

# The Clock of the Covenant

by Nyle Kardatzke



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**R**eligious consciousness awakened abruptly for me one Sunday morning when I was a young boy. I emerged from the formless, larval stage of my religious life while I was standing facing the back of a one-room church, balancing precariously on the edge of a folding wooden theater seat.

As I rocked on the seat, attempting to pass time while the adults were preoccupied with activities up front, something drew my attention to the back wall of the church, to a mysterious box on the wall. I already knew it to be a clock, but it was a very special clock, not like the one at home. Under the clock's face, inside a small glass housing, a pendulum swung back and forth. Between outbursts of worshipful preaching and shouting, I could hear the clock ticking its ancient sounds as its pendulum moved in rhythm with the words.

Even then, I sensed authority in that clock and its ceaseless ticking. The pendulum itself bore a golden design that looked to me like a face. As I rocked and stared, it seemed to become the face of one of the Philistine gods I had heard about in Sunday school stories. I imagined it to be one of the wicked gods destroyed in the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land.

The swinging pendulum may have induced a partial hypnotic trance in me, for I seemed to hear words that settled deep into my

consciousness and took on extraordinary significance: “And when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the tablets of the Law, he ordered that the tablets be placed in the ark of the covenant to be carried wherever God’s people went.” In my boyhood imagination, I thought the preacher had just said that the promises of God were locked in the “clock of the covenant” to be a reminder forever of God’s laws and His love. Probably it was this clock, our clock!

The church clock was indeed mysterious and ancient, something our spiritual forebears must have carried with them out of the desert until they reached this place. Indeed, there was a door under the face of the clock, perhaps where the promises of God had been placed in ancient times. And there it hung, still holding the Covenant, still with God’s people, the people in my church in Elmore, Ohio.

The Clock of the Covenant is a collection of sixty reverent and sometimes funny stories about life in a small evangelical Ohio church in the 1940’s and 1950’s, as seen by a young boy. The passage above is an introduction to that collection, to be published in 2016.