

SENIOR ESSAY

MY THEOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE

By

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**MY THEOLOGICAL PILGRIMAGE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This Essay includes all that the topic suggests. It is an account of my life's journey in the wilderness of time undergirded with God.

It is not a biographical sketch, neither it is a complete narrative of my life story. Instead, it is an honest attempt to identify God's presence in the many experiences and encounters that I have had from my early childhood until today. In essence, it is an attempt to share with the reader a kind of divine revelation of the soul, which paints a picture of my life's journey in the wilderness of time. Yes, it is Benjamin Carroll to whom I have reference at this stage of life's struggle. For me, life has been certainly a constant up-hill struggle.

Therefore, it is my honest, heartfelt and burning soul desire to share with the reader the very secret of my being. For, as I reflect upon life in terms of where I am now, as over against where I was, and the condition I was in some twenty-five years ago, something tells me that surely the Lord has been with me in my struggle.

### I

Part one of this adventure will deal with my life before I entered the seminary - Pre-Seminary Days. Here, I will attempt to identify the guarding spirit of God in my life at an

early age.

## II

Part two will deal with my struggle at the Interdenominational Theological Center - The Period of Wilderness Wondering. In this section, I will attempt to state some of my first experiences and encounters at the Center, and identify God at work in my life.

## III

Part three is an account of the continuation of my struggle. It is an attempt to reveal the stages in my struggle at which signs of hope were appearing - Viewing of the Promise Land.

## IV

Part four, The Conclusion, is the attempt to further clarify what the topic is really all about.

I invite my readers and my Christian friends of the faith to journey with me into the secret of my heart.

CHAPTER I  
PRE-SEMINARY DAYS

After a moment of reflecting, I can well remember in my early childhood the many pains of hunger and the suffering that seemed to have been a constant struggle. The greatest of all memories were the days of joy and fun which, to me, came only from God. I remember well the cold days, the rainy days, the cloudy days, the sunny days, and the week days. But, Sundays were, to me, the best days. The reason why I feel this way was the fact that present and active in my life, I could discuss the Bible and sing the old spirituals:

"I am so glad troubles don't last always."

And I couldn't hear nobody's prayer  
I was way down yonder by myself,  
I couldn't hear nobody prays.<sup>1</sup>

I was born in a large family, a few years after the depression, when the times were hard. My father and mother had little or no education. They found themselves with a family of ten children living in an old three-room, run down shake in the clay hills of Louisiana, where a black man had little or no chance to be really a husband or father of his family. My father engaged in share cropping. For the most part, this meant only a way to feed his children. We did most of the

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<sup>1</sup>  
Howard Thurman, Deep River, California: The Encolypus Press, p. 12.

labor. This meant we had to stay out of school most of the time. I well remember those sad days as I watched my older brothers one by one dropped out of school. Within my heart, I always prayed, "Lord, help me not to do the same." Young as I was, I remember the words of my old mother around the old fire side: "Well, children, there will be a bright side somewhere." With tears in her eyes, she would say: "Papa will be home soon. Yes, Papa is doing the best he can." And at night, as the cold wind made music on the roof of that shake and circulated through that big room, I would pull the cover tight over my head, and pray to God to help me to get an education so I could aid my parents. In August of 1956, I really felt the need for God. Times were rough. I went out to pray and I was converted. Never before had I felt so close to God. At this time, I had a peculiar inner feeling of God's presence. However, this experience did not end the struggle. Things did not get any better. Only, I became more sensitive to the existing conditions of hard times and suffering.

After becoming a member of the Saint Mark Baptist Church of Holly, Louisiana, I attended this church every Sunday whether I had sufficient clothes or not. Many Sundays I went even though my shoes had paper soles, my little pants/<sup>were</sup>tearing in the seat, and my whole body was cold. In spite of these conditions, something deep within me would not let me stay home. I just had to go to church and discuss God's word.

Then, in the summer of 1960, in the quietness of my soul, one night, I heard God speaking to me, telling me that I had to preach. However, I paid no attention to this because I had other plans. Preaching was not a part of them. In September of that same year, somehow, I entered Southern University. I was able to borrow from the business office my first semester's fees. Later, I got a part-time job at the State School for the Deaf, where I worked for a year as a part-time counselor and a general flunky for Mr. Braford, the principal of the school. As part of my duty, I had to feed ducks, turkeys, and hogs as well as work in his yard during my spare time.

