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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

4 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES
Article 14: Mankind's Relation to the Fallen King (continued)



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MEDITATION

Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

—Exodus 3:10–12

Moses stood before God upon Mount Horeb, which is Mount Sinai, and Moses heard God speak out of the burning bush: “Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

Moses could not understand. “Who am I?” Moses was no deliverer, as he had learned the hard way forty years earlier, when he had tried to rescue God’s people out of the land of Egypt. Moses had slain an Egyptian taskmaster who had been beating a Hebrew slave. Moses had thought that the Hebrews would understand that God had raised him up to deliver them from their iron furnace. But the very next day, the Hebrews had turned on Moses, mocked him, and rejected him. And when Pharaoh had heard what Moses had done, Pharaoh had sought to slay Moses. Moses had had to flee from Egypt and sojourn in the land of Midian. Moses’ brief stint as the deliverer of the Hebrews had lasted all of a single day and had ended in disaster.

And what was Moses now? An eighty-year-old man who kept the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro. How humiliating! Keeping sheep was the work of young boys and women. By every earthly measure, Moses’ life had been a failure. Moses had had such a promising beginning: the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, educated in the considerable learning of the Egyptians, destined for great things. But now? A fugitive, a sojourner, an old man, a lowly shepherd, without

name or nation. What would make Pharaoh even grant Moses permission to speak to him, let alone make Pharaoh listen to Moses? For that matter, what would make even the Hebrews pay any attention to Moses at all? Who am I, indeed!

Moses must learn that Israel’s salvation did not lie in Moses’ power or position, which both were nothing. Moses must learn that Israel’s salvation was of God. If God sent Moses to deliver Israel, then Israel would be delivered by Moses indeed. What did it matter that Moses was nothing? All that mattered was that God had sent him. And God *had* sent him! “I have sent thee.” All that mattered was that God would be with him. And God *would* be with him! “Certainly I will be with thee.”

In his mercy to Moses, God gave Moses a token that God had sent him. God called Moses’ attention to the very mountain upon which he now stood. “When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” What a token! When Moses presently would go down from Mount Sinai, go into Egypt, speak to the Hebrews, and speak to Pharaoh, the very existence of the mountain would stand as an abiding testimony to Moses that he would return to it with the people of Israel.

Why must Moses learn such things? For your sake and for mine. Every officebearer in the church of Jesus Christ who is charged with bringing forth God’s people out of the iron furnace of their sin and death by bringing them the word of God knows Moses’ question: Who am I?

To them comes this precious promise: Certainly I will be with thee. And every child of God who sojourns in this strange land has a precious token of God's promise. In the worship of God, God calls our attention to his presence with us. As certainly as we have stood before him in worship for Jesus' sake, so certainly shall we serve God in heaven too.

And how can these things be so sure? Because God's servant, Jesus Christ, has ascended God's mountain and gives us entrance to God's presence through his flesh.

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

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Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

Article XIV. Mankind's Relation to the Fallen King (continued)

We are investigating whether the doctrine of the covenant, particularly that of the Covenant of works, rests upon a Scriptural basis. Thus far we found that the covenant relation is the only conceivable relation between God and man if the latter is to have communion with his Creator and Sovereign; as such it is simply the prerequisite of all religion. We also came to the conclusion that the attainment of eternal life by the way of obedience is conceivable only on the basis that God had made of man His ally and freely promised him life eternal on condition of absolute and unconditional obedience. We further found abundance of references in Holy Writ that speak of the relation between God and man as a covenant relation. And finally, we came to the conclusion that even what is revealed to us of the relation between God and Adam in Paradise at least suggests that God had established His Covenant with our first father.

We are still to refer to the passages already mentioned in our previous article, namely, Hosea 6:7; Rom. 4:12–19; and 1 Cor. 15:21, 22.

