

THE STANDARD

Bearer

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME XVIII.

FEBRUARY 15, 1942

NUMBER 10

MEDITATION

Glorious Head Over All

... and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Eph. 1:22b, 23.

Glorious knowledge!

Christ, the head over all things, is given as a head to the Church!

For, let us not overlook the fact, that this passage constitutes the close and climax of the apostle's prayer for the Church of Ephesus, and for the church of all ages, which was begun in the words of the fifteenth verse.

And how fitting, and, indeed, indispensable a close it is!

The earnest prayer of the apostle was, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; that by this Spirit the eyes of their hearts might be enlightened, so that they would be able to discern spiritual things; and that so they might be able to know, and actually know, what is the hope unto which they were called, that is, what are the riches of God's inheritance among the saints. And in order to conceive at all of the abundant riches of this hope, they must know the exceeding greatness of the divine power that even now already works within and into the Church, and which can be measured only by the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and by which He set Him at His right hand in heavenly places; so that Christ is now exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. . .

And hath put all things, in the entire universe, in heaven and on earth, now and in the future world, under His feet!

Mighty Head over all!

Yes, but where now is the connection? How is this amazing exaltation of the Lord Christ related to the knowledge of the hope of our calling? What does this exceeding great glory and authority and might of Christ have to do with the "exceeding greatness of His power" that worketh into the Church?

Here is the answer: He gave Him as the Head of the Church!

And that Church is the fulness of this mighty Head!

And now He fills all in all!

Blessed knowledge!

Mighty Head of the Church!

He, Who is the Head over all, is given as a Head to the Church!

Such, no doubt, is the significance of the text. The meaning is not merely that God has appointed Christ as the Head over all things in the Church, although this is undoubtedly implied; but that He, Who is exalted at the right hand of God, and Who is Head over all things in the entire universe, is now also given to the Church as her Head!

This should be evident from the context.

There the subject was exactly "Christ the Head over all things!" To this supreme position in the whole universe He was exalted by the power of God. He had received authority and power over every name that is named. All things were in subjection under His feet. And Him (thus emphatically in the original) God had given to the Church as her Head! Indeed, by this the Church may know what is the hope of her calling, and what are the riches of God's inheritance among the saints; that this exceedingly glorious Christ is given to her as the Head, and that of this mighty Lord she is the body!

Blessed hope!

And blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!

For, indeed, as the Head is, so is the body!

Head and body are one, organically one.

And Christ and the Church constitute a very real spiritual organism, an organic unity, the principle and source of whose life resides in the Head. And this organic unity of Christ and the Church always appears in the foreground, whenever Scripture speaks of Christ as the Head of the Church, and of the latter as the body of Christ. It signifies that there is unity of life, of a life that has its source in the Head, and from the head flows into and operates in the entire body, and in all the members. In Christ is the life of the whole body. Never is that life in anyone of the members apart from the Head; nor is this life in the whole body independent from the Head. Without the Head the body would be dead, and none of the members would have life at all. But in organic union with the Head, through the Spirit which was given unto Him and which He hath poured forth into the body, the body partakes of the life of the Head. Constantly, from moment to moment, there is a life-current from the Head into the body and into all the members, quickening them, and causing them to live even as He lives. And this life is the glorious resurrection-life. It is from above. It is the life of Him that is exalted Head over all. Him, the Head over all, God has given as a Head of the Church, which is the body. . . .

As the Head so is the body!

As is the life of the Head, holy, glorious, immortal, incorruptible, victorious, eternal,—so is the life of the body!

And, although now it may not yet appear what we shall be, by our union with this glorious Head over all, we may surely know what is the hope of our calling, and what is the riches of God's inheritance among the saints, for when He shall be made manifest, we shall be manifested with Him in glory!

Mighty Head over all!

Yes, indeed, this Head of the Church in the organic sense is also its Head in the juridical sense of the word, so that He is its King, ruling over her.

Or how could this meaning possibly be excluded from this marvellous passage? Indeed, there are those who foolishly deny this. Christ is not the King of the Church, say they, but only its Head in the organic sense. He gives life to the Church and is united with her in the mystic communion of love. But He is not her King. Only in relation to the nation of Israel He stands as King. And though for a time He cannot function in this capacity, seeing that His own rejected Him as their King, the time will come that He will assume His power and royal throne over the Jews. Then He shall be King of Israel, but Head of the Church forever! But how foolish and impossible is

this separation of what God hath forever joined together!

Or how could it possibly be that the "Head over all" should not be ruler over His own house? Or did you ever hear even of an earthly monarch that had power and exercised authority everywhere except in his own kingdom? Or what kind of a ruler would he be, who while he swayed a mighty sceptre over a glorious empire, could not maintain his authority in his own household? And is not Christ the "Head over all things" in the whole universe? And would He then not rule His own body, His own household, the Church? . . .

How absurd!

But who else would rule over the body if not the Head?

No, indeed, Christ cannot be dethroned in His own house! Even as He is Head over all in the whole universe, so He is the mighty Head over all things in the Church; the difference being, that while He exercises His power in the universe by His mighty strength, He rules over all things in the Church as her organic Head, and, therefore, through His grace and by His Spirit and Word!

Yes, indeed, He also rules over the destiny of His Church, and with a firm hand governs her way through the history of the world, protects her against all the wiles of the devil, and against all the powers of opposition that would destroy her, and leads her on to the glory which He prepared for her in the eternal kingdom of His Father. And He is able to do so, for He is Lord over all in the universe, and He is powerful to subject them all into His service, so that they must all work together for good to His Church!

But He is also the King of His Church!

He speaks, and she obeys!

His Word is her delight, because by His grace He makes her sincerely willing to serve him as her Lord!

Thus He rules over the individual believers.

And thus He is Head over all things in the Church as a whole. And there cannot be, nor ever may be tolerated, any power within the Church that is not from Him, and that is not strictly subject to His Word!

Thus God gave Him to the Church!

He gave Him to her, this Firstborn of every creature, as her Head from before the foundation of the world.

And as the Head of the Church He prepared Him in the fulness of time, through His death and resurrection and mighty exaltation. . . .

And to the Church He gave her, when He, the Head over all, returned to His own in the Spirit!

Blessed gift of God!

Glorious Church!

Which is His body, the body of Christ!

The fulness of Him, that is, of Christ, Who filleth

all in all!

The Church the fulness of Christ! But what may this mean? Is the fulness here "that which is filled" with Christ? Or must we rather say that its significance is expressed by the words: "that which fills" Christ?

Both interpretations seem possible, and both have been offered.

And, indeed, it appears rather difficult to choose between the two, for the simple reason that in the last analysis they denote the same truth.

In the last part of the text we are told, that the Church is the fulness of Him *that filleth all in all!* And considering these words one is inclined to explain the words "His fulness" as signifying "that which is filled" by Christ.

Hardly, it would seem, can there be room for doubt, that the last clause of the text has reference to Christ's filling all things in the whole Church. It is true, that also these words have been explained as applying to Christ's relation to the whole universe. It is argued that the context speaks of the Lord as being Head over all things in the whole world; hence, the last part of the twenty-third verse must also have reference to His universal significance. However, to this it must surely be objected that the text itself deals with Christ's relation to His Church, that this Church, which is His body, is even called His fulness, and that, therefore, the last clause must also be explained as referring to this same relationship between Christ and His Church. He fills all in all in the Church.

Besides, even though all things are now in subjection unto Him and He has power and authority over them all, it can hardly be said that already He fills all in all in the present world. O, it is true, He fills all in all as the eternal Son of God, but the text speaks of the exalted Christ. And it is also true, that in the new creation He will fill all in all, so that all things will be united in Him, and everywhere in all the new heavens and the new earth we shall see the Christ of God. But this glorious reality is still awaiting its fulfilment.

And, finally, does not Scripture in Col. 3:10, 11 plainly teach us that in the community of believers that put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, *but Christ is all, and in all?!*

And thus it is, indeed: Christ fills all in all in the Church!

He fills the whole Church, and every one in the Church, and all things in everyone! He fills the whole body, from the greatest to the smallest, from the most important to the most insignificant member. And He fills each member according to his capacity. And He fills everything in each member, the whole man, with

heart and mind and will and soul and strength. Do not object that this is not true now, for that the believers have but a small beginning of the new obedience, that, therefore, this will only be true in eternal glory, when this mortal shall have put on immortality. For, it is, indeed, true, that the final perfection of this "all in all" will not be revealed until the tabernacle of God will be with men forever in the new heavens and earth. But it is equally true, that Christ fills all things in all even now. He does not dwell in part of us, but in the whole of us. For He takes up His abode in the heart! And from the heart are the issues of life. He fills our heart, and from the heart He fills our mind and will and all our desires. He that is in Christ Jesus is a new creature, exactly and only because Christ fills all in all! Old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new!

He fills all in all with His Spirit and grace!

All in all He fills with life, with the new resurrection-life; with light and spiritual knowledge of the things of the kingdom of God, with understanding and spiritual wisdom to discern what is the hope of our calling, with faith and hope and love. . . .

He fills us with all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places!

And, mark you well, He *fills* us, or as the original may be translated: He is the one *filling* all in all!

This operation of filling all in all is not the work of one moment, but a constant activity of the Head in the body. Just as the sun constantly fills all the earth with light, so Christ is continuously filling all in all with His Spirit and grace!

And He does so in His own behalf, that is, in order that the fulness of His glory may shine forth in the Church which is His body. Even this truth is plainly expressed in the original. For His own sake He fills all in all in the Church!

