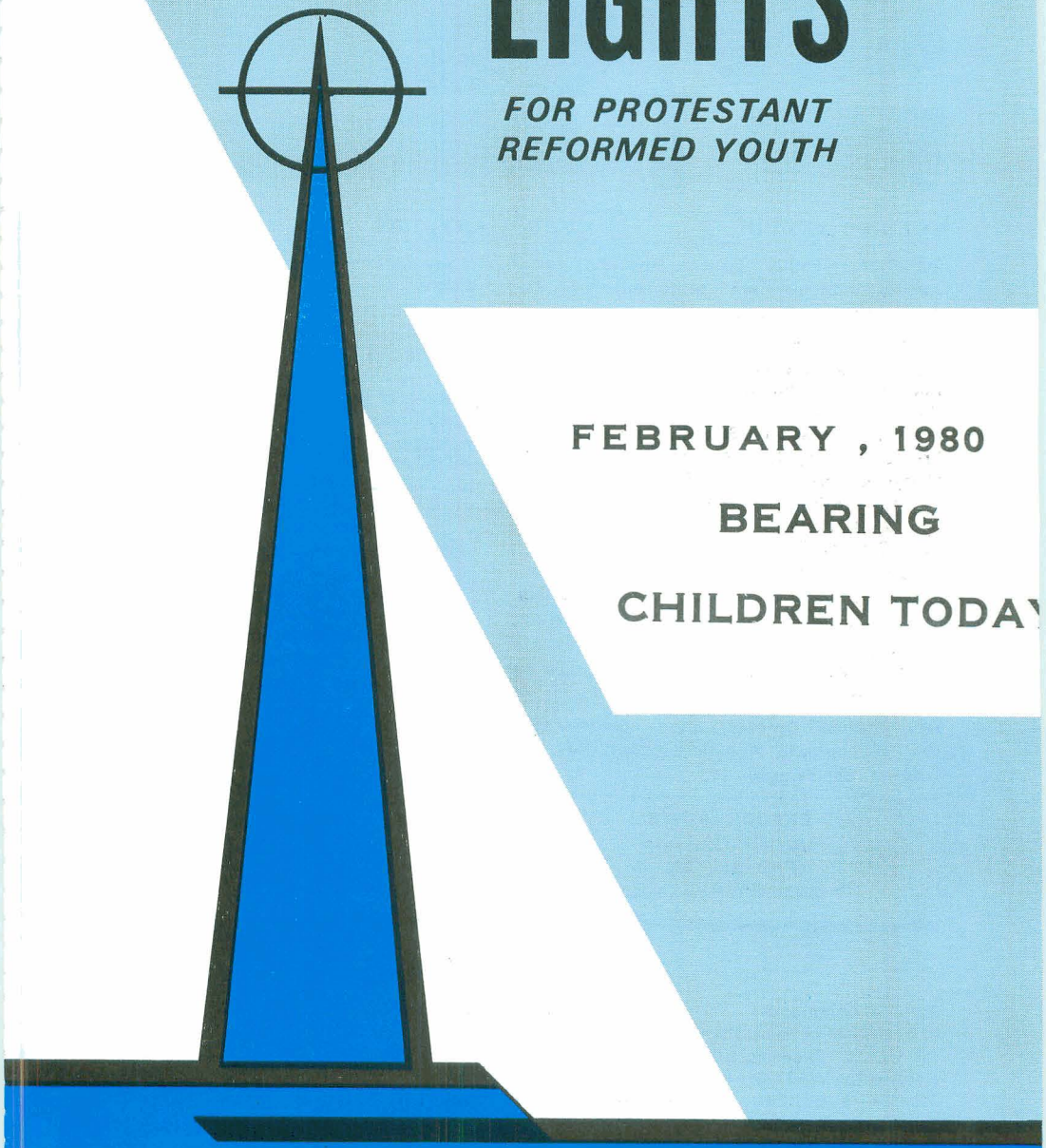
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH



FEBRUARY , 1980

BEARING

CHILDREN TODAY

VOLUME XXXVIII FEBRUARY, 1980 NUMBER 10

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Bob Faber - President; Brian D. Dykstra Vice-President; Sandy Miedema - Secretary; Lois Hoekstra - Assistant Secretary; Scott Boer - Treasurer; Doug Dykstra - Assistant Treasurer; Sheryl Oomkes - Librarian; Jim Van Overloop - Youth Coordinator; Rev. W. Bruinsma - Spiritual Advisor

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF
Dave Moelker - Editor-in-Chief; John M. Faber, David Harbach, Harry Langerak - Associate Editors; Gerrit Boverhof - Finance Manager; Jan Dempsey, Carla DeVries, Ellen Hanko. Mike Lotterman, Carolyn Van Baren, Grace Faber

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Rev. Michael DeVries, Randy Groenendyk, Rev. R. Harbach, Agatha Lubbers, Rev. G. Lubbers, Ben Wigger

BEACON LIGHTS
c/o O. P. Bookshop
P. O. Box 2289
Christchurch, New Zealand

If any material of **Beacon Lights** is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.

The articles of **Beacon Lights** do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

Contribution of general interest are very welcome.

