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MEDITATION

BUY THE TRUTH

"Buy the truth and sell it not." Prov. 23:23a

Our Lord said to Pilate: "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice."

Was it cynicism, despair or disgust which prompted Pilate to say: "What is truth?"

I do not know.

This is sure: he did not have the faintest idea what the truth is. If he had, he would have kneeled before Christ and confessed Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Why, the truth stood before him when he uttered his strange question.

The truth.

A word which we use and use again and again, all the day long, and throughout our vain lives.

Yet, how far are we often removed from this mighty concept.

And God says to us: Buy the truth and sell it not! So we must concern ourselves with it.

A mighty concept is found in my text and the setting is severely practical. You find in the context a description of the whole of our ethical lives in the midst of a deceiving and evil world. In the midst of that struggle, the Lord tells His people: Buy the truth and sell it not.

What is truth?

* * * *

Buy the truth!

But what is the truth?

It is not easy to find an exhaustive answer to this question.

The word truth is found about two hundred times in the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testaments.

And it is found in many different connections.

It is found in connection with firmness, stability, perpetuity, peace, sureness and certainty, faithfulness, fidelity and constancy, but also with justice and equity and uprightness.

One of the classical texts for an understanding of this concept is in Duet. 32:4, where we read: "He is the Rock, His work is perfect: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."

This text is also our point of departure in our quest for truth.

From this and many other texts it is plain that God is the Truth, that truth is one of His virtues and that He is His virtues.

Psalm 31:5 calls Him the God of truth, as does Isa. 65:16, where we read: "That he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth, etc."

These texts surely teach us that the Triune God is the Truth personified. And the specific quality of the concept truth seems to be that He is the Rock. And this figure teaches us that truth means immutability, constancy, fidelity and faithfulness, but then in justice and equity and honesty. Truth is the virtue of a just fidelity.

As such He is the Rock.

If there were an eternity of eternities He is the constant Rock, the never changing, and faithful God.

* * * *

Now, we would never know this if God had not revealed this to us.

But He did reveal it. And this revelation of the Truth is Jesus. So that we hear Jesus say: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

When we turned from the Rock in the first Paradise, and built our house on the shifting sand of the lie and vanity, God revealed His unchangeable and faithful covenant love

in the sending of Jesus. And thus we see the Truth as applied to our salvation.

Spiritually, instinctively the Church has seen this. Listen to the song which we hear wherever men praise God: "Rock of Ages!"

And the Agent who brings this Triune God of Truth, as revealed by Jesus, to the Church is also the Truth. He is called the Spirit of Truth, John 14:17. That Spirit of Jesus Christ brings the firm, constant, perpetual, faithful and just love of God to His people, and tells them in their heart that they are safe in the everlasting arms of God.

And the medium through which this Spirit of Truth speaks to us is the Word of Truth, John 17:17.

Summing it up we see this: God is truth essentially, without regard to man or his salvation. He is the unchanging, constant and faithful Rock, full of justice and equity.

This Triune God of truth revealed Himself as our Redeemer in Jesus Christ, so that this Redeemer was called the Truth too. And since this Truth of God, that is, Jesus, is brought to the Church, the elect, whom God loved from all eternity, by the Holy Spirit which was given to Jesus at His exaltation, therefore that Spirit is also called the Truth. And the Medium through which this spirit speaks is the Word of Truth.

After I saw and absorbed all these truths the following text had a deeper meaning than ever before: "and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

* * * *

"Buy the truth!"

How strange!

Who can buy the Rock, that is, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit of Christ, and the Word of the living God?

Oh, but it is very evident that the words *buy* and *sell* are used in a figurative and unreal sense. There is just one idea in the concept of selling and buying which the Holy Spirit wants to use in this connection.

The things of God, the spiritual things, are never a matter of merchandise.

God's Word even forbids and condemns those who would make merchandise of the Gospel and the people of God. Think on the magician who offered big money for the gift of imparting the Holy Spirit on people.

No, but here is the point in the picture: it refers to our response, our reaction to the manifestation of the truth, that is, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

There is a commentary which we should not neglect in this connection: "Again, the Kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath,

and buyeth that field." Also in Isa. 55:1-3 we find the same figure employed, and is the Lord appealing to men to come and buy the things of the Rock of our salvation.

This figure refers to one point, namely, to our attitude towards the Treasure of God Almighty, our Rock, our Redeemer and Saviour, as He revealed Himself in Christ, through Spirit and Word.

Now all these bounties are called the Truth, and we are admonished to buy this Truth.

And to buy this truth means that, first, you know it with the knowledge of love. And, second, that you treasure it above all things, and I mean *all* things.

It means that you rest on that Rock of the Truth of God, that you place all your trust in that Rock for time and eternity. That you look away from all other rocks, and build your house on the Rock, the Foundation which was laid by the God of your salvation.

Then let the rains, the floods and the winds come: your house will not fall, for it was founded on a Rock.

* * * *

"And sell it not!"

The one point of comparison is very clear. When you sell a thing you plainly say: I can do without that thing!

You do not sell your hands, feet, eyes, do you? What kind of man would sell his wife and beloved children?

No, but the things you sell you can do without.

Those things we dismiss, forsake, and turn to the things which we value higher, and hold dearer.

Well, what did man do after the fall in Paradise?

He dismissed the Truth, sold Him down the river, turned away backward, and conceived of better rocks than our Rock.

What are his treasures?

There is nothing outside our Rock than the lie of the devil.

And around that lie is built a whole world of iniquity.

And that world of the lie is all vanity, nothingness, emptiness.

And when the end of the ages has come the world will for that reason be ashamed. Shame is the being found empty, naked, shorn of anything and everything that is good, and kind, and lovely and constant, faithful and just. In short, the being found alone without hope and without God in the world.

That is the terrible shame of the world.

And we are all that way by nature. And even after we are born again we are inclined to take the Truth and sell

it. That is, we will turn our back to the Truth and turn to the lie, the devil, the world, the earth and earthly things.

Until we are sought out by the Truth (you remember, that is, God, Christ, the Spirit and the Word of God) and brought back to rest in His loving arms. Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe in the arms of God.

Moses found a place near to God in the cleft of the Rock, and He covered him there with His wings.

Human nature, under the influence of the father of the lie, ever is inclined to sell the Truth, and prefer the lie, darkness, sin, the earth and earthly treasures.

And when the Truth asserts Itself, and speaks, then the world takes the Truth and holds it under in unrighteousness.

And it is a great pity, but God's children are also inclined to do this.

To their shame and misery.

Oh no, they do not stay there.

Our Rock is constant and faithful and just.

He never goes back on His word.

He tells them in such instance: My beloved child, do not sell the truth but buy it!

And He gives the Spirit of Truth in their hearts, so that they do.

Beloved, do not sell the beautiful Rocklike, Protestant Reformed Truth!

Heaven is in sight!

G.V.

Announcements

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches has decided that each congregation be requested to take two collections a year for Foreign Missions.

Will the consistories please consider this an official announcement to them.

Please send to: Mr. Arthur H. Haan, Breton Road, S. E., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

G. Lubbers, Stated Clerk

THE MIGHTY GOD, JEHOVAH, SPEAKS

The mighty God, Jehovah speaks
 And calls the earth from sea to sea;
 From beautiful Zion God shines forth,
 He comes and will not silent be;
 Devouring flame before Him goes,
 And dark the tempest round Him grows.

Psalm 50:i

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Editor — REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

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EDITORIALS

Election and Reprobation

In his chapter on the above mentioned subject, Berkouwer presents a caricature of my view on the relation between election and reprobation, in order thereupon to criticise his own caricature. Perhaps, in a later connection, I may call the attention of the reader to this.

In the present article, however, I am rather concerned with his own presentation of the subject.

And then I would almost be inclined to say that Berkouwer does not believe in the Reformed conception of reprobation. Perhaps, this will still be my conclusion at the end. But, for the time being, let me put it this way that he certainly has very little sympathy for it, and certainly does not induce his reader to believe with his whole heart in the Scriptural and Reformed doctrine of reprobation.

Let me show you how I received this impression from Berkouwer's book on God's election.

First of all, I wish to call attention to the fact that he virtually introduces his discussion of reprobation by a quotation from the "Conclusion" of the Canons of Dordrecht. Writes he: "This is evident from the fact that in the Reformed doctrine of election this 'parallel' (between election and reprobation, H. H.) was repeatedly discussed, and that, then, it is emphatically rejected. A continual serious warning is sounded forth in this connection which is neglected strikingly in much criticism with the result that one simply arrives at a caricature. With this warning we meet not only in the dogmatic discussion, but it sounds through also in the manner in which election is mentioned in the confession of the church, and is even clearly and explicitly mentioned in the Canons of Dordrecht, particularly in the defense and warning which is added to the canons. For there, where the doctrine of election is being protected against misunderstanding and caricatures, the following is rejected *'that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety'*." To this the author adds: "Of *this* thought it is emphatically declared that the Reformed Churches "not only acknowledge this, but even detest it with their whole soul."

Concerning this we wish to remark the following:

1. The author should have quoted the context of this "Conclusion" of the Canons. By failing to do this, he leaves the impression that the sentence he quotes contains all that which the fathers of Dordt and the Reformed Churches reject and despise with their whole soul, i.e. the parallel between election and reprobation. But they reject much more. They refer to all the enemies of the true doctrine falsely alleged to be the teaching of the Reformed fathers anent the doctrine of predestination; that it is an opiate by which men are led away from all piety and religion, that it makes

God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical, that it makes men carnally secure, teaching them that they can live as they please and commit the most atrocious crimes because their salvation is secure anyway; that the reprobate are lost no matter if they perform all the good works of the elect, and that God, by His arbitrary will has predestined the greatest part of the race to damnation; and that, in the same manner in which election is the cause and fountain of faith, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety. It is all this which the fathers reject and detest with their whole soul, and not merely Berkouwer's "parallel."

2. From the above it is evident that it is not true, as Berkouwer alleges, that in the one sentence he quotes from the "Conclusion" the fathers of Dordt intended to reject the "deterministic" conception of the doctrine of election. In his book, Berkouwer repeatedly mentions the "deterministic" and the "indeterministic" conception of the truth. He does not want either, although he never makes it clear what he does prefer. But it is not true that the fathers had this distinction in mind. They wanted simply to maintain the truth of predestination over against "all the calumnies that are heaped upon it." The philosophic distinction between "determinism" and "indeterminism" was not before their minds. Besides, whatever Berkouwer may allege, the doctrine of election and reprobation certainly maintains that God, and not man, *determines* the salvation and damnation of every man, the one in the way of faith, the other in the way of unbelief. And even the way of both, faith and unbelief, is determined by God.

3. Hence, it is not true at all that the intention of the "Conclusion" is to warn us against a wrong conception of predestination as Berkouwer interprets it. The "Conclusion" does not mean to be a warning against the idea that reprobation is in the same sense the cause of unbelief and impiety as election is the cause of faith. On the contrary, it warns against those calumniators that thus misrepresent the Reformed faith as if it makes God the author of sin. And, at the same time, it warns the calumniators themselves to consider the terrible judgment of God for bearing false testimony against the truth.

