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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  
Seventh Commandment

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4 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES  
Article 87: The New King and His Kingdom: Objective Revelation or  
Subjective Development?

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Thou shalt not commit adultery.

—Exodus 20:14

## Seventh Commandment

**H**ow blessed is the gift of marriage! Marriage is the gift of union. By his sovereign power God unites husband and wife as one flesh in the mystery of marriage. The husband and wife are no longer two but one. The woman is of the man, and the man is by the woman. The man who hates his wife hates his own flesh, and the man who loves his wife loves himself. “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Eph. 5:31).

How treacherous is the sin of adultery!

Adultery is the sin of forsaking. A married man forsakes the wife to whom he is united to embrace another. A married woman forsakes the husband to whom she is united to give herself to another. The adulterer disregards the wife of his youth. The adulterer disregards the vows that he made in the sight of God and man to be faithful to his bride. The adulterer disregards the pain and shame and vulnerability and turmoil that he now causes the woman whom God gave him. In his hatred and lust and greed and envy and folly and selfish pride, the adulterer forsakes his wife, who is his own flesh, to be with another, whom God has not given him. Whether in his deeds or in his thoughts and in his heart, the adulterer forsakes his wife.

Thou shalt not commit adultery!

Oh, the adulterer does not abrogate his marriage by his adultery. For marriage is the gift of union, which union God alone can forge and which union God alone can break by death. God joins the husband and wife together; and what

God joins together, let not man put asunder. As long as her husband lives, the woman is married to him. Though she lusts after another, forsakes her husband, leaves his home, enters the arms of another, and thereby makes herself an adulteress, she is still bound in the union that God himself has effected. The adulterer does not and cannot break the union of marriage.

But the adulterer does send a message by his adultery. The adulterer does make a profession of what he believes by his adultery. And the adulterer’s profession is this: God is an adulterer! God is unfaithful! For behind the marriage of a man and a woman on this earth stands the covenant marriage of God and his church. Marriage on this earth is a symbol of the great marriage of God and his bride in Christ. For marriage is “a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). In the covenant marriage of Christ and the church, Christ is perfectly faithful to his bride. He remains united to her forever. Never is he unfaithful to her; never does he leave her; never does he forsake her.

The faithfulness of Christ to his church is our salvation. For the church, according to her flesh, is always unfaithful. But Christ, according to his grace, is always faithful.

Therefore, adultery—and all its related uncleanness—is not only a sin against one’s spouse; adultery is blasphemy against God. For the earthly symbol is a declaration about the spiritual reality. Adultery in marriage is a profession that God, too, is unfaithful in his marriage to his church.

What shall we adulterers do? What shall we who have been impure in thoughts and affections and actions do? What shall we who have blasphemed God by our adultery do? There is no doing, only believing. Behold the bridegroom who is always faithful to his church: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). Behold the savior, who suffered the penalty of God's

curse against his people's adultery, so that we are right with God: "Neither do I condemn thee" (John 8:11).

And how shall we forgiven sinners show our gratitude? This way: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

—AL

## HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

*The Banner*

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Our Doctrine by Rev. H. Hoeksema

### Article LXXXVII. The New King and His Kingdom: Objective Revelation or Subjective Development?

**B**efore I proceed to discuss the question of higher criticism in regard to the Old Testament, I wish to point out that this apparent digression on my part is closely related to the main subject of our discussion: the development of the Kingdom as presented in the Word of God.

It is my purpose to trace the development of God's Kingdom and covenant; to trace the line of grace in Scripture.

Now, if the conception of higher criticism is correct, there was, no, there could have been no true conception of God whatever in the prediluvian period. All that existed was a physical, immoral conception of God. If that presentation is true, it is, at least, very questionable whether Abraham and the other patriarchs ever existed. They may be legendary personages. If that conception is correct, much of the books of Moses belongs to a very late period, even after the exile some part originated. It may be questioned whether the children of Israel ever were in Egypt, whether there ever was such a thing as the tabernacle. And it may, at least, be called an established fact that Israel never had a monotheistic conception of God, never believed and

knew that there was One God till the time of the prophets.

It will be admitted immediately that in that case my entire exposition of the development of the Kingdom-idea rests upon a mistaken conception of Scripture. I would have to rewrite a good deal of what was offered in the past. And I would have to change radically the outline of what is still to be written.

Neither would I be justified in making this digression if it were absolutely certain that this higher critical conception did not attempt to gain foothold in our own circles. But this certainty I do not have. The atmosphere is not clear at present. I feel as if we do not know what is what. And I will state the ground of this uncertainty at the proper time. Please bear in mind that my motive is no animosity of any kind. Neither is my purpose personal in any respect. I want certainty. And certainty cannot come till the case is clearly stated. Till we know what is really implied in the question that was before the last Synod. If I fail to state the case correctly, I may be corrected. If I state the case correctly, but if the conception that was hitherto considered Reformed is faulty,

let us change the official standards. But by all means, let us have a clear case!

