

Labor Union Membership in the Light of Scripture

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [Preface](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [The Stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches](#)
- [Petitions and Discipline](#)
- [Bearing the Cross](#)
- [Surrender to Union Pressure](#)
- [The Testimony of Scripture](#)
- [Rebellion](#)
- [Corporate Responsibility](#)
- [Other Evils, Spiritual and Civil](#)
- [Calling of the Christian Workingman](#)
- [“Pillar and Ground of the Truth”](#)

Preface

This pamphlet is the revised text of a speech on the subject of labor union membership given in Lansing, Illinois under the auspices of the Evangelism Committee of the Peace Protestant Reformed Church of Lansing. The fact that the speech was given in a south suburb of that great center of labor unionism accounts, in large part, for the repeated references to Chicago.

During my fourteen-year pastorate of a congregation in the Chicagoland area, I came to know firsthand the violence, threats, intimidation, beatings, maimings, murders, mayhem, ruthlessness, contempt for law, and corruption of the labor unions. I remember distinctly the murder of a trucker on I-80/94 east of South Holland, Illinois during a Teamsters Union strike. Union enforcers dropped large chunks of concrete from an overpass on the unsuspecting driver.

The stand against labor union membership by the Christian defended in this pamphlet is principled. It is a stand based on Scripture’s condemnation of unionism’s constitutional nature. It is also a stand that is well aware of the actual spiritual condition and conduct—the ungodliness—of the unions, which every member willingly joins and for whose constitution, condition, and conduct every member makes himself responsible before God the Judge.

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Introduction

Neither the well-nigh universal acceptance of labor union membership by Western society nor the nearly unanimous approval of labor union membership by the churches settles the issue of membership in a union for the Christian workingman. The practice of the world is certainly not the standard of the life of the Christian. But neither is the example of the majority of churches the standard, especially not when it is evident that their approval of labor union membership is not obedience to the Word of God, but mere conformity to the world.

Scripture is the standard of the life of the Christian workingman. Scripture alone is the standard.

This is the basis of the examination of labor union membership that follows, as the title of the pamphlet indicates: “Labor Union Membership *in the Light of Scripture*.” The issue is not labor union membership in the light of strong pressures to join unions in Chicago or some other big city; labor union membership in the light of the well-nigh universal tolerance of labor union membership by the churches, particularly the Reformed churches; or even, labor union membership in light of the fact that refusing to join a labor union may mean the loss of a good job, indeed any job at all, and therefore starvation and death.

What does Scripture teach?

Scripture, we Reformed Christians confess, is our only rule for faith and life. Life includes work. The decisive question for the Christian workingman in Chicago at the beginning of the twenty-first century AD, as it was the decisive question in Ephesus, or Colosse, or the regions in the Middle East where the scattered saints lived to whom James wrote, in the first century AD is, “What does God say?”

The question is, “What pleases God in the realm of labor?” Pleasing God is far more precious to the Christian workingman than job, job-security, good wages, comfortable working conditions, and big pensions. Pleasing God is far more precious to the faithful church than the approval of men.

If Scripture is our basis in the matter of union membership, the issue is clear and conclusive. Scripture condemns labor union membership as revolution against the authority of the sovereign God. Scripture forbids the disciple of Christ to join a union and requires him to renounce membership, if he is presently a member.

This pamphlet will demonstrate that Scripture addresses the issue of membership in the union and that Scripture forbids membership, especially because labor union membership is revolution against God-ordained authority.

The Stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches

The stand of this pamphlet condemning membership in labor unions is not a personal stand of the author on the basis of his private interpretation of Scripture. Rather, it is the official stand of a Reformed denomination of churches, the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. The Protestant Reformed Churches have condemned labor union membership throughout their history, from the very beginning of their existence in the 1920s to the present day.

