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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

CONTENTS

3 MEDITATION
Miriam the Prophetess

4 THE ALCOVE
The Lord Our Rock

10 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES
Article 58: The New King and His Kingdom (continued)



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And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

—Exodus 15:20–21

Miriam the Prophetess

On the shores of the Red Sea, a wonderful thing was revealed about Miriam. Miriam was a prophetess. How wonderful! Miriam was a prophetess! It warms our hearts. We can sense that there is something very good for us in the truth that Miriam was a prophetess.

But the revelation that Miriam was a prophetess also comes as something of a surprise. To this point we have only known Miriam as Moses' and Aaron's older sister, the firstborn of Amram and Jochebed. By the time of the crossing of the Red Sea, Miriam was an old woman. More than a decade older than the eighty-year-old Moses, Miriam was well into her nineties when she prophesied with her timbrel on the far shore of the sea. And although the woman was the crown jewel of God's creation and was the mother of all living, God had forbidden the woman to usurp authority over the man. And yet there at the Red Sea, God revealed that Miriam was a prophetess.

And a prophetess she surely was! Consider the tokens of her office. She is called "the sister of Aaron," reinforcing her status as prophetess by association with her prophet-brother. For God had said to Moses, "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" (Ex. 7:1). Miriam carried the instrument of a prophet in her hand, for by the timbrel and other sweet instruments of those days, God would breathe his word into his prophets' souls (see I Sam. 10:5; II Kings 3:15). God revealed the truth to Miriam, and Miriam spoke God's truth to all the women. "Miriam

answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Ex. 15:21). So emphatically was Miriam a prophetess that God would later even list her with Moses and Aaron as one who went before Israel to lead the people out of Egypt. "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Mic. 6:4).

Yes, Miriam was a prophetess. And, oh, what good there is for us in this! For consider what is here revealed: Miriam was united to Christ by faith. That is the only explanation, for the only way that Miriam could be a prophetess was through Christ. Christ is God's officebearer. Christ is our chief prophet and teacher. Christ is the anointed of God. Christ is christened with the christening of the Spirit. And Miriam was given a part with Christ! Miriam the prophetess: united to Christ, anointed with Christ's anointing, partaker of Christ's office, prophesying on the shores of the Red Sea.

Do you see what wonderful news this is for Christ's church? The news is not this: women should be ordained as elders, deacons, and ministers in the church. That is not how the text applies Miriam the prophetess to the church. Rather, the wonderful news is this: Miriam carried the office of believer! United to Christ by faith, Miriam partook of Christ's anointing and was a prophet, priest, and king. And so were all the women! For they went out after Miriam with

timbrels (symbols of their prophesying) and with dances (symbols of their joy). In God's kindness to his people in Christ, he makes even his lowliest servants prophets with Christ, that they may know God's truth and confess it. "I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of His anointing; that so I may confess His name" (LD 12, Q&A 32).

What a lovely scene as the children of Israel prepared to leave the Red Sea. What a comforting truth was there revealed. Miriam the prophetess! And all God's people prophets and prophetesses in Christ.

—AL

THE ALCOVE

The following is a meditation by Herman Hoeksema on Psalm 18:31: "For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?" The meditation was originally published in Dutch in the May 1, 1926, issue of the *Standard Bearer*.¹ The meditation has been translated into English by Mr. Henry De Jong.

The translator's interest in the meditation was sparked by his observation that the Dutch Bible—the *Statenvertaling*—translates Psalm 18:31 using the word *alleen*—only or alone. The translator makes some comments about the significance of that word, which comments are included after the translation; and Herman Hoeksema's meditation on the verse beautifully and profoundly explains the spiritual truth of that word.

