

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

So it is distinguishing grace alone which makes men to differ; and although it could be said that the proximate cause of this hardening is to be found in man's sinful heart, still the ultimate cause is God's sovereign decree of reprobation.

See "Studies In Isaiah" —
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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

Our Fall in Paradise

Rev. C. Hanko

*Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?**From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin.*

Heid. Catechism, Lord's Day III, Question 7.

This depravity.

Our fathers make no effort to spare us when they speak of the extent of our sins and miseries. Have you ever stopped to consider the various terms that they use in describing our present misery? In Lord's Day II they assert that the very inclination of our nature is only to hate; to hate God and to hate everyone with whom we come in contact from day to day. That includes those whom we profess to love most dearly. In the first question of this Lord's Day our Catechism

declares that we are wicked, that is, that our motives are always purely selfish, that we love sin, and that we transgress God's law continually with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. No, even that language was not strong enough to suit our instructors. To that terrible indictment they added the dreadful word 'perverse.' We are also perverse, stubborn, rebellious in our very nature, rejecting God and His holy Word at every turn of the

way, always determined to give vent to the evil passions that burn within us.

The very thought makes us shudder. Yet the saints of old did not hesitate to make these charges, even as they were led by the Holy Scriptures and the testimony of the Spirit in their hearts. The question and answer we are now discussing speaks of 'the depravity of our human nature,' and adds that the corruption of our nature must be traced back to the earliest moment of our existence. We are depraved, innately bad, corrupt, lewd, immoral, like an apple that may appear sound on the outside, but is rotten at the core.

Our first reaction might very well be, that this is a hard doctrine, who can believe it? Reluctantly we might be willing to grant that this is true of the scum of humanity, the drug-addicted, immoral hippies who live like swine in the mire, or of the criminals and sadists of the world. We might be inclined to brush this charge aside with a feeling that it gives us nothing more than a pessimistic outlook on humanity. We might want to plead that there surely must be a lot of good in the worst of us, and that this good should receive more emphasis. We might even raise to our defence that all this might have been true at one time, but now that grace abounds in our lives our very nature has changed and greatly improved. But our fathers know nothing of this. With Scripture as their guide they maintain that there is none that doeth good as he is by nature, no, not one. We are of ourselves prone to hate, we are wicked and perverse, we are depraved, even corrupt. Our Baptism Form urges us "to loathe and humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation without ourselves." We learn to say with David, "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." We understand Paul when he brands himself as the chief of sinners, and we readily acknowledge, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing."

Whence this depravity?

Our Catechism asks, "Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?" To answer that question we go back to paradise; this time, not as before to marvel at the state of righteousness in which we were created, but to weep.

Two trees stood in the center of the garden of Eden. One of these was the tree of life. This tree of life gave the center of the garden an atmosphere of the Holy of Holies, where Adam and Eve experienced in a very special way intimate communion of life with God. This was a memento to them of the fact that they received their daily bread from God's hand. It was also a constant reminder of their Sovereign Friend, Who in boundless covenant love had created them as His friend-servants. I like to think that God

came and spoke to our first parents at this tree of life, and that there they kept Sabbath, somewhat as we do in church on Sunday. At the tree of life they experienced that the loving-kindness of their God was more to them than their daily food and drink.

The other tree that stood in the center of paradise was the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil. As the one tree was the Tree of Life, so this other tree was the Tree of Death. God had forbidden Adam to eat of that tree, with the warning that at the moment that he would eat of it he would surely die. Its very name told Adam that God expected implicit love and obedience from him. In covenant love to God he must persistently refuse to eat of the forbidden tree, simply because God said so. Refusing to eat he would experience the good, the blessedness of obedience, which carried away God's approval. On the other hand, if he would reach out his hand in rebellion to God's command, and take of the forbidden fruit, he would know evil. He would know sin, and experience the misery of God's severe judgment upon the sinner. Adam and Eve must have understood that obedience in love was good, was a constant knowing, experiencing the goodness of God. While on the other hand, disobedience was evil, carrying with it the evil horrors of death. They must have understood this, even though they could not have understood the misery that accompanies this living death throughout the generations.

The Temptation.

Scripture gives us a clear account of the temptation, with which we are all acquainted. Certainly no one could express it better than God's own language in Genesis 3. Anyone who believes an infallible Scripture, divinely inspired, must also believe that there was literally a Satan, a wicked, fallen angel. He must believe that Satan literally found an instrument in the serpent, which was created with a gift of speech. He must also believe that Satan spoke to Eve through the serpent, tempting her to eat of the forbidden tree, which actually stood in paradise. What impresses us, possibly even more than a literal interpretation of this entire event, is the fact that Satan is given by God access to paradise, is given the instrument of the serpent, is given opportunity to approach Eve with his temptation. The sovereign God did not merely *allow* these things to happen. In fact, I am thankful to my God that He never for a moment turns His back upon the happenings of this present time, but sovereignly rules over all by His almighty providence. I am grateful that the fall was not an accident, and that there are no accidents in God's plan of the ages, but that all things, including the fall in paradise, are a part of God's eternal, sovereign plan of redemption to the glory of His Name. Eternally before the face of God stands

Christ, by Whom all things were created, through Whom God carries out the counsel of His sovereign will, unto Whom are all things, that to God may be the glory forever. Colossians 1:13-20.

There were, as it were, three phases in Satan's temptation of Eve. Satan chose the ready tool, the serpent, which was able to communicate with man. We have possibly a faint resemblance to this communication in the manner in which a dog now "speaks" to man. The devil chose to approach Eve, because she did not stand in the responsible position in which Adam stood over against God. She likely was also the weaker vessel. And, if Satan could win Eve to his side, he could use her to approach Adam. Eve was not surprised that the serpent spoke to her. What should have put her on her guard was the subject he wanted to discuss. Eve must have realized at once that this was no mere chit-chat about the trees of the garden. Her attention was being drawn to the forbidden tree, and she was being tempted. At this point she should have refused to discuss such a serious matter with the serpent, or at least have called her husband, but she preferred to handle this in her own way. The question appeared innocent enough. You may eat of all the trees of the garden, may you not? Yet it was a barbed question with serious implications. If not this one tree, why not? This tree also is obviously good for food. Why should God withhold this good tree from you? Is it fair?

Eve avoids mentioning the name of the tree, merely referring to it as the tree in the midst of the garden. There is a tone of resentment in her voice; she even exaggerates as she says, we may not eat of it, we may not even touch it. With a bit of hesitancy she admits that God might punish them with death. "Lest we die."

Eve has already fallen. She has taken matters into her own hands, matters that pertained as much to her husband as to her, and she was supposed to be his helper! She had given in too much. She questions the right, the justice of God in demanding implicit obedience from her.

The second phase of the temptation must follow.

We marvel at the defiant boldness of Satan, contradicting God by saying, "Ye shall not surely die." He makes God a liar, and Eve calmly listens to such outright blasphemy. She does not run away. She stays.

Now the devil adds insult to injury. Your God is not seeking your good as your covenant Friend. Let me tell you what is good. The wretched deceiver makes a play upon the name of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you want to know both good and evil, if you want the freedom to decide for yourself whether you will do the good or

the evil, you must eat of this tree. The reason your God is keeping it from you is because He knows that the day you eat of that tree your eyes will be opened, you will be independent, even as God, to choose for yourself good or evil. Yes, the devil seems so sincere in seeking Eve's good that she weighs his words intently.

Now follows the final step. Eve is really not so naive that she believes these lies. She knows better. She knows that she is in the wrong company, that she is being unfaithful to her God as well as to her husband. But she is ensnared. She knows no way out. For the first time the fruit of the tree has a strong appeal to her. It's beautiful. It must be luscious. Her mouth waters, her hand reaches out. She throws caution to the wind. Let the consequences be what they may. She takes the fruit, she bites into it, and for the moment experiences that stolen waters are sweet. No sooner is she finished than she is aware of the voice of conscience, but also of the serious consequences of her offence. Never again can she love her husband in his sinless state. Their marriage has struck disaster. As a friend of Satan and as an enemy of God and of her husband she goes out to make Adam like unto her sinful self. He must become even as she, an enemy of God, wicked and perverse, depraved, corrupt to the very core of his existence, dead in sin.

Reading this sad account of the fall of our first parents, we are reminded that Satan still tempts in the very same way. He arouses in us that rebellious question, Why mayn't I? We whimper that we are hedged in; we cannot do anything. Next arises the thought that there cannot be real harm in sinning; we can get away with it. Why not? And then the final plunge, sin is good, I must sin, I need to satisfy that deep desire within. I want that more than anything else, at least for the moment. The epistle of John speaks of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

Adam stood in paradise as our representative head. Our Catechism never questions for a moment that his guilt passes through the generations from father to son. Adam was also our first father, so that his depraved nature is transferred to his children in the line of generations. We hang our heads in shame, confessing with Paul, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, *for that all have sinned.*" (Romans 5:12). With David we say, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Lost, hopelessly lost in sin. But God came. He made the move for our redemption. He came to Adam and Eve with Christ. He called them to Him, even as we now hear the voice of Jesus calling, "Come unto Me, and I will give thee rest."

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The Origin of the Name "Protestants"

As sons and daughters of the Reformation, we are called Protestants.

Do you know the origin of that name?

