

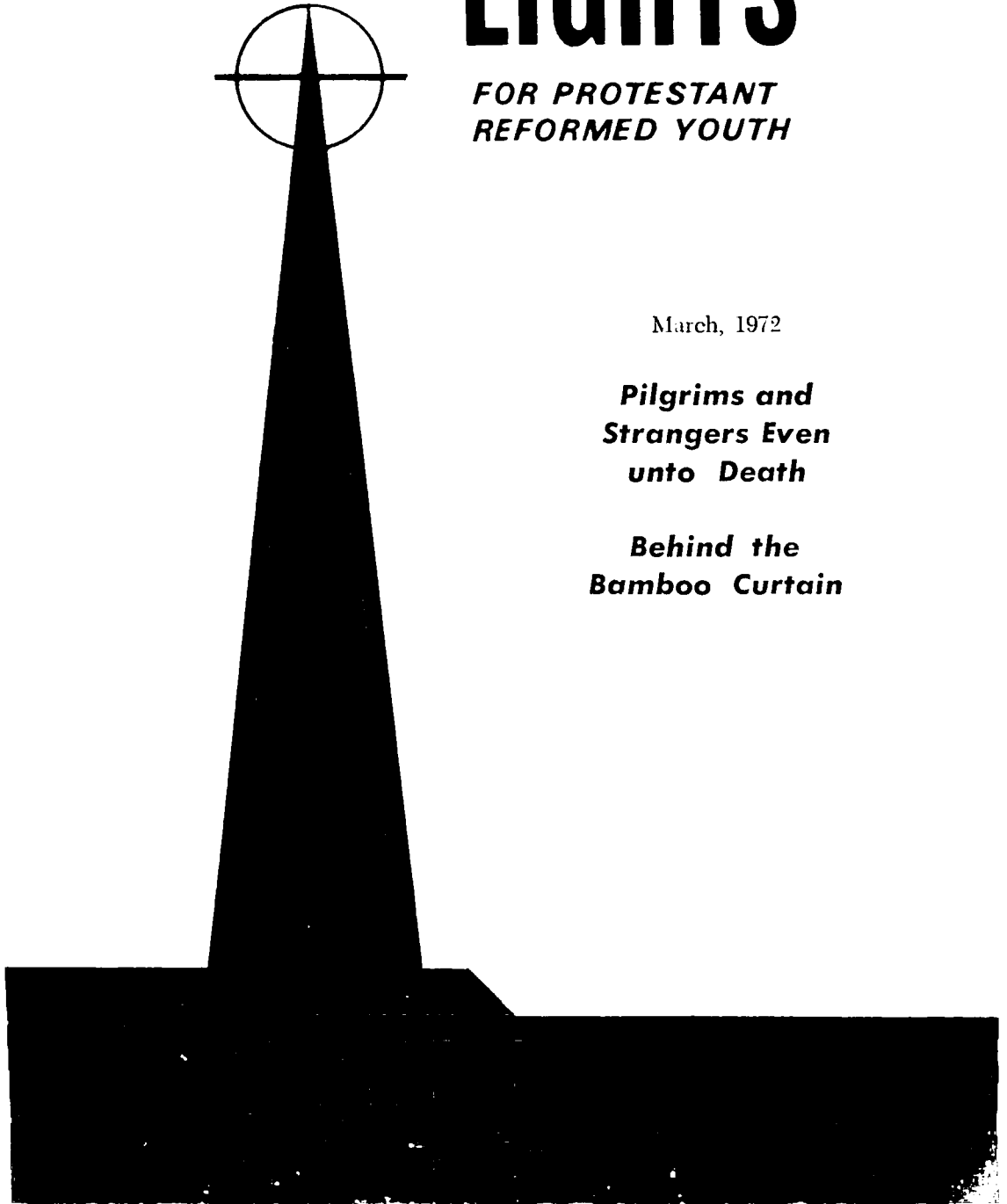
BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*

March, 1972

*Pilgrims and
Strangers Even
unto Death*

*Behind the
Bamboo Curtain*





BEACON LIGHTS

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HUMILITY – GOD’S ELEVATOR

Man, in sinful pride, thought to elevate himself above God. He thought that by disobeying the Lord’s command he too could know good and evil. He fell and great was his fall. He became a lowly, despicable, sinful creature whose whole life was enmity against God. In his wretched state he foolishly imagines himself, even today, to be very important. He lifts himself up in haughty pride and defies the living God as Goliath of old. He shakes his fist in the face of Almighty God provoking Him with his rebelliousness. Jehovah sitting in the heavens laughs and holds him in derision. What an awful laughter that must be. How horrible to be the cause and object of that laughter. It means horrible blackness; unquenchable thirst; continuons, never ending burning; everlasting hell fire. In pride man, elevating himself above God, is cast into lowest perdition.

Man’s elevator “pride” fails miserably. In time he may appear successful in his attempts to elevate himself but eternally he is brought low. God’s elevator “humility” works in quite the opposite way.

Christ told his disciples in Matthew 23:12, “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” In Isaiah 57:15 we read “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” “God,” according to Rev. G. Vos (see his meditation October 15, 1947; volume 34 of the *Standard Bearer*) “dwelleth in two places. First he dwelleth in His Holy Place But there is another place where God loves to dwell, and that is His dwelling in a created place which He has reserved for Himself. It is with the contrite and humble spirit of man. . . . And a contrite spirit is a spirit that is broken, crushed, unspeakably sad and sorrowful as a consequence of his fall from God.” Such a person God will elevate to highest heaven to live everlastingly with Him.

