BEACON LIGHTS
FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

January 1970

A Completely Unique Experience
TIM HEEMSTRA

Happy New Year??
REV. G. VAN BAREN
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NEWS FROM, FOR, AND ABOUT OUR CHURCHES
TRIVIA

The year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and seventy, and it is time for yet another picture of old “Father Time” and his reaper. Nineteen seventy, and “Father Time” is pushed aside by the infant new year (Looking suspiciously like a kewpie doll).

Nineteen seventy, and the world erupts in frenzied celebration as the delayed fuse of midnight passes from time zone to time zone. Wild parties, wild drinking, wild sinning: A new year dawns.

For God’s people, the new year brings, not insane partying, but quiet reflection. For God’s people, it is a time of joining together with praise and prayer in God’s house.

What a contrast! There is seldom a time when the diametric opposition of Church and world is more obvious. Yet, if the separate position of the Church is seen only at New Year’s the Church is not separate, but melded into the world.

It is a time of reflection, of self-analysis, of New Year’s resolution to be “better.” Often we promise ourselves to strive toward some goal of perfection, overlooking the fact that it is also our manner of striving toward the goal that needs correction.

However, lest we jump ahead with all good intention and little forethought, we must be constantly aware that it is not we who strive, but God Who works in us the will to do the right.

With this in mind, let us take a brief look at ourselves.

Our lives are played out today in a world of hurry. To be a success by the world’s standards, you have to be a hustler. We are supposedly duty-bound to spend our “free time” having fun, so that we return exhausted from vacations. We hurry to work, hurry home, hurry to play, hurry to society, hurry to church, hurry to school, hurry to live and hurry to die. We rush around frenetically, and “rest” in front of the hypnotic television. Books? Study? they might interrupt our rest in front of T.V.! We are living our lives at a dead run, stumbling over the trivia in which we are sadly tangled.

Yet, now it is New Year’s Day again. It is time to think, to take stock of ourselves. We do live in an accelerated age, and to ignore this fact is to be non-functional. It is not wrong to be busy (though we all have different levels of busy-ness), in fact, if we are often idle, we are sinning. Yet it is not right to be unconsciously busy. To work for the sake of working, to hurry for the sake of hurrying, to reach for and live by the world’s standards is to be enmeshed in trivia. To live as a busy Christian, we must live as aware Christians. Not to live as an aware Christian, is to be no better than the world, and but little better than a vegetable.

Another year is dawning. It is a year of hope tinged with the fear of the unknown. It is a year met with confidence by the Christian. We know that, no matter what the trials, no matter what the glories may be, the hand of the Lord is ever near to shelter and guide. It is another year, another step closer to glory.

Another year is dawning. The world hails the new year as a clean slate, an unblemished record, a time of new beginnings . . . and drinks itself silly as the first entry on this “clean” slate. It is a new year, a time of looking at life realistically. The aware Christian knows that the record of life is not wiped clean merely by a changing calendar date. He knows that man does not change, that life cannot be lived without the taint of sin. Yet, an aware Christian feels the presence of God in himself. He feels the sense of renewal that comes from joining together with God’s own at the beginning of a new year, and the feeling of awareness which comes from joining with the Church at the end of the old year.

Another year is dawning, another page turned in the Book of Life. By God’s grace we shall be better people in it, by God’s grace we shall be yet another step toward glory.

By God’s grace . . . how often do we live in an awareness of this grace? Are we not also enmeshed in the trivia of this world? Are we Christians or vegetables? Christ said that the Christian could be found by the works which he did. Are we easily spotted against the night of the world? Sometimes it seems that we are enmeshed in the trivia.
of this world, instead of being busy in the Lord's glory.

What then, sets the busy Christian apart from the frantic world-man? Primarily, it is his motivation. The Spirit of God rules in the heart and mind of the Christian, leading him into right paths, toward true goals.

In matter of course, the Christian man carries within him an awareness of why he does all things. He functions in an alert state, able to discriminate between what glorifies God in a Christian, and what tarnishes His name in the eyes of the world. Not only can an aware Christian differentiate between right and wrong, he can also center his life to best use his talents to God's glory, while fulfilling his obligations to Church and family.

