



REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

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MEDITATION

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

—Exodus 12:1–14

Egypt was about to die. Having been crushed and burned and broken by the nine strokes of the first nine plagues, Egypt was about to die in the tenth plague. God would pass through the land of Egypt by night and smite all the firstborn of Egypt, both man and beast. Because the firstborn represented the entire nation, Egypt was about to die.

But Israel was about to be born. God spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt and announced the birth of the nation of Israel as his son. This month—called *Abib* or *Aviv* in Hebrew and often referred to as *Nisan* after the Babylonian captivity—would be the beginning of months to Israel. Israel would mark its birth as a nation from this month. For “when Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1).

God instituted the passover feast to instruct Israel in the spiritual meaning and reality of her birth. The passover was “an ordinance for ever.” The passover was a “memorial” unto Israel. Israel must “keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations.” When God spoke to Moses and Aaron, he instituted the passover feast.

What did the passover feast teach Israel? First, the passover feast taught Israel that Israel was God's firstborn son. God dealt with the firstborn on the night of the passover. The firstborn of Egypt, God slew. But “Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Ex. 4:22); and God delivered him. As God's son, Israel ate and drank at God's feast.

Second, the passover feast taught Israel that God had one true Firstborn Son among many brethren. Israel was God's firstborn because the

nation carried the seed of the woman and the seed of Abraham in its loins. And Israel was God's firstborn in her elect. For in the election of grace, God had predestinated his people "to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

Third, the passover feast taught Israel that her sins against God were heinous. So heinous were they that God's justice could only be satisfied by the bloodshed and death of the sinner. God would come through Egypt and execute judgment against all the sinners. Those in Israel who were spared were not spared without bloodshed and death—only it was the bloodshed and death of the sacrifice in their place.

Fourth, the passover feast taught Israel the mercy and grace of God, who had covered all of her sins in the blood of the lamb. Though Israel in herself deserved to die as much as the Egyptians, God killed the passover in Israel's place. "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you" (Ex. 12:13). It is the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), who is our passover and who is sacrificed for us (I Cor. 5:7).

Fifth, the passover feast taught Israel that the only difference between the people of God

and the people of Egypt was God's grace and mercy. Egypt sinned, and Israel sinned. Egypt was ungodly, and Israel was ungodly. Egypt deserved to die, and Israel deserved to die. But God made separation between Egypt and Israel. The separation was not due to Israel's being more spiritual than Egypt but solely to God's being merciful to Israel. The blood was a token of God's love for his people in Christ, providing an atonement and passing over them to smite the sacrifice in their place.

Sixth, the passover feast taught Israel that salvation is of the Lord. Israel did not deliver herself from Egypt. Israel could not provide deliverance but could only be given deliverance. Helplessly the people of Israel girded their loins while God went through the land. Helplessly the people of Israel shod their feet and held their staffs while the firstborn in Egypt died. Helplessly the people of Israel ate in haste while the Lord passed over. Exodus from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, did not come of Israel but of the Lord.

So it always is for the church of Jesus Christ, elect in the Firstborn and delivered by the Lamb.

—AL



Article XL. The Fallen King and His Kingdom (continued)

It is the fourth form of restraint imposed upon the development of mankind in the world after the flood that occupies our attention. The change that is generally known as the confusion of tongues.

We called your attention to the fact that there is an important difference between this last change and those that were brought about immediately after the flood. The latter made no incision into the life of mankind, did not violently alter the course of its development; the former, however, did force that development into entirely new channels. This is not understood as long as we simply consider the history in Shinar's valley as a confusion of tongues and nothing more. But if we consider that language is the expression of all that lives in the inmost soul of man, we understand that the change of tongue presupposes the change of man's conscious life, a change of conception and emotion, a change in his intellectual and voluntary life of great significance. Already with us the process of Americanization implies far more than a mere change of language. It means a change of a person's customs and habits, a change of temperament and character, a change of views and mode of conception. It even means a considerable change in outward appearance, for while you can recognize the recent immigrant that comes into our country without difficulty by his very features, this difference in outward appearance between him and the American gradually disappears, and in the second and third generation it has often entirely gone. Much greater, much more significant was the difference suddenly introduced between various

groups of people in the valley Shinar. For while the Holland immigrant into America merely adopts a language that is related to his own, and changes after the similitude of a people that is akin to his own more or less, at Babel, no doubt, a difference of far greater dimensions was created. Not merely different dialects, different languages that have a common root were created at that occasion, so that there remained a similarity between the one and the other, so that it were possible to trace one in the other, but a radical, a fundamental change must have been introduced, a change that hopelessly separated mankind into different groups and forced them to abandon their project of establishing one mighty empire with Babel as its center. Only when conceived in this light can we understand the significance of this miraculous intervention of the Almighty. If hitherto mankind had constituted a unity, from now on a very real division would become evident. And if hitherto the creation of one mighty empire, lording it over the whole world and over all life had been within the range of possibilities, from now the attempt to create such a world-empire would prove hopeless. And it is in this latter fact that we must look for the significance of the confusion of tongues at Babel, both for the development of the seed of the woman and of the seed of the serpent. The event of Shinar's plain determined the course of development of the fallen king and his kingdom for centuries to come.