Humility is a non-human virtue. Natural man is the very opposite. He is very proud. Humility is of such a nature that the minute you think you have attained it you have lost it. Wicked man even turns the virtue of humility into an object of pride. Napoleon once called it “the greatest ornament of an illustrious life which goes a great way in the character of the most exalted princes.” At the final judgment when every man will face the righteous judge of heaven and earth, each, the wicked and righteous alike, will be forced to confess that never in his whole life was he ever humble. It is impossible for man to attain the virtue of humility no matter how earnestly he strives for it. And yet God requires of us that we walk humbly.

True humility is God given. He is the one that brings low in order that he might also exalt. David suffered deep humiliation. He disobeyed God by going to live in the land of the Philistines. God found him out and brought him low by the arm of the Amalekite avengers. The purpose of this humiliation was to make David aware of his sin in leaving the inheritance of the Lord. The result was that David offered a broken and contrite spirit of repentance to God. God forgave him and exalted him as ruler of His people. God humbles His own because he loves them. Consider also that God suffered His own Son to be humiliated here on this earth so that we with Him might be elevated to sit at His right hand.

When the believing child of God walks through the Valley of Humiliation and faces the dreadful apollyons of this and the nether worlds he is being led unerringly by the Lord Himself. Only a regenerated child of God will be led through this Valley for he alone possesses humility. It is, however, a virtue that is as far away from his natural reach as is salvation itself. As only the Lord is able to work regeneration so only the Lord is able to produce true godly humility in one of His creatures. That humility which He originates is ultimately for His own pleasure and enjoyment.

Only the child of God is humble. He reveals his humility first of all and foremost to God. He submits himself willingly to the preaching of the Word and anxiously longs for that eternal day of glory with the Lord God. He detests his sins and abhors that which is evil. He is like the publican who prostrated himself before Almighty God and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He will not be anxious to display his humility before men because he will never be able in good conscience to consider himself humble. He will continuously petition the Most High for humility and bear adversity patiently knowing and be-

lieving that God is answering his prayer for humility. He will be content with that which the Lord has given him.

Humility is truly God's elevator. Through the deep way of humiliation he exalts His own.

He that is down needs fear no fall,

He that is low no pride,

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide.

The Shepherd Boy's Song

Pilgrim's Progress

John Bunyan

J.K.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. LUBBERS

"Each one of you is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

Ephesians 4:7

KEEPING PERSPECTIVE

It is good, young people, to have the upward look in these evil days in which we live. We do not yet see all things subjected unto Christ, the Son. Yet, very really by faith we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death (Heb. 2:9). God has perfected, raised to glory the author and finisher of

our faith, the captain of our salvation. God did this in causing His Son to suffer, to taste death by the grace of God. And Jesus ascended up on high after he had been in the lowest depths of hellish suffering and agony, and having lain in the grave for three days and three nights.

This is the deep mystery of God, His

fathomless grace, the history of salvation. This is *world* history, this death and resurrection of Christ.

Keep the course, run the race, and reach for the crown!

God has an eye for the entire body of Christ, but no less for each individual saint of his, be he young or old, black or white. For each of these it is gift, *pure* gift. We merited nothing! And this grace is from a certain point of view measureless. This is the great love, the rich mercy, the infinite condescending goodness of our God to us.

Grace is gift!

Yet it is measured out to us. Grace is not a haphazard thing, left to the free-will and the caprice of man. It is given according to the divinely established "measure" determined by God. This is the measure of *Christ*. And this measure has four dimensions, not three. It has length and breadth, height and depth (Eph. 3:18). Such is the love of Christ wherewith He loved us even to the end. It means to know the superabundance of the knowledge of the love of Christ. Yea, it means to be filled with all the fulness of God!!

Amazing measure!

It is this amazing grace that keeps one in proper perspective to God in Christ. O, then we see that it is one Lord in the church on earth and in heaven!, but this is where grace has been effective, giving one saving faith, cleansing baptism of the Spirit, as it subsumes us all under the one God and Father of the entire church. This God is upon all, through all and in all!

Each receives grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ which proceeds out of the Father and from His Son Jesus Christ.

How good it is, young people, to hear the evidence of this measure of the grace of Christ from the pen of one of our Jamaican students. His name is Leonard Williams. You will find his picture in the *Acts Of Synod*, 1971, page 59. He stands next to my beloved brother and friend, Mr. Cecil Vander Molen, Pella, Iowa. The picture was taken by Rev. D. H. Kuiper. Brother Williams stands next to brother Vander Molen. They have different colored skins. *Each* has received grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. We gave

each student a French Morocco leather-covered Bible, King James version for Christmas. Brother Williams echoes the sentiments of all the students in this letter in his inimitable Jamaican way.

Hope Hill District
White House, P.O.
Jamaica, W.I.

Dear friends in America,

Greetings from Leonard Williams to you and your family in the name of our LORD, Jesus Christ.

I wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year throughout your task of laboring for our Lord, hoping that when "he call you" you will be eager to see Him as He is, and to rest with Him in His kingdom.

We (are) hoping that when you receive my letter of thanksgivings for the gift, a Bible, it will bring joy into your heart.

I appreciate it very much in making outlines and in reading to get a specific meaning of the text. I am thankful for it; it helps a bit.

And I trust in the Lord that you will ever distribute gifts among the needy, which is acceptable to the Lord, to lead them to the straight and narrow way, as they are pilgrims and journeying home to God. We need the signal of His light.

God bless you increasingly.

Yours,
Leonard Williams

This letter from Leonard was unsolicited; it came spontaneously from his heart. It was an experience to see the glow and flush of joy and gratitude on Leonard's face when we handed him his gift-Bible.

Not even do we see such thankfulness here when we distribute gifts.

Yes, the other students heard this letter read and said: include our thanks, too, unto the friends in the States in the Protestant Reformed Churches. They were embarrassed that they had overlooked to write such a letter.

