



"In Thy Light Shall
We See Light"

BEACON-LIGHTS

FOR
YOUNG PROTESTANTS

- *Editorial*
by Rev. C. Hanko
- *Bible Outlines*
by Rev. P. De Boer
- *Discussion on the Canons*
by Rev. H. Hoeksema
- *Book Review*
by Rev. L. Vermeer
- *For Readers Who Cannot Read*
by John Piersma

BEACON-LIGHTS

for
Young Protestants

MONTHLY PERIODICAL OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEDERATION

Vol. I

APRIL, 1941

No. 4

Editorials

Spring

The boisterous wind picks up the falling rain-drops and flings them clattering against the window pane. All day long heavy skies drop their moisture while icy winds spend their fury in sweeping gusts. Long, naked arms of ice-coated trees bend clumsily before the savage onslaught of the storm. Night closes in swiftly today, changing the misty gloom into murky darkness. Even the corner light looks dismally on as the wind continues to lash the disgruntled spirit of each passerby.

Creation groans.

Yet it groans in hope.

Ah, it seemed to me that it was despair.

Spring, summer, autumn, winter; each giving way before the other, and then all over again.

One moment all is warm and pleasant, fit for the tender rose and snow-white lily, full of vigor and vim. And then the hand of death deliberately wipes it away. Earthquakes, floods, icy winds carrying their burden of snow or rain, burning sun and blistering drought. Devastations of every kind. Ever repeated, ever intensified, all through the ages.

One moment the sun strides majestically to the zenith of the heavens, pauses a fleeting second, and then is on his way to the distant West; night stalking in his trail. Passing days and weeks and months and years. As but a shadow. And man's days on earth pass with it. All his wisdom, his

inventive genius, his advancements, his treasures, his glories.

"Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes.
Each morning sees his task begun,
Each evening sees its close."

And when I looked at man, I said: All is vanity.

Why does the "vicious circle" always go on revolving? Why does not creation give up in despair? Why continue groaning wearily under the curse?

Why should it, if it did not groan in hope?

* * * *

No wind now, no sign of rain, nor a single fleecy cloud in the unspotted azure bright and clear over head. A yellow glow has streaked the eastern sky. The trees stand in rapt attention before the triumphant march of day, banishing darkness before it. A daring robin bursts into song in response to the challenge of the dawn.

The trees have been aroused from their long slumber and have donned a new garment of youthful green. The fields have also come to life, adorning themselves in sparkling splendor. The seedlings in the earth awaken to the warm rays of the sun.

Spring time is the time of resurrection.

For creation groans. Even audibly.

Always groaning in hope.

Almighty God speaks to us in parables.

He who called the things that were not as if they were, and sustains them in His power.

causes the heavens to declare His glory, the day to utter speech and the night to show forth wisdom.

He sustains all things on the basis of His promise, even while He subjects the unwilling creature to vanity, in hope. Therefore, the creature waits in earnest expectation for the manifestation of the sons of God. (Rom. 8:19-22). It, to, will be delivered from the bondage of corruption in that day when He shall make all things new.

Hope maketh not ashamed.

This we know, for once the heavens were rent and the Son of God came into the likeness of our sinful flesh. In our human nature He entered into death and burst its portals wide open.

Death is swallowed up in victory, for GOD raised JESUS from the dead. At the break of dawn.

The firstfruits of our resurrection.

He lives, and we, too, shall live.

Even as we have hoped in THEE.

C. H.

Bible Outlines

OUTLINE XIII

Fasting

FIRST WEEK OF APRIL

MATT. 6:16-18—"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

I. FASTING IN GENERAL:

A. The practise of fasting is frequently referred to in the Scriptures, both in the New and in the Old Testament. The Old *Fasting Practised both in the Old and in the New Testaments.* Testament makes mention of Moses fasting, Ex. 34:28; Elijah fasted, I Kings 19:8; Nineveh fasted, Jonah 3:6; Israel fasted at Mizpeh, I Sam. 7:6; David fasted, II Sam. 12:16, etc. But also the New Testament speaks of it: Jesus fasted, Matt. 4:2; John's disciples, Lk. 5:33; the Christian Church at Antioch, Acts 13:2,3. See also I Cor. 7:5; II Cor. 11:27, etc.

B. Fasting consists in the practise of abstaining from *certain* (partial fast) or from *all* (total fast) food, for a longer or shorter time (one day,

seven days, forty days), with a view to mortify the appetites, to express grief or to deprecate an expected evil. In so far as it consisted of the abstinence from food, it is comparable to the present day "dieting", advocated by many. However, in so far as the *purpose* of this abstinence is concerned, a great difference must be noted. The purpose of dieting is bodily health and a "slim figure"; the purpose of fasting, as a religious rite, was spiritual.

C. Fasting as a distinct rite was done:

1. Primarily to express sorrow over sin, and thus denotes humiliation. I Sam. 7:6; Jonah 3:6. Great grief frequently robs men of their appetites; bitter sorrow makes food revolting. It is easy to see, that fasting became a common method employed to express sorrow and humiliation.

2. To mortify the appetites of the body and to devote one's self the better to prayer. See Acts 13:2; I Cor. 7:5. The fundamental notion of fasting is that a continually stuffed body cannot devote itself wholly to spiritual things. E.g. a minister is not at his best to preach, nor the audience to hear, after a heavy meal.

Hence fasting was primarily a means to an end, not something of value in itself.

D. Must We Fast?

It is noteworthy that although Scripture frequently speaks of fasting, it nowhere makes fasting obligatory, except in Lev. 23:26-32. Israel,

Fasting not Required. under the influence of its teachers, introduced many fasts. But these were only traditions of men, not ordinances of God. The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays). Zechariah 7:3, 5ff. speaks of fasts in the fourth, fifth and seventh months. None of these fasts, however, were ordained of God. The *only* fast that Israel was required to keep was that of the Great Day of Atonement, Lev. 23:26-32. This fast was fulfilled in Golgotha and the Atonement of Christ, and has therefore ceased to be binding for the church since Pentecost. Hence, we conclude fasting is not required.

However, neither does Scripture condemn fasting. Fasting is permissible, provided it be more than merely an empty form. It is no sin to fast.

Permissible and Valuable. If it were, then Christ would not have fasted, nor Paul, nor the Christians at Antioch. We might even add, that fasting either from some or from all food, is at times a very good thing. Over-eating is always sin. But even on Sundays a partial fast observed by Christians would make it possible for many a mother to come to church in the morning who is now busy with the preparation of a hearty meal. A little more fasting on Sundays would find less sleepers in church also. And so, it would be conducive to our *spiritual* welfare.

