



REFORMED

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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 Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

—Exodus 4:10-17

Unbelievable! Having seen God in the burning bush, having been called by God to lead Israel out of Egypt, having learned God's great name *I AM*, having heard about the mighty wonders by which God would devastate Egypt, and having been given by God three signs to show to the people, Moses tried to excuse himself from his calling. Unbelievable! How much plainer could God have made it? What more did Moses expect? How could Moses try to excuse himself from his calling? Unbelievable!

Actually, it is not so unbelievable, is it? Rather than say, "Unbelievable!" we had better say, "Unbelief!" for that is what it was. Moses fell into unbelief. And it was an unbelief with which the child of God is very familiar. It was the unbelief of fear. It was the unbelief of cowardice. It was the unbelief of the flesh that refuses to trust that God is faithful to his word. God had said that he would be with Moses, but Moses did not believe it. Unbelief!

Oh, Moses had his arguments. "I am not eloquent." Moses blamed his slow tongue. God corrected that excuse very quickly: "Who hath made man's mouth?" The God who makes the mouth would be with Moses' mouth and teach

him what he should say. But Moses wasn't finished. "Send someone else, anyone else, anyone whom thou chooseth. But I beg of thee, do not send me." God's anger was kindled against Moses at that, for Moses' excuse was unbelief. God is angry with unbelief, for at the heart of unbelief is an accusation that God cannot be trusted. The stench of unbelief is its implicit declaration that God's word is not true. No wonder God's anger was kindled, for he is the God of truth, whose word is true and whose truth endureth forever.

Moses fell into unbelief. It was sinful of Moses, but Moses must fall into unbelief at this point and that according to God's eternal purpose and counsel. Why must Moses fall into unbelief? First, that all men might know that it was God and not Moses who delivered Israel from Egypt. That would now become very, very plain. The people would not even hear from Moses but from Moses' brother Aaron. God would speak to Moses, Moses would speak to Aaron, and Aaron would speak to the people. The words would be God's words as given to Moses, but the face that the people would see would be Aaron's face, and the voice that the people would hear would be

Aaron's voice. What is more, God would do great wonders by the rod that Moses carried in his hand. Was Moses afraid that he was slow of tongue? By the rod, which had no tongue, God would show mighty wonders. Egypt, Israel, Moses, and Aaron would all know that salvation is not of man, but salvation is of the Lord.

Second, Moses must fall into unbelief in order that the faith of God's people might rest in Jesus Christ, of whom Moses was a type. Moses must give way to Christ. The type must give way to the antitype. The shadow must give way to the light. For God called Jesus to lead his people out

of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. Where Moses made excuses, Jesus Christ obeyed. Where Moses fell into unbelief, Jesus Christ stood firm upon the sure word of God, for Jesus is the Word made flesh, in whom all the word of God is yea and amen. In unbelief Moses tried to excuse himself from his calling. But in obedience Jesus fulfilled his calling and saved his people.

The flesh cannot believe this Jesus. "Unbelievable!" says the flesh.

But faith knows Jesus and is glad.

—AL

HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

The Banner

January 16, 1919

Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

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

A. MANKIND'S RELATION TO THE FALLEN KING

The purpose of our last essay was chiefly to warn against the impression that the main element in the covenant between God and man is that of opposition and enmity against a third party. This is not the case. The covenant is not established for the sole or highest purpose of combating the devil and the power of sin. If this were true God would have been determined by the devil, which is, of course, absurd; and besides, in that case the covenant would cease to exist with the complete victory over the power of opposition, which also is to be rejected as against the plain teaching of the Word. And, therefore, we arrived at the conclusion that the essential element in the covenant established between God and man is that of friendship. God makes of man His friend. He will dwell with man, take up his abode with him. This idea of the covenant is eternal and shall be realized most completely in the realization of the

New Jerusalem where there shall be no temple for the evident reason that itself shall be the temple of our God and the presence of the Holy One shall fill the city of God.

The fact remains, however, that in this dispensation that covenant between God and man manifests itself as an agreement or alliance against the devil. This is but natural. An enemy of our friend is our enemy because of his hatred against our friend. And over against that enemy we will defend our friend as much as possible. David and Jonathan were friends in the first place. They loved each other. They were not first of all mere allies bound together by the formal conclusion of a covenant between them, but they were tied together by the bond of friendship and their love was stronger than that of brothers. It is because of this friendship that they also established a formal covenant between themselves, on account of which covenant Jonathan

became David's party against Saul. The same is true of the covenant between God and man. Because of his covenant relation to the Almighty the enemy of the latter becomes the enemy of man, and man is God's party in the world over against the arch-enemy of God, the devil. The one follows from the other. Should not I hate them, Lord, that hate Thee? is principally the question of all that are friends of the Holy One. And, therefore, since the covenant between God and man in this dispensation reveals itself over against an evil power that would destroy the sovereignty, the reign of our covenant God, it is but natural that it appears as an alliance between God and man against the devil and all his host and seed.