While most of us probably readily connect that name with the Reformation of the sixteenth century, there are probably not many of us who are acquainted with the specific historical origin of it. Nevertheless that origin is worth knowing: for it is intimately connected with the very principle of the Reformation.

To understand this we must go back to the early history of the Reformation in Germany.

At the Diet of Worms in 1521 — the occasion when Dr. Martin Luther was challenged to give account of his faith and when he ended with the well-known words, "Here I stand; I can do no otherwise, God help me, Amen!" — at that Diet every measure was taken to crush the movement of the Reformation completely. These efforts, however, failed. The Lord took care of His own cause. In spite of the edicts of men and in spite of all the opposition of the prince of darkness, the cause of the Reformation went forward. Many were liberated from the power of Rome and found peace and salvation in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only the laity but also the clergy, not only the poor and the weak, but also princes and mighty men embraced the cause of the Reformation. One of the results of this rapid growth was the fact that at the Diet of Spire, 1526, the power of the opposition had to give in; and it was decided, in effect, that every prince would be free to regulate the matter of religion in his own realm and territory. In other words, a measure of freedom of religion was decreed by that Diet, something which could only be to the benefit of the Reformation.

Matters did not remain thus, however. The second Diet of Spire gathered in 1529. In the interim between the first and the second Diet of Spire the Pope and Charles V had ironed out their differences, and the latter had sworn to devote all his power to root out the Reformation. The result was that the second Diet of Spire in 1529 revoked the decisions of 1526, and thus revoked the slight degree of religious liberty which had been granted at that time. It was decided that in every place in which the edict of Worms, 1521, had gone into operation, no change

was to be introduced. Further, in those places where the edict of Worms had already been transgressed and where it was not very well possible to enforce it, there was to be no further spread of the new doctrine of the Reformation. No Roman Catholic might be accepted into the congregations of the Reformation. There was to be no discussion by the Evangelicals concerning the points of difference with regard to the faith. And the authority of the bishops was not to be hindered.

The effect of these decisions of 1529, should they be enforced, would be devastating. The further spread of the cause of the Reformation would be effectually halted. In Roman Catholic territories the doctrine of the Reformation might not be proclaimed. And where there were already churches of the Reformation, no effort might be put forth to make converts or to accept members from the Roman Catholic Church. If these decisions would be enforced, the Reformation would be smothered in its cradle.

Against these decisions of the second Diet of Spire, the Evangelical princes and nobles protested. It is worthy of note that this protest originated not in the church and not with the spiritual leaders of the church, but with the princes and nobles, the political leaders and authorities of that day. It is also worthy of note that this protest was registered by a small minority over against a great and powerful majority, not only a majority of those assembled at the Diet of Spire, but a majority which included the power of the king, the pope, and the emperor.

It is from this protest that our name "Protestant" originated: from that time forward those who adhered to the Reformation were called Protestants.

Because that document of protest is a beautiful, highly spiritual, godly document, which gives expression to the true motivation and the formal principle of the Reformation in a very precise way, it is worth our while, as sons and daughters of the Reformation, to review this protest and to be reminded of the origin of our name. The protest was as follows:

"Dear Lord, Cousins, Uncles, and Friends —

"Having repaired to this Diet at the summons of his majesty, and for the common good of the empire and of Christendom, we have heard and learned that

the decisions of the last Diet concerning our holy Christian faith are to be revealed, and that it is proposed to substitute for them certain restrictive and onerous resolutions.

“King Ferdinand and the other imperial commissaries, by affixing their seals to the last *recess* of Spires, had promised, however, in the name of the emperor, to carry out sincerely and inviolably all that it contained, and to permit nothing that was contrary to it. In like manner also, you and we, electors, princes, prelates, lords, and deputies of the empire, bound ourselves to maintain always and with our whole might every article of that decree.

“We cannot therefore consent to its repeal:

“Firstly, because we believe that his imperial majesty, as well as you and we, is called to maintain firmly what has been unanimously and solemnly resolved.

“Secondly, because it concerns the glory of God and the salvation of our souls, and that in such matters we ought to have regard, above all, to the commandment of God, Who is King of kings and Lord of lords; each of us rendering him account for himself, without caring the least in the world about majority or minority.

“We form no judgment on that which concerns you, most dear lords; and we are content to pray God daily that he will bring us all to unity of faith, in truth, charity, and holiness, through Jesus Christ, our throne of grace and our only Mediator.

“But in what concerns ourselves, adhesion to your resolution — and let every honest man be judge — we would be acting against our conscience, condemning doctrine that we maintain to be Christian, and pronouncing that it ought to be abolished in our states, if we could do so without trouble.

“This would be to deny our Lord Jesus Christ, to reject his holy word, and thus give him just reason to deny us in turn before his Father as he has threatened.

“What, we ratify this edict! We assert that when Almighty God calls a man to his knowledge, this man nevertheless cannot receive the knowledge of God? Oh, of what deadly backslidings should we not thus become the accomplices, not only among our own subjects, but also among yours.

“For this reason we reject the yoke that is imposed

on us. And although it is universally known that in our states the holy sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord is becomingly administered, we cannot adhere to what the edict proposes against the Sacramentarians, seeing that the imperial edict did not speak of them, that they have not been heard, and that we cannot resolve upon such important points before the next council.

“Moreover, the new edict declaring the minister shall preach the gospel, explaining it according to the writings accepted by the holy Christian church, we think that for this regulation to have any value, we should first agree on what is meant by the true and holy church. Now, seeing that there is great diversity of opinion in this respect; that there is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the word of God; that the Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine; that each text of the holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts; that this holy book is in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness, we are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of his only word, such as it is contained in the biblical books of the Old and New Testament, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it. This word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, while all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.

“For these reasons, most dear lords, uncles, cousins, and friends, we earnestly entreat you to weigh carefully our grievances and our motives. If you do not yield to our request, we PROTEST by these presents, before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Saviour, and who will one day be our Judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and for our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatsoever to the proposed decree, in anything that is contrary to God, to his holy word, to our right conscience, to the salvation of our souls, and to the last decree of Spires.

“At the same time we are in expectation that his imperial majesty will behave towards us like a Christian prince who loves God above all things; and we declare ourselves ready to pay unto him, as well as unto you, gracious lords, all the affection and obedience that are our just and legitimate duty.”

Publication News

We are happy to report that “*When I Survey. . .*” is finally on the market. This, you will recall, is the Lenten anthology which includes all six of the pre-

viously published, but now out of print, Lenten works of the late Herman Hoeksema. This marks another important milestone in one of the projects of

our Publications Committee, namely, to publish and make available to the Reformed community as many as possible of the writings, both previously published and yet unpublished, of Rev. Hoeksema.

Our hard-working Business Manager asked me to inform all those who took advantage of our pre-publication sale of this book that he is delivering and getting your copies into the mail as fast as he possibly can. If you ordered a copy, you may expect it in the very near future. In fact, by the time this appears in print most of you should have your copies.

By the way, if you did not order a copy at the pre-publication sale price, you can, of course, get a copy. Only you will now have to pay the full price of \$9.95 plus 45¢ postage. Considering that this is six good books in one, that's still a bargain! Order your copy promptly from: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501. Wouldn't this book make a dandy Christmas present for someone?

We remind you, too, to order your copy of

Gertrude Hoeksema's new Bible teachers' manual, *Suffer Little Children, Book One*. In case you couldn't decipher our ad because of the printing mistake in it, this manual covers the first half of Old Testament history. You can get this helpful manual for \$8.95 plus 45¢ postage.

More news!

Suffer Little Children, Book Two, which will cover the second half of Old Testament history and which is designed especially for teachers of Grade 2 children, will be off the press in the very near future. There will be a companion pupil workbook with this volume. The teachers' manual will cost \$5.95, and the workbook will cost \$2.00. The combination of manual and workbook will sell for \$6.95. How's that for an attractive deal! Get your order in now, and be sure to include 45¢ for postage. Same address as above.

One more item. But that's a secret yet. Watch these columns and also your mail for some really big publication news. From whom? Who else but Reformed Free Publishing Association?

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

The Command to Isaiah

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

1. Isaiah 6:9-13 *Its Declaration* that his labors would be negative, and, as to the people, in the form of a command ordaining their judgment: "and He said, Go and say thou to this people, Hear ye continually, but perceive not" (v. 9). "This people" refers to Isaiah's people of unclean lips. They are those among the organic whole of "His people" (5:25) whom the Lord will not call "My people." They would hear the preaching of the Word of Jehovah, but not to their salvation. That word would be to them a savor of death unto death. This is one side of the polarization caused by the preaching of the word. On this side, God's Word is sovereignly prohibitory and hardening, forbidding to understand, and rendering them so blind that they would not even care to understand. They saw all the miracles that the Lord had done before their eyes, and had heard the gracious words that fell from His lips. But also to them, in effect, it had to be said, "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see and ears to hear, unto this day" (Dt. 29:2-4). In fact, as Jesus put it, "Why do ye not understand My

speech? even because ye cannot hear My words" (Jn. 8:43); and further, "My word hath no place in you" (v. 37); and still further reason is found in v. 44, "Ye are of your father and the devil . . . He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God" (v. 47). Also, "Ye believe not because ye are not of My sheep" (10:26).

So they heard the Word incarnate himself preaching among them, but they did not understand Him. They saw with their eyes His wonders, His raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; but they did not perceive that He was the divine Messiah.

