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DR. KEYSER'S "CONSENTING FREEDOM" OF THE HOMO CONVERTENDUS.

"*Apage tragicas accusationes ecclesiis nostris a Bellarmino in Praefat. libror. de lib. arb. intentatas, quasi arbitrii libertatem tollamus, ipsam naturam tollamus, ipsam naturam violemus et nos ipsos non beluarum similes, sed omnino beluas rationis expertes profiteamur,*"—these words of Gerhard¹⁾ come to mind as we glance over the numerous protests contained in Dr. Keyser's review of Dr. Pieper's book against the teaching of "a forced conversion." Dr. Keyser regards the teaching of the Missouri Synod on the origin of saving faith in man as imperiling, yea, destroying, the essential freedom which enters necessarily into every act of human volition; and this constitutes Dr. Keyser's second objection to Dr. Pieper's treatise. This objection is voiced throughout the book in ever varying terms and in ever new connections. A few selections may suffice to show what Dr. Keyser believes to be our teaching:—

How do our Missouri brethren preach to unconverted sinners? As if they were logs and stones, or as if they were men capable of receiving, through God's enabling grace, an ethical salvation? God never works on man, a personality, in a mechanical way; always in a vital and ethical way. The fact is, man, even in his sinful state, still has ears and eyes and self-consciousness, through which God, by the Gospel, is able to reach that dead spiritual corpse within him and bring it back to life. (p. 75 f.)

1) *L. de lib. arbitr.*, § 8.

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE THIRD ARTICLE.

(Continued.)

OF THE CHURCH.

The Church is “properly *nothing else* than the congregation of all believers and saints.” (*Augsb. Conf.*, Art. VIII.)

Eph. 2, 19—22: *Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

The apostle addresses the Christians at Ephesus, who had been "Gentiles in the flesh," v. 11. In their lives there is a marked distinction between "once," vv. 1 ff., and "now," vv. 13. 19 ff. "Once" they "walked according to the course of this world," v. 2; "once" they "were far off," "separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," v. 12. Once they had been *strangers, foreigners, ξένοι*, aliens, not citizens in the city of God, without any privileges in the commonwealth of the true Israel; they had been "sojourners," like unto people who have their abode in a family, but who do not belong to it, are not children, members of the household. A most deplorable condition!

Now, however, they have access to the "Father," v. 18, hence are children of God. How did the change come about? Christ came and preached peace to them, etc., v. 17.

"Now, therefore" = "so, then" — an inference from the foregoing sections — "*ye are no more,*" as ye have been, "*strangers and foreigners.*" What are ye? "*Fellow-citizens with the saints.*" Who are "saints"? Sanctification, *ἀγιασμός*, is an act of God in virtue of which He sets apart certain people for Himself, separates them from the world, *i. e.*, through the Spirit, by the Word, makes them Christians, who are dedicated to Him. They are believers, *οἱ ἄγιοι τοῦ θεοῦ*, "the saints of God," Acts 9, 13. And all believers, saints, in the imagery of the text, form a vast city in the eyes of God, the city, the commonwealth of God. These Ephesians, having been converted, *eo ipso* are *fellow-citizens*, have all rights and privileges in this city. Who only are citizens in this city? The believers.

The image changes. These Ephesian Christians are "*of the household of God,*" they belong to God's family, hence are His children, He is their Father, v. 18. Who only are children of God? The believers. Gal. 3, 26.

Again the image changes. The Ephesians — once heathen, now Christians — are not only citizens in the city of God, not only are they members of the family of God, but, viewed from another aspect, they themselves are the stones, “living stones,” 1 Pet. 1, composing the temple of God. They are “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.*” How beautiful, how grand the conception of this temple! Apostles and prophets the foundation, Christ the corner-stone, believers the “living stones,” and the temple still “growing,” v. 21.¹⁾

So, apostles and prophets are the foundation of this building. The apostles and prophets, though dead, still live and work through their writings. Whosoever comes to faith, does so by their writings — the Word of God. Who are built on this foundation? The believers. But the sun and center of this Word is Christ. John 5, 39. They who come to faith are built upon the word of the apostles and prophets, and *ergo* upon Christ, the Alpha and Omega of this Word. Who are living stones in this temple? Believers in Christ, and they only.