All material for publication should be addressed to: Dave Moelker 1401 Su-Lew S.W.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504
News Editor: Linda Kaiser
3364 New Castle S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508
Michigan subscription dues to Grace Faber
4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Subscribers outside of Michigan please forward subscription dues to
Jan Dempsey
3519 Senora S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Forms 3579 should be returned to:
Beacon Lights
1401 Su-Lew S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Second Class Postage paid at
Jenison, Michigan (USPS 046-840)
Subscription Price $5.00

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial Comments 1
EDITORIAL - A Good Name - Harry Langerak 2
CRITIQUE - Choosing a Career - Ben Wigger 4
Everywhere We Look - Sharon Bylsma 7
TRUTH VS. ERROR - The Strait Gate - Rev. R. Harbach 8
Correspondence - Mr. & Mrs. F. Tolsma 11
Reply - Neva Doezema 13
Bearing Children Today - Rev. J. Kortering 14
Definition of "Christmas" - Phil Dykstra 17
News From, For and About Our Churches - Linda Kaiser 19
Test Your Memory 21

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

A reminder to those who have not yet ordered their copy of *Leaving Father and Mother* by Rev. Cornelius Hanko that you may do so by getting an order blank in your church or by writing to Grace Faber, 4190 Burton S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506. ($1.50 per copy, Checks payable to *Beacon Lights*)

This booklet is an easy reading, down to earth handbook for Christian youth who are looking for guidance in their seeking of a life mate. Simple, yet profound, it gives insights and guidelines that should be observed by the youth of the Church as they enter this important time of their lives. Never before has so much relevant material on such an important time of life, from the seeking of a life mate through their marriage in Christ, been made available in booklet form from a Protestant Reformed source.

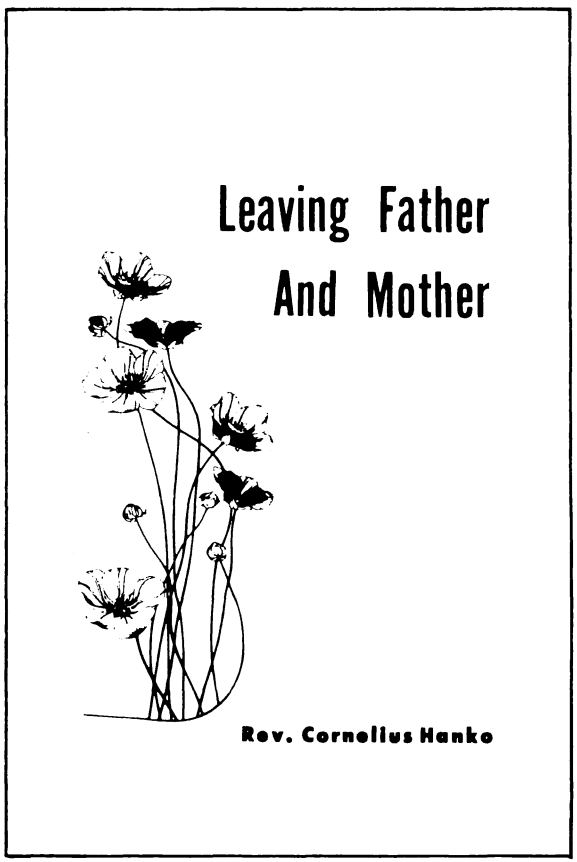
Dedicated to the covenant youth of God's Church who seek a holy marriage in the Lord.

Chapter headings include:
Leaving Father and Mother
Courtship
Wedding Plans
And they shall be one flesh

For your copy write to:
Grace Faber
4190 Burton S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

Enclose $1.50 per copy. Add 10% for mailing on orders outside greater Grand Rapids.

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



An article which appeared in the February 1979 issue of *Beacon Lights* and also one which appeared in the December 1979 issue have each drawn a response from our readers. The former from Edmonton, Alberta in response to "A Christian's Responsibility to the Environment" by Neva Doezema. And the latter from Hudsonville in reply to the article entitled "A Definition of Christmas" by Linda Feenstra.

* * * * * *

We also would like to take this opportunity to ask that you remember *Beacon Lights* with your prayers. We are grateful for your past support and confident that you will remember us in the year 1980.

Editorial

A GOOD NAME

by Harry Langerak

All of us have been given names by our parents. As babies we were not aware of the name or the thought or agony which some of our parents went through to give us our names. Some of us were named after relatives, usually a parent or grandparent, while others of us received names taken from Scripture, or possibly some received names following an alphabetical order. But whatever the case, we have a name that we will live with the rest of our lives.

As we grew older, we became more and more conscious of our name because it was *our* name. We call this self-consciousness. Our name became more than just a handle because associated with that name was how we thought of ourselves and how we wanted to be viewed by others. We want our name to designate us as a particular type of person and thereby set us apart from others. To many of us our name is so important that we take offense when we are spoken of slanderously. When something happens which could blacken our name we immediately take steps to correct it.

Now the desire for a good name is a commendable one, but one wonders if the motive is always a proper one. If our concern is only what others will say or are saying about us, we are being purely selfish and self-centered. But if on the other hand our concern is that as God's children we want to properly bear His name, then we have a proper concern about our name.

There is something about a good name which is extremely important to those who bear the name of Christ. God tells us in Proverbs 22:1 "A good

name is rather to be chosen than great riches." While many people are concerned about their names, only the child of God is concerned for the proper reason.

