BEACON LIGHTS

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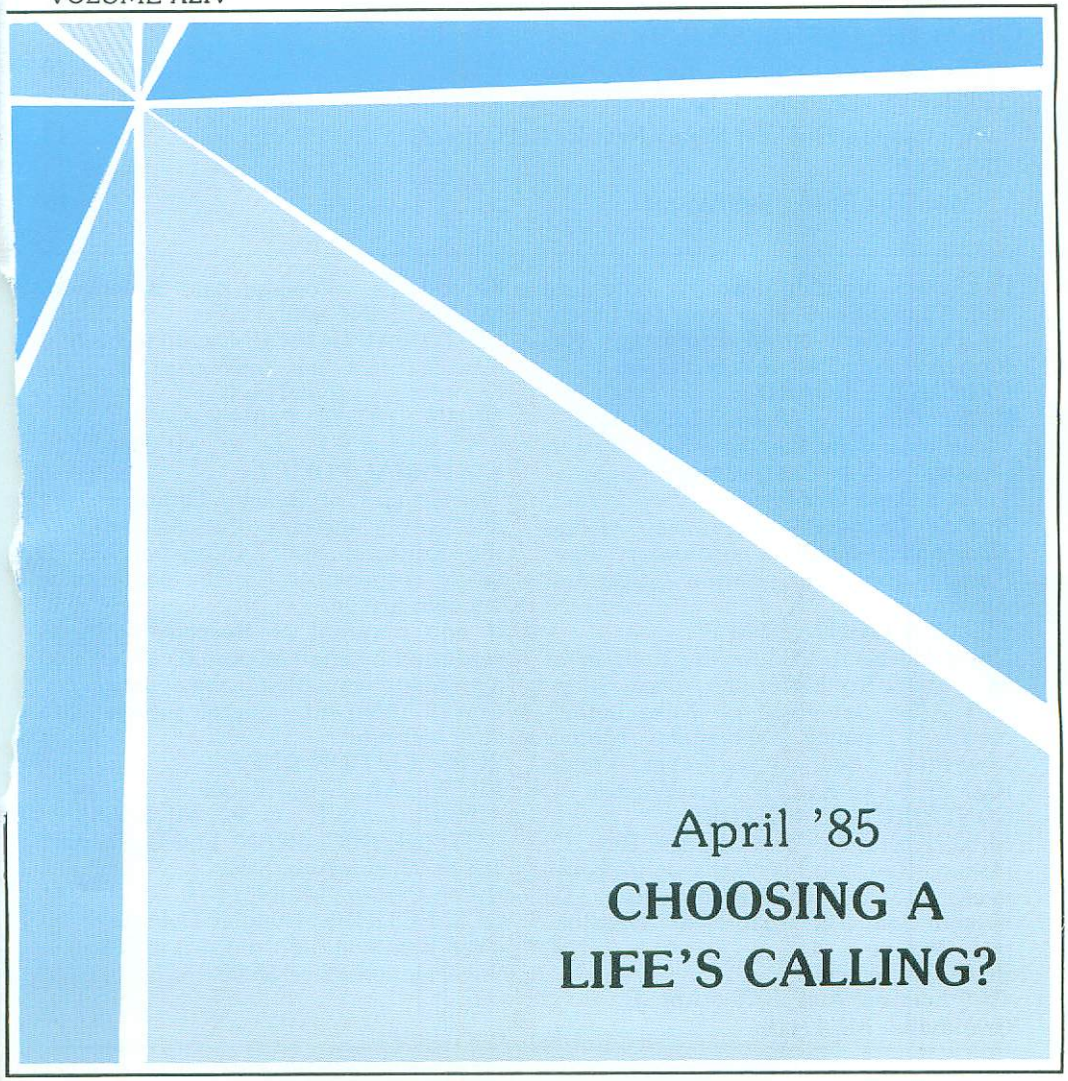

April '85

CHOOSING A LIFE'S CALLING?

BEACON LIGHTS

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Editorial

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS

by Gary Nienhuis

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16)

Scripture is clear that one generation had to teach the next and in so doing remain faithful to the truth and to God's covenant. For example, it is possible that Abraham was told, third hand, of God's friendship with Adam in Paradise and of the fall of Adam into sin. Abraham could have heard Shem tell of his life before the flood, the flood itself, the ark and the tower of Babel. And God knew Abraham, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." (Gen. 18:19a). We are constantly learning new truths about the creation around us, ourselves and our Creator.

We are commanded to learn the ways of the Lord and walk in them. It is necessary for us to know our past, the faith of our fathers, so that we are not destroyed for lack of knowledge and cut off in our generations (Hosea 3:6). If and when we become parents, we are commanded by God to teach our children. Do you ever think about that young pilgrim, or is that the farthest thing from your mind? All the truth of God's Word that your parents try to teach you right now, that you get so weary of sometimes, you will have to teach to your children. Are you prepared for that? It might not be too many years before God blesses you with children of your own. You are going to have to answer the questions that they will be asking about God and His Word. "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this?" (Ex. 13:14a). See Ex. 12:26, Deut. 6:20, Joshua 4:21 and also, there is a nice Standard Bearer article by Rev. Vos entitled Firstfruits in Volume 11, page 450.

When you date someone, do you think about how your boyfriend or girlfriend would be, not only as a husband or wife, but also as a father or mother to the children God might bless you with? No, I don't mean that's all you think about when you're dating, but this must be an important consideration.

I know that parents seem to be too old-fashioned, too strict, they don't seem to "understand", but God in His perfect wisdom gave you the perfect parents for you.

