

BEACON LIGHTS

*FOR PROTESTANT
REFORMED YOUTH*

April, 1975

**My Brother's Keeper
The Right to be Dependent**





BEACON LIGHTS

VOLUME XXXIV

APRIL, 1975

NUMBER 2

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

If any of the material of BEACON LIGHTS is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.

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Forms 3579 should be returned to
BEACON LIGHTS

7561 Sunset, Jenison, Mich. 49428

Second Class Postage paid at
Jenison, Michigan

Subscription price \$3.00

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Editorial

My Brother's Keeper

by Harry Langerak

The incident in Scripture around which the subject of my article centers is God's coming and asking Cain "Where is Abel thy brother?" You will recall Cain answered the Lord with a question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Mind you, he had just killed his brother in cold blood and had the audacity to answer God with this wicked question. The question Cain asked was a rhetorical one. In other words, it had an implied answer which was NO I am not my brother's keeper. Cain by his answer showed his hatred for God. God had just previous to this incident told Cain "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" Gen. 4:7. It was soon after this that Cain killed Abel thereby showing his contempt for God and his brother. One hates his brother when he hates God. This is why the first and second tables of the law hang or fall together. Cain was a child of the devil. He hated God and this hatred despised the first table of the law. This led to his hatred of his brother and his despising of the second table of the law.

Cain knew better. He knew he was supposed to be his brother's keeper. But he willfully refused to obey God and be his brother's keeper. You and I may never repeat the question of Cain. It is a question that stems from the hatred of God. As regenerated children of God we are our brother's keeper. We love our brother because we love God. And yet, if we are honest with ourselves, we will confess that although our Heavenly Father has kept us from inflicting the death blow upon his brother in a physical manner, our hearts are none the less capable of being cruel to the brother. We may not

dare to touch him physically, but we have our ways of getting our pound of flesh. It is because of the old man of sin that wars in our members that we must constantly remind ourselves to be our brother's keeper. Only God by the implanting of his love has made us capable of loving our neighbor. He has given us the strength by His Spirit to crucify the old man of sin so that we can love the brother. And yet we must never forget that at times we can be the most calloused haters of the brother. You and I must constantly be on our guard lest we sin against the brother and even kill him, if not physically, then spiritually. We must be as Abel who loved God and also his brother. Abel was a righteous man which was reflected in his walk toward God and his brother.

What does it mean to be your brother's keeper? In answering this question it is my particular concern to relate it to our contact with the brother in Christ as we rub shoulders with him in home, church and school. Christ, our elder brother, laid down an important principle for us in answering our question. He said "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." What you seek to enjoy as God's servant, you must help your brother to enjoy. This involves all our life in its physical as well as spiritual aspects. We must seek this even as we would seek it for ourselves. This is extremely difficult in our complex life, but to be our brother's keeper is an absolute necessity.

Paul also directs our attention to being our brother's keeper in Philippians 2:3 where he writes: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Paul is saying it

takes a humble child of God to be his brother's keeper. Pride will never let us be our brother's keeper because pride makes us vainglorious and incapable of loving the brother. Only if we are humble before God will we be of a lowly mind before our brother so that we can esteem him enough to be his keeper. Humility is the key that unlocks the door of our selfish pride so that we can look out for the well-being of others as Paul goes on to state in verse 4 of Philippians 2: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." To be humble takes hard work. We must crucify our old man which is proud and selfish. We must pray and ask the Lord to humble us before him. Only then can we be humble before the brother.

The Heidelberg Catechism also indicates what it means to be our brother's keeper. In the explanation of what is to be understood by the communion of the saints it has this to say "... That every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members." In the explanation of the sixth commandment it states that we show our neighbor patience, peace, meekness, mercy and all kindness; that we prevent his hurt as much as in us lies and that we do good even to our enemies. Also in the eighth commandment the Heidelberg Catechism tells us that God demands "I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may; and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others; further also that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy." Finally the Heidelberg Catechism in the ninth commandment states we are required to "defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor." The Heidelberg Catechism is God's gift to His church through the work of very spiritual men. What an extremely difficult task they put before us in being our brother's keeper. Yet it is our task. When we violate these

commandments we are no better than Cain who killed his brother and buried him. We too can bury the brother under the sand by failing to heed the admonitions of the Heidelberg Catechism when dealing with him in life's walk. Regardless, we are still our brother's keeper and as such are responsible for his physical and spiritual well-being.

Going back to the incident of the Lord coming to Cain. The Lord asked Cain "Where is your brother Abel?" The impious answer of Cain was "I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" The Lord also asks this question of us. Do we know where our brother is? If we are our brother's keeper we are concerned about him and know where he is. We didn't leave him buried in the sand by leading him into sin did we? This is easy for us to do if we forget our calling to the brother.