Thus, then, we actually find the relation between God and man in paradise. As we have remarked before, Adam, created in the image of God was King-servant. On the one hand he was a sovereign, a king, and the world was given him as his kingdom. Over it he was to rule. He was to subdue nature, was to have dominion over all the earth. He was to bring his kingdom to complete subjection under him and to its highest possible development. But he was no king in the absolute sense of the word. He was no autocrat. He could not rule arbitrarily and according to his own whims and fancies. On the contrary, his kingdom was God's kingdom, and he together with all his dominion belonged to the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth. In the midst of the world, that had been given him as his rightful dominion Adam was to be the servant of God. It was exactly thru him, the king of the world, that the latter was truly God's footstool. Adam, therefore, though king in relation to the world, was in relation to God, servant, "knecht des Heeren." But again, the idea of his service must not be confused with that of slavery. He was to obey God not from the motive of fear or servile subjection. Neither was he to be a wage-earner, who obeyed and labored for wages. But he was to be God's friend. The essence of the law also for Adam was love. He was to be king and prophet, but also priest. As king he was to have dominion over the world and

subject all things under him; as prophet he was to know his God truly and proclaim the glories of His name; but as priest he was to lay himself in willing obedience on the altar of God's love and bring him the sacrifice of his life. In a word, Adam was friend of God, Son of the Most High, the Almighty was his Father and he was to render the obedience of a son, not of a slave. He knew God, loved Him, served Him willingly, and God communed with him and spoke to him as a friend with his friend. It was thru Adam, the crown of creation that the world was to be God's kingdom and the Almighty exercised His sovereignty over the world; but it was also thru Adam, the servant of God, that the world lay at the heart of its Creator and enjoyed His love.

On that entire relation, however, the devil was to make his attack. And we know, sin did not make its first entrance into the world thru man, but thru the devil. Everywhere Scripture gives the impression, that the devil originally was one of the most glorious and powerful of God's spiritual creatures. It is not at all unlikely that he was an arch-angel, a prince among the angels with power and authority over other of his fellow-angels, nor is it improbable that it was exactly those angels over whom he ruled as prince which he dragged down with him in his fall from God. After his sin and fall at least, it is no one less than Michael, the great prince among the angels, who is evidently divinely ordained to stand as the opponent of mighty Satan. It is Michael that disputes with the devil for the body of Moses. And even then recognizes his former glory and authority. It is Michael, too, and his angels that are pictured in the book of Revelation (chapter XII) as warring with the devil and his angels, a war which results in the victory of Michael and the casting down from heaven of the dragon. The inference it seems, is not so far fetched that even as Michael so also Satan was originally a prince among the angels. However this may be, certain it is, that he was one of the most powerful and glorious creatures God called into being as is evident from the great power he still displays after his fall. For naturally, his sin did not at all deprive him of

his great power, but transformed him into that horrible monster that is so frequently portrayed in Scripture as the great red dragon. Of the fall of this satan we know very little. Exactly when his fall took place we are not informed, — certain it is, however, that it occurred before sin entered into the world of man. Neither are we told just what constituted his great sin that made him worthy of the irrevocable wrath of God Almighty and the everlasting banishment from His presence, — certain it is that after his sin the devil manifests himself at every instance as the great Opponent of the Holy Sovereign of heaven and earth. He is pictured as being constantly inspired by the insane purpose of thrusting the Almighty from the throne of His Sovereignty and establishing his own dominion in the world God created. No doubt we may assume that this same purpose inspired him already in his rebellion against God in heaven. And after his failure there he makes it his evident ideal to transform the world, the kingdom of God under man, into a kingdom of his own, to make of man, the Servant of Jehovah, his own servant, and thus deprive God of the glory of His Name. Thus was the condition. And if we bear this in mind, if we remember that this satan already existed as such while man still lived in his original righteousness in the garden, and that this satan would surely attempt to reach his purpose and make an attack upon the sovereignty of God in man, we can easily understand that the covenant from the very beginning assumed the form of an alliance between God and man against the devil. Adam was the king-servant of the world under God, he was the friend of the Almighty. And for that very reason the devil, who was the sworn enemy of the Holy One was also the enemy of Adam. The moment Adam fell to the devil and obeyed him he had become the friend of God's enemy, had broken the covenant with his God, had become a slave of the devil instead of a servant of God, and had delivered his kingdom to the Prince of Darkness. Adam, as the friend of God was to fight God's battle as God's party in the world against the arch-enemy of the Holy One. It was this