Using his talents, fulfilling his obligations to God's glory, being a Christian in walk is but a part of the whole. The world is characterized by the frantic nature of its busy-ness: the Church by its pervading calm. Though we are busy in the Lord, we are not frantic. Our pursuits, varied though they may be, are purpose filled, for they are to God's glory. We have God in us.

Another year is dawning, another step toward glory. For some of us it will be but a brief step, and it will cause earthly sadness. For others, it will be but one of many steps onward.

Let this new year bring with it a heightened awareness, a closer walk as God's children. Let us remember always to walk as though God were right beside us (as He very really is).

May we welcome the new year with the greeting:

BLESSED NEW YEAR, MAY YOU WALK WITH GOD!

C.R.

FEATURE

"A Completely Unique Experience"

TIM HEEMSTRA

The development of science accompanied by a powerful technology has given man great opportunities for enriching life, and hopes for a better tomorrow. One need only mention the great technological advances of our Twentieth Century to verify that this truly is a scientific age. At the beginning of the century men spoke of the horseless carriage as a luxury only enjoyed by the rich; today even the residents of the ghettos are privileged to cruise about. Air travel was but a dream of two enterprising brothers; the planes of today would dwarf the length of their first flight. Our homes are lit ultimately from the breakdown of atoms, once imaginary particles of a theoretical construct. The survivorship charts have increased the life expectancy to over eighty years of age, more than even the "three score and ten" of which the Psalmist spoke. Life has indeed been revolutionized with the predominating influence of science.

To some, the quoted advancements will appear to be beneficial if not humanitarian, although the consequential hazards may loom far greater. Science has also been used for destructive purposes as well. Those living during the last world war will remember the ghastly, warped utilizations of the Nazis, who had considered themselves as a super race of brilliant scientists. Even our advanced "Christian" nation employed its nuclear physicists to create an atomic bomb which destroyed literally millions, those living in the Japanese cities as well as their untold progenies never born. The stockpiles of nuclear war-heads, the arsenals stored with biologically devastating nerve gases and bacteria, and the super-sensitive spying satellites are all called to mind. But those looking at achievements of science as detrimental are few.

The far greater predominating philosophy of our age is that science is the mid-wife of tomorrow's hopes. The fact that there exist many problems today is accepted, but these problems can and will be attacked using the scientific method. The problem must be
carefully analyzed to seek a precise objective. The methods are developed and research into the problem begins. The results will be technologically applied. Thus the pollution of our natural resources and the filthy effluent draining into man’s environment may be cleaned up. The ecologists are busy at work, aided by the government’s legislating more stringent measures to insure a supply of fresh water. The doctors are receiving headline publicity for transplants of many vital organs in the humans, and their list of capabilities is growing longer. Disease is being beaten back. The burgeoning birth rate of the underdeveloped countries of the world is being retarded by the implementation of birth control devices.

All this scientific has had a pronounced effect on the thoughts of our age. Many men and women become skeptical and uneasy about whatever cannot be proved in the laboratory. Science is elevated to the status of a cult. It can readily be seen that a conflict has of necessity ensued between the traditional doctrines of faith in God, our Lord, and the scientific tenets. The world is full of those who would contend with Thomas Huxley, a popularizer of the theories of Darwin, that for the advocate of science “skepticism is the highest of duties, blind faith the unpardonable sin.” Only empirical evidence counts; things must be verifiable. To base something on faith is to place one’s trust in the hypothetical, for this is now the period of great confidence in the method of science.

The Christian can now understand why his Bible, the Word of the Creator, comes under such barrages, even from those on the ecclesiastical scene close to him. For it is now vogue to de-mythologize the Bible and undertake the quest for the historical veracity of the Scriptures. To invoke God in the explanation of any historical occurrence in Scripture is to fail to adequately explain the story in a verifiable and reasonable manner. The first eleven chapters of Genesis are discarded as ancient myths of the Israelites to explain the origin of the world and the beginnings of their nation. Ignorant and unscientific peoples have always relegated the unexplainable to the supernatural. The serfs of the Middle Ages considered thunder to be the actual voice of God and it filled them with fear. Hence, the expression — “thunder-struck” has come down to us. Dr. Hugh Schonfield, a Jewish professor from England, has written two books, Passover Plot and Those Incredible Christians, in his “quest for the historical Jesus.” In them he produces “historically verifiable proof” that Christ was only an imposter in the Jewish worship and certainly not the Son of Almighty God.