Although we admit that Scripture does not prescribe a ritual fast, not even once a year, for the New Testament church,

Spiritual Fasting Required. *fasting in its spiritual significance is required.* Consult Is. 58:3-7. We *must* fast from sin, we *must* deny the lusts of the flesh, we *must* keep the body under and not allow its appetites to lead us away from wholehearted attention on the spiritual things.

QUESTIONS: What similarity and what great difference is there between fasting and dieting? May we diet? Does Scripture require fasting? If not, is fasting sinful? Did our Reformed fathers of the Reformation times and afterward practise fasting? Do the Catholics practise fasting? If so, is it a partial or a total fast, and when do they practise it? Should Christians today fast in any sense? Should Christians practise self-denial in respect to eating, smoking, etc?

II. WHAT CHRIST SAID ABOUT FASTING:

A. Christ Condemned the Fasting of the Hypocrites: vs. 16

1. The Pharisees fasted "to be seen of men". Their object was the honour of men.

They were "hypocrites". They appeared pious, but were not. They "played", *The Fasting of Hypocrites.* It was only pretence. Their heart was evil and not in at all.

3. Because they sought the praise of men, they "disfigured" their faces. Perhaps unshaved, hair uncombed, faces unwashed.

QUESTIONS: Why did the Pharisees fast on Mondays and on Thursdays? Which was the lesser sin: the outright wickedness of the publicans and sinners who revealed themselves as they were, or the pious hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees? If someone piously sits in church to leave the impression of piety, but in his heart hates God and His Word, does he commit the same sin the Pharisees committed?

B. How the Citizens of the Kingdom are to Fast, vs. 17, 18:

1. Fasting must be from the heart, sincere, and not mere "outward show". Only such true fasting has a reward.

2. "Anoint thy head, and wash thy face". This means: Your fasting must be before God, not outward show. Don't tell the world about it. Only God need know it. Let your fasting be true humiliation over sin, and self-denial to God's glory.

QUESTIONS: Should Christians put on a black shirt, go without a tie, etc., to show humility? Should we fast on Prayer Days, etc?

FILL-INS

Abimelech, the son of Gideon, is sometimes called the world's first dictator.

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Psalm 117 is the 595th chapter of the Bible, with 595 before and after. The central verse is Psalm 118:8. The longest chapter Psalm 119.

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It was a farmer who built the first city.

* * * *

Seven common herbs mentioned in the Bible are: anise, balm, coriander, mint, hyssop, rue and wormwood. These are still common today.

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There were two people who never died. But there were also two people who were never born. Who are they?

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OUTLINE XIV

Undivided Service vs. Mammon Worship

SECOND WEEK OF APRIL

MATT. 6:19-24—Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

The righteousness of the kingdom in respect to the service of God demands two things: (1) It demands *true* service from the heart, and not mere outward show, vss. 1-18. (2) It demands further *wholehearted, undivided* service, vss. 19-34. The present outline treats of whole-hearted, undivided service, and shows how Mammon worship is incompatible with the righteousness of the kingdom.

I. LAYING UP TREASURES, vss. 19-21:

A. The Meaning of the Exhortation Itself:

1. By "treasures" are to be understood all man sets his heart on, trusts in, and seeks as his good.

What it Means. 2. "Treasures upon earth" are all the earthly things, such as silver and gold, raiment, and even honor, pleasure and power.

3. Note that the Lord does not say. Do not lay up many treasures upon earth, or something similar; but, don't lay up any treasures at *all* upon earth. No earthly thing may be a treasure for us.

4. The citizens of the kingdom must, indeed, lay up treasures, but they must lay them up *in heaven*, only in heaven. This implies that Christians are to serve God and Him alone, and do His will also in connection with all earthly things. Earthly things and possessions may only be the means, the capital, with which to serve God.

B. Why this Exhortation:

1. Because also the citizens of the kingdom so long as they are still in the flesh *Dire Need.* have dire need of it. They, too, are by nature earthly minded, carnal, prone to lay up treasures on earth.

2. Because it is sure to lead to disillusion. The treasures on earth are subject to corruption and decay, "where moth and rust doth corrupt".

Earthly Treasures Perish. Yea, frequently, these treasures are gone before the elements of nature have done their destructive work, for "thieves break through and steal". Earthly goods, earthly honor and pleasure perish. They endure but for a season. Earth's banks are never safe. Besides, men are but for a moment, and then they go on to their eternal reward and must leave all behind.

3. Because treasures laid up in heaven endure. Heaven alone is moth-proof, rust-proof, thief-proof. Heaven's banks alone are safe. The fear of God endures forever, and brings a rich reward. The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled and fadeth not away, I Pet. 1:14.

4. Because "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also". Where you lay up treasures reveals where your heart is. From *Your Heart: Where Is It?* the heart are the issues of life. This is principally true, but also relatively. In so far as anyone lays up any treasures on earth, in so far his heart is still earthly and sinful.

QUESTIONS: May Christians save money? What is Christian stewardship? What did Christ teach in the parable of the covetous fool, Lk. 12:13-21? Can one lay up treasures on earth and in heaven at the same time? Show how people who spend their goods for pleasure are guilty of laying up treasures on earth?

II. THE EYE, THE LIGHT OF THE BODY: vss. 22, 23

A. General Remarks:

1. For a better understanding of the verses it is well to bear in mind that as God created man He flooded man with light. a. God created *physical* light and the human eye to be the lamp or medium through which the whole body should have light. Physical light is very important, and the eye essential to give the body contact with it. *Three Kinds of Light.* b. God created *logical* light, and the human reason is the God-given medium that makes it possible to apprehend, interpret, and

understand. c. God created *spiritual* light, and the image of God in the narrower sense (knowledge, righteousness and holiness) is the means whereby we have contact with it. As God created man he was filled with the light of God, and walked in the light.

2. Secondly we should bear in mind that sin came. a. Sin did not make man physically blind, although the consequences of sin also affect his physical eye-sight. Death also works in the physical eye, so that he needs glasses, etc. But

sin did not mean that man became physically blind. Neither did sin make man insane. It is true that

by reason of the curse man lost his powers of intuition, by which he could simply read into the essence of things before the fall, and that in comparison to what he once possessed he has only a few glimmerings left of this original light of reason, but it is equally true that man did not lose his reason. He did not become insane, nor did he become a beast. c. But man lost *spiritual* vision. His spiritual eye became *evil* (vs. 23), *perverse, wicked*. Walking in the midst of the light of God's revelation, yea, knowing that God must be served, man is totally corrupt. All the light that is in him is darkness! He holds the knowledge of God under in unrighteousness. He is wilfully blind, imagining he sees, Jno. 9:40, 41.

