

THE STANDARD *Bearer* A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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MEDITATIE

Geestelijke Eetlust

Zoo legt dan af alle kwaadheid, en alle bedrog, en geveinsdheid, en nijdigheid, en alie achterklappingen; En, als nieuwgeboren kinderkens, zijt zeer begeerig naar de redelijke onvervalschte melk, opdat gij door dezelve moogt opwassen.

I Petr. 2:1, 2.

Zoo legt dan af. . . .

En zoo, dat is, waar de zaken zoo staan, als in het laatste gedeelte van het voorgaande hoofdstuk beschreven werd, zijt zeer begeerig naar de redelijke onvervalschte melk.

Daar toch werd gezegd, dat de geloovigen wedergeboren zijn. Ze zijn dus in geestelijken zin nieuwgeboren kinderkens.

Nieuw geboren zijn ze, niet slechts in den zin, dat ze pas geboren zijn, en dus nog klein en teer zijn. Ook dat is waar. Ze zijn nog kinderkens. Allen zonder onderscheid zijn ze nog kleine kinderkens. Want wel is er onderscheid in de gemeente van Christus, en zijn sommigen sterker dan anderen, zijn sommigen verder gevorderd in den geestelijken wasdom; en wel mogen we uit dit oogpunt spreken van kinderen, jongelingen, en vaders in de kerk des Heeren op aarde. Mits maar verstaan wordt, en ook door allen beleden, dat in vergelijking met, en in betrekking tot de eindelijke zaligheid en volmaaktheid, allen, ook de sterken en verst gevorderden, nog altijd nieuw geboren kinderkens zijn. Immers hebben ook de allerheiligsten nog slechts een klein beginsel der nieuwe gehoorzaamheid, en is er dus in dat opzicht geen verschil tusschen heiligen, hen, die heiliger, hen, die heiligst, en hen, die allerheiligst zijn in dit leven. En in het woord Gods dat we hier be-

spreken, worden alle geloovigen toegesproken als nieuwgeboren kinderkens.

Intusschen zijn ze echter niet slechts nieuw geboren in dezen zin. Ze zijn door hunne tweede geboorte ook waarlijk nieuw geworden. En nieuw werden ze, niet slechts in vergelijking met hun ouden, zondigen en verdorven staat, zoodat ze in hunnen oorspronkelijken staat hersteld werden. Ware dit het geval, ze zouden naar de redelijke onvervalschte melk, waarvan de tekst gewag maakt, niet begeerig kunnen zijn. Ze werden echter geboren uit onvergankelijk zaad. Ditmaal werden ze niet slechts door God geschapen, maar uit God geboren! Ditmaal werden ze niet slechts tot levende zielen doordat God hun den adem des levens in een uit de aarde geformeerd lijf inblies, maar werden ze levend gemaakte nieuwe schepselen, doordat de Zoon, die vleesch werd, die stierf en den dood overwon, die opstond en tot een levendmakenden Geest werd, het zaad des levens in hen inplante, en hen met Zichzelfen voor altoos verbond.

Uit onverderfelijk zaad wedergeboren!

Maar daarom blijft het leven, dat uit dit onverderfelijk zaad ontspruit, voor zijn onderhouding en voeding, dan ook voortdurend afhankelijk van den Zone Gods, het vleeschgeworden Woord, dat uit de dooden opstond en verheerlijkt werd in de hoogste hemelen.

Van boven kwam ditmaal het zaad hunner geboorte.

Van boven moet ook het leven uit dit zaad worden gevoed. In heel de natuurlijke, aardsche schepping is er niets, dat tot onderhoud van dit leven dienen kan.

Bovendien werden ze, wat hun bewustzijn betreft, immers ook in deze nieuwe geboorte gebaard door het Woord, het eeuwig blijvend Woord van God!

En dat Woord komt hier op aarde nog altijd tot hen door de verkondiging er van in aardsche vormen, en in aardsche woorden van mensen.

Wat wonder dan, dat de apostel hier schrijft: *Zoo dan....* . . . zijt zeer begeerig. . . .

Waar gij immers allen nog nieuwgeboren kinderkens zijt, die niet alleen voor uw levensonderhoud be-

hoeft hebt aan voeding, maar die ook nog moet opwassen

Waar gij echter geboren zijt uit onvergankelijk zaad, en dus in deze wereld nergens het noodige voedsel kunt vinden

Waar gij geboren zijt door het Woord van God, dat eeuwig blijft, en levend is

En waar dat Woord onder u verkondigd wordt. . . .

Zijt zeer begeerig daarnaar!

Naar de redelijke melk!

En dat wel met nadruk: naar de *onvervalschte* redelijke melk!

In het licht van het reeds opgehaalde verband kan er zeker geen twijfel meer aan bestaan, of deze redelijke onvervalschte melk is het levend en eeuwig blijvend Woord van God, zooals het in het bewustzijn van deze nieuwgeboren kinderkens kan worden opgenomen door Zijne verkondiging onder hen. Het is het Woord der zaligheid in Christus, het Woord, dat vleesch werd en onder ons tabernakelde, door Wien God Zelf in deze laatste dagen tot ons heeft gesproken; het Woord, dat in ons vleesch door den eeuwig Geest Zichzelven offerde aan het vloekhout; het Woord, dat als overwinnaar over zonde en dood ten derden dage in heerlijkheid verrees, aan 's Vaders rechterhand verhoogd werd, en de belofte des Heiligen Geestes ontving; het levend en eeuwig blijvend Woord Gods door Christus gesproken, en dat God nog altijd door Hem spreekt tot ons; het levend en eeuwig blijvend Woord onzer zaligheid, dat in apostelen en profeten gelegd werd, door hen verkondigd werd, in de Heilige Schriften voor ons bewaard bleef, en naar het voorbeeld der apostelen en profeten nog altijd door de Kerk verkondigd wordt, in haar bewustzijn wordt opgenomen als redelijke melk, en als zoodanig aan navolgende geslachten medegedeeld wordt, — het is dat Woord, dat door den apostel wordt aangeduid als redelijke onvervalschte melk.

Door dat levend en eeuwig blijvend Woord van God werden deze nieuwgeboren kinderkens wedergeboren.

Door datzelfde levende en eeuwig blijvende Woord van God in Christus wordt het nieuwe leven in hen aldoor onderhouden en gevoed. Want aan Christus zijn ze verbonden. Uit Christus leven ze. Ja, niet zij zijn het, die leven; Christus leeft in hen. Op gansch wonderlijke, voor ons ondoorgrondelijke, mystieke wijze deelt Christus Zich steeds aan hen mede, zooals de wijnstok zijn levenssappen aan de ranken mededeelt.

En toch mag dat leven uit Christus in hen niet louter passief en voor het bewustzijn der nieuwgeboren kinderkens verborgen blijven.

Zij moeten immers smaken, dat de Heere goed is. Ze moeten den God hunner volkomene zaligheid kennen in al den rijkdom Zijner genade, opdat ze Hem mogen verheerlijken. Ze moeten naar Hem hongeren en dors-

ten, opdat ze met bewustheid uit Hem mogen eten en drinken al het heil, dat Hij voor hen heeft bereid en dat Hij hun schenkt. Daarom moet er hunnerzijds een daad des geloofs zijn, door Gods genade in hen gewerkt, waardoor zij den Zich aan hen mededeelenden Christus en al Zijne weldaden aannemen, den rijkdom Zijner genade smaken, en God verheerlijken voor het wonder Zijner zaligheid.

Geen bloot kunstmatige, hunnerzijds passieve voeding mag hun leven onderhouden en doen opwassen.

Als gezonde, levende, nieuwgeboren kinderkens moeten ze eten en drinken en verzadigd worden.

Maar juist daarom moet het levende en eeuwig blijvende Woord van God den vorm aannemen der verkondiging.

Het moet redelijke, onvervalschte melk worden!

Melk, want immers zijn het de nieuwgeboren kinderkens, die daardoor moeten gevoed worden. Het woord staat hier dan ook niet tegenover vaste spijs, evenmin als de geloovigen hier kinderkens worden genoemd in onderscheiding van anderen, die reeds toenamen in de genade en kennis van den Heere Jezus Christus. Integendeel, het duidt hier aan heel het Woord, dat onder ons verkondigd wordt, geheel den inhoud van de leer, die naar de godzaligheid is, de verkondiging van den vollen, rijken Christus, die in het Woord Gods ons is geopenbaard.

En deze melk is redelijk.

Niet alsof de inhoud van het geopenbaarde Woord Gods, dat levend en eeuwig blijvend is, zich aansluit bij de natuurlijke rede, door het natuurlijk, onwedergeboren, ongeestelijke verstand van den zondaar kan worden ontvangen. De natuurlijke mensch begrijpt niet de dingen, die des Geestes Gods zijn. Ze zijn hem dwaasheid, en hij kan ze niet verstaan, daar ze immers geestelijk onderscheiden worden. Dat Woord betreft dingen, die geen oog heeft gezien, geen oor heeft gehoord, en in geen menschenhart ooit zijn opgeklommen. Maar wel zoo, dat het het geheiligde verstand van den geloovige op redelijke wijze toespreekt, zoodat het redelijk verstaan kan worden, en het verstand van den wedergeboren mensch kan vervullen met waarachtige kennis van den God onzer volkomene zaligheid, van den Christus en alle Zijne heilsgoederen. Alleen op redelijke wijze grijpt het geloof, dat immers ook eene zekere kennis is, het redelijke Woord Gods aan, en wordt het leven der nieuwgeboren kinderkens onderhouden en gevoed ten einde toe.

Onvervalscht!

Geen vreemde bestanddeelen, geen valsche filosofie, geen ijdel menschenwoord mogen met de verkondiging van het eeuwig blijvend, levende Woord Gods vermengd worden. Het leven, dat door het Woord Gods gewekt werd, kan alleen door Gods Woord gevoed worden.

Alleen dat Woord, maar ook geheel dat Woord!
Redelijke, onvervalschte melk!

Zijt zeer begeerig!

Zijt hongerig en dorstig naar die redelijke, onvervalschte melk!

Begeer toch nimmer iets anders dan de volle, onvermengde, zuivere verkondiging van het levende en eeuwig blijvende Woord van God!

Laat uwe ziel toch geen bevrediging zoeken in de vage mystiek van geestdrijvers, die u zou afvoeren van de waarheid, die in Christus is, op de wieken van schijn-zalige gevoelsaandoeningen, of zou doen omkomen in de nevelen van pantheistische droomerij: *redelijke* melk zijt ge noodig. Laat toch geen arglistigheid van bedriegelijke dwaalgeesten toe, dat ze ooit de zuivere melk van het Woord Gods, waardoor alleen uwe ziel gevoed kan worden ten leven, vermengen met de ijdele filosofie van menschen: *overvalschte* melk moet ge begeeren.

En *begeeren* moet ge deze melk.

Zeer begeerig moet uwe ziele naar haar zijn!

Naar Gods Woord moet uwe ziel hongeren en dorsten. Dan toch alleen zult ge het in u opnemen, door het geloof verwerken, gevoed worden en opwassen!

Edoch, is dit niet eene ietwat vreemde vermaning?

Als er dan toch eenmaal bij het kleine kind geen eetlust is, zal men het door een vermanend woord tot begeerte naar voedsel kunnen opwekken? En is het op geestelijk gebied niet even onmogelijk als op natuurlijk gebied om iemand tot honger en dorst naar het waarachtige Woord Gods te vermanen?

't Is waar, op zichzelf ware deze vermaning ijdel.

Maar de apostel doet meer. Hij wijst ook den weg, waarin de nieuwgeboren kinderkens verwachten mogen, dat ze zullen hongeren en dorsten naar de gerechtigheid, en begeeren zullen naar de redelijke onvervalschte melk. Zoo toch moet het woord verstaan worden, waarmede hij deze vermaning aanvangt: "Zoo legt dan af alle kwaadheid, en alle bedrog, en geveinsdheid, en nijdigheid, en alle achterklappingen". . . .

Het eene is onafscheidelijk aan het andere verbonden.

Van tweeën één, ge legt af alle kwaadheid, bedrog, geveinsdheid, nijdigheid, en alle achterklappingen, en wat dies meer zij, en dan zult ge ook de begeerte naar de redelijke, onvervalschte melk in u ervaren; of ge koestert deze zonden, of ook slechts één er van aan uw hart, maar dan versterft ook in u de ware geestelijke eetlust, en alle begeerte naar het levend en eeuwig blijvend Woord van God vergaat bij u.

Hoe kan het anders?