The world is continually developing in sin. The closer we get to the end of time, the stronger in the faith God's people will have to be. There will be famines, pestilences and persecution such as the world never experienced before. The martyrs knew what they believed and counted it all joy to be worthy to die for righteousness sake. They were **certain** about what they believed. The Church has had to fight for their beliefs and confessions and we must know what those beliefs and confessions are so that we too, by God's grace, can defend them now and in the time to come.

Do you know what you believe, young pilgrim? Do we **all** know what we believe, children of God? Can we confess with Paul, in II Timothy 1:12b - 14, "For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

May God give us grace to remain faithful.

The Joys of Conception

Focus on Christian Women

The Joy of God's Eternal Reward

by Mrs. Carol Brands

I have seen it happen. Sincere Christian parents have conscientiously raised their children in love and in return have been loved and honored by their children. But then something happened. The children grew up and left homes. . .and parents' lives fell apart. They quarreled with each other; they ceased visiting in the church; they were depressed; they felt lonesome and useless any longer in this world. They seemed to have nothing more to live for.

The effects on their children varied. Some, still single, moved back home out of pity, concern, and sometimes guilt combined. Some, married, spent so much time at home that they could well-nigh have moved back in. Some resented the change and became estranged from their parents. But on all the children — grown-up children, now — of such situations, there was a tremendous strain.

And no wonder! For in effect, the parents in these situations have suddenly renounced all the prior training given their children. Throughout the years of training, the parents have taught their children: "God is our help and strength. He is our life. He is all we need." But now they have suddenly in action said, "No, God is not enough. We didn't raise our children just for God; we raised you for ourselves. We need you for ourselves!"

Now, it is not questioned that the proper parent-child relationship will and should continue for life. The parent will always have a special supervisory interest in the child and the child must always have a heart which loves and honors his parents so that he is responsive to them. But the years of training must come to an end. The special joys of daily fellowship between parent and child give place to the adult needs of the child. And while the joys of fellowship between parents and children do not cease — in some ways they become increasingly stronger — they take on new dimensions, with the parent recognizing that the child must have new relationships and priorities as

an adult.

I suspect that this breaking of the childhood tie of a parent and child is usually a struggle even where there has been a right relationship in the home. How can it be easy to give up the deep and natural blood-ties which are so much stronger when joined to a spiritual fellowship and likeness? Only the expectancy of greater joys through this division can make it a possibility at all.

For the parent, this means putting his child's life over and above his own. God has given the parent years of a special, uniquely joyful relationship with children, but he must now be willing to give up a portion of this joy in order that his child may now live a full and rich life independently of him.

And, actually, being willing to forego the selfish aspect of his joy is the only way in which the parent can in any way at all maintain a joyful relationship. His joy must always be that his children are walking in God's ways, in fellowship with God. If he forbids the child to mature in godliness, then he is denying God's will for his child and is himself walking in disobedience. There can be no joy in a walk contrary to God's ways.

Rather than lose joy as his child grows and leaves home, the parent should instead find his own walk of faith deepening in a new direction. He now has more time to spend on the things of God and God's Kingdom. The essence of all joy is our fellowship with God and God now draws near to us in a new and special way. In these years, God provides more time for prayer, more time for meditation on His Word, more time for service in His church, more time for visiting those who are sick and lonely and in other special needs, more time for studying out even questions and problems of the grownup children, so as to give wise counsel. These things all draw us closer and closer to the Father.

And ultimately, finally, really, is not this the desire of sanctified hearts? Above all else, do we not desire the fellowship of our covenant God? Is not this our all-consuming need? Is not fellowship with God our ultimate joy, the core also of all other joys in this life?

And so, throughout all of our lives, in each life differently, the Father draws His children to Himself until they are fully fit to live with Him eternally in His place prepared for them. For each of His children, the Father has prepared a place in eternity as a special reward for all the toils of this life, endured in faith by His grace. For each, the essence of this reward will be His love, His favor, His eternal, "Well done, my child. As you have been faithful in life by my grace, I will now graciously give you the eternal life which Christ earned for you."

And that reward, that eternal life, that eternal love of His surrounding me, will be all the joy my heart could possibly endure. God is the essence of **all** things. . .and He loves me completely! What more joy can there be?

That joy is the ultimate reward also of all fathers and mothers in Israel. Be faithful, be diligent, even when the sorrows press hard. God will give joys along the way to encourage you. And then, at the last, He will receive you to Himself forever. Let that joy always shine bright to encourage us until the day it becomes an eternal reality. God is our eternal joy!

Critique
A STUDY OF COMMON GRACE

by Bernie Kamps

I feel that as Protestant Reformed young people we need to delve into the doctrine of God's grace and the doctrine of total depravity. We must be aware of how it is distorted by "common grace". To do this, I am going to quote considerably from our Reformed fathers.

Today, the Arminian view of common grace has saturated nearly every church and congregation. Who is not affected by it? Name the churches today who have not departed from the Biblical principles of God's grace. Which synods have not adopted this heresy officially? Take notice of this! Think about it! Discuss it! Today's church world is corrupted by these false, unbiblical teachings to the hurt of God's people in them. This is very, very serious for us as God's elect. It means that God's people must struggle with sin and false teachings within the nominal church, to the point that they have an extremely difficult reality to face. Where is the pure gospel preached?

After the Reformation, God was pleased to spread once again the pure gospel throughout the world. The truth blossomed and was held in high esteem. John Calvin emphasized God's sovereignty over man's will, man's complete dependency upon God for regeneration and saving grace. But apostasy is an ongoing activity which has since progressed nearly everywhere again. The flower withers.

