

The Standard Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

IN THIS ISSUE

Meditation:

God's Eternal Word

Abortion On Demand

(see: All Around Us)

About Witnessing

(see: Question Box)

The Now Generation

(see: Come Ye Apart...)

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Meditation

God's Eternal Word

Rev. M. Schipper

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

I Peter 1:24, 25.

Regenerated, born again, and for the second time from above, and that by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever!

Of this the apostle wrote in the preceding verse, to which we called attention the last time.

This Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever,

whereby we are born again, so we pointed out, is not to be identified with the Word of the gospel which is preached unto you. Though it is true that the Word of God is also preached, as our text for this time abundantly makes clear, there is a difference. The Word preached is neither living nor abiding; but the Word

whereby we are regenerated is both. It is living because it quickens. It is abiding because God continues to speak it. It is the Word which God continues to speak through Christ, Who in Scripture is called the Word of God.

It is on this truth that the apostle elaborates in the words of our text. This the apostle does by first of all quoting a suitable passage from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, where Isaiah the prophet also contrasts the word of man with the abiding Word of God. Evidently the apostle is quoting from the translation of the Septuagint, and not literally from the Hebrew text. (40:6-8). Secondly, we notice that the apostle also shows that that eternal and abiding Word is preached. And finally, we notice how that that abiding Word which is preached brings that regeneration which is wrought in us to a conscious living experience.

All flesh is as grass!

When the apostle here, and the prophet Isaiah in his prophecy, speaks of flesh, and all flesh, he is not referring to flesh in general. Though, no doubt, all flesh in general is of a temporal nature, flesh in general is not especially referred to. In other words, the reference is not to vegetation, or to the flesh of creatures in general; but the flesh of man is compared here to grass. Plainly Isaiah asserts: "surely the people is grass." And Peter declares: "And all the glory of man as the flower of grass." It is plain, therefore, that the text as well as the commentary has in mind the creature — man, man, whose breath is in his nostrils, but who also, in distinction from the rest of creation, intelligently speaks.

The nature of grass and flesh is that it withereth and the flower of it falleth. If it is not blasted from without by the burning sun or drying wind, it dries up from within. All in a little while. Today it stands in green verdure upon the field. Tomorrow it is cast into the oven, and is no more. Such is also the nature of man. For a time he stands in the power of his strength. He appears to be some one to be reckoned with. But soon he is cut down. His power is diminished. His voice weakens, and he passes away. He returneth to his dust.

Because the nature of man is so temporal, it follows that his word is also temporary in nature. The word of man dies.

The point of comparison in the text is between the word of man and the Word of God. It should be clearly understood that implied in the comparison is more than a comparison between the eternal nature of God and the changing, fleeting nature of the creature. When the text speaks of the word of man in terms of its temporal nature, implied is also all human attempts for the salvation and the life of man and the world being as vain and futile as the word of man itself. Moreover, implied also is all the attempts of the flesh to counteract and oppose the Word and counsel of God as vain. And seen in this light, the contrast in the text becomes emphatically important in our day. It is doubtful

whether there ever was a time that stresses more the power of humanism than today.

O, to be sure, it is true that man has always withstood, denied the Word of God, and attempted to replace God's Word with his own, as he is by nature. But today this is most pronounced. Man seems to need no Word of the cross to save him. By human wisdom, philosophy, science, etc., man will save himself and the world. But the Word of God says: all flesh is grass, and its glory as the flower of grass that dies. Man's wisdom and word cannot endure; neither can it make alive and save.

But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever!

Peculiarly the apostle uses the term "word" in the sense that he refers to the word as spoken. Scripture uses two words which are translated "word"; but there is a difference in their meaning. The one refers to the word as the term denoting the idea, the reason of the word. The other denotes the expression of the word. It is the latter term which the apostle uses. God not only has an idea or reason which He conceives in His mind or counsel, but He also gives expression to it. He declares it.

That God's Word endures for ever, is difficult to explain, simply because it is most difficult to express the idea of eternity. There is really no word for eternity in our temporal language. Eternity is a concept which naturally lies beyond our comprehension. The most we can say is that eternity is not time. It is this idea that the terms: eternal, forever, and everlasting mean to imply. The point here is that the Word of the Lord never ends. He keeps on expressing it, while the word of man is like all flesh — it dies. It is upon this abiding, this eternal Word of God, that regeneration depends. So understood, regeneration also abides forever.

That enduring Word of God is also preached!

Necessary it is in our day to ask the questions: What is preaching? and who is the preacher? Our day is characterized by gross ignorance relative to the preacher and his mission. In the thinking of many anyone can be a preacher. Not only men, but also women, and even children. And because men aspire to the sensational, even the dumb creature, as the horse, is used in the preaching service, which has been trained to stamp rhythmically with his front hoofs the words of a text from Scripture. Societies, institutions, and even business associations hire, prepare, and send out preachers. And today the mission of the preacher seems to be a far cry from what Scripture understands by his mission. Preachers are hired as professionals to draw crowds. They are given huge salaries to entertain, and by emotional carryings on are expected to sway the multitudes. Many make better acrobats and circus performers than ministers of the Word. And in many instances a "good sermon" is nothing more than a forty-five minute play on the emotions.

In the light of this, it is well to ask the questions: What is a preacher? and What is his mission?

A preacher is a man through whom it pleases Christ, the Chief Prophet, to speak His Word. If Christ does not speak to you through the one who calls himself a preacher, you have no preacher. The preacher is an ambassador of Christ, and sent by Him through His church. As an ambassador has no right or authority to speak his own word, so no ambassador of Christ comes authoritatively with his own word. He is one who declares with authority: Thus saith the Lord. And the word which he brings is only the infallible Word of God in the Scriptures.

It follows then that the preacher is one who is sent. He must be officially commissioned to bring Christ's Word. And this commission comes to him by Christ through His church. The apostles were sent out directly by Christ, while ministers, preachers, are sent out indirectly by Christ through the church.

As important as it is to understand properly the significance of the preacher and his mission, so also it is of prime significance to understand the significance of preaching. Faith, that is, the activity of faith and the experience of salvation depend on the preaching. Not on Bible reading or instruction, good and important though they be, but on the lively preaching of God's Word do faith and salvation depend. It is with this in mind that the apostle Paul asks the questions: How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? And the conclusion is: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.

Now the text informs us that the abiding Word of God is preached.

Preaching is here the means whereby we come into contact with the living and abiding Word. To be noted here is the fact that the apostle in the original text does not say: which is preached UNTO you, as the translation has it. This would mean that it preached in your direction. This is, of course, true in itself. The Word must be directed unto you, shall you hear it. But this is not precisely what the apostle says. Neither does he say: which is preached AMONG you. But emphatically the original text declares: which is preached INTO you. That is, the Word which is preached penetrates into you, so that you hear it not only with your physical senses, but spiritually in your heart. The

preaching of the Word, in other words, brings you into contact with the living and abiding Word which God never ceases to speak, that almighty, creative, regenerative Word whereby we are saved.

Thus understood, you can also understand how that preaching of the Word is the Divine instrument to bring that life of regeneration in us to a living consciousness. The seed of regeneration is implanted in us immediately, that is, without means. God simply speaks and we are made alive from the dead. We have the resurrection life of Christ implanted in our hearts by this living and abiding Word of God. And that seed of new life is incorruptible seed. Mysteriously and wonderfully God speaks, and that new life in seed form is implanted in our hearts. So we possess the life of regeneration below our consciousness. So we are born again, not of corruptible seed, such as that of which I am born the first time physically; but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. But that seed of new life God does not allow to lie dormant in me. He keeps it alive through His abiding Word, which He continues to speak.

Through the preaching of the gospel God brings that seed of new life into conscious existence in me. That preaching is as the rain and sunshine upon the seed implanted in the soil; it evokes the seed of new life into living consciousness, so that subjectively I know that I am born again from above. So He by the preaching brings me into living contact with the living Word He continues to speak.

So the preaching of the gospel is the chief means of grace. Not the Sacraments, but the preaching of the Word is the chief means.

Were that Word not preached, we could have no living contact with the abiding Word. But God graciously causes that Word to be expressed in the lively preaching of His Word, and He providentially brings me under that preaching so that I hear it, not only with my ears, but in the inner recesses of my heart. And the life of regeneration whence is the life and activity of believers in Christ, becomes a conscious, living reality in us.

Thanks be unto God for the living and abiding Word whereby I am made alive from the dead!

And thanks be unto His holy Name for the preaching of the gospel, whereby I am consciously made partaker of the life of Christ Jesus my Lord!

This is no time, in today's ecclesiastical world, to be an innocent by-stander. If you are a bystander, you are not innocent!

All Around Us

Abortion On Demand

Prof. H. Hanko

In the last issue of *The Standard Bearer*, we began a discussion of this subject once again. We noted then that the central question concerning the rightness or wrongness of abortion is the question of when the foetus becomes a person. If the unborn child is a person at the moment of conception, then abortion is a violation of the sixth commandment. It is murder. Abortion can be defended only on the grounds that the unborn child, either until birth or until some point after conception is less than human; is, as a matter of fact, only a mass of tissue and basically no different from an appendix or one's tonsils.

That the issue is a critical one is plain from the number of abortions now legally performed in this country. In a recent issue of *Newsweek* magazine some statistics were given. We quote a few pertinent paragraphs.

"Abortion," says Dr. Donald Minkler of San Francisco's Center for Legal Abortion, "is finding its place as a perfectly acceptable and valid health measure. People no longer think of it as a crime." The statistics seem to bear out Minkler's contention. Lawrence Lader of the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws estimates that there were 8,000 therapeutic abortions in the U.S. in 1966, the year before the first liberalized law was passed. This year, he predicts, the number will reach 400,000.

Interestingly enough, (it is estimated) that the number of abortions is approaching the number of live births in the New York city hospitals, with 950 abortions reported performed for every 1,000 children born.

Those pushing hard for abortion reform do not envision clear sailing ahead, however. There are roadblocks on the way. President Nixon has said, for example: "Unrestricted abortion policies I cannot square with my personal belief in the sanctity of human life — including the life of the unborn." Potential presidential candidate Edmund Muskie has expressed similar views. In some states the courts are ruling against unrestricted abortion and in many areas of the country, groups of churchmen are organizing to stop the repeal of present abortion laws which make abortion a crime.

But the debate goes on concerning the question of whether an unborn child can be considered a human being or not. Does it live? This is the question. In an article in *Christianity Today* by Kenneth J. Sharp, this question is faced. He writes:

The question inevitably arises, What is life? I long believed with countless others that the time when a

specific human life begins is a question of ethical belief rather than scientific conclusion. I am now not so sure that this is true. Dr. Landrum Shettles of Columbia University states, "From the union of the germ cells there is under normal development a living definite going concern. To interrupt a pregnancy at any state is like cutting the link of a chain; the chain is broken no matter where the link is cut." Dr. Jules Carles of the French National Center for Scientific Research also reports, "This first cell, formed by sperm and egg union, is already the embryo of an autonomous living being with individual hereditary patrimony." The scientific community unanimously holds that the tissue of a fetus from the time of conception has a unique nature, though it must be nurtured and protected by the mother until viability. It is far more than simply a biological extension such as a tonsil or an appendix; every aspect bears the attributes of individuality.