Many times, I really thought of giving up. Something deeply rooted in me, however, just would not let me stop pushing. In the fall of 1963, in the quietness of my room, during the cold month of November, this same compelling inner force again came upon me. Only, this time, it was greater and clearer in meaning. The force of this divine spirit was so strong until every moment of silence seemed to have been interrupted by the voice, out of the air, saying to me: "You should preach, you should preach." Restlessly, I gave up and said out aloud: "Lord, I will do whatever you want me to do. Take me and use me. If it is your will, I will preach."

Then, came the problems of self-adjustment, of identity and of self and peers acceptance all over against my commitment to God. I found myself both a student and a minister.

I discovered myself as a student hoping to graduate, get a job and earn some money for my family. I was a person with many mixed feelings, almost uncontrollable frustrations and emotions about my role as a young minister and the final decision of the kind of minister I wanted to be. At this time, I still had another year in college. First, I thought about taking a teaching job and preaching on the side. This decision was interrupted by both inner and outer forces that made it impossible for my plan to work out. At a point of confusion, one day, I cried out: "Lord, tell me what to do."

A few weeks later, I was talking with the University Chaplain about my calling. He readily advised me to start thinking about seminary and, at the end of his discourse, he gave me addresses of several seminaries, and the Interdenominational Theological Center (I. T. C.) was one among them. Immediately, I began to correspond with I. T. C. Several times I received mail of my possibility of being accepted. I still had a problem: by that time, graduation was approaching and I had been offered a job with the United States Department of Agriculture offering a starting salary of \$5400 per year. In the midst of financial distress, doubts and fears, I accepted the job. At the same time, something within me made me feel that I was in the wrong place. Something kept saying to myself: "You are doing a good work, but anybody can do your job. There are others who might even do better. I have something else for you to do. I want you to take your

family, leave here and go and study my word."

I remember the many nights that I would roll and turn in bed, trying to sleep, but God would not let me sleep. Then, one night, I picked up the Bible, read a little from various sections. One of which was God's summons to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-4 to leave his home. At first, this passage did not mean anything. I awoke early the next morning. For some reason, I got up and picked up the Bible, went into the bathroom and read these same passages, Genesis 12:1-4, again and again until it was time to get dressed for work.

More and more, as the day went by, I thought about what I had read and God's concern for Abram. That night, as I read again the Genesis passage:

"Now, the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you, all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.

So, Abram went as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him."<sup>2</sup>

After reading this time, I gained a new faith, courage, and strength to make that final decision. I concluded and told my wife that if I really had been called to preach, if

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Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, The Oxford Annotated Bible, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 14.

God has anything at all to do with me, He will, as He did with Abram, take care of me.

Coming up through time and growing out of my many frustrations and difficulties, I came to I. T. C. with a wife and two children and much unfinished business behind in Louisiana.

## CHAPTER II

### PERIOD OF WILDERNESS WONDERING

"Open my eyes, dear Lord, that I may see each message that thy word would speak to me. Lest reading lightly, heedlessly, I miss some shining truth from Thee! I beg for this, oh, blessed Holy Spirit, linger near!"<sup>3</sup>

I had been told many fascinating things about seminary life, what is taught, and the kind of preacher one will become when one has graduated. With such built-up excitement, in the cold month of January, 1967, I enrolled and began classes at I. T. C. hoping to be enriched. My first problem, which caused for me all kinds of mixed emotions, was that of adjusting to being a student again. The next basic problem was that of finance. With bills back home to be paid and new bills at I. T. C., and little or no money coming in, I could not study properly. I was just wondering around in dark state of hopelessness. Strangely enough, as I wondered in the darkness of fear and frustration and the lack of a proper understanding of God and what being a Christian was all about, I always cried to the Lord: "Give me courage to accept my condition and will-power to change those things that I can, and sense to live through the impossibles."

In the midst of financial difficulties, I was getting

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<sup>3</sup> Oscar Vance and Helen Armstrong, Prayer Poems, New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, p. 117.

behind in my studies. Dr. Charles B. Copher, Dean and Old Testament professor, I thought, was killing me. I was having nightmares and was failing every test. I had reached the point that I understood nothing he talked about. There were days when I would talk with him about my problems, but that did little or no good. I began to feel that the only thing left was for me to give up. I thought about my family and especially my two boys, who were just babies. I thought: "What will I say to them when they start asking questions." In the midst of this academic crisis, I prayed as ever before.