We can easily hurt the brother by our sinful behaviour. I do not mean hurt in the sense of grieving him by our actions, but I mean in the sense we lead him into sin. We cause him to stumble by our coaxing him into sin. Christ said to the wicked Jews in Mark 9:42 "He that offends one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." We must never urge or lead the brother into sin. Our example is an important part of being our brother's keeper. By our sin we can set an example to follow and by this awful example lead the brother farther and farther into sin until he becomes as skillful or better than we are. The brother's keeper never does this. Rather, he will try to keep the brother from a sinful walk even as Abel tried to do by his example. Paul in Romans 14:8 says we must live unto the Lord because we are the Lord's.

As our brother's keeper we must take sin seriously and, therefore, it is of concern to us that we not only walk as living examples of Christ, but we desire the brother to walk in the same Christ-like

behavior. When we see the brother sin it is of concern to us. We may never turn our backs, shrug our shoulders and walk away. We have an obligation to admonish our brother. We must see that his spiritual life is at stake. If we do not tell him of his sin we kill him and walk away as Cain did. We must admonish the brother as Able did. This is why it is important for us to set an example in our behaviour. Otherwise our admonition is nullified by our deeds. In coming to the brother we must do so in all patience, meekness and humility. The brother who is truly a spiritual brother will welcome such loving concern on our part. His reaction will be one of sorrow for sin. The hater of God will hate us for admonishing him and will ridicule us and poke fun of us but it is still our obligation to him as our brother's keeper. We must never be an onlooker while the brother sins. We must live in God's fear. Then and only then, will we desire to see the brother walk in his fear. It has often been said that birds of a feather flock together. Let it be said of

you and me that remain attraction of others to us and we to others is our living the life of Christ. Then we will have real friends (brothers) who will keep us spiritually as we will also help them. Then we will do unto others as we would have them do unto us. In Psalm 119:63 David says "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

Are you your brother's keeper? Cain hated his brother and killed him. Abel loved his brother and he set an example and rebuked him. For this he was killed, but only physically. He received his reward which was eternal life. Can you honestly say I desire to be my brother's keeper? It takes grace and humility which only God can give. Ask for it in prayer and you will receive it. Then live in God's fear and you will desire to see the brother walk in his fear. We must bear one another's burdens and help each other. Then we are our brother's keeper because we love the brother better than self.

Feature

"Why Not Man?"

by Dave Looyenga*

*Dave is a member of First Church.

For a moment, allow yourself to objectively observe man. Notice how marvelous man and his world are. If you cannot see man's superiority – just take a look at all of his achievements. He has found cures for nearly all of the world's most fatal diseases. He has invented many machines that make life for himself and his fellow men so much more comfortable. He has even fled the planet that God placed him upon – and may in the future even leave the solar system itself. In the

last one-hundred years, man has increased his knowledge *ten-fold*, and even now his rate of learning is increasing at a faster pace than that. If you just use common sense, *why not* put your trust in man? What concrete accomplishment have you received from *God* lately?

The perverse philosophy just presented to you is characteristic of a contemporary cult known as scientific humanism. What is it in this philosophy that causes us to cover our ears with horror?

Through his technocracy and prosperity, man no longer sees a need for

God, because he has made technocracy his god. Formerly man trusted in a Divine Being for survival, food, shelter, and clothing. Now he sees no need to pray to God for daily bread, because he has scores of steak and potatoes stored up for himself. If he runs short of "daily bread", he simply steps up food production. He no longer prays for shelter or clothing – there is an ample supply of these material goods for him also.

Many men no longer consider salvation or the life after death. To them, there is no concrete proof of a heaven, and they refuse to even consider the possibility of a hell. To avoid this subject, man attempts to avoid death itself. He desperately searches for cures for all dreadful diseases. He goes to the doctor, not believing him to be a tool of God, but a god in himself. He constructs houses to resist the rains and the storms, and attempts to free himself from earthquakes, tornadoes, and other "natural" disasters. In the end, for him, death still has its sting and the

grave has its victory.

Now consider what this wicked cult does to our God. Man has completely revolted against God. He mocks Him and spits in His Face. He seeks to destroy the very One Who formed him from the dust of the ground, Who directed his growth in the womb of his mother, Who gave to him the intelligence that enables him to continue in his technology. He kicks this God in the very dust from which he himself came! This heathenism – this humanism repulses the Christian almost to the point of despair.

But, we have our defenses and only comfort in the Holy Word of God. This the Psalmist writes in Psalm 146:3-4; "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to the earth; in that very day, his thoughts perish." And also in Psalm 118:8, we read very purely and simply, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

"The Soul Gymnasium"

by Phyllis Bylsma*

*Phyllis is on the Beacon Lights Staff and a member of First Church.