Already in 1927, a mere year or two after the formation of the denomination, the classis (there was no synod as yet) took a decision condemning labor union membership. Classis declared that “a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches cannot be a member of the labor union.” The decision of the classis was in response to an overture from the consistory of the South Holland, Illinois church. South Holland gave the following grounds for its overture that classis condemn membership in labor unions:

1. Being a member of a worldly union is definitely inconsistent with membership in the body of Christ. a. There is no communion between Christ and Belial. We cannot serve God and mammon. Children of God may not sit in the seat of mockers. b. It is abundantly proven that the use of force is the chief and most desired means used to attain their goal. c. The unions undermine the God-given authority of the employer.
2. The consistory regards this as a proper time to take a definite stand against unionism before this evil takes root in our churches.
3. The affiliation with a worldly union can only be condoned on the basis of the error of common grace. With all might and main we must show with our deeds that we are willing to fight for our King against Satan and the evil world (citation of the minutes of Classis, June 1927 by Cornelius Hanks, “The Antithesis and Unionism,” the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 62, no. 5, Dec. 1, 1985, pp. 115-117).

South Holland has the credit for the stand against labor union membership by the Protestant Reformed Churches. This is significant. The significance is that opposition to the unions by the Protestant Reformed Churches was born in that church which was located where unionism was the strongest and where the members could expect to suffer the most from the right stand on unionism.

This was the very opposite of developments in other Reformed denominations. In other denominations, it was the Chicago churches that pressured the denominations to cave in to unionism.

In late 1940 or early 1941, the consistory of First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, mother church of the Protestant Reformed denomination, issued a "Testimony" concerning union membership to its large, five hundred-family congregation. The "Testimony" observed that "it is still the position of the Protestant Reformed Churches that membership of . . . a union is incompatible with membership in the Church of Jesus Christ." The consistory of First Church informed the congregation that this position was the conviction of the consistory.

The consistory gave four reasons for its conviction that labor union membership is incompatible with membership in the church. First, membership in a union (as in a corporation or association) necessarily involves responsibility for the principles and acts of the union. Second, the pledge or oath taken upon joining binds the member to abide by all the acts of the union. Third, the union stands for the principle of force and coercion, as is evident "especially from its constant attempt everywhere to introduce the closed shop." Fourth, the union is pledged to violence if it cannot gain its objectives in a peaceful way. Illustrating this violence, the "Testimony" devoted several pages to a vivid description of the violence of strikes in Detroit in 1936 and 1937. The violence of one of these strikes ruined a Fisher Body auto plant and injured many people (the "Testimony" was distributed in the form of a brochure; it was published in full as an editorial under the title, "Our Churches and the Unions," the *Standard Bearer*, vol. 17, no. 9, Feb. 1, 1941, pp. 196-198).

Petitions and Discipline

Such has been the intensity of the opposition on the part of the Protestant Reformed Churches to labor union membership that at least twice the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches has officially sent a letter to the President of the United States concerning this matter. Protestant Reformed synods are very chary of addressing the civil government.

The first address was in May 1941 to President Roosevelt, known as an ardent supporter of the unions. The synodical letter petitioned President Roosevelt "to cease condoning and supporting the closed shop" and thus "to protect us and so rule," as he was "duty bound" to do, so that our men have "an opportunity to earn a livelihood." The letter stated that "unionism [is a] great evil in the sight of God." The grounds for this condemnation of unions were the following:

We refuse to become members of the Union because we condemn the principles of utter materialism of the Union; because the Union demands in the required oath or pledge loyalty to itself even though this loyalty to the Union would bring us into conflict with the interests of

the Church of Jesus Christ our Lord; and because the Union seeks to gain its ends by force, strikes and boycotts, all of which militates against the Word of God which we hold dear and which is the first and last criterion for our conduct on earth (“Acts of the Synod 1941 of the Protestant Reformed Churches,” pp. 75-77; synod adopted the letter and decided to send it to the president in Art. 83; in the following article, synod decided to send a copy “to every member of Congress and to every member of the President’s Cabinet”).

A second official address of the president by synod was in June 1946. On this occasion, synod sent a letter to President Truman, another strong supporter of the unions. Synod appealed to the “Head of the government” to protect Protestant Reformed workingmen “in the exercise of our liberties” under the Constitution. The synodical letter expressed the reasons for the Protestant Reformed conscientious objection to the labor unions.

