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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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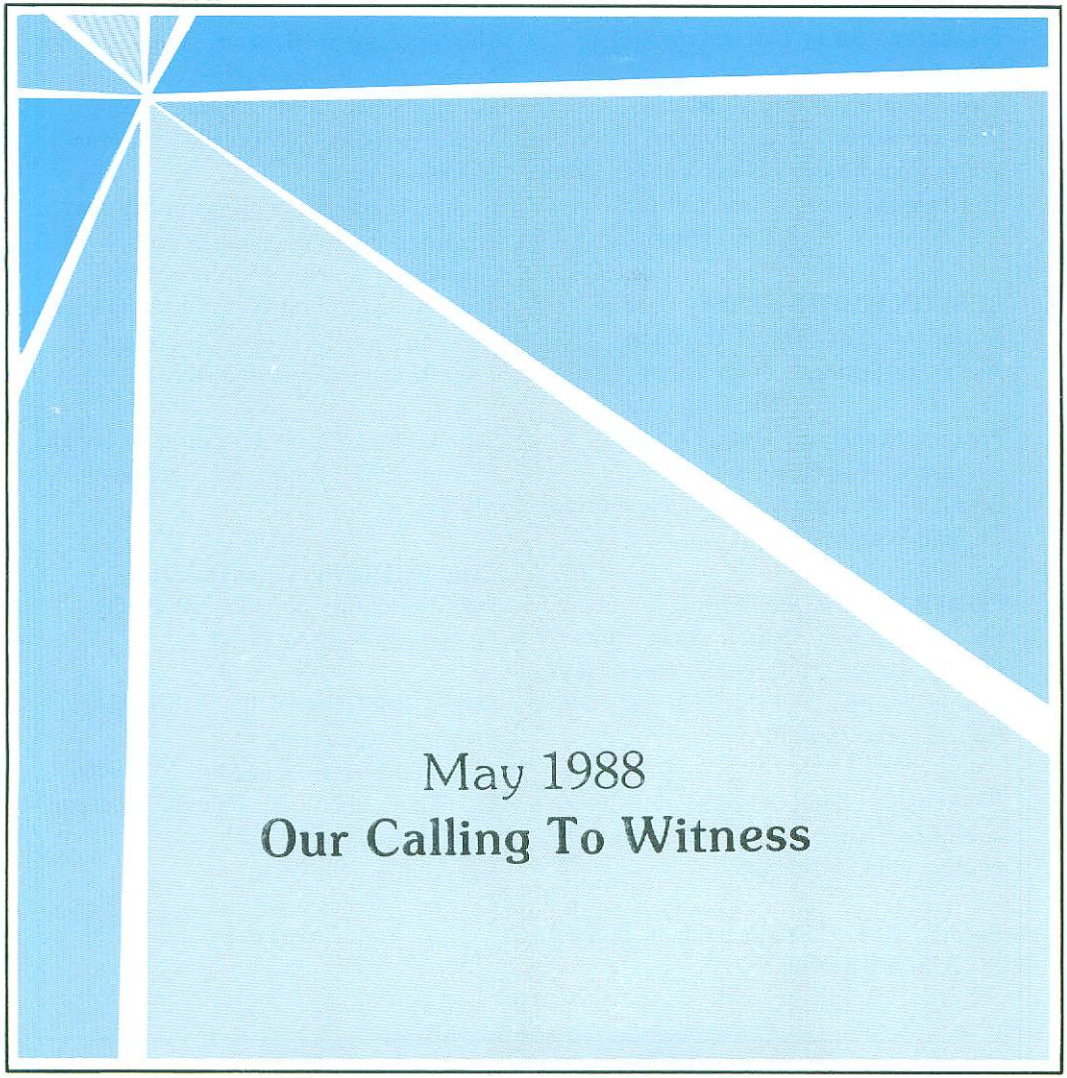

May 1988

Our Calling To Witness

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EDITOR'S NOTES

by David Harbach

Nancy Van Baren has resigned as our News Editor. We have been thankful for her faithful contributions to this rubric over the last couple of years and know that she is or will be active in other work concerning the young people of our churches.

That leaves us with the need not only for a News Editor, but also an associate editor, and writers for the rubrics Issues In Our Lives and Critique.

In this issue you will find the first of two articles by Rev. Ron Hanko on witnessing. The first article examines our calling to witness and the second article our conduct as a witness. I am sure that these articles will encourage you to remain faithful to our calling to be shining lights in the midst of darkness.

