

FEMINISM

A number of weeks ago we paid attention to the principalities and powers that exert themselves against the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. The spiritual warfare that takes place throughout history will intensify in the last days (2 Timothy). Already at the beginning of time Satan contradicted Almighty God with the lie. He has not repented of that tactic and continues to use it from age to age. We have already seen how he repeats the lies from one generation to the next. This time we want to have a closer look at the power of feminism and how Satan repeatedly teaches the world and the church the lie.

After the apostle Paul teaches the Corinthians about the place of women in the Church and in relation to their husbands, he concludes with; "If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God."(I Cor.11:16).

From this we can understand that already in the very early days of the New Testament Church there was unhappiness with the order God had put into creation regarding the relationship between men and women.

The Gnostic Gospels, dating back to the days of the early Church, confirm that there were indeed dramatic conflicts in society and Church concerning the place and function of women. Just as today we hear the expression Mother Nature, so in those early days there was a strong movement to ascribe supreme authority to female deity. This female power was alternatively referred to as the 'eternal Silence, Grace, Thought, or Wisdom, etc. She was considered to be the essence of life and wisdom. Some Gnostic writers used the facts of creation (that Eve was taken from Adam) to show that all beings consisted of male and female aspects. In the same manner God was said to consist of both male and female attributes and must be referred to as God the Father/Mother (Trimorphic Protennoia - Triple-formed Primal Thought).

This early gnostic text (Trimorphic Protennoia) was among those discovered at Nag Hammadi, in Egypt around the 1940's. It begins: " [I] am [Protennoia the] Thought that [dwells] in [the Light][she who exists] before the All ... I move in every creatureI am the Invisible One within the All". Another of these gnostic writings, The Apocalypse of Adam, contains the following "...from the nine Muses, one separated away. She came to a high mountain and spent time seated there, so that she desired herself alone in order to become androgynus. She fulfilled her desire, and became pregnant from her desire....". How interesting to note that almost 2000 years later, with the discovery of invitro fertilization human-kind has come a long way to doing exactly that.

Irenaeus, an orthodox bishop of Lyons explained, in one of his writings, that these heretics were twisting the history of the flood to suit their own ideology. They wrote: "because they did not worship or honor him as Father and God, he sent forth a flood upon them, that he might destroy them all. But Wisdom opposed him ... and Noah and his family were saved in the ark by means of the sprinkling of the light that proceeded from her, and through it the world was again filled with humankind." This same bishop Irenaeus struggled much with the influence of these teachings among members of his own congregation. Especially the women were intrigued. "Many foolish women" including the wife of a deacon were attracted to the Gnostic teacher Marcus who was working in that area.

Tertullian, a well-known early Church leader, also expressed outrage at women who wanted to combine the ideas of the gnostics with the Christian faith. He says: "These heretical women - how audacious they are! They have no modesty; they are bold enough to teach, to engage in argument, to enact exorcisms, to undertake cures, and, it may be, even to baptize!" As much as possible he countered with: "It is not permitted for a woman to speak in the church, nor is it permitted for her to teach, nor to baptize, nor to offer [the Eucharist], nor to claim for herself a share in any masculine function - not to mention any priestly office." But Marcion, a contemporary of Tertullian, but a proponent of Christian Gnosticism, appointed women as priests and bishops on an equal basis with men.

The Gnostic's reversal of everything that God established in creation shows them to be faithful servants of the father of lies. What God put into creation Satan turns diametrically around. God created man and woman in a special relationship to one another: "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. (I Cor. 11:8, 9) And God put order into creation and gave mankind instruction and direction. But Gnostics as well as 'new agers' declare themselves independent of any authority, human or divine. They reverse everything created. The Gnostic gospel of Thomas reiterates this in logion 114 where we find: "And when you make the male and the female into a single one so that the male shall not be male and the female shall not be female ... then you shall enter the kingdom."

Having had a look at all this does it surprise us that in our present society there is such a great call for abortion, invitro fertilization, same sex relationships, etc.? In light of the history of the world should we be shocked that the sexless society is around the corner; that there is a strong drive to dismiss the Scriptural norm of male - female marriage, and that the world prefers anything but the norm? Do the sexual sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Roman Empire and San Francisco, Atlanta and Vancouver not give us a clear pattern of the path followed by the father of lies?