3. Grace changes this. Not our *physical* eye-sight and not our *mental* eye-sight are in this life delivered from the consequences of sin — this

waits until hereafter. But our *spiritual* eye-sight is restored. Christ opens the eyes of the blind, so that they say, "Once I was blind, but now I see". They can discern the things of the kingdom of God. They are principally delivered from their blindness.

B. The Meaning in the Context:

1. Christ emphasizes this because while physical blindness is bad, mental blindness (insanity) worse, spiritual blindness is infinitely the worst of all. The latter is fatal.

2. Eye-sight is a very important thing. If the little eye is "single", i.e. good, so that it sees straight, then the whole body has light. This is true physically — the blind man's whole body is deprived of light: it is true mentally — the mentally blind man, the insane, are deprived of the normal light of reason in all their activity, and wander aimlessly in a world of their own; it is true

spiritually — the spiritually blind man as well as the insane wanders about in a world of his own making, a world which exists in his own mind alone. Spiritual blindness is fatal, for it cuts man off from the communion of the living God, from all that is truly life.

3. When men lay up treasures on earth, there is something wrong with their eye-sight. Something radically wrong. Men only lay up treasures on earth *when their spiritual eye is diseased with sin*. People act insanely, foolishly, only when their reason is affected. People only lay up treasures on earth when their spiritual eye-sight is perverse.

4. Hence, above all watch your spiritual eye-sight, as Christians. All life's activity depends upon it.

QUESTIONS: What three kinds of blindness can be spoken of? Is man's spiritual eye-sight merely dimmed? How does vs. 23b prove "total depravity"? How is physical eye-sight affected by sin? How is mental eye-sight affected by sin? Can the unregenerate see the things of the kingdom, Jno. 3:3? What does spiritual eye-sight have to do with laying up treasures?

III. GOD OR MAMMON, vs. 24

A. Also this vs. contains an argument against laying up treasures on earth. Such laying up of treasures is Mammon worship.

B. Note the Following:

1. The word Mammon, a word of Hebrew origin, was the term commonly employed in Jesus' day to denote *money, goods, possessions*. In idiomatic American it might be fittingly rendered: *the Almighty Dollar*.

2. Material things, especially the Almighty Dollar as the medium of exchange, is conceived of as a Master. And indeed money is powerful: it brings honor and prestige, it buys a name, supplies the pleasures of life, etc. Generally, it is used in the service of sin, when Lk. 16:11 speaks of "unrighteous Mammon". It is the Idol of the world, to which all men since the fall render obiesance.

3. Notice, that Jesus speaks of *servng* Mammon. Men think their money serves *them*; in fact, however, the wicked are servants of *it*. The word "serve" refers to such service as a bond-slave renders to his master and owner, and denotes utter subjection to the master's every wish. To be God's servant is not slavery, but true freedom.

4. Men serve either God or Mammon. It is an "either-or" question, never "both-and", nor "neither-nor". This is true in respect to the deepest attitude of our heart generally, as well as of every single action.

5. Christ emphasizes the utter impossibility of serving both God and Mammon. This is the emphatic point of the text. There is also need of emphasizing the impossibility of a synthesis of the two. Such emphasis is not necessary for

the wicked world, since it always merely serves Mammon and makes for *Synthesis*. no attempt to serve God. But the church of God as it historically exists in the world repeatedly makes itself guilty of wedding God and Mammon, of seeking both. The danger of synthesis always threatens the church, through the sin that remains in us. So the Pharisees tried to harmonize the worship of God and Mammon, Lk. 16:14. It is this attempt to fuse the two that mars the church's life here below. For remember, although God and Mammon cannot be wed, the fact remains that men ever anew attempt it. It always ends in spiritual failure, for no more than light and darkness can be harmonized can the service of God be fused with the service of Mammon. God requires wholehearted, undivided service.

QUESTIONS: Does the natural man look upon the service of Mammon as a bondage from which he seeks to be delivered? May a Christian ever seek wealth? Is the service of God slavery? What shows that God's people today often seek to serve God and Mammon? How can Christians fight against the prevalent Mammon worship of the world in its influence upon their own lives, in the church, etc?

OUTLINE XV

Trust In God versus Worry

THIRD WEEK OF APRIL

MATT. 6:25-34—Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not so much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

There is a close connection between this section and the preceding, which is suggested by the "therefore" of vs. 25. The thought runs as follows: Because the citizens of the kingdom are to render wholehearted service and trust to God, therefore also they should not worry. Undivided trust in God precludes worry.

I. THE CAREFREE SPIRIT TO WHICH CHRIST EXHORTS, vs. 25. "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. . . ."

A. "Take no thought" is, in our present day English, an unhappy translation. Scripture does

BEACON LIGHTS

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not condemn the *legitimate thoughtfulness* which Scripture elsewhere commands, Prov. 6:6; II Cor. 12:14; I Tim. 5:18, etc. Chris-

Anxiety or Worry. Christians owe legitimate thoughtfulness to the supply of their material needs and those of the church.

But Christ condemns all that goes beyond that, and especially worry. The Revised Version translates, "Be not anxious", and this correctly so. Anxiety about the bread-question Christ condemns. Christians must not worry, must never worry, for worry is sin. Christians should be carefree *in the Lord*.

B. Christ mentions food and raiment, but this does not mean that Christians may be anxious about other things. All worry is sin. However, Christ is here thinking of our material needs. These things are generally the main cause of worry.

QUESTIONS: What does I Tim. 5:8 make very evident? Is indolence a sin? Do we usually worry about our actual material needs, or about our imaginary needs?

II. CONSIDERATIONS THAT DEMAND SUCH A CAREFREE SPIRIT. vss. 25c-30.

Tenderly and lovingly Jesus points out that there is no need at all for worry. On the contrary, there is every reason for *No Reason To Worry.* such a carefree, trusting and happy bearing. The world may speak of a "bread-question", but for the Christian there is no *question*. It is a question answered in advance.

A. First Argument — vs. 25c, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

Jesus here reasons: If God gave life, will He then not also give the wherewithal to continue to live? Most assuredly! No more than an employer will hire a man to work in his shop and then give him no work to do, no more will God give life and then withhold the means whereby to live.