Why is it so important that we have a good name? Because our name is inseparately connected to the name of Christ. As His witnesses what we do and say very really reflects on the name of Christ. And what a name He has! "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). Furthermore, we have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus (I Corinthians 6:14) so that through His name we have life (John 20:30). Through His work of redemption He has given us a new name which is written in the Lamb's book of life. The Heidelberg Catechism asks this question "Why art thou called a Christian?" And answers "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing; that so I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him; and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life: and afterwards reign with him eternally, over all creatures" (Q. and A. 32). What more can be said? The meaning of this in connection with our desire for a good name is that we must in all our life reflect the life that we have in Christ. We must do all in the name of Christ so that His name will be praised. We must testify by the whole of our conduct our gratitude to God for His blessings. When we bear the name of Christ in this manner then without a doubt we will have a good name.

This implies, of course, that when we by our works and deeds dishonor our name that we dishonor the name of Christ. This is why sin is so deadly serious. It is against the majesty of the Most High God. We are want many times to be selfishly embarrassed or even upset that our sin was found out. We may even go so far as try to excuse our sin or blame it on others. But the fact remains that Christ's name is dishonored. The only thing for a Christian to do is what David did when his sin of adultery and murder was pointed out to him by Nathan. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David. The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (II Samuel 12:13). Yet in spite of our sorrow and God's accompanying forgiveness; we, as David, by our sin give the enemies of God an occasion to blaspheme God's name. "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (II Samuel 12:14).

In closing, let us remember that a good name is not something we can fulfil in our own strength. We must go to God the only source of all our strength. Let us pray that He will preserve His name in us and that He will keep us from those sins of youth which so often grieve the Holy Spirit. And if we through weakness fall into sin let us not dispair of His mercy nor continue in sin. Also let us use His Word as our guide. We must study it and know it.

We must be able to say "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." Particularly let us heed His Word as it comes to us in Ephesians 5:15-20, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHOOSING A CAREER

by Ben Wigger

We, along with the world, place an extreme amount of importance on the degree of success that we achieve in our lives. It is not all that unusual for one to come across accounts of different individuals who have started with nothing and through what seems to be a combination of skill and good luck built for themselves fortunes.

And who among us has not at one time or another wished that we were as good in our favorite sport as the best person. We can dream of rolling a perfect 300 game in bowling or hitting a home run with the bases loaded in baseball.

And from a human point of view we all want to realize some degree of success in our own lives. Perhaps we never expect to amass a small fortune or bowl a perfect game, but the desire is there none-the-less. But by today's standards, we both expect and desire to be able to lead lives that are relatively secure.

But as Christian young people, you realize that there is always more to any situation in life than what we want. The world's young people are concerned with their own self-interest. How can they get ahead in this life? While we have to consider the Will of God with regard to our calling, they consider the amount of money they can earn.

With this in our minds, let us look for just a minute at some of the aspects we have to consider when faced with the issue of choosing a career.

We must never forget that God for eternity has determined what our calling in this life will be. There is a tremendous comfort in that fact. God has planned out your life from beginning to end so that as believers we rest assured of the wisdom of God's way.

But choosing a career is by no means an easy road to go down. It is by far one of the most difficult decisions you will have to make. It is not only difficult, it can be frustrating and even at times overwhelming. And the difficulty and the frustration are increased by those two major career choice mistakes: Ignorance of the thousands of occupational options, and poor judging of one's talents.

As young people, you have to look at all the possibilities that are available. There are more than 20,000 careers out there to choose from with 1,000 new ones being added each year. And most of us are still wandering around and choosing between butchers, bakers, and C.P.A.'s.

More importantly, however, is the fact that you must take stock in yourself. You must discover what your aptitude is, which is nothing more than your strengths and weaknesses. You have to be objective about your interests and your attitude about things like wanting to work alone or whether you need supervision.

Obviously, the problems a young person may have are not always his or her fault. Television is the early forceful provider of false impressions. Television supplies young people with the idea that a real medical examiner is just like "Quincy" or that a television newsroom is just like the cozy family in "Mary Tyler Moore".

Also, many schools don't do as much as they might with career education, with helping students analyze their talents and their aptitude.

What you usually get are a few trips to the fire and police departments when you are in grade school. And then it is usually dropped until high school when you bump into something called "Career Day".

They are only one day long usually and there is not enough time to get any real information.

Another drawback is that most guidance counselors are not equipped to discuss careers because they have spent most of their lives in a school system and that's all they know.

Students should be exposed to experts in small relaxed groups. You have perhaps eight or ten students who are primed with pointed questions. Not "Why do you like to be a lawyer?", but "What is it that you don't like to do that you push off to another worker?" Or, "What did you do between 9 A.M. and 10 A.M. yesterday?", or "Did you take any shortcuts to your career and why?"

According to experts in this area the next twenty years will be crucial ones for career education because so many new occupations will be opening up. And the five greatest growth areas which these experts see will be:

Leisure time activities — By the year 2000 we will have a 32 hour work week. People will have more free time so there will be more opportunities for things like golf course architects or for jobs in the hotel and amusement park areas.

Care for the elderly — With the number of people over 65 doubling by the year 2000, there will be the accompanying expansion of jobs in the field of geriatric care.

Energy development — Our energy needs, be it coal, oil or nuclear, will require engineers, in addition to people who can market it, advertise it, and package it.

Supportive health careers — A probably national health insurance program of some kind will mean that people with skills in supportive health care, jobs like respiration therapy and blood technology will be in demand.

Communications — In the exploding area of communications, there will be jobs opening in technological areas that haven't even been developed yet.

But unlike the world's youth, we as confessing Christians have to realize that there are so many other areas and ideas that have to be considered when we think about our possible life's work.

