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JOURNAL
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

VOL. I., No. 1. PHILADELPHIA, PA. MAY A. D., 1901.

THE DEBT OF THE PRESENT TO THE PAST:
ITS PAYMENT.

THE ANNUAL ADDRESS

BY THE PRESIDENT,
HENRY C. MCCOOK, D. D., Sc. D.,
January 10, 1901.

Can the Presbyterian Historical Society be commended to the serious consideration of those who have money, time and influence to give for the advancement of the cause of Christ, and the perpetuation of that testimony for which the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches have always stood? We may answer unhesitatingly, "Yes."

I.

OUR OBJECTS.

1. The Presbyterian Historical Society stands for the *Justice of God*, and for the attribute of justice in man as communicated to him by his Creator. It is an act of justice to the worthy that their memory be kept green. Not, indeed, that they asked or had even thought that posterity would do them that justice. The pioneers, men and women, those noble and most beneficent servants of God's Church in America, were unconscious, for the most part,

The
Society
Stands
for
Justice.

(1)

HISTORY
OF THE
Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America,
(GENERAL SYNOD.)

REV. DAVID STEELE, D. D., LL. D.,
Pastor of the Fourth Reformed Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

A Paper read before The Presbyterian Historical Society, March 16, 1896.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in both its branches in the United States and in the Dominion of Canada is a lineal descendant of the Reformed Church of Scotland.

In the year 1581, what is known as the National Covenant of Scotland was prepared and subscribed by all ranks. The object of this bond was to resist the encroachment of Romanism. An attempt to force the liturgy of the Service Book upon the reformed church resulted in the great moral revolution of 1638, when the National Covenant was renewed with additions. To resist prelatie innovation and further the Reformed Religion in the Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, the solemn League and Covenant was adopted in 1643 and became part of the Constitution of Britain. About this time, the term "Covenanters" began to be applied to the Reformed Presbyterians of Scotland.

From 1638 to 1649 inclusive, in Scottish ecclesiastical history, has been styled the period of the Second Reformation. During this interval, the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, together with several supplemental acts to the First and Second Books of Discipline, were adopted by the Reformed Church. After the restoration of

Charles I., 1660, on account of his attempt to overthrow presbytery and force prelacy on the Reformed Church, the church was divided into factions; some yielding to the pressure of the King's tyranny, and others refusing to submit to the dictation of the prelatial throne. Twenty-eight years of persecution ensued. Many succumbed to the storm and were allowed to exercise their ministry under certain restrictions, called "indulgences." A goodly number betook themselves to the fields and mountains, that they might worship God in accordance with the constitution and polity of the church during the Second Reformation. These persons and their followers formed themselves into district societies, and these again sent commissioners to what was called the general meeting. In refusing to surrender the spiritual independence of the church, and in adhering to the church's position, as held from 1638 to 1649, they became the true exponents of the doctrine, discipline and government of the Reformed Church of Scotland. It is worthy of note that these persons never cherished the thought of forming themselves into a distinct denomination. They hoped and prayed that the storm of persecution would pass by and that the Reformed Church would again arise and shine. Prominent among those who identified themselves with the societies were Richard Cameron and Donald Cargill. In the year 1680 they published the Sanquhar Declaration, in which the ground was taken that when a sovereign violates his solemn engagements with his subjects and becomes a tyrant, the people are released from their allegiance. Although the abettors of this sentiment were accused of treason and adjudged worthy of death, in less than ten years the entire British Nation endorsed the position by the joint coronation of William and Mary, in 1689. The same principle lay at the foundation of the American Revolution in 1776. The covenants of Scotland and the Sanquhar Declaration, we have no doubt, prepared the way for the declaration of independence in 1776.