How then does this affect us as elect people of God? It should startle us into realizing that we must be discerning individuals. To have before our minds' eyes the differences of doctrine and walk examined by God's measurement - His Word.

Apostasy and heresy work slowly and at times almost hidden from immediate view. One hundred years ago many churches were basically Reformed in their view of man's will and the sovereignty of God. Now we hear exclusively of the free offer of salvation and man's ability to choose without regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Hence, we find ourselves quite alone in this world - maintaining doctrines which not only are scoffed at, but are even declared unbiblical and cruel. In this connection, let's study common grace and the dangers associated with it. Also, let us observe and condemn teachings which profane God and glorify man. May we refute errors to magnify God's name and live out of thankfulness to our Creator.

Jacob Arminius is the 16th century Dutch theologian who introduced common grace and the free will of man to the Reformed Churches. Dr. Abraham Kuyper is the Dutch theologian accountable for developing the theory of common grace. Dr. Kuyper, who lived from 1837 to 1920, established himself as a giant of a scholar, theologian, and politician. But it was to the hurt of the Reformed Churches that he developed and propagated his world and life view

of common grace.

Dr. A. Kuyper had two types of grace; "particular" grace and "common" grace. Particular grace is a saving grace only for the elect. Common grace is a favor which God used to enlighten and uphold fallen man as a cultural being. Dr. Kuyper's view, as taken from his book, **Lectures on Calvinism** delivered at Princeton University, held to "particular grace by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption, and thus allows the untrampelled development of our life in which to glorify Himself as Creator."

Dr. Kuyper, in his lecture on Calvinism and Art, attributes his view of common grace to Calvin, and I quote, "Calvinism has taught us that all liberal arts are gifts which God imparts promiscuously to believers and unbelievers, yea, that, as history shows, these gifts have flourished even in a larger measure outside the holy circle." . . . "But if, at the hand of experience and history, you become persuaded that the highest art-instincts are natural gifts, and hence belong to those excellent graces which, in spite of sin, by virtue of common grace, have continued to shine in human nature, it plainly follows that art can inspire both believers and unbelievers, and that God remains sovereign to impart it in His good pleasure, alike to heathen and to Christian nations."

Calvin's views concerning total depravity, as quoted from Calvin's Institutes, pages 270 and 272:

"And, indeed, that common opinion which they have taken from Augustine pleases me: that the natural gifts were corrupted in man through sin, but that his supernatural gifts were stripped from him. For by the latter clause they understand the light of faith as well as righteousness, which would be sufficient to attain heavenly life and eternal bliss. Therefore, withdrawing from the Kingdom of God, he is at the same time deprived of spiritual gifts, with which he had been furnished for the hope of eternal salvation. From this it follows that he is so banished from the Kingdom of God that all qualities belonging to the blessed life of the soul have been extinguished in him, until he recovers them through the grace of regeneration. Among these are faith, love of God, charity toward neighbor, zeal for holiness and for righteousness."

". . . Therefore, to perceive more clearly how far the mind can proceed in any matter according to the degree of its ability, we must here set forth a distinction. This then, is the distinction: that there is one kind of understanding of earthly things; another of heavenly. I call "earthly things" those which do not pertain to God or His Kingdom, to true justice or to the blessedness of the future life; but which have their significance and relationship with regard to the present life and are, in a sense, confined within its bounds. I call "heavenly things" the pure knowledge of God, the nature of true righteousness, and the mysteries of the Heavenly Kingdom. The first class includes government, household management, all mechanical skills, and the liberal arts. In the second are the knowledge of God and of His will, and the rule by which we conform our lives to it."

According to Rev. H. Hoeksema, in his book **The Protestant Reformed Churches**, Dr. A. Kuyper's chief purpose for developing the theory of

common grace was to explain that there was a positively good development of the human race even though man was in a fallen state and totally depraved. Dr. Kuyper developed a grace that all unregenerate men received an antidote to the poison of sin at the time of Adam's fall in Paradise. Dr. Kuyper believed that man became totally depraved, but through God's administering the antidote of common grace, God saved man and all mankind from terrifying chaos and an explosion, as it were, of barbaric savagery. He taught that Adam through sin lost not only the image of God, but also physical capacities and would have ended in being a brute, or a devil, without common grace. He defined the fall from God's grace as a fundamental change of man's substance. We quoted Rev. H. Hoeksema from his pamphlet **The Christian and Culture**, "that sin did not and could not change man ESSENTIALLY. It is absurd to say that except for the influence of "common grace" man would have changed into a devil. Sin is ethical moral in nature and could not change the essence of man." That is that man is still very human in all his being and abilities. He is not changed physically into an animal. He has the same human characteristics, thinking, willing, rational being. What has changed then? Rev. Hoeksema writes in his **Reformed Dogmatics**, pg. 209, "Man was originally created so he actually possessed the image of God. These virtues are usually distinguished as true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness, and all three are often expressed in the one term, man's original righteousness."

This, man has lost! He is now absolutely corrupt, wills only sin, and apart from conversion, is a slave to it.

What does man in the fallen state retain? Let's quote **The Canons**, Article 4 of the 3rd and 4th Heads of Doctrine: "There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is the light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God, and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God."