These beautiful images picture the *una sancta*, the Church. The Church is comparable to a commonwealth, a household, a temple. Who belongs to the Church in the proper sense of the word? They only who belong to this commonwealth, this household, this temple. Who are they? The believers. What is the Church? The sum total of all believers. What is the all-deciding factor of church-membership? Faith.

And faith intimately binds the Christians together. “*In whom,*” Christ, “*all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.*” Stone is placed upon stone; the mortar holding them together is faith, faith in Christ. This *one* building is at the same time a harmonious, symmetrical building. It is not a chaos of stones, lying about

1) The writer does not deem it his duty to record the various interpretations of each passage. For an instructive article on “Variant Interpretations” see THEOL. QUART. VI, 110.

higgledy-piggledy. The stones are *fitly* framed together. In the eyes of God all Christians constitute *one* building, with *one* corner-stone, *one* foundation. The Church is *one*. As yet the temple is not completed. "It groweth." More and more stones are added, more and more people are brought to faith by the Spirit through the Word, and all these are "fitly framed together" unto this holy temple. Thus it had been with the Ephesian Christians. Of them it is said: "In whom *ye* also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This will continue till the number of elect is complete. Then the last stone will have been laid, and the scaffold, this world, will be torn down, and this grand edifice, built by the Triune God, will stand forth in all its incomparable beauty on the last day.

We observe, too, that this temple is a *holy* temple. Christ, the corner-stone and foundation, is holy, and from Him the "living stones" receive their character. The blood of Christ cleansed them from all sin, thus they are holy. And Christ, the Holy One, at the same time dwells in this temple founded upon Himself. The believers are a holy temple in the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit. The Church is a habitation of the Triune God.

The text is too rich to do ample justice to it here. We must content ourselves with the main thoughts under discussion. We have seen, 1. what the Church is: the sum total of all believers. We have also noted 2. some properties of the Church. It is invisible, one, holy, Christian, apostolic.

2 Tim. 2, 19: *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.*

The conception underlying this passage is that of the Church, the Church of God. The foundation is mentioned by way of synecdoche for the entire building. "*The foundation standeth sure,*" it is firm; hence, the Church built upon it is firm and cannot be subverted. The seal this structure bears, reads: "*The Lord knoweth them that are His.*"

"*Them that are His*" are built on this firm foundation composing the Church. "*Them that are His,*" God's people, are the believers. We cannot look into the hearts of men, to see and know who believe, and who do not. "*God knoweth them.*" To Him the Church is visible, to us it is *invisible*. Hence we confess: "*I believe in the Holy Christian Church.*" The Church is the whole number of all believers. Believers are persons. Believers, Christians, confess their faith with word and deed. True, but then these things may deceive, may be hypocrisy. So we cannot positively say who is a member of the Church proper, who not. We cannot take a census of the true Christians, as the government does of its citizens, but "*the Lord knoweth them.*"

Luke 17, 20. 21: *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

The Pharisees asked the Lord when the kingdom of God would come. The motive of the question is not assigned. To Luke this was of little moment; the Lord's reply was the important thing. When the Pharisees asked, "When cometh the kingdom?" they had in mind a great earthly kingdom in which they fancied to enjoy high stations, privileged positions. It was a kingdom that would come "*with observation,*" as the Lord's answer suggests. What does Jesus reply? "*The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,*" μετὰ παρατηρήσεως. Its coming cannot be observed, seen, with the natural eye, so that a specific locality could be assigned to it and one could say: "*Lo here! or, Lo there!*" Behold, in this place or in that place is the kingdom apparent to observation. Why not? "*For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*" This kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, but it is of a spiritual nature. It has its abode "*within you,*" in the heart, hence cannot be observed with bodily eyes.—The contrast lies in the phrases "*not by observation*" and "*within you.*" It is not a visible, but an *invisible* kingdom; it is not

an earthly, but a *spiritual* kingdom. The kingdom of God is the one which God established by sending the Christ, the promised Messiah, in whom people should find rest for their souls by accepting Him in faith.

