



# 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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REFORMED  
— PAVILION —

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## MEDITATION

And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shall take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.

—Exodus 4:1–9

**M**oses knew that the people of Israel would not believe him when he told them that the Lord had appeared unto him. Moses had had some experience with this. Forty years earlier the people of Israel had chased Moses away. They had not hearkened to Moses then; why would they hearken to him now? But Moses did not need experience to teach him that the people of Israel would not hearken to him. It is simply the reality of the church that God's people by nature are unbelieving, hard-hearted, slow to learn, quick to contradict, ungrateful, uncircumcised in heart and ear. Trace the history of Israel through Egypt, through the wilderness, through the judges, through the prophets and kings. Time and again God's people refused to take to heart what God's servants told them. You and I must see ourselves in Moses' complaint. "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice"!

But God is ever merciful. Upon Mount Horeb from the burning bush, God gave his people three signs for Moses to show them. These signs

would testify that God had indeed sent Moses and that they were to hearken to his words.

What were the signs? First, Moses' rod, when thrown on the ground, turned into a deadly serpent; and it returned to a rod when Moses grasped it by the tail. Second, Moses' hand, when placed in his bosom, became entirely infected with the corruption of leprosy; and it returned to clean flesh when placed in his bosom again. Third, the water of the Nile, when poured upon the dry ground, turned to blood.

It is a fact of great significance that all three signs spoke of death. The venomous serpent, the putrefaction of leprosy, and the spilled blood were all symbols of death. By these signs God declared that he is the sovereign God who gives life and who takes life away. God holds the keys of death and the grave, bringing men through death's door according to his sovereign good pleasure. Let Israel take heed, and Egypt too, that the God with whom they have to do is sovereign over life and death.

It is a fact of great significance that God also promised life and restoration to his people Israel by these signs. The deadly serpent was taken away, and the decay of leprosy was removed. By the restoration of life, God promised his people that it pleased him to restore his people's life by taking away their death. Oh, blood must be spilled, and there was no getting around that. The blood was not made back into water. But the spilled blood sealed the promise of life from death.

The fulfillment of the signs was Jesus Christ. God gave the keys of death and the grave to his

only begotten Son. With the curse of God for our sins upon him, Christ unlocked the door through death and the grave by the shedding of his blood. Through his blood is life for a naturally stubborn and rebellious people.

This is the one message in all the world that can penetrate hard hearts. It is the one message that can open closed ears. It is the one message that can soften a naturally ungrateful church. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for the salvation of his people. Behold God's sign: Jesus Christ. Believe God's sign and be saved.

—AL

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another issue of *Reformed Pavilion*. Here at *Reformed Pavilion* headquarters, our resident scrivener has been busy transcribing lectures and classes. The article in that rubric this week is a transcript of a video post made a couple of days after First Reformed Protestant Church suspended the undersigned from the office of minister of the gospel. The post shows a little age—*Reformed Pavilion* had not yet been started, and Remnant

Reformed Church had not yet been organized. Nevertheless, the gospel of Jesus as the sweet psalmist of Israel remains as fresh and invigorating as ever. The video post has not appeared in printed form before. We commit it to the printed page with the prayer that God will carry it forth to the readership of the magazine with his blessing.

—AL



I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

—Psalm 22:22

## The Gospel of Worship

Greetings to all who have tuned in to this video post.<sup>1</sup> This video is being recorded on Saturday, March 25, 2023. As many of you have undoubtedly heard by now, I have been suspended from my office of minister of the word and sacraments by the consistory of First Reformed Protestant Church. That suspension was made with the concurrence of the consistory of Second Reformed Protestant Church. That means that I am speaking to you in this video not in my capacity as minister of the gospel but in my office of believer. I do not intend this post to be a sermon or to be used in place of a sermon; I am submitting to my suspension and intend to follow the lawful and orderly way of dealing with that suspension. But I do want to speak as a brother to his brethren tonight, and I pray that the post be taken in that way.

I believe it is important for me to speak to myself and to my brethren tonight in order to remind us together of some of the principles that we hold together in the Reformed Protestant Churches. One of those principles is our duty and calling to go to church on the Lord's day. That is our confession in Lord's Day 38. "What doth God require in the fourth commandment?" The answer in part is "that I... diligently frequent the church of God." Even if one might believe that errors have been made or even if one might disagree with decisions that have been taken, it is still our duty diligently to frequent the church of God. I urge my brethren that we not boycott the house of God but that we go to church.