The article "Take Note of Elihu, Young People" by Bruce Jabaay is about speaking the truth to others and points out that through much Bible reading, prayer and the inworking of the Spirit, we will be faithful witnesses of God.

ATTENTION STUDENTS!

The Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for scholarships to be awarded to future Protestant Reformed ministers and teachers for the 1988-89 school year. Each applicant must also submit an essay of at least three hundred words, presenting a defense of the Bible's infallibility in the context of theistic evolution. For an application blank, contact Dirk Westra, 7960 Ronson, Jenison, MI 49428. The application, accompanied by the essay, must be returned by June 1, 1988.

Editorial

Take Note of Elihu, Young People

by Bruce Jabaay

Eli who? No, Elihu! Elihu was a young man who reproved the elder Job and his three friends for lack of wisdom. We read in Job 32, "Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu . . . against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather then God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Can you imagine that? That would be like one of our younger people reprimanding one of their elders or respected men in the church. Well, Elihu was very nervous about it as he states, "I am young, and ye are old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should speak wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, hearken unto me; I will give you my opinion." Those are truly the words spoken by a man with a strong faith and good conscience. He knows that wisdom comes only from God and we all share that wisdom through God's indwelling spirit. The Holy Spirit pricked him in his heart to speak out in accordance with his Christian convictions. If he hadn't spoken out, God's wrath would have been kindled against him as well as Job and his three friends.

How about you, young people? Are you ready to give your opinion? Does you opinion mean anything? Does your opinion contain the wisdom from on high? Elihu did not merely give his own opinion, but he gave a testimony from God! Through much Bible reading, prayer and of course the inworking of the Holy Spirit, we too will be ready to give a testimony from God. In Titus we read, "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, **sound speech**, that cannot be condemned . . . . These things **speak**, and **exhort**, and **rebuke** with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

Young people, I am not encouraging you to be "trouble makers". I am not saying that you must argue doctrine with our professors, pastors, elders, teachers and whomever. But I am telling you, that you must know your doctrine and what constitutes Christian charity; and therefore be ready to defend what you believe. Naturally, you must exercise a certain amount of Christian liberty and not be ready to point fingers, but let your views, thoughts and ideas be known. By discussing your beliefs with others, hopefully you will search the scriptures and either strengthen those beliefs or

stand corrected through the grace of God. Don't be afraid of being wrong either, for it is better to stand corrected than to be spiritually unsound.

At times, it becomes necessary to do more than discuss your opinion. You must declare God's wisdom! Elihu became angry because he knew Job and his three friends were talking as foolish men and did not seek the wisdom of God. As soon as Elihu pointed out that wisdom comes from God and not man's vain talk, they became dumbfounded or ashamed. In Job 32:13-15 we read, "Lest ye should say, We have found wisdom, God thrusteth him down . . . he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches. They were amazed, they left off speaking." A cross reference to verse 32 is Jeremiah 9:23 where we read, "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches." Elihu further points out that when it comes to declaring God's wisdom, **no** man will restrain him from speaking. "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away" (Job 32:21-22).

Be careful to declare God's wisdom and not your own. State only the truth and remember, "a fool's voice is known by multitude of words" (Ecc. 5:3). You must be humble when defending the truth. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5). When God's wisdom is mocked, it becomes a sin to keep silent and a sin to speak proudly or hypocritically. If you remain silent, is it because you don't want to be a hypocrite or are you afraid of man? If you speak proudly, aren't you declaring more than God's wisdom?

When it comes time to make a stand, the easiest solution is to ignore it or forget about it. Your conscience will tell you to witness, but you either are afraid or just don't care enough. If you are afraid because you lack confidence, ask the Lord for courage and wisdom. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (I Cor. 1:27). "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13). Young people, love the Lord and be zealous in your faith as Elihu. "For I am full of the matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak that I may be refreshed. I will open my lips and answer" (Job 32:18-20).

"It is not surprising that few Christians are in fact to be found, seeing that there are few who have come to realize that Christ is so precious that they regard everything else as so much filth."

- John Calvin

Truth Vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
21. Compassionate Discrimination Saving the Elect

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." — Jude 22, 23.

The text is difficult to translate, one reason being because of many manuscript readings at this point. But we offer the following rendering of the text:

"And, indeed, on some have mercy, discriminating [Between the weak and the wilful]; some save with fear, snatching [them] out of the fire, hating even the underwear blemished from the flesh."

