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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.*

—Psalm 27:5

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Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

—Exodus 20:8–11

Fourth Commandment

The sabbath day.
The day of rest!

Six days of labor and toil. Six days for all our work. But the sabbath day is the day of rest!

A day of rest to put away our work. A day of rest for our sons and our daughters. A day of rest for our menservants and our maidservants. A day of rest for our cattle and our strangers within our gates. The sabbath day is the day of rest.

And what blessed rest! For sabbath rest is not merely the cessation of our work. But sabbath rest is also delight in the finished work of God.

For consider: God rested. While God did the work by his sovereign providence of upholding all things that he had created, God rested. While God did the work by his sovereign providence of governing all things that he had created, God rested. God always works. So said our Lord: “My father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). And yet the almighty, sovereign sustainer and governor of all things rested the seventh day.

What was God’s rest? This: God delighted in his finished work. The work of creation was ended. Everything that God had made was very good. On the seventh day God beheld his finished work and delighted in it. “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen. 2:3).

Thus sabbath rest for God’s people is not merely putting away our toil. But sabbath rest is also entering into and delighting in the finished work of God. For God has finished our salvation in Jesus Christ. So said our Lord: “It is finished” (John 19:30). Jesus’ finished work is declared in his gospel. Under the preaching of that gospel, God’s people delight in the finished work of God. Under the preaching of the gospel, God’s people rest.

And what rest! For our life here below is one of weary pilgrimage. We are weary of sin, weary of death, weary of trouble, weary of sorrow, weary of foes, weary of our flesh, weary of persecution, weary of burdens. Our threescore years and ten, yea, our fourscore years are all labor and sorrow (see Ps. 90:10). But to his tired, sick, broken, trembling, despised, laboring, and heavy laden people God gives Jesus Christ—that is, God gives rest. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

We certainly do not deserve what God has freely given in Christ. For the fourth commandment exposes our sin of not remembering the sabbath. How foolish we are! Our flesh would rather dwell in the tents of sin for a season than enjoy the rest of our God. But Jesus Christ has suffered our curse for our disobedience, and he has perfectly kept God’s holy sabbath in our place. And rising from the dead the first day of the week, he is our sabbath rest.

How shall we express our gratitude to God for so graciously giving us such wonderful rest

in Christ? This way: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

—AL

EDITORIAL

Transplanted

When we last left the little flock of the *Afscheiding*, God’s people were in the midst of terrible persecution for the sake of the Reformed faith.¹ And yet they were very glad, for God had reformed his church. The people of the *Afscheiding* were nothing in this world, but they had been given the treasures of the world to come. They had been fed in the green pastures of the gospel, and they could never go back to the dead pastures of man’s gospel in the state church. Though the Dutch Reformed Church and the civil government raged against them, the lowly people of the *Afscheiding* lay down contentedly by the still waters of Jesus Christ. Let the king and the councils take away the whole earth from them; they had seen the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Over the course of three successive Sundays in October 1834—Farm Wagon Sunday, Church Pew Sunday, and Soldier Sunday—the reformation of the *Afscheiding* had become an established fact, and the response of the state had been swift and brutal.

Today let us revisit our downtrodden brethren of long ago and see how they fared. We will jump ahead a few years, from the *Afscheiding* of 1834 to the transplanting of 1846. We will find that, after years of suffering the oppression of their fellow countrymen in the Netherlands, some of our brethren were carried by God across the seas to a new land. On November 17, 1846—exactly 178 years ago tomorrow—Rev. Albertus van Raalte and fifty-three fellow *Afscheiding* saints landed on the shores of North America. It

was one of the outstanding episodes in God’s reformation of his church. For, having preserved the Reformed church through the *Afscheiding* in the Netherlands, God would now transplant his Reformed church in the soils of North America. On this November 16, 2024, let us revisit the transplanting of November 17, 1846.