Kwaadheid, bedrog, geveinsdheid, nijdigheid, achterklap, en zooveel meer werkingen der zonde, zijn uitingen van uwen ouden zondigen, totaal bedorven mensch. Kwaadheid, dat is de neiging en begeerte om

den broeder te schaden, te benadeelen, kwaad te doen, is van de hier opgesomde zonden misschien wel de wortel. Ge haat uwen broeder, wilt hem schaden, te schande maken, zijn naam uitroeien, hem verwoesten in de boosheid uws harten. Daaruit volgt ook reeds de nijdigheid, die het niet hebben kan, dat het den broeder wel gaat; en ook de duivelsche achterklap, waardoor ge met hatelijke tong den naam uws broeders door het slijk sleurt, bekladt, hem geestelijk bedoelt te vermoorden. Maar in nauw verband hiermee staan ook de zonden van *bedrog*, de leugen in actie, en van geveinsdheid en *huichelarij*, waardoor ge uwe boosheid en kwaadheid en nijdigheid en achterklap een masker van vroomheid aandoet.

Al deze boosheden zijn zoovele werkingen der zonde in uwe leden.

Als ge deze goddeloosheden den vrijen teugel viert, heeft in uw leven de oude mensch der zonde den boven-
toon.

En die oude mensch der zonde is van beneden. Hij voedt zich met ongerechtigheid en leugen. Hij heeft zeker geen begeerte naar de redelijke onvervalschte melk. Integendeel, van deze heeft hij een afkeer. Hij haat het levend en eeuwig blijvend Woord van God, waar het verkondigd wordt. Hij verzet zich er tegen met al, wat in hem is.

Hoe zult ge dan, waar deze oude mensch en zijne werkingen bij u den boventoon voeren, begeerig zijn naar de redelijke onvervalschte melk? Eene geestelijke onmogelijkheid is het.

Zoo legt dan af!

Ach neen, dat beteekent niet, dat ge bij machte zoudt zijn, om eens en voor goed uwe oude, zondige natuur af te leggen en kwijt te worden. Van den ouden mensch komt ge niet af tot den dood toe.

Maar wel wil dit zeggen, dat ge steeds door waakt en bidt, en strijdt den goeden strijd des geloofs; dat ge bij dagen en bij nachten de werkingen van den ouden mensch der zonde door de kracht van Gods genade tegenstaat; en dat ge den nieuwen mensch, die naar God geschapen is, ook in het lichaam dezes doods doet heerschen en aldoor oefent in dezen geestelijken strijd.

In den weg van deze voortdurende geestelijke oefening, zult ge zeer begeerig zijn naar de redelijke onvervalschte melk.

Want het is de nieuwe mensch, die dan den boventoon voert.

En het is deze nieuwe mensch, het nieuwgeboren kindeke in u, het beginsel der wedergeboorte alleen, dat begeerig zijn kan naar het levend en eeuwig blijvend Woord van God!

Dan zult ge hongeren en dorsten naar de gerechtigheid!

Dan zult ge eten en verzadigd worden!

En opwassen tot de zaligheid!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

As to Proposal of Local No. 12

We received the following communication:

Dear Mr. Editor,

We were astonished to read on page 470 of the Standard Bearer of September 1, 1944, what Mr. Richard Tempelman had written to you in a personal letter. He undoubtedly did not intend it for publication. And, Mr. Editor, we were mystified also by your action. What did you hope to gain by the publication of that letter, without having tried to verify its contents? Surely it could serve no good purpose.

As to the contents of the letter: we will answer the charges. We particularly resent the attack upon the Convention procedure and the reflection on the C.L.A. Secretary. It is true that debate on the proposal of Local 12 was limited to one hour. But that was done for no other reason than that time was very limited since we met for only one afternoon in Convention. Mr. Tempelman did not, either at the National Board meeting, held in the forenoon of the same day, nor at the Convention meeting protest about this limitation. He also failed to mention that at the National Board meeting, held in the morning, the question was discussed for more than an hour in his presence, and that the National Board could then already have decided by a large majority to recommend to the Convention not to adopt the proposal of Local 12, but that it did not make use of that prerogative, but instead decided to bring the proposal before the Convention without comment, in order to avoid even the semblance of high-pressure tactics.

It is true that the C.L.A. secretary spoke on the proposal ahead of the delegates from Local 12, but that was not intentional. The Secretary was asked by the President to place the proposal before the meeting, in his capacity as secretary, which he did. He then stated what the C.L.A.'s position on the strike had always been, that it is the historical position of the Christian labor movement, that the arguments presented by Local 12 were not convincing, and that therefore the Executive Committee was opposed to adoption of the proposal. Instead of taking up the greater part of the hour we will vouch for it that the secretary did not take more than ten minutes! When Mr. Tempelman later stated that he did not like that procedure the secretary frankly stated that he didn't either, but that it was not improper and that no harm had been done.

That was entirely true. The simple fact is that the

delegation that was supposed to defend Local 12's proposal was confused about the whole thing. Mr. Tempelman himself admits the inability to defend the proposal, but tries to put the blame on the secretary who supposedly "put a rope around the necks" of the Local 12 delegates. Whatever Mr. Tempelman means by that expression, it is absurd.

The brother did not state facts either when he said that Local 12's delegates tried to get another word for the word "strike" when they realized the hopelessness of getting anywhere with the original proposal. Fact is that in the debate they were led to admit that it was not so much against the use of the strike in principle that they were opposed, but to the use of the word "strike" as used by the radical unions because of its offensive implications. Mr. I. De Mey, of the Tailors Local, who drew that statement from them, was thereupon very quick to point out that then the proposal did not make sense and that it should have dealt only with the substitution of another word for the word "strike." The delegate from Kalamazoo, Mr. P. Smit, thereupon asked whether such a word could not be found, and the Secretary stated that he too had been looking for another word, and that the best he could think of was "cessation of work." Others pointed out that a change was necessary but that we would have to instruct the people that what the C.L.A. understands by a strike is something different than that of the unchristian organizations. The delegates of Local 12 were told that if a substitute for the word strike was what they were seeking another proposal to that effect ought to be brought next year. Thereupon the proposal before the Convention was voted down.

That, Mr. Editor, is the true and complete story, to which the undersigned six members of the Executive Committee, outside of the Secretary, attest. If that is not sufficient we are sure that we can get testimony to the truthfulness of it from practically all those who were present at the Convention.

We request that you, in fairness to us and to remove the unfair reflection on the C.L.A. Secretary, publish this letter in the next issue of The Standard Bearer.

Ralph De Groot
Sam Sterk
Andrew Lamer
Edward Stegink
Henry C. Van Wyk
Ralph Kok

REPLY:

1. I am sorry that circumstances made it impossible for me to publish the above communication in the last number of our paper. It arrived at my address about the fifteenth of September, though it was dated the eighth. At that time I happened to be in

South Dakota, and when I returned it was too late for its publication in the Standard Bearer of Oct. 1. I had left my copy for the last named issue with the printer before I left Grand Rapids, and when I returned that issue was already on the press. This by way of explanation.

2. As to the contents of the communication, it is not for me to gainsay or admit the truth of what the brethren write about the procedure at their annual meeting of the C.L.A. with regard to the proposal of Local No. 12. Mr. Tempelman, who supplied the information to which the above communication gives the lie, can have all the opportunity he wants.

3. I am, however, concerned with the first paragraph of the communication. The brethren appear to have been somewhat overheated when they wrote that paragraph, judging from the big words and unwarranted statements they use, as well as from the fact that they jump to the conclusion that I must have been motivated by some evil design, when I published the information I received from Mr. Tempelman. They were "astonished," they were, in fact, "mystified" by my action! They openly state that Mr. Tempelman wrote me a *personal* letter, which was *undoubtedly* not intended for publication. And they wonder what I hoped to gain by this publication, but surely "it could serve no good purpose." This certainly concerns me.

4. And then I must kindly ask the brethren, if ever they desire space in the *Standard Bearer* again, to refrain from such tactics, and to leave all personalities kindly out of the discussion. Our paper is fair to all that desire to use it for the discussion of the truth. I like to give the brethren of the C.L.A. ample space, as the past issues of our paper will abundantly prove. But they must not become personal, must not allow themselves to be astonished or mystified at a perfectly clear and simple matter, and not impute evil motives where there was none. I may also suggest in this connection that it is quite sufficient to sign a communication with one single signature. We do not need a list of names in our paper to fill it. Perhaps Mr. Tempelman will be inclined to send in a communication with eight names to contradict the six. And before long we have ninety two.

5. The above brethren write that Mr. Tempelman had written me a personal letter, which was not intended for publication. This is an untruth. In the Sept. 1 issue of our paper I wrote: "Although the writer, Mr. R. Tempelman, does not state whether or not he intended this for publication, we thought there was nothing secret about the whole matter, and that it was but fair to all concerned that we made it public." This means simply that Mr. Tempelman did not ask me in so many words to publish his communication over his own name, although he certainly did not

intend it for private use by me, but sent me the information to be used by me as the editor of the *Standard Bearer*. Let Mr. Tempelman himself testify whether this is not the truth. How then can the above brethren write that Mr. Tempelman sent me a *personal* letter, not intended for publication at all? They must, indeed, have been mystified!

6. Besides, what wrong was there in publishing the information by Mr. Tempelman? To me it seems, first of all, that there was nothing secretive about the contents of Mr. Tempelman's communication. In fact, had I kept it to myself, I might have left the impression with those who were acquainted with it that I allowed myself to become a party to backbiting. What wrong can there possibly be in publishing someone's estimate, even though it is unfavorable, of a public meeting such as the annual meeting of the C.L.A. was to a large extent? Do not the brethren of the C.L.A. have the right and also the opportunity to gainsay Mr. Tempelman? And, in the second place, had not the secretary of the C.L.A. openly written that the proposers of "Proposal No. 12" were not able to defend their own proposal? It was to this statement that Mr. Tempelman replied, and which he meant to explain in his communication. And to do this in public, even through the *Standard Bearer* if he so desired, he had a perfect right. And he may certainly answer the above communication if that is his desire.

And now: no further personal insinuations. And only one name, please! H. H.

NOTICE

To subscribers and members of the *Standard Bearer*: On our annual membership meeting held Sept. 14; the following men were chosen as new Board members, D. Jonker, S. De Vries and G. Pyp; on a recent held Board meeting Mr. G. Pyp was chosen treasurer to take the place of Mr. R. Schaafsma who for 11 years has faithfully worked as treasurer of the Ref. Free Publ. Ass'n., but due to lingering illness had to lay down this work. In all these years this brother has freely given his time and effort for which we are grateful and pray that the Lord may bless him with that assurance that his labor was not in vain and that he may receive grace to patiently walk the way in which the Lord also now leads him.

Communications relative to renewal of subscriptions and membership fees or gifts should now be sent to Mr. Gerrit Pyp, 946 Sigsbee St., Grand Rapids 6, Michigan.

P. S. Please remember the cost of our paper has increased above cost price, so your prompt renewal subscription and gifts will be appreciated.

The Board

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

OF MAN'S REDEMPTION

Lord's Day XII

6

The One Sacrifice

(cont. from Vol. XX, p. 397).

The *moral theory* of the suffering of Christ stands condemned, first of all, in the light of all that Scripture teaches us concerning the state and condition of the natural man, and the character of sin.

For, according to Scripture, sin is guilt, and the sinner is liable to punishment, worthy of damnation, wholly unworthy of God's favor, a child of wrath. Sin is not only, and not in the first place, an inherent weakness or defilement of the human nature, some moral imperfection that may be removed by the influence of some sound moral example: it is guilt. And this means that the sinner, as the object of God's just condemnation, lies in the midst of death, and has no right to life. This also implies his spiritual death, according to which he is incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil. He is legally a slave of sin. His moral depravity is the punishment that is inflicted upon him by the righteous judgment of God. Hence, suppose even that it were possible to reform man, to deliver him from his moral depravity by a mere example or moral influence, the natural man would not even have the right to such deliverance from the slavery of sin. Before he may be delivered the justice of God against sin must be satisfied. And, as we have repeatedly emphasized, this satisfaction of God's justice can be accomplished only through such a voluntary bearing of the wrath of God and of the punishment of sin that constitutes an act of the perfect obedience of love. There is no deliverance from sin without atonement for sin. There is no possibility of sanctification without justification. If the death of Christ is not the sacrifice of vicarious atonement, it certainly cannot have the power of moral improvement or reformation.