We also live together in the Reformed Protestant Churches by the principle that it is our calling to honor those in authority over us, and that includes the elders that God has given to rule in the church. Even if one might believe that the elders have shown weaknesses or infirmities or if one might disagree with the elders' decision, our calling is still that we bear patiently with the rulers in their weaknesses and infirmities. There is a lawful and an orderly way to deal with disagreements over decisions that the elders have taken. That lawful way does not include dishonoring the officebearers that God has set over us.

And therefore, I would like to encourage my brethren—and I speak that to myself also—that we not be obnoxious or disagreeable to our officebearers but that we show them love and patience and remember those who have the rule over us. I believe that these things are important for us right now in order that we can keep our focus on the doctrinal issue that is now in our churches—exclusive psalmody—and that we not by our behavior sow such rancor and bitterness in personal relationships that we then harvest that bitterness. And so I remind myself as I remind you of these principles that we live by in the Reformed Protestant Churches.

It is also my hope and prayer that we can walk together yet as brethren united in the truth. The truth will be our unity. That truth has been and will be our foundation. And therefore, in these days, when things are still new, when

<sup>1</sup> This is a copyedited transcript of a speech given March 25, 2023, which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zjze-Gmb-0>.

decisions are still fresh and matters are still being debated and decided, let us walk with one another in humility and patience and seek the truth and then stand upon that truth.

I also would like to take the opportunity tonight to speak regarding worship in general and exclusive psalmody in particular. Again, I do this not as a sermon or in place of a sermon. The style may sound like a sermon, but that is just because that is how I know how to speak. But I am serious when I say that I only intend this as a word of a brother to his brethren and that to help us understand the whole matter of worship and the whole matter of psalms in worship.

I would like to do that by speaking a little bit from Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is the well-known psalm that begins “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” And then I’d like to read verses 22–26.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

I take it as obvious that this passage is about the public worship of the church. In this psalm Jesus speaks of declaring God’s name “unto my brethren” and says, “In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” And then again in verse 25: “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.” In this passage our Lord is speaking of the public, corporate worship of the church that takes place in the assembly of God’s people together.

Now, there is a law concerning worship, and that law concerning worship includes a law concerning singing in the congregational worship. The Heidelberg Catechism explains the second commandment as requiring that we do not worship God “in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.” The second commandment was the immediate occasion for the whole matter of exclusive psalmody coming up in our midst. In First Reformed Protestant Church we were up to Lord’s Day 35 of the Catechism. It was my sermon on Lord’s Day 35 for which I was suspended from the ministry.

But the *law* of worship is not first in the matter of worship. What is first in the matter of worship is the *gospel* of worship. That is always how the law and the gospel work. The law is not first, but the gospel is first.

You can go through each commandment and see that reality. The gospel is that the one God is the living, true God; and therefore the law is “Thou shalt have no other gods.” The gospel truth is that God is a Spirit and that he is glorious, and therefore the law is “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” The gospel truth is that God reveals himself in his name, and therefore the law is “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.” The gospel is that God gives his people rest, and therefore the law is “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The gospel is that God in love rules his people, and therefore the law is “Honour thy father and thy mother.” The gospel truth is that God gives life to his people, and therefore the law is “Thou shalt not kill.” The gospel truth is that God is faithful to his beloved church, and therefore the law is “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” The gospel truth is that God provides for his people in his love and mercy, and therefore the law is “Thou shalt not steal.” The gospel truth is that God is a God of truth, and therefore the law is “Thou shalt not bear false witness.” And the gospel truth is that God is perfect, and therefore the law is “Thou shalt not covet.”

That is always the way the law and the gospel work. The gospel is first, and then comes the law

in accordance with that gospel. That is the way it works also in the matter of worship. The *law* of worship is not first, but the *gospel* of worship is first. And so I wanted to speak in this video post as your brother concerning that matter of the gospel of worship.

Again, I feel compelled to remind us that this is not intended to be a sermon; so whatever style of a sermon this might exhibit, just keep in mind that that doesn't make a sermon a sermon. This is a meditation of brethren together in the word.

I would like to meditate then on Psalm 22:22, which is the words of Jesus: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." I believe we see the gospel of worship in this passage. That could be a theme for this meditation then: The Gospel of Worship. And that could be developed in three points. The first point would be Christ and worship, the second point would be Christ's brethren and worship, and the third point would be Christ's gift of worship.