Today much emphasis is placed on our physical bodies. We are taught in Phys. Ed classes that our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The basis for this is found in I, Cor. 6:19, "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" We are taught that we should keep our bodies in excellent condition. Our lives are organized largely on the basis of the body.

Many things are done for the physical body. Stores manufacture and sell clothing to warm the body. Homes are

built to house the body. Food also is consumed to strengthen and nourish the body.

Gymnasiums, health spas, and country clubs are provided to exercise the body. Yes, many things are done for the convenience of the body!

But, we would not have it any other way. Who wants to discard the many things that brighten life?

But, what about our souls? Isn't it true that without our souls our bodies could not exist? Do we exercise our souls as often as we exercise our bodies? Is our soul becoming "spiritually flabby"?

The problem seems to be that our souls have not kept pace with our bodies. The soul is lagging behind. We must also

exercise our souls daily! I Timothy 4:7b states that we should exercise ourselves unto godliness.

Preparing for sermons, our societies and catechism are a few instances to exercise our souls. This can be done by not only studying what is to be discussed or taught, but also by desiring or longing for that instruction. The preaching of the word and catechism are means whereby we are instructed. Our societies are based mainly on discussion. Through exercising ourselves in church, society can be made profitable.

The more difficult exercises are these: confessing that Jesus Christ is our Saviour, thanking God continuously during both good and bad times, earnestly desiring to do good works, and fighting against the devil and sin. The last exercise is the hardest one of all. Many people try this exercise but give up because it is too difficult. Which exercise is hard for you? The one that you have the most problem with is the one which you should work on.

The Word of God and the sacraments nourish our souls. The Word is the bread of life. The preaching of the Word and the acceptance of this Word warms our souls.

In I Cor. 9:17 this is stated: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection". *The American Revised Version* quotes this same verse as: "I buffet

my body and bring it into bondage". The idea here seems to be that we should try to exercise our souls so that they will have authority over our bodies.

Exercising our bodies, whether it be through swimming, gymnastics, or basketball, we often strive for a goal. Sometimes the goal is a trophy or otherwise the mere satisfaction that you have achieved. What goal should you strive for while exercising your soul? The Bible states in I Cor. 9:24: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." What then is that prize? Exercising our souls through faith, we may obtain the gift that God gives His people: eternal life and perfect salvation.

Our bodies, our shells, are only a temporary form. Our souls are everlasting. Afterwards, our resurrected bodies will be reunited with our souls and made like unto the body of Christ.

Finally, we are not our own, but belong to God. "For we are bought with a price: therefore glorify in your body and in your Spirit (soul), which are God's." (I Cor. 6:20).

The soul gymnasium is open three hours every Sunday. "Is your soul gymnasium a forgotten room?"

(Title and various ideas taken from *Hallock's Sermon Outlines* - Rev. Bruce S. Wright. Pg. 70.)



A Teen-Ager During the Depression Years

by Mr. Dewey Englesma*

*Mr. Englesma is a member of our Hope Church.

My first teen-age year was spent as an eighth grade student in the same one-

room public school house where the Hope Protestant Reformed congregation assembled for their worship services on the Lord's Day. Our family had been members of this small rural church from its origin during the 1924 "common grace controversy." Throughout the years 1929 to 1936 we had been without a minister and, although several calls had been extended, it wasn't until 1936 that we received our own pastor. He accepted the call with a yearly salary of nine hundred dollars – truly a depression-day wage. It was barely enough for an existence. let alone a living.

When the year 1929 with its economic disaster crashed upon the nation, I was nearing my fourteenth birthday, and my formal education had been concluded. By today's standard it would be labeled a meager education; and rightly so, for the eight grades with some fifty or sixty pupils were being taught by one teacher.

There wasn't a party to celebrate my graduation, but I was the recipient of a gift. A horse and cultivator were passed along to me, indicating that I had passed my "Shibboleth". I crossed the ford, and it was time for me to begin a man's work. For you see, my parents were farmers, and relatively poor even before the depression years, as they cared and provided for the needs of their eleven children. Now their financial struggle was intensified as they bent their backs to keep from losing the farm. These efforts became a daily battle as the returns for their farm products not only continued to decline, but some produce even became worthless.

How well I remember one such occasion. I was selected to make the early morning (2:30 a.m.) safari to the local wholesale market with the strawberries which had been picked the previous day. I found the market flooded with berries, for the harvest that June had been plentiful, but the buyers were few. Several hours later, and with day light arriving, the disgusted farmers began to pack up

and leave. I became desperate and sold the whole load to the lone buyer at twenty-five cents a crate. I was sick to my stomach as we made the transaction, for this price would hardly pay the cost for the sixteen containers. But neither could I force myself to dump them in the Grand River as some of the growers had threatened. Upon arriving home I told my father the circumstances of the deal, and he estimated that the eight of us had worked that whole day for the sum total of \$1.50. Well, that was the last of berry picking for the season. The younger children were glad and didn't hide the fact either. We older ones were a bit more sensitive to the heartache and despair of our father and mother as they watched this bountiful red ripe field shrivel and go to waste.

