normally would choose a career or vocation for their livelihood at this period in life. Now nothing but uncertainty faces them. If a few years elapse between the time they leave school and their induction, a new problem often arises. They have perhaps met a girl with whom it is their desire to marry and set up a home. The problem then is—is it wise to marry now that induction faces them, or is it better to wait until discharged?

Our girls, although not directly effected by military service and war, are nevertheless similarly faced with their own problems. At an age when normally they are seeking and finding their future husbands, they find that the boys of their age are serving their country and often facing the threats of death by the enemy.

All these problems have a tendency to cause us to say "What's the use?" "It's impossible to make any plans or decisions about anything—the future is too uncertain". This is a great danger. It is the taking of the road of least resistance. This negative attitude is never justifiable. It is not by chance that conditions in the world are as they are. Nor is it by chance that you are, at your age, faced with uncertainties in regard to your future. God requires of us that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength we serve Him. We experience that we are wholly unable in the very least way to meet this holy demand.

Obedience to God's positive commands does not make allowances because of the uncertainties of our future or of world conditions. God demands obedience now —today—under exactly these conditions —that we live a positive life of faith. Faith is the gift of God. By faith we have the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord. If we live out of this faith, we believe that God is sovereign; that in and through all these things His kingdom is coming; that we, His people are set as a testimony to His grace in the midst of a world which lieth in wickedness. We can't postpone this until a more stable world-order develops or until our life becomes a little less uncertain, but daily, under the most adverse circumstances, we must walk in faith as before His face. This faith strengthens us to face the future with confidence, being assured that our God does all these things and does them well. Then we wait patiently for the Lord to make His will known with regard to us, —not running ahead in our own impatience.

In regard to our boys and girls, this, in our opinion, would include that they wait with their marriage until they can establish a normal, christian home, and in regard to our boys that they do not take the initiative by enlisting, but wait until God in His providence directs that they be drafted.

In this way they can be fully assured that they are in God's way and may expect His blessing.

The things we have touched upon are only a few of the more prominent things in the lives of our young people that can be treated in this connection. It may be profitable for our comfort, edification and instruction to treat some of the other phases in a later issue.

Stand fast in the truth and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wait patiently upon Him. Search His Word, Who does all things well. —S.D.Y.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

REV. P. VIS
Manhattan, Montana

TURNED INSIDE OUT

THAT, FRIENDS, is what happens to us during the Christmas season: God turns us inside out!

We have again come to to that season of the year which is known among us as Christmas. However, that is a fact of which none of us has need of being reminded, for whereever we turn, everywhere, we find the hustle and bustle which is common to this season of the year. In our cities and towns, streets and windows are gaily decorated in the festive colors of yuletide, children and adults are tense with excitement and the minds of old and young alike are occupied with the problems and joys of the coming holiday. All of which reminds us that we have again come to the most joyful of all the festive seasons and that this season is indeed one of joy and gladness, of rejoicing and jubilation.

And well may it be such, for Christmas has a very comforting message and Bethlehem is indeed a beautiful place. For there in Bethlehem, many centuries ago, God supplied us with a Saviour. And that, friends, namely a Saviour, is exactly our greatest need. For at the root of all our troubles, and those of the weary world in which we dwell, lies our sin. And sin, as we all know, means that we are enemies of God. It means that we have broken God's law. It implies that we stand guilty before Him, and that we are the objects of His hot displeasure and righteous judgments.

And to be delivered from that awful condition and state, one who is an example, or merely extends kind invitations and throws out well-meant life-lines, is of no avail. What we need is one who saves, truly saves, entirely and completely, for we are not merely drowning but drowned, not only dying but dead. What we need, even more than food and clothing and life itself, is someone who saves not only from the effects of sin, but who saves first of all from the guilt and power of sin. What we need above all else, is one who first atones for our sin and then makes of the dead sinner a living saint.

And that is what God gives us in Bethlehem. There in Bethlehem He provides us exactly with such a Savior, for Bethlehem's Babe is none other than Christ, the Lord. And that means that He has been appointed and ordained by God unto the very purpose that He might redeem and save all those given Him by the Father. But it means also that this purpose will surely be realized, for He is no one less than the Lord Himself, Who even at the time of His humble birth has all things in His hand and rules supreme over all the inhabitants of the earth.

In Bethlehem, therefore, heaven and earth meet, God and man are forever united. In Bethlehem, a holy and righteous God breaks forth into a world of sin and darkness, to give beauty for ashes, life for death, peace instead of war, and hope where there was nothing but despair. In Bethlehem, God condescends to our low estate, He comes to

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live with the poor and the lowly, and He opens the way that poor, lost sinners may again dwell with Him. That friends, is the meaning of Christmas and the beauty of Bethlehem.

Small wonder, then, that the shepherds of old in the fields of Ephrata, said to one another: "Come, let us go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass." For there in Bethlehem, in that lowly manger, in that Babe so humbly wrapped in swaddling clothes lies our salvation. There in the city of David, is the Wonder of God, the mystery of godliness, Immanuel, God with us.

And well may we today, admonish one another likewise, for in this war-torn world, there, and there only, do we find peace. True it is, the nations are again at war, and our young men are called to arms and must bear the sword. But even so, in Bethlehem there is peace, peace with God and our entire way, for Bethlehem's Babe, and He alone, is the Prince of peace. To be sure, Bethlehem is beautiful, also, yes, especially today in a world at war, in which all things proclaim to us that we never rest until we rest in Him.

And yet, we so easily forget that Bethlehem is also terrible. So often we seem to think that the joy of Christmas is universal and that the Christ-child came to bring peace and happiness to all. No doubt, that was also the hope and expectation of His mother, and that she should cherish such thoughts and expectations can easily be understood. For as soon as the child is born, angels sang of His glory, shepherds and Magi came to worship Him, and old gray-haired Simeon in the temple, taking the child in his arms exclaimed: "Lord, now let Thy servent die in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." In view of this, it is not strange that Mary's hopes

were high and that concerning her child she had the greatest expectations.

But the same Simeon who caused her hopes to rise, also warned her not to be come overly optimistic, for having made his beautiful confession, he turned to her and said: "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against...in order that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

No doubt, these words must have come to Mary as a great disappointment and as a tremendous shock, for they made it plain to her in no uncertain terms, that her child would not be popular, that many would contradict him, and that they would be offended in him unto their own ruin and hurt. They foretold in very plain language, that through this child, though some would be exalted and lifted up to the very heights of heaven, yet others would fall and stumble over him into eternal perdition.

And so God would have it, for, notice, Simeon emphasizes that Christ has been set unto this very thing, which means that God has ordained him for the very purpose, that he might bring separation between the children of men, that he might separate the sheep from the goats and the good from the bad, that the one might be exalted by him and the other brought low, that for the one he might be a savor of life unto life but for the other a savor of death unto death.

And this separation which God brings about through the Christ-child, begins at Bethlehem, for there, though wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, the Babe we behold, is none other than the Christ of God, the Prince of Peace, who in one person is not only a real righteous man, but at the same time is also very God. Hence, in that Babe, God places us before the question: What think ye of the Son of God? And in the answer we give and in the attitude which we assume toward him, we reveal whether we are children of darkness or whether by grace we are children of God.

Therefore, friends, Christmas is a grave situation and Bethlehem is a serious place, for there in Bethlehem we stand before the tribunal of God, God judges us, He turns us inside out, and He lays bare the thoughts of our heart. And, therefore, if it should be true of us, that during this Christmas season we ignore and crowd-out the Christ-child, and if we think more of gifts, tinsel and tree than of him, then we stand condemned already, for thus we prove that the glittering things of this world mean more to us than the salvation and righteousness of Christ.

But on the other hand, if it be true of us, that as the shepherds of old, we seek our all in Bethlehem, in the Christ of God and that all our rejoicing is in him, then it is well with us, for then the word of the angel comes to us: "Fear not, for unto you is born in the city of David, the Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord."

