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

—Psalm 27:5

CONTENTS

3 MEDITATION
Israel's Proving Ground

4 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S BANNER ARTICLES
Article 61: The New King and His Kingdom (continued)



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Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning
From the Ramparts Editor: Dewey Engelsma

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And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

—Exodus 16:1–4

Israel's Proving Ground

Would the children of Israel walk in Jehovah's law, or no?

That was the question. The children of Israel were delivered from Egypt. They were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Their bitter waters of Marah had been made sweet. They had tasted the refreshment of heaven at Elim. Now would the children of Israel walk in Jehovah's law, or no?

To answer this question God brought them into the wilderness. The wilderness was harsh and howling. The wilderness was empty and waste. Deprivation! Hardship! Hunger and thirst! This would be their lot. They would be tested, examined, tried. The wilderness would be their great proving ground to answer this question: would the children of Israel walk in Jehovah's law, or no?

Not that Jehovah needed to learn the answer by proving them. He who knows the end from the beginning knew very well whether Israel would walk in his law, or no. Rather, you and I must observe Israel in the wilderness and learn the answer. The children of Israel must be proven by Jehovah so that you and I may know whether they would walk in Jehovah's law, or no.

Why must you and I know this? Because we are Israel, and Israel is us. Israel was the Old Testament church. But Israel was the Old Testament church in such a way that she was the type and foreshadowing of the New Testament church. What Israel was, what Israel did, and where Israel went were not just aspects of her unique identity and history. Rather, they were our spiritual identity and our spiritual history in picture form. Their Red Sea was our baptism (I Cor. 10:2). Their Canaan was our heaven (Heb. 11:9–10). And their wilderness was our earthly life (I Cor. 10:6). In proving them God proved us.

So would the children of Israel walk in Jehovah's law, or no? Would we?

The proving ground reveals this answer: *or no*. The children of Israel murmured. They lusted for the flesh pots and bread of Egypt. They forgot Jehovah and remembered their bellies. Such disobedience through murmuring would be a recurring theme for Israel in the wilderness. And for us.

Take note, Israel. First, we cannot enter Canaan by our keeping God's law. We need Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and the passover lamb, all types of Jesus Christ. Through him alone can we approach to God.

Second, let us be reproved by Israel's proving so that we may obey in gratitude and not disobey in rebellion. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are

written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:11-12).

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

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(Pp. 38-39)

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

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

We are trying to obtain some conception of the relation that exists between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity as such. In our last article we characterized that relationship in a general way. We said that it was a covenant-relation. There are three divine Persons, three individual subsistences, each possessing in his own way the whole divine nature. These three Persons subsist in the divine nature as persons, each determining his own relation to the others; they are most absolutely equal, for all are God in the infinite sense of the word; and the communion between them is most intimate, for these three persons are One. They are one in Essence, possess the same divine nature, are of one mind and of one will. It is a relation of most perfect and intimate communion. This intimate communion and intercourse between the three Persons of the Trinity we called friendship. And this friendship we said is the very idea of the covenant. The relation, therefore, entirely in general, between the three Persons of the Trinity is a covenant relation.

We also found that the covenant relation between God and man is nothing less than a creaturely reflection of that friendship relation as it exists between the three Persons of the Trinity. The covenant is not a mere way of salvation. Neither is it a mere agreement of God and man against the devil. It is not a means to an end. It is

the purpose. The realization of the covenant-relation is at the same time the highest manifestation of God's glory and the greatest possible bliss to man. Man in covenant relation with God is His friend.

An inspiring thought, indeed!

The end of all things will be that as friends of God in Christ Jesus we shall represent our Eternal Friend in the perfected Kingdom, in His communion see the light, to His friendship consecrate ourselves with all we possess, and in His good pleasure dedicate all the world to Him who is the God of our salvation, reigning forever as friends of God over the works of His hands! Only in the relation of that perfected friendship can we truly reign as Kings forever.

And for the present we will feel that we are God's party in the world. The more we are conscious of the covenant tie, the more God in Christ strengthens that tie of covenant communion, the more we realize that we are God's party in the world. His party over against all that is of the devil and by the devil and for the devil in the world. Conscious knowledge of that covenant tie makes us bold, very bold. We claim that all things in the world are ours and that in Christ we are God's. All that is in the world, and all that has ever been instituted in the world is for the friends of God. In that consciousness we are not afraid either to say very emphatically

that we are **the** people. On the contrary, for God our Friend's sake we maintain that we are the people indeed. We say that we are the light in the world. We say that we know it all and we only know it. We tell all the world boldly that they must listen to us. And that for every sphere of life. For home and society, for state and church, for time and eternity, always and everywhere we say most emphatically we are the light of the world. We know it. World, you must listen to us. As friends of God, in His light seeing the light, we will tell you how things must be. We will tell you how things must be in the home. How they must be in society. How they must be in the state. How they must be in every relation of life! And then it may very well be that the world will not listen to us. They may mock at us. They may use and develop all the powers and blessings of God's world, and all that God has instituted for us, they may employ it all from the motive and principle of sin. And it may, indeed, seem that all that world is right and we are wrong. That is nothing. It does not shake our faith. Neither does it silence us. It may for a time make it impossible for us to realize what we know is the only truth. We maintain our faith, and boldly witness of it nevertheless. And we are assured that in the eternal kingdom we shall be justified, and it shall gloriously become manifest that God's word is true forevermore!