4. That Berkouwer approaches dangerously the denial of the Reformed conception of reprobation is evident from his interpretation of Canons I, VI. There we read: "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree." According to Berkouwer, election is, indeed, the cause and fountain of all saving good, but man is the cause and his is the guilt of unbelief. But, then, how is it possible, asks Berkouwer, that Canons I, VI can teach that the fact that some do not receive the gift of faith from God can be explained as flowing forth from God's eternal decree? He could wish, thus he writes, that the Canons had expressed themselves more clearly on this point. But he, nevertheless, wishes to interpret Canons I, VI thus that it simply refers to God's judgment over the ungodly. That God does not give them the

faith is meant as God's act of judgment over man in his guilt. In other words, God's eternal decree in this respect simply means that God from eternity determined not to bestow the gift of faith on some because of and on the basis of their sin and guilt as His righteous judgment. Cf. p. 211. This is supposed to be the meaning of Canons I, VI. And this is presented as the Reformed truth of reprobation. But here, to my mind, Berkouwer is Arminian. Will Berkouwer, please, explain, if the sin and guilt of man is the cause and judicial ground of, not his condemnation, but his reprobation and his not receiving the gift of faith, how it is possible that not all are reprobated and that, after all, some do receive the gift of faith? Does this cause and judicial ground of their not receiving the gift of faith fall away in the case of the elect? If this should be the case, the first cause and deepest ground of their salvation is in themselves. I realize that Berkouwer emphasizes that he does not want this. Nevertheless, I would like to have clear explanation of this by himself. As it stands now, I can only conclude that he favors the Arminian conception of reprobation.

The Canons certainly teach quite a different conception. They trace both, the fact that God bestows the gift of faith on some and that He does not bestow it on others, to God's eternal decree, certainly not to man's guilt. Besides, in I, the rejection of errors, VII, they reject the errors of those "Who teach: That God, simply by virtue of his righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion. For this is firmly decreed: 'He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.' Rom. 9:18. And also this: 'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.' Matt. 13:11. Likewise: 'I thank thee, o Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.' Matt. 11:25, 26." This is certainly not *supra*, but it is, nevertheless, soundly Reformed and Scriptural. It squarely attributes the fact that some do not receive the gift of faith, and that they are left in their condemnation, to God's eternal good pleasure and not to their own sin and guilt as judicial ground for their reprobation.

Berkouwer does not like this.

He does not like reprobation.

The Reformed view is certainly not that God is the author of sin, but whether, though man himself has the blame and is the author and, as such, the secondary cause of his own rebellion and unbelief, God is not the final and deepest cause of man's remaining in his sin and unbelief, this is an entirely different question. No, it is not a question, but it is the truth according to Scripture, and according to the mildest (*infra-lapsarian*) presentation of it.

Let us not camouflage and distort it, as Berkouwer does, but clearly and definitely maintain it.

H. H.

The Christian Encyclopedia

I promised that I would write a little more extensively than in a common book review on the first volume of the Christian Encyclopedia. In this article I will begin doing so by pointing out its good features.

Let me say, first of all, that I consider the whole set, judging now by its first volume, worthy of giving it a place in any library, that is, of course, for those that are sufficiently acquainted with the Holland language. The price for the whole set is f 25 per volume.

The outward form of this first volume is rather attractive and quite proper for a work of this nature. It will look good in any library. I am afraid, however, that, in course of time, the binding will hardly stand up.

The work is under the redaction of Prof. Dr. F. W. Grosheide and Dr. G. P. Van Itterzon, both of whom, and especially the first, are well-known to most of us.

As to its contents, they are not only biblical and theological, but rather universal. The first volume which covers the subject under the letter A and B, up to *Bouwoffer*, treats besides biblical and theological subjects, also the history of church and mission in the entire world, evangelization, charity, social work, youth- and other organizations, philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, political questions, biology, geology, astronomy, culture and art, medicine, etc.

It, therefore, covers quite a field of study.

According to the Foreword, this encyclopedia does not intend to represent the views of a particular school or denomination, but means to represent all Protestantism in the Netherlands.

A very worthy attempt!

H. H.

IN MEMORIAM

The Board of the Reformed Free Publishing Association extends its sympathy to its fellow board member, Mr. Joe King, in the sudden loss of his son,

GORDON A. KING

Job 1:21, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

The Board

Important Notice

There will be a Sunday School Inspirational Mass Meeting in our Creston Church on September 21, at 8 p. m.

All Sunday School teachers and friends are invited to attend.

Arthur Schuitema, Secretary

OUR DOCTRINE

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER II

Salutation and Blessing. Rev. 1:4-8.

Nevertheless, in the text here the reference is definitely to His final and visible appearance, when "every eye shall see Him." That His coming will be "with clouds" may have a literal fulfillment, so that He shall appear in the clouds of the sky. However, the symbolical significance of these clouds must not be overlooked. Clouds in Scripture are symbols of majesty and judgment. Thus we read in Ps. 18: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him this thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire." vs. 6-12. And in Ps. 97:2: "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." On the mount of transfiguration "there was a cloud that overshadowed them," Mark 9:7. And when He was taken up from the earth "a cloud received him out of their sight," Acts 1:9. He cometh with clouds, not again as the suffering Servant of Jehovah, but in all the glory the Father hath given Him, in royal majesty and to judge the world in righteousness!

And in His coming He will be visible to all. "Every eye shall see Him." His own, that looked for Him with longing, but also the enemies shall see Him. The latter even has the emphasis in the text. They that pierced Him are mentioned particularly. The prophet Zechariah had prophesied that "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" would "look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." And, no doubt, that prophecy refers to the crucifixion of the Lord, when the Jews literally pierced the Son of God in human nature, though also there the words have a wider significance and may be applied to all the sin and rebellion of the people of Israel throughout their history. This rebellion only culminated in the crucifixion of the Servant of Jehovah. But the "looking upon Him" and the "mourning for Him" of which the text in Zechariah speaks

are not the same words as in the words of our passage from Revelation. There, in Zechariah they cast upon Him a saving look and mourn for Him in true repentance, as they did, indeed, on the day of Pentecost, and ever since, whenever the Spirit of grace touched the hearts of sinful men. For, the "looking upon Him" and the "mourning for Him" in the prophecy of Zechariah is presented as the result of Jehovah's pouring upon His people the Spirit of grace and of supplications. Zech. 12:10. Here, however, in Rev. 1:7 they look upon Him in His final coming. They that pierced Him, no doubt, are literally the Jews, and particularly those that crucified Him. But this does not mean that the expression "they that pierced Him" is limited to them. It has a wider significance. It includes, not only all the Jews that rejected Him, but all that ever came into contact with Him, despised Him, and crucified the Son of God afresh. They shall be from "all the tribes of the earth." And, therefore, seeing Him, all the tribes of the earth shall mourn. They are the hostile tribes, the antichristian forces of the world. They mourn and wail because of Him, or literally according to the original "towards" Him. Seeing Him, Whom they despised and hated and opposed, in His glory and power, they are filled with consternation, realizing that His fierce wrath will strike them down and consume them. But for the Church it will be the hour of complete and eternal redemption and deliverance, the realization of all their hope and longing.

All this is steadfast and sure, for it is God that here speaks, the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." He is the "Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." His counsel shall stand, and He will do all His good pleasure. Alpha and omega are the first and last letters respectively of the Greek alphabet. The meaning of these symbols is explained in "the beginning and the ending." He is the Lord, the Lord God (R.V.). He is the beginning of all things, and therefore also the ending. He is their sovereign Creator, the Fount out of which are all things. And in Him all things have their purpose. Even as all things are out of Him, so they are also unto Him. From the beginning He made all things with a view to the end: the alpha is connected with the omega, the one must inevitably lead to the other. And whatever lies between the alpha and the omega is through Him. He controls all things in such a way that His counsel is accomplished, His design is fulfilled, His end is reached. And that end is the "revelation of Jesus Christ," the firstborn of every creature and the first begotten of the dead, as the One in Whom all things in heaven and on earth are to be united forever. Then, in the new creation, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and God shall be all in all, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And nothing can prevent this Omega. For, God is Lord, and He is the Almighty. He is not merely supreme in power, more powerful than all other powers combined, but His is all the power, even the power of the creature, the power also of the forces of darkness. They have no power but from

Him. And He uses them, willingly or in spite of themselves, for His sovereign purpose. He is coming, therefore, surely and irresistibly, always coming through the ages of history, coming from the alpha to the omega, from glory to glory, His own glory, until all His glory shall forever shine forth in the perfect revelation of Jesus Christ. Peace, therefore, unto you that look for the coming of the Lord, the peace of grace, peace in the midst of the conflict and sufferings of this present time. For, behold, He cometh with clouds! Faith is the victory!

Chapter III

Rev. 1:9-20

CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

We are now approaching the main body of the book of Revelation itself, and the numerous visions it presents for our consideration. In the passage we are to discuss in this chapter we have the beginning, the first part of the first main vision which extends to the end of chapter III. The whole vision may be divided into two main parts. The first part is covered by our passage, which contains the vision of the glorified Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks and commissioning John to write the things that he saw; the second part includes chapters II and III, which contain the sevenfold message of the Lord which John must deliver to the churches in Asia. In this vision, therefore, we deal with the revelation of the exalted Christ in relation to His Church as well as in connection with the things that must shortly come to pass. It is preceded by an explanation of the circumstances under which the vision was received by John. Even as the prophets of the old dispensation were wont to give an account of their calling to the prophetic office, so John in this passage tells us how and under what circumstances he first received the revelation concerning the future contained in this book of Scripture. He was on the lonely island of Patmos, a forsaken little isle, rocky and bare in the midst of the sea, not far from the coast of Asia Minor. He calls himself the brother of believers rather than apostle, because of the circumstances in which he finds himself. And he adds that he is a companion with them in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. We must note here that all three: tribulation, the kingdom, and patience, are of Jesus Christ. We are partakers of them only if we are in Him. Secondly, we must note that the Church is presented as in tribulation; the Church was in tribulation then, and according to the viewpoint of the book of Revelation she is always in tribulation in the midst of the world. And if we are to be partakers of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, it is inevitable that we also partake of the tribulation that comes upon the Church because of her relation to, and faithful confession of, her Lord. And lastly, for that very reason, it is necessary that we partake of the patience of Jesus Christ, for it is only in the power of that patience that we can bear the tribulation and persevere unto the end. The

apostle further informs us that he was on the isle of Patmos for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. This may mean that he was sent there to preach the Word of God and be witness of the name of Jesus; or it may signify that he was there for the very purpose of receiving the Word of God as contained in this book of Revelation; or it may denote that he was exiled as a martyr for the sake of the Word of God which he had preached and the testimony of Jesus which he bore. The last mentioned possibility appears to be the most probable and acceptable sense of the words. In the first place, this is the most natural significance of the phrase: "for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Most generally these words convey the idea of true martyrdom. In the second place, this is implied in the manner in which John introduces himself, namely, as the brother and partaker with the Church in tribulation. This would seem to imply that at the time of John's receiving this revelation a persecution had broken out for the Church; and that John, partaking of the general tribulation and persecution of the Church, had been banished to the isle of Patmos. And in the third place, this would be in accord with the records of secular history, which informs us that about this time the power of the world, represented in the person of the emperor Domitian, raged with fury against the followers of Jesus, the despised sect of the Nazarenes. We conclude, therefore, that John was on the isle of Patmos about the year 95 or 96 A. D. as a martyr for the name and the testimony of Jesus Christ, his Lord.