And thus the other meaning of "His fulness" becomes possible and even plausible: "that which fills Christ!" The Church is that which fills Christ, without which Christ is not complete! No, you will understand this now very clearly, not as if the Church could possibly be anything in herself and apart from Christ her Head; still less, as if the Church could ever claim to have added anything to Christ's glory. Let the very shadow of this blasphemous thought be far from us. All that the Church is and has, or ever will be and will have of life and glory, will be from Christ alone.

Yet, Christ and the Church belong together!

And the Church is ordained of God to be the instrument through which the manifold riches of God's perfections in Christ must shine forth!

In that sense the Church fills Christ, because He fills her!

O, marvellous grace of the ever blessed God!

Blessed be He forever!

H. H.

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine, issued the 1st and 15th of each month, omitting the 15th July and August

Published by

The Reformed Free Publishing Association
1101 Hazen Street, S. E.

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Subscription \$2.50 per year

Entered as second class mail at Grand Rapids, Michigan

EDITORIALS

De Acht Punten

Ik noemde onlangs de "acht punten"; en iemand vroeg, wat daaronder verstaan moest worden.

Wel, daardoor wordt bedoeld de verklaring, die op 14 Aug. 1941 werd afgelegd door Premier Winston Churchill en President Roosevelt ten opzichte van de doeleinden, die ze door den tegenwoordigen wereldoorlog bedoelden te bereiken. Ik geef ze hier, zoo goed mogelijk, vertaald weer:

1. Hunne respectieve landen hebben niet op het oog uitbreiding van grondgebied of eenige andere zelfverhooging. (aggrandizement).

2. Ze zoeken geen veranderingen in de bestaande grondgebieden, die niet in overeenstemming zijn met de vrij uitgedrukte begeerte van de betrokken volken.

3. Ze respecteeren het recht der volkeren om eigen regeeringsvorm te kiezen; en ze zoeken herstelling van dat recht bij die volkeren, die van eigen regeering werden beroofd.

4. Met behoorlijke inachtneming van bestaande verplichting, stellen ze zich ten doel, om zooveel mogelijk aan alle staten, groot of klein, overwinnaar of overwonnen, open te stellen den wereldhandel en de grondstoffen der wereld noodig voor hun economische welvaart.

5. Ze begeeren tot stand te brengen de grootst mogelijke samenwerking tusschen de verschillende natiën op economisch gebied, en dat met het doel om voor allen te verkrijgen verbeterde standaarden voor den Arbeid, economische vooruitgang, en maatschappelijke zekerheid.

6. Nadat de tyrannie van het Nazisme vernietigd is, hopen ze eenen vrede tot stand te brengen, waaronder alle volken in veiligheid zullen kunnen verkeerden binnen hunne eigen grenzen, en waaronder alle menschen in vrijheid en zonder gebrek hun eigen leven zullen kunnen uitleven.

7. Zulk een vrede zal allen menschen de vrijheid laten om de zeeën en oceanen zonder belet te kunnen bevaren.

8. Ze gelooven, dat om realistische zoowel als om geestelijke redenen alle natiën er toe zullen moeten komen om af te zien van alle uitoefening van geweld (use of force). Waar de handhaving van een toekomstigen vrede niet mogelijk is, zolang door sommige natiën land- zee- en luchtwapenen bij den voortduur worden aangewend, en deze natiën met aggressie dreigen buiten eigen grenzen, daar gelooven ze, dat, totdat

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er breedere en meer permanente maatregeling tot verzekering van den vrede getroffen zijn, zulke natiën dienen ontwapend te worden. En ze zullen ook helpen en aanmoedigen het gebruik van alle mogelijke middelen, waardoor de last van bewapening voor vrede-lievende volken verlicht kan worden.

Dat is dus een heel program.

Het luidt zeer onbaatzuchtig, vooral voor Albion.

Het is niet beperkt tot eenige natie, maar sluit heel de wereld in, en dat niet alleen uit politiek, maar ook uit economisch en maatschappelijk oogpunt.

Het streeft naar een wereld van vrede, welvaart en geluk voor alle volken niet alleen, maar voor alle menschen.

Daartoe is het noodig, dat het Nazisme eerst wordt vernietigd, en dat de natiën van de "Axis" worden ontwapend en dus onschadelijk worden gemaakt.

En het belooft aan alle volkeren het recht om eigen regeeringsvorm te kiezen. En dat houdt nogal wat in, vooral als deze belofte ook vervuld zal worden in het Britsche wereldrijk.

Ik vrees, dat, indien de tegenwoordige wereldoorlog niet ten einde kan worden gebracht, eer deze doeleinden zijn bereikt, we op een langen en bangen oorlog ons moeten voortbereiden.

Maar: De Heere regeert!

H. H.

Vrede De Grondtoon

Het is uit alles, ook uit bovenstaand program duidelijk, dat de wereld temidden van den oorlog eigenlijk den vrede, den wereldvrede zoekt.

Men ziet het schadelijke, het verwoestende van den oorlog wel in. Dat de oorlog, hoe kleiner de wereld wordt, en hoe dichter de natiën bij elkander komen te wonen, steeds vreeselijker wordt, steeds meer verwoesting aanricht, en ten slotte heel het schoone gebouw der beschaving dreigt ineen te doen storten, wordt al meer erkend. Reeds lang werd het gezien, dat oorlog is "een wanklank der beschaving"; dat hij de welvaart belemmert en de ontwikkeling der volkeren tegengaat, het kapitaal verslindt, de staatsschuld doet toenemen, de armoede bevordert, en de maatschappij met den ondergang bedreigt. *Woordenboek voor Wetenschap en Kunst*, VII, 200.

Maar vooral in den laatsten tijd, nu door stoom en electriciteit, door luchtschip en radio, de wereld aanmerkelijk kleiner geworden is, en de verst van elkan- der verwijderde volkeren burens geworden zijn, en nu daarom schier elke oorlog heel de wereld in vuur en

vlam zet; nu, bovendien, de moderne beschaving de oorlogsmoordtuigen honderd maal verwoestender heeft gemaakt dan vroeger het geval was; nu moet de oorlog de wereld uit.

Er moet vrede komen. Wereldvrede.

Men wil een toestand scheppen, waarin de oorlog onmogelijk gemaakt is.

En zoo komt het, dat men ook thans, nu we eigenlijk nog pas aan het begin staan van dezen oorlog, den grondtoon kan beluisteren in schier alles, wat er over den oorlog wordt gesproken of geschreven, van het verlangen naar en de poging tot wereldvrede.

De wonde, de doodelijke wonde, die het beest van het antichristelijke wereldrijk bij de spraakverwarring van Babel ontving, moet zoo spoedig mogelijk worden geheeld.

Of het gelukken zal?

Wat het einde zal zijn van dezen oorlog, zal wel niemand kunnen zeggen. De Heilige Schrift laat wel het licht der openbaring over de tegenwoordige geschiedenis schijnen, maar niet zoo, dat ze ons de historie van tevoren beschrijft. Wie dan ook tracht om te voorspellen, wat het einde zal zijn van de huidige wereldbrand, moet zich daarvoor zeker niet op de Schrift beroepen. Wel wordt dit telkens weer gedaan, maar altijd loopt dit op mislukking uit.

Wel leert ons de Heilige Schrift, dat we zullen hooren van oorlogen en geruchten van oorlogen, *en nog is het einde niet!*

Zoolang als het dus oorlog is, mogen we ons verzekerd houden, dat het einde er nog niet is.

De Schrift leert ons ook, dat we tegen het einde een wereldrijk moeten verwachten, dat alle natiën en volken zal insluiten. Het antichristelijk wereldrijk.

Voor een korten tijd zal het dus de wereld ongetwijfeld gelukken, om tot eenheid te komen, en om den oorlog te bannen. Het zal een wereldrijk zijn van politieke vrede en maatschappelijke welvaart.

De grondtoon van vrede, die zich ook in dezen oorlog telkens weer uit, en die steeds sterker wordt, komt op uit den drang naar dat rijk, naar dien wereldvrede.

Maar als die vrede komt, wordt het bang voor de kerk des Heeren in de wereld.

Want voor haar zal er dan geen plaats zijn.

Zoolang er oorlog is, kan dat antichristelijke rijk geen werkelijkheid worden.

Maar als er straks vrede komt, hetzij aan het einde van dezen oorlog of later, vrede zonder Christus, vrede in een wereld, die zich tegenover den Gezalfde des Heeren zet, dan wordt het voor Gods volk in de wereld eng.

De oorlog, maar nog veel meer die grondtoon des vredes, roept ons toe: Doet aan de volle wapenrusting Gods!

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

IV.

LORD'S DAY III

3.

The Fall Of Man. (Cont.)

The last stage in the temptation and the fall of the woman naturally and inevitably followed upon the woman's acceptance of the word of the serpent by which he had plainly and boldly contradicted the Word of God. The lie had been introduced. And it had been accepted and embraced. It is in the light, or rather, in the darkness of that lie, that is, with eyes that had been darkened by the lie, that the woman now looked at the tree and passed her own judgment upon it. She saw nothing anymore of the Word of God. On the contrary, she saw "that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise". Gen. 3:6. In other words, already she was filled with lust, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We may well suppose that part of what the woman saw was, apart from the Word of God, true. Why should it not be? There is no reason to believe that the tree was not good for food, nor that it was not a pleasant tree to behold, that is, appealing to the natural eye, devoid of the spiritual light of the knowledge of God. The only trouble was, that she set aside the Word of God, and divorced the tree from it. She opposed her own judgment to the commandment and Word of God, and considered the tree in the light of her rebellious heart. And upon that judgment she acted. And she took of the fruit of the tree and ate.