Besides, this *moral theory* of the atonement really proceeds from the supposition that man is inherently good, though his nature is weakened and morally incapacitated somewhat. If only he considers how in-

finitely good and loving and merciful God is, he will, by the contemplation of this good and loving Father, be persuaded to love Him too, and strive for improvement that he may be pleasing in God's sight. And that he may be able to understand and contemplate this great love of God, the Most High enters into our deepest woe through the death of His Son. However, Scripture teaches us, not that man is morally weak by nature, but that he is dead through trespasses and sins. He is not in need of reformation, but of regeneration, and unless he is born again, he cannot even see the kingdom of God. No amount of moral influence will do him a particle of good. The very contrary is true. The more the love of God is demonstrated, provided it is truly the love of GOD that is shown, the more he will hate God and hold the truth in unrighteousness. The very cross of Christ, that is supposed to exert this salutary moral influence upon the sinner, is sufficient proof of this. Let us not be oblivious of the fact, that, although God delivered His only begotten Son to the death of the cross, he was taken and slain by the hands of wicked men. And rather than being morally improved by the sight of the suffering of the righteous Son of God, they jeered and mocked and blasphemed as long as they dared at the spectacle of Golgotha! Apart from God's act of reconciliation through the atoning death of His Son, the cross reveals nothing but wrath and judgment. It is the condemnation of the world.

Further, what demonstration of God's love could one possibly discern in the cross of Jesus, considered as an act of God, if the death of Christ is not an atoning sacrifice for sin? If Christ did not bear our sins upon the accursed tree, He did not represent us. And if He did not represent us, He could not justly enter into our death, and God could not justly send Him into our death and hell. Surely, it is quite impossible to discern how such an unjust and quite superfluous infliction of suffering on the righteous Son of God, which apart from the idea of atonement and suffering for sin can be little more than an empty, though terrible show, could be a revelation of God's love, and a power for the moral improvement of the sinner.

Lastly, it is quite true that the Bible holds before us the sufferings of Christ as an example, which we must follow. But, let it be noted, first of all, that this example of Christ's suffering is held, not before the natural man and for his moral improvement, but before those that have been redeemed by the death of Christ, called by His grace out of darkness into the light, and in principle delivered from the power and dominion of sin and death, that they might be to the praise of the glory of God's grace in the Beloved. And, secondly, though the Scriptures certainly present the suffering of Christ as an example for us to follow, it never does so except after it has first pro-

claimed the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of His own. Jesus Christ, the righteous, is a propitiation for our sins, I John 2:2. He is the faithful and merciful High Priest, that makes reconciliation for the sins of the people, Heb. 2:17. He Himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, I Pet. 2:24. The Church is bought with a price, I Cor. 6:20; 7:23. And all the sacrifices of the old dispensation point to the same truth: Christ's death is the vicarious atonement, whereby the justice of God is for ever satisfied against the sins of His people, and through which they are reconciled to Him.

A second theory of the significance of the death of Christ that denies the Scriptural truth of satisfaction and vicarious atonement, is known as the *governmental theory*. It denies that it was necessary that God's justice be satisfied. Christ did not have to suffer and die in order to bear the sins of many, and thus to atone for them. God's mercy is exactly that He forgives sin, that He cancels the debt without payment. However, it would be a dangerous, a morally impossible thing to forgive the sinner, and to treat him as if he had never committed any sin, without first causing him to acknowledge the righteousness and justice of God. He would get the impression that God is indifferent to sin, that He is not terribly displeased with the workers and work of iniquity. Even though God forgives the sinner, and receives him again into His favor, He must maintain the moral order of the universe, and the sinner must repent and acknowledge that God is holy and righteous. And to bring him to the acknowledgement of God's righteousness, and to true repentance, God gives a demonstration of His wrath and justice in the death of His Son. In delivering up His own Son He clearly reveals to the sinner what He might righteously do to every sinner. Just as a general might court martial and sentence to death every soldier of a regiment that committed mutiny, but singles out only one, the ring-leader, perhaps, and hangs him in the sight of all the rebels, so God demonstrated His righteousness and displeasure against sin by sending Christ into death that we might go free. And the sinner, looking by faith at that demonstration of the justice and wrath of God, will confess his sins, acknowledge that God is righteous, and thus assume the position in which God, while maintaining His moral government of the universe, may forgive him, and treat him as if he had never had or committed any sin.

That also this theory must be rejected as contrary to the plain teachings of Holy Writ, and, besides, as inherently absurd and impossible, is not difficult to see. All the Scriptural passages that speak of the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sins, a ransom, as a price that was paid for our redemption, as a propitiation

for sin, as an atonement and reconciliation through blood, condemn this presentation of the significance of Christ's death and of the redemption of the Church as contrary to the revealed Word of God. To be sure, the death of Christ is a setting forth, a demonstration, a declaration of the righteousness of God in justifying the ungodly, but only and exactly because it is a payment of the debt, a satisfying of the justice of God, a "propitiation through faith in His blood," Rom. 3:25, 26. Only because Christ represented His people in the hour of the righteous judgment of God, and as their Representative took upon Himself the guilt of their sins, so that He could justly bear the wrath of God in their stead and in their behalf, was the death of Christ indeed a demonstration of God's unchangeable righteousness.

How otherwise could it possibly be such a demonstration? Even if, according to the illustration used above, the general of an army selects one of the guilty mutineers to punish him in the sight of all the rebels, and lets the others go free, this can hardly be considered a demonstration of righteousness and justice, for all were guilty and deserved punishment. However, in such a case it is, at least, one of the guilty ones that is selected to receive the punishment as an example to all the rest. An innocent outsider could not possibly serve such a purpose. But with Christ this is different. He knew no sin. Unless the guilt of His people could be and was imputed to Him, so that He could suffer their punishment in their stead, there was no sin and guilt upon His head for the which He could justly be made to suffer death. If, therefore, our Lord suffered merely as a demonstration of the justice and righteousness of God against sin, in order to impress us sinners with the truth that God might justly damn us all to eternal death, the demonstration misses the point entirely. To make the just suffer as an example for the unjust is not a show of righteousness and of justice, but of the grossest injustice. Such a demonstration, even though this method would be sufficient to satisfy and maintain the justice of God, would be quite devoid of power to bring men to an acknowledgement of the justice of God, and to true repentance and sorrow over sin, simply because it is no demonstration of justice, but of injustice.

And finally, such a demonstration of the righteousness of God could never accomplish the reconciliation of men with God. Sin is not merely a denial of the justice of God in the consciences and consciousness of men, it is also in the objective sense a violation of God's law. It is rebellion against the Most High. It is guilt. It must be blotted out. And it can be blotted out only through satisfaction, that is, through an act of obedience that is the complete antithesis of the act of sin committed. Not the mere acknowledgement that God could justly punish every

sinner with eternal death, not the most earnest and heartfelt repentance can satisfy the justice of God. But only such an act of obedience, whereby the sinner voluntarily and from the love of God suffers the punishment for sin to the end, is capable of blotting out the guilt of sin. This act of loving disobedience in the suffering of eternal death the sinner could never perform, still less accomplish perfectly to the end. But God's own eternal Son in our flesh, ordained to be the Head of all His elect, was authorized and capable to bring this willing sacrifice instead of His guilty people. This, and not a mere demonstration of the justice of God, is the meaning of the cross of Christ. And this is also its power unto salvation unto every one that believes.

Finally, we must briefly review in this connection what is known as the *mystical theory* of the death of Christ. This theory, in common with the two presentations of the meaning of Christ's suffering which we already discussed, also denies that Christ's death is substitutional. It must have nothing of what is often called "blood theology." Those who support this view scoff at the idea of the necessity of satisfaction. They will not hear of guilt and punishment, but rather emphasize that the sinner is morally weak and sick, and must be delivered from the power of sin. To this end Christ entered into our nature, and on the cross He actually bore our sinful nature and delivered it up unto death. On the cross our sinful nature died principally. And in the resurrection He arose with a new, glorified, holy nature, wholly free from sin and death. Now, through faith we become mystically one with that Christ, who led to death and buried our sinful nature, and who arose in glory and righteousness. Through this mystical union also their sinful nature is crucified, and also they rise unto newness of life. And so they become reconciled to God.

There is, of course, an element of truth in this mystical theory, provided it is left in its proper connection, and viewed in the proper light. The Word of God teaches us, indeed, that by grace we become one plant with Christ, so that our old nature is crucified with Him, and with Him we are raised to newness of life. We are crucified with Christ, and we are raised with Him, and we are set with Him in heavenly places. Scripture teaches, indeed, that in and through the suffering and death of Christ, sin itself was condemned in the flesh, so that it has no longer the right and the power to have dominion over us. Rom. 8:3. And thus there is surely power in the cross to deliver us from the power and corruption of sin through our union with Christ. But we must not overlook the fact that the Word of God always presents this power of deliverance from the dominion and defilement of sin as the fruit of the cross, never as the ground of our reconciliation and justification. The

latter is found only in the vicarious suffering of our Lord, in His perfect sacrifice for sin, never in our being crucified with Christ in mystical union with Him. And, secondly, this spiritual fruit of the death of Christ is given us only on the ground of His perfect satisfaction, and of our being justified by faith in Him. We are not justified because we die and rise with Christ in the mystical sense, but we are delivered and sanctified because we are justified through His blood. Justification is ever the ground of our sanctification.

All these theories of the meaning and power of the death of Christ must be rejected. They are a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross. They deprive us of the sure ground of our salvation, and of the only comfort in life and death, that we are not our own, but belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who fully satisfied for all our sins, and delivered us from all the power of the devil. For this sure ground can only be the righteousness of God, realized in the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ, imputed to us freely by grace, and given unto us and appropriated by us through faith. All these theories somehow substitute a righteousness of man for the righteousness of God; and the former can never be the ground of our salvation. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For He hath made Him sin that knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. All this was actually accomplished nineteen hundred years ago. It is purely of God, in no wise of us. Not our goodness, not our faith, not our religion or piety, not anything that is of us can possibly be the ground of our salvation. But the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ, and that righteousness absolutely alone, is the ground of our hope in God, the sure basis of all our salvation, our eternal peace!

7.

Atoned For The Elect.

Christ is the High Priest of His people, And His people are they whom the Father hath given Him before the foundation of the world. And these are the elect, chosen and ordained unto eternal life out of free and sovereign grace.. And His sacrifice to atone for the sins of sinful men, was brought, not for all men head for head, but only for those whom the Father had sovereignly ordained unto eternal life, and chosen in Him. That this is true is abundantly testified by all the Scriptures. Christ Himself frequently speaks of this. To the Jews in Capernaum He declares: "For I came down from heaven, not to

do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all *which he hath given me* I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." John 6:38, 39. Hence, the Lord is never discouraged, even though under His preaching the things of the kingdom of heaven are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed only to the babes, for He knows that this is the good pleasure of the Father, Matt. 11:26. And "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me." John 6:37. He is the good shepherd, and He knows His sheep, and is known of His. And He lays down His life, not for all men, but for His sheep. It is not the free will of man that determines who shall belong to His sheep, for the Saviour knows His sheep as those whom the Father gave Him, even before they know Him. Hence, he can declare: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." John 10:14-16. To the opposing and murmuring Jews he says: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Let us take note of this remarkable word. Many may be inclined to turn this saying of the Lord about, so that it would read: "Ye are not of my sheep, because ye believe not." Nevertheless, the Lord emphatically declares the very opposite: because they are not His sheep, i.e. because they do not belong to His God-given flock, therefore they do not believe. His sheep surely hear His voice, and He knows them, and they follow Him, and He gives them eternal life. And no one is ever able to pluck them out of His hand. His Father Who gave Him the sheep is stronger than all, and no one can pluck them out of His Father's hand. John 10:26-29. Only those, then, whom the Father ordained to life and gave to Jesus, belong to His sheep. And for them He gave His life, and offered the perfect sacrifice on the cross.

H. H.

NOTICE

The Protestant Reformed Consistorial Conference will meet Friday evening, October 27, 8:00 o'clock, at the Roosevelt Park Protestant Reformed Church. Topic for discussion will be: "*Whether or Not the Discipline of Members That Belong to Worldly Organizations Should be left to the Ministry of the Word.*"

Speakers: Rev. H. Veldman, and the Rev. John Heys.

All Consistory and ex-Consistory Members are Welcome.