But the Lord, who is the prince of the rulers of the earth and who causes even their counsels to work together for the good of His Church, had His own purpose with the banishment of His servant John. And though the worldly power had exiled the aged apostle in order forever to silence his faithful testimony, the Lord transformed this lonely and secluded isle into a spot that served as an oracle for the revelation of one of the most beautiful and important parts of Holy Writ. Without any doubt, the abode of the apostle's exile, where nothing but wild nature surrounded him from day to day, where he was separated from the tumult and bustle of the world, where he could witness the terrible symbolism of the restless sea, listen to the monotonous roar of the powerful waves beating against the rocky shores of his abode, where, moreover, he had an unobstructed view of the heavens and his observation of the four corners of the earth was arrested only by the horizon where sky and water met, — this forsaken abode was undoubtedly naturally adapted to be the scene of the prophet's visions and revelations, offering as it did a natural back-ground for them and being conducive to make the apostle spiritually capable of receiving them. There, then, John was exiled, and he tells us that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. By the day of the Lord in this connection we must not understand the final day of judgment, for although that may be the meaning of the term, this interpretation is by no means in accord with what immediately follows. Much more natural it is to explain that

by the Lord's day John refers to the day of the Lord's resurrection, the first day of the week, set aside by the Church under the direction of the apostles as a day of special worship and consecration to take the place of the seventh day Sabbath of the old dispensation. The expression "in the Spirit" does not merely mean that he was profoundly meditating on spiritual things, but rather that he was in a state of prophetic, spiritual ecstasy, so that he was separated from the world of sense and experience, and prepared to receive visions of spiritual things. We believe that in the visions which the apostle is privileged to see there is, indeed, something objectively real. They were not merely subjective, so that they consisted only of the spiritual states of the seer, but the object that was presented to his view was of such a nature that the mere natural eye could not perceive it, and therefore a translation in the Spirit was necessary to prepare John to receive the visions. In this state then, John heard a great voice, mighty and clear as a trumpet call. And as he heard the voice behind him, and therefore turns about, he beholds the vision that is recorded in our passage: the glorified Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

It will be observed immediately that in this vision there are two elements. In the first place, there is the element of the golden candlesticks, of which it is most natural to assume that they were standing in a circle around the Saviour; and in the second place, there is the appearance of the glorified Redeemer Whom John describes in detail. To begin with the latter, what a wonderful appearance He is. In general He made the impression of a being, overwhelming in glory and brightness of appearance, for He was as the sun shineth in his strength. It is only after John has become somewhat accustomed to the glory of this marvelous vision that he is able to note some of His details. Gradually he begins to notice that this being bears the general resemblance and appearance of a son of man, of a human being. His head and His hair, so he notices further, were white as wool, white as snow. Out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and in His right hand He held seven stars. His feet were like unto burnished brass, His eyes reminded one of flames of fire, while His voice was like the roar of mighty waves beating against the rocks, when the storm sweeps them into fury. His garments consisted of a long robe, stately and majestic, flowing down to the feet; and about the breast He wore a golden girdle, glittering in the general brightness and glory of His appearance. Such is the general description of the vision. And we ask naturally: what is its significance?

In order to arrive at a correct interpretation of the whole, it will be necessary first of all to make careful study of the details of the vision, in order that then we may combine them into their proper synthesis, and thus obtain a conception of their essential meaning. Certain it is from the outset that here we have the appearance of the Saviour from a certain definite point of view. The vision has a specific meaning, purposes to present the Son of Man in a definite light, and

every detail of the vision must undoubtedly serve to emphasize that one particular idea. The outstanding features we may take as our starting point in explaining the vision. First of all, it draws our attention that this glorious Being is described as "one like unto a son of man." The expression is familiar to us all, for Jesus was fond of using that name with application to Himself during His public ministry on earth. The name is most probably derived from Daniel VII: 13, 14. There we read: "And behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even unto the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples and nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." If we compare this passage from Daniel with the passage we are discussing now, the following inferences would seem to be justified. First of all in the phrase "one like unto a son of man" we have a reference to the Lord in His human nature. He was truly man and as such He is called the Son of Man. That in the vision He is not directly called by that name, but described as "one like unto a son of man" makes no difference. The form of the expression certainly does not mean to deny His true and real manhood and only to affirm that He bore resemblance to the human form. Rather must the indefiniteness of the phrase be attributed to the impression of the overwhelming glory His appearance made upon John. In the halo of glory John beholds the form of a son of man. In this phrase, then, we have a special reference to Christ as the Son of Man, as the human Servant of Jehovah. However, He does not appear here as the suffering Servant, but as the glorified Lord. If it is correct to assume that the name Son of Man is derived from the prophecy of Daniel quoted above, it is evident that it does not refer to His humiliation only, but rather to Christ as He was destined to inherit the kingdom; to the Son of Man in his humiliation, indeed, but only as a necessary way to His exaltation and Messianic glory. It is to this glory and dominion that the passage from Daniel refers with emphasis. There the "one like unto a son of man" is presented as approaching the Ancient of Days, God, to receive His everlasting kingdom. Naturally, in the prophecy of the Old Testament His glory is presented as to be expected in the future. But at the time John is favored with this vision of the glorified Christ, the prophecy of Daniel was already fulfilled. The one like unto a son of man had approached the Ancient of Days, through His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God, and already He had received His everlasting dominion. And as such, as the glorified Lord, Who received His kingdom and dominion from the Ancient of Days, He appears in this vision. And, thirdly, from a comparison with the text in Daniel we may draw the inference that He here appears as being authorized and empowered to function as Judge. When Daniel beholds Him, thrones are set and judgment is

about to take place; it is just before the judgment is begun that the "one like unto a son of man" receives His power and dominion. And, therefore, a comparison of the two passages leads us to the general conclusion that the glorified Saviour here appears as the mighty King-Judge.

As a second striking feature in the vision we may point to the whiteness of His head and hair. Also in this detail there is an unmistakable reference to the passage from Daniel VIII. In the ninth verse of that chapter we read: "I beheld till thrones were placed and one that was an Ancient of Days did sit: his raiment was white as snow and the hair of his head was like pure wool." The reference is clear. The whiteness of the hair refers to the age of the Ancient of Days, and is a symbol of His divinity, because it describes Him as the eternal One. In our passage, therefore, the whiteness of His hair pictures the Saviour in His divine nature, as very God, for only as such He is the eternal One, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," Micha 5:2. In Daniel it is the hair of the Ancient of Days, not that of the one "like unto a son of man," that is white; here, however, it is the glorified Son of Man that is thus described. In Daniel, therefore, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man are two distinct persons; in our passage they are presented as one. And again, this difference is in harmony with the distinction between the two dispensations: when Daniel wrote his prophecy the Word had not yet become flesh, when John received his vision the Incarnation had been accomplished. God and man, the divine and the human nature had become united in the one person of Immanuel, God with us, and the Ancient of Days could therefore appear in the vision as being at the same time the one "like unto a son of man." The glorified Christ, the Son of Man, but also the very Son of God, appears here in the vision on Patmos as the glorious King, that has entered in His inheritance from Jehovah, has received His dominion, is authorized and mighty to execute judgment and to realize the consummation of His kingdom.

Most of the rest of the symbolic details of the vision serve to strengthen this general appearance of Christ as the powerful King-Judge. This is true, for instance of the eyes like flames of fire. This denotes both His holy anger and His power of omniscience. The eyes of this mighty Judge penetrate into the deepest recesses of the hearts of men; they discover hidden things. Before them all things are an open book, even the secret thoughts and intents of men. Under the glare of these eyes every evil thought or deed, every wicked device is exposed. And He comes to judge and inflict punishment upon the forces of evil, whether they be found in His Church in the world, or in that world itself. Without compromise He will expose the evil, wherever it is found, in the Church first (for judgment must needs begin at the house of God), then also in the world; and having exposed it in its true character and worth, He will visit it with a just retribution. For, those flaming eyes also express holiness and

righteous indignation and wrath. Somewhat the same idea is expressed in the symbolism of the feet "like unto burnished brass." They are like white hot, shining brass, burning in a furnace; and with them He will tread down the powers of darkness, all His enemies, until they are consumed. We may notice here, too, that His voice is as the voice of many waters, that is, as the roaring tumult of the storm-swept deep, when wave after wave breaks against the rocks. It is the voice of thunder, the voice of power, the awe-inspiring voice of the mighty King that is come to execute judgment in righteousness. And, lastly, this general impression of Christ as the glorious King-Judge is also corroborated by the feature of the sharp two-edged sword that proceeds out of His mouth. The sword in Scripture is symbol of authority, of power to punish evil-doers. In Rom. XIII the apostle Paul says of the powers that be: "but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for him that doeth evil," vs. 5. This sharp two-edged sword that proceeds out of the mouth of Christ, is a symbol of that power to take revenge and execute wrath upon all the workers of iniquity. It proceeds out of Christ's mouth, indicating that it is by the power of His mighty Word that He will execute wrath and vengeance. All these details, therefore, corroborate the general impression that the glorified Saviour appears here to John as the great and mighty King, Who is coming to judge His Church and the world, till all the powers of darkness shall be destroyed forever.

However, it is not only as King and Judge that He reveals Himself in this vision. He is also the great High Priest, Who is busy for His Church in the sanctuary of God. This is indicated by His apparel, for He is clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. The High Priest of Israel in the old dispensation wore a long robe or upper coat, called the robe of the ephod. It is evidently in this long high-priestly garb that the Lord reveals Himself here to John in the vision. The fact that the garment is pictured as hanging down to the foot indicates that He is not now functioning in the offering of sacrifices of blood, for in that case the garment would have been taken up by means of the girdle. The great and final sacrifice has been offered. It is finished. On the other hand, the fact that He still wears the golden girdle shows that, although the bloody sacrifice is finished, yet this High Priest is still engaged in active ministration in the sanctuary, for the old dispensational high priest would wear this girdle only as long as he was busy in the temple; immediately after his ministrations were accomplished he would lay it aside. And thus we have here a beautiful picture of the Saviour, as He has finished His sacrificial work on the accursed tree of Golgotha, but is still engaged as our High Priest and Intercessor with the Father in the sanctuary above. There He prays for us, and from thence He blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Some think that there is a point of difference with the appearance

of the Old Testament in the fact that the Lord here wears the girdle about the breast. But this does not seem to be based upon fact. The high priests, as well as the common priests, wore their girdles about the breasts and not about the loins. But a real point of distinction may be seen in the fact, that our High Priest in this vision wears a girdle of gold, while the ordinary girdles of the priests were of fine twined linen and purple and scarlet, reminding us once more of the royal character and dignity of this High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Finally, it is evident that the Lord in this vision also reveals Himself in His prophetic office. This cannot be deduced from His appearance as such, unless it be implied in the detail of the sharp two-edged sword that proceeds out of His mouth. For, although it is true that this sword denotes chiefly His authority and power to execute judgment, it may very well also refer to His power as a prophet. For, as we have seen, that sword is the Word He speaks, and that Word is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Also as prophet He speaks His efficacious Word. Besides, the offices of Christ may be distinguished, but they can never be separated. However, apart from any detail in His appearance, He reveals Himself as prophet by the word he speaks. First of all, He addresses John in the vision, and enjoins him to write. He must write all that he sees in a book and send it unto the seven churches that are in Asia; and particularly he must write what he has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. Besides, He appears as the prophet in the consolation He gives to John and to the Church, vs. 17, 18. And in the chapters that follow He certainly functions as the Prophet of His Church, addressing to the seven churches of Asia words of instruction, consolation and encouragement, exhortation and rebuke. We conclude, therefore, that in the vision the glorified Lord appears in His threefold office of prophet, priest and king. And as such He stands here in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

These seven candlesticks are a symbol of the Church in her ideal existence and relation to her Lord, as a light shining to the glory of God in Christ. They represent the Church in perfect holiness and righteousness, as she is in the counsel of God, and as she once shall be when the Lord shall present her as His perfected and glorified bride without spot or blemish. The symbolism reminds us, of course, of the seven-armed candlestick or lamp that once stood in the holy place of the temple in Jerusalem. In that sanctuary there were the altar of incense, the table of shewbread, and the golden candlestick. The last mentioned piece of temple furniture consisted of a perpendicular shaft from each side of which three arms branched out, so curving that their tops were on a level with that of the central shaft. The

lamps had to be kept burning continuously and symbolized the truth that Israel was the light of God shining in the darkness of the world to the glory of Jehovah their God. In our vision the seven candlesticks represent, not Israel of the old dispensation, but the Church of all ages in her ideal perfection. They convey the truth that the Church is a light, even as God is a light and there is no darkness in Him. She is a light, not of herself, but, as is clearly indicated by the fact that Christ stands or walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, only through her fellowship with Christ in the Spirit. The Lord is her light, and apart from Christ she is in darkness and lies in the midst of death. We may notice, however, that there are two points of difference between the candlestick as it stood in the temple and the seven candlesticks as they appear in this vision. First of all, it may be observed that the former consisted of one lamp whose arms all stood in a straight line, while in our vision the seven candlesticks evidently stand in a circle around the Saviour, for we read that Christ stood in the midst of them, and in the first verse of the next chapter we even read that he "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." This distinction is in harmony with the difference between the Church of the old dispensation and the Church in her ideal perfection or as she is already being realized in the new dispensation. In Israel the Church was confined to a single nation: the covenant line ran in the generations of Abraham according to the flesh. But *the* Church is gathered from every nation and tongue and tribe. And already this is being realized for the Church is gathered from Jew and Gentile both. And, secondly, we may notice that the candlestick in the temple was once piece of furniture, so that there was a material and visible connection between the seven shafts; while in our vision there are seven separate lamps without any visible connection. The significance of this is plain. Among Israel the Church was united by the physical bond of the nation and the theocracy, but the true and eternal connection between the Church and her Lord and between believers mutually is a purely spiritual one. It is in the Spirit through faith that we are connected as one Church with Christ our Head in the communion of saints. That these candlesticks are golden denotes the perfection and purity, the incorruptibleness and the preciousness of the Church of Christ, which He has purchased with His own precious blood. The Church is more precious than the finest gold, she is pure and holy and more glorious than the noblest of metals, and she is incorruptible and imperishable because of her union with her Lord, the Son of God in the flesh, Who died and was raised and lives forevermore: death hath no more dominion over Him!