About a week later, Dr. Copher came skipping into class, leaned half upon the desk, and with a smile, he asked: "Do you take everything in the Bible hook-line and sinker?" For a moment, the whole class said nothing. At first, I did not know what he meant by "hook-line and sinker." Then, Mr. Mark Richards, a student from Africa, replied: "Dr. Copher, I am a foreigner, I don't understand what you mean by "hook-line and sinker." Dr. Copher began to explain what he meant and, at the end of his explanation, he said: "Well, there is myth, prose, poem, stories, and other literature in the Bible." He continued: "There are some mistakes, yes, because it was written by men and they make mistakes. Furthermore, every word of the Bible is not the inspired words of God written down exactly like God said them." For me, this was most absorbing. For, I grew up in a church and had read the Bible ever since I learned how to read. For about twenty

years, I had believed that the Bible was the exact word of God as spoken by Him. My faith was so tied up in the Bible that when I read it, I got peculiar mystical feeling of the possible presence of God.

Hearing Dr. Copher's view about the real nature and content of the Bible really made me question his Christian belief. He had shaken my very foundation; the very basis of my Christian belief, the Bible, had been watered down. I said within myself: "That man is crazy, for if the Bible is not true, then, where will the truth be found."

Following that experience, a tree of hopelessness and despair over-shadowed my being; somewhat blotted out my dreams and caused me to, for the first time, doubt God and my conversion experience that I had when I was thirteen years old. I was at the point of giving up the ministry and dropping out of seminary.

The semester ended, my grades were poor, and I got a feeling that God had really left me alone. My next thought was to drop out of seminary, go back to Louisiana, and get my job back with the United States Department of Agriculture. A few weeks later, summer school began. I was encouraged by my wife and others to enroll for the summer and see how I would come out. Taking their advice, I enrolled. That summer, the classrooms were hot and the work was plentiful. My grades were a little better at the end of that session.

The trees of hopelessness and despair were still too high

and the bushes were too thick for me to see. In the middle of this darkness, I somehow got a small glimpse of the promise land. This small glimpse did something to me. It was like a voice saying to me: "Be patient. Keep the faith and trust in God." In the midst of this crisis, it was revealed to me that I needed more courage, so the prayer for courage became my daily habit.

Yet, I seemed to have been growing colder each day. For, God seemed to have been far away. I felt lost in the darkness. I was lonely. I felt as if I was a nobody wandering around in the night. Most frustrating of all, I felt a kind of spiritual death taking place.

Increasingly, I wandered in the night trying to hang on to old theological principles and take on new ones. This caused the frustration to grow until one night, about midnight, I cried out: "Lord, please help me to find my way. Lord, please give me courage to hold on." Then, the next day, with a confused mind and a heavy heart, I went to Dr. Josephus R. Coan just to talk with him about my subject matters. He was very nice to me. And later, in our conversation, he informed me that I had not done so well, which I already knew. Seeing that I was discouraged, Dr. Coan turned around in his chair, asked a few personal questions, and began to share with me his seminary experiences encountered at Yale University. I cannot remember his exact words, but there was something he said to me about himself that revived my courage

and caused me to feel that if others can do it, I can too.

Still I was very dull spiritually. I almost stopped attending church and felt like I would never preach again. I seemed that all the walls of my soul was crumbling and the winds of the intellectual world was rushing in, cold, and freezing. It seemed to me that all I once was and stood for had gone with the wind.

After one semester and a summer, I said to myself: "Benjamin, you will never graduate from I. T. C." But deep down within me, there was a voice speaking to my soul saying: "Try it again, try it again, may be you will do better next time. I am with you."

The fall semester of 1967-68 began. I enrolled with many mixed emotions and fears of failing. That semester, I took New Testament along with some other courses. Dr. Robert C. Briggs led us into a study of the nature and content of the Synoptic and the Johannine Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), where we compared and related the authors and pointed their reasons for writing in such a style. We pointed up their possible mistakes. We talked about the Crucifixion, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, in a very objective way. I waited every day for Dr. Briggs to say what was the truth about the various information that we had discussed. But sad enough, he left me totally confused and frustrated. I did not know what to believe.

Many nights I walked the hall of the basement of the

classroom building, asking myself: "What do you believe? What is really left there to believe? Lord, what shall I preach?"

As the semester moved on, I continued to search the Scripture. I searched every book that I thought would help, and talked to anyone whom I felt was dedicated and really concerned about students. So, Dr. Coan became that shelter to which I went when the rain was falling and the stormy winds was high.