Renewed Apostacy and Repentance

To get our bearing in expatiating on the history of Israel—on that part of it in which the person of Jephthah figured so prominently—we must reach back a few years to the times that immediately followed the death of Gideon. So soon as Gideon died, the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-covenant their god. The amazing foolishness of the people! It had been demonstrated to them, through the achievements of Gideon's faith, that national freedom, security, and prosperity lay only in the way of obedience and wholehearted consecration to Jehovah in opposition to Baal. And now they again ran after Baal! Previously they had gone a whoring after Gideon and his ephod—after Gideon, in whom they conceived their victory to be personified—so that their turning to Baal was merely a shifting of affections and allegiance from one idol to another. Yet the shift that now was made the sacred narrator regards as a new, open, and complete break with Jehovah, for he continues (Chap. 8:34), "And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side. . . ." They were willingly ignorant of the salvation that had been wrought in their behalf by Jehovah. Israel thought not on the God who had delivered it from its enemies, and it therefore thought not on the human agent after he had passed away. "Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel." If the people repudiated Jehovah in favor of Baal, it could not be expected that they continue to do well by the house of Jerubbaal the antagonist of Baal. As the tool of Abimelech, they turned against Gideon and exterminated his house. Thus they destroyed everything that reminded them of Jehovah and admonished to repentance. And the godless Abimelech was made king. These atrocities were perpetrated only by the Shechemites directly. Yet the whole nation should have decried these crimes and asked Jehovah what action should be taken against those wicked men. But this was not done. Abimelech's usurpation and the murder of the seventy were deeds that were overlooked in condonation. Nothing was done about it. There may have been and undoubtedly were protests from individuals; but as the people on a whole had chosen to be unmindful of what went on there in Shechem, the guilt of those crimes rested squarely upon the whole nation. Could these terrible deeds have been committed with impunity? Would the covenant between Abimelech and the Shechemites endure? Would the compact prove beneficial through the years? It could not. Over it hovered the curse of God as pro-

nounced by Jotham, the brother that had escaped. "Let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Milo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Milo, and devour Abimelech." So he had spoken. The godless would insist that the man had not spoken for God but that his words had originated in his own heart. It was but natural that he should curse the murderers of his father's house. God had not sent the man. That doubtless was held to be evident from the very tenor of his speech. Abimelech was to devour the Shechemites and at once be devoured by them, a thing impossible. And thus the Shechemites were to devour Abimelech after he had devoured them; likewise a thing impossible. So they must have reasoned—reasoned that the speech of the man was contradictory and thus self-destructive. Nothing could come of it. Let them then rejoice in this king and he in them, as the compact was bound to be productive of the greatest good for the parties concerned. But Jotham indeed spoke for God. His discourse, however impossible on the surface, was fulfilled, marvelous to say, to the letter. To the end it had seemed that Abimelech was to emerge from his conflict with the Shechemites, alive and well and completely victorious and that thus the second part of Jotham's prediction was not to take effect and that therefore the whole discourse was after all a human invention. Consider the following. Gaal and his men had been routed. Shechem had been taken, its inhabitants slain, the city razed to the ground, and sown with salt. The neighboring city of Thebez had likewise fallen. Thus the rebellion nearly had been put down. Abimelech was fighting his last battle with some remnants of his foe trapped in a tower within the city. Thus the war was so good as over with him as the victor. Fire indeed had gone out from Abimelech and devoured the Shechemites! But Abimelech still lived! And the foe was in his hand, at his mercy. Assuredly, Jotham's words were vain. So doubtless spake Abimelech with himself when, in a careless moment, he went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire, only to have his skull broken by a piece of a millstone cast upon him from above by a certain woman, so that he died. That was the fire coming out from the man of Shechem and from the house of Milo devouring Abimelech. That was plainly God's doing. For the matter had been foretold with amazing accuracy. And it is only God who knows the end from the beginning. This whole terrible history was so plainly the successions of the revenges of God! Gideon's ephod was punished with the blood of his sons; the blood of his sons was punished with the blood of the Shechemites, as shed by Abimelech, and with the blood of Abimelech as shed by the woman. The retaliations of God are certain and just.

There are grounds in the narrative for concluding that the terrible end of Abimelech and Shechem made a deep impression upon the conscience of the nation as a whole, so that, fearing that worse things might befall them, should they any longer postpone forsaking their abomination, the people sought after Jehovah. For we read, "And after Abimelech there arose to deliver Israel, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and he died, and was buried in Shamir" (Jud. 10:1, 2). That this deliverer arose after Abimelech, would seem to lend support to the above view, and thus to justify our imagining the succession of events to have been as follows. After the death of Gideon, the people again apostatized and in punishment of their deflection were again harassed by the enemy from without. Then came the catastrophe within Shechem that, in combination with the terrors from without, brought about the return of the people to God.

The record of Tola's life is exceedingly brief. It contains no action like that of most of the other judges. It makes no mention of the enemy from which he delivered the people. But it does contain the names of his father and grandfather. As the mention of both father and grandfather is unusual, and occurs in the case of no other judge, the name dodo was taken to mean cousin or uncle and the expression "son of dodo" rendered "son of his uncle or cousin" and the "his" made to Abimelech. In this view, Tola would have to be taken as a son of a brother or a sister of Gideon. But if such were the relation, it is more likely that the writer would have said, "Son of the sister of Jerubbaal." The names can also be taken as indicating a certain industry that must have been carried on in Issachar. Tola dwelt in Shamir, on Mount Ephraim. Here was permanently fixed the centre of his judicial activity, where he also died and was buried after a judgeship of twenty three years.

"And after him rose Jair, the Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years. And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, those are called circles of Jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead." These cities were arranged in the form of a circle and therefore called Havoth or circles of Jair. It was not Jair, the judge, who gave to these cities his name, but an ancestor of his, Jair the son of Manasseh. From Num. 32:39-41 we learn that Michar took Gilead and "Jair, the son of Manasseh," the "circles." The position of Jair the judge was one of distinction. By his strength and virtue he had defused his thirty sons over the entire district in which these thirty cities lay and with which his ancient progenitor had long ago associated his own name. For

the thirty sons rode on thirty asses and had thirty cities. Their appearance on this animal indicated their calling. They judged their thirty cities. Unlike the sons of Samuel, they were worthy sons, who gave happiness to their father. They performed their task well. They were an influence for good in their district. For after the death of Jair and doubtless of most of his sons, idolatry again spreads far and wide.

"And the children of Israel did evil or continued to do evil in the sight of Jehovah and served the Baalim and Ashtaroth," whose service Gideon overthrew, "and the gods of Syria," whose king was defeated by the hero Othniel, "and the gods of Zidon, the mention of whom reminds us of the victory of Deborah and Barak over Jabin, king of Canaan, "and the gods of Moab," whom Ehud had smitten. Israel served these gods and besides these it now also served the gods of the Ammonites and the Philistines. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the power of the Philistines, and into the power of the children of Ammon. "And in that year they broke and crushed the children of Israel eighteen years." It is not certain how this statement is to be construed. The use of the word "that" is not plain. It may mean the first year of the oppression or the last year both of the oppression and of Jair's life. The former is the more likely as hitherto apostasy and servitude have always followed the death of the judge. But the latter meaning has in its favor the very ambiguity of the statement and the brevity of the record of Jair's life. Though it is said that he judged Israel, it may be doubted whether his influence was strong enough to hold the people to the worship of Jehovah. The new tide of idolatry that engulfed the land may have begun to rise even in the first years of Jair's judgeship. Be this as it may, the sufferings and conflicts with the western nations, particularly with the philistines, are related under Samson and Samuel. The chastisement by means of Ammon was experienced by the people east of the Jordan, the neighbors of Ammon. The children of Ammon spoiled their harvests and plundered their cities, and imposed tribute year after year. The weakness of Israel emboldened the oppressor. Ammon passed over the Jordan and attacked Israel in the heart of the most powerful tribes—Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim—without meeting resistance. After eighteen years when the peril was greatest and it seemed that the death of the nation as a free people was probable, the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, saying, "We have sinned against thee, namely, because we have forsaken our God and have served the Baalim." It was one great agonizing cry that rose from the bosom of the sorely distressed nation. Consider Jehovah's reply to it. "And Jehovah said unto the children of Israel, Did I not deliver you from the

Egyptians (from Mizraim, i.e. Egypt), and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidionians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites did oppress you, and ye cried to me, and (then) I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." Just how this divine message was communicated to the people—whether directly by the Lord Himself, i.e. by the Angel of the Lord—or by an unnamed prophet, or by the highpriest at the sanctuary, in the name of God, through the Urim and the Thummim, is not stated. It makes no essential difference. But what is all-important is that we deal here with the very word of God, a reply that originated in the mind and heart of God and not in the heart of man. It is a terrible answer to their cry for deliverance. It is well that we pay closest attention to it. The voice of God speaks in the tone of passionate discourse. According to His customary manner of dealing with the apostate nation, the Lord first held before the people their history in which lay embedded these great facts and truths, to wit, that Israel had his origin in God's election and was brought into being by the wonder-working power of God's grace, that thus the Lord was Israel's Maker and they the sheep of His pasture, His very own heritage, in duty bound to be wholly consecrated unto Him their redeemer-God. For He had delivered them from the Egyptians and, through the centuries, from all their other adversaries, when they cried unto Him. Yet, as willingly ignorant of their history, of the great principles of truth it so marvelously demonstrated, they over and over and now again forsook Him and went to prostrating themselves before the shrine of the devil-gods of their edversaries, made after the likeness of the creature and of corruptible man, gods in whose temple they could play and dance and serve the lusts of the flesh. That was the real reason they repudiated over and over the Lord their God and crowded Baal's temples. Jehovah is holy God. They could not serve Him. But Baal made no demands on them except that they worship him. For the rest, they could do as they liked. With Baal therefore they had no quarrel. But they were in dire distress now. For they again had denied Him whom no man can deny with impunity. He being the living God. Consistency demanded that they now turn to the gods which they have chosen. But these gods were vanity, they well knew. None but the living God would do, now that they were in trouble and once again reaped the bitter fruits of their sins. So they directed their cry to Him. True, it took them eighteen years to come to this. But their distress was great. It was therefore the part of wisdom that they lay aside their sinful bias and once

more take some notice of God. So finally they did cry. And of all men these apostates cried the loudest. And they crowded God's sanctuary in the hope of inducing Him to send deliverance. And they bewailed before God their sins. "We have sinned against thee, because we have forsaken our God and served Baalim." Is it to be wondered at that God replied as He did? "Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in time of your tribulation." But the people were insistent. They would not leave off beseiging God for help against the oppressor. They said, "We have sinned, do thou unto us whatever seemeth good unto thee, only deliver us, we pray thee, this day." They even went further. In fact they went as far as they could go in their frantic effort to secure relief from their present miseries. They put away the strange gods among them and served the Lord.

There is a question here. To whom are these confessions of sin and this repuliation of strange gods in favor of Jehovah to be ascribed, to the carnal seed in the nation or to the true people of God or to both. To both certainly. But then there is this question. Would unprincipled men, lacking in the life of regeneration, say to God, we have sinned," turn against their idols and serve God? When outward physical distress reaches such a stage that it has become a threat to his very existance, the natural man will even go through all the motions of a true repentance, if only he may gain some respite. But no sooner is the respite granted, than he returns to his abominations. We have examples of this in the Scriptures. There is the amazing case of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. As seized by the terror of God, when he saw his land being devastated by God's plagues, he wailed in the ears of Moses and Aaron, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunders and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer" (Eex. 9:27,28). "But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants" (Ex. 9:34). So it went with the carnal Israel. Now again, since there was no way out of their present troubles, other than the way of repentance, they bent their stiff necks and repented. It was the only thing to do in the present emergency. But their sorrow was the sorrow of the world that worketh death. Soon did they return again to their idols wherefore the Lord delivered into the hands of the Philistines, Judges 13:1.

But there was also the true Israel according to the election. The present plight of the nation was also theirs, for, with their brethren according to the flesh the formed the one people of Israel, whom the Lord now again smote. The cry that rose from the bosom of the nation included also their groaning; and what

they cried was substantially identical to what the others cried. Yet it must not be supposed that they had literally been crowding Baal's temple as had the others. Their sin, in times of general apostasy lay in a different direction, as has already been explained in former articles. Because of this formal agreement between the confessions of the true Israel and the confessions of the others, the sacred narrator included them all in the one statement, "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord and said, We have sinned against thee, because we have forsaken our God and served Baalim." But in the language of an old adage, two can do the same thing and still not do the same thing. Confessions of sin are like the fruit of fruit-bearing trees. Their character is determined by the character of the man, of his heart. If the heart is bad, the confession of sin that proceeds from that heart is an abominable thing, however well it agrees, as to the form of its words, with a true confession. When the natural man confesses his sin, he seeks not God but himself only. Thus the notice, "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. . . ." has reference to the cry of two kinds of penitents in Israel, the true and the false, and to two kinds of cries. Jointly, they formed the one cry of the people of Israel in great distress. Only in the light of these observations can it be understood how God could react to this cry as He did, that He could say on the one hand, "I will deliver you no more, go and cry unto the gods that ye have chosen," and on the other hand be "grieved on account of the misery of Israel." Rightly considered, God extended His help only to the true Israel. The others would share in the deliverances, but never were they *truly* helped; but they were hardened through the very manifestations of divine mercy over His people and thus prepared, through the ages, for the final day of reckoning. The reply of God, however severe, was also meant for the ears of God's believing people, to be sure. With respect to them its purpose was to incite them to lay hold of God with greatest spiritual vigor. Thus upon them this reply, however severe and discouraging, humanly speaking, had a most wholesome effect, the reason being the presence of God's redeeming grace in their hearts. With new born courage and determination, the god-fearing fathers and mothers in Israel, and the god-fearing heads of the clans, demanded, as did Jacob of old after his bitter experience in Shechem, that the idols be put away and be destroyed and that there be a return to the Lord. If they heretofore had been silent, when they should have spoken, they now came out boldly for the Lord. To them the severe reply of the Lord was a blessing.