Many jobs that are available to others are not available to us simply because that particular job would mean we would have to join a labor union to keep it. This problem will become even more so as the cost of living continues to climb out of sight. The same job may pay considerable more because of a union shop than that job would pay in a non-union shop.

Another consideration which must be faced is: Will this job mean the possibility of leaving the church. Today it is impossible for an executive to move up the corporate ladder unless he is willing to relocate, perhaps many times. In such a career, you could face the real possibility that you might have to choose between advancement or the church. What if you had to go to a branch office where there was no church in the area. What would you do?

When I look back on the past fifteen years, I do indeed see God's hand directing my life, as He is doing for you as well. If someone would have told me then that I would be doing what I am doing now, it would have been hard for me to accept. But God does give us grace, for we are above all, His servants; and as servants, we must do what our Lord desires.

The answer for the questions that we all have in our hearts from time to time about our life and the work we are called to do is found in the Word of God and in prayer. For a Christian these two go hand in hand. And as His children we acknowledge His plan for us as the best way our lives can possibly go. Even though the future does seem uncertain, we can be sure that God will without any doubt direct our way down that path.

YOUNG PEOPLE!! — Send your questions to Rev. Moore's Mailbox.

EVERYWHERE WE LOOK

by Sharon Bylsma

A miracle so small and loving
Whimpered a tender cry,
From the arms of its happy mother,
Which showed only God's wondrous hand.

An old mountain majestically stood,
Standing mysteriously in its ruggedness,
The mist which covers its snow caps,
Whispers the beauty of God's greatness.

The white flakes that fall,
Renew themselves every year,
Each, a different size and design,
Coming from God's eternal home.

As far as man's eye can see,
Lays the sea, gaping its mouth,
Showing only its secrets far beneath,
All the glorious vastness of His mighty powers.

Those eternal heavens are endless,
In which our loved ones abide,
The countless stars shining as a beacon
Surround the earth in a display of wisdom.

Radiant rainbows color the sky,
With pastels of splendor and delight,
And lays its treasure of promise
On every heart that is God's.

The sun rises, creeping into the day,
Hiding the beauty for a time,
Then proudly its silence is awakened,
Breaking the night into the new morning.

Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

THE STRAIT GATE

The truth over against error has to do with "the Strait Gate and the Narrow Way." This is treated in Matthew 7:13, 14, where the word of God states, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." These classic words appear in the superb Sermon on the Mount. The first part of that sermon is doctrinal and preparatory to a holy way of life; the last part is practical and applicatory to a sanctified life. The aim of the sermon is to show the nature and extent of the righteousness of the kingdom of God. The nature of kingdom-righteousness is obedience to the revealed law of God. The extent of that righteousness is in excess of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. If personal righteousness (i.e., *your* righteousness) does not go to that extent, there can be no entrance into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). The self-righteous hearers of our Lord's sermon thought themselves already citizens of the kingdom, with not only their own righteousness measuring up quite satisfactorily to the law, but even proving to be quite supererogative, soaring higher than the perfect demands of the law. The Jews of that day prided themselves with being, exclusively, the children of Abraham. But the Lord identified Abraham's children as having the faith of Abraham (Romans 4:16), as doing the works of Abraham (John 8:39), and as those Gentiles who have faith in Him, Christ (Galatians 3:29). One possessing this righteousness of the kingdom is one who practices complete self-denial, abandons the dearest idols and forsakes the most cherished sin.

This righteousness is the Christian's way of life, and is represented under the figure of plucking out right eyes and cutting off right hands (Matthew 5:29ff), if necessary, to avoid the evil of the whole body being thrown into hell. The Christian way is then a very dedicated way of life. It is one in which "your righteousness" (5:20) and "His righteousness" (6:33) are closely related. Your righteousness, to be acceptable to God, must be in conformity to His righteousness. These words of our text the Lord spoke to His disciples (5:1), to His own children, who were regenerated citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Two negatives in the chapter identify and characterize the children of the kingdom: "judge not" (rashly and hastily, v. 1), and "give not that which is holy to the dogs" (v. 6). Two positives identify the righteous: "ask, and ye shall receive" (v. 7) and "do whatsoever ye would that men should do to you" (v. 12).

Now this strait gate is not pictured in Scripture as a place where a crowd stands at a cross-roads, where they must choose in what direction they shall go, on the narrow or on the Broad Way. Must less are there two gates. The Broad Way has no gate at all. It is all open territory. What we have are two classes of people, the one class entering the one way, and the other class entering the other.

First, consider the Strait Gate. Is this gate prior to or posterior to the narrow way? Is the gate at the beginning of the way, or at its end? The gate is plainly at the beginning of the way. Christ commands, Go in thru the strait gate, because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life. Therefore, the gate is at the beginning of the way. At the end of the way are the *gates* (plural) of pearl (revelation 22:14). Those on the Broad Way are in the worst misery—on the road to destruction. Those on the narrow way experience deliverance from that deadly misery.