While there are some aspects of this quotation with which we agree, we are very much inclined to believe that it nevertheless states the problem wrongly. And it is increasingly our conviction that this is quite usually the case with those who argue either the pro or the con of abortion. The question is phrased in such a way that the problem is looked at from the viewpoint of when the foetus becomes alive; or when the soul enters the body which is formed through the union of sperm and ovum. This seems to be a wrong way to approach the whole question.

It is also this viewpoint which leads Dr. Henry Stob to some erroneous conclusions in a recent article in *the Banner*. We refer to this article quite at length because it touches upon many aspects of the abortion debate. In answer, first of all, to the question of whether the embryo or foetus is a human being, the article answers:

That is a large question, and we shall have to pursue it for a while. The thing first to be observed is that the fetus is an *in-between-entity*. It is obviously not a simple ununited spermatozoon, nor a simple unfertilized ovum. It is also not a post-partem baby or infant. It exists somewhere between these things. That is why people have disputed about its exact nature or status, and about whether it can be destroyed without moral fault.

This, in our opinion, is stating the matter wrongly. And this incorrect statement of the problem leads to the following conclusion:

Of course, the fetus is neither an infant, nor a sperm, nor an ovum, but the last two together — a fertilized ovum. It is neither an actual human being, nor the mere bare potentiality of humanness (as are

the sperm and ovum), but "something" *in the process of becoming human*.

It is this "in-between" status of the fetus — this "becomingness" residing somewhere between "being" and "non-being" — that makes it hard to judge whether or not we are here dealing with an "object" that the sixth commandment has in view.

It seems to me that this same misstatement of the problem leads Dr. Stob to the conclusion, erroneous, in our opinion, that Scripture says almost nothing about the question of the nature and status of the foetus.

Texts are sometimes cited to prove that the Bible regards the embryo as human from the moment of conception, and that it therefore considers the destruction of the fertilized egg as the destruction of human life itself. Cited are texts like Genesis 25:22, where Esau and Jacob are said to have struggled together in the womb of their mother; or Jeremiah 1:5 where the Lord declares "before you were born I consecrated you"; or Luke 1:41 where John the Baptist is reported to have leaped in the womb of his mother Elizabeth. But these texts, couched in the religious language of faith, do not, in my judgment, speak with any directness to the question.

Just exactly what Dr. Stob means to say by the expression, "Couched in the religious language of faith" is not clear. The implication seems to be that these texts must be taken in some other sense than their literal one; and this involves a question of inspiration and authority into which we cannot now enter.

Getting then to the point of the matter, Dr. Stob says,

Because of what I have called the "in-between" status of the fetus I do not regard its destruction as tantamount to infanticide. What is destroyed in abortion is not a human being; at most it is "something in process of becoming human." This, of course, is a great deal; and the fetus therefore deserves everyone's respect and protection. But one is not entitled to speak too quickly and too loudly of murder when the question of abortion is raised, particularly when it concerns the embryo in the very earliest stages of its existence.

After this position is staked out, it is not difficult to predict that Dr. Stob will, at least under some circumstances, favor abortion. He does precisely this. First of all, he condemns various kinds of abortion. He condemns abortion when it is performed simply because a woman finds it inconvenient or otherwise undesirable to have a child. He condemns abortion as a means to restrict the size of a family. He condemns abortion when it is a means of terminating a pregnancy resulting from fornication and adultery.

But while these kinds of abortion are condemned, they have got to be condemned on grounds other than a violation of the sixth commandment. Dr. Stob does not say very clearly why he condemns these types of abortion. He only says:

In all these cases, and perhaps in others, there is nothing to justify the taking of so sacred a thing as a life in process of becoming human.

The kinds of abortion which he approves are abortions calculated to preserve the life of the mother when continued pregnancy threatens her life. With this we, of course, agree. But then he goes on to say:

Not every Christian will endorse my judgment, and among these dissenters are people whose friendship I cherish and whose Christian sensitivity and integrity I deeply respect.

Although I am not as certain about any of these as I am about critical abortion (already mentioned), I am disposed — on the ground that the value of unborn life must be weighed against the value of the life of the already born, and on the ground that we are not called upon to increase by our generative activities the increment of evil already in the world — to classify as allowable abortions the following additional types:

Forecastive abortion, that is, abortion calculated to prevent the birth of a child who, because of the occurrence of German measles or because of the use of Thalidomide, and so forth, is likely to be *horribly deformed or deranged*.

Social abortion, that is, abortion calculated to forestall dire personal and social consequences, the pregnancy being due to criminal behavior on the part of the father, that is, *rape or incest*.

Therapeutic abortion, that is, abortion calculated to preserve the *physical and mental health* of the mother when continued pregnancy will significantly and continuously undermine these.

I have named these three types in the order of their moral priority. I am more certain of the legitimacy of the first and second than I am of the third, but when all the conditions here recorded are maximally and assuredly present, I believe that these kinds of abortion are to be Christianly permitted.

We have noted above that our objection to this entire presentation is basically the objection that the problem is wrongly stated. It seems to us that one can get involved in useless argumentation when one asks when a foetus comes to life; or, when the soul enters the body. It is probably correct that the Scriptures do not give any answers to these questions — at least, if they are formulated in this way and limited to these points. But we cannot agree with Dr. Stob that therefore the Scriptures have nothing to say about the matter at all. It seems to us, in the final analysis, that Dr. Stob has rejected the Scriptures altogether as being of value in the settling of this problem, and has come to his conclusions on the basis of social, medical and psychiatric considerations. This leads to a cul-de-sac, a dead-end street. This is finally situation ethics of one sort or another.

We must postpone our discussion of this matter to the next issue of *The Standard Bearer*. It might be of some interest to our leaders to have before them a brief summary of what various denominations have

had to say in recent years about abortion. We quote from *Christianity Today*.

American Baptist Convention (1968): "... We ... urge that legislation be enacted to provide: 1. That the termination of a pregnancy prior to the end of the 12th week (first trimester) be at the request of the individual(s) concerned and be regarded as an elective medical practice and licensure. 2. After that period, the termination of a pregnancy shall be performed only by a duly licensed physician at the request of the individual(s).

Episcopal Church (1967): "... Resolved, That the 33rd Triennial Meeting of the Episcopal Church support efforts to repeal all laws concerning abortion which deny women the free and responsible exercise of their conscience. ..."

United Methodist Church (1970): "... We urge ... that church-related hospitals take the lead in eliminating those hospital administrative restrictions on voluntary sterilization and abortion which exceed the legal requirements in their respective political jurisdictions, and which frustrate the intent of the law where the law is designed to make the decision for sterilization and abortion largely or solely the responsibility of the person most concerned. ..."

United Presbyterian Church (1970): "Our commit-

tee's position is that abortion should be taken out of the realm of the law altogether and be made a matter of the careful ethical decision of a woman, her physician and her pastor or other counselors. In the later stages of pregnancy, serious consideration must be given to the competing claims of the developing fetus as well as to the increasing risk to the life of the mother in surgical abortion. ..."

Lutheran Church in America (1970): "On the basis of the evangelical ethic, a woman or couple may decide responsibly to seek an abortion. Earnest consideration should be given to the life and total health of the mother, her responsibilities to others in her family, the stage of development of the fetus, the economic and psychological stability of the home, the laws of the land, and the consequences for society as a whole."

That major church denominations can take such stands as these is frightening. It is clear that they are based entirely upon the idea that the unborn child is nothing but some tissue in the mother's body that can be removed at will. Is this Scripture's teaching? We shall have to look more closely at this problem next time.

Editorial

About Confessing With Thy Mouth The Lord Jesus

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Elsewhere in this issue, I have tried to answer several questions sent to me about our calling to witness. In connection with this subject, reference is made to Romans 10:9, especially to the words, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus." This reference reminded me of some pointed remarks on this subject in a sermon on this text by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema in *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*, pp. 203, ff. These remarks are worthy of consideration — and still very up to date — by themselves. But they are also helpful in connection with the questions about witnessing which I tried to answer in *Question Box*. We present them here:

"But the apostle makes mention of another characteristic of those that shall be saved, in fact, he mentions this first. If the word is nigh unto us, it is not only in our heart; it is also in our mouth. Hence, the text calls our attention to the element of confession: If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus ... thou shalt be saved. Faith of the heart and confession with the mouth cannot be separated. To believe in our hearts that God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and to confess Him with our mouth are not two sepa-

rate conditions of salvation, but they belong together. They are one. He that believeth in his heart also confesses with his mouth. He that does not confess with his mouth thereby shows that he does not believe in his heart. And that which the believer confesses with his mouth the apostle designates by saying: the Lord Jesus. The believer confesseth *the Lord Jesus*. And this means the confession that Jesus is Lord. The believer, therefore, confesseth with his mouth that Jesus, Whom God raised from the dead, is Lord!

"What is the implication of this confession? What does it mean that Jesus is Lord? In its widest sense it implies that He has received from the Father authority and power over all things. He has a name above all names, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He stands at the very pinnacle of created things, and all things are subject unto Him. Jesus of Nazareth, Who died and was raised from the dead, is exalted by the Father at His right hand, and now has power over all things both in heaven and on earth, angels and principalities and powers being subject unto Him. There is nothing in all the world to limit His lordship. Even the powers of darkness, the devil and his hosts and all the

wicked, though they refuse to serve Him and to acknowledge Him as their Lord, must nevertheless do His bidding and serve His purpose: the realization and final perfection of the Kingdom prepared for Him and His own from before the foundation of the world. This is, indeed, a mighty confession! Mark you, *Jesus is Lord!* The confession is not an exhortation that we make Him Lord, that we crown Him King. He is Lord in heaven and on earth and rules the world in the name of the Father. He, Who humbled Himself deeply, is highly exalted. The obedient Servant of Jehovah is become Lord of all.

"But there is another, a more intimate relation of lordship expressed in this confession of the believer. It is this, that Christ is Lord over His Church with a lordship, not of power merely, but of love. The Church belongs to Him, because she has been given to Him by the Father from eternity, and He purchased her with the price of His own blood, the precious price of unfathomable love. And having shed His lifeblood for His Church on the accursed tree, and having been raised from the dead and exalted in the highest glory, He dwells in her by His Spirit, pours out heavenly graces upon all His people, downs the throne of Satan in their hearts and establishes His own, so that they become sincerely willing to serve Him and have their delight in His precepts. His mind becomes their mind; His will is their will. He is Lord over His Church with a lordship of grace and rules over them by His Spirit and Word. And the confession that Jesus is Lord implies that He is given unto the Church as a Head over all things.