### Christ and Worship

This passage reveals the truth of Christ and worship, and there are two things to know about Christ and worship. First, Jesus Christ is the worship leader. The worship leader is not the minister; the worship leader is not the consistory; the worship leader is not the congregation; the worship leader is Jesus Christ. And Christ says that in this passage: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." Jesus is teaching here his leadership in the worship, that he is the one conducting the worship.

This whole matter of Jesus' being the worship leader follows from Jesus' office of high priest and from his role as our mediator. Jesus is the mediator and the high priest, who carries his people to God. As such, Jesus Christ is the worship leader.

That means that the Lord Jesus Christ is the leader in every element of the worship. For example, when it comes to the preaching of the sermon, it is Jesus Christ who is the preacher,

and it is Jesus Christ who speaks the sermon. He declares God's name unto his brethren. That is true of the congregational prayer. Jesus Christ by his Spirit cries unto God; and Christ fills his church by that Spirit, so that by the Spirit she cries unto God. Through the Spirit the church prays unto God by Jesus Christ. That is true with regard to the Lord's supper and the sacrament of baptism. Jesus Christ is the host at those sacraments. The minister is not the host; the consistory is not the host; but Jesus Christ is the host. He brings his people to his house, and he sits them down at his table and feeds them his supper. That is true also with regard to the giving of offerings. Jesus Christ gives his church the fullness of the Spirit, who fills their hearts so that they willingly and readily give to the causes of Christ's kingdom. And that is true with regard to the singing. Jesus is the worship leader in the singing also.

This means that the reality of our worship is that when we come to church, Jesus is already there in church, and Jesus himself has chosen the text and prepared the sermon. Now, that happens in a marvelous way. It is a mysterious way that I don't believe a minister and congregation can fully understand. Jesus chooses the text. He does that by guiding the minister by his Spirit during the week. Jesus also prepares the sermon as he guides the minister by his Spirit. So Jesus is already there in church, having chosen both the text and the sermon.

Jesus is already in church with regard to the giving of the offerings. In fact, the causes of the kingdom are causes that he himself has selected. The deacons make up a collection schedule, but the Lord Jesus Christ guides the deacons in that by his Spirit, so that Christ has already been in church before we ever arrive, and he has led the worship by determining all of the causes for the giving of offerings.

You could say that regarding all of the other elements of the worship: when you come to church, the Lord Jesus Christ is already there, and he is the one who conducts the entire worship service.

Now, in that leading of the worship, the Lord Jesus Christ tells us in Psalm 22 what he is doing. He says, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” Jesus in worship is declaring the name of God. And the name of God is the revelation of God. That is a marvelous thing about God’s name. His name is a very special thing that is unique to God. His name expresses the revelation of who he is, so that God is his name. Therefore, when Jesus says, “In the church, as the leader of the worship, I declare thy name unto my brethren,” Jesus is saying, “I show my people who thou art. I declare all thy truth to them.” That means that Jesus opens up the Bible and declares the whole Bible to God’s people. He declares the truth to God’s people. He declares the doctrine of himself and his God to God’s people. Jesus Christ as the worship leader declares God’s name to the church.

The Lord Jesus Christ does that with each element of the worship service. He is the worship leader with each element, and each element has its own particular declaration of God’s name. So, for example, when it comes to the preaching of the gospel, Jesus gives to the church the whole word of God. And because Jesus is the leader in that worship, preaching God’s name to God’s people, he says to the ministers, “Preach the word. That is the material that you are to use in your preaching of the gospel; and you are to use that material, the word of God, because I am the worship leader, and that is the material by which I speak the word of God.”

That is true with regard to the Lord’s supper also. Christ chooses the material for that part of the worship service. He has given us formulas for the sacraments. For baptism Jesus has given us the formula “I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” That is the material that the worship leader has prepared for that part of the worship. Christ has also given the material in the formula for the Lord’s supper. “This is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as

oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” The Lord Jesus Christ chooses the material for each element of the worship service. And Christ does that in order to ensure that the worship that the church brings to him is exactly the worship that God requires. God has given to the church his own worship leader, so that Jesus Christ as the mediator and high priest in the midst of the congregation may lead in worship that is pleasing to Jehovah.

That is the first thing to know, then, about Christ and worship: that Jesus is the worship leader.

The second thing to know about Christ and worship is that Jesus Christ is the worshiper. He is not only the worship leader, but he himself is the worshiper. And Christ teaches that in Psalm 22 also. “In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” We have Jesus declaring God’s name as the worship leader, and we have Christ praising God as the worshiper.