In verses 20 and 21, Jude had told the saints in the churches what to do about themselves; now he tells what to do about weak brethren deceived or confused by the (hopelessly, v. 12) false teachers. Some of the weaker brethren get temporarily carried away with false doctrine, especially in the time of controversy. Restore such in the spirit of meekness, not being unnecessarily severe in correcting them, nor proudly looking down on them. We ought to be happy to be reconciled with them and to have them restored to our fellowship when they give evidence of repentance and desire to resume their stand on the truth. Contrary to modern thinking that we must have laws forbidding religious and credal discrimination, we must rather be discriminating against all who attack the Christian Faith. It is only discriminating in the legitimate, good sense to bar those from our membership who oppose the Faith once-for-all delivered to the saints and who refuse or fail to live godly in Christ Jesus. We are to be merciful, discriminating between the teachable and the intractable. An excommunicated person on true repentance and amendment of life may be, and ought to be, compassionately received back into the church, but not those who persist in stubborn resistance to the Faith and the way of godly living marked out in Scripture and the Reformed Confessions; not impenitent heretics like Hymenaeus, Philetus, Sabellius, Arius and Socinus. It is discriminating, in the proper sense, to welcome the penitent sinner, once more returning to and conforming to the truth and godliness, and to bar and ban the apostate sinner entangled in false doctrine and a wicked manner of life. We are commanded by God to be so discriminating.

But the political hatred of and animosity to our right to be discriminating as to religion, creed, morals, mores and sex has now become a matter of dreadful threat to our whole

existence as Christians. The House has already passed the so called Civil Rights Bill of 1984 which absolutely forbids all discrimination. The Senate now (Sept. 1984) labors to pass this bill. If the president adds his signature, it will become law. Then, for example, neither our schools, seminary nor churches will be able to bar homosexuals from our ministry, pulpits, classrooms, congregations or membership. It would then be impossible to operate "underground" schools, for our children would be forced to attend public schools (where anything goes), or the state authorities could take them off, from our families, to hold in state care institutions to be educated and raised for the state. Then to reply to this statist tyranny with, "We must obey God rather than men" will mean confrontation with the most enigmatical dilemma we have ever had to face! Then Antichrist cannot be far away!

But in the discriminating way of Scripture we show compassion because God is both a discriminating God and a God of compassion. Christ is a discriminating Lord (Matt. 23) and a merciful and faithful high Priest (Heb. 2:17). It is exactly so that He saves His people from their sins.

"Some save." This is not difficult to understand. First, consider that Paul was much concerned about his brethren, the Jews, that he "might save some of them" (Rom. 11:14). Next, Paul encourages Christians married to unbelievers to live, pray and labor to the end that "thou shalt save thy" spouse (I Cor. 7:16). Then a minister, like Timothy, by taking heed to himself and to the doctrine should "both save himself" and his hearers (I Tim. 4:16). The idea here is that as people of God, saved ourselves, we endeavor to be instruments in the salvation of others.

"Save some with fear," that is, with the instrument of fear. Some must be dealt with more severely, denouncing with the awful judgments of God which threaten them. The fear of the last judgment and of eternal punishment must be impressed upon us at times. Also church members must fear the censures of Christian discipline. The steps of censure are awe-inspiring and we must regard them with reverential fear and holy dread. The world mocks faithful expounders of the Word as "fire-and-brimstone" preachers. The world taunts us with what they call our scare-talk concerning the terrors of the Lord, the torments of hell and the sufferings of everlasting damnation. But we have been told by our Lord Himself to fear God and His wrath because He is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matt. 10:28). Does this sort of preaching ever scare any into heaven? Better that than being laughed into hell.

But the fear we would teach them is the fear of the Lord. This is not a slavish, servile fear, which is sinful. In that kind of fear men fear God for His wrath and punishment, but hate Him for His holiness. They want God dead; they wish Him annihilated; for they wish there were no God. This sinful fear may cause a man to quit certain sins without hating sin itself. A wolf may be driven off from its prey without changing its preying and wolfish nature. So wicked sinners are not afraid to lie, die and fry in their sins. Therefore, we are to warn them to flee from the wrath to come and to snatch some of them out of the fire. This means that we will have to "rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Tit. 1:13).

