

# Editorial – SPECTATOR?

Jason Kortering

Did you ever notice the reaction of some spectators at a sports event? Whether it be a baseball, football, or basketball game, the spectator is always interpreting the play. He may respond with wild enthusiasm expressed in exuberant shouts, or he may frown and with a disgruntled bark express his adverse feeling.

It is somewhat easy to be a spectator, in fact, it is delightful and relaxing. To watch others perform and to judge their ability gives us a feeling of priority. We like to assess and evaluate them. If one player excels over another, we cheer for him all the more.

How true this is in the experience of life. The way of least resistance is the way of a spectator. Let's be more concrete. Take by way of example, your young people society. A spectator goes to society unprepared, listens to the discussion as best he can, but he has nothing to add to it. When his turn comes up for the program, he has excuses for not participating. If the society should insist, he will conveniently forget, or get some substitute. Invariably, it is such a person who sits back and criticizes are so dull and uninteresting that he feels justified to conclude that they are not worth attending.

One can find such spectators most anywhere. They are content to react to the expressions of others, but have nothing to contribute themselves. I do not mean to overlook the possibility that there are some who study conscientiously, but fear to speak. They are not indifferent or critical, but simply have difficulty in expressing themselves in a group. Rather, we have in mind ones who are quick to criticize, but slow to contribute.

Lest I become guilty of being a spectator and simply appraise, but have no positive contribution, I would like to suggest one thing in this editorial. It seems to me that the cause of the problem of the "spectator" member of society lies in the fact that he does not study, or acquire knowledge of the subject under discussion. An unprepared member has nothing to say, and when one refrains from speaking, the society becomes boring.

I feel as if I am perhaps beating the air. These words are in print in Beacon Lights. The reader undoubtedly is one who has an interest in reading. It is exactly the ones who do not read Beacon Lights that are the ones to tend to be spectators. Yet if this reminder can only encourage the reader to continue and perhaps even broaden out in his reading, it will have served its purpose.

There are many important subjects being discussed in the church today. Questions arise as the church struggles in her militant battle of faith. It is nothing short of amazing, the number of volumes and periodicals being printed today. Yet I often wonder how many of these are ever read by our young people. Beacon Lights has added a rubric which contains a discussion of these various problems in the church, written especially for young people. The Standard Bearer also is your magazine. Reading it will not only increase your knowledge concerning our distinctive Protestant Reformed point of view, but also guide you in appraising the thoughts of others. Reading our own church papers serves as a good basis to pursue further study. It awakens ones interest. Questions arise that demand answers, and thus the quest for knowledge has begun.

The only proper basis in that quest must always be the Bible. Human reason or desires may never come before the Word. That is true for all our discussions whether it be our Bible lesson or the after-recess program. The Bible must be at the root of all our discussion. Read the

text for the lesson first of all. Try to see it in the light of the context, chapter, and book. Consult other similar texts of Scripture. If you feel you need more help, consult a commentary. It is good idea to bring the various opinions of others to society so that they can be discussed, and we together may arrive at a proper conclusion. If you study and read the lesson, I am certain a lively discussion will follow. You do not expect a spectator of a basketball game to take the place of a player, nor can a player assume the role of a spectator. Spectators are not trained as the players. The player knows the plans of the game and can carry out the strategy that he has decided. In the society we are all players. Each one has his own contribution which adds to the total success.

Life is not a grand sports event in which we simply watch others perform. There is no easy road for anyone. The problems of the church are also your problems as young people of the church. You can't just shrug your shoulders and leave them to others. They must be met by you as well. The only way that we can effectively meet them is to try to understand them, to know their significance, and then finally to come to the proper conclusions. Your society is an excellent place to wrestle with them. Questions such as our mission work, is it being pursued to the greatest degree, the singing of hymns, our relationship with other churches within our denomination and without, infallibility of the Scripture, divorce and remarriage, all serve as worth while topics for after-recess programs. Whenever a program schedule is drawn up and the topics listed with the assigned writers, it is a good idea that each member bears the topic in mind and in the preceding week reads about it and comes up with various questions which will serve to help the general discussion. I am sure that the more you prepare for society the less of a spectator you will be.

Originally Published in  
Vol. 20 No. 2 March 1960