If considered all by itself, apart from other proof, it must be admitted from the outset, that

Hosea 6:7 offers a rather feeble basis for the doctrine of the Covenant of works. And the Reformed people themselves are naturally the most ready to admit this. They are not accustomed to build entire doctrines on the basis of a single expression in Scripture. On the contrary, as we have said before, they have an eye for the organic unity of the Word of God, and would much rather conclude to the doctrine of the Covenant of works from the fact that man is created in the image of God, and that in the nature of the case he could never merit eternal life unless he stood in such a free covenant relation to his Sovereign, than appeal to one single expression in Holy Writ in proof of its validity. Nor would it have been possible to erect the entire structure of this doctrine on the foundation of Hosea 6:7. It gives no information concerning this covenant between God and man whatsoever. It merely suggests, if anything, that the relation between God and Adam was a covenant, its conditions and promise and its purpose. And, therefore, we should readily admit, that it constitutes a very slender and feeble basis to support this doctrine. On the other hand, if we first take into consideration all that has been said thus far in

regard to the Scriptural basis of this doctrine, the text in Hosea may certainly serve as corroborative evidence.

The correct translation of this passage, however, is a matter of dispute. If you will consult your common King James Version of the Bible, you will find that the portion is rendered: "But they, like men, have transgressed the covenant." In the Revised Version, however, the translation runs: "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." And so also in the Holland translation you will find: "Maar zig hebben het verbond overtreden als Adam." Now, in order to follow our discussion, you must remember that the original Hebrew text cannot help us out of the difficulty. Literally you find that the original has it: "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." But the trouble lies in the fact that "Adam" may be both a common and a proper noun, it may designate the proper name of a person, but it may also serve to denote the entire class of human beings. I may write it "Adam" with a capital letter or simply "adam," and in the latter case it would mean either man or men, or even mankind. And, therefore, as far as the text itself is concerned, I may translate: "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant," or: "But they, like 'adam' (man, men, mankind), have transgressed the covenant." In the former case we naturally have in this passage some corroborative evidence for the doctrine of the Covenant of works; in the latter case there is no reference to the Covenant between God and Adam whatsoever. Some there are who maintain the view that the prophet in this text speaks of the transgression of the priests and princes in distinction from the common people, and then he intends to say in our text: "They (namely these priests and princes) have transgressed the covenant like ordinary men." But others, as also the Revised Version as well as in our Dutch translation indicate, defend the view that the prophet compares the transgression of Israel to that of our first father, indicating that both are covenant transgressions.

What is to decide?

The context.

If you will take the trouble to open your Bible and read the entire passage in Hosea 6, beginning with verse 4, you will discover that the prophet addresses the people of Judah and of Ephraim rebuking them for their transgressions and sins. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away," thus the prophet introduces his stinging rebuke. Surely, in that verse there is no reference to the men of a special and higher rank, there is no singling out of them, but an address to the people in general. In verses 5 and 6 the prophet continues to address these same people of Judah and Ephraim, and reminds them of it that also in the past the Lord Jehovah has sent his prophets among them to bring his message and admonish them to repent of their evil ways, to warn them that the Lord "desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." And then, in the words of the text under our consideration at present, he intimates that they have not heeded the words of the Lord's prophets, but that they have transgressed the covenant like Adam. Evidently, also in this verse it is once more the people in general and not merely the men of higher rank to whom the prophet addresses his messages. But if this is so, the translation: "But they have transgressed the covenant like men" would have no sense. And now it is true that others still offer a different translation or interpretation of this verse, and would paraphrase the text: "But like Adam transgressed, so they transgressed the covenant," implying that Israel's transgression was sin against the Covenant, but not necessarily indicating that the same is applicable to Adam's first sin in Paradise. But the fact remains that the most natural rendering is simply: "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant," and that in this case there is an unmistakable reference to the Covenant of works between God and Adam in Paradise. Adam transgressed. In transgressing he shamefully broke

his faith and truth to God, broke the Covenant that had been established between his God and himself. And the prophet means to say that even so the sin of Israel is a Covenant sin. They have become unfaithful, breakers of the Covenant with God.

More important is that wonderful passage in Romans 5. It is true, this passage does not literally speak of the Covenant at all; does not even refer directly to the relation between God and man; but it draws a most clear and beautiful parallel between Adam and his posterity and Christ and His people, which evidently presupposes the truth that all mankind under one head

originally stood in a covenant relationship to their God and Sovereign. It is not our purpose now to enter into a detailed discussion of all the questions that may arise in connection with the interpretation of this important passage. This would not be essential to our purpose. But what we must clearly understand is, that in this portion the Apostle boldly asserts that the relation between Christ and His people is like unto the relation between Adam and his posterity, so that even as on account of the former relation we obtain righteousness and life, so also because of the latter we are under the law of sin and death.

—Holland, Mich.



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