We must keep perspective!

Each is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ; students in America and students here. Each receive grace according to the measure of Christ.

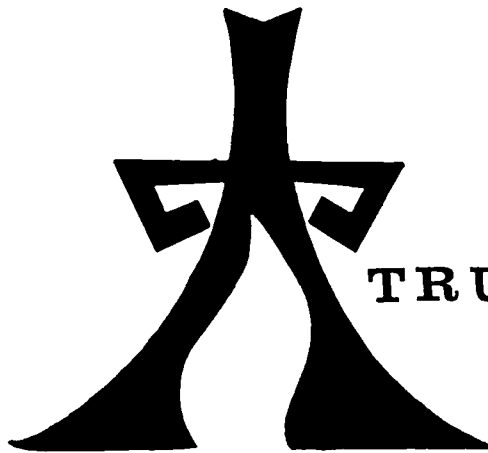
That keeps us humble, and only thus do we not become weary in well-doing.

By the way, young people, do you use your Bible in home and church, society and catechism to arrive at, what Leonard called "a specific meaning of the text"? Do you

read the Bible accurately and studiously? That is too a measure of the gift of Christ.

Would your minister agree with the answer you give?

God grant you this measure of grace, and keep Biblical perspective.



TRUTH vs. ERROR

REV. ROBT. C. HARBACH

The First Shepherd – Knowledge

"Fools hate Knowledge" – Solomon

After their escape from Doubting Castle, Hopeful and Christian began devising some sort of warning sign to be set up in the way to warn other pilgrims against the dangers of By-pass Meadow and its dark defiles and declines to the hold of the Giant Despair. They set up a pillar with the deeply etched words, "This is the way kept by Giant Despair, despiser of the King of the Better Country, and destroyer of pilgrims." You may be sure this prevented many from going in that forbidden way, and so escaped its dangers.

Now they reached the Delectable Mountains, which Christian had seen in the distance from the top of Palace Beautiful (Isa. 33:16, 17).

*Mountains delectable they now ascend
Where Shepherds be, who to them do
commend*

*Alluring things, with signs of caution
dear:*

*Pilgrims are steady kept by faith and
fear.*

These mountains belong to the Lord of

the Holy Hill and are the mountains of Israel in Emmanuel's Land. The mountain sides were covered with forests, gardens, orchards, vineyards, living fountains of waters and shepherds with their flocks of sheep. The sheep belong to Emmanuel and He laid down His life for them. The mountains are in sight of the Heavenly City. They ask just how far off it is. The shepherds answer, "Too far for any but those who shall really get there!" Then the shepherds told them that Perseverance of the Saints depends on the divine preservation of the saints, which, in turn, is always manifested by the actual persevering of the saints, and that against all temptations, persecutions, heresies and afflictions. Christian then asked, "Is the Way safe, or dangerous?" The answer came, "Safe for those for whom it is to be safe, but transgressors shall fall therein" (Hosea 14:9).

The shepherds who entertained them were Knowledge, Experience, Watchful and Sincere. Now Old Knowledge was, by his flock, held in high esteem. In fact, he was

regarded as a treasure. For knowledge is what the under-shepherd needs more than confidence, accomplishment, graceful delivery, eloquence, or polished manners. Here is another picture of the Church of God together with ministers and members nourished with the means of grace. David, himself a shepherd in those mountains and green pastures, declared, "In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee." Knowledge dwells in the bosom of the Church.

Of course, Old Knowledge got to be so knowing partly by reading good books, in fact, the best books, which were all he had time for. At first he began as a very poor shepherd, not able to afford many books, so he placed a motto over his library, "Much, Not Many!" The best books are few enough. If a Christian or a Hopeful were to begin by limiting his reading to only "The Treasury of David" and Matthew Henry's Commentary, he would make a fair beginning at scratching the surface of the best. He would also find himself in green pastures and beside still waters where he would never cease to be fed and refreshed. This man, Knowledge, however, although he was mainly a man of one Book, delighted in any book which competently purveyed true knowledge. He was a student of all knowledge. He loved books on astronomy, birds and poetry. The Book which he always carried in his bosom he knew was written by Him who is Creator of Heaven and Earth, who is Heir of all things and who upholds all things by the word of His power. A favorite book of his, by the same Author, is that of the heavens declaring the glory of God and the firmament His handiwork. Still, our friend Knowledge was a specialist, specializing in one field of knowledge, the knowledge which was his business first, last and always, the knowledge of God, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord," or, as he also put it, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Therefore, he was busy making a study of that little Book of his night and day. Every year, to the curio section of his library, he adds to his collection of the latest modern translations of The Book in up-to-date English.

But any reading he does in these becomes exceedingly and increasingly painful because they are, all of them, for the most part, such wide and fraudulent divergencies from his Hebrew and Greek Testaments, his *Tenach* and his *He Kaine Diatheke*. Knowledge fed his flock out of his own experience, out of the Book as taken, eaten and digested in his own soul. He fed them on the Book as he felt it in the depths of his being, as he felt its rich contents ought to be expressed. He had not only the knowledge, but the feeling of the Book. Then he would convey his feelings with the deepest convictions of the deepest truths.

Also for knowledge of the day, not only the common newspapers and newsmagazines will be read, but more reliable and reputable sources, like *Human Events*. The latter is probably to be found on the tables of Covenant House. These are read, not so much to trace human events, as to check on the latest providences of Him who is the Owner of the Holy Hill, to see how fares His kingdom, how Antichrist arises, progresses and declines, how the One on the White Horse rides on conquering and to conquer, how He, in so many different ways, daily fulfils His word, "Yes, I am coming quickly. Amen!" With all this knowledge to hand, much prayer will be made for distressed pilgrims suffering destitution and persecution.