"**Pulling** them out of the fire." The word "pulling" means "taking by force" as the violent do (Matt. 11:12; Jn. 6:15; Acts 23:10). It means "plucking them out" (John 10:28, 29). It means to be "caught up", as the saints shall be caught up into heaven at the coming of the Lord (II Cor. 12:2, 4; I Thes. 4:17). It means to **snatch** them out of the fire.

"The fire," of which Jude warns, is it merely a figure of speech? No; for according to the context (v. 7), it is the "everlasting fire" of hell; and Peter speaks of fire kept for a day of judgment (II Pet. 3:7). Lot was "as a firebrand plucked out of the burning" of Sodom and Gomorrah which, set on fire, burned down sinners to a flaming hell (Amos 4:11). Lot, indeed, was as "a brand plucked out of the fire" (Zech. 3:2).

". . .hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Jude refers to the soiled stinking **underwear**, reeking with foul body odor. No wonder Paul speaks of "our vile body" (Phil. 3:21)! Hating even the under-garment spotted and soiled by its contact with a filthy body—such a detestation of **sin** we all should have. (Lev. 13:45-47; 15:4, 17).

Some sinners are so vile that we cannot, dare not, come in contact with them, as those infected with the AIDS disease. They are not even wanted in their places of employment, not in the military, nor in the Salvation Army, nor in health clubs and bath houses, nor in hospitals, nor their dead bodies in mortuaries, lest infection from their corpses be caught and spread. Therefore, some sinners, in order to avoid the society of such evil persons, must be put away out of the church by excommunication. The true church is a holy church and by the separation of excommunication gives witness to its confession that it detests gross sin and wickedness. "A wise man feareth and departeth from evil" (Prov. 14:16).

Today, by way of TV, even on the "commercials", the filthy garment spotted by the flesh is to be seen. Some of these garments are deliberately tailored to tempt and seduce to the lusts of the flesh, to all kinds of filthiness. These garments are purchased with the wages of unrighteousness and worn in the enjoyment of licentiousness. Not only women, but men wearing clothing too tight, too brief, and, as they say, "too sexy," do adorn themselves with "the garment spotted by the flesh." There is much in the garment industry that ought to be detested and loathed as dealing in the vilest rags by those who would be recognized as Christians. Some of the worst of this spotted and stained fashion is demonstrated by the sons of Belial who don female array (transvestites). There was a man who wore outwardly decent dress suits, but who continually put on effeminate airs. Doing so he defiled his garments. They were spotted by his sinful flesh in a very offensive way. The Christian must continually be **hating** this sort of thing. Only then shall he "keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27).

Joshua the high priest stood before the Angel of the Lord, but he was clothed with filthy garments (Zech. 3:3). Satan stood there, too, as an adversary against him. But the Lord rebuked the devil for disputing the salvation of the priest, snatched him as a brand out of the fire and in mercy took away his filthy garments, caused his iniquity to pass away and clothed him with a change of clean raiment. So we are to have compassion on lost sons

and daughters; so we are to discriminate between the weak (Rom. 14) and the wilful (II John 10); so we are to save some by means of fear—fear not only of the consequences of sin, but also of the awful, deadly contagion of sin. We will hate even the sweaty, stained underwear defiled from our flesh. If we do, we will flee the wrath to come, flee youthful lusts, flee, as Joseph did, even the garment spotted by the flesh (the touch) of a lascivious, lewd woman. We will pray, "I flee to Thee to hide me," fleeing to the Cross of Christ and the Christ of the Cross and there wash all our sins away.

From the Pastor's Study
I WAS SICK AND YE VISITED ME

by Rev. C. Hanko

This is a subject that is not commonly discussed in a young people's periodical, the subject of visiting the sick, elderly and shut ins. The busy life, the many interests that take up the hours of the day leave little time for thinking about others who may be weak and frail, afflicted with some ailment; lying alone on some weary hospital bed, or just hindered from getting around by the weaknesses of old age.

Yet the exercise of Christian mercy must also have a place in your youthful lives. As members of the body of Jesus Christ, we are closely knit together by the bond of faith that unites us to Jesus Christ. Even as head and body are inseparable and dependent upon one another, so also we need one another for our spiritual welfare and growth.

There is no doubt but that you are aware of that, at least to a degree. At occasion you do go out to sing at rest homes and the homes of shut ins, even bringing them a basket of fruit in the holiday season. No doubt some of you have relatives and acquaintances who are advanced in years or hindered from getting around freely, and whom you visit on a regular basis.