Indeed, therefore, Bethlehem is a beautiful place. But it is also terrible. It is beautiful for the righteous, but it is terrible for the wicked. During this Christmas season, therefore, and in our rush and pursuit of gifts, let us be warned, friends, not to trample underfoot the greatest of all gifts, for remember: This child has been set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, in order that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed!

CURRENT COMMENTS

REV. L. DOEZEMA
Bellflower, California

A NEW VERSION

SINCE THE publication of the new "Revised Standard Version", I had intended to make a few comments in Beacon Lights about it. This is an interesting subject and warrants a more lengthy consideration than can be given in these few lines.

The version is authorized by the National Council of the Churches of Christ and published by Thomas Nelson & Sons. For this reason it is severely criticized by many who maintain that it is the work of liberal scholars and the promotion scheme of the publishers.

I have not read the version, but have read the criticism of the New Testament revision by Oswald T. Allis entitled "Revision or New Translation?" This is worth while for you to read.

It is my opinion that the King James version remains the best for our public usage. It has preserved the meaning of the original to a remarkable degree but has also a beautiful and majestic style which is so far not surpassed by other translations. The Revised version it is true, is more accurate in certain instances, but it does not have the beauty of style which is also necessary for our grasping of the Word of God. The inaccuracies of word translation do not distort the truth in any way.

We always must remember that there are no infallible translations and any one which is given out as the best because of new discoveries in the language, as this version is, ought to be a warning signal to us. Considered soberly it is not true, that new discoveries of the last years warrant a new translation.

There is a danger in the modern speech translations if they are used as standard versions. They are however, helpful, in studying the Bible along with our King James version and American Revised version.

A passage which is a good example in this Christmas season to point out a difference in the translations and how other translations help us to gain the meaning is Luke 2:14. In the King James version we read, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." In the other modern speech translations, and the American Revised we read, "And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."

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THE MESSIAH

Throughout our country among religious groups there seems to be a growing interest in the rendition of Handel's "Messiah". In our circles in the west there has not been the same interest as in Michigan, but also here it is growing. Last year an oratorio society was formed and gave the Messiah in our neighborhood to a large audience. Just as I was preparing to make my comments for the month of December a paper came announcing the preparation for and the

dates of the rendition of the Messiah next month.

There is no doubt that the "Messiah is great music and that the selections from Scripture serve beautifully to give the Word of God about Christ's birth. It can and does serve to impress us all with the deep meaning of Christmas. Certain passages of God's Word are sung and heard in the world, in the church world today, that call attention to God's sovereign wrath and just judgments in an impressive way, which otherwise would not be heard in certain pulpits. How some can "enjoy" such a rendition as they do is strange. It is only possible to "enjoy" the oratorio without having fear and trembling when one ignores the words of Scripture or relegates them to myths of ancient literature.

It seems to me that there is a certain strange interest in the "Messiah". There is an overemphasis on its importance. It may be explained by the lack of interest in God's Word and a desire to escape the truth by an appreciation of the beauty of music.

To enter into the depth of the truth of Christ's birth and the Word of salvation we need the lively preaching of the Word.

Our Christmas worship must be more than lip and ear and soul service. It must be the true service of the heart. Let us seek for the truth with all our heart in prayer and as pastors and flock earnestly strive to possess the deep significance of the Incarnation by exegetical study and worship.

Fron the quietness of the meeting of God and His people through the preaching of His Word,—not from the quietness of the music hall—, we shall go forth into the din of the false Christmas spirit, into the noise of the shop and street, into the trouble of the turmoil of sin and sorrow with a peace of God that passeth all understanding.

FEDERATION BOARD REPORT

As the society season is in full swing, so are the activities of the Federation Board. We held our first meeting September 15, 1952. We meet on an average of once a month. The Board appoints new staff members to BEACON LIGHTS, plans special Mass Meetings, and handles all other business (mostly financial) concerning the Young Peoples' Federation. Speaking of finances, won't you societies please send in your society assessments to our treasurer, Herm Hanko?

All matters relative to the Young Peopels' Federation or Federation Board should be sent to the secretary:

Miss Eleanor Veldman
1435 Kalamazoo Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids 7, Michigan

Will each society please send the name and address of its secretary to the above? Thank you.

——:——

Success comes in cans—failure in can'ts.

A day of worry is more exhausting than a week of work.

The sign on the door of opportunity reads—PUSH.

—The Mountain Presbyterian

TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ANDREW PETTER
Grand Rapids, Michigan

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS LABORS

IN OUR previous article we tried to face the problem that confronts us as Christians in the field of Labor—in that field with all its carnal strivings, with all its perversions of the meaning of the work of our hands.

Certainly for the Christian whose lot is cast into a daily first-hand contact with this sphere of life the problems must be overwhelming, the perplexities the temptations, the confusion would seem to make impossible any intelligent attitude toward it all.

And yet we believe that for the Christian the guidance also for this sphere is given in the Scriptures.

Do we not believe that the Christian is saved from the whole dominion of the devil over his entire creaturely human life? Do we not believe that the Christian is sanctified and redirected by the Holy Spirit so that his whole existence is changed? We believe that we are created unto Good works, we believe that we are thoroughly equipped unto these good works, we believe that all Scripture is given for this purpose of equiping us and that the Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

If this is our confession then we certainly believe that it covers every hour of our day. We cannot assume that the largest part of the Christian's life, the eight or ten working hours of his day is somehow left outside of this redemption and restoration. Thus they would be left in the tangle of a crooked world, rather futile, rather meaningless, with no guidance or direction.

Also this part of our life as Christians has meaning, purpose, direction.

Is it not remarkable that the ordinances for this sphere of life can be traced and that they give direction in this respect.

I will not forget that on this point we have been especially warned in recent years. We have been set on our guard against natural theology, natural law, natural ethics, and have been pointed back to the word, to the written revelation of God as it is booked for our guidance.

Calvin said that God has revealed Himself to us through two means of revelation, namely thru nature and thru the Scriptures. But then he added that they are used in such a way that the Bible must first be taken and understood, and it must be the spectacles through which we look at nature and gather its God-inscribed thoughts.

Thus then we can learn from nature, its ordinances for life. In this work-material which God has given to man for cultivation, the Most High has Himself interwoven the laws by which it must be cultivated.

In the prophecies of Isaiah we have a classic passage for this principle. In order to illustrate with a parable the wisdom and equity and timeliness of God's deeds of judgment and salvation, the prophets refer to the farmer's me-

thods. He says, "Doth he that ploweth for sowing plow continually, doth he continually open and harrow his ground? When he has leveled the face thereof does he not broadcast the fitches, and scatter the cummin and put the wheat in rows and the barley in its appointed place and the spelt in the borders? For his God doth instruct him aright and doth teach him". The prophet continues to show that the same wise care and discretion is used in threshing and preserving the various kind of grains. And again he comments, "This also cometh from Jehovah of Hosts who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom. (Isa. 28:23-29).

God instructs man how to labor intelligently, purposefully.

In the creatures, in the working-material itself, the laws and ordinances for purposeful culture are given. If it is used in one way it gives usefulness and profit. If it is used or treated in another way it causes complications and trouble and loss.

This principle is true all along the line. If the farmer simply kept on plowing and harrowing without end it would get too late for sowing. And if he plants too deep or two shallow he will get only half a crop, but if he carefully strikes the right depth he gets a well-nigh perfect stand. And each grain requires its own particular kind of threshing implement and its own particular kind of treatment.

Delitzsch in his Commentary translates the conclusion as follows: This also, it goeth forth from Jehovah of Hosts. He gives wonderful intelligence, high understanding.

And so there is no question but that our work, our daily occupation with the creature, that God has placed in our hands that we should cultivate it and develop it, carries in itself the laws by which it must be developed.