"Make fat the heart of this people and its ears make heavy, and its eyes smear over (with paste, i.e., make blind), lest it shall see with its eyes, and with its ears shall hear, and its heart understand, and turn and (there be) healing to it" (v. 10). The sigh of the eye, the hearing ear, the understanding heart and turning to the Lord are all sovereign gifts of God. With the gift of spiritual sight, the sinner sees he is a sinner,

then turns to repent. With the gift of hearing, or ears of the heart, the sinner believes and embraces what he hears to his salvation. But these gifts, Isaiah is told, shall be withheld from "this people." Men will be commanded and held responsible to hear and believe. But they will not be able to do as commanded and held responsible. For the effect of Isaiah's ministry will be to cause a hardening of the heart of the nation, so that there will be no possibility of its being saved, even by the preaching of that which in itself is for the salvation of His church. Men would be made callous so that they will not believe, will not care to believe, will refuse to believe, will not be able to believe. Still, God would hold them responsible for all this, including their inability. "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in His Spirit by the former prophets; therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 7:11-12).

The purpose and end of Isaiah's preaching "is a negative end: . . . people must not turn from their sins to God, for if they turn, they will be healed. Strange . . . the ways of . . . God!" He commands all men everywhere to repent and believe. "At the same time He sends forth" a preacher "to prevent this . . . from occurring. He opposes the Word of God with the Word of God," and so it is "necessary that some do not hear (savingly — RCH) that word . . . In His mysterious wisdom God had foreordained that this people would not respond to the blessed overtures of the gospel. In His sovereign good pleasure . . . not ordaining them unto eternal life, and" in the way of their sin "ordained them to dishonor and wrath" (E.J. Young). So it is distinguishing grace alone which makes men to differ; and although it could be said that the proximate cause of this hardening is to be found in man's sinful heart, still the ultimate cause is God's sovereign decree of reprobation.

But *almost all* the Bible commentators have weakened and corrupted this truth. Most of them speak of this as a *judicial* hardening, that is, God hardened their hearts because they had first hardened their own hearts to forsake Him and His truth. But Isaiah's prophecy deals with not a *judicial* but a *sovereign* hardening. As in Rom. 9:18, "whom He will He hardens," not "He hardens all who refuse Him and His truth." This sovereign hardening of sinner's hearts, in distinction from judicial hardening, is not a truth isolated in Scripture. John 12:37-40 is full of it. "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report? and to

whom hath the Arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they *could not believe* (why not?) because that Isaiah said again, 'He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts (not because they rejected the Lord and refused to believe in Him — the popular thinking; but) *that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*' This is plain Scripture and should be enough (it is enough for true faith!), but there is more, in Matt. 11:25-26. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Jesus was not annoyed nor disappointed when He was rejected, when whole cities were unmoved, remaining unconverted at His preaching. Neither did He complain against God's sovereign proceedings in hiding and revealing the gospel. Rather, He gives praise and thanks to God for His sovereignty in bringing about this state of things. He rejoices over it (Lk. 10:21), and glorifies the Father for it, acknowledging that what the sovereign Lord does is right. The Father and the Son conceal and reveal, choose and refuse men as They will to do (25, 27). This is the clear, irrefutable Word of God, and childlike faith will unquestioningly receive it and believe it.

2. *Its Duration.* "Then I said, 'How long, O Lord (Adonai)?' And He said, Until that when cities he laid waste without a dweller, and houses without a man, and the land become waste, a desolation" (v. 11). First, spiritual death is prophesied, then material ruin. Then "how long" means not, How long must I endure this hard task in preaching this hard saying, but, How long is this state of Israel's in hardness and death to continue? As the psalmist, he asks God, Will He always chide? Will He keep His anger forever? Will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Isaiah submits to the state of things under the divine judgments, and purposes with all his heart to be faithful to the burden of the Word placed on him to proclaim. But he has a holy anxiety and love for his kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1-3). He neither coldly and stoically delivered himself of his responsibility to the truth, nor did he in any way compromise the truth, nor fail to present the whole truth, including "the severity of God," out of natural affection for Israel. It is always true love to preach uncompromisingly the whole counsel of God, no matter the cost or consequences, and to do so in a gracious manner. Not some political or military figure, but a man like Isaiah is "A Man Called Intrepid" because he has the indomitable courage to preach exactly the word God bids him, even though that be judgment and destruction. Yet he is a man

kind, tenderhearted, compassionate, not unmoved with great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart that blindness in part happened to Israel.

How long, this blindness, dullness, and deadness? Until it ruins them, their houses, cities, and whole country. "And (until) Jehovah shall have removed far away the (presence of) man and great (shall be) the forsaken (sector) in the midst of the land" (v. 12). They were to be removed far away, not only to Babylon, but to the ends of the earth, as at the present time. There was an initial fulfilment of this prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the resultant captivity. Then the land, desolated as it was, made up for its neglected seventh year sabbaths with a sabbath rest of seventy years. Still this prophecy, reaching to the New Testament and to the Jews of Jesus' day, has a final fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem and its people by the Romans in 70 A.D., the effects of which are felt and evident to this day.

3. *Its Comfort*: a promise. "But yet in it (there shall remain) a tenth, and it shall return, and (again) shall be for a consuming; (but) like a hardy tree, and

like an oak, which in felling (them), a stump (remains) in them. The seed of holiness (grows out of) the stump of it" (v. 13). The judgment shall be repeated in blow after blow, so that there shall be a repetition of it throughout history, even on the remnant. Often the people were destroyed, yet there was always a surviving remnant. "However frequently that very remnant may appear to perish, there shall still be a remnant of the remnant left . . . the holy seed, the true church, 'the remnant according to the election of grace' (Rom. 11:5)." — J.A. Alexander. That there is ever a remnant means not, Pelagian-wise, that God picks up the pieces after a project of His gets smashed to smithereens, but that it is a visible evidence of God's secret counsel and decree of election of vessels of mercy before ordained from destruction to eternal life. So for the elect people of God, as concisely summarized in this promise, His blessing comes to them always out of the depths of the curse. The curse fells the hardy olive tree, yet out of the stump a remnant branch shoots up. A remnant shall return (Isa. 10:21). For from the depths of the Cross the holy seed is born; and the promise is sure to all the seed (Rom. 4:16).

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Led Prosperously While Walking Faithfully

Rev. John A. Heys

No thanks.

The duty that Abraham charged his eldest servant to perform is not one that one could be glad to be called to perform. If all goes well, there might be a word of thanks; but woe to that man who sets out to get a wife for someone else and then the marriage turns sour. Besides, Isaac had shown no interest in having a wife, and one could get his wrath and displeasure for having gone and gotten one for him.

The duty Abraham called his servant to perform is doubly difficult because of the qualifications which Abraham stipulated. To get a pretty face, to get a charming damsel by a display of trinkets and golden earrings and bracelets of gold was no harder in that day than it is today. Then, perhaps, even more than today when our standard of living is already so high, a young woman whose future, because of the social

conditions of the day, was quite uncertain, would fall for such a display and gladly seek a life of wealth and abundance. But this servant must get a believing child of God for Isaac to marry. And she must be one who is willing to leave father and mother and all her household behind, never to see them again for God's sake and His covenant's sake.

The servant sees this clearly and raises that objection, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" He sees that she must be a woman of Abraham's kindred — and not because such were physically better, or for sentimental reasons, but because there he would find those that would be spiritually compatible for Isaac in whom and around whom the covenant promises centered; and revolved. He might,

however, find one of that kindred who is nominally in the church of God of that day, a woman born to covenant parents; but she might not want to come, having no interest or not enough interest in God's covenant and its promises to leave her land as Abraham had done. By faith Abraham had obeyed; but that she is born to covenant parents does not mean that she is going to have that faith and that strength of faith. And the man she will marry is completely a stranger to her. She has not even seen him. It is asking an awful lot of her. It will have to be a venture of faith in God and of firm conviction that this is His will, and that *He* calls her to close the door so completely on her family and leave the land so fully, not for a natural love that has tremendous drawing power, for the only thing she will know about this future husband is that he is a relative, but out of love for God and with a sincere interest in His covenant.

And Rebekah was no plain Jane and no unattractive young lass who most assuredly would be passed by and had better seize this one opportunity of a lifetime to be married. She was extremely beautiful and undoubtedly had the heads of many, many young men in the region turning. She did not need to seek ways to obtain suitors but to avoid them. She would have to have, and did have, faith in God to agree as she did. But by the same token Abraham's servant's task is not made easier when he has to pick out a woman — and quite naturally he would pick out an attractive woman, would choose as he would for himself — that would be spiritually compatible and willing to be a stranger in a strange land for God's sake.

But he goes to perform this thankless duty and swears an oath that he will not take a wife for Isaac out of the daughters in Canaan, but would go to Abraham's kindred and get one there. And do not say that this servant had no choice, being a servant. Yes, as a servant he had to go, and placed under an oath by his master, he had to swear. But he did not have to take an interest in all this, that is, Abraham could not make him love God and want to do all this for God's sake. We likewise can and must command our children to love God and walk in His fear, but we cannot make them do so. And this servant of Abraham showed that he did have an interest, that he was a believing child of God who knew God's covenant promises and rejoiced in them. He, too, wanted a God-fearing wife for Isaac. He also wanted spiritual compatibility in Isaac's wife. And all this becomes evident in the fact that he commits the whole matter in prayer to God instead of trying to get out of the difficult duty he had to perform.