Christian is happy to have Knowledge for his Shepherd. From the Book in his hand he learns that "the Lord is a God of knowledge" (1 Sam. 2:3). He also soon learns to discern one church from another, the true from the false. All to the good, for many can barely distinguish one church building from another. What is that strange title, some wonder, over the portal of yonder church inscribed, *Ichabod*? Then another church portal is bedecked with a golden *Mundane*. Another archway is bold with *Sacerdotalis*, while another is engraved with *B'nai Belial*. But few today can cipher such riddles. Can you? But that is a true church where the portal arch is deeply etched with, "To Give Knowledge of Salvation unto His People" (Luke 1:77), and where the Sacred Desk has the divine promise carved on it, "And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, who shall

feed you with *Knowledge* and understanding" (Jer. 3:15).

Close by the Delectable Mountains was another, Mt. Error. It was right opposite Mt. Truth. Situated on top of Mt. Error is the Babylonian shrine of Ecclesiastical Infallibility. It is part of the vast *religionem comparativus* complex of the restored ancient Temple of Misunderstanding. Just across from it is a cathedral of cubistic architecture dedicated to Theological Indifference, the sacrarium of modern liberalism. Its devotees understand not how there can be men who detest persecution, yet love their enemies or such as differ from them, and still earnestly contend for the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints. The former of the latter say, "They have just got to be narrow-minded bigots."

On the far side of Mt. Error the height drops down, sheer, to the bottom. "Look over the edge," the shepherd guides command. The two friends, shrinking from the rim, cautiously and fearfully peep over. Quickly they dart back in horror and shaking like a leaf. For far below they saw many shattered bones on the rocks. Many in the past had gone on ahead in the dark, not realizing the danger, and stepped off into space to their terrible end. Such was the end of Hymenaeus and Philetus with their bemused following. Many have erred concerning the resurrection, especially, like the Sadducees, in denying it altogether. A long line of such Sadducees have gone headlong down the chasm of Mt. Error. What others made the same leap in the dark? Some false brethren, who did not know the Way of Life themselves, who claimed that circumcision and the works of the law were necessary conditions to

salvation. Paul warned them against another gospel of a different kind from what he preached, which certainly would not be another of the same kind as his gospel (Gal. 1:6, 7, Gk.), but would be a perverted gospel, more dangerous than the Judaism (1:13, 14, Gk.) from which he had been called and converted. He called teachers of that perverted gospel "the mutilation faction," while the Church he called "the truly circumcized" (Phil. 3:2, 3, Berkeley). So you see what the whole "mutilation faction" comes to. Or blind guides come around to your door with the line that there is no eternal punishment, no hell, and that after death the impenitent wicked will have a second chance to be saved, which, if they refuse, they shall then be annihilated. O how the wicked *could* wish that *were* their end at death! Then they would not be, know nor suffer any more than before they were born! An easy out for them, but in reality an easy slip over the precipice of Mt. Error.

Test the spirits. They are of God who believe that the Bible is the only infallible Word of God; that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, himself God in the flesh; that He was born without sin, of a virgin, was incapable of sin, yet on the Cross was made sin as He bore the sin of many; that He shall save His people from their sins; that He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; that no man can come unto Him, except the Father draw him; and that the righteous dead shall be raised at the last day. They who believe not or teach not these things are not to be trusted. Errors which deny the deity, doctrine, messiahship, person and work of Christ are fatal.

CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

RACHEL LUBBERS

Joy!

Dear readers: Due to my surgery I was unable to complete an article for my regular column "Current Events and Comments." In place of it I have written a fill-in article which I hope you enjoy as well. My

apologies and the Lord willing I will be back in two months. Thank you.

Jamie carries his striped umbrella over his head as he tries to hide from the warm

raindrops that want to blow in his sad face. He walks slowly but steadily as his eyes closely follow the stone he is kicking along the cracked sidewalk. As time passes Jamie disappears in the distance.

Jamie, you know, is one person whom I really am sorry for. He feels like a complete failure about so much of life and about so much of himself that he looks at himself as nothing but a failure. It is really so sad because he really is not a failure at all! He is a great person but, he fails to realize many of his valuable qualities. He is just as you and I are sometimes. Of course, some feel this more than others and Jamie is one of those people.

Jamie has a dream that he will someday be as great as so many people seem to him. But it is mysterious that Jamie does not know he is much more of a person than those he envies. It seems completely *unreal* to him that anyone could ever possibly envy him! Yet, there are those people. There are people who really would rather be a Jamie than a Paul or a Sherry.

Along with Jamie, you and I have forgotten or perhaps have never searched for what joy there is in living, the joy that should make us appreciate life everyday! How often it is that we live one day in and one day out and just more or less move along with time. There may be days when we feel like we are on top of the world and then days when we are on rock bottom but, how about one who feels like a failure almost *everyday*. This is Jamie and perhaps even you.

Together let us try to make Jamie smile; try to make him feel like an important, successful person for himself and for others. Together let us allow ourselves to smile.

What makes you and Jamie a beautiful person? You have the greatest God that anyone could possibly have, a God who is alive and living in you everyday! Could anyone want anything more? You can hear your own prayers, prayers that would be totally meaningless if it were not for God who alone can hear them. And prayer also that can be held any time without having to first find a willing listener. You never have to wait ten minutes, a half hour, or two days before you can make arrangements to have Him listen. The secrets that you do

not quite want to share with even the closest person you happen to know you can share with God. Indeed, this is something to be valued so greatly that if we do feel like a failure and yet are able to pray even then we can smile through the sadness.

And you are beautiful too because you have within you an amount of inspiration that runs like the endless sea. An inspiration that keeps you fighting through a most wearisome battle and an inspiration that makes you want to try to count every single window that a skyscraper owns.