"And in this sense the confession assumes a very personal character. It means that I confess Him to be *my* Lord. This implies that I belong to Him, that I am not my own but His, with body and soul, in life and death, for time and eternity. I profess that He is responsible for me, now and in the day of judgment; that He has the authority, the sole right to rule over me, to demand of me that I shall do His will; and that this lordship of Jesus has become my delight, so that with body and soul, with heart and mind and will and all my desires, personally and in all the different relationships of my life in the midst of the present world, it is my sincere endeavor to do what is pleasing to Him, to think as He would have me think, to do His will, to speak to His glory, to walk in newness and holiness of life, and thus to fight the good fight even unto death, that no one take my crown!

"This we confess if the Word is nigh unto us, in our mouth and in our heart, the Word of faith, which is preached unto us . . . With our mouth we make this confession, the apostle writes. And, perhaps, you remark that it is rather superfluous to say that we confess *with our mouth*. How else can confession be made except with our mouth? And this is true, of course. Yet, the apostle is not guilty of a tautology in this case. It is sometimes necessary to give special emphasis to mat-

ters that appear to be self-evident, in order that we may realize their grave importance. It may be ever so self-evident that confession must be made with the mouth, and that it cannot possibly be made otherwise. But in actual life we, nevertheless, frequently forget or find many excuses to evade this self-evident truth. Is it really necessary to say everywhere that Jesus is Lord? Is it really necessary to explain that we do certain things and refrain from doing other things because Jesus is our Lord? Do not actions speak louder than words? If we quietly go our way and walk as Christians, cannot people, cannot the world see that we belong to Him and that we consider Him our Lord? Must we really express this? You see, it is not quite so superfluous as it might appear to emphasize this truth, as the apostle does in the words of our text, that confession must be made with the mouth. In the church and in the world, on the street and in shop or office, wherever we may be and whatsoever may be our daily calling, we should at all times be prepared to confess, to express very clearly and audibly with our mouth, that Jesus is Lord. You may not always put it in that very form, but the contents of your confession must be that Jesus is Lord. You do not have to have this confession on your lips whether there is occasion to make it or not, but whenever it is plainly demanded you should not hesitate to confess it clearly with your mouth, that Jesus is Lord. He that believeth in his heart and confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus, shall be saved.

"Let us take this very seriously. Not he who simply believes in his heart shall be saved, but he that believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth is heir of eternal salvation. If we do not confess with the mouth, we have no right to appropriate the promise contained in the last words of our text unto ourselves. They do not apply to us. Did not also the Lord Jesus Himself plainly state that whosoever would confess Him before men He would confess before His Father in heaven? There is no third possibility. There are only two alternatives. We confess Jesus the Lord, or we deny Him. You cannot keep still. To keep silence with regard to Jesus' lordship is to deny Him. The reason lies in the peculiar position of the people of God in this world. I have reference to the antithesis. The world has and confesses its own lord, the prince of darkness. Over against this confession of the world that of the people of God must stand, clearly and definitely, so that there is no room for doubt: Jesus, Whom God raised from the dead, is Lord!"

Then, after explaining the relation between confessing with the mouth and believing with the heart, the author continues:

"Now, what does this all mean for the practical life of the Christian in the world? It can signify nothing less than this: that in our entire life, in all our walk and conversation, in every department of life, we shall in-

sist that Jesus' name shall be acknowledged, that His will shall be obeyed and that we shall do nothing that is contrary to His precepts. 'Jesus is Lord' is not an empty phrase. It means that we acknowledge Him as our Lord in our personal life, Lord over our body and soul, our thinking and willing, our speaking and acting. It implies that we acknowledge Him as Lord in our family-life, in our relations of man and wife, as parents and children, as brothers and sisters, and that in all these relationships we shall earnestly ask: 'Lord, what wilt thou that I shall do?' It means that we acknowledge His lordship with regard to the education of our children, whether it be in the church, at home, or in school. In the Christian School we confess that Jesus is Lord. It signifies that we maintain His lordship in our public life, political and social, and that we protest against the denial of His name in every department of life. In business and industry, with regard to the relation of employer and employee, Jesus is Lord. In whatever relationship we may stand in any sphere of life, we shall insist upon the lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ!

"Negatively, this also implies that you shall never join yourselves to any association, union, lodge that refuses to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus in the proper sphere of its activity. O, this confession that Jesus is Lord is a serious matter! When we are admonished not to join ourselves to such so-called 'neutral' organizations, we find many excuses. These organizations have nothing to do with religion! They do not require of their members to do anything that is contrary to their conviction! They are very broadminded and tolerant! But I would say: insist that the organization of which you have voluntarily become a member acknowledge in its constitution that Jesus is Lord, Lord also in the sphere of labor and industry, of busi-

ness and commerce, and discover for yourself whether these organizations of the world can actually boast of neutrality. Remember: you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord! And not to confess is to deny!

"This confession implies, moreover, that you would never voluntarily appear in any place where it would appear strange and awkward to confess Jesus as your Lord. It is well to remember this. To determine whether or not it is proper to partake of certain kinds of worldly amusements, we often proceed from the viewpoint of the question: what is wrong with it? It is more salutary to remember always your positive calling to confess with your mouth that Jesus, in Whom you believe, and of Whom you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, is Lord! And wherever your very presence would be in conflict with that confession, so that it would appear absurd if you would make it, you have no proper place as a member of the body of Christ.

"Conceived of the words of our text in this light, the matter of our salvation does become a rather serious question, does it not? The way becomes narrow, indeed! The gate through which you and I must enter is strait! In our light-hearted, worldly-minded, superficially religious age we have almost forgotten the seriousness of the Christian faith. O, just accept Jesus and you will go to heaven! That is all! That we cannot serve two masters, God and Mammon, we hardly understand anymore. They that profess to be Christians amuse themselves with the world, associate themselves with the world, dance and sing with the world. Only, they insist that they do not go to perdition with the world! But why not, pray? We have forgotten, indeed, that the word of the Lord concerning the narrow way and the strait gate is still true. . . ."

Question Box

About Witnessing

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Question

From a young man among our Michigan readers I received several questions about witnessing. He writes as follows:

"Dear Prof. Hoeksema:

"Your replies in the 'Question Box' have shed much light on some very pertinent and even disturbing questions.

"I have a problem that disturbs me very much. I would like to know what exactly is our calling as Christians in regard to our effective witness for the Lord?

Just how far are we to extend our witness?

"The example of the Christian's good works is a very important part of his witness. But by themselves these good works are not a sufficient witness. In Romans 10:9 we read, 'That if thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Also in Luke 17:3 we read, 'Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.'

"It would seem an almost endless task to be con-

stantly rebuking the evildoers round about us, but yet this seems to be our calling. Ezekiel 3:18 says, 'When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.'

"When we read the work of a man or hear someone who is a proponent of false doctrine are we to rebuke this man personally? Think of all the articles in church periodicals, all the 'preaching' heard nowadays, most of which contains downright heresy and blasphemy. Is it our calling as followers of Christ to personally admonish such?

"Then too, there is the evil which the Lord warns against in Matthew 7:6, 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.' Where is the line to be drawn? When are we being true witnesses for the Savior and when are we casting our pearls before the swine?

"Yours in Christ,
"N."

Reply

First of all, I want to say that it is encouraging to hear that you read the *Standard Bearer*. I always like to hear from our readers; but it is especially encouraging to me to hear that our young people — and if I am not mistaken, you are a young man of high school age — read our magazine. I am also happy to hear that Question Box has been helpful. I hope that it will also be helpful with respect to your questions.

Permit me a few preliminary remarks which may serve at the same time to clarify your problem. First of all, I am somewhat at a loss to know what you mean by "effective witness." To me, the term *effective* denotes the idea of having effects, of achieving results. And then I would point out that the effect of our witness is not up to you and me. Whether or not our witness will have the positive effect of turning someone from his evil way or of gaining someone for Christ is, of course, not up to us and is not a matter of our achievement. That is the work of God Himself, through His Spirit, as He uses our witness as a means to accomplish the work of His grace. Hence, I would prefer to speak of a *faithful* witness, or a *true* witness, rather than of an effective witness. Secondly, although you probably did not intend the expression in that sense, I am not very fond of the expression "for the Lord" in connection with our witnessing. Too often in our day this expression is used with the connotation of our doing something for the Lord; and this is, of course, not a correct idea. I prefer to speak of our being witnesses *of* the Lord. In the third place, although I think I understand the point you want to make in this connection, I would like to point out that you suggest a false distinction between our good works

and our speech. You intend, I take it, to make the point that we must witness not only by our actions, but also by our speech. And this is correct. However, our speech, or our "confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus," belongs, of course, to our good works. And, finally, I would like to point out that the text from Ezekiel 3:18 is hardly pertinent in this connection, for the simple reason that this passage has to do with the calling, or task, of a prophet, or preacher, and does not refer to our Christian witnessing in general. Besides, of course, Ezekiel did not have a general calling to speak to all wicked men; but he was commissioned by the Lord to go and speak to the house of Israel at a particular time and place.

But with these preliminary remarks out of the way, let me address myself to your main question. This, as I understand your letter, is about the *extent* of our witness.

This question of the extent of our witness may be viewed, first of all, from the viewpoint of our position as witnesses. And then I would like to emphasize that we are always witnesses and that it is therefore always our calling to witness. "Ye *are* the light of the world," the Lord Jesus says. "Ye *are* light in the Lord," Eph. 5:8. This is our nature as regenerated children of God. And from this follows that it is our calling to bear witness. We must not put our light under a bushel, but let our light shine, that men may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. We must walk as children of light. I think it is well to bear this in mind. Too often this matter of witnessing has been given a restricted kind of religious connotation according to which we must all devote some part of our time to witnessing for the Lord, to being little evangelists and to bringing the gospel to others. But this is not the Biblical idea of witnessing. It certainly is not the calling of any and every Christian to be a kind of evangelist and to engage in some kind of religious work. But it is indeed the calling of every child of God in whatever station the Lord may place him in life to let his light shine and to walk as a child of the light, and in that sense to be a witness, to bear testimony, to show forth the praises of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Our entire life is included in this calling to witness. Our deeds and our words are included in it. No part of our life in relation to others is excluded from this calling to witness. In this sense, you are correct in feeling that this calling to witness is an endless task.

In the second place, however, we may view this question concerning the extent of our witness from the viewpoint of the *objects* of our testimony. To whom must we bear witness? I have really answered this question already in the preceding point when I emphasized that we are always witnesses and are always called, therefore, to bear testimony in our entire walk in the midst of the world. But without trying to prescribe all

kinds of detailed precepts, let me make a few suggestions.