In the seven stars which Jesus holds in His right hand a transition is made to the Church as she exists in the world, represented by the seven churches of Asia. For, indirectly, these seven stars also represent the Church. The Saviour's own interpretation is that they are the angels of the seven churches, vs. 20. But interpreters differ with

respect to the question, just what is meant by these seven angels. Some would explain the term as denoting real angels, heavenly spirits, and think that they are the guardian angels of the several churches. But this would not seem to be a very plausible explanation, for John is commissioned to address letters to these angels, and it is rather difficult to conceive of the possibility of writing letters to such guardian angels. Others would spiritualize and idealize the term, and maintain that the expression refers to the peculiar and distinctive "spirit" of each congregation, to its individual disposition, in some such sense as even now we speak of "the spirit of the age." But also this interpretation must be rejected as impossible, in view of the fact that one could not very well address a letter to such a "spirit of the church." And still others, more correctly, have applied the words to the officebearers or overseers of the churches, especially to those that were busy in "the Word and doctrine." Let us bear in mind, first of all, that the symbol of the star refers to a light that is conspicuous and yet dependent and subordinate. Further, we should also remember that in the Word of God the original term for angel (*malakh* in the Hebrew, *angelos* in the Greek) does not always refer to one of God's spiritual servants in heaven, but may also simply denote a messenger or servant from among men, called to fulfill some important mission in God's Church or Kingdom. With reference to John the Baptist, Malachi prophesied: "Behold, I send my angel (messenger) and he shall prepare the way before me," 3:1. And, finally, as we already remarked, we must remember that John is ordered to write to these seven angels of the seven churches of Asia. All these considerations establish it beyond doubt that the angel of the church in this case is a human servant of God, the overseer or elder that is busy in the Word and doctrine, the minister of the Word of God. They are called angels simply because they are God's servants and messengers. And they are symbolized in the stars, not because the churches receive their light only and absolutely from them, but because it is the Lord's good pleasure to enlighten and instruct His Church in the world through their ministry. Through them especially it pleases Christ to preach and preserve His Word. And yet, by these stars that are held in the right hand of the glorified Lord, the churches themselves are also indirectly indicated. On the one hand, you cannot separate these "stars" from Christ. He holds them in His right hand. Without Him they are nothing. Unless Christ Himself works through them, they cannot function. Only when Christ, as the chief Prophet, speaks His Word, can there be preaching. But on the other hand, they cannot be separated from the churches. They represent the churches. The churches function through them. This close connection between the stars and the churches is evident from the seven letters that follow in the next two chapters. For it is evident, that in these John does not merely address the angels, but through them writes to the churches they represent and serve. The glorified Lord holds the seven stars in His

right hand. This symbolizes not merely that He controls and holds in His power the angels of the seven churches, but also indirectly that the entire Church is held and preserved by His power alone. No one can pluck His own out of His hand!

And thus, finally, we come to consider the Church as she is represented by the seven churches of Asia. That there is an essential connection between these and the seven candlesticks is evident from the number seven. Repeatedly this number occurs. There are seven churches to which John must write, there are seven candlesticks in the midst of which the Lord appears, there are seven stars in the right hand of the Saviour, and, as we have seen before, there are also seven Spirits before the throne of God, seven lamps of fire burning before that throne, seven eyes of the Lamb, chs. 4:5; 5:6. Seven denotes a fulness and perfection of grace. It contains the numbers *three* and *four*, and it is also the sum of *six* and *one*. In the latter sense it denotes the perfection of all that God does in time with a view to an including the eternal sabbath, the rest that remaineth for the people of God, the consummation of all things in the eternal kingdom and tabernacle of God. In the former sense it symbolizes the perfected communion of God (three) and the kosmos (four), the perfected covenant of God's friendship in Christ, God's dwelling with men. And for the same reason it denotes the fulness of the Spirit that dwells in the Church, the fulness of grace and spiritual blessings, and the fulness of the Church itself as the Body of Christ. This is the essential connection between the seven candlesticks and the seven churches in Asia. They are not the same. The former denote the Church in her ideal existence and eternal perfection, her essence, as she appears in the eternal counsel of God, and as she once will appear in the eternal kingdom; the latter represent the Church as she is in the world, essentially the same as the Church as represented by the seven candlesticks, but an earthly manifestation of the latter, the historic Church on earth with its essential holiness and actual imperfections and infirmities, the Church of Christ, indeed, but as she is still in constant need of consolation and encouragement, of exhortation and rebuke, the House of God from which judgment must needs begin. That, therefore, exactly seven churches are selected indicates that in these the whole Church, as she exists in the world at any time of the present dispensation, is represented. They, no doubt, actually existed at the time. They are no mere fiction, but historical churches. And they are mentioned here in the order of their geographical position in Asia Minor: from Ephesus north to Pergamum, and thence south to Laodicea. However, these churches were chosen because they were prepared by God through Christ, that together they might constitute a picture of the entire Church in the world, with its perfections and defects, its strength and its weaknesses, its trials and temptations. And thus it happens that in the sevenfold message to these churches in Asia we have the Word of Christ to His Church in the world at any time and in all lands, even

until the coming again of the Lord. These messages, therefore, concern us as directly as they concerned the first seven churches to which they are addressed.

Now let us try to view the whole significant picture. Christ, Who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, the Head of His ideal Church given Him by the Father, also is in the midst of His Church in the world. He is her light and life. Without Him she is nothing and can do nothing. He is in her midst as her merciful High Priest, praying in her behalf and blessing her with all the blessings of salvation. He is with her as her mighty King, ruling over by His grace and Spirit, protecting her in the midst of hateful enemies, and leading her unto victory and glory. He comes to her also as her righteous Judge, commending whatever good there is found in her, rebuking and admonishing her for her sins and weaknesses, calling her to repentance and threatening her with His wrath and judgments. It is because Christ is in the midst of His Church in the world as her Judge that the Church must ever reform, even though separation from a certain manifestation of her is the result. And He is in her midst as her only Prophet, giving her the stars, instructing her through His Word and Spirit, and causing her to know the things that must shortly come to pass. Look on Him and be filled with that fear and trembling in which you must work out your own salvation! Behold Him, and be assured that the Church can never perish; she is safe though all hell come raving against her!

The appearance of the glorified Lord has a terrifying effect upon John. He tells us, vs. 17: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." The sight of so much majesty and glory fills him with awe. Some understand this as indicating that John had not recognized the Lord, and that he does not know Him until the Saviour addresses him in the words that follow. But in the light of the preceding verses this is very improbable. For, he had already received his commission to write, and he had seen Him as the one "like unto a son of man." But although he knows it is the Lord, he is filled with fear by the awe inspiring glory of His appearance. Once he had seen a shadow of this power and glory, when he and Peter and James were with Him in the holy mount, but now "in the spirit" he beholds the reality of that awful majesty, he is stupefied and falls at his feet as dead. All this must be understood as belonging to the vision, and takes place "in the spirit." And this becomes the occasion for the Lord's comforting words, addressed to John, but also to the Church of all ages. For also we tremble at His glory. When like John we stand face to face with this mighty and righteous Judge of heaven and earth, we realize the sinfulness of our own condition and we are impelled to fall down before Him and cry out with the prophet of old: "Woe unto me, for I am undone!" Even as we are discussing the vision of this glorious and majestic Judge, we realize that we would not be able to stand in His presence. We are inclined to fear at His coming, rather than hope for it. And, therefore, both now and in the day of

His coming we have need of His comforting words: "Fear not!"

It is, of course, also in the vision and "in the spirit" that Jesus laid His right hand upon John, and that he addresses him: "Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." This is the message of comfort in all our fears, and how perfect a comfort it conveys! Let us notice that it entirely consists in calling our attention to Christ and to what He now is. And what else could possibly be our comfort in life and in death than that Christ, our Lord, in Whom we believe, to Whom we belong with body and soul, is the first and the last, the one that liveth and he was dead, the one that holds the keys of death and of hell? He is the Alpha and the Omega (vs. 11), the first and the last (vss. 11, 17). In vs. 8 this was said of God, here it is attributed by Christ unto Himself. Nor is there any conflict here. For Christ is not only very God, but also as the Mediator, the Son of God come in the flesh, the first begotten of the dead, He is the firstborn of every creature, through Whom and unto Whom all things were made. And he is the Risen One! Note the order of the words. He does not say: "I was dead and am alive again"; but: "I am he that liveth, and was dead!" He is the living One! This clause should stand by itself. It is is first. It is the cause and reason of all that follows. He is the life! He has life in Himself, for He is the eternal God come in the flesh! And He became dead! The living One entered into death, into our death in the human nature, in order that as the great High Priest He might finish the sacrifice for sins. But death could have no dominion over Him, for He is the living One! And so He issued forth out of death into the glorious resurrection, and now He is alive for evermore! And the keys of death and hell are His. "Hell" here is "Hades," the abode of the dead, the grave, the place of corruption. It is presented here as a mighty fortress: the power of all death. And Jesus has the keys, the power to open and no one shutteth, and to shut and no one openeth. He has the power and authority to open the jaws of death, the gates of darkness, in order that His own may come forth into the glory of eternal life! Fear not! Ah, the essence, the real cause of all our fears is death. But for them that trust in this glorious Lord, this fear is not only removed, but is changed into the sure hope of eternal life and glory in God's everlasting tabernacle with men! Blessed are they that put their trust in Him!

Having thus quieted the fear of His servant John, the Lord gives him his commission: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." These words, no doubt, characterize in general the contents of the whole book of Revelation. John must write "the things which he has seen," that is the vision we have been discussing.

H.H.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of I Corinthians 1-4

18.

(I Corinthians 2:10-15)

This beautiful and instructive passage to which we would call your attention in this essay reads in part as follows: *"According to the grace of God which is given me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is . . ."*

We should not lose sight of the general argument of the Apostle. He is still engaged in refuting the boasting in the wisdom of men, wisdom of words, rather than glorying in the Lord and, therefore, in the Word of Wisdom which is manifested in the Cross of Christ.

What Paul had written in the foregoing verses was the death-blow to all the wearying and foolish attempts to boast in one man, one servant of God overagainst the other. Strictly speaking, Paul is nothing and Apollos is nothing. God, who gives the increase, is everything.

This does not mean that Paul does not have his own singular task in the church, in distinction from Apollos, and in distinction from everyone else!