The date of the meditation is significant: May 1, 1926. At that time the churches that would become the Protestant Reformed denomination still considered themselves to be member churches of the Christian Reformed Churches (CRC), albeit protesting churches. These protesting churches, having been expelled by the CRC at the end of 1924 and the beginning of 1925, signed an Act of Agreement on March 6, 1925. In this Act the churches stated their purpose to appeal to the Christian Reformed synod of 1926: "That at the same time we stand on the basis of our

appeal and intend to address our appeal to the Synod of 1926."² The protesting churches adopted the name *The Protesting Christian Reformed Churches*. The Christian Reformed synod would be meeting in June 1926, which means that this meditation in early May appeared a little over a month before synod's gathering. The coming of that synod must have loomed before Protestant Reformed faces and weighed on Protestant Reformed minds. The glorious truth of Psalm 18:31 would have been exactly the comfort that Protestant Reformed men and women needed. Who is God save the Lord! Or who is a rock other than our God alone!

The decision of the 1926 Christian Reformed synod was as predictable as it was abrupt. Synod simply dismissed the protests as having no standing. Although the protesting churches considered themselves protesting members of the CRC, the CRC considered them to be outside the denomination. "Your committee advises synod to lay aside the following documents [of protest and appeal] as unacceptable...Ground: Since these protesting [or] appealing parties are outside our ecclesiastical communion."³ That advice was adopted. Thus did the CRC—mimicking Pontius Pilate—wash its hands of the blood of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

¹ Herman Hoeksema, "De Heere Onze Rotssteen," *Standard Bearer* 2, no. 8 (May 1, 1926): 217–219.

² <https://www.prca.org/resources/publications/books/the-history-of-the-protestant-reformed-churches-1924-1936/item/88-chapter-14>.

³ https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1926acts_et.pdf, 113; see B.1 and B.1.b.

A couple of notes about the translation as it appears here. First, the meditation is filled with ellipses (...). These ellipses were Hoeksema's, and they appear in the original Dutch meditation. They do not indicate that a portion of the meditation is being omitted; the entire meditation has been translated and appears here. Rather, these are what we might call "edge of the seat" ellipses. Hoeksema brings forth out of the text such profound and soul-captivating truths that the believer finds himself on the edge of his seat with interest. The believer is carried to such heights of spiritual wonder that he almost cannot handle it. Every so often, after coming to such summits, Hoeksema pauses so that he and the reader can

catch their breath, as it were. In that pause the reader marvels at the greatness of God and becomes hungry to learn what comes next. It is these pauses for regathering that Hoeksema marks by his ellipses.

Also, the footnotes have been added and were not part of the original meditation.

Our thanks to Mr. Henry De Jong for his labor of love, so that Hoeksema's meditation on Psalm 18:31 can be of profit to a new generation of English readers today. And above all, our thanks to God for his sovereign grace. For who is God save the Lord? And who is a Rock than our God alone?

—AL

The Lord Our Rock

Herman Hoeksema's May 1, 1926, *Standard Bearer* meditation

Translated by Henry De Jong

For who is God save the Lord? and who is a rock than only our God? —Psalm 18:31⁴

Who is a rock?

No one, save the Lord!

In all the universe, whether you search the heights of the heavens or the depths of the seas or the darkness of hell and of death, nowhere is there a rock save the Most High.

How full of the riches of comfort is the thought!

There proceeds from the silent colossus of a rock in nature a very quiet speech.

It speaks to you of overwhelming power, of unapproachable greatness and grandeur, of unshakable and unwavering firmness, of age-enduring immutability. You cling to a rock and do not waver and shake. On a rock you take refuge from the furious foe and from its lofty heights ridicule him. You choose a rocky ground for your foundation, and you dwell in safety...

The rock is strong.

Roam for but a day through the mighty Rocky Mountains in the far West, where mighty rock giants lift their heads loftily above the clouds; and, standing at the foot of one of these mighty colossi, let your eye glide along the almost perpendicular walls, and tell whether that silent rock does not overwhelm you with its powerful speech and make you feel deep in your soul the impotence and powerlessness of your own tiny existence. Strong, all-defyingly strong, is the rock.

The rock is unshakably and unchangeably firm.