The reader might consider men such as Schonfield to be one of the extreme, liberal advocates of this philosophy, but it must be pointed out that their number is growing.

The upshot of all this is important. We as Christian young people should not be on the defensive when encountering “evidence” brought up by rational investigators. In the final analysis, our beliefs show everyone where our ultimate loyalty lies. God has given us grace to trust and faith to believe in Him. The ultimate trust of the philosopher is, of course, in his brilliant use of logic and reason. The loyalty of the scientist who completely rejects God is in his observations through his senses. For him, seeing is believing. Our trust lies in the Creator of all things and the Sustainer of the present universe. Though the scientist may never analyze faith under a microscope, though the philosopher may not be capable of logically verifying the love of God, nevertheless our faith in God and His love for us is a very real experience. Just ask us!
HAPPY NEW YEAR??

Already the words are repeated to each other: "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year." (I am writing this in mid-December.) 
Happy new year! What does man mean? What do we really mean when we say it? Are we thinking of what we speak? Or do we simply adopt a traditional expression – because everyone else uses it? What is the expression? Is it a wish? Do we wish really that everyone to whom we speak does have a happy new year? And what sort of a happy new year do we wish each to have? Do we wish that one have a happy new year in the sense that he will have no major problems during the new year, that he has no sickness, that he is prosperous? Is this what we mean when we wish each other a happy new year? Or do we perhaps think that if we say "Happy new year" often enough, then we will surely have one?

Happy new year – really? What will be happy about it? Will perchance the world situation improve so that this world will become a more pleasant place in which to live? Statistics not only, but especially the Word of God emphasizes that this will not be. Wars continue. Man speaks of peace. He engages in strife, violence, revolution – to emphasize his desire for peace. But wars continue. Is 1970 going to be any better than 1969?

The crime rate continues to increase. Each year the statistics indicate that it is worse than the year before. What makes us think that 1970 will be “happier” in this respect than the year before? Who will be happy under the constant threat of robbery, injury, murder, and all forms of violence?

World problems continue. Constant cries are made about impending famine within the next ten years (maybe in 1970?). Overpopulation seems to be a great worry of man. Soon there will be not enough room for all the people. There is such a degree of air and water pollution that those who do live on the earth may soon be poisoned to death. Then you dare say, “Happy new year”? What will be so happy about it?

The situation within the churches of the world is equally grievous. There is evidence of gross apostacy on every hand. Men freely now deny the infallibility of Scripture. Nor is this limited to churches outside of the Reformed circles. The atonement of
Christ is distorted or denied. The Trinity is questioned. Heaven and hell do not exist as far as some are concerned. A social gospel is proclaimed — and especially the idealistic young are impressed by this. The trend continues toward mergers under the cry of “ecumenism.” Those who love the truths of Scripture grow ever smaller in number. And you say, “Happy new year”? Do you think this trend will change in 1970? Do you think that there will be a greater love for the truth in this new decade? Yet you say, “Happy new year”?

And what are your personal prospects for 1970? Young people, especially, can look for good health: they are filled with dreams concerning the future. But God has not given a guarantee to any one of you that you will live through 1970 — that you will not spend long days and months in the hospital. But worse, temptations about you increase. The world ever more presses in upon the church — and especially upon its youthful members. Young people are particularly quick to imitate even the world. The temptations to be as like the world as possible are great. In dress I sometimes observe little or no difference between the church and the world. In the realm of entertainment, the world has managed to seduce many to enjoy that which it produces — for it can introduce this directly into our homes. We rather flippantly and jokingly speak of “nude looks,” but is this trend not frightening? There is open violation of the laws of God — and it does not even seem to bother the members of the church too greatly anymore. Rather, we want to defend our right to do as we please; to live as like the world as possible; to enjoy those same things which the world enjoys. This whole situation will grow worse in 1970. Do I dare, then, wish you a “happy new year”? I wonder how happy it can be under these circumstances. One would be inclined to crawl into a dark corner and weep because of the Sinful Seventies which have come upon the world and the church. What, do you think, will be happy about these?