Did she not, from that very moment experience the wrath of God and His curse upon her? It would seem that she must have felt the misery into which her act had plunged her rather keenly and deeply. No man would ever pass through a similar experience as that through which she must have passed at that moment. Ever since all men are born in sin and under the wrath of God by nature. But Eve had known what it meant to walk in the light of God, to live in His fellowship, to behold His glory, to taste His goodness. And now her light had changed into complete darkness, her knowledge of God had been corrupted into spiritual ignorance and love of the lie; she had been

alienated from God, saw the beauty of His revelation no more, and knew herself to be an object of God's holy wrath. Her life was changed into death. However, and just because of this corruption of her nature, she immediately went in search of her husband in order to make him her accomplice in sin and her companion in misery. What method she employed to tempt Adam the Bible does not tell us. Very briefly it states: "and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." She had learned the lie in the school of the serpent, and, no doubt, she practised what she had learned upon her husband. But the point is that the truth of what the apostle writes in Rom. 1:32 became immediately manifest in Eve: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them". No longer could she have pleasure in a sinless husband. In fact, by nature she would henceforth hate him, and unless he became her accomplice in sin, she would be ready to persecute and kill him. Such is sin. Hence, it was inevitable that she could have no moment's rest, even though she now very clearly knew by experience the judgment of God, until she had also persuaded Adam to become her companion in disobedience and in death.

Such was the first sin, the one act through which sin entered into the world, and death through sin. The question is often asked, how it was possible that sin could originate in the heart and mind of a creature that had been created good and after God's image, in true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. In the ultimate sense this question must probably remain unanswered, like all questions that concern the beginning of things and that are not specifically explained in the Word of God. We must remember, of course, that sin is no substance. It has no being in itself. It is the perversion of good powers wherewith God endowed the creature, in this particular case, man. We must also bear in mind that God had created man good, but lapsible. There was no evil in him. But he had not attained to the highest possible state of freedom and goodness, in which he could not sin. Perhaps, we may even say in the light of Scripture, that this state of highest freedom is possible only in Christ, and that too, because He is the Person of the Son of God in human nature. If we bear these various factors in mind, we may approach a solution of the problem, how sin could possibly enter into the heart and mind of a man that was made morally good. God had endowed him with the good and rich gift of imagination. But by this power of his mind he was also able to conceive of the lie, to create for himself another world than that of the Word of God, and to call that world of his imagination reality and truth. And if by an act of his will he embraced that world of his imagination,

and acted accordingly, he chose the lie instead of the truth of the Word of God. And that is sin. But even so, while this may explain the first operation of sin in man's heart and mind, it does not give a final and satisfactory answer to the question, how this operation could originate in a sinless nature. Certain it is that also that first sin, though the responsibility of it is entirely man's, and though it was wanton and wilful disobedience, was according to the inscrutable plan and purposes of the Most High, and took place under the controlling guidance of His providence.

But there is another question, one that must and can be answered in the light of Scripture. The Catechism does not merely speak of the fall of our first parents in paradise, but mentions it as the source and cause of the corruption of the human nature. The question is: "whence proceeds this depravity of human nature?" And the answer is: "From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence, our nature is become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin." The human nature is corrupt. It is the very opposite from what the law demands that it should be. The law demands love; our nature is such that it hates. And this corruption or depravity of the human nature the Catechism traces to the fall and disobedience of Adam and Eve as its source. And this raises the question, first of all, concerning the relation between that first act of disobedience and the corruption of the nature of our first parents. How can one act of sin corrupt the nature, darken the mind, pervert the will, so that henceforth no good can proceed from it any more? This is, evidently, the teaching of the Catechism here. The nature was good. Man was created after the image of God. The sinful deed of disobedience and rebellion against God did, in the case of Adam and Eve, not proceed from a corrupt nature. On the contrary, the deed was first. The corruption of the nature followed. The deed may be traced to its inmost root in the deepest recesses of the heart,—the fact remains that the sinful deed was first. How this was possible remains a mystery, as we have already stated. But the next question is: how could that first deed cause the nature to become depraved? Why could not Adam repent of that first and only deed that had ever been committed, and henceforth walk in obedience and righteousness? That the human nature is corrupt, is evident from all Scripture. For "there is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and

misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes". Rom. 3:9-18. Throughout the Bible speaks the same language. And it is also evident from Scripture that this corruption of the human nature entered into the world through the sin of the one man Adam: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". But once more: how must it be explained, that one sinful deed could corrupt the whole nature?

It is this truth that is denied by the Pelagian. According to him, sin is always and only in the act, never in the human nature. A man is righteous only according as he does righteousness; and he is unrighteous only in the measure that he commits sin. But no sinful deed can affect the nature so that it becomes corrupt. It is true, of course, that the sinful deed weakens the will. When one sinful deed is committed, it becomes more difficult to do the right thing the next time. It is also true that certain sins, when repeatedly committed, become habits, so that it appears as if the human nature is completely enslaved to them, and kept in bondage. But in the deepest sense of the word the will of man always remains free to choose either for the good or for the evil. The human nature remains inherently good. The sinful deed cannot possibly corrupt it. And thus the Pelagian denies, that by the sin of the first Adam he corrupted his nature so that he became morally depraved.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact, that sin incurs guilt, that guilt is liability to death, and that the death sentence was very really executed upon man when he committed that first sin. By his disobedience Adam became guilty before God. He became delinquent in paying to God what he owed. His calling was to love the Lord his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, every moment of his existence and with all he had. Such was his constant obligation. As long as he met this obligation he was in the state of righteousness. Never could he do more than was his obligation. And less he might not do. If he failed even for one moment in this perfect love of God he lapsed into the state of guilt, that is, in the state in which he was worthy of punishment. Debt with God must be paid. It cannot be ignored, forgotten, or simply cancelled. Sin must be atoned. But Adam had nothing wherewith to pay that debt. Hence, he fell hopelessly into the state of guilt as far as he was concerned. And the punishment of sin is death. God had very specifically threatened: "the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." And that death sentence God executed upon him immediately. Adam died on that very day, yea, the very moment he sinned. That, according to the eternal counsel of God, Christ stood behind him, so that as it were he fell on Christ

and was saved; and that, therefore, he did not utterly perish, is also true. But we may leave this outside of the scope of consideration for the present. As far as Adam was concerned, apart from Christ, it can only be said that he died, because God inflicted the punishment of death on him. And this punishment of death certainly included physical death: he was separated from the tree of life; and corruption and mortality took hold of his physical frame from that very moment. But it also implied the spiritual death, so that: "revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections." Canons III, IV, 2. And thus it is explained that the deed of that first sin resulted in the corruption of the human nature in our first parents. This corruption was not a natural result of his disobedience, but the infliction of God's own sentence of death upon him.

Thus the disobedience of our first parents was, indeed, a fall, by which man lapsed from the state of righteousness into that of guilt and condemnation, from light into darkness, from holiness into corruption, from life into death. If we understand this and, at the same time, see the reason and cause of this in the execution of the death sentence upon man, we will also clearly see the absurdity of the theory that there was an operation of restraining grace in Paradise, whereby the process of moral and spiritual corruption was checked, so that man did not become so depraved as he would have been without this restraining influence. This is the view of common grace as presented by Dr. A. Kuyper Sr. According to his conception, death was the natural and inevitable result of Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit, just as physical death is the natural result of taking poison. Adam killed himself. Of course, even so this law of cause and effect operated according to the ordinance of God, and in so far death was also punishment. But the fact remains that for Adam death in all its implications and, therefore, including moral and spiritual corruption, was inseparably and naturally connected with that one deed of disobedience. The word of God: "the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die", must be understood, not as a threat which God Himself would fulfill, but as a prediction of what would happen, and, therefore, as a fair warning. Writes Dr. Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* I, 209 ff.; (I translate):

"Death in connection with man's eating of the tree of knowledge, can be understood in a twofold way: either as a punishment that was threatened, or as a result that would follow therefrom. If death is fixed as the punishment of high treason, this must be under-

stood as a threat, for one does not die inevitably of high treason. But when I say: 'Do not take of that Paris Green, for if you do you shall die,' there is no question of punishment: all that is expressed is that this poison is fatal in its effect, and that one who takes the poison must die. In the last instance, I may, if one should, contrary to my warning, take the poison nevertheless, make an attempt to counteract the deadly affect of the poison by the application of an antidote to make the patient vomit. Then I certainly spoke fully in accordance with truth: 'when you take the poison, you shall die', and I do not at all come into conflict with myself when afterwards I make an attempt to save the reckless one that took the poison. If this is clear, then it must also be admitted that the words: 'If you eat of the tree of knowledge, you will surely die', are explained in their full implication, when I understand them as implying nothing else than the declaration, the warning: 'Know this, that when you permit yourself to be tempted to eat of that tree, you will see that death will be the result'. And if this is the significance, then there is nothing contradictory in the fact that death was not on that same day fully inflicted on Adam, because the same God that had warned them, hastened immediately after their transgression in order to check the results of the evil."