Now we have man as a rational, moral creature. Able to live and work on this earth. To be busy with commerce, industry, and the arts. Let's quote from the **Reformed Dogmatics**, pg. 271; "With these small remnants he can do no good. On the contrary, they belong to the capital which he possesses in order to be able to sin. If he did not possess these small remnants, if it were true that in this fall he lost everything that belonged to his moral nature, if he lost his intellect and will themselves, he could not be a sinner and could never be held accountable for the deed of sin! Through these small remnants of natural light he retained some knowledge of God." . . ."He knows that God is; he knows also somewhat who He is; he is conscious of the fact that this God, as He is, must be thanked and glorified."

It is absolutely essential for us to remember that man is totally depraved

by nature. Dead to all things spiritual and godly. Common grace bridges the chasm between the unregenerate man and the hearing of the gospel by instilling within him a glimmering of God's grace.

To be continued.

CHOOSING A LIFE'S CALLING?

by Rev. G. Lubbers

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" Ecclesiastes 12:13

Choosing a life's calling, a life's partner, should be and is the seeking to perform the will of God, the will of our heavenly Father!

In the most basic sense of the word, God separates us from our mother's womb unto a certain calling in life. He has us born into a designated family, and parents of his choosing are ours. Here in this family, in obedience in the Lord, we come to years of discretion. Really nothing is left to chance; all our life is directed according to God's counsel and providence. As it was with David so it is with each child of God.

David served his generation by the will (counsel) of God and fell asleep, and was gathered unto his fathers. (Acts 13:36)

That is true of every child of God.

Within the frame-work of this serving our generation by the will of God we must also try to see a place for our Christian calling in life. Here is more than a "job" to do. In our parlance, "job" means employment for wages or salary. And our life's calling is really not at all to be equated with a "position", which suggests high social status. Nor can it be limited to what is called in our language an "office" which means really a position of trust and responsibility. Sometimes we even speak of a man having a "post", where one is stationed at a certain place with duties from a superior.

It is all these together and more!

It places all of these on a high and more exalted level, as all things stand in relationship to God, Christ and His church and kingdom.

It is really: fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man! The Dutch translation has: fear God and keep his commandment for that is "fitting" for all men!

Yes, this fear of God is befitting man, who was created in the image of God! For the fear of God is to stand in holy awe of God, to love Him and adore Him, and to seek to serve the Lord to the utmost of our strength and talents. We do not put our talents in the ground, we do not leave them in misuse! We must be faithful over little to presently be placed over much. Life is the trying ground. (Matt. 25:14-30).

May it not be said to any of us, of you young men and women, take it from him and give it to another. Nor may it ever ring in our ears to all eternity: depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!

Your life is a life of prayer? You conscientiously, before the face of God, seek to know the Lord's will for your life, and the particular place where you

may serve the Lord in a good and free conscience?

Let us try to say a few words on this very weighty matter.

In a larger and more profound sense of the word our decision of a life's calling is made for us by God Himself. Our prayer is: lead me by thy counsel. We see the counsel of God unfolding in the life of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They were the days of the years of their pilgrimage to which the LORD had set them apart. How clearly we see the counsel of God unfolded in the life of Jacob and of his sons in their being brought to the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. All things worked together in their lives. Hear Joseph consoling his confused and conscience-stricken brothers, when he says, "but as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen. 50:20)

What is true of Joseph and his brethren is universally true for all God's children.

All learn to pray with the Psalmist: thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. (Ps. 73:24)

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You desire to be a school-teacher in a Christian school; you have a constant desire to teach not simply any children, but you believe that you have a calling to teach the holy seed of the church for their place in life's calling? And you would instill into their minds that in their full-orbed life in the world, toward God, fellowmen and angels and devils they have to remember what is "fitting" for them as saints; to fear God, and keep his commandments? Or you would become a practitioner in medicine, not merely to fulfil the rather pagan "oath" of Hippocrates (read this oath sometime) but you would deal with men's bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit when Christians, and, if they are not, deal with them as those originally created in the image of God. You would show the love and mercy of Christ in that field? Or you would be a lawyer to hang out your shingle, so that you may help the needy in their problems, and aid men and women to live orderly under the law from a good conscience (Rom. 13:1 f.f.)? Or you want to be a good father or mother of children to train them in the fear and nurture of the Lord?

Then you would pray fervently whatever "office or vocation" you have: grant, Father, that I may be as diligent in this office and calling as the angels of heaven are in theirs—these angels, who always behold the face of our Father in heaven. (H.C. Ques. 124)

Yes, that is the straight and narrow way which leads to life. And few there be that find it.

Yes, we are to be the salt of the earth, a city on a hill-top, the light of the world, that our Father in heaven be glorified because of God's grace in us!

So the "office and calling" is not limited to being preachers and teachers according to the Scriptures.

But it is also true that not all are to be preachers and teachers, and not all are to be fathers and mothers. But all are to serve God in that station and calling where God places them in his unscrutable wisdom and providence! (Rom. 11:33-36)

It is still true that "God has set some in the church" to serve in a special way and in a special office. We may, with Paul, ask the rhetorical question: are all ministers, are all professors, are all elders, are all

deacons, are all teachers of children and young people? It is good to place the duties to serve the Lord before the attention of our young people, but we should ever engage in a sort of "drive" to get many or few men and women into these offices. However, we do believe that when a young man loves the Lord, confesses his name publicly in the congregation, and stipulates three things: 1. to believe the doctrine contained in the Scriptures in the Apostles' Creed to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation 2. That he rejects all heresies repugnant to these doctrines 3. That he will submit to Christian discipline and if he should become deliquent, that he should consider very seriously whether the Lord has given him "gifts" for the teaching or preaching of the Gospel of Christ in the church. There was a John somebody, who thought that he should "preach Christ" because he saw that initial "P.C." somewhere on his farm machinery. Upon attempting the impossible he later read this "P.C." to mean "plow corn".