Let the storms rage wildly about her bare walls and the hurricane howl around her lofty peaks; let the lightning flash skittishly about her proud tops, and let the thunder rumble past her with a thousand echoes; even when everything

⁴ The 1637 Dutch *Statenvertaling* translation (commissioned by the Synod of Dordt) reads, "Want wie is God behalve de Heere? en wie is een rotssteen dan alleen onze God?" The *Statenvertaling* numbers the verses of Psalm 18 differently than the King James Version does. In the *Statenvertaling* the heading of the psalm is verse 1, whereas the KJV does not include the heading as a verse. Thus the verse that this meditation deals with is Psalm 18:32 in the *Statenvertaling* but Psalm 18:31 in the KJV. Throughout this document we will refer to the verse according to its numbering in the KJV.

in nature trembles and quakes and shakes, the mighty rock stands there—immutable, immovable, motionless. She does not tremble at the howling of the wind; she does not bend her head before the fury of the hurricane; she does not shudder at the rattling roll and roar of thunder; and on her rock-hard walls, the fire of lightning bursts powerlessly and helplessly. An image of the unshakably solid is the rock.

Or go to the steep and precipitous seaside, where the rock has set its foot on the bottom of the deep waters and from thence rises up out of the whirlpools to laugh at the roaring of the sea. Foam-headed waves lash and crash against her loins; they rage and seethe and boil; they gather all their strength and roll like a giant sledgehammer against the rock; they return presently to repeat their assault with renewed rage...It is all in vain. Pretty soon the foaming sea, exhausted, gives up the fight, and the quiet surface of the water again mirrors and reflects the image of the invincibly firm rock...

An image also of the abiding and permanent, of the eternal, is the rock.

Insatiable and unsatisfiable time sinks its gnawing and chewing tooth into all that exists. Nothing continues. Visibly, all things around you pass away and perish. The grass still withers before the evening, and the flower's bloom that charms you for one moment fades still upon its stem. The mighty oak also dies and is uprooted. River and lake and stream overflow from their own banks away. As before your eyes, all things change. But the rock remains year after year; and time, which pities nothing, breaks its devouring tooth on its hard wall...

Who, who in the whole universe is a Rock?...

The Lord is a Rock.

He alone.

The Rock!

Our God is a solid Rock!

A strong Refuge for all his beloved.

When the storms of life rage, when streams of unrighteousness oppress your soul, when the foe rages about the city, when the hellish brood is foaming at the mouth to destroy you, when each morning the chastisement awaits you and the suffering of this present time is your lot, when death climbs into your windows and when bitter sorrow pierces you through the heart, then...

Oh, then there is nowhere a rock under the whole creation. Then you stand powerless, helpless, small, and weak...

But then the Lord is *the* Rock, the only but also the all-sufficient Rock, to which you can cling, by whom you can seek your strong and safe refuge where is rest and peace and comfort and courage, and whence you laugh at fear and mock at the raging fury of the foes.⁵

He is, in himself, the eternal Rock.

Is he not the only abiding, the immutable in himself? There is no ravage of time that exerts its effect upon him. There is no course of centuries that makes him grow old and gray. There is not a weight of years that makes him stoop. There is no labor and no toil, no struggle and no wrestling that diminishes his strength. There is no twist of fate that induces him to change. He is an eternally-shining light without a shadow of turning; an always-glowing fire that never consumes itself; an always-working power that never weakens and never faints. In the midst of all the becoming and changing of all that is called creature, he alone stands and says, "I AM THAT I AM!" ...

He is also the only-powerful.

For he is God!

And who is God save the Lord?

No one.

The Lord is God and no one else. He stands alone in his power. Inclusive of all power and strength and lordship, of all virtue and good, of

⁵ "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. 2:4).

all glory and blessedness, of all understanding and wisdom, is the Lord. There is no power outside of and besides him, above him, under him, apart from him. If he withdraws his power out of the whole universe, then everything will shrivel and will fade into an everlastingly dark nothingness. He is not God next to or above other gods. He is God alone. He does not possess virtues and perfections next to or besides the virtues and perfections of others; his is all virtue; his is all perfection. He is not wiser but the only-wise; not more glorious but the only-glorious; not stronger but the only-strong...