Had he been an unbeliever — and let it be remembered that he had been circumcised, according to

Genesis 17:26, 27, and had the covenant promises of God explained to him in connection with it — had he despised God's covenant and called all this foolishness, he could have escaped his task. And his words, "What if she will not be willing to follow me?" would have been the words of a clever, carnal mind that was already devising a way out. He could make it so hard, could paint such an awful picture to the women in Abraham's kindred that no one wanted to go along with him to be Isaac's wife. He could have warned them that Isaac did not have interest in a wife and might not take to her, would shun her, insult her, and a bitter life of tears and frustrations lay ahead of her. But no, he has a keen interest himself and therefore goes to God in prayer for success upon his way.

When he says, "I being in the way the Lord led me," in Genesis 24:27, he shows that he willingly walked in God's way. This way was his way because he knew it was God's way. He was *in* the way and not *out* of it. He walked faithfully where God wanted him to walk and was not complying with a command in which he had no interest. His walking was an act of love to God, and God led him successfully so that this servant himself declares in verse 56, "... the Lord has prospered my way." Get that: he says, "my way." God's way as pointed out to him by Abraham had become his own way. He wanted it this way as well as Abraham and God Himself did.

This servant is also to be commended for the way in which he set out to perform his task. He began where we must always begin. He began with God. He did not begin with a woman. He sought a woman to be a wife for Isaac, but he began in this search with God. In prayer he came before the throne of grace and asked God to lead him and to prosper his journey. And this way is to be recommended to all our young people who quite naturally think of marriage. It applies to parents and all of us in all the situations and matters of our earthly lives. We must not, only after we fail, first begin to think of God and turn to Him for help, but we ought to begin every project with the understanding and in the full knowledge that we will always fail unless God is pleased to prosper our way. He must not be an afterthought in our lives but be thought of as we begin the day, as we begin our work, as we finish our work, and as we close our eyes in sleep after our work.

Now understand the situation. This servant has never seen any of Abraham's kindred. Cameras to take and produce instant pictures were thousands of years away. Little, simple, inexpensive box cameras were not even in the minds of inventors yet; and Abraham's kindred did not and could not supply him with pictures of the children and grandchildren. Consequently Abraham had no photos to show to this servant. He did not even have an address — surely

not with a zip code — to tell him to look up. We read in Genesis 22:20 ff. that news reached Abraham about his brother's family; but that is not the same as receiving pictures so that these can be identified by his servant. Yes, he could ask around where Nahor lived and be directed to his tent. But there is a better way. There is one Who knows them all by name and can never be deceived by looks or change of apparel or the like. To Him this servant goes in prayer and asks that, not the family, not the father and mother, but the exact woman be pointed out to him by God Himself.

And let us not overlook the humility, the strong love for Abraham, the deep interest in the cause of God's kingdom when he prays, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham." Get that last part especially: He is not praying for self. He does not pray to be a successful servant that may get praise — and maybe a raise — from his master. It is kindness to his master from the living God Himself that he seeks. He is not looking merely to be prosperous in his own way. He desires that Abraham be prospered in his covenant way and desire that his son have a believing wife. He has interest in God's covenant and wants a God-fearing wife for Isaac, the child of the covenant.

All this explains the way of which he speaks when he says, "I being in the way the Lord led me." And we may note here also — that is, in verse 27 — that being successful in finding a damsel that meets the qualification he sought in a wife for Isaac — he speaks again of that mercy of God for Abraham. We read, "And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." He prayed for the mercy of God upon his master — a master who had placed such a difficult task upon his

shoulders — and now he thanks God for that mercy. We have here quite a different picture from that which characterizes the whole field of labor today. What a beautiful relationship between master and servant! But what an interest this man shows in God's covenant! And that he calls God "The Lord God of my master Abraham" does not mean that Jehovah is not his own God. He means the God Who has given such wonderful and rich promises to Abraham, promises in which he also believes, promises which he also desires to see fulfilled in the mercy of God and in His truth.

Yes, Christ is here. He is in all the Old Testament. For He is everywhere in the Old Testament Scriptures where we find God's mercy and His grace. All the blessings of the covenant come through Christ and His cross. That cross was there in the Old Testament under the symbols, the types, and shadows. He was there in the highpriest, the altar, the lambs, and bullocks. And do we not exactly read of a *mercy seat* which was the covering of the ark of the covenant in the innermost part of the temple? On it the highpriest sprinkled the blood of the lamb; and because of its typical significance was able to go out to the people and bless them in God's name and assure them that with God there is pardon for their sins.

But the point at the moment is that in the way of faithfulness before God, in the way of obedience and committing our way to God, we are prospered by Him.

God will not lead us to true prosperity in the way of sin. In His mercy He will lead his erring children *back* to the way of obedience and love, and then bless them while they are in the way that He demands of them, the way of faith and obedience. As Solomon in his wisdom said, "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Indeed, "Trust and obey for there is no other way."

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

November 15, 1977

Dear Timothy,

We shall have to continue, in this letter, our discussion concerning the godly example which ministers in the Church of Christ must be. You will recall that last time we discussed some matters of Christian liberty as they are connected with our calling to be a godly example. In this letter I want to range a bit farther afield in our discussion.

A matter which comes to mind as being important

is the attitude of a minister towards worldly possessions. I am well aware of the fact that even to bring this subject up involves some measure of courage. There is scarcely a subject which involves such intensity of feeling as a minister's worldly possessions. There are all kinds of questions which are raised in this connection and which are topics for debate — perhaps especially at the time the annual budget is drawn up and the minister's salary is discussed. How much money does a minister need? At what

economic level ought he to be supported? Should he be put on a financial level with the lowest paid people in the congregation? Should he receive a salary which places him at about the average income of the members? May smaller congregations increase their requests for synodical subsidy in order to raise the level of the salary of their ministers? Should we have fixed salaries in the denomination? All these questions and many more are constantly being discussed.

It is not my purpose to enter into these discussions. If I should write some day to your congregation, it would perhaps be fitting to enter into some of these questions. But I am writing to *you*. And I am interested in your attitude towards these matters.

The pressing nature of this question is repeatedly brought to mind when I hear discussions among ministers on these matters. I sometimes get the impression that ministers are more concerned about these things than about their calling as shepherds in the Church of Christ. I recall a few years ago being in the company of several pastors of a different denomination from the one you serve. Among themselves they were discussing a colleague who had apparently received a call from the richest and most prestigious congregation in the classis. There was not one smidgen of doubt in the minds of any of them that he would take this call — even though he had been in his congregation a very short period of time. Nor did they blame him for taking the call — they frankly admitted that anyone of them would have done the same. But they spoke of the fact in terms of this man's having reached the top of the ecclesiastical ladder as far as the pastoral ministry was concerned. And their envy was ill-concealed. No more financial worries for him! He would have a home that bordered on a palace! And because he was young, that congregation was now tied up for the foreseeable future.

I recall also a minister from yet another denomination who spoke happily about the wonderful call he had received. When pressed a bit about why this call was so wonderful, he responded by pointing out that the work was minimal and the salary was large; the parsonage was new and the car allowance generous. This was about all he could say about why the call was wonderful.

There are no doubt ministers also who, while deeply troubled over apostasy in their denominations, would never think of leaving simply because they would have to abandon large congregations, ample pensions, secure futures, and generous salaries for the uncertain financial status of an unknown future. In other words, they do not hesitate to compromise their convictions concerning the truth of Scripture for "houses and lands."

I think this attitude is far more widespread than you or I realize. It is, however, a wicked attitude. The

Lord has some very sharp words to say through Ezekiel the prophet about this very thing. The passage is worthwhile and we can take the time to quote it. "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased ye have not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. . . ." Ez. 34:2-10

This is a powerful passage, Timothy, and you can sense how fitting it is for much of our time.

We live in a materialistic age. The spirit of materialism infects us all. It is a devastating spiritual illness, and goes far to destroy the life of the Church of Christ. How wholly wrong it is, therefore, for a minister of the gospel to seek the things which are below! How entirely out of keeping it is when he is constantly complaining about his salary, when he lives beyond his means, when he must seek help from the Church to bail him out of debt and financial difficulty because he is a free-wheeling spender who covets the good things of this world.

I know that the objections can be made that a congregation is obligated before God to support its minister. I know that it is a shame on the Church of Christ when a minister can barely subsist in these times of affluence. I know that there are tightfisted congregations who begrudge their pastor enough to support his family, send his children to a Christian school, and have something left over to give to the

poor. I am not interested at the moment in all these things. I am interested in a minister, and particularly in you, Timothy, being a good example to the flock. Your good example must be a constant protest against the spirit of materialism which saps the spiritual energy of the members of the Church. It is not your concern or mine what the congregation does and what its attitude may be towards the support of the pastor. It is your concern and mine that we be good examples.

I wonder sometimes where the spirit of sacrifice is that has characterized so many shepherds in the past and still characterizes some today. I am thinking particularly of missionary work — to refer to but one example. There have been in the past, and are yet today, missionaries who left families and friends, who set out to unknown lands, entered hot and humid jungles, faced the fury of headhunters and aborigines, lived in shacks and ate from the land food which at home was considered unfit for dogs — all for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I know that sometimes the objection is raised that these men often left even their children behind, and that in doing so they did not fulfill their covenant responsibilities before God. There is some room for argument here I suppose. Nevertheless, they brought the gospel to heathen lands at great personal cost to themselves. Far less sacrifice is required of us; yet we are so hesitant to leave our comfortable homes, our loaded tables, our warm, cozy family rooms, our large congregations to serve the Lord in places where only a bit of sacrifice is required of us.

