

# THE STANDARD

*Bearer*

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## MEDITATION

### JEHOVAH'S FAITHFULNESS

*"But Zion saith, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me."*

— Isa. 49:14-16

Zion was wrapped in darkness in the prophetic vision of Isaiah.

And small wonder it was. She had more than deserved to be wrapped in this mantle of darkness.

Scan the context, and shudder.

The measure of iniquity was more than full. The nation that was named for Jehovah had provoked Him to His Face, in that they whored after other gods, after the gods of the nations that surrounded them.

And doing that, they had turned their backs upon the Fountain of Israel. These two things always go together.

And then the prophets had come with their heavenly injunction: Where are the fruits of My vineyard, saith the Lord of Hosts? These prophets had spoken, wept, pleaded, but all in vain.

Worse than that, this perverse nation had mocked their prophets, derided their testimony, persecuted their persons and had killed some of them. We have heard the bitter weeping of Jeremiah and Micah.

Oh yes, this Israel had forsaken their God, the God who alone was able to deliver . . .

And what followed?

Well, what would you expect? You cannot have success when you turn your back to the Lord. You must needs be plagued all the day long.

He called, and His servants came: the hated enemy, the arch-enemy of Israel: Babylon, wicked, foul, proud Babylon.

And the heritage of Jehovah was led to a strange land.

The daughter of Zion finds herself in Babylon, between the two rivers.

And there come the haters of God with unholy glee in their hearts: they are going to have a good time with these aliens and their strange customs: Come, sing us one of the songs of Zion!

But no, we cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, ere I sing in this God-forsaken land of the sons of the devil.

And with tears in their hearts, they look toward Judah and Jerusalem, so far away!

But they see no deliverance.

How could they expect deliverance, after such great apostasy.

Upon their own unfaithfulness they can expect nothing but the just reward of their deeds.

Oh, it was sad in Babylon!

\* \* \* \*

But wonder of wonders, in that night of agony resounds the prophecy of God: Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God!

Notwithstanding their grievous sins, they hear the golden speech of God: "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted."

It is the shaft of brilliant light of prophecy that shines in the darkness in Mesopotamia.

Lift up your heads, O Zion, and rejoice ye daughters of Jerusalem: your God cometh, and His arm shall rule for Him. He is going to lead you like a flock; He shall gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young!

So, wipe away those tears; anoint your head with the glad oil of rejoicing: your Shepherd cometh to lead you back to Jerusalem!

But no, Zion still weeps. She turns a deaf ear to the miraculous speech of God, the unexpected, the baffling speech of unspeakable love. God's mercy on us? Oh no, how can that be?

Besides, look at the objective facts: we are in Babylon, far from the holy land, far from the city of God and our glorious House where our fathers served Him!

How, O prophet, can you speak of comfort, of mercy when the facts testify of our forsakenness. Oh no, but God has forgotten all about us, and He has forsaken us! Those are the sober facts.

And they continue to weep in Babylon.

\* \* \* \*

How utterly foolish of Zion to act this way!

They have forgotten one thing: God changeth never! God is faithful from everlasting to everlasting, and with Him is no change, nor variableness, nor turning.

Jeremiah testified of just that. He came to the weeping children of Zion and said: The Lord Jehovah hath appeared to me of old, and I have listened to His speech. This is what He said unto me: I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee!

But it was foolish to continue to weep in the face of such comfort.

First, because it made their night still darker.

Second, because they robbed themselves of the only comfort in such straits.

Third, because it was contrary to reality, the reality of the love of God.

No, for Zion there was no cause to lament; no, not in the face of such wondrous prophecy.

And therefore the Lord enjoins the people of His elective love to look about them: they have but to look and they will see shadows, symbols of His own fond love.

What generation is without its mother and babe? You find them in the lowest hovel and in the most glorious palaces.

Did you ever see a mother that would turn from her darling babe?

Is there a mother that would not have mercy on her son?

Ah, if the whole world would say of that son: Lynch him! Destroy this dastardly wicked boy from off the face of the world! Then, if this culprit can escape the avenging mob, and sneak to the hovel of his mother, she will meet him with outstretched arms, and fold him to her breast, and say: My son, oh, my son!

Oh yes, mothers do have pity on their sons!

It is the sweetest picture in this sorry earth.

And God bids His people to look upon that picture.

\* \* \* \*

But yet, it is possible that a mother be found who would cast off her son, and utterly forsake him in his misery. It is not likely, it is not probable, but it is possible.

And so God says: If they would forget, yet will I not forget thee!

Oh, dear reader, write those words on the posts of your doors; let them be for frontlets between your eyes; teach them to your doubting heart; inculcate them to the generations following: those words are sweeter than honey and the honey comb. I spoke earlier of the *miracle* of the love of God.

You see, the love of God and the faithfulness of that God are unchangeable.

But why?

And then is this the answer: God's love is not subject to change because of reasons outside of Him.

Ponder that statement.

He takes reasons within Himself to love us. His good-pleasure, which is as old as God is, is the fountain of His love toward us. And so it is not subject to change, even as our love and mercy.

Today I lie on my knees before the object of my love, and say: Thou art my life, my joy, my all! But tomorrow something happens, anything happens: there are a thousand possibilities; and I arise to detest the erstwhile object of all my adoration.

But not so God.

No, not even the sin of Zion can change the love of God.

And how Zion had sinned. She knows it; she is full of remorse, and cannot hope that God will ever forget.

But in the face of all that sin, the Lord saith: tell her that her iniquity is pardoned!

(We live anno Domini 1961, and I may add now: God will bear all our shame and sin, our curse and hell; till all is gone! till heaven is earned on His cross!)

What comfort!

What unspeakable consolation!

\* \* \* \*

God has an image of His beloved Zion in the palms of His hands.

So have we.

Oh those pictures, those images of those we love!

But here is the difference: God has your photograph before you yourself appeared in history.

Before the world was made, He had your image in His palms, in His heart of hearts.

And you may rest assured that the image which God has with Him from eternity is beautiful. You are so beautiful in that image that God delights to look at you.

No, not as you appear now in history, for then your image is so ugly that you yourself turn away from it, and cry: O my God, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death!?

As we appear in history we are very ugly indeed.

Be patient!

God is at work. He labors throughout all the ages to make you in history as you are in His palms. Looking at the image of you in His heart, He fashions and fashions again. We call it sanctification.

And He will continue to fashion you, in body and soul, until you shall be just as lovely as He imagined you in His own heart before the earth sank on her foundation.

Be still, my heart!

God thinketh on thee!

And that's enough!

Amen.

G.V.

### Announcement

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, October 4, 1961 at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, located at the corner of Porter and Meyer Streets in Wyoming, Mich. Delegates from the various churches of Classis East will please take notice.

Rev. M. Schipper, Stated Clerk

### Notice for Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet, the Lord willing, in Doon, Iowa, on Wednesday, September 20, 1961. All matters for this classical agendum must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk not later than thirty days before the meeting of Classis.

Rev. H. Veldman, Stated Clerk

#### THE STANDARD BEARER

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## EDITORIALS

### The Lord Does Not Command His Blessing There!

In the September 1 issue of the *Christian Reformed Banner*, Editor Vander Ploeg makes bold to apply the beautiful words of Psalm 133 to the union between the schismatic De Wolf group and the Christian Reformed Church. He states concerning it: "... and, we do not doubt, it is pleasing also to our Lord in heaven." And then he goes on to tell his readers that in this connection there come to mind the familiar words of Psalm 133:

"How good and pleasant is the sight  
When brethren make it their delight  
To dwell in blest accord."

He then adduces some supposed reasons why this is a good and pleasant sight. They are, briefly, as follows:

1. "This reunion of brethren who have so much in common is a good and pleasant sight because of the wholesome effect it may be expected to have upon the children and young people of the church."

2. It is "A good and pleasant sight . . . also because this reunion places us in a better position over against a Christless world to whom in the past we have unfortunately given cause to rejoice."

3. "Yes, a good and pleasant sight . . . because we believe this to be a manifestation and exercise of true ecumenicity in keeping with the will of our Lord." And in this connection the words of Christ's sacerdotal prayer, from John 17, are quoted: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

And Editor Vander Ploeg concludes by applying to this "good and pleasant sight" the concluding words of that same versification of Psalm 133:

"The Lord commands his blessing there,  
And they that walk in love shall share  
In life that never ends."

In the meantime,—almost it would seem with some pangs of conscience,—*The Banner* cannot forget that in this whole sham transaction the parties concerned are conveniently forgetting (or, willfully overlooking) a shameful chapter in Christian Reformed Church history which is certainly written too in God's book of remembrance. For this same editorial states:

"The sharp rift that has divided us dates back to 1924; ever since, for 37 years, there has been a painful breach which God has now graciously healed, at least for ourselves and for many of those with whom we had a parting of the ways at that time."

"It is neither necessary nor wise at this time to review

the so-called common grace controversy which has made very interesting and stimulating, but also very painful history. Woven into this history are unpleasant memories which ought not now be needlessly drawn out of oblivion. The efforts initiated by our Protestant Reformed brethren in 1957 toward reconciliation have been so blessed of the Lord that this has now been accomplished."

\* \* \* \*

Now there are many statements in this editorial which could well be the subject of comment and correction. But the most serious aspect of the entire article is that which led to the caption of this reply, "The Lord Does Not Command His Blessing There!" Indeed, if it can be said that this "reunion" is a good and pleasant sight,—good and pleasant in the sight of the Holy One, Who is too pure of eyes to behold iniquity; if it can be said that this "reunion" is an instance,—in the sight of our Lord in heaven,—of brethren who make it their delight to dwell in blest accord; if it can be said that God Himself has now graciously healed a breach of 37 years duration; if it can be said that reconciliation in the Scriptural sense of the word and upon the basis of Scripture and our Reformed confessions has been sought and has been accomplished; then it may also be added, "The Lord commands His blessing there."