Is there any power in the heaven that is not his? Is not his the power of the thousand times ten thousands of heavenly hosts, who obey the voice of his word? Did not their splendor fade when he withdrew himself? Did not the song die on their lips when he did not pluck the strings of their angels' hearts? Were not seraphim and cherubim afraid when he hid his shining face?...

There is no power on earth except out of him. The sound of many waters, the rattling of thunder, the roar of the king of the forest, the soft warbling of the nightingale, it all testifies of him, of his power and glory. The wise man has no understanding, the foe has no counsel, except by him alone. Hearts of kings and wills of tyrants exist only by him. The pestilence does not roam around, the viper does not creep under the grass, the arrow does not fly by day, and death does not climb into your windows, except only by a power that flows out of him from moment to moment.

There is also nothing that exists in hell, except only by him. His is also the strength whereby the darkness can work. Also the devil's strength is God's, and he uses it for whatever he wills. Even the spirits of hell themselves could not tremble except by him alone...

Who is God save the Lord?...

He is the being of all existence, the wisdom of all understanding, the strength of all ability,

the glory of all beauty, the abiding of all becoming, the governor of all destiny...

Lord of lords is his name!

The Rock.

And this God is our God.

Eternally and always. He shall be our guide even unto death!

What a wonderfully rich, comfort-giving, all-fear-erasing, battle-strengthening, and courage-filling thought!

Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, the eternally abiding, the immovably firm, the only being, is our God in life and in death.

And what he is in himself, that also is he for and in relation to his own.

He loves his own with an eternal and therefore unchangeably faithful love, with a love that can stand alone like the rock in the midst of the crashing waves and never change. Let the powers of hell and of death rage, let the dark waves of our iniquities throw themselves against that rock of God's eternal love; it stands and remains unshaken and unchangeable. Let streams of sin and guilt try to extinguish the glow of that love; in the gift of the only beloved Son there goes out a fire from that glowing love that licks up the streams and, uncooled, continues glowing...

In that unchangingly faithful and overpoweringly deep love, he has chosen the people whom he loved from before the foundation of the world that they should be conformed to the image of his Son and that they would live and dwell with him, near him, close to his heart⁶ in glory forever. And that will of God for the glorification and eternal salvation of all his loved ones is as he himself is, unchangeably faithful, immovably and unyieldingly firm, all-overpoweringly strong, invincibly mighty, a strong Rock!...

And he has also willed (with that same immutable and omnipotent will) that all things in heaven and on earth and in hell should work

⁶ Dutch: *dicht aan Zijn hart*—near to, close to, his heart, which heart, without breaking, suffered in our place on the cross, sustained by the eternal Spirit: “for the LORD sustained me,” Ps. 3:5.

together and work with each other for the realization of the salvation of all those known to him...

And he himself also works out that counsel of salvation!...

With eyes sparkling with eternally unfathomable love fixed on that unspeakably glorious bliss and salvation of his people, he holds the reins of the government of the universe in his alone-powerful hands and directs the destiny of all creatures' existence. For achieving and reaching that goal, everything serves him. For it the angels serve him, who wait upon his command while attending to all things; and the devils who, gnashing their teeth, resist and set themselves against his will; and the foes on earth, who lie in wait for the blood of the righteous. For this purpose sun and moon and stars, rain and drought, refreshing sunshine and scorching heat, fruitful and unfruitful years, peace but also war, health but also pestilence, prosperity but also adversity, gladness but also sadness, joy but also sorrow, life but also death serve him...

All things!

And he never fails!

For he is all wisdom. By nothing was his wisdom bound or restricted, so that in the eternally unchangeable counsel of his will all things are so arranged and ordered that they all worked together for that one goal: the glory of his covenant, the glory of his everlasting kingdom, the salvation of his friends and those known to him...