The word *strait* is involved with that figure of speech known as a homonym, i.e., a word with the same pronunciation as another word, but with a different meaning, origin, and, usually, spelling. For example, b-o-r-e and b-o-a-r, and here s-t-r-a-i-t and s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t. We speak of the straight and narrow, by which we mean a narrowness which is nevertheless right, true, correct. But the strait gate is a narrow gate guarding the narrow way. In nature and geography there are the Georgia and the Juan de Fuca Straits, two very beautiful but narrowed bodies of water. We speak of a strait-laced person to denote someone quite narrow in thought and behavior; and a strait-jacket is for very narrow confinement of a disorderly person. A gate is a portal which lets in, but also shuts out, as is clear with the door of Noah's ark. It's just as clear in the case of the wise virgins who went into the marriage with the Bridegroom, and then the door was shut against the foolish virgins (Matthew 25:10). They who enter the strait gate are Christ's own sheep, and "the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). They who do not enter, do not strive to enter, must hear Christ's "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23). This gate often is, from the point of view of our sanctification, *righteousness*, and "His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33) first of all, which must then become

"your righteousness," if you are to enter the kingdom of God. Now we may understand why the Psalmist loved to sing, "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord, this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter" (Psalm 118:19, 20). Scripture makes plain, then, that the strait gate is the gate of practical righteousness.

Now it becomes evident that this righteousness is identical with the *teaching* of Christ; it is what He taught His disciples (Matthew 5:1-2). Where does this teaching actually begin? Upon entering the strait gate to set out on the narrow way. This means then that when the Lord commands, Go in through the strait gate! His covenant people, in effect, respond, We did! Hence, they are already on the way of righteousness, which is the way of life (Proverbs 12;28). John Bunyan in his "The Pilgrim's Progess" illustrates this in his unforgettable character, Christian, who, on that narrow way, fled the City of Destruction to head for the Heavenly City. How he got on that road was not easy. At first he got sidetracked to the town of Morality. But the burden he carried could not be removed in this town. Then he came to the foot of Mt. Sinai, where his heavy burden (of sin and guilt of soul) was only made the heavier as that mount towered over him and threatened to topple in a terrible avalanche to bury him. At this point in the story, by the help of Evangelist (Grace) he entered the wicket (small) gate. Doing so, he became aware of a spattering of arrows thudding into the doorposts behind him. This action was explained to him by Goodwill (Romans 12:2) as that Satan envies those who enter and so tries to prevent and discourage their entering. Christian was next instructed by Interpreter (the Holy Spirit). Then the Cross had meaning for him; he became conscious of his burden leaving him, falling off at the foot of the Cross to roll down Mt. Calvary and be swallowed up forever in Christ's empty tomb!

The gate is of necessity a strait gate to guard against sin. It is not wide enough to accomodate mere sinners with their sins and wicked worldliness. Not the ultimate gate of heaven nor the proximate gate of righteousness may admit such encumbered, unprepared characters. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 6:9, 10). Also the gate is narrow because it maintains the law, guarding against two errors, (1) that we can earn heaven by our obedience, and (2) that we can enter heaven without holiness. The law closes the gate on both counts. It is also too narrow a gate to admit the world. For that reason, you cannot take it with you. In another place, the Lord requires, "Strive (or agonize) to enter in at the strait gate" (Luke 13:24), and that means, cling to the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, love him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. It means to forsake the world, crucify the old nature and walk in a new and holy life.

This gate opens on the narrow way. It is a single concourse, being the only way to saving good. It is called the way of the Lord (Exodus 13:21), the good

and the right way (I Samuel 12:22), the way of wisdom (Proverbs 4:11), the way of righteousness (8:20), the way of life (10:17), the way of holiness (Jeremiah 25:8) and the way of truth (2 Peter 2:2). Our aim is to deny self, take up the cross and follow the Lord, and not to deviate from that narrow way. There is only one direction to the North Star, but there are one billion directions from it! Amen. Heavenly Father, Thou alone canst lead us infallibly to Jesus Christ, the Life, the Truth, the Way! Set our feet in the path that leads unto life; and to all those who walk in the truth, give the assurance of faith, that they are Thine, that they belong to Jesus our faithful Savior. In his name, Amen.

CORRESPONDENCE

by Mr. & Mrs. F. Tolsma

To the Editor of *Beacon Lights*,

In the February issue of Beacon Lights there appeared an article written under the heading "A Christian's Responsibility toward the Environment" by Neva Doezema.

The title alone made us curious to read. It sounded familiar language. After reading it, we wondered how an article like this could appear in a so-called Protestant Reformed magazine. Because, after reading it we came to the conclusion that this must be taught somewhere. We are sure that the foundation for this article is the view of the so-called Reformed World and Life View. But far removed from a ***true*** Reformed view. When in the so-called Reformed church world is written or talked about the "Reformed World and Life View" the word "Reformed" mislead many—as it did us—because it is not Reformed but Arminian.

To give an example taken from the *Banner*, March 16, 1979, page 18: there Rev. H. Van der Kam in "Reflections" writes the following: "It may not be correct to equate a Reformed World and Life View with the whole Counsel of God, but it certainly is an attempt to do justice to all the teaching of the

Word of God, etc."—Let the reader look it up. To explain this mystery, we could also say: The whole counsel of God (which we confess in the three forms of unity) — The Reformed World and Life View (confessed in the three points of 1924). With other words: God's Sovereignty over against man's responsibility.

But do we believe that man's responsibility stands *over against* God's Counsel? We certainly believe in man's responsibility but that is *included* in God's Counsel. That is the responsibility for our sin. Are we still Protestant Reformed people when we make that Reformed World and Life View our confession? Is it possible to sign the declaration of principles and at the same time confess the Reformed World and Life View? Let us not be fooled! We should not let A.A.C.S. men be the example for our learning. If Dr. A. Kuiper, Dr. Bouma, Dr. Waterink, Dr. Brillenburg-Wirth, Groen van Prinsterer, etc. were *Reformed* in their teaching, why was there the split in 1924? Because these men were Neo-Calvinists and according to our Protestant belief, not Biblical. Do we really forget the past and go back to the same old error?

