



FOR *thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.* (Psalm 18:28)

THE *spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.* (Prov 20:27)

A few days ago, I was invited by a dear friend to visit his home at a time when many friends from Denmark were gathered. I lingered there only half an hour, but I must say that the joy and happiness I felt in conversing with that company of mostly military folks was keenly amazing. They exhibited great joy and happiness.

My friend also loaned me a book entitled, '*Hygge*' by a Danish author named Meik Wiking. I am not sure that we have an English equivalent to that word, *Hygge*, but the author of the book explains the term as meaning a special kind of closeness with friends and family. It is an emotional coziness in which one feels accepted and able to open his heart to all present.

In reading the book, I discovered Denmark is one of the happiest countries in the world. When asked why they enjoyed such joy in life, I learned that 85% included the word 'candles' in their response. The soft, warm glow of candles in an otherwise darkened room gives a special life to those gathered around a table or even a fireplace. I

have always enjoyed candles on the dinner table and Candle-Light Services at Christmastide in Church. So, I believe the Danes are on to something in this feeling.

In Danish, the word for 'spoil-sport' is 'lyseslukker' or one who puts out the candles. The word for candle, by the way, is 'levende lys' or 'LIVING LIGHTS.' I find that term very meaningful in a biblical sense.

On 16 October 1555, Bishop Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were burned alive at the stake as a result of a mock trial presided over by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, who died himself one year later. It is reported Gardiner's last words were: "*Like Peter, I have erred, unlike Peter, I have not wept.*" I am not sure, along with his cruel burning of Protestants, these last words will suit him well at the judgment.

Being led to the burning stake just outside Balliol College of Oxford University, Nicholas Ridley seemed a bit anxious about the whole matter when Latimer calmed him with these words, "*Be of good cheer, Ridley; and play the man. We shall this day, by God's grace, light up such a candle in England, as, I trust, will never be put out.*" And so was such a candle lit in England. Queen Mary (Bloody Mary) who had sent 280 Protestant professors to the burning stake died three years later to see the re-Romanizing of England fall apart with the re-emergence of the English Reformation. I believe I would prefer to be remembered for the remarks of Latimer over those of Gardiner.

At the point where Bishops Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer were burned is a Martyrs Memorial which reads:

"To the Glory of God, and in grateful commemoration of His servants, Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, Prelates of the Church of England, who near this spot yielded their bodies to be burned, bearing witness to the sacred truths which they had affirmed and maintained against the errors of the Church of Rome, and rejoicing that to them it was given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake; this monument was erected by public subscription in the year of our Lord God, MDCCCXLI."

Well, Ridley and Latimer symbolized the Candle of Truth in their deaths; however, we, as Christians must symbolize those "Living Lights" described by the Danes as "*Levende Lys.*" The Candle represents our mortal lives on this earth. We are all born with a shaft of wax fuel (mortal bodies) and a central wick (spirit) to make light possible but, unfortunately, many go through life lacking fire to give light. There is no advantage in being a candle if you give no light – if you are not a Living Light. We must be "Burning Lights" if we are not to perish in outer darkness. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.* (Luke 12:35)

Who can light the wick of our flameless candle? *For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.* (Psalms 18:28) The Holy Spirit is our Living Flame and the source of fire to ignite our Candle.

The Christian should be a candle of humble disposition, but certainly not shy of giving light. If we have been given light for our lives, or what worth is that light if it is shrouded from giving light to all that surrounds us? *14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* (Matt 5:14-16)

Some men are '*burning lights of truth and righteousness.*' Of John the Baptist, our Lord said, *He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in*

his light. (John 5:35) John was a witness of the Light that is the Light of the World – our Lord Jesus Christ. One witnessed and testified; the other proved His Lordship by action! *But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* (John 5:36) While it is true that we must be lights of wisdom and knowledge to others, we must also DO the works of our Father in Heaven. We must be MOVING LIGHTS to go forth into the world and share our lights in diverse places.

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. (Prov 20:27) Below are three comparisons of the nature of the Candle compared to the Spirit of Man:

1. A Candle is created to give light to men during the night. The Spirit of Man (lit by the Holy Spirit) is formed to give light to men during the spiritual darkness of this world.
2. A Candle can give no light unless it receives light from another source. The Spirit of Man receives its Light from God. Jesus tells us, *Ye are the light of the world* (Matt 5:14); yet, in another place, He says, *“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* (John 8:12) Is this a contradiction? Not at all! The light the candle gives was received from another Source. The light we give is the Light we received from God. We are the ‘reflected Light of Christ’ to the world.
3. The light of a candle, though it can vanquish a roomful of darkness, is a tiny light; but the Light of the Christian Spirit is magnified by that Great Light of the Sun of Righteousness which is Christ.

There are exceptional men and women who not only burn their candles in lonely places of darkness, but actually burn their candles from both ends. The candle will not have a life as enduring if burned from both ends. Works alone will not give the proper light. The double flame will provide little extra light, and the flame will fluctuate and burn unevenly. Since the candle must be lit from on high (at the top), I believe that is the best way to be a light to others.

If we become too much focused on the work without the spirit (as Martha of Bethany), we may not use our candle in a spiritually cost-effective way. We do not carelessly burn up before our time in trying to be all action and no faith. But we do not either desire to be all faith and no action. Burning our Candle from the top whereof it was lit to receive light is the wise and thoughtful light of faith joined with action.

I hope we will each be a Candle Lit, and a burning Light to the world until our Maker calls us to enter into His *“Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* At that time we will need no candle for light for Christ is the Light of that Holy City called New Jerusalem. In the meantime, let us strive to be ‘*Levende Lys*’ or Living Lights and not ‘*Lyseslukker*’ or Spoil Sports of Life!