B. Second Argument — vs. 26, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

If God supplies the needs of the birds, who have no instinct to lay up provision for a future season, shall God not certainly supply the needs of His dear children? Notice, "*your* heavenly Father" feedeth them. Certainly, that Father will also take care of His children which are of much greater value to Him.

C. Third Argument — vs. 27, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"

The Greek allows a twofold translation. It can be rendered as our version has it, but it may also mean, Who by taking thought can lengthen the span of his life? The meaning is: You cannot worry yourself into growth or a longer span of life. Worry is fruitless, as well as useless. You can, humanly speaking, only worry yourself *to death*.

D. Fourth Argument — vss. 28-30, "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you,"

The word translated "lillies" simply means wild flowers, and does not say exactly which is meant. Undoubtedly Jesus had in mind the lillies for which Palestine was known. What a marvelous beauty God lavishly bestows upon the flowers of the field, which are but for a short time! Even the grass of our lawns, how beautiful this green carpet is. Under the microscope the beauty of a single stem of grass is so marvelous, that if we realized it as we were mowing our lawn, I'm afraid we would grieve too much to go on. If God so lavishly bestows beauty upon the field, how much more he will clothe His children. Yes, God frequently not only clothes, but gives us much more raiment than we really need. Why then should Christians worry, with such a God as their Father?

QUESTIONS: Should Christians be interested in the beauty of nature? Why does Jesus compare the glory of the lilies to the glory of Solomon?

III. THE TRUE CHARACTER OF WORRY:

A. Worry is "little faith", and therefore Christians should not worry. vs.

The Root of Worry: 30c and 31. "O ye of little faith, what shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

1. Men continually are talking about these questions. Even the citizens of the kingdom worry about them; but they should not.

2. Worry is "little faith". Little faith is not the same as *no faith*. By no means, it is faith,

but faith mixed with sin. The Bible speaks of "weak faith", "faith as a mustard seed", "great faith", etc. Instead of "little faith", Lk. 11:29 speaks of a "doubtful mind". Hence little faith is a faith not wholly resigned to and trusting in God. It is a faith that needs to increase and grow.

3. Hence growth in the faith is the only way to attain to the carefree spirit Christ calls us to. It cannot be attained by laying up treasures, for a sense of security based on things comes and goes with them. It can only be attained by growth in faith. The only antidote for worry is faith; the root of all worry is unbelief.

B. Worry is also conformity to the world, vs. 32, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of them."

Worry is Worldliness.

1. The Gentiles are first of all the heathen as opposed to Israel as nation, and then also the children of the world as opposed to the true citizens of the kingdom.

2. Instead of serving God the wicked world seeks the temporal things. Think of the parable of the covetous fool. You can expect this of unbelievers. You can also expect them to worry, for they do not confess an Almighty God and Father.

3. When Christians worry they are guilty of conformity to the world. Not only theater attendance, dancing, etc. are worldimindedness, but also worry is worldimindedness. Christians must be transformed also in this respect.

4. Neither is there any need at all for this anxiety, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things". That He knows the needs, means also that He will supply them.

QUESTIONS: What four kinds of faith do Reformed people speak of? Is "little faith" true faith? How only does "little faith" grow? Discuss what is meant by conformity to the world, and mentions various forms of it? Is worry a common one? Does worry ever seriously affect the church?

IV. THE ONLY RIGHT WAY OF LIVING FOR CHRISTIANS, vss. 33, 34

A. Positively, vs. 33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

1. Christians are to *seek* the kingdom of God. The word "to seek" means "to strive after", and implies strenuous effort. Neither must we forget that although the kingdom of God remains from beginning to end a *gift* of God in

Seek the Kingdom.

Christ, the grace of God in Christ operative in the believers makes them *seek and strive*. They must *work out* their own salvation, just because God works in them to will and to do, Phil. 2:12, 13.

2. They must seek the kingdom of God *by seeking righteousness*, the righteousness of God. Such is the meaning of the appendage, "and his righteousness".

3. They must seek it *first*. This does not mean in point of time, but logically, principally. Lk. 12:3 omits the word "first" altogether. As a matter of fact, the thought is that Christians must only, and always, be seeking the righteousness of the kingdom.

4. But what about our material needs then? "And all these things shall be added unto you". They are guaranteed to us, God will most certainly supply all we really need as long as we live. Therefore, Christians can wholly attend to the righteousness of the kingdom, and need never worry and thereby sin.

B. Negatively, vs. 34, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

1. Once more Christ exhorts against anxiety. He adds "for the morrow", since *Today's Evil Sufficient.* anxiety is always looking into the future, and weighed down by it. God is there tomorrow also.

2. The curtain of evening is a curtain which God draws between today and tomorrow. We may not attempt to push it aside. Besides, the evil of every day is sufficient for the day, why should we by worry load on ourselves what may be in the morrow.

3. From the last part speaking of the evil of every day, it is evident that Christ does not mean to promise that God will always give His people prosperity.

QUESTIONS: May Christians seek material things at all? What does Christ mean by "seek"? Just how must Christians seek righteousness? May Christians hanker after luxuries and abundance? If we go to church on the first day of the week, may we then the rest of the week seek the material things? What should come first in our lives: Christian education for our children or a new home and car? Is a job that requires absence from catechism right for Christian young people to take? May Christians feel free to leave the Prot. Ref. Churches if they can get a job in another city?

OUTLINE XVI

Captious Criticism and Spiritual Discernment

FOURTH WEEK OF APRIL

MATT. 7:1-6 — Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

The previous chapter spoke of the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to *God*; this new section (vss. 1-12) treats of that righteousness in respect to our relation to *men*. Some interpreters of the Sermon believe there is no unity of thought at all in these verses — they consist only of several unconnected sayings.

Our Relation to Men.

Although we admit the connection is more loose than in other parts of the Sermon, we refuse to admit that there is no connection between these verses. The entire Sermon is one grand whole, every part related to the other, and therefore we also expect that here. Besides, after the Sermon has in chapter 6 spoken of the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to our relation to God (the first table of the law), we expect Christ to speak of our relation to men (the second table of the law). The latter is also the case. Vss. 1-5 speak of judging the brother, vs. 6 of recognizing men who are dogs and swine. Besides, vs. 12 is the so-called Golden Rule according to which we are to treat the *neighbour*. The *therefore* with which the vs. is introduced also points to a conclusion from the preceding. As we go on with our outlines, we expect to trace the unity of thought more exactly, but sufficient has been shown to warrant the statement that the under-

lying thought of these verses is: the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to our relation to *men*.