That too is true of each element of the worship service. Jesus Christ is the worshiper, who confesses the truth of the sermon; Jesus is the one who speaks the sermon; and Jesus rejoices in the sermon and seals the sermon with his own amen. He is the worshiper in the sermon. Jesus Christ is the worshiper with regard to the giving of the offerings, for it is by Jesus’ Spirit that the congregation gives the offerings. For all of the worship, the Lord Jesus Christ is himself the worshiper.

And now, the beauty of Jesus Christ as the worshiper in church is that Christ does that worship absolutely perfectly. There is nothing missing from the worship that Christ gives to God. Jesus Christ worships God with his whole heart. The zeal of God’s house eats him up, as he confessed, so that all of the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ in the church is pleasing to God. There is nothing missing from that worship. There is nothing absent from that worship. There is nothing of Christ’s worship about which God says, “That particular thing did not please me.” Christ as the worshiper perfectly worships Jehovah.

That whole matter of Jesus Christ as the worshiper and as the worship leader applies to the matter of the singing of the church. Jesus Christ as the worship leader chooses the material for the singing of the congregation. And the material that Jesus chooses for that part of the worship is the book of psalms.

The proof that Jesus chooses the material of the psalms for that part of the worship that is the singing is that there are many, many songs—even many songs in scripture, even many songs written by men who were inspired—but there is one *book* in scripture that is the book of songs for the worship. Solomon, for example, wrote a thousand songs. Solomon was a type of Christ. But not all of the songs that Solomon wrote were compiled in the book of psalms. God compiled one book of songs for his church: the book of psalms.

And God shows that this book is the material that Jesus Christ uses for the singing of the church in the worship service. For example, Jesus is known in II Samuel 23:1–2 under the type of David as “the sweet psalmist of Israel.” And Jesus’ identification there as the sweet psalmist of Israel shows what material Jesus intends to use for singing in worship: the psalms.

As another example, in Psalm 137:3 there are specific songs that are called “the songs of Zion”—Zion being the church in her assembly for corporate worship in the temple that was built on Mount Zion. The songs of Zion are the psalms, sung in Zion by the church in her corporate assembly. There are many other songs in scripture, and those are good songs; but there is one *book* that constitutes the songs of Zion.

For another example, in I Chronicles 25:7 those songs are called “the songs of the LORD.” Now, again, there are many songs in the Bible; but there is one book that is designated as the songs of the Lord, indicating that that is the material that the worship leader, Jesus Christ, has selected for the singing in the worship. And that is why there are many places in scripture that call the church to sing the psalms. Psalm 95:2, for example: “Let us come before his

presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.” Or Psalm 105:2: “Sing unto him, sing *psalms* unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.”

Jesus as the worship leader has selected that material for that element of the worship service. He has given his church a book of songs, which are the songs of Zion and the songs of the Lord.

Jesus also sings those songs as the worshiper. In fact, Psalm 22 is quoted in Hebrews 2, and there the quotation includes the word “sing.” Hebrews 2:11–12: “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

We must not think that when we come to church and sing the psalms, then Jesus comes into the church in order to sing those songs with us. But we must think of it this way: Jesus Christ is already in the church as the worship leader. He has already selected all of the parts of the worship, and he has chosen the material that belongs to each part; and when we come into church and sing the psalms, *we* sing with *him* the psalms that he has chosen.

The reason that Jesus chooses the material of the psalms for the part of the worship that is the congregational singing is because the psalms are the little Bible. The psalms are the Bible in miniature. All that is taught in the entire word of God is found in the psalms; and God wrote the book of psalms, intending it as the little Bible. You can even see that in the span over which God inspired the psalms. That span included the entire period of Old Testament revelation. The first psalm was written by Moses, and Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. The last psalm to be written, Psalm 137, regarding the captivity in Babylon, was written around the time of that captivity, so that during the whole span of inspiration in the Old Testament, God was also inspiring this book of the psalms. The psalms are a little Bible. You can find every doctrine and every truth of the whole word of God in the psalms.

And God knows how to include the whole Bible in the little Bible.

That is why Jesus Christ selects that material for the church's worship in her congregational singing—because by that congregational singing, then, the church sings the whole truth of the whole word of God to Jehovah God with the worship leader and with the worshiper, who is Jesus Christ.