Incidents such as this were multiplied during the long lean years and have made a lasting impression on me. Because the last forty years have been years of prosperity and affluence, the majority of this generation's teen-agers find it next to impossible to visualize, let alone sympathize, with the life style of the depression years, and its lack of what is currently deemed a necessity.

Beside the daily barn chores of milking, feeding, and cleaning, there was the seasonal field work of plowing, harrowing, haying, cultivating, grain cutting, potato digging, and the never ending berry and bean picking. If ever a thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen year old boy is expected to hold up his end, it is in the bean and berry patch. And let me clue you, my brothers and sisters (especially my sisters) were not hesitant to let me know exactly what was demanded of me here.

It was also the duty of the teen-age son to provide water for the multitude of house-hold tasks. This water had to be carried by the tons of gallons from the spring which was at least a block away from the house. And it didn't matter, be it blizzard or blistering heat, the call was continually – water!

Also to me, the boy just out of knee britches, was given a third name. Besides my given name and water-boy, I responded to wood-boy (really in the Frisian dialect it has a much nicer sound). It was -- don't forget the wood, young one. How could I forget? I had already spent day after day after day at the opposite end of the crosscut saw cutting down the trees, then trimming the limbs off with the axe, after which the wood was sawed into stove length pieces to be hauled upon the sleigh and stacked up beside the barn. Here is where insult was added to the injury. "Scrounge around for some kindling too." So the wood was brought in again to be greedily devoured by the huge kitchen range. That apparatus surely had an insatiable appetite.

No, it wasn't quite all work and no play. We had our fun too during many an evening and noon hour while the horses rested. (Horses must have their rest periodically; I often did wonder -- and what about me?). We played either softball or baseball depending on which type of ball we possessed at the time. All our balls we found lodged in the debris along the banks of the river. The bats were either a wagon wheel spoke or a taut straight tree limb. Yes, even the fielder had his mitt. This was the one item which required a bit of know-how in order to protect our hands and fingers. Whenever I tell my own children how we improvised, every single child goes into gales of uproarious laughter and their remarks border on disbelief. But to me it was serious business to get this "mitt" to fit just right. I would take a burlap sack, fold it into a tight square and tie each corner with binder twine. If with precision and care, the twine was tied just taut enough, a perfect pocket would be formed -- which was my goal. My brother and I spent many hours using our home made equipment. The aged grandmother who lived with us was of the opinion we were "wasting" our lives by our frequent

participation in this sport, which she considered to be simply worldly pleasure. According to her my father should see to it that we were in the house learning the Scriptures.

In order to provide bread for his children, or to keep a roof over the family's head, many a husband and father engaged in some rather peculiar tasks. I personally knew a man, a close family friend, who came to our farm for the express purpose of hunting for frogs. This man was a skilled tradesman, ambitious and diligent but unemployed. He would arrive in the morning and spend the day sloshing through the swamps, bayous, and along the river bank whacking these pop-eyed creatures with his club. Whenever he was finished for the day, he would come to the back yard of our house where the boys would help him cut off and skin the legs of these critters. He sold these appendages to a local hotel for a few cents a dozen and so earned a couple of dollars. Today when we visit together we share a hearty laugh as we reminisce over some of the unusual and ridiculous means of earning a thin dime in the frogging days. The evening's conversation invariably closes on a more sober note as we recall God's watchful care over us through those trying and humbling years.

I have tried to portray for you young people, teen-agers, and others, a glimpse into the life of one who lived in the depression years. Our God takes care of us, as He has done for all His people throughout the ages past. He is faithful and knows us and our circumstances. He will surely save His Church through all of history. For He is God, and history is His eternal counsel unfolding before our eyes, and in our lives it has its salutary effect.

So, we can say with the assurance of faith to you Protestant Reformed teen-agers and others, do not fear what may come, and will come in your lives before Christ returns. How comforting for all of life are the words spoken by Habakkuk the prophet in chapter 3:17, and 18:

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

But they were good years we believe, since all of God’s works are good. We can say too, that we were content, even

though there were many difficulties. It is entirely possible that at the present time the struggle to maintain a Christian walk is even more difficult. To be sure, we who are God’s children do not despair because of the lack of physical bread. I believe it to be true that when the child of God has little earthly bread, God provides His children with bread that is of inestimable value – the spiritual bread of life.



Our Always Faithful God

by Mr. M. Gaastra*

*Mr. Gaastra is a member of our Hope, Redlands, Church.