But what if all the above cannot be said?

Then it follows just as surely: "The Lord does *not* command His blessing there."

And the premise expressed in Editor Vander Ploeg's first quotation from Psalm 133 is *not* true. What has happened between the two synods,—the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church and the would-be synod of the schismatics,—is surely not a good and pleasant sight in the eyes of the Lord of heaven. It can never carry away the divine approval and benediction. For God is holy and just and true. He cannot be mocked!

Here are the reasons, and they cannot be gainsaid.

1. A triple breach in the fortress of the Reformed truth was struck by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, not by a common grace controversy, but by the official adoption of the Three Points of Common Grace. These still stand in all their binding force. This the *Banner* will not deny, I am sure. For though the schismatics explicitly requested that the binding force of the Three Points be removed, the Christian Reformed Church rejected this request. These Three Points are false doctrine. Even our schismatic brethren formerly maintained this; and some of them continued even up to their last synod to attack the Three Points and to aver that they could never accept them. At any rate, the Three Points can never stand the light of Scripture and the confessions. And false doctrine is not good and pleasant in the sight of God. He is terribly displeased with it, and with any union on the basis of it.

2. The terrible injustices perpetrated by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924-'26 have not been rectified. That ministers of whom the Synod of Kalamazoo itself was impelled to testify that they were fundamentally Reformed were deposed and cast out (there was not merely a parting of the ways, as the *Banner* suggests), that consistories were deposed, that whole congregations were deprived of their place of worship because they maintained the truth,—and all this in a manner contrary to the spirit and the letter of Reformed church polity,—these all are injustices which cry still to Jehovah Sabaoth. They have not been rectified. There has been no reconciliation. But both parties to this sham healing of the rift have conveniently ignored the past. Our schismatic brethren have wilfully made themselves co-responsible now for these iniquities. And the Christian Reformed brethren may speak of raking over a past they are eager to leave behind and may attempt to relegate that past to oblivion. But these matters are still “unpleasant memories” even to them. And the sight of them is not good and pleasant, but unpleasant in the eyes of the Holy One of Israel. He cannot, for His own name's sake, ignore the crooked that has not been made straight. And He does not command His blessing there!

3. The union that has been effected is not a union of the Christian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed Churches. Our schismatic brethren know that they were not Protestant Reformed. For they forsook their own Act of Agreement, and with it what they once said were “their most sacred convictions,” when they embraced the Christian Reformed error of common grace. And Editor Vander Ploeg, I am sure, also knows that those who united with his denomination were no longer representative of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He knows very well that the De Wolf group capitulated doctrinally and embraced the Christian Reformed position not in 1961 but in 1953. And he knows very well that the Protestant Reformed Churches are continuing their same vigorously Reformed course, as represented in our churches. This whole transaction, if presented as a union involving the Protestant Reformed Churches, is pure sham. And the God Who demands truth in the inward parts is not pleased with sham. It is not good and pleasant in His sight. And He will not bless it.

4. Regardless of the respective doctrinal positions of the Christian Reformed Church and the Protestant Reformed Churches, and regardless of the peculiar views of Reformed church polity maintained respectively by each, the De Wolf group was a schismatic group. In fact, by Christian Reformed standards of church government, this is, if anything, more emphatically true of the De Wolf group. They are ecclesiastical revolutionaries. They would not submit, even temporarily, to the discipline and government which they had solemnly vowed to honor. This too the Christian Reformed Church ignored,—something that should be below all proper ecclesiastical dignity. But according to our

Reformed polity, schism is a censurable sin; and those who raise discord, sects, or mutiny in church or state are barred from the Lord's table and excluded from the kingdom of heaven as long as they continue in such sin. Can all this, then, be characterized as good and pleasant in the sight of God? And can it carry away the divine blessing?

In the light of the above, it will be evident that the reasons suggested by the *Banner* do not bear the stamp of truth.

\* \* \* \*

Perhaps it is too much to hope for. But we Protestant Reformed will continue to testify to the Christian Reformed Church nevertheless.

If the Christian Reformed Church will ever show a willingness to forsake the error of common grace; if the Christian Reformed Church will ever consent (not to rake over the past) to review its actions of 1924-1926 forthrightly and honestly, and will confess its wrongs and undo them in as far as that is possible; if the Christian Reformed Church will ever face up to the bitter fruits it has harvested and still is harvesting from its synthesizing common grace doctrine,—fruits which some of the very leaders who formulated the Three Points are now decrying; then there is hope for true reconciliation.

The Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches has officially proposed this more than once, and even as recently as 1957, 1958, and 1959. But the Christian Reformed Church will not even discuss this. And as long as there is no discussion, there can be no reconciliation.

But surely, genuine reconciliation,—even though it involves a painful rehearsal of painful history,—is good and pleasant in the eyes of God.

And then only is it possible for brethren to dwell together in blest accord.

And . . . “The Lord commands His blessing there,” . . . not elsewhere.

H.C.H.

### Notice of Annual Board Meeting

The Annual membership meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association will be held Thursday evening, Sept. 28, at 8:00 o'clock in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. The Speaker, Rev. C. Hanko, will speak on the topic, “A New Generation.” New Board members will be elected from the following nominees:

James Lanning, Harry Zwak, R. Bos, Dave Meulenberg, John Kalsbeek, Clarence Kuiper, Gerrit Pipe, Peter Cnossen.

The Board of the R.F.P.A. invites all our Protestant Reformed men to join with us in this work of witnessing for the truth and urges all members to attend this important meeting.

# OUR DOCTRINE

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### PART TWO

#### CHAPTER XXIII

#### *The New Jerusalem*

#### Revelation 21:9-27

In detail Scripture tells us very little about the rest. We may ask: how shall this new state be? We know a few things of that new and perfect state which shall be characterized by God's dwelling with men. Certainly, we know that sin and suffering shall be no more. All will be holy and righteous and filled with the glory and knowledge of God. We also know the temporal and all that is connected with it: and that temporal shall be no more. All that is of the present time shall be changed. But for the rest, our experience will be like the expression made by the Queen of Sheba after she had visited Solomon: "The half was not told me." In the text we have before us a little more in detail is expressed of that new state of things. We read in vs. 9 and 10: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials . . ." John is to be shown the glory of the New Jerusalem. And it seems that it is very appropriate that one of the vial-angels, that had been instrumental in the final destruction of Babylon, serves as the mediating angel for this purpose. "Come hither," so the angel speaks to John, "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." The New Jerusalem that is described in the rest of the text is here called the bride, the wife of the Lamb, which is, as we know, the church. The church and the New Jerusalem are one. We are here warned at once that the description of the city that follows is by no means to be interpreted as referring to a literal city, but is the glorified church as a social community, centered in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then we read: "And he carried me away in the spirit . . ." The mountain to which John is carried away is great and high, in order to afford John a proper view of this colossal city that is shown him, "the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God" (cf. vs. 2).

From verse 11 on we have a general description of this New Jerusalem. In vs. 11 we read: "Having the glory of God," that is, the very glory of God, which is the radiation of His infinite virtues and perfections, such as eternity, omnipresence, knowledge, grace, righteousness, holiness, etc., is reflected in the New Jerusalem. God's glory is revealed in the perfected church. "And her light was like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Evidently these words describe the appearance of the glory of God in the city as John perceives it in the vision. Cf. also Rev. 4:3. The glory of God is the light of the city. And the light is like the brilliancy of the jasper; very bright and very clear and very transparent is the brilliancy of the

city. In Revelation 4:3 God Himself is described under the symbolism of a jasper. And then we have in verses 12 to 14 a description, first of all, of the wall of the city. In these verses the general structure of the wall about the city is described as follows. In the first place, it is great and high. Cf. also on vs. 17. Secondly, that wall has twelve gates, indicative of the number of the citizens within that enter through these gates. Twelve is the number of election, especially when it is multiplied by ten. And hence, this number refers to the fulness of the people of God, of the old as well as of the new dispensation. In the third place, we are told that at the gates there are twelve angels. This certainly cannot mean that these angels serve as guards, to watch over the city against possible enemies and possible attacks by the enemies. For there will be no one in the new creation and in the New Jerusalem that will hate and attack the people of God any more. We must rather understand that these twelve angels are indicative of the fact that they served the ingathering of the citizens of this New Jerusalem. Then, in the fourth place, on the gates are the names of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel, indicative of the identity of those that are within. All Israel, from Jews and Gentiles, constitutes the glorious church of God and the glorious, holy Jerusalem. In the new creation there are not two peoples; there is only one people, and that people is the church. Cf., for this, also Chapter 7. In the fifth place, the gates are equally distributed in the four sides of the wall, which constitutes, therefore, a perfect square: three on each side. Sixthly, the wall, according to the text, has twelve foundations, evidently to be conceived as standing next to one another, one under each gate. And on these foundations are the names of the twelve apostles, indicating that the foundations are laid through the instrumentality of the apostles, of which Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. Cf. also Eph. 2:20. There we read: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." And then in verses 21 and 22 we read: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." We may note, as I have already expressed, that throughout this description the number twelve prevails, which is the multiplication of three and four, three being the number of the Trinity and four being the number of the creature. Hence, we say that the number twelve is the number of election.