Our story begins in the Netherlands in the years immediately following the *Afscheiding* of 1834. The *Afscheiding* had begun in the town of Ulrum when the congregation there, following the lead of its two elders and three deacons, had separated from the corrupt state church and had maintained Rev. Hendrik de Cock as its minister. In the days and weeks and months that followed, many other congregations also declared their separation from the Dutch Reformed Church and joined the *Afscheiding*. God delivered thousands upon thousands of his people in the Netherlands from their spiritual bondage and gave to them the sweet spiritual freedom that can be found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For so long these people had not been able to attend church because of the corruption in doctrine and worship. Now, finally, they could go to church again to hear the gospel and to sing the psalms. These were wonderful and exciting years for God’s flock.

Nevertheless, these were very hard years for the flesh, for God’s flock suffered tremendously. Though many thousands joined the *Afscheiding*, they only ever amounted to a tiny fraction of the vast population of the Netherlands. Only 5 percent of the Dutch church members ever left the Dutch Reformed Church for the *Afscheiding*.

¹ See Andrew Lanning, “Soldier Sunday,” *Reformed Pavilion* 2, no. 29 (October 26, 2024): 4–8.

The great majority of Dutchmen remained in the apostate state church. The *Afscheiding* was never more than a fragment, as the name attests. For an *afscheiding* is the part one cuts away, the part that is unusable, that part that one discards. The *Afscheiding* was the remnant. And the 95 percent who continued in the apostate church were filled with hatred and bitterness against the little *Afscheiding* remnant. As the general population saw it, those stubborn folk of the *Afscheiding* were disrupting the good life that people enjoyed in their grand kingdom of the Netherlands.

And the kingdom of the Netherlands had been grand, indeed, and still enjoyed the fruits of her former Golden Age. The mother country had birthed colonies all over the world. She had enjoyed coffee from her plantations in Java and nutmeg from her farms in Sumatra and furs from her trapping grounds in North America. Her ships had plied every waterway, from the Hudson River in New York to the secret routes among the spice islands of Indonesia. Her society was renowned for its educational system, for even the lowest among the population were well educated. The Dutch were famous for their order, their industry, their cleanliness. Their churches were grand, their ministers were learned, their people were decent. Life was as comfortable as comfortable could be in the Netherlands.

But along came those *Afscheiding* people, with heads as hard as their wooden shoes, and ruined everything for their fellow Dutchmen. Those hardheads gave a lot of thought to dusty old doctrines: election and reprobation and the total depravity of man. Those hardheads objected to the beautiful hymns of the *Evangelische Gezangen* that sounded so lovely and stirring when sung by hundreds of voices on a Sunday morning. Those hardheads did not like the state church ministers, even though those ministers were very nice and respectable men who could move one to tears with their eloquent sermons about human decency. Those hardheads objected to the removal of Reformed doctrine from the

Dutch schools. One state official made this remark to the hardheads of the *Afscheiding*: “You break everything; first you wreck our church, now you wreck our schools.”²

The state church and the state government intended to break the hardheads of the *Afscheiding*. With the full support of all the respectable people of the Netherlands, the church and the state unleashed persecution upon the *Afscheiding* with a vengeance.

The apostate church led the way in the persecution of God’s people. The Dutch Reformed synod of 1835 urged King William to punish the people of the *Afscheiding* as criminals, on the grounds that the *Afscheiding* assemblies for worship were illegal gatherings. The synod even appealed to specific articles in the Napoleonic Code—the law of the land in the Netherlands at the time. The Napoleonic Code forbade any secret assembly of more than twenty people, thus preventing any political uprising against Napoleon from fomenting. But the crafty churchmen of the synod applied the code to the worship services of the *Afscheiding*. The synod’s use of the code was blatantly deceitful. The Napoleonic Code forbade *secret* gatherings for *political* purposes but said nothing about *public* gatherings for *worship*. Though the seceders of the *Afscheiding* were perfectly lawful in their assemblies, they were branded as criminals and numbered with the transgressors through the false witness of their foes.