The rest of the scriptures relate to the psalms, then, as the illumination and interpretation of the psalms. This whole matter of the psalms' being the little Bible does not pit the psalms against the rest of the scriptures, but it shows that the whole Bible interprets and illuminates the psalms. So, for example, when you sing the psalm "Sing a new song to Jehovah for the wonders he hath wrought," then that idea of the new song is illuminated and interpreted by a passage like Revelation 5. In Revelation 5 we read of the saints in heaven singing a new song to the ascended Lamb, a song declaring that the Lamb is worthy of all praise and honor, that the Lamb is worthy to take the book of God's counsel and execute all the decrees of the counsel of Jehovah God. And that passage in Revelation 5 illuminates and interprets the new song that you sing in the psalms. When you sing, "Sing a new song to Jehovah for the wonders he hath wrought," the wonders about which you are singing are the wonders of the worthiness of the Lamb and the work of Jehovah God through Jesus Christ in redeeming his people to himself out of every nation, tribe, and tongue.

And that is the way the whole Bible works in relation to the psalms. The whole Bible is the illumination and interpretation of those psalms.

Jesus, therefore, as the worship leader and as the worshiper, takes that little Bible, the book of psalms, and makes that the material for the church's worship.

That also answers the question, how can it be right for me to say the Lord's prayer but wrong for me to sing the Lord's prayer? Or how can it be right for me to say the ten commandments

but wrong for me to sing the ten commandments? That question pits the psalms against the rest of the word of God and makes it look like the position of exclusive psalmody is denigrating the rest of the word of God. That is simply not the case. There is nothing wrong with the Lord's prayer. There is nothing wrong with the ten commandments. But the question is not, if I may say the Lord's prayer, why may I not *sing* the Lord's prayer? The question is this: What material has the worship leader selected for the worship of the church? What material belongs to the singing in the worship service? And just as in the administration of the sacraments, for example, the worship leader has not said, "Take any passage out of the word of God, and say that instead of the formula that I have provided" but says, rather, "Here is the formula: 'This is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me,'" and the rest of the word of God illuminates and explains that formula, so also in the singing of the church, the material that Christ has selected is the little Bible. He has selected the songs of Zion. He has selected the songs of the Lord. He has selected what he sings as the sweet psalmist of Israel. And now the rest of the word of God illuminates and explains the psalms, so that you sing the whole word of God in your singing of the psalms.

This, then, also explains the law regarding worship and specifically the law of exclusive psalmody. The law of exclusive psalmody does not mean that the rest of the word of God may not be read or used in the worship service in the place that God has given. But the law of exclusive psalmody works from and stands upon this idea of Jesus Christ as the worship leader and Jesus Christ as the worshiper, who has revealed in the scriptures what he has been pleased to select for the worship of the church.

This truth, this gospel of worship and this gospel of Christ and worship, is of tremendous comfort to the church of Jesus Christ because the church comes into the house of God and knows

that all of the worship that must be pleasing to God has already been offered by the Lord Jesus Christ, the high priest and the worshiper; and God has been perfectly and utterly pleased with the worship of Christ, so that the saints' worship is not a matter of trying to obtain fellowship with God, trying to earn that fellowship, trying to obey the law *unto* her fellowship with God but is a matter of her grateful life to Jehovah God, who has already received the perfect worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. God says about the Lord Jesus Christ in the worship service, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. I am well pleased with his worship."

### Christ's Brethren and Worship

This matter of the gospel of worship can also be looked at from the point of view of Christ's brethren and worship. Psalm 22 speaks not only of Christ but also of his brethren. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." Christ has brethren, and he has a congregation. The idea here is that the Lord Jesus Christ congregates his brethren. That is tremendous mercy. That reveals the grace of God, that Jehovah God through Jesus Christ takes his people to himself; and when he does that, Christ says, "These are my brethren, and this is the congregating of my brethren, whom I draw to myself."

The reality of our worship, then, is not that when we come to church, then Jesus comes in the door and worships along with us. But the idea is this: Christ is in that church already, and Christ draws us to his church and says to us, who are God's elect people, "Come sit here next to me. Sit next to me because you are my brother. Sit next to me because I am going to take you with me to worship my God and my Father and your God and your Father." He gathers his church as his brethren to himself in the congregation.