The editor asked me to write a short article for *Beacon Lights*. The only thing in that request that appealed to me at all was the word *short*. I would not want it any other way. He further explained that it would have to be in connection with the 50th anniversary of our Protestant Reformed denomination and more spe-

cifically, about the depression years. In other words, it would have to do with the history of our churches, or to express it correctly, the history of God’s church. That is what we believe, do we not?

It is God who called that church into being, and according to question and answer 54 of our catechism, the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His spirit and word out of the

whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and forever shall remain a living member thereof. We are reminded also of Article 27 of the Confession of Faith. These are very beautiful and comforting words for the child of God indeed. And because it is God's church, its' history is so very important to all of us.

This church is in the world, but not of the world, and when God in His divine wisdom visits the world with His judgments, whether it be famines, great earthquakes, devastating tornadoes, or so-called depressions, the church too is affected by them. In fact, it is precisely for the welfare of the church that these things come to pass. The "depression" of the 1930's was no exception. If we see it in that light, there is a very important lesson in it for us. To our young people the 1930's may seem almost like ancient history, but to us oldsters it is only a short time ago. Although our young people were born and raised during years of unprecedented prosperity, it does not mean that the Lord does not speak to them in other ways. I am sure there are a goodly number of our young people who have experienced the loss of father, mother, brother, sister, or a very dear friend. That, too, is the calling voice of our faithful covenant God. The scriptures tell us that *all* things must work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

But what about our churches during those depression years. Work was very scarce and money was hard to come by. We all know that it takes a considerable amount of money to maintain a church and denomination. And consider for a moment that at that time, there were many of our families who through loss of their jobs, were unable even to provide for the physical needs of their families such as food and clothing. At that time, the government did make jobs available to quite an extent so that not all the unemployed would have to stand in line

for food. Nevertheless, there were many of us who had to rely upon the mercies of the church through our deacons to supply our daily bread and to help us meet our obligations to the work of God's kingdom. Is history going to repeat itself? It could happen! But the Lord provided for His church during that period too, as He always does.

In connection with this, it would be interesting to know what the salaries of our ministers were during those years. I have no access to consistorial archives, and to trust my memory, I dare not. I am sure that our older ministers could paint quite a picture as to what transpired during those years along that line. But, perhaps they are too modest to do that. This much must be said, regardless of what the salary was, the beautiful truth of God's Word was proclaimed, and they labored faithfully in the Lord's vineyard. The Lord uses those times to draw His people closer to Him.

During that time different congregations came into being and even church buildings were erected. Through the faithful preaching of the Word, the eyes of some were opened to the error of common grace and arminianism. It was true in those years too that the Lord added to His church such as should be saved. It might not be amiss to mention here that during those depression years the first Protestant Reformed day school came into being at Redlands, upon which soon others were to follow. To be sure, it was pioneering and it was not easy. But there too the Lord provided. It was a beginning and today most of our children are privileged to receive Protestant Reformed instruction.

When one takes the time, and believe me, it is well worth it, to page through the old volumes of the Standard Bearer, what a gold mine of material one finds there. The Lord raised up men whom He equipped physically and spiritually to produce what they did, and the material we find there is just as relevant today as it

was in the 1930's. Besides their regular ministerial labors they produced volume upon volume of literature which is well worth our time and effort to pursue. On top of that, they were instructing the students in the seminary, preparing them for the ministry.

I am sure that much more could be said of what was going on in our churches during those depression years. We were small then and we are but small today. Let that not be a reason for any of us to

become discouraged. It is God who has entrusted that truth of His Word unto us and therefore He is on our side. We have God's promise that no one can pluck us out of His hand. We had that promise then and we have it today.

This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning.

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS.



Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

Standfast

Stand fast in the faith. – 1 Cor. 16:13.

How do you do that – stand fast in the faith? You begin, as did this man, by taking a much simpler stance, on your knees. But he was no longer a neophyte when discovered in such a position. Near the end of his journey, being weary, he was tempted to take By-path Meadow to Enchanted Ground. The air there tends to make one drowsy just when he must watch and be sober, lest he fall into fatal sleep. So he had a battle of it to keep awake. Almost at the end of this ground was heard the sound of a very solemn voice, trembling with much concern. Coming closer revealed a man on his knees, with hands and eyes lifted up,

speaking earnestly to one that was above. Another man from Darkland, Mr. Standfast it was, making for the Heavenly City.