This, which can be seen in the simple task of sowing and harvesting also extends through the more complicated forms of activity. The new Christian philosophy developed in the Netherlands is wont to emphasize that all human effort in the cultivation of the creature in the history of men is kept in certain bonds by the inherent laws which God gave it. Man is restrained by the very laws that lie in the creature that he handles. He is restrained from going to excesses which make life and society and development impossible. Thus life is hedged in and stays more or less in the middle of the road and moves on toward the end of history and development.

We understand that this has nothing to do with grace, common grace. It is God's way of giving man his task and holding him to it.

Now if it is true for the natural man, the man without God, how much more true it is for the Christian.

If it is true that the rebellious sinner who does not with his cultivation of the earth, with his cultural activities, want to arrive at the goal, at the end-station which God has set, how much more true is it of the Christian who desires to arrive, with all that he has and is, at the end which God has set before him.

Once more, if it is true that the rebellious sinner is for a long way restrained and held down the middle of the road, how much more will it not be true for the Christian whose conscious purpose is to follow this road of obedience and love and service of God to the very end consecrating all that God has placed under his hands and superintendence.

Now in earlier articles we have pointed out that the Christian takes this simple elementary knowledge of sowing and

—continued on page 16

NATURE STUDY

MR. ANDREW VOSS
Grand Rapids, Mich.

MESSAGES IN FIELD AND WOOD

HOW LOUDLY, our God speaks to us in the works of His hands in the midst of which we live! Most of us do not hear Him, for the sound is drowned in the roar of the wind that rushes past our car windows as we hurtle down highways and by-ways, impelled by the hurry and speed which is so characteristically American.

We all bemoan this rush and hurry but it seems we cannot escape. A quiet stroll in fields and woods in this season of snow and cold can refresh the spirit and as God's children we can hear Him speaking in all we see about us. But we chorus, "We haven't the time—too busy"!

Let us nevertheless take time then to at least take this stroll in fancy and see what the Creator reveals of Himself and also what spiritual truths are shown. What marvelous lessons our Saviour drew from soil and water, sky and plants! May God illumine our minds as we go forth then, centuries later, to look at these same things and to listen to the sermons that they preach!

As we go forth we look up at the sky which arches overhead and which upon this particular December afternoon is cloudless and of an intense blue color. The blue sky tells us of the covenant faithfulness of our God, for we know that sometime as we look upward we see only dark clouds and no blue sky at all, yet it is there behind the darkness of storm and wind. It gives us a glow of inner peace as we muse on the fact that our Father's love is constant even as the storms of life rage about us. And even as in nature the blue is always behind the black, so spiritually the light is eternally behind the darkness, if we are His child.

As we make our way over the snow covered fields towards the grey woods beyond, we notice that a bank of heavy cloud has overrun the sun and suddenly there is a swirl of snow flakes. We catch a few on our sleeve and study them. 'What marvelous design'. Gossamer—six pointed stars—no two exactly alike. They join the millions that cover the fields with purest white. To God's child they are the picture of the sin-blackened soul which has been cleansed by Christ's blood and now stands revealed surpassing in whiteness and purity the snowy field before us.

Just before we arrive at the patch of woods beyond the field, we come upon an isolated elm that immediately draws our attention, because of a deep ugly gash that runs from near the top, the full length of the trunk, to the ground. Fire from the heavens has ripped the trunk apart and has caused the death of this majestic tree that had weathered some sixty years. As we see the shredded fibers we think of the fearful force necessary to produce this havoc. Lightning, thunder and stormy winds—picture of God's wrath against all wickedness and sin. The lightning bolts of God's anger were absorbed by Him Who hung upon the cross, shielding us to whom they were due. Amazing love! Near the edge of the wood we come upon a

shrub, that has some objects dangling from the otherwise naked twigs. Examining them more closely we see that they are cocoons of one of the group of silk spinning moths, the pupa of which winter-over in these snug silken homes. Each cocoon has the leaf of the bush as an outer wrapper. A despised green worm prepared this winter-shelter last fall and one of the first steps was to place several wrappings of silk about the base of the leaf where it joins the branch. This keeps it securely anchored to the branch so that even the wildest winter gales cannot dislodge it. Next it drew the two edges of the leaf together to form a sort of tude in which it built its silken cage with an air space of loosely woven silk between the outer and inner walls—a perfect insulation job, for it must weather sub-zero temperatures. This lowly green worm had never done this before, yet all the steps in the preparation of this swinging cocoon were exactly right to preserve the pupa inside so that when the warmth of Spring arrives it emerges a winged creature of marvelous beauty and design. "How marvelous is Thy wisdom, Oh Lord". As we gaze at this it suggests a tomb which at the right moment bursts to release its object greatly glorified from when it entered. It speaks of that great resurrection morning when we shall arise incorruptible and undefiled, to glorify our God as we never can while our spirits are shackled to these earthly temples.

How quiet it is as we enter the woods. There is no sound save the rustling leaves of the oaks which for the most part cling tenaciously to the tree until forced off by the swelling buds next Spring. All is cold and still and white, a picture of death. Just as we are apart from God's grace. We are cold to the things of the spirit, nor do the things of the spirit strike any response within us, except hatred. Let the warm sunshine of Spring begin to permeate these trees and plants and soil and this very silent woods springs to life in leaf and flower and song. So also God's grace brings life out of death, song out of silence and peace to our souls. And in this newness of life we say, "Yea Lord, we will truly seek first the things of Thy Kingdom". But how soon the cares and anxieties of life crowd in and the sight of a half-dozen birds busily eating the seeds of a half covered weed, stopping now and then to chirp cheerfully, makes us realize that here again the Lord is speaking. If these tiny feathered creatures could speak they would say in effect, "we have the same heavenly Father as you do and He provides our daily needs—then why do you worry and fret so about the needs of your bodies?" We say to ourselves, "Yes, Lord, if Thou dost so carefully provide for these Thy lowly creatures, how much more for us Thy children for whom Thy Son died?" Shame on us for our lack of faith and trust.

But the day is waning and we must turn homeward. As we retrace our steps and turn to the west we see the clouds beginning to glow in tones of yellow, red and orange. In a few moments the entire horizon is lit with these rosy tints that impart their color even to the snowy expanse before us. What a fitting finale! As we come to the close of this winter stroll in which the Lord has spoken to us by means of His creatures and creation the words of a Psalter number come to mind.

"The west in evening glories bright,
Proclaim that Thou art near."

Quickly the colors fade and as we conclude our walk, the evening star hangs like a glowing lamp in the southwestern sky. It draws our thoughts back thru

—continued on page 16

LIFTING THE LID. . . . .

SEYMOUR BEIBOER
Grand Rapids, Michigan

COMMUNISM

PART I

AN OLD RELIGION

THE FIRST three verses of Psalm two contains the religion of Communism in a nutshell: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying; Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." This is also the teaching of the great leaders of Communism. Karl Marx, the great prophet of Communism writes, "We shall have deserved well . . . if we can stir up hatred and contempt against all existing institutions. The idea of God is the keystone of a perverted civilization. It must be destroyed. The true root of liberty and equality and culture is Atheism." Lenin the revolutionary, in his book called **Religion,** makes the following famous assertion, "Religion is the opiate of the people. Religion is a kind of spiritual intoxicant, in which the slave of capital drowns his humanity and his desire for some sort of decent human existence.... We Bolsheviks will dethrone God from the heavens, when we will have completed the elimination of His churches from the face of the earth." Yaroslavsky, the leader of the Anti-God movement, says in his book, **Religion in the U.S.S.R.**, "Religion acts as a bandage over the eyes to man, preventing him from seeing the world as it is. It is our task to tear off this bandage." Stalin, the dictator, made the following assertion in 1933: "The (Communist) Party cannot be neutral towards religion and it does conduct anti-religious propaganda against all and every religious prejudice because it stands for science, while religious prejudice runs counter to science."