The state was all too happy to follow the synod’s advice. The king levied fines against the *Afscheiding* churches every time they gathered for worship. The ministers and elders were delivered to the magistrates, condemned, and sentenced to months in prison. Rev. Hendrik de Cock spent three months in prison, during which time the state evicted his wife and children from their house.

The state church and the civil government persecuted the *Afscheiding* remnant not only

² H. Bouma, as quoted in Janet Sjaarda Sheeres, “The Struggle for the Souls of the Children: The Effects of the Dutch Education Law of 1806 on the Emigration of 1847,” in Robert P. Swierenga, Donald Sinnema, and Hans Krabbendam, eds., *The Dutch in Urban America* (Holland, MI: The SVH Group, 2004), 43.

with regard to their worship but also with regard to their schools. Very early on many of the fathers of the *Afscheiding* realized that they could not continue sending their children to the corrupt state schools. As much as possible they set up their own schools to rear their children. In the corners of farmers' barns and in the workshops of wooden shoe makers, the little remnant of the *Afscheiding* sought to train up their children in the way that they should go.

The state came down with as much, if not more, force against the schools as it did against the churches. The first Christian school of the *Afscheiding*, in the town of Smilde, was shut down after four days of operation; and the twenty-three-year-old teacher, Douwe J. Vander Werp, was fined an exorbitant sum.³ Members of the *Afscheiding* who taught in the state schools were summarily fired from their livelihoods. The *Afscheiding* remnant had to start schools in secret and be on the lookout for the state inspectors, who would make surprise visits to those *Afscheiding* barns and homes where a school was suspected. The school inspector of Drenthe encouraged the government "to step in with force, because unpunished, these schools would flourish like weeds."⁴ A young mother—Grietje Takken, six months pregnant at the time—was fined and imprisoned for three days when she was found with an ABC primer for the instruction of the *Afscheiding* children.⁵

Cruelly—so cruelly!—the state dealt with the humble folk of the *Afscheiding*. Yet blessed—so blessed!—were the persecuted people of God. For the little remnant of the *Afscheiding* in the Netherlands was privileged to suffer the reproach of Christ for the sake of his gospel. And they found what God's persecuted people always find: the loss of one's entire life upon the earth is a small thing compared to the infinite treasure of the gospel.

For twelve long years the persecution continued. Oh, the persecution waxed and waned, so

that there were seasons of reprieve. And, yes, the state finally stopped fining and imprisoning the *Afscheiding* remnant after 1840. But all the while, the members of the *Afscheiding* continued to be reviled by their neighbors; and their churches continued to be illegal institutions, as far as the state was concerned.

In addition to the hardships of persecution, the saints of the *Afscheiding* faced other mounting hardships. On November 14, 1842, God took Rev. Hendrik de Cock away from the earth in death after a brief illness. He was only forty-one years old, but he was simply worn out. The Lord delivered his servant from the burdens of his pilgrimage to the rest of his everlasting home. What a blow for the *Afscheiding*, to be sure. But the churches had never been founded upon a mere man—not even Reverend De Cock. The reformation of the *Afscheiding* had been founded upon the head stone of the corner, Jesus Christ, and thus the *Afscheiding* could continue long after De Cock's death.

God's people also faced mounting economic hardships in the Netherlands. The Golden Age of the Netherlands was past. Bitter poverty descended upon the rural areas. The increasing poverty of society in general was especially hard on the poor people of the *Afscheiding*, whose life on the fringes of society had already been very difficult.

Added to all this was the fact that, for the reviled people of the *Afscheiding*, it had become almost impossible to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. They were opposed at every turn for their churches and schools. The government had also begun imposing vaccinations upon the Dutch populace, which many in the *Afscheiding* saw as a lack of faith in God's providence over health and sickness. Whatever one might think today about vaccines, in those days it was one more reason that respectable Dutch society hated and reproached their neighbors in the *Afscheiding*.

³ See Andrew Lanning, "The *Afscheiding*'s First Christian School," *Sword and Shield* 3, no. 11 (February 2023): 7–13.