We must not try to invent signs and indications of our own making and choosing.

There are certain evidences of being called to a certain task.

1. God gives certain talents to certain people, certain **spiritual**-psychological aptitudes. A teacher as well as a preacher must be able to read with comprehension. He must have the mind of Christ in a large measure. He must be a good and apt student. He must be able to use languages as tools with efficiency. Yes there is room for the minister with lesser talents; however, they must be **ministerial** talents. He need not be a straight "A" student. Few are. But he must be above average as a student—from childhood on. He must have the natural gifts which can be developed into workable capital.

2. He must have an abiding desire to **serve** the Lord as a future minister! He must be a humble man, who does not seek self-aggrandizement, one who would use the office for the purpose of material advancement. Furthermore, he must be a faithful man. He must be faithful to God, to his confession of faith in the Gospel, and must love the Gospel as the only and chief treasure of greatest value. Yes, he must rather lose all his goods and wealth, than even in one word deny the Gospel, or neglect to preach the full counsel of God.

3. He will need to walk in faith. when he enters the preparation for his life's calling. No obstacle should deter him in this calling; no sacrifice should be too great to achieve the goal of his life's calling. He should be learning with Paul to say: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me; yea, I both labor and suffer reproach because I hope in the living God! Sometimes the Lord gives a difficult road to a young man, for even this is bringing him through the training camp, to stand finally in the midst of the battle. He must be able to endure hardness as a good soldier!

4. He must be willing to wait until the Lord will seal all this desire and prayerful preparation with the "call" from a certain church, and, therefore, from God Himself. And then ever we must remember, whether ministers, teachers, lawyers, doctors, farmers, factory workers: it is sought in a steward that he be found faithful.

Seeking to choose a life's calling?

Consider the above and may the Lord direct your path.

From the Pastor's Study
THE SLANDERED PILGRIM

by Rev. D. H. Kuiper

But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Genesis 39:8, 9.

In the prophecy which Jacob made concerning his sons just before he died in Egypt, we find these words concerning his beloved son: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him and hated him." (Gen. 49:22 - 23) How true these words were of this young saint as he was bitterly tormented right in his own father's house. Nor does this picture change as we find him as an alien in a strange land, living among hostile foreigners. Here, too, the archers sorely grieve him as they pierce his heart with bitter arrows of hatred and cruelty. However, the Lord preserves those that are His, keeping His saints from being defiled with the corruptions of this world.

Just as last time, the experience of Joseph quoted above teaches us the kind of treatment the member of the Church may expect as he lives in harmony with his confession that he is a pilgrim and a stranger in this world. Now as then, when the saints are faithful to the God Who hath called them, malicious accusations and lies are hurled against them by those that hate the light and the truth. But according to Jesus' words in Matthew five, nothing is a clearer sign of belonging to Him than when men revile us, persecute us, and say all manner of evil against us falsely. The saints must know that they are always blessed, even when they are being slandered.

A Sore Temptation

After Joseph had been sold by his brothers to some traveling salesmen and taken to Egypt, he is brought to the slave market where he is purchased by Potiphar, one of the high officers of the king. It was the duty of this officer to preserve peace in the precincts around the palace, and it fell to him to be the personal bodyguard of Pharoah on public occasions. Into the service of this officer Joseph now enters. It is very striking that Joseph in his lonely position as a slave sets out immediately upon his new duties! He doesn't sit around moping with a hanged-dog, resigned look on his face. But out of a deep reservoir of his faith he draws the necessary strength, courage and hope to do his work and to do it well! Joseph puts me to shame here, does he not you? Many are the times when we say, What's the use? We work hard at things. We want for things to go smoothly and uprightly. And yet, everything seems to hit the skids. Yet here we have Joseph, whose life was

not merely altered a bit, but had come tumbling down about his head. . .an alien in a strange land, a slave in an unbeliever's house. . .and with courage and contentment he sets about his appointed work!

The Lord was with Joseph so that all he did was made to prosper. Soon the master of the house made the young Hebrew his chief steward or **major domo**; all of Potiphar's household, possessions, and business dealings were in his hands. The Lord promoted His young servant, and even blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; not as though God had any favor or grace towards the unbelieving Egyptian, but for the sake of Joseph and the cause of His kingdom He caused the house of Potiphar to prosper.

Along with this promotion of Joseph the Lord sends a very severe trial. Usually this is the case. With blessings and honor come responsibilities. A prominent position in the world confronts the child of God with the question of choosing between worldly honor and practices of fidelity to his God. As Joseph goes about his work, Potiphar's wife observes him; her eyes fall upon his manly physique and youthful strength. She becomes so infatuated with him that she begins to approach him suggestively with improper demands. And this all constituted a very real temptation for this young man who possessed the normal desires created in a person. Besides, living in Egypt he was separated from the good influence and instruction of his father. If his godliness had only been on the surface, he certainly would have yielded to this temptation as many a youth has in similar circumstances. So there was this matter of lust to contend with.

Another aspect of this trial for Joseph is that by way of a liason with Potiphar's wife, a short and alluring way to power presents itself. Potiphar would be removed and Joseph could take his place, no longer a slave but a chief officer of the king! Thus, undoubtedly, this wicked woman spoke to him, and so also the devil speaks today, promising us the whole world if only he be served first. Other men have stooped to advance their own interests this way. Why not he, especially since great things had been predicted for him, and no one would ever know? The temptation is very real.