Salvation is never through the good service of man, but it is only and alone through the suffering and death on the cross of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, which He accomplished for His people and which He also applies by His Spirit through the Word. *The Word alone*—not through the service of man. When God's children live in this world they know that God is Sovereign and that the whole creation must serve to bring the church to glory (not the other way around—like in the article) and at the same time, that also creation will be delivered from sin. These are interwoven and not two separate covenants.

If so, we fall into error. When we do not discern rightly between common revelation and special revelation we do not have a right view. To quote a little part of the last part of the article, "We are here for a short time and have been called by God to care for His creation. God reveals Himself to us through His creation (Psalm 19:1) and we must not make a mockery of that special revelation. God has made us kings over creation and we must use, not desecrate the honor He has bestowed on us." Here creation is called "that special revelation." *We* call that common revelation. But in God's special revelation the Word is only salvation. Psalm 19 and all the rest of Scripture is special revelation. And out of the Word we understand creation, not what we see before our eyes. Compare Calvin Inst, Book ii, Chapter II, paragraph 19: "But since we are intoxicated with a false opinion of our own discernment and can scarcely be persuaded that in divine things it is altogether stupid and blind. I believe the best course will be to establish the fact not by argument but by Scripture."

Interesting and worthwhile for all young people to study this. When we believe the Reformed World and Life View, we make common revelation a common grace. Let us search the Scriptures and say with the psalmist: "Let thy *mercies* come also unto me, O Lord even they salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me for I trust in thy word." Psalm 119:41 & 42.

REPLY

by Neva Doezema

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.... And God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good." Genesis 1:1, 31. In the beginning God's creation was very beautiful, majestic, and perfect. God looked at it and saw that it was good and perfect.

With the fall, however, came sin. Man fell and creation suffered and still is suffering under the effects of man's sin. Romans 8:22 "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Creation is marred with smog and filth produced from industries made by sinful men.

A Christian has a calling to live in this world to God's glory and honor. A Christian also has the ability to appreciate God's power and might in creation. Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

God reveals His glory and greatness through creation and this fact alone means that we as Christians should honor God's creation. This revelation however is not a saving revelation. Romans 1:20 "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made even His eternal power and God head; so, that they are without excuse."

Anyone, even the wicked, viewing creation cannot help but be amazed at the wonder, order, and majesty of it. Creation, though it speaks of God's glory and greatness, does not reveal or show to man salvation. God's saving grace revealed in the preaching of the Word is the only means of salvation. Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which ye have done, but according to his mercy he saved, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

We as Christians may take heart from Paul's words in Ephesians 1:10 & 11 "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Our inheritance as Christians is the new heaven and earth. Revelation 21:1 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

Jesus says in John 14:2 "In my Father's home are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." We are here on this earth for only a short time. We know that our eternal resting place will be much more beautiful and holy. We may look forward to that with joy and anticipation.

For the time we are here, however, we are called to do good works. We do not do this to merit our salvation, but as fruit of God's saving grace in us. Psalm 40:8 "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." The regenerated Christian by grace will seek to keep God's commands while on his pilgrimage here on earth.

BEARING CHILDREN TODAY

by Rev. J. Kortering

It used to be called a blessed event.

Now one wonders.

True, children are still born. Our hospitals have "delivery rooms" and the newspapers still report marriages, births, and deaths as usual. Yet, the fact remains that the average size of a household is below three for the first time in American history.

The reasons for this are complex. It is not the purpose of this article to analyze the reasons for this. It is obvious that a great deal has to do with the feminist movement, one that teaches women that marriage, bearing children, and being a homemaker detracts from her freedom as a liberated woman. Selfishness abounds in the midst of the world. As a result, "Time" magazine reports in March 5, 1979 issue, "Of the 50,000 parents who responded to a query by Advice Columnist Ann Landers a while ago, a depressing 70% said that, given the choice again, they would not have children; it wasn't worth it." No wonder birth control material is one of the fastest selling items in the pharmaceutical section of the drug store. Even with modern techniques however, abortions still abound. Since the Supreme Court's 1973 decision legalizing abortion, they have been occuring at a rapidly increasing rate; in 1977 alone, 988,267 abortions were performed or 312 abortions for every 1000 live births. The more aggressive leaders tell women, "Marriage has existed for the benefit of men, and has been a legally sanctioned method of control over women.... the end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Therefore, it is important for us to encourage women to

leave their husbands and not to live individually with men.... we must work to destroy marriage," quoted from the document, *Declaration of Feminism*.

Big families are definitely out! Just ask anyone of our mothers who has delivered her sixth, seventh, or eighth child. It gets almost hazardous dealing with doctors, nurses, curious spectators, yes, even at times, fellow members of the church.

Let's ask the question for ourselves, is giving birth to a child still a blessed event?

Let's try to separate our thoughts from those of the ungodly, and face this simple question. Might it be that in light of the terrible times in which we live that God's people should forgo bearing children? Did not our Lord Jesus say in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a picture of the end of the world, "Woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days!" Matthew 24:19. Should we bring forth children in this evil and even hostile world?

