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The Prophets and Political and Social Problems

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not want to deceive people by holding out to them the hope of the resurrection of the body. But there was no other "category" available, and he hoped that, when people heard him speak of the resurrection of the body, they would somehow catch the right idea and think of the "persistence of personality" only. Was St. Paul really so stupid? We are not stupid enough to believe that.

Fools of reason! And that does not mean only a *sacrificium intellectus*. Much more, an infinitely greater sacrifice is involved. "*Ratio inimica FIDEL.*" The pride of reason is, as we shall show, destructive of the Christian faith.

TH. ENGELDER

(To be continued)

The Prophets and Political and Social Problems

(Concluded)

IV

In the Old Testament the messages of the prophets were directed chiefly to God's own people, which had a theocratic form of government.

The well-known saying, The exiles returned from Babylon to found not a kingdom but a Church, expresses at best only a half-truth, for the commonwealth of Israel was from its very origin a Church, a state-church, a church-state, a theocracy, and this theocracy was not founded by the returning exiles, but was a divine institution, organized by the Lord immediately after the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. It is rather difficult for us to realize all that the term "theocracy" implies. The Jewish Church was not a Church within the Jewish state, it was the Jewish state; and the Jewish state was not something altogether independent of the Jewish Church, it was the Jewish Church. In Israel the church laws were state laws, the state laws were church laws.

Membership in the Jewish Church and citizenship in the Jewish state were identical terms. If a Jew was deprived of his civic rights, he was by that very act excommunicated from the Church. And if a Jew was put out of the congregation, he lost his rights as a citizen of the Jewish state. No uncircumcised Gentile believer could become a member of the Jewish state-church, just as little as a circumcised idolater could acquire or retain citizenship in the Jewish church-state. A believing eunuch was saved, Is. 58:3-5; yet he never could become a member of the Jewish Church nor a citizen of the Jewish state, Deut. 23:1. He remained without the commonwealth of Israel.

God Himself gave to His people judges, Judg. 2:16-18, and kings, Gen. 35:11; 2 Sam. 5:12, and priests and Levites, Ex. 28:1 ff., Num. 8:6-26, and prophets, Amos 2:11. All these divinely appointed officials and leaders were church officers and state officials at the same time, for Church and State were one. The Lord had assigned to each of these various leaders certain duties which dared not to be usurped by any other ruler. Yet even in assigning these duties, God did not draw a sharp line of demarcation between State and Church. When King Uzziah went into the Temple to offer incense, he was stricken with leprosy, not, however, because a state official had usurped the right of the clergy. A Levite, though a member of the clergy, would have met with the same fate if he had tried to offer incense. For the offering of incense was the right exclusively of the priests, and these priests were punished by death if they would as much as dare to offer any strange fire on the altar of the Lord, Lev. 10:1, 2.

While certain specific duties were assigned to each class of leaders or rulers, all were held in like manner responsible for the welfare of the Jewish commonwealth, for the prospering of the church-state, for the furtherance of the state-church. And part of this responsibility was the mutual supervision enjoined upon all these officers. Kings and prophets and priests alike were under divine obligation to do all in their power that the Word and will and Law of God was to be enforced in Israel, to be made the guiding norm, the ruling principle, for all actions of the leaders of this theocratic commonwealth.

It was the Jewish state which stoned the blasphemer, who had transgressed a law of the Jewish Church; for the laws of the state-church were the laws of the church-state, and therefore the state had the right and the duty to enforce them. It was the Jewish Church which put to death the murderer, who had committed a crime against the Jewish church-state; for the laws of the church-state were the laws of the state-church, and therefore the Church had the right and duty to enforce them.