I. CAPTIOUS JUDGING, vss. 1-5:

A. Judge not, vs. 1a:

1. From vss. 3, 4 and 5 it is evident that Christ means judgment *Must We Never Forget?* of the *brother*. It is a judgment of *persons*, yes, even of brethren.

2. When Christ says, "Judge not" He does not mean that *in no instance, never*, are we to judge the brother in any sense. This cannot be for then Scripture conflicts with Scripture which cannot be. The magistrates, whether of church or state, *must* judge, according to God's Word. Christ cannot therefore be condemning such official judgment. Furthermore, Christians are told by Christ in Jno. 7:24 to "judge righteous judgment", and this implies judgment also. And, finally, vs. 5 itself when it shows the proper way to judge implies that Christ does not condemn all judging.

3. What Christ does condemn? All sinful judging, all love-less uncharitable, hypocritical judging. He condemns all judgment that is without mercy and love, that is exer-

The Judging Condemned. cized in a spirit of self-righteousness and haughtiness. This interpretation is sustained by: (1) The parallel passage from Lk. 6:38-42, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven". (2) It is sustained by the consistent teaching of Scripture, as well as by other passages of the Sermon itself (5:7; 5:21-25; 6:14, 15, etc.)

B. Reasons why Christ warns against such Judging, vss. 1b-5:

1. Because such captious criticism brings *sure punishment*. Vss. 1b, 2, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be

Judging Brings a Like Reward. measured to you again". This means that as you treat others, others will treat you. Christ, in

harmony with the consistent reference of the Sermon to future punishment also surely refers to the judgment to come. However, it is frequently true that people who are always criticising and condemning others receive a like return from men. See Lk. 6:37, 38 for proof that it is the return reward of *men* that is on the foreground.

2. Because such captious criticism reveals that the person himself is *guilty of gross sin*, vs. 3.

Anyone who always goes about condemning other Christians for their faults, may well take inventory of his own spiritual life. His loveless, uncharitable attitude shows there is something radically wrong with himself. He sees the *mote* (a little *chip* or *sliver*) in his brother's eye, but he is entirely forgetful of the *beam* in his own eye. The beam is a large rafter, and stands for a large *fault*. What is this fault? Perhaps some certain gross sins the man may be guilty of himself? I don't think so. If that were the case vs. 5 would mean that one would have to get rid of all his own great faults first before he could speak to the brother. Dare anyone ever say that he is rid of all great faults? In my opinion the beam in his own eye represents not any great fault, but the one fault of self-righteousness, of love-less, merciless criticism. The attitude revealed in condemning a brother to destruction, the attitude that has no room for mercy and forgiveness, that destroys but does not seek to save is the beam.

3. Because such hateful criticism makes it utterly *impossible to aid the erring brother*, vs. 5, 6. A judgment of love is demanded by Scripture. The Bible does not mean that we shall not see the brother's faults, but we shall see them in connection with Christ and in mercy. To help the brother out of his sins — and this is our Christian brotherly duty — demands that the beam of merciless, uncharitable, unfor-giving criticism be cast out. Then there is mercy, love, forgiveness, and one can "see clearly" to cast the little sliver out of the brother's eye. Not a haughty spirit of self-righteousness, but a humble spirit of love and mercy only can help the brother overcome his faults. Such a spirit of love is the *only* spirit compatible with the righteousness of the kingdom.

QUESTIONS: In what sense must Christians judge one another, and in what sense may they not do it? Are Christians bound to help one another overcome faults? Is self-righteous judging a prevalent sin in the midst of the church? How can it be counter-acted, if it is there? How does captious criticism undermine society life very frequently?

II. DISCRIMINATION IN THE EXERCISE OF HOLY THINGS: vs. 6

In the above section Christ warns against self-righteous judgment and by implication ex-

horts to love and mercy in judgment of the brother. This verse, "Give not that *Holy Pearls*, which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you", in our estimation, limits the previous warning. The proper use of the brotherly-admonition has its limits — it must not become a casting of the holy pearls to the swine and dogs.

A. The Holy Pearls — What are They?

1. The word "pearls" suggests things that are precious. Notice, that Christ speaks of them as "your" pearls, i.e. they belong in an especial manner to the citizens of the kingdom and are esteemed highly by them.

2. The term "that which is holy", or simply "the holy thing" (as in the Greek), implies that these things are separated in an especial manner for the service of God. The Old Testament speaks of holy bread, the holy temple, the holy place, the holy land, the holy Sabbath, the holy oil, the holy seed, the holy city, the holy covenant, the holy angels, etc. In every instance it means that these persons or things have been set apart from the common sphere to be consecrated to the Lord and His service. In the same way, we today speak of holy baptism, holy communion, holy apostles, holy offices, holy Sabbath, holy table of the Lord, holy Gospel, etc.

3. Hence, it is evident from the analogy of Scripture that by "that which is holy" and by "your pearls" Christ means all those sacred things that are of great value in our Christian religion. The preaching of the Word is a holy thing, and must not be despised as a common thing. The Lord's Supper is a holy Supper and must be so treated.

B. The Dogs and the Swine:

1. As such: *Dogs* were in Palestine held in very low esteem. They were street scavengers; ran wild as our present-day wolves. To be called a dog or to be eaten by the dogs was the worst possible thing that could happen to one. See I Kings 14:11; 16:41; I Sam. 17:43; II Kings 8:13; Is. 56:10. *Swine* were unclean animals, and the eating of swine's flesh was an abomination. Cf. Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8; Is. 66:3, 17.

2. Jesus refers to *some men* as swine and dogs. From the viewpoint of the Old Testament the heathen were dogs and swine, Matt. 15:27. Very likely Jesus here means wicked people who

creep into the church for other reasons than the faith, and destroy the church. In Phil. 3:2 Paul warns the church for false teachers and calls them "dogs". Peter in II Pet. 3:22 speaking of those who fell away from the faith says, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire". Hence "dogs" and "swine" are not the true children of God, but those people in the midst of the church visible that reveal themselves as outright wicked. They want the world, and the things below. Spiritually they rut in the mire of sin.

C. Don't give the Holy Pearls to the Dogs and the Swine:

1. If men become wicked, and show that they want sin, don't continue admonishing them. Don't keep on warning one that goes on cursing, who perhaps will only curse the

Discrimination in the Exercise of Holy Things. more if you warn him. Don't keep on preaching the gospel to them, but shake the dust off your feet and let them have their mire. Don't open up the Lord's Table to them, the Table which is only for the children of the

kingdom. Don't keep them on the rolls as baptized members. Don't make them ministers, elders and deacons.