Yes, you likely also send a card to those who need a bit of comfort. Some of you, as I once did, may think that a card is somewhat of a waste of effort. People receive them, maybe by the dozens, glance through them, and soon

dispose of them. But anyone who has been in the hospital, or has been laid up at home, or does not get out of the house freely, appreciates the fact, that others still think of him or of her. Mail call means so much to those who are confined to their homes, the hospital, or institutions. It is so little effort, and yet so greatly appreciated, especially if the sender takes time to jot down just a line of two. Many downcast spirits are cheered by knowing that others care.

Yet it is true that a visit means so very much more, particularly when that visit is made by a pleasant, enthusiastic boy or girl from the church. There are elderly people in the church who will eagerly show you a picture of some young person who shows interest in them, drops around occasionally to chat with them, and runs an errand or helps in some small way to make their life a bit easier. They will fondly refer to the person on the picture as their adopted son or daughter. There are many lonesome people in most any congregation. At one time they were active members, possibly taking a prominent place among the saints, but either through illness or some infirmity no longer leave their home except when absolutely necessary. During inclement weather they rarely get out. Just a short time ago one elderly couple made the remark, we sit here day after day looking at and caring for each other, but rarely do we see visitors. That makes for long days, when nothing but meals break up the monotony of the slowly moving hours. Anyone who has visited the Holland Home in Grand Rapids, or some rest home, will have noticed how these elderly people begin to move toward the dining room at least a half hour before meal time. How they appreciate having someone drop in on them, someone who will speak with them of the spiritual things that lie closest to their hearts, someone who will read to them from the Scriptures or from our church periodicals, giving them an opportunity to rest their weary eyes. Have you never called on anyone, wondering what to say, and then coming away shamefacedly, since you thought to bring them a word of comfort and cheer, while they were spiritually far ahead of you and gave you some real food for thought? Or haven't you brought some goodies or some other small gift to a shut in, and then gone home marvelling how much that meant to them, while it took such little effort on your part?

As important as it is to take time out to speak a word to the weary, there are, nevertheless, certain considerations that should be kept in mind.

There are people who are hard to visit. Maybe they have a hearing problem, so that you are reluctant to call on them, because you have to shout yourself hoarse to be heard. You keep putting off a visit like that. But there are many like you, so that, if anybody, these people are often neglected. You may have to raise your voice, so that you are heard from the living room to the kitchen, you may have to get right up to the ear of this person to get through to him, but this poor soul needs comfort and assurance, possibly more than others. There may be a person who is almost a complete invalid, who cannot utter a word, and therefore cannot converse with you. That makes a visit extremely difficult, and might make you think twice before you venture out. In that case, you do well to plan in advance a one-sided conversation, so that you will not make the person uncomfortable with your

long pauses and hesitations. You'll be surprised how interested such a person is even in mere trivialities that take place in the church. You can always read to those suffering from aphasia, and often they can enjoy singing along with you, if not audibly, certainly from the heart.

Sometimes the sick person is too sick to converse, or may even be in a coma. Maybe you are not alone when you make your visit, or maybe your other visitors arrive while you are there. The most natural thing to do is to start conversing together, almost ignoring or forgetting the patient. Little do we realize how trying that is for the patient, who cannot warn you of what misery he or she is in. You may get involved together in a lively discussion, which you really enjoy, but in the meantime, you have left the sick person in dire agony, eager to scream, if that were possible. I recall one instance in which the nurse came into the room, took in the situation at a glance, and marched out the visitors with the remark that the patient needed her attention right now.

To mention one other instance. An elderly man lay in a coma at death's door. Part of the family and a visitor were talking together, raising their voices and laughing as they became the more involved in their conversation. Maybe they thought that the man in the coma could not hear them. Maybe they forgot about him. In any case, the minister entered, realized what was going one, asked them either to leave the room or to be quiet, while he stepped up to the bed, talked to the man so near the gates of eternity, prayed with him, and received a nod of appreciation. It is said, that the last of the senses that leaves a person before death is the sense of hearing. One family in particular was not aware of this, and was making funeral arrangements alongside the bed. It was the nurse who warned them that mother could hear and understand everything that they were saying.

Yet none of these things should deter us from visiting the sick and the shut ins. This is part of our Christian stewardship in seeking each other's welfare. The communion of saints is also a part of the office of every believer.