A brief glance at the history of Israel will convince us that this was actually the practice followed by both civic and religious leaders of Israel. Already Joshua, the military leader of the people, gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem that they should present themselves before God and exhorted them to remain faithful in their service of the Lord. When King Saul had failed to comply with the will of the Lord to slay Agag, the king of the Amalekites, Samuel, the prophet, slew Agag because the will of the Lord had to be fulfilled. It was King David who reorganized the Levitical service in preparation for the future Temple worship. It was

David who took a census of the entire tribe of Levi, divided the Levites into four groups, and assigned to each group its specific duties, 1 Chron. 23 ff. It was David who bought the site for the Temple, who made extensive preparations to make its building possible, who gave the plans and specifications to Solomon and urged the princes and the people to offer willingly for the erection of the Temple. It was King Solomon who built the Temple, and while the priests on the day of solemn dedication brought the ark into the Most Holy Place, because according to God's will that was the exclusive privilege of the priests, it was Solomon, the king, who offered the dedicatory prayer, not the high priest nor a prophet, 1 Kings 8. It was, therefore, no undue meddling in the office of the priesthood when King Joash changed the method of gathering the Temple money, 2 Kings 12, nor when King Hezekiah, and a century later King Josiah, inaugurated religious reforms, 2 Chron. 29-31; 34; 35. That was their duty since they were the heads of the state-church, and the prophets would very properly have faulted them if they had been remiss in their duty.

In view of the peculiar nature of the theocracy the anointing of Solomon in opposition to his brother Adonijah was not a "palace intrigue" on the part of an ambitious mother and a scheming prophet, as unbelieving critics often call it, but an act of obedience to the clearly expressed will of God that Solomon was to be David's successor, 1 Chron. 28:5, 6. It became the duty of Nathan to take a hand in the civic affairs of the theocracy when David was too old and sluggish to insist on compliance with God's will. Take another example. Jehu was anointed king over Israel while Joram still sat on the throne, and he exterminated the family of Joram and the whole house of Ahab. A wholesale slaughter? Yes, to be sure. Was, then, Jehu a second Zimri, deserving the fate meted out to that rebel, as Jezebel sneeringly intimated, 2 Kings 9:31? Was Elisha, at whose command Jehu had been anointed, a political intriguer? No. It was the Ruler of the world, the covenant God, who wanted the house of Ahab to be rooted out because of its idolatry and therefore charged Elisha through Elijah to anoint Jehu as the executor of God's will and decree, 1 Kings 19:15-17; 2 Kings 9:1-13. Three times in the latter quotation we meet with the expression "Thus saith the Lord" and 1, 4, 12; and after Jehu had finished his bloody work, we are told that the Lord approved his action and promised him that his children up to the fourth generation should sit on the throne of Israel, 2 Kings 10:30.

In none of these incidents were the prophets guilty of meddling in affairs which were not committed to them. They were simply doing their duty, which they, as messengers to a theocratic nation and king, were commanded to do by the Lord Himself.

V

The prophets preached the Word of God without addition or diminution.

The covenant God of Israel, who had chosen the seed of Jacob as His own peculiar people and had given them a theocratic form of government, was a holy God and therefore demanded holiness of His people in all their relations to their God and their fellow-men. This holiness was to be manifested in maintaining that high standard of social relations He had laid down in His holy Law as published by Moses. Their community life was to be a shining example to all surrounding nations, none of which had statutes and judgments as righteous as the Law set before Israel. Deut. 4:5-9. On the Jewish social order compare, *e. g.*, many of the regulations recorded in Ex. 21-23; Lev. 25; Deut. 12-15; 19-25.

The maintenance, and in many instances the reestablishment, of this divinely ordained social standard was one of the chief duties of the prophets sent to Israel by the Lord. As ambassadors of the Lord of hosts, they insisted on the carrying out in all its details of the social legislation enacted by the Lord, never once altering its ordinances, never toning down its requirements, never diminishing its far-reaching obligations. "Hate the evil and love the good," Amos 5:15, was their unvarying demand. Like God, the prophets were imbued with an intense hatred of evil; their heart glowed with fervid love of all that was good in the sight of the Lord; and, like God, they required the same hatred, the same love, from all their people, because they were to be God's people not only in name but in fact.