But I do not want to be only pessimistic. I do wish you a happy new year. There is room for such a wish, for such a prayer. But this wish or prayer can not be a desire that you will prosper materially, that the world improves, that utopia will be established on this earth. This won’t happen. But children of God can expect a happy new year. It will be happy from many spiritual viewpoints.

You, faithful children of God, will have a happy new year because God promises in His Word that we will not stand alone. Trials and tribulations there will be. But His Word assures us of grace sufficient for every need. His Word testifies that nothing can happen to us by chance or accident, but that on the contrary all things will work together for our good. God’s Word assures us that He Who hath begun a good work in you will also complete it. Happy is that man whose God is the Lord — such an one will have a happy new year indeed.

Happy new year it will be too because the signs all point to the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ will soon return. The very things which seem so deplorable to man, are signs which point to Christ’s return. Wars and wars, earthquake and pestilence, apostasy — these all remind us of the nearness of the end of this dark age. More is yet to come. Persecution will increase. It will become ever more difficult to find jobs — and maintain God’s Word at the same time. One’s life might be threatened. Imprisonment might become commonplace for Christians. Temptations will become more subtle. Before long, the kingdom of the antichrist will be established. Man will succeed for a short time in uniting nations and churches. The beasts of Rev. 13 will be seen in all of their awfulness. But shortly after all these things take place, our Lord shall return on the clouds of glory. A happy new year it is as one sees through that year the definite unfolding of all the plan and purpose of our Sovereign God. It is a happy new year which brings us one year closer to the return of Christ. It is a happy new year — not so much because of what happens in it, but because it will serve God’s purpose of bringing in something far better.

And each new year does serve as a little reminder of the new age which shall be ushered in. We know not all of its beauty. We can only try to imagine some of its glory. Jesus will be there. Sin will be gone. We shall be able to praise our God with
Our whole being and with all that we have. There will be no more curse. But the glory of God shall shine as the sun. That will be a happy new “year” indeed. We must be looking for that.
So—happy new year, young people!

TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

GOODWILL

“the good will of Him that dwelleth in the bush” — Moses

“with good will doing service as to the Lord” — Paul

“on earth peace, in men good will” — The Heavenly Host

Christian, recovering from the set-back caused him by following Mr. Worldly-Wiseman’s counsel, went on once more in The Way with haste, heeding no one. Finally, he reached the Little Gate he had been seeking, which had a sign over it, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” It was necessary to knock more than once or twice, to even call out, “Will He within open to sorry me?” At last he was rewarded with the appearance of a man, but not one the most attractive to a young person, one severely serious, who demanded he identify himself, state his business and whence he was. Immediately striking about the gate-keeper was his commanding seriousness. The significance of his gravity did not dawn on Christian until later as he proceeded in the Narrow Way. Then he would think back and see what he had not before noticed. The location of the gate was enough to banish lightheartedness from any in the area, for the gatehouse was just uphill from the Slough of Despond, the miasmatic damps of which filled the air with a dank depressing atmosphere. Also the peep slots of the gatehouse looked down on the City of Destruction in the distance and the Wilderness of Sin surrounding it. Then the characters who applied at that gate up to all hours of the night never showed a smiling face. Furthermore, every applicant at the gate had to be pulled in, for there were dangers right at the entrance. Nearby stood Beelzebub’s castle. From the tower arrows flew and thudded into the gate-posts. They were meant to make the seeker give up entering and going in The Way. Christian, trembling but rejoicing, began to think of what the arrows were. All arrows have their own peculiar identification on the shafts. There was the arrow of persecution and the arrow of ridicule. Other arrows were the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of this life and the lusts of other things. The arrow
most dangerous to you, young reader, is probably that one, the pleasures of this life. When that arrow is shot it usually has a note wrapped around it which reads, "Christians don't have a good time!" One person, converted to the Lord like the Ethiopian eunuch, warded off that arrow, saying, "I am happier now when I'm not happy than I was before I was happy!" That is what the man meant who said, "O wretched man...! who shall deliver me...! I thank God!"