Matt. 16, 18: *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

On this passage the enormous, preposterous pretensions of the archenemy of the Church and the State, the Pope, mainly rest, claiming that Christ here constituted Peter the visible head of the Church, the first Pope, the rock of central authority in the Church. Naturally, we feel tempted to write a lengthy essay on the subject. But it must not be; we shall endeavor to stick to our text.

We are told "when Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked *His disciples*, 'Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?'" The question is directed to *all* His disciples. "And *they* said, 'Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias or one of the prophets.'" The disciples say: There are various opinions afloat about Thee. "He saith *unto them*," to His disciples, "But who say *ye* that I am?" You have recorded the opinions of others regarding Me, now what is *your* belief? "And Simon Peter answered and said," in the name of those addressed *ye*, in the name of *all* disciples: "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" That was Peter's faith, that was the disciples' faith. That this was the other disciples' belief also is plain from the fact that they utter no word of dissent or contradiction; it is plain from the words of Jesus in v. 20, where "He charged His *disciples* that *they* should tell no man that *He was Jesus the Christ.*"

Hence, what follows applies to *all* His disciples, though naturally Christ addresses Peter, since he had been the spokesman. Christ says: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for *flesh and blood* hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father

which is in heaven." What had *flesh and blood* not revealed unto Peter? To know and believe the mystery of mysteries he confessed: the "*Son of Man*," Mary's son, true man, is at the same time "*the Christ*," the promised Messiah, "*the Son of the living God*," true God. To "flesh and blood," to natural man, this blessed truth: Christ, true man and true God, is foolishness. 1 Cor. 2, 14: "No one can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." This knowledge must be *revealed* to man by the Father through the Spirit. It is *divine* knowledge, not human knowledge.

In the name of the disciples and in his own name Peter had made a great confession of Christ. The Lord shows him the origin of that faith, and then proceeds: "And I say also unto thee that *thou art Peter*." Peter means rock-man. "*Thou art Peter*," thou art a rock-man. You have based your faith upon rock—solid, safe, unshakable. This rock is expressed in your confession: "*The Son of Man is the Christ, the Son of the living God*," "and on this rock, on Myself, I will build my Church." Christ is the rock on which the Church is built. All who confess with Peter: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," are founded on this rock, Christ, are His disciples, belong to the Church.²⁾

2) There is a paranomasia, a play upon the words *Πέτρος* and *πέτρα* in the phrases *ὃ ἐστὶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρῃ* which cannot be reproduced in English. "*Πέτρος* and *πέτρα* are not absolutely identical. Not the mere, bare human individual Peter, but the characteristic quality in the individual Peter which deserves to be designated as *πέτρα* is the subject of the remark *ἐπὶ ταύτῃ κτλ.* Jesus says: *Ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρῃ*, plainly referring to the name of Peter. But by using the feminine *πέτρα* for the masculine *πέτρος*, and by placing *ταύτῃ* alongside of it, Matthew effects a distinction between the person of the apostle and that which makes the apostle a rock, and the latter element is credited to that knowledge which he had received by revelation. It was because this distinction had to be made that the Lord did not simply say *ἐπὶ σου*. Besides, the express statement that this knowledge had not sprung from his *σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα* declares that it was not his personality that made Peter a rock-man (a fact which the history of his life clearly corroborates), but something that had been implanted in him by God." (See Prof. Dau's article: THEOL. QUART., Vol. XIII, p. 109.)