And never do the reins of the government in the entire universe slip out of the grasp of his hands! He is God, and there is no God save the Lord! Satan, in vain rage, may imagine for a moment that he can push the Most High from the throne and reign himself; it is all vanity and folly, and the Lord laughs at his attempts. The foe may wildly rage against the Lord, his anointed, and his beloved children; he who sits in the heaven breaks their counsel.

The way may seem dark, but he guides.

The battle may be difficult; the foe may seem mighty; but he conquers.

This God is our God.

For ever and ever.

The Rock!

Who is a rock?

No one, save the Lord!

Also the mighty rocky boulders in the mountains are not rocks. In all their immovable, unyielding strength, they are only an image and shadow of the Rock. Pretty soon he will thunder from on high, and then the earth will shake on its foundations; then the mountains will crack and the rocks split and all things will melt in the blaze of the world fire...

The Lord alone is a rock!

My brother, believest thou this?

Away then with all false rocks, wherein is no strength and power, no steadfastness, and no immutability. Away with your own strength and wisdom, away with your gold and goods, away with the princes and great ones of this earth as rocks to build upon. Away with your own righteousness, your own fame, and your own honor as a ground or basis of your trusting or an object of your praise. They are not rocks. They will soon slip out from under you. They offer no peace and do not give courage. They do not comfort us in sorrow. They do not steel for battle nor glory in the victory...

And by faith we cling to him who alone is the Rock because he alone is God. Built upon him, entrusted to him, by him we seek our refuge and our strength. Then peace comes in the midst of strife; then great joy shines through the cloud of sadness; then the soul rejoices in the midst of the most oppressive sufferings:

“In the greatest pain,
Our hearts remain
At rest in the Lord.”

And from out of your strong tower and safe refuge, you sing to the raging foe, defying him by God's strength:

“I shall be full of heroic courage,
There his hand protects me,

Not fearing tens of thousands;
Though I may be violently assaulted
And fiercely oppressed from every side.”⁷

—H. H.

Translator’s Comments

The sweet psalmist of Israel uses *save* three times in II Samuel 22:32 and Psalm 18:31. He chose *save* in eternity and uses it twice in his parallel questions in II Samuel 22:32.

In the second question in Psalm 18:31, however, the psalmist substitutes a different word in place of *save*. In II Samuel 22:32 he uses *save* in both questions. Surprisingly, in Psalm 18:31’s second question, our Lord Jesus Christ chose and substituted a different word in place of *save*. This word the fathers translate with *alleen* (*only*,

alone). In the first question they use *save* (see the *Statenvertaling* translation of Psalm 18:31 above): “Who is God save the Lord?” In the second question of the verse, however, the fathers translate the psalmist’s substituted word with *alleen* (*only, alone*): “only our God.” “For who is God save the Lord? and who is a rock than only our God?”

In this meditation on Psalm 18:31, father Hoeksema’s eye of faith is on the sweet psalmist of Israel’s simple, yet unfathomably deep, questions: “For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?” (II Sam. 22:32) and “For who is God save the Lord? and who is a rock than only our God?” (Ps. 18:31, *Statenvertaling*).

For who is God than Jehovah our God exclusively? And who is a Rock? Our God alone.

—Henry De Jong



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⁷ Translation of a 1773 paraphrase of Psalm 3:3 used in Dutch Psalters in the *Hervormde Kerk* and the *Gereformeerde Kerken* after 1773; see <https://psalmboek.nl/zingen.php?ber=1&mod=not&psalm=3&psvID=3>. Peter Datheen’s earlier versification (see the Datheen link toward the bottom of the website), used already at the time of the Synod of Dordrecht (1618–19), more closely aligns with the sweet psalmist’s words in Psalm 3. By 1773 the Dutch churches were indeed apostatizing from singing the psalms in their very words as given by our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

We attempted to show in our last article that the history of the doctrine of the Trinity plainly reveals its fundamental significance. It was the first doctrine that was opposed by heretics; it was the first dogma that reached definite formulation, first at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. and more fully in the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. And not only was the doctrine of the Trinity the subject of much discussion and controversy in the early church, but all thru the history of the church she was called upon to maintain the truth of this dogma over against false philosophies.