The Christmas holidays came, and I had a very quiet Christmas. I spent most of the holidays in prayer, meditation, and study. Through these special activities and "reverence" to God, I hoped to find the way to the promise land. As the holidays ended and the semester came to an end, Dr. Briggs suggested that we would have a few extra class sessions at night in the Student Lounge. These sessions were for the purpose of asking more questions and the clearing up of certain issues.

As we discussed the different gospel writers and their writing raised and various ideas, Dr. Briggs talked at length with us about the whole field of New Testament studies. Finally, he said: "Well, I am sure many of you have been looking for answers. I have tried not to give you an answer. I have tried only to raise some issues that you can think about. This seminary is not a place where you come and get answers or solutions to problems, but it is a place where questions

are raised, many of which will never be answered. What I have tried to do in this class is to raise questions. Now, you fellows will have to find the answers. It is left to you, the challenge is yours. You see, fellows, I might not be able to tell you where Rich's is; but I can tell you which road to take. It is left to you to get on the road if you want to go to Rich's."

This explanation, in itself, was a great challenge to me. To me, this meant freedom to allow the soul to search for meanings of God and His self-disclosure. As that semester drew to the end and the next semester got on the way, I still was somewhat at a state of frustration and fear, but at the same time, I was searching for answers to my questions.

One day, as I was looking through the stacks in the library, I ran across a little red book and printed in gold on its cover were these words The Courage to Be - Tillich. Immediately, this struck me for I was at a point where I needed courage. Then, I read:

"The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflicts with his essential self-affirmation."<sup>4</sup>

I was at a point of opposition with myself, the school system and God. I was disturbed because I did not seem to be

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<sup>4</sup>  
Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 3.

able to hold on, and God seemed far away. Then, I read:

"The ultimate source of the courage to be is the 'God above God,' this is the result of our demand to transcend theism. Only if the God of the theism is transcended can the anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness be taken into the courage to be."<sup>5</sup>

This passage helped me to understand that even though I had not yet affirmed my faith in God, but only the courage to do this and to be was in God. God was the only solution to my inner frustration. I knew I was lost. I wanted to find my way but I did not know how. I was weak and low. Then, I read Saint Francis de Sales' book entitled Introduction to the Devout Life.

"God maintains this great world in existence in an unending series of changes by which day ever turns into night, spring into summer, summer into autumn, autumn into winter, and winter into spring. One day never perfectly resembles another. Some are cloudy, some rainy, some dry, some windy, a variety that gives great beauty to the universe. It is the same with man, who, according to the saying of the ancients, is an epitome of the world. He never remains in the same state. His life flows away upon the earth like the waters that float and undulate in a perpetual diversity of motion. Sometimes, they lift him up with hope and, sometimes, they cast him down with fear. Sometimes, they carry him to the right hand by consolation, sometimes, to the left by affliction. Not one of his days, not even one of his hours, is completely like another.

There is a great lesson for us here. It is necessary that we endeavor to preserve a constant and inviolable equality of heart amidst so great an inequality of events.

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<sup>5</sup> Tillich, Op. Cit., p. 186.

Although all things turn and change around us, we must always remain unchanging, ever looking, striving, and aspiring toward our God. No matter what course the ship may take; no matter whether it sails toward the east, the west, the north, or the south; no matter by what wind it is driven, never will the mariner's needle point in any direction than toward the fair polar star. Let everything be in confusion, I say, not only around us but even within us. Let our soul be overwhelmed with sorrow or joy, with sweetness or bitterness, with peace or trouble, with light or darkness, with temptation or repose, with pleasure or disgust, with dryness or tenderness. Let it be scorched by the sun or refreshed by the dew. For all that, ever and always, the point of our heart, our spirit, and our higher will, which is our compass, must look unceasingly and tend always toward the love of God, its Creator, its Savior, its sole and sovereign God. 'Whether we live or whether we die,' says the apostle, 'if we are of God, who shall separate us from the love and charity of God?' No, nothing shall ever separate us from His love. Neither tribulations nor anguish, nor death, nor life, nor present sorrow, nor fear of future troubles, nor the artifices of evil spirits, nor the height of consolations, nor the depth of afflictions, nor tenderness, nor dryness ought ever to separate us from this holy charity which is found in Jesus Christ.

