

183
Retiring Moderator's Sermon, page 8

J. N. C.
Carolina Room

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL

*A Presbyterian weekly magazine devoted to the
statement, defense and propagation of the
Gospel, the faith which was once for
all delivered unto the saints*

JUN 15 1951

JUNE 13, 1951

The Moderators



JAMES LUTHER FOWLE



JAMES ROSS McCAIN

Fairlea, W. Va. (Special)—The General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in a fully attended meeting voted to reject union with both the United Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Church, U. S. Keen appreciation for both these great churches was expressed but it was felt better to continue as at present.

VOL. X NO. 7

\$2.50 A YEAR

Library, Reading Room
University of N. C.
Chapel Hill, N. C.
Comp

The Priesthood of All Believers

Delivered at the opening session
of the 91st General Assembly of
the Presbyterian Church, U. S.,
in Orlando, Fla., June 7, 1951

By Dr. Ben Rice Lacy, Jr.
Retiring Moderator (See Cut)

Text: "But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord; men shall call you the Ministers of our God." Isaiah 61:6.

As Moderator for a year I have been impressed by the fact that the world needs three things committed in a special way to the Reformed Church, of which our Southern Presbyterian Church is a part: first, the doctrine of God's sovereignty; second, the doctrine of God's grace; and third, the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers. This third doctrine is rooted in and springs from the second of these doctrines.

Once accepted and put into practice by believers it is capable of transforming individuals and nations.

This doctrine was formulated by God's first words from Sinai: "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 19:3-6). Prior to this faithful men had been the priests of their own homes and clans—Abel, Noah, Abraham, Job, Jethro, and others. Now it is foretold that the entire nation may become a kingdom of priests. All were to be holy,

all were to offer sacrifices and prayers. But in order to school and discipline the nation a special family, that of Aaron; from a special tribe, that of Levi, was to be set apart; clothed and anointed in a peculiar way as priests to mediate between God and His people and to offer gifts and sacrifices. This experiment was never altogether successful, even when the priesthood was reorganized under David. The consecration of a special group apparently did not prevent the secularization of the nation, and in accordance with the proverb, "Like people, like priest" the priesthood itself became degraded, and with the nation was swept into exile.

Then it was that a prophet of the Exile renewed the prophecy of the priesthood of all believers. He it was who understood best the symbolism of the Tabernacle and of the Temple and described the Suffering Servant: the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, who would bear the sins of His people. In the heart of these prophecies he announced: "But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God." (Isaiah 61:6).

It was difficult for men to realize that the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ, was to be the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and was to constitute Himself the great High Priest through His own sufferings and prayers. Yet after His Resurrection it was given to His disciples to understand. When the Eunuch, quoting a part of Isaiah's great prophecy, inquired:

"Of whom speaketh the prophet?"

Philip opened his mouth and beginning from the same scripture preached unto him Jesus. With this understanding of the high priesthood of Christ, and redemption by His grace, came a new proclamation and a new application of the doctrine enunciated on Sinai and by Isaiah. Peter declared: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye

should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (I Peter 2:9). And John on Patmos begins the great message of Revelation in these words: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:4-6).

The New Testament contains no slightest refer-



ence to a priestly caste in the Christian Church. Apart from references to the Temple and her priests, the only uses of the word are in connection with the High Priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of believers. As Christians lost the sense of their own divine vocation, to be holy unto God, they too created an official priesthood to whom they could delegate many sacred functions which they themselves were unwilling to assume. The development of the hierarchy resulted, as in Isaiah's day, in the ultimate secularization both of the people and of the priests. Rob men of their sense of sanctity and place other men between them and God and you debase them. The Reformation attempted to abolish the tyranny of professional priests and to restore the privilege of priesthood to all. However, human weakness persists and even in churches which most clearly enunciated the priesthood of believers the ordained ministers assumed too great authority and the people yielded their powers too willingly. James I, of England, said in anger: "Presbyter is priest writ large." The Church is weakened when the minister either assumes or has thrust upon him by his members honors and functions which belong to all. As members of a royal priesthood each Christian has a holy office, and individual ministers are rightly set apart for special offices and functions only when elected to such from among their brethren. It is the task of those of us who are ministers both to indoctrinate our people with the conception of their divine priesthood and to relinquish gladly any authority which we have acquired.