Just review some of the headlines that appeared in a national magazine or our local newspaper of late:

"Angry attack in America, Khomeini's tirade spins outbreak of mob hysteria and bloodshed"
"1980 to bring in fewer jobs"
"Global hunger crisis predicted"
"Stampede to tragedy, 11 killed at rock concert"
"Presbyterian schism is seen over women elders and deacons"
"U.S. policy in Middle East failing"
"Quake jolts Iran"
"Cambodian rice shortage expected to worsen famine"
"Ambush at daybreak, Puerto Rican terrorists kill two U.S. sailors"
"Sacrilege in Mecca"

If we place next to these headlines, some of the detail our Lord Jesus Christ gave to us concerning things that must happen in connection with the end of the world and the return of Christ, we see the seriousness of the times in which we live.

Note carefully some of the things recorded in Matthew 24:

vs. 6, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars"
vs. 7, "there shall be famine, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places"
vs. 9, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you and ye shall be hated of all nations for my names sake"
vs. 11, And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many"
vs. 24, "for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect."
vs. 12, "And because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold."

vs. 21, "there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be."

vs. 29, "Immediately after the great tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man."

How is it possible to bring forth children into this world today? Should we? Should we conclude from our evaluation of these critical times that it would be better not to bear children?

Let me interject here one sober thought. You realize, young people, that there is only one reason why the world continues to exist, that is so that the church of Jesus Christ can be gathered. This takes place in two ways, within the covenant by God's people bringing forth and instructing their children, and from without by mission work in which God is pleased to include strangers. As soon as this church is complete, Christ will come in judgment to destroy this world and cast the wicked into outer darkness of hell and to take His own to glory.

If we really understand this, that the one great work of the Holy Spirit in history is the salvation of the church and that everything else serves this work, then we understand why we have nothing in common with the ungodly world. Their goals are not our goals and their life style is not ours.

This applies to the value and responsibility of bearing children as well.

Let's consider three things in this connection.

First, we must realize that it is our duty before God to bear children. If young people believe it is God's will for them to marry and they are joined together as husband and wife in true faith, they should also conclude that if God wills, they should be willing to bear children. It isn't so that their marriage has no purpose without children, rather, they should consider that the covenant is propogated by means of bearing children. We read in I Timothy 5:14, concerning young widows, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." God places that responsibility on husbands and wives.

Secondly, God never places a duty upon His children, but that He also provides the strength to bear it. We are reminded of this beautiful truth in I Timothy 2:15 wherein Paul reminds women that they were deceived and in transgression when Eve fell, "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Childbearing will not break down a woman, it will save her. This is the opposite psychology of the world. They tell us a woman will have hardship if she becomes a mother, she is made a slave of men by having a child, she will suffer nervous tension, etc. Yet, God tells us that bearing children will make a godly woman even more godly and will be a means to sanctify her and her husband. True, we live in evil days that cause us to fear, yet, remember young people that if God gives you children in your marriage, He will also give you the

strength to instruct and care for them in the midst of this evil world.

Finally, it takes faith to bear children. We think of the explanation given of Sarah in Hebrews 11:11, "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." This has a unique application to Sarah, but the principle is the same. Only through faith will we have strength to conceive seed today. In Sarah's case it included the miracle upon Abraham's and Sarah's sexually dead bodies. Even then it took faith to believe God's promise. So today, by faith we know the value of children, we understand our duty, we trust in God's provision, and therefore we marry in the Lord and if God wills it, bear His children.

May God give you covenant young people such faith for these evil days.

Bearing children is still a most blessed event.

Definition of "Christmas"

by Phil Dykstra

This article is written as a response to the article which was written in the December issue of the *Beacon Lights* entitled "Definition of Christmas." That article began with the question, "Who needs a definition of Christmas?" After reading that article, I felt it necessary to present what I believe is the *true* definition of the word Christmas. My point in this article is not to give a detailed history of the origin and practices of Christmas, but to find quotations from other writers, including our Reformed fathers, on their ideas of just the name "Christmas." After all, this was the thrust of the article in the December issue of *Beacon Lights*.

John Calvin, in his "Institutes of the Christian Religion," presents in great detail the origin and practices of the "Mass." Remember now, this word "mass" was given a good connotation in the December *Beacon Lights*. If one is interested in reading what Calvin says, you can find it in Book IV, Chapter XVIII, of his "Institutes." Just a couple of quotes from him should be sufficient. He says, "As to the origin of the name "mass" I have never been able certainly to ascertain," but then he implies very strongly that even from the beginning, its nature and practices were wicked. Here is another quote which I think sums up Calvin's view of the Mass: "the supper was altogether buried when it was turned into the Mass."

Let us now turn to Lord's Day 30 of the Heidelberg Catechism, question

and answer 80. I will not quote this; I trust you will look it up and read it. I would like to quote what Ursinus himself says about this question and answer in his "Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism," He says, "We reject the idea of the mass, and also the term itself, for the reason that it does not belong to the Lord's Supper, which has nothing in common with the mass, although some of the ancient writers employed the term. Nor is there any necessity that we should use the term, inasmuch as we have other words which express this mystery in a more striking manner, which are extant (still existing) in the Scriptures, which call it the Lord's Supper, the table of the Lord, the breaking of bread."

I will now quote from R. F. Becker. In his pamphlet entitled "The Truth About Christmas," he says the following: "The name Christmas, this very name is an abomination to our Holy God. The reason for this is that the word Christmas is an unholy and pagan combination of the two words "Christ" and "Mass". It is the teaching that the "mass" is not a mere representation of the sacrifice of Christ, but that it is a continuation of the same offering, as the priest commands our Lord Jesus to come down from glory and become a piece of bread."