Have you ever had the experience of coming suddenly upon a man down on his knees in prayer? It's not unusual to come upon a family in prayer about the kitchen table. But it's a rarity to discover a man on his knees praying. The natural reaction would be to steal quietly away, making as little disturbance as possible, out of respect to man's privacy. But, if he were a close friend, or a roommate, perhaps you would kneel down beside him to add your prayer to his! Who does not pray as this man did in times of great

trouble? But few feel the need of private prayer daily. Standfast, when so occupied, could not care less who saw or heard him. Could you locate and point out your own secret prayer spots? Could you indicate a shady spot near flowing mountain stream? Could you show the exact tree you used to climb to be alone with God in prayer? Is there perhaps a high Etam, which, while the tree may be long gone, remains, where, like Samson, you could withdraw to pray for your allotted time? A good habit, yet though done in the greatest secrecy can hardly be kept undiscovered. Always there are prying eyes, as Daniel learned. Nor is prayer activity always interpreted favorably, as Daniel also learned. A Daniel, suppose, with a work schedule of seven in the morning to eleven at night, if discovered busily praying in one of those secret places, might be maligned as lazy, avoiding his work, a habitual loafer. But without such activity, one does not stand fast.

What kept Standfast faithful to his self-appointed task? It was his deep understanding of the wise counsel, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Surging, strong, insistent temptations constantly assailed him. He just as avidly resisted them. Once when weary and sleepy, he was accosted by an attractive, tall, dark well dressed woman who offered him her bed, her body and her purse. This, besides learning that she was Madam Bubble, mistress of the world, was enough to send him from her flying. Whoever lays down his head in her lap as good as lays it down on the block. Whoever lays adoring eyes on her is accounted an enemy of God. She is a sorceress and by her sorceries makes this world an Enchanted Ground. She has given it out in some places that she is a goddess and so some do worship her. She pours out hordes of gold from her purse in certain places on certain persons. She is a bold, impudent slut and will talk with any man. She loves to be sought after,

spoken well of, and to lie in the bosoms of men. She never wearies of recommending her attractions, loves them who think best of her, and promises some crowns and kingdoms if they will but take her advice. Yet she has reduced many to slavery and brought ten thousand times more to hell. She draws men into many hurtful lusts which drown them in destruction and perdition. She set Absalom against his father, and Jeroboam against his mast. She persuaded Judas to sell his Lord and was the cause of Demas' falling down the shaft of a silver mine to break his neck. She estranges rulers and subjects, parents and children, neighbor and neighbor, man and wife and sets a man at variance against himself. Standfast, with fear and trembling, was able to stand against her wiles because he was motivated and directed by a much stronger will than hers. For this is what he lived by: "Love not The World, neither the things that are in The World. If any man love The World, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in The World, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of The World. And The World passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." So Standfast could also be called Abide-forever.

Standfast, to live up to his name, was a watchman, for every Standfast must stand as a watchman, gathering intelligence of the enemy's approach and maneuvers (Hab. 2:7). He must stand, put on the whole armor of God and with spiritual weaponry fight the good fight of faith all his life to the end. His sword is always in hand, never decorating his mantel-piece. In full armor he stands his ground as a fighting soldier, resisting all the enemy's furious assaults face to face, foot to foot, hand to hand (Eph. 6:13, 14). Then he must, and only then he may, stand, not any more as a fighter, but as a conqueror. Then his stance is that of the victor when the conquered is thrown

down upon the ground (Ps. 20:8) and brought under foot of the conqueror (Josh. 10:24-25).

Then it came time for Mr. Standfast to prepare himself for the conqueror's crown. As with the passing of pilgrim's, he leaves the wilderness, goes down to the River Jordan, which was quite calm when he waded into the waters, and, about half way across, he stands a while to speak to his companions. There he felt like the priests who bore the ark of the covenant over Jordan to the promised land, to the heavenly Canaan. That is John Bunyan's very biblical picture of the believer's passage from this world to glory. With the promise of a glorious, eternal and

heavenly Canaan, who needs, or would want such a comparatively base, mean entity as a paltry chunk of real estate that is Palestine, even if the whole UAR were thrown in? Since you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. With Abraham we are heirs of the world, which means heirs of the New Heavens and the New Earth. *There* the King of glory and the kingdom of glory are, also the Church of the firstborn, the heavenly Jerusalem, where no more crying is (Isa. 65:17, 19). Spiritually-minded Israel, crossing over to Canaan, looked forward to *that*, not to an evanescent empire.

Contribution

The Right to be Dependent

by Rev. W. Bekkering

As growing and maturing Christian young people, we want to be more and more independent. That is good. That is part of growing up. Yet in the process of maturing and seeking independence we must be careful that we keep a proper spiritual perspective.

Really, you know, we never become independent in the absolute sense of the word. What we usually mean when we talk about being independent is making our own decisions with respect to the future course of our lives. As Christian young people we immediately see and understand that the future course of our lives can never be separated from God's will for us. We see that our seeking of "independence" must be within the scope of the Word of God. Never may we as young people lose sight of the boundaries within which we may exercise what we call "independence".