In 1683, the societies were cheered by receiving Rev. James Renwick as their minister. As he would not accept ordination from the indulged ministers of Scotland, by an act of courtesy he was ordained by the Classis of Groningen in Holland. By this

act as well as by similarity in contending for the truth, was laid the foundation for that friendly correspondence that has existed for many years between the Reformed Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of this country. After a ministry of three years, Renwick suffered martyrdom. Subsequently in 1686, the societies were encouraged by the accession of the Revs. Alex. Shields, Thomas Linning and Wm. Boyd. In the space of three years these persons deserted the very people who had aided them in their preparation for the ministry. Thus the struggling remnant was left without a ministry for nearly 17 years. The revolution settlement which took place in 1689 and by which Presbyterianism was established in Scotland, incorporated principles in the Church's constitution, against which those who refused to submit to the tyranny of the Stuarts had earnestly contended. From the revolution settlement, these persons must either dissent or submit to royal supremacy, patronage and other abuses, which were inconsistent with the Church's spiritual independence and the Headship of Christ. It was from the above abuses of royal prerogative that the Free Church came forth in 1843. For about seventeen years, these dissenters, numbering from about 8,000 to 10,000, remained without a minister. At length, in the year 1706, Rev. John McMillan acceded to their communion and subsequently, in the year 1743, Rev. Thomas Nairn joined their fellowship. These two ministers with ruling elders, August 1st, 1743, just 100 years after the adoption of the Solemn League and Covenant, formed a Presbytery, which became known as the Reformed Presbytery of Scotland. Through this body, Reformed Presbyterians in Scotland, Ireland, British America and the United States have received their ministry. The Reformed Presbytery adopted as its constitution the whole framework and polity of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as existing between the years 1638 and 1649 inclusive. From this, it will be seen that the designation Reformed Presbyterian is rooted in and grows out of ecclesiastical descent, and not from any attempt to reform Presbyterianism either in the Old World or in the New.

The Reformed Presbytery, actuated by a true missionary spirit, sent ministers to the north of Ireland, where a Presbytery

was constituted upon the same principles, as the sister Presbytery in Scotland. From these two Presbyteries ministers were sent to the colonies of America, and in 1774 a Reformed Presbytery was constituted, consisting of Rev. Jno. Cuthbertson from the Scottish Presbytery and Revs. Wm. Lind and Alex. Dobbin from the Irish Presbytery, together with ruling elders. In 1782 this Presbytery was disorganized by its union with a Presbytery of the Associate Church. By this union the church was in danger of becoming extinct. About six years after Rev. James Reid was sent as a missionary by the Reformed Presbytery of Scotland to examine the state of affairs in the United States. After remaining several months in America he returned to Europe in the summer of 1790. Mr. M. Garragh was ordained by the Reformed Presbytery of Ireland for the church in the United States, and arrived in South Carolina about the year 1791. Rev. Wm. King was commissioned with instructions to join M. M. Garragh, and as a committee of the Reformed Presbytery of Scotland, these gentlemen were empowered judicially to manage the concerns of the Reformed Presbyterian church in America. In 1793 Rev. James McKinney and Rev. William King met in New York and subsequently a committee of Presbytery was formed in the South, whither Mr. King had gone, and under its care was taken Mr. Thomas Donnelly, a young man who had received a collegiate education in Glasgow. Mr. King was settled in a pastoral charge, and the affairs of the church began to wear a regular appearance in the South.

From this it will appear that a large number of Reformed Presbyterians could not approve of the union previously mentioned; and although widely scattered from Vermont to South Carolina, they formed themselves into praying societies and maintained a separate existence until in 1798 the Reformed Presbytery was reconstituted in the city of Philadelphia, by Rev. James McKinney and William Gibson with ruling elders. Within a few years, Revs. John Black, Alex. McLeod and Samuel B. Wylie, as well as others, were added to the Presbytery.

Among the first acts of the Reformed Presbytery of North America was the passing of a resolution, that no slaveholder should be admitted to full communion in the Reformed Presby-

terian Church. The result was an exodus of nearly all the members and all the ministers from the South. These settled largely in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

The Reformed Presbytery was divided into three committees—the Northern, Southern and Middle. Subsequently, these committees were formed into Presbyteries, and by emigration and otherwise, the church began to put on a flourishing appearance.