There are many reasons why this entire presentation must be rejected. In the first place, it is not in harmony with Scripture to explain the words: "the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," as a warning concerning a natural and inevitable result, the actual realization of which might then be prevented by God. Everywhere Scripture presents death as a punishment inflicted by God Himself, and that too, in His just wrath. Death is the revelation of God's displeasure against sin, the execution of His just sentence, the deliberate infliction of punishment, not a natural result of the sinful deed. If the corruption of the human nature must be explained as the natural result of one sinful deed, the Pelagian is, no doubt, correct when he maintains that this is spiritually and ethically impossible. But the inevitableness of this corruption becomes quite clear if we consider it as the punishment of death inflicted upon our first parents for their disobedience. In the second place, sin is no paris green or any other kind of poison that kills a man physically and spiritually if he takes it. The sin of Adam and Eve was a wilful deed of disobedience, transgression of the commandment of God. The figure which Dr. Kuyper employs here, as is the case with many illustrations in his works, is misleading. In the third place, it must be very evident that there is no golden mean between life and death. A man is either alive or dead; he cannot be in some in-between condition. To apply Dr. Kuyper's own illustration: if a man takes paris green he dies; but if an antidote

is administered, and this means is effective and has the desired result, so that the patient vomits out the poison he took, he does not die, but lives and will recover completely. He certainly is not half dead and half alive. The evil results are not "tempered" or checked, but wholly counteracted and prevented. Now, if God warned Adam and Eve when He said: "the day ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die," so that the sinful deed was comparable to taking poison; and if thereupon God administered an antidote of grace, and this means was effective, our first parents did not die at all; they certainly lived. The evil of their deed was not checked, but entirely prevented. In no sense of the word could they be half dead and half alive. Hence, they lived. And this means, too, that in paradise the human nature was not corrupted at all. It would have been, if God had not intervened by His common grace. As the matter stands, however, Dr. Kuyper's explanation of what actually happened in paradise, really directs us to the same view as that of the Pelagians, except that we arrive there in a round-about way. But this is in flat contradiction with the plain testimony of the Bible, which teaches us that the nature of man became corrupt through the fall and disobedience of our first parents in paradise. The view, therefore, must be rejected. Instead we must maintain that in the words: "the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," God threatened punishment, the punishment of death which He Himself would inflict upon the guilty transgressor; and that this sentence was actually carried out by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth. Only thus can it be explained, in opposition to the Pelagian view, how the one deed of disobedience could entail upon man the corruption of his whole nature.

H. H.

ATTENTION

There will be a public lecture at the Fuller Ave. Prot. Ref. Church on Feb. 26 at 7:45 P. M. The Rev. P. De Boer of Holland Michigan will address us on the topic: "*Can We As Christians Perform Sunday Labor In Our Defense Industries During The Present National Emergency?*" Come and bring your friends! Proceeds for the Standard Bearer. This lecture is being sponsored by our League of Men's Societies.

Geo. Ten Elshof—Sec'y.

Some people put on a *form* of godliness to gain a reputation. But it is only the *power* of godliness which assures character.

The Author of the Book of Ecclesiasties

Both the title and the contents of this book firmly sustain the view that its author was none other than king Solomon. The author says of his words that they are of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. The internal evidence of the Solomonic authorship is so strong as to be conclusive. Speaking of himself the author says: "I the preacher, was king over Jerusalem. I gave my heart to seek and to search out wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. . . . I sought in mine heart to give my self unto wine yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; and I also had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and of the provinces. I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments and that of all sorts. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me" (chapters 1, 2). According to the Book of the Kings, these were the engagements of Solomon. Then, too, the meditations that form our book are such as the history of this monarch would lead us to ascribe to him in his old age, after he had experienced the vanity of life in its best earthly estate.

What also strongly pleads for the Solomonic authorship of our book is the childishness of the objections raised against it. It is said, to illustrate, that the manner in which the author speaks of himself, as the son of David and king of Jerusalem and attributes to himself works, undertakings, and qualities, whose originator and bearer history teaches to be Solomon alone, indicates rather a literary fiction than the direct Solomonic authorship. Then the allusions to his prosperity, as not less the boasting expressions regarding his own wisdom are said to be scarcely in harmony with the authorship of Solomon, the son and successor of David. And altogether unkingly, it is held, sound the complaints concerning unjust judges, violent tyrants, officers given to imposition, and slaves and fools elevated to high offices and honors. It is said that these are all lamentations and complaints natural enough in a suffering and oppressed subject,

but not in a monarch called and authorized to abolish the evils.

Certain it is that these arguments against the authenticity of the book as ascribed to Solomon are devoid of all force. When the whole case is viewed in a different light, all the references from which these arguments are derived form the strongest proof in favor of the Solomonic authorship. Then, the failure of every attempt to fix any period for the authorship of the book, if we depart from the date of Solomon, is another proof that no other time and author is genuine. How great is this difficulty, is seen by reverting to the different views presented, all of which are held with equal confidence and yet, in every way, are opposed to each other. Finally, so much alike, as to works and qualities, are the author of this book and Solomon son of David, that they who deny its Solomonic authorship are driven to conclude that the author is one who artfully transposed himself into the place of Solomon, and that thus the book is literary fiction. But if the author is not king Solomon, son of David, the book is more than fiction; it is a literary fraud. For the author plainly wants himself known as Solomon. Not once does he lay aside his mask—if a mask he wears—to shew his true countenance.

The numerous Aramaisms in the book are regarded as forming the surest signs of its post-exilic origin. But the surety also of these signs is dispelled by the light of the following consideration. The Aramaic languages were the Semetic dialects originally current in Mesopotamia and the regions extending southwest from the Euphrates to Palestine. Thus the southwest Arameans were from ancient times the immediate neighbours of the Jews. This being true, the Hebrew language was from earliest times exposed to the infusion of Aramaic elements. Fact is that eventually the Jews gave up their language and adopted the Aramaic as their tongue. It has been proven conclusively that the substitution of Aramaic for Hebrew as the vernacular of Palestine took place very gradually. Assuredly, it must have been a long process, extending backwards even to the time of Solomon. If to this be added the fact of the royal position of Solomon, and the fact of his receiving a familiar acquaintance with foreign words through his intercourse with the strangers who came to hear his wisdom, and if these facts be coupled with the circumstance of the peculiar nature of the subject requiring a different phraseology and demanding abstract terms with variety of form not elsewhere required, we have, it would seem, the real solution of the peculiar style of the book. In fine, the position that the author of Ecclesiastes is Solomon must not be forsaken. With all respect for the linguistic learning and acuteness of Biblical scholars, this brushing

aside of the plain and conclusive testimony of any book of the Old Testament Canon respecting its authorship, on the ground of arguments derived from style, is seen to be truly preposterous in the light of the consideration that little is known and can be known of the history of a language, so ancient and on this account so far removed from us as the Hebrew.

What manner of man was the author of our book? What may have been his world- and life-view? The rationalist interpreters imagine that the book contains copious evidence of the author's being a sceptic philosopher of the school of the Epicurians, thus one who affirmed or denied nothing respecting reality, who doubted and disbelieved all the principles of religion, and whose motto therefore was: "This life is all. The thing for a man to do therefore is to make the most of this *life* by drinking deeply of its pleasures."

A correct understanding of the book, brings to light that the author was a firm believer in God and belonged to His believing children, and that, in producing his book, he very consciously was addressing himself to the task of assailing and exposing as false all such pagan conceptions of what constitutes for man the only good. "Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (12:2). Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole of man" (12:13). That such is the author's conclusion of the matter on which he discourses, shows how utterly untenable the view that he was an infidel.

However, the book does contain passages that seem to justify the conclusion that the wisdom of life which it sets forth is worldly-skeptical as to its character. Says the preacher: "For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart hath not rest in the night. This is vanity. There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. . . ." And again: "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. And their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they anymore portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy vanity, which he hath

given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity; for this is thy portion in life, and in thy labour which thou hast under the sun" (9:4-9).

Here the Preacher in his cogitations seems to be progressing in a channel of thought identical to that of the pagan Aristippus, when he said that pleasure—the pleasure of the body—is man's sole good. And yet, truly, the Preacher was a man of God, who set forth God's wisdom, while the wisdom of Aristippus is from below. This is plain from his main propositions, which are two in number. The first of these he expresses in this language: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (1:2). This expression is a paraphrase of the superlative idea "extremist vanity". That it again returns at the close—chapter 12:7—shows that it contains the fundamental thought of the whole book—a thought that the Preacher means to prove and also does actually prove by searching, examining and even subjectively testing all the things that are done under the sun—things, doings, that constitute life as fallen man in his spiritual estrangement from God lives it on this earth, where stalks the curse of God. The whole book is seen to be a record of the various examinations made and of the conclusions arrived at. And whatever the particular thing, doing, phenomenon, it may be that is examined or tried, it is found to be vanity.

What may be the idea denoted by the frequent word *vanity*? Is it *transitoriness*, *swift passing away*? Is this the teaching contained in the exclamation "all is vanity" that this earthy is in a state of continual flux, that, as the Greek Philosopher Heraclitus affirmed, change, movement, is the Lord of the Universe even so completely as even to exclude the possibility of an unchanging substratum? This is not the idea denoted but this rather that this earthly, all human endeavor, in a word, life—this life—as fallen man in his state of spiritual death lives it—is essentially purposeless, profitless, unprogressive, and thus utterly futile. In a word, it is vain. Mark the words: "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun" (1:3)? None whatever. The preacher knows. For he gave his heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. And he has seen all the works that are done under the sun. And, behold, all—all men's works, endeavors—are profitless. Vanity they are and vexation of spirit. Because "that which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered" (1:15). Man by all his efforts neither can nor will rectify what is unjust in this world. Thus he cannot perform the most important thing. All his exertions to make straight the crooked is a moving in a circuit of vanity. And it is precisely this inability on the part of man that renders all his labors, all his achievements in

science, all his advancement in learning, the mighty civilization that he develops a thing utterly vain, meaningless from the point of view of what there is in them for man in the way of spiritual profit and advancement.