The Word of God everywhere calls us to recognize our dependence on God. How is this dependence on God manifest?

By being submissive to the rule of God. How is that rule of God concretely manifest in our lives? Through those whom God Himself has placed in authority over us. In His law God commands us to honor our father and our mother. Our Heidelberg Catechism, in explaining the fifth commandment, correctly interpretes this to mean "that I show all honor, love and fidelity, to my father and mother, and to all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand." Scripture further speaks of the God ordained authorities in Romans 13:1-5. There we read: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a

terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must need be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

To be obedient to the God ordained authorities in our lives is to express our dependence on God, and to recognize that His will is best for us.

Our parents, our teachers, our elders and minister, our employer and even the representatives of the government are authorities in our life representing God's rule over us. We must not view these authorities as those from whose rule we must separate ourselves as soon as possible. But we must view them as those through whom our God, Whom we trust and upon Whom we depend, rules us.

We begin to see then that the desire to be independent just for the sake of independence is wrong because it is an expression of rebellion against those through whom it pleases our God to rule us. We may still have the desire more and more to make our own decisions with respect to the future course of our life, but we must always do that before the face of God and in the framework of the authority He has placed over us.

A mark of spiritual development and maturity is that we recognize and confess our dependence on God. The more we see our lives in the light of the Word of God, the more we see that we cannot be totally independent nor, by God's grace, do we want to be. So then our process of growing up as Christians involves us in both growing more "independent" and dependent.

It is exactly this seemingly contradictory situation that causes us as young people many problems. It is here where we encounter the struggle between the

old man of sin and the new man in Christ Jesus. The old man wants to be independent in the absolute sense of the word and the Devil tells him that he has the right to be independent. The new man, however, through the instruction of God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit holds on to the desire to be totally dependent on God.

Many other influences in our lives testify to us that we have the *right* to be independent. Television hammers this theme home in almost every program we see. The popular songs that we hear on the radio drum the same theme into our heads. The example of the intellectual youth of our day on the college campus show us that we have a *right* to be independent and that we must insist upon that right. But all of these influences we recognize, by God's grace, as being the manifestation of the lawless spirit of the age in which we live. We understand that we cannot embrace this rebellious theme and still be dependent upon the God, Who loves us.

If the Devil can convince us that we need not be submissive to those in authority over us then he has cut us loose from our dependence on God. We become a law unto ourselves. We become independent in the bad sense of the word. To be independent in that sense of the word would be a terrible thing for a child of God. We would be hopelessly lost in the current of life with no anchor or rudder. As Christian young people our faith is directed to God and firmly grounded in Him. To be cut loose from God, that is, to be independent is a most terrible state.

As Christian young people we must resist the attempts and temptations of the Devil to make us rebel against those in authority over us and thus to declare ourselves independent from God. We must strive to overcome the weakness of our flesh and the rebellion of our natures and firmly hold on to the right to be dependent on God. ■



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

by REV. G. LUBBERS

That Basic Personal Commitment

"...and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses"

I Timothy 6:12b

It is many centuries ago now that the young man, whose mother was a Jewess and whose father was a Greek, made a good profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Paul and Silas were possibly present too when this promising young man stood forth in the church at Derbe or Lystra to confess his faith in this Jesus of Nazareth, and in the gospel of sovereign grace. It was necessary for the sake of the Jewish members in the vicinity, who knew Timothy, that the latter should submit to the rite of physical circumcision. He must also have been baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. No doubt the two women who had so much to do with Timothy's training, as a child from the Scriptures, were present too. They were his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. It was a very great moment when Timothy, as a true-born

son in the faith, makes his confession, standing in the New Testament congregation, in the Gentile world.

There was a large audience present. God would have many witnesses at this occasion. Timothy would become a "man of God", a fellow-worker in the church, whom Paul always loved as his "dear son". There must have been something very loveable about this young man. He was called unto eternal life, he must fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life!

Recently I saw them stand there. It touched my heart. They rose up before the congregation, before many witnesses. They gave a "good confession" on that Sunday morning. I read of them later in *Beacon Lights*, and I remembered them standing there in the church, and heard them say one by one "Yes" to the ques-

tions which were put to them. And many witnesses heard it. It was done in the presence of God, the Lord Jesus, and all His elect angels. The latter too looked down and rejoiced. There was more than one sinner who repented!

And then I looked once more and reflected on the three questions to which they answered in the affirmative.

"Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian Faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?"

What a direct question to ask! Here in this sinful and unbelieving world where the truth of the gospel is not believed, but gainsaid, young people were asked: do you acknowledge the Bible to be the only "doctrine" of salvation. A doctrine which is true and complete. Nothing may be added, nothing may be detracted from it. And then I hear young people say "Yes", that is my personal committed position in the midst of the world. That is a miracle of grace, indeed. Flesh and blood could not reveal this to these young people. Fathers and mothers, ministers, teachers all taught it. But to acknowledge this all before many witnesses, that is of the Lord.