Luxuries of life, vacations, recreations, eating out, costly clothes (all of which can never be wrong in themselves) are so much more important to us than the welfare of the Church of Christ. It becomes increasingly difficult to preach on texts which call the people of God to have their treasures in heaven and not upon earth.

It all seems to me to be somewhat frightening. We know and confess that before our Lord returns again upon the clouds of heaven there will be times of severe persecution for the Church of Christ. We know

that the Scriptures teach that the people of God who are faithful to Christ will not be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast which they refuse to carry. The Scriptures present to us a picture of the world enjoying an affluence and a prosperity such as the world has never seen, while the Church of Christ is an outcast among men and the people of God forced to scavenge in garbage pails to find a bone for their starving children to gnaw on. We know these days are coming, and we know Christ cannot return until they do.

I sometimes wonder whether we will be able to give up everything we have when this is the price that must be paid for faithfulness to our Lord and King. Perhaps we do not even like to think very much about it; and without too much thought, we convince ourselves that we will be able to give all these things up when the occasion demands it. But material things are like a powerful narcotic. The more they get their grip on our lives, the more difficult it becomes to break free of them. Will we be able to give up our homes and salaries, our books and treasures, our vacations and pleasures to flee to the mountains when that is the only way to be faithful? I am frightened sometimes — frightened for the Church, frightened for myself.

The ministers of the gospel shall surely be the first to experience the dread heat of persecution. They shall have to be the first to go to jail, to face the firing squads, to endure the exquisite tortures which ungodly men invent to try to overcome the grace of God. And this is as it should be. This is part of a minister's calling in the place he occupies in the Church. But can we? Will we? How can we know when so little is required now, and when we are so reluctant to let slip from our grasp the small bit we possess?

God's grace will suffice. I have no doubt about that at all. Let God's grace suffice now, too, as we point the way for God's people in a spirit of self-sacrifice and godliness with respect to this world's goods.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Who Wants to be Wise?

Rev. Ron Van Overloop

Are you wise?
Do you believe yourself to be wise?

If you are wise, does that mean you are smart or intelligent? Is to be smart the same as to be wise?

Do you know someone who is wise?

I am sure that you know someone who thinks or acts as if he or she is wise. It seems as if there is one of them in every crowd. We call them "smart alecks" or "wiseacres." It is not a compliment to be called that. Although everyone of us would like it if we were said to be wise, no one wants to be called a wiseacre.

Can we make ourselves wise? Can we get wisdom? Or can we learn to be wise?

Or is it such that one is either wise by birth or there is no hope for him ever to be wise? Is it a matter of our genes which determines whether we are wise or not? If it is, then we cannot do anything about it. Then you and I are as wise as we are ever going to be.

* * *

All of these questions are important to consider. They are important to the young. They are also important to those who are old.

Maybe we can answer these questions, or at least begin to answer these questions, by finding out the answer to another question. That is an obvious question: "What is wisdom? What does it mean to be wise?"

First of all, wisdom implies a knowledge. One who is wise must know some things; he must have some sort of knowledge. He must have some facts in his head.

But that can not be all there is. We seem to sense that there is more to it than just knowledge. I believe we sense that because we know someone who is wise. Generally, he is an older man. And usually he has not had much of an education. This would make us conclude that, to some extent, experience is as an important element of wisdom as knowledge.

Now then, just what is wisdom?

A simple definition of wisdom might be: to know what is the best way to gain the highest end or goal.

A wise man puts into practice the knowledge he has.

God is wise. I Tim. 1:17 and Rom. 16:27. He uses that which He controls for the highest end. The highest end for God is the glorification of His own name. To say that God is wise means that we believe God knows how to plan and control all things in such a way that everything and everyone glorifies God.

What makes a *man* wise?

I can remember a minister using an example as he was explaining what wisdom is. If I can remember correctly, the example went something like this. He spoke of a man who had gone to an automotive school and had aced all the courses. Then as this man

was driving home from his final exam one of the tires on his car went flat. Surveying the object of his trouble the man KNEW he had a flat tire. He KNEW he had to replace that flat tire with a spare tire he had in the trunk of his car. But this man, who had just passed his final exams in automotive school with flying colors, did not know HOW to change his flat tire. He had knowledge, but he had no wisdom. The point of this example is that it takes more than just knowledge to be wise.

A man is wise when he knows how to use all he knows. He knows how to apply what he knows to practical life.

According to the Word of God, a man is wise when he knows how to do something to the glory of God. The highest end for man is the glory of God. Because the glorification of God is the highest end for God, it has to be the highest end or goal for man.

A wise man practices his faith. He talks it and knows it, but he also lives it. All of us know people who can talk a lot about religion and about the Bible and about spiritual things. But if these people do only that, if they only talk about it (or complain about it!), we do not think much of them. Oh, we may think that they are quite knowledgeable. And they might even leave an impression upon us — at first. But soon we begin to realize that that is all it is: knowledge. They talk a lot about what they know, but they do not live it.

Wisdom is the ability to use all things to the glory of God. Wisdom tells us how to study. Wisdom tells us how to play. Wisdom tells us how to date. It tells us how to marry and give in marriage. It tells us how to eat and drink and be merry, all to the glory of God. Wisdom also tells us how to weep.

Wisdom tells us how to live.

* * *

Can a young person be wise?

Earlier we suggested that each one of us knows a wise man. At that time we said that it was probably an older person whom we would call wise. Does that mean that one has to be old to be wise? Is there any hope for a young person?

* * *

The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111:10.

A young person can be wise. He is wise when he fears the Lord.

Job asks a very interesting question in Job 28:12. Get a Bible and look up that text. Preferably, get your own Bible and underline the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth words in that verse. (Do not keep reading this article in the hope that you will find that verse quoted here. You will not find it, so go get your Bible.)

In the rest of that chapter Job answers that question. Read it just before you go to bed tonight. For now, go to the last verse of that chapter, verse 28, and find the answer. Is not that a beautiful answer? (I hope you did not close your Bible already, because if you did, you will have to find Job 28 again, because verse 28 will not be quoted in this article either.) Why not underline the key words of that verse, too.

Who wants to be wise? Do you, young Christian?

You can be wise. It is possible for you to be wise.

Only fear the Lord.

* * *

But, I hear you ask, how do we fear the Lord? What does it mean to fear God or to be God-fearing?

What "God-fearing" means is hard to explain and hard to understand. But do not stop reading just because it gets a little hard to understand. I may not stop writing, so you ought not to stop reading. We just have to concentrate.

First, to fear God means that we stand before God. Can you imagine what that is like? God is in our mind and we are thinking about Him. This God we know is not a buddy, but the great, almighty God. He is the infinite, eternal, incomprehensible, perfectly wise, just, good, and holy One. And before Him we are standing.

Secondly, this fear of God is not that kind of fear which means to be afraid. Rather it is that fear which is great respect. It cannot mean that we are afraid because someone who is God-fearing is drawn TO God.

Therefore, to fear God means that we humbly want Him and seek Him. Because we fear Him we want to know Him better and better. And so it means that we study the Word of God. When we find ourselves standing before someone whom we know to be very important, we are going to want to hear everything he says. One who is God-fearing listens to God speak to Him in the preaching and spends times reading the Speech of God.

The third thing involved in the fear of God is about our attitude towards this great God. We see ourselves as being very small and insignificant. One who fears God is *always* humble. He stands in awe and wonder as he gazes up at God.

As you stand before the God revealed in Scripture, you are struck with awe and reverence. The awe is because you are so conscious of His nearness. When we contemplate God, then we, like the publican in the corner of the temple, smite our breasts in repentance.

Finally, the fear of God implies a desire to please

this God before Whom we stand. The fear of God brings us upon our knees and we pray, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord; show me Thy paths."

Standing before such a great God we do not even think about what we want to do. That is unimportant. Right now God is everything. And therefore we want to do what He would have us do.

We worship and revere God, consecrate the whole of our life to Him. This must be what Solomon meant in Ecclesiastes 12:13. Look up this verse, too. In your Bible underline all the words between and including the fourth and eleventh words of that verse.

Because we want to do what God wants us to do, we are again going to go to the Bible. Whether for our belief or for our conduct, the fear of God brings us to the Word of God.

In review, the fear of God means: 1. to stand consciously before God, 2. to know God, 3. to be humbled, 4. and to want to do what He commands.

* * *

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. This means that the fear of Jehovah is the source, origin, and cause of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the basis upon which wisdom stands. It is the fountain out of which wisdom flows.

He who fears God is truly wise. The fear of God begins wisdom. And it continuously proposes wisdom as we move from moment to moment and from day to day.

There are many people who think they are wise. They may be worldly wise, i.e., wise according to the world. We may think of men who were geniuses in math or philosophy or in science. But Solomon makes all the wisdom of the world, which is without the fear of the Lord, to be vanity, an empty shadow.

All who are ignorant of the purpose for which they live are fools and madmen. There is no worse blindness than when God is forgotten and despised.