Beauty. Is it possible for you to imagine who you would be without spontaneous joy? Don't the miles of peace that lie within you make you feel some contentment with yourself? It is this inspiration that helps you capture beauty in words, in thought, and it is this inspiration that makes you feel spontaneous joy and spontaneous peace. And God gave you this incredible gift!

Then there is the great ability to think. When you are creative in your own thinking you are distinguished from all other persons. And there are times too when your thoughts can soar high above the confines of this earth like the thoughts of an architect as he dreams of the spires of a cathedral he will someday build.

You are more than the person who needs constant improvement, more than one who has failed so much, more than one who has become disappointed; you are in many parts an unexplored Christian. Everyday opens to you another opportunity to continue a voyage of new discoveries in yourself and is not that also beauty? You are capable of exploring the parts of you that are like brick walls, parts that have been tightly knotted with time, parts that are as a most fragile piece of glass, and parts that are so intricately woven that you will never finish seeing every stitch.

Don't put off joy. Let us not belittle what was given to you and me, but let us take a glimpse at ourselves and be fascinated, be intrigued with this creation of God, even though imperfect. We must continue to discover more of ourselves until we finally discover for what we are living . . . the glory of eternity.

Well, Jamie has walked a long way by now and he has turned around and is

walking back again. The rain has passed and the wind is blowing huge mountains of clouds swiftly across a dark gray sky. His umbrella is folded up and he is swinging it back and forth at his side while he clutches tightly the deep brown and yellow handle. The sweet smell of a fresh rain sweeps across the land. But Jamie is not kicking that black and grey marble-size

stone anymore because he had kicked it too hard and lost it. The closer Jamie comes, the clearer I can hear a soft song fade in and out of the whipping wind. His hair is blowing and his brown eyes are beautiful. Jamie is crying.

"Jamie, keep singing. There is a lot to sing about. Jamie, oh Jamie, smile. God is in you!"

FEATURES

CHANGELESS PURPOSE IN A CHANGING WORLD

REV. RICHARD G. MOORE

The above named topic was sent to me with the request that I write on it in this issue of BEACON LIGHTS. This I am pleased to do. However as we turn our attention to this topic, we find ourselves immediately faced with a question. To this question we now turn. The question is this: "Are we living in a changing world?"

As we consider this question in light of our changeless purpose, I would propose in many ways we do not live in a changing world. Solomon under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us there is no new thing under the sun. We read this literally in Ecclesiastes 1:9, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." In a very real sense this is true.

As we are attentive to our changeless purpose, as God's people, we find this truth brought near to us. For, covenant young people, the purpose that motivates the child of God is and always has been to glorify God in every sphere of life. To serve God in love and to stand opposed to all evil is our calling. In a very practical way this means that we maintain the Christ of the Scriptures as our Lord and Savior. By this I mean that we hold fast to the confession to the Jesus Christ, God's Son, Who saves us by grace alone.

Thus John emphasises to the church in his epistles the importance of the confession that Jesus is the Christ. An example is clearly stated in John's second epistle verses seven and nine: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This

is a deceiver and an antichrist. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." The necessity of expressly maintaining the doctrine of Christ has always been necessary in the church; and one of the reasons that this is necessary is because the world always attempts to take this confession away. They would always take the glory from God to themselves. For this reason did we find in the Old Dispensation, the world attempting to lead Israel astray with Baal and other man-glorifying gods. This was the attempt in the apostles' day as is clear from the writings of John. Also, this was true when Pelagius opposed Augustine, and Arminius the reformed faith.

This same denial of the doctrine of Christ is seen today in the universal attempt to proclaim a Christ that is dependent upon man's will. A main reason that this does not change is found in the fact that the father of this world and antichrist is the artist of deception, attempting to take the glory of God to himself. So we read in John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do, he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." Again I would emphasize that this same opposition to the truth overwhelms the church world, even the "Reformed" community. Hence in a very significant sense the world changes not.

However, the topic of the article is sig-

nificant when we consider the world with respect to the times. We live in the last days! The world in ever increasing and refined ways promotes its denial of Christ and its embracing of man's christ-antichrist! The day of great apostacy is upon us. With the result that almost all embrace the false christ of man along with their false doctrine, worldly immorality, and a philosophy of the dark one. As a result of the intensity of the world in its service of sin, we live in a rapidly changing world. In each sphere of life the world rushes headlong down the road of filling its cup of iniquity. To prove the above I have not the space in this article, yet covenant youth, with a discerning eye and a study of God's Word you may accomplish this.

In light of the above, you may understand that our purpose remains the same, yet requires an increasing steadfastness of faith. We must strive to glorify God in every sphere of our life. We must serve Him in love and stand opposed to all evil. We must trust in God's Christ who saves us from beginning to end! This means that in an age when the Scriptures are denied and changed, we as God's people *know* and *confess* them! Only if one knows the Word of God will he be able to discern the de-

ceitfulness of the many winds of doctrine which seek to destroy. Above all we must embrace the pure preaching of the Word and maintain its purity. This is not popular today. The church world needs all kinds of frills. New translations of God's Word, that are misleading to say the least; new emotionalism in the form of conversion experiences; and the speaking of tongues take the place of the preaching. But young people to stand as true Christians we need Christ and Him crucified preached. Only if we abide in the way of the purity of Scripture shall we stand against the antichristian forces. This may not sound so glamorous or exciting for the flesh. But he that makes his purpose in life the undefiled serving of God shall stand for eternity!