⁴ Sheeres, "The Struggle for the Souls of the Children," 47.

⁵ See Andrew Lanning, "The Schools and Emigration," *Sword and Shield* 3, no. 12 (March 2023): 10.

As the years rolled by, some of God’s people in the *Afscheiding* began to consider the possibility of leaving the Netherlands. The years of persecution were taking their toll. The people of the remnant felt themselves to be strangers in their own land and in their own cities. If they were such a burden to their fellow Dutchmen, might there not be a place for them to live a quiet life elsewhere? After all, the Netherlands had colonies all over the world, and the king would sometimes relocate Dutch citizens to populate the colonies. Might not the saints of the *Afscheiding* have their own place in one of these colonies?

The saints of the *Afscheiding* first considered the island of Java in present-day Indonesia. They approached the Dutch government with the request that they be permitted to leave to help colonize the island. In this, as in so many other interactions with the Dutch government, they would be disappointed. Two ministers of the *Afscheiding*, Reverend Scholte and a certain Reverend Heldring, “took it upon themselves to go to His Excellency, the Minister of Colonial Affairs, to acquaint the government with this matter and to persuade it to guide the movement of emigration in that direction by giving freedom, opening the way, and granting privileges. Their answer, as far as Java was concerned, was negative.”⁶

With Java closed to them, the saints of the *Afscheiding* began to turn their attention toward North America. Positive reports from North America were flooding the Netherlands from Dutchmen who had found a good living in America. It began to appear to the beleaguered saints of the *Afscheiding* that God was opening a door to the West rather than to the East. One of the leading ministers of the *Afscheiding*, Rev. Albertus van Raalte, kept an eye on these developments with a growing interest. Finally, in

1846, along with Rev. Anthony Brummelkamp, Reverend Van Raalte published a document, “Emigration, or, Why Do We Promote the Migration of People to North America and Not to Java?”

The advice of the two ministers was met favorably by the people of the *Afscheiding*. And so it was that, in September 1846, Reverend Van Raalte and fifty-three fellow travelers boarded the ship *Southerner* in Rotterdam and began the long journey to America. These few souls would be the vanguard for their brethren, searching out a suitable place in the vast continent where they could settle a colony and await the arrival of their fellow saints.

After two months at sea, the little band of God’s people disembarked on Manhattan Island in New York. The date was November 17, 1846. On their backs they carried such meager belongings as they possessed; in their pockets they had very little; in their right hands they carried the *Statenvertaling*—the Dutch Bible; in their left hands they carried Datheen’s *Psalmen*—the Dutch psalter.

The arrival of a few ragged Dutchmen in the bustling harbor of Manhattan Island was nothing to note as far as the world was concerned. But faith marvels at the arrival of these few saints. For God was at work transplanting his church. Having brought his people safely through the *Afscheiding* of 1834 and the subsequent years of persecution, God had now begun the transplanting of 1846. Reverend Van Raalte and those few sheep of God’s flock stood before a vast and largely untamed continent. Where would they go, and how would they get there? Only God knew, which was enough for them. For the reformation of God’s church is not a matter for the flesh but for faith.

To be continued...

—AL

⁶ A. Brummelkamp and A. C. van Raalte, “Emigration, or, Why Do We Promote the Migration of People to North America and Not to Java?” in *Van Raalte Papers: 1840–1849*, trans. Harry Boonstra (1846), 22; https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp_1840s/240.

Article LXXXIV. The New King and His Kingdom: Sons of God

In our last contribution we pointed to the historical illustrations of Abel and Enoch as powerful prediluvian manifestations of the life of the New Kingdom.

They lived as friends of God in the world and had communion with Him. Of one of them it is even said that he walked with God, which points not, as modern critics would say, to a crude conception of God at that period and pictures God as taking pleasure walks on the earth; but to a most intimate communion and confidential intercourse of Enoch with God as his friend.

These same men manifested themselves as the party of the living God in the world. That world became alienated from God more and more, especially in the line of Cain. Wickedness, ungodliness, increased and asserted itself more boldly as time went on. These friends of God bore testimony of the Name of God and witnessed against the wickedness of the world's ungodliness.