2. Why Discrimination must be Exercised:

- a. Because these things are holy!
- b. Because they are "your pearls", intended for you!
- c. Because it is dangerous to cast pearls before swine. Swine want garbage, not pearls. If you give them pearls, they'll tear you. This is also true in the church. If you let them be members of your church, they will use their influence to undermine the church. If you make them ministers, they will by false doctrine lead the church astray. If you make them elders, they will drive out the true people of God. Such evil men always destroy the church. Don't give your holy things to them.

QUESTIONS: What are holy things, and why are they holy? Is the dog ever spoken of favorably in Scripture? How can we tell which men are dogs and swine? Are erring children of God to be treated as "dogs and swine"? In what way can the church of today learn a lesson from this verse?

Discussion on the Canons

These notes have been contributed by Rev. H. Hoeksema and edited by Rev. C. Hanko.

CHAPTER II

Article 4.

61. Why is the death of Christ of infinite value? Article 4 teaches that the death of the Son of God is of infinite value, because:
- (1) It was the Person of the Son that died.
 - (2) His death was a bearing of the wrath of God. No human being could so taste death in our nature and suffer the feeling of the wrath of God as the Son of God Himself.

Article 5.

62. Is the promise of the gospel general or particular?
- The promise of the gospel, according to article 5, is in its contents not general, but particular. For it is the promise of eternal life, not to all without distinction, but to them that believe only. And since faith is the

gift of God to the elect only, it is essentially for these that the promise of the gospel is meant.

63. How did the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 interpret this promise?
- The Christian Reformed Churches referred to this article as proof for the first point, which teaches that the preaching of the gospel is a well-meant offer of salvation on the part of God to all that hear the gospel, accordingly they interpret the promise of the gospel as being general.
64. Is the preaching of this promise particular or general? How general and how particular is it?
- According to article 5 the preaching of the promise of the gospel is to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel. This is general in as far as it does not only come to the elect, but also to the reprobate; it is,

however, particular in as far as God in His good pleasure does not send the gospel to all men that are, have been or shall be in the world.

65. Is the command to repent and believe general or particular?

The command to repent and believe is general. For God does not abandon or relinquish His demand that man shall love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. He cannot allow the sinner the right to sin and not to repent. To repent and believe is the obligation of all men. But from this obligation does not follow that they are also able of themselves or that God is willing to give them the grace of repentance. The latter He gives only to the elect.

Article 6.

66. In what sense, then, are *many* called by the gospel?

That many, therefore, are called by the gospel, does not mean that God offers them grace while they reject this; but that outwardly the gospel is preached to them, and that they are sincerely placed before their obligation to repent before the living God.

67. To what is their unbelief to be imputed, according to this article? Is this all that may be said of this in the light of Scripture?

The unbelief of those that do not accept the gospel, is, according to this article, not due to the insufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, but must be imputed to themselves. This is, of course, true. The guilt of unbelief is man's. Yes, although the guilt of their unbelief must surely be imputed to man, this is not the final word on this matter. For the Scriptures teach, that in His righteous judgment God hardens whom He wills, Rom. 9:18; and that because of this hardening judgment of God the Jews of Jesus' time could not believe. John 12:39, 40.

Article 7.

68. To what must the faith and deliverance of believers be attributed?

The faith and salvation of believers must be attributed, not to any merit of their own, but solely to the grace of God. In God's counsel this grace is given to them in Christ from eternity. God, therefore, bestows this gift of faith on whom He wills, that is, on the elect. And these elect are not distinguished by any merit, virtue or act of their

own, but solely by that sovereign counsel. Nothing on the part of man precedes that gift of grace; it precedes every good work.

Article 8.

69. What is the chief thought of article 8?

The chief thought of article 8 is that according to the sovereign counsel of God the death of Christ is efficacious for the elect only and that Christ, therefore, should bestow upon them all the blessings of salvation merited by Him for them in the blood of the cross.

70. Whom did God redeem through the blood of the cross? See II, B, 1, 5, 6, 7.

The Arminians argued that God ordained His Son to the death of the cross, without a definite purpose or decree to save any. But as far as God is concerned all men have been received in the state of reconciliation. This grace of reconciliation is also freely offered to all without exception. But whether it shall be appropriated and, therefore, be efficacious, depends on the free will of man joining itself to that offer of grace. It will be evident that there is no conceivable difference between that view and the first point of 1924. The Arminians also argued that it would be folly to say that Christ died for those whom God already and eternally loved. These did not need the death of Christ. Over against these errors article 8 maintains that Christ, according to the sovereign counsel of God, redeemed the elect and them only.

71. What did Christ purchase by His death? See II, B, 2-4.

It stands to reason that the Arminians must needs deny the vicariously atoning character of the death of Christ. They taught that Christ merely merited the right for God to open a new way to deal with man, that he might have another chance of life. This new way did not consist of justification by faith in the blood of Christ, but in this, that God would regard faith itself as the perfect obedience of the law and worthy of eternal life. The fathers, however, teach in article 8 that Christ merited for His people justification and the justifying faith, all the saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as regeneration and sanctification, forgiveness and purification, and final perseverance and eternal life.

Article 9.

72. What does article 9 teach?

This article teaches that this purpose of God

unto the salvation of the elect as it proceeds from everlasting love, has always been powerfully accomplished in the past, is being accomplished in the present and shall be ac-

complished until the whole Church for whom Christ died, shall I have been gathered. And all this in spite of all the powers of opposition.

Book Review

TWICE TRIED, by Anne S. Swaan. Published in England. Sold by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. Price \$1.00.

"Twice Tried" is the apt title of this book of fiction. The story is woven about an English family, giving us, therefore, a very clear glimpse into English life, which in itself is educational. Robert Angus Sr., whose wife died some years ago, has watched his son, Robert Jr., grow into a young man of keen mind and ready to gradually take over a great part of the work of the elder Angus in the profitable banking business in which they were engaged. The younger Angus was truly a devoted son, upright and very different from the usual run of young people in that he was serious and conscientious in all that he undertakes to do. He was in his late twenties and being human had somewhat centered his affections upon a pretty girl, Amelia Burdett, who was a spoiled and very cultured friend of the family.

