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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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And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

—Exodus 17:1–7

Water from the Rock

This passage is difficult to understand. Very, very difficult.

The difficulty is not understanding *how* water came from a rock. That part is easy to understand. Easy for faith, that is. It was a miracle. It was a wonder. No unbelieving theories are needed about water already being in the rock. The rock was solid rock. There was no water in it. God made water come out of the solid rock. There is only one explanation: it was a miracle. It was a wonder. A child understands it.

Rather, the difficulty is understanding *why* God gave the children of Israel water from the rock. The children of Israel were ugly at Rephidim. It turns our stomachs to see them, but see them we must. Behold: “the people did chide with Moses.” To chide means to charge and accuse. What was their charge? “Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?” As if Moses had rescued them from Egypt with the purpose of dehydrating them to death in the desert! So wicked was their mood that they were almost ready to stone Moses. But that is not yet

the worst. The worst is that Israel was really chiding God. They were tempting God. The names given to Rephidim afterward memorialize their wickedness: Massah—temptation; Meribah—strife. Israel fought Jehovah! Israel made itself the enemy of Jehovah! Our stomachs turn at Israel’s spiritual ugliness at Rephidim. And when we realize that we are really looking at ourselves, our stomachs turn again.

Thus the difficulty. Why would God give his spiritual enemies water from the rock?

Ah, but the answer is really the same, isn’t it? *How* did water come from the rock? It was a miracle. It was a wonder. *Why* did water come from the rock? It was a miracle. It was a wonder. A miracle-wonder of grace! The wonder of God eternally favoring his people in Christ. The wonder of God graciously reconciling us to himself through Jesus Christ while we were yet enemies. The wonder of God graciously laying our ugly sins upon his only begotten Son and laying Christ’s beautiful and perfect righteousness upon us. The wonder of God graciously satisfying our thirst by pouring out to us the

refreshing water of salvation. “For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (I Cor. 10:4).

What good news for thirsty sinners is this miracle of God’s grace! You may sing of it: “He

clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers” (Ps. 78:15–16).

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA’S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

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(pp. 157–58)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article LXVII. The New King and His Kingdom (continued)

We are busy discussing the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son.

We stated that the personal property of the Holy Spirit, according to the confession of the church, is thus expressed, that He proceeds from the Father and the Son. Two elements, so we pointed out, must be emphasized in this confession. In the first place, the fact that the Spirit **proceeds**, is not, like the Son, begotten. And in the second place the truth that He proceeds, not from the Father only, but from the Father and the Son.

That the Spirit proceeds, is breathed, spirit-ed and not generated we found implied in His very name. “Spirit,” besides being applied to the very being of God, is also in a distinctive sense applied to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. And, besides, this truth is definitely expressed in Holy Writ. For, as we showed, in John 15:26 we read with reference to the eternal personal relationship of the Spirit to the Father, that He proceeds from the Father.

In regard to the second question, namely, whether the Spirit also proceeds from the Son, we mentioned that a long and bitter controversy was carried on, and that to this very day the Eastern or Greek and the Western or Latin Church are divided on this point. The former, afraid that the

confession of the procession of the Spirit from both the Father and the Son would postulate two principles of being in God, denied it and always maintained that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only. The latter, pointing out that the denial of this truth would leave the Trinity unfinished and without rest for the divine life, just as strongly maintained that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

We were calling your attention to the significance of the confession of the Western Church. We already stated that on the basis of the theory that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only, it is a mystery why there are three and only three persons in the Holy Trinity. In that case the Father begets the Son and breathes forth the Spirit, but Father and Son never meet. The Trinity does not close, does not come to rest. The Father thru the Son in the Spirit does not return to Himself.

But there is more. The confession of the truth that the Spirit also proceeds from the Son is of great significance for our conception of our relation to the Triune God. Covenant-life is communion with the Triune God. That life is established thru the indwelling of God in us. In the Spirit the Father and the Son take up their abode with us, dwell with us in friendly covenant communion. But if the Spirit proceeds from the Father only, it is difficult to conceive how in Him

we have communion with the Father and the Son. In that case the Father only would take up His abode with us. The explanation that the Spirit proceeds from the Father thru the Son does not help us out of the difficulty. For the fact remains that the Spirit, proceeding from the Father only, is the Spirit of the Father, and that in Him only the Father takes up His abode with His people. The true covenant connection with the Triune God is lost. And finally, the attention has been called more than once to the fact that the conception that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only and not from the Son tends naturally to false mysticism. False mysticism is characterized by the attempt to seek communion with the Father thru the Spirit apart from the Word. It is generally distinguished by its tendency to disregard the revealed Word of God, to show a lack of appreciation of the clear and definite knowledge of the truth of God, and to emphasize the direct communion, blessed and mystical, beyond expression, of the heart with God. Naturally, to maintain that the Spirit proceeds from the Father only is to establish the possibility of this communion of the heart with the Father apart from the knowledge of God thru the Word. It tends to separate mind and heart, intellect and feeling, knowledge and experience. And it casts us into the arms of a mystically sweet experience of God that knows no bonds because it is not limited and controlled by the revealed Word of God.