Whittaker Chambers, an ex-communist, was a member of the Communist Party for thirteen years. He spent six in the Communist underground in America. In his recent autobiography, **Witness,** a work of some 800 pages describing a shocking account of the Communist Fifth Column which infiltrated the U.S. government and American life, as seen by the author, who was there, took part in it, and who mentions names. He also gives a lengthy inside story of the famous Alger Hiss case. Mr. Chambers also give a rather lengthy, but a very unique and clear definition of the Communist religion. I will quote:

"First, let me try to say what Communism is not. It is not simply a vicious plot hatched by wicked men in a sub-cellar. It is not just the writings of Marx and Lenin, dialectical materialism, the Politburo, the labor theory of value, the theory of the general strike, the Red Army, secret police, labor camps, underground conspiracy, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the technique of the coup-d'etat. It is not even those chanting bannered millions that stream periodically, like disorganized armies thru the heart of the world's capitals: Moscow, New York, Tokyo, Paris, Rome, etc. These are exposures of Communism, but they are not what Communism is about.

"The revolutionary heart of Communism is not the theatrical appeal: "Workers of the world, unite. You have a world to gain." It is a simple statement of Karl Marx, further simplified for han-

dy use: "Philosophies have explained the world; it is necessary to change the world." Communists are bound together by no secret oath. The tie that binds them across the frontiers of nations, across barriers of language, and differences of class and education, in defiance of religion, morality, truth, law, honor, the weaknesses of the body and the irresolutions of the mind, even unto death, is a simple conviction: It is necessary to change the world. Their power, whose nature baffles the rest of the world, because in a large measure the rest of the world has lost that power, is the power to hold convictions and to act on them. It is the same power that moves mountains; it is an unfailing power to move men. Communists are that part of mankind which has recovered to live or die —to bear witness — for its faith. And it is a simple rational faith that inspires men to live or die for it.

"It is not new. It is in fact, man's second oldest faith. Its promise was whispered in the first days of the Creation under the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: "Ye shall be as gods." It is the great alternative faith of mankind. Like all great faiths, its force derives from a simple vision. Other ages have had great visions. There have always been different versions of the same vision: the vision of God and man's relationship to God. The Communists version is the vision of Man without God.

"It is the vision of man's mind displacing God as the creative intelligence of the world. It is the vision of man once more the central figure of the Creation, not because God made man in His image, but because man's mind makes him the most intelligent of the animals. Communism restores man to his sovereignty by the simple method of denying God."

The religion of Communism is certainly not new. It had its beginning when Satan was cast out of heaven as a fallen angel. And the truth of Revelation 12:12 to 17 is continually repeated thruout the history of this world. Yes, Communism was manifested at the time of Noah and the Flood; it was again manifested at the building of the Tower of Babel and later on in the successive world empires of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Think of the various infidel leaders, such as Nimrod, Pharaoh, Balek, Sennacharib, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Herod, Caesar, Pilate, Nero, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, etc., who tried to dethrone the Living God and exalt man in His place. Communism has also manifested itself within the Church thruout the ages. Think of Cain and of Esau, and of the children of Israel in the desert when they worshipped the golden calf; their frequent murmurings and unbelief, which delayed their entrance into Canaan. Think of their idolatry during the period of the Judges and later on during the reign of their wicked kings, especially during Ahab's reign. Think of how they shed the blood of the prophets and of the saints and even of God Himself when they nailed Him to the Cross. Think of the idolatry of Roman Catholicism with all its image worship and its substitution of the Pope as its god instead of the Living God. Think of the ungodly Christ-rejecting Modernism of our day. John 5:17-47 will settle this matter once and for all. Think of Communism's doctrine concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat (the common working man) as manifested in modern labor unionism in the light of Romans 13. There are also milder forms of Communism. They do not dethrone the Triune God entirely; but they rob God of some of His honor, due to Him alone, and ascribe the same unto totally depraved mankind. I am thinking of the heresies of Arminianism and of the Com-

mon Grace theory. And last but not least, you and I are also Communists by nature. Is not Romans 3:9-23 and Isaiah 53:6 a true picture of all of us apart from the Grace of God! And let us not in our own self righteousness condemn the Communists lest we fall into the same sin ourselves. And it is only in this light that we, a true children of God, can condemn Communism.

From the above facts we can see that Communism is only another attempt of mankind to turn his back upon the Living God and exalt **almighty man** in His place but in a more deliberate, unscrupulous manner. To all appearances it looks as if Communism may actually be that terrible beast of Daniel 7:19-25 and of Revelation 13. Today more than ever before all the people, that are living on the face of this earth, whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, are wandering after Commumism in its present form. I hope to explain this more fully in my future installments on Communism.

TRUTH VS. ERROR

Continued from page 11

harvesting, of processing and developing and puts it to work in a higher plane. We as Christians carry this into the life of social relationships. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. We shall work with our hands the thing that is good, advance our neighbors welfare, feed the poor, clothe the naked, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also likewise unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 7:12).

To be sure even for the Christian with the light of God's word shining on his pathway and on the work of his hands, this becomes a very complicated task in this world where also the field of labor seems completely dominated by the distortion and perversion of sinful men.

In a following article we shall advance a step in tracing this path of purposeful, beneficient, christian labor.

NATURE STUDY

Continued from page 13

the centuries to the time when a glowing star guided the wise men to the manger of Bethlehem to worship before God in the flesh without Whose coming the fields and woods would be silent and would not have proclaimed this hope and joy which we heard today.

PERSPECTIVE

"Sometimes when all life's lessons have
been learned,
And sun and stars forevermore have
set;
The things o'er which we grieved with
lashes wet;
The things which our weak judgments
here have spurned,
Shall flash before us out of heaven's
clear light
As stars shine most in deeper tints of
blue;
And we shall see how all God's ways
were right,
And how what seemed reproof was love
most true."

—Selected

The Military Mail Bag

MERRY CHRISTMAS FELLOWS!

Even though many of you probably won't be reading this issue until January or later, we of the B.L. staff join in wishing you the Lord's blessing on this most joyous day.

Many of you will be spending your first Christmas away from loved ones and familiar scenes. At first glance, it will be a far cry from a Merry Christmas for you. Your Christmas will be far from "Merry".

Yet if we approach this day in it's true spirit, our present surroundings seem insignificant and all of us, even you on the battle front, can have a BLESSED CHRISTMAS.

On Christmas day our thoughts and our prayers will be with you. Knowing this, our greeting to you sounds less superficial and much more sincere. We know that with God's help, you can and will have a BLESSED CHRISTMAS.

Just one letter this time. It's from Pfc. Ralph De Young who is stationed in Germany. It's dated the 17th of October.

Dear Friends;

I am happy to be able to tell you that I am going back to the States to be discharged. My time is finally up. So you will not have to send me the B.L. anymore.

I have enjoyed reading it very much. Every article was very interesting.

When we are so far from home, our churches, and the truth they preach, all we have left is God's Word and our church papers.

It is w o n d e r f u l how "at home" you feel when you sit on your bunk and read the B.L. and other church papers.

But soon now I will be reading it back home with my wife again.

I want to thank you again for the B.L.

Your Brother in Christ,
Ralph De Young

KENNETH EZINGA
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Thanks so much Ralph. It was swell hearing from you.

Ralph is from our Grand Haven church.

Our list of dischargees is steadily growing. New names are being added to the list every month. Usually we don't list them in our column because **Concordia** does the job very faithfully and we see no reason for being repetitious.

That's it men. We're still waiting for YOUR letters. Is it on the way?

CHRISTMAS GEM

God sent His Son down to the earth;
He might have been a prince or king.
But low and humble was His birth,
Yet through it all did angels sing.

The glory of the heavenly host
Still comes to us at Christmastide,
To show us what we long for most,
Is often found right by our side.

REPORTS ON MASS MEETINGS

GRAND RAPIDS AREA

The Reformation Day Inspirational Mass Meeting of the Grand Rapids area was held the 28th of October in Hudsonville Church.