Just a final remark. A chaplain in a hospital once said, "Jesus said, 'I was sick and ye visited Me'; He could have added, 'and ye did not stay long'." That is worth remembering.

But also this: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40

". . . there is no other way by which we can attain to the wisdom of God than by becoming fools in this world. But the foundation of this humility, as of the whole of religion, is conscience and the fear of the Lord, if that is done away with, you may build your house in vain."

- John Calvin

OUR CALLING TO WITNESS

by Rev. Ron Hanko

Young People, do you witness of Christ? Do you know that a good witness is one of the proofs you belong to Him? Jesus Himself tells us this in Matthew 10:32:

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

Notice, here, that the only ones for whom Jesus makes intercession now, and stands for in the judgment day, are those who have been His witnesses.

I am afraid that this is a calling that we have all seriously neglected. Not only do we not actively seek to fulfil this calling, but even when we are confronted by a good opportunity to witness, we refuse to do so. Far too often we are ashamed to speak of our faith, or to defend the name of God. But we must see that this means that we are ashamed of Christ Himself, or that we do not care enough about the Name of God to defend His Name from blasphemy and reproach. That is why Jesus says what He does in Matthew 10:32.

The biggest part of the problem, then, is a spiritual problem. No article in the **Beacon Lights** can deal with that. That is a matter of self-examination, prayer, and conversion. But in so far as the problem is also due to a lack of knowledge, we can look at what the Bible says about Christian witnessing, and perhaps these articles will help us do that.

The most important passage in Scripture that deals with witnessing is I Peter 3:15:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

The first thing we should notice here is that Peter gives us a definition of Christian witnessing. What is it? Peter says it is giving an answer concerning our hope.

Witnessing, then, is not giving personal testimonies, as many like to do, but speaking of our hope, that is, of the fact that our home and our treasures are not here, but in heaven. Remember that Peter is talking to strangers and pilgrims (1:1) We are stranger and pilgrims and that is the reason why our witness concerns our hope.

Now the word "answer" in this passage is literally "apology." We must give an "apology" for our hope. The word apology does not mean, however, that we are sorry for our hope and speak with regret of it. Obviously, it cannot mean that. The word is used in the same sense as in the name of a class that is taught at many Seminaries, Apologetics. The word so used has

the idea of a **defense** of our hope. The implication is, of course, that our hope is mocked and rejected in the world. And truly, unbelievers consider the Christian's hope of eternal life a mere "pipe dream."

We should realize, too, that this word "apology" implies that the "answer" we give concerning our hope is clear, reasonable, and knowledgeable. We must know what we believe in order to speak of it, and an effective witness requires that we know what we believe well enough to speak clearly and sensibly. A good Christian witness, in other words, is more than emotional show.

This does not mean that our witness is or should be a theological discourse, or lesson in dogmatics. Jesus makes that very clear in Matthew 10:32 when He speaks of "confessing". That is His definition of witnessing **confessing Him** before men. When Jesus says we must confess Him, He too is reminding us that witnessing is not the telling of personal "conversion experiences," but speech about Him and His grace. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that good witnessing is something very personal, not in the sense that we speak of ourselves, but in the sense that we speak from the heart and from experience of what God has done through Jesus.

The word that we use to describe this calling, the word "witnessing," reminds us of some of these things. A good witness in a court of law is one (a) who knows the facts of the matter, (b) knows them by experience, (c) tells only the truth, and (d) tells the truth simply, directly, and sincerely. We are Christ's witnesses.

We might add here that both passages we have quoted make it clear that witnessing does not include arguing or strife. Paul warns against this very thing in witnessing in II Timothy 2:23-25;

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

All too often we destroy what would otherwise be an effective witness by being argumentative and harsh. Peter also speaks of giving our answer with "meekness and fear".

This calling is ours also in every area of life. Jesus simply says that we have this calling "before men", that is, everywhere and always. We have the calling to witness at work and in play, in home, school, and church. Out in the world this calling is especially important, for there we are dealing with those who do not know Christ. What a shame it is when they do not even know or realize that we are Christians, because of our failure to witness. Nor can we ever say in the world that we do not have the opportunity to witness, exactly because we are dealing with those who do not know Christ. They show that in everything they do.

But we must not forget either that this calling is ours also among other Christians, in our homes, churches, and schools. We have this calling among fellow Christians both because of the constant presence of sin, and to build up and encourage one another. And certainly there is even less excuse for our failure to defend the Name and honor of Christ among brethren, than for our failure to do it in the world.