And then I would say, first of all, that the general principle is that we must witness to all those whom the Lord puts on our path in life. When the Lord brings us into contact with anyone, in whatever sphere of our life that may be (home, church, school, business, factory, amusement, etc.), and whether that person is a child of God or not, it is our calling in relation to that person to manifest ourselves as children of the light. By this principle we must be guided and controlled always. Secondly, I would like to suggest that the objects of our witness are not only evildoers. I say this because the emphasis in your letter seems to be on this aspect. And this is certainly included. In fact, this emphasis is very realistic. As witnesses we occupy an antithetical position. We are called to walk as children of the light and to let our light shine in the midst of darkness. And it is well to bear this in mind, for the simple reason that it is exactly our tendency to become afraid or ashamed and to shirk our calling when we come into contact with evildoers. But at the same time, I would point out that this is only one aspect of our witnessing. We are also witnesses in relation to our fellow Christians and in a positive sense. Parents to their children, children to parents, children and young people to one another, believers mutually in the bonds of the communion of saints, — all are witnesses of the marvelous grace of the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Nor must this be overlooked. For one thing, this positive witness in the communion of saints must serve to strengthen and to confirm one another in the faith and in the assurance of faith.

Thirdly, whether in a given set of circumstances it is one's personal calling to bear testimony over against heresy and blasphemy or other evildoing, it seems to me, is a matter of personal determination before the face of God and in the light of the general principle that I laid down: that we must witness to whomever the Lord plainly puts on our path. This, it seems to me, too, depends somewhat on the circumstances. Thus, for example, you could drive yourself crazy if you tried to bear witness personally to every false preacher or teacher or writer of whose heresy you might gain some knowledge; and you would at the same time become an unfaithful witness by your failure to devote your time and energy to your God-given work and calling — in your case, let us say, your school work. Besides, we may remember that the Lord does not call us individually to do *all* the witnessing to *all* evildoers all by ourselves. Not only does He have *many* witnesses, but there is also such a thing as corporate, or group witnessing. The sending out of the witness of our *Standard Bearer* or *Beacon Lights* is an example of the latter. But let me use a concrete example. Let us say that you are on vacation, and that you are visiting in a church of another denomination on a Sunday. Let

us imagine that the minister preaches a bad, Arminian sermon. When the service is over, the minister goes to the exit to greet the people; and thus you are forced to meet him. The Lord has put him on our path. What must you do? Would it be right to pass him by with a polite and cheery "Good morning" and to ignore the fact that he has corrupted the gospel? You judge!

Further, my questioner wants to know when we are being true witnesses and when we are casting our pearls before the swine, in connection with the Lord's words in Matthew 7:6. Where is the line to be drawn?

This is really a large question all by itself. But let me try to give a few brief pointers. That which is holy and your pearls are evidently identical and have reference to the truth of the gospel, the pure and precious doctrines and precepts of the gospel. Dogs and swine, as unclean animals, represent those who when they come into contact with "that which is holy" and "your pearls" retain and reveal themselves in their unclean and ungodly and spiritually filthy nature. And "to give" and "to cast before" means to set that holy thing and those pearls, the various precious truths and precepts of the gospel, before these "dogs and swine." The Lord exhorts the children of the kingdom not to do this. Notice that this presupposes that these wicked men have already revealed themselves in their wickedness. In other words, when you have witnessed of the precious truths and precepts of the gospel before wicked men and they reveal themselves as spiritually filthy and vicious and impenitent, then you must not continue to expose that holy and precious gospel to the vicious and vile treatment of such men. There comes a time, therefore, when you shake off the dust of your feet against them and have nothing to do with them any longer. If I may use a concrete illustration, you may witness to an ungodly person concerning his cursing and swearing when you come into contact with him. And this is proper. But when your witness bears no positive fruit, and when, on the contrary, this ungodly man greets your witness with a vile stream of invective and cursing, then you do not continue to cast before him your pearls. But you turn your back on him and have nothing to do with him and his vile speech any longer. Bear in mind, however, that this very action and attitude is also a witness against such dogs and swine.

Finally, there is the point suggested by my questioner that we may not be satisfied to witness only by our actions, but that we must certainly witness by our speech as well. This is certainly correct. And it is a point well made. For witnessing by our actions may never be used as an excuse for failing to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus. And it is not an imaginary danger, I think, that we excuse ourselves in this manner.

My reply to these questions is already lengthy. But my questioner's reference to Romans 10:9 reminded me of some very pointed remarks made on this subject

in a sermon by the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema in his book, *God's Eternal Good Pleasure*. I will quote these

remarks under a separate heading; and I recommend that you read them in connection with this answer.

The Strength of Youth

The Formula For The Christian Home

Rev. J. Kortering

You teen-agers are well aware of the fact that sometimes the domestic waters are troubled by petty bickering, nagging conflicts, and even serious differences. We are not always riding the same wave with our parents.

The climate is stormy: harsh words, lost tempers, erratic behavior, and predictable remorse.

Many prayers are offered nightly on behalf of parents and teen-agers that such incessant conflicts may be resolved, that peace may be in the family, and that our homes may bear the seal of the covenant of grace.

It is in the interest of family harmony that we consider another phase of the subject, the Christian home. So far we considered the elements that are important for the founding of a Christian home, a proper understanding of marriage, Christian courtship, mate selection, and the wedding. Now we look at the home itself and consider what should characterize life within the Christian home.

A FORMULA

It may seem strange at first that Eph. 5:21 should constitute a Scriptural basis for such a formula. There we read, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." I suggest that, since this text precedes the specific consideration of how wives are to be submissive, how husbands are to love, how children are to obey, Eph. 5:22-6:4, we have here in these words a formula. By this we mean that upon understanding and following these words, we have the proper spiritual disposition to put into practice specific instruction as members of the family unit.

This can also be appreciated if we look carefully at the preceding context. In these verses Paul reminds us that we have been saved from sin. In verses 3-6 he describes the life of the wicked and reminds us that our nature is the same, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light," verse 8. We are converted, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The manner is spelled out in verse 18, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." This has a direct effect upon our whole life: expressed negatively it is, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. 5:11; positively it is, "Redeeming the

time because the days are evil," verse 16. This new life excites us to spiritual joy. It affects our singing, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord," verse 19. It affects our praying, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," verse 20. It also affects our conduct, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God," verse 21.

Obviously this text has general application. It is the principle that guides all human relationships. Nevertheless, here it introduces the specific instruction for behavior in the home.

HOW IS MUTUAL SUBMISSION EXPRESSED?

The question posed here is very serious. "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God." This speaks of *mutual* submission. How can that be? Are not wives to be subject to husbands, children be subject to parents? How can parents be subject to children, or husbands to wives? Does not the text imply we all have equal standing?

To steer through this maze of questions, we might suggest that there are three possibilities concerning submission. It is conceivable that Paul refers to some physical submission; there must be submission by the weaker to the stronger. This might be maturity of body or mind. Whoever is stronger physically or mentally should be the lord of the home and the rest of the members submit to them. A second possibility might be a legal submission. Here enters the sphere of authority; some members of the family have a right to be obeyed and others have the duty to submit. Thus parents have the right over children, and husbands over wives. A third possibility is a spiritual submission, that is each member of the family is to be subject to every other member of the family whenever that member speaks out of the fear of God. Paul undoubtedly has this in mind.

The Word of God emphasizes that when we are united to Christ by faith there is no preference given to some people, we are all equal. This is a beautiful truth that gives spiritual depth to our belief in the communion of saints. In the context of Eph. 5, Paul emphasizes that spiritual union with Christ, "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children," verse 1. Why does he

call us children? Because that is exactly what we are; no matter whether we are two years old or ninety-five years old, we are all *children* of God. We have principally one Father: He is Jehovah of Hosts. He is the absolute Lord and Sovereign. Every child of God must submit to Him, to His Word and Testimony. We are not the natural sons of God; there is only one natural Son: His name is Jesus. We are adopted children: legally through the blood of the cross, spiritually through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We come to express this joy in the family of God when the Spirit is in our hearts and we cry out, "Abba, Father," Gal. 4:6.

Paul makes a point in Gal. 3:28ff. That our equality with one another is that fact that we are one in Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This is the spiritual principle of unity. In Christ we are not lords and masters, we are servants, I Cor. 7:22; we are not fathers and mothers, we are children, Rom. 8:16, 17; we are not princes and rulers, we are citizens, Eph. 2:19; we are not elders, deacons and ministers, we are one body with one Lord, Eph. 4:4-6.

Applying this to the home, we are told that each member of the family has equal spiritual standing when we stand together before God in Christ. We have much to learn from each other. Christ tells us, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The same Scripture tells us, "The beauty of the old man is the grey head," Prov. 20:29. These two do not conflict, they complement each other. The old learn from the young and the young learn from the old as we altogether are learning from Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let me illustrate. One time a young person came to me troubled about her parents: she thought they were not serious about their faith; they lived like hypocrites. They insisted that she could not attend movies on dates, but when she came home the TV had the late-late show. It was one time that I told parents to listen to their children. This text provides the basic principle. It makes no difference how old one is or what one's legal position may be, whoever speaks truth concerning the Word of God must be obeyed and all must submit to that word. We will do this only if we understand this Scriptural principle. If a Christian wife confronts her husband with the Word of God, he cannot say that she must submit to him no matter what; he has the sacred obligation to submit to the Word she brings.

A truly Christian home is beautiful when this is put into practice.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE

Where does one find spiritual strength to govern his life by this principle. Eph. 5:21 provides this answer, "Submitting yourselves one to another, *in the fear of God.*"

Life in America is a testimony that this is the only formula for a truly beautiful home. One in four marriages ends in divorce, with the rate climbing rapidly. The birth rate has declined by one half in the past 60 years. Each year one-half million teen-agers run away from home. And "Dear Abby" provides a running account of the sad condition in many homes.

Even the world recognizes that the home is under persistent assault. How foolishly man sows the wind in order to reap the whirlwind. Women's Liberation, birth control, trial marriages, communal living all add to the rubble of broken homes and wrecked lives.

The fear of the Lord is God's own formula. When we have the fear of the Lord we will enjoy mutual submission, for no matter who speaks the Word of God in the sphere of the home, we will receive that and follow it. It stands to reason, one has to fear God to appreciate this.

The fear of the Lord includes three things.

First, one must know God as revealed in His Word. By this we do not mean that we merely have some intellectual understanding as to Who He is and what He has done. We need to have a thorough understanding of the Scriptures, to be sure, but we need more. We need to *love* that God. We must recognize that the Scripture is His Word, and we will not distort that Word, but will humbly bow before it. By this reverence of God's Word we will come to know Him as our God through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, one must respond to that revelation with a deep sense of spiritual awe. Here we understand that fear of God does not mean wicked and sinful fright. The wicked have every reason to be scared of God, just as Eve fled before His face before she received the covering of blood. As children of God, we know that He is our God, He loves us, He sent Christ to redeem us, and therefore the thought that the holy, righteous, infinite, and eternal God is our *Father*, is almost too good to be true. We respond with reverential awe and wonder.