Our purpose beloved is to stand antithetically in the midst of a world of perversity, never compromising, seeking the kingdom of righteousness. And it shall soon be ours in perfection! Young people, this purpose of life must receive our daily attention. This means you won't be one of the crowd, you will be a non-conformist; you won't be popular, you will be *the* enemy soon. You won't be damned, you *will* receive everlasting life!

PILGRIMS AND STRANGERS EVEN UNTO DEATH

by RON CAMMENGA*

There are two things which, of late, have been plaguing my conscience. The first is the calling of the Christian to be a pilgrim and stranger here on this earth; the second is the certainty of death. After thinking about both of them, I came to see that the two are very closely related. For it is only as we fulfill our calling to be pilgrims that we can face death with confidence. So I write to you under the theme: *Pilgrims and Strangers Even Unto Death*. Notice with me three things:

- I. Our Calling as Pilgrims
- II. The Certainty of Death
- III. Our Hope as Pilgrims in the Midst of Death

In I Chronicles 29:15 we read, "For we

are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." Psalm 119:54 says, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." We must see, then, that even as the saints of old were called to be pilgrims, so are we.

What is a pilgrim?

First of all, a pilgrim is one on a journey to a specific destination. A pilgrim is not a wanderer. He journeys with an objective in mind. It must also be noted that the intense pilgrim journeys in the hope of arriving at his destination as quickly as possible. He is not one who meanders along the way, wasting his time. He is continually on the move.

The pilgrim travels light, carrying with him only the necessities of life. He allows

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no overweight to slow and hinder him on his way.

Besides this, we observe that the pilgrim's abode is a tent. He has no permanent abiding place, and he cannot have because he is continually proceeding on his journey.

As children of God we must see ourselves as pilgrims. As pilgrims we journey with a definite goal in mind. For we look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

We must travel light, carrying with us only the necessities of life. Nothing must hinder us along the way. We must not be distracted by the lusts and pleasures of this world. Nor may its treasures burden us. We *must* continue on.

Yes, we must continue on. But not in our own strength, for then we are sure to be lost. Letting ourselves be our own guides will certainly end in disaster. But we must take the Word of God for our guide. For it is a lamp upon our feet and light upon our pathway. It alone illumines the way before us and with it all the powers of darkness, which shroud the way, are dispelled.

Our abode is in tents. We have no permanent abiding place. Paul says in II Corinthians 5:1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Note, the apostle calls our earthly abode a tabernacle which is a tent sanctuary.

We must confess, however, that though our abode is in tents, it is exactly our nature to drive those tent stakes as deeply as we can. We don't want to be continually moving along on our way. We want to stop, for at least a short while, to rest. We want to at least taste a little of this life. We seek to set down roots for ourselves in this world. That which we possess no longer aids us on our journey but hinders us. Our possessions are no longer means to the end of glorifying our God, but are ends in themselves. This is particularly true of us as young people, for it is to us that what the world has to offer is most appealing. To us, to our fleshly desires and carnal ambitions the world is, oh, so attractive. And how often is it that the seductive trickery of the

world catches us off our guard or unawares. But this must not be, for then we forsake our calling to be pilgrims and strangers.

Let us now take a look at death. Death is painful. Often death is painful from a physical standpoint. Many are called to bear excruciating pain and terrible suffering before death. Even for those who do not suffer physically, there is the pain of leaving loved ones behind.

As soon as we are born we are launched on a journey ultimately ending in death. For some the journey is short. For others it is long and trying.

To us as young people, death is often something remote, something distant. But wake up, it is not! Death is close at hand, all around us. At any time our Maker may call us to dwell with him, to leave this life which is nothing but a continual death. Are you ready and willing, right now, at this instant, to leave this life behind? Or do the things of this world so have you in their clutches that it is well nigh impossible to escape their evil grasp? Are you so engrossed in the activity of "living" that life as a Christian has lost all meaning?

May God forbid!

Truly, death is certain, unescapable, experienced by all. We lie in the midst of death; and there is no way out. In spite of the optimistic outlook and predictions of the prophets and leaders of this world, things grow more hopeless as time goes on.

But death is not the final end. For after death is the judgment. Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." II Cor. 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Revelation 20:11 and 12 describe the judgment in this way, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

We see, then, that even as death is unescapable so also is the certainty of judgment.

What is our position as sinners before the righteous judge of Heaven and Earth? Before our God who is a consuming fire; before the righteous and holy king who tolerates no uncleanness and filthiness? We are doomed to hell! For as such we are unworthy servants, rebellious and murderers of His dear Son. But by the power of His grace we are lifted from the caverns of hell to eternal salvation in the blood of Christ. As Paul writes in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." As the hymn states, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a *wretch* like me!"

You must see yourself as a filthy wretch, unworthy of the least of God's blessings and unworthy especially of salvation. For it is only in the measure that you see yourself a sinner that you can experience the joy of your salvation.

The connection, therefore, between our being pilgrims and strangers and the certainty of death is this: fulfilling our calling as pilgrims we face death with confidence. Walking in this life as children of God, shunning the evil and clinging to the right, death no longer arouses terror in our souls. The doom of hell is lifted by the Almighty hand of God. Then we see that death is the last portion of our journey as pilgrims; for having passed through death we have arrived at our destination.

Admittedly, the way is filled with obstacles, trials and temptation. But first and foremost, we have the promise of Christ himself that he is continually with us, even unto the end. That for all the onslaughts of the Devil which we face, we will surely provide grace. Besides this we have one another, and, though it is of secondary importance, it must not be overlooked. As pilgrims on the same journey, fulfilling the same calling, we must aid one another. Helping those whom God has placed in ways of want, comforting those in ways of distress, building one another up in the most holy faith. For therein lies the strength of the communion of the saints.