Then in verses 15 to 17 we find the measurements of the city. The interpreting angel measures the city, as John looks on, with a golden reed. Golden is the reed, in harmony with the glory of the city. And the measurements as they are given here are as follows. First of all, we may note that the city is a perfect cube in form, symbol of the strict universality of this city: it embraces heaven and earth, and it embraces all the nations of the earth. Further, it is a symbol of the heavenly perfection of the house of God. Cf. also the most



holy place in the temple of the old dispensation. Further, we find that the city is twelve thousand furlongs each way, which signifies that it is an immense city. It is colossal in size. For note that a furlong is six hundred feet. Hence, twelve thousand furlongs is approximately fifteen hundred miles. The church as it is finally perfected is a multitude which no man can number. Further, we find that according to the number the city is complete. This is symbolized by the number ten. We also find that it is the church of God's elect, as already expressed. God Himself determines the size of the city. The wall of the city is one hundred forty-four cubits high, approximately two hundred twenty feet, "according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel." Notice here that the wall is comparatively low, which means that the city needs no protection. The wall merely serves to circumscribe the number of citizens within, twelve times twelve.

Further, we may notice that the city is described as being very beautiful and glorious. The entire description that follows, with its symbolism of gold and precious stones, simply serves to picture the beauty and the glory and the preciousness of the bride of the Lamb. We dare not allegorize each detail: that would be in conflict with the entire context. We may briefly note, therefore, that the wall is of jasper. Again I refer you to chapter 4, verse 3 in this connection. And jasper here, as well as in Revelation 4:3, represents the glory of God. The city itself is pure, transparent gold, symbolizing the purity, the beauty, the glory, and the preciousness of its inhabitants. The different foundations were each a precious stone. There is again the jasper (cf. 4:3). There is the sapphire, which is a beautiful dark blue stone. There is the chalcedony, probably an agate (the description is unknown). There is an emerald, which is a beautiful green. There is the sardonyx, a brilliant flesh color. There is the sardius (again, cf. Rev. 4:3). There is the chrysolite, a stone of a golden, yellow luster. There is the beryl, like the greenness of the sea when the sun shines upon it. There is the topaz, which is a transparent, yellow color. There is the chrysoprasus, a pale, golden color. There is the jacinth, a violet color. There is the amethyst, which is a purple color. And then we read that the gates were each a huge pearl, pure and lustrous. And the street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. We might ask the question whether there was only one street in the city, or whether the term *street* is representative of all the streets; but this is not necessary. The whole, we may say in conclusion of this particular description, is reflecting the manifold glory of God.

Then we come to verses 22 and 23. Here we still have a further description of the glory of the New Jerusalem. "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." It is very important that we constantly bear in mind that what is described here as a huge and glorious city is actually the glorified church, the bride of the Lamb, in the new creation. All the details of

the description must be interpreted accordingly. In the first place, there is no temple in that New Jerusalem. The temple is the house of God, the dwellingplace of God in fellowship with His people. This is always the idea of the temple. In the old, earthly Jerusalem there was a special temple, distinct from the rest of the city. Although Jerusalem as a whole was the city of God, the Lord nevertheless did not dwell in the entire city, but in a special house, and particularly in the holy of holies, which was behind the veil. But the New Jerusalem has no such special house of God. The reason is given in the text: "For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." This is the reason for the absence of a special temple in the holy Jerusalem. There is no need, there is no occasion for a special temple: for God Himself is the temple of His people in Christ. The meaning of this is very evident. That God and the Lamb are the temple signifies that God through the Lamb is the temple of the New Jerusalem. Through the Lamb God dwells with His people. Further, that God through Christ is the temple of the whole city signifies that the glorified church now perfectly dwells with God. Constantly and everywhere they know Him as He reveals Himself to them and as He walks with them. They see God evermore and everywhere, and dwell in His blessed fellowship. Further, we read: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." This does not mean that in the new creation there will be neither sun nor moon. For the reference in this connection is not to the new creation, but to the church. Nor does the text say that there will be no sun and moon, but that the glorified church will have no need of it. And the reason is given in the second part of this verse: "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." God through the Lamb directly enlightens His church, so that they may behold the glory of His virtues in Christ immediately. Here, in the earthly creation, there is only a reflection of His glory through the light of sun and moon. There they shall see Him face to face, and know Him as they are known, and that through the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In verses 24 to 27 we have a description of the citizens and their activity. "And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." The city, first of all, is strictly cosmopolitan. Its citizens are gathered of all nations. Not only so, but they appear here as nations even though all national separation shall no doubt be removed. And these nations walk in the light of the city, that is, in the revelation of the glory of God through Christ. By their walk is meant their life and conversation, all their activity, and that too, in relation to God. In eternal glory there will be constant life and constant activity, and that too, all in the service of God. For all the activity is in the light of the city, that is, all their walk and conversation is controlled and motivated by the perfect knowledge of and fellowship with God through the Lamb.

H.H.

## A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

### Rephidim

*Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers . . . did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*

I Corinthians 10:1, 4

Daily Israel arose from its sleep to gaze upon the bread from heaven which in the morning light covered the floor of the desert. It was a beautiful sight, glistening all white under the rising sun. They gathered of it until they had plenty to eat. They ate of it until they were satisfied. The taste of it was sweet, giving the people much joy. It reminded them again and again of the great and all-comprehensive power of Israel's God. To those who were spiritual in Israel, the truth which the manna brought was even richer. Eating of it to nourish their bodies, they were reminded every time again that in God also they must find the nourishment for their souls. His grace had to uphold their spiritual life. They were being told "that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. 8:3). In the dim outline of Old Testament shadow, they saw the promise of the living bread which was yet to come from heaven so that if any man would eat of it, he would live forever. To those who had eyes to see, the manna of the wilderness testified of the promise of the gospel.

But there were others. They saw in the manna nothing more than a form of food that was pleasant to the taste and satisfying to the body. For a time they too marveled at the daily replenishment of this wonderful food, but before long they began to take it completely for granted. They became tired of the constant repetition of manna. They ate of it only because there was nothing different, but the pleasure of eating was departed. There was a rift in the camp of Israel, and constantly it was growing deeper.

Every day they were being led deeper into the wilderness by the cloud of Jehovah, and once more the difficulty that preceded their arrival at Marah began to reappear. Their water bags were becoming empty, and they found no springs or fountains upon the way to refill them. Again the tension of fear and disappointment began to build. What good was their daily supply of manna without water to drink? Carefully what water they had was meted out; but no one received enough to quite satisfy. Every mile along which they were led appeared to be drier than the one before. Why did they have to travel such a dismal route? They needed fresh supplies of water if they were to live. Why was it not supplied? More and more bitter their thoughts became until at last in anger they turned again to Moses. "Give us water that we may drink," they angrily demanded.

In this the children of Israel revealed an evil that is often typical of sin. The people were rebelling against God. They were dissatisfied with the way in which the Lord was leading them. In their hearts they were thinking that they could have found a better route. It would have been better to take a shorter way with an abundant supply of food and water, they thought. The road upon which they traveled now was foolish and ill advised. But at the same time they lacked the honesty to acknowledge that they were questioning the wisdom of God. Instead they would lay the blame at the feet of another mere man. The fact that Moses did nothing more than to follow the cloud of Jehovah, they would ignore. The fact that he led them as he did by direct instruction from God, they would forget. They would speak to Moses as though he were the responsible party. In that way the wickedness of their rebellion did not appear quite so evident. This Moses pointed out when he answered, "Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?"

Well might the people have stopped at this. It was a grievous error to become guilty of tempting the Lord their God. They made themselves worthy of being destroyed even as the Egyptians were. But the angry minds of the Israelites were much too heated to stop at this. It made them even more angry to think that in the present situation they should be accused of sin. With accusing voices and threatening gestures, they answered Moses, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

Gradually Moses was learning how deep the roots of sin were still implanted in the nation of Israel. He could lead them in the way that the Lord had ordained, but he could not make them willing to follow. He could admonish them for their rebellion, but he could not make them repent. He could speak to them the truth, but he could not give them ears that would hear and hearts that would believe. Rather it was becoming ever more evident that many were offended by the Word of God. They wanted nothing more than the things of this earth. When these things were supplied, they were satisfied and would even put on the appearance of thankfulness. But when the Word of God came to them without the material things they wanted, it made them angry and rebellious. They would not place their trust in God alone, and the very suggestion that they should do so was offensive. Each time the murmuring of the people was becoming more violent. They were even beginning to threaten his life. Overwhelmed with a feeling of helplessness, he cried unto the Lord in prayer, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me."

With God he found a calm but firm answer. Obediently Moses set himself to obey.

First Moses gathered together the elders of the people. They were the leaders of the nation. Many of them were the most outspoken in the repeated murmurings of the wilderness journey. Now they stood before Moses and there was tension in the air. Antagonism was dividing the nation



which before had been so closely united. They looked upon each other as enemies.

With firm authority Moses began to lead the men out of the camp toward the wilderness. Within the minds and hearts of the elders a feeling of uneasiness began to stir. They had defied the living God, and the bearing of Moses told them that the time of reckoning was drawing near. The uncertainty of sin began to trouble them within. But a few weeks before at Marah the Word of God had come to them saying, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Now, as they walked behind Moses, their memories echoed these words again and again. In their murmuring and rebellion, they had refused to keep the commandments of Jehovah and His statutes; they had rejected the voice of the Lord, and what would their end now be? Looking ahead they saw in the hand of Moses that rod which had come to symbolize his God-appointed office. This was the rod that had brought the plagues and diseases of the Egyptians upon them. It was that rod, indeed, which had opened up the Red Sea for Israel's deliverance; but that same rod had closed the sea again to the destruction of the wicked. It was a rod of judgment. Now, they had made themselves guilty. Would it turn upon them?