A Steadfast Resistance

Joseph resisted at the first and he resisted to the end! Not because there was no appetite for fleshly things or that he lacked ambition. Rather, as far as the things of the flesh were concerned, he had learned in the school of grace to keep physical appetites in their proper place, that is, in subservience to the service of God. Joseph believed in God and sought to serve him in all places and all cases. At home or in a strange land, it was not going to make any difference; by grace he would worship his God and wait on him to bring things to pass!

This was no half-hearted, reluctant decision on his part. You know, sometimes we can reject evil with such reluctance. We say no, but we almost wish sometimes we could say yes, and we almost give the impression that we are saying yes. Not so with this young saint of God! In a three-fold way he attempts to dissuade her from this evil course. First, let her consider his master. How could he betray him after such great trust had been placed in him? Secondly, let her consider **herself**!

She has been kept back by Potiphar from Joseph. She may esteem the institution of marriage very lightly, as apparently she does, but to Joseph this institution of God is very important and holy! He will not interfere with their marriage bond. And finally, the most important ground for his refusal is that he "cannot do this great wickedness, and sin against God!"

Oh! those are beautiful words! There is something here for us all, but especially for the young men and women in the church who are often tempted in this same way. I am reminded of that great question of Psalm 119, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Is that a concern that **you** have? Is it your desire that your way may be clean, pure, chaste, or godly? The answer of the Psalmist is, "By taking heed thereto according to thy Word." That was really Joseph's answer; he said, "I cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God." We ought to let those words sink into our souls a little while. Today, in addition to sexual uncleanness, temptations take the form of drive-in theaters, taverns, dance-halls and caberets; you are encouraged to take alcohol to boost your self-image, and drugs if you really need a lift. But in all this Satan would erase **God** from our consciousness! He tells us to adopt modern business practices, to change our attitude toward the Sabbath Day, to forget the antithesis, and adopt a life style of tolerance for the world, its organizations, pursuits and goals. And in all this he would erase **God** from our consciousness!

And although some external considerations may, for a time, restrain us from submitting to these evil enticements, the only **real safeguard** is the deep consciousness that to do these things is to do wickedness against God! You see, don't you, that if your resistance to evil is based only on some external restraints, once those restraints are removed there is no defense left. If we don't do something **merely** because parents say not to, what happens when our parents are not there? If you don't go to certain places because your Christian friends will not approve, what will you do when those friends are far removed and you are surrounded by the enemies of your soul? Joseph was far away from parents and friends, but he stood consciously before his God! And he loved God and against Him he would do no wickedness. That personal, loving relationship with God which is the Spirit-worked result of His great love for us is the only safeguard in the midst of temptation. Joseph is a fine example of a young Christian who knows God and enjoys fellowship with the Most High!

Because he maintained his integrity and upheld the honor of God by being faithful to His precepts, he had to suffer the bitter consequence of well-doing. The furious wife of Potiphar was a woman spurned! The light of God in the young Hebrew revealed the terrible darkness in her. Thus, the coat she had aggressively torn from Joseph becomes the symbol with which she will slander him, first before the household and later before her husband. He is the fornicator, not she. His morals are low, not hers. And when Potiphar comes home, he discharges Joseph without a hearing, casting him immediately into prison. We may ask, Is this always the end of the righteous? Young children can sometimes come to that conclusion after they have suffered

some indignity or been ostracized for some well-doing. Then they begin to think that it doesn't pay to be truthful and upright. Better to tone things down a bit, compromise here and there, do what everyone else is doing. If a child assumes that attitude and does not forsake it, it will carry over into the teenaged years, and then into adulthood. Therefore parents must be quick to encourage their children in the way of faithfulness, come what may. Our youth must be shown by patient word and careful example that they must be guided by this consideration: if I do this or that, will I be committing an evil against God. If so, he must not do it! And covenant youth must learn to say that too! Let them say cheerfully, "Let it be that way with me then, for my God's sake!"

A Living Example

The believer who makes it his living confession that he is a pilgrim on this earth will be slandered and maliciously spoken against. This was the treatment accorded Joseph not only, but this was the experience of our Lord many centuries later. The endurance of this belongs to the cross that must be taken up and borne to the end of this life by every true disciple. We must be careful not to deceive ourselves into thinking that because we live in a "Christian land" or "Christian community" we will not suffer persecution for righteousness sake. It would be better to investigate ourselves to discover why that world leaves us alone, tolerates us, and even compliments us. Does our walk fail to reveal important aspects of our faith? Have we learned to avoid unpleasantness by compromising? Has the church become like the world for the sake of maintaining good will? And is the result of all this that the church brings forth children and young people which have no distinctive, spiritual identity?

When the church walks faithfully after her Redeemer-Head, and shows herself to be the light of the world, she will be assailed and slandered. Since this was so eminently true of Jesus, on what ground can His disciples exempt themselves? It has been given us of grace, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Believe that. And believe that through it all God is preparing you for exaltation, honor and glory. As branches in the Vine, struggle on through the storms of life. Rest in God Who will never forsake you, but will be your faithful Guide unto death. He will crown you when the battle is over.