A document prepared by the US Department of State, entitled Background on the UN Conferences on Women Leading to the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development, and Peace described at great length the feminist agenda. This document contains too much information to summarize here, but it might suffice to know that it describes marriage as the root of all evil for women; men are seen as oppressors and exploiters whom women should regard as life long enemies. Strong representation is also given to the right to decide one's own sexual identity; while the preferred love relationship for women is lesbian in nature.

Such is the world we live in. Not many years ago a small town Christian could wonder how the antithesis would really affect him. What was so different about the way society lived and the members of the church lived? Sure believers went to church and did their own thing, but the world did not seem bothered by them. Each left the other alone; each respected the space of the other. But how is that today? Can we continue to live Scripturally obedient lives un-assailed by the world? Or will the world want us to conform to their thinking?

Recently I met a Chinese couple. As we got to know one another we spoke of our families. They have only one daughter because in China all expenses are paid for the first child, but if a second one arrives the parents must pay all the expenses and a \$2000 fine. The third child costs \$5000 etc.

As long as the feminist agenda is permitted to continue there is no confrontation, but as soon as a public school board (as was done by the Surrey, BC school board) withdraws some reading books containing the ideology that same sex marriages should be considered equally acceptable as heterosexual ones there is confrontation. The school board members were threatened with law suits and teachers threatened labour action.

But that is the world. We can expect that. We must seek our community in the Church. But does the Church remain unaffected by feminism? J. Bruning, as part of his article *Armed for War in Una Sancta* of Feb 14, 1998, wrote: "A recent synod of our sister churches in the Netherlands has given the churches the freedom to allow women to vote for office bearers in church. The last synod has introduced a new marriage form on a trial basis which, according to some church press articles, reduces the headship and authority of the husband in marriage."

The world in which we live and work, the families where we experience intimacy and love, the Church, the body of Jesus Christ, of which we are members by the grace of God are all targets of the spiritual warfare that is intensifying. Let us use the means of grace, the preaching, the sacraments, the communion of saints, the office bearers, and the Word of God to combat the fiery darts of the father of lies. Our heavenly Father has given these means, these gifts to us so that we might be able to withstand in the evil day.

At times we hear questions about the need and authority of the confessions. At other times we witness lack of respect for ministers and elders. At still different times we might encounter the desire for new methods of worship, more tolerance for other opinions, etc. Feminism or egalitarianism is also one of the diametrically opposite lies that try to lure us away from the truth of God's Word. The battle between Christ and Satan is very real and very close. The antithesis is very apparent. The spiritual war is intensifying.

In all these matter, feminism too, 'we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12) Let us put on the whole armour of God and obediently use His means of grace. PdB

UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

The Structure of the Psalter (2)

By Rev. K. A. Kok

Last time we began our look at the structure of the Psalter by noting that the Book of Psalms is intimately connected with David. As a matter of fact, prior to David, worship in the Tabernacle had been silent. But David changed the Mosaic ritual; he beautifies it with music and with singing. As a result, when the people join the praise set forth in the Psalter under the direction of the appointed choir and orchestra, they are like the cherubim; they are the earthly heavenly host, as it were. While the glory of the covenant renewed with David is not complete, yet it represents real growth and development for God's people.

Now, we also have to note that the Book of Psalms is written largely prior to the completion of Solomon's Temple. This, however, brings up a problem: there are 16 Psalms that refer to the

Temple and 10 of them were written by David. How can this be? We could say that, “Well, David is looking ahead to the day when there is going to be a Temple. So he wrote those Psalms about the Temple, knowing that he was never going to be there, but he knew that someday, somebody was going to sing this song. But this is rather strained. When we read those Psalms, we read about how magnificent God’s dwelling is, how David would rather be a sparrow that dwells by the altar of the LORD than have a palace and a house, and so forth. We sense that David is not singing about someday in the future. Instead, the House of God, or the Temple of God that we read of in the Psalms refers to the same thing we mean when we talk about the Temple of God. When we talk about the Temple of God, we are talking about the people-house of God, the church. And that is what the Temple means in the Psalms. It refers to the people, who are made a living Temple of Praise. The Book of Psalms forms a temple of praise for David and the people of Israel, under the leadership of the Levites. David had to organize the Levites and build the people as a Temple before Solomon could build the architectural Temple. The latter is just a model of the former.