On into the wilderness they went until they saw before them a great rock cliff of towering granite. In its shadow they stood, and how small it made them feel. In pride they had thought themselves great, but the feeling melted before the elevated rock that God had made. They had thought themselves strong, but before the vast, immovableness of the granite cliffs the feeling could not endure. In number they were many, but here they seemed as nothing. And then lifting up their eyes, they saw the cloud. It stood before them on the rock. It was the cloud of Jehovah radiating with purity and righteousness from above, and it was as though the rock and the cloud were merged into one. The holy brilliance of the cloud seemed to cover the face of the rock; and the vast immovableness of the rock belonged also to the cloud. The people stood small and insignificant in the presence of Jehovah God.

There was fear in their hearts when they turned again to look at Moses. And then they trembled, for he had lifted up above his head the rod given him by Jehovah. They had sinned. Now they had to admit it. What right did they have to question the way of the Lord? What right did they have to doubt that He was able and willing to fulfill His promises and supply their every need? What right did they have to murmur and complain when things did not go as they wanted? And yet they had done it over and over again. Now the time of judgment had come. There was the cloud glimmering with the holy glory of God. There was the cliff of

rock typifying His immovableness. There was the rod which before their eyes had brought down judgments on countless wicked before. What was their end to be? Would fire and brimstone be called down from on high repeating the judgment of Sodom? Would the rock fall upon them and grind them to powder? Would they be cast into hell?

Through the stillness of the desert air sounded the weight of a heavy stroke. Moses had brought down the rod once and again on the rock. Punishment was being meted out, but not on them, on the rock, on the rock where the cloud of Jehovah stood, on the rock where the Angel of Jehovah was. The punishment of their sins was being laid on the Angel of God.

And that was not all. As the astonished people watched, there burst forth from the foot of the rock a stream of water, clear, cool, and pure. It brought refreshment to their dry and thirsty lips. It was the proof that God could and would provide the needs of Israel.

It was a beautiful scene to behold as the people gathered to drink of the waters that poured mysteriously forth from the rock. But there was also a tinge of sadness, for the division in the camp had become more deep.

There were those who drank of the water and found nothing more in it than refreshment for their burning lips. When they left the waters they would forget them. They would be ready to murmur again.

But there were also the others who drank the water with a sense of spiritual reverence. They could not forget the way in which it was brought forth. They remembered how unworthy they were. They remembered that they had sinned. They remembered that they had been worthy of judgment. They remembered that their judgment had been laid upon the Angel of Jehovah that stood on the rock, and then the waters came forth. It was as though they heard already the voice of the prophet many ages away saying, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." As they stooped to drink of the waters, the glorious refreshment of the waters of life poured in to quicken their souls. Through faith they drank of the spiritual Rock which was Christ.

B.W.

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The sacrifice of praise I bring  
While to the Lord I pray,  
And with His people will I meet,  
My thankful vows to pay.

Within His house, the house of prayer,  
My soul shall bless the Lord,  
And praises to His holy Name  
Let all His saints accord.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of I Timothy

(I Timothy 2:1-7)

c.

Twice we have now called attention to the exhortation of Paul given to Timothy here in the text in I Tim. 2:1-7.

In the first instalment we called attention to the meaning and implication of the term "all men" as this is modified in the phrase "for kings and for all who are in authority." It was and is our settled conviction that the meaning of "all men" as here employed by the Holy Ghost through Paul must not be distilled into "every man" in the sense in which the Arminians speak of this, to wit, "that Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins . . ." (Point II of the "Five Articles of the Remonstrants."). It is and was equally our conviction and contention that the text does not afford proof for a certain attitude of grace or favor of God to mankind in general, or to all to whom the Gospel is preached. This in opposition to the Common Grace enthusiasts, the Synods of the Christian Reformed Church, past and present.

In our second instalment we indicated what we believed to be the teaching of Scripture in general concerning the meaning of prayer, the chief part of thankfulness, so that in justice God is acknowledged to be who He is and what He is in the history of the gathering of the church, all men; and also how in truth He ought to be confessed and acknowledged to be God the Saviour of "all men." This we do when we pray. And, those who have read this second instalment, will remember that we also called attention to Paul's enumeration of certain forms of prayer, which terms indicate, when taken together, the full-orbed prayer of the church. They also show the urgency indicated in this exhortation to prayer for all men. Not one class of men, aged and young, rich or poor, slave or master, man or woman, king or subject, may be omitted from our prayers for their salvation, namely, their coming to the knowledge of the truth.

We now stand before another question which is indicated in the text. I refer to what Paul indicates as being the basis for this prayer for "all men." We do well to consider this element in the text too and try to show its relation to the exhortation that prayers be made for all men.

What was this solid and only basis for such prayers?

It is: the *will* of God that "all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." God wills even to bring certain kings to the knowledge of the truth. It is the soterio-

logical purpose of God, even with kings and all who are in authority, as they are included in all men which is the *ground* for the injunction that they too be the objects of our prayers. Certainly when kings are truly pious God's people lead quiet and peaceful lives, undisturbed by violence and persecution in the world!

Let it not be overlooked that God is here denominated "God, our Savior." This is an indication that we have here to deal with God not simply as the Creator of the world as such, apart from the cross, resurrection of Christ, and the final restoration of all things in the Parousia of Christ. This is not a certain saviorhood of the creature; a certain providential care over the creature in general which would then form the substrate for God's dealing in Christ. The doctrine of the providence of God is not an article of faith common to believer and to unbeliever. It is no *Articulus mixtus*! When we believe in "God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth" we believe in God the Father as his sons of adoption for Christ's sake, who are foreordained from before the foundation of the world unto such sonship, confession and prayers. See Lord's Day 10, Questions 27, 28. And in that very peculiar and unique sense of the term Paul here speaks of God, the Saviour.

That such is the meaning of the term in Scripture is abundantly proven by many texts, which beyond a shadow of a doubt refer to God as the Saviour in Christ, as He saves His people *from their sins*. We refer to the Song of Mary as found in Luke 1:47: "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." It is very evident from this song of Mary that she here refers to Jehovah God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; it is of the covenant God, as merciful to his people of whom she sings, and not simply of a preserver of creation, preserving the substrate to maintain and execute the common mandate to man that he be fruitful and replenish the earth! God, the Saviour, is definitely the God Who through the blood saves His people from sin, and the whole creation for their sakes. Rom. 8:21. That such is the case is clear from what we read in Jude 24, 25: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to preserve you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, *our Saviour*, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen." Also here "Savior" is in the Christological, soteriological and truly eschatological sense; all things *reunited* in Christ Jesus!

This is corroborated by the current usage of the term here in the epistle to Timothy. Do we not read in I Tim. 1:1 that Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God *our Saviour*, and the Lord Jesus Christ which is our hope? And do we not read again of God as Saviour in I Tim. 4:10 of the "living God, who is the *Saviour* of all men, specially of those who believe"? And is this same God not called Saviour in Titus 3:4-6 where we read: "But after that the kindness and love of God *our Saviour* toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done,

but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

We believe that our interpretation of "God our Saviour" stands confirmed from Scripture itself.

Since the will of God is, in this great plan of salvation, that all men be saved, the entire human race, that is, the elect out of every tongue and tribe and people and nation, it is also the will of God that prayers be made for "all men." For for all of these elect was the blood of Christ shed, a testimony in God's own time.

It is further emphatically stated that there is but *one* God and one Mediator of God.

This is very meaningful for the exhortation that prayers be made for all. It is exactly the truth that there is but one God and Saviour, and one Mediator of God and men which is the basis for the unity of the church, and for the fact that all men, all kinds of men, elect to everlasting life, be brought before the face of this one God in prayer.

Heathendom is necessarily polytheistic, that is, it must have more than one God. Having fallen away from the *one* true God they serve the creature, and they have as many gods as there are individual creatures. Heathendom cannot come to unity. It is only when the entire cosmos is brought back again to God through the blood of the Mediator Jesus Christ, that again there can be a service of *one* God. That unity is in the many members which are constituted one body in Christ.

And so the basis for the unity of the prayers of all saints for the entire Christ, for every class of men is not in a common, imaginary brotherhood of man, but it is in the unity which is ours in the one new man in Christ wherein is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but where all are one in Christ by faith.

And it is for this reason that this one God and one Mediator is made the basis for the exhortation unto prayers for all men.

There cannot be any other basis.

It should be borne in mind that the one God here is most emphatically the *Savior* God. He is the God and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is only one such Savior. He is such a Savior in the Mediator Jesus Christ. For the Mediator is the Mediator not *between* (metaxoo) God and men, but He is the Mediator *of* God and man. He is the Mediator of God, very God of God in our human nature, and therefore He is also our Mediator. He is real and righteous man and also in *one person* truly God.

It is in the incarnated Son, the Word of God which *dwelt* amongst us, Who suffered and died that the middle-wall of

partition was broken down, and that one new man is created, that peace is proclaimed to those who are far and to those who are near.

This Son of God in the flesh has come in His own time. He died at the proper time in history. He reconciled all things again unto God through His blood on the cross, and He has the preeminence in all things.

He also called Paul unto the proclamation of the gospel. And Paul preaches the Gospel everywhere. He must teach the Gentiles in faith and verity. As an ordained preacher Paul preaches and teaches. He is an apostle of Christ by the command of God the Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ. And in this unity of the word of the one God Paul is busy.

Wherefore let every one know that prayers are within the framework of the economy of salvation in Christ as wrought by the Savior God in Him. And prayers are in agreement with the calling of Paul to be an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles in verity and truth.