Also in objective view this earthly shows itself futile. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south; it whirleth about constantly, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, hither they return again" (12:4-7). The human race—such is the thought conveyed—with every change of its generations, the sun, wind, and water, make no advance, present no real progress, arrive in their circuit of vanity at no fixed goal or lasting place of rest. The labour of which all things are full—so full that man cannot utter it—is gainless.

Even wisdom,—natural, practical wisdom—the possession and pursuit thereof, is vain. The preacher knows whereof he speaks. For he has come to great estate and gotten more wisdom than all that have been before him in Jerusalem; yea, his heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And he gave his heart to know madness and folly. But he perceived that this also—the pursuit of wisdom without the fear of God—is vexation of spirit in that in much wisdom is much grief (1:15-18).

He then proved his heart with mirth. But he soon found himself saying of laughter, It is made; and of mirth, What doeth it. Continuing his searches, he sought in his heart to give himself unto wine, and to lay hold on folly, till he might see what was good for the sons of men. He made him a great works, got him servants and maidens, gathered him also silver and gold until he was great and increased more than any that were before him. Then he looked upon all the works that his hands had wrought; and "behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (2:2-11).

Having concluded his experiments, the preacher looks out upon life and observes many evils and so the evidence that life is indeed vain continues to accumulate before his eyes. He records these evils in his book and intersperses his recordings with positive moral precepts and good counsel. Having fully established the truth of the proposition that he set out to prove, he again exclaims: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity" (12:8).

But this is not his final conclusion. If it were the preacher as a teacher would rate no higher than the gloomiest of pessimists among worldly philosophers, and then it would be correct to say that in all his

reasoning he, as they, was enclosed by the circuit of the earthly. Then in his counselling "There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink," he progresses along a line of thought that is thoroughly pagan. Then what he tells us is verily this: that, seeing that man dies on the morrow and that death ends all, the best that a man can do for himself while it is yet day, is to make a god of his belly. The preacher, were his final word "All is vanity" were but another apostle of despair. For that this earthly is vain means that in it operates a principle of sin, that it is the sphere of the transgression of the law of God, thus of sin and guilt and death. But there is a way—the way of truth and light—that, when taken, leads out of this vain circuit of depraved human existence up and onward to God—the God of our salvation. For this, says the preacher, is the conclusion of the matter, "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil". The whole of man is to fear God, that is, to love him with all our heart and mind and will and strength. It is to obey His voice and to believe in His Christ, who is the way because He is the truth and the life. Thus the man who fears God has passed in principle in that new and living way that Christ dedicated from the circuit of vanity into the light of God's blessed presence. To the earthly existence of such a man there is meaning and purpose indeed and also true progress. For he has found the way of life and thus walks with God. And he is God's co-worker in the sphere of His covenant on the terrain of this earthly where Christ even through all the futile labours of the wicked executes God's degrees, and realizes His covenant and this along the antithetical line of election and reprobation. And Christ comes and He comes quickly to reward His servants according to their works—His works imputed to them—. Thus their labours are not vain. For they labour as driven by God's love and to His glory.

Thus the main teaching of the preacher is that earthly human existence sanctified by the fear of God is vain, that thus only as unsanctified and consecrated to God does and can it have meaning and purpose.

What now may be the thought contained in such passages as "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour". These passages have given rise to much comment, especially the one found at 11:9-10 and that reads, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth. . . . Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart and put away evil from thy flesh. . . ." And also the passage, "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. . . .

Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest" (9:7). It is hardly necessary to remark that the thought contained in these passages is not: "Seeing that tomorrow we die, let us wholly abandon ourselves to the enjoyment of the sensuous pleasures of this life." This cannot be the thought, unless all this counsel be taken as irony, as some do. But this counsel is very plainly serious advice. Certainly, natural existence and its pleasures such as eating and drinking are not as such sin. A hungry man need not accuse himself because his food tastes good to him. But it is sin to eat and to drink without moderation. It is seeking the earthy and working for perishable bread, having the affections set upon it, that is sin. Let a man eat his bread with joy, but let him thank God for this joy. Let him end with his bread in God, eat it to His glory and out of the principle of faith. This is calling and duty. Let the young man be mindful of this ever, considering that God will bring him as to all his pleasures into judgment. The fundamental thought of this book is, as has been shown, not that this earthly life with its lawful enjoyments must be shunned but that it must be consecrated unto God, and lived to His glory.

As to the Preachers view of death, he spoke according to the light that the church then had. Jerusalem was then on earth as also the temple of God, so that to the devout in Israel, the highest good was to live long in the land of Canaan with their God.

On the subject of death, the preacher discourses as follows: "(For) that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they shall have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity" (3:18, 19).

In the mouth of an infidel this language can mean but one thing, namely, that through death man enters a state of non-existence and thus ceases to be. But the assurance of the preacher is that for all his works God will bring man into judgment (11:6). He thus believes in a life after death. What he says of the estate of man in comparison with that of the beast does not militate against this article of faith of his. In the above-cited passage, he simply wishes to call attention to the vanity of man's earthly existence and therefore looks away for a moment from that life which exists for him after death. He here takes men as they are, as they appear, fallen, sensual, animal.

Further, of the dead he says: "But the dead know not anything, neither have they anymore reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they anymore a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun" (9:5, 6).

There is, rightly considered, nothing in this language that is at variance with the more advanced views on the state of the dead contained in the New Testament Scriptures. Death certainly is a severing of all the earthy ties that bind man to this earthy existence, and a cessation of the aggregate of all such actions that enter into the constituency of this life. In death man's state of being is non-earthly. It cannot be otherwise then that in this state his earthy love, and hatred, and envy are no more. For in Hades, man—and this applies to unbelievers as well as to the believers—is no longer in the flesh. His earthy passions and desires have *indeed* perished. No longer is his portion in the things that are done under the sun.

In Hades the reprobated one does not hunger and thirst after earthy food and drink, lust after other men's wives, covet the material possessions of the living and envy them on account of their riches. Sin in these forms can riot only in men who are in this body. Yet the reprobate is still a totally depraved sinner. But sin in him is not active in the same way that it was before his decease. In a sense he sins not at all anymore, neither in Hades nor in the place of eternal desolation. In hell he is a subdued sinner, crouching at Christ's feet and acknowledging that He is Lord. For in hell the wicked will have been made Christ's footstool. And in Hades as well as in the place of eternal torment, the spirits of the departed—such is the teaching of the New Testament Scriptures—are conscious. And nothing that the preacher says on the subject of death neither directly nor by implication assert the contrary.

G. M. O.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

When the Eternal formed creation's plan
 In power and might,
 His Spirit moved upon the deep, and said,
 "Let there be light!"
 O gracious gift, the earliest boon of heaven!
 The stars so bright,
 The far-flung ray from every lighthouse given,
 Soft moonbeams, white,
 The blazing sun, the tiny fireflies' gleam
 In summer night,
 The candle flame that guides a wanderer home,
 All are God's light.
 Dear Father, in Thy mercy lead us on
 In paths of right,
 And grant that we may learn to walk by faith,
 And not by sight;
 In life's dark hours, grant us to hear Thy word,
 "Let there be light!"

Obedience As A Christian Virtue

When we speak of obedience as a Christian virtue, we do not thereby imply that obedience can be anything else than a christian virtue. Obedience is a virtue and obedience is therefore only christian. One who is not a christian cannot possess virtue, nor can such a one therefore obey. Principally obedience is the fruit of the sanctifying spirit of grace according to I Peter 1:2, and deals with our attitude toward the authority of the Most High God. So that we may safely say that obedience can only be viewed as a christian virtue and can be no otherwise. This we will attempt to make plain.

First of all it is well to answer the question: What is obedience? In answering we hasten to take away the false notion as though obedience were the same as mere servitude. To obey does not mean that one dumbly and blindly submits to a master. For instance if a slave inwardly rebels against his master, yet dumbly and blindly does his masters bidding, he is not obedient. He merely submits for fear of the whip, or for fear of other consequences. He is not therefore possessed of Christian virtue. Or to take note of an example we have in Scripture and in the sphere of the covenant. The rich young ruler who desired greatly to know what he must do to enter the kingdom of heaven, had apparently obeyed from his early youth all the commandments of the decalogue. He had done this very carefully and seriously. Yet in order to be obedient and possess christian virtue, he yet lacked the vital element of obedience, namely, the love of God and the neighbor to lose all and follow Christ. The law demands love to God and the neighbor. Lacking in this love, deprives anyone of obedience as a christian virtue. Therefore we say first of all that obedience is not merely servitude but is a christian virtue. Obedience is that act of man whereby he willingly submits to the proper authority because God has so decreed and willed. Not merely slavish servitude but willing subjection of the whole man whereby I love, honor and revere those in authority over me. This is also taught in the Heidelberg Catechism, Qu. and Ans. 104.

This virtue now is possessed by the Christian alone and never is the unregenerated man virtuously obedient, principally in respect to no authority. The man of sin can in no wise be truly obedient, either to his church authorities, or to the government, or to his employers or to the husband or parents. This is so for the very simple reason that man is made to be friend-servant of God in all that must be done. Surely God mandated Adam to culture the earth and dress the garden and to multiply his seed, etc. But only as a friend-servant. And to be friend-servant is one virtue not two virtues, separately conceived of, as

though he might be a friend of God without being His servant or as though he might be a servant of God without being His friend. No, but to be friend-servant is one virtue wherewith Adam was clothed. In fact the combination of the two, made of Adam an image-bearer of God, created in the likeness of God. The God of all virtue made Adam in his image and likeness. This virtue caused Adam to not merely obey the mandate of God, but to so do the will of God in heaven, that in every act, his love to God would be made manifest. Adam could obey only when he would perform all of God's good pleasure **WITH ALL HIS MIND AND SOUL AND STRENGTH**. To do God's will must be his supreme delight. All his enjoyment had to come from fulfilling the command of God as the friend of God. Not blindly, not grudgingly, not murmuring, nor even neutrally. Adam must from the principle of friendship do God's will. In fact, as soon as Adam would cease this love to God, though he would dress the garden and culture the earth and multiply upon the face of the earth, he would become a rebel and would lose the virtue of true obedience. He would be perfectly miserable.