In scathing terms the prophets denounced the sins of their day and age. Hosea paints a lurid picture of the social conditions prevailing in his time and threatens his people with rejection and utter destruction, Hos. 4:1-11. Conditions in the day of Malachi, the last of the prophets, were not much better, and the prophet pronounces God's judgment "against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right," Mal. 3:5. Amos and Isaiah and Micah unite their protests against the grinding oppression of the poor, Amos 2:6, 7; Is. 3:13-15; Micah 3:1-4. Jeremiah joins them in denouncing the bribery and injustice at the courts, owing to the covetousness of the judges, Jer. 5:26-28. Cp. Is. 1:21-23; Amos 5:12; 6:12; Micah 2:1, 2. With like vehemence they condemn the luxuries and intemperance of princes and people, Amos 6:3-8; Is. 3:16-28; 28:1-8; the prevalent immoralities, incestuous fornication, unjust divorces, Jer. 5:7, 8; Hos. 7:4; Amos 2:7 b; Mal. 2:14-16, the lying and deception so universally practiced in every profession, Jer. 9:2-6; Hos. 10:4; Amos 5:10. Denunciation and

condemnation of existing social evils were the first steps in the effort of the prophets to reestablish the social order which God demanded of His people.

Here is a lesson for every Christian pastor and layman. It is the duty of every true Christian, and particularly of every Christian pastor, to call the congregation's attention to maladjustments of the social order within its midst wherever they are in conflict with the Word of God, and not only with human conception of an ideal social order. Christians must be told that, in permitting such conditions to exist without as much as a word of protest, they are sinning against the clear word of God, applicable to all times and circumstances, "Hate the evil and love the good," Amos 5:15. Above all, the Christians themselves in their social relations are not to become or remain guilty of any transgression of God's Holy Law. The sinfulness of such perversions of their social duties must be clearly pointed out to them. They must be threatened with the wrath and punishment of God. They must be told that persistence in such sins excludes them from the Kingdom and will lead to their excommunication from the Christian congregation, because they are reversing the will and word of God, they are loving the evil and hating the good.

The prophets were not satisfied with a merely negative denunciation and condemnation of existing social evils. Their proclamation was at the same time a constructive one, declaring very clear and well-defined principles, which were to guide their people in their social relations, and offering a very definite plan, which would enable Israel to carry them out. The principles underlying the proper social relations are briefly but quite comprehensively summarized by Micah in the well-known words "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8. A few decades earlier Hosea had told his hearers: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you," Hos. 10:12. Justice, mercy, humility, that is the trinity of virtues which the Lord demanded of Israel, and justice, mercy, humility are the irremissible requirements on which the prophets insisted in their efforts to maintain or reestablish the ideal social order demanded by the Lord.

Just what is meant by justice Isaiah tells us in the words, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" Is. 58:6. "Take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity," Is. 58:9 b. This demand still holds good in our day.

If any one ought to be willing to practice social justice, it is the Christian, who calls himself a child of the God of justice and righteousness. In the Christian Church there should neither be found nor tolerated unscrupulous politicians who make glowing campaign promises with no intention to carry them out or even to remember them once they are elected. In the Christian Church there should neither be found nor tolerated any "putting forth of the finger," any scorning of the rights and privileges of the forgotten man, any rousing of class hatred, any inciting of the passions of the laboring class against the capitalists, the employers. Christian candidates for, or incumbents of, any civic office must be lovers of truth, justice and equity. And it is the duty of the pastor so to instruct his parishioners, as the prophets so taught their people.

The demand that every yoke be broken, Is. 58:6, means that the Christian congregation, together with its pastor, dare not tolerate any one in its midst that grinds the face of the poor, Is. 3:15, by paying starvation wages, by employing sweat-shop methods, by promising amelioration of unbearable conditions but constantly failing to carry them out. Justice, as enjoined upon His children by the Lord, demands, and the congregation must insist, that an employer be just and fair to his employee; that his factory or workshop be made as sanitary and the machinery as safe as is consistent with the nature of his business; that he pay them a living wage, so that they may properly house, feed, and clothe their family and enjoy a just and equitable measure of the conveniences and comforts of life.