All this witnesses against the truth of the conception of the Eastern Church.

Yet, this is not sufficient to establish the truth of the confession that the Spirit proceeds from the Son also. The ultimate question that decides is after all, not what is the result of a certain doctrine? but: what is the testimony of the Word? Many conclusions have, for instance, been drawn from the doctrine of predestination. It has often been argued what a dangerous doctrine this is, and how it contradicts the truth of man's responsibility. And if we would but listen to human arguments we would long ago have abandoned this fundamental confession of our Reformed Churches. But this is not the correct

method of procedure. The question is not: what arguments can be brought against the doctrine of predestination by our human reason? but: what is the truth of the Word of God? And the answer to this question quickly settles the matter. The same is true in regard to the confession that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. If Scripture teaches the contrary, if according to Scripture the Eastern Church is correct, no matter what scruples we might have to accept this truth, the matter is settled. The Word of God is for the Calvinist the end of all dispute. Hence, to that Word we must turn.

And, then, it may be admitted frankly that there is no direct formula in the Word of God that expresses in so many words that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. We found that in regard to the relation between the Father and the Spirit Scripture is clear. It states directly that the Spirit proceedeth from the Father. In vain would we look for a similar statement in regard to the relation between the Spirit and the Son. However, this does not settle the matter. Scripture is no encyclopedia of dogmatic formulae. It cannot be used like a dictionary. It is very well possible that the formula "the Spirit proceedeth from the Son" is wanting and that still it is the current teaching of the Word, and its tacit assumption that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father.

And this is exactly the case.

To prove this we may call your attention in the first place to the safe principle that the relation that becomes manifest between the three persons of the Trinity in the works of God outside of His own Being is a reflection of the intertrinitarian relation within the Divine Family. In the works of God outside of Himself, in creation and salvation, each of the three Persons occupies His own place. Surely, all the works of creation and salvation are of the Triune God. It is not thus, that the Father creates and not the Son and the Holy Spirit. We may not say that the Son saves and not the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is an error to think that the Spirit sanctifies and not the Father and the Son. No, God creates,

God saves, God sanctifies. All the works of God belong to Him as Triune God. But, if God is Triune, and if within the Trinity the Three Persons have each his own personal properties; if they stand in a certain definite relation to one-another and each possesses the whole divine nature in His personal way; it stands to reason that in the works of God this relation will be reflected. And further it is evident, that whenever this relation between the three Persons is reflected we may conclude from this reflection to the actual and eternal relation between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Divine Family. In the work of creation and salvation, for instance, the Son is the manifestation of God. And He is this, because also within the Trinity He is God revealed, the eternal Word. If in the same way it could be shown that in the works of God the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, it would be safe to conclude that also this is a reflection of His eternal procession from the Father and the Son.

Now, this is not difficult.

In John 14:16, 17 we read: “And I will pray the Father and He will give you another comforter, that He may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth.”...And again in vs. 26: “But the comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.” In these passages, evidently, the Spirit in the work of salvation is presented as being sent from the Father. And we conclude, especially in the light of John 15:26, that the Spirit is sent by the Father because within the Trinity His relation to the Father is such that He eternally proceeds from Him. But if we apply this same principle to other passages we discover the same truth in regard to the relation of the Spirit and the Son. In John 15:26 we read: “But when

the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me.” Here the Spirit is said to be sent by the Son. And the same truth is expressed in John 16:7: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away I will send Him unto you.” In the work of salvation, therefore, the Father alone does not send the Spirit. Neither does the Son alone send the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, when all these promises of the Lord to His disciples were fulfilled, the Spirit comes, sent by the Father and the Son. And this soteriological procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son finds its root in the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son within the Holy Trinity. He proceeds, eternally proceeds, not only from the Father, but also from the Son.

Of course, when this is confessed we must in the meantime never lose sight of the relation between the Father and the Son. There are not two Spirits proceeding from two principles in God. But one and the same Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son. From the Father this Spirit proceeds as from God revealing, from the Son as God revealed. Also in this respect the Son doeth nothing but what He seeth the Father do. Also in this respect the Son copies the Father. Even as the Father generates the Son and breathes forth the Spirit, so the Son is generated by the Father and breathes forth the Spirit. And the Spirit, proceeding from both the Father and the Son, witnesses of God revealed to God revealing and searches the depths of God. And that same Spirit, being sent forth in the economy of salvation into the church, witnesses of the Father and the Son and establishes the tie of covenant communion.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