Thirdly, by recognizing this revelation of God in such a way, it will arouse in us the proper response; we ask God to lead us in our lives. We confess our depravity, our sinfulness, and earnestly pray to God that He will guide our understanding, that we may be able to know what is His will and that it may be the controlling power in our lives. In the fear of God we humbly bow and pray, "Teach me thy will."

How can we obtain this fear?

The unbelieving world doesn't know anything about this fear of God. You can't sit in its universities or colleges and take courses in sociology that deal with the family and expect to find it. Sad to say, you can't even sit in many Christian schools and find that fear of God. If anything is sadly lacking in the apostate churches and schools it is this: there is no fear of God before their eyes. They trample under foot the Word of

God, their prayers are mockery, they boast of their greatness, but crumble because their foundation is of sinking sand.

The fear of God is communicated to us through the lively preaching of the Word as The Holy Spirit applies it to our hearts. When we meditate upon that Word, pray together about that Word, worship together at the feet of our Lord and do this as *families*, we come to appreciate this formula and learn that the closer we are to God the more peaceful our family life becomes.

OUR RESPONSE

Since this formula is so humiliating, we all do well

to spend more time confessing our sins one to another than boasting about our rights. This is true for parents and children as well. If the fear of God is in our hearts, we will readily confess our weakness and seek our help from Christ, Who alone provides.

At the same time we will be ready to be instructed as to our duty, whether of husband, wife, parents, or children.

Is the fear of God in us? Only then will we submit ourselves one to another in the sphere of our homes, and thereby submit to Christ our Lord.

In His Fear

Hope For Our Fading Flowers

Rev. John A. Heys

Last time we penned down a few thoughts in connection with the graduation address which we delivered to the class graduating from our South Holland, Illinois, Protestant Reformed Christian School June 8, 1971. Since one of the principle purposes of this department is to treat educational matters, we would at this time like to give some of the thoughts of the graduation address we delivered two nights later to the graduates of our Adams' St. Protestant Reformed Christian School, in Grand Rapids.

The class text was Isaiah 40:8, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever." Plainly the text contains two elements separated by the word *but*. After the word *but* we find the main part of the text. Here is the gospel, here is the comfort of the Word of God, "The word of our God shall stand forever." The section that precedes the *but* contains the background on which Isaiah would have us see this glorious truth. The last part of the verse contains comfort and hope for us. The first part tells us the situation in which we find ourselves and because of which we need comfort and hope. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth. But is that all we can say? Nay, in the face of this terrifying fact we find comfort in the truth that the word of our God shall stand forever.

Now it does not take us long in life to learn that which Paul declares in his first epistle to the Corinthians, namely, that there are different kinds of flesh. There is the flesh of man, of beasts, of birds and of fish which not only look different, but have a different taste. And although it is true of all flesh that it is as grass, and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field, Isaiah has only our flesh, the flesh of man, that is, our human bodies in mind. For in verse 7 he de-

clares, "Surely the people is grass." He has people in mind here and the word of our God for that people.

He sees a similarity between the grass of the field and the flower of the field and these bodies of ours. Certainly our flesh is not grass. It is flesh. Isaiah uses the expression figuratively, for in one instance he does say, "All the goodness therefore is as the flower of the field." That little word *as* is important. And the similarity that Isaiah sees between our flesh and the grass is that both appear strong and healthy in the morning of their life but soon wither, fade, and are gone! Withering and fading are the beginning of death. They show that the process has begun and cannot be reversed. It is not the same as drooping to say the grass is withering. It is not simply a case of the flower losing its rich color, lovely texture and delightful scent. It is a case of dying and of being no more. On the one side of that word *but*, therefore, we have the process of death setting in upon our bodies.

And at this time we would consider that these flowers that fade are our youth. It is possible to consider the rich, the noble, those of high social standing to be the flowers of the field, the goodness of the grass. These do stand out among the grass as far as man's judgment is concerned as being a step better than the common run of the human race. But we certainly may also consider our youth to be those fading flowers. We may do this because they are beautiful. The beauty of life and health and strength shines in their faces and their well-built, capable bodies. They do not yet have our wrinkles, our gray hairs, our stooped shoulders and our halting gait. They are a delight to behold.

But let us also remember that it is the flower that brings forth the seed whereby the plant is perpetuated

the next year. And in that sense also our children are our hope for the human race not only, but for the Church of Christ to be continued after the withering process has removed us from the earthly field. Where we stand, they will stand. They are the flowers that will and do insure the presence of this "grass" tomorrow and next year and until the end of time.

But the Spirit of God is no respecter of persons. As the wind blows off the hot desert upon the luscious, green, sturdy grass and withers it by nightfall, so our flesh which is grass is withered by the blast of God's Spirit that comes out of the fire of hell! All flesh is touched by it, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All have died in Adam and become guilty before God. It is appointed unto all men once to die.

And it is well that our youth take heed and remember this. It does not look at the moment as though they are in any danger of withering. They grow stronger every day, it seems. They go from strength to strength. It might seem quite out of place to remind of this at such a joyous occasion as their graduation, their attainment of this new level of their formal education, by their strength. But it will not take them long to find out that they too are only grass and fading flowers. All the men and women whose lives they studied, all the authors and poets whose works they examined were at one time flowers of the field. Where are they today? Not one of them remained. And none living today will escape that blast of the Spirit of God in the heat of His holy anger.

It is a matter of wisdom to consider this truth now before those days of the evidence of the fading are there. We want our youth to be happy at their graduation, but we also want them to be everlastingly happy and truly happy. Therefore it is quite fitting to listen to this word of God and to speak it clearly and loudly also in the midst of our rejoicing because of some achievement in this life. Then we can begin to give them the hope they must have now, and when the fading makes its clear mark upon them.

Pity then the graduates and the youth who are deceived by speeches the world delivers. Pity those who are deluded into thinking that man by his achievements will build a barrier against that wind from off the desert, will insulate mankind against the breath of death that God sends forth. Man's word about what victories we will have over diseases and sicknesses is not worth the breath with which they are uttered. You can hear man boast and claim his "victories" of heart transplants, and new surgical methods, of antibiotics and therapy. He has a long list of dreadful diseases which we hardly need to fear. And he is sure that cancer also will soon be cured. He has set in order many programs that will nullify the power of that wind with its withering heat and flower-fading power. He is sure that without the cross — which he despises — he will remove the curse.

But his word does not stand very long. For some fifty, sixty years he talks and seeks to encourage and give hope. But tomorrow he is gone! And instead of the diseases he has "conquered," the Spirit of God comes with a dozen new ones; while over the whole world hangs not only the air pollution that threatens more cancer and lung diseases but dreadful nuclear explosives with fatal radiation to make our heart attacks and cancer look tame and relatively painless and mild. No man shall stop the Spirit of God. No man can stand His tornado and hurricane, His lightning and His earthquake. Let the boasting of man go in one ear and out that same ear. Do not even entertain it a moment as having any real value.

But the word of our God is worth listening to and gives us hope when the heat out of hell begins to cause us to wither and fade. That word is His word of promise in Christ that this flesh will be raised again in the day of days. And then not to be brought back to this field as Lazarus came back only to die again. Nor even back to Adam's glory in paradise before he fell, but into the everlasting life of glory in the new Jerusalem. There we will know no sorrow or sighing, no night and no death, no pain and no distress.

And this is a particular promise. All flesh, indeed, will be raised, but all flesh will not be glorified. The word of our God is a very particular word, even as He is a particular God. That He is called *our* God is not simply due to the fact that He is the God Whom we confess. But it means that He is our God in a special way. He is our God in Christ. He is not simply the God Who created us. In that sense He is the God of all creatures. But He is the God Who saved us in Christ and is become our Covenant God, our Father Who loves us because of what He has made us to be in Christ. Because He is our God in that sense, there is a word of promise to us from Him.

And that word of promise stands! He is the unchangeable God Whom no creature can change in the least. What He promised, He will continue to promise. He never changes His word. He never goes back on His word. And not only is He the unchangeable Jehovah, He is also the Almighty God. Promising us this deliverance, through death, from death and hell He is also able to do it exactly as He promised. We may and do change, for we fade and die. He does not and cannot change. We have strength as He is pleased to give it to us. He has infinite strength in Himself and depends upon nothing or no one outside Himself. The withering and the fading do not deny His unchangeableness. Neither do they deny His almighty power. His word of promise stands, not in spite of these, but through these.

For that word of promise has already been fulfilled, not in us yet but for us. God sent His Son into the fiery blast from out of hell. God nailed Him to the tree as our Head and sent forth on Him all the fury of hell

that our sins call for; and He endured it all till it was burned out, and He could triumphantly cry, "It is finished!" Then God raised Him the third day from the dead for us. Forty days later God took Him to His right hand in glory to prepare the way for us to come through death to this glory that death cannot touch. And because it is realized already for us, we may be sure that it will also be realized in us according to His ever-standing word.

When the aches and pains of withering come, when the miseries and afflictions of fading make themselves known to you, remember this word of God that stands forever. The aches and pains, the miseries and afflictions will not always stand for you. They will for those

who cannot say that He is their God in Christ. Yea, they will increase and be inexpressibly awful, because the word of our God stands forever. His decree to punish the unbeliever also stands forever. But we have the promise, and we have a standing word of promise that an end comes to our woes.

Read then all the books you can, but set the book of God's Word first and as that in the light of which all words of men are to be understood. Hold not to man's word unless he is echoing the word of our God. Listen not to the proud boasts of men who are withering and fading away at this very moment. Listen to the God of life Whose word is never broken and stands forever.

Contending for the Faith

The Doctrine of Atonement

THE REFORMATION PERIOD
THE SYNOD OF DORDT

Rev. H. Veldman

Finally, the Great Synod of Dordt was about to be convened. The moment had finally come when this august assembly would assemble in Dordrecht, Netherlands.