Here one prays that God's kingdom come, namely, "so govern us by Thy Word and Spirit, that we submit ourselves to Thee always more and more; preserve and increase Thy church; destroy the works of the devil, every power that exalteth itself against Thee, and all wicked devices formed against Thy Word, until the fulness of Thy Kingdom come, wherein Thou shalt be all in all." Lord's Day 48, Question 123 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

When thus the prayer of all saints is prayed, all is well.

Small wonder that Paul says: I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men!

This is a chief point of God's agendum of salvation.

It is good and acceptable before Him.

It is the sweet incense of the prayers according to His will.

G.L.

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O come, behold the works of God,  
His mighty doings see;  
In dealing with the sons of men  
Most wonderful is He.

He led in safety through the flood  
The people of His choice,  
He turned the sea to solid ground;  
In Him let us rejoice.

He rules forever by His might,  
His eyes the nations try;  
Let not the proud rebellious ones  
Exalt themselves on high.

## I N H I S F E A R

### God's Royal Priesthood

(9)

Not Aaron but Adam was God's first priest here upon this earth. His temple had no thick veil between Holy of Holies and Holy Place. His temple had no walls nor even an altar of burnt offering or of incense. No blood was shed in that temple; and no sin was confessed. Because as yet no sin was committed, there was no sin confessed. And there was no need or call for an altar for bloody sacrifices. Or let us speak more accurately, there was no sacrifice.

As we pointed out last time, the word sacrifice means a slaughter, and that indeed always then is a bloody sacrifice. And therefore it is incorrect even to speak that way of a bloody sacrifice. All sacrifices were bloody. When God clothed Adam and Eve with skins to cover their nakedness and to teach them that only through the shed blood of Christ was there covering for their guilt, He certainly shed the blood of that beast. How can you possibly take the skin off an animal without shedding its blood? Not only do you kill it, but you kill it in a bloody way. And so we say that before man fell in Paradise, God's priest did not sacrifice to Him. He did bring offerings unto God, but sacrifices were a foreign idea in that day.

And not only did God's priest bring offerings to God in that righteous world before the fall, he spent his whole day in that temple; and he spent his whole day in offering up gifts unto God. It was not a spasmodic offering up nor an offering at specifically set times but a day-long activity every day; even as so it shall again be when God's royal priesthood stands in the new Paradise. Already that thick veil in Jerusalem's temple has been rent in two. Already separation between Holy of Holies and the Holy Place has been erased. Already bloody offerings have been abolished, and it has become sin to offer them up for forgiveness unto God. And the High Priest Who shed His blood on Calvary's altar is also the King exalted over all God's creation. But then also Adam as God's royal priest spent his whole day in his priestly work of offering up gifts unto God.

We might call your attention for a moment to the fact that the name priest means minister, agent, one who stands by to serve another. And Adam surely was God's minister and agent. He was king over that whole earthly creation, but he was also priest over that whole earthly creation. Over it all he was God's minister. He ruled it all in God's name. And then he served as God's king. But when he served God over that same creation as God's priest he offered it up to God as one who has dedicated and consecrated it all to God's service. In fact the priest was one who was himself dedicated and consecrated unto God's service.

We remind you once again of what we wrote last time that the little boy in Israel whose lineage was of the tribe of Levi had his work all cut out for him. He was by an act of God set aside or, if you will, dedicated and consecrated to God. Webster tells us, to dedicate is "to devote to the service or worship of a divine being, or to sacred uses; to set apart to a definite use or service." And of consecrate he says, "To make or declare sacred or holy; to set apart or devote to the service or worship of God." The whole tribe of Levi was set aside in that sense and had a special and separate work to perform. From infancy the male children were set aside for that work. We may say from birth this was the work to which they were assigned. Now all this was by God's appointment and decree. But the significance behind it all is that so we are to live, and so our calling in life is that we with all our possessions must be dedicated and consecrated unto God. The practical significance of this truth we will explore somewhat later, but now we simply wish to state the fact and point out that Adam already in Paradise was such a priest. He, himself was devoted, consecrated and dedicated consciously and willingly unto God with all the earthly creation over which he was also king. He was God's first royal priest. He saw nothing but he saw it for God's sake. He touched nothing but to use it in service of God. He listened to the sweet music produced by God's creation in order himself to sing God's praises.

We may put it this way: All of that earthly creation was brought by Adam daily unto God as an offering of praise and thanksgiving. Or, if you will, God had close contact with that whole earthly creation through the hand, the mind, and the heart of Adam. The little bird in the tree, that cannot know God and cannot consciously and willingly sing His praises, did have its trilling song brought before the face of God through the mind, heart and tongue of Adam when Adam in his soul, upon hearing this creature's song, said, O God, how great Thou art! God caused all the animals to pass before Adam while he still served in that original priestly office; and Adam saw God in every creature; and in the names which he gave to these animals he once again said in his soul, O God, Who is a God like unto Thee! How great Thou art! He saw the beauty of color, of shape and texture. He tasted the sweetness and deliciousness of the fruit of the garden. He saw the creatures large and small, the animate and inanimate creatures of God's world; and he kept on saying in his soul, This is God's world. How may I best serve Him therewith? How shall all these through me return to Him in the glorification of His name? He was God's minister over that creation. He was His agent, one who stood on this earth in order to serve the God in heaven. He was, as it were, the human, rational-moral funnel through which that whole creation returned back to the God Who had made it, in conscious, willing praise and service.

And even this has its reflection still after the Fall and in the Old Testament temple. For all Israel came to God through the priest. Today since our High Priest, our ONLY High Priest, Christ Jesus, has offered His bloody sacrifice on Calvary for our sins and blotted them all out, has been seated at God's right hand evermore to plead our cause, we need no priest through whom we can approach God. And the Roman Catholic Church certainly ignores and sets aside this glorious truth that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," Hebrews 9:28. Through Him it is that we do approach God. Only in Him as our only High Priest do we have the right even to utter one prayer to God. But today we need no earthly priest, even as we need no lamb to sacrifice. And it is as much an act of unbelief to maintain an earthly priesthood for the forgiveness of our sins as it is to continue the ritual of offering up a lamb to God for this forgiveness. It is as much a sin of ignoring the atonement of Calvary to maintain a priesthood that must still sacrifice Christ anew as it is to say that the blood of bulls and goats today is necessary for the forgiveness of our sins. But in the days of types and shadows, before this merciful high priest came, Jesus Christ the Righteous, man could approach God only through the priest in the temple.

Remember the time when Samuel commanded King Saul — and he was the king, if you please, the ruler of the people with power invested in him by God Himself — to wait until he, Samuel, should come to sacrifice before they went to battle with the Philistines? Now Samuel was of the tribe of Levi, the tribe that God had set aside for this work of sacrificing and presenting the offerings of the people. All Israel was dependent upon that priesthood. Still more, this is so evident in the fact also that this priesthood remained until the very cross of Christ. A prophet there was not always in Israel. From the days of Malachi to John the Baptist there was no prophet in Israel. It was a period of silence, and God spoke through no one to His Church. From the captivity of the Kingdom of Judah — a much longer period of time — Israel likewise had no king upon the throne. Heathen nations ruled over Israel instead of the house of David. Yet through all this time there was a priest in Israel.

In a sense — because as we pointed out before, it is one office with three phases, and each one of us is all three: prophet, priest and king — the priest in this period when there was neither king nor prophet still represented the other offices — God does not withdraw His grace, though He may withdraw some of the material evidence of it — and the priest *taught* Israel and *ruled* over her spiritual life.

There is a difference, of course. The prophet taught by word of mouth and by means of the written and spoken Word of God. The priest taught by example. The prophet taught of the coming of Christ and forgiveness of sins in Him. The priest held Him up before the eyes of the people in his daily sacrificing, in the lambs and bullocks, in his wash-

ings and even in his prayers and benedictions. By his own life of dedication and consecration to service in God's house he also taught by example our calling to be ministers of God, agents through whom His whole creation returns in service and praise to His glory. O, indeed, the priest also taught God's people.

But we may also point out that he needed that instruction of the prophet. The prophet must come to this priest with his sacrifice. He can come to God only through that priest, but the priest depends upon the truth and instruction that God gave through the prophet. What could Aaron have done as high priest without that knowledge of his service that God gave through Moses? And the priests were mere men, sinful men, given to all kinds of weaknesses. Did not God through Samuel even rebuke Eli and his wicked sons? And in the days after Israel returned from the captivity of Babylon, did we not find priests who committed all manner of evil and set a wicked example before the Church? Truly the heart cannot be dedicated to God unless the mind is filled with the truth concerning Him. And we likewise can be God's royal priesthood only in the way and in the measure that we know Him as His prophets.

It works the other way also. The man who is dedicated to God, loves Him with all his heart, that man surely will seek Him and resort repeatedly to His truth to know more and more of Him. One cannot be priest without being prophet. And one cannot be prophet without being priest. This also in part is the reason why Peter speaks of the royal priesthood. And though it seems as though he has overlooked the prophetic office, the fact in the case is that it is implied and expressed in the calling to show forth God's praises. But even as the greatest of the three — faith, hope and love — is love, so the priesthood, with its dedication in love to God, is the chiefest of the three phases of the one office. For though our heads may be full of knowledge of God and we can prophesy as wicked Baalim did, but we do not love that God, we are still prophets, priests and kings of the devil.

J.A.H.

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#### IN MEMORIAM

The Eunice Society of First Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to our fellow member, Mrs. Donald Pastoor and family in the loss of her husband,

MR. DONALD PASTOOR

May our God comfort the bereaved family and sustain them in their sorrow.