Realizing the importance of an educated ministry, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1807 organized a Theological Seminary, with Rev. Samuel B. Wylie, father of the late Dr. T. W. J. Wylie, of this city, as its first professor. This seminary, now nearing its centenary, is still in existence, and is located at 3621 Locust Street, Philadelphia. Its professors at present are Rev. David Steele, D. D., LL. D., Rev. M. Gailey and Rev. J. Y. Boice, D. D. Its alumni, both in the church with which it is connected, and in other Presbyterian churches, have been recognized, both at home and abroad, as preachers of a sound gospel and an orthodox faith.

In 1877 General Synod resolved to establish a college at Cedarville, Ohio. This institution was opened in 1894. It now enjoys a fine building of modern architecture, with about seventy students in attendance. Under the auspices of Synod a prosperous academical institution is conducted at Minneapolis, Minn.

In 1809 the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church was constituted by the three Presbyteries noted above. This organization took place in the city of Philadelphia, with Rev. Gilbert McMaster as its first moderator.

In 1823 it was thought desirable to give the Synod a representative character. As a consequence, the General Synod was formed, the constituency of which is taken from the Presbyteries according to a certain ratio.

It should be noted that the Reformed Presbytery in 1807 formulated a series of doctrinal statements to which was appended a condemnation of errors. This book has been known as "Reformation Principles Exhibited." The design of this formulary was not to supersede the Westminster formularies, but to make

more clear and distinct the position of the church in relation to the Headship of Christ over the nations, as well as in relation to other matters not touched upon in the Confession. And here it may be said, that if there is one divine truth that constitutes the Christo-centric doctrine of the Reformed Presbyterian church, more than another, and to which all other doctrines lead up, it is the Headship of Jesus Christ over the nations of the earth, and the duty of all nations having the light of the gospel, to conform their constitutions and administration of government to the divine law. Against the Erastianism of the British government, Reformed Presbyterians earnestly protested, and refused to incorporate with the same. And when they saw slavery recognized by the American Constitution, as well as the omission of the name of God from this fundamental document, it was natural that there should be some misgivings about incorporating under its provisions. It is noteworthy, however, that although Reformed Presbyterians for the most part abstained from voting and from other forms of incorporation, no decision from either the Reformed Presbytery or Synod is on record absolutely prohibiting members of the church from taking part in governmental affairs.

In 1812, the Synod, fearing lest aliens, who had not taken the oath of allegiance, might be treated as enemies, prepared the following oath to be taken before the proper authority: "I, A. B., do solemnly declare in the name of the Most High God, the searcher of hearts, that I abjure all foreign allegiance whatsoever, and hold that these states and the United States are and ought to be sovereign and independent of all other nations and governments and that I will promote the best interests of this empire, maintain its independence, preserve its peace and support the integrity of the union to the best of my power." Although the word "Constitution" is not in this form of oath, many have thought that in some respects it is a stronger form of allegiance than the oath that is usually taken.

For some years previous to 1831 the relation of the church to the civil government of the United States had engaged the attention of the ministers and members of the church. The out-

come was that discussions became warm between those who were disposed to be liberal in their application of the church's principles to the civil authority of the United States, and those who were inclined to be more rigid and unyielding in the application of these principles.

In the Synod of 1831 the question of civil relations was made a subject of "free discussion" until the meeting of Synod in 1833. It was at this Synod also that two subordinate Synods were created, known as the Eastern and Western.*

In 1832 a pastoral address of the Eastern Subordinate Synod to the people under their charge was published. In this address an expression respecting the comparative excellence of the civil institutions of the United States appeared. Although the majority of the Synod approved the sentiment, yet it was judged inexpedient to give it a place in the paper at the time. Some, however, desired to see it published by private authority and thus let it become a part of the "free discussions" which had been ordered. The publication of this harmless paper was seized as a pretext by a number of the younger members of Synod, for calling a *pro re nata* meeting of the Eastern Subordinate Synod. The time of meeting was in the winter, and only about one-half of the ministerial members attended. Under a high state of feeling and against the protests of the fathers of the church, those who came together organized and framed libels to be served on men who had devoted their best energies to the building up of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Without any legal service of these libels or regular citation of these fathers in the church, acts of suspension were passed upon them. And these hasty and unseemly steps prepared the way for the schism in the Reformed Presbyterian Church which followed.