With the fear of the Lord in your heart, you will be wise. Motivated by the fear of God you will humbly study readily. Motivated by the fear of God you will humbly work hard. Motivated by the fear of God you will humbly do all things to the glory of God.

Then you will be wise.

Who wants to be wise?

Know the standard
and follow it.

Read the
STANDARD BEARER!



THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Impossibility of an Unfruitful Faith

Prof. Robert D. Decker

“We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true, that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man: for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith which is called in Scripture, a faith that worketh by love, which excites man to the practice of those works, which God has commanded in his Word. Which works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by his grace: howbeit they are of no account towards our justification. For it is by faith in Christ that we are justified, even before we do good works; otherwise they could not be good works, any more than the fruit of a tree can be good, before the tree itself is good. Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them, (for what can we merit?) nay, we are beholden to God for the good works we do, and not he to us, since it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let us therefore attend to what is written: when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do. In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through his grace that he crowns his gifts. Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them. Thus then we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences continually vexed, if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior.”

Article XXIV, *The Belgic Confession*

In the preceding two articles our *Confession* carefully and unequivocally articulates the truth of Scripture that the elect are justified by faith alone and not by works. Whenever that precious truth is maintained there is the charge that this doctrine makes “men careless and profane.” The Heidelberg Catechism faces this same charge: “But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?” “By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true and living faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.” (Lord’s Day XXIV, q. and a. 64) Even the Apostle Paul, after he had developed the truth of justification by faith without works, found it necessary to refute this objection. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:1, 2) Against this same, age old charge, “that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life . . .”, the fathers wrote this article.

They speak, therefore, at length about good works as the fruit of sanctification. And, in order to make that point clear, they discuss the relationship between justification and sanctification. It cannot escape our attention, however, that sanctification in this article is really identified with regeneration. This is evident from the very opening sentence: “We believe that this true faith being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God, and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth *regenerate* and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin.” It would appear that the article teaches mediate regeneration, that is, the view that regeneration is accomplished by means of the preaching of the Word. Immediate regeneration, the view to which we hold, teaches that regeneration takes place beneath the consciousness and is effected by the Holy Spirit without means. The fact is that the article makes no distinction between regeneration and sanctification and simply speaks of them as synonymous. This is not an error on the part of our *Confession*.

The *Confession* simply does not enter into the whole question of mediate or immediate regeneration. The *Confession* proceeds from the principle that regeneration can be and actually is spoken of in Scripture in a broad sense as sanctification.

All of this is not to say that regeneration cannot be regarded in another sense. It can be and is in Scripture. When speaking of regeneration as taught in Scripture we must distinguish between regeneration in a narrower and a broader sense. In the narrower sense, regeneration is the implanting of the principle of the life of Christ, the new life, in the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins. It can be compared to the planting of a kernel of seed in the earth, or to the conception of a child in the womb of its mother. This is the initial work of the Holy Spirit in the application of the blessings of salvation in the heart of the elect. It takes place without means and beneath the consciousness. Regeneration in the broader sense includes man's conversion and even sanctification. It may be compared to the sprouting forth of the seed from the earth, or the birth of a child by which he comes to conscious life.

Concerning regeneration in the narrower sense we may note that it is the initial work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the elect. Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) That term, "born again," means to be born again and from above. It refers to a radically new life. Moreover, it is a term used in Scripture to refer to the moment of conception, the very beginning of life, the begetting of a child. This is a work of the Holy Spirit which takes place in a moment of time and is performed in the very depths of man's being, in his heart which is the center of all his spiritual and ethical life. It takes place while the sinner, although elect, is still dead in trespasses and sins. It takes place beneath the level of his consciousness so that a man is not aware at that moment of the work being performed. Thus Jesus said to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) It is the implanting of the new, resurrection life of Christ by which the sinner is raised from his spiritual grave and placed in everlasting communion with the body of Christ. Regeneration is a work which can never be lost, a principle of life which abides in the heart all through life, through death itself, and on into eternity. Finally, it is absolutely indispensable. Without regeneration in his heart man has no receptivity for the Gospel, he can only reject the Word. So true is this in fact that Jesus said that without regeneration man cannot even see the Kingdom of God! (John 3:3) In the line of the

covenant, believers and their seed, this takes place in earliest infancy, perhaps even at the moment of conception. That regenerated child of God from that moment on is receptive to the Word of God and he begins the spiritual growth process that continues until he is delivered up into glory. This is regeneration in the narrower sense. (Cf. also I Peter 1:23-25; I John 3:9)

Regeneration in the broader sense is a work of God in the elect which implies not only the implanting of the new life of Jesus Christ, but also the entire work of salvation as it is consciously applied to the believer. It includes, therefore, conversion and faith and even sanctification. This work is accomplished by means of the preaching of the Word by which the Gospel, "the living and abiding Word" (I Peter 1:23), "the Word of truth" (James 1:18), is addressed by the Spirit to the principle of regeneration, calling that new life into consciousness. Thus the principle of regeneration renews and influences the mind and the will in such a way that the elect is capable of hearing the Gospel and desiring it, believing it and clinging to it. This is a life-long process and perfection is not reached until the saint is taken into glory. In this broader sense the *Confession* in this article speaks of regeneration.

Thus the article continues by discussing the relationship between justification and sanctification. There is a difference between the two. Justification has to do with man's state, and it thus frees him from the guilt of sin. Justification is a judicial act of God, a formal declaration by which man is declared righteous. Sanctification, on the other hand, has to do with man's condition and frees him from the pollution of sin. We are washed and cleansed from iniquity. More and more the old man of sin is destroyed and the new man in Christ is quickened and we become holy.

While there is that difference between justification and sanctification, the two are related. Justification necessarily implies sanctification, for one's state and condition must correspond. If one be justified, he will also be sanctified and even glorified. (Cf. Romans 8:29, 30) Justification is the ground for sanctification. Sanctification can never be the basis for justification, for this would lead to the error that we are justified by our works.

The importance of understanding this relationship is evident. This means that it is utterly impossible that there be a careless and profane Christian. It is impossible that there be faith without the fruit of faith. If one be justified, he will also lead a sanctified life. And the faith by which he is justified is a lively faith which cannot possibly produce a profane person. Where faith is there will be the works of faith. (Cf. James 2) Yet, at the same time, our good works

can never be the basis for our justification. And if they cannot contribute to our justification, they cannot in any way contribute to our salvation. Without justification we cannot and "would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation." Our good works, even though approved by God, are of no account for our justification, for we are justified before we do good works, and God's approval upon our works is simply the crown He places upon His own work in us. This is even, the article says, as a tree that cannot produce good fruit unless the tree itself is first good. And the fact that we are first good before we can produce good works, is due to the fact that whom He justifies God also sanctifies. Besides this, our works can never justify because even when we do good works, we remain unprofitable servants who have earned nothing, but only done our duty. And, we are not perfect,

but continue to sin, while only one sin would be sufficient to send us to hell forever. Yet our works are rewarded both in this life and in the life to come. But that reward is of grace for: "It is through His grace that he crowns his gifts."

Finally there is a word about the assurance of our salvation. This assurance can never rest upon the basis of our good works: "For we do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them." If, however, we do attempt to base our assurance on our good works, then: "we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences continually vexed." Our assurance of salvation can only come by relying completely upon the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior. *By grace* are ye saved!

IN HIS FEAR

The School's Responsibility to the Slow-Learner

Rev. M. Joostens

Author's note: The following article is the essence of a speech that I delivered to Hope School's P.T.A. meeting on October 7, 1977. I include this article under this rubric because I believe it is pertinent to parents who desire to educate the seed of the covenant "In His Fear."

Sometimes one feels somewhat like a fish out of water, as if he is overstepping his bounds. I feel this way about the topic before us this evening. And especially after a little more researching of this topic the feeling increased. I read many scholarly works that deal with the "slow-learner." These works were written by concerned and knowledgeable people in the field. Yet I found no consensus as to a solution to the dilemma of the "slow-learner." I will readily admit to you that I am not a professional educator. But I am a pastor and a parent. And I think that this somewhat qualifies me to make a few observations and points this evening. For, first of all, as a parent I have the concern of maintaining the covenant education of my own children. And, secondly, as a pastor I see the heartbreak and frustration of parents who must deal with children who cannot "keep up." I am concerned for the little sheep in the church of Christ.

Our topic tonight is rather limited, yet at the same

time applicable to all of us. It is limited because the number of children that are "slow-learners" is relatively small. Yet this small number is the concern of all of us in that we attempt to maintain a parental school that is based upon the idea of the covenant. These children are part of the body of Christ in the church where they reside. And when a little member of the body suffers we all suffer!

I am going to state quite frankly what I have in store for you this evening. I intend to put across the fact that we have a problem. And that this problem must be faced. It is only through awareness of the problem and a collective effort toward a solution that the problem will be solved. I hope that this little verbal orientation this evening stimulates some activity in this direction. It is my desire to keep things very simple this evening. I am going to cut out all the fancy "lingo" in order not to isolate the parents. Those of you who are interested in the scholarly studies that I consulted can do so at your leisure. I want to be Scriptural and practical!