God's prophets were not satisfied with demanding mere social justice. They required more. They asked for mercy, that kind and loving disposition which will, as Isaiah puts it, induce a person to deal his bread to the hungry, bring the poor that are cast out to his house, cover the naked, and not hide himself from his own flesh. Mercy goes much farther than mere justice. It is not satisfied with the mere doling out of alms, of charity. There is a charity that pains the recipient just as keenly as, and wounds him perhaps more deeply than, the pangs of poverty and hunger, a charity which impresses upon the needy one that he is at the receiving end, which humiliates instead of relieving, which is as frigid as ice and leaves the heart of its victim just as cold. That is not mercy. The merciful man will "draw out his soul," Is. 58:10. He will let his soul, his heart, his affection, go out to the hungry, the poor, the sick, and the homeless. Such mercy involves sincere sympathy with the needs of the neighbor, not only with his material and physical needs, but particularly with his spiritual trials and afflictions. Isaiah exhorts, "Satisfy the afflicted soul,"

v.10. Not only the body but, above all, the soul needs to be satisfied, needs to be consoled and comforted and strengthened by the Bread of Life.

The prophets insist on still another requirement in the observance and maintenance of a social order pleasing to God. In close connection with the demand to do justly and to love mercy, Micah adds another requirement, "to walk humbly with thy God," Micah 6:8. Far from boasting about our accomplishments and trusting in our justice and mercy, we must humbly confess that we are and remain sinners, who, when they have done all those things which are commanded to them, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do, Luke 17:10; by the grace of God we are what we are, 1 Cor. 15:10.

The prophets did not regard their task as finished when they had laid down God's social code in its eternal principles and with all its divinely prescribed details of putting this code into practice. The Lord had conceived a plan whereby this code could be made operative, and the prophets were delegated to proclaim this plan to the people. This plan was none other than to make sanctification, the indispensable prerequisite to social justice and mercy as demanded by God, possible through justification of the sinner by the atoning blood of the promised Messiah. This Gospel-message remained an essential part of the proclamations of the prophets. The very first chapters of Isaiah with their vehement condemnation of every manner of social injustice, every form of social maladjustments, are interspersed and finally climaxed with sweetest Gospel invitations, Is. 1:18, 27; 2:1-5; 4:2-6. And this is the method adopted by every Old Testament spokesman of God. The prophets knew that this Gospel was the only means whereby a people could be called into existence that would be willing and able to comply with the high social standards set up by the God of holiness for His chosen nation. Therefore they were not satisfied with mere denunciation of social ills, with demanding justice and mercy and humility, nor even with what manner of outer social reform they might have attained. God was not satisfied with anything less than a change of heart, and a change of heart effected by faith in His Son as the promised Redeemer, and also the prophets were satisfied with nothing less. They would think of changing God's plan as little as they would think of changing God's demands. In the very center of the social order proclaimed by them as the will of God for His people stood the Woman's Seed, the Messiah, the suffering Servant, and His vicarious death, from whom radiated strength and willingness into the hearts and minds and members of the believers to live up to the demands of this

social code, constantly progressing in justice, increasing in mercy, growing in humility.

Wherever the social order as demanded by the Lord was maintained and complied with, this was due to the untiring efforts of the prophets of God and their conscientious preaching of God's Word without addition or diminution. And wherever prophets so called deviated from the Word of God or the people refused to hear and obey the faithful spokesmen of God, deterioration, disintegration of the social order, set in and increased in the same ratio that the setting aside of God's Word became the accepted fashion of the times. Once more let us recall to memory that all the social messages of the prophets of which we have taken notice so far are addressed to Israel, the theocratic nation, divinely instituted as such.