Rog Hamstra led the young people as they sang the opening songs, and Rog Faber, the Federation President, opened with Scripture reading from Heb. 11 and with prayer.

The music was supplied by a trio of Wiersma girls and by Rog Griffioen and Bernie Klaver with their trumpets.

Rev. Knott was the speaker choosing as his title "Our Heritage We Must Uphold."

The doctrines of justification by faith, the supreme authority of Scripture, and freedom of judgment were given to us by the Reformation. We receive our Reformed heritage from this Reformation and therefore have a vital connection with it. These were Rev. Knott's opening remarks.

He went on to ask, "What is our heritage?" Our heritage is the orderly arrangement of the truth. There is a line in our thinking. Into this line all of truth logically fits. Looking at the Word from beginning to end we can see the whole perspective of the truth. We must place the proper evaluation on the truth.

We must have an understanding and appreciation of the truth. It must have a vital place in our lives. We must have a willingness to fight for the truth and sacrifice for it.

We can keep this understanding and appreciation for the truth by preserving doctrinal purity, by resisting error, by continuing to be instructed in the doctrine of our heritage, and by appropriating the truth by a living faith. We must use every means to grow in the truth such as attending Young People's meetings and by reading.

The Word must live in us as a reality. Our mouth-confession must be the expression of the experience of the heart. Walking by that truth in the midst of the world, we will be living our confessions and the Truth shall make us free.

After recess was a debate: "Resolved that Doctrine Should be Taught in Our Christian Schools". Don De Jong and Agatha Lubbers as affirmative speakers pointed out that a distinctive education presupposed a teaching of doctrine. Further, the home and the church had no means of teaching systematic doctrine and therefore the parents delegated the authority to the school. This also has many advantages.

Dick Flietstra and Ruth Dykstra defending the negative position were at pains to show that the church and home have the calling to teach doctrine. These are God ordained institutions and they have as such fulfilled their task. Therefore the question should not even come up. Also the duty of the school is primarily that of teaching specific subjects with a view to helping the child to choose a vocation in life and prepare him for it.

Judges picked from the audience awarded the debate on the basis of more convincing arguments and opposing arguments answered, to the negative. The meeting was slightly reminiscent of the convention because the lights went out for a few minutes just before the speech.

Rev. Vos closed the meeting with prayer.

NORTHERN IOWA-MINNESOTA

The annual Reformation Meeting of

Northern Iowa and Minnesota was held at our Sioux Center Church, Friday evening, Oct. 31, 1952. Rev. Van Weelden opened the meeting with prayer and read Scripture. Essays, readings and musical numbers were given by the various societies which included Edgerton, Rock Valley, Sioux Center, Orange City and Hull. Rev. S. Cammenga was in charge of the Question Box, preceding his address. All took part in this. Rev. Cammenga spoke on the topic "Calvin, the Genevian Reformer." At this particular time there was a great spiritual darkness in the Church of Jesus Christ. A great storm was brewing. God began to stir the hearts of his people. Great reformers as Martin Luther and John Calvin were being raised up. The main points of Rev. Cammenga's speech were as follows:

Calvin, the Genevian Reformer

1. Person and work.
2. Teaching
3. Influence

Calvin's parents were from the higher class in contrast to Luther's humble and poor home.

Calvin had great reverance and fear of God's law. He was converted and cast himself on the mercy of Jesus Christ. He went to Paris, and taught against the moral evils of that age. He wrote the "Institutes of Christian Religion." He studied the Bible very thoroughly and had a great understanding of it. He spoke and wrote mainly to the nobility. He spoke greatly on the subject of Predestination and the Sovereignity of the Lord his God. Calvin maintained and stuck to his theological thinking and didn't alter it as other reformers did. He was a clear and profound thinker. He was a systematic worker, doing his work efficiently and well. Many people called his writings "the Koran of the Heretics." Calvin died calmly. Magistrates and ministers were gathered around his death bed. He showed love for his enemies to enable them to see the light, proving his love for his fellowmen.

The five points of Calvinism are:

1. T-Total Depravity
2. U-Unconditional Election
3. L-Limited Atonement
4. I-Irresistable Grace
5. P-Preservation of Saints

Calvin's influence has a great effect on us as Christians today, especially as young people. We must be witnesses. We must not merely boast or claim to be Calvinists, but we must crown it with a walk of Godliness. We must not only be called Christian, but it must be seen in our daily life. Calvin condemned worldliness of this age. We must hold to these doctrines and put our trust and hope in Jesus Christ.

Many and important lessons can be derived from Calvin's life and teachings. Do we as young people break from the world and the things thereof? Is that why people break from us because we seek that which is above and walk in Godliness and holiness? This is a vital question, also for the Servicemen who are constantly in the midst of the world, away from home, church and loved ones. We must learn to put first things first, such as church attendance regularly and studying our lessons pertaining to society and church life in general.

The meeting was closed by singing several Psalter numbers led by Mrs. J. D. De Jong. Rev. De Jong closed with prayer. Lunch was served afterwards.

It was indeed an enjoyable meeting of Christian fellowship. The message especially, left us with a challenge to be true Calvinists in this sinful world. Not merely outwardly confessing, but living what we maintain to be the truth. Calvin lived what he taught. Do we do likewise? So let it be with God's help.

—Miss Ena Dykstra, Reporter

QUESTION BOX

REV. G. M. OPHOFF
Grand Rapids, Michigan

I have this question

We read in Matthew 11:14 and again in Matthew 17:1-13 that Jesus unmistakably points out John the Baptist as "Elias (Elijah) that was to come". Our question is: "why does John the Baptist himself deny that he is Elias when interrogated on this point by the priests and Levites in John 1:21? Doesn't it appear from these passages that John and Christ contradict each other?

REPLY:-

THE CONTRADICTION is only apparent. Elias typified the Baptist. Thus what Christ was telling the Jews is this: that "if ye will receive it, this (John) is Elias," that is, not Elias literally raised from the dead, but one like Elias —like Elias as to his character, mode of life, and mission.

The Jews, on the other hand, thought that John was Elias literally raised from the dead. And so they put to John the question whether he was Elias, that is, Elias raised from the dead. This of course John denied.

Elias (Elijah) did indeed foreshadow, typify, John the Baptist.

As to John, he came neither eating nor drinking. The wilderness was his abode and his meat there was locusts and wild honey. And he had his raiment of camel's hair, and about his loins was a leathern girdle.

The rigor of John's mode of life was in agreement with the nature of his mission. The substance of his Gospel was: The kingdom of God and its king are at hand. Woe to them who will not have repented of their sins, when this kingdom will have come. For the fan of its king is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of every tree; therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Repent therefore and live".

Being a Nazarite, he had separated himself from his people and taken up his residence in the desert. Here God spoke to him and he came forward a preacher of great power, though he performed no miracles. His audiences were vast. Quoting the Scriptures, there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the regions about Jordan. And they confessed their sins and where baptized of him in the Jordan. We are to think here of a conversion of large numbers of Jews, and accordingly of the fulfilment of the prophetic word of Malichai, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."—Mal. 4:5, 6. So were the labors of John blessed with such fruit as to justify his bearing the title of "forerunner", forerunner of Christ.

Also many Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism. What impelled them was carnal fear of the judgment to come. They would escape the judgment but not repent. John's word to them was, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you,

that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham."

As to Elijah, he, too, as John, whom he prefigured, came neither eating nor drinking. He appears in the Scriptures as living much of the time in solitary companionship with God. His attire was the same as that of John. Also the rigor of his life betokened the nature of his mission. The element of judgment was prominent also in his ministry. Suddenly and unannounced he stood before Ahab, and abruptly delivered his awful message. He was as an apparition calculated to strike with terror the boldest of kings. He made no set speech, he offered no apology, he disdained all forms and ceremonies. He did not even render the customary homage. He uttered only a few words, preceded by an oath; "As Jehovah the God of Israel liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word".