Psalms 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Mrs. D. Jonker, President  
Mrs. G. Spruyt, Secretary

## Contending For The Faith

### The Church and the Sacraments

#### THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION

#### VIEWS ON THE CHURCH

#### INFLUENCE OF THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION

(continued)

In our preceding articles we almost concluded our quotations from the book of "Radio Replies" by the Rev. Dr. Leslie Rumble in which Dr. Rumble sets forth the Roman Catholic position on "Tradition." We will now quote the two remaining articles which we wish to quote.

527. Do you imagine that the Catholic Church only has arrived at a true understanding of the Gospels?

That is not a correct presentation of the Catholic position. There is no question of the Catholic Church "arriving at" a true understanding of the Gospels. Before a line of them was written, Christ had established His Church, taught her His essential doctrines, sent the Spirit of Truth upon her at Pentecost, and commissioned her to go and to teach all nations orally and with authority, just as He had taught orally and with authority. Later on, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, the Books of the New Testament were written. Now, as one and the same Holy Spirit could not contradict Himself, it is certain that nothing in the Gospels will contradict the official teachings of the Catholic Church. If independent people arrive at an interpretation of the Bible which conflicts with the official teaching of the Catholic Church, then they are mistaken, and have arrived at a wrong meaning.

In connection with the above paragraph of Dr. Rumble we wish to make a few observations. It is, of course, true that the Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself. It is also true that the Gospels were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is true, in the third place, that the apostles were inspired when they functioned officially, in all their writing and preaching. And it must also be maintained that the Church of God has the promise of the Lord that He will lead it, infallibly, into all the truth. But this is surely not the same as maintaining that all traditions are the product of this infallible Spirit, inasmuch as the Fathers wrote many things which cannot be harmonized with Holy Writ. And neither is this the same as maintaining that this power of Divine inspiration has been bestowed upon the Church as in one individual, the pope.

528. Why can't Catholics be trusted to read the Bible for themselves?

They can be, and they are. But they are warned that their interpretation of what they read will be wrong unless it be in harmony with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is the one safe guide as to what Scripture means.

We do well to distinguish between the Protestant doctrine concerning the common faith of the Church and the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition. Some of the Roman Catholic theologians would have us believe that what they mean by tradition is nothing else than belief on the authority of common consent. "Common Consent" means that what all believe, consent to be true must be true. If all the people of God believe the same thing concerning a certain doctrine, then that particular doctrine must be true. However, the Protestant doctrine concerning the common faith of the Church is surely different from the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition. This difference is ably and clearly set forth by Hodge, in his Systematic Theology, Vol. I, pages 115-116, and we quote:

*B. Points of Difference Between the Romish Doctrine and that of Protestants on Common Consent.*

The points of difference between the Protestant doctrine concerning the common faith of the Church and the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition are:—

First. When Protestants speak of common consent of Christians, they understand by Christians the true people of God. Romanists on the other hand, mean the company of those who profess the true faith, and who are subject to the Pope of Rome. There is the greatest possible difference between the authority due to the common faith of truly regenerated, holy men, the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that due to what a society of nominal Christians profess to believe, the great majority of whom may be worldly, immoral, and irreligious.

Secondly. The common consent for which Protestants plead concerns only essential doctrines; that is, doctrines which enter into the very nature of Christianity as a religion, and which are necessary to its subjective existence in the heart, or which if they do not enter essentially into the religious experience of believers, are so connected with vital doctrines as not to admit of separation from them. Romanists, on the contrary, plead the authority of tradition for all kinds of doctrines and precepts, for rites and ceremonies, and ecclesiastical institutions, which have nothing to do with the life of the Church, and are entirely outside of the sphere of the promised guidance of the Spirit. Our Lord, in promising the Spirit to guide His people into the knowledge of truths necessary to their salvation, did not promise to preserve them from error in subordinate matters, or to give them supernatural knowledge of the organization of the Church, the number of the sacraments, or the power of bishops. The two theories, therefore, differ not only as to the class of persons



who are guided by the Spirit, but also as to the class of subjects in relation to which that guidance is promised.

Thirdly. A still more important difference is, that the common faith of the Church for which Protestants contend, is faith in doctrines plainly revealed in Scripture. It does not extend beyond those doctrines. It owes its whole authority to the fact that it is a common understanding of the written Word, attained and preserved under that teaching of the Spirit, which secures to believers a competent knowledge of the plan of salvation therein revealed. On the other hand, tradition is with the Romanists entirely independent of the Scriptures. They plead for a common consent in doctrines not contained in the Word of God, or which cannot be proved therefrom.

Fourthly. Protestants do not regard "common consent" either as an informant or as a ground of faith. With them the written Word is the only source of knowledge of what God has revealed for our salvation, and His testimony therein is the only ground of our faith. Whereas, with Romanists, tradition is not only an informant of what is to be believed, but the witness on whose testimony faith is to be yielded. It is one thing to say that the fact that all the true people of God, under the guidance of the Spirit, believe that certain doctrines are taught in Scripture, is an unanswerable argument that they are really taught therein, and quite another thing to say that because an external society, composed of all sorts of men, to whom no promise of divine guidance has been given, agree in holding certain doctrines, therefore we are bound to receive those doctrines as part of the revelation of God." — end of quote from Hodge.

We must not, of course, confuse the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition with the Protestant doctrine of development. That there has been development in the Church's knowledge of the truth none would care to deny. All the facts, truths, doctrines and principles are in the Bible. They are there as fully and as clearly at one time as at another, at the beginning of history as well as now. The Scriptures never taught anything differently at one time than another; what is true today always was true. The same applies, for example, to the facts of nature. These facts of nature are now what they have been from the beginning. However, they are known today far better than they were known a thousand years ago. This also applies to the Word of God. What is true today always was true, although it must be granted that, in the light of the Old and New Dispensations, we do have a clearer knowledge, revelation and setting forth of the truths of the Word of God.

Neither do we go along with Rome when that Church holds that many doctrines are in the Scriptures only in their rudiments, and that under the constant guidance and tuition of the Spirit the Church comes to understand all that these rudiments contain, and expand them in all their fulness. Hence, many doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, although not literally set forth in the Divine Scriptures, are

taught in the Word by implication and in principle, having been developed from those rudimentary principles of the Word by the Church. Rome realizes, of course, that it cannot provide Scriptural support, in the literal sense, for all its teachings and practices. And so that Church contends that many doctrines are in the Scriptures only in their rudiments, and that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has come to understand all that these rudiments contain and imply. Thus the Lord's Supper has been expanded into the doctrine of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass; the anointing of the sick, whereof we read in the epistle of James, has been developed into the sacrament of extreme unction; the rules of discipline have been expanded into the sacrament of penance, of satisfactions, of indulgences, of purgatory, and masses and prayers for the dead. And the prominence of Peter, who often assumed the leadership among the apostles, has been developed into the Romish doctrine of the supremacy of the Pope. The Old Testament, then, contains the germ of all the doctrines unfolded in the New Testament; and so the New Testament contains the germs of all the doctrines unfolded, under the guidance of the Spirit, in the theology of the mediaeval Church.

The real question between Rome and Protestantism is whether apart from the revelation contained in the Bible, there is another supplementary and explanatory revelation which has been handed down outside of the Scriptures, by tradition. The question is not whether the Spirit of God leads true believers into the knowledge of the truth. Neither is it the question whether true Christians agree in all essential matters as to truth. But the fundamental question is whether there are doctrines, institutions, and ordinances, having no warrant in the Scriptures, which we as Christians are bound to receive and obey on the authority of what is called common consent. This we most emphatically deny.

First, the Romish doctrine of tradition and belief in doctrines not taught in the written Word of God is impossible. It is, of course, conceded that Christ and His Apostles said and did much that is not recorded in the Scriptures. The apostle John himself informs us to this effect in his last chapter of the gospel of John. It is also granted that, if we had a certain knowledge of all that Christ said, that would surely be just as authoritative as the written Word of God. This, we understand, none would care to deny. But, the fact is that we have no record of those sayings. The Roman Catholic traditions are simply based on man's memory, what people remembered of those sayings. And the limitations of our nature, as well as its corruption because of sin, make this tradition impossible. Are we going to regard the product of a man's memory as authoritative as the inspired Word of God? Can we afford to take such chances? Are we going to permit the memory of a fallible man to tell us what is truth, in the sure and unadulterated sense of the word? Would not the weaknesses of the flesh be inclined to corrupt that truth?

H.V.

## The Voice of Our Fathers

### The Belgic Confession

#### ARTICLE I (continued)

The same reference to the attribute of God's omnipotence is found in the New Testament in the divine name. In II Corinthians 6:18 it is combined with the name *Lord*, as follows: "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And in I Timothy 6:15 God is called "the only Potentate."

Secondly, we may ask: what is the testimony of Scripture as to the meaning of this divine perfection?

And then we may observe, in the first place, that Scripture currently speaks of God's omnipotence in concrete terms and in connection with the concrete revelation of God's power in the works of His hands. In other words, the Bible teaches us that we must not think merely in the abstract of God's omnipotence as an unlimited power, according to which God is able to do anything at all. Even when Scripture speaks of God's power as unlimited and irresistible, it does so in connection with a certain concrete situation. We may mention a few passages of Holy Writ by way of illustration. In Isaiah 40:26 the host of heaven is cited as a proof of God's power: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." And again, in vs. 28 of the same chapter: "... the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." God's power to accomplish His will is frequently presented in Scripture as one of the marks whereby He is distinct from any idol of man's making. Thus we read in Jeremiah 10:10-13: "But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures." The same thought is set forth in Psalm 115. The complete impotence of the idols of the heathen is set forth after the omnipotence of our God is affirmed: "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat."

vss. 3-7. Psalm 29 extols the might of Jehovah throughout, making mention of the accomplishments of "the voice of Jehovah." For, "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." Ps. 29:4. Psalm 33 speaks of His wonderful power as follows: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in store-houses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." vss. 6-11. And so the Psalms abound with references to God's wonderful works as so many evidences of His mighty power. To Abraham, when Sarah laughed at the impossibility of her giving birth to a son in her old age, the Lord says: "Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." Genesis 18:9-15. And at the annunciation, after Gabriel has made known to Mary the coming wonder of the virgin-birth as well as the pregnancy of her aged cousin Elizabeth, he says: "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Luke 1:37.