In order to understand this lesson from history in its full significance, however, we must not merely establish the fact that denial of the Holy Trinity always led to Pantheism on the one hand and Deism on the other, but we must see the inevitableness of this historic fact. He that denies the doctrine of the Trinity must, if he would still speak of God, become a pantheist or a deist. The peculiarity of Trinitarianism lies, of course, in the fact that it confesses a threeness, a three-fold personal life in God. Surely, it holds with equal tenacity to the oneness of God's Being. It believes in only one God, not in three. But the distinctive characteristic of this faith lies in its profession of a God that subsists in three persons. It maintains that God is a personal God. But it confesses that this personal life in God is threefold. God is one Being, but He is three persons. In this threeness of personal existence you have the peculiar object of the Trinitarian faith.

It is a denial of this peculiar phase of the Christian faith that must needs swing us into the abyss of Pantheism or chill our religious life in the icy atmosphere of Deism.

Of these two Pantheism is the more consistent and by far the more tempting to thinking man. It denies the personal life of God altogether. A three-personal Being is foolishness to the Pantheist. But so is a One-personal God. A person presupposes relating to other persons. And, therefore, an absolute Person that would exist eternally alone is a contradiction in terms. Or, granted that such an absolute Person existing in eternal solitude, as God must then have been before the world was, could actually be conceived of; granted that God existed as just one person, in absolute loneliness, with nothing to reflect Himself, nothing from which He could possibly distinguish Himself, nothing in regard to which He could possibly determine His relation; such a divine Person would neither know nor love, for the simple reason that there would be no object. He would not be able even to develop into a self-conscious and self-determining Being. In short, he really would be an idle God. He would be no person at all, but merely some vague, unconscious potentiality or power. Such is actually the God of pantheism. God has need of the world. He cannot be thought of apart from the world. He has no existence, at least no conscious existence, apart from the world. The world is God's necessary and eternal self-manifestation, His body, His son. And thru a long process of development God in the world comes to self-consciousness, returns unto Himself, knows Himself as God in Man. Man is the highest development of God in the world, for in Man God reflects back upon Himself and becomes self-conscious. Such is the one extreme result of a denial of the Trinity. It may be remarked even at this stage of our discussion that

faith in a Triune God is not wrecked upon the rock of this Impersonal God that must reach consciousness in the world. From its point of view God is absolutely self-sufficient. He is in no need of a world to realize His divine self-consciousness. He is in no need of a creature as an object of His knowledge and love. For He exists in trinity of Persons. God as Father knows and loves Himself thru God as Son in God as Holy Spirit. God the Son knows and loves the Father thru Himself in the Spirit. And God the Spirit knows and loves the Father thru the Son in Himself. Thus God is light and there is no darkness in Him. Thus He is love and lives within His own Being the highest conceivable covenant-life of perfect friendship. But this in passing. We shall refer to this in detail later. But Pantheism, denying the Trinity and, therefore, the transcendent personal life of God, must make God dependent for His life and love upon the world, must ultimately identify God and the world, or rather, make the world, as it finds its climax in man, God.

It stands to reason that in this manner we lose our God. If there is no other God than the God within us, the Divine Potentiality reaching self-realization and self-consciousness in us, all distinction between God and us is simply removed. And this distinction being obliterated, the entire truth of revelation naturally must follow. Revelation, other than the voice of God within, becomes an absurdity. Creation is replaced by evolution, God Himself evolving with the world. Sin becomes mere imperfection, guilt being inconceivable. The wrath of God is nothing but an imaginary notion to be dispelled under the influence of education. Atonement is heroic self-sacrifice. The incarnation is the first breaking thru of the divine consciousness in man. In a word, religion as a relation between God and men is destroyed.