The statement was just made that the true people of God were not among those who had been bending the knee before Baal. But the implication is not that

none of those who had been serving Baal and who now, in the present distress, repented of their vile doing, were not truly converted and thus soon again turned to their idols. There is no ground in the Scriptures for the view that without exception all idolaters were reprobated and that a truly penitent Baal-worshipper was a nonentity in Israel. To be considered is this. After every great deliverance another generation would rise and grow up in ignorance of the glorious history of its people, thus grow up in ignorance of God's great works and of His worship. Though this ignorance was what Holy Writ calls willful, yet the fault lay, to a large extent, with the religious teachers in Israel. They would fail to indoctrinate the rising generation. The result was a general falling away. Then, at the high tide of renewed apostasy, God would again come with His judgments and the result was that the nation once more would seek after Jehovah. Many, perhaps the great majority, eventually would return to their idols; but there was always present in the nation the seven thousand, the remnant according to the election, comprised for the most part of those who had not once been seen in Baal's temple, and of those, their number may have been small, who were permanently cured of their idolatry by the grace of God. Doubtless in times of stress, the public confessions of sin rose largely from the bosom of this element, who thus would again assert themselves. So it was now. And the result was that a new spirit was manifest in the nation. And with the putting away of the strange gods and the return of the nation to the Lord, discord and weakness, despondency and self-seeking, gave way to concord and confidence in God, that lead to victory. Thus, when the children of Ammon made a new incursion into Gilead, "were gathered together and encamped in Gilead, "the children of Israel likewise assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpah. The phrase "children of Israel" does not include all the tribes but only Gad and Manasseh east of the Jordan. But the host of the Lord was without a human leader to lead it into battle. The princes of the people agree among themselves that the man that would begin to fight against the Ammonites would be head over them. And their thoughts turned to Jephthah.

G. M. O.

NOTICE

To those who wish an index for the last 10 volumes of the Standard Bearer, please place your order now so ways and means may be found to have this done in a way most reasonable for all those interested.

B. Woudenberg, Sec'y.

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Grand Rapids 7, Michigan.

De Les Der Historie

(Psalm 78)

Dit is een van de historische psalmen die ons de geschiedenis van Gods volk vertolkt met het doel, dat het tegenwoordige geslacht die dit lied zingen zal, er uit leeren zal hoe zich tegenover den levenden God te gedragen.

O mijn volk!

Hier zien we weer, dat Gods boodschap van Zijn Woord is voor Israel, voor de Kerk der eeuwen, voor God's uitverkoren volk. De prediking van dat Woord mag algemeen zijn; de boodschap als zoodanig is voor God's volk en is daarom partikulier.

Mijn volk!

Daar zit meer in dan net maar bezitting. O ja, God bezit Zijn volk; zij zijn Zijn eigendom; Hij heeft ze gekocht door den prijs van het dierbare bloed Zijns Zoons—evenwel zit er meer in dan dat. In het bezittelijk voornaamwoord "mijn" zit ook liefde. Het volk Gods is door Hem bemind van eeuwigheid; zij zijn een kleinood des Heeren waarop Hij ten allentijde ziet met innig welgevallen. Des Heeren volk is Zijn erfdeel.

Dit volk zal in dezen psalm een particuliere boodschap van hun God ontvangen.

Daarom: O Mijn volk! neem Mijne leer ter oore, neigt ulieder oor tot de redenen Mijns monds.

En als we dan den psalm aandachtig bestudeeren, merken we op, dat hij een groot verhaal is van alle de wondere daden die den Heere gewrocht heeft ten overstaan van dat volk. De Heilige Geschiedenis van Israel is leer. Leer van God.

Die leer van God's wondere daden ter oore neemen en het oor neigen wil meer zeggen dan juist maar met het uitwendig gehoor waar te nemen op de woorden die gezongen zullen worden. Ook dat wordt ingesloten, doch de hoofdzaak is het hooren met een opmerkzaam, gehoorzaam harte. Zoo wordt het vaak in Gods Woord gebruikt. 't Zit ook in het woordje "gehoorzaam". De Heere bedoelt: Luistert naar Mijn Woord met liefde in het hart. Drink Mijn woorden in en regelt uw gansche leven in naar dat Woord. En dan zal 't gaan.

Merkt ook op de nederbuigende goedheid Gods! Hij zegt: "neigt ulieder oor tot de redenen Mijns monds!" Ik heb hier het oog op het feit, dat de Heere Zijn lippen opengedaan heeft en tot de vaders gesproken heeft. Vergelijk dat bij de grooten der aarde. Of ook, denkt hier aan de verwatenheid der hoovaardigen onder ons. Hebt ge wel eens gelet op wat sommige stervelingen spraken in groote boosheid en verwaten hoogmoed? Luistert: "Denk je, dat ik tegen dien kerel woorden wil vuil maken?" Sommige menschen zijn zoo hoogmoedig, dat zij inplaats van te

spreken tegen het soogenaamde object, een hoogmoedig, briefje sturen.

Doch God spreekt tot ons. "Neigt ulieder oor tot de redenen Mijns Monds!" Dat is vooral vervuld toen Jezus Zijn melodieuze stem deed weerklinken in de valleien en wegen van Judea en Samaria en in de landpalen van Galilea. Hebt ge wel eens gelet hoe de Bergrede tot ons kwam? Er staat: "En Zijnen mond geopend hebbende leerde Hij hen, zeggende" Matth. 5:2. Ja, Jezus achtte het niet beneden Zijn waardigheid om tot hoeren en tollenaars Zijn mond open te doen en heel vertrouwelijk en liefelijk tot en met hen te spreken.

Hoe zal het hen vergaan zijn, die de stem van Jezus met hun uitwendige oor gehoord hebben en Hem niet hebben geloofd? In de Hebreëen brief staat er iets van. De schrijver heeft het daar ook over "de stem der woorden". En later waarschuwt ook hij: "Ziet toe, dat gij Dien die spreekt niet verwerpt!" Hebr. 12:19, 25. Geen wonder, dat hij besluit in het laatste vers van dit hoofdstuk: "Want onze God is een verterend vuur."

En om niet meer te noemen (Gods Woord is vol van dit overheerlijke feit, dat God spreekt en roept.) wijzen we naar Spreuken 1. Daar zegt God: "Dewijl Ik geroepen heb en gijlieden geweigerd hebt!" Vers 24.

Vreeselijk is het om Gods stem te hooren en te doen alsof Hij nooit sprak. Zoo kunnen we er eenigzins inkomen, dat we verder de vreeselijke woorden lezen: "zoo zal Ik ook in ulieder verderf lachen, Ik zal spotten wanneer uwe vrees komt." En dan zullen zij roepen, zegt God, doch Ik zal niet antwoorden! Dan valt de stilte van de eeuwige gramschap Gods op hen. Hannah heeft er van geprofeteerd: "maar de goddeloozen zullen zwijgen in duisternis." Voor eeuwig telaat!

Zullen we dan luisteren met een liefhebbend hart, geliefde lezer?

Het is God die spreekt in dezen psalm. Hij zal ons de geschiedenis van Zijn wondere daden verhalen. Het is een lang verhaal. Twee-en-zeventig verzen.

Het eerste vers van de stem van God en van nu aan zullen we luisteren naar den profeet door wien God tot ons spreekt.

Die profeet is Asaf.

Benijdenswaardig menschenkind. Hij was een van de opperzangmeesters in Israel. Als de verzen gedicht waren door hemzelf of door David of door een ander, dan ontving hij die liederen om ze op zang te zetten, zijn koor te leeren en voorts uit den treure te zingen voor Gods volk. Het is een vooruitgrijpen naar de hemelsche zaligheid waar gezongen zal worden tot in eeuwigheid. (Psalm 89:1, onberijmd. Hoevele kinderen Gods zijn al niet met dat versje de eeuwigheid ingegaan?)

Asaf zegt ons: Ik zal mijnen mond opendoen met

spreuken, ik zal verborgenheden overvloediglijk uitstorten van oudsher.

Het gebruik van het woord "spreuk", alswel van den term "verborgenheid" vertelt en leert ons, dat we hier een particuliere boodschap van God hebben. Het is maar geen bloote vaderlandsche geschiedenis. Beide woorden naar hunne oorspronkelijke beteekenis zien op autoritatieve, gewichtige gezegden. De spreuken die geuit zullen worden zijn als gelijkenissen die ons een les zullen leeren. Het tweede woord wil eigenlijk zeggen, dat de feiten van Israel's historie evenzoovele diepe waarheden in zich opsluiten ter leering en onderwijzing van de geslachten die zullen volgen.

Dat is dan ook te begrijpen. God is de eeuwig onveranderlijke. Zijn werken en arbeid die Hij aan Israel gedaan heeft beantwoorden aan Zijn eer en deugden. En zooals Hij handelde met Israel zal Hij zekerlijk ook handelen met U en met mij. Dat is tot onze waarschuwing en tot onze troost. Bij Korach's vurige graf hooren we Zijn waarschuwing bij Jakob's snikken en weenen beluisteren wij Zijn vergevende genade in Jezus' bloed.

Altemaal spreuken en verborgenheden. Och, schonkt Gij mij de hulp van Uwen Geest! We zullen dien Geest van noode hebben om alles te mogen verstaan.

Ook zijn we verantwoordelijk voor hen.

We hebben ze gehoord en we weten ze. Van jongs aan hebben ik in 't kleine kerkje in Sassenheim geluisterd naar het telkens weer herhaalde: "en Zijn volk droogvoets daar doorgeleid, waardoor den doop beduid werd." We hebben ze gehoord en we weten ze. Daar heeft God voor gezorgd. Luisteren we daarom niet en gaan we zoo de eeuwigheid in zonder gehoorzaamheid, dan zullen de Japaneezen en de Chineezzen tegen ons opstaan in dien dag en ons veroordeelen. Vreeselijk te vallen in de handen van den sprekenden God.

Onze vaders hebben ze verteld.

Christelijke huizen, catechisatie, scholen. En het telkens wederkerende refrein was: Zoo spreekt de Heere! Ja, onze vaders hebben ze verteld. Ik zie in mijn gedachten nog dat grijze hoofd van grootvaders, grootmoeders, oud-ooms en tantes. En met bevende stem hebben sommigen van hen getuigd van den Onveranderlijke.

Ik ben verantwoordelijk.

Zullen wij het dan voor hunne kinderen verbergen?

Wat een eigenaardige naam voor ons geslacht dat we geteeld hebben! Onze kinderen zijn de kinderen van die bevende ouden die ze nooit gezien hebben. Doch ze hebben voor hen gebeden. Vrage: Bidt ge wel eens voor de kinderen die ge nooit zult zien? Spreekt ge wel eens met Uwe kinderen over de kinderen die na hen komen zullen? En als ge dat niet durft, hooren Uwe kinderen het wel eens dat ge voor hunne kinderen en kindskinderen bidt? Bidt ge wel eens voor Uw ge-

slacht dat staan zal op de aarde bij de vreeselijke komst van Christus? Hebt ge het God wel eens gevraagd om Uw geslacht dat dan leven zal te doen bidden: "Deze God die daar komt op die vreeselijke wolken is onze God; gelijk onze vaders in 1944 hebben wij op Hem vertrouwd en nu komt Hij om ons zalig te maken!?"

God heeft ons de kinderen van de oude geslachten die voor ons waren en op God hoopten.

En nog zijn er mensen onder ons die hunne kinderen naar de publieke school sturen. Foei toch! Durft ge de kinderen Gods daaraan te wagen? Zulke ouders verbergen de spreuken en de verborgenheden Gods voor de ooren van het geliefde zaad. Moeten dan Uwe kindren het straks tegen God zeggen, al weenende: O God, ik heb het niet geweten? Onze teacher heeft ons andere dingen geleerd, dingen die verfoeiselen waren in Uw oog. Vader en moeder waren stil als het graf, doch teacher heeft ons de leugen geleerd. Doch van Uwe voetstappen in Sinaï en op Golgotha weet ik niets?

Gij allen die dit leest, kunt ge het Asaf nazeggen: "Wij zullen het niet verbergen. . . .?"