And then the Lord, gathering that church together, puts the word of the gospel in her mouth and in her heart. He does that throughout the worship service. He puts his Spirit in the hearts

of his people so that they believe the truth of the gospel that is taught to them. He puts the fullness of his love in the hearts of his people so that in that abundance they give to the causes of the kingdom. He puts the comfort of the Spirit in their hearts when they partake of the sacraments, by which their faith is confirmed. And the Lord Jesus Christ in the singing of the material that he has selected for that service puts his word in the mouths of his people, so that when Jesus sings to God the material of the little Bible, he gives the church that little Bible to sing with him.

And that is something that the Lord has revealed to us in these past years that is marvelous. I have heard many, many people speak of the marvelous things that God has done for us in opening up to us the book of psalms.

When Christ sings the psalms, he says in Psalm 18, for example, "For good the Lord rewarded me, because I kept his ways aright." And now he says to his people, "You come sit here by me. You hear me sing this to my Father, and I'm going to put that word in your mouth, and you're going to sing with me about me, about my perfect keeping of the law of God and the reward of righteousness that God has given me. And when I sing that mine iniquities are risen up before me and my folly is before me, I'm singing that about *your sins* that the Lord has imputed to me and which I have covered, those sins really being counted as mine, though I did not commit them." That is the way the Lord operates in this portion of the worship, in the singing of the psalms. He tells his church, "You come into my house. You come worship the Lord with me, and I will give you the songs that you sing to the Father with me."

With regard to Christ's brethren and worship, the truth of this worship is also that Christ brings his brethren into God's house through his blood. The way that God's people enter into his congregation is through the blood of Christ. That is the only way we can come into God's house. We don't have any right in ourselves to sit with Christ in God's house. We don't have any right in ourselves to appear

before the thrice-holy God. But the Lord Jesus Christ covers all our sins in his blood, so that through that blood we may come in. You can even picture it this way, that the Lord Jesus Christ paints on the doors of the church his own blood, like the Israelites painted their doors with blood in the celebration of the pass-over. It doesn't matter which door of church you come in—the front door or the back door or the outbuilding door or whichever door you come in—you come into church through his blood. That is what Psalm 22 teaches. What is the first thing you say in Psalm 22? “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That is Jesus. That is Jesus' blood. That is Jesus' sacrifice covering the sins of his people. That is how you get into the congregation: through that blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you walk into the church, you can think of that as you come through the doors: there is the blood of Christ over these doors. That is how I get into church today: through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is how I can sit before the face of God here: because of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Christ by that blood covers all the imperfect worship that we bring to God. There is never going to be perfect worship. You and I sin as we come into God's house and worship him. But you come in through Christ's blood, and you go out through that blood too, so that the blood of Christ covers the worship of the people of God.

That gives the people of God great boldness and great peace as we come to his house. The covenant fellowship that we have with God is not because we worship God well enough, but the covenant fellowship that we have with God is the gift that he gives us that was purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that means that you can go into the house of God with great, great boldness. And now understand what I say when I say that you can sin boldly as you enter into the house of God. I do not mean that you say, “It doesn't matter what I do here. I don't care what I do. I'm going to be brazen in breaking the law of God.” But it means this: You can

recognize, as you go into the house, “I'm not going to worship perfectly. There are going to be sins here. But I don't have to be paralyzed by that, because I come into the house of God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and only through that blood.” That is the joy of the people of God as they worship with Christ and are gathered by him in the great congregation.

### Christ's Gift of Worship

And then we can talk about the matter of Christ's gift of worship as a third and briefer line of development. This worship of Jehovah is truly a great gift. It is not something that belongs to us by nature. It is not something that we can enter into and have by nature. Worship is a gift of God. It is a great gift of his grace. Can you imagine what is happening in worship? Can you and I grasp what is going on in worship? Jesus says about worship, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” The worship of Jehovah is happening. And Jesus says about that worship, “I have brethren. I have a congregation in the midst of which I worship.” The Lord Jesus Christ, who is perfect and glorious, who never committed any sins, says about you and me in our wretchedness and our fall and our sin, “I am not ashamed of them. These are my brethren. This is the congregation that I bring into God's house with me that I may lead them in the worship of Jehovah.” What a great comfort for us in all of our wretchedness, all of our misery, all of our sin. The Lord Jesus Christ says, “You are my brethren. You are my congregation. And I bring you to Jehovah, who loves you in his covenant love.” That is a beautiful, glorious thing.