Christ is the impregnable Rock upon which the Church is built—this is the plain meaning of the text. And with it the other Scriptures agree. The Church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, *Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone,*” Eph. 2, 19. So says Paul. Again Paul says: “For other *foundation* can no man lay than that is laid, which is *Jesus Christ,*” 1 Cor. 3, 11.—This sure Foundation was predicted hundreds of years before the Christian era. In Is. 28, 16 we read: “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” This is said of Christ. Cf. Rom. 9, 33.

And now let us call upon Peter himself to give testimony. “Peter, the Pope says, you are his man, you are the rock of central authority in the Church, you are the visible head of the Church, you are the first Pope. Now, Peter, what say you?” “This”—Jesus Christ of Nazareth—“is *the stone* which was set at naught of you builders, which is become *the head of the corner*. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,” Acts 4, 11. 12. Peter’s testimony is clear. Again he writes: “To whom”—Christ—“coming, as unto a *living stone*, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, *ye* also, as lively stones, *are built up* a spiritual house,” 1 Pet. 2, 3. 4. The testimony is plain. Hear him once more. Addressing the pastors, he says: “The *elders* which are among you, *I* exhort, who *also am an elder,*” etc., 1 Pet. 5, 1. Again the testimony is clear. Peter arrogates no superiority, no supremacy, to himself. He is simply “a fellow-elder,” on a level with the rest.

Clarke has some pointed remarks on this text. Says he: “Had he, Peter, been what the Popes of Rome say he was, the Prince of the Apostles and head of the Church, and what they affect to be, mighty secular lords, binding the kings of the earth in chains, could he have spoken of himself as he

here does? It is true that each of the Roman pontiffs, in all their bulls, style themselves '*Servus servorum Dei*,' servant of the servants of God, while each affects to be '*Rex regum*,' king of kings and vicar of Christ. But the popes and Scriptures never agree."

But let us return to the main thought of the text. The Church has a firm foundation—Christ, a glorious head—Christ. "*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" What does this say? Briefly this. Oriental cities were enclosed by strong walls as a protection against sudden invasions of enemies. The gates were the most strongly fortified places. Gen. 22, 17; Ps. 127, 5. Here, too, the judges often sat, here the kings administered justice, here the garrisons gathered. Out of the gates soldiers marched in attack of the enemy. So the expression "gates of hell" represents hell as a strong, well-fortified city with walls and gates. Hell's intent is, of course, to destroy the city of God, the Church, but "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"; *the Church shall not be overcome by its power, she shall not cease to exist, the Church shall last to the end of time.*

There have been times of oppression in the Church, but not of total suppression, extinction. Elijah thought and said: "I, even *I only*, am left." Jehovah answered him consolingly: "Yet will I leave me *seven thousand* in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him," 1 Kings 19, 8—18.

The main point taught here is: "*There always will be one holy Church.*" (*Augsb. Conf.*, Art. VII.)—Implied points: Believers *only* are members of the Church proper; only they can confess with Peter: "Thou art Christ," etc. The Church is *one*. Christ speaks of "*my Church*" in the singular. It is *Christian*; Christ says: "*my Church*"; "*I will build.*"

Eph. 4, 3—6: *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit,*

even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.

St. Paul exhorts the Christians to lead a godly life. The admonition is of a general character: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called," v. 1. Once ye were "Gentiles in the flesh," now ye are Christians, having been called by the preaching of Christ. Once "ye were far off," now "ye are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God"; hence it behooves you to walk as saints, to conduct yourselves as becomes members of this household. Walk worthily of your high calling. This walk is now defined: walk "with all *lowliness*," *i. e.*, with all *humility*, subordinating yourselves to the brethren; walk "with *meekness*," gladly serving one another, "with *long-suffering*," not easily becoming embittered by the frailties and shortcomings of the fellow-Christians, but "bearing with one another *in love*," loving them, forgiving them their faults, or overlooking them, if possible.