Truth vs. Error
APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

1. Jude Its Interpreter

LETTER HEADING. "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of Jesus. . ." On these opening words there are some very interesting and helpful remarks as found in John Peter Lange's "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures": "Who are these two

brothers, Jude and James? James, the Apostle, the brother of John, cannot be meant here, for he was early martyred (Acts 12:2), and probably had no brother besides John (Matt. 4:21; 20:20; 26:37; 27:56. . .); nor can it be James, the son of Alphaeus, called the Little, of whose person and work we have no certain date, cp. Mk. 15:40. He must be a well-known individual, doubtless the much revered head of the Church at Jerusalem, besides whom history knows no other distinguished man of that name. . .Paul, in Gal. 1:19, introduces James, the Lord's brother, and evidently distinguishes him by that designation from the Apostle James the Less, and describes him as an apostle in a **wider** sense, cp. II Cor. 8:23, Gk.; Rom. 16:7; Phil. 2:25, Gk.; Ac. 14:14. Hence we need not be surprised that some of the Fathers. . .(including) Augustine, call him also an apostle . . .**Adelphos** (brother) in forty-nine passages of the New Testament signifies **actual** brother, while the sense **cousin** cannot be proved in a single passage. At first they (his brothers, rch) did not believe in Him as the Messiah, Jn. 7:5, but after the Resurrection of Jesus, I Cor. 15:7, and after the Ascension, we find them forming part of the circle of believers, Acts 1:14. Among the brothers of the Lord, after they had become believers, James soon occupied a prominent position. He is introduced as the representative of "Jewish Christians" in the Mother Church, Acts. 12:17. His near bodily relation to the Lord, his pious life and austere habits soon raised him to apostolical dignity. At the Apostolical Council on the obligatoriness of the law, his judgment proved decisive, Acts 15:13. The council of elders gathered round him, 21:18. Among the pillars of the Church, he is mentioned first (Gal. 2:9), while otherwise Peter is the Prince of the Apostles.

"He is probably the author of the Epistle of James in the Canon; for the principles contained therein are in exact keeping with the notices of his life reported by the Fathers, and he, like Jude, describes himself, not as an apostle, but only as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jas. 1:1). If it be objected that Luke does not clearly distinguish the non-apostolic James from the Apostle James, who is mentioned in Acts 1:13, we. . .answer . . .that the then familiarity with all the circumstances of the case did not require such a distinction to be specially marked, and that the same holds good in the case of the two Philips, Acts 1:13; 8:5. . .(The) assertion that the Church at Jerusalem would not have recognized as its head any other than an Apostle, cannot be substantiated by any reasons.

"Our Jude was then the brother of that revered head at Jerusalem, and with him sustained the same family relation to the Lord. His not describing himself as the Lord's brother, like James in His Epistle, may have been the effect of modesty, or his sense of the spiritual relation in which he stood to Christ may have predominated over that of his physical relation, even as . . .was the case with our Lord Himself, Matt. 12:48-50. . .

"We have no reliable data concerning the life and work of Jude. He has generally been confounded with Judas Lebbaeus, as James the Just with James, the son of Alphaeus. . ." This, Lange's sketch of these two brothers, is well worth careful study.

SIGNIFICANCE. Jude is, in Greek,

Judas, which means Praise. The name originated in the birth of Judah. "Now Leah said, 'I will **praise** the Lord.' Therefore she called his name **Judah**" (Gn. 29:35). This Judas, Jude as we know him, was the exact opposite of the traitor, Judas Iscariot. For Jude was characterized by a life of confessing and praising God. That more blessed form of the name, Judah, is one of the names of the Church, which was given to Christ to be to the praise of the glory of His grace. Perhaps this name, Jude, is not common among us as are other Bible names. But does your life and mine reveal a constancy in praising God, so that if you or I did bare the name, people could say, "He lives up to his name"?

Usually, it is wise, proper and necessary to sign one's name to one's letter at its beginning, as here, or at the end, as ordinarily. Sometimes there is good purpose in withholding the name, as did the writer to the Epistle to the Hebrews. A good name may be given to both good and bad men. There was Judas the apostle and Judas the apostate. There was Enoch of Seth's line and Enoch of Cain's line. There was a godly Lamech and a wicked Lamech. The German word for **Jew** is **Jude**. In Nazi graffiti, the word "Jude!" used to be painted on a wall or house to mark the next in line for persecution and murder. In Stormonth's etymological dictionary (1904), the meaning of the word "Jew" is not given. It means "Praise." But this dictionary does have: "Jew: in any dishonest dealings, applied to a cheat." Such a delineation would probably be rejected by the editorial staff of any contemporaneous dictionary as prejudiced discrimination, anti-semitic and racist. Yet Stormonth's designation is on the tip of everybody's tongue, including that of the best Christians. So we had better pray the prayer, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psm. 141:3). For spiritually every Christian is a true Jew. Rom. 2:28, 29. Are we as Christians living testimonies to God's praise? That's the way it should be, for only true Christians are true Jews.

SLAVE. The original Greek reads, "Judas, Jesus Christ's slave, (de) on the other hand, brother of James." The Authorized Version's "servant" is, literally, "slave," even "bondslave." But isn't that a little too strong, for a Christian to call himself "Jesus Christ's slave"? Shouldn't the Christian retain just a bit of "self-respect" and refer to himself simply as a **servant** of Christ, surely not a **slave**? (My! my! PRIDE does have its preferences, doesn't it?) But no, the word is **slave**. In fact, he that is called in the Lord, whether bond or free, is said to be Christ's slave. I Cor. 7:22. Christian slave-masters were said to have the Lord for their Master. Eph. 6:9, "knowing that your Master (Lord) is also in heaven." So a Christian slave is God's freeman, while a Christian slave-master is God's slave. Paul, Rom. 1:1, although making it clear that he is by calling an apostle, does so only after first confessing he is "a slave of Jesus Christ." Paul, as a Christian, is self-effacing, rather than self-assertive. While holding to his office he nevertheless does so humbly in yet gracious self-denial. Do we have such self-effacing grace? For himself and for his close associate, Timothy, he claimed no higher title or honor than "slaves of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:1).