What arrogance before a king. Elijah, an utterly unknown man, in a sheepskin mantel, apparently a peasant, dared to utter a curse on the land without even deigning to give a reason. But it was not necessary. Ahab knew and all Israel knew. God's gifts were being placed on Baal's altars.

At Elijah's command the Baal priests were slain, five hundred in number. He anointed Hazael king of Assyria, who later became the scourge of Israel. He anointed Jehu, the extirpator of Ahab's house, king over Israel. He announced to Ahab the judgments of God to come upon his house. For their impudence the two bands of fifty, that Ahaziah had sent, were consumed with fire from heaven in answer to his prayer. He went up by a whirlwind to heaven. Even some years thereafter there came to Jehoram, king of Judah, a writing reproving him for his wickedness and pronouncing upon him sorest judgments.

When the people repented and ceased from their Baal-worship. he brought them rain by his fervant prayer. In his deep gloom he had imagined that all his labors had been in vain. But it was not so. Through his ministry the hearts of many had been turned back to God.

Elijah, as later the Baptist, was a "forerunner", a "preparer of the way", not of Christ directly but of Elisha his successor.

HOW MUCH DO YOU WEAR?

A missionary at home on furlough was invited to a dinner at a great summer resort where he met many women of prominence and position.

After dinner he went to his room and wrote a letter to his wife. He said:

Dear Wife: "I've had dinner at the hotel. The company was wonderful. I saw strange things today. Many women were present. There were some who, to my certain knowledge wore one church, forty cottage organs, and twenty libraries."

In his great longing for money to provide the Gospel for hungering millions, he could not refrain from estimating the silks, satins and the diamonds of the guests at the dinner in terms of people's needs.

If God sends us money to send to perishing millions the Good News of the Saviour from sin, and we spend it for needless luxuries, what does He think of it? — Herald of Light.

BIBLE OUTLINE

REV. M. GRITTERS
Pella, Iowa

LESSON 41

Each Serving All

I Cor. 12:20-31

THIS SECTION continues the thought of the former lesson but now directs it toward an application needful in the Corinthian church. There was danger that some envied the gifts others had, there was danger of the 'greater' proudly disdaining the 'lesser', and there was the danger of using whatever gift one had for selfish display. All of this is wrong. Therefore Paul concludes this chapter with the exhortation to promote edification with all the gifts. Each serving the whole. And then proceeds in Chapter 13 to say that Love is the excellent thing while using the gifts in love is the excellent way.

In the vss. 21-26 Paul instructs them how the members should live toward each other in the church, but illustrates it by the figure of the human body. The human body is an earthly replica of the heavenly reality. The eye is a beautiful member of the body, can see much farther than the hand can reach; the head too, holds a position quite above the feet and, truly, without a head your feet would be useless. But it is impossible for the eye to boast that it needs no hands, or of the head to boast it needs no feet (vs. 21). God has created the body symmetrically, so that there is a relation of interdependence among the members. All have need of all. So God made it, because it must reflect the heavenly.

Some members of the body seem to you (who consider yourself strong members) to be weaker, and therefore dispensable. Much to the contrary. All members are vitally necessary (vs. 22). If we have a certain member of the body lacking in honor, i.e. (I think) if a certain member of your body lacks in beauty you go about to make it beautiful. At least if your nose is disfigured you think of plastic surgery rather than amputation. And the secret parts of your body you cover with clothes, making the whole beautiful (vs. 23). All the members of the body agree to clothe one member, enhance the beauty of another and help strengthen a third. Such cooperation, such symmetry, such interdependence.

God has co-mingled the bodily members (vs. 24) that there should be no schism, but that the members should be concerned about each other (vs.25). So closely has God knit them together that if your tooth hurts, your whole person is in pain; if one remarks about what a keen mind you have, your whole person rejoices in it (vs. 26).

If such is the case in the body (and who does not cherish his own body Eph. 5:29) how horrible if in the church an opposite rule applies. Then Paul advances to say: "Ye are (the) Body of Christ" (vs. 27). There you have it. This is what Paul had in mind all the while but he came to it by masterful steps. The Corinthian congregation is Christ's Body. All the elect are members of that

Body. There is an adequate manifestation of it wherever a church is organized according to God's Word. The Corinthian should BE what it IS. Everything God said about the human body, the Corinthians should take to heart. Ye are members "in particular" i.e. each of you believers has his own membership-place and his own membership part in the Body. And so you ought to function. How grievous it is that sin destroys this ideal, mutilates the Body, and how great the wrath of God against any who disfigure the Body. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. He rejoices to see anything, that has the Name of Christ written over it, fall into mutiny and chaos.

As God has set members in the body, so He has set some in the Church as: first Apostles, then Prophets, then Teachers (vs. 28). Here we have gifts but also the peculiar offices into which God has ordained them whom He has furnished with those gifts. But each does not have everything. What a confusion if all were Apostles etc. There is difference of gifts and each must serve for edification of all. And let Love be under and behind it all. That is the excellent way. With all your gifts, forget not the great gift, LOVE. Let LOVE function in truth and righteousness and thus the whole Body grows. (Eph. 4).

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Questions for Discussion

1 Such gifts as skill and art and aptitude in business are not mentioned. Wonder why? Are they valueless for the welfare of the Body? E.g. a christian businessman has great skill and profit in his business. Is that useable for the church welfare? Discuss.

2 The Unity of the Body roots in the "election in Christ". How?

3 If Corinth is the Body of Christ, is not also Phillipi, and Ephesus etc.? Are there then many "bodies"? Or is the Denomination the Body and each Congregation a part? Or what?

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LESSON 42

What Without Love?

(I Cor. 13:1-6)

Chap. 13 is not merely a methodical dissertation on love (I prefer the word love to charity) but rather it is an instruction to the Corinthians and to us, as to how the believers should use the gifts God gave them. As almost all instruction in the New Testament is suggested by some occasion, and adapted to it, so Chap 13 still treats of the special gifts which the Corinthians had. Chap. 14 carries it forward. God has ordained Christ the FULLNESS of the Church. When the Spirit distributes this fullness in the Church, He gives "gifts" but what if He had not given LOVE? What a chaos the church would be if men had gifts, but not love to use those gifts to mutual edification. The gifts are vain, they are like a skeleton if you in your use of them are not motivated by the love of God and the love of the saints of God. If God has so marvellously knit the Body together, and graced each member with a peculiar gift, the life of the Body lies in LOVE. Neither is Paul speaking of some intangible thing. God has so loved us that He gave His only Begotten. So much He has forgiven us. Would not we love much? And John says: "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Starting out with the gift most popular in the Corinthian church namely—

speaking in tongues— (vs. 1) Paul says even if I spoke in a language utterly out of this world, if I spoke angel-language, and used it as not having love, what would I be? I would be making loud shrill and discordant noises like brass beat against brass, but nothing more. No benefit in it for others, no edification. Just sounds and noises.

Or take the next popular gift. . .prophecy. In 14:5 Paul ranks prophecy as greater than speaking in tongues. But bring prophecy even to its superlative and say you could understand mysteries. What a prophet you would be. And then suppose you had all knowledge, and were really initiated into the realm of things hidden from others. And suppose you had a miraculous faith so that you could do what no saints have ever been capacitated to do, say you could move mountains. What a figure you would be. The entire church world would take notice of you and the denomination would glory in your skill. . .But, says Paul, if you had all this and no love, what would you be? What would I be, says Paul. Zero, that's what I'd be. (vs.2)

And suppose I should give away, in food, all my possessions, and I would welcome martyrdom, even giving my body to be burned. Even such display is profitless if I have not l o v e (vs.3). However magnificent our deeds may seem to men, they are odious to God if love be absent. What is not of faith is sin. We use this text to beat down the false theory of "the good that reprobate do," and that is well. Provided on our part our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

Having shown that the ultimate in gifts is worthless if love be absent, Paul now proceeds to show us LOVE itself. He personifies her and declares her beauty. It is the supreme gift of God to His people, given that they might walk in it.