This absolute resolution never to forsake God and never to abandon His sweet love serves as a counter-poise to our souls to keep them in a holy equilibrium amidst the inequality of the various motions which the condition of life brings to them. Little bees, caught in the fields by a storm, take hold of a small stone so that they may be able to balance themselves in the air and not be so easily carried away by the wind. So, also, when our soul has, resolution, strongly embraced the precious love of its God, it continues constant in the midst of the inconstancy and change of consolation and affliction, whether spiritual or temporal, whether exterior or interior."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Saint Francis de Sales, Introduction to Devout Life, New York: Harper and Brothers, pp. 197-198.

The words of this quoted author said much to me. I needed some directions and needed some assurance that God was for me and in ~~these~~ words I was assured of God's everlasting concern for mankind and for me.

As the spring semester of 1968 came to an end, I was tired of studying, so, I got a part-time job with the Atlanta University Center. I used the rest of my time in prayerful reflection and deep meditation.

Later, on the summer of that year, something happened to me, something happened to my soul. One day, I was riding down I-85 coming back into town. All at once, it seemed like light was everywhere. I felt released; I felt almost as never before. Out of all this came these words: "Growing faith amidst crumbling walls." As I continued driving on my way home, I began to think about the possible meaning to this experience. One occasion after another, I began to think about the many experiences of my own personal life that I had encountered from the time I had been to I. T. C., and how I had suffered and endured the many changes that I. T. C. had taken me through. I thought about the low grades that I had once made. I thought about how far God had seemed, at one time, to have been from me, and the sad thought of never being able to preach. I thought about the times that I felt that no one cared anything for me, not even God. I thought about the times when I would say to myself: "Where are you, God?" That day when I drove down the road, I felt as never

before a closeness to God. My soul was filled with joy and tears rolled down like a mighty stream. And, out loud, I screamed: "Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord!"

Growing out of this kind of experience and my giving of thanks to God, I remembered that great hymn written, some years ago, by John Newton:

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretched like me!  
I was once lost, but now I am found,  
Was blind, but now I see."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Walter Hines Sims, Baptist Hymnal, Nashville, Tennessee: Convention Press, p. 188.

### CHAPTER III

#### VIEWING THE PROMISE LAND

I truly felt saved and new again. As I continued to reflect, it was revealed to me that, as a result of my constant struggling in the darkness of misunderstanding and poor grades, the fear of failing all undergirded with a kind of far away faith in God, I had really grown.

I had reached the point where I could talk about God, Jesus, and the Bible very critically and my faith was not affected.

I discovered that I could say with no fear: "I do not know anything about God, in terms of where He came from, for I was not there. I could care less about Jesus' birth, and all the talk about Mary being a Virgin, for I was not there either. But I believe that there is a God who disclosed Himself in human flesh in order that I might have eternal life. I believe not in Jesus but in Christ of faith. After reaching this stage in my wilderness struggle, I began to feel stronger and a kind of determining new spirit was born in me. That feeling caused me to study harder every day. As a matter of fact, it seemed like I began to enjoy my studies.

At the end of that semester, my grades were improved, and I began to get a better view of the promise land. This brighter view and re-assurance of the promise land caused

me to go on in spite of signals of impossibilities and still far away sounding of hopelessness, and in the very midst of all this, time passed on and time took me through another Christmas and another New Year.

As that year ended, in my prayer, I prayed: "Lord, I am thankful for your grace and tender care. I am appreciative and am gracious to you for bringing me through the dark days. I thank you for helping me to pull my grades up. Now, Lord, please stay with me. I am stronger now but stay with me. Amen."

Then, after the final examinations, I found a part-time job. The spring semester of 1969 found me still with hope and a growing spirit of determination. Growing out this kind of determining spirit, I registered for thirteen hours, and launched out in the wilderness of intellectual cloudiness.

Finance was getting lower and lower. To really top it off, Mrs. Carroll was getting ready to stop working and go on her maternity leave. My job was giving me trouble with its long hours and irregularity. In spite of this, I was very strong and determining. I had concluded that the Lord was on my side and He would make away somehow.

Reverend Walter McCall, my Director, came up to me and said: "How are you, Bennie (this is what he called me)? Do you want a church?" Naturally, my answer was yes. However, I thought nothing of this concern. About three weeks later, I received a letter from the New Zion Baptist Church of Spin-

dale, North Carolina, asking me to come to preach for them, the second Sunday in March. Naturally, I agreed and went to preach. After the service, the deacons informed me that I would hear from them. So, I came back home knowing that I had done my best and leaving the rest to God.