Perhaps we can even say that we must first learn to speak of Christ among ourselves before we can do it in the world.

Nonetheless, when we think of this calling, we think especially of our witness in the ungodly world, and that is certainly what Scripture emphasizes also. Peter talks about those who ask a reason of the hope that is within us, implying that they do not know, and our primary calling to witness, therefore is to them.

I do not believe, however, that because this calling is toward the world that it is something that requires us to go out of our way to fulfil. In other words, it does not usually mean going door to door or passing out tracts on a street corner (or more likely today, in an airport), as many seem to think. Rather, it is such an integral part of our whole life as Christians, that our whole life becomes a witness. It is this matter that I want to write about in the next article, i.e., "Our Conduct as a Witness". Peter has much to say about this also.

But in conclusion, I would plead with you, Young People, not to forget this important calling, and to show that you are not ashamed of Christ by speaking and testifying of Him. Remember that it is the proof that you belong to Him.

Issues In Our Lives
THE INFALLIBILITY AND AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD

by David A. Rau

This article is written shortly after Calvin College's board of trustees gave approval for the professors at Calvin to teach whatever they want to teach: even evolution. This article is not intended to scorn or mock our mother church, nor is its intent to directly debate that fateful report. I only point to that as proof that the infallibility of God's Word is under attack. What a terrible thing! God's Word subjected: it must conform to man's rationale. The death knell of a church is when God's Word is thrown out and humanism becomes the ruler in the church. That church is dead. As I stated, however, this article is not about the problems in the Christian Reformed Churches.

Do not think, for even one minute, that this can not happen to us, Protestant Reformed Churches. One of the problems that leads towards the doubting of God's Word is already among us. We must submit ourselves to the authority of God's Word. The problem is, that quite the opposite happens. We try to subject God's Word to our lives. We use the Bible to justify our actions. We try to hide behind Christian liberty. We subject God's Word to our actions, rationale, and even

what we know to be fact. God is much greater than that. No mere man can fully understand God or His Word. We have only a very small understanding. God is beyond comprehension.

Take the case of evolution versus God's Word. Most scientists say evolution is not a theory. They can conclusively prove, to man's intellect, that species evolve. They prove that due to the survival of the fittest, the world is what it is today. How must the Christian respond to this? Don't forget, we are facing what the scientists call irrefutable proof. We will be mocked to scorn if we come up with some "fairy tale" as they call the creation story. We must respond with God's Word. That is the ultimate authority in our lives. Do not rely on human rationale. What it boils down to is this: who do we believe, God's Word or man's rationale. Only be faith can we say that God's Word is the **only** authority in our life.

The problem is, you see, that if we start to pick and choose what we want to believe in the Bible, the entire Bible crumbles into meaninglessness. There is no authority in God's Word. If we say this or that text does not apply to us in our circumstances, we have destroyed all of God's Word. The Bible was written thousands of years ago. Circumstances were so different back then. It doesn't apply to us the way it applied to them - right? Dead Wrong. If we believe that any part of the Bible is dated, obsolete, not applicable to us, untrue, or not inspired by God, then we have destroyed the authority and power of all of God's Word. If we deny anything in the Scripture from creation through the prophets, the virgin birth through Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, and right on through the last chapter of Revelation, then God's Word becomes only a fable. The Bible stands as God's Word, but if one part is destroyed or changed, it becomes meaningless.

Scripture itself proves that it is inspired by God. II Peter 1:21 "For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The creation is not a fable written by man. It is God's Word. Does this Scripture apply to our life? II Timothy 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." God's Word was not written to instruct the world, but rather, the man of God. The world exists for the church. The Word of God damns the wicked. Do not expect to instruct the world out of the Word of God. They will not listen. God's Word is instruction only for the elect.

The Scripture must be the only authority in our lives. We must bow before what the Word of God tells us. We believe, by faith, that all of Scripture is inspired and written by God through men. When man, with all of his proof tries to prove God's Word wrong, do not try to make God's Word fit man's proof. That will never be possible. We must say that God is the only authority in our life. Man is wrong. In God and His Word is my strength and hope.

Singspirations for 1988:

June 19	Hope
August 7	First Jenison CRC
September 18	Southeast
October 16	Southwest
November 20	Faith
December 18	Hudsonville