Here is a quotation from a Dr. W. R. Crews. He says, "Have you ever thought that even the word "Christmas" is not pleasing to God? Sometimes in referring to Christmas I simply say "X-mas." Christmas is a compound word meaning "the mass of Christ." The Romish Mass is the saying or chanting of prayers for the dead. The precious and holy Name of Christ should not be associated with the diabolical and unscriptural practice of the "Mass."

Rev. Gordon Girod, pastor of 7th Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, says, "The Mass is a later development and, one may add, a perversion of the Lord's Supper as it was celebrated by the Apostolic Church."

Who needs a definition of Christmas? I would answer, that we as individuals, and as churches would do well to think about the above quotations and not dismiss them as made-up or somebody's radical ideas. Christmas! Truly this word should make us sit up and think of what this word *really* means. Then we as God's children would not even use the word. Birth of Christ? This is an occasion for great rejoicing. For God came into our flesh, and became sin for us. And through His death and resurrection and ascension, and by His Spirit poured out upon us, we are saved from death. Glory to God for all His benefits.

Let us never associate the birth of our Savior with the pagan term and practices of "Christmas."

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Greet one another with an holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

II Corinthians 13:11-14

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Linda Kaiser

BIRTHS

Mr. & Mrs. C. Weener of Holland were blessed with the birth of a son.

Mr. & Mrs. D. Haan of Holland were blessed with the birth of a daughter on January 2.

Mr. & Mrs. Doug Wedekind of Southwest were blessed with the birth of a baby girl, Jennie Renae.

Mr. & Mrs. John Zandstra of Southwest were blessed with the birth of a baby girl, Kelly Lee.

Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth De Jong of South Holland were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Elisa Joy.

Mr. & Mrs. Randy Miedema rejoice in the gift of a son, Edward, born on December 18.

Mr. & Mrs. Bob Knott of Hope were blessed with a baby girl, Katy Suzanne, on December 18.

Mr. & Mrs. Joel Zandstra of Hudsonville were blessed with a son, Richard Jay.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Mr. & Mrs. Ken Lotterman of Southwest made confession of faith on October 28.

On December 23 Kim Miedema, Dave Bouwkamp, Mr. & Mrs. Hib Kuiper, Jr., Kim Lubbers, and Mrs. Sue Lubbers made confession of faith in Hudsonville Church.

Miss Lois Peterson made public confession of her faith on December 30 in Hope.

The public confession of faith of Brian D. Dykstra and Douglas J. Dykstra took place on December 16 in Hope.

MARRIAGES

Mr. Duane Alsum and Sandy Lubbers were united in marriage in Hudsonville Church on December 14.

Ted Miedema, Sr. and Ann Miedema were united in marriage on December 29 in Hudsonville Church.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Loveland sent the membership papers of Bill Joosten to Doon.

Southwest received the papers of Mrs. Anna Jansen from Seventh Reformed and Miss Sally Ekema and Miss Linda Feenstra from Redlands.

Southwest sent the papers of Dr. & Mrs. Richard Kreuzer to Hudsonville.

South Holland has received Mrs. Don De Jong (nee Cindi Dykstra) as a full member from Hope.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

Hope Finance Committee for the 1980 PRYP Convention sponsored a Pancake and French Toast Breakfast on January 12 at Hope School.

A Mass Meeting was held in Southwest Church on December 23. Rev. De Vries was the speaker.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Christmas program of Loveland's choral society was held on December 16.

Mr. Ophoff was the leader at the Christmas singspiration at Hudsonville Church on December 23. The Federation Board rendered a special number.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Proverbs 20:1

"Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." Proverbs 23:29-35

TEST YOUR MEMORY

1. To whom do all things work together for good? Romans 8:28
2. With what are we to overcome evil? Romans 12:21
3. Who did Paul say is our passover? I Corinthians 5:7
4. What is greater than faith and hope? I Corinthians 13:13
5. What happened the third day after Christ died and was buried? I Corinthians 15:3-4
6. What kind of giver does God love? II Corinthians 9:7
7. How many witnesses are needed for a word to be established? II Corinthians 13:1
8. Why are we told to forgive one another? Ephesians 4:32
9. What should we put on so that we stand against the devil? Ephesians 6:11
10. Complete the verse "For me to live is Christ, and...." Philippians 1:21

SINGSPIRATION DATES
For Greater Grand Rapids Area

Feb. 17 - Southeast
March 16 - Hope
April 6 - Easter - Hudsonville
May 4 - Faith
June 1 - Southwest
Aug. 17 - Preconvention
Sept. 21 - Faith
Oct. 19 - Southwest
Nov. 23 - Thanksgiving - Hope
Dec. 21 - Christmas - Hudsonville

Karl VanOostenbrugge

presents

"WELCOME TO HOLLAND"

AT

GRANDVILLE
JR. HIGH SCHOOL GYM

THURSDAY
MARCH 27
8:00 P.M.

	TICKETS IN ADVANCE	AT THE DOOR
ADULTS	2.00	2.50
STUDENTS	1.50	2.00

CHILDREN UNDER 5 FREE

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT HOPE ADAMS & COVENANT'S OFFICES

PROCEEDS FOR THE 1980 P.R.Y.P. CONVENTION