Wat zullen wij niet verbergen? Dit: "de loffelijkheden des Heeren en Zijne sterkte, en Zijne wonderen die Hij gedaan heeft."

De loffelijkheden des Heeren, wat zijn ze? Zij zijn het inbegrip van alle deugden Gods in één woord. Al zijn groote genade en liefde, Zijn lankmoedigheid en goedertierenheid, Zijn trouw en gunst aan groote zondaren, Zijn wijsheid en kennis, Zijn rechten en heiligheden, alle deugden van God. En zij worden loffelijkheden genoemd, omdat die deugden schitterend schoon en lieflijk zijn. Als ge die deugden ziet door Gods genade, dan kan het niet anders, dan gaat ge aan het zingen en loven en prijzen van God.

Apart genoemd wordt: Zijn sterkheid.

Die sterkheid is dan ook zoo groot. Zie rondom U in de werken Zijner handen. Ziet het aan het aardrijk en de hemelen. Elk oogenblik staan ze daar als een monument van de groote kracht des Heeren. Hij heeft ze geschapen door het woord Zijner kracht en geschapen zijnde, onderhoudt Hij ze door het zelfde spreken Gods.

Eindelijk wordt ook nog apart genoemd: Zijne wonderen Die Hij gedaan heeft.

Wat een sluitsteen!

De wonderen die Hij deed zijn in één Woord: Jezus op Golgotha en verzezen in Jozef's hof.

Het Goddelijk Wonder is, dat Hij de donkerheid des eeuwigen doods die over ons ligt verbreekt en, in het vriendelijk gezicht van Zijn Zoon voor ons staat tot in alle eeuwigheid.

Zong Adam in het Paradijs van de loffelijkheden Gods, wat zullen wij doen?

Wij staan op den heuvel van Golgotha en, later, in

Jozef's hof en zingen ons lied. Langzamerhand gaan onze hoofden omhoog en zien wij verlangend op naar den hemel. Paulus zal onze tolk zijn: "Doch wij zien Jezus, met eere en heerlijkheid gekroond!"

En die gekroonde en verheerlijkte Jezus is de verlosser onzer zielen!

Neemt dan Uw geslacht bij de hand en gaat bij Asaf staan. Tezamen zullen wij de loffelijkheden des Heeren zingen, ja, zingen!

G. V.

The Power of Public Opinion

What do we mean when we speak of "public opinion?" Consulting the dictionary one finds that an opinion is: "A conclusion or judgment held with confidence, but falling short of positive knowledge.—Favorable judgment or estimation.—An opinion is a general conclusion held as probable, though without full certainty. —A *conviction* is a fixed *opinion* sustained by such evidences as removes all doubt from the believer's mind." From the foregoing it is plain that the word "conviction" is stronger than the word "opinion." The word "opinion" from the Latin *opinio* means *think*. When one expresses his opinion about something, he states what he "thinks" about it.

"Public" means: of, pertaining to, or affecting the people at large or the community, distinguished from *private* or *personal*.—The people collectively." "Public opinion" is therefore the opinion of the public, the people at large, the community. It is the collective opinion of the majority, what the majority thinks to be right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, etc.

Keeping this definition in mind we can see at once that the "public opinion" is something to be reckoned with. It is a power. It may be a power for good, it may be a power for evil, as we hope to explain in the sequence of this essay. Governments, rulers, business establishments etc. usually reckon with and they must reckon with "public opinion." Take for example the matter of "style." Any shrewd business man who puts a certain article on the market knows that he must advertise his product, bring it before the public, and a favorable reaction to his product will bring him sales. If the reaction to his product is unfavorable, he may just as well close shop. Hence, tremendous sums of money are spent for propaganda to win the favor of the public, to *mold* public opinion. During the last few years we have had several organizations in our Country which make it their business to sample public opinion. Think for example of the polls that are taken to find out for what politi-

cal party or candidate the majority of the people intend to vote. And although sometimes these polls are unreliable, the politicians certainly keep close watch of these polls and if possible take measures accordingly.

You would be surprised how much the average individual, including you and I, reckons with "public opinion" in his every day walk of life. We do this often unconsciously. You might check up on yourself once by doing a little investigation on this point.

Also Scripture speaks of public opinion, although the term is not used. Sometimes public opinion is changed in short order when the people find out that they have misunderstood something. We have an example of this in Joshua 22. The Israelites on this side of the Jordan thought that their brethren on the other side of Jordan had erected an altar to worship thereon and thus neglect the true service of God and separate themselves from the rest of the people. Public opinion was aroused, the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh to go to war against their brethren. However when a committee of investigation finds out that their brethren had no such intentions but erected an altar of testimony to express their unity with and their affinity to the Israelites on this side of Jordan, the public opinion changed. "And the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt." (Joshua 22:30).

David tried to obtain a favorable reaction, win the confidence of the people, at the time when Abner was killed. Joab had done this wicked deed, but the people might easily cast suspicion on David. But what did David do? He did not take bread or ought else till the sun was down, thereby declaring that he abhorred Joab's deed and had no part in it. And thus he won the favor of the people, he rose in their estimation, he won their confidence. "It pleased the people," (II Sam. 3:36) that David acted in this manner.

When the apostles proposed to appoint deacons to take care of the poor, they explained this matter to the church. And the result was that "the saying pleased the whole multitude to appoint deacons." The proposal had the approval of the church, public opinion (in this case the community of the believers) was on the side of the apostles and favored the change.

We read on the other hand of wicked men who "catered" to public opinion. (Something that is very common also today). "Felix willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." (Acts 24:27). Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, suggested to Paul that he be judged in Jerusalem. (Acts 25:9).

At times public opinion may be suppressed by propaganda, threat or force. We have an example of this

nature in John 17: 13. Many of Christ's followers thought highly of the rabbi of Nazareth. However the rulers had threatened dire measures if some one would confess Him. Hence, we read: "Howbeit no man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews." A clear case of suppression of public opinion.

Sometimes public opinion restrains rulers from committing certain crimes. "Herod would have put John the Baptist to death but he feared the multitude because they counted him as a prophet." (Matthew 14:5). For the same reason the chief priests and the pharisees did not dare to lay hands on Christ for they feared the people, because they took Him for a prophet. (Matthew 21:26).

There are also cases when public opinion is ignored and scorned. The unjust judge in the parable says that he fears "neither God nor regards man."

"Public opinion."—What a power it is. It means that the multitude, the majority approves or disapproves, backs you up or condemns you.

In November public opinion will decide the presidential election. No wonder that the politicians do their best to mold public opinion.—Tremendous power. A couple of years ago public opinion in our Country was against war, our people were apathetic with respect to war. Our political and military leaders could not make very much progress in preparing our Country for war because they feared the unfavorable reaction of the people. Public opinion was against war, the leaders had to go easy. (When you read some political speeches you sometimes get the impression that our leaders were sleeping at the switch, but fact is public opinion was a mighty factor in the matter of unpreparedness). Again, it was public opinion that switched overnight at that fateful Dec. 7 when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japs. Germany first conquered one nation after another, but public opinion in the suppressed countries was against the German rulers and made life miserable for them. By its ruthless measures and its refusal to cater to public opinion the Germans made countless enemies for themselves in the territories conquered.

In order to gain the good will and cooperation of the masses one must win the confidence of the people, public opinion must be on one's side. Anyone who ignores public opinion is foolish. You may disagree with it, you may like to change it, you may want to suppress it, but you *must* reckon with it. This is also true in church matters. Sometimes public opinion is contrary to the decisions of ecclesiastical bodies. The public (in this case of course common members of the church) may be wrong, sometimes the public may be right. It is foolish to take the attitude "let them swallow it." If decisions are *right*, church leaders do always well to attempt to convince people that they are indeed right, make it clear, explain it.

If Classes or Synods take decisions which are *contrary* to public opinion it is well to inform and instruct the public. After all you can not deny the power and influence of public opinion, not even in church.

What a power it is "public opinion." It may dethrone kings, it may put rulers into power. It may make or break a cause. It may be right, it may be wrong. We do well to remember this. After all public opinion is not the criterion for right or wrong. There are many people who seem to have a notion that as long as the majority wants a thing, it must be right. Politicians like to promise their constituents that they will do for them what the majority desires. However, public opinion may be very well wrong and often is. Public opinion winks at divorces, adultery, immorality etc. Does that make these sins right or excusable? By no means. After all the Word of God and the Word of God alone is the criterion of right and wrong. The apostle Paul in I Thess. 2:4 lays down the criterion for every act and every decision, for the proper attitude in any particular matter, when he says: "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; *not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts.*" Only the law of God is the true criterion of right and wrong in respect to every sphere of life and every action of men, whether individuals or collective groups.

We said public opinion may be right at times, it often is wrong, unreliable, dangerous.

Public opinion may restrain one from committing a certain sin, it may restrain some one else from enforcing God's law.—Public opinion is greatly influenced by propaganda, hence, it may condemn today what it approves tomorrow. Today it may restrain the Jewish rulers from laying hands on Christ, tomorrow it may support these same leaders in nailing Christ on a cross. There is tremendous dynamics in public opinion. No wonder that so much is being done by persons, parties, organizations, by the written page, the spoken word, the picture on the screen, to *mold* public opinion. Public opinion also may be suppressed, as e.g. the case in several dictator countries today.—Public opinion is often poisoned by false, lying propaganda. What a tremendous power it can be in the wrong direction. So much so that it will also have bearing on the sufferings of the people of God in the last days. We can see many instances and isolated cases of that nature now already in our political and social set-up. And presently in the day of Antichrist public opinion will favor the beast, will be molded by the false prophet, and as such it will favor the persecution of God's people. And the result will be that the antichristian power will with all the more confidence and ruthlessness oppress the children of God.

Let us be alert and wide awake, and never be

persuaded by mere "public opinion." But let the Word of God be our Guide, our criterion for all our thinking, for all our actions. Not when we blindly follow public opinion but only then when we can say: "Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee," do we walk the straight and narrow road that leads to heaven.

J. D.

Proofs For The Existence Of God *

But as Kant points out the arguments of Anselm and Descartes, as well as those of Leibniz, are based upon assumptions which have yet to be proved. One assumption is: That existence must be regarded as one of the qualities in of the concept of an absolutely perfect Being. And a second assumption in Descartes' argument is that matters of existence, in this instance at least, can be discovered by a purely analytical examination of conceptions that are clear and distinct, without recourse to empirical evidence. The first assumption asserts that if a person thinks of an absolutely perfect Being, he must also think of that Being as actually existing, since otherwise the Being would not be perfect. This may be questionable and is said by Rev. Hoeksema to be a clear illustration of begging the question. But suppose this assumption granted. Unless the second assumption also be conceded, the first taken alone, might only lead to the conclusion that a person who clearly and distinctly thinks of an absolutely perfect Being must also think of that Being as in existence; which would not be enough to prove that the Being does actually exist outside of the person's thoughts.

"It is easily perceived," says Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason, "that the concept of an absolutely necessary Being is a concept of pure reason, the objective reality of which is by no means proved by the fact that reason requires it. That idea does no more than point to a certain but unattainable completeness, and serves rather to limit the understanding, than to extend its sphere. It seems strange and absurd, however, that a conclusion of an absolutely necessary existence from a given existence in general should seem so urgent and correct, and that yet all the conditions under which the understanding can form a concept of such a necessity should be entirely against us.

"The concept of a supreme Being is, in many respects, a very useful idea, but, being an idea only, it is quite incapable of increasing, by itself alone, our knowledge with regard to what exists. It cannot even do so much as to inform us any further as to its possibility." (end of quote).

For Kant, all knowledge is operation on material given through the senses, in other words, if there should be reality that cannot manifest itself through our senses, we could never have knowledge of it. Therefore, says Kant, God may be real but we can have no knowledge of God. We cannot prove nor disprove His reality. So too, man may be free (morally) but we cannot prove nor disprove that. And again, the ideals which man seeks may be eternal, but we can neither prove nor disprove that. God, freedom, immortality remain unknowable, they are not phenomenal. A-priori knowledge is limited to the sense world.

Thus we see that Kant's criticism of the ontological argument is that the argument is based or dependent upon the false assumption that conceived existence and real existence are synonymous. The fact that we have a concept of God as an all-perfect Being does in no way guarantee His existence. His example is that it is not the same to say that I am conscious of a hundred dollars or that I actually possess one hundred dollars. He says, "If I try to conceive a being, as the highest reality, (without any defect), the question still remains, whether it exists or not. For though in my concept there may be wanting nothing of the possible real content of a thing in general, something is wanting in its relation to my whole state of thinking, namely, that the knowledge of that object should be possible a-posteriori also."