They were willing to bear the reproach of the world and had the eye of their faith fixed upon the realization of the promise. For also in their case faith was an evidence of things unseen.

Neither is this all the information Scripture offers in regard to that strange period before the deluge.

We may gather from the first six chapters of the book of Genesis, first of all, that also in that early period the life of God's covenant followed the line of generations. True, before the flood there was no definite establishment of a covenant with any particular family as there was with Abraham. No specific family was singled out to be the bearer of God's grace in the world. The

promise as it was given in paradise was entirely general. It was not said that the seed of Seth would ultimately crush the serpent's head. On the contrary, the seed of the woman was mentioned. And this seed of the woman as such might include the descendants of Cain as well as those of Seth. Hence, there was no specific promise or revelation that pointed to the line of Seth as the children of the promise, while it excluded the descendants of Cain. But although this is true, fact is, that also before the deluge God's grace plainly follows the generations of Seth, while those of Cain are accursed and doomed to find their termination in the destruction of the flood. This, in the first place, is simply a historical fact. If no other implications were found in Scripture of the election of Seth's generations, and the rejection of Cain's line, the fact would remain just the same that Seth was accepted and Cain rejected. The entire line of Cain is characterized by a development in sin, while the children of Seth are characterized by godliness and piety. Generation after generation from Adam to Noah counts the children of God in the line of Seth, while that of Cain increases in wickedness. Thus, not only the particular character of grace, but also the fact that God's grace was destined to run in the channels of generations is plainly brought to light.

This is corroborated by Gen. 5:1ff. There we read: "This is the book of the generations of Adam." And then follows simply a record of the line of Seth. Cain is not counted with the generations of Adam. Not, of course, because from a natural point of view he and his sons do not belong to Adam's generations. They certainly do. In general they as well as the children of Seth belong to the human race, to the seed of the

woman. But from the point of view of God's covenant, from the standpoint of election, conceived as the New Humanity that is to have the victory, the descendants of Cain have no part with the generations of Adam. God's covenant runs through the line of Seth. It is to be continued and carried even through the destruction of the flood. But Cain's line is accursed and will be discontinued. Even in the race that is to develop after the deluge there will be no seed of Cain.

And last this is plainly evident from the expressions "sons of God" and "daughters of men," by which the prediluvian race is separated as it were distinctly into two classes, the Sethites and the Cainites.

In the sixth chapter of Genesis we read, vss. 1, 2: "And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose."

Of old there were three different explanations offered of the phrases "sons of God" and "daughters of men."

The first interpretation explains that "sons of God" refers to men of high rank, to princes perhaps; and "daughters of men" points to people of the lower class, of a lower level of society. This interpretation is now quite generally dismissed as unscriptural and not warranted by the usage of the language. We need not discuss it any further.

The second view holds that with the phrase "sons of God" the text refers to angels; while the expression "daughters of men" may then be taken literally as referring to mankind generally. The meaning of the passage then would be that at that period angels came down from heaven to seek intercourse with human beings, that they actually did have sexual intercourse with the daughters of men, and that the result was a strange and wicked generation of giants. Now it would not be necessary to elaborate upon this interpretation any more than upon the first, were it not that it is presented as the true interpretation of the text from two different directions.

In the first place, there were those who not only offered this view as a correct, as the only possible interpretation of the text as such, but who also accepted that explanation as historical reality. They said, "The only possible explanation of this passage to us seems to be that in the prediluvian period angels from heaven had intercourse with women on earth. And since it is the Word of God that informs us about this intercourse, we accept it as historical reality, though it may seem ever so strange." This view finds very few defenders today. Its great difficulty is, of course, that angels are always presented to us as spirits in Scripture; and that the Lord very definitely suggested that the angels do not marry. Such intercourse between angels and men is not only inconceivable, it is absurd. And, therefore, unless the text allows of no other explanation, this view must be dismissed. And, surely, as we shall see, the phrase "sons of God" in Scripture may be interpreted quite differently. If this, then, were the only form in which this interpretation of the text is offered to us, we would discuss it no further.