The Remonstrants of Arminians had opposed this calling of a national synod. They constituted a minority party in the Netherlands. The Calvinists were the national and popular party, and embraced the great majority of the clergy. And they stood upon the solid basis of the recognized standards of doctrine, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession. The Remonstrants favored a conference, attended by representatives of their own party and of the Calvinists, the issue to be settled by representatives of the government. In the February 1 issue of our Standard Bearer of this year, Rev. D. Engelsma has an article, entitled: The Concern of the Reformation for Christian Education (5). In this article Rev. Engelsma calls attention to the fact that Luther advocated the position that the civil authorities were supposed to establish and maintain Christian Schools. He also makes the observation that these civil authorities not only supported the school-teacher, but they also paid the pastor's salary. Well, at the time of the Great Synod of Dordt, and we can understand this, the government convened the synod, and these civil authorities were also represented at this Synod of Dordt. Until shortly before this synod convened, the Calvinists had been unable to prevail upon the civil authorities to convene a national synod. The reason was that the political leader, John van Olden Barneveldt, sided with the Arminians, and therefore

it was impossible for the Contra-Remonstrants or Calvinists to call a National Synod. This leader urged both sides to assume the attitude of tolerance. The Arminians and Calvinists should discuss their differences and then learn to live together. To this, of course, the Remonstrants did not object. They favored this spirit of tolerance and compromise. The heretic never objects to a name and place within the church of God. He always favors compromise. The Calvinist, however, can never agree to this. After all, in any compromise he will invariably be the loser. Give the heretic any standing room within the church of God, and he will invariably take over and assume full control. The Calvinists insisted on a national synod.

How did it happen that a national synod such as the great synod of Dordt was convened? This question is answered by the late Rev. Hoeksema as follows (he also calls attention to how this synod was constituted):

The political leader Odenbarneveld sided with the Arminians, so that it proved impossible for the Contra-Remonstrants to call a National Synod. But by a strange turn of events, plainly so directed by Him Who has all things in His hands, the influence of this politician was broken. Suddenly Prince Maurits, an able general took the side of the Calvinists. He took over the reins of the government, and gained permission to call a National Synod. On November 13, 1618, the National Synod of Dordt opened its sessions.

The constituency of the synod was as follows. Thirty-four ministers and eighteen elders represented the various synods of Gelderland, South Holland,

North Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overijssel, Groningen and Drenthe. Among these the name of Gomarus stands out as a long and consistent opponent of the Arminian errors and a staunch Supralapsarian.

Twenty-seven foreign theologians, representing the Reformed Churches of Great Britain, the Palatinate, Hesse, Switzerland, Wetteraw, Geneva, Bremen and Emden were at the synod. Delegates from France were invited to attend but were unable because of government interference. In addition, the synod received advice from aged Dr. David Paraeus, from the University of Heidelberg, who by reason of age and infirmity was unable to attend but gave written opinions. The foreign delegates did not merely sit in on the discussions, but took active part even in composing the Canons, even though the delegates from Holland were the main body of the Synod. Undoubtedly they exerted their influence in the formulation as we now have it.

There were five professors from the Netherlands.

There were also representatives of the government. Although they did not take part in the discussion, they were the government watchdogs who exerted influence on the delegates by their very presence.

As to the doctrinal position of the delegates, we may be sure that they were the very best representatives of the church, capable men with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. What an array of intellectual talent, especially as represented by the delegates from the Netherlands! This does not mean that they *all* were staunch in the truth:

(1) There were the supralapsarians, especially represented by Gomarus.

(2) There were the infralapsarians who also exerted influence. In fact, the articles are written in the *Infra* strain.

(3) There were some who were doctrinally sympathetic with the Arminians, particularly the delegates of Bremen, led by Martinus.

Finally, it would hardly do to fail to remark that Johannes Bogerman was the president. Of him it is said that he was courageous, tactful, decisive, and a man of action. His piercing eyes were said sometimes to emit flames of fire, his thundering voice demanded respect, and the wave of his arm expressed authority. He is said to have had the most attractive beard of all the delegates, gold-blond, wavy hair, extending to his waist-line.

Finally, the Rev. Hoeksema gives us the following brief resume of the meetings of this great synod:

a. The Arminians were called to the Synod to defend themselves. But they only stalled for time. They objected to the legality of the Synod, to the president, to the procedures. They refused to give their answers on paper and accused the Contra-remonstrants at every opportunity. (To this the undersigned, H. V., may add that the Remonstrants really accused this synod of being a "packed" synod. They wanted to meet with these synodical delegates on equal terms. They wanted this synod to be a conference between themselves and these various delegates.

And it was their desire that the findings or conclusions reached should then be submitted to the magistrates for their approval. They, of course, objected strenuously to the fact that they had been called by this synod to defend themselves. But the synod maintained that they had been convened legally, and that they, therefore, had authority to act).

b. The Synod put up with this until even the foreign delegates grew weary of it. On the 14th day of January, 1619, they were told by the thundering president: *Dimittimini, exite!* You are dismissed, get out! Appealing to the day of judgment, they withdrew.

c. On the basis of their writings, the objections to the errors were formulated. The Canons were finished by the 18th of April and the meetings were ended with the 130th session.

Of course, in our present discussion of the doctrine of the atonement, we are primarily interested in the second point of the Five Points of the Remonstrants. In this second point the Arminians set forth their view of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. It is well to quote this point once more:

That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that He has obtained for them all, by His death upon the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And in the First Epistle of John 2:2: "And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

In this second article, the Arminians state their view of the cross of Christ very clearly and unambiguously. This cannot be said of the other articles of the remonstrants' although it is true that they declare in the fifth article that they are not ready as yet to say that the saints will certainly persevere to the very end. In Article I they speak of an eternal and unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ, His Son, that it is before the foundation of the world, and that, according to this eternal and unchangeable purpose, the Lord has determined to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who shall believe on His Son through the grace of the Holy Ghost. And we may ask, "Is it not true that God has eternally and unchangeably decreed and determined to save those who believe in Christ Jesus and who shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith?" And is it not also true that the Lord has determined to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath and to condemn them as alienate from Christ? Do not our reformed fathers also declare that the Lord leaves the wicked in their sin and obduracy? However, we know what the Arminians meant in this first article on Divine predestination. Did they mean that the eternal counsel of God has sovereignly determined these things, and that their being

left in their sin and disobedience is the fruit of God's eternal and unchangeable decree? Indeed, not! What they meant was that God foresaw this sin and continued disobedience, and that the Lord, in His decree of predestination, election and reprobation, was determined by the faith of those who are saved and by the unbelief of those who perish. But, their language in Point I is surely ambiguous and vague.

Their second point, however, is clear. Here they declare that Christ died for all men and for every man. Here they state that the Saviour has obtained redemption and the forgiveness of sins for them all. And when they add that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, then they surely mean that,

although Christ died for all men and for every man, the actual benefit and fruit of that cross is dependent upon the believer. As far as Christ's intent is concerned, He died for all and would have all men be saved. But, as far as our actual salvation is concerned, that is not determined by the work of Christ upon the cross but only by the sinner who determines his own salvation. And this is also the position of Professor H. Dekker of Calvin Seminary. The Arminians, therefore, believed in universal atonement, and, as we shall see later, this is really no atonement at all. If Christ died for everybody, then nothing really happened upon the cross of Calvary.

Come Ye Apart . . . And Rest A While

The Now Generation

Rev. C. Hanko

One hears a lot of talk about the "now generation." It may be a bit difficult to determine what the expression means, but the general idea seems to be quite evident. Especially the youth of today wants to do their thing NOW. They are unhappy with the "establishment" and want to change it, and that right now. They express their resentment against the established order of things by wearing long, unkempt hair, matted beards, filthy, tattered clothing, and show a complete disregard for all law and order. They resort to demonstrations, riots, destruction of property, and, if need be, to revolution. Although they have nothing constructive to offer, they want a change, and they want it now.

Even that does not fully describe the NOW people. Many of them refuse to work. They want to enjoy life to the full; to get everything out of living that they possibly can. They may use beer and hard liquor, but they even more readily resort to drugs. They try to escape reality by getting "high," by making a "trip," by bringing themselves into a state of "ecstasy." Many of them rock and sway with their rock and roll music. Some blasphemously associate themselves with Jesus, Who is also regarded as being opposed to the establishment of His time. As "Jesus' children" they add their "religious strain" to their sensual music. The pagans in their idolatrous immorality could not outdo them. Many of the now generation indulge freely in sexual intercourse outside of marriage, yet refusing to assume the responsibilities that normally accompany marital relationships. They make free use of the pill, and, if that fails, they want the freedom to practice abortion. They would like to escape the venereal diseases that result from their promiscuous living, but already these

diseases have reached epidemic proportions in many areas of our country. America is swiftly becoming the filthiest, most immoral nation of the world. The result is misery, disgust with living, while the institutions for the mentally ill are overcrowded, and suicides "to escape it all" are on the increase.

The now generation is not waiting to fill up the cup of iniquity at some future date. They are filling their measure as fast as they can right now. This is only another sign of the times, warning us that the end of the ages is upon us. For what can come of all this? Only lawlessness, open defiance of all decency and morality, internal revolution, and world wide chaos must follow. The future looks very dark.

Yet that is the righteous judgment of God upon those who ruthlessly trample His law into the mire of sin. "Vanity of vanities," saith the preacher, "all is vanity," even everlastingly into hell. (Eccles. 1.)

And because the preacher was wise, he gave, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sage advice to the covenant youth of his day, which applies just as much, if not more so, today. He tells them that they may and can do what no one else can do. They can "do their thing." They can live their lives to the full, following freely the dictates of their hearts and minds. Just listen to him: "Rejoice, O young man (and young woman, for that matter) in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the sight of thine eyes." (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

A teen-ager is strong. In the strength of his youth he can flex his muscles, work hard and fast, and even find time to test his strength and skill in various sports. As a young woman she is like a bud unfolding in her tender, feminine beauty. She also stands in the virgin strength

and vitality of youth. Covenant young people are, likewise, spiritually strong. They are new creatures in Christ with renewed, sanctified hearts. Their minds are devoted to God and to His Christ, according to that new life of the Spirit. They are able to resist evil and the evil one; ready and capable through prayer to make some of the most vital decisions of life.

A teen-ager is alert. This is the time to learn, and the inclination of heart is there to probe deeply into things, devour greedily more knowledge, absorb it, and stow it away in the most uncanny computer of all, the human brain. In God's covenant he acquires knowledge of the Scriptures, of his God, and of his Christ. He sees God's handiwork in creation, even as he experiences God's grace in his heart. He recognizes his divinely appointed place in his family, in the church, and in the midst of the world.

The teen-ager is care-free. No, covenant youth is not careless or indifferent. But he is not yet burdened with the cares of life. He may often feel as if he is carrying all the problems of the world on his young shoulders, but actually he is not yet personally concerned about the many perplexities of life.

He can remove from him the sorrow for sin by way of repentance, and thus experience the joy of forgiveness. He is able to fight sin, even the sin that works so powerfully within his old nature. He knows that the paths of sin, as enticing as they may be, are slippery paths of worry, trouble, misery, yes, in one word, death. For apart from God, childhood and youth are vanity. (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

And therefore, covenant youth, you are the genuine, the only proper NOW generation. As the wise preacher, still under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, left you the sage advice: "Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

Always keep in mind your Maker.

He is the living God, Who, some six thousand years ago, created heaven and earth by the word of His power. It was not necessary for Him to depend on some slow process of evolution within creation. He knew that the smallest microbe could never come into

being, could not even exist apart from Him, much less could develop into different creatures of various kinds. He spoke and it was; He commanded and it stood forth; for He called the things that were not as though they were. We know that, trust in it, and rejoice in it by faith.