The prophets had messages also for the surrounding Gentile nations, and many of their proclamations to these nations or to individual members touched upon social questions. Consistent with their call to be spokesmen of God, they preached these messages with the same scrupulous avoidance of any addition or diminution. They left the Law of God unchanged, that Moral Law which obligates every human being to unselfish service of God and his fellow-man, that Law which God has inscribed into man's heart, this Moral Law they proclaimed just as God had given it, without omitting or altering one jot or tittle of its demands, of its threats, of its universal obligation. In language just as straightforward, just as unequivocal, as that employed against Israel they reproved and condemned unmercifully the sins and iniquities, the many transgressions and crimes against social justice and equity prevalent among these nations. Read Obadiah's scathing reproof of Edom's unnatural cruelty and inhuman hatred, and compare with this message those of Nahum against Nineveh, of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel against the surrounding Gentile nations, and you will find that the prophets demand the same obedience to God's Law and threaten transgressors with like penalties whether they are addressing Gentiles or Jews. Neither do they offer any other remedy for these existing social maladjustments than that offered to the Jews. They demand of the one as of the other repentance, a change of heart, a change impossible to natural man, a change effected only by faith in the promised Messiah, a faith wrought by the grace and power of the Lord through His Gospel. This explains why there is not a nation to whom the prophets do not speak of the future Savior from sin. Even Obadiah, whose message comprises only 21 verses, devotes four verses to the proclamation of the deliverance to be wrought upon Mount Zion and to the announcement that saviors, men with

the message of salvation, shall judge Mount Esau, vv. 17, 19, 20, 21. (See *C. T. M.*, 1939, p. 603 f.)

Just as careful were the prophets not to add anything to the Word and will of God in their messages to the Gentile nations. They remained ever aware of the fact that the Gentile nations were not divinely constituted as theocracies. They did not, therefore, impose upon the heathen nations the whole body of laws given to the theocratic people of Israel, nor did they ever demand that the Gentiles adopt all the various rules and regulations of social life laid down for Israel in the Mosaic Law. The Sabbath law, e. g., had both a religious and a social, humanitarian aspect. One of its purposes was to afford to the servants a day of rest and recreation, Deut. 5:14, 15. Yet God had never demanded the keeping of Saturday as the day of worship and rest of any Gentile nation. That was a law specifically Jewish. There is not a single instance on record that the prophets ever faulted the Gentiles for not observing Saturday as the day of their worship or that they ever demanded the introduction of Saturday or any other day as the divinely prescribed day of rest and recreation as one of the essentials in a God-pleasing social order. Since God did not demand of the Gentiles compliance with the specific Jewish laws, neither did the prophets. Instead of adding to God's Word directed to the nations beyond Israel, they were satisfied to preach this Word according to God's will and rejoiced over every success of this Word, even though the convert did not outwardly join the Jewish commonwealth nor submit to all its social requirements.

Like the Church of the Old Testament and its prophets, the New Testament Church and its pastors, as spokesmen of God, have no other message to proclaim than that which they were commissioned to preach. Jer. 23:28; Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Pet. 4:11. Within its own midst the Church must seek to establish and maintain a social code in exact conformity with God's revealed will, and from all its members it must demand strict and conscientious observance of, and obedience to, all its principles without exception. It dare not change one letter of these social precepts and principles so far as they are still valid in the New Testament. They are the unalterable Word of God to His Church, and the Church ceases to be the spokesman of God as soon as it usurps the right to substitute its own views for the Word and revelation of God. The Church must teach its members that a mere external observance of these principles will not satisfy the Lord of the Church. He demands, and the Church will insist, that it must be a conformity which flows from the heart, and not a heart as it is by nature, a heart naturally sympathetic, kind, and loving, or which has trained itself to such sympathy and kindness. The Church, like its Master, must

insist on a change of heart, on repentance and faith in the atoning blood as the indispensable requisite for a fulfilment of the social code laid down by the Lord for His Church. Since such repentance and faith can be wrought only by the divinely instituted means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments, the Church will regard it as its primary duty to preach this Gospel in its unadulterated purity and administer the Sacraments in strict accordance with Christ's institution. There is no other means to engender and strengthen faith, and there is no other means to establish a social order which is based on saving faith except God's own appointed means. And if the Church wants to make God's social order operative within its midst, it must preach the Word of God without addition or diminution, the Law with all its social demands, the Gospel with the fulness of grace, which enables man to put those demands into active operation.