This is exactly what happened when Adam fell into sin. He plunged himself into the most absolute misery, by what our fathers termed "wilful disobedience". This disobedience refers of course to man's relation to God. Man became disobedient toward God and His precepts, in that he refused to be friend-servant of Jehovah and therefore refused to subject himself willingly to God's authoritative word. Yea, not only does he refuse this, but all his mind, soul and strength is directed at, or used to the end of, disobeying and rebelling against the word of God. He hates the very words that proceed out of the mouth of God. He refuses in any way to bow before the authority of the Most High. Whereas God alone is God and there is no God beside Him, so that His word alone is authoritative and final, from which there can be no appeal and about which there can be no compromise or question or change, man has become disobedient toward God.

But this change of relation toward the Sovereign God also brings about a change of relation toward his neighbor. Even as man refuses to love his God, so also he refuses to love his neighbour. God he hates and his neighbor he hates. Man's attitude toward God determines his attitude toward his neighbor. The essence of the whole law and the prophets is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and the neighbor as ourselves. Thus also man, who refuses to possess the virtue of obedience to God, also possesses not the power or virtue of obeying those set in authority over him by God. For God gives authority to some, as this world developes into various relationships. As the human race developes, various

relationships come into being. The relationship of husband and wife, of parents and children, of magistrates and citizens, employers and employees, becomes operative. The God of all authority delegates to some authority, to be exercised over others of Adam's children. God's demand to this given authority is to *exercise* this authority and God's demand to those placed in subjection, is to *exercise obedience*. This demand to exercise authority and obedience is not caused by the fact that sin entered the world. But this demand of God to exercise authority and obedience was there, before sin ever entered the world, and so this demand would remain unchanged, even if sin had never entered the world. Surely it is entirely conceivable that in a world of righteousness there nevertheless would be some who would have authority over others and that some would be called to subject themselves to those in authority. However this may be, the fact remains that sin did not change God's sovereignty, and gives to some authority and to others the command to obey. But man's rebellious nature prohibits him to exercise this in accordance with God's law. Those in authority do not obey and those in subjection do not obey. O surely they may exercise authority out of utilitarian principles, for the sake of their own profit or benefit, but not for God's sake. So also the subject may submit out of fear or for his or her own sake, but not out of the principle of love to God and for His sake. **NOT BECAUSE THEY BOW BEFORE THE AUTHORITY OF GOD WHO ALONE IS SOVEREIGN.**

The result is corruption in all human affairs and relations. In the home the wife is not subject to her husband, nor do the children honor their father and their mother. In the nation the citizen-subject is not obedient to the magistrate, except for selfish reasons of his own, and the authorities exercise their God-given authority only to set up an anti-christian power that ultimately will develop into the anti-christ of the last days. In the industrial field, the laborer opposes both the fellow laborer and also his employer and the employer in turn hates his employee, except in so far that he can make himself rich by the sweat of their labors. There is no true obedience, for man is not obedient to God. He hates the very virtue of obedience.

Into that world of disobedience God reveals His grace, and His virtues, for God is the God of all virtue. All virtue is centered in God alone, for God alone is good and the overflowing fount of all good. Also the true virtue of authority and obedience is centered in Him, and this virtue he reveals in the Son of His love, Jesus Christ our Lord. In due time God sent forth His son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, though himself without sin, and condemned sin in the flesh. Also he condemned the sin of the gross disobedience mani-

fested in man since the fall of Adam. God anointed Christ to be the obedient Servant in all things that were to be done in the house of God. Christ completely obeyed. Never was He disobedient. Not toward His parents, not toward the authorities and magistrates, not toward His God and Father in heaven. He obeyed even with the curse of the law resting upon Him because of the disobedience of His brethren. He obeyed even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. And this obedience was His virtue. His virtue consisted entirely in obeying the will of His Father. He exercised the virtue of obedience but also of authority when he cleansed the house of His Father of those who would make of that house a den of robbers. His word was not as the word of the scribes and pharisees, but as One in authority. But when he was wrongly accused and none found fault in Him, and when the authorities nevertheless condemned Him to death, he resisted not. He reviled not, but gave Himself completely, in subjection to the will of the Father in heaven. He did this all for God's sake.

When Christ had completed all, He arose and went to His Father and for His obedience He received the reward of glory. Receiving the Spirit without measure He poured it out upon His Church in the midst of the world. And this Spirit of grace gives virtue, not outward, but spiritual, eternal virtue unto His people. It recreates in them a new heart and mind, yea, making of them a new man, made after the image of Christ. This Spirit humbles them so that they see and recognize and confess that Jesus is Lord. I Cor. 12:3. This Spirit causes them to lose themselves and follow Jesus. Matt. 10:39. Yea, this Spirit of grace alone gives unto them the virtue of obedience. See I Peter 1:2.

This christian virtue of obedience must then manifest itself in all spheres of life. First of all in the Church of Jesus Christ. Christ establishes the office of Elders for the purpose of ruling His Church by His Spirit and Word. And the members, when making confession of faith, answer yes, when asked whether they will submit to church-government and discipline if they become delinquent. They express their desire and willingness to be obedient to the authority of God in Christ and exercised through the office of elders by the Word. Secondly, also in the home this virtue of christian obedience becomes manifest. The man then assumes the authority as the head of the house and the wife is subject to her husband in all lawful things. By God's grace she then possesses the virtue of christian obedience, and does not seek emancipation from this divine command to obey and be subject. O surely, this so-called emancipation is extolled in the world as a virtue of especially the democracies, but instead of this being an emancipation and a virtue, it is sinful rebellion against the command of God. Also the child-

ren, ruled by this same spirit of grace, then fight against their rebellious nature and honor their parents, loving and obeying them sincerely. They will then not seek to be honored, as it is in the world. In the world today it has become almost a slogan: Honor the children. They are put on the throne and the parents ask of the children: What wilt thou have us do. This is not child training, as the philosophers of the world choose to call it, but it is sinful rebellion against God's command that children must honor their mother and father for this is the first command with promise. The child honoring father and mother shall be richly blessed and enter into the kingdom of God.

This spirit of grace also manifests itself in all other spheres of life. Then the Christian citizen will not rebel against his government but be in subjection to the magistrates. It is a christian virtue with him to obey those placed in authority over him. Surely the christian is the best citizen of any country, for he will show fidelity to the magistrates. He will expose all evil and extol all virtue. Such a christian will point out the only way of blessedness, and tell the government that righteousness exalteth a nation. The christian is anti-revolutionary, and will not ally himself with any seditious, rebellious or anarchist movements.

In the industrial field, the christian laborer will also be obedient to his masters, not as men pleasers but as desiring to please the God Whom he confesses and Whose light he lets shine about him. The christian virtue of obedience prohibits him from joining any union with others who seek only the things of this world and who hate the law of the Lord their God. If the employer demands of him to break the law of God he refuses and if necessary leaves his job, even if he is working on defense work. He will obey God rather than men. But if he is in harmony with the law of God, he will submit and obey his master. And thus we conclude that true obedience is a christian virtue, born of grace, and promising a great reward in life eternal, when all things have been made new and God's authority is the rule and joy of the redeemed forever.

L. V.

NOTICE

Classis West, of the Protestant Reformed Churches, will meet Wednesday, March 4, at 9:00 a. m., at Hull, Iowa. Those desiring lodging please contact Rev. A. Cammenga as soon as possible.

M. Gritters, S. C.

The Value Of Young People's Societies

The above-mentioned title immediately suggests that this article is mainly for our covenant youth. Most of them are members of a society, and if not, certainly should be. And I don't think that it is unknown to most of us that in our smaller congregations these societies consist of both young men and young women, whereas we often find one of each in larger congregations. But whether combined or separate, this article is naturally intended for both.

Before treating the subject as such the writer wants to remark that he certainly does not think that he with this article has completely exhausted the subject. Far from it. I am merely giving a few personal opinions and ideas according to the best of my ability, with the hope that this article may be of some value to our Young People's Societies. Unto that end I also intend to be very concrete.

When speaking of Young People's Societies, then, it is understood that they are societies of our *covenant* young people. They are covenant children of God, who bear the sign of baptism on their foreheads, and who are in the world but not of the world. Children of God who have a peculiar place, peculiar calling and a peculiar task to perform in this world. They also are the future church. But more. They are covenant *young* people. It is at this time that our young people experience the same thing as the eagle's fledgling when driven out of the nest. Now they are beginning to stand on their own feet, they are beginning to meet their own problems (father and mother can't do that anymore as before, i.e. in the same manner and degree), they have different places to fill, come in contact with the world. Now is the time when not merely their natural but also their spiritual habits are formed, characters are molded, and they must make their personal stand in respect to the world. They are in the most critical stage of their life.

And now we are speaking of societies of such young people. They have societies. The question naturally arises, what is a society. My dictionary tells me that it is an organized body of young people united by a common interest and purpose. Applied to a Young People's Society it would read: an organized body of covenant young people united by the common interest and purpose of the fear of the Lord. Such a society now we find in most churches.