He created you. He formed you as an individual, with your own personality, your own nature, your own peculiar gifts and talents, to take the divinely appointed place in life which only you can fill. You are a distinct masterpiece produced by the Hand of the Master-Craftsman, the living God in Christ Jesus. He had His own purpose in making you exactly what you are, so that, under the guidance of His Spirit, you can walk in those good works which He has appointed for you. You have your own place in the church, to work out your own salvation to the welfare of others, and thus to the glory of His Name. (Eph. 2:10). Committing your way to Him in prayer, He guides you in all your decisions, so that you have the assurance of His "well-done."

Remember Him Who created you with the sole purpose of re-creating you in Christ as His son or His daughter, as a member of the family of God, to enter into the assembly of the saints in heaven, to serve Him forever in the new creation.

By grace you can follow the dictates of your sanctified heart. You can see with a spiritual eye all God's mighty works. You can stand in the strength of youth, resisting all evil, defending the right.

In that sense you are the NOW generation that can do your own thing. And you must do it now. Don't waste your time in sinful wanderings. Don't make rash, sinful decisions that burden you the rest of your life. Do prepare yourself, like a runner training himself to run a race, for life's demands. Even now work the work of the Lord, redeeming the time, so that when the burdensome days of old age are upon you, you may benefit still from what you acquired in your youth. And afterward, be ready to receive the crown of life.

Studies in Election

Its Implication

(continued)

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

The previous article showed that angels are in God's decree of reprobation. They have been ordained to condemnation and to eternal judgment, a certain definite number of them. Since the elect angels had

never fallen, all the angels were, in the decree of God, viewed neither as yet created, nor as yet fallen. It ought to be readily understood that not first with respect to the decree of the angels was their creation.

This is not true, even with respect to the plan of a man. He first plans to have a house before he determines to build a house. When he decides (decrees) to have a house, then he may not only decide to build it, but also to build the most amazing structure you ever saw out of cast-offs and ruins. The church has always been mocked by the world with some such ridicule as, "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" (Neh. 4:2). But that is exactly what God Himself will do in the building of His church. His church is brought out of hell's rubbish.

But men, too, are included in God's decree of reprobation. It is right here that the idea of sovereign reprobation is so offensive. That some of the angels have been pre-ordained to damnation is not the cause of very much concern to us. That they were cast down to hell, that they were even eternally damned before they had done any good or evil, we can hear with very little emotion, and with not the least thought of charging God with injustice, cruelty and no mercy. But at just a hint of the reprobation of man, and a great outcry is made against the idea. The reason for this is because the matter now comes much closer to home. It affects us! We are naturally partial to ourselves and to our race. Yet God's decree of reprobation with respect to the angels reveals a much greater severity: the fallen were not spared, no grace was provided them, no savior brought to them. They were from eternity consigned to everlasting ruin. Now there are not only elect men, but also reprobate men. Jesus said of such a small body as the apostolate, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen" (John 13:18). He has a very particular knowledge of His chosen ones, a knowledge that is beautifully expressed in, "I know My own, and My own know Me" (John 10:14, ASV). To the rest He shall say in the day of judgment, "*Never* was I knowing you!" (Matt. 7:23, Gk.). Never at any time did He know them as His own. Their names were never written in heaven. They never believed in Him to the saving of the soul. Why not? Jesus Himself answers, "Ye believe not because ye are not My sheep." This truth of reprobation is offensive to the natural man and to the flesh in the Christian. But it is Jesus' own teaching!

"Moreover, whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Not all are conformed to that perfect image of the Son. Some are and remain in the image of the devil. They consequently imitate their father, the devil. Further, "whom He did predestinate, them He also called." But though many are called, few are chosen. Not all are called. Some are not even outwardly called. They sinned without law, they perish without law. "Whom He called, them He also justified." Not all are justified. There is a world to be condemned: I Cor. 11:32. Not all are children of God or heirs of Christ. Some are vessels of mercy, indeed, but some others are

vessels of wrath. "And whom He justified, them He also glorified." Certainly not all are glorified. The vessels of wrath were fitted to destruction and go into everlasting punishment.

Reprobation was determined sovereignly, and before the fall. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth . . . Hath not the Potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Rom. 9:11, 21). Here mankind is viewed in the pure mass of creature-ship. It is not viewed with sin, as corrupt and fallen, as though all men were originally fit for dishonor, some being left in that dishonor, while others were translated from dishonor to honor. No, but all the vessels are taken from the same unfallen lump, and some are made unto honor and some to dishonor. Also Pharaoh's hardening was not merely a judicial hardening, because he despised and refused the truth. For "whom *He* will, *He* hardeneth." It is not man's hardening which is first, but God's. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves (II Cor. 3:5). Even "the preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, (are) from the Lord" (Prov. 16:1). Yet "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (21:1). Therefore, "for this same purpose have I raised thee (Pharaoh) up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Rom. 9:17). Calvin tells us that here we have two things, the predestination of Pharaoh to ruin according to His eternal counsel, and the purpose of this decree of reprobation, which was to make known the name of God. The cases of Pharaoh and Esau are used in Romans Nine "to prove the doctrine of reprobation as the counterpart of the doctrine of election." "It is written, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated'" (9:13). Take your concordance and check the passages where *men* are said to hate, and you will find that the meaning of the word *hate* is not according to Scripture softened to "loved less." Where you read that "He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He *hardeneth*," the word *hardeneth* cannot be softened to "shows less mercy." Paul in this chapter does not bother to defend the doctrine of predestination against charges of (God's!) injustice. His argument is that God in the cases of these reprobate men displayed neither justice nor injustice, but His free sovereignty. "Whatsoever His soul desireth (wills, decrees), even that He doeth."

God's sovereign acts are beyond all complaint of man. Paul in answer to a complaint that is always made replies, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?" The complaint is that election and reprobation are incompatible with human responsibility. Paul's thinking and teach-

ing here are inconsistent with the facts of man's responsibility, and therefore Paul must withdraw and correct his position. It is saying too much, as Paul had said in verse 18, "He hath mercy on whom He will, and whom He will He hardeneth." This only opens the way for all kinds of fault-finding to be made against God. The argument is really saying, Why did not God have mercy on *all*? Why did He not make *all* obedient? and so put fault-finding once-and-for-all right out of court. Paul does not concern himself with this objection. He does not bother to repudiate it. He does not say, for example, Oh, you misunderstand me; God does *not* find fault. Men may and *do* resist Him. Paul is not worried about being inconsistent with man's responsibility, as though that could ever be lost! and therefore he must certainly withdraw his extreme position. No, Paul knows perfectly well what may be lost — the sovereignty of God, as held and maintained in the true church. Nor is Paul concerned with the manufactured difficulty dumped into his lap, that of reconciling God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Paul never felt any need for reconciling that which never needed any reconciling. The two are perfectly good friends, have always gotten on well together, never were separated, nor can be, and so need no reconciling. What Paul replies in verse 20 to this objection is that, You argue, not against me, but against God. For your objection you have no right, no reason. A potsherd of the earth has no complaint against the almighty Potter, or against His sovereign will. "Whom He *will*, He hardeneth!" God can and does do as He wills. The destiny of man is in God's hands. "It is not of him (man) that willeth, nor of him that runneth." "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?" (Matt. 20:15).

This sovereign act of reprobation God works effectually. The efficient cause of it is God. "Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased, Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He, in heaven, in earth, in the sea and all deep places. He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the

inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say, 'What doest Thou?' We have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11). God is the cause of it. He says, I hated! I raise thee up! I show My power! Then you read, He will! He hardeneth! He has power over the clay. He afore prepared unto glory! *He* fitted to destruction! It cannot fairly be said that the reprobate fitted themselves this way. The tense of the verb is the perfect passive participle, "having been fitted for destruction." Esau did not fit himself the object of divine hate. "Esau *I hated*." Pharaoh did not raise himself up a monument to God's severity; I did, saith the Lord.

What is the moving cause of the act of reprobation? Nothing other than the will of God. Not man's sin, but the good pleasure of God moved Him to it. Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death, for death is decreed for sin. But sin is not the cause of God's decree. The decree of reprobation was before either sin or righteousness (Rom. 9:11). The decree of God damns the reprobate. It damns him for his sin. Sin is the cause of his ordination to condemnation, but not the cause of the ordination itself. That is, sin is the cause of the thing willed (condemnation), but not the cause of the will. An aspect of divine election and reprobation is expressed in Jesus' prayer, "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." What is the most ultimate cause of this two-fold effect of predestination is expressed in the following words, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight!" (Matt. 11:25f).

Here is abundant Scripture evidence for the doctrine of reprobation, which we have given. For much, much more, consult the proof texts quoted in Boettner's *Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* and Berkhof's *Textual Aid to Systematic Theology*.

(To be continued)

Studies in Baptism

Various Baptisms Exemplifying One Baptism

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

According to Hebrews 9:10 (Gk), the Old Testament dispensation and its worship in connection with the first tabernacle stood in exoterordinances and "various baptisms." These baptisms were plain types of the New Testament's "one baptism." The Old Testament, we saw previously, reveals that these baptisms were *washings*, as the King James Version correctly trans-

lates in Hebrews 9:10. We also examined ten pentateuchal instances of these baptisms which show them to be cases of "this the dipping in *and* sprinkling with water. . . ." Here, too, we showed that the administration of baptism is neither *either-or*, i.e., either by dipping in, or sprinkling with water, nor a matter of *both-and*, i.e., both by dipping and sprinkling. There

are neither two allowable modes of baptism, nor did the dipping happen to the baptized. So that the act of dipping was not the act of baptism; the act of sprinkling was. We saw, too, that there were old covenant baptisms that could be and were performed by anointing with blood, and by the pouring of oil on the head. Often it was that baptism was effected when men did *wash, bathe, purify and cleanse*.

No one seriously questions the fact that circumcision was a sign of God's covenant. Circumcision also clearly revealed who belonged to God's covenant, namely, true Israelites (Rom. 2:28, 29) and their infant seed. But also these various washings and baptisms were signs of God's covenant — certainly of nothing else or less — and revealed that the children no less than the parents belonged to God's covenant. That is, they also belonged to His everlasting love. This is plain from Deut. 29:9-17, where the covenant is said to embrace "all of you . . . your captains, elders, officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, for a people unto himself." Covenant people are clearly identified as "the seed of Abraham," "all Judah with their little ones, their wives and their children. (II Chron. 20:7, 13)

We know from the New Testament that passing through the Red Sea, the Israelites were baptized. They were also baptized in the wilderness, and that as *families*. A family baptism took place in a dry land, when "the heavens also dropped at the presence of God . . . Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby Thou didst confirm Thy inheritance . . . Thy congregation hath dwelt therein." (Ps. 68:6-10) The families of Israel, by a plentiful rain, were baptized and dwelt (lived) in that baptism, just as we do now in ours. Referring to the baptism that took place passing through the Red Sea, the psalmist praises God that He had so "redeemed Thy people." Then he says, "The waters saw Thee, O God . . . they were afraid . . . the clouds poured out water, the skies sent out a sound, Thine arrows (missiles: raindrops) also went abroad . . . Thou leddest Thy people as a flock." (Ps. 77:14-20) This throws light on I Cor. 10:1, 2, with implications perspicuous and powerful.