The acceptance and application of this doctrine will have the following effects:

It will destroy dictatorship in church and state and lay the basis of representative government in both. One who feels that he is of the royal priesthood will delegate his powers to those of his own choosing but will not be robbed of them. It is no mere accident that representative government upon the face of the globe is found only in those lands where this doctrine has prevailed. Nor will the people of America or of any other land long continue to enjoy representative government if they either permit a priestly caste to assume their responsibility or neglect to retain their dignity and sanctity as individual priests before their God.

We are too prone, however, to identify the kingdom of priests with a particular political organization. A nation, as such, has never become Christian. They are more often organized against God than for God. We have seen this in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Communist Russia, but evidence of anti-Christian elements are not lacking in our own land. The hope, however, of all nations is that within them there shall be enough Christians, imbued with their high calling, to transform the political, economic, and cultural elements.

The idea of Vocation derived from that of the priesthood of all believers gives us this hope. Simply stated this means that every Christian exercises his

SUMMER SCHOOLS

Preparatory: Begins June 4, 1951. High School Subjects.

Junior College: Begins June 11, 1951. Freshman and Sophomore Courses.

Business Administration: Begins June 4, 1951. Typewriting and Shorthand. Night Classes in Accounting.

Pleasant surroundings, good fellowship, Christian emphasis, daily chapel, recreation. Women admitted. Veterans enrolled.

Accelerate your education before military service.

Fall Session begins September 3, 1951. Write for Catalog. Educational Excellence.

PRESBYTERIAN JUNIOR COLLEGE

Box BJ - Maxton, North Carolina

priestly offices in the occupation and circumstances to which God has called him. In the Roman Catholic Church for one to have a religious vocation is to enter a convent, monastery, or the priesthood, but the true Protestant can be called of God to manufacture hats, or dig wells, or service automobiles—each in his own sphere and calling. Thus is each occupation brought under the domination of Christ and men and women engaged in any work approved of God are rendering a divine service. Such a conception practiced by owners, managers and workers in industry alone gives hope that peace and productivity and a better distribution of the good things of the earth can be assured. When from the least unto the greatest the Christian recognizes his work as holy unto God and designed for the helpfulness of God's children we shall see fulfilled the words of Isaiah which immediately follow the text: "You shall eat of the riches of the nations, and you will glorify yourself in their glory."

It is the further acceptance and application of this doctrine which produces martyrs. Every reference to the Kingdom of priests, both in the Old and New Testament, was made amid the suffering of God's people: From God to Sinai to Israel recently delivered from captivity and facing forty years of wilderness wandering; from Isaiah to the Babylonian captives; from Peter to the dispersed and persecuted of Asia; from John to the Church menaced by all the organized forces of evil. The Dutch in their flaming towns and flooded lands; the French through their Dragonnades and Exile; the Scots through their Killing Times were sustained in their suffering by the thought that they were priests of God. Bishop Berggrav, of Norway, writes, "The Christian has two weapons, the Word and suffering," and Mlle. de Dietrich has declared in her book, *Le Dessein de Dieu*, which has such a wide circulation in all of Protestant Europe: "Even

(Continued on Page 19)

Mo.; Harold Lowell Thomas, Lakeland, Fla.; Frank Calvin Wilkinson, Mooresville, N. C.; John Calvin Wingard, Batesville, Ark.

Bachelor of Divinity, Cum Laude: Ismael Andrade, Recife, Brazil; Shelstone Wallace Carr, Laurel, Miss.; Robert Wilbur Cousar, Jr., Chattanooga, Tenn.; Albert Grady Harris, Jr., Macon, Ga.; Thomson Quarles Johnston, Spartanburg, S. C.; George William Long, Jr., Barboursville, W. Va.; Charles Luther Moffatt, Johnson City, Tenn.; Larry Beaver Robinson, Honea Path, S. C.; Russell David Toms, Hialeah, Fla.; Edward Lee Wilingham, III, Augusta, Ga.