In the second place, in close connection with the above, we may observe that Scripture always presents this divine power and energy as a *unique* power. God is the God of the wonder! His power is exactly characterized by the fact that it accomplishes that which it is impossible for the creature to accomplish. It is a power that is absolutely free and sovereign, a power that is not and cannot be limited by any power outside of Himself. It is a causal and creative power. Any of the passages cited above also serve as Scriptural proof for this.

In the third place, we do well to remember that God has revealed His infinite power most clearly and wonderfully in His great work of salvation. He is the Almighty Creator of all things. But still more, He is the Lord of life and of death, the God that quickens the dead. To this wonderful revelation of God's power in Jesus Christ our Lord the apostle Paul makes reference in Ephesians 1:17-21: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

In the fourth place, we ought not to abstract the omnip-

otence of God and merely conceive of it as an infinite power, according to which God can do anything at all. God cannot lie. He cannot deny Himself. He cannot do that which is foolish or wicked. And therefore, bearing in mind the truth of the divine simplicity and of the unity of all God's virtues in Himself, we must rather define God's omnipotence as that divine perfection according to which God is able to accomplish whatsoever He pleases.

Very briefly stated, the practical significance of God's almighty power for the believer lies in the fact that he may be assured that nothing can separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and that therefore nothing can prevent his salvation. Cf. Romans 8:35-39.

#### 7. *God is Perfectly Wise.*

When we discuss the mention of God's wisdom in this article of our *Confessio Belgica*, we may remark, first of all, that here again it becomes evident that this statement is not and is not meant to be exhaustive. For in an exhaustive mention of the divine perfections one would certainly include the knowledge, or omniscience, of God. Rather must we assume at this point that the knowledge of God is presupposed in the virtue of divine wisdom. The divine wisdom without the divine omniscience is impossible. We may therefore briefly refer to God's knowledge in this connection: for Scripture makes frequent reference to it. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." I Sam. 2:3. "He that teacheth knowledge, shall he not know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." Psalm 94:10, 11. Isaiah poses the question, "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" Isa. 40:14. In Hebrews 4:13 we read: "But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." And thus there are many passages of Scripture which speak of God's mind, His understanding, His thoughts, and His counsel. We must remember that God's knowledge, like all His perfections, is uniquely divine. It too is characterized by absolute freedom and sovereignty, eternity and immutability. God's knowledge does not have its source outside of God, but in Himself. It is not derived, but original. It is not caused, but causative. It is not dependent upon its object, but its object is dependent upon it. Briefly, we may describe that knowledge as the divine perfection according to which God fathoms with infinitely perfect consciousness Himself and all His works, both those within and those outside of the divine Being.

In the second place, we may observe that our creed makes no distinction between the attributes of God's intellect and the attributes of God's will. This distinction is sometimes made; and it is not without some justification, that is, as a method of classification. Then to God's intellect belong such attributes as knowledge and wisdom, while to God's will would belong attributes such as righteousness, holiness, grace, mercy, etc. As we noted, this distinction is not made here. And it is well to remember that we must not separate between

God's mind and His will. If we conceive of God's knowledge and His wisdom as being purely intellectual, not ethical, not only do we do violence to the truth of God's simplicity, but we also make it impossible properly to conceive of these perfections of God. God's knowledge and wisdom are not abstract intellectual attributes, but ethical perfections as well. God's is a holy knowledge, and His is a holy wisdom. It is for this reason that also in the rational, moral creature, according to Scripture, the ethical aspect of knowledge and wisdom is always emphasized. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Concerning the divine wisdom we read in that classic chapter of Proverbs 8, where "wisdom cries" (vs. 1): "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was . . . . When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Proverbs 8:22-30. In Romans 16:27 God is called "the only wise God." The same expression is found in I Timothy 1:17. In Psalm 104:24 we read: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." But again, as with God's power, it is especially in the wonder-work of salvation that God's wisdom is revealed. The wisdom of the world is made foolish by God through Christ crucified. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." I Cor. 1:20-24. We are of God in Christ Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I Cor. 1:30. And, contemplating God's sovereign work of salvation, the apostle exclaims: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

God's wisdom is that divine virtue according to which God lives His own divine life as the Triune God with perfect adaptation to His infinite blessedness as the Holy One, and according to which He is able to attain the highest possible glorification of His own name through the adaptation of all things to that purpose of His Self-glorification, and to adapt all things to one another with a view to that purpose.

And again, the significance of this divine virtue from the practical, spiritual point of view of faith may be briefly stated. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28. H.C.H.

## ALL AROUND US

### NOT ALL ECUMENICALLY MINDED

In this age in which ecumenicism seems to be the controlling desire of most church bodies it is rather startling to come upon news in which denominations sever relationships which have bound them together for many years. Yet this has recently been the case among a part of the Lutheran Church in America.

There is in this country what is called the Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America composed of four different Lutheran bodies. These churches were united in much the same way as "Sister Churches" are united in Reformed circles. They held joint worship services and cooperated in joint projects such as mission work, charities and ministry of the Word on college and university campuses. The four churches which made up this Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America were the 14,000-member Synod of Evangelical Churches (Slovak), the 9,000-member Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian), the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod with 352,563 members. The Missouri and Wisconsin Synods of the Lutheran Churches, directly involved in this matter, have long been known for being the most conservative among Lutherans in this country.

At the last biennial meeting of the Wisconsin Synod a resolution was adopted to sever all relationships with the Missouri Synod. The basic issue seemed to be a statement that had been prepared by the Missouri Synod's theological faculty in which the infallibility and authority of Scripture was attacked. However, in general, the liberal tendencies of the Missouri Synod were severely criticized and given as reasons for breaking the ties. Dr. John W. Behnken, president of the Missouri Synod, was present. He tried to persuade the delegates of Wisconsin not to sever the ties that bound them together for 90 years. He said, "If there are errors in our midst, then remain with us and help correct these errors." He insisted that the differences between the two Synods were not differences of doctrine, but of application of Scripture. The statement prepared by the theological faculties of the various seminaries, he said, was not a decision of the churches as a whole, but was merely a study document submitted to the denomination's clergy for examination. It was therefore still subject to correction. His plea went unheeded.

The resolution adopted by the Wisconsin Synod read in part:

Whereas the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has lodged many admonitions and protests with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod during the past 20 years to win her from the path that leads to liberalism in doctrine and practice . . . and, whereas, our admonitions have largely gone unheeded and issues have remained unresolved; and . . . whereas the Commission on Doctrinal Matters has faithfully carried out its directions to continue discussions but now regretfully reports that differences

with respect to the Scriptural principles of church fellowship . . . have brought us to an impasse . . . therefore, be it resolved that we now suspend fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17-18 ("Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.") with the hope and prayer to God that the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod will hear in this resolution an evangelical summons to "come to herself" (Luke 15:17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself.

Another resolution was passed in which the delegates made a point of emphasizing that they were not "passing judgment on the personal faith of any individual member of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod," but that they were instead addressing themselves to the denomination as a corporate body.

Still another motion left the way open for the fellowship that was broken off to be restored.

Under conditions which do not imply a denial of our previous testimony we stand ready to resume discussions with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod with the aim of re-establishing unity of doctrine and practice and of restoring fellowship relations, these discussions to be conducted outside the framework of fellowship.

It is somewhat surprising to read of a denomination that still has sufficient interest in maintaining the truth to sever relationships with other churches when this truth is threatened; and by doing so to buck the strong winds of ecumenicism. It is also refreshing.

This same Synod of the Wisconsin Lutheran Churches a few years ago ordered the deposition of a certain minister who denied the teachings of the church. If my memory serves me properly, this was in connection with the divinity of Christ. Although they were roundly condemned by the ecclesiastical press and other church bodies, they nevertheless proceeded with their deposition and maintained their convictions. This cannot always be said even of Reformed Churches. It seems as if there is considerable spiritual strength left in these churches.

### DECISIONS ON INFALLIBILITY

Since the controversy over the infallibility of Scripture has been raging for some time in the Christian Reformed Church, and since our people were vitally interested in this controversy and its outcome, it might be of interest to quote the decisions of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church with regard to this matter. The controversy began when certain articles appeared in the paper of the Christian Reformed Seminary *Stromata* in which a student questioned the historical stand of the churches in the matter of infallibility and inspiration. The president of the Seminary, Dr. John H. Kromminga, was also drawn into the controversy through the means of a protest by Dr. Wyngaarden who objected to certain statements Dr. Kromminga had made with respect to the questionable infallibility of "peripheral" matters in Scripture. In 1959 the matter was referred to a Study Committee which gave a lengthy report to the Synod of 1961.

After much discussion and several changes the decisions in their final form read as follows (Quoted from *The Torch and Trumpet*):

A. That Synod declare, as the study committee indicates in the fulfillment of its mandate, that both Scripture and the Creeds establish an essential relationship between inspiration and infallibility, in which the infallibility of Scripture is inferred from inspiration, and inspiration secures the infallibility of all Scripture.