How is it that David could presume to alter the priesthood? After all, that is what he does. He appoints the 24 chief priests; he says to Asaph, Heman, and Korah, “You are going to be the head of the singers, and you men over here are going to be the heads of the orchestra.” He does this, even though he is not a priest; he is not even a Levite. Still, he presumes to alter the priesthood; he presumes to alter the way Israel worships. Now, think about this for a minute. What do you see early on in Israel’s history? Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons, presume to change the way Israel worships. What happens? Fire comes out of the Most Holy Place and burns them up. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram presume to change the priesthood. What happens to them? Dathan and Abiram are swallowed up by the earth; Korah and his followers are burned up with fire from the Most Holy Place. It is a dangerous thing to mess around with Israel’s worship.

Yet, David alters the priesthood. David alters the ritual; he alters the priesthood; he writes Psalms and establishes choirs; and he appoints an orchestra. But the earth does not open up and swallow him. No fire from God devours David. He does so only because - and only when - he is the Anointed of the God of Jacob. 2 Samuel 23:1 tells us this: David became the sweet singer of Israel, when he was the Anointed of the God of Jacob. The Canon contains none of David’s songs before he was anointed.²

That is why he did this and how he could do it.

Not surprisingly, the covenant that is renewed with David is alluded to in the Psalms over and over again. Here we think especially of Psalm 89. A large number of Psalms refer to the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem, the crowning moment of David’s kingship that segues to the renewing of the covenant with David (e.g. Pss. 68 and 132). The king is a representative person. He represents the people before God. So he is the son of Adam, the son man of whom we sing in Psalm 8.3 Yet, not only does he represent the people to God, not only is he the son of Adam, but he also represents God’s rule to the people.⁴ And therefore he is also the son of God. We may think of Psalm 2 here: You are My Son; today I have begotten you. This, of course, was also central to the renewal of the covenant with David: “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me” (2 Sam. 7.’14a).

2) See Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton, (Grand Rapids, Michigan:Eerdmans, 1976 [1871]), vol. 5, part 1, p. 9.

- 3) The fact that ‘son of man,’ or, better, “son of Adam” does not refer to men in general is seen in Jesus Christ’s application of this Psalm in Matthew 21:16 and in Paul’s use of it in Hebrews 2:5-8.
- 4) C. Van Darn explores the nature of David’s kingly office in “The Office of David: A Preliminary Look at David as Nagid,” *Koinonia*, vol. I, number I, Spring 1978, pp. 12~16.

COMMENTS ON THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR CONTACT WITH OPC

PART II, by Rev. B. R. Hofford

The CCOPC was mandated by General Synod 1995 to arrive at an agreement with the OPC on the matters of the fencing of the Lord’s Table and confessional membership. In seeking to fulfill this mandate, the CCOPC devised a “Proposed Agreement” regarding these two issues. In the first article critiquing this agreement, the issue of the Lord’s Supper was addressed. In this article, we shall examine whether or not the Committee has faithfully fulfilled its mandate regarding the second issue, confessional membership.

The CCOPC was instructed by Synod to arrive at an agreement with OPC using the guidelines set forth by Synod 1992 (Acts 1992, Art. 72, IV.A.1.e.i,ii). The guideline regarding confessional membership reads as follows: “With respect to ‘confessional membership’ the different situations in the OPC and the Canadian Reformed Churches must be taken into account as resulting in various practices. It should be agreed, however, by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the OPC that all who profess their faith accept the doctrine of God’s Word as summarized in the confessions (standards) of the churches. This means that all members are bound by the Word of God in the unity of faith as confessed in the accepted standards.”

By way of explanation it should be noted that there is a major difference between our two federations regarding what is confessed when one becomes a communicant member. In the Canadian Reformed Churches, candidates are asked if they “wholeheartedly believe the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church.” Because they are required to express agreement with the Three Forms of Unity, we call this “confessional membership.” However, in the OPC, no such requirement exists. The relevant question for membership in the OPC is as follows: “Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation? There is not even a reference to the confessions of the church in any of the questions required for confession of faith. Only a minimal gospel must be confessed. Any binding to the confessions is reserved for the officebearers alone. This distinction has quite profound consequences. For one thing, instruction of potential members does not require instruction in the Westminster Standards although some ministers will do this in some measure. Further, it often results in people being admitted into membership who do not agree with doctrines taught in the Westminster Standards. In some cases, such people may be required to continue to submit to the teaching of the church on these matters, but it does not keep them from the Lord’s Supper, and rarely, if ever, results in a person being excommunicated. With these significant

differences, it is no wonder that General Synod 1992 made it clear in its guideline that our practice of confessional membership not be compromised in coming to terms with the OPC.