Before the meeting of General Synod in 1833 party feeling in regard to civil relations ran so high that, as the Moderator of

* Here it may be noted that as the question of "civil relations" has never been decided by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in her undivided capacity, General Synod has all along her history inculcated the principle that any connection with the state or with the United States that would involve immorality, should be avoided.

General Synod, the late Rev. Samuel B. Crawford, D. D., was about to open the judicatory with a sermon, about one-half of the delegates left the building and organized another Synod, known since that time as the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. This body has taken the extreme ground in relation to the United States government. It is due to the brethren of the other Synod to say that in numbers they have so far outstripped the General Synod. On their roll are over one hundred ministers, with a membership of 9,000, a flourishing college at Beaver Falls, Pa., and a Theological Seminary in Allegheny City, Pa., and missions in China, Syria, and among the Jews. These brethren constitute an important part of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America and are known as the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Although the two synods are doctrinally and largely practically one, save in the matter of leaving civil relations *an open question*, as it was left by the Synod of 1831; all efforts at healing this breach of 1833 hitherto have been unavailing. In these efforts General Synod has always taken the initiative.

In 1836 General Synod entered upon Foreign Mission work, and, in co-operation with what was called the "Mercer Co. Society," sent Dr. James Campbell to Northern India. In the following year he was joined by Mr. James Craig and Rev. Joseph Caldwell; and the Reformed Presbytery of Saharanpur was constituted in connection with General Synod in 1839. In 1849 Synod sent out to India Rev. John Woodside in company with Dr. Campbell, who was returning to his field of labor, and in 1853 Rev. David Herron and Rev. Wm. Calderwood were sent out as missionaries to India; thus, at one time, about the tenth of the ministers of the Church were in the foreign field. Nor was the Church unmindful of home missions. In the West, and in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada, missionaries under the care of Synod were doing good service. Of these, Dr. Alex. Clark deserves to be held in remembrance for his untiring labors in Nova Scotia while it was yet a wilderness.

During the Civil War, and for some time subsequently, General Synod conducted missionary work among the freedmen at Alexandria. As the colored people generally desire something

more exciting than the simple form of worship observed among Reformed Presbyterians, General Synod has not taken part in missionary work among them for some years.

Although small in numbers, yet believing in the unity of the Church and animated by the spirit of covenanted ancestors, General Synod took the initiative in bringing about the convention of Reformed Churches in 1842, the object of which was to ascertain if some common ground could be found on which the Associate Reformed, the Associate and the Reformed Presbyterian Churches could unite. Conferences were held from time to time which result in the union of the Associate Church and the Associated Reformed Church of the North in 1858. Into this union the Reformed Presbyterian Church did not see her way clear to enter without surrendering some things that were dear to her ministers and people. It was the General Synod also that inaugurated the convention of Presbyterian Churches, which met in the City of Philadelphia in 1867, and which undoubtedly formed an important link in the chain of events leading to the union of the O. S. and N. S. Presbyterian Churches in 1870. Into this union General Synod was well-nigh drawn, but from considerations which were deemed sufficiently weighty at the time, the Synod hesitated to give up her historic standing and organization.

When the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System was formed, the General Synod concurred in the movement and has had, in accordance with the ratio of representation, a place in the Alliance since its first organization.

The principle of federation, which is now pending among the Presbyterian Churches of the United States, was formulated and presented by the late Dr. McLeod of the General Synod, as early as 1845. It will thus be seen that, true to her historic disinclination during the period of persecution from 1663 to 1689 to separate from the Church of Scotland, she has sought on multiplied occasions to bring together the Reformed Churches adhering to the Presbyterian system. In 1868 General Synod suffered severely from an attempt to administer discipline upon a prominent ruling elder in her connection. It may, perhaps, be true that Synod assumed responsibilities which had better

been left in abeyance. Be this as it may, the results were disastrous, eventuating in the loss of property, and in that which was of more consequence, the separation from Synod of some of the most dear and distinguished brethren in the Church. From this loss the Church has only yet partially recovered.