Let us first of all come to grips with the problem. It is legitimate to ask the question: what precisely are

we talking about? We can narrow the boundaries somewhat. There are many terms that are thrown around in this aspect of education dealing with the slow-learner. They speak of mental retardation, mental deficiencies, mental handicaps, and many more. I choose not to use any of these terms, for two reasons. First of all, many of these terms are not applicable in our situation because more extreme cases of mental deficiency require more attention than this school system can give. Secondly, these various terms carry with them a certain stigma or bad connotation. This I desire to get away from. Therefore I want to confine myself to the "slow-learner" who is sometimes called the "under-achiever." A definition of such a child is very simple. These are children who are characterized by, as we say, the inability to "keep up." Children who acquire the ability to perform certain skills at a somewhat slower than normal rate. They are children who achieve at a slower rate and will never be geniuses. Consulting various works, as well as our own teachers, I find the percentage of these children to be about 15, or perhaps two or three in a class of 20. This small group of children has an acute problem! And though most of us may be unaware of this problem, particular parents who struggle with such children know the heartbreak of the situation. This problem is not going to go away. And if we do not find a proper solution to this problem the wrong solutions will be employed.

We must fully appreciate the dimension of the problem of the "slow-learner." There are two aspects to this problem. First of all, there is the obvious scholastic difficulty. God gives these children talents to learn, but to learn more slowly. They are not able to keep pace with what we term the normal rate of progress. We must recognize that this problem is a progressive one. By this I mean that the gap between the "slow-learner" and the normal achiever increases as the chronological age of the children increases. Or let me put it this way: the child that needs to be pushed through the first grade needs this pushing more and more as he progresses through the school system. At last you cannot push hard enough because this gap is too wide. Such children are often flunked periodically. This does not help the child except, perhaps, in that things are run past him twice. We must also understand, as far as the scholastic problem is concerned, that these "slow-learners" never come near the peak of norm. I'd like to emphasize this. All our children are not going to be Einsteins or Leonardo Da Vincis. We have to recognize this as parents and teachers else the consequences are going to be disastrous. What I am really saying is that the goals that are established for the "slow-learner" must be lower. This does not mean that we must be satisfied with less qualitatively but quantitatively. Each must

use his God-given talents to the fullest, but the number of talents may differ.

But, in the second place, I am really more concerned about the psychological and emotional difficulties of the "slow-learner." In this regard I want to state first of all, that these difficulties are not innate. Lest I be misunderstood, let me clarify. I am not saying that these children are not corrupt and consequently not responsible for their sin. But I am saying that these psychological and emotional difficulties are not inherent problems of the "slow-learner," but rather side or after effects. All too often we make the mistake of treating this problem too superficially. We say that these children are nonchalant, disinterested, cocky, always in trouble, and problems in general. And we, not appreciating the difficulty of the "slow-learner," think of them as headaches, truants, and finally dropouts. These characteristics may be traced to their intellectual inability to achieve. Psychologists tell us that these children, as well as those handicapped in other ways, have the same needs as normal children. They need the same love and affection. Anyone who has ever dealt with grossly retarded children will know that they cling to you as you are trying to make an exit. More to the point in our discussion, "slow-learners" have the same need for achievements and personal satisfaction. No one can operate in a negative atmosphere. We know better than to try this in our homes. We destroy our children if we always say no, not good enough, etc. The spiritual equivalent of this would be for a pastor to remain in the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism and never proceed into Redemption and Gratitude. But the difficulty is that these "slow-learners" have trouble achieving toward the norm we the community sets for them and to satisfy the goals that are held before them. Even if these children had the ability to achieve to that point, they are unable to do it in the time frame that we provide. For example, a child with an I.Q. of 75 develops at three-quarters the rate of the normal child. We must set for our children *attainable* goals and we must give them time to reach these goals.

If we do not take these variables into account, then education for these children becomes a series of successive failures and frustrations. This must lead to emotional difficulties caused by outward and inward factors. Externally these children become ostracized from their peers. They are labeled the so-called "dummies" of the class. They are the last ones to be chosen for a spell down and the first ones to sit down again. They receive an invisible mark of inferiority. And children can be so cruel to each other! This inability to achieve the norm inevitably leads to a personal feeling of being unwanted, of seeing oneself as a dismal failure. Oftentimes these children will strive

for recognition in other ways. They feel the need to prove themselves and become the "dare devils" and "cut-ups" of the class. They then become discipline problems and are sometimes written off as irreversible cases. And more serious than this, these children are

often separated from our covenant schools and Christian peers. They find themselves largely outside the distinctive sphere of the covenant and this has its toll! This bothers me.

(to be continued)

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism

Rev. David Engelsma

Pentecostalism is proud. It is arrogant in its attitude towards the Church of the past. Until about 1900, there was no such thing as the Pent. baptism with the Spirit within the Church. Athanasius and Augustine did not have it; Luther and Calvin did not have it; the Reformed saints of the Netherlands who died by the scores of thousands under the Roman Catholic and Spanish persecution never had it. Says Pent.: "Up till now the Church has been a very poor and lifeless Church; the full gospel, the full salvation, and the full Christian life start with us."

Put all of Pent. and neo-Pent. on a pile, and the whole heap is not worthy to untie the shoelace of one Luther, or of one Calvin, or of one Reformed saint who believed the gospel of grace, feared the Lord and kept His commandments, brought up his family in the truth, and gave his life for his faith.

Pent. is arrogant in its attitude towards the "mere" believer. The Pentecostal is the elite in the Church, the super-saint; all others are "merely" converted Christians. Hence, Pent. is schismatic; it causes division in the body of Christ. Elders are only fooling themselves when they tolerate Pent. within the congregation, but warn it to "keep the peace."

The explanation of this pride is that Pent. is man's religion. It centers on man: how does man feel? how can man have power to do splendid things on the earth? It is not God-centered. Hence, the neglect of God's Word; of God's Christ; of God's way of salvation, namely, faith. That Pent. is a man-centered religion is evident in its Arminian, free-willist theology. The roots of Pent. are not in Calvin, Dordt, and Westminster, but in Wesley, Finney, and revivalism. But this is another story.

Pent. is ecumenical. It is obviously, admittedly, and aggressively ecumenical. It operates in all churches, with total disregard for doctrinal differences. It unites Roman Catholics, Episcopalians,

Lutherans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Reformed, and what not more. Those who practise idolatry in the mass, as well as those whose confession is that that practice is accursed; those who depend for righteousness upon their own merits, as well as those whose confession is that we are to trust only in the alien righteousness of Christ; those who boast of salvation by their own free will, as well as those whose confession is that the free-will "gospel" is the error of Pelagius out of hell are made one by Pent. Pent. leaders herald their religion as a means of church union.

The ecumenical nature of Pent. was evident at "the 1977 Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches" held this summer in Kansas City. The conference was co-sponsored by Baptists, Pentecostals, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Mennonites, Messianic Jews, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, and United Methodists. Members from many other denominations participated. One of the main speakers, the Episcopalian, Dennis Bennett, said that "he sees three streams of Christianity that are beginning to flow together: the Catholic stream with its emphasis on history and the continuity of the faith, the evangelical stream with its emphasis on loyalty to Scripture and the importance of personal commitment to Christ, and the Pentecostal stream with its emphasis on the immediate experience of God by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The keynote speaker, the Roman Catholic, Kevin Ranaghan, "asserted that divisions among the various Christian churches have been a 'serious scandal' in the world. 'For the world to believe depends on our becoming one,' he said. It is the will of God, he emphasized, 'that we be one.' " He expressed his belief that there is a "real possibility of moving together toward some lasting form of Christian unity." (cf. *Christianity Today*, August 12, 1977, pp. 36, 37)

Because of its fundamental errors regarding the Word, Christ, and faith; because of its pride; because of its false ecumenicity — an ecumenicity apart from the truth; because of its heretical soteriology — the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism; and because of its fraudulent miracles, Pent. must be rejected, and it must be rejected by Christian discipline. Here, many are weak. They know the errors of Pent; they see it as radically different from the Reformed faith. But they speak of their “Pent. friends” and tolerate Pent. in the life-stream of their church.

The Pent. must be disciplined. He must be disciplined for his own good, that God may thus give him repentance unto the acknowledging of the truth. He must be disciplined for the church’s good. The other members must learn to fear. For the Pent. means to stay within the church, so that he may gain adherents to his religion. “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Titus 3:10, 11).

The Reformed View of the Christian Life
But can we not learn something from Pent.? Does

it not have something positive to contribute to Reformed believers? Pent. has nothing whatever to contribute to us. We can learn nothing from this movement. I am troubled to find Pent. literature in the homes of Reformed people for use as devotional reading: *The Full Gospel Businessman’s Voice*; the David Wilkerson writings; the Watchman Nee books; and the like. Even though the material may not be Pent., the devotional reading — and listening! — of some Reformed believers is to be faulted. The fare from which they regularly feed to satisfy the soul’s craving for exposition of the Christian life, experience, and practice is the best selling (paperback) literature of present day Arminian fundamentalism. At best, it is devoid of anything Reformed; at worst, it undermines everything that Reformed believers hold dear, inculcating a superficial, false view of the Christian life and experience. Where, for example, in the frothy works on the higher, richer, fuller, deeper Christian life, with their flashy covers, that abound in the average Christian bookstore do you find anything of the “out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord” of Psalm 130? Much less is this agony over the guilt of sin central to their vaunted higher, richer,

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fuller, deeper Christian life. Theirs is a higher, richer, fuller deeper Christian life, therefore, whose heart-beat is not the forgiveness of sins in the redemption of the cross of Christ. Nor does it consist of the fear of Jehovah, this gracious Judge. A plague on these books, and a plague on their higher, richer, fuller, deeper Christian life!