But there is a second view that maintains the very same interpretation of the text, but with an altogether different result. It is the view of modern higher criticism. It starts with the same explanation of the text. It maintains that there is no question about the meanings of the words. Sons of God are in the text contrasted, so the exponents of this view tell us, with daughters of men. And this can mean nothing else than that angels from heaven, who are called "sons of God" in the Old Testament, sought intercourse with human beings. Marriages are here pictured between angels and human beings. That interpretation stands. But if you further ask these modern critics whether they accept this passage, then, as historical reality, they smilingly would pity such naivety. No, although the text presents it that way, such intercourse naturally could never take place. The text only offers one of the many illustrations of the Jewish conception of angels at the time the book of Genesis was written! Such was the Jewish angelology at the time (Genesis, you must remember, was not written

by Moses, but at a much later date) that sexual intercourse was conceived of as possible between angels and human beings. Hence, the text stands, and its interpretation is evident, but Scripture here gives us a bit of mistaken, erroneous Jewish theology and offers it as historical reality!

Let me offer a quotation to give an idea of the angelology these critics find in Scripture. It is taken from *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. III, page 480. The author of it is A. S. Peake, a strong defender of the Grafian critical theory of the Old Testament. The same author offers a popular exposition and defense of the Grafian theory in his book: *The Bible, Its Origin, Its Significance, Its Abiding Worth*. Here follows the quotation:

“From the functions which the angels exercise it might be expected that ethical distinctions would not be made prominent. In the older Biblical literature there is no reference to evil spirits, in the modern sense of the term. The angels are instruments to effect Yahweh's (Jehovah's) will. They are good or evil not in virtue of intrinsic character, but of the mission on which they may be sent. The ‘angels of evil’ who bring the plagues on Egypt (Ps. 78:49), the ‘destroyer’ who smites the first-born (Ex. 12:23), the evil spirit that troubles Saul, the angel that slays the Israelites (II Sam. 14:16, 17), or Sennacherib's army with the pestilence, the lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, the cynical Satan who smites Job in property, family and person to prove that he does not serve God for nought, all alike belong to the heavenly host and are God's servants, who live to do His will. They are evil so far as their mission is to inflict evil. Our distinction between good and evil angels is unknown; moral features, if present, are rudimentary. When they are called ‘the holy ones’ no ethical reference is intended, but simply their consecration to the service of

God. Immoral actions are attributed to them. Thus the sons of God have children by the daughters of men (Gen. 6: 1–4), and the hosts of the high ones on high have to be visited with punishment for the wrongs done by the kingdoms under their charge (Isa. 24:21). In Ps. 82 the Elohim (gods) are rebuked by God in the heavenly assembly for their unrighteous rule, and this is so also in Ps. 58. In Job we have similar thoughts. Twice Eliphaz insists on the imperfection of the angels, once in his wonderful description of the spirit who said unto him, ‘Behold, He putteth no trust in His servants and His angels He chargeth with folly’ (6:18); and again, speaking for himself, ‘Behold, He putteth no trust in His holy ones, yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight’ (15:15). Bildad also says that God ‘maketh peace in His high places’ and that ‘the stars are not pure in His sight’ (25:2, 5). In later Jewish theology when the distinction of angels and demons has become explicit, the angels are frequently represented as far from perfect,” etc., etc.

Such, then, is the presentation of the character of the angels in the Word of God, according to the view of modern critics.

Of course, there never were such beings as are here pictured. But Scripture presents it that way, because it was the current conception of Jewish theology at the time!

And from this modern critical viewpoint it does not imply any difficulty whatever to interpret “sons of God” in Gen. 4 as having reference to the angels.

You see, the story of Genesis is a mere legend.

Perhaps a bit of Persian theology!

And, of course, in a legend all things are possible!

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