Now you can see why Goodwill was of such sober cast. Yet he was not morose, despairing or desponding. Actually, he was a fundamentally joyful man. Who would not be, holding such a post, having such work as his to do? Also you must have a good guess of his nature from his name and know him to be a happy man. Goodwill and his gatehouse were full of goodness, and, holding forth at the head of the good old way, were also full of heavenly happiness. He also anticipates a full glory of happiness when he pulls in the last marcher to Zion.

Knowing Goodwill a little better, you would expect him to direct Christian, having entered the strait gate, in the narrow way. He did. "This is the way thou must go." He told him of the broad way to hell, the many who crowd in upon it, and the one, only way to heaven, which sometimes has no more on it than a lonely footprint, or a trail of blood. He who commanded, "Strive to enter in through the strait gate" really calls that striving agony. He also asid, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Does His service cause you any agony? What cross do you daily take up? Where or in what do you deny yourself? Write it in code on the margin of your Bible. In the working out of your own salvation will the most microscopic scrutiny find any fear and trembling? If not, then you probably have not yet met friend Goodwill, either in your parents, or in your pastor. For he informs you that "the way thou must go" is steep, narrow, becoming narrower as you proceed, till it almost crushes you, is dangerous and lonely all its way. That hook in your hand, what does it say? Watch and pray! Give the more earnest heed! Run with endurance the race set before you! earnestly agonizing for the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints! pressing on, reaching forth toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! What does he know of the truth of Christ or the way to heaven who is a stranger to these things?

By nature Christian was Graceless. There is something about him, all along his pilgrim journey, that is graceless. But it is as Christian, not as Graceless, that he enters through the strait gate. Asking, seeking and knocking to do so he does as Christian, enquiring, "Are there no turnings nor windings by which a stranger may lose his way?" As Christian he was more afraid of missing the way than of meeting the hardships in it. Graceless neither asks, nor seeks, nor knocks, nor strives to enter. Christian was not so ignorant and foolish as to suppose that "our striving or agonizing is the prerequisite for entering life" as though Graceless may become Christian if only he will fulfil that prerequisite. Christian knew that the striving is a mark of that much coveted life, and that both are God's gift. Graceless has no care, concern, ability or hope of ability to perform any "prerequisites."

Goodwill's gate is one going easily unnoticed by the majority of worldly wisemen rushing back and forth in the throngs "where cross the crowded ways of life." It is isolated off to the side, "far from the madding crowd." It is usually shut when an applicant comes up to it, with no attendant visible. If this is the gate to The Way, then why is there not a welcoming committee of at least one standing there with open arms, garlands of orchids, an enthusiastic handshake, hug and kiss of reconciliation which sweetly draws us in from the hail of Beezlebub's arrows? What do you want, a medal? before the battle is even begun? You recently faced a battle. You knelt in secret prayer to face it. What was visible to you then? nothing more than living room chair, study desk or bed! no angel! no glorious manifestation of the Divine presence! You prayed a short but earnest prayer. Did you rise from prayer disappointed because "nothing happened," no one appeared to comfort you? Look at the one who now enters the little gate. First he knocked, then he pounded, finally he banged on the door. If he had to, he would take it by storm. He would not merely send up a little prayer, then leave off. Continual prayer, impatient
prayer would find him calling.

May I now enter here? Will He within
Open to sorry me, though I have been
A wandering rebel? Then shall I
Not fail to sing His lasting praise on high!