The point of difference, then, between Kant and the proponents of the ontological argument is that the latter think that an all-perfect Being necessarily includes the attribute of existence, while Kant says, no, we can have a concept of a real absolutely all-perfect Being, but that does not necessarily include existence, because existence can be proved only a-posteriori, or through sense perception.

Having discussed the pros and cons of the ontological argument, we will now proceed to the so-called Cosmological Argument.

We will recall that this argument is an attempt to prove the existence of God from the evidence of a First Cause of the world or universe. Everything must have a cause. Therefore, there must be some Being outside the universe who caused it. Briefly stated in the form of a syllogism, we have as

Major Premise—Every new existence or change in existing things must have had a cause pre-existing and adequate.

Minor Premise—The universe as a whole and in all its parts is a system of changes.

Conclusion—Therefore, the universe must have a cause exterior to itself, and the ultimate or absolute cause must be eternal, uncaused, and unchangeable.

This version of the cosmological argument that proceeds from effects to causes, has as its major premise

a causal judgment that is intuitive and absolutely universal and necessary. Even though it is denied by some, as Hume and Mill, it is nevertheless used in all their reasoning as to the origin of the world and all things in the world. The judgment is unavoidable and its opposite is unthinkable. If something exists now, there must have been something existing eternally which is the cause of that which exists now.

Dr. A. A. Hodge in his 'Outlines of Theology', says: "We must remember that the cosmological argument is not that everything must have a cause, but that every new thing or change must have been caused. That which is eternal and immutable needs no cause. Therefore, the real cause—that in which the causal judgment can alone absolutely rest—must be neither a change nor a series of changes but something uncaused, eternal, and immutable. All philosophers postulate an eternal, self-existent, and unchangeable cause of the universe and in so doing they merely assume the principles asserted in this argument." (end of quote).

As to the minor premise, this objective reality is accepted by practically everyone. Common sense recognizes the universe and its parts as a system of changes. This is emphasized by the principle and lesson of modern science.

There is another and more common version of the cosmological argument which is the interpretation given by Kant when he criticizes it in his "Critique of Pure Reason." Stated in syllogistic form we have:

If there exists anything there must exist an absolutely necessary Being.

For, 1) Everything contingent must have its cause, and

2) This cause—if contingent—must have *its* cause, till the series of subordinate causes end in an absolutely necessary cause, without which, the series would have no completeness.

Since at least I, exist, an absolutely necessary Being exists.

In analyzing this syllogism we find that it is based on two principles. First, Every limited or contingent reality must have a cause. Secondly, Every limited reality must have, not merely a partial, but a complete explanatory, and ultimate cause.

Kant's criticism of this argument is very nicely stated in the notes of Dr. Stob, as follows:

"It is true that every limited or contingent reality must have a cause.

It is not true that the universality of this causal principle implies an ultimate cause.—All that the causal principle demands is that the causal series of contingent beings never at any particular point come to an end.

A cause is necessarily contingent, i. e., a cause

stands in necessary relation both to its effect and to its own cause, and consequently an ultimate being cannot be a cause. For, 1) An ultimate being if it *were* a cause would need to *have* a cause, and so would cease being ultimate. (That is, as cause, God would be a member of the temporo-causal series and thus not be ultimate). 2) If God, in the interest of ultimacy, be placed outside this temporo-causal series, then how is He connected with the contingent things of which He is said to be the cause?" (end of quote).

In this argument we have an appeal to experience; it is a fact in experience that I exist. But in the major premise a leap is made beyond experience in the assertion that the existence of anything contingent and dependent, implies the existence of something absolutely necessary and perfect. We do not know that to be true, and this part of the cosmological argument reverts to the ontological argument and is dependent upon it, for it assumes that existence can be deduced from mere ideas, those of contingency and necessity.

The third argument advanced by some philosophers is called the Teleological Argument, or the physico-theological argument, as Kant calls it, because it calls attention to the signs of order, design, and purposiveness that we see about us in nature; evidences which are impressive. This argument is simply a form of the cosmological argument. Whereas the causal argument proceeded from effect to First Cause, this argument proceeds from an orderly effect to a wise cause. The Cosmological argument led us to an eternal, self-existent, First Cause. This argument reveals the First Cause as possessing intelligence and will.

Stated in a syllogism this argument could be presented thus:

Major Premise—Universal harmony and purpose in nature and in all creation, is a matter of fact.

Minor Premise—This effect, or matter of fact, must have a cause adequate and pre-existing.

Conclusion—Therefore, the First Cause of the universe must be an intelligent mind and will.

As a proof of the major premise, it may be stated that the very fact that science is possible, shows that there is design in the order of nature. Science is based and dependent upon the fact that external nature bears out its conclusions. Besides, we have but to look about us, to find evidences of a definite purpose in the laws of nature. As Rev. Hoeksema points out, "How beautifully and perfectly are all things adapted to one another, so that each creature exists and moves, lives and acts, within the sphere of its own law, and all its needs are satisfied! The fish is adapted to the water, the bird to fly in the air, and the beast to roam in the jungle."

Must we find the cause for this harmony in chance or accident? Or, should we conclude that an intelligent mind and will is the First Cause of the uni-

verse. Huxley and Darwin would base their conclusions upon chance, contending that through a long period of time chance can accomplish the work of intelligence. According to Darwin, organisms are like grape-shot of which one hits something and the rest falls wide. But according to Teleology, organisms are like a rifle bullet fired straight at a target. Just as nobody can believe that any number of throws could cast a font of type into the order of letters in the plays of Shakespere, so no man can rationally believe that the complicated and significantly intellectual order of the universe sprang from chance.

It is again in Kant that we find a criticism of the Teleological Argument. Although this, of all the proofs, appealed most to Kant, yet he insists that it carries with it no absolute certainty, and is open to all the objections he has given to the Cosmological argument. He says it is simply analogical. Because a human being would need thought and will in order to create objects comparable to the wonders of nature, we have no right to argue that the unknown cause of nature is intelligence and will. And in this argumentation he agrees with David Hume, who argues that our conviction that adaptation implies design is due to experience and cannot go beyond it. That our judgment that natural organisms imply design in their cause, is an inference from the analogy of human contrivance, and its effects. Hume argues further that this analogy is false because the human worker is antecedently known to us as an intelligent contriver, while the author of nature is antecedently unknown, and the very object sought to be verified by the theistic inference. Also the processes of nature are all unlike the processes by which man executes his contrivances, and the formation of the world, and the institution of the processes of nature are peculiar effects of the like of which we have no experience.

We could answer Hume's arguments by saying that the human contriver, of whom he speaks, the soul of our fellow-man, is not known to us antecedently, nor is ever in any way known except by the character of the works in which he manifests himself. And exactly in the same way and to the same extent is the Author of nature known. And secondly, the analogy of human contrivances is not the ground of the conviction that order and adaptation imply intelligence. It is a universal and necessary judgment of reason that order and adaptation can only spring from an intelligent cause, or from accident, and that the latter supposition is absurd.

There is one more argument which we can briefly present in this introduction, and that is the Moral Argument. This argument adds to the cosmological and teleological arguments a new element, viz., the attributes of holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. The argument uses as a premise, the fact that man

has a moral consciousness. He realizes an obligation to do that which is right and feels a sense of guilt when he does that which is wrong. Man's conscience tells him constantly that he must perform that which is good, and that happiness will follow upon virtuousness. And on the other hand, that he should not perform that which is evil, for surely sin will be rewarded with evil consequences. Now in order to account for this moral consciousness in man, the existence of God must be postulated. In order that the highest good may be possible, God must exist. For if there were no God, how could we even have a sense of that which is right or that which is wrong? If there were no perfect moral Being, as our standard, how could we universally determine good and evil?

It is probably in Kant's, "Critique of Practical Reason," that this argument finds its basis. He says, and I quote: "Happiness is the condition of a rational being in the world with whom everything goes according to his wish and will; it rests, therefore, on the harmony of physical nature with his whole end, and likewise with the essential determining principle of his will. Now the moral law as a law of freedom commands by determining principles, which ought to be quite independent on nature and on its harmony with our faculty of desire. But the acting rational being in the world is not the cause of the world and of nature itself. There is not the least ground, therefore, in the moral law for a necessary connection between morality and proportionate happiness in a being that belongs to a world as part of it, and therefore dependent on it, and which for that reason cannot by his will be a cause of this nature, nor by his own power make it thoroughly harmonize, as far as his happiness is concerned, with his practical principles. Nevertheless, in the practical problem of pure reason, i.e., the necessary pursuit of the 'summum bonum,' such a connection is postulated as necessary; must contain the principle of the harmony of nature, not merely with a law of the will of rational beings, but with the conception of this law, in so far as they make it the supreme determining principle of the will, and consequently not merely with the form of morals, but with their morality as their motive, that is with their moral character. Therefore, the summum bonum is possible in the world only on the supposition of a supreme being having causality corresponding to moral character. Now a being that is capable of acting on the conception of laws is an intelligence (a rational being), and the causality of such a being according to this conception of laws is his will; therefore, the supreme cause of nature, which must be presupposed as a condition of the summum bonum, is a being which is the cause of nature by intelligence and will, consequently its author, that is God. It follows that the postulate of the possibility

of the highest derived good (the best world) is likewise the postulate of the reality of the highest original good, that is to say, of the existence of God. Now it was seen to be a duty for us to promote the *sum-mum bonum*; consequently it is not merely allowable, but it is a necessity connected with duty as a requisite, that we should presuppose the possibility of this *sum-mum bonum*; and as this is possible only on condition of the existence of God, it inseparably connects the supposition of this with duty; that is, it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God." (end of quote).

Criticism of this argument is founded upon several factors. In the first place, this argument does not take into consideration the mechanical invariabilities of natural laws, and their disregard of the welfare of human beings. Then there is the obvious sufferings of irrational animals that cannot be shown to be compatible with the virtue-happiness ratio of this argument. Again there is the presence of moral and physical evils among men; besides, the apparent unequal apportionment of providential favors, and the absence of all proportion between the measures of happiness allotted, and the respective moral characters of those who receive this happiness—these conditions are not easily explained on the basis of the moral argument. John Stewart Mill in his "Essay on Nature" describes it as the characteristic of nature ruthlessly to inflict suffering and death, and affirms that the cause of nature, if a personal will, must be a monster of cruelty and injustice. In his "Essay on Theism," he argues that the attempt to maintain that the author of nature, such as we know it, is at once omniscient and omnipotent and absolutely just and benevolent, is abominably immoral.

Thus we could continue to quote from many different philosophers as to their ideas of these different rational proofs for the existence of God, for they all have in their systems of philosophy a slightly different slant on this universal question. They must at one time or another in their logic consider the place of a Supreme Being.

But because God is God, Incomprehensible, and Invisible. "He dwelleth in a light no man can approach unto." Therefore we must conclude that the value of these arguments is not in the fact that they compel belief in God, nor do they prove His existence mathematically, but they do strengthen the faith of those who already believe in His existence. The existence of God is a matter of faith. This does not mean that belief in His existence is unreasonable, for it is imminently reasonable, but that reason cannot conclusively demonstrate His existence. Faith does not contradict reason but goes beyond it. It is more reasonable to believe in God than not to. Over-against unbelievers these proofs do establish a strong

possibility of the existence of God, for they are reasonable, and in their very reasonableness they strengthen the faith of those who believe.

D. Vander Wal

* Paper read at a meeting of the student philosophy club of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Gleanings From Twenty Years *

Tonight we celebrate twenty years of continuous publication of the Standard Bearer. I thought it appropriate, therefore, on this twentieth anniversary, to depart somewhat from the usual type of speech heard on the occasion of the Annual business meeting and to review briefly the past twenty years of history of the Standard Bearer. To accomplish this resume of the past twenty years many facts have been gathered and some conclusions and deductions drawn from them which should prove both interesting and profitable for a discussion. The material divided under three heads: General Facts, Facts concerning the contents, and Facts relative to Policy. Many of the figures presented are, very evidently, not actual but approximations; used as a basis for conclusion. I believe, however, that they are correct enough to allow the conclusions drawn.

The September 15 issue of the Standard Bearer completes 20 volumes of our paper. In these 20 volumes there are about 430 separate numbers or issues. These volumes contain approximately 10,320 pages and about 10,320,000 words. If the pages of a complete set of 20 volumes would be laid end to end they would stretch for a distance of about 2 miles. If all the pages of all the issues, that have ever been printed, would be so laid end to end, they would easily connect all of our Churches and then go around the world about one and one half times. If the words of a complete set were laid out in a straight line they would form a continual sentence of about 62 miles in length.

In the past twenty years there have been 3 special issues of the Standard Bearer printed. Two of these have commemorated our Young People's Conventions and the third has been devoted to the 25th anniversary of the Rev. H. Hoeksema's ministry.