When a vacancy occurred in the bank, the elder Angus suddenly proposed to his son that they fill in the vacancy with a young man, an orphan, who was being cared for by a widowed aunt. The younger Robert Angus reluctantly consented to his appointment, for he noticed that the elder Robert Angus intended this widowed aunt for his own wife and that this young nephew of hers would consequently find a place in the Angus home. When this happened it developed that this young nephew, though outwardly attractive, was, nevertheless, a ne'er-do-well sort of fellow. A strong dislike developed between the two young men, which was aggravated by the fact that the young nephew began paying too much attention to Amelia Burdett, who now was engaged to be married to Robert Jr. Amelia, who had been brought up in a Christian home, felt keenly the deception she herself was practicing, but was brought under the beguiling influence of this ne'er-do-well, whose name was Rolfe Ransome. The latter, who loved also the pleasures of sin, practiced his deception so adroitly that he was able to wean Amelia away from Robert Jr. in such a way that it was kept a secret to the

very day of the marriage of Amelia and Robert Jr. Even the night previous to the wedding Amelia and Rolfe tried a wild elopement, but the efforts of Rolfe Ransome to rob his benefactor of a huge sum of banking money failed and the elopement was thus thwarted. The deception was seen and noticed by a certain girl, Joan, who was a very good friend of Robert Jr. and Sr. and who herself admired the former greatly, although this admiration was based at this time solely on Robert Jr.'s personal integrity and honesty. However, she said not a word of this deception to her friends, but kept these things secretly in her heart, though fearful of the outcome of the marriage between Robert Jr. and Amelia Burdett.

After the marriage things seemed to go along well and both the young married people seemed happy until the old dissatisfaction of Amelia Burdett became evident again, as she became restless under the rigid though loving control of her husband, who devoted himself completely to his business and his home. Somehow Amelia became so dissatisfied with home life, that she admitted Rolfe Ransome to her home and was again brought under his influence. Matters thus became increasingly worse. Robert noticed that his wife was not entirely satisfied and showered more and more goods on her, doing all in his power to make her happy, all to no avail. This continued until one day, while upon a visit away from her home, Amelia ran away with Rolfe Ransome and took a steamer to America. This was the first terrible trial of Robert Jr. Almost unbearable was the grief of this Christian young man. Then, suddenly, and under strange circumstances he read in the London Times the announcement that the steamer on which his wife had run away with Rolfe Ransome had struck another ship and was sunk, with all on board drowned. Indeed a great trial for young Robert.

We have reviewed enough of the book to give the reader an idea of the plot of the story. It develops later that the report, that all on board the ill-fated vessel had drowned was not quite true and that Amelia had miraculously escaped. This

news came to Robert after three years, during which time he had partially overcome his grief and disappointment and had again just been made extremely happy by his marriage to Joan, the truly Christian young lady, who had nothing of this world to offer Robert Jr. except a pious soul and heart. Light again shone brightly in his life, until suddenly the news of Amelia's safety reached him and he caught a glimpse of her on a London street. This was his second trial. Surely this book is aptly titled: "Twice Tried"

We must remember that we have to deal here with fiction, and fiction is always the product of the imagination. The author attempts in this book to imagine and thus produce the life of a Christian young man as well as of a very wicked and perverse young lady. Though, therefore, much in such a book of fiction is necessarily outside of the sphere of reality, yet the life of these two is at times quite real, though not normally so. The book intends to show how sin gains dominion over a person, and that with a good bringing up. Yet, lacking the grace of God, no one can even see the kingdom of heaven. If you are disposed to devote an evening or two to easy reading of a gripping story, you have the material in this book. If there is such a thing as Christian fiction, we would place this book in that category.

AH SIN, by Sherman A. Nagel. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. A factual novel of the Hakka Chinese. 272 pages. Price: \$2.00.

Ah Sin the hero of this historical romance is a young Chinese patriot. The romance of his life is pictured amid a setting of war and revolution. At the opening of the story we find Ah Sin as the leader of a group of robbers and plunderers fighting against the Manchu dynasty. He and his band ultimately join forces with the late Doctor Sun Yat Sen the famous, so-called, Christian general of the revolution. During an encounter with the enemy Ah Sin is wounded and removed to a hospital. While convalescing here, he finds the beautiful Fa Len to whom Ah Sin had been betrothed although, according to the Chinese custom, he had never seen her. Since the earlier betrothal a bitter feud had broken out between the two families and Fa Len's parents had vowed that she would never be married to Ah Sin. Their acquaintance during Ah Sin's recovery grows into friendship and love which is expressed by both. There is a great barrier separating them; however, for La Fen had become a Christian while

Ah Sin is still an unbelieving heathen. Although they are deeply in love, Fa Len asserts that this unhappy circumstance must separate them forever unless God's grace turns the unbelieving heart of Ah Sin to embrace the Christ of God. This finally takes place through the untiring efforts of Fa Len to instruct Ah Sin in the truth of God's Word. The story closes with their marriage and resolution to devote their lives to christianizing heathen China.

Once again we are disappointed because of the lack of a true Biblical conception of conversion. The spiritual experiences of the characters seems rather superficial. Although the author has pictured real characters whom he has met, and even though we do not care to doubt the sincerity of their conversion, it is nevertheless clear that a very shallow conception of true Christianity exists, either in the mind of the author or of the characters of this book. For example, the presentation of the rebirth of China in which she turns from her old, heathen traditions to the Light which radiates from Christ is not only superficial but also untrue. Nowhere does Scripture teach such a national conversion to Christianity in the new dispensation. Scripture certainly pictures to us the awakening of the nations on the four corners of the earth. This is not an awakening or embracing of Christianity, but only an enlightenment in the natural sphere which will result in the conflict between Gog and Magog and the nominally Christian nations i.e. the nations in which Christianity has flourished in the past. China will never be Christianized as presented in this book. We repeat that we do not doubt the regeneration and conversion of a small remnant of the Chinese, but never a renewed, Christian, Chinese nation.

However, there are other features of this book which are worthy of admiration. One who reads "Ah Sin" will greatly enlarge his knowledge of the Chinese as a people. This is well worth while for they constitute an extensive nation of over 400 million souls. The customs and traditions, as well as the political struggles of the past 25 years, of this large nation are vividly and interestingly sketched. Upon careful reading one can even detect some of the motives for the present struggle between China and her aggressive neighbour, Japan. It is very evident that the author is thoroughly acquainted with China and the life of the Chinese people. He knows their aspirations and desires for he has spent more than 20 years in China making a careful study of this

interesting race, of its history and also of its present struggle.