We, the Protestant Reformed Churches, are opposed to membership in the existing unions: because we believe that the principles of the class-struggle, dividing society into the two opposing camps of capital and labor, are contrary to Holy Writ and to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; because we cannot agree with the materialistic motives and purposes that so manifestly actuate the unions, but believe that we should first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness; because we believe that unionism in often defying authority and taking the law in its own hands, is in conflict with the Word of God which enjoins us to honor those that are in authority over us; because the union seeks its own end through the employment of force and coercion, which militates against the principles and spirit of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in short, because we refuse to affiliate ourselves with any organization whose principles and practices are so plainly in conflict with the teaching of Holy Writ (“Acts of Synod 1946 of the Protestant Reformed Churches,” pp. 28, 29; in the decision of Article 20, synod had the letter sent “not only to the President but also to all members of both houses of Congress, the President’s Cabinet and to the members of the Supreme Court”).

In keeping with this official stand by the denomination, Protestant Reformed consistories have repeatedly disciplined men for joining a labor union. One example was South Holland’s decision in 1969 to erase a baptized member on the ground of his impenitent membership in a labor union. “Erasure” is the form that Christian discipline takes in the case of a member by baptism who has not confessed his faith. South Holland asked for the advice of Classis West regarding this discipline. South Holland described the man and his sin this way: “[a member] who persistently refuses to heed the admonitions of the Word of God to terminate his membership in a godless Union.” Classis West approved the discipline “on the ground of his continued refusal to repent of the sin of having membership in an anti-christian labor union” (minutes of Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches, March 1970).

Bearing the Cross

In this history-long, principled, consistent, and uncompromising stand, the Protestant Reformed Churches manifest themselves as true, faithful, and courageous churches of Jesus Christ. The men of the churches show themselves genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, willing to deny themselves and to bear the cross for Jesus' sake.

Their stand against labor union membership has cost the churches many members. Many more people refused to join the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, in the strongly unionized Chicagoland area, or left the congregation, during my pastorate, because of the stand against unions than refused to join, or left, because of the sound Reformed doctrine of the church. An astute minister in another Reformed denomination told me at the time that the congregation would be three times as large as it was (and it was then nearly six hundred members), if it were not for the stand against union membership.

The stand against union membership cost any number of men better jobs. Men with families gave up their job rather than to join a union.

In their stand against the unions, the Protestant Reformed Churches “walk the walk” of making known in the life of the members the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There are many churches and professing Reformed Christians today who talk about Jesus' Lordship in every area of life, especially when it costs them nothing. But in their life, especially under pressure of persecution or possibility of suffering loss, they deny Christ's Lordship. In modern parlance, they “talk the talk” but do not “walk the walk.” The Bible's name for this is hypocrisy.

Surrender to Union Pressure

The stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches against labor union membership contrasts sharply with developments in the Christian Reformed Church. The Christian Reformed Church has fallen away abysmally in the matter of faithfulness to the Word of God regarding labor union membership. That denomination made a good beginning. In this respect also, the Protestant Reformed Churches are the real continuation of the Christian Reformed Church as it once was and as it should be.

The good beginning of the Christian Reformed Church regarding labor union membership was in Chicago, always a stronghold of the Christian Reformed Church.

In 1886, all three hundred Dutch Reformed workers at the Pullman Works in Roseland crossed picket lines to help break the strike (Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago: A History of the Hollanders in the Windy City*, Eerdmans, 2002, pp. 640, 641).

Also in 1886, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church decided that no member of the Christian Reformed Church might be member of the Knights of Labor labor union, the forerunner of the CIO-AFL. The grounds were much the same as those the Protestant Reformed Churches would later adduce in their letters to two presidents of the United States (see J. L. Schaver, *The Polity of the Churches*, vol. 2, Grand Rapids International Publications, 4th rev. ed. 1956, pp. 217, 218).