Do you not see, dear reader, that this fundamental thought is inspiring, and that it becomes more inspiring as you grasp its truth more clearly?

Do you not see, that there is no semblance of Anabaptism in this view? The Anabaptist has no message for the world. He does not know how things must be in the world. He separates himself from the whole world, and claims all the institutions God has given really are for the world only. We claim exactly the opposite. We claim that there is nothing in the world that is not for the friends of God. And we have a message, and preach that message boldly and distinctly at every possible occasion and for every sphere of life. That the world will not act accordingly, — is the truth to blame for it?

But do you not see at the same time, that from this viewpoint every attempt to amalgamate with the world and to mix light with darkness becomes worse than nauseating to us? Work in cooperation with the world? Surely, we have no objection, if only the world steps across upon our basis and adopts the eternal principles of the Word of God. Not otherwise. There is no harmony between light and darkness. There is no communion of Christ and Belial. Principally the antithesis is most absolute!

But I was tempted to anticipate upon what we must discuss in the future. It is not as yet the covenant-relation between God and man we are discussing, but the relation of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. That relation we have characterized in general. But we must do more. We must enter into this relationship more deeply. We must know how and why God realizes all things thru the Son, and how it is ultimately thru Him that we also enter into the final covenant-communion with God. And for that purpose we must ask specifically what is the peculiar place and significance of each of the three Persons in the divine family. In other words, we must discuss the relation between the three Persons as it is expressed in the names: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We must constantly remember that we are discussing the personal relation between the three Persons in God. We are not now speaking of God's Being and His divine Nature. God is one in being and there is but one divine Nature. But this one divine nature is borne by three distinct, individual subsistences, each of whom possesses the whole divine Nature, in His own peculiar, personal way. The Father possesses the whole divine Nature, but eternally He possesses that Nature as Father. The Son possesses the whole divine Nature, but eternally He possesses that Nature as Son. The Holy Spirit possesses the whole divine Nature, but eternally He possesses that Nature as Holy Spirit. The Father never acts thru the divine Nature as Son, the Son never acts thru the divine Nature as Father, the Holy Spirit

never acts thru that divine Nature either as Father or as Son. And, therefore, though it must be strictly maintained that all three are equally God, and that they all possess all the divine attributes, nevertheless, because of the peculiar place of each of the three Persons, they all have their distinct personal properties. And this distinction is most comprehensively expressed in the names: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We must discuss first of all the relation between the Father and the Son.

The church has always expressed this relation by the phrase: eternal generation. She expressed her confession with regard to the relation between the Father and the Son by saying that the Father from eternity to eternity is generating the Son; and that the Son from eternity to eternity is being generated by the Father. Of course, these terms are always but very imperfect means to express the life in God. We must watch constantly against the possibility of applying our human conception of generation and birth to the relation between the Eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and His only begotten Son.

That is why the church spoke not simply of generation, but of eternal generation. All human generation is temporal. In the strict sense of the word, man is father only for a time. He is not a father because of a continued act of generation. And a man's son is not son because of such a continued act of generation on the part of his father. With God this is different. God is Father absolutely, continually, eternally. His Fatherhood is as eternal as His Being. There is never a moment in God's life that He is not Father, i.e. that He does not generate the Son. There never was such a moment, and there never will be such a moment. Generation is with Him a continued, an eternal act. In the second place, the result of human generation is a second human

being. A man's son is not one in being with his father, but he is a distinct and separate being. He does not from moment to moment receive his life and being from his father, but exists by himself, independent of his father's fatherhood. With God this is different. By the act of eternal generation not another being is called into existence, nor is it thus that the Father existed first and the Son second in point of time. On the contrary, the Son is one in being with the Father, and exists from all eternity with Him. The result of the act of eternal generation is not another Being, but another, a Second Person, a second subsistence within the same divine Being, eternally one with the Father. And in the third place, all human generation is very imperfect. A human father never perfectly reflects himself in his son. The latter is, at best, but a faint reflection of the father. But again, with God this is different. If we may for want of better terms speak thus, God the Father, from moment to moment, with an absolute, eternal act, pours the fullness of His Being over into the Son, so that within the same divine Being the Son is the absolute manifestation of the Father.

Such is the doctrine, as expressed by the church.

As such this doctrine lived in the consciousness of the church of all times, ever since this truth was developed as a definite doctrine.

We must, however, still ask two questions. In the first place, it will be expedient to ask the question: how is the truth of eternal generation based on the Word of God? And in connection with this first question the second: what is the full significance of this truth in the light of Scripture?

But these we must postpone till next week.

—Holland, Mich.