The Church, like Israel's prophets of old, has a message for those without the pale of the Church of God. It is to be the teacher of the world also with respect to the best solution of social problems. Christ has commissioned His Church to go and teach the world to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded them, Matt. 28:20. And a very essential part of these commandments is the social code prescribed by Christ in His Word. Yet in trying to live up to this commandment of its Master, the Church must never forget that, before the world can actually live up to the requirements of this code, it must be disciplined. And this discipling is possible only through the preaching of repentance and faith, and, we repeat it, such faith is engendered only through the Gospel of the atoning vicarious sacrifice of Christ, the Son of God. This Gospel must be preached to the world without diminution and without addition. Without diminishing. The Church, as the spokesman of God, and its messengers, as the mouthpieces of the Lord, dare not to be satisfied with a mere "social reform," with the introduction of man-conceived social improvements, or with the external observance of some or even all of God's social requirements. It must insist on a change of heart. It must continue to preach what God has commanded her to preach, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It must continue to tell the world, "He that believeth not shall be damned," in spite of all social uprightness and integrity. No social gospel can save the world from sin and Satan, can possibly disciple the world or a single individual. The social gospel is not a Gospel as God conceives the term; it is not a power of God unto salvation. It must perforce be satisfied with a social code far beneath that demanded by the Lord. In order to have any hope of success, it must lower the standard of social order sufficiently to make this order and the

legislation establishing it acceptable to the community. Else there would ever be present the danger of wide-spread secret or open disregard for this particular legislation and of breeding gradually a disrespect of all law and all order. Even if the champions of the social gospel should succeed in enforcing a given social order, it would not be the Christian social order; for that requires not an enforced obedience but willing observance, and the willingness of faith, engendered by the Gospel of Christ's vicarious atonement. And since the proponents of the social gospel will not accept this atonement, their method of establishing a so-called Christian social order is one which omits the very heart and soul of God's Gospel. The preaching of such a gospel instead of the Gospel of God unto salvation would call down the curse of God upon every church and every pastor proclaiming it. Gal. 1:8, 9.

The Church must not *add* to God's social order or to His plan to make it operative. The Church must not demand that the State should introduce all those rules and regulations prescribed in the Old Testament for the maintenance of His social order in Israel or that it should establish a specifically Christian social order. That would be adding to what God demands of the State, for God did not demand that of the non-Israelite commonwealths even in the Old Testament, nor did God give to the State the administration of those means whereby alone His divinely prescribed social order can be established and maintained. The Church should not demand more than God requires.

The prophets had a message also for such members of the Jewish Church as dwelt in Gentile countries under a heathen government. Though far removed from the land of promise, from the Temple and its worship, they were still members of God's people, and God was willing to be their God and dwell in their midst. For this purpose He sent to them one of His prophets, Ezekiel, who pleaded with them to remove all idolatry out of their homes and hearts and remain loyal to the Word and will of God. Ezek. 14:1-11. Scripture names many Jews who would rather have suffered imprisonment and death than transgress God's Law, *e. g.*, Daniel and his friends, Dan. 1:3-16; 3:1-30; 6:1-28; Mordecai, Esther 3:1-15; *cp.* Heb. 11:33-40.