We have already called your attention to the fact that this tremendous change was not introduced immediately after the flood. The time was not ripe for the change then. It was only after

history developed in such a direction that it became necessary to intervene that of a sudden the Almighty brought about this separation between the different groups of men on the earth. And it is of importance that we have a clear insight into the historical circumstances under which this separation was brought about. And, therefore, the question must be asked: What was the occasion that called for the introduction of this significant change?

The answer is plain: it was nothing less than the attempt to establish and maintain a unity mechanically imposed upon the life of humanity, the attempt to establish a unity that was foreign to the natural development of humanity, a unity that was in direct opposition to all that was determined in the counsel of God with a view to the temporal development of the human race in this world.

It is highly important that we see this clearly.

In Shinar's valley we do not find an attempt to maintain a natural unity merely. This would not have been sinful. All mankind was still one. And this natural unity had nothing to do with man's will. It was according to the guidance of God's providence that they were one. "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech" we read in Gen. 11:1. And we must clearly distinguish between his natural and normal unity of the race and the unity men tried to impose upon mankind in the plain of Shinar. If the confusion of tongues had never been introduced the human race would have remained essentially one in its development in the world. Men would have remained one in speech, one in conception, one in imagination and thought, one in emotion and voluntary action. And if the Almighty had never miraculously intervened this natural unity would not have implied necessarily anything sinful. Even if this unity of the race had been maintained, it would not have been necessary to establish the mechanical, the forced unity that was aimed at in the building of Babel. On the contrary, at Babel a sinful element entered in. Just because the race was naturally one, just because no separation had as yet taken place, just

because they were one in speech, they conceived of the bold idea to establish one great world-empire, that would ultimately gain control over all things, an empire, moreover, that would be based on the principle of sin, and that would oppose all that called itself after God's name. And it was this attempt that was frustrated by the Almighty. It was the early realization of this ideal that was rendered impossible by the confusion of speech that forced men into separation from one another.

Let us try to picture to ourselves the development of the human race if the confusion of tongues had not been introduced and if the sinful attempt of Babel had never been made.

In that case the race would naturally have developed into different families, these families would have grown into clans, and these clans would have branched out in various tribes. Because of their very development these tribes would gradually have separated and would have settled in different parts of the earth. In their separation from one another these tribes would have developed each according to its own peculiar characteristics. Even thus humanity would not have been an endless monotony of human beings perfectly similar to one another, but there would have been a natural difference, a normal variation between the different groups of the human race. Even thus the earth might have been filled according to God's ordinance and the multifarious powers and talents of the human race might have been developed and revealed. There would have been great diversity of development and rich display of different powers even if the separation of Babel had not been introduced.

Still more. The diversity just described does not reckon with the fact of sin and its separating influence upon the human race. Sin naturally has a tendency to separate, to disrupt. Sinful quarrels and controversies would naturally have arisen between the different families and tribes, between the different groups of society, hatred and enmity would have developed, and these would have separated different groups one from

another. It is even not so improbable, that this tendency to quarrel and separate had already revealed itself before men descended into the valley of Shinar to realize their ideal of an empire. It is not so far-fetched to infer that this very tendency to separate, to quarrel and fight, created the desire for a mechanical federation. In our own time we may watch the same development. It is the inevitable repetition of war that constitutes the practical reason for the establishment of a league of nations. And it is not at all impossible, that a century and a half after the deluge the same tendency to wage war upon one another and in bitter hatred seek the destruction of one another had already become evident among the different groups of the race as it existed at that time. Neither is the inference far-fetched, that this very tendency to disruption and war was the occasion for the descent into the valley of Shinar, there to create a new unity. However this may be, fact is, that even without the confusion of tongues, providing the attempt to build Babel's empire had not been made, there would have been diversity of development and separation into different groups.

The purpose, however, that was held in view with the building of the tower of Babel was to prevent this separation of the race by the establishment of a mechanical unity imposed from without. Sinful humanity, naturally inclined to separation and war, conceived of the possibility to suppress this tendency and to remain a unity

in spite of the operation of the power of sin in their life and development.

The tendency was to seek unity on the basis of sin.

And since the power of sin can find its unifying element only in opposition to the Almighty and His people, the empire that was to be established in Shinar would have been a tremendous power in the world for the crushing of the seed of the woman. It would have been an empire that would have found its greatest joy and glory in exalting itself against all that is called God and the terriblest persecution of them that love His Name. It would have been a premature establishment of the kingdom of Antichrist.

But this might not be. Had this been realized the people of God would have had no standing room on earth, and would never have been allowed to develop and assert themselves. And therefore, this must be prevented. The plans of sinful humanity in the plain of Shinar must be frustrated. And for that purpose God Almighty forms the different groups of the race into that very separation which they sought to prevent.

The confusion of tongues is that powerful, miraculous intervention of God, whereby He frustrates the attempt to prematurely establish the kingdom of Antichrist.

That this was actually the case we hope to show from the record of God's Word.

—Holland, Mich.