Now it is but natural that there is a tremendous difference between these various societies. Some are much more active than others, and some only bear the name of a society. Therefore the value is always according to the standard of the society. The better the society is, the greater the value will be. Therefore I first want to give my idea of an ideal Young People's

Society, and then evaluate the society according to that criterion. By the word ideal I mean as near the ideal as we can expect to find it on this earth.

An Ideal Young People's Society.

I am now visiting that visualized Ideal Young People's Society. And what a society it is. I am amazed. How orderly everything is. It is naturally opened with prayer. And how they sing, all of them. There is no whispering there or any distraction. Then follows the discussion of the Word of God. To be sure this is the main part of their society. They realize that the study of the Word of God is indispensable for their society. No, the president (usually the minister in our churches), doesn't do all the talking. There is a lively discussion, all taking part. This period of discussion does not lag and drag on. It seems to be but a few minutes. There are no uninterested members, whispering members. There are no members here that are indifferent, and that have their thoughts far away. Following the recess the well-recorded minutes of the previous meeting are read. From the minutes it is evident that at the previous meeting they had a lively debate in respect to amusements for Christian young people. The program follows. No, there are no compulsory numbers. What more, everyone scheduled for the program is ready, there are no slackers. Various numbers are rendered including an essay. (And let me add in passing that so it should be in every society. The idea of a society is that the young people themselves should produce something. The Word of God must be discussed, and not merely explained by the president. There must be other productions in the nature of essays, etc.) The program for the following week is read. A few songs are sung, and one of the members closes with prayer.

How impressed I was. Truly an ideal Young People's Society. It rightly can be called an organized group of covenant young people united in the common interest and purpose of the fear of the Lord. How does your society compare with this one?

Value.

I'm sure that no one will deny that such a society is of great value for those members. The benefit of discussing the Word is that they learn to know Scripture, their infallible guide of life. And how much this is lacking with many of our covenant youth today. But these also learn to interpret Scripture by themselves, give their own meaning, etc. And the result of this all is that they grow in faith and in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Often we see it that these kind of members have the strongest faith, and are most true to their calling. Secondly, such a society serves as a means to prepare those covenant youth for their future place in the church. By

means of producing essays, etc., by means of discussion, by means of making public appearances, they are prepared to take their future place. Also here again we often see it that such young men later are the leaders in the church, taking charge of reading services, etc. And by means of praying, they later, when in their own home can also lead the family in this. (Not forgetting, of course, that the first and proper place for our covenant youth to learn to pray is the home). It is such a society that properly helps to mold our characters, to show us the right way so that we then can take the place of our parents whether it be in the church, or the home or school.

In the third place such a society is an excellent means to develop our talents. Talents we all have received, be it one or ten. And those must be developed, not buried. And in such a society they are developed, but the passive member buries them. It is not seldom that a consistory, having nominated men for the consistory, receives that common answer: "I can't, I'm not capable". Are they really incapable? Don't they have any talents? Of course, but they aren't developed and cultivated as they should be. But such an ideal Young People's Society certainly is an efficient means to develop the talents of our covenant youth. In the fourth place in such a society there is the communion of the saints among our youth. There is a bond, a fellowship of those of the one house of faith. But also a conscious communion of the saints. By means of their discussion, questions asked, problems discussed, speaking about the spiritual things they regard one another as brothers and sisters in our Lord. And realizing that they all have the same struggles, battles to fight, etc., this unity is strengthened. In close connection with this we can say in the fifth place that such a society is of great value in respect to becoming acquainted with one another. They learn to know one another, find friends, and it is not an infrequent means whereby they find their life's partner. In the sixth place that society gives a wonderful testimony of itself before the church and the world. Finally such a society is a school for our young people. There they can learn to know their place and calling in the midst of the world, get an answer to their problems, the different attitudes they should take in the midst of this world. Now there are perhaps many more benefits to receive from such a society, but with the above mentioned it certainly has become plain that such a society pays enormous spiritual dividends. I'm sure that if there was anything in natural life that would pay such dividends, we wouldn't for one minute hesitate in partaking.

How Attained.

But the question is, How can we attain that? What is necessary for our society, or your society to reach

that high level? The first requisite, and a very important one, is that we have the proper attitude over against our society. Negatively expressed we sometimes hear from our parents that our young people have to have something on Sunday evening (where held on Sunday evening). They can't go all over, and we don't want them to go to all kinds of churches. Truly a poor attitude, if no more is said. Again I hear another member ask his friend where they shall go this evening. What an attitude! What is your attitude?

Neither will our society ever attain that high level if its members or even a number of them are affected with that dreadful malady of indifference. The I don't care spirit. They are the lukewarm ones. They may attend society, and they may not; may be regular in their attendance, and just as likely not. They always have a ready excuse for their irregularity. It's either too hot or too cold, they either have been too busy to prepare their part, or have been on a vacation. And if not ready to render their number on their program they don't hesitate to "skip" a meeting. Indifferent in respect to the welfare of the society, the discussion, the Beacon Lights, etc. Miserable members they are.

Positively speaking we must have an entirely different attitude. And even though there are also many different things to be considered here, I merely want to lay stress on those which I think are lacking the most. First of all then that the Young People's Society which we attend is *our* society, not the society of the president, or of the other members. We so often consider it as a Catechism class or a meeting to receive instruction. I'm sure that if our young people would realize that more their society would be much closer to the ideal. For then we realize that *we* are the ones that must make a go of it, not the president first of all. Then we won't blame the president first of all when the discussion is "dry". But then we will reprimand ourselves first of all for improper preparation. With the proper attitude we realize that we must prepare ourselves. Study the to-be-discussed portion of God's Word at home. I'm sure that it happens time and again that many members come to the meeting not knowing anything about the lesson, yea, don't even know what the lesson is about. Terrible, but also tragic for our society. Then no discussion will ensue either, but we'll let the other one do it. We must prepare ourselves. And an excellent opportunity for this is afforded us with the Beacon Lights. And being prepared we will discuss. Let us then cooperate in every way, attend regular and be punctual. In other words do everything possible to make our society a success.

Remember, we reap what we sow. Also here. *You* get out of your society what *you* put into it.

Never any more. And he who sows bountifully reaps bountifully, and those are usually the ones who later in life are the ones that can take their place in the church, but also the ones that feel the need of a Men's Society and a Ladies' Society, and are the bone and marrow of them. J. B..

Nieuws Van Bellflower

Eindelijk, daar is het groote nieuws van Bellflower, n.l., dat ons eigen kerkgebouw gereed is. En nu werd ons door de kerkeraad opgedragen, om door middel van de "Standard Bearer" aan al onze gemeenten hiervan kennis te geven; en om meteen hen hartelijk te bedanken, voor de hulp ons daarbij verleend, n.l., bij het bouwen, aan welk verzoek we gaarne voldoen.

Al voor ettelijke jaren heeft Bellflower bouwplannen gehad, maar om verschillende redenen, werd het altijd weer uitgesteld, totdat we op 't laatst zelf bang werden, dat van uitstel afstel zou komen. Maar nu heeft de Heere ons dan een eigen kerkgebouw geschonken met ongeveer 100 zitplaatsen, waarin we met Zijn volk van Zondag tot Zondag kunnen vergaderen.

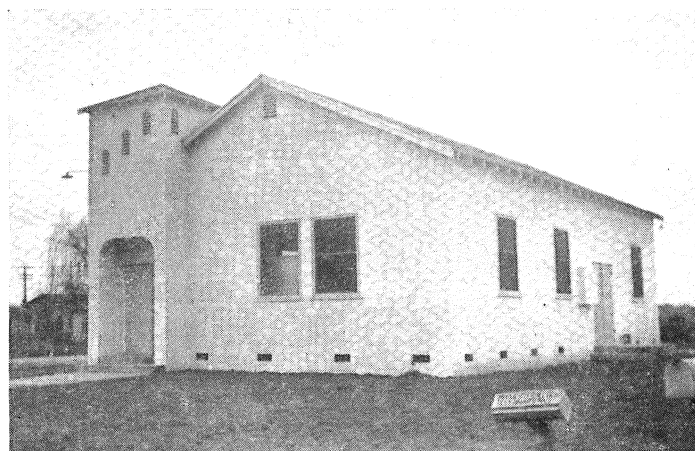


Gezamenlijk, en dan met de hulp van al onze gemeenten, hebben we de kerk gebouwd; een ieder heeft naar vermogen bijgedragen; en alhoewel we hier geen financieel rapport van willen maken, willen we toch even zeggen, dat de hulp van onze zusterkerken door gehouden collecten ongeveer \$500.00 bedroeg. En dat met de inschrijvingen van onze eigen leden de kerk nu 80% contant betaald is. Is dat nu geen reden tot dank aan onzen Verbonds-God, die Zijn werk hier in Bellflower niet laat varen, maar voor ons zorgt, meer dan wij het waardig zijn? Dank aan Hem in de eerste plaats, maar ook aan allen, die ons financieel geholpen hebben. En ook willen we vooral niet vergeten de Doezema Furniture Co., die ons een prachtig nieuw pulpitis ameublement schonk, waar we heel dankbaar voor zijn.

We hebben nu drie Zondagen dienst gehad in onze

nieuwe kerk, en gevoelen ons al aardig tehuis. Eenige kleine dingen nog, zooals b.v., vloerkleed, loopers in de gang en misschien een orgel moeten nog komen, zoodra de kas het toe!aat. Anders is alles compleet.

Ja zeker, we hadden wel altijd gelegenheid om te vergaderen in de Zevende Dag Adventisten Kerk, maar dat was toch niet het ideaal, het is zoo veel mooier, en bovenal veel beter voor ons gemeentelieven. Het bindt meer voor ons en onze kinderen in de toekomst een eigen kerkgebouw te hebben.