Another prophet took a very keen interest in his exiled countrymen in distant Babylon. We are told that Jeremiah wrote a letter to them, instructing them as to the proper civic and social relations in their new surroundings. Jer. 29:1-32. It is remarkable that neither Ezekiel nor Jeremiah ever so much as mentioned the building of a temple or the establishment of a more or less elaborate temple service as one of the duties of these Jews living in a Gentile country. On the contrary, Ezekiel assures them that, though they

had been cast far off among the heathen, yet God would be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they should come, Ezek. 11:15, 16. Neither do the prophets make it obligatory on these Jews to make any effort towards changing the government of Babylon into a theocracy after the model of the Jewish state or toward establishing a social order patterned after the order prescribed to Israel. They are simply told to build homes, plant gardens, marry, and give their sons and daughters in marriage, in brief, to make the land of their exile, though a Gentile country, their homeland, the native land of their children and grandchildren. They are charged to seek the peace, the welfare, of the city, politically, commercially, socially. In all their relations, as subjects or leaders, as laborers or capitalists, as neighbors or as citizens, they were to practice the eternal principles of justice, mercy, and humility. Thus they were to be shining examples of civic and social virtue to their heathen fellow-citizens. By word and example they were to endeavor to bring their heathen fellow-citizens to a saving knowledge of the God of Israel and His promised Messiah, at least to do their share towards developing and promoting a social consciousness within their community, towards raising the social standards of their fellow-men, and towards an amelioration of the general social order wherever that was possible. They were assured that in the peace of their commonwealth they would have peace. If justice, mercy, and humility, even as civic virtues, would be practiced in a community which was still pre-eminently pagan and would presumably remain that, they themselves would reap the benefits of that higher social order inaugurated by their example and efforts.

There is a lesson here which every Christian citizen will do well to observe. The Christian citizen as a Christian will demand of all men no more and no less than God requires in His Word concerning social relations within and without the Church. He will never forget that the social order laid down by the Lord Himself is the only social order which the Church as Church, and he as a member of that Church, must proclaim and maintain. Yet he will constantly remember that it is God's will to have this order established only within His Church and by no other body than this Church. While he will make use of every opportunity to bring Christ and all spiritual, material, and social blessings connected with the Christian religion to the unchurched, he will realize that he can never hope for a Christianized world or a Christian social order within this world. He will therefore endeavor by word and example to help in establishing and maintaining a social order of the highest possible standards within his community. To this end he will study to understand the underlying causes of social mal-

adjustments and bend every effort to the removal of these causes. If it is impossible for him to participate personally in the actual social work, he will pray that God grant His blessing and success to every civic effort in this direction. He will lend his influence toward having appropriate legislation enacted and will willingly pay his taxes and lend his moral and financial support to every civic endeavor for the creation of a social consciousness and for remedying the various social evils.

For the purpose of doing his full duty in the adjustment of the various social problems of his commonwealth the Christian citizen may join any purely civic body or club organized for the improvement of the social order. He is, however, not at liberty to join other denominations in the social work carried on by them, whether they call this association an undenominational, a non-sectarian, or an interdenominational body. This would run counter to such Scripture passages as enjoin avoidance of such as "create divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned." Also in his social work the Christian must be careful neither to add to, nor diminish from, the Word of God.

VI

The prophets were loyal to their Lord, doing their duty without fear or favor.

The prophets were loyal to their Lord. They were willing to preach what God asked them to proclaim whether their message met with any visible success or not. Isaiah knew that his sweetest Gospel-message would fall upon deaf ears, that it would serve only to harden by far the great majority of his hearers, that only a small remnant would be willing to listen to him, repent, and walk in the ways of the Lord. Jeremiah had preached 23 years to a people that refused to hear him. Yet neither Isaiah nor Jeremiah nor any prophet of the Lord became disloyal to his Lord because of his lack of success, because the social order of his day deteriorated from decade to decade in spite of all his efforts at reformation. A Christian preacher should not become discouraged if his efforts in establishing a social order within his congregation or commonwealth along the lines indicated above do not at once appear successful. The non-success of his efforts should not induce him to follow the methods employed by modernistic unionistic churches and denominations. As a loyal servant of his Lord, he will keep strictly within the bounds and limits laid down in God's Word, deviating from them neither to the right nor to the left.