Then the Christian Reformed Church began steadily to abandon its good stand. They did so under pressure mainly from the Chicago-area churches, whose members were joining the unions because of intimidation and because of the financial benefits. The reason why the Dutch Reformed in Chicago finally joined the unions was not conviction that Scripture permitted labor union membership, much less desire to be a Christian influence on the unions. Rather, the reason was purely pragmatic and materialistic. A Reformed garbage hauler admitted as much to Richard Tempelman, who was a staunch opponent in the Christian Reformed Church of the secular unions.

You correctly observe that most of us don't care what happens in our unions. . . . Our supreme interest is in enough take home pay. We live too easily on a horizontal plane. We are more interested in what we get than in how we got it. . . . These are our good people in the pews who are in the scavenger business. They [unions] are organized. You can't do business without belonging. They control things (*Dutch Chicago*, p. 644).

Under pressure, especially from the Chicago churches, the Christian Reformed synod of 1916 permitted membership in a "neutral union."

How strong the opposition to union membership was in the Christian Reformed Church is evident from the fact that, despite the decision of 1916, synods of the Christian Reformed Church were forced to face the issue again and again until the relatively late date of 1954, when the matter was finally decided. Even at that late date, a synodical study committee recommended that synod declare membership in the CIO-AFL *sinful*. But, as Swierenga relates in *Dutch Chicago*, "so many church members in Chicago, Patterson, Detroit, and other big cities belonged to these unions that the synod rejected the committee report" (pp. 644, 645).

Still, not all voices in the Christian Reformed Church against the unions fell silent. Sounder men continued to speak out, regardless of their synod. In 1959, Prof. Henry R. Van Til of Calvin College wrote a book on Calvinism and culture. In it he asserted that

the believer, in his opposition to the world, therefore, must see that the so-called "neutral union" *is an enemy of the cross of Christ* just as well as the communistic party leader that curses

the church and her King. For the neutrality postulate of the union involves a tacit curse upon the anointed One, whom the Father sent into the world and by whom he now rules over all things . . . The labor unions of our day are not one whit behind those of whom the Psalmist testifies that they took counsel together against the LORD and his anointed (Ps. 2) (Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture*, Baker, 1959, pp. 201, 202; emphasis added).

Nevertheless, ministers and elders in the Christian Reformed Church, including many who know better, have rolled over and played dead. They allow men and women who are members of an organization that, in Van Til's words, is "an enemy of the cross of Christ," curses Christ, and takes counsel against Jehovah God and His Anointed to partake of the Lord's Supper.

This is the stand, or lack thereof—really, the supine position—of the Christian Reformed Church today, as also of those who have recently left the Christian Reformed Church over women in church office, the United Reformed Churches, and, for that matter, of most Reformed and Presbyterian churches in North America.

In light of the perfectly clear, forceful testimony of Scripture, which testimony is the basis of the stand of the Protestant Reformed Churches against unions (as originally it was the basis of the Christian Reformed Church's rejection of the unions), this miserable surrender of the churches to the labor unions is inexcusable, and deadly serious.

The Testimony of Scripture

The testimony of Scripture is that God has ordered, or structured, that basic sphere of human life known as labor in such a way that the owner of the farm or business has authority from God to govern. He certainly has a calling from God toward the workers, a calling to give the workers "that which is just and equal," or "fair" (Col. 4:1). But he has authority, *God's own authority*, and the duty of the worker is to submit and obey.

There are other reasons why labor union membership is sinful, and these will be mentioned presently. But the central issue is this: in the realm of labor, the owner, or management, has the right to rule, so that the Christian worker must submit.

Scripture addresses the matter of the Christian's behavior in the sphere, or ordinance, of labor. It addresses the matter repeatedly. Usually, it addresses this aspect of the Christian's earthly life in connection with the other spheres of life: marriage; family (parents and children); state, or civil government; and church.