Note: Although a due appreciation of this fact requires a complete study of the entire report, the following quotations may illustrate the above:

1. "Initially we may say that infallibility as an inference drawn from inspiration is to be ascribed to Scripture only in accord with the extent, nature, and purpose of inspiration.

2. "Divine inspiration establishes Scripture as an infallible rule and sufficient canon for all of Christian faith and life by securing it against falsification, error, and deceit.

3. "An examination of the Church's interpretation of the Belgic Confession as well as of the principles which it has enunciated forces us to the conclusion that the approach of the Church to the trustworthiness of the Scripture is . . . to give testimony to the faith of the Church, on the basis of the demands of Scripture, to its own authority and trustworthiness."

B. That Synod commend this study committee report to the church. Grounds: 1) This report will serve to remove misunderstandings that have arisen; 2) This report is a framework for further study of the relationship between inspiration and infallibility.

C. That Synod declare that Dr. M. Wyngaarden's charge ("that President Kromminga makes an unwarranted distinction between this so-called periphery and that which does not belong to this periphery" and that this view is inconsonant with the creeds) is unsubstantiated. Grounds:

1. Dr. Kromminga has removed an ambiguity in the presentation of his view by stating that his use of the word "periphery" was in no way intended as a limitation of the extent or the degree of the infallibility of Scripture.

2. The Study Committee in its report indicates that it is possible to make such a distinction which is not inconsonant with the creeds ". . . there are in the Scriptures incidental and circumstantial data which have no independent revelational significance, but are dependent for their revelational significance upon the relationship they sustain to the central intent and purpose of a given passage. When viewed in this light, the term 'periphery' must be judged not inconsonant with the creedal teachings on infallibility." Dr. Kromminga assured the Committee that the above statement reflects his view.

D. That Synod declare that "the specific charge that President Kromminga committed himself in his policy as President to a 'drastic reinterpretation' of Articles III and VII of the Belgic Confession is unsubstantiated."

Synod affirms the faith of the Church in the infallibility of Scripture and urges upon the Church the approach of humble faith in the Word of God.

Synod decided to continue Dr. J. H. Kromminga as President of the Seminary for one year.

Although the decision is somewhat of a victory for the historical position on infallibility, there is some reason to conclude that it is not as clear and incisive as it could have been. There seemed to be a desire on the part of the Synod to re-affirm the church's historical stand on the matter; but this desire seems to be mixed with a fear of offending those who originally compromised the doctrine. The lack of clarity is particularly evident in the fact that Synod never specifically defined the *extent* of infallibility. There is some inconsistency in the decision on this point. On the one hand, the Committee said, as quoted by Synod, "Divine inspiration establishes Scripture as an infallible rule and sufficient canon for all of Christian faith and life by securing it against falsification, error, and deceit." This was used as support for Synod's expression that "inspiration secures the infallibility of all

Scripture." This would seem to indicate that Synod wanted to maintain the truth of *verbal* inspiration. But from other parts of the decision, this was evidently not Synod's intention. Although Dr. Kromminga himself said that his use of the word "periphery" was not intended as a limitation of the extent of inspiration, nevertheless Synod agrees with the study committee when they say, "There are in Scripture incidental and circumstantial data which have no independent revelational significance, but are dependent for their revelational significance upon the relationship they sustain to the central intent and purpose of a given passage." The question still remains, Are these peripheral matters infallibly inspired? or are they not? Does Synod still mean to say that Scripture is only inspired as to its main purpose? This almost seems to be the meaning of the statement above and of another quotation from the committee report: "Initially we may say that infallibility as an inference drawn from inspiration is to be ascribed to Scripture only in accord with the extent, nature, and purpose of inspiration."

The main question is yet, "Does Synod believe in verbal inspiration?" If it does, it should have said so. If it does not, then the battle for the truth of Scripture will yet be lost. Either all of Scripture, word for word, is inspired by God or none of it is. If there are peripheral matters in Scripture that are not inspired directly by God, who is to determine what these peripheral matters are? Obviously, no one can, for each may have his own idea as to what is peripheral and what is not. There is no standard by which to judge.

It seems as if the opponents of infallible and verbal inspiration still have room in this decision to propagate their views. And no doubt they will utilize their opportunities.

## GROWTH IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church has shown remarkable growth in the last few years. Some figures recently released may be of interest.

In a brief article in *Our Sunday Visitor* the figures show that the Netherlands now has more Roman Catholics than Protestants:

The Hague, The Netherlands — (NC) — Catholics outnumber Protestants in the Netherlands for the first time since the Reformation, according to preliminary figures released here.

Final census results are not yet available, but the preliminary totals show:

— Catholics number 4,900,000 or 40.5 per cent of a total population of 12 million.

— Protestants number 4,500,000 or 37.5 per cent of the population.

— There are 2,100,000 persons without religious affiliation and 490,000 in the "other" category.

At the time of the Reformation, according to estimates, about two-thirds of the Dutch people became Protestants. A century ago Protestants still had an absolute majority of the population (54.5 per cent) and Catholics accounted for 38.1 per cent of the people.

At the time of the last census, 1947, Catholics were 38.5 per cent of the population and Protestants 40.8 per cent, compared with 36.4 per cent for Catholics and 44.9 per cent for Protestants in the 1930 census.

Growth in the United States of the Roman Catholic Church is the highest of any church body with the exception

of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The Romish Church showed an increase of 3% while the Lutheran Church showed an increase of 3.2%. U.S. Roman Catholic membership increased in the past year by 1,233,598 to bring the total of Roman Catholics in this country to 42,104,900. H. Hanko

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

*"All the saints salute thee . . ." PHIL. 4:21*

Sept. 5, 1961

The annual Family Visitation has begun in many of our churches. May we all experience the answer to our prayer as expressed in Hope's bulletin, "May God grant his blessing upon this work this year that our congregation may be strengthened."

Hope, Adams St., and Edgerton schools re-opened their doors, and Oak Lawn-South Holland opened its doors for the first time Sept. 5. What a privilege we have that we may instruct our children in harmony with that which they receive in our homes and churches! We hereby quote (again from Hope's bulletin), "As the new year begins, and throughout the year, let us not fail to remember the needs of our school(s), of our school board(s), and of our teachers before the throne of grace that our covenant seed may be instructed in the truth we love," as a reminder to all of our membership.

First Church's Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Society held their annual outing at North Shore in Grand Haven, Aug. 23; and the Sr. Mr. and Mrs. Society held theirs at Gun Lake, Aug. 30. The announcements of both stressed a special invitation to prospective members to join in the festivities.

Among those societies that recess for the summer, we note that Hudsonville's Mr. and Mrs. Society and the Young People's Society began their activities the first week in September.

Rev. Harbach prefaced Lynden's August 27th bulletin with this paragraph, "Let us speak to the Lord *before* the service. Hear the Lord speak to us *in* the service. Let us speak to each other *after* the service."

*Have you heard* that the 1961 Young People's Convention was an unqualified success? It must be that the Rockies proved to be more than attractive, for a returned native Michigander (young lady) was heard to say, "I'd like to live there." Probably the scenic falls, Estes Park Tramway, horseback riding, and, above all, the hospitality of our Loveland-Denver people all contributed to those sentiments. Surely, the beauties of nature served as an appropriate backdrop for the Convention theme, "The Beauty Of Holiness" viewed as God's Perfection, as The Church's Distinction, and as Youth's Adornment.

Hudsonville's Manse is strangely empty while the pastor's

wife is resting and receiving treatments in Pine Rest Hospital. Rev. Vos joyfully announced that her first treatment already gave her some relief from her nervousness and depression. And as the Reverend always does with all the sick and shut-ins, he publishes the mail address of the ill person that he may be remembered by the congregation by cards and letters.

August 20 the worship services of First Church were conducted by Rev. G. Lubbers, who also officiated in the administration of Infant Baptism—the infant being our Missionary's first grandchild, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Newhof, Jr.

*Bulletin quote* (Oak Lawn's): "Sins are like circles formed in the water when a stone is thrown into it: each produces another. When anger was in Cain's breast, murder was not far off." E. Kook.

The congregation of Oak Lawn welcomed Mr. and Mrs. H. Kuiper into their fellowship recently. They and their four children came to them from Ft. Collins, Colorado. Mr. Kuiper, son of Rev. H. H. Kuiper, is to take up his duties of Administrator of their new school, and to teach grades 6-9.

As fountains need a water source, and as a fire needs fuel, so this bi-monthly News Column needs material—gleaned from reports of society secretaries and from bulletins mailed in by faithful ministers and/or consistory clerks. Is a word to the wise sufficient?

The singing members of the South Holland-Oak Lawn churches, under the name, "South-Lawn Choral Society," have resumed their weekly rehearsal meetings, the first one this season at South Holland.

From Hull's bulletin we lift the following: The Reformed Action Society collected a total of \$76.98 from the 4th of July inter-church picnic. We also received the following letter which may interest you: "Thanks for the copy of *The Reformed Witness*, subject, 'God, Servant Or Sovereign.' In no sense is God a servant. In all senses He is sovereign. I was taught this eternal truth when I was four years and four months old. Now I am more than 80 years old, and have never reversed this conviction. This conviction is full of sweetness, the only refuge for mortal man, the only peace and joy for us now. To know God in this role is peace, health and happiness." F.S.F.

*Bulletin quote* (Oak Lawn's): "The reason why so many poor souls have so little heat of joy in their hearts, is that they have so little light of Gospel knowledge in their minds. The further a soul stands from the light of truth, the further he must needs be from the heat of comfort." Gurnall.

In these days of world crises, remember: "*The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.*" Prov. 29:25.

. . . . see you in church.

J.M.F.



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