From this sketch, as well as from the history of brethren in the British Isles of the same faith, who, amid poverty and necessities, refused to touch the money that came from the hands of an Erastian Government, it will be seen how the Reformed Presbyterian Church has earned the designation of "The tocherless bride, with a long pedigree."

In 1883 the General Synod re-established her missionary work in India by the appointment of Rev. Geo. W. Scott, native of India but educated in the United States, to the station of Roorkee. In the year 1889 he was joined by his brother, Dr. C. G. Scott, who had been brought to the United States, and after passing through the Theological Seminary and the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, was sent out as a medical missionary. In 1897, on petition to General Synod, the Presbytery of Saharanpur, which had suspended relations to Synod, was received back, and thus anew became an integral part of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The mission in 1898 consisted of over one thousand communicants, with a Christian community of over 3,000, two Presbyteries, Reformed Presbytery of India and the Saharanpur Presbytery, nine ordained ministers, and forty-one workers and two licentiates, seven schools, six mission centres and seven sub-stations. On the 18th of June, 1895, by order of Synod, the brethren of India organized the REFORMED PRESBYTERY OF INDIA. This, so far as we know, is the first native Presbytery ever organized on Indian soil. Speaking of our mission in India, the *Indian Standard*, in its issue of Oct., 1895, says: "This mission enjoys the enviable celebrity of being entirely under native management in its local affairs, and we trust that its history will soon establish beyond the possibility of dispute that successful evangelistic work can be inaugurated and carried on by the sons of the soil themselves."

The doctrinal standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church

are the inspired Word of God, as supreme and infallible, together with the Westminster formularies and Reformation Principles Exhibited, the Testimony of the Church as subordinate. The Westminster Confession is received with an explanatory note appended to the Testimony respecting the power of the civil magistrate. The covenants of reforming fathers are regarded as obligatory only in so far as their principles are applicable to this land. An acknowledgment that the subordinate standards are agreeable to the Word of God, as well as the promise of a life and conversation becoming the gospel, is required of ministers, ruling elders and members who enter or continue in the fellowship of the Church. The whole profession of faith is summed up in six propositions known as "Terms of Ecclesiastical Communion of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America." These are read and, if need be, expounded in all the congregations under the care of Synod in connection with every administration of the Lord's Supper.

They are as follows:

1. An acknowledgment of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God.

2. An acknowledgment of the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, and Reformation Principles Exhibited, the Testimony of the Church as embodying, according to the Word of God, the great principles of the Covenanted Presbyterian Reformation to the maintenance of which this Church is obliged by solemn covenant engagements.

3. An acknowledgment that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer and Head of his Church, has appointed our permanent form of ecclesiastical government; and that this form is by divine right, Presbyterian.

4. An acknowledgment that public, social covenanting, upon proper occasions, is an ordinance of God, and that such moral deeds as respects the future, whether ecclesiastical or civil, are of continued obligation, as well upon those represented in the taking of them as upon those who actually covenant, until the ends of them be effected.

5. An acknowledgment of the faithful contendings of the

Martyrs of Jesus, and a recognition of all as brethren in every land, who maintain a scriptural testimony in behalf of the attainments and cause of the Reformation against all that is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness.

6. A practical adorning of the doctrine of God our Saviour, by a life and conversation becoming the gospel, together with due subordination in the Lord to the authority of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America.

The Book of Psalms chanted in prose, or sung in the best metrical version obtainable, set to simple and melodious tunes, constitutes the matter of the church's praise. An exposition of a portion of psalmody each Sabbath morning, as well as an expository discourse on some other portion of divine truth, forms a part of every Lord's Day Service. Prayers are extemporaneous, and reading discourses discouraged, if not absolutely prohibited.