These passages, among others, are the Word of God regulating the life of the Christian workingman in the sphere of labor:

- Ephesians 6:5-8: “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh.”
- Colossians 3:22-25: “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh.”
- I Timothy 6:1ff.: “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor.”
- Titus 2:9ff.: “Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters.”
- Philemon: the run-away slave, Onesimus, is sent back to his master, to serve him again.
- I Peter 2:18ff.: “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear”; the apostle adds: “not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.”
- James 5:1-11, where the description of the godly conduct of the worker is, “he doth not resist you.”

In view of the fact that the Word of God orders our life in all other spheres, it would be exceedingly strange if Scripture did not command us how to live in the sphere of labor. Indeed, it would be culpable failure on the part of the Spirit of inspiration to leave us in the dark, how to live in this vitally important sphere of earthly life. The Spirit is guilty of no such failure. The passages quoted above set forth the will of God for the Christian workingman clearly and fully.

Some attempt to evade the will of God for the laborer, and thus evacuate Scripture of its instruction regarding the sphere of labor, by arguing that the New Testament passages refer to the out-dated system of slave-master and slave. The argument fails.

First, Scripture sometimes refers to *hired laborers*, to workingmen who are not owned by the master, but rather work for a wage. This is the case in I Peter 2:18ff., which speaks of “servants,” not “slaves.” This is also the case in James 5, which speaks of the “hire of the laborers” (v. 4).

Second, although it is true that slavery was the prevalent form labor took at that time, the principles laid down by Scripture apply, not to that one specific form, but to all forms of labor in all ages.

Third, the fact that the laborer was a slave does not *detract* from the calling of the free worker today, to submit, but *emphasizes* this calling *even more strongly*. If slaves had to submit for God’s sake, how much more, workingmen today, whose circumstances are in any case far better than those of slaves.

Rebellion

The labor unions, and thus all their members, are guilty of rebellion against lawful authority, just as is the case with a rebellious child, or a revolutionary against the state. Labor unionism is transgression against the fifth commandment of the law of God, "Honor thy father and thy mother," as is evident from the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the commandment in Lord's Day 39:

That I show all honor, love, and fidelity to my father and mother *and all in authority over me*, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction with due obedience;*and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand* (emphasis added).

The labor union is an organization of laborers, not merely for the purpose of collective bargaining, but for the purpose of regulating the business or industry according to the will of the laborers. The labor union enforces the will of the laborers by the strike. This enforcement of the will of the laborers against the will of the employer, which is of the very *essence* of the union, is rebellion. It is rebellion by force and violence, for the strike is the power to destroy the particular business and ruin the owner.

Out of this fundamental evil of the union flows all the violence characteristic of labor unions. The unions are committed to the class struggle propounded by Marx, and many constitutions say so. Naturally, the strike, which is as such an act of violence, breaks out in destruction of property, threat and injury, hatred of "scabs," and murder.

Corporate Responsibility

Every member of the union, whether he participates in the violence or not, whether he wholeheartedly approves or is upset by the violence, is responsible—fully responsible before God—for the union's violence, so that in the day of judgment he will have to account for it. He willingly joined an organization committed to rebellion against God-ordained authority. By his membership and dues, if not by walking the picket line, he supported an organization that forces the owner to submit to the will of the workers, that destroys property, and that injures and kills those who oppose it.

When the enforcers of the Teamsters Union crushed the head of the truck driver on I-80/94 east of South Holland, Illinois with chunks of concrete as part of the truckers' strike, every member of the Teamsters Union became a murderer before God. Every member of the Union was guilty of crushing the head of that driver as much as if he had hurled the chunks of concrete with his own hands.

This is the principle, ordained of God, revealed in the Bible, and acknowledged widely in everyday life, of corporate responsibility. “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Let the labor union member professing Christianity try once to “reprove” the union and the other members sharply at a labor union meeting! “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4).

Other Evils, Spiritual and Civil

There are other biblical grounds for objecting to labor union membership. I mention four.