A preacher who will under all circumstances make God's Word the norm of all his activities, as far as they are related to the

solution of social problems also, will never be popular with the world. The prophets in spite of their insistence on the establishment of a social order of divine institution, or rather just because of this insistence, were not popular with Israel. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One," Acts 7:52. The truth of Stephen's charge is proved by the lives and experiences of practically all prophets. Cp. 1 Kings 19:1-10; Jer. 26-29; 36-38; Ezek. 2:7-9; Amos 7:10-17; Micah 2:11. Ahab very adequately expressed the general regard in which the prophets were held by the people when he told Jehoshaphat, who had asked him to consult Micaiah, a prophet of the Lord: "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." 1 Kings 22:8.

Strange as it may seem, this hatred directed against the prophets of the Lord was almost universal. These champions of the downtrodden and oppressed were just as unpopular with those whose rights they defended as with those whom they denounced for their violation of these rights. Princes and prophets and priests and people were unanimous in spurning the message of the prophets, in turning against the spokesmen of God, in demanding their imprisonment and death. Cp. Jer. 25:1-7; 26:7. The prophetic call to repentance was just as hateful to the oppressed as to the oppressor, to the unjust judge and the false witness and the bribing opponent, as to the victim of their intrigues. Yet the prophets remained loyal to their high calling. Though they were branded and pilloried, persecuted and imprisoned, without fear and without favor they demanded what God required: justice, mercy, humility, repentance, faith. That was their unalterable message to rich and poor, to the man in power and the man in the street.

To this day the world does not want to hear the message of Christian preachers and does not want to hear of a Christian social order based on sanctification through justification by the atoning blood of Christ. The world hates God's Law because of its insistence on holiness and perfection, and it hates even more intensely the Gospel of Christ crucified as the only means of salvation. The world is too well satisfied with its own righteousness to accept the Biblical doctrine of total depravity. Natural man thinks too highly of his own wisdom to take his reason captive under the obedience of Christ. We cannot popularize the Word of God, nor can we popularize the social order demanded by this Word. A popularized Law is no longer the Law of the holy and just God, and a popularized Gospel is no longer the Gospel of Christ, which was at all times an offense and a stumbling-block to man, and is particularly at this present time folly and foolishness to many so-called Christian churchmen and social workers.

The Church of Christ and its individual members, pastors and laymen, will be swayed from the course charted by the Master in His Word by the lack of popularity as little as by the lack of outer success. Undismayed by the ridicule and hatred of the world, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, they will go on preaching the Gospel to all nations in an endeavor to disciple them and teach them all things the Lord commanded. The Church can make no better contribution towards improvement of the social order than loyally fulfilling this commission. This Gospel will beget men and women who really have the eternal as well as the material and social welfare of their fellow-men at heart. Constrained by the love of Christ, they will do all in their power to establish and maintain within this world of sin and iniquity a social order which is not ruled exclusively by greediness and injustice. By word and example they will do their share towards aiding civic righteousness, justice and equity, and good will, mercy and charity in making their beneficial influences felt, and so help to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free. Loyalty in preaching the Gospel pure and unadulterated is loyalty to God, to the Church, to the State.

T. L.

Entwürfe über die von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Epistelreihe

—
Graubi

2 Kor. 5, 1—10

Wie wunderbar ist doch die Veränderung, die mit dem Menschen bei seiner Befehrung vor sich geht! Sie ist so groß, daß der Befehrte geradezu als eine neue Kreatur bezeichnet wird. Durch den in ihm gewirkten Glauben steht er in einem neuen Verhältnis zu Gott. Dieser ist sein lieber Vater, der ihn liebt und dessen Liebe der Gläubige erwidert. Sein Glaube spiegelt sich aber auch wider in seinem Wandel, das ist, seinem gesamten Denken, Reden und Handeln. Diese Tatsache behandelt der Apostel in unserm heutigen Text.

Wir Christen wandeln im Glauben und nicht im Schauen

Dies offenbart sich

1. in unserer Sehnsucht nach dem Himmel
2. in unserm Streben, allezeit unserm Heiland wohlgefällig zu sein