"*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" The unity of the Spirit is not established by the conduct of the Christians, but it is a unity that is produced, effected, by the Spirit. *Τοῦ πνεύματος* is genitivus *authoris*. Being produced by the Spirit, this unity is spiritual. This unity they are to *keep*, to maintain. How? "*In the bond of peace.*" "Of peace," *τῆς εἰρήνης*, is genitive of apposition. Keep this unity in the bond of peace, therefore says: Peace is the bond that should knit the brethren together. Keep peace amongst yourselves, and the unity of the Spirit will be preserved. And how is peace kept? By practicing the virtues, v. 2: humility, meekness, long-suffering, love. "Big heads," egoists, do incalculable harm to the congregation, and, if they be in high positions, to the Church at large.

In the next verses the concept "unity of the Spirit" is further unfolded. What the Christians really are, what they

actually possess, we are here told, not what they shall become. Because the Christians are *one* body, have *one* Spirit, etc., they are to keep this unity by striving after the virtues enumerated in v. 2.

“There is *one* body”; all Christians are as closely united with one another as the members of “one body.” What links them together? The one Spirit who lives in them. He is, as it were, the soul of this body, the Christian Church. By this one Spirit the Christians are led and governed, and by this Spirit they all strive after one goal, “*even as ye are called in one hope of your calling*” — which is the hope of eternal life. What furthermore binds the Christians together, and what all possess in common, is: “*one Lord, one faith, one baptism.*” The *one Lord* is Christ, who has bought them with a price, in whom they believe, in whom they were baptized. The climax of the paragraph follows: “*one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.*” Through Christ God has become our *Father*. He is *above* us all; He protects and governs us, and causes all things to work together for good for His children. He works *through* the Christians; the good the Christians do God works in and through them. And, finally, He lives *in* the Christians; we are His temple. — The three main concepts of the passage are: “*one Spirit,*” “*one Lord,*” “*one God and Father.*” To these the rest are linked and subordinated. In this Triune God the Christians are united with one another. By the one Spirit and in the one Spirit they are at the same time united with the one Lord and the one God and Father. Knowing this, they should walk worthy of their vocation.

Eph. 4, 4—6 is a *locus classicus* for the doctrine of the Church. — We learn, 1. what the Church is. The text says: There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father. So all who have one and the same Spirit and faith, all who call upon one and the same Lord and God, constitute *one* body, this spiritual body, the Church. The Church

is the aggregate of all believers, the communion of saints. Hypocrites, sham Christians, do not belong to the Church.

2. Since only believers constitute the Church, she is *invisible*.

3. Though invisible, the Church has certain *marks* whereby we know with absolute certainty where the Church is. The believers have one hope of calling. But they were called by the Gospel. The Gospel produces faith. Where the Gospel is preached, there are believers, there is the Church. (Cf. Stoeckhardt, *Epheserbrief*, in loco.)

Eph. 5, 25—27: *Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

“The Church, the Bride of Christ,” is a fitting caption for this paragraph.—“*Christ also loved the Church.*” He proved His love: “*He gave Himself*” unto death “*for it,*” thus acquiring for it the forgiveness of sins, the righteousness that availeth before God. The aim Christ had in view in His sacrificial death was also this: “*that He might sanctify it,*” by His Word and Spirit purify it more and more of spots and wrinkles and blemishes, and adorn it with all Christian virtues, “*having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word,*” *i. e.*, by Baptism, the washing of regeneration. Baptism works forgiveness of sins; by Baptism new spiritual powers are implanted, sanctification begins and is to continue through life. The love spoken of here Christ manifests to each one of His believers. He sanctifies and purifies them by His Word and Spirit. But all believers collectively make up the Church. Just here that which Christ does to every one of His members the apostle predicates of the communion of saints, the Church. All saints are a unit in the eyes of the Lord. This Christian Church Christ sanctifies and cleanses again and again of all impurities, spots, and blemishes.—The final aim of Christ’s giving Himself for the Church is that at

the consummation of the world "*He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" On the last day, when Christ will appear in all His glory, He, the Bridegroom, will place by His side His bride, the Church, in all her spotless splendor.