Deism is less consistent and more superficial than Pantheism, but for religion it offers the same result. While denying principally that God is Triune, it would maintain the personal life of God. But by doing so Deism loses all connection,

all communion between this God and His creation. Trinitarianism confesses that God created all things thru the Word in the Spirit. Also in creation God returns unto Himself in the Holy Spirit. He is, indeed, far above the world, and there is an infinite distinction between Him and His creation. Yet He is not separated from the works of His hands, but immanent in the world. In Him we live and move and have our being. But Deism necessarily cuts the tie of communion between God and the world. Pantheism, because of its denial of the personal life of God, loses all distinction between the creaturely and the divine. Deism on the other hand places God far above the world, entirely out of reach, so that all communion with God and the world is impossible. Even thus, all religion is impossible. This transcendent God has no contact with the world. There is no special revelation of Him. Miracles can never occur. And especially the incarnation and atonement, the covenant and forgiveness are impossible products of the imagination never to be realized.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is expressed by the well-known formula: God is one in being and three in Persons. Now, what is implied by the formula? What does the church mean by it? Once more, we do not propose to explain God. This, as we have stated before and would emphasize again, is impossible. God is incomprehensible, and that in the meditation upon what He has revealed of Himself we come to meet face to face with inscrutable mysteries must not surprise us at all. We would not expect anything else. Faith does not even want anything else. A God we would comprehend would cease to be God. God is and must needs remain the Infinite, and we are finite. This distinction must never be obliterated. And, therefore, the Trinity as such we will never comprehend. But the fact remains: there is the formula that expresses the faith of the church, God is one in Being and three in Persons. It may be remarked that this formula was not taken literally from scripture. The church as a whole never believed

that she was limited to the very words of Scripture in the phraseology of her confession. On the contrary she was convinced that Scripture as the revelation of God was to be the object of her meditation, was to be assimilated in her mind and expressed in her own language and form. A sample of this we possess in the formula that God is one in Being and three in Persons. It is the revelation of God assimilated and expressed by the church. And, therefore, the question may surely be asked: what does the church mean by this article of her faith?

That God is one in Being is rather easily grasped. By this sentence the church expresses that there is but one divine Essence of infinite perfection. There are not three gods, there is but one God. And that one divine Being possesses all the attributes of the divine nature. The implication of this truth is easily understood if we contrast the Divine Being with the human race. There is only one human nature. That human nature was present in Adam when he stood alone in paradise. He was bearer of the entire, of the full human nature. And that same human nature is now present in and borne by the entire human race. It is true, that the human nature is more richly manifested in the entire race than it was in Adam alone. But the fact remains that also today there is but one human nature. But we cannot say that there is but one, undivided human being that is bearer of the human nature. On the contrary, there are as many human beings as there are human individuals. The one human nature is borne by and revealed in several human beings.

True, these human beings are not entirely separate. They all belong to an organism. But the fact remains that all the human race does not constitute one being but implies several human beings. Now, then, this is not the case with our God. The divine nature is not borne by several divine beings. It is not manifested by three divine beings. But there is only one divine Essence. To deny this is polytheism, the belief that there are several gods. And, therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity must never be understood as if the divine Being was divided, separated or even distinguished. God is one and indivisible. He is one in Essence. That one divine Essence is Bearer of the full divine nature. Of that one divine Being we say that He is Love, that He is Light and that there is no darkness in Him. That one divine Being is eternal and infinite in all His perfections. He is omnipotent and omniscient. He is truth and righteousness.

Hence, in our discussion of the Holy Trinity and of the trinitarian life of God, this must first of all be emphasized. When we speak of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost we do not refer to the Being of God, but to His Essence. This fundamental truth must be constantly remembered, must be our guide, must safeguard us in our discussion of the threeness in God.

Far more difficult it is to understand what lives in the consciousness of the church when she confesses that this one divine Being subsists in threeness of Persons.

But about this next time.

—Holland, Mich.