Each month there are about 1,200 copies of the Standard Bearer printed. These are sent out to 800 subscribers, while 400 are gift subscriptions. The gift subscriptions include all our servicemen, contributors, exchanges and Library copies. Among the libraries where the Standard Bearer is found, are the Calvin Library and the Grand Rapids Public Library. Although there are only 12 subscribers outside our de-

nomination, there is evidence that it is much more widely read by other than Protestant Reformed Church members. Among our Churches, Edgerton leads with a 100% subscription record while Manhattan is not far behind. Proportionately, Fuller Ave. has the least number of subscribers.

The original staff of the Standard Bearer was composed of the Revs. H. Danhof, H. Hoeksema, G. M. Ophof and Mr. G. Van Beek. Soon after the birth of the child the Rev. Danhof and Mr. Van Beek deserted the babe leaving the Revs. Hoeksema and Ophof to nurse the little giant alone. That they did so very nobly is abundantly evident.

The Rev. Hoeksema has written at least one article in every issue of the magazine since its inception. An amazing record! This includes the three special issues that have been printed. In fact, it is the exception to find only one article with the initials H. H. It has only occurred once in the twenty years of history; in the 20th anniversary number. In each of the Convention numbers there are two articles signed by him. His material has filled from $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page in the Anniversary number up to 28 pages of the Standard Bearer. You might ask how that last figure is possible for the paper is of only 24 pages. At the time that Dr. K. Schilder was visiting in this country a meeting was held in the Pantlied Hotel in Grand Rapids to discuss a possible reunion with the Christian Reformed Church. The speech which the Rev. Hoeksema delivered at this gathering was printed in both English and Holland and together with other material written by him accounted for 28 pages in that particular issue. Apart from that it is not uncommon to find from 12-16 pages of the Rev. Hoeksema's material in a single issue. The overall average is about 8-10 pages. If we take the lower figure we find that he has filled about 3,440 pages and written about 3,500,000 words in the past twenty years in the Standard Bearer. This material would fill about 7 volumes and is, consequently, more than one-third of all the material published.

The Rev. G. M. Ophof follows; also having high honors. Next in line are the two "nurses aides" who were soon called in, the late Rev. W. Verhil and the Rev. G. Vos, who quickly became full fledged "doctors" by faithful service and labor. At present there are 22 regular contributors; some of whom are not so regular.

You would like to suggest, perhaps, that though these facts have been interesting, to gather them represents a terrific waste of time and effort. On the contrary, they are not only interesting but very very revealing and of great value, in their revelation, to all those who are truly interested in our paper. By these gross figures we are brought, first of all, very strikingly, before a great cause for joy. They should

arouse within us a mighty prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God for His goodness to us; thankfulness for deeming us worthy to carry the banner of His truth for these twenty years; praise for His continued blessing upon our labors; appreciation and adoration to Him for giving us men with insight and talent and spiritual gifts, through whom He has developed the truth of Scripture in our midst.

In the second place, it is evident that they demand a sincere expression of thanks, appreciation, and gratitude to the Rev. H. Hoeksema, especially, and to all others in a varying degree, who have labored so faithfully for the Standard Bearer.

They also reveal that the burden of the responsibility and work connected with the Standard Bearer, in the past twenty years, has rested on the shoulders of the Rev. Hoeksema. He has felt that responsibility and has assumed it throughout. It is evident that he has often filled its pages when others were negligent. This has meant much burning of the midnight oil and plenty of hard work. The paper has been a constant cause of worry to him. It has often been a sick baby and his was the struggle to keep it alive. Even though now there are 22 regular subscribers it is still his baby, as it always has been.

But after twenty years it should be a healthy young man and the time has come to prove that it is. We would like to suggest, therefore, that the paper be departmentalized or divided into rubrics. Not only would this relieve the Rev. Hoeksema from a great deal of unnecessary work and worry, but would at the same time stabilize the paper and let it stand on its own feet. To accomplish that end the plan should be adopted that was suggested by the Editor-in-Chief in Volume 17, number 8. He suggests that the following departments be included:

Meditations	Doctrine
Biblical History	Hist. of Dogma
Missions	Reviews
Editorials	Church History
Social Topics	Political History
Education	Questions & Contributions

These might, of course, be decreased or increased; according to the discretion of the staff. Our personal preference would be to give the Rev. Hoeksema the Meditation and Doctrinal departments and to relieve him of all else. He could, of course, contribute any other material; as he pleased. For the rest, one man should be responsible for each department. The remaining men might be divided under these heads as would be necessary. It is evident that not every rubric could be included in each issue but a schedule could be drawn up to work out the material. We believe it would be wise to include the Rev. Hoeksema's material in each issue. To this we would also add

the remark found in the article referred to above: "Each editor or department head shall be held responsible, during the time of his appointment, to fill his space with material pertinent to the rubric assigned to him, and that no one else, not even the Editor-in-Chief, may fill that space"—unless some extraordinary circumstance arise, such as the death of the writer.

The objection raised to the adoption of this plan is that the contributors in the past have not sent in their material, neither when it was directly assigned to them, nor when they had the privilege of choosing their own material. Further, it is said, that if this would continue it would surely be the death of the Standard Bearer. We believe, however, that effective measures could be taken and that the adoption of the plan itself would eliminate this objection. Nor do we believe that this would be the death of our Standard Bearer.

For especially two reasons, we feel that this plan would be a means of stabilization and growth rather than lethargy and death. Instead of the situation of prompting and directing and the relationship of pupil and teacher that now exists, there would arise a healthy sense of responsibility and individual development. In the second place, the inclusion in each issue of the departments assigned to the Rev. Hoeksema, which would surely be prepared, would alone make the paper worth printing and circulating; even though nothing else appeared. At the same time we should begin to prepare ourselves for a future eventuality. Although we all pray that the Lord may yet spare him for many years, we know that some day the Rev. Hoeksema will be forced to lay down his many labors. The adoption of this plan would help to prepare us for that day.

The facts concerning the circulation and volume of material that has been written are also very revealing. It was stated that if all the pages were laid end to end they would easily connect all of our churches. The Standard Bearer has been, just exactly, that mighty and potent factor of connection between our Churches which was necessary to us, who are scattered and small. It has been a bond of union between us. It was further stated that the contents of a complete volume would form a *continuous* sentence. Once again, it would be exactly that, for there has been unity and harmony of thought and development throughout its history.

Some sad impressions are left by the facts relative to circulation. It is evident that only about $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ of our own people are regular subscribers. Certainly there should be 100%. This, together with the fact that there are only about a dozen subscribers outside of our own denomination, presents a terrific field for expansion in this line. The evidence that Edgerton and

Manhattan lead in the percentage of subscribers and Fuller Ave. lags, is likewise revealing. It reveals that our newer and younger congregations are the best supporters of our paper in subscriptions. That again means that as we grow older in our denomination our support and interest wanes. It is the old story of losing our first love and with it our enthusiasm. This certainly demands a mighty revival and call to return.

Some interesting and revealing facts have also been gathered relative to the contents of the Standard Bearer in the past twenty years. Passages from all the books of the Bible have been treated except two or three of the Minor Prophets in the Old Testament and the books of Philemon and III John in the New Testament. Many books are treated comprehensively. Portions from almost every chapter of Genesis are treated. Of the 50 chapters in Genesis one can find references to all but about 12-14. There are 12 or more references from the first chapter alone; while there are over 75 from the entire book. Passages from about half the chapters of each Exodus, Deuteronomy and Proverbs are treated. Of the 150 Psalms about 100 have been treated; many in great detail. Isaiah has been treated comprehensively while Zechariah is most complete—almost verse for verse. In connection with Ezekiel's prophecy we find a striking fact. Especially 2 portions, in fact 2 verses, receive the lion's share of discussion. Verse 23 of chapter 18 is treated in 9 articles while verse 11 of chapter 33 is developed in 7 articles. They are the two most famous "common grace" texts: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way and live?"—18:23; and "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—33:11.

In the New Testament the following books are treated comprehensively: Matthew, Luke, John, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Phillipians, Hebrews, 1 & 2 Peter, Revelation.

All of the so-called proof texts for "common grace" are treated and explained in detail in the light of all of Scripture. The most difficult passages seem to be found in the Gospel according to Matthew for at least 12 questions concerning passages in this book have been sent in; which is more than on any other book.

The titles and fields covered are of an equally wide range. They spread from A—Abraham or Absolute Predestination to Z—Zelotes or Zeal. Some of the more interesting and striking titles are: Yankee Dutch, That Insane Amusement Notion, The Lone Archer, Benedicto Domini Super Candidatos Nostros, Did Christ Commit Suicide, and, of course, Common

Grace. Material treated has been in the style and fields of Doctrine, Meditations, Church History, Bible History, History of Dogma, Philosophy, Economics, Sociology, Politics, and many more. Contributors, outside the regular staff, have ranged from A—Aardema to Z—Zwier. The latter being the Rev. Daniel Zwier of Holland, Michigan.

There are two special departments which we wish to examine a bit closer, for they give an indication of reader interest. In the first place there are Contributions, which include articles by others than the regular contributors, communications with the editors, reports, etc. In the first 10 volumes there were about 196 of these for an average of about 20 per volume. These 196 articles represent, however, only about 50 individual writers; so that many wrote twice or more. In the 11th volume there are 61 of these contributions representing as many individual writers. The reason for this sudden increase was in response to a request of the Editor-in-Chief for reflection and sentiment regarding a proposed change in the set-up of the Standard Bearer. It is interesting to note that this is the only occasion that the Young People were roused to write in to the Standard Bearer. Outside of this, one looks in vain for the voice of our Young People; except for an occasional paper or society work. We discovered only one such contribution: a discussion on Hymns from the Fuller Ave. Young Men's Society. It is also interesting to note that this contribution aroused a great deal of interest and discussion. In the next 4 volumes—12-15—there are about 46 contributions or 11 per volume. The last 5 volumes contain about 47 contributions or 9 per volume.

The other special feature is the Question and Answer department. In past twenty years many interesting and instructive questions have been received and answered. For example: May a Christian engage in Politics?, When were the Angels created?, What is the distinction between the ethical will of God and the will of His counsel?, May a minister assume that a member of his congregation is a child of God if he simply answers yes or no at house visitation? There are no questions in the first volume. In the next 9 volumes there are about 997 or 11 per volume. In the next 5 volumes there are about 47 or 9 per volume. In the last 5 volumes there are about 11 or 2 per volume.

Once again these facts are very revealing. They give evidence, in the first place, of the richness and depth of the Word of God in its content and truth. Further, they instruct us that in the twenty volumes of the Standard Bearer that we now have, we possess a veritable gold mine of treasure from which to draw. We have here, a wealth of material on almost any subject discussed in our circles. As such, they are invaluable for ministers not only, but for society work,

Sunday-school teachers, elders and deacons, all Church workers, the sick, all those not able to attend services—in brief—for everyone and for every occasion. We would like to see the R.F.P.A. give to, or urge every consistory to buy or acquire, a complete set of the 20 volumes to be the property of the congregation for use by all its members.

Many deductions can be made concerning the reader interest from the two special departments reviewed. In both cases there was a gradual decline in interest until now the one is almost dead and the other is fast disappearing; except for an occasional report of some special Church activity. This indicates, certainly, that our people are losing interest, and we might even say, that they are not reading the Standard Bearer. No one will deny that it is evidence of the fact that the paper is not being read as it should. We repeat that one looks in vain for a response from our Young People and a sign of interest on their part. Once they rallied to ask for help and consideration and for a voice in the paper. In that connection it is interesting to note, that not one of the Young People who wrote in at that time, was opposed to the proposed plan. Further, that many of the adults who expressed their opinion admitted the fact that there was not a great deal to interest our Young People in the Standard Bearer and favored the change. Personally, we would not favor the change proposed at that time but that latter change which we have already discussed. In as much as we touch upon these matters later we leave them for the time being. We do believe that the facts presented warrant the conclusion that the majority of our Young People are not reading the Paper, that the same is true of many adults, and that gradually the Standard Bearer is losing its place among our people.

W. H.

(To be continued)

*Speech delivered at the Annual meeting of the R.F.P.A. on Thursday evening, September 14, 1944 in Fuller Ave. Comments and criticisms concerning any of the material here presented is invited.

IN MEMORIAM

The School board of the First Reformed Christian School of Redlands, Calif. wishes to express its sincere sympathy to its brother member Charles Pieksma and family in the loss of both mother and father in the course of eight days.

MR. WILLIAM PIEKSMA

MRS. JOSEPHINE PIEKSMA

May the Lord abundantly comfort him and his family in this time of sadness, and may He fill the emptiness in their hearts with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

H. A. Kimm, Pres.

H. Joling, Sec'y.