The Lord has given us that gift of worship together in the Reformed Protestant Churches. The Lord has been very, very gracious to us in these churches. I look around, as you have done, and realize that there probably is no weaker people on the face of the earth than we are. We confess that we are empty and naked and blind and poor, that we are publicans and sinners and

harlots. And yet the Lord has given us the gift of worship. And not only that, but he has also given to us an understanding of that worship, an understanding of worshiping with Christ that is so rich that it probably will take all of eternity for us to fully understand the richness of it.

I submit these thoughts for our consideration as we contemplate this whole matter of worship. Though there is a law of worship, let us consider worship first of all from the point of view of the gospel of worship.

—AL

## HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

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**Our Doctrine** by Rev. H. Hoeksema

### Article XVI. Mankind's Relation to the Fallen King (continued) and What Time Is It?

#### A. MANKIND'S RELATION TO THE FALLEN KING

The illustrations we quoted last week from Scripture, all seem to convey the same idea of a covenant. Every one of them corroborates the statement that a covenant is an agreement or alliance between two parties against a common enemy or mutual danger, an alliance based on the mutual pledge of faith and truth.

We must be careful, however, not to entertain the thought for a moment that in the covenant between God and man the idea of opposition, of enmity, of antagonism against the third party is the essential element. That would seem to be a rather prevailing impression among many of our people, and yet, this cannot be the case. If it were the right conception two things would necessarily follow. In the first place it would follow that this third party or power (in this case the devil and sin) would really have determined the conclusion of the covenant between God and man. The devil and sin are first. And God, in his eternal decree allowing them, establishes His covenant to fight them. And in the second place, it would also follow, that the covenant would lose the reason for existence, and therefore, would actually cease to exist, as

soon as the devil and his whole dominion have been overcome, that is, at the end of this dispensation, and we obtain a temporal covenant. But this is impossible. The first is impossible because it is against the absolute sovereignty of God to maintain that He is in any way determined in His action or decrees by the power of sin and the devil outside of Him. God is absolutely free. The Lord is a Lord over all things, sin and the devil not excepted. And, therefore, we must never have the impression that sin could in any way determine the Lord of Lords. Never must we represent matters as if the devil and sin are independent powers, that rise in sovereign independency, and as it were take God by surprise, so that the best thing He can do next is to establish a covenant to fight that evil power that threatens all His works with destruction. No, but we must maintain that the sovereignty of the Almighty is over the devil and sin as well as over all other powers in the world, in the most absolute sense of the word. The devil not only cannot obtain the final victory in his battle against God, but he never scored one victory yet, nor did he ever determine in any way the action of the Almighty God!

It is sad, that it is ever presented in any other way, for this is a vital point of our Reformed doctrine. The Almighty and the devil are often represented in their battle against each-other as if they were two players at chess. All thru the history of this world they are playing their game, but the final result will be that the Lord wins the game although He too has lost a few of his pieces while playing. But this representation, or any similar illustration is principally at fault, for the simple reason that it does not leave God Sovereign in the absolute sense of that word. Two chess-players are at the start equal in power and they both stand the same chance of winning the game. Besides, all during the game they determine each-other's movements and positions, and each one changes his position according to the movements of the other. But this is not a picture of the relation between God and the devil. The devil does not only fail to win the final victory, but he never succeeded yet to determine the position of God Almighty on the chess-board of the world's history. On the contrary, every movement of the devil is determined and controlled by the Almighty, by our covenant-God, and the former can all only serve to reach the purpose of God's plan.

The devil plays God's game!

No, he does not play that game willingly and with gladness of spirit, to glorify the God of all creation, but unwillingly, imagining that he is working against the Holy One from day to day, actually conceiving in the darkness of his devilish mind that he can prevail against the Almighty. That is the devil's deep sin, and the sin of all his seed. But although he imagines this vain thing, and although he rises in rebellion against the Holy One, and refuses to obey him, nevertheless the devil is playing God's game, and God is never for once determined in His action by His evil Opponent.

That is the glory of our Reformed faith. Not two powers control or determine this world's history, but only One Power rules, and that One Power is our Covenant-God!

On the eve of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt it appeared, indeed, as if the obstinacy and rebellious attitude of Pharaoh compelled God to send the plagues over the land. And surely, his obstinacy and rebellion, the hardness of his heart and the persistent refusal to let the people of God go from the land was Pharaoh's sin. But what saith the Scripture? Was God in all this history even for once determined in his action by the obstinacy of the king? No, the scripture saith: "For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth." That is strong language, you say. It is, indeed. Perhaps you would never believe it if Paul had not said it. Perhaps you even refuse to accept it in all its significance in spite of the fact that it was Paul who made the statement. But surely, it is there, it is the Word of God. And what is true of Pharaoh is just as true of the devil.