Now we are in a position to evaluate the statement on confessional membership in the “Proposed Agreement.” It reads as follows: “The churches of the Reformation believe that they have to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and are called to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Rom. 16:17). Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible. The patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles’ Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions. Every confessing member is bound to this doctrine and must be willing to be instructed in it.”

Again, it is not surprising to learn that the CEIR of the OPC responded very positively to the CCOPC’s transformed as successfully reached an agreement with the OPC on this issue. However, when we consider that both sides also agreed that each church would continue to follow their own practices within the bounds of the agreement, we must conclude that nothing has really been solved. Such a caveat would not be necessary if a truly substantive agreement had been reached. This is not an agreement of resolution, but an agreement of accommodation. When Synod 1992 asked the Committee to use the guidelines to arrive at an agreement on this matter, it meant resolving the issue, not compromising. If Synod 1992 had in mind the conclusion reached by the CCOPC, then there would have been no need for its mandate; Synod 1992 could have simply said that this issue was no longer an impediment needing resolution before entering into ecclesiastical fellowship. Thus, we must conclude that as with the Lord’s Supper matter, so with confessional membership, the CCOPC has not fulfilled its mandate with integrity. It should be made clear that these are not just minor matters with no practical consequence. If these statements are accepted, it will place our churches in an impossible situation in practice with the OPC. And we should not take false comfort in the reassurance of the CCOPC, “that both the OPC and the Canadian Reformed Churches would follow their own practice within the bounds as expressed in the statements,” (CLARION, Vol. 46, No. 6, p. 129). They cite as example a local Canadian Reformed Church using the rule of Art 61, CO with respect to members of the OPC. This Article says that we shall admit to the Lord’s Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith. But even with a travel attestation, which the OPC has never historically issued, how will we know if the person in question has indeed confessed the Reformed faith? If the person was an office-bearer, we might have some assurance of this, but otherwise, we have none since, as we have already seen, such a confession is not required. Indeed, there are members in good standing in the OPC who are admitted to the Lord’s Supper, yet reject infant baptism. How can we turn a blind eye to these practical anomalies? As we pointed out in the first article, the OPC has no problem admitting visitors from a variety of evangelical churches precisely because it does not see confessing the Reformed faith as being essential for participation. Thus, if this “Proposed Agreement” is accepted, we will create a contradiction between our own Church Order, Art. 61, and Rule 4 for ecclesiastical fellowship which states, “The churches shall accept one another’s attestations or certificates of good standing, which also means admitting members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of that attestation or certificate,” (Acts of Synod

1995, Appendix VI.II.4, p. 165). And this practical problem cuts both ways: not only will we be unable to admit OPC people to the Lord's Supper, but we in good conscience will not be able to attend their Lord's Supper table knowing not only that they practice open communion but also that they do not require confession of the Reformed faith for admission.

It is also important to remember the reason why these two issues of fencing the table and confessional membership became priority issues in our relationship with the OPC at recent Synods. The histories of the Blue Bell, PA and Laurel, MD congregations brought these matters to the forefront. One of the principle reasons the congregation in Blue Bell, PA, seceded from the OPC was because they were told that they could not practice confessional membership. And the congregation in Laurel, MD seceded because they were told that open communion would continue to be allowed in the OPC. When these two congregations were received into the federation, they were told, after careful examination by several classical committees that their views and struggles were legitimate and the OPC was wrong. Yet now by failing to truly come to terms with the OPC over these contentious issues we reveal our willingness to compromise over essential Biblical principles. Furthermore, we send a message to these faithful brothers and sisters that it was not necessary for them to fight over these issues for now these wrong practices will be approved by our churches as well.

In conclusion, we may say that the Committee, by manipulating the guidelines of Synod 1992, has indeed brought about agreement with the CEIR over these matters. By doing so the Committee has avoided resolving the real issues which divide our two federations. It does not help us either to be told that "these statements are not intended to prevent further discussions." The Committee has not faithfully fulfilled its mandate; we are no closer to agreement with the OPC on these issues; we are in no position to enter in to full ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC at this Synod.