In the words of *Hodge*: "Christ presents the Church to Himself, *αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ*, He and no other, to Himself. He does it. He gave Himself for it. He sanctifies it. He, before the assembled universe, places by His side the bride purchased with His blood. He presents it to Himself a glorious Church. That is glorious which excites admiration. The Church is to be an object of admiration to all intelligent beings, because of its freedom from all defect and because of its absolute perfection. . . . The figure is preserved in the description here given of the glory of the consummated Church. It is to be as a faultless bride, perfect in beauty and splendidly adorned. She is to be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, *i. e.*, without anything to mar her beauty, free from every indication of age, faultless and immortal. What is thus expressed figuratively is expressed literally in the last clause of the verse, that it should be holy and without blame, *ἀγία καὶ ἄμωμος.*"

The purpose for which this passage is adduced in the Catechism is to show that all the members of the Church are holy by faith in Christ, and that they serve God with *holy* works; hence the Church is *holy*.

1 Pct. 2, 5: *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

In the preceding sections the Christians were addressed as individuals. Beginning with v. 4, a new thought is introduced. The Christians are spoken of as a spiritual house, a temple. So the congregation of Christians is addressed. The main thought is: Build yourselves up on Christ, and manifest

your Christian character by serving God with "spiritual sacrifices," with holy works. Peter writes: "*To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.*" Christ is the "living stone" preeminently. He is so called here to emphasize the thought that in Him there is life. Coming into contact with this stone, life is imparted. An impulse goes forth from this stone to those placed upon it. An illustration is the magnet. Iron, steel, coming into contact with it, becomes magnetic; disconnected, the magnetic power is lost. In order to be "built up," the Christians must daily come to this "living stone," Christ; daily, by contrition and faith, they must renew the connection, daily they must dedicate themselves to God.

True, Christ is "*disallowed of men*"; He is rejected by humanity in general. But this is not to deter the Christians' coming to Him. They are to remember that, though He is dishonored, rejected, by the world, He is highly honored of God, He is "*chosen of God and precious.*" Chosen, for what purpose? To be the "chief corner-stone in Zion," v. 6, to be the foundation of this "spiritual house," the Church.

Christians are to know and to remember: "*To Him coming, . . . ye also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house.*" Christians, too, are "lively stones," having received their life from Christ, John 14, 6. But this life must be nourished. And this is done by coming to Him again and again in true faith. Thus the connection with the living stone is maintained. Only in this manner can they be "*built up a spiritual house,*" *i. e.*, a house filled by the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Only in this way the life received in conversion is augmented and strengthened—the "lively stones" must come again and again to the "living stone," the foundation and corner-stone of this spiritual house, this temple.

Christians are living stones in this temple, but, changing the figure, they are, at the same time, priests in this temple.

They are "*an holy priesthood*," says Peter. Priests in the Old Testament had access to God, offered sacrifices to God. In the New Testament all Christians are priests. They should be true to their priestly character. The purpose of their having been made priests is: "*to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*" Priests and sacrifices go together. So in the Old Testament, so in the New. But in the New Testament the offerings are not to consist of sacrifices of animals, etc., as in the Old, but they are to be *spiritual*. Christians are a *spiritual house*, hence the offerings in this temple are to be spiritual, *i. e.*, such as are wrought in them and through them by the Spirit, who dwells in this sanctuary. In short, the spiritual sacrifices are the good works of the Christians. Of these sacrifices Hebr. 13, 15, 16 speaks: "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Hence, in the New Testament there are especially two classes of sacrifices: 1. sacrifices of the lips, 2. sacrifices of the hands.

Notes.—The conception of the Church here is similar to that in Eph. 2, 19 ff. Christ is the corner-stone laid in Zion; the Christians are the "lively stones" composing the temple. It is *one* building: the Church is *one*. *Christians only* belong to the Church; there are no "dead" stones in this building. This Church is *holy*: it is Christ's, God's sanctuary, the workshop of the Holy Spirit. It is *holy* because the members of this Church serve God with *holy* works, "spiritual sacrifices." The Church is *Christian*: it is built on Christ.

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(To be continued.)