The Lord's Supper is dispensed twice or three times a year, according to the circumstances of each congregation. This is regarded both as the season of revival and consecration. The week previous to the dispensation of the Supper begins with what is known to the church as the "preparation Sabbath." Besides the mid-week prayer meeting, Thursday of the week is observed as a day of fasting and humiliation and prayer. Saturday before the communion is regarded as the day of immediate preparation. The session is constituted at the close of worship on Saturday, if it has not remained in recess from the evening previous, and in the presence of the ruling elders and the pastor, tokens of admission to the Lord's table are distributed to intending communicants. Although this is the rule, yet exceptional cases may take place, when under some extraordinary circumstances a person or persons, not in formal fellowship with the church, from a distance, may desire to commune. If such person or persons be in good standing in some evangelical church, the session may open the way to the Lord's table, by giving the usual token of admission. In other words, communion in the ordinance of the Supper takes place under the sessional jurisdiction, and not simply on the ground of the individual's own personal Christianity. On all the days

of preparation, as well as on the day of communion, sermons appropriate to the occasion are delivered. The object of the church is, to exalt these sacramental occasions, by showing to the people that in them they make the nearest approach to God that can be made on earth; and that by personal and social covenanting with God in Christ, they are to live not to themselves, but to him who died for them and who rose again. Baptism is administered only to such as profess faith in Christ, and to the infant children of those, when one or both of the parents are members of the church. The baptized children of the church are regarded as subject to the counsel and advice of the session, previous to their admission to full communion. Parental instruction of children receives a prominent place in the administration and direction of congregations. This is supplemented by instruction in the Sabbath School; and this auxiliary institution is under the supervision of the church session.

The discipline of the church is in accord with that of other Reformed churches adhering to the Presbyterian system, save that ministers and ruling elders are unqualifiedly forbidden to have connection with what are known as "secret associations." And on the admission of members, they are affectionately warned to keep themselves free from those "secret orders," where unscriptural oaths are taken and Christless prayers are offered.

The government of the church is presbyterian, not from custom or expediency, or convenience, but *jure divino*, by "divine right." General Synod with the people under its care, numbers seven Presbyteries, forty-five ministers and licentiates, and about 6300 communicants, besides adherents, and 3400 in the Sabbath school. Small such a church is among the hundreds of thousands in other churches, but the divine promise is, "I will give power to my two witnesses and they shall prophesy." No holy days such as are observed in the Romish church are observed in the Reformed Presbyterian church.

From time immemorial, and as handed down from generation to generation, the Reformed Presbyterian church has been par-

ticular in inculcating Sabbath observance. The members of the church, the children in the family and in the Sabbath-school have been taught to designate this period of holy time by those names which are given to it in the Scriptures and in the Westminster formularies, namely, First day, Sabbath day, and Lord's day, while the term Sunday, often used in the pulpits as well as in the pew, is set aside as far as possible.

Many years ago this church took advanced ground in relation to the question of temperance, so that connection with the liquor traffic is forbidden to all its members. The result of this prohibition has been that no one in full communion in the church, so far as known to the writer, is engaged in this disreputable business.

The Reformed Presbyterian church longs for and prays for the day when all the churches bearing the Presbyterian name shall be one, and while she has been the uncompromising friend of truth, and the opponent of all oppression civil and religious, her heart has at all times beaten responsive to every effort without the sacrifice of principle, to unite the divided body of Christ, and to hasten the fulfilment of the Savior's prayer "that they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

All along the history of this church, her testimony both in the British Isles and in America, has received singular endorsement in the providence of God. Although somewhat disorganized and existing as a reclaiming remnant of the church of Scotland, the protest of her societies against the usurpations of Charles the II. and James the II. was vindicated by the accession of William and Mary to the throne of Britain in 1688. In 1843, her testimony against the Erastian principles embodied in the revolution settlement received a signal vindication in the coming out of the Free Church from the establishment.

In 1863, her testimony against human slavery in the United States received a remarkable endorsement in the overthrow of human bondage by the proclamation of the immortal Lincoln, then president of the republic. This church in company with all who sympathize with her principles is now waiting with prayer, with patience and with faith, when her testimony in re-

gard to the universal Headship of Christ shall receive a world-wide exemplification by all the civil powers of the earth publicly and constitutionally recognizing Christ as the supreme Ruler and Governor among the nations. May the twentieth century usher in the prophetic day, when upon the bells of the horses there shall "be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD, and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."