Scripture teaches that the human may swear unconditional allegiance only to God. “It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). Unions require the member to pledge, or swear, unconditional allegiance and obedience to the union. Typical is the oath required for membership by the International Typographical Union quoted by First Church’s “Testimony”:

I hereby solemnly and sincerely swear (or affirm) that I will not reveal any business or proceedings of any meeting of this or any subordinate union to which I may hereafter be attached, unless by order of the union, except to those whom I know to be in good standing thereof; that I will, without evasion or equivocation, and to the best of my ability abide by the Constitution, By-Laws and the adopted scale of prices of any union to which I may belong; that I will at all times support the laws, regulations and decisions of the International Typographical Union, and will carefully avoid giving aid or succor to its enemies, and use all honorable means within my power to procure employment for members of the International Typographical Union in preference to others; *that my fidelity to the union and my duty to the members thereof shall in no sense be interfered with by any allegiance that I may now or hereafter owe to any other organization, social, political, or religious, secret or otherwise . . .* that I will not wrong a member, or see him or her wronged, if in my power to prevent. *To all of which I pledge my most sacred honor* (emphasis added).

This is idolatry.

Scripture calls the believer to brotherly communion only with fellow believers and forbids fellowship with the ungodly. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (II Cor. 6:14). The unions are “brotherhoods.” Constitutionally, they are brotherhoods. A Christian who is member of a union expresses that he views unbelieving, ungodly men and women as spiritual brothers and sisters (obviously the unions are not referring to physical brotherhood); that he shares their principles and goals regarding labor; and that he cooperates with them—is “yoked together” with them—in achieving their goals

as member of their family. This is flagrant breach of the antithesis.

Scripture instructs the Christian to seek the kingdom of God first, and not earthly things. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, drink, clothing] shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). The labor union puts wages and benefits above all else. This is materialism, *naked* materialism. In its appeal to President Roosevelt in 1941, the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches declared, “We refuse to become members of the Union because we condemn the principles of utter materialism of the Union.”

A fourth reason for objecting to labor union membership is often overlooked. The Word of God demands that we promote the kingdom of Christ with our money. This is an aspect of our stewardship regarding all our life in the world, for which we shall also give account in the final judgment. “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. . . . Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?” (Luke 19:11-27).

As *World* magazine pointed out in the issue of November 30, 2002 the labor unions spend billions of dollars of the members’ union dues every year to support the most liberal political candidates and their anti-Christian agendas. Thus, the unions aggressively, and effectively, promote abortion, the homosexual movement, the outlawing of capital punishment, and the like. In fact, the labor unions, through their political lackeys, are one of the most powerful forces driving the liberal agenda in the United States.

Many [unions] have moved on to funding liberal causes such as abortion-on-demand and school-based sexual-health clinics, opposing conservative causes such as school choice and welfare reform, and strongly supporting liberal candidates (“Dues & Don’ts,” *World*, Nov. 30, 2002, pp. 17-19).

By his voluntary membership, the member of a labor union contributes to and promotes the swelling tide of corruption in our country. Knowingly and willingly, he pays for the coming of Antichrist.

In addition to these biblical condemnations of labor union membership, labor unionism is un-American. The demand that a worker join a union in order to have a job and the exclusion of a citizen from the workforce because he refuses to join a union are contrary to the Constitution of the United States. Certainly one of the most precious aspects of the earthly freedom recognized and guaranteed by the Constitution is the right to work. All those politicians who support big labor by working for the closed shop are enemies of freedom.

Calling of the Christian Workingman

In light of the biblical testimony, the Christian workingman, every Christian workingman, must refuse membership in the union, or, if presently a member, must get out. He must do this willingly, in obedience to the Word, out of respect for the authority of God, as an act of discipleship after Jesus Christ, in gratitude for gracious salvation, and as he values his eternal salvation.

In carrying out this holy calling, the Christian workingman must be willing to suffer loss.

Servants [men working for wages], be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps (I Pet. 2:18-21).

Against the testimony of Scripture, which is clear and compelling, there are two arguments in favor of a Christian's joining a labor union. These arguments are powerful. Both of these arguments come down to this: "If I do not join the union, I will suffer."