Love is long-suffering or patient (vs. 4). The very first description tells us that we live our love-life in the midst of a hard, cruel world and an imperfect church. It is over against others who lack in this love that love shows itself in you as being patient. Here it is from Paul himself: "the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (II Cor. 12:15). Love is kind, unselfishly helpful, bountiful, not only takes the opportunities to do good, but looks for such opportunities. Love envies not. Envy is the effect of ill-will, of pride, love "vaunteth not itself", it does not brag about itself, detests arrogance and insolence because it seeks not the glory of men. (vs. 4) Love is not ill-mannered and tactless, does not put its own ego in the center. Is not quickly provoked since it is quick to forgive. Anger rests in the bosom of fools. Love thinketh no evil. The meaning, I think, is that love does not think in terms of revenge for evil done to it. "Avenge not yourselves, dearly beloved." Love does not take pleasure in the doing, hearing or seeing of what is contrary to the Word of God (vs. 6) but rejoices with t h e truth, i.e. when the truth reigns. It hates dissembling, it loves sincerity; hates apostacy, loves constancy and Word-purity.

And, oh we say, where is the man who has such love? By nature prone to hate God and the neighbor, we confess this love as a gift of God through Jesus Christ. And this gift too is calculated to be exercised by us who profess to be of Christ.

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Questions for Discussion

1 The law is fulfilled in one word, namely, LOVE. What does that mean?

2 Someone says: God commands us to love each other, but then we must also want to be "loveable". What do you think about that reasoning?

3 In Matt. 5:46 I read: "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same?" How shall we exceed the Publican?

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LESSON 43

Love, All-excelling

I Cor. 13:7-13

There is much more to say about love, more than our books could contain. Our words cannot exhaust its riches, it exhausts our words.

So Paul goes on: love beareth all things (vs. 7). It reaches beyond the limits. Peter asked about forgiving seven times and Jesus said something about forgiving seventy times seven times. Love meets obstacles, it has to put up with horrible imperfections which also reveal themselves in us who say that we have this love. It bears all things, that is, it suffers affliction without complaining about its lot. It believes all things. Not as if it were blind to fact or careless about righteousness and truth, but it mixes kindness with its every judgment of others. Love hopeth all things, and, rather than suspect the brother, it can pray for him. It endureth all things, it is not quickly exhausted even as Paul in this very letter to the Corinthians shows. They showed so many imperfections, they were even telling around that Paul's letters were weighty and powerful but his bodily presence was weak, and his "oratory" was actually contemptible. Yet his love for them went on, enough so he would admonish them still. He received no salary while at work here, the more he loved the less he was loved... yet Paul loved them enough to write them what we are studying in this lesson.

In the vs. 8-13 Paul testifies that love excels all gifts, even faith and hope. For love never faileth (vs. 8). Prophecies, tongues and knowledge are for the duration and calculated for this imperfect state. Sooner or later the prophet, the teacher, the speaker will no more be needed, for in the glory-state we all reach the manhood of Christ (Eph. 4:13) These shall cease, therefore, but love never ceases.

Vs. 9 proves what had been said in vs. 8. Prophecies etc. are adapted to the present, imperfect state of knowing "in part" i.e. because we are not yet perfect. Our knowledge of God is NOT incorrect or faulty. By no means. God does not give us a distorted picture of Himself in the Scripture. God's Revelation is perfect and sufficient. But our knowledge is imperfect, incomplete, compared to the state of perfection which awaits. Therefore in vs. 10 the Lord tells us that when that which God has prepared for us, when that End has been reached, then all that which leads to that End shall be put away. So the prophet, the teacher, the missionary shall cease; even our Bible in its present printed form, our pulpit, our communion table and our baptism font, all of it has served its good purpose and it is needed no more, Not so with love. It is the difference between the child and the man (vs. 11). Things suitable to children are put away when they reach their maturity. As yet immature, earthly, sinful children we need things fit for infants, but when perfection comes such things, as prophecy and speaking with tongues, shall cease. For now we see imperfectly (as in a mirror) and we know imperfectly, but the time comes that we shall see face to face and shall

know in the highest possible degree. (vs. 12)

Faith shall cease, hope ceases (vs. 13) because it belongs to the "not seeing." Scripture speaks of not seeing but believing (I Pet. 1:8) and of hoping for what we see not (Rom. 8:24). If then we finally SEE God, faith and hope in that sense make way for the perfected covenant fellowship. When all this ceases, love goes on and on. Everything in the glory-life throbs with love. The love wherewith God loved us before the world was, our love reflected toward Him and toward all who with us have been glorified by His love.

See then, ye Corinthians, that ye hold high the gift of love for without it your boasted "gifts" are all in vain. And to us Paul says: see that ye love one another with unfeigned love, for whosoever loveth is born of God.

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Questions for Discussion

1 In Numbers 12:8 God asserts that He speaks with Moses face to face and not in dark speeches. Yet Paul asserts in I Cor. 13:12 that we now see through a glass, darkly. How explain this?

2 Someone says: we always know only in part and therefore we can never be absolutely sure about any doctrinal proposition. What would you answer to that?

3 "He that hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15). If now he have the "gift" of prophecy, tongues etc. and uses them as hating the brother, how great a murderer he will be. Is that correct?

4 Why does Scripture warn us so much to love one another? Even husbands must be exhorted to love their wives (Eph. 5:25), wives to love their husbands and even mothers to love their children (Titus 2:4) Why is that?

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LESSON 44

But Do You Edify

I Cor. 14:1-19

Having exhorted the Corinthians concerning the excellency of Love the conclusion is not: loving one another is everything, the gifts are nothing. Instead, the conclusion is: exercise yourselves to love one-another, and let the gifts be the tools with which love works.

As one glaring example of this Paul devotes a good part of this chapter to the gift the Corinthians seemed most excited about, namely, the speaking in foreign languages. It does not edify anyone, says Paul, if the church members do not understand the language. You speak foreign languages indeed, but do you edify? And what comes of love if you are not edifying each other while you live next to each other in the Body of Christ?

It were better you prophesied (vs.1). That is, it were better you spoke so that men could grasp what you say. From vs. 26 I conclude that at that time, when the Revelation of Scripture was still in the making, saints would receive revelations from God on high. That revelation was valuable to the one and to all. Suppose now that this saint would speak this revelation in an utterly foreign and incomprehensible language, he would speak to God, only God could understand what he was saying. Only the man himself knew what he meant, but the fellow-man stood by, enthralled but ignorant. Of what benefit is this? (vs. 2). It is better that you prophesy, for he that prophesies (explains his words as he goes) speaks

so that men can grasp it, and then he builds up, encourages and comforts the church. (vs. 3). Prophesyings and speaking in tongues are not opposites. Vs. 4 wants the speaking in tongues to be understandable to the hearers. Then it IS prophesying (vs. 5). Let all of you speak in tongues, it is a gift of God, but let him that does such speaking interpret (give hermaneutics) what he says. Then the church receives edification and isn't that the all important thing? Isn't that how love works?

From vss. 6-13 Paul emphasizes how useless is the boasted gift of tongues if it be not accompanied with an explanation. Vs. 9 underscores this futility. Except you, by means of your tongue, give speech that man can readily understand you will be speaking into the air. You can probably make a great show of learning, but what comes of edification? Paul uses three examples. The example of his own conduct in vs. 6. What if I had come to you with a language none of you could understand? But I did not do that. Again, if a musical instrument make no melody, who will appreciate the sounds coming from reeds and strings? (vs 7) Again, if the trumpet gives an obscure sound, who of the older will know that it is a call to battle? (vs. 8). O Corinthians, let us not come with meaningless sounds, with showing off of our own skill and learning, but let us speak so that Christ's glory may be enhanced, to the edification of the saints.