We zeggen het nogmaals; De Heere heeft Bellflower rijkelijk gezegend, verleden jaar een pastorie, en nu een nieuw kerk.

20 Januari j.l., hadden we onze inwijdingsdienst, waar de broeders en zusters van Redlands ook rijkelijk vertegenwoordigd waren. Onze leeraar had tot tekst Openbaring 3:7-13: "De kleine gemeente te Philadelphia". Terwijl Ds. Vos van Redlands tot ons sprak in de Hollandsche taal over II Kronieken 6, met het onderwerp, "De Tempel Gods".

Tusschen de twee predikatiën gaf onze zangvereeniging een paar nummers ten beste. Het was werkelijk een zeer gewaardeerde avond voor al ons volk hier in Bellflower, en we zijn verzekerd dat, iedereen huiswaarts ging, met een dankbaar hart, voor de groote dingen, die God aan ons gedaan heeft, en gevoelde, dat het Zijne groote genade is, om tot het kleine groepje te behooren, die Hij geroepen heeft om te getuigen, ook door middel van dit nieuwe kerkgebouw, tegen de dwaling van 1924 in de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk.

We willen eindigen met de uitnoodiging aan iedereen, die in California komt, om met ons te vergaderen. De kerk en pastorie staan op de hoek van Monterey en Grand Ave. in Bellflower, en het gaat ons net als iedereen, die een nieuw huis gebouwd heeft, nu willen we ook graag bezoek hebben.

Met dank voor plaatsing, namens de gemeente en kerkeraad van Bellflower, California.

John Bekendam,

News From Our Churches

As I am well aware of the fact that I have to write about "News from our Churches" and not about news for our churches; nevertheless, as I have said from the beginning, then you get old news every time. And this is not beneficial for our readers, and not for the good of our "Standard Bearer". Let us therefore continue as we have started. The majority of the readers seem to like it, and the "Editor-in-chief" did not find fault, so far.

As Protestant Reformed Churches we have a great calling, and a noble work to perform in our own midst, but also in the midst of this world. In season and out of season we must be able to say, thus saith the Lord. The world must be able to see in us that we are a peculiar people; and as we are in this world we do not seek the things of this world, but in our walk and life we seek the things of the kingdom of God, and we do not fear what men will say and do unto us.

The other day a friend of mine asked me: What do you think of the Venden Brothers? They have a large audience that come and listen to them, in the Civic Auditorium. Now, I do not think much of these leaders of the blind, and those who find a delight in preaching of that kind are on the wrong path.

But let me explain. The brother-preachers have their question-hour. One of their questions drew my attention. It was as follows: "Is God willing to save everybody"? I thought by myself: Ah, if only the Protestant Reformed Radio Hour speaker had the privilege to answer that question, then the answer would have been different. Venden's answer was: "Most assuredly! God has a delight in it", viz., to save all men. The preacher goes on to say: to make my statement clear, let me use an illustration: A certain father had a son, and it was in his mind that that son should become a doctor. He sent him to school, and the necessary preparations were made. However, the time came that the son had to choose for himself what should be his career in life. He came to the conclusion that a lawyer and not a doctor was his choice. You see, Mr. Venden told his listeners: So it is with God. He wants all men to be saved, but they are not all willing.

Now look at the figure. That earthly father is God the Everlasting One, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Alpha and the Omega, the Sustainer of all things, the I Am. That son in the figure is puny little man; insignificant little speck of dust, less than a drop in the bucket. He says to God, I don't want to be saved! And don't make a mistake, dear reader: you and I, we always say that by nature. But this is the point: now, that Almighty God, He can do nothing, for man decides. What becomes of God? He is dethroned! His sovereignty is gone. His people whom He did

ordain unto eternal life from the foundations of the world are swallowed up. His love does not exist anymore. Election and Reprobation is wiped out. Christ the Saviour has no place in this scheme. To be sure, an ungodly doctrine, but don't forget that general offer of salvation—point 1. It is not any better. God will never save one sinner through that proclamation, for in it there is no salvation.

Did you read that little article of S. Van Der Lee in the Banner of December 12? It is about the Labor Unions. He writes: This joining ourself to a Union is more than a sin. It is living in sin. It is a continuing in sin, which can only be repented of when it is forsaken. Thus we must break our relations with this idol before we can be restored to God's favor.

Our leaders are to blame for allowing this evil to creep into our Church. Little by little our Church is losing its distinctiveness. The line of demarcation is becoming dim. Spiritual life is going down. Lukewarmness is present. No one who belongs to one of the various Unions should be allowed to partake of Communion. The leaders who say yes to this are allowing these people to eat and drink damnation to themselves. Keep the table pure. Admonish these people to forsake their evil way.

The brother laments that our leaders are to blame, and it is a lamentable fact indeed. They should be watchmen upon Zion's walls and tell the people of God: "Ye cannot serve two masters!"

Let us praise the Lord that our Protestant Reformed Churches took a firm stand in this Union matter. As Churches we believe and confess that a member of our Churches cannot be a member of the labor Union.

You perhaps will say, That is tough. We must live. Yes, dear reader, we must live, but don't forget, in this way a Christian cannot live, for the wages of sin is death.

You may ask, "But what is really wrong with the Union?" There is much wrong with it; and even from a material standpoint you don't gain much. However, we are not interested in this. We have a rich Father in heaven, and we are assured that He will take care of us.

As our Churches see it, the Union is an organization of men and women void of grace. It is anti-christian, and therefore such organizations consequently do not figure with God and His Christ. It is also an oath-bound Union, and it places itself above any other organization, social, political, or religious, secret or otherwise. Yes, dear reader, also the Church is involved in this. The Union is placed above this Institution. It is to be condemned in its strikes, lockouts, and boycotts, and closed shops. I refer you to the "Testimony" which was signed by the Consistory of

the First Protestant Reformed Church. It is worth while to read it again.

You may ask: But can it be proven from Scripture that it is wrong? Of course it can be proven. We read in II Corinthians 6 14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?"

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you: And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

From the Word of God, it is very clear that we can not serve two masters. We can not sit at the table of the Lord, have a pious face, and on Monday serve Belial in order to receive of him a piece of bread, for then we will heap the wrath of God upon us.

There are some that make the sweeping statement, that the Church should also tackle members of the Associations and discipline them. They reason, that they are left alone. Now, to be sure, the Church tackles no one, for all things are done in love, and she seeks the wellbeing of her members. After all discipline is a mental or moral training, subjection to control, chastisement; it is to bring back those who go astray; and no one can deny it. Now looking at it in that light, then the laboring man is remembered in love, and those others do not share in this; and that will never do. But is it true that the Associations and the Labor Unions both are disciplinary? Is there no difference whatsoever? Both have this in common: they work for social betterment; and this in itself is no sin. The Associations also set their prices, and work out their plans. Frequently the prices are too high and the wages too low, and they forget that God in His Word warned us that we shall not steal. And if we may believe the daily papers, then also in their ranks is much corruption, especially in their banqueting and feasting. But can we mention them in one breath with the Labor Unions? You do not find such corruption in their Constitutions and By-Laws as in those of the Labor Unions. They do not place themselves above the Church. Strikes and sit-down strikes do not occur; neither shedding of blood, and therefore some of us are inclined to think that they are not so bad after all. But is this true? We must not lose sight of the fact: their Constitutions are not based upon the Word of God, and therefore wrong. If our activities in life can not stand the test of Scripture they are no good, and sin before God. To be sure, those men have success,

and if we didn't know any better we would be inclined to say their efforts put forth are blessed. However, we must not forget: also these Organizations are of the world, and they have not Christ as their King-Ruler, but are man-made.

Now it is my conviction that the worldly Organizations of today are in principle not any better than the Labor Unions. The people of God can not go hand in hand with the people of this world; and what is true of the Labor Unions, is also true of the Organizations, namely, God is not in all their thoughts. However that may be, our Churches have spoken and the voice was raised unanimously, a Christian can not belong to the Labor Union and at the same time belong to the Protestant Reformed Churches. Let us all stick to that thoroughly Reformed principle. Let us watch each other in love, and not find fault. This is not to the glory of God, and it will hurt the cause for which we may labor as Churches in the midst of this world. The Church must preach the pure Word, and divide it aright; and she must never compromise.

As Protestant Reformed Churches let us never take the stand of the Christian Reformed Churches. They say you can belong to the Union, but you must protest against any wrong act or decision and refuse to take part in it. But I ask you: is it possible to put your hand in a bee hive and not be stung? or in the fire and not be burned? It is the height of folly for a church to allow their members to become one with the workers of iniquity and then protest against their sinful acts and deeds. This is a sinful compromise indeed. It is impossible for a Christian to seek fellowship with Belial and then confess Christ. They can not dwell under one roof. That was the sinful mistake of the Philistines. We read in I Sam. 5 that they took the ark of God and brought it in the house of Dagon their god. But the next morning Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord, with his head and hands cut off, and only the stump was left. God cannot be mocked!

I think it becomes clear more then ever, that a Christian can not belong to Unions like the C. I. O. and the A. F. L. He has no business to be one with the workers of iniquity. To be sure, we must let our light shine in the midst of this world and never become wishy-washy Christians. Life is too serious.

Nowadays there are many Creeds, but if our Creed is not worth hardship, persecution, yea, death; then it is worth nothing. And this is also true: if we toil and labor only for a piece of bread, then life is not worth living either.

I know it, there is nothing new in this article. It is only a friendly reminder. Let us forsake the world and flee unto the High Tower, Christ, for in it is a safe retreat. This was made very plain by the Rev. Hoeksema in his New Year's radio lecture. — S. D. V.