And the next question spoke of a godly resolve. It was not a flippant off-the-cuff reply. It was "have you resolved?". Is this a prayerful resolution to which you have come, like that Ruth, the Moabitess, when she said "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God". These young people were not Moabites. They were in the household of faith from their childhood, like Timothy. They knew the Scriptures from their childhood, at mother's knee. Yet a firm resolution had grown in their hearts, and they must express it. They did not "join church" of which they had been members all their life, and were therefore baptized as infants. But they must utter before many witnesses, a solemn "yes," to

"Have you resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?"

Faith must be confessed. And faith does not only adhere to sound doctrine, it also by the very law of the Spirit of life rejects all that fights and militates against this faith in Christ. It rejects heresies; it rejects all that is contrary to the teaching of "this Christian Church", which means: The Protestant Reformed Church, as she adheres to the Articles of the Christian Faith and in the Three Forms of Unity: Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt.

My mind went back almost a half Century. There I stood too and made that good profession before many witnesses. It was by the grace of God that I made that confession. I did not understand that so profoundly then. But now a bit battle-scarred and having learned the tactic of the arch-foe Satan, to rob us of the faith, I say with Paul "By the grace of God I am what I am". Timothy needed to be reminded of his "good profession" back there in Derbe, and so do we. We need to be reminded of this at this Fiftieth Anniversary of our Churches. We must continue to adhere to the doctrine and to reject all heresies.

I still cannot forget that moment when the minister read the question.

"Will you submit to church government, and in case you should become delinquent (which may God graciously forbid) to church discipline?"

No, these young people were not swearing allegiance to the flag of these United States of America. They did not "swear" but they did make a sacred vow. And vows are sacred. They vowed to place their neck willingly under the yoke of Christ and his authority, as their Lord and master. They will submit to "Church government" as Christ exercises this through the instrumentality of office-bearers whom He chooses and appoints to these tasks. These young people must

have read Hebrews 13:17 "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves. . ."

Yes, we learn to submit to Christ's government when we obey our parents in the Lord. That means that we recognize the Lord in our parent's authority. And now we also see that authority of Christ's Prophetic-Kingly office in the elders and the minister. And we vow before God, Christ, and the angels, and many witnesses in the church that we shall submit to church government. Good citizens of the kingdom of heaven we shall be by

God's grace. We shall be also good citizens in the midst of the world. We shall be the salt of the earth, some first-fruits of God's new creation.

Yes, it is a battle, every day anew to keep these our vows before the Lord in spirit and in truth. It means: follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, whereunto we have been called.

May we not err from the faith.

Grace be with you, young confessing saints, to the end. Amen.

Current Events and Comments

Women's Lib in the Church

by Gwen Van Eenenaam

Women's Lib has invaded almost every aspect of our lives. Wherever we go, we are reminded by many that women were created on a level equal with that of man. All of you will agree with me when I say that this statement has no biblical background, I hope. This is what we believe. But what is said and what is done are often two different things.

Paul instructed the New Testament women in the church to be obedient to the wishes of their husbands. When they dressed, it was not in the latest fads of fashions, but they "clothed themselves with humility". They realized that it wasn't outward adornment that mattered, but the adornment of the heart. Fashion was slow to change in the church in that they were usually the last to cast off the old and the last to put on the new.

But the women of the world are no longer happy with their position in the world and surprisingly enough, in the church. Or maybe it's not surprising. The "Women's Rights" movement arose, contesting that women were no longer inferior to men and in many cases were

superior. This expression of equality on the part of women even carried so far that women began to dress like men.

Now don't get me wrong! Pants, in particular, for women have a definite function and place in the world. I'm not writing about that; that doesn't concern me now. But something else does.

Although pants have their place in the world, they have no place in the church. This "fad" has carried over from many more liberal churches to our churches. These women argue up and down that pants have their place in church; but I believe they do not.

Even though these women may not consciously realize it, they are in fact competing with men. How terrible this must be in the sight of God, who made the beautiful woman to fill a special place in the church. And now women are competing for equality with men and are unhappy with the position which God has given them in the church.

These women may argue that they want nothing more than to be comfortable. But the next logical step after

this is that of women holding office in the church. How can we reconcile our truly Reformed beliefs to let this serious error invade our churches? Other churches have found in the past that the old saying, "If given an inch they'll take a mile" holds true. If we give the first inch now, soon we will be able to distinguish no difference between our churches and the world.

I hope that the words of Peter can conclude this issue. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;

that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Don't forget the Essay and Poetry Contest

Theme: God's Covenant Faithfulness

Due: May 1

for more details see February issue.

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