And, therefore, it cannot be true that God was determined, if not compelled, by the power of the devil and of sin to establish his covenant, neither his covenant of works nor his covenant of grace. On the contrary, we must rather maintain that the devil and sin are but unwilling instruments in the hands of God to realize the plan of the Almighty also with a view to the covenant. The covenant-idea is first, exists, independent too of the work and opposition of the devil. That we must maintain in the first place. And as to the second consideration, that namely the covenant would be temporal and cease to exist with the complete victory over sin and the devil at the close of this dispensation, it is plain from the Word, that also this is untenable. God has established an eternal, an everlasting covenant with His people, and it is not so that the covenant of grace shall come to an end with this dispensation, but much rather so, that it shall reach its highest realization in the eternal future, when all things shall be subject to God and He shall be all in all. But then, it is also plain from this that the essential idea of the covenant must not be sought in its antagonism against the devil, for then it would lose its very being

with the complete overthrow of the latter's power. But the essential idea of the covenant must be found in the positive relation of friendship between God and men. And the antagonism, the enmity against the devil is something that follows from this covenant-relation of friendship between the Almighty and His human creature. God makes of man His friend. As a friend with his friend He wants to live with man. Typically this essential idea of the covenant is represented in temple and tabernacle. Centrally this idea of the covenant is realized in Christ, the Word become flesh, Immanuel, God with us! Perfectly this covenant shall be realized when the words of Jesus shall have reached their complete fulfilment: "I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected in one." John 17:23

## B. WHAT TIME IS IT?

The above, dear reader, is the superscription of an article that appeared in the "Christian Journal" of Dec. 28. Of-course, I know not whether you read the "Christian Journal." It's a new paper published in Grand Rapids, new in more than one sense of the word. But whether you read it or not, I feel constrained to write a few words of agreement with the writer of said article, Prof. Kromminga, of Grundy Center, agreement at least in as far as his dissent is concerned with the leading spirit of the paper. The writer says, that he cannot follow in the course which the "Christian Journal" would map out for us, and at that same time he expresses his expectation that there will be many others who agree with him in this respect. Well, then, I feel obliged to tell Prof. Kromminga that I am one of those that are with him in this respect.

To tell the truth, I cannot for the world see how any one could very well follow the leadership of the Christian Journal, for the simple reason that at present at least, it leads in opposite directions.

For instance. The paper makes propaganda for the Christian School and at the same time antagonizes the movement! You ask, how this is

possible? Well, simply because it is so broad! It has a department for the Christian School movement and its propaganda, and that is fine. But at the same time it registers its protest against the separatistic movement of the parochial school, and claims that our children belong in the public school to be trained there! This latter protest was signed by one of the regular contributors of the paper and as far as I have been able to notice, not a word was written against it. And in the issue of Dec. 28 the publisher had a little comment on an advertisement in which he evidently condemned the principle that at all times the parents are responsible for the education of their children. In some circumstances, so he claims, the maintenance of this principle becomes "schooltje spelen" and quite sarcastically he asks when our good people shall be delivered from that spirit of "schooltje spelen."

For instance again. The paper antagonizes all anabaptistic and pre-millennialistic movements and tendencies. That is praiseworthy, of-course, though there is reason to fear that it sometimes calls anabaptism what is nothing but pure Calvinism. About this latter feature I will write again. But the wonderful thing of the paper is, that at the same time it opposes Pre-millennialism it also makes propaganda for it. You will no doubt, remember how at the synod of last June Pre-millennialism was condemned as being anti-reformed. Now, one would expect that the "Christian Journal" would uniformly agree with that stand of synod. But in this expectation you would be sadly disappointed. For in one of the latest issues the publisher (mark—also the publisher of "Maranatha") prints an article that appeared in the "Hope" in which the action of synod in regard to "Maranatha" is practically condemned and a better way is pointed out in which synod might have walked. The wisdom and good spirit of this Hope-article is favorably commented upon by the publisher of the paper, the publisher, too, of "Maranatha"!

I know it, the writer of the article "What Time is it" expressed his scruples from a different point of view. Perhaps another time I may

write my views also on that question of the time indicated by the world-clock.

But when I read the “Christian Journal,” and consider how many different spirits are clamoring for leadership among our people, I cannot

repress the question: What time is it on the clock of our Christian Reformed Church?

—Holland, Mich.



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