And, then, I wish to state at the outset that it is to be regretted that at the last Synod attention was called rather to minor details than to big things and principles. To me, for instance, it is a question of minor importance whether the walls of Jericho fell because God sent an earthquake under the walls or whether He threw them down without the intervention of any natural agency. To me it is of minor significance whether God in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha caused the fire and sulfur to rise from the surrounding country or whether He rained it directly from heaven. To me it is of little significance whether Samson carried the gates of Gaza to the highest peak of the mountain range or to a mountain-top next to that highest peak. Because of the strong emphasis on these minor details, attention was diverted from bigger questions. Again, I would even say that it is regrettable that the attention was finally concentrated upon the question of inspiration. For, surely, the question as to how we must conceive of the inspiration of Holy Scripture was involved in the discussion. To adopt in any way the higher critical view would necessitate a considerable change in the traditional view of inspiration, even in the Reformed conception of organic inspiration. But the question of inspiration is too much an underlying question, a question of underlying principle. When it comes to a discussion of the critical view of the Old Testament especially, there are other questions, questions more at hand, of a more concrete nature, that ought to be settled. The discussion was altogether too much generalized by calling the attention to the question of inspiration.

The question of higher criticism in regard to the Old Testament concerns first of all our conception of supernatural revelation. And in the second place the problem of the historicity of Scripture.

Let me try to elucidate the first point.

What have we in the Old Testament? Does the Old Testament present to us a history of

supernatural revelation or a history of Israel's religion? To speak as concretely as possible: does the Old Testament inform us how God revealed himself in a supernatural way to man, or does it simply tell us how the conception of God gradually developed in the minds of men? Does the Old Testament answer the question: How did God supernaturally reveal himself to Adam, Noah, Abraham and the patriarchs, Israel and the prophets? Or does it merely give an answer to the question: how did Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon, the prophets and the priests conceive of God? In the former case we have supernatural revelation. In the latter natural development.

In the light of these questions I wish to lay down and explain three propositions:

1. The Reformed faith always was and still is, that in the Old Testament we have a record of supernatural revelation. God supernaturally revealed himself in paradise, to the patriarchs, in Israel's laws and sacrifices and ceremonies, and to the prophets. A supernatural revelation which finds at once its center and climax in Christ, the Word become flesh. And Scripture is the written record of this revelation.
2. This certainly leaves room for development in revelation. God did not, and because of the human and natural factor could not, reveal himself and the plan of redemption as fully and clearly to Adam as He did to Isaiah. There is, therefore, development in the fulness and clearness of revelation. And accordingly, there is also development in the fulness and clearness of the conception of God and his covenant in the minds of his people.
3. But this leaves no room for development from a wrong to a correct conception of God. The idea of supernatural revelation rules out all possibility of development from polytheism to monotheism, of belief in many gods to the faith in the One God, of belief in an immoral to faith in a moral God. Adam, and Noah, and Abraham no

more believed in many gods than did Isaiah. I wish to emphasize that the Reformed conception of supernatural revelation absolutely rules out the possibility of such development.

Let me explain.

It might be deemed unnecessary to defend the proposition that in the Old Testament we possess the record of a supernatural revelation of God. Surely, Reformed theology is very clear in this matter. But I want to point to the fact that this truth is also embodied and expressed in the Standards. Question 19 of the Heidelberg Catechism reads:

“Whence knowest thou this?” (the fact, namely, that Jesus Christ is the Mediator).

“From the holy gospel, which God himself first revealed in paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son.”

This is rather clear language. It expresses as the belief of the Church, in the first place, that the same gospel is revealed throughout the Old Testament. The revelation of this gospel was already begun in paradise; evidently with reference to the mother-promise this is said. It is continued to the patriarchs and prophets, and it is represented in the sacrifices and ceremonies of Israel. Mark, it was not a certain conception of God which was revealed. But the gospel. The gospel, according to the context, that speaks of Immanuel, the Word become flesh, God and man in one person. In the second place, it clearly expresses, too, that the Old Testament is a revelation of God. It does not tell us what the patriarchs and prophets thought of the gospel, but how God revealed it. He revealed that gospel in paradise, and He published it by the patriarchs and prophets. And, surely, there is progress in this revelation of the gospel. No one shall deny that this gospel was revealed more clearly in the time of Isaiah, when he prophesied of the Suffering Servant, than was the case in paradise,

when God simply spoke of the victory of the seed of the woman. But this progress does not concern the essence of the gospel. It was not thus, that first a wrong revelation of the gospel was prevalent, and that gradually the correct manifestation of it was obtained. No, the progress concerns the fulness and clearness of the gospel. The gospel was not a matter of subjective experience, but an objective, supernatural revelation of God.

The same truth is expressed in Art. III of our Confession of Faith. There we read:

“We confess that this Word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the Apostle Peter saith. And afterwards God, from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing; and He himself wrote with his own finger the two tables of the law. Therefore, we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.”

Also in this article the same truth is strongly emphasized. The Word of God, the Scriptures, can in no way ultimately be explained from the will of man. God moved men by the Holy Ghost to write his Word; God took special care to have it committed to writing; God even wrote with his own finger the two tables of the law. It is a revelation from God, not a description of subjective experience on the part of the authors.

And, to call the attention to one more passage, Art. V of the same Confession reads:

“We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation and foundation and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.”

Also in this paragraph the faith of the Church is represented as believing that the Scriptures are from God. They are a revelation, not a history of religion simply.

Hence, it stands as a Reformed principle that also the Old Testament is a record of God's supernatural revelation to man.

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