One argument is that the owner, the employer, the boss, management, the capitalist is a greedy, cruel, blood-sucking monster. Without unions, workers have suffered, and will suffer.

The other argument is the visceral one: "I have to eat." If a man is unwilling to join a union, work is denied him, and then he and his family starve to death.

The Bible refutes both these arguments.

As regards the first, concerning the unjust employer, there are indeed wicked employers, who take advantage of the worker. Their only concern is profits for themselves. Workers are merely disposable means to that end. Scripture recognizes such employers and damns them: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you" (James 5:1). These were the farmers for whom the Christian laborers of James 5 were working. These farmers kept back the hire of the laborers, thus killing the righteous workingmen. "The hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth . . . Ye have condemned and killed the just" (James 5:4, 6).

This injustice and cruelty, however, do not warrant resistance on the part of the workers—a general strike. Rather, the laborer “doth not resist you” (James 5:6). Radically different is the activity to which the gospel of Christ calls the defrauded workingman: “Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord” (James 5:7). Christ the judge will punish the greedy capitalist who has defrauded his workers. Such a businessman “has heaped treasure together for the last days” (James 5:3). The millions he gave to charity in his old age, to soothe his conscience and get a name for himself, will not mitigate his punishment in the least. Christ will also reward the suffering, patient workingman. “The end of the Lord (is) that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11).

As regards the second argument, namely, that we must eat, the biblical refutation is exactly that we do *not* have to eat. Eating is not the “bottom line” in the life of Christians. For the Christian, what is absolutely necessary—that to which all in life must give way—is obeying God. When eating conflicts with obeying, as it often has in history, eating is given up.

Karl Marx and his disciples in the labor union movement are wrong in their teaching that the material is everything.

The man who makes eating the main thing in human life, to which all else, even the Word of God, must give way is an idolater. His god is his belly. Some god!

Whoever takes the position, “I must eat,” will, on this basis, soon also take the mark of the beast, for without that mark in the kingdom of Antichrist one will not be permitted to buy or sell (Rev. 13:17). Whoever takes the mark will be permitted to eat. He will also drink. He will “drink of the wine of the wrath of God” forever (Rev. 14:9-11).

“Pillar and Ground of the Truth”

If the Christian workingman is to carry out his calling, the church must take a stand—the biblical stand—and instruct the workingman, as well as discipline him, if he should join a union. The church is “pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15). She is pillar and ground of the truth of the godly life of her members. For the widespread disobedience to the will of God on the part of professing Christians in the sphere of labor today, the unfaithful churches are to be blamed more than the workers.

The Protestant Reformed Churches take a stand. Their stand is avowedly and undeniably biblical. This stand against labor union membership is not something about which they should be embarrassed. Rather, it is a significant part of their honor as true churches of Christ by the grace of God. True churches of Christ are identified by

their confession of the truth of the Word of God. This confession includes more than only the great doctrines of the faith. It includes as well the churches' teaching the nations "to observe all things whatsoever I [Jesus Christ] have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). As this pamphlet has shown, the Lord Jesus has commanded His disciples in all nations to honor the authority of the "master" in the sphere of labor. Therefore, the Protestant Reformed Churches may not hide, or downplay, their stand against labor union membership. Christ calls them to make this stand known.

Exactly because of the stand of the Churches from their very beginning, Protestant Reformed workingmen can still get exemption from union membership, including the requirement to pay dues to the union, under the law of the land as "conscientious objectors."

The stand of the Churches, faithfully preached and taught, guides the members of these Churches in a holy life. This is true love on the part of the Churches for their workingmen.

The Churches' stand is also an important part of their witness to the outside. It leaves impenitent rebels against the authority of Christ in the ordinance of labor without excuse. It gains others to truth, holiness, and Christ.

The encouragement both to suffering workingman and embattled church is James' exhortation:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. . . . behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (James 5:7-10).

Come, O Christ, and judge on behalf of your defrauded, but patient workingmen and on behalf of your reproached, but faithful church. Amen.