Bachelor of Divinity, Magna Cum Laude: Harold Whitfield Minor, Jr., Atlanta, Ga.; David Royal Moorefield, Lancaster, S. C.; William Richard Thurman, Decatur, Ga.

Master of Theology: Gabriel Abdullah, Jacksonville, Fla.; John Newton Ashenfelder, Baton Rouge, La.; Cheves Kilgore Ligon, Decatur, Ga.

Master of Arts in Biblical Education: Miss Elizabeth Arnold, Sylacauga, Ala.

The Wilds Book Prize for outstanding scholarship was awarded to William R. Thurman, of Decatur, Ga., who was also the winner of the Dr. James Robert Howerton Prize for the best paper in the field of Church Polity. The R. A. Dunn Award for the outstanding paper in defense of the Deity of Christ was presented to Mr. Miles Douglas Harper, Jr., of Hattiesburg, Miss. The Indiantown Country Church Award was won by Mr. J. Edward Craig, of Cramerton, N. C.

More than one hundred graduates of the seminary met at the annual Alumni Luncheon just preceding the commencement exercises and elected the following officers of the association for the coming year: Rev. Frank Alfred Mathes, of Birmingham, Ala., president; Rev. Alex. R. Batchelor, of Decatur, Ga., vice-president; and Rev. A. Allen Gardner, of Atlanta, Ga., secretary-treasurer.

This issue of THE JOURNAL went to press before the actual business of the General Assembly meeting in Orlando, Fla., got underway. In the June 20 and June 27 issues of THE JOURNAL complete coverage of the entire meeting will be published.

—ED.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

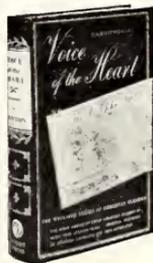
(Continued from Page 9)

as the priest held himself before the altar of God for all the people, in the same way the 'people of the priests,' this royal priesthood, holds itself before Him for all the people of the earth."

While we of this Assembly may now be spared such suffering, are not our Christian brethren in Korea and other ravaged nations making their sacrifice? And who knows how long it will be before our own people will be called on to make their own offerings? Indeed, is not the entire task of the Church bound up with the conception that the offering of sacrifices and of prayers must be made by every Christian in order that men may be brought to Christ and His Kingdom made triumphant? Paul declared: "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith I joy and rejoice with you all."

Another impression which I will add to those enumerated at the beginning of this message, and one which has come to me with overwhelming insistence during the past year, is that our Southern Presbyterian Church is on the verge of a great revival which will affect the work of our Church in its expansion through evangelism, in its teaching through all of its educational processes and in its world conquest through its missions. The realization of these expectations, while dependent in no small measure upon the quality and number of our ordained men, is even more dependent upon all of our members, realizing that they are to offer gifts, prayers and sacrifices that will make them priests of the Lord and ministers of our God.

John Owen in his classic on the Holy Spirit quotes Psalm 105:15 as follows: "Touch not my CHRISTIANS and do my prophets no harm." "Christ" means "the Anointed One." When one has named us "Christians" we have been named "the anointed ones." Anointing was used only in the coronation of a king and the consecration of a priest. Christ was anointed as Prince and Priest, and all true Christians are kings and priests unto God and the Father. We shall reign forever and ever only if we assume our priestly functions.



Now Ready

ANOTHER WYCLIFFE CHRISTIAN CLASSIC

VOICE OF THE HEART

by John Newton

Letters from the saintly John Newton to his parishioners on a variety of practical and spiritual subjects. Dr. Alexander Whyte said, "I keep John Newton on my choicest shelf of spiritual books." \$3.50.

Purchase at your favorite religious bookstore or direct from

MOODY PRESS 820 N. LA SALLE STREET, CHICAGO 10, ILLINOIS

X735