OFFICE BEARERS. Perhaps it may be said that the term **slave** does not refer to an office, as such;

nevertheless, it is applied to those in the ministry, as in II Tim. 2:24, "The servant (slave) of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient." The Old Testament priests were called the servants of the Lord. Psalm 134:1. The Lord also speaks of "My servants the prophets," Amos 3:7. Even Christ, in His office of Mediator, is called Jehovah's "righteous Servant."

QUEEN OR SERVANT? Modern science, we are told, is about to eliminate from American life the concept of male and female equally being servants of God to make them equally and mutually independent of one another and independent parties over against whatever gods there may be. If so, then science has already been outdone by the Roman Catholic Church in its unjustifiable and unbiblical exaltation of Mary. She, long ago, has been called by Rome not only co-redemptrix but also co-creatix. She actually had replaced Jesus as the redemptive symbol. Now feminism capitalizes on this, glorifying Mary's virginity as perpetual and symbolizing the woman's autonomy and completeness, independently of the male. But Mary, the mother of the Lord, never called herself, as Roman Catholics do, Mother of God, Queen of the Apostles, Queen of Heaven, Queen of Hell, Queen of Angels, Queen of the World, Queen of Glory, the Door of Paradise, the Gate of Heaven or Sovereign Mistress of the Devils. Rather, this is the way she styled herself: "Behold, the handmaid (female slave) of the Lord (Jehovah)", Luke 1:38. The Roman Catholic Church had transformed her into "Wonder Woman." The feminist movement, going beyond this, has made the modern female a ruling wonder, the feminist Christ a Son-Daughter of the Heavenly Father-Mother and the crucifix an exhibition of a nude woman!

But the apostles esteemed it the greatest honor to style themselves and be held in regard as Christ's bond-servants. Jude, too, believed that with no other term was he entitled to Christ.

Critique

DOWN THE ROAD

by Ben Wigger

Do you ever stop and think in terms of what you will be like in 10, 20, 30 or more years? Obviously none of us stay young forever. Time stands still for no one; not even you. And if God's Will says that you are to be given many more years, then it is very important that you consider the type of person you are going to be. We all develop - spiritually, physically, emotionally, educationally, and in so many other ways. But what will the end product be? That is a rather significant question, and one well worth considering.

Years from now you may be surrounded by all kinds of friends - a person who has grown old graciously, a man or woman who is both respected

and loved by fellow saints in the church, a person whom others like to be around, and a person who lives the Christian life of loving his neighbor to the fullest.

Or you may be a very bitter person, one who never has a good word for anyone; and therefore is friendless and alone, a person who thinks only in terms of himself and what he wants, a person who has little, if any, time for others in the church or for any extra church activities.

Now you may be thinking to yourself, why stop and consider all this now? After all, being young, you have years and years ahead of you when these details can be worked out. That, however, is not true. The reason I stop and consider these details with you today is that the person you turn out to be 10, 20, 30 or more years from now depends on you and what you do today. You simply can not live today as if it has no impact on your future. Remember, the Bible says in Galations 6:7 "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." To be quite blunt about all this, the life you lead today will to a great extent determine the life you face in the years ahead. The man or woman you meet down the road someday will be a composite of everything you do, say, and think over the course of the years you spend going down that road.

That is why these years of your life are so very important. You are not only making some of life's great decisions, you are also laying the very ground work for what that man or woman will be like down the road.

Every little thought, every little deed goes into the making of this person. You will be exactly what you make that person to be; nothing more, nothing less. You will have no one else to credit or blame.

Just remember that every day you are becoming more and more like yourself. Perhaps you may find yourself wishing that you could be more like someone else. But the truth is that each day you develop and become more and more like the person that God has determined you should be.

But this does not wipe out any of our own responsibility. If you choose to live only in terms of yourself, you will invariably find your world getting smaller and smaller. If you only consider things from the viewpoint of what can I get out of it, you will find that person you meet down the road getting harder, drier, crabbier, and more self-centered.

If, on the other hand, you live your life with others in mind, if you think in terms of what you can give to others, you will find that person you meet down the road getting softer, kinder, and less self-centered.

One very important point to remember in all of this is that these things don't always show immediately, but they will show up at some time and usually sooner than you think. Don't let your youth be your excuse with regard to these important decisions. It is so easy to simply dismiss all of these choices and say, "I'll take care of them later." It may seem to you that you have plenty of time in the years ahead to decide these things, that the years of your youth are no time to do it. But don't fool yourself, for these things are adding up inside where you can not see them. And they are shaping and forming your heart and mind. Some day you will discover that you have hardened into a person that will be unable to change from the course you

set for yourself when you were young.

That is why the time to take care of these important decisions in your life is now; this week, today. Sit down and examine your attitudes, motives, and goals. Check up on yourself. The time to work is now while you are still in a formative condition. The day will come awfully soon when it is too late. The hardness will have set in.

What we are really stressing in all of this is that it is important for all of us to regularly take personal inventory. Never mind what you would like to change about your neighbor. Look at yourself. What about change in your life? If we seriously look at our lives and all the hopes and dreams that we have in light of God's Word, we can not go wrong. And the person we meet down the road 10, 20, 30 or more years from now will be a person we would like to both meet and be.

ATTENTION

All young people are
invited to the
Protestant Reformed
Young People's Convention
of 1985
hosted by the Hudsonville
Young People's Society