It may be that part of the blame for this bad reading lies with us preachers, elders, parents, and schoolteachers. Perhaps, we do not point the Reformed saints to the books that will afford good, solid, devotional reading: many of the writings, especially the commentaries and sermons, of Luther and Calvin; many fine books by the old Presbyterians and Puritans published by The Banner of Truth Trust, e.g., *The Valley of Vision (A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions)* and *The Beatitudes* by Thomas Watson; certain of the devotional and practical works of Abraham Kuyper, e.g., *When Thou Sittest in Thine House*, a book consisting of meditations on home life; the published sermons of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, e.g., *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*; and such publications of the Reformed Free Publishing Associ-

ation as Herman Hoeksema's forthcoming *When I Survey* (sermons on the passion of Christ) and Herman Hanko's *Mysteries of the Kingdom* (a study of the parables), as well as those sections of Herman Hoeksema's commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism that treat the ten commandments and the Lord's Prayer.

Perhaps, we are not producing material on the distinctively Reformed (Biblical) life, practice, and experience, as we should. *The Standard Bearer* could do more in the way of a positive development of these aspects of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

It goes without saying that the main course in the Reformed diet must be Scripture itself, especially the Psalms, the Proverbs, and the "practical" parts of the epistles.

That Pent. has nothing to contribute to the Reformed believer does not imply that God does not make use of this movement on behalf of His people. God has always used heresies to drive His Church to the Word, so that her knowledge of the truth may be increased and her faithfulness of life may be renewed.

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God uses Pent. to send us back to Holy Scripture to search it as regards its teaching concerning the Christian life.

The basic appeal of Pent. is its criticism of the Christian's life and its promise of a higher, richer Christian life; it will give power and joy. Pent. finds much laxity, unfaithfulness, and disobedience. We do well to confess this. God sends this scourge upon the churches for a reason. Many have lost the first love. The love of many waxes cold. Iniquity abounds. For

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of a faithful member, MRS. PAULINE SYNDERS, whom the Lord took home on October 16. We express our sympathy to the bereaved family.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Mrs. P. Decker, Pres.
Mrs. C. Pastoor, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church, in Jenison, expresses its Christian sympathy to Mr. Clarence Pastoor in the loss of his wife JEANETTE PASTOOR, on October 24, 1977.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18

Rev. M. Joostens, Pres.

many, worship is lifeless formalism; confession of the truth is a dead tradition; Christian life is an external ritual; and the experience of salvation's peace and joy is non-existent. Always, mysticism arises against the background of a decline in the spiritual life of the Church, especially a decline into dead orthodoxy. Thus, Pent. seduces the people with the allure of real life, dynamic power, and wonderful feeling.

So, we ask: What is the Christian life and experience? What is "the normal Christian life?"

ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT

On November 4, 1977, our beloved brother and sister-in-law, MR. AND MRS. GEORGE ENGELSMA, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. It is our prayer that God will continue His lovingkindness and faithfulness to them in the coming years.

"The Lord is my inheritance,
The Lord alone remains
The fulness of my cup of bliss;
The Lord my lot maintains.

(Psalter No. 27, vs. 4.)

The Engelsma brothers and sisters

Book Review

MUSIC IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, by Dale Topp; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1976. (205 pp., paperback, \$4.95)/
Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema.

Written by a professor of music at Calvin College, this book tries to view music in its proper perspective as a tool for use "in the Christian Community." In seven chapters the author develops the concept of the power and importance of music in the lives of God's people. Not only does he discuss the areas of life in which music enters our lives, such as in worship services and the Christian home and school, but he also treats the many problems which arise in the study and performance of music, those of the choice of music, the choice of singers and instrumentalists, and the place which music should fill in the lives of Christians.

In the first chapter, "Worshipping God," the author sets the tone of the book, using Scripture's many references to the importance of singing and instrumental praise in the lives of God's people. With a fine blend of scholarship and common sense, he goes on to write a reasonable, well-balanced treatise on the purpose and use of music, in an atmosphere of sympathetic understanding of his fellow Christian.

In his comments on proper selection of hymns he shows how to select those which are solidly Scriptural, singable, and whose lyrics fit the tunes; and he makes suggestions for the improvement of congregational singing. Although this reviewer cannot agree

with all his choices and suggestions, his ideas are well worth studying.

One theme which the author carries throughout the book is that *all* Christians can and should enjoy music. Even those whose voices are not so beautiful should be encouraged to develop their talents for the glory of God. He urges those who have few vocal talents to praise God on instruments or by listening to others perform. The chapter on "Music in the Christian Home" and that on "Music in the Christian School" should help parents who want to foster an enthusiasm for good music in their children.

Although the author recommends the heritage of the music of the church of all ages and shows how to mold the tastes, even of children, toward the classics that have stood the test of time, he fails to reckon with the antithesis of good and evil in our lives, also as it shows itself in the area of music. As in all areas of our lives, so in music there is a line of sharp distinction between the good and edifying and the secular and sensual, between music and the perversion of music, between music in the service of God and in the service of Satan. It is in this area that we would disagree with the author. Particularly, for example, we disapprove of the author's permissiveness with regard to the choice of rock music and with regard to the dance for teen-agers. Also in the comprehensive appendix, which in general is an excellent guide for musical selections, the selections from the world of rock, of films, and from Broadway we deem to be inconsistent with a life of sanctification.

Qualifiedly recommended.

*Report of Classis East
October 5, 1977
Faith Prot. Ref. Church*

Classis East met in regular session on October 5th at the Faith Prot. Ref. Church in Jenison, Michigan. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. Van Overloop led in opening devotions and Rev. Woudenberg, in the absence of Rev. Veldman, presided.

After the usual business of accepting the credentials, signing of the Formula of Subscription, reports of the Stated Clerk and Classical Committee, Classis dealt with the issue of the frequency of its meetings. Overtures from Hope, Kalamazoo, and Covenant addressed this issue. All three overtures requested that classis reduce its meetings from four times to three times a year. In addition, Hope requested that, in order to avoid conflict with the meetings of Classis West, classis meet on the second Wednesday of the month rather than on the first Wednesday as is the current practice. After discussion, classis decided to adopt the overtures of the three churches. Classis East will now meet in the months of January, May, and September on the second Wednesday of those respective months. The grounds given by Hope's overture were adopted to support this change: 1) Our church order allows for some flexibility because of great distance; 2) Good stewardship of time and money;

3) Small amount of work, particularly at our July classis; 4) Classis West meets but twice a year having twelve churches while we have but nine; 5) If necessary, a special meeting can be called by the Classical Committee.

Due to Rev. Van Baren's accepting the call to Hudsonville, First Church requested classical appointments and a moderator. Rev. Schipper was appointed as moderator and the following appointment scheduled was adopted for First: Nov. 6 - Rev. Schipper, Nov. 13 - Rev. Joostens, Nov. 20 - Rev. Veldman, Nov. 27 - Rev. Van Overloop, Dec. 4 - Rev. Heys, Dec. 11 - Rev. Woudenberg, Dec. 18 - Rev. Van Baren, Jan. 8 - Rev. den Hartog.

The Finance Committee reported expenses of \$362.20, the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered, the concept minutes were adopted; and, after the closing remarks by the chairman, classis stood adjourned. Rev. den Hartog closed the meeting with prayer. Classis will meet next on January 11, 1978 at Southeast.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

News From Our Churches

Rev. James Slopsema declined the call extended to him by our church in Randolph, Wisconsin. Soon after they received this news, Randolph formed a new trio consisting of Rev. John Heys, Rev. Rodney Miersma, and Candidate Kenneth Koole. After a recent congregational meeting, Candidate Koole received the call from Randolph.

Rev. George Lubbers, pastor of our church in Pella, Iowa, planned to spend about two weeks in Maine toward the end of October and in early November. Beside preaching on Sunday, Rev. Lubbers planned to give two midweek lectures on the subjects: "The Raging of Satan in History" and "The Infallible Earmark of the Last Hour."

During their most recent celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Pella congregation dedicated their Thank Offering to the support of the Jamaican ministers with whom our churches have been working for some time: Revs. Brown, Williams, Nish, and Elliott. Rev. Nish was married on September 25 in Dias. Rev. Brown preached the sermon.

Our Iowa/Minnesota churches sponsored a Reformation Day lecture on October 26 in the Sheldon Community Building in Sheldon, Iowa. Rev. Kamps of Doon, Iowa, planned to speak on "Limited Inerrancy: Right or Wrong?" or, "Does the Bible Contain Errors?" This western lecture was scheduled the day before the Michigan area Reformation Day Lecture in Hudsonville. Prof. Homer Hoeksema was to speak on "Reformation - Option or Mandate?"

At a recent special congregational meeting, the Edgerton congregation voted to insulate their parsonage. Randolph has also been busy with repairs to their parsonage while it is vacant.

During the months of October and November the ten stations of the Family Radio network are broadcasting some of the sermons on Romans 9 preached by Rev. G. Van Baren in First Church, Grand Rapids. Some months ago, Family Radio broadcast a series of Rev. Van Baren's sermons on the first chapters of the book of Genesis.

K.G.V.