Goodwill was brave, not sour. As we now
know him, he was a man full of joy, one
who brought much joy to many. Entering
that gate and continuing in its way has its
difficulties, yet not without its joys. "Hark!"
cried Mercy, "Don't you hear a noise?"
"Yes," answered Christiana, "I believe a
noise of music, for joy we are here."
"Wonderful!" replied Mercy, "Music in the
house, music in the heart, and music also
in heaven for joy that we are here!" In this
way they conversed a while before going to
bed. In the morning Christiana inquired,
"What was the matter? you laughed in your
sleep last night! You were in a dream?"
"Yes, I was." Mercy admitted, "and a sweet
dream it was. But are you sure I laughed?"
"Yes, you laughed heartily; but Mercy, tell
me your dream." "I was dreaming I sat all
alone bemoaning the hardness of my heart
when I saw One with wings coming toward
me, who said, 'Mercy, what aileth thee?'
(Gen. 21:17). When He had heard my com-
plaint, He said 'Peace be to thee.' He also
dried my eyes and clad me in silver and
gold (Ezek. 16:8-11). He put a chain
about my neck, earrings in my ears and a
beautiful crown upon my head. I followed
Him until we came to a golden gate. With-
in, the place looked like the stars, rather,
the sun! But did I laugh?" "Laugh? ay, and
well you might, to see yourself so well!"
Joy is not so evident at the gate, or in
entering it, except as one is mindful of the
joy that is set before one at the end of the
narrow way. Like Abraham (Gen. 17:17)
and Sarah (21:6), one may with that view
before the eye of faith laugh indeed.

Good news, yet heart-searching, heart-
breaking that welcome of Goodwill's, "Any,
notwithstanding all that they have done
before they come hither, they in no wise are
cast out." Christian would, indeed, recall,
not all, but much of the worst he had done.
Like the woman of Sychar he felt that "He
told me all things that ever I did." This
made Christian conscious again of the place
he fled, where he would go and of the
burden on his back. From that time on he
would often think:

He that would enter in, must first without
Stand knocking at the gate, nor need he
doubt
That is a knocker, but to enter in:
For God will love him and forgive his sin.

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We wish to thank the following for
their gifts:

Kalamazoo Prot. Ref. Church..............$14.42

South Holland Ladies' Society.............$25.00

Southeast Prot. Ref. Church..............$27.75
The Beacon Lights' Staff is once again requesting your help. When was the last time you wrote? We encourage you to send to the editor any article written by society or any school course. Also, please feel free to criticize any previous articles. This is not a dogmatic magazine, but is open for discussion. If there are any suggestions on topics which are of particular interest to you, please send them to us.

Remember, "the Beacon Lights is designed to give expression and application of the Protestant Reformed Truth in various spheres of life, and through this means of edification, to draw our young people closer in their common bond of unity." Without your interest, the Beacon Lights can not be as successful as it should be.

Please remove this sheet as a reminder that we need your help.

Sincerely yours.

Beacon Lights Staff
Dear Readers,

It is a month of good news! We have entered a new year and are standing on the threshold of a new decade. We have challenges to meet, tasks to do, sorrows to confront, and questions to answer. We have a lot of work to do it looks like and sometimes that big, unknown future does not look very inviting or promising. BUT, we have the promise of the Child and with that promise we will be able to smile in the face of defeat and sing in spite of tears. That is happiness and peace and love and that is the greatest and best news you will ever find in this or any other magazine!

Miscellaneous

On December 14 at 9:00, a Hope Choral Christmas Program was held in the Hope Church.

The Hudsonville young people sponsored a “Bigger and Better” party for all the area young people. The proceeds once more went for the coming Convention.

An “all sports night,” sponsored by the Federation Board, was held on December 16 in the Calvin Chr. High Gym for the Grand Rapids area young people.

Membership

Mr. and Mrs. John DeVries and five baptized children have transferred from Southeast to Hope.

Mr. and Mrs. John Scholten have been received into the membership of Hope Church from the Newhall Reformed Church. Welcome!

Marriages

Miss Jacquelyn Knott from Hope and Mr. Don Offringa from Southeast on December 3.

Our Pastors

Rev. C. Hanko has written a pamphlet on “The Christian Witness over against Labor Unions” and it has been published by Oak Lawn’s Church Extension Committee.

Rev. Dale Kuiper has accepted the call to Pella, Iowa. He is presently in Randolph.

Our Servicemen

The address of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Miedema from Hope is:

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Miedema
44 Jackson St.
Fort Stewart, Ga. 31314