battle that was concentrated in paradise. Not the whole world, but the particular spot in which God had placed man, paradise, which Adam had to keep according to the explicit command of his God, was the scene of this battle. And again, it was this same battle that concentrated still more narrowly in the tree of knowledge of good and evil. With that tree was connected the word of Adam's God. To abstain from that tree, as was the apparently so arbitrary command, signified for Adam that he would be absolutely obedient to the God of his life, and that from free love he would bring Him the sacrifice of voluntary obedience. But to listen to the devil and eat of the tree, regardless of the word of God, proved that Adam was incapable of being God's friend in the world, his party over against the devil, and of leading creation on to that perfection in which it would enjoy the full love of the indwelling God forevermore. The covenant between God and man, called the covenant of works, manifests itself immediately as an alliance between two parties against a third.

B. WHAT TIME IS IT?

Once again I feel constrained to call attention to and reflect on that most significant article in the "Christian Journal" written by Prof. Kromminga of Grundy Center. As I remarked last week, the theme of the article is expressed in the question: What time is indicated by the great clock of the world's history? The question is, of course, a very significant one. I believe our people, especially too, our Calvinistic people, ought to place themselves consciously before that question and they ought to be able to answer it too. Not, indeed, with a view to calculating the more or less exact date of the coming of Christ, but with the definite purpose of ascertaining historical developments and obtaining some conception of the world in the midst of which we are living today. As Calvinists we are living in an entirely different world now and in our country from the world our fathers were living in at the time of the Eighty Years War, and a mistake it would be, no doubt, to imagine that we could assume the same attitude toward things political and social

they did in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Exactly what attitude must be assumed is determined not only by the principles dear to us, but largely also by our conception of the world. The writer is inclined to believe that a rather late hour is indicated by the world-clock, that we are approaching the end. I am inclined to believe the same thing. Considering the development of the nations from a political point of view, considering the direction of our social movements and considering the development of the church and her relation to things political and social, I too am inclined to believe that the beast is developing rather distinctly before our eyes. Scripture pictures the time of the end as one of general apostasy and even antagonism against the fundamental principles of Holy Writ, and I agree with Prof. Kromminga when he says that literal separation will be the only possible duty for the christian at that time. It is surely conceivable, therefore, as the author asserts, that an otherwise sound Calvinist, whose principles are covering every sphere of life, would be compelled by the condition in the world to withdraw himself and live in separation. And I sign my name to the protest of the writer against any presentation of the matter that leaves the impression that they are no Calvinists, who with the strict maintenance of their principles confess to the impossibility of carrying them out in actual life.

And yet it seems to me, we ought not to make our calculation as to the character of the time the basis for our life and action as a people in the world. This is not necessary, for the simple reason, that when the time comes the world itself will force us out if only we remain faithful to the truth. Calvinism has its own views, based on the Word of God, with regard to the State and things

political; it has its own views, based on the Word, with regard to society and things social; it has its own views, based on the Word of God, with regard to the Church and things ecclesiastical. Let us maintain the truth and adhere to the principles of the Word of God first of all. We surely must not be tempted to change the fundamental principles of our faith in order to accommodate ourselves to the condition and development of the world. The world may never determine our faith. Practice may never dominate principle. If it does we do not conquer the world but the world conquers us. In the second place, let us also strive to realize and apply these same principles in actual life, in the life of our own country, socially and politically, as well as with regard to the church. If this is impossible and will prove to be impossible more and more in the future, let actual life show it. In regard to the sphere of education, for instance, we are still permitted to realize our ideal, at least among ourselves, of the free school, based on the principle that education is not the duty of the state, neither of the church, but of the parent. Perhaps in the future this will be made impossible. Here in Michigan, at least, a movement was already started to abolish the private school and compel all children to attend the public school by popular vote. Fortunately the danger is past for the present. It only serves as an illustration how it may be made impossible for us to carry out the principles of our faith, but whether impossible or not let us keep the faith, never permitting the world to dominate it or change it; let us also continue to fight by word and deed, as far as possible; and let the world decide whether it will ultimately thrust us out with our faith in the old Word. I for one am willing to receive the thrust.