As a romance the book is also very interesting. The author very realistically pictures the relations between young men and women in China which are strikingly interesting due to the great difference in custom and tradition between China and our own country. A very commendable feature of the book is its presentation of the sacredness of marriage and courtship. Our young people should profit from this narrative by mak-

ing this important part of their lives the subject of prayerful consideration. Young people, often, so easily neglect their calling of God in respect to one another, to confess "In Whom they believe." We must realize that only in the way of prayer for God's blessing will our courtships and marriages be a cause for true joy and happiness. These truths are certainly taught in this book. We believe, therefore, that the historical romance of Ah Sin can be profitably read by our young people.

Rev. L. Vermeer.

An Article For Readers Who Cannot Read

This article is for readers who cannot read.

That statement may arouse various reactions. To some it may sound rude, but rest assured that it is not meant to be. To others it may sound like a contradiction in terms, but it is not. To still others it may arouse disgust that the editors of this paper allow such an article to appear. After all, most everyone has been educated sufficiently to read at least, especially in this wonderful age of compulsory schooling. However, the appearance of rudeness and contradiction and impropriety arises only because of the variety of senses in which the term "reading" can be used.

Of course, anyone who has read this far can read in some sense of the word. You can guess now, therefore, what I must mean. It is simply that there are those who can read in some sense but not in others. And for these people this amateurish contribution is intended. It is for those who can read in a certain sense, but who desire to read better or in some other way than they are now able. That also implies that there are two classes of people for whom it is not intended, namely, those who can not read at all: such as infants, imbeciles, etc., and those who are masters of the art of reading, such people who can do every sort of reading and do it well. For more reasons than one the author of these lines cannot expect attention from the already expert.

Between these two extremes is the average reader. We have learned our ABC's in childhood. We can make sense out of certain types of reading material, especially if it is not too abstract, nor too closely reasoned. Local "news", the sport page, the "funnies" perhaps, all of these things are not beyond us. And yet we are well aware of the fact that we are not able to read well. We know this

in many ways, but most obviously when we attempt to read certain articles or books and find them too difficult to grasp, or when we read something that someone else has also read, and find out that he or she has discovered so much more or that we have misunderstood. Our embarrassment is increased by the fact that in our circles we are continually urged to read so that we may as men of God become "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works".

I suppose that most of us have had experiences of this sort, without knowing what to do about the situation. If we knew ourselves to belong to the common herd anyway perhaps we were content to satisfy ourselves with the explanation that we are "too dumb anyway" to hope to understand the deeper things. On the other hand, if we were presidents of societies or Sunday School teachers, or students, maybe, we just went on hoping that after all we could have done better if circumstances had only been different.

Right at the outset I believe it should be said that the trouble might very well lie in the fact that we are inclined to assume that reading is not a complicated, difficult activity. We are often victims of the common opinion that reading is after all something very simple and natural, a good deal like walking, for example. It is very well possible that we might be totally unaware of the many different steps involved, each of which can be developed and made less difficult through practise. Reading in that respect is no different than tennis, baseball, or music. If one wrote a book on how to play baseball it would contain many rules for each of the various offensive and defensive moves of the game. There would be rules for hitting, including rules for long distance, extra-base hits as well as

for bunting and place hitting. There would be rules for base running, stealing bases, tagging up for the catch of the fly-ball. There would be the rules for playing each of the different position, from catching and pitching to the duties of the outfielder. The same is true for music, painting, and any other "art".

These things also pertain to reading. There are rules and more rules, which must be assimilated to form correct habits. Two things are required, first that we are possessed with the will to learn, and second, that we foster patience in the process. That excludes any of us from thinking that this is not for us because we are not able. True it is that we are not possessed of equal abilities in any one respect. But that is not the question here. The question is: are you getting out of your ability that which lies in it, whether it be small or great? If we are truly sincere, the prospect of having those fearful words once spoken to the Unprofitable Servant applied to us in that day will arouse us to action.

By this time you will very likely realize that the scope of this article is not sufficient to treat this subject in its entirety. There is not room for an exposition of "rules, and more rules" in one short composition. Believe it or not, I was aware of that before I began writing. I continued nevertheless because I believe that certain rules inevitably form a basis for good reading, and if they are followed will result in the development of the skill in the reader. What are these basic rules?

Naturally, the rules that require first attention are the rules of analysis. It is self-evident that we must give an author the benefit of careful analysis before we seek to evaluate his product. Under this heading I would list two requirements. First, it is necessary that we determine what the book or article is about with utmost brevity. What is the author trying to do? What problem is he trying to solve? What particular phase of which field of study or human life is he trying to cover? Questions of this nature should be asked and answered first of all. You might ask, how does one go about finding the correct answers to these questions? In books the answer is almost invariably found in the author's preface. It is said that book-reviewers for large papers and magazines can review a book by reading its preface alone. That ought to give us some idea of the value of the preface. In it you can most always find the intentions of the author stated in brief and concise form. In articles as well as books, the contents can be determined frequently by the

title. And, in many cases, much information can be gleaned from the list of chapter headings. There are more ways than these mentioned. The main thing is that we look for the nature of the book or article, and, having found it, seek to summarize its contents in the shortest possible manner. In the second place, we ought to look for the outline of the composition. That means that we determine the major parts in their order and relation, and analyze each one of them in turn, as we have done with the whole. No more need be said. Having done this, you will have a good hold on the structure of the book or article. The next problem is that of interpretation. Now that the purpose of the book has been ascertained, and its main parts discovered, how are we to grasp the meaning of the author? The most fundamental rule under this head is the rule that calls for a clear conception of the basic words the author is using. That means that you must come to terms with the author, you must agree with him as to the meaning of a certain word in his book or article. For example, in the early part of this article we spent a little time discussing the fact that the word "reading" has various meanings. Well, if you take the word to mean one thing, and I take it to mean another, how are we ever to get anywhere? Find the basic words and determine their meaning is the first rule of interpretation. The next step is obvious. Having determined the meaning of the more important words, you should proceed to the more important sentences. And still more closely related stands the third rule of interpretation: find the author's main arguments, by locating them in certain paragraphs, or by constructing paragraphs of connected sentences. There are many words and combinations of words that will tell you when you have to deal with these sentences and arguments. "Because", "if. . . then", "since" etc., "therefore" that, "it follows from this" are a few of the earmarks to be noticed.

None of us are discouraged now, I'm sure. It is true that this article has not minimized the difficulty of reading, that is, of reading for instruction and increased understanding. If we weren't Christians I would despair of hoping that any of us might desire to follow after wisdom and understanding, knowing that it is difficult and arduous work. Besides, the ethical nature of true wisdom and understanding would eliminate all possibility that we might spend time and effort in pursuit of these things. But, the love of Christ constraineth us to exert ourselves to the limit for the glory of our King.

John Piersma.