Let us, then, confess with the Heidelberg

Catechism that our only comfort in life and in death is that, with body and soul, we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ; and with Paul in Romans 8, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us Thy grace in order that we may walk as pilgrims and strangers in the midst of this evil world. Give us the confidence of salvation in Jesus Christ, that death and the judgment no longer strike terror in our souls but lift us up in the hope of our ultimate glory. Amen.

The Federation Board extends a special thanks to Eunice Hoeksema and the banquet committee for putting many hours of hard work and concentrated thought into making the annual Winter Banquet a real success. Thanks to each of you.

The Federation Board thanks retiring staff member, Cathy Clawson, for her contributions to the **Beacon Lights** while serving as Assistant Secretary.



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CRITIQUE

AGATHA LUBBERS

BEHIND THE BAMBOO CURTAIN

The eyes of the world are focused on the "Middle (or Central) Kingdom." The president of the world's most powerful country is visiting one of the world's most forbidden countries. The most important diplomatic event during the month of February is the visit of President Nixon behind the "bamboo curtain" to attempt to establish cordial relations with the leaders of Communist China.

It is Monday evening in the United States of America, but 11,000 miles west the sun is again announcing the dawn of another day. Tuesday, February 22, will be the second day in the talks between officials from the U.S. and China.

Last night the "Spirit of '76" touched down in Peking and the first formal reception of an American diplomat to China in two decades could be observed by millions of Americans. *Time* magazine, February 21, 1972, comments as follows: ". . . 10:30 in the evening (Sunday) Eastern Standard Time, an excellent hour for a presidential candidate seeking re-election to make a television appearance."

The next few days will be filled with historic confrontations and discussions. President and Mrs. Nixon with the official party and newsmen will leave Peking for Hangchow. They will spend a day in the "relaxed garden town studded with classic temples and pagodas" and will then leave from Shanghai on February 27 for Alaska and Washington D.C.

Nixon's China Journey

The details of this journey will be fairly well known by anyone who follows the coverage given by the various news media. The fact that the president of the world's most capitalistic nation and the leaders

of the world's most populous nation (750,000,000) are meeting after a period of immense distrust is tremendously significant. This event has caused men of every political shade and men from many religious groups and denominations to ask about the results of such an encounter. Quoting *Time* again:

The Peking summit fairly shimmers with the kind of historic aura that Richard Nixon dearly treasures — the leader of the world's most powerful nation meeting with the ruler of the most populous. Never, perhaps, have two men who so dramatically epitomize the conflicting forces of modern history ever sat as equals at one negotiating table: Mao, the self-styled heir of Marx and Lenin and revolutionary leader of China's revolutionary masses; Nixon, elected spokesman of the world's richest most advanced capitalist society and once the archetypal Cold Warrior. Even if nothing happens at their meeting — and no dramatic breakthrough is in sight — the reopening of a U.S.—China dialogue has fundamentally altered the power structure of the globe.

Not all are equally happy with the events which preceded this journey nor are all equally happy with the events of this week. Communist Russia fears the results of this encounter. Spokesmen for the Conservative front in America have opposed this encounter because they see this as a compromise movement and a capitulation to Communism.

Let it be known that our country is indeed entering into negotiations and possible diplomatic relations with a country which is Communistic. This in itself is not of such earth-shaking proportions. We have such relations with other Communistic countries. The importance of the moment and the concern that many people have in

the moment is that we are establishing diplomatic relations with a country which has been traditionally isolationistic and which has taught its people for years to look with suspicion on anything non-Chinese. Concerning this renewed concern *Time* comments that it is motivated by a changed attitude toward Communism.

Nixon became convinced that the old strategy of applying U.S. force to resist Communist inroads at all points no longer was a wise or feasible policy. If nothing else, the Sino-Soviet split had made Communist aggression far less likely in Asia. If the U.S. no longer felt compelled to combat Communism at every point, it followed that there was little sense in treating China as an enemy or in denying it a legitimate sphere of interest in Asia. And so the dialogue began.

May we say that the dialogue has advanced from the level of the ping-pong table to that of the conference table?

Time suggests that two decades of ill-will and cold war resulting in the construction of the legendary "bamboo curtain" is an aberration in the history of Sino-American relations and that the renewed concern expressed by the journeys of Kissinger and Nixon is a return to normalcy. There are those who will debate that friendly relations between China and any country is abnormal, but *Time* points to the mid-19th century when the U.S. befriended China and attempted to prevent other western powers from exploiting the helpless, prostrate country. China in the later 19th century became the prime "beneficiary of the U.S. missionary movement which along with Christianity brought education, health services, and a political philosophy that helped spark China's first democratic revolution in 1911."

The conclusion of the *Time* article follows:

In a historic tumble of events, the missionary movement was swept aside by a larger, more militant native movement, which combined raw terror with a renaissance Chinese nationalism. In the process, China, has been transformed into a new society whose ideology and structure would defy reconciliation with the U.S. — unless the U.S. too became a Maoist-style revolutionary society. Still the old legacy of American friendship toward China, combined with a large measure of Yankee curiosity, undoubt-

edly helped account for the overwhelming approval with which the American people welcomed Nixon's new policy toward Peking.

Those who have expressed disapproval of this journey of our chief executive to China because they oppose diplomatic relations with Communist China will find very little in the *Time* feature article to please them. One can see very plainly a very soft attitude toward Communism, as an ideology, in most of articles of *Time*. I also disagree with the very inclusivistic and general use of the term "Christianity" by *Time*, but this is the way the term is generally used. The more confessional and limited use of the term is foreign to the writers in the secular press.

Nixon's China Journey and the Results for the Church

Nixon's journey to China has evoked most of the comments from the secular press at the level of the political consequences. Religious leaders are also concerned. Leaders in the church world have speculated that perhaps the Christian religion will once again be able to rise above ground in China as a result of the thaw in diplomatic relations.