Paul will make it still plainer. The edification of the church is important enough to repeat a thing several times, and make it plainer with each repetition. There are many sounds (or voices) in our world and they all have their meaning (vs 10). If therefore we do not understand the meaning of the other's voice we are barbarians to each other, we stand looking at each other as foreigners (vs 11). Use the languages to edification, abound in edification (vs 12) and let him that speaks in foreign languages, before he utters any sound, let him pray that he may explain as he goes. If not, it were better he did not begin. (vs 13).

I speak with tongues more than you all (thank God) but you must know that I would rather speak five words that can edify the church than ten thousand foreign words. (vs 19). In speaking, and praying and singing (vss. 14-16) the things must be understood by learned and unlearned alike. If not, thou performest ably, but the brother is not edified. And then what have you? Then where is the love of Chap. 13?

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Questions for Discussion

1 The edification of the church is the primary thing. Neglect that and the church becomes the world, where each performs for the glory and advantage of himself, instead of the Christ. This applies to office bearers especially. Also to the singer, the organist, Sunday School teacher, Men's Soc. Ladies' Aid etc., the janitor and the ushers.

2 By virtue of his office the minister must do most of the speaking in the church. Is there the possibility still that he speaks in an "unknown tongue" If so, how?

3 Of what value to the church at the time was the speaking in tongues?

BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN VIS
Edgerton, Minnesota

THIS HAPPENED IN THE HILLS OF KENTUCKY, by John Vogel. Publishers: Zondervan Publ. House. Price $3.95.

Near Corbin, Kentucky, in the southeastern part of the state, may be found an institution known as the Galilean Childrens' Home. "This Happened in Hills of Kentucky" is about the founding of this home and its progress.

The author, John Vogel, is the founder and director of the home. After graduating from the Chicago Christian High School he took a pre-seminary course at Calvin College. He left Calvin and after attending three other colleges in Chicago he went to the Moody Bible Institute. After leaving the institute he took his wife, Marguerite, and their daughter, Gladys, to the hills of Kentucky where they began their labors.

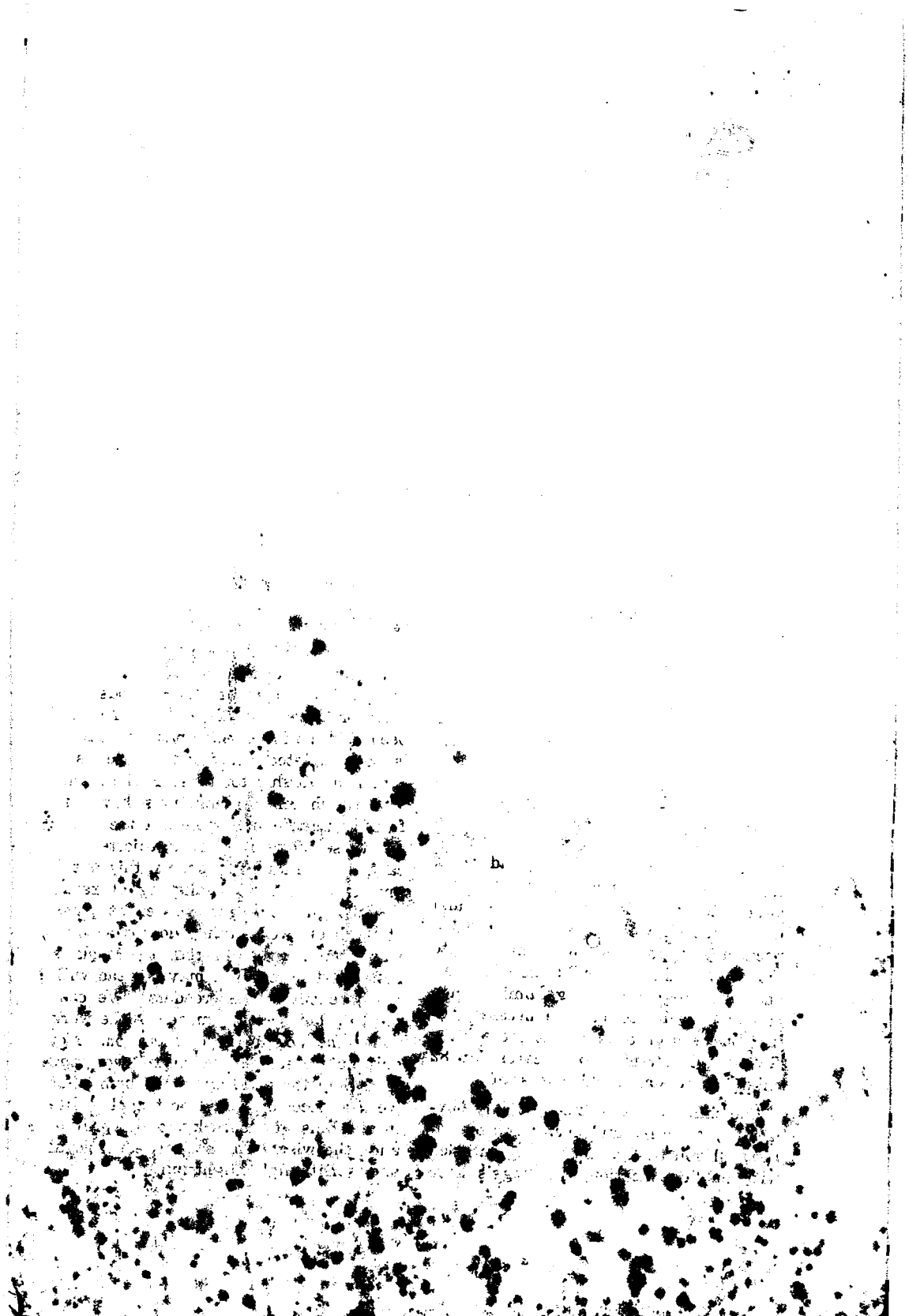
The home was born when the Vogels were asked to take an unwanted child and care for it. After they had taken the first child many more children were offered to them. As time went on and more children were received it became necessary to purchase more land and to build new and larger buildings to accomodate the Vogels' growing family. When traveling facilities became necessary a new bus was purchased. At present the Galilean Children's Home cares for 32 children and has a efficient staff.

The children are trained not only physically, socially, and mentally, but above all spiritually. Not being satisfied with public education, the Vogels have started their own Christian grade school and have hopes for a Christian High school in the future. As yet there is no church building completed at the home.

The Vogels are undenominational. Their work is supported by no organization whatsoever, religious or otherwise. They work on the principle that we must live by faith, and by faith alone; that God will supply our daily needs if we are faithful to our calling. They believe it is their duty to center their lives and prayers around those whom Christ calls 'the greatest in the kingdom.' They do no soliciting or advertising, but keep their work entirely a work of faith.

We might wonder, and possibly rightly so, about some of the methods and ideas employed by the author. As has been said, he is undenominational. There is no completed building to serve as a center of worship for those at the home. Various church organizations have offered to finance or help finance the work, but these offers have been rejected because, as the author supposes, this would give evidence to a weakening of faith.

Although we might wonder at parts of the book, we certainly do not wish to leave the impression that the book is better left unread. It may be read with much benefit by our readers. We cannot help but become amazed at the work which the Vogels are carrying on. Not only do we see the wonderful workings of God in the building of the home, but we also receive a vivid portrayal of life in the hills of Kentucky, both spiritual and otherwise. The book is educational and spiritually enlightening.



CHRISTMAS

THE

RADIO CHOIR

will present a one hour program on the Sunday before Christmas, December 21, at 9 o'clock in the First Church Auditorium.

This program is designed to be a short inspirational program with plenty of good music and good soloists.

Let's fill the auditorium.

An offering will be taken for our growing radio-missionary ministry.

PROGRAM

Mr. John Zandstra, Jr.
182nd St.
South Holland, Ill.