About two weeks later, I received this letter from the Board of Deacons and Trustees stating: "Dear Reverend Carroll, the church had a meeting Thursday night and unanimously voted for you to become the pastor." For this, I prayed to the Lord, as tears ran down like a mighty stream: "Thank you! Thank you!" My very soul, my very being was happy. Then, I knew as never before that the Lord was with me. For getting this church meant that I could feed my family and keep going. Strangely enough, in spite of having to drive four hundred miles every week and to preach and try to pastor, my grades were better that semester than ever before.

The semester ended and summer school began; for some reason, I got new strength, enrolled in summer school and made all good grades.

The summer was over and the fall semester of 1969 came, with me still determining to do better and get a better understanding of God and His will for my life. I took twelve hours.

That semester, I found myself swinging between two pendulum, my school work and my responsibility to the New Zion Baptist Church that needed me as much as I needed it.

One Friday night as I drove the highway reflecting upon life how that I had grown from the back woods of Louisiana and most of all from a very immature understanding of God to a more mature understanding of Him, at the same time, to a state of humbleness and almost total dependence upon and commitment to God. In all of this, I found myself questioning my real reasons for driving such a distance every weekend for such a small salary. As I continued to drive, I could not help but cry. For about ten miles I cried. Then, still a voice from out of nowhere spoke to my soul and said to me: "You need not to worry and feel lonely for I am with you. Go on down there, you all need each other. You can help them and they can help you, go on."

Growing of this, I came to realize that God was on my side, that God had called me to preach and best of all that I was not alone.

I am happy to confess the true greatness of God. He will always fulfill His promise. For about a year and a half, I wondered in the wilderness of almost absolute darkness, thinking that I was alone and supposing that He was far away and, at the same time, however, not aware that He was ever so near.

I could see the promise land and all of its beauties, the fulfillment of my every day dream of better understanding of God and His will for my life. A more developed intellectual of being able to really preach His word, graduation, a church, and, at last, a chance to be a father and

a husband.

After such an experience with God, a kind of newness of the soul was beginning to take roots and I began to discern increasingly more light and hope. I can see the promise land of becoming in Christ, the kind of man, the kind of preacher that He wanted me to become. I can see the promise land of graduation. I can see the promise land of being a dedicated leader to my people and, above all, I can see the promise land of a real closeness with God, where He would use me as His vessel to spread His word to all mankind.

I must confess I have truly decided to follow the Lord. At this point in my struggle, I am happy to say: "I feel that I am on the right road to the promise land. My theological journey is getting brighter. I can see the promise land, but it is much too far to reach within the few months of school that are left before graduation. I, therefore, am sure I will not get there now, but I am thankful to God that somehow in the wilderness, I have gained courage to keep on pushing, until one day, I shall get stronger and stronger and live closer and closer to God.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Throughout this Essay, I have tried to tell my story of how God has been at work in my life. I have endeavored to share God's revelation in my life, how I have interpreted His revelation, the purpose of His self-disclosure to me and what it has meant to me.

I have attempted to reveal how I have moved through life in the shadow of God's love and His grace. Above and beyond everything else, I have said; and after hours of critical and honest reflection upon all of my experience from early childhood until today, 1970, I can say, out of the depth of my being: "God is universal, His love is everlasting for He cares for all alike, both young and old, black and white. There is a kind of power in His love that no one, not even the little child can resist. God's grace is immeasurable and flows like a mighty stream."

I must agree that the journey is not over yet. I have not learned all about God that is to be known. For I have only got a glimpse of His divine will, and have felt only a small portion of His spirit and have experienced just enough of life to be made aware of the facts that I cannot make life's journey by myself.

I am trying to say in many words that I am just beginning in God, and it is this beginning of His love for my life

that I will preach. It is this real life story of my encounters that I will share. So, with this prayer to God that I will close: "Lord, I thank you for your revelation, for your tender care down through the years. The journey has been rough up to this point. I know it is not over. Help me to accept my responsibilities of becoming in the future as I have become in the past. Lord, help me to stay open-minded enough to see and understand your will for my life and to be just your help-mate in this world. Lord, help me not to get discouraged on life's journey, but to continue in search for you and your will for my life. Lord, help me to be able to identify and know the truth and then after knowing be able to stand firm in your name on thy truth. Amen."

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