Yet these various baptisms all pointed to but one baptism, still to come. "This external washing with water" pointed to the fact, now realized, of our having been "washed by Christ's blood and Spirit." Baptism is a reality and has a sign of the reality. The sign of the real baptism is with the ablution of water. So that, the real baptism, merely signified with water, is actually and only with the blood and Spirit of Christ. (Heid. Catec., Of Holy Baptism, Lord's Day, 26, Ques. 69-74). This one baptism, still to come, was continually put before the minds of God's people, especially by the prophets. A prophecy of it is had, first, in Proverbs 1:23, "Turn you at My reproof: behold, I will *pour out My Spirit* unto you." Second, Isaiah

prophesied that Israel would be troubled in heart "until the Spirit be *poured* upon us from on high." (32:15) Third, through Isaiah the Lord promised, "For I will *pour* water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will *pour* My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring." (44:3) Fourth, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies *pour* down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together." (45:8) Fifth, it is also prophesied how Christ himself should be the baptizer, and how He should effect His baptism: "So shall He *sprinkle* many nations." (52:15) This was fulfilled in the execution of His great commission, "Go ye, (*lit.*, having gone), disciple the nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them. . . ." Sixth, God through Ezekiel promised, "Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you . . . and I will put My Spirit within you" (36:25, 27). Seventh, in vision the Lord saw the promised baptism as already fulfilled: "for I have *poured out* My Spirit upon the house of Israel." (39:29) Eighth, Israel was taught that this promised baptism of the Spirit included not only "the people, congregation, elders, priests and ministers, but the children, those that suck the breasts," so that they all, including the infant seed of the congregation, were "Thine heritage." To *them* the promise was, "I will *pour out* My Spirit upon all flesh," including sons and daughters. "In those days will I *pour out* My Spirit." (Joel 2:16, 17, 28, 29) Ninth, "I will *pour* upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace. . . ." (Zech. 12:10). You see, then, how severely biblical the Heidelberg Catechism is on baptism. It is quite in keeping with the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.

The theme we have really been treating is, *Baptism With the Blood and Spirit of Christ* (cp. Heid. Cat., Q. 70). Under that heading the divisions are, I. The Old Testament on Various Baptisms, and II. The New Testament on One Baptism. This brings us to the point where we now give consideration to baptism in the light of the New Testament. Besides the beautiful expression given to the doctrine of baptism as in the Heidelberg Catechism, as noted above, it is also beautifully put in the Belgic Confession of Faith. "Our gracious God and Father . . . has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with pure water . . . signifying to us that as water washes away the filth of the body when *poured* upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized when *sprinkled* upon him, so does the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, internally *sprinkle* the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath unto children of God. Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the *sprinkling* of the precious blood of the Son of God, who is our Red Sea, through which we must

pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil . . . Therefore, our Lord gives . . . the . . . *washing, cleansing, and purging* our souls of all filth . . . Neither does this baptism only avail us at the time when the water is *poured* upon us and received by us, but also through the whole course of our life." (Art. XXXIV)

When you then look at baptism as taught in the New Testament, you may expect that the New Testament doctrine of it will be in perfect harmony with what we have already seen of its Old Testament setting and exemplifications. It simply could not be otherwise. According to the New Testament, there were two great historical victories which were typical baptisms, pre-figurations of the baptism with the blood (Mark 10:38) and Spirit of Christ. These events were the Flood (I Pet. 3:21) and the passage through the Red Sea. (I Cor. 10:1, 2) With the Flood there was a baptism of the church in seed form, the baptism of a family, and that on the faith-basis of Genesis 7:1, which see. In this instance, it is plain as can be that although the "world of the ungodly" (II Pet. 2:5) was immersed, it was not baptized, and that although Noah and his family were baptized, they were not immersed. Paul, writing of the other baptism victory, states "that all our fathers were *under* the cloud," not underneath it; for the cloud was behind them, making separation between them and the Egyptians. They were under the cloud, under the dominance of its Presence, under the guidance of the Faces, Persons dwelling in the cloud. "And all passed *through* the sea," certainly not under

the sea; not even *in* the sea, as we shall see. For they went through the sea dry shod and as on dry land. They "were all baptized *unto* Moses," that is, in *reference to* Moses, who as a type of Christ led them through the sea in redeeming power. They were, as the King James Version (the best Bible version in all the world) has it, baptized "*in* the cloud and *in* the sea." The preposition is the Greek *en*, used with the dative. It is properly translated *in* when it happens to be a dative of place, as "in the Jordan." But when it happens to be a dative of means, as here, it is properly translated *with*. Then it properly reads, they were baptized "*with* the cloud and *with* the sea." So it is in the Greek Testament. The Dutch Bible has exactly the same as the Greek Testament. The German Bible correctly translates the Greek, "mit der wolche und mit dem meer," that is, "*with* the cloud and *with* the sea." It is not the place, but the means of baptism which is emphasized. According to the text, they were not in the cloud nor in the sea. They were *under* the cloud and *through* the sea. So that their baptism in this case was with the cloud and with the sea; one baptism with two aspects. Here occurred the baptism of a nation, one of the many nations referred to in Isaiah 52:15. The Egyptians were immersed, but not baptized, whereas the Israelites were baptized, but not immersed. According to Scripture, there is a great deal of difference between immersion and baptism.

(To be continued, D. V.)

When we fail to learn the lessons of Church History and the History of Dogma, we sin against better knowledge.

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on Wednesday, September 1, 1971, at Isabel, South Dakota, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Delegates in need of lodging are to notify the clerk of the Isabel consistory of this need.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy to our members, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Noorman, in the sudden loss of his father,

MR. BARNEY NOORMAN.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (II Corinthians 1:3,4)

Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.
Mrs. Robert Moelker, Sec'y.

ATTENTION !!!

ALL MEMBERS OF THE REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION.

Our Annual Meeting will be held, the Lord willing, on Thursday evening, September 30. The time — 8 P.M. The place — First Church. Your speaker — Mr. Jon Huiskens. His subject — "THE STANDARD BEARER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION." All members are *expected* to attend this meeting and prospective new members are *invited*!

G. Bol, Sec'y.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OPENING

The Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches will begin a new term, D.V., on Wednesday, September 8, at 9 a.m. All students should be present at that time for registration and assignments. A public convocation program (seminary night) will be announced in the Grand Rapids area bulletins. We commend the seminary and its labors to the prayers of our churches.

H. C. Hoeksema, Rector

News From Our Churches

We may as well begin with information concerning a couple of not very recent calls. Rev. R. Moore was chosen, from a trio which included also Rev. R. Harbach and Cand. R. Miersma, to receive the call to serve as pastor in our church in Randolph, Wisconsin. Rev. Moore has also received the call from Doon. According to a late report, Rev. Moore has accepted the call from Doon. Rev. D. Engelsma has declined the call to become the third professor in our seminary. And, at the time of this writing, Rev. R. Harbach is considering the call to become our second missionary, a "Home Missionary" to labor in the United States and/or Canada. The trio from which he was chosen by Hope Church (Grand Rapids), the calling church, included Rev. Harbach, Rev. Heys, and Rev. Kuiper.

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Requested announcement: the newly appointed Secretary of the Protestant Reformed Mission Committee is Mr. John M. Faber. His address is 1123 Cooper S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507. He replaces Rev. G. Van Baren.

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Also from Isabel's bulletin we learn that the congregation of our Hull church, after the recent remodeling of that church's pulpit area, sent to Isabel a pulpit chair "which will find its place behind the pulpit very soon." The thoughtfulness and brotherly concern, of which this is evidence, was noted in that bulletin from Isabel.

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News from Hope Church in Redlands includes this item: "The Reformed Witness Hour has obtained a new station, especially clear in the Bellflower area. A new and better time has also been obtained." That's station KHOF, at 2:30 P.M.

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From time to time, and from various parts of the world, the R.F.P.A. receives letters concerning its publications, notably *The Standard Bearer*. We would like to quote a few lines from several of these letters which have been made available to this writer for use in the news column. This, from Australia: "It is a joy to hear of the work of the Protestant Reformed Church, but I would like to know more. We look forward to seeing 'The Standard Bearer.'" And this from South Africa: "With reference to your letter regarding the distribution of *The Standard Bearer* in South Africa, we have decided to undertake the distribution of 10 copies on a

trial basis, since we feel that there are a number of persons who might be interested in becoming regular subscribers."

Not all letters are favorable, of course. There are those who consider the truth of God, as it is revealed in Scripture and as it has been understood by the church of the reformation, to be irrelevant to today's world. From the Netherlands, for example, comes this response. "I don't wish to receive any longer 'The Standard Bearer.' It may represent the pulse-beat of your reformed heritage, it does not mine. In theological sense it doesn't answer the religious questions of this modern world with its modern way of life."

Compare that last reaction with this one from a reader in Hungary: "I am also glad to write you that the Reformed Witness Hour (printed message) and *The Standard Bearer* sent in an envelope are regularly arriving. I am thanking God that they are allowed to come in, because I am learning much of them. . ." And this one from a U.S. reader: "Thanks for giving to me, through your magazine, an understanding of many things Reformed. Would that my seminary training . . . had given me an appreciation for and an understanding of the Reformed concept of 'Church' as I learn it in your pages." And from a Sunday bulletin of our Kalamazoo Church comes the letter of appreciation for our Reformed publication and the articles of its editors. Of them he says, "We need to have such strong defenders of the faith."

Our hard-working business manager is probably in as good a position as anyone else to know where our paper is going and how it's being received. So the last work on this subject ought to be his. Here it is: "Another country heard from! Egypt yet! From time to time The Board of The R.F.P.A. receives requests for Protestant Reformed literature from individuals outside our own country. This time the request came from a pastor residing in Cairo, Egypt. Amazing, is it not! Other requests received recently originated in Canada, Australia, Essex (England), Guyana (South America), Budapest (Hungary), Edenvale (South Africa), and New Zealand. For less than one dollar expended for postal expenses, a bundle of recent issues of *The Standard Bearer*, plus a copy of each of the Sunday School pamphlets were sent to these interested people. Have you ever wondered how these Christian believers ever learned of our small Protestant Reformed denomination? We will inform you, D.V., in one of the forthcoming issues of this paper."

D.D.