The reason?

Is it that there is, after all, a little in Paul, which Paul or others may make as a ground of boasting overagainst others?

Not at all.

On the contrary we will notice from the text, that, even when Paul comes to stand out head and shoulders above others in the church, it still is all mere grace to Paul. Thus whatever is said about the preminence of Paul is still all God's sovereign, matchless grace!

Let us give heed to the text. We will notice the following particulars:

That Paul indeed had a unique labor to perform in God's church; a labor for which he alone was prepared by God and which, therefore, no one else could ever perform. For it is as "to each it has been given." And Paul's singular task is to lay down, with apostolic insight into the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as these have been fulfilled in Christ, the fundamental tenets and teachings with all their far-reaching implications for the church of the New Testament Dispensation.

In passing we may notice that most of the New Testament Scriptures were written by Paul. At least he wrote more alone than all the rest together. What would the New Testament Scriptures look like should they be minus the writings of Paul? What would we understand of the explicit implication of justification by faith alone, were it not that Paul had written the great letters to the Romans and to the Galatians? What would we know about the interpretation of the Scriptures in regard to the doctrine of the return of Christ, the resurrection of the body, had Paul not written I Corinthians 15? And, again, what would we know about the Gentiles sharing in the promise to Abraham had not Paul written on this so extensively, and shown us how all the lines of Scripture converge in Jesus Christ, and in Him crucified?

To ask all these questions is, for the student of Scripture, to answer them!

He laid down the foundation. He showed the architectural lines of all the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. All the wisdom of God in him. That is the foundation of all the teaching in the church. Helpers, evangelists, shepherds and teachers may be ever so eloquent, yet they all must simply exegete Paul, follow his exegesis of the Scriptures, or all will be so much nonsense and folly!

For Paul laid the foundation as a "master-builder." The term in the original Greek is "architektoon," which literally means: giving original birth to something, *begetting first!* The New Testament truths in Christ were first made known to Paul as to none other. Thus Paul writes to the church at Ephesus, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand *my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (3:3-5). And does not Paul speak of the fact that he had been caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter? II Cor. 12:4.

Does Paul then glory in himself? Nay, writes he, but he will glory in his infirmities.

Howbeit, he cannot deny the "grace that has been given him." When we read in verse 10 of the "grace of God given me" we must make a twofold distinction in this one grace of God.

First of all, this "grace" undoubtedly refers to the personal grace of adoption, of justification, sanctification — of complete redemption. Paul personally is a poor sinner; he accounts himself less than the least of all the saints. Particularly does Paul thus think of himself because in his Pharisaic pride he had persecuted the church of God! Compare Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:12-17. Paul obtained mercy!

Secondly, all that Paul is as an apostle, his rich insight into the truth as it is in Jesus is also a matter of "grace,"

the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he can be a "master-builder" in the truth in Jesus. It was wholly "gift" to Paul, gift of grace. It is a false humility which will not acknowledge and recognize gifts in the church. Paul does it. But, when this is done, man does not receive acclaim; it is a recognition of the great grace of God!

Hence, both they that plant and they that water are indeed wholly dependant upon God, who giveth the increase, yet, even so, he that planteth in this instance had received a singular grace for this work of "planting" which he that "watereth" could not receive. However, both live by grace. Yet, he that watereth must surely water what is planted by another.

Thus also it is with the preachers in God's church!

We are to study the "blue-print" of Paul, the Master-builder!

It requires great carefulness in the "workmen." Says Paul, "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon!" This certainly means that every minister be a good exegete, that he read carefully, that he draw no unwarranted conclusions, which are in anyway contrary to the foundation, the truth in Jesus Christ.

This injunction of Paul is for "every man." This means even Peter, John and James. So confident is Paul about what he had laid down as the foundation, that he utters the strong warning in Galatians 1:8, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And, again, in verse 9 of the same chapter Paul writes, "As we have said before, so say now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Strong warning indeed. Here we indeed feel the seriousness of preaching the word of God, of writing "From Holy Writ."

The question is: will the work of a preacher stand the test of Christ, the great Prophet in that day?

Paul employs the figure of speech (metaphor) of two kinds of materials in a building. It is either that of enduring metal such as "gold," "silver," "precious stones." On the other hand it is also possible that the materials of a preacher are comparable to perishable materials, such as "wood," "hay," "stubble."

When we have any teaching which is not fully in agreement with the foundation, does not fit into the design of the Architect, then it is to be likened unto perishable wood, hay, stubble. Such a man will himself be saved. But his work will be proven to be so much hay which burns in the fire. That is often the issue in a careful exegete. Will my work stand? That is not the issue with the slothful worker. He spurns this careful teaching as being "stereotyped." It does not give sufficient room for "individual expression." Now I have never in all of my nearly twenty five years in the ministry felt that my individuality was cramped by my being a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches. The Lord

be praised. I count it an honor that I may bear the reproach of being called "spineless," a "jelly-fish" by those who do not have the holy fear and trembling at this Word of Paul! In that day it will count what the righteous Lord will say of my work. I am certain, that in respect to the "statements of De Wolf," my repudiating them as heretical will stand in that day!

And whom do I fear?

I fear the Lord, lest upon me come the judgment: you are saved, but your work must be destroyed!

And I fear no one else.

But when a faithful servant or servants show conclusively that certain teaching is so much "hay" and "stubble" — it would cease to be courage to maintain such teaching, but would prove to be the daring of the fool! There is, thanks be to God, a distinction and distance between courage and foolhardiness, between "stubbornness" and steadfastness, which is not simply as wide as the poles, but are as far apart as heaven and hell!

To exclaim "Good land, must that teaching be *so exact*" shows little respect for the Architect, for the faithful builders who have hewn to the line in the Confessions, and does not bespeak a tender conscience. I have heard that remark made at a crucial moment during the time of Classical Sessions!

The Lord, no doubt, wrote it down in His book of remembrance!

Meanwhile, the injunction stands: Let every man beware!

Only the careful builder looks for a reward. What is it? It is, no doubt, the reward of hearing from the lips of Christ himself: Well done, thou good and faithful servant. It is having the honor from God in the entire church, which is due to careful builders. Think of the Augustines, Calvins. Their work stands. The gate of hell cannot prevail against it.

Many a preacher in that day will look upon his preaching and teaching as being so much "hay!" It will go up in fire.

Blessed is the man who buildeth carefully upon the foundation beside which there is none other.

He shall indeed be saved by grace and his work shall stand unto all eternity!

G.L.

THE MIGHTY GOD, JEHOVAH SPEAKS

He calls aloud to heaven and earth
That He may justly judge His own;
My chosen saints together bring
Who sacrifice to Me alone;
The heavens His righteousness declare,
For God Himself as Judge is there.

Psalm 50:2

IN HIS FEAR

Praying in His Fear

(4)

“Not my will but Thy will be done.”

He who prays in His fear not only says this to God in prayer but also means every word of it.

So, we wrote last time.

We wish to discuss this important element of prayer in His fear further at this time.

Of utmost importance it is, then, to consider the fact that to pray in His fear we must know Him as He is. Any wrong notion we may have concerning Him will surely show itself in our prayers. Simply by listening to one's prayer(s) you can learn the beliefs of that one concerning God. Whether he be a premillennialist or not; whether he believes the Scriptural truth of sovereign predestination or not; whether he believes in the sufficiency of Christ or the need of His mother as an intermediary; whether he believes a spiritual salvation or a “social gospel” for this life alone; whether he is a Baptist, a Methodist, a Calvinist, a Lutheran or the like will become evident in the prayer that is offered. What is more, for this very reason one's prayer also reveals one's beliefs concerning God.

A prayer, such as we heard once as uttered by one who had a name for being a Calvinist (a “Reformed” man) that expressed this thought, “Lord, add to the number of the elect,” surely revealed an unscriptural idea concerning God's sovereign, unchangeable, eternal election from before the foundation of the world. But it also revealed a wrong conception of the God who elects, and, therefore, how He elects. In fact we have always insisted that in whatever point of doctrine you depart from the truth, you touch God Himself. Whether your departure is in the field of Theology, in its narrowest sense of use, in the field of Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology or Eschatology you always touch God for the simple reason that all these branches of theology are just exactly that: Theology. Because it all is the work of God and the revelation of the God Who creates, saves unto everlasting glory and casts into the everlasting perdition of hell, whenever you take a certain stand in regard to anyone of these points of doctrine you say something about God. And in prayer, when we speak to Him, we also say something very definite about Him and who and what we believe Him to be.

He that cometh to God must believe that He is; and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” Hebrews 11:6.

It stands to reason, therefore, that one's prayer to God will be controlled by one's conception of God. This fundamental principle manifested itself in the difference of

approach in Cain and in Abel. Abel came in obedience to God with the sacrifice designated by God and according to the instruction concerning God which his believing parents had given unto him, Abel came in His fear. Adam and Eve had been taught by God Himself when He shed the blood and took the skins of a lamb to clothe them. In that act God also taught them concerning Himself and the God that He is. They knew God because He revealed Himself to them. Knowing Him from the instruction of his parents and by the application of the Spirit in his heart Abel sought God in His fear, sought Him as the God that He is.

It was a seeking in prayer there in that offering. This relationship between sacrifice and prayer is clearly indicated in the Hebrew parallelism of Proverbs 15:8, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight.” Sacrifice and prayer are presented as having essentially the same idea.

Cain's offering or prayer revealed his opinion of God. It revealed that his heart was not right with God; but it also revealed that in his mind he harbored an evil opinion of God. The very thought that God would and should accept what he offered according to his own standards and in opposition to what God had expressly taught makes plain to what degree he had dethroned God in his mind and denied Him to be the God that He is.

The Publican and the Pharisee in Jesus' parable likewise illustrate this fact that one's prayer shows one's belief concerning God. The Pharisee did not know God and did not come in His fear. Actually he exalted himself above God in his prayer.

To be sure, he exalted himself above man, above the publican. That is why Jesus says in the parable, “Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” And the parable was spoken, according to Jesus' own words, “unto certain which trusted in themselves and despised others.” The Pharisee despised the publican and exalted himself above that sinner, that man who stood afar off in the temple. The publican humbled himself, however, before that Pharisee; and before God he confessed that he was more sinful than the Pharisee when he cried out, “God be merciful to me *the* sinner.”

Yet it must not be overlooked or ignored that in this very exaltation above man the Pharisee exalted himself also above God. Do not be misled by his pious words, “God I thank thee . . .” For he did not thank God. Analyze his “prayer” carefully and you will note that instead he came to the temple to tell God how thankful HE ought to be that he, the Pharisee, was not like other men. He did not know God. He did not pray to God. Jesus says, “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.” He was himself the god to whom he prayed. What an evil conception of God he nourished in his soul!

He did not know sin!

He confesses not one sin! He contradicted God!

He did not know what pleases God!

He boasted of God's indebtedness to him.

He did not know God!

He prayed to himself and not to God!

To come to God in His fear we must know Him to be the God that He is and recognize Him as such in our every petition and utterance of praise and thanksgiving.

And now we come to the point of this installment of the matter of praying in His fear: knowing God as He is we will not pray under the mistaken and Goddishonoring misconception that prayer changes things!

Prayer does not change things, because prayer does not change Him Who causes all things and controls them to the realization of His unchangeable purpose!

Shall we form an opinion of God that declares that He no longer is God?

Do we dare try to whittle Him down to where we control His thoughts, desires and actions?

Can He be influenced by any creature?

Can that which depends upon Him for every breath of life, for every throb of its heart, for the very earth upon which it walks twist and turn Him and gain control over Him upon Whom it depends?

In prayer we want to remember that we are seeking God's face. We have to do in prayer with a divine being, a sovereign being, a God Who declares Himself that He is a jealous God. We want to remember that He is unchangeable. All that which has taken place, all that which shall take place in the future is unchangeably determined by Him from before the foundation of the world.