Liberty, January-February, 1972, a publication of the Religious Liberty Association of America and the Seventh-day Adventist Church featured an interview with an associate editor and former missionary to China (1931-41) who has recently returned from an extensive fact-finding-trip through the Far East. M. E. Loewen, who knows the Chinese (Mandarin) language and has extensive contacts in the Far East answered one of a series of questions as follows:

Q. President Nixon's scheduled trip to China is raising hopes in Christian circles that missionaries once again will preach the gospel there. One Christian group has suggested that 1,000 three-man teams be mobilized to evangelize China — the task to be accomplished during a two-week crusade. Are you optimistic?

A. I am a realist, and realism does not encourage fantasy. The invitation to the American ping-pong team signalled the desire of China's leaders to open communications with the West. Their agreement to receive President Nixon — who had made known his willingness to visit mainland China — emphasizes that desire while enhancing Chinese prestige. The

President may come now with some agreements that will further American-Chinese *rapprochement*; he will not come home with an RSVP invitation for Christian missionaries to take up a bamboo cross and follow him.

Consider the following. Half the population of mainland China is under 25 years of age. Youth and adults alike have been saturated with Communist philosophy and values. They have been taught to look with suspicion on anything non-Chinese. From their earliest years children have learned that the chief enemies of the Chinese People's Republic are America, Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek, and religion. One can hardly conceive of foreign missionaries making an impression on China in two hundred years, let alone two weeks.

Actually the plan is sheer fantasy. And the hope that foreign missionaries will ever again witness effectively in China is hardly more realistic. Neither Mao Tse-tung nor his successors can be expected to grant visas to "imperialist lackeys," their definition of Western churchmen.

This is only the first of a series of very interesting questions and answers which I wish you all could read. This associate editor of *Liberty* sees very little hope of re-establishing Christian missions among the Chinese. The young people are a lost cause and besides the government which opposes religion has given the people of China a substitute for religion. Words of Mao and thoughts of Mao cover every situation. Mao could brook no competition.

More specifically, however, it ought to be clear to everyone who reads this article that we are living in the last days. The gospel has been preached in China. Nestorians, who were followers of Bishop Nestorius, who was deposed at the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431, came to China in the seventh century. This corrupt form of Christianity is claimed to have influenced the mother of Kublai Khan, the Mongol emperor. In the 16th century Xavier, the Jesuit missionary to the Orient, sought to gain a foothold in China. During the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century missionaries from Christian churches in the United States established mission programs in China.

During the cultural revolution of the 1960's the Red Guard, composed mostly of young people, was very instrumental in destroying all religion. Those who were

suspected of religious feelings were humiliated in public accusation meetings. Religious books and articles were seized and were destroyed. In 1966 all church services were discontinued, and Christianity went underground.

It is reported that there are still 2.5 million people in China who have not bowed the knee to Communism. E. M. Loewen, who seems to know, finds this to be an incredible figure. He says:

I would like to believe that 2.5 million Chinese now profess Christ. History documents that the church has emerged strengthened in faith and in numbers from persecution in other lands. I simply don't know of reliable information on which one can project a doubling of believers.

Although I have no first-hand information of the religious situation in China, I also find it difficult to believe that 2,500,000 people have maintained a Christian profession. Although it is true that the "Son of God, out of the whole human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, by His Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith, a Church chosen to everlasting life; . . ." it seems very unlikely that there will be a great revival in Communist China because of the journey of the President. This is the dream of the post-millennial revivalist, but it is not the teaching of the Word of God.

Christ says, ". . . when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8.

"And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insonuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you . . ."

Matthew 24:22, 24, 25a

God grant us the grace and the ears of faith to hear the distant footsteps of the white horse and his rider as he goes forth conquering and to conquer.



NEWS

from, for, and about our churches

JEANNE GRITTERS

From our Hope, Walker Church:

The following young people made public confession of faith on February 13: Lorraine Bomers, Russell Dykstra, Ronald Hanko, David Kamps, Larry Kooienga, Kathleen Koole, Betty Kuiper, Richard Peterson, Daniel Schimmel, Gerald Schipper, David Tanis, Carol Tanis and Suzanne Terpstra.

From our Hull, Iowa church:

The Young People's Society sponsored an athletic night on January 24 for the young people of the church.

From our Loveland, Colorado Church:

The Young People's Society sponsored a baked goods sale on January 22 to raise money for the '72 convention, which is to be held, D.V., in Loveland this summer.

The membership papers of Mr. Art Griess were transferred to our Redlands Church at his request.

On the evening of February 6 the young people sponsored a singspiration, again for the purpose of raising money for the coming convention.

From our South Holland Church:

The congregation welcomed Mr. Garrett Eriks into their midst as a member in full communion. Mr. Eriks came from Bethel

Christian Reformed Church of Lausing, Illinois.

From our Southeast church:

The BEACON LIGHTS planned a singspiration at Southeast Church on the evening of February 13. Mr. C. Westra was the song leader, and special numbers were a flute and piano duet by Linda and Sharon Vander Vennen, and three numbers by a male quartette.

From our Southwest Church:

The Choral Society presented a program of music and singing on February 13. The special number was a trumpet and clarinet duet by Randy and Greg Feenstra. A collection was taken for a new piano for the church.

Miscellaneous News:

The Fed Board-sponsored ice-skating party which was scheduled for February 12 was cancelled because of "warm" weather. Instead, the young people met together at Hudsonville Church to receive assignments for a scavenger hunt, and from there went their separate ways in search of pink marshmallows, false teeth cleaner, and mouse-traps After the hunt everyone met back at the church for barbecue and hot chocolate.

Anyone interested in writing book reviews should contact the editor for more information. The address is:

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