In prayer we must remember that He is God!

He is not less than man who sees the wisdom of planning some great engineering feat with great care and caution before one bit of labor is performed in its execution. Where will the world come presently if God is "open" to all kinds of ideas and suggestions of men, if men are able by their repeated and massed prayers to make Him change His plans and mind the work having been begun, and do what He did not plan to do.

He sends war and pestilence and famine.

Does He wait then till men have offered sufficient prayers and prayed enough days before He brings these to a halt? Can we change things by coming to Him in prayer? Can we by force of numbers weary Him or gain control over His thoughts and desires?

All such thought flows forth from an unscriptural opinion of who and how God is! And only as we recognize Him to be the God that He is and behave that way in our petitions do we pray to Him; do we pray in His fear. Otherwise we have no more than the Pharisee. We have prayed with ourselves. Men have heard it and thought that we offered a pretty nice prayer. But God has been insulted, for man has exalted himself above God! God has had no more respect for our prayers than He had for Cain's offering.

Prayer does not change things.

That is, we do not by our prayers get God to change

the things about which we complain. And remember that every time men come to God with the idea of persuading Him to change things that they do not like, He considers it exactly to be a complaint, to be finding fault with His work!

Let a man pray in His fear instead.

Let a man pray to God for grace to suffer this misery, these pains, this deprivation, this horror and woe in such a way that he recognizes God's sovereign right to send it and in such a way that he praises God for being an all-wise God Who knows what is best for His creatures and Who knows how to save and glorify His Church through tribulation and affliction, Who knows how to work ALL things together for the good of those that love Him, because eternally and unchangeably it pleases Him to purpose to call them.

Let a man pray for grace to continue to acknowledge Jehovah to be God!

Then, and then only, we can speak in a limited, special sense of prayer changing things. For that prayer will be heard, being a prayer in His fear, and God will change the troubled heart of His people who pray that way into a heart that has peace and comfort. Then, through that prayer God will work a wonderful change in the mind and thinking of His troubled child. Yea, in that very prayer He is already working a wonderful change in the heart and mind of His troubled child. He will even in that very prayer cause His child to look away from the things which caused him to come to God in prayer and turn him to the things in His word of promise. He will make him see that our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, II Corinthians 4:17. He will make him say with James, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

In His fear we will pray that God be magnified, exalted and glorified and that we receive grace and faith to live out of the principle that He is God in all that which we see of Him and which He causes us to experience.

Then, truly, we say, "Not my will but Thy will be done."

Otherwise our use of that phrase is mockery and an abomination to Him.

J.A.H.

Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in Oak Lawn, Illinois, Wednesday, September 19, 1956. The consistories are reminded of the rule that all matters for the classical agendum must be in the hands of the stated clerk thirty days before the meeting of Classis.

Rev. H. Veldman, Stated Clerk

THE POUNDS AND THE TALENTS IN THE PARABLES

No two parables in Holy Writ are more nearly alike than these to which reference is made in our subject. Little wonder, that they are frequently identified.

Both parables, that of the Pounds and that of the Talents, the former recorded in Luke 19:11-28, the latter taken from Matthew 25:14-30, have in view the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In both the subject of the parable leaves on an extended journey to a distant land. The reference is obviously to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who came to earth in the fulness of time, then left again to return to the Father and receive from Him the everlasting Kingdom, and after a long absence will return to judge and reward according to works.

In both parables this man, before leaving, summons his servants and entrusts to them certain goods with the mandate and in the expectation that these servants would labor with the master's funds during his absence to his advantage.

Both parables reveal how the servants involved did work with these goods of their lord. In both there are two servants who labor diligently and scrupulously, according to the master's mandate, while there is one who does nothing with the entrusted goods. True, in the one parable the indolent and irresponsible servant "hid the talent in the earth;" in the other he kept his pound "laid up in a napkin." The meaning is the same. Instead of laboring for the profit of his lord he does nothing.

Both speak of the return of the master in due time and his dealings with his subjects, good and bad. The faithful servants receive their just reward in language strikingly similar. In the parable of the Talents we hear the master speak, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy master" — Matt. 25:21, 23. In that of the Pounds we hear him say, to the one, "Well done, good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very small matter, have thou power over ten cities," and to the other, "And be thou also ruler over five cities." The indolent servant makes excuses, evilly accusing his lord, and again the language is almost identical. "Master, I knew thee that thou art a harsh man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter: and, being afraid, I went away, and hid thy talent in the earth." Thus he speaks in the parable of the Talents. In this of the Pounds we hear him say, "Master, lo, thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art a harsh man: thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and reapest what thou didst not sow."

In both parables the slothful slave in reprimanded and condemned in the same scathing language. His goods are taken from him (the one talent; the one pound) and given to him who had most, and in either case the same explanation is given by the master, "For to every one that hath shall

be given; but he that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him." The language may differ ever so slightly; the sense in both parables is identical.

The similarity, therefore, is striking and we do not wonder that even competent students tend to view the parables as identical, in essence, though uttered perhaps on different occasions.

* * * *

However, they who do so are in error. The similarity between the parables may be striking enough; the differences, however, are obvious.

The respective occasions governing both parables are different. That of the Talents was spoken after Palm Sunday, on the Tuesday evening preceding the crucifixion of our Lord; that of the Pounds was uttered a few days before the royal entry. The former was spoken by Jesus while seated on the Mount of Olives; the latter while the Lord was approaching Jerusalem. The one was spoken to the disciples only; the other was addressed to the multitude as well.

Consequently, there is a marked difference between the parables as far as the purpose is concerned for which they were uttered. Both are related to the return of the Lord Jesus, but in a somewhat different manner. The parable of the Talents follows upon these significant words, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." In view of that coming the disciples are spurred on to diligent and faithful labor until that advent shall have become reality. The determining context in the case of the parable of the Pounds is indicated by these words, "And as they heard these things he added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Here, too, the parable intends to spur on to zealous labor during the Master's absence. His own must not simply wait. They must work while it is day and be busy in the things of the Kingdom. But there is more. Both the disciples and the multitude must be set right on this question of the immediate appearance of the kingdom of God. They imagined that the time was at hand that Jesus would establish His kingdom in all its glory and assume the rule over all the house of David. He was drawing "nigh to Jerusalem." There was a strong feeling among the disciples and the crowd in general that something great was in the offing. Also, it was the time of the Passover, when large throngs would travel to the city of the great King for the purpose of celebrating this greatest of all Jewish festivals. Josephus tells us that upward of two million people would be at Jerusalem at this time. Something great was bound to happen, now. They felt sure that at this time the kingdom of this Jesus would come to clear and open manifestation. A crisis was approaching. Momentarily He would assert His Messianic authority, take the government into His hands, break the Roman yoke, free the nation of Israel from

all foreign tyranny and at long last bring to concrete realization all their Messianic hopes and notions. The multitude, and the disciples too, still entertained such premillennial notions about this entire kingdom and kingship of the Messiah. Hence, the parable of the Pounds. The people must know the truth about this whole matter; know that they were all wrong about this imminent appearance of the kingdom of Christ; that any open assumption of the kingdom was yet far distant; that He must first go away and return only after a long while. Meanwhile, they must also be informed as to their calling to labor diligently during that period of His absence with the means He would give them to that end. They must not be sluggishly inactive, but faithful in the hope of His return, assured of the abundant reward of fidelity as well as the dreadful punishment in store for the indolent and wicked. Hence, between the two parables there is by no means sameness of purpose.

In harmony with the above, there is also a distinct difference between the "talents" in the one parable and the "pounds" in the other. An important clue to this difference is given in the fact, that whereas the talents are bestowed on the servants in varying measures, this is not true of the pounds. In the parable of the Talents the one servant receives five talents, the other two and still another only one. In the parable of the Pounds each of ten servants receives one pound with which to labor until the return of the master.

What then is meant by the "talents" in the parable recorded in Matthew 25? They are bestowed in different proportions. The reference is to the excellent gifts which the Master bestows on the children of men and with which they must be active in the service of their Lord. They are spiritual powers, first of all. These are given not only to the apostles with a view to the special labors they must perform, but to others as well for mutual edification and the service of gratitude in the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 12 speaks of these gifts which are bestowed on the people of God, on the Church, through the Holy Spirit. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge . . . ; to another faith . . . ; to another the gifts of healing . . . ; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will" — Cf. I Cor. 12:4-11. Also the ungodly in the church on earth possess these means in varying measure, though, void of all grace, they reject them and use them only to their own condemnation. Still, they receive means wherewith to work and have the responsibility to use them in the service of the Mighty God and His Christ. Nor do these talents exclude other means and opportunities such as wealth, learning, faculties of mind and body, etc.

Also these are given with a view to the service of God. Those possessing them will have to render account in His day.

Therefore these talents are received in different proportions. All receive, but not in identical measure. The parable states: "And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one; *to every man according to his own ability.*" The reference is to natural ability, capacity, also determined by God alone. Spiritual gifts do not ignore the difference between individuals, but the one is according to the other. The natural is the vessel, the container, as it were, which is filled by the spiritual. The one vessel is larger, the other smaller. Accordingly they receive their talents. Hence, the servant receiving two talents was not inadequately furnished compared with the one receiving five, nor was the one receiving only one talent more incompletely furnished than the one receiving two. Each received according to capacity. The one was not fit for as wide a sphere of life as the other. Nevertheless, he was just as well equipped for the place and task ordained for him. All determined by the sovereign good pleasure of the Lord.

On the other hand, what is indicated by the "pounds" in the parable recorded by Luke? Here each servant receives the same amount. Here you do not find the limitation: to every one according to his own ability. Clearly, therefore, the reference is to something else. The talents refer to personal and diverse gifts. Not so the pounds. These refer to the outward means which all have in common and which they must employ faithfully with the talents received, such as the ministry of the Word, the offices of elder and deacon, the sacraments, etc. We are called to labor with these means diligently and conscientiously until Jesus returns to establish His kingdom forever; work with them in the home, in school and church, in our mission endeavor and the Christian training of our covenant seed. Hence, the "pound" refers to equal opportunities and means. Every Christian has that pound. All do not possess ten talents, or even five, or even two. But all have the pound.

According to the respective purposes of the two parables is also the reward given. This reward is not according to things accomplished, but according to faithfulness and consecration revealed in the use of the means. Reward of grace according to the works of grace. Therefore the reward of the two faithful servants in the parable of the Talents is the same. True, the servant with the five talents gained other five talents; the servant with the two gained other two. The returns in the one case are greater than in the other, due to the difference in talents. However, the faithfulness is the same. The one with five produced other five. That is a 100% gain. The one with two gained other two. That, too, is a 100% gain. No less. And if the third servant had gained one other talent, his profit, too, would have been 100%. Therefore the reward is precisely the same. To both the master speaks the same words, "Well done, good and

(Continued on page 476)

The Voice of Our Fathers

The Canons of Dordrecht

PART TWO

EXPOSITION OF THE CANONS

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE

OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST, AND THE REDEMPTION
OF MEN THEREBY

REJECTION OF ERRORS

Article VI. Who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching, that God, as far as he is concerned, has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life, and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace. For these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors.

We must call attention to the fact that the translation would be more accurate if throughout the article we had the verb "apply" rather than the verb "appropriate." We must also note that in the clause, "that God . . . has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ," the word "applying" should really be "conferring." Lest one think that the expression "special gift of mercy" implies the existence of a "common gift of mercy," it would be better to translate by "singular" or "unique." And finally, the very last clause in the first, lengthy sentence of this article should for the sake of clarity be introduced by "so that" or "in order that." This shows more clearly the relation between the two ideas: "but that it is not dependent on the singular gift of mercy, efficaciously operating in them, so that (in order that) they rather than others apply to themselves that grace."

Here you have an instance of the insidious and crafty technique which the Arminians followed in order to instill their doctrine into the "incautious and inexperienced." They made use of what is in itself a perfectly legitimate distinction between the objective and subjective sides of salvation in order to propagate their heresy of free willism. This leads us to emphasize at the outset three things. In the first place, in Reformed churches there should be no "incautious and inexperienced" people when it comes to Arminianism. All should be very cautious and should be thoroughly acquainted both with the Arminian error and with the Arminian method of propagating his error, in order

that they may be on the alert continually. In the second place, it is the duty of the church, and particularly of the officebearers (cf. also the Formula of Subscription) to do their utmost by way of instruction that the "incautious and inexperienced" should become cautious and experienced. And in the third place, this example of Article VI points up the fact that the preaching and teaching must be clear, concise, and distinctive, in order that the error may be exposed and in order that no one may entertain any doubts as to what is meant. The minister of the Word should not have to say when he is finished preaching, "I didn't mean what you think I meant." His preaching must clearly convey his meaning.

The distinction between the objective and subjective aspects of salvation, between salvation as it is wrought *for us* and salvation as it is wrought *in us*, between the meriting of the forgiveness of sin and life eternal and the actual application of this grace to us so that it becomes our personal and conscious possession, is a sound distinction, we said. We must emphasize, however, that it is a two-fold distinction in the one salvation, and that this distinction must not be changed into a *division* of salvation into a divine factor and a human factor. That this distinction is legitimate is also implied in the article, which does not attack the distinction as such, but attacks the corrupt and deceitful use of the distinction on the part of the Arminians. Furthermore, the fathers all make use of this distinction in their written critiques of the Arminian position which were presented at the Synod before the *Canons* were composed. Only, they without fail make it clear that also this application of the benefits of salvation is of God by free grace.

There are, I think, especially two factors which enter into this deception of the Arminians, which facilitated it in a way. In the first place, they made capital of the truth that the grace of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life is in the preaching set forth, presented, promiscuously. We may note in this connection that the *Canons* have the word "offered." This is not to be taken in the current sense, but in the original sense of setting forth, presenting, putting on display. In the general proclamation of the gospel the benefits of the forgiveness of sins and life eternal in Christ, as merited by Christ, are set forth to all who hear the preaching. The Arminians used this in order to leave the impression that "God, as far as he is concerned was willing to confer to all equally the benefits acquired by the death of Christ." In our day, of course, there are those who do not hesitate to express this very literally and openly: God wills the salvation of all men. He offers well-meaningly the forgiveness of sins and life eternal to all. One gets the impression, however, from this article of the Rejection that the Arminians were very crafty about this in the days of the fathers. They were not open. And to be sure, the impression can very easily be left that salvation is for all without literally stating it. All that need be done is to omit any and all distinction. One need not expressly state that God is willing

to confer these benefits of the death of Christ upon all men equally. He need only omit to say that "this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation." One sometimes hears the criticism voiced that it is not always necessary to refer to the fact that the benefits of Christ's death are for the elect only, that Reformed people are supposed to know that, and that the preacher may take this for granted in his preaching. But this is incipient Arminianism. One may never leave the impression, either by overt statement or by the sin of omission, that there is anything general about the benefits of Christ's death. One may never leave the impression, either by expressly stating that God is minded to apply them to all men equally or by neglecting to state that God is minded to apply them only to the elect, that these benefits of grace are for all men. It is exactly by way of such non-distinctive preaching that heresy is instilled into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced.

But we are reminded of something else in this connection. It is exactly this error that has been instilled in the minds of many in Reformed circles by means of the First Point of 1924. The Christian Reformed Synod of Kalamazoo by its "general offer of the gospel" as proof of the "favorable attitude of God toward humanity in general and not only towards the elect," could mean and did mean nothing less than such a well-meant offer of salvation by God to all who hear the preaching. They meant that God was minded to confer the benefits of Christ's death to all equally, though they also claimed to be Reformed, and even attempted to substantiate the position of the First Point by citing the *Canons*. And the same is true of the statement of more recent origin in Protestant Reformed circles that "God promises salvation to everyone of you, if you believe." These, and all theories of such ilk, are condemned as Arminian by *Canons* II, B, 6.

In the second place, the Arminians made capital of the fact that in the subjective aspect, the application, of salvation to the elect sinner is not a stock and block, but is as a rational-moral creature active. The very nature of that application of the benefits of salvation to the elect sinner is such that his heart and mind and will actively appropriate those benefits. He believes. He is sorry for his sin. He repents. He clings to Christ. He walks in a new and holy life. Now what did the Arminian do? He used this very fact in such a way as to leave the impression that in this work of the application of salvation the sinner who hears the offer of the gospel is active without being activated, applies these benefits of the death of Christ to himself. The Arminian position is that the will of God and the will of man meet in a cooperative venture. God wills to confer the benefits merited by Christ upon all men equally. Man, on his part, joins his own free will to that grace that is indiscriminately offered. And thus the work of salvation is completed. This, according to the Arminians, explains

the fact that some are saved, others not; some join their will to God's will to save, others do not. And thus it also becomes evident that in this cooperative venture the divine part and the human part are not even equal. Man's will is determinative. And if man does not join his will to God's, then God is helpless, even though He wills to confer the benefits of the death of Christ upon all.

And again, let us not imagine that this view must be literally propagated. This Arminian conception can be instilled into people's minds without even mentioning "free will." All that need be done is to omit the fact that the obtaining of the pardon of sin and eternal life is dependent on "the singular gift of mercy, efficaciously operating in them, so that they rather than others appropriate (apply) to themselves this grace." All that need be done is to disconnect the gift of faith itself from the merit of Christ, in order silently to leave the impression that faith is of us while forgiveness and eternal life are from God, but dependent upon our faith. All that need be done is to emphasize strongly the command to repent and believe, while neglecting to state specifically that faith is "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." All that need be done is to omit to preach that "it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross . . . should effectually redeem . . . all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father; that he should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he purchased for them by his death . . ." Thus it is that Arminians deceive men, corrupt the gospel of grace, and instill false doctrine into the minds of the incautious and inexperienced.

For false doctrine it is. As the fathers rightly remark, this view is nothing less than the pernicious venom of Pelagianism. And do not object that to attribute Pelagianism to the serpent is too heavy a charge. Once again, Arminianism does not merely differ on some points with the gospel of the Scriptures: it is fundamentally divergent, and has nothing in common with the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has its origin in the devil, and is some of the most pernicious venom ever to issue from his mouth.

H.C.H.

THE POUNDS AND THE TALENTS IN THE PARABLES

(Continued from page 474)

faithful servant; enter thou in the joys of thy master." In the parable of the Pounds this is different. There each receives the same pound. There the one servant's pound gains tenfold; the other's fivefold. The measure of faithfulness is different. Therefore the difference in the reward, according to difference in the works of grace.

In the case of the third servant there is no real difference between the parables. He is wicked and slothful. He is a servant outwardly, but not really. He is no child of God. He does nothing. And his reward is, accordingly, ending in eternal destruction. Matthew 25:30.

R. Veldman.

DECENCY and ORDER

Article 26, D.K.O.

The Diaconate and Other Almoners

The last time we quoted the twenty-sixth article in full and will, therefore, not repeat it here. The reader may consult his church-order or the *Standard Bearer* of July 1, 1956.

The original rendering of this article as taken from Jansen's "Korte Verklaring" reads: "De Diakenen zullen, ter plaatse waar huiszitten-meesters of andere aalmoezeniers zijn, van deze begeeren goede correspondentie met hen te willen houden, ten einde de aalmoeden te beter uitgedeeld mogen worden onder degenen die meest gebrek hebben."

Freely translated this is: "Where there are administrators of pensions and other almoners, the deacons shall seek to hold good correspondence with them to the end that the alms may be better distributed among those who have greatest need."

This article is considerably shorter than the one that appears in our present church order. It contains only one of the three elements found in the latter, which in 1914 was revised so as to fit present circumstances. The sole provision of the original article arises out of historical circumstances peculiar to our father-land. This historical background is described in the following quotation taken from the pen of Rev. G. M. Ophoff:

"The Roman hierarchy possessed much property, most of which was confiscated by the state when the Netherlands adopted the principles of the Reformation and became Reformed. A good share of this property was being used for the care of the poor. There were many homes for the aged poor in the land and still other institutions of charity. The position of our Reformed fathers was that the task of caring for the poor was not that of the state but of the church and, therefore, it requested that the state turn over to the diaconate these institutions of charity. But this was done only in some provinces while in others these institutions of mercy continued to operate independent of the diaconate. This accounts for it that we have in our church order this article according to which the deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with such institutions to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have need, and also that the deacons shall make it possible for the poor to make use of such institutions."

Originally then the subject matter of this article stems from the question as to what is the calling and duty and proper relation of the church's diaconate to government relief and other organizations which are engaged in secular work of charity? It cannot be gainsaid that this question affects us today as much as ever. Many of our readers have not forgotten the depression of the 30's when members of the church as well as others stood in line to receive bread from the government. In times of disaster when entire communities

are smitten by floods, fires, tornadoes, etc., organizations such as the Red Cross, Community Chest, and others offer assistance to the distressed. In view of the numerous agencies which today are engaged in various forms of relief work, doesn't the task of the diaconate become virtually nullified? Sometimes it almost appears so and because of this the diaconate has fallen into disrepute even among those who are members of the church and who, in times of need, prefer to seek assistance in the world rather than turn to Christ's ministers of mercy.

The provision of our church order here is no solution to the problem involved. It merely stipulates that the deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with these other agencies so that duplication of assistance is avoided. This stipulation, it seems, implies that it is legitimate practice for those of the household of faith to seek and receive aid in times of need from worldly institutions of charity and, furthermore, that the church may share her responsibility to care for her own poor with them. This synthesis is in conflict with all Reformed principles and if the church order leaves the impression that this practice is just, we have need of a revision which clarifies the proper position and function of the diaconate in these circumstances.

Sometimes the wording of this article of the church order is defended with the argument that the "other charities" refers exclusively to agencies of the government and at the time of the origin of this article the government of the Netherlands was Reformed. The conclusion is drawn that this article instructs the diaconate to work in cooperation with governmental agencies of charity only if and when the government is a christian one. This, however, does not alter the matter as we see it. It is not a question that concerns a christian or non-christian government that is the important matter here but rather it is the question whether any government is instituted to dispense charity? Does this belong to the domain of government? To this our unequivocal reply is, "No, it does not!" The government is instituted with sword power. Its calling is to rule under God and thus to punish evil doers and protect the righteous. Notwithstanding the fact that governments engage in this sort of thing, it is not their prerogative to do so. The church, through its diaconate, has the calling to exercise charity and thereby reflect the virtues of Christ's Highpriestly office. She alone by the power of the Spirit and the grace of Christ is able to rightly perform this spiritual labor. She neither may nor can share it with worldly agencies and where this is attempted the result can only be that her spiritual labor of love degenerates into a mere humanistic work of alleviating physical distresses. That is not the essence of Charity!

The very presence of an article of this nature in our church order reminds us of the fact that we are still in the midst of a sinful world. Rebellion to God's ordinances is everywhere present. The various departments of our complex social structure disregard the will of God and fail to confine their functions within God appointed limitations.

When then the government (and other worldly organizations of charity?) pretend to institute "offices of mercy" their activities so overlap a function that belongs exclusively to the church that where she is not carefully zealous and constantly faithful her work of charity is obliterated or coerced into a cooperative role with the world. On that basis the church cannot perform her God-given duties. And, certainly, what the world does may never serve as an excuse for the neglect of the diaconate.

From this the conclusion may not be drawn that the assistance rendered to the poor and distressed by the government and other worldly agencies of charity is to be entirely condemned. Such aid is necessitated by the fact of sin in the world where men, devoid of the knowledge of God, refuse to acknowledge and in time of need turn to the proper instituted agency of charity which is the diaconate of His church. Because of this they receive aid in their distress from the world but never do they receive charity. It does not require grace to recognize that one whose home and possessions have been destroyed by fire or flood needs help. Common sense dictates that. Neither is it an evidence of "common grace" that the world affords such assistance. This help is not charity in the Biblical sense of the word. It cannot be. Charity requires grace and that the world does not possess. The world's assisting the distressed is never performed in the consciousness that, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me," (Matt. 25:40b). Even the "tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." (Prov. 12:10b). They are motivated purely by humanistic desires. This is evident, for example, from the vast program of foreign aid that is carried on in our present day by our own government. Its aim is man! It purposes to win self-respect, recognition, and praise among the befriended. The thought of God is not in it nor is it the consciousness of duty toward God that compels such action. Materialistic and selfish ends are sought under the guise of a charitable work. Likewise, the program of domestic handouts that has reached fantastic proportions under the present economy and by which the murmuring dissatisfactions and rebellions of certain segments of a carnally minded citizenry are temporarily restrained. No different is it with the various independent relief societies of the world. Man, living a distorted life in defiance of God and therein encountering the miseries of His holy wrath, attempts to alleviate or escape these miseries WITHOUT GOD. He seeks to accomplish in defiance of God what can be attained only in the way HE has appointed and approved. If then all things were done properly, all charity would be dispensed through the media of the diaconate of the church. She alone has the right and the ability to perform his labor and she must always safeguard herself against the imminent danger of degrading her spiritual function into a mere humanitarian work by putting it on a cooperative and equal basis with those who neither have the right nor the qualifications to engage in such enterprise.

The implications of the first provision in Article 26 are very dangerous and misleading. If the article simply means to express that the deacons should not duplicate aid given to the needy through other agencies, the matter is redundant. The deacons should not have to be told this by a ruling of the church order. It stands to reason that where a material need is already met, there is no more need left for which further aid must be provided. To do so leads to excess through which greater sin is frequently committed than through lack. If the provision of this article means that the diaconate should perform her work of charity in cooperation with worldly institutions, the article is, as we have shown, wrong and the entire provision ought to be eliminated for it violates the principle that the church must provide for her own poor and the needy of the church should not seek aid from the world but should be assisted by their brethren and sisters in Christ. The whole provision then leads to the practical error often committed by diaconates which is that as long as the material needs of the people of God are provided from some source (be that what it may) there is no need for the labors of charity. The results of this is that true charity becomes obsolete and "without charity we are nothing," (I Cor. 13:3).

Our space for this issue is about filled so we will have to wait till next time, D.V., to write on some of the implications of this provision of the church order for both the diaconate and the members of the church. We also have two other provisions in this article that are worthy of some attention.

GVdB.

I WAITED FOR THE LORD MOST HIGH

I waited for the Lord Most High,
And He inclined to hear my cry;
He took me from destruction's pit
And from the miry clay;
Upon a rock He set my feet,
And steadfast made my way.

O Lord my God, how manifold
Thy wondrous works which I behold,
And all Thy loving, gracious thought
Thou hast bestowed on man;
To count Thy mercies I have sought,
But boundless is their span.

Not sacrifice delights the Lord,
But he who hears and keeps His Word;
Thou gavest me to hear Thy will,
Thy law is in my heart;
I come the Scripture to fulfil,
Glad tidings to impart.

Psalm 40: 1, 3, 4

ALL AROUND US

Destructive Labor Union Practices.

We take our suggestion for our remarks on this subject from a well-written and informative article appearing in the August issue of the *Reader's Digest*. In it a Mr. Lester Velie writes under the title: "Labor's Dreaded Squeeze Play: The Secondary Boycott."

Mr. Velie borrowed for his title the well-known baseball expression: The Squeeze Play. This is a play used by the batting team to force a run at the plate. Those acquainted with the game understand well how it works and how the field team is forced to use every strategy and power to block its impact and thus save itself from being scored on. There are other games, for example football, where this strategy is employed though it does not have this name. All the power of the offensive team is concentrated at one vital spot.

The writer applies this expression to the operation of labor unions in their all-out endeavor to bring management and the working man, and even the government in line and under its control. He calls it the "Dreaded" squeeze play because he sees in it the loss of complete freedom for both management and labor to work out unmolested and without encroachment its own problems. He sees the end of free enterprise, and the end of our democratic way of life. This dreaded squeeze play of labor unions he denominates: "The Secondary Boycott."

What Mr. Velie has to say about this presents nothing new to the citizen who is well aware of his times and who is informed either by reading or experience of what is going on in the spheres of labor and management, and I might add also in the government in recent years. He shows us by examples the things that are apparent to all, things that have been with us for a long time. But the poignant aspect of his article points up a condition which if not soon remedied will jeopardize our whole economic system and, still more importantly, as I see it, make it impossible for the Christian laborer, who is opposed for religious reasons to godless unionism, to live; and for management, that will be stubborn enough to defy these ruthless tactics of unionism, to continue. In a little note affixed to the article in the *Digest* we have an explanation of what the article purports to be: namely, "Vicious examples of how collective bargaining is turned into collective bludgeoning." The latter expression must be understood also figuratively, of course, but it means literally a beating with a heavy club or some other instrument used as a weapon to beat one to death.

The writer starts out with an illustration of a man whom he calls "Joe the Barber," who for some 15 years thought he was one of the happiest men working in one of New York's most popular hotels. He liked his job. He enjoyed in this country the freedom, so he thought, from tyranny which he could not have in his native land. In fact, he was

even happy about the union he had helped to form, evidently a local union covering 14 barbershops in the metropolitan area and run by one boss.

Then, we are told, Joe got "caught in a squeeze he still doesn't understand." No one it seemed could help him. Not his union, nor his boss, nor the boss's landlord, the hotel. Even under the law he could find no relief, or rather, the law would not protect him. All this began when the national union of barbers began to pressure him into abandoning his independent union and join up with the big one, when Joe and some 300 other members of his union decided to remain independent. But the national union did not rest here. They went to Joe's boss and still later to the boss's landlord with their demands. Even the protestations of Joe's boss, that should he bow to the pressure of the national he would have to transgress the unfair-labor-practice provisions of the Taft-Hartley law, did not help.

The national union placed pickets around the hotel. All illegally, of course. It did not represent the union inside. With parading signs the national declared that Joe's boss was "unfair to organized labor." This, the writer suggests, is the initial boycott.

However, when it became apparent to the national that this method of coercion would not bring Joe, or his boss, or Joe's union to time, for Joe's customers boldly crossed the picket line and his business continued as usual, the secondary boycott was then brought to bear.

The national called on the brotherhood of Teamsters, an affiliate, to step in. No one could go through the picket line to deliver the materials the hotel needed to operate. The hotel would have to close if it did not bring Joe's boss to his senses. It had to threaten Joe's boss with the loss of his lease, and this would mean the loss of Joe's job. So there was no other choice than to acquiesce to the national union. Joe had to join a union he didn't want.

The writer of the *Digest* article proceeds to show with other examples how that small businesses which it took as much as 15 years to build are put out of business by this squeeze play overnight. Further, that in many instances even the National Labor Relations Board was helpless to intervene. We are informed that it is the very intent of the Taft-Hartley Act to protect the worker's freedom to organize his own union or to join the union of his choice. Yet in many instances this law is not enforced or over-ruled so that the N.R.L.B. stands helplessly by when an appeal for help is raised by those caught in the union's squeeze play, the secondary boycott. The writer also notes that though the main national unions (A.F.L.-C.I.O.) mean not to be run by racketeers, that racketeers nevertheless have complete control in many unions.

It stands to reason, therefore, that so long as this ungodly business continues, and no provision is made to rule out the pressure methods of godless unions, the laborer, management, and even the government can no longer boast of freedom. And to think that there is a political party in our

country that under the pressure of so-called neutral unions would even destroy the Taft-Hartley Act, as it boastfully declared it would do in the Democratic Convention in Chicago if and when it gets back in the driver's seat in the government, should make our citizenry sit up and take notice.

It is our contention that this Act should not only be preserved, but legal machinery should be set in motion that will put more teeth in it to preserve the rights and privileges of what we boast is the possession of a free people.

The religious freedom of our Christian labor men is fast being choked out. Where he insists that under the Bill of Rights he should be allowed to work where he can make an honest living without any coercion, where he can utilize the gifts and talents God gave him to realize his vocation in this world, all his insistence falls on deaf ears when such pressure is brought to bear. When he declares that he may not for conscience sake and according to the Word of God be unequally joined with the ungodly unions, even management and government cannot help him to realize this religious freedom when such ungodly pressure gadgets are allowed to be manipulated by these unions. To sign with these unions is to subscribe to the Beast. There can be no question about that.

Yet, I see many so-called Christian laborers doing just that very thing. And some even persecuting their Christian brethren who still have the courage to refuse to bow their necks under this ungodly pressuring. I can understand somewhat the strain and stress, the anxieties and cares of the Christian labor man whose livelihood for himself and for his family is threatened, but I cannot understand how one can be called Christian who would persecute a Christian brother who has enough spiritual fiber to say no to a godless union. I have often said to my people that when the day of anti-christ comes we will have no trouble to discern who our brethren are. And I am inclined to make that judgment even now. Those are not my Christian brethren who would cast me from my job because I refuse to with them join such ungodly pressure organizations for material ends. I denounce them as hypocrites who purport themselves to be Christian and so conduct themselves.

And what shall we say about this so-called squeeze play of ungodly unionism? Unless it is stopped, (and as I see it, it can be stopped only temporarily if at all), we are fast running into a state of affairs that could easily be the end of all our so-called freedoms. I say so-called freedoms because in the strict sense of the word they do not properly and correctly evaluate and express true freedom which can never be lost. I can lose economic, social and even religious freedom and still be perfectly free. The latter is the portion of the child of God who though he is persecuted and loses everything even his life, still stands in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. This is indeed the blessed heritage

of the children of God which no man, nor union of men can take from us.

That does not mean that we do not also cherish the other so-called freedoms. We do, and for these we are also willing and ready to exert ourselves. The constitution of our country is supposed to guarantee them to us. Those who are clothed with the mantle of government in our land are sworn to preserve this constitution. Ours is then the duty to put into office men who will dare to keep it, and to remove from office those who flinch. Moreover, so long as this is possible, we can still raise our voices in protest against these ungodly practices by instructing our constituency in the art of blocking the place so that the stragem of the squeeze play becomes non-effective, dreadful as it may be. This we can do in our churches by maintaining the incompatibility of union and church membership. If all Christians were of the same caliber as the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches there could be, it seems to me, a considerable blocking at the home plate that would put the unions back on their heels.

M.S.

GOD LOVETH THE RIGHTEOUS, HIS
GOODNESS IS SURE

God loveth the righteous, His goodness is sure,
He never forsaketh the good and the pure;
Yet once my faith faltered, I envied the proud,
In doubt and disquiet my spirit was bowed.

The wicked are prospered and firm in their strength,
No pangs do they suffer, though death come at length;
They are not in trouble as other men are,
The plagues of their fellows they view from afar.

In garments of boasting and violence decked,
With wealth more abundant than heart could expect,
They scoff, and the helpless they proudly oppress,
The heavens and the earth they assume to possess.

Despising God's people, they cause them to drain
The cup of oppression, injustice, and pain;
They question God's knowledge and boldly defy
The might and the justice of God the Most High.

The wicked, grown wealthy, have comfort and peace,
While I, daily chastened, see troubles increase,
And, wronging God's children, I cried in my pain,
That clean hands are worthless and pure hearts are vain.

As when one awaking forgetteth his dream,
So God will despise them, though great they may seem;
My envy was senseless, my grief was for nought,
Because